

NOTICE

There will be no edition of The Hills Times on September 18, 2025, as office will remain closed on September 17 on account of Vishwakarma Puja
Wish you all a very happy Vishwakarma Puja
-PUBLISHER

PM to launch development initiatives as part of 'Sewa Pakhwada' to mark his birthday

NEW DELHI, Sept 16: Launch of a host of welfare and development initiatives on Wednesday by the BJP and its governments at the Centre and in states will mark the 75th birthday of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who will kick off a fortnight-long nationwide health and nutrition campaign from Madhya Pradesh.

More than one lakh health camps will be organised, making this the largest ever health outreach for women and children in the country. Daily health camps will be held in all government health facilities nationwide," it said. The BJP's organisation will hold many such initiatives, including blood donation and health camps, across the country.

the BJP to new highs and made it a dominant political force for over a decade. Swadeshi fairs to promote made-in-India goods, "Modi Vikas Marathon", drawing contests on Viksit Bharat, interaction with intellectuals, blood donation and medical camps, and cleanliness campaigns will be held through the period across the country with the involvement of the party's organisation, central government or the states where it is in power.

In Dhar, Modi will also transfer funds under the "Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana" directly into the bank accounts of nearly 10 lakh eligible women and also unveil the "Suman Sakhi Chatbot" to raise awareness on maternal and child health. The chatbot will provide timely and accurate information to pregnant women in rural and remote areas, ensuring access to essential health services, the statement said.

Under "Adi Karmyogi Abhiyan", Modi will launch an exercise in the state that will symbolise the confluence of tribal pride and the spirit of nation-building. The initiative will include a series of service-oriented activities in tribal regions, focusing on health, education, nutrition, skill development, livelihood enhancement, sanitation, water conservation and environmental protection, the statement said. In line with his 5F Vision - Farm to Fibre, Fibre to Factory, Factory to Fashion, and Fashion to Foreign, the prime minister will inaugurate the PM MITRA Park in Dhar. (PTI)

ASDC says demand for autonomous state remains, despite MoU

DIPHU, Sept 16: The Autonomous State Demand Committee (ASDC), a regional political party active in the hill districts of Karbi Anglong and Dima Hasao, has stated that the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Centre has not ended the demand for an Autonomous State, citing the provision of Article 244(A) of the Indian Constitution.

ASDC President Jotson Bey, in a press conference at the ASDC Central Committee office here on Tuesday, said that the then MP Jayanta Rongpi insisted on signing the MoU rather than accepting the "maximum autonomy" offered by the then Union Home Minister LK Advani.

Addressing claims by Congress leaders that the creation of an Autonomous State had become impractical, Bey said, "Though the former Union home minister Advani may have said it, the provision of Article 244(A) of the Indian Constitution allows for the demand of an Autonomous State. The demand has not ended." Bey recalled that during his tenure as Chief Executive Member (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

'Arrested ACS officer's wealth 400 times than official earnings' ● ₹92.50 lakh in cash along with gold and diamond ornaments worth nearly ₹1.5 cr recovered

Stringent action against Nupur Borah on anvil: CM

GUWAHATI, Sept 16: Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Tuesday said stringent legal action would be pursued against Assam Civil Service (ACS) officer Nupur Borah, arrested for allegedly amassing assets vastly disproportionate to her known sources of income. Borah, posted as Circle Officer in Goroimari under Kamrup district at the time of her arrest, was found to possess wealth nearly 400 times higher than her official earnings. The Chief Minister said the scale of corruption was so alarming that suspension or dismissal alone

would not be adequate punishment. "She had amassed wealth 400 times more than her known sources of income. We believe mere suspension or dismissal is not enough. She must face penal consequences through due legal process," Sarma said while addressing a public programme in Baksa district. Officials of the Chief Minister's Special Vigilance Cell carried out extensive searches at Borah's residences in Guwahati and Barpeta, recovering ₹92.50 lakh in cash along with gold and diamond ornaments worth nearly ₹1.5 crore. Senior Superintendent (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)



50 pc tariff unfair, unreasonable: New Delhi

USA, India teams begin talks on proposed trade agreement

NEW DELHI, Sept 16: The day-long discussions with the visiting US team on a bilateral trade deal were positive, and both sides agreed to push for an early and mutually beneficial conclusion of the agreement, the Commerce Ministry said on Tuesday. "It was decided to intensify efforts to achieve early conclusion of a mutually beneficial trade agreement," the ministry said in a statement after a day-long meeting with the US officials. The discussions with visiting US Chief Negotiator Brendan Lynch on the proposed bilateral trade agree-

ment were positive and forward looking. Lynch, Assistant US Trade Representative for South and Central Asia, reached the national capital on Monday evening to hold deliberations on the proposed India-US bilateral trade agreement. From India's side, the discussions were led by Rajesh Agarwal, Special Secretary, Department of Commerce. An official said that both sides will continue the discussions in virtual mode and will also decide on a mutually convenient date for the next physical (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

Pramod Boro leads massive campaign in Chirang NE trade meet brings together stakeholders in Guwahati

KOKRAJHAR, Sept 16: With just a few days left for the Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) elections, the political atmosphere in the region has reached fever pitch, with all major parties intensifying their campaigns to connect with voters. On Tuesday, Chief Executive Member (CEM) of Bodoland Territorial Region and UPPL President Pramod Boro spearheaded a series of election rallies at Nichima Constituency, extending full support to party candidate Ranjit Basumatary and Shyamtgaibari for Chirang Constituency candidate, Saikhong Basumatary.

The rallies saw huge gatherings, with people turning out in large numbers to listen to the party's vision for the Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR). Addressing the crowd, Pramod Boro expressed his heartfelt gratitude to the people of Nichima and Chirang Constituencies for the overwhelming support and blessings they have showered on the UPPL and its candidates throughout the campaign trail. Highlighting the UPPL's commitment to peace, development, and good governance, the CEM urged voters to give a decisive mandate to the party so that its ongoing developmental initiatives could be taken to the next level. He said that the (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

GUWAHATI, Sept 16: The 4th Northeast Export Promotional Meet held here on Tuesday brought together policymakers, diplomats, officials, industry leaders and entrepreneurs from across the region, along with business delegations from neighbouring countries. The event was organised by the Indian Chamber of Commerce (ICC), in association with the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) and the office of the Director General of

Foreign Trade (DGFT), a statement said. ICC's Northeast regional director, Ishantor Sobhapandit, underlined the importance of such forums in creating meaningful dialogue and trade linkages. He highlighted the strategic significance of the Northeast as a vital connector with Southeast Asian countries. The inaugural session was attended by Namgay Pelden, vice-

consul of Bhutan to Guwahati, Zikrul Hasan Fahad, assistant high commissioner of Bangladesh, Satinder Kumar Bhalla, secretary, North Eastern Council, and senior officials from the Assam government and other stakeholder institutions. MEA joint secretary (states division), A Ajay Kumar, emphasised the central government's commitment to strengthening connectivity, trade facilitation and market access (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)




SUSRUSHA SETU

SCREENING, DIAGNOSIS & TREATMENT

MEGA HEALTH CAMP IN EACH LAC

Starting from 18 September 2025

Highlights

- ◆ Focus on children below 18 years
- ◆ Screening for 50 plus diseases – heart, neurological, genetic, liver, kidney, eye and ear conditions, etc.
- ◆ Treatment & follow-up in next phase
- ◆ Referral to Tertiary and Super Speciality Hospitals for further free treatment (case basis)



Dr Himanta Biswa Sarma
Chief Minister, Assam

Timeline

Phase - 1 (September & October 2025): Identification of health conditions/diseases in each LAC

Phase - 2 (November 2025): Confirmation of health conditions/diseases in Special Camps at Medical College & Hospitals

Phase - 3 (December 2025 onwards): Further treatment and other interventions

Appeal

- ◆ All parents, guardians, family members and teachers are requested to bring their children to the Mega Health Camp for screening
- ◆ If you know of any children who need special care, kindly inform Rashtriya Bal Swasthya Karyakram (RBSK) Team/Block-level health official/ANM/ASHA/Anganwadi worker
- ◆ Your co-operation will go a long way towards complementing our efforts in building a Healthier Assam

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DIPR/D/HLT/168/17-Sep-25

Stock markets rebound as US, India begin trade talks; Sensex jumps 595 pts

MUMBAI, Sept 16: Stock markets rebounded on Tuesday with the benchmark Sensex climbing nearly 595 points on renewed optimism over the resumption of the India-US trade talks.

The 30-share BSE Sensex jumped 594.95 points or 0.73 per cent to settle at 82,380.69 following buying in auto and IT shares. During the day, it surged 657.74 points or 0.80 per cent to 82,443.48.

The 50-share NSE Nifty climbed 169.90 points or 0.68 per cent to 25,239.10.

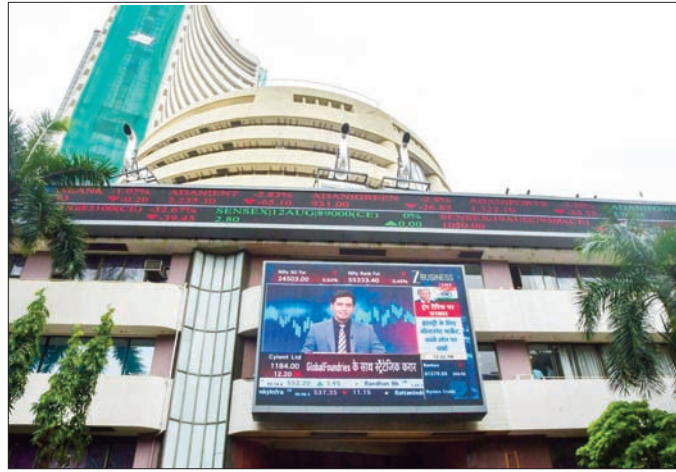
Chief negotiators of India and the US have commenced talks on the proposed trade agreement to iron out issues in the wake of steep tariffs that have created uncertainties for exporters, an official said on Tuesday.

A rally in Asian and US peers also instilled optimism in the domestic stock market ahead of this week's US Federal Reserve policy meeting.

Among Sensex firms, Kotak Mahindra Bank rose the most by 2.55 per cent. Larsen & Toubro, Mahindra & Mahindra, Maruti, Bharti Airtel and Tata Steel were also among the major gainers.

Asian Paints and Bajaj Finance closed with losses.

"The domestic market sus-



tained its recovery trend, supported by favourable global cues on expectations of a 25 bps rate cut in the forthcoming US Fed policy decision and renewed optimism surrounding the resumed India-US trade negotiations.

"Auto and consumer durable stocks outperformed, ahead of the rollout of new GST rates and festive-driven demand expectations," Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Investments Limited, said.

The BSE smallcap gauge climbed 0.66 per cent and midcap index went up by 0.62 per cent.

Among sectoral indices, serv-

ices jumped the most by 1.67 per cent, followed by telecommunication (1.50 per cent), auto (1.43 per cent), teck (1.05 per cent), industrials (1.05 per cent), realty (1.02 per cent), consumer discretionary (0.96 per cent) and commodities (0.90 per cent).

FMCG emerged as the only laggard.

"The rally was driven by strong gains in auto, realty, and financial stocks, as optimism grew around ongoing India-US trade talks and expectations of a US Federal Reserve rate cut later this week," Gaurav Garg, Research Analyst, Lemnank Markets Desk, said.

Global cues also remained supportive, with investors betting on a 25-basis-point cut by the Fed in its policy meeting concluding September 17, he added.

"Indian benchmark indices on Tuesday session traded higher in line with Asian peers, as investors took comfort from progress in US trade talks. Market participants now await the US Federal Reserve's policy decision for further cues," according to Bajaj Broking Research.

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

Markets in Europe were trading lower. US markets ended higher on Monday.

Global oil benchmark Brent crude declined 0.55 per cent to USD 67.07 a barrel.

Foreign institutional investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth ₹ 1,268.59 crore on Monday, according to exchange data.

On Monday, the Sensex declined by 118.96 points or 0.15 per cent to settle at 81,785.74 after five days of rally. The Nifty settled lower by 44.80 points or 0.18 per cent to 25,069.20, halting its eight-day uptrend. (PTI)

Rupee rises 7 paise against US dollar

MUMBAI, Sept 16: The rupee appreciated 7 paise to close at 88.09 against the US dollar on Tuesday, tracking US-India talks on the proposed trade agreement to iron out issues in the wake of steep Trump Tariffs.

Forex traders said the rupee strengthened on positive domestic markets and a weak greenback, which is trading at a two-month low ahead of the two-day FOMC meeting commencing Tuesday and disappointing US economic data.

At the interbank foreign exchange, the rupee opened at 88.05, then touched an intraday low of 88.16 and a high of 88.01 against the greenback. The domestic unit closed at 88.09, a gain of 7 paise

over its previous close.

On Monday, the rupee settled 10 paise higher at 88.16 against the US dollar.

"The rupee saw its third consecutive day of appreciation, as the dollar index fell to a two-and-a-half-month low. The decline in the greenback was fuelled by expectations that the US Federal Reserve would cut interest rates.

"The local currency was also bolstered by a rebound in domestic equities, driven by optimism for a positive outcome in US-India trade negotiations," Dilip Parmar - Senior Research Analyst, HDFC Securities, said.

Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's

strength against a basket of six currencies, fell 0.26 per cent to 97.04.

Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, was trading 0.28 per cent lower at USD 67.25 per barrel in futures trade.

On the domestic equity market front, the Sensex jumped 594.95 points to settle at 82,380.69, while the Nifty surged 169.90 points to 25,239.10.

"We expect the rupee to remain strong on broad weakness in the US Dollar amid disappointing economic data coming from the US and weak labour market, which has raised expectations of a rate cut by the Fed," said Anuj Choudhary, Research Analyst, Currency and Commodities, Mirae Asset

NRL holds 32nd AGM, highlights landmark projects and robust performance

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Sept 16: Numaligarh Refinery Limited (NRL) convened its 32nd Annual General Meeting (AGM) on Tuesday at the NRL Centre in Guwahati under the chairmanship of Dr Ranjit Rath.

The meeting was attended by shareholders, company directors, senior management, and media representatives, who engaged with the Chairman on NRL's performance, strategic initiatives, and future growth plans.

According to an official statement from NRL, Dr Rath highlighted the inauguration of the world's first bamboo-based 2G Bio-Ethanol Plant at Numaligarh by the Prime Minister on September 14, in the presence of the chief minister of Assam, the Union Ministers for Ports, Shipping & Inland Waterways, and Petroleum & Natural Gas, along with senior Central and State Government officials.

He noted that the commissioning of this pioneering project aligns with the Government of India's import substitution and 'Make in India' initiatives, demonstrating NRL's leading role in the bio-energy transition and value addition to local resources.

The Prime Minister also laid the foundation stone for a 360 KTPA polypropylene plant at Numaligarh, with a project cost exceeding ₹ 7,000 crore.

Once operational, the plant is expected to raise NRL's Petrochemical Intensity Index by 4.0, further enhancing its petrochemical portfolio.

Dr Rath detailed NRL's financial performance for FY 2024-25, noting that the company's net worth reached ₹ 16,260 crore as on March 31, 2025, marking a 25% increase over the previous year.

Revenue from operations rose to ₹ 25,147 crore from ₹ 23,731 crore, reflecting a 6% growth despite margin pressures. Profit before tax (PBT) and profit after tax (PAT) were recorded at ₹ 2,215 crore and ₹ 1,608 crore respectively, compared to ₹ 2,912 crore and ₹ 2,160 crore in the previous year.

The moderation in profitability was attributed to the narrowing spread between product and crude oil prices, which reduced the Gross Refining Margin (GRM) from \$13.17 per barrel to \$5.14 per barrel. Capital expenditure for the year reached a record ₹ 9,038 crore.

Operationally, NRL's refinery achieved over 100% capacity utilisation, processing 3,066 TMT of crude oil—its second time in the past three years.



Domestic crude receipts from OIL and ONGC reached 3,033 TMT, supplemented by 22 TMT of imported crude. Distillate yield stood at 86.7%, the highest among PSU refineries in the country.

Diesel production during the year was 2,044 TMT, while MS and wax production reached historical highs at 725 TMT and 50 TMT respectively.

The LPG bottling plant adjacent to the refinery produced 64 TMT of packed LPG, exceeding its rated capacity. On the marketing front, NRL recorded its highest-ever sales volume at 3,125 TMT, surpassing the previous record of 3,019 TMT in 2022-23.

Sales of MS, wax, and sulphur reached 707 TMT, 49 TMT, and 6 TMT respectively, while HSD sales totaled 2,030 TMT. RPC and CPC sales stood at 44 TMT and 57 TMT respectively.

Project implementation milestones include the Refinery Expansion Project achieving 81% overall progress and 78% financial progress, reflecting NRL's commitment to Government targets.

On the corporate social responsibility (CSR) front, over ₹ 80 crore were spent on community welfare initiatives. The Vivekananda Kendra NRL (VKNRL) Hospital and VKNRL School of Nursing continued to provide medical and healthcare services to surrounding communities.

Dr Rath also highlighted NRL's adoption of digital innovations, including AI-powered Smart Truck Parking, Digital Twin applications, and 5G-enabled business processes, setting benchmarks in the refining sector.

He reaffirmed NRL's vision to contribute to India's energy security with the enhanced 9 MMTPA refinery capacity, while supporting Atmanirbhar Bharat, Net Zero commitments, and local community development.

Contd. from Page 1...

Stringent action against

of Police (Vigilance Cell) Rosie Kalita described the recovery as the largest cash seizure ever made by the cell. Investigators also traced ownership of three flats in Guwahati linked to the officer, apart from other properties under scrutiny. Several individuals suspected of facilitating the deals are currently being questioned.

CM Sarma said that Borah had come under the scanner around six months ago, after allegedly authorising an illegal land transfer while serving in Barpeta district. Following the controversy, she was transferred to Goraimari in Kamrup, where surveillance against her continued.

The Chief Minister urged people to remain alert against corruption and report instances of bribery.

"I request citizens to be vigilant and immediately inform us if any official seeks illegal gratification," he said. Sarma reiterated his government's commitment to fighting corruption, stressing that investigations against Borah and her associates would be pursued with complete transparency to uphold accountability within the administration. Borah's arrest has created ripples within the state bureaucracy, with many insiders admitting it was one of the biggest corruption scandals to have surfaced in recent years.

50 pc tariff unfair

meeting. The day-long talks are important as the US has imposed a steep 50 per cent tariff on Indian goods. This was the first visit by a high-ranking US trade official after the imposition of a 25 per cent tariff and an additional 25 per cent penalty on Indian goods entering the American market for buying Russian crude oil.

India has earlier described the steep 50 per cent tariff as unfair and unreasonable. In February, the leaders of the two countries directed officials to negotiate a proposed Bilateral Trade Agreement (BTA). It was planned to conclude the first tranche of the pact by the fall of 2025. So far, five rounds of negotiations have been held, and the talks for the sixth round, which were scheduled from August 25-29, were postponed following the imposition of the high import duties. A senior commerce ministry official had said this meeting should not be viewed as the 6th round of negotiations, but a precursor to it. The meeting took place within days, Prime Minister Narendra Modi warmly reacting to US President Donald Trump's positive assessment of trade ties between the two countries.

India has defended purchasing Russian crude oil, saying it was driven by national interest and market dynamics. The government has repeatedly emphasised that it will protect the interests of its farmers, dairy producers, and MSMEs in all trade deals. (PTI)

NE trade meet brings

for the Northeast as a vital part of India's Act East Policy. DGFT's Ajay Kumar Srivastava highlighted its role in facilitating export promotion schemes, simplifying trade procedures and supporting exporters in exploring new markets. The meet also featured a trade and export awareness session which focused on export facilitation, financing, logistics and unlocking opportunities in regional and international markets.

A buyer-seller meet was also held as part of the event. Indian exporters from different states, including all eight states of the Northeast, held B2B interactions with buyers from Thailand, Bhutan, Nepal and Bangladesh, the statement added. (PTI)

Pramod Boro leads

UPPL party is getting majority seats in the BTC elections, and accordingly people cutting across the communities are coming forward to extend support to the UPPL party. He said that the government of BTR is committed to work for all round development of the citizens. "A massive turnout at Nagalbhangha as people from every community of 16 No. Nichima and Shyamgaibari of Chirang constituency came out in huge numbers to show their support for UPPL. With such overwhelming love and blessings from the People, nothing can stop UPPL's march to victory", CEM Boro added.

ASDC says demand for

(CEM) of the Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC), he submitted a memorandum on the Autonomous State to Advani. A second memorandum was submitted in New Delhi to the Prime Minister and Advani.

Advani had replied that the matter was not practicable, citing reasons such as the closure of autonomous states after Meghalaya's creation, the small area of the district, low population, and lack of revenue sources.

Advani said ASDC leaders later convinced Advani that Karbi Anglong has sufficient revenue sources compared to states like Mizoram and Tripura, a population larger than Mizoram, and an area bigger than Tripura.

Advani was reportedly convinced and had agreed to consider granting autonomous states and plans for creating smaller states. During the discussions, the Central government offered the ASDC "maximum autonomy." However, Boro said, Jayanta Rongpi, then MP, emphasised signing the MoU rather than accepting the "maximum autonomy" offered by the government. "The Union government openly said that the powers in the MoU would not be enough and that it would be better to accept maximum autonomy. But it was Dr. Rongpi who insisted on signing the MoU," Boro said. He further alleged that the Congress, seeking political mileage, has misrepresented the matter and is spreading incorrect interpretations among the masses.

Coal India declared preferred bidder for Ontillu-Chandragiri REE block

KOLKATA, Sept 16: Coal India Ltd (CIL) on Tuesday said it has been declared the preferred bidder for the Ontillu-Chandragiri Rare Earth Element (REE) exploration block by the Ministry of Mines, marking a key step in the Maharatna company's diversification into critical minerals.

The block in Andhra Pradesh, spread over 209.62 sq km, was awarded pursuant to a tender issued by the Ministry on March 30, the company said in a filing to the stock exchanges.

The exploration licence deed is to be executed within one year of issuance of the Letter of Intent by the state government.

CIL had earlier secured a significant graphite and vanadium block in the fifth round of critical mineral auctions held in May.

"These initiatives mark CIL's entry into the exploration of rare earth and critical minerals, which are vital for clean energy technologies and advanced manufacturing," a senior company official said.

Coal India, primarily the world's largest coal producer, has been seeking to diversify beyond fossil fuels in line with India's strategy to build self-reliance in critical and rare earth elements needed for electric mobility, renewable energy and defence applications. (PTI)

NAME CORRECTION

I, Swarup Sarkar son of Late. Sadhan Sarkar resident of Dharamnala, Diphu would like to state that my name was wrongly written as Sawrup Sarkar in my Document. My correct name is Swarup Sarkar.

Gold futures hits fresh peak on Fed rate-cut hopes, weak dollar

NEW DELHI, Sept 16: Gold prices rose ₹ 384 to touch a record of ₹ 1,10,563 per 10 grams in the domestic futures market on Tuesday, buoyed by strong global cues and expectations of a rate cut by the Federal Reserve that spurred safe-haven demand.

On the Multi Commodity Exchange (MCX), gold futures for October delivery climbed ₹ 384 or 0.34 per cent to touch a record ₹ 1,10,563 per 10 grams. The contract had touched a previous high of ₹ 1,10,330 in the last session.

Similarly, the December contract advanced by ₹ 418 or 0.37 per cent to hit a fresh peak of ₹ 1,11,655 per 10 grams against the earlier high of ₹ 1,11,350.

"Gold prices scaled a record peak, supported by a weaker dollar and US Treasury bond yields ahead of the Federal Reserve's policy meeting, where the central bank is widely expected to cut borrowing rates," Manav Modi, Research Analyst for Precious Metals at Motilal Oswal Financial Services, said.

The dollar index, which tracks the greenback against a basket of six currencies, slipped 0.34 per cent to 96.97, further aiding bullion prices.

"Market participants are awaiting Fed Chair Jerome Powell's statement and projections this week, with a 25 basis points rate cut largely priced in after a long pause. US President Donald Trump called for Fed Chair Powell to enact a 'bigger' cut to benchmark interest rates via a social media post," Modi added.

In the overseas markets, gold futures jumped to a record USD 3,736.97 per ounce. The momentum was also fuelled by geopolitical tensions in the Middle East and Ukraine. Adding to the uncertainty, a US appeals court rejected an attempt by President Trump to remove Fed Governor Lisa Cook, a move seen as challenging the central bank's independence.

Meanwhile, US Treasury Secretary Scott said the government would not impose additional tariffs on Chinese goods to encourage China to halt purchases of Russian oil unless European countries hit China and India with steep duties of their own.

"Investors will closely track US retail sales and industrial output data for further cues on the Fed's monetary stance and the near-term direction of gold," Modi added. (PTI)

Mother Dairy to pass on GST cut benefits to consumers from Sept 22

NEW DELHI, Sept 16: Mother Dairy on Tuesday announced it will pass on GST reduction benefits to consumers, making most of its products, including value-added dairy items and processed foods under the Safal brand, cheaper from September 22.

The wholly-owned subsidiary of National Dairy Development Board (NDDB) clarified that retail prices of pouch milk -- everyday poly pack milk, including full cream, toned and cow milk -- will remain unchanged as these have always been GST-exempt.

Following the GST revisions, UHT milk (tetra pack) and paneer will attract zero GST instead of the earlier 5 per cent, while other dairy products and value-added horticultural items will see rates

drop from 12 per cent to 5 per cent.

The price reductions include toned tetra pack UH milk (1 litre) coming down from Rs 77 to ₹ 75, double toned UHT milk (450 ml) from ₹ 33 to ₹ 32, paneer (200 gm) from ₹ 95 to ₹ 92, ghee carton pack (1 litre) from ₹ 675 to ₹ 645, and butter (100 gm) from ₹ 62 to ₹ 58.

Other products like Cassatta ice cream, pickles, tomato puree and Safal frozen French fries will also become cheaper.

"The recent GST reduction across a wide range of dairy and processed food products represents a progressive step that will significantly boost consumption and accelerate the adoption of safe, high-quality packaged offer-

ings," Mother Dairy Managing Director Manish Bandlish said in a statement.

With the tax revision, Mother Dairy's entire portfolio now falls under either the exempted/nil category or the lowest 5 per cent slab. As part of the GST Council's reform process, only 5 and 18 per cent slabs will remain instead of the earlier four, benefiting several items with reduced rates effective September 22.

Bandlish expressed confidence that the measure would positively impact the entire value chain, with farmers benefiting from increased demand for packaged food products and consumers gaining from affordable pricing and greater access to packaged dairy and processed foods. (PTI)

Airtel anti-fraud cut losses by nearly 70%: Data

'This validates our efforts and encourages us to continue innovating to keep our networks free of spam and scams'

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Sept 16: Bharti Airtel has reported a sharp decline in cybercrime complaints following the rollout of its AI-powered anti-fraud initiatives.

Data from the Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (I4C), Ministry of Home Affairs, shows financial losses on Airtel's network dropped by 68.7%, while overall cybercrime incidents fell 14.3% between September 2024 and June 2025.

Gopal Vittal, Vice Chairman and MD of Airtel, said the company's AI solutions have identified over 48.3 billion spam calls and blocked 3.2 lakh fraudulent links in the past year.

"This validates our efforts and encourages us to continue innovating to keep our networks free of spam and scams," he added.

Airtel had launched India's first network-based AI-powered Spam Detection Solution in September 2024 and, in May 2025, introduced a real-time solution to detect and block malicious links.

Both services are auto-enabled for all Airtel mobile and broadband customers at no extra cost.

The I4C findings highlight the effectiveness of Airtel's proactive measures in safeguarding users and demonstrate the potential of AI-driven solutions in combating cybercrime.

No. 619078/SSA-15015/12/2025 PUBLIC NOTICE Date : 16.09.2025
In pursuant to the advertisement published vide SSA-38029/3/2024-IED-SSA/1/783384/2024, it is for general information to all concerned that the written examination for the post of Additional Resource Person (ARP) and Assistant Additional Resource Person (AARP) under Samagra Shiksha Axom will be held as mentioned below :

Sl.No	Name of the post	Date of written examination	Time of written examination	Venue
1	Additional Resource Person (ARP)	20.09.2025	9.00 am	Composite Regional Centre (CRC), GMCH Campus, Hospital Road, Bhangagarh, Guwahati-32
2	Assistant Additional Resource Person (AARP)			

The list of short-listed candidates is uploaded in the official website of Samagra Shiksha Axom at <https://ssa.assam.gov.in>

The admit card will be available in the official website (<https://ssa.assam.gov.in>)

w.e.f. 18.9.2025. The candidates are requested to download their admit card from the website of Samagra Shiksha (<https://ssa.assam.gov.in>) and reach the above said venue by 8.00 am on the day of written test along with a copy of admit card.



Sd/-Mission Director,
Samagra Shiksha Axom
Kahilipara, Guwahati-19

AASU demands removal of fundamentalists from state

HT Correspondent
NAGAON, Sept 16: The Nagaon District unit of the All Assam Students' Union (AASU) staged a protest in Nagaon on Tuesday, demanding the immediate removal of fundamentalists and Bangladeshis from Assam.

The protesters gathered near the office of the Nagaon District Commissioner, raising slogans and urging the government to take action.

During the protest, AASU raised several demands, including the removal of fundamentalists and Bangladeshis from Assam, exclusion of the state from the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), implementation of the Assam Accord within a specific timeframe, sealing of the India-Bangladesh border, and implementation of the recommendations of the Biplob Kumar Sarma Committee based on Clause 6 of the Assam Accord.

The protesters shouted slogans and called for swift action from the government to address the issues at the earliest.

Police seize capsules, two arrested

HT Correspondent
BOKAJAN, Sept 16: On the night of September 15 at around 10 pm, the Karbi Anglong police intercepted a car on the Four Lane road near the Forest Beat office at 6th Mile. Upon searching the vehicle bearing registration number NL 07 CB 0690, the police recovered 49 Tramadol capsules and 82 Sam-plex+ capsules weighing a total of 70,320 grams.

The drugs were concealed at the rear of the passenger seat.

In this connection, two persons have been apprehended. They have been identified as Habij Uddin, resident of Lengribori, Saharia Gaon, Morigaon, and Radheshyam Kumar, resident of Dubarbanna, Muzaffarpur, Bihar. It may be mentioned that Karbi Anglong is a known route for drug smuggling and gun running extending towards the notorious Golden Triangle. The ongoing civil war in unstable Myanmar has contributed to the availability of illegal small arms.

Modern yoga training centre inaugurated

HT Correspondent
JORHAT, Sept 16: A modern yoga training centre was formally inaugurated at the P R Yoga Complex on Old Circuit House Road in Jorhat town on Tuesday.

The inauguration ceremony was led by Yogacharya Subhashish Kar, founder president of the Indian Yoga Culture and Yoga Therapy Centre and Yoga Consultant to the Government of Assam.

In his address, Yogacharya Kar underlined the importance of yoga, describing it as a complete spiritual science that creates synergy between the mind and body. He emphasised that yoga is an art that blends a healthy body and science, playing a vital role in enhancing physical and mental well-being.

The centre, established under the aegis of the P R Yoga Complex, will offer yoga training and therapy sessions.

Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan organises two-day district level SMC RP training in Sonitpur

MLA urges SMC Members to take ownership of school development during two-day training

HT Correspondent
TEZPUR, Sept 16: A two-day District Level School Management Committee (SMC) Resource Person Training, organised by the Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan Mission, Sonitpur district, concluded on Tuesday. The training, which began on Monday, was held at three venues in Tezpur — PM Shri Tezpur Collegiate HSS, Tezpur Govt Boys' HSS, and Rashtrabhasha Vidyalaya — covering four educational blocks of Sonitpur district with the participation of 238 members, including CRCCs of all clusters and selected teachers.

On the first day, Tezpur MLA Prithiraj Rabha attended the training at Tezpur Govt Boys' HSS and inspired the participants with his address.

He highlighted that active and responsible SMCs are the backbone of community participation in schools, sharing examples of how collective effort can transform the education scenario. He urged SMC members to take ownership of school development, monitor student progress, and create a supportive learning environment.

The training sessions were led by Resource Persons (RPs) drawn from BRPs and CRCCs across the district. They shared inputs

AAI Dibrugarh Airport to celebrate Yatri Seva Diwas today

Passengers to enjoy cultural shows and special activities at airport

HT Correspondent
DIBRUGARH, Sept 16: The Airports Authority of India (AAI), Dibrugarh Airport, will celebrate Yatri Seva Diwas on September 17, 2025 as part of its ongoing commitment to passenger satisfaction and community engagement.

The event aims to welcome passengers and create an interactive and memorable experience that reflects AAI's service-oriented approach.

The celebrations will begin with a warm welcoming ceremony, where passengers will be greeted with tika and offered the opportunity to click photographs at specially designed standees and selfie booths inside the terminal.

As part of its focus on environmental responsibility, the airport will organise a plantation drive to promote a greener future.

Complimentary health check-up



kiosks will be set up, allowing passengers and airport staff to avail themselves of free medical services.

To showcase the rich cultural heritage of Assam, traditional dance performances will be staged, creating a festive atmosphere throughout the day.

The MIHY team will document passenger flow and airport activities through creative video reels to engage travelers and highlight the air-

port experience.

Interactive activities such as quiz and painting competitions will also be organised for child passengers, ensuring that families traveling through the airport have a fun and engaging experience.

As a mark of appreciation, chocolates and special gifts will be distributed to participating children and cultural performers.

Commenting on the occasion, the Airport Director of Dibrugarh Airport said, "Yatri Seva Diwas is more than just a celebration—it is an opportunity for us to connect with passengers, enhance their travel experience, and reaffirm AAI's focus on service with care."

The celebrations are expected to create a lively and festive atmosphere at Dibrugarh Airport, making travel a delightful experience for passengers on this special day.

Passenger bus catches fire in Kokrajhar

HT Correspondent
KOKRAJHAR, Sept 16: In a shocking incident, a passenger bus caught fire late on Sunday night in Kokrajhar district.

The incident took place at Patgaon along the National Highway at around 12:40 am, when the bus was engulfed in flames due to a mechanical fault.

Hitesh Basumatary, Officer of Police, Kokrajhar, said that the passenger

bus bearing registration number AR01M-0924, which was traveling from Siliguri towards Tezpur, suddenly went up in flames.

He expressed gratitude to the brave and immediate efforts of the Officer-in-Charge of Patgaon Police Station, as all passengers were successfully evacuated from the bus.

There were 22 passengers onboard, and fortunately, none of them were

harmed. Later, the Kokrajhar Fire & Emergency Services managed to bring the fire under control.

The timely action of Sub-Inspector Amirul Hussain, Sub-Inspector Ashim Roy, and the entire staff of Patgaon Police Outpost saved the lives of the passengers.

Local people have highly praised the police for the courageous rescue effort, Basumatary added.

Fraud accused attempts suicide at Dibrugarh police outpost

HT Correspondent
DIBRUGARH, Sept 16: In a shocking incident related to trading fraud, an individual, unable to return money he had allegedly misappropriated, injured himself by cutting his neck at the Barbari Police Outpost in Dibrugarh.

The accused has been identified as Prashant Paul, a resident of Odisha, who is a suspect in a case registered at the Cuttack police station in January this year.

Prashant initially went into hiding in Kolkata and later in Guwahati before settling in Dibrugarh's Paltan Bazaar, where he had been staying at a lodge for the past three months.

He posed as an employee of Jio services to conceal his identity.

According to allegations, he had opened a fraudulent trading app and collected money from multiple individuals with promises of doubling their investments but was unable to return the funds.

With the assistance of the Barbari Police, a team from Odisha Police arrested him from the lodge on Monday.

While being taken to the police outpost, Prashant, claiming that he could not repay the money, broke a glass and cut his own neck. He is currently undergoing treatment at the casualty department of Assam Medical College and Hospital.

Dr Sukha Baruah Memorial Lecture delivered

HT Correspondent
SIVASAGAR, Sept 16: The 2nd Dr Sukha Baruah Memorial Lecture was delivered by Dr Lakhpriya Gogoi, Assistant Professor, Department of English, Dibrugarh University, at Moran Mohila Mahavidyalay on Tuesday. The event was attended by a large gathering of academicians, college teachers, leading citizens and students.

Dr Sukha Baruah, founder principal of Moran Mohila Mahavidyalay, was widely revered for her amiable personality and erudition.

Speaking on the theme "Women's Writings of Assamese Autobiographies: A Social and Cultural Context," Dr Gogoi traced the evolution of Assamese women's autobiographical writings, beginning with Rajabala Das, founder of Handique Girls' College, whose autobiography was published in 1971.

She explored the shift from earlier works by prominent figures to contemporary narratives by lesser-known women, emphasising the socio-cultural contexts that shaped these writings.

Dr Gogoi also discussed emerging trends in autobiographical writing and how these narratives reflect both collective history and individual identity.

Election observers conduct briefing session in Kokrajhar

HT Correspondent
KOKRAJHAR, Sept 16: Election Observers Anupam Choudhury, ACS, and Md Javed Arman, ACS, of Kokrajhar Sadar sub-division conducted a training-cum-briefing session for Micro Observers and Sector Zonal Officers of their respective constituencies at Kokrajhar Government College on Tuesday.

The session was held in the presence of master trainers.

Anupam Choudhury, ACS, observer for 10-Debagaoan (ST), 11-Baukhungri (ST), and 12-Salakati (ST) constituencies, and Md Javed Arman, ACS, Observer for 7-Fakiragram (Non-ST), 8-Dotma (ST), and 9-Banaragoan (ST) constituencies, jointly led the programme.

The Observers briefed the officials on the do's and don'ts of election duty, covering impartial conduct, vigilance during polling and adherence to procedures.

They emphasised the importance of carrying out responsibilities with fairness and integrity to ensure free, fair and peaceful BTC elections.

APPOINTMENT OF STATION TICKET BOOKING AGENT

Tender Notice No. C-LMG-12-2025; Dated: 05-09-2025

Applications are invited by the undersigned for the following work:

Name of the work: Working as Station Ticket Booking Agent (STBA) for issue of unreserved tickets to passengers at "NSG-6" category stations over Lumding Division. **Name of the stations:** Agthori (AGT), Aujuri (AJRE), Bhilgaon (BHG), Barahu (BRHU), Bandarkhal (BKK), Bishramganj (BHRM), Baraigram (BRGM), Dharamtul (DML), Damchaha (DCA), Ditokcherra (DTC), Hawaipur (HWX), Hatikhali (HTL), Hailakandi (HKD), Jugijan (JGJN), Jatingalampur (JGLP), Jamuguri (JMI), Kamrupkhetri (KKET), New Harangajao (NHGJ), Panchgram (PNGM), Rangapahar (RXR) & Thakurkuchi (TKC). **Earnest Money:** ₹2,000/-

Application form can be obtained from the office of the Divisional Railway Manager (Commercial), D.R.M. Building, Lumding, Dist.-Hojai, PIN-782447 on any working day from 10.00 hrs. to 15.00 hrs. from 11-09-2025 to 15-10-2025. **Application box will be available for dropping of applications** at the Chamber of Asstt. Commercial Manager at office of Divisional Railway Manager (Commercial), Lumding, Dist.-Hojai, PIN-782447 from 10.00 hrs. of 11-09-2025 to 15.00 hrs. of 16-10-2025. **Application box will be opened at 16.00 hrs. on 16-10-2025** in the office of Divisional Railway Manager (Commercial), Lumding, Dist.-Hojai, PIN-782447. Notification had already been uploaded on the Railway website at www.nfr.indianrailways.gov.in on 05-09-2025.

Divisional Railway Manager (Commercial), Lumding

NORTHEAST FRONTIER RAILWAY

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KARBI ANGLONG AUTONOMOUS COUNCIL
DEPARTMENT OF S.E. WORKS,
KAAC :: SECRETARIAT
D I P H U - 782460

No. KAAC/HRN/S.E.W-138(Pt)/2025-26/ Dtd. / /2025

TENDER NOTICE

Sealed tender affixing non-refundable KAAC court fee stamp (receipt) Rs. 10.00 (Rupees Ten) only eventually to be drawn up in form are hereby invited from KAAC registered contractor / reputed firms of works department and will be received by the undersigned up to **4.P.M. on 04/10/2025** and will be opened on the same date.

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

Sl. No.	Name of Works	Tender Amount (Rs.)	A/A Amount (Rs.)	Earnest money	Time allowed for completion
1.	Construction of Paver block Road from Chengbong Tiniali to Men Rongpi Arong along with 2 nos RCC H.P. Culvert	Rs. 1,25,04,000/-	Rs. 1,25,04,000/-	ST/SC/OBC=1% General =2%	120 days
2.	Construction of Sand gravalling Road from Chengbong to Mekve Hidi LPs via Nihang Tokbi Village along with 4 nos RCC H.P. Culvert	Rs. 1,04,30,000/-	Rs. 1,04,30,000/-	ST/SC/OBC=1% General =2%	120 days

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

Terms & Condition

N.B.

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

Sd/-
 Superintending Engineer (S.E.), Works
 Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council,
D I P H U

Memo No. KAAC/HRN/S.E.-W-138 (Pt)/2025-26/224 (A) Dtd. 16/09/2025

QUOTE OF THE DAY

More business is lost every year through neglect than through any other cause. -Rose Kennedy

SC call on firecracker policy

Diwali 2025, may be a little different. Supreme Court of India has just called for pan-India policy on firecrackers ban, while assuring that it would hear the livelihood concerns also on the next hearing on September 22. The apex court has also issued directions to the authorities to maintain the status quo on ban and also asked the Centre, in consultation with the National Environmental Engineering Research Institute (NEERI), to submit status report. While call of the Supreme Court is welcome, there is a clear need of balancing the ban on crackers and the livelihood concerns. The bench headed by Chief Justice of India (CJI) B R Gavai, while hearing on September 12, 2025, a batch of petitions filed by firecracker manufacturers, who objected to the year-long ban applicable to the sale and manufacture of firecrackers in Delhi-NCR, suggested a nationwide ban on firecrackers and not just the NCR. "If firecrackers are to be banned, they should be banned throughout the country," CJI said. Issuing notice on the applications, the bench, also comprising Justice K Vinod Chandran, said, "If citizens in NCR are entitled to pollution-free air, why not so for people in other cities." Then, there was the issue of the livelihood of several families which is dependent on this industry, the petitioners have said. It was mentioned in the court that on the last order of the Supreme Court on April 3, the top court has refused to alter its ban, and even the green cracker formulations prepared by them have not been considered by the Centre along with the expert body NEERI.

The petitioner firecracker traders, the Association of Firework Traders, and Indic Collective and Haryana Firework Manufacturers, had pointed out that due to the order passed by the top court, their licenses are revoked even though it is valid till 2027-28. It should be noted that during the last Diwali 2024, several states of the country had banned crackers, which included not only Delhi-NCR, but also Bihar, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Punjab, Haryana, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, and West-Bengal. Bans were imposed in several cities with different specifications of firecrackers. Nevertheless, balancing livelihood and ban will not be easy task. Firecrackers contribute significantly to air and noise pollution, especially around Diwali and other festivals. It is in this context the Supreme Court and various state governments have imposed restrictions, sometimes blanket bans, sometimes partial bans allowing only green crackers. The problem is that the bans are often temporary, sometimes inconsistent, and enforcement mixed leading to confusion among businesses and consumers.

Ban also impacts workers and manufacturers. India's firecracker hub Sivakasi in Tamil Nadu employ around 4 lakh workers directly or indirectly. Workers are largely daily-wagers and have limited alternative employment opportunities. Frequent bans create uncertainties, reduced production, jobs losses and wage cuts.

Vishwakarma Puja: Celebrating divine craftsmanship

Vishwakarma Puja, also known as Vishwakarma Jayanti, is a significant Hindu festival celebrated with great devotion across India, particularly in eastern states like West Bengal, Odisha, Assam, and Jharkhand, as well as in other regions where industrial and artisanal communities thrive. This festival is dedicated to Lord Vishwakarma, revered as the divine architect and craftsman of the gods in Hindu mythology. Celebrated annually, typically in September on the last day of the Bengali month of Bhadra, coinciding with the Kanya Sankranti or the sun's transition into the Virgo zodiac, Vishwakarma Puja holds immense cultural, spiritual, and social importance. It is a day when artisans, craftsmen, mechanics, engineers, and workers honor the tools, machinery, and skills that sustain their livelihoods, acknowledging the divine force behind creation and craftsmanship. The festival not only reflects reverence for Lord Vishwakarma but also underscores the value of labor, creativity, and innovation in society.

In Hindu mythology, Lord Vishwakarma is described as the supreme creator of the universe's architectural marvels. According to ancient texts like the Rigveda and Puranas, he is the divine engineer who crafted celestial cities, weapons, and chariots for the gods. He is credited with constructing the golden city of Lanka for Ravana in the Ramayana, the city of Dwarka for Lord Krishna, and divine artifacts like Indra's thunderbolt (Vajra) and the Pushpaka Vimana, the mythical flying chariot. His unparalleled skill and creativity make him a symbol of craftsmanship, ingenuity, and technical expertise. As the divine patron of architects, engineers, and workers, Vishwakarma is worshipped by those who rely on tools and machinery to earn their living, from factory workers to carpenters, blacksmiths, and modern engineers. This reverence transcends caste, creed, and social boundaries, uniting people in their shared respect for the dignity of labor.

The celebration of Vishwakarma Puja is deeply rooted in the ethos of Indian culture, where work is seen as an act of devotion. On this day, factories, workshops, offices, and construction sites come alive with rituals and festivities. Preparations begin early, with workplaces cleaned and decorated to honor the deity. Tools, machines, and vehicles are washed, adorned with flowers, and marked with sacred symbols like the swastika or vermilion tilak. Idols or images of Lord Vishwakarma, often depicted with tools in his hands and riding an elephant, are installed in temporary altars at workplaces. The puja begins with the chanting of mantras and offerings of flowers, fruits, sweets, and incense to the deity. Priests or senior workers lead the rituals, invoking Vishwakarma's blessings for safety, prosperity, and success in their endeavors. The atmosphere is one of reverence



mixed with camaraderie, as workers come together to celebrate their shared profession and seek divine guidance for their craft.

One of the most striking aspects of Vishwakarma Puja is its emphasis on the sanctity of tools and machinery. In a world increasingly driven by technology, this ritual serves as a reminder of the importance of the instruments that enable human progress. For artisans and workers, their tools are not just inanimate objects but extensions of their skill and creativity. By worshipping these tools, they express gratitude for the means of their livelihood and seek blessings for their continued functionality and safety. In factories, heavy machinery is garlanded, and vehicles like trucks and buses are decorated, symbolizing their integral role in sustaining industries. This practice fosters a sense of respect for one's profession, encouraging workers to take pride in their contributions to society, no matter how small or large.

The festival also holds deeper spiritual significance. Lord Vishwakarma is not only the deity of craftsmanship but also a symbol of creation and order in the universe. His worship inspires devotees to strive for excellence in their work, embodying qualities like precision, dedication, and innovation. The act of performing puja is seen as a way to purify one's mind and workspace, aligning them with the divine principles of creation. For many, it is an opportunity to reflect on the interconnectedness of human effort and divine will, recognizing that their skills are a gift from the divine architect. This spiritual dimension elevates Vishwakarma Puja beyond a mere ritual, making it a celebration of human potential and divine inspiration.

Vishwakarma Puja fosters a sense of community and solidarity among workers. In workplaces across India, the festival is

marked by collective participation, where employees, regardless of their rank, come together to perform the rituals and share prasad, the sanctified food offered to the deity. This shared experience strengthens bonds among coworkers, creating a sense of unity and mutual respect. In many places, the puja is followed by cultural programs, feasts, and even friendly competitions, adding a festive spirit to the occasion. For workers in industrial hubs or construction sites, where long hours and demanding conditions are the norm, the festival provides a much-needed break and an opportunity to celebrate their collective identity.

The festival's relevance extends beyond traditional artisans to modern industries and urban settings. In cities like Kolkata, Mumbai, and Bangalore, Vishwakarma Puja is observed in factories, IT companies, and corporate offices, reflecting its adaptability to contemporary contexts. Engineers and technicians in modern industries worship their computers, machines, and equipment, acknowledging the role of technology in their work. This blending of tradition and modernity highlights the festival's enduring appeal, as it resonates with both rural artisans and urban professionals. In educational institutions like engineering colleges, students and faculty also participate in the puja, seeking Vishwakarma's blessings for academic and professional success.

Vishwakarma Puja also carries an economic and cultural message. By honoring the tools and skills of workers, the festival underscores the importance of craftsmanship in driving economic growth. In India, where small-scale industries and artisanal work form a significant part of the economy, the festival serves as a tribute to the millions of workers who contribute to the nation's progress. It also promotes the preservation of traditional skills in an era dominated by automation and mass production. Many artisans use this occasion

to showcase their work, passing down their knowledge to younger generations and keeping alive the legacy of Indian craftsmanship.

The environmental and social aspects of Vishwakarma Puja are also noteworthy. In recent years, there has been a growing awareness of the need to celebrate the festival in an eco-friendly manner. Devotees are increasingly opting for biodegradable idols and sustainable decorations to minimize environmental impact. Additionally, the festival encourages inclusivity, as it is celebrated by people from diverse backgrounds, including those from marginalized communities who work as laborers or artisans. This inclusivity reflects the democratic spirit of the festival, where the focus is on the universal value of work rather than social hierarchies.

In rural areas, Vishwakarma Puja often takes on a more traditional and localized flavor. Villages with strong artisanal traditions, such as those in Odisha or Assam, organize elaborate rituals and community feasts. In these settings, the festival is not just a religious event but a cultural celebration that reinforces local identity and pride. Folk songs, dances, and storytelling sessions about Lord Vishwakarma's divine creations are common, adding to the festive vibrancy. These traditions help preserve the cultural heritage of rural India, ensuring that the stories and values associated with Vishwakarma continue to inspire future generations.

The festival also has a broader philosophical implication. By worshipping the divine architect, devotees are reminded of the importance of balance and harmony in creation. Vishwakarma's role as the builder of the universe emphasizes the need for thoughtful and sustainable development. In an age of rapid urbanization and technological advancement, this message resonates deeply, urging society to prioritize quality, ethics, and sustainability in all forms of creation. The festival encourages individuals to approach their work with a sense of purpose and responsibility, recognizing that their efforts contribute to the larger fabric of society.

Vishwakarma Puja is a multifaceted festival that celebrates the divine architect, the dignity of labor, and the spirit of creation. It brings together spirituality, community, and professional pride, uniting people across diverse backgrounds in their shared reverence for craftsmanship. By honoring Lord Vishwakarma and the tools of their trade, devotees express gratitude for their skills and seek blessings for a prosperous and safe future. The festival's blend of tradition and modernity, its emphasis on inclusivity and sustainability, and its recognition of the value of work make it a cherished occasion in India's cultural calendar. As the nation continues to evolve, Vishwakarma Puja remains a powerful reminder of the timeless connection between human effort, divine inspiration, and the pursuit of excellence.

The Significance of Shri Shri Vishwakarma Puja

By: Himangshu Ranjan Bhuyan

Shri Shri Vishwakarma Puja is a profoundly significant festival in Hinduism, dedicated to Lord Vishwakarma, the divine architect of the universe, the creator of creation, and the patron deity of craftsmanship. The importance of this puja extends beyond its religious dimensions, encompassing social, cultural, economic, and spiritual aspects. Through this festival, individuals express reverence, dedication, and gratitude toward their work while seeking the blessings of divine creative energy. Vishwakarma Puja fosters a sense of dignity in labor, emphasizes the importance of craftsmanship, and promotes social harmony.

The religious significance of Vishwakarma Puja is deep and multifaceted. According to Hindu mythology, Lord Vishwakarma is the architect of the universe, playing a pivotal role in its creation. Through his creative prowess, divine cities, celestial weapons, and architectural marvels came into existence. Through this puja, devotees pay homage to his divine energy and seek blessings for success, skill, and prosperity in their respective fields of work. This religious belief instills a profound sense of faith in people, affirming that a divine force guides their endeavors. Such faith inspires individuals to perform their duties with sincerity, responsibility, and integrity. The concept of Vishwakarma's creativity encourages innovation and originality, motivating people to view their work as a creative process that brings pride and fulfillment to their lives. This religious significance elevates Vishwakarma Puja beyond a mere ritual, establishing it as an integral part of human life. It fosters a deep sense of responsibility toward one's work, inspiring individuals to pursue their life's goals with purpose. The spiritual dimension of this puja creates a profound connection, bringing peace and stability to devotees' lives.

Vishwakarma Puja is not only a religious observance but also a platform for cultural convergence, where people from various strata of society come together to honor their work. During this festival, artisans, craftsmen, workers, and professionals from diverse fields organize special worship ceremonies at their workplaces. This tradition fosters unity and promotes a spirit of mutual cooperation within society. Devotees worship their tools, machinery, and work-related equipment, expressing

deep respect and dignity for their labor. This practice enhances awareness of the importance of craftsmanship and technical skills, honoring the contributions of artisans and workers in society. The festival's cultural environment, marked by special decorations, the use of ritual items, and collective worship, creates a vibrant cultural atmosphere. This tradition instills pride and reverence for one's culture and promotes cultural awareness among younger generations. The cultural dimension of Vishwakarma Puja fosters unity across different societal classes, contributing to social harmony and preserving cultural continuity as a legacy for future generations.

Through this puja, a sense of unity and harmony emerges among individuals from various professions. Workers, artisans, craftsmen, and others unite to honor their work and cultivate mutual cooperation. Special ceremonies organized at workplaces, where everyone participates equally, help reduce class distinctions within society. Vishwakarma Puja spreads a holistic message about the dignity and importance of labor, inspiring people to perform their duties with sincerity and dedication. Furthermore, it fosters positive relationships between employees and employers, creating a more productive and harmonious work environment. This tradition promotes a deep respect for labor, contributing to social harmony and societal progress. By fostering pride in one's work, the festival encourages meaningful contributions to the overall betterment of society.

During Vishwakarma Puja, special ceremonies are held at workplaces, factories, and industrial establishments, boosting local economic activity. The demand for puja materials, flowers, incense, and other ritual items increases, creating economic opportunities for local businesses. The festival infuses workers with renewed enthusiasm and energy, enhancing workplace productivity. By emphasizing technical skills and craftsmanship, Vishwakarma Puja paves the way for innovation and creativity, inspiring the younger generation in technical and industrial fields and contributing to economic development. The festival's economic dimension reinforces its significance as a vital societal event, promoting economic vitality and overall societal progress.

The spiritual dimension of Vishwakarma Puja deepens its significance. Through this worship, individuals experience a profound spiritual connection with their work,

viewing it as a divine process and performing it with dedication and reverence. Devotees pray for peace, prosperity, and success in their workplaces, and this spiritual connection instills positive energy, empowering them to face life's challenges with courage and strength. The puja encourages people to view their work as a sacred duty, fostering a deep sense of commitment. This spiritual aspect brings peace and fulfillment to individuals' lives, guiding them toward their life's goals and promoting stability and prosperity.

The traditions and rituals associated with Vishwakarma Puja maintain cultural continuity. Special decorations, the use of ritual items, and the chanting of specific mantras bring vibrancy to these traditions, fostering pride and reverence for one's culture. These practices also promote cultural awareness among younger generations, connecting them to their roots and instilling a sense of cultural identity. By fostering unity across societal classes, these traditions contribute to social harmony and establish Vishwakarma Puja as a cultural heritage that preserves societal continuity for future generations.

In the modern era, despite the growing importance of technology and innovation, Vishwakarma Puja retains its relevance. The festival encourages reverence for new technologies and technical skills, fostering respect and gratitude for the tools of modern workplaces. It inspires innovation and creativity, motivating workers to approach their tasks with dedication and responsibility. In a competitive and high-pressure modern society, Vishwakarma Puja brings peace and stability, harmonizing tradition with modernity and adding a new dimension to people's lives.

Ultimately, the significance of Vishwakarma Puja transcends its religious and cultural dimensions, profoundly impacting various aspects of human life. Through this festival, individuals cultivate reverence, dedication, and gratitude toward their work, fostering unity and harmony across societal classes. Its economic, social, and spiritual dimensions contribute meaningfully to societal progress. The profound significance of Vishwakarma Puja establishes it as an indispensable festival, conveying a message of creativity, dedication, and prosperity. By viewing their work as a sacred duty, devotees commit to performing it with sincerity, fostering peace, fulfillment, and societal advancement.

Flood slows down Assam's economic growth

By: Chafikhur Rahman

Every year, the state of Assam in North-east India faces floods. While floods are part of the natural cycle of rivers like the Brahmaputra and Barak, in recent years the scale and destruction have increased. What was once considered a seasonal problem has now turned into a serious economic challenge.

Floods not only damage houses and farmlands but also slow down Assam's economic growth. Agriculture, industries, tourism, and infrastructure are all badly affected. People lose their jobs, government resources are drained, and new development projects are delayed. Experts believe that unless strong flood control measures are taken, Assam will continue to struggle with economic progress.

Impact on Agriculture: Agriculture is the backbone of Assam's economy. More than 70 percent of people in the state depend on farming for their livelihood. Paddy is the main crop, along with vegetables, mustard, jute, and pulses. Assam is also famous for fruits like banana, pineapple, and oranges.

But every year, when floods arrive, vast areas of farmland go under water. Paddy fields are completely submerged, vegetable crops rot, and soil fertility is reduced. The seeds and fertilizers that farmers buy with great difficulty are washed away in just a few days.

This means the production of food grains goes down, and farmers lose their main source of income. According to estimates, thousands of hectares of farmland are damaged every year due to floods. For a poor farmer, this is not just an economic loss, but also a question of survival.

Some farmers take loans for farming, and when floods destroy their crops, they are unable to repay the money. This creates debt problems and mental stress. Many farming families are forced to migrate temporarily to towns in search of work. Thus, floods keep Assam's farmers in a cycle of poverty and insecurity.

Damage to Infrastructure: Floods also destroy infrastructure like roads, bridges, schools, health centres, and government offices. Assam's rural economy depends on good connectivity for transport of farm products. But during floods, roads and bridges are either damaged or completely washed away.

This means farmers cannot take their crops to markets, and essential goods like rice, pulses, and medicines cannot reach villages. School children cannot attend classes, and patients cannot reach hospitals.

Repairing this infrastructure takes a long time and requires huge government spending. Money that could be used for building new roads or starting new industries is instead used for repairing old structures again and again. This slows down development and keeps Assam behind other states.

Effect on Industries: Assam has some important industries like tea, oil, coal, and

small-scale handicrafts. Among these, the tea industry is the pride of Assam, as it contributes greatly to India's export earnings. But floods also affect tea production. Many tea estates are located near rivers, and when floods come, the gardens are damaged. Workers cannot go to pluck tea leaves, and factories stop production.

Apart from tea, floods also affect small-scale industries like weaving, bamboo products, and rice mills. Many of these industries are located in rural areas, and when water enters workshops or godowns, raw materials and finished goods are destroyed.

Workers in these industries are daily wage earners. If the factory is closed due to floods, they lose their income. This increases unemployment and hardship among poor families.

Loss in Tourism: Assam is a beautiful state with rich natural and cultural heritage. Places like Kaziranga National Park, Majuli Island, Sivasagar, and Kamakhya Temple attract thousands of tourists every year. Tourism brings income for hotels, restaurants, transport services, and handicraft sellers.

But during floods, tourism is badly affected. National parks are closed, roads are blocked, and tourists cancel their trips. Local businesses that depend on visitors face heavy losses. Even after the floodwater goes away, damaged roads and poor facilities discourage visitors for many months.

This reduces Assam's earnings from tourism and affects many families who depend on this sector.

Social and Human Costs: Beyond economic losses, floods also bring social and human problems. Every year, thousands of families lose their homes and have to live in relief camps. Children cannot go to school, women face health issues, and elderly people suffer due to lack of medical facilities.

When people lose their homes and land, they also lose their assets and identity. Many villages are eroded by rivers, forcing people to shift to new places. This leads to migration and social instability. The continuous displacement weakens community life and makes long-term development difficult.

Pressure on Government Finances: Floods put huge pressure on Assam's government finances. Every year, large amounts of money are spent on relief, rescue, and repairing damaged infrastructure. Food, medicines, clothes, and shelter materials are provided to flood-affected people. Roads, schools, and health centres are repaired.

While relief work is important, it takes away money from development projects. Funds that could be used for new industries, higher education, or healthcare improvements are diverted to flood repair. This slows down the growth of Assam's economy in the long run.

Why Floods Are Increasing: Experts say that floods in Assam are becoming more dangerous due to several reasons:

1. Deforestation: Cutting of forests in hills and river catchment areas has reduced water

absorption. Rainwater flows quickly into rivers, causing floods.

2. Siltation of rivers: Rivers like Brahmaputra and Barak carry huge amounts of silt. This reduces their depth and increases chances of overflow.

3. Climate change: Unpredictable and heavy rainfall patterns due to climate change make floods worse.

4. Encroachment of wetlands: Natural wetlands and beels that absorb floodwater are being filled up for construction.

5. Poor embankment system: Embankments built along rivers are old and weak. Many are not repaired in time and collapse during heavy floods.

Possible Solutions: To reduce the impact of floods on Assam's economy, experts suggest a long-term strategy:

1. Strong embankments: Build new, modern embankments and repair old ones regularly.

2. River dredging: Remove excess silt from rivers to increase water capacity.

3. Afforestation: Plant trees in hills and river banks to absorb water.

4. Wetland protection: Save natural wetlands, lakes, and beels that act as water storage.

5. Early warning systems: Use technology to give flood warnings to people in advance.

6. Resilient infrastructure: Build flood-resistant houses, roads, and schools.

7. Crop insurance: Provide affordable insurance to farmers to protect them from crop loss.

8. Diversified economy: Promote industries and services so that people do not depend only on farming.

Voices of Experts: Economists say that Assam's economy has strong potential because of its natural resources and hardworking people. But repeated floods push the state back every year. Unless strong and permanent measures are taken, Assam will remain stuck in a cycle of destruction and repair.

Agricultural experts point out that with proper irrigation, flood-resistant seeds, and crop insurance, farmers can reduce their losses. Industrialists say that better infrastructure and flood management will encourage investors to set up new industries in the state. Environmentalists stress that saving forests and wetlands is as important as building embankments.

Conclusion: Floods are natural, but their impact can be reduced with planning and effort. Assam cannot stop floods completely, but it can reduce the damage. For this, the government, experts, and common people must work together.

If long-term measures are taken, Assam can turn floods into an opportunity by using excess water for irrigation and power generation. Otherwise, repeated floods will continue to destroy crops, industries, and dreams of growth.

Assam's economy is like a river itself — full of energy and potential. But if floods are not controlled, this river of opportunity will keep overflowing into losses. For a better future, strong steps are needed today.

Empowering Girls: Assam's child marriage revolution

By: Satyabrata Borah

Assam, a state in northeastern India, has emerged as a beacon of hope in the fight against child marriage, a deeply entrenched social issue that has long plagued the region. Through a combination of stringent legal enforcement, innovative financial schemes, and community-driven awareness campaigns, the state has made remarkable strides in reducing child marriage rates, setting a model for the rest of the country. The Assam government's multifaceted approach, led by Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, has not only resulted in an 81 percent decline in child marriages across 20 of its 35 districts between 2021-22 and 2023-24 but has also ignited a broader conversation about empowering young girls and dismantling systemic inequalities. This transformative journey reflects a blend of policy innovation, grassroots engagement, and unwavering commitment to eradicating a practice rooted in poverty, lack of education, and cultural norms.

The scale of the challenge in Assam cannot be understated. Child marriage has been a persistent issue, particularly in rural areas such as Dhubri, Barpeta, and Morigaon, where poverty and limited access to education have perpetuated the practice. According to the National Family Health Survey (NFHS-5), nearly 30 percent of marriages in these districts involved girls aged 14 to 17. This statistic paints a stark picture of a society where young girls are often denied their fundamental rights to education and health, instead being pushed into early marriage and motherhood. The consequences are dire: child brides face higher risks of domestic violence, health complications, and limited economic opportunities, perpetuating cycles of poverty and gender inequality. Recognizing this, the Assam government has taken bold steps to address the issue head-on, with a clear goal of eliminating child marriage by 2026.

One of the cornerstones of Assam's strategy has been its aggressive legal crackdowns. Since Chief Minister Sarma assumed office in 2021, the state has adopted a zero-tolerance policy toward child marriage, invoking the Pro-

hibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006, and the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act (POCSO). In February 2023, a massive state-wide operation led to the arrest of over 3,000 individuals, including parents, religious leaders, and others facilitating underage marriages. This was followed by another significant crackdown on Gandhi Jayanti, resulting in 916 arrests and 706 First Information Reports (FIRs). More recently, in the third phase of the campaign, Assam police arrested 416 people and registered 345 cases. These actions sent a clear message: child marriage is not only illegal but also a violation of human rights that will face severe consequences.

The impact of these legal interventions has been profound. A report by India Child Protection, titled "Towards Justice: Ending Child Marriage," revealed an 81 percent reduction in child marriage cases across 20 districts between

for legal action, with over 90 percent of respondents in 12 out of 20 districts believing that arrests and FIRs are effective deterrents. This shift in public perception is critical, as it indicates a growing awareness of the harm caused by child marriage and a willingness to embrace change.

Assam has recognized that legal enforcement alone cannot address the root causes of child marriage. Poverty and lack of education often drive families to marry off their daughters early, viewing it as a means of economic security. To tackle this, the state government launched the Nijut Moina scheme, a financial support initiative aimed at empowering girls through education. The first phase of the scheme, introduced in 2024, provided financial assistance to girls to continue their schooling, reducing the pressure to marry early. The second phase, Nijut Moina 2.0, launched in August 2025, expanded the program to cover over

By investing in girls' education, the government is addressing the stark disparity Sarma has often highlighted: the coexistence of two Assams—one where 22-year-old women pursue higher education and another where 14-year-old girls are forced into marriage. The scheme aligns with the state's broader commitment to universal free education, ensuring that every child, regardless of gender, caste, or religion, has access to quality schooling. This focus on education is critical, as it empowers girls to make informed choices about their futures, breaking the cycle of poverty and dependency that child marriage perpetuates.

Assam's efforts have not gone unnoticed. During the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) Chief Ministers' conclave in May 2025, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the state's campaign against child marriage was lauded as a national model. Modi urged other states to emulate Assam's ap-



2021-22 and 2023-24. The data, drawn from the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) and surveys conducted in 1,132 villages with a total population of 21 lakh, including 8 lakh children, underscores the effectiveness of Assam's approach. In 30 percent of these villages, child marriage has been completely eradicated, while 40 percent have reported significant declines. The report also highlighted strong community support

4 lakh girls, offering them the resources to pursue higher education and vocational training. Chief Minister Sarma has described the scheme as a source of hope for parents facing financial constraints, emphasizing that it gives girls the opportunity to dream beyond the confines of early marriage.

The Nijut Moina scheme is more than just a financial aid program; it is a strategic intervention designed to shift societal norms.

proach, suggesting that officials visit the state to study its strategies firsthand. The India Child Protection report, released on World Day for International Justice in July 2024, further reinforced Assam's success, describing its legal interventions as a proven model for the country. The National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) chairperson, Priyank Kanoongo, praised the state for showing the way forward in the



fight against child marriage.

Community engagement has also played a pivotal role in Assam's battle against child marriage. In November 2024, the state joined the Government of India's Bal Vivah Mukta Bharat (Child Marriage Free India) campaign, organized by the Just Rights for Children (JRC) alliance. This initiative saw participation from 3,900 villages across 28 districts, with events such as awareness drives, candlelight marches, and public pledges to end child marriage. These grassroots efforts have been instrumental in changing mindsets, particularly in rural areas where traditional norms often hold sway. By involving local leaders, schools, and community organizations, the campaign has fostered a sense of collective responsibility, encouraging communities to take ownership of the fight against child marriage.

Child marriage is deeply rooted in social and cultural practices, and changing entrenched norms requires sustained effort. The India Child Protection report noted that while Assam has made significant progress, the national pendency rate of child marriage cases in trial courts remains high, suggesting that judicial processes need to be streamlined to maintain momentum. Additionally, ensuring that schemes like Nijut Moina reach the most marginalized communities, particularly in remote areas, is critical to achieving the 2026 goal of complete eradication. The government must also continue to address the socioeconomic factors that drive child marriage, such as poverty and lack of employment opportunities for women.

Assam's journey to rewrite the story of child marriage is a testament to the power of coordinated action. By combining legal en-

forcement with financial empowerment and community engagement, the state has created a blueprint for change that balances deterrence with opportunity. The 81 percent reduction in child marriage cases is not just a statistic; it represents thousands of girls who now have the chance to pursue education, build careers, and shape their own futures. As Chief Minister Sarma has vowed, the state will not rest until child marriage is eradicated entirely. This commitment, coupled with the tangible results already achieved, positions Assam as a leader in the fight against child marriage, offering hope and inspiration to other states and nations grappling with similar challenges. The story of Assam is one of resilience, determination, and a vision for a future where every girl can thrive, free from the shackles of early marriage.

Want Strong, Healthy Nails---



By: Shahnaz Husain

White strong nails free from chips and cracks are what every woman wish their nails look alike. Most of women dream of a set of natural-looking nails something like strong, long, perfectly polished as it enhances beauty of hands.

Genes play the biggest role – if your parents had gorgeous long and strong fingernails you're likely to as well – but beauty expert says that Nails requires to be cared and nourished properly through healthy lifestyle, dietary changes, a proper nail care regimen to grow and strengthen.

The key to a model-esque manicure goes way beyond polishes and filing: Your nails need to be resilient to conditions like typing, cleaning, sports etc and prevent infections to grow and maintain gorgeous nails. Children nails grow at fastest rates while adult fingernails grow at an average 1/11 inch per month. The nails growth rate decreases with increase in age factor.

Your nails are made up of laminated layers of a protein called keratin, the same protein as your hair. Everyone wants their nails to grow uniform in colour, smooth, shinier without pits or grooves, fast and strong because it enhances the beauty of your hands. Pamper your hands with any of the suitable home remedies to get brighter and stronger nails. Some simple Ayurveda home remedies can help fix the most common nail problems, such as brittleness and splitting and make your nails strong and healthy.

The only way to protect the nails and keep them looking good is to give them regular care. Your nails can reflect neglect and

the state of your internal health. A pinkish colour indicates good health, while a bluish tinge shows poor blood circulation. A healthy nail is smooth and free from ridges and grooves. Protection is so important.

You should wear rubber gloves for your washing chores.

The cuticle (skin surrounding the nail) should be kept soft and smooth. Otherwise, it sticks to the nail and gets dragged as the nail grows. Massage cream or oil on the hands nails and cuticle daily, especially after using detergents and soaps. Daily massage is even more important during the dry season. Pure almond oil helps to strengthen the nails and keep it in good condition. Dip the finger tips and nails in warm almond oil daily for about ten minutes and then massage the oil on and around the nails. The cuticle (skin surrounding the nail) should be kept soft and smooth. Never cut the cuticle. After soaking the nails in warm water, apply cream to the nails to soften the skin. Then push cuticles back gently using a cotton bud. Never use sharp instruments to clean under the nails. Use a cotton bud instead.

Can the sun affect the nails too? Some pastel colours, especially beige and pink, can become yellowish after being exposed to the sun. The nail too can acquire a yellowish tinge. The most common cause of yellow nails is wearing nail polish constantly. The nails should be left unpolished sometimes.

For sun protection, use a clear, transparent nail polish as a top coat. You can apply sunscreen on the nails too, just like you apply it on the hands and arms, for protection from UV rays. UV-resistant top coats are also available.

To protect the nails from the

discolouring effect of nail polish, apply a transparent base coat first and then apply the colour of your choice. Thus, the nail is protected.

To get rid of the yellowish tint on the nails, scrape the surface of the nail with the finest-grain side of an emery board, so that the nail is not damaged and then use the UV-resistant or clear polish for protection. It will also add shine to dull nails.

The nails can also be "buffed." This is usually done with a piece of chamois leather. It should be gently rubbed with the chamois leather. It helps to remove the yellow tinge and also makes the nails shiny. It will be available at a cosmetic store.

To remove the yellow colour, add baking soda to water and soak your fingers in them daily for 15 minutes.

You can also take pieces of lemon and rub them on the nails. Or dilute lemon juice with water and soak your hands in it for 10 minutes every day.

Use nail clippers for cutting nails to avoid splits. File in one direction only.

If you have brittle nails that break or chip easily, include adequate protein and calcium in your diet. Take skimmed milk, yogurt, cottage cheese, fish and sprouts. For weak and brittle nails, follow a ten-day programme of taking gelatin. Dissolve one teaspoon gelatin in a little boiling water. Cool the water and add it to the fruit juice. Have this daily for ten days.

As far as nail colours are concerned, dark colours are very much in trend. Or, you can try colours like pink, mauve or ivory and then dress them up with nail art. Or, go for shades of brown, like coffee, bronze, copper, or seashell and then add on glitter.

In film 'Songs of Forgotten Trees', the sisterhood between two women who share a flat

By: Nandini Ramnath

Anupama Roy grew up in a village in Bengal's Purulia district, studied English literature, switched to mass communications, worked in a call centre in Delhi and then moved to Mumbai to work as an information technology sales executive. Throughout her journey, one constant element was the ambition to make a film.

Roy had no formal training in filmmaking. The only movie theatre during her formative years was several kilometres away from her village – which she wasn't allowed to visit. Instead, Roy devoured pirated Indian and foreign films on her laptop. The world of cinema came into her computer. Now, she is taking her own contribution to cinema to the world. Roy's remarkably assured, haunting debut feature, *Songs of Forgotten Trees*, was premiered at the Venice Film Festival that got underway on August 27. The multi-lingual movie revolves around two migrant women sharing an apartment in Mumbai. The bond between Thooya, an aspiring actress who turns tricks on the side, and Shweta, an IT sales executive, grows within the walls of the apartment and along its corridors.

Although Thooya and Shweta are quite unlike each other, they find their paths and personalities converging. As they cook meals together and swap stories, a sisterhood develops between the flatmates that Roy calls "platonic love".

A shot of trees swaying in the wind is followed by a montage of buildings that stand in for the nature that both women have left behind for better prospects in the big city. Debjit Samanta's camera moves through the rooms that either woman inhabits and the spaces that they share.

The device of mirroring emerges through the flow of scenes and visual cues, rather than expository dialogue. "I was trying to understand the complexity of the relationship of a woman with another woman," Roy explained. "I wanted to focus on a space that has a bigger existence than the people staying inside it."

Roy's screenplay is deeply autobiographical but also based on her observations after she moved to Mumbai in 2022, she told Scroll. Certain aspects of the script, such as Thooya's memory of her school friend Jhuma who was scorned by Thooya's father, were present in Roy's life too. "I realised when I was around 22 or so that I had been carrying Jhuma in my head," Roy said. "There was also a constant fear that I would not be able to forgive my father, even though he is a great human being and we have a good relationship."

After Roy moved to Mumbai, she learnt about struggling actresses taking to sex work for survival – which finds reflection in Thooya, whose landlord Nitin (Bhushan Shimpi) is her principal client. Roy treats Thooya with empathy, using the character's choices as an opportunity to look at the men who visit Thooya.

"The idea of writing about a sex worker or something on this subject itself was new to me," said 29-year-old Roy, who has previously directed the short film *Run to the River* (2023). "I had been hearing about women with what are called sugar daddies. The struggle I had was that I didn't want to show the woman's skin, like in Bollywood or Hollywood films. So I decided to showcase the skin of the man. I wanted to break that male gaze thing."

The point about Thooya – which is also reflected somewhat in Shweta as well as in Nitin's wife – is the crisis over sexual identity, Roy added. "I wanted to explore the idea of detachment that women feel towards sex."

Thooya gets into trouble with her neighbours because of her clients' visits. Roy faced something similar when she decided to film *Songs of Forgotten Trees* in her own apartment in suburban Mumbai. The building society wasn't happy with the shoot, and had Roy evicted on the last day of production.

"This too found its way into the film – I added scenes because of what happened to me," Roy said. "The circumstances surprised me and led me into different directions from that I had initially planned." A bunch of companies, including Flip Films and Romil Casting Productions, has backed the 77-minute indie film. Roy was determined to make *Songs of Forgotten Trees* despite funding challenges – "I wasn't able to hold the story anymore," she said.

Like Roy is newish to the game of filmmaking, so are the film's female leads. Naaz Shaikh, who plays Thooya, and Sumi Baghel, who portrays Shweta, are aspiring actresses whom Roy met during the casting process.

"We had a workshop for a few months in the same apartment – we lived together for a while to understand the complexity as well as of the flaws of the script," Roy said. The Venice selection was a bolt out of the blue for Roy. Of the 19 titles in the competitive *Horizons* (Horizons) category, *Songs of Forgotten Trees* is the only one from India.

"I never thought my film would be in Venice – I am still a student of cinema," Roy said. "I am so grateful that the selectors understood the essence of the film, and that it is very personal. I am super-happy." (Courtesy: Scroll.in)

India shows rise in deaths from non-communicable diseases, women hit harder: Lancet

By: Rohini Krishnamurthy

While there has been a decline in deaths from non-communicable diseases (NCD) like cancer, diabetes and heart attacks globally in 2010-2019 compared to the decade before, India is showing the opposite trend, according to a new study published in *The Lancet*. For males, the probability of dying from NCDs between birth and age 80 years increased to 57.8 and 57.9 per cent in 2010 and 2019, from 56 per cent in 2001.

The trend for females is more troubling. After a slight decrease in the probability of dying from NCDs between 2001 and 2010, the likelihood of death from these diseases rose sharply in the following decade. The probability of a female dying from an NCD between birth and age 80 years was 46.7 per cent in 2001. This showed a small decline to 46.6 per cent in 2011, before rising sharply to 48.7 per cent in 2019. For men, the findings showed, the smaller increase in fatality risk from NCDs during 2010-19 was due to improvements in eight of the 20 causes of death analysed, including chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), ischaemic heart disease and cirrhosis of the liver. But men did not see progress in other causes such as upper aerodigestive tract cancers and stroke. For women, no improvements were seen in any of the causes of death, barring cirrhosis of the liver, COPD and the residual category of all other NCDs.

The study highlighted that the quality of data from India is "very low" and that the results are subject to substantial uncertainty. India also saw concerning trends in lung cancer. Though global mortality declined in 92 per cent of the places for males, only five countries – India, along with Armenia, Iran, Egypt and Papua New Guinea, showed an increase in mortality. Deaths from most chronic diseases increased, with heart disease and diabetes contributing heavily, the study highlighted. The analysis tracked global progress to reduce deaths from chronic or 'non-communicable' diseases in 185 countries from 2010-2019.

Globally, mortality from non-communicable diseases dropped in around 80 per cent of the countries, which is home to more than 70 per cent of the world population, from 2010 to 2019. However, compared to the preceding decade, the decline from 2010 to 2019 in 60 per cent of countries was either smaller or showed a reversal of the earlier decline. In most countries, the study noted, reductions in deaths from cardiovascular diseases, including heart attacks and strokes, played a major part in reducing deaths from chronic diseases, including cancers like stomach, colorectal, cervical, breast, lung and prostate.

However, increases in deaths from dementia, other neuropsychiatric conditions, including alcohol use disorder, and some other cancers (like pancreatic and liver), counteracted the gains. The global slowdown or reversal in progress in reducing mortality from chronic diseases in 2010-19 compared to the preceding decade could be due to several factors, the authors noted. These include medications for diabetes, hypertension and cholesterol, and timely cancer screening and heart attack treatment not reaching people in need. Other drivers could be macroeconomic responses to the 2008 global recession, which curbed expansion of health budgets and development assistance for health in many countries. The tumultuous period led to a rise in poverty, destitution and employment insecurity. People affected by these social conditions account for a disproportionately large share of deaths relative to their share of the population. This can be because these groups typically have lower access to and utilisation of clinical interventions, or to fresh, healthy foods. (Courtesy: Down to Earth)

Uttarakhand has witnessed 46 cloudbursts, 97 flash floods and 140 landslides so far this year

FRESH RAINS LEAVE TRAIL OF DESTRUCTION IN HIMACHAL PRADESH, UTTARAKHAND

DEHRADUN/SHIMLA, Sept 16: Fresh heavy showers overnight ravaged the Himalayan states of Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh, already bruised by a string of deadly natural calamities over the past couple of months.

Three members of a family were killed as rains triggered massive landslides and flash floods in Himachal Pradesh on Tuesday, while five people were washed away and hundreds were stranded by cloudbursts and intense showers in Dehradun district of neighbouring Uttarakhand.

Torrential waters running through the hilly slopes swept away cars, damaged houses, and commercial establishments, while in Uttarakhand, a bridge was also washed away.

The downpour swelled most of the snowfed rivers and streams in these states. In Uttarakhand, the Ganga and the Yamuna were flowing close to the warning level, while the water level of the Tamsa river reached tantalisingly close to the danger mark.

The Tamsa swelled rapidly in the morning, inundating the famous Tapkeshwar temple on its banks and submerging the gigantic Hanuman statue near its entrance up to the shoulders.

The temple's priest, Bipin Joshi, said he has not seen the river waters rise so high in the past 25 to 30 years. Luckily, there were few devotees within the temple premises in the early morning hours when the inundation occurred, he said, adding that the priests staying at the temple are safe.

The Song river, flowing at spate, flooded nearby areas in Uttarakhand, putting a bridge on the river in Maldevta in danger. The local administration responded quickly and was coordinating with each other to restore normalcy.



Sahastradhara, Maldevta, Santla Devi and Dalanwala in Uttarakhand were the worst-hit by the disaster, according to the district disaster management office in Dehradun. Sahastradhara received 192 mm of rain, followed by Maldevta (141.5 mm), Hathi Barkala and Jolly Grant (92.5mm each) and Kalsi (83.5 mm) in just a few hours.

The state's Disaster Management Secretary Vinod Kumar Suman said teams have been engaged in relief and rescue operations in the affected areas, while 300 to 400 people have already been moved to safety.

About 200 children trapped by waterlogging at the Devbhoomi Institute campus in Paundha area of Dehradun were rescued by an SDRF team, said Banshidhar Tiwari, Director General, Information.

Residents of Majhara village were on the road, having survived what they called a landslide that hit their dwellings early in the morning. They claimed that some people have gone missing.

Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhama visited the rain-affected areas of Dehradun district to review the situation on the ground. Local MLAs and senior officials accompanied him.

Interacting with reporters in the rain-hit Maldevta area, he said, "All rivers are in spate following heavy rains. Roads have been breached at 25 to 30 places. Approach roads are cut off. Houses and government properties have been damaged. Normal life is severely affected. Rescue teams are working on a war footing to restore normalcy."

"The state government stands with every affected family. The administration is already on alert mode, and the NDRF, SDRF, police and local administration are active," he said.

The chief minister's office, in a social media post in Hindi, said Dhama has briefed Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah about the situation in Uttarakhand following heavy showers.

They assured the state of all pos-

sible help and asserted that the Union government stands firmly with the people of Uttarakhand in this hour of crisis, according to the CMO.

Dhama inspected the Maldevta and Kesarwala areas of Dehradun district, hit hard by heavy rains, and took stock of the situation. He directed officials to speed up relief and rescue operations and assured the locals of all assistance.

For neighbouring Himachal Pradesh, the situation was equally bad. State capital Shimla received 141 mm of rain in 12 hours since Monday evening, followed by Nagrota Sauriyana 135.2, Bhatiyat 80 mm, Sundernagar 60.5 mm, Brahmani 54.4 mm, Guler 54.2 mm, Mandi 52.6 mm, and Kangra 50.5 mm. The state has witnessed 46 cloudbursts, 97 flash floods and 140 landslides so far this year.

With 650 roads, including stretches of three national highways closed, 1,250 power transformers and 160 water supply schemes already disrupted, the latest bout of showers exacerbated the situation.

A flash flood triggered by the downpour submerged the main bus stand in the Dharampur area of Mandi district, washing away several vehicles. Two women and a child died when their house collapsed on them in Bragta village of the district following a landslide.

Shopkeepers and residents faced severe losses as floodwaters gushed into shops, damaging goods and infrastructure. Preliminary estimates suggest losses amounting to several crores. Officials said the rains led to floods in the Son and Bharand streams in Dharampur.

Himachal Pradesh Deputy Chief Minister Mukesh Agnihotri, who also holds charge of the transport department, took to Facebook to report that two dozen state transport buses, shops, a pump house and a workshop in and around the Dharampur area have been damaged.

In Shimla, several vehicles were buried following a landslide near Himland in the heart of the city, and the main circular road was blocked.

Reports of rains triggering landslides and uprooting trees in BCS-Vikas Nagar area, PMT colony, Jhanjeri and some other areas of the town have also poured in. Restoration works are underway, officials said.

Thunderstorms were witnessed in Shimla, Jubbarhatti, Kangra, Bhuntar, Jot, Murari Devi and Sundernagar while winds gusting up to 37 kmph lashed Bilaspur, Bajaura and Kufri.

A total of 412 people have died in rain-related incidents and road accidents since the onset of the monsoon over the state on June 20 to date, while 41 are still missing. A total of 232 people died in rain-related incidents, while 180 were killed in road accidents. (PTI)

ONLINE BETTING APP

ED summons Robin Uthappa, Yuvraj Singh, Sonu Sood

NEW DELHI, Sept 16: Widening its probe into an alleged illegal online betting linked money laundering case, the Enforcement Directorate (ED) has summoned cricketers Robin Uthappa and Yuvraj Singh, and actor Sonu Sood for questioning, officials said Tuesday.

Uthappa (39), Singh (43) and Sood (52) have been asked to depose beginning next week at the agency's headquarter investigation unit in Delhi and get their statements recorded under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) in a case linked to a platform named 1xBet, the officials said.

While Uthappa has been asked to depose on September 22, Singh has been called on September 23 followed by Sood on September 24, they said.

The federal probe agency has questioned former cricketers Suresh Raina and Shikhar Dhawan apart from former TMC MP and actor Mimi Chakraborty over the last few weeks as part of this investigation.

Bengali actor Ankush Hazra (36) appeared before the ED on Tuesday on his scheduled summons in the case, while actor Uravashi Rautela (31), the India brand ambassador of 1xBet, is yet to appear on her given date for Tuesday, the sources said.

The probe pertains to the operations of the 1xBet betting app as part of ED's wider probe against such platforms on allegations of duping numerous people and investors worth crores of rupees and reportedly evading a huge amount of direct and indirect taxes.

According to the Curacao registered company, 1xBet is a globally recognised bookmaker with 18 years in the betting industry. The

brand's customers can place bets on thousands of sporting events, with the company's website and app available in 70 languages, according to the company.

An email sent by PTI seeking a response from 1xBet on the ED probe remained unanswered till the filing of this report.

More sportspersons, movie actors, online influencers and celebrities are expected to be questioned by the agency in the coming days as part of this probe.

The ED's line of investigation, according to the sources, is to know from the celebrities as to how they were contacted by the said betting company seeking their endorsement, the nodal person(s) for contact in India, the mode of payment (cash through hawala or banking channel) and place of the payment (in India or abroad) etc.

The agency, while recording the statements of the cricketers and actors, is understood to be asking them if they knew that online betting and gaming was illegal in India. It has also asked them to furnish a copy of their contracts and all relevant email and paper documentation made by them with 1xBet.

The agency is also looking at the end use of the money taken by the celebrities to check if any of them can be categorised as the "proceeds of crime" under the PMLA, as per the sources.

The Union government recently banned real money online gaming in India by bringing a legislation.

The ED, during a recent national meeting of its senior officers in Jammu and Kashmir, has also decided to initiate "focused strategies" to investigate financial crimes arising from this sector linked to alleged illegal betting and gaming. (PTI)

Manhunt on for fourth accused in gang rape of Dalit student near beach in Puri

BHUBANESWAR, Sept 16: A manhunt was underway for one more person in connection with the gang rape of a Dalit college student near a beach in Odisha's Puri, police said on Tuesday.

The 19-year-old woman, along with her boyfriend, was sitting in the Casurina forest near the Baliharchandi temple when a group of youths clicked their photos and videos, and asked them to pay in return for deleting those, SP Prateek Singh said. When they refused to pay, two youths in the group raped the woman while the others assaulted her boyfriend and tied him to a tree, he said.

The incident happened around Saturday noon, but a complaint was lodged at the Puri Sadar police station on Monday evening. Three persons have already been arrested in connection with the incident, while a manhunt is underway for one more accused, he added.

Among those arrested are Siba Sahoo and Manoj Sahoo alias Kalia, who allegedly raped the woman, the SP said. (PTI)

PM's charge over infiltration was 'diversionary tactics', claims Tejashwi

PATNA/JEHANABAD, Sept 16: RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav on Tuesday alleged that Prime Minister Narendra Modi's fulminations against infiltration in Bihar were "diversionary tactics" ahead of the assembly elections in the state.

Yadav spoke to journalists in Patna ahead of leaving for the adjoining Jehanabad district to launch "Bihar Adhikar Yatra", a veritable campaign for the upcoming assembly polls.

The RJD leader was asked to comment on the PM's speech at a rally in Purnea a day ago, when the opposition party was charged with "shielding and defending" infiltrators.

The PM had also asserted that infiltration led to a "demographic crisis" and left common people "worried about the honour of their sisters and daughters".

Yadav, whose party is immensely popular among the minorities, said, "Let us, for a moment, assume that there are infiltrators in Bihar. Then the question arises, what have you (Modi) been doing all along? You have been in power for 11 years. Besides, you (BJP-led NDA) have been ruling the state for 20 years."

The leader of the opposition in

the Bihar assembly wondered if the ruling dispensation has been able to identify a single infiltrator in Bihar.

"I must point out that it is a bogey they had similarly raised in Jharkhand last year when assembly polls were underway there. Now they have forgotten about that," Yadav claimed.

The former Deputy CM alleged, "The issue of infiltration is raised as diversionary tactics. The NDA realises its failure in providing good governance, ensuring that people had jobs, education, health care, and their grievances were quickly and effectively redressed."

He also claimed that the INDIA bloc will "defeat the NDA in the polls".

"We will form a government that ensures 'padhaai', 'dawaai', 'kamaai', 'sunwaai' aur 'karwaai' (education, medicines, jobs, grievance redressal and taking measures to resolve issues). I am starting Bihar Adhikar Yatra with this very message", the RJD leader said.

The tech-savvy politician has also shared on his X handle a couple of videos proclaiming the "arrival of the RJD" with the people "yearning for a change" and crying out "we want Tejashwi". (PTI)

Ex-CM Baghel's son ran syndicate, handled ₹ 1000 cr of 'liquor scam' proceeds, claims ED

RAIPUR, Sept 16: Chaitanya Baghel, son of former CM Bhupesh Baghel, was at the helm of the syndicate behind the "liquor scam" in Chhattisgarh and personally handled nearly Rs 1,000 crore generated from it, the ED has alleged in its prosecution complaint.

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has also claimed Chaitanya knowingly assisted in the concealment, possession, acquisition and use of proceeds of crime, acting in conspiracy with other members of the syndicate.

It made the claims in its fourth supplementary prosecution complaint (charge sheet) filed before the court of District and Additional Sessions Judge (VI) Damarudhar Chouhan on Monday.

Chaitanya Baghel was arrested by the central agency on July 18 following a search at his house which he shares with his father in Bhilai town of Durg district.

The alleged Rs 2,500 crore liquor scam was orchestrated between 2019 and 2022 when a Congress government headed by Bhupesh Baghel in office in the state.

The ED has so far filed one prosecution complaint and four supplementary ones in the case, and claimed the alleged scam resulted in a "massive loss" to the state exchequer and filled the pockets of the liquor syndicate beneficiaries.



In the latest prosecution complaint, the ED stated that, in 2019, after the formation of the new (Congress) government in Chhattisgarh, an organised liquor syndicate was created. To run the day-to-day operations of this syndicate, Anil Tuteja, then an IAS officer, and businessman Anwar Dhebar (both named as accused in previous prosecution complaints) were chosen as the front faces, it claimed.

"At the apex of this syndicate stood Chaitanya, and his role was not just symbolic but commanding and decisive. He was responsible for maintaining 'hisab' (accounts) of all illicit funds collected by the syndicate. All major decisions relating to the collection, channelization, and distribution of funds were taken under his instructions. His position

as the chief minister's son made him the controller and ultimate authority of the syndicate," it alleged.

Chaitanya is a recipient of "proceeds of crime," which he has layered in his real estate project and is projecting and claiming these assets so developed as untainted property, the ED claimed.

Investigation has already suggested a significant amount out of the proceeds of crime was being collected by one Laxmi Narayan Bansal @ Pappu, who in his statement before the ED, has revealed that he had handled more than Rs 1,000 crore worth of proceeds of crime originating out of the liquor scam in association with Chaitanya, it stated. He (Bansal) has categorically stated that, on the instructions of Chaitanya, large amounts of cash

were delivered to the then treasurer of the state Congress unit, Ram Gopal Agrawal, and others between 2019 and 2022, the ED charged.

Bansal allegedly used to collect these proceeds of crime from Anwar Dhebar via Dipen Chawda and thereafter these funds were delivered to Agrawal in coordination with Chaitanya, it said.

"Bansal, during his statement, revealed he has known Bhupesh Baghel for the last 25 years and that both of them share family relations. He used to regularly visit the Chief Minister's House in Raipur, then with Chaitanya. During one such visit to CM's house in Raipur, Bhupesh Baghel categorically told him that Anwar Dhebar would be sending some "saamaan" to him, and the same had to be further passed on to Agrawal," the ED said.

"Thereafter, Chaitanya Baghel used to intimate him one day before the supposed delivery of cash from Dhebar. That he clarified that the term 'saamaan' was a code word used for cash," it said.

Agarwal is presently absconding. "Chaitanya was the central figure and controller of the liquor syndicate, exercising direct command over its finances, supervising the flow of illegal funds, and utilizing the proceeds of crime for personal and business ventures," the ED alleged. (PTI)

IIMs develop holistic governance model for PPP projects to deal with contract disputes, investment risks

NEW DELHI, Sept 16: Researchers from the Indian Institute of Management (IIM) Lucknow and Ranchi have developed a framework to strengthen governance in public-private partnership projects and deal with challenges such as contract disputes and investment risks, according to officials.

Public-private partnership (PPP) projects play a significant role in infrastructure development but such projects often face challenges such as contract disputes, investment risks, institutional gaps, and other issues such as transparency, trust, and integrity.

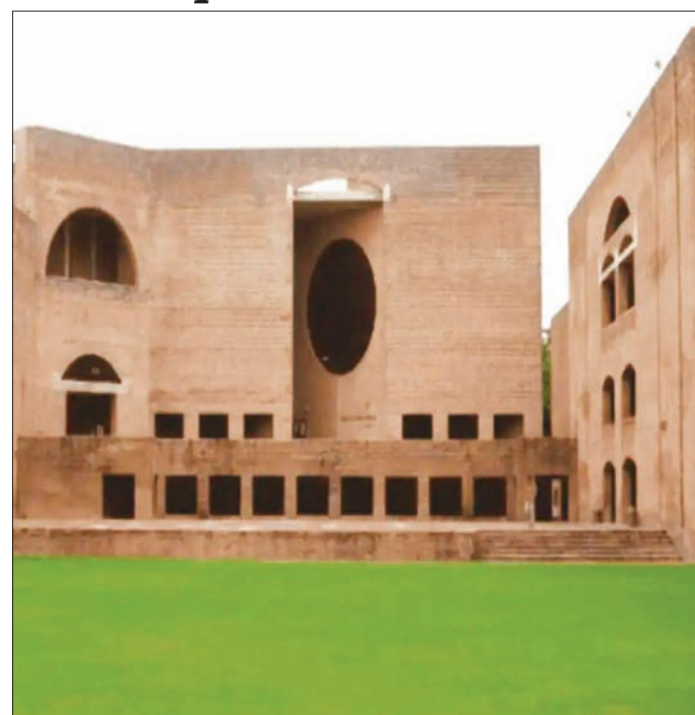
Though these projects are recognised globally, there is a pressing need of a comprehensive framework that can enable managers to design and monitor accountability across the entire project lifecycle, they said.

Published in the reputed journal Built Environment Project and Asset Management, the research

draws on real-world PPP cases to integrate accountability-related themes such as transparency, integrity, responsibility, and performance.

"The proposed accountability framework provides multifaceted implications for policymakers managing PPP projects, such as maximum public display and media coverage of complete information, following joint decision-making process, clarifying individual responsibility and continuous external and internal review of performance," Dipti Gupta, Assistant Professor, IIM Lucknow, said.

"The developed framework can be used by the policymakers, regulating authorities, and project managers in designing accountability governance policies, risk-sharing mechanisms, and performance management systems for PPP projects. By fostering transparency and trust, the framework enables better stakeholder



participation and enhances the long-term sustainability of public infrastructure projects," she added.

The framework developed by Gupta along with Santosh Kumar Prusty, Assistant Professor, IIM Ranchi, has combined theoretical drivers such as trust, dialogue, multi-dimensionality, and external control.

The framework facilitates the assessment and monitoring of PPP projects by designing suitable accountability governance policies.

"It can design internal and external control mechanisms through stakeholders' dialogue and collaborative decision-making methods, which can enhance transparency, trust, responsibility and integrity.

It can be used by the policymakers in defining risk-sharing policies and contract management strategies across multiple dimensions of accountability in PPP," Prusty said. (PTI)

AIADMK gen secy Palaniswami arrives in Delhi, calls on VP Radhakrishnan

NEW DELHI | CHENNAI, Sept 16: AIADMK general secretary Edappadi K Palaniswami called on newly-elected Vice President C P Radhakrishnan in Delhi on Tuesday and congratulated him on his victory.

Radhakrishnan's elevation as Vice President was a matter of great pride for Tamil Nadu, he said.

Palaniswami was accompanied by the party's deputy general secretary K P Munusamy, headquarters secretary S P Velumani, and MPs. "I congratulated him for his win and wished him success in his service to the people as Vice President and Chairman of the Rajya Sabha," Palaniswami said in a post on the social media platform 'X'.

The former Chief Minister is likely to meet Union Home Minister Amit Shah and other leaders.

His visit comes amid speculation that the crisis in the party, especially the appeals by certain leaders to bring into the AIADMK fold all those who have been expelled, had compelled him to meet the BJP leaders. A senior leader in the party said the rank and file in the AIADMK

stood solidly behind Palaniswami whom they elected as their general secretary.

"Those battling for the merger of factions may make ripples, but they appear to have no intention of accepting Palaniswami as the Chief Ministerial candidate for the 2026 Assembly election," the senior leader said. A few days ago, BJP state chief Nainar Nagendran had said that what Palaniswami says about the AIADMK mattered.

Indicating that the AIADMK is with Palaniswami, Nagendran said the BJP has accepted the AIADMK general secretary as the CM candidate. "I am willing to negotiate with former Chief Minister O Panneerselvam and AMMK leader T T V Dhinakaran and bring them back to the NDA," he had told reporters.

A source in the AIADMK said Palaniswami is likely to apprise Shah that he had already consolidated his position in the party and that "some voices" that speak for unity would only derail the party's prospects at the hustings, if they were readmitted. (PTI)

State health minister calls on Governor

Women's health initiatives on agenda



HT Correspondent

ITANAGAR, Sept 16: State Health and Family Welfare Minister Biyuram Wahge called on the Governor of Arunachal Pradesh, Lt General KT Parnaik, PVSM, UYSM, YSM (Retd.), at Raj Bhavan in Itanagar on Tuesday.

Adviser to the health minister, Dr Mohesh Chai, MLA, accompanied the minister during the courtesy visit.

According to an official statement issued by Raj Bhavan, the delegation briefed the Governor on

key health-related issues affecting the State, including the ongoing challenges in healthcare delivery and recent initiatives launched to improve public health.

They also provided details on the recently launched nationwide campaigns—'Swasth Nari, Sashakt Parivar Abhiyaan' aimed at promoting women's health and the observance of the 8th Poshan Maah led by the Prime Minister of India.

The Governor, as per the statement, underscored the intensi-

fied campaign focusing on women's health must be implemented in a mission mode with a collective sense of commitment and urgency.

He emphasised that the health and well-being of women is not only crucial for their own lives but also serves as the foundation of a strong, healthy, and empowered family.

"A woman's good health nurtures generations and contributes directly to building a resilient society," he remarked.

Highlighting the need for strengthening healthcare services, the Governor stressed that medical care, preventive health measures, and awareness initiatives must be extended to every woman—especially those residing in remote and underserved areas of the State.

He urged all stakeholders, including government departments and civil society groups, to work in coordination to ensure accessible, affordable, and effective healthcare services for women.

The Governor further advised the Health Minister to ensure that the sector is adequately supported with skilled manpower and modern medical technologies to meet the growing healthcare demands.

He underlined that healthcare goes beyond treatment, as it also requires empathy, reassurance, and mutual respect between providers and recipients.

The official statement concluded by reaffirming the Governor's call for collective action and sustained efforts toward enhancing healthcare delivery in the State, with a special focus on empowering women and building healthier families.

TRIHMS hospital principal dies after prolonged illness



ITANAGAR, Sept 16: Tomo Riba Institute of Health and Medical Sciences' Dean and Principal Dr Shyamal Bhattacharya died on Tuesday morning after a prolonged illness, a hospital official said.

He was 69. Chief Minister Pema Khandu and Deputy CM Chowna Mein expressed grief over the demise of Bhattacharya.

The TRIHMS's principal had been suffering from chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) with refractory thrombocytopenia and undergoing treatment at the hospital's intensive care unit for the past two weeks, the official said.

"Despite all efforts by the attending doctors, he breathed his last this morning," TRIHMS Director Dr Moji Jini said.

He is survived by his wife and a daughter.

Bhattacharya joined the institute

in 2018, the official said.

"It is with profound grief that we mourn the untimely demise of Prof Shyamal Bhattacharya Ji, Dean & Principal of TRIHMS Medical College, who breathed his last at TRIHMS Hospital," Khandu said in a post on X.

Bhattacharya was an outstanding academician, a dedicated administrator, and a compassionate soul, the chief minister said.

"His immense contribution to medical education, his tireless efforts for the development of TRIHMS, and his commitment to shaping young medical professionals will always be remembered," he said.

"On behalf of the Government of Arunachal Pradesh, I extend my deepest condolences to his family, colleagues, and all who were touched by his life and work. May his soul attain Sadgati and merge in the eternal peace of the

Supreme. Om Shanti," Khandu added.

The deputy CM also condoled the death of Bhattacharya.

"His contributions to strengthening medical education and healthcare in our state will always be remembered. My heartfelt condolences to the bereaved family, colleagues, and students. May his soul rest in eternal peace," Mein said in a social media post.

Health and Family Welfare Minister Biyuram Wahge paid his last respects to Prof Bhattacharya.

The medical fraternity of the state expressed grief over his demise, describing it as a sad day for the entire community of doctors, students, and health professionals.

They recalled Dr Bhattacharya as a dedicated academician and administrator whose contributions to TRIHMS will be cherished for years to come. (PTI)

District level monitoring committee reviews developmental progress

HT Correspondent

KOLORIANG, Sept 16: The District Level Monitoring Committee (DLMC) of Kurung Kumey convened today under the chairmanship of Deputy Commissioner, Cheechung Chukhu, at the district headquarters.

The meeting was attended by Heads of Offices and senior officials from various departments who gathered to review the ongoing developmental works in the district and assess progress across sectors.

According to an official statement issued by the district administration, the meeting involved comprehensive presentations by different departments outlining key achievements, current challenges, and the status of development projects underway.

The committee deliberated on important aspects such as strict adherence to government policies, proper utilisation of allocated funds, and the need for capacity building among field staff and community volunteers.

The statement further mentioned that departments were directed to establish robust monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, ensure regular submission of progress reports, and conduct audits to maintain financial accountability.

Officials were also instructed to strengthen oversight at the project level to ensure that public resources are utilized effectively and transparently.

A significant focus of the discussions was on encouraging community participation in governance.

Departments were urged to engage local stakeholders actively, conduct awareness campaigns, and incorporate citizen feedback into the planning and implementation of projects.

The committee stressed that empowering communities and involving them in developmental initiatives would lead to more sustainable and inclusive outcomes.

The meeting also emphasised the need to integrate environmentally sustainable practices in ongoing and future projects.

Departments were encouraged to adopt climate-resilient infrastructure models, promote proper waste management systems, and ensure that development initiatives do not compromise ecological balance.

District Monitoring Committee inspects drug de-addiction centre in Upper Siang

HT Correspondent

YINGKIONG, Sept 16: The District Monitoring Committee for the Drug De-Addiction Centre (Sudhaar Ghar), Upper Siang, conducted an inspection of the facility today to assess its operations and review the implementation of Standard Operating Procedures (SoPs) aimed at improving management, accountability, and the overall functioning of the centre.

According to an official statement issued by the district administration, the initiative is part of a broader effort to enhance transparency, ensure the welfare of beneficiaries, and strengthen drug de-addiction and rehabilitation services across the district.

The 10-bedded Drug De-Addiction Centre (DDAC) was established in 2021 within the premises of the District Hospital in Yingkiang under the chief minister's Nasha Mukht Abhiyan.

The facility began operations in 2022 with the objective of providing rehabilitation services to drug-dependent individuals from across Upper Siang. Since its inception, the centre has admitted a total of 109 patients, of whom 104 have been successfully treated and discharged.

At present, the facility accommodates five female inmates undergoing treatment.

The official report presented during the inspection detailed the cases treated so far, stating that 22 patients suffering from Alcohol Dependence Syndrome (ADS), 75 patients with Multiple Drug Use (Heroin Polysubstance Abuse), 2 cases of Ganja dependency, and 4 cases of Opium dependence have received treatment at the centre.

Additionally, the report highlighted 9 cases of relapse, includ-



ing 3 alcohol-dependent and 6 drug users, along with 13 beneficiaries who availed psychological support through the TeleManas service.

During the inspection, Dr Karo Teng, MS cum Senior Psychiatrist at the facility, informed the committee that due to the limited number of beds and inadequate infrastructure, male and female patients from various districts are admitted on an alternate basis.

He emphasised the urgent need for better-equipped infrastructure, separate wards for men and women, increased staffing, and adequate financial assistance.

"We are doing our best to serve the community, but with cases rising at an alarming rate, there is an urgent requirement for proper infrastructures separately for male and females, adequate staffing, and financial support to provide treatment and care as per the Standard Operating Procedures," he stated.

The committee, comprising Dr Geping Litin, District Medical Of-

ficer (DMO); Token Saring, Superintendent of Police (SP); Ine Pertin, deputy director, ICDS; Yalik Jerang, District Information and Public Relations Officer (DIPRO); Norbu Tsering, DPO (ISSE); and Dr Ayik Miyu, District Tuberculosis Officer (DTO), jointly inspected the premises.

The team reviewed patient care protocols, sanitation measures, medical records, and counseling facilities to ensure that Sudhaar Ghar continues to deliver quality treatment in line with government guidelines.

The official statement concluded that the committee remains committed to supporting the centre's efforts to provide comprehensive treatment and rehabilitation services, thereby contributing to the State's mission of creating a drug-free society.

The members called for coordinated efforts among departments, increased resource allocation, and community participation to address the growing challenges related to substance abuse.

State-level training programme launched in Itanagar

HT Correspondent

ITANAGAR, Sept 16: A four-day State Process Lab (SPL) training programme under the Adi Karmayogi Abhiyan was formally launched in Itanagar on Tuesday with the objective of strengthening grassroots leadership and improving service delivery in the tribal areas of the State.

The programme, organized by the Department of Social Justice, Empowerment & Tribal Affairs (SJETA), was inaugurated at the State Banquet Hall in the presence of senior government officials and master trainers from various districts.

According to an official statement from the SJETA, the Adi Karmayogi Abhiyan is a flagship initiative of the Ministry of Tribal Affairs, Government of India, aimed at creating a cadre of approximately two million change leaders drawn from tribal communities and allied stakeholders.

These change leaders will be mobilised across more than 100,000 tribal villages in over 550 districts nationwide.

The programme is designed to foster citizen-centric governance, enhance the delivery of essential services to remote areas, improve grievance redressal mechanisms, and promote participatory planning at all levels.

Speaking at the launch event, Principal Secretary Kaling Tayeng emphasised the critical role that grassroots leadership plays in the

effective implementation of government schemes.

He urged the master trainers to take the training programme seriously and to ensure that the knowledge and skills imparted are effectively shared with district and block-level personnel upon returning to their respective postings.

He further highlighted that many tribal villages in Arunachal Pradesh remain remote and face significant infrastructural challenges.

"The success of the Abhiyan will depend on how well this training is disseminated to these areas. It is imperative that the master trainers ensure the programme's benefits reach every corner," he said. Secretary of SJETA, Abu Tayeng, while elaborating on the programme, described the Adi Karmayogi Abhiyan as a transformative initiative that places tribal communities at the core of decision-making and development processes.

He noted that the programme aims to empower tribal change-makers through capacity-building workshops and the establishment of 'Adi Seva Kendras'—community service centres that will act as hubs for development activities.

The training sessions in Itanagar are part of the state-level rollout of the initiative and are aimed at orienting master trainers, government officials, tribal affairs functionaries, youth volunteers, and local leaders on the objectives, tools,

and strategies of the programme.

Through a cascading training model, these master trainers will subsequently conduct sessions at the district, block, and village levels, equipping change leaders with the knowledge and tools to engage with tribal communities and accelerate development initiatives.

The official statement further noted that the first phase of the programme will focus on five districts—Tirap, Longding, Namsai, East Siang, and Kra Daadi—which have been selected to pilot the development projects under the scheme.

Arvin Kumar, Director at the Ministry of Tribal Affairs, Government of India, also addressed the participants via video conference, offering detailed insights into the programme's objectives, expected outcomes, and broader impact on tribal empowerment and governance.

The training programme was attended by participants and master trainers from across the state's districts, underscoring the collective commitment to enhancing governance, service delivery, and leadership development in the tribal regions.

The official statement concluded by reaffirming the government's dedication to ensuring that the objectives of the Adi Karmayogi Abhiyan are achieved and that tribal communities are provided with the necessary support to lead development initiatives in their areas.

96 KGBV students undertake overnight march to District HQ to demand teachers

HT Correspondent

ITANAGAR, Sept 16: In a rare and unprecedented protest, 96 girl students of Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya (KGBV) at Nangnyo in Pakke Kessang district marched nearly 70 kilometers overnight to reach the district headquarters and meet the Deputy Director of School Education (DDSE), raising concerns over the acute shortage of teachers at their school. According to an official statement, the students, dressed in their blue school uniforms, began their march from Nyangno village past midnight on

Sunday.

They walked through the night and arrived at Lemmi, the district headquarters, by around 8 AM on Monday, where they met with DDSE Dipak Tayeng to present their grievances.

Speaking over the phone, DDSE Tayeng confirmed the incident, stating, "A total of 96 schoolchildren, mostly from classes IX, X, and XI, came to our office this morning regarding the shortage of teachers. They demanded immediate action for the appointment of teachers at their school."

He added that the protest was carried out without informing the school warden or headmistress. Regarding the issue, DDSE Tayeng clarified that the school has been facing a shortage of teachers in subjects like Mathematics, English, and Political Science.

"Walk-in interviews were conducted for Mathematics, and after receiving government approval, a teacher was posted but failed to join. Further interviews were held for Geography and English, and the approvals are awaiting final sanction from the government, which was de-

layed by nearly a week or two," he said. The DDSE further informed that "the approval for two teachers has been received today, and the students were briefed about it. If the appointed Mathematics teacher does not report, we will consider candidates from the waiting list." The school, managed by the NGO "Si Donyi Charitable Trust," currently has a total of 24 teaching and non-teaching staff, including 1 warden, 1 headmistress, 13 full-time teachers, 3 part-time teachers, 1 accountant, 1 head cook, 2 assistant cooks, 1 peon, and 1 watchman. Even after the

approval of three new teachers, the school is expected to continue facing a shortage of teachers for the subject of Political Science.

The protest has drawn widespread concern among parents, authorities, and the public across the state. Many have questioned the school's management and the adequacy of its staffing. Local sources reported that the students carried placards with slogans like "A school without a teacher is just a building" and raised chants demanding immediate appointment of teachers.

Focus on deep tech and engineering excellence

Arunachal observes 58th National Engineering Day

HT correspondent

ITANAGAR, Sept 16: The 58th National Engineering Day was observed and celebrated with great enthusiasm on September 15, 2025 by the Arunachal Pradesh State Council for Science & Technology (APSCS&T), Government of Arunachal Pradesh, at the Arunachal Pradesh Science Centre in Itanagar.

The event, supported by the State Government, was organized around the theme "Deep Tech & Engineering Excellence: Driving India's Techade," underscoring the transformative role of advanced technologies in shaping the future of the nation. As per an official statement from APSCS&T, the programme commenced at 10:30 AM in the Sir CV Raman Conference Hall at the Directorate office in Itanagar.

The event was graced by Dr Tage Taki, Hon'ble Chairman of the Arunachal

Pradesh State Council for Science & Technology, Department of Science & Technology, Government of Arunachal Pradesh.

The occasion was also attended by resource person Prof Moirangthem Marjit Singh from the Department of Computer Science and Engineering, NERIST, Nirjuli, along with students from Vivekananda Kendra Vidyalaya, Itanagar, as well as scientists and officials from the Department.

In his inaugural address, Dr Tage Taki highlighted the significance of celebrating National Engineering Day each year on the birth anniversary of Sir Mokshagundam Visvesvaraya, a visionary engineer and statesman of India.

He elaborated on the chosen theme for this year, "Deep Tech & Engineering Excellence: Driving India's Techade," emphasising how engineers play a critical



role in advancing key technological domains such as Artificial Intelligence (AI), Quantum Computing, Semiconductors,

Robotics, and Advanced Materials.

He stated that engineering innovation not only fosters national development but

also enhances India's position in the global competitive landscape.

Delivering the welcome address, CD Mungyak, Director cum Member Secretary of APSCS&T, stressed the importance of the day and encouraged students to actively engage in events that promote engineering excellence, innovation, and awareness.

He urged students to explore opportunities in emerging fields like AI, Quantum Computing, Robotics, and Semiconductors, which are integral to India's technological advancement.

Prof Moirangthem Marjit Singh, serving as the resource person, delivered an insightful lecture and presentation on "Role of Deep Tech and Engineering Excellence in India's Techade."

He shared his expertise with the students and participants, aiming to inspire them to explore cutting-edge technolo-

gies and pursue innovative career paths. His address sought to foster a culture of innovation and excellence among students and professionals alike.

As part of the celebrations, a quiz competition based on the theme was also organised to engage students and reinforce their understanding of deep technology and engineering contributions.

The event concluded with a vote of thanks delivered by Dr Pakngu Lombi, Scientist-D and Deputy Director (Technical), who expressed gratitude to all participants, resource persons, and organizing members for their efforts in making the event a success.

The official statement affirmed that such celebrations play a pivotal role in promoting scientific temper, technological advancement, and professional growth, while inspiring young minds to contribute to India's ongoing "Techade."

External distractions, own failings worry Pakistan in crucial Asia Cup match against UAE

DUBAI, Sept 16: Wedged between their own shortcomings and external distractions, Pakistan will have to lift their game by several notches to tame a tricky UAE in a Group A match to keep their Asia Cup campaign on track here on Wednesday.

In the aftermath of the 'Handshake Gate' against India on Monday, the PCB has sought the removal of match referee Andy Pycroft, and as per reports in the Pakistani media the country has threatened to pull out of the tournament if the Zimbabwean is not expelled.

Pycroft is scheduled to officiate as match referee during Pakistan's final league game of the tournament.

While the whole move is more administrative in nature and highly unlikely to materialise, the players will find it tough to cocoon themselves from the surrounding noise.

But that is only one part of the story as Pakistan has even more pressing concerns to address on the field.

Pakistan have one win and a defeat from two matches and are currently on the second spot with



two points, ahead of UAE (2 points) on net run rate -- 1.64 against -2.03 -- but a slip-up here will show them the exit.

The seven-wicket thrashing against India has revealed a certain brittleness in this Pakistan

side. After hammering minnows Oman by a large margin, Pakistan were schooled in the modern T20 game by world champions India.

Pakistan had no answers to the guiles of spinners Kuldeep Yadav

and Axar Patel as the Indian pair shared five wickets among them.

The Pakistan batters were also in a knot against spinner Varun Chakravathy.

If anything, that outing underlined the need for Pakistan's

emerging prospects like Saim Ayub, Sahibzada Farhan and Hasan Nawaz to raise their game against a top quality opposition.

The UAE game offers them a good chance to find their mojo to take their side to the Super 4s, as India have already qualified to the next stage from this group.

Similarly, Pakistan bowlers struggled against the aggression and skills of Indian batters as Abhishek Sharma took Shaheen Shah Afridi to the cleaners before skipper Suryakumar Yadav applied the finishing touches with customary flourish.

Leg-spinner Abrar Ahmed did reasonably well, but the likes of Mohammad Nawaz, touted as the world's best spinner by coach Mike Hesson, and Sufyan Muqeem will have to find a higher gear in this match.

While the UAE is certainly not India in cricketing terms, they can spring a surprise on their day.

They appeared to have recovered from the shellacking against India with a facile 42-run win over Oman.

Batters like skipper Mohammed Waseem and Alishan

Sharafu are well experienced in the T20 format, and they will be eager to prey on a distracted Pakistan unit.

In bowling, the UAE have experienced Junaid Siddique, who can be quite lively, and the parsimonious left-arm spinner Haider Ali, but he will require more support from fellow tweakers Dhruv Parashar and Harshit Kaushik.

Squads:
Pakistan: Salman Ali Agha (c), Abrar Ahmed, Faheem Ashraf, Fakhar Zaman, Haris Rauf, Hasan Ali, Hasan Nawaz, Hussain Talat, Khushdil Shah, Mohammad Harris, Mohammad Nawaz, Mohammad Waseem Jnr, Sahibzada Farhan, Saim Ayub, Salman Mirza, Shaheen Afridi, Sufyan Moqim.

United Arab Emirates: Muhammad Waseem (c), Alishan Sharafu, Aryansh Sharma, Asif Khan, Dhruv Parashar, Ethan D'Souza, Haider Ali, Harshit Kaushik, Junaid Siddique, Matiullah Khan, Muhammad Farooq, Muhammad Jawadullah, Muhammad Zohaib, Rahul Chopra, Rohid Khan, Simranjeet Singh, Saghir Khan. Match starts at 8pm IST. (PTI)

PV Sindhu overcomes first-round hurdle at China Masters

SHENZHEN (CHINA), Sept 16: Star India shutter PV Sindhu overcame the first-round hurdle, defeating Julie Dawall Jakobsen of Denmark in straight games to advance to the women's singles pre-quarterfinals of the China Masters Super 750 badminton tournament, here on Wednesday.

Sindhu, the two-time Olympic medallist, took just 27 minutes to decimate Jakobsen 21-4, 21-10. The win for the Indian comes less than 10 days after her opening-round loss in the Hong Kong Open Super 500 tournament where she had lost to another Dane Line Christophersen.

Sindhu, who has suffered six first-round exits on the BWF World Tour this year with the latest being the Hong Kong Open, was in her elements as the 30-year-old raced to a substantial lead in no time and finishing the opening game in slightly over 10 minutes.

The trend continued in the second game as well with the Indian, who had beaten the Dane in two previous occasions as well, taking a three-point lead at 4-1 before Jakobsen made it 4-4.

Thereafter, Sindhu displayed her experience and superior technique to finish off her opponent's challenge. She won six straight points to jump from 11-8 to 17-8, before closing out the contest.

The last time the two had met, in the opening round of the Yonex Swiss Open in March, Jakobsen had given a tough fight to Sindhu.

Young Ayush Shetty will take on sixth-seeded Chou Tien Chen in a men's singles first-round match later in the day, while the mixed doubles pair of Ruthvika Gadde and Rohan Kapoor will play Yuichi Shimogami and Sayaka Hobara.

Shetty, who had shocked Japan's Kodai Narooka last week, will look for another strong run against Chou. (PTI)

Mandhana reclaims No 1 spot in ICC ODI ranking for women batters after half-ton vs Australia

DUBAI, Sept 16 Star Indian top-order batter Smriti Mandhana reclaimed her No.1 spot in the latest ICC ODI ranking for women batters released on Tuesday, following her half-century in a losing cause against Australia.

Mandhana struck a 63-ball 58 in the opening game of the three-match series in Mullanpur but her effort went in vain as Australia overhauled the target with ease to go 1-0 up.

The No.1 spot will boost Mandhana's confidence going into the Women's Cricket World Cup, which starts on September 30. The half-century was enough for Mandhana to gain seven rating points and move four points ahead of England stalwart Nat Sciver-Brunt, who dropped to second spot.

Mandhana has 735 rating points to Sciver-Brunt's 731. Mandhana first held the No.1 ODI batter ranking in 2019 and has now had two stints in the top position in 2025.

India opener Pratika Rawal, who scored 64, jumped four spots to 42nd, while top-order batter Harleen Deol is now placed 43rd after a well-made 54 against Australia.

For Australia, left-handed stalwart Beth Mooney rose three spots to fifth following her unbeaten 77, while Annabel Sutherland (up four places) and Phoebe Litchfield (up 13 runs) shared the 25th place following half-centuries in the match their team won by eight wickets.

Pacer Kim Garth and spinner Alana King are up one spot each to be fourth and fifth in the ODI bowling ranking, their highest ever.

India spinner Sneha Rana, who took a wicket in the first ODI, improved five rungs to move to 13th, with England spinner Sophie Ecclestone maintaining her place as the No.1-ranked bowler. (PTI)

2nd Women's ODI: Fielding, spin bowling in focus as India look to draw level against Australia

MULLANPUR (PUNJAB), Sept 16: India's big defeat against Australia in the opening women's ODI may have come as a dampener ahead of the World Cup, but the team would look to level the series against Alyssa Healy's side with a stronger bowling and fielding effort in the second match here on Wednesday.

Skipper Harmanpreet Kaur's wards did well with the bat by putting up a challenging total, courtesy half-centuries from batting mainstays Pratika Rawal, charismatic opener Smriti Mandhana and Hareem Deol.

But poor fielding came back to haunt them yet again in the opening encounter of the three-match series. The four dropped catches let Australia, who would be India's toughest opponents apart from England in the women's World Cup scheduled later this month, off the hook and they managed to finish the task of chasing 281 runs in double-quick time.

Australia, on the other hand, seem to be pacing their preparations in a manner which could make them unstoppable in their quest for a record-extending eighth ODI World Cup title, something the Indian team management would be aware of.

The home conditions and pitches suit them, but the Indians still faltered and much of the blame lies with their fielding, middle and lower-order batting and the spinners, who are expected to spearhead India's quest for the elusive trophy.

The four spinners India employed in the opening match lacked the penetration, with only stalwart Sneha Rana managing a wicket, while the other

three -- Deepti Sharma, Shree Charani and Radha Yadav -- drew a blank.

Australia's familiarity to India conditions, given the time their cricketers now spend in the country playing the Women's Premier League and bilateral series, might also have helped them. In fact, Australia vice-captain Tahlia McGrath was spot on when she said before the series that her players "have been quite lucky" to be travelling to India every now and then. The loss should come as a wake-up call to India as any total in the vicinity of 300 can be easily chased by the Australians, who have in their ranks veterans of several T20 and ODI World Cup campaigns such as Healy, Beth Mooney, Phoebe Litchfield, Ellyse Perry and Annabel Sutherland.

All of them scored heavily in the previous game, showing the team is ready for the World Cup, beginning in less than a fortnight. Perry, though, could be a doubtful starter on Wednesday after she retired hurt on 30 in the first match. India's middle-order comprising Jemimah Rodrigues, wicketkeeper-batter Richa Ghosh and Deepti Sharma too would need to show the appetite to bat long and deep if India have to put up fighting totals consistently.

Despite scoring 281, with Rawal and Mandhana putting on 114 for the first wicket, India still fell short by 30-odd runs and Harmanpreet conceded that it was way below-par against a team like Australia. In that context, India would be hoping for a much improved effort in all three departments on Wednesday. (PTI)

ICC rejects PCB's demand to remove match referee Pycroft from Asia Cup

DUBAI, Sept 16: The ICC on Tuesday rejected Pakistan's demand to remove match referee Andy Pycroft from the panel of officials for the ongoing Asia Cup despite the PCB's reported threat of a pullout after blaming the Zimbabwean for the "no handshake" furore that followed the game against India.

The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) had filed a complaint with the ICC alleging that Pycroft asked its captain Salman Ali Agha not to shake hands with his Indian counterpart Suryakumar Yadav at the time of toss in their Asia Cup match on Sunday.

"Late last night, ICC had sent a reply to PCB stating that Pycroft won't be removed and their plea has been rejected," an ICC source told PTI. The 69-year-old Zimbabwean is due to officiate Pakistan's final group stage game against the UAE on Wednesday.

Pakistan team manager Naved Cheema had also filed a complaint with the Asian Cricket Council alleging that it was on Pycroft's in-



sistence that team sheets weren't exchanged between the two skipper on Sunday as is the norm.

After the match that India won by seven wickets, Suryakumar and his men did not exchange handshakes with their cross-border rivals as a mark of respect for the Pahalgam terror attack victims and their families.

Pycroft is one of the senior-most match referees in ICC Elite Panel with 695 international games to his credit (men and women across

three formats).

It is reliably learnt that the situation arose due to PCB's Director of Cricket Operations Usman Walha, who didn't apprise his own skipper about the rules and regulations that are to be followed during the tournament. It is learnt that an irate PCB chief Mohsin Naqvi, who is also the current chairman of the Asian Cricket Council (ACC), ordered the sacking of Walha on Monday for the embarrassment caused to the national cricket team

World C'ship gold achieved, Jaismine and Minakshi set sights on LA28

NEW DELHI, Sept 16: With the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics less than three years away, star Indian boxer Jaismine Lamboria said on Tuesday she will now channelise her energy to be ready for the quadrennial showpiece following her gold-winning performance at the World Championship in Liverpool recently.

Jaismine, who outclassed Paris Olympics silver medallist Julia SzereMETA in the 57kg summit clash to end her long wait for a medal, arrived here along with teammate and gold medallist Minakshi Hooda, Nikhat Zareen, Nupur Sheoran among others following Indian women boxers' best-ever world championship campaign on foreign soil.

"It feels good and winning a gold medal in itself is a matter of immense happiness. My coaches have helped me a lot in improving my game. I am feeling very good," said 24-year-old Jaismine, who achieved success in her third attempt at the Worlds.

"I missed out on medals twice, but now I have made a comeback with a gold, so it feels very satisfying. Yes, the training will be directed towards that (Olympic glory), and my coaches will work accordingly on my technical training," added the great granddaughter of legendary Indian boxer and two-time Asian Games gold medallist Hawa Singh.

Her coach Sandeep Lamboria expressed confidence in a medal-winning performance from Jaismine in

LA28.

"It (performance) was amazing. Our main target is the Los Angeles 2028 Olympics. She is the only girl who has won a medal in the Olympic weight category. She is going to rock in 2028," he added.

Debutant Minakshi, who out-punched Paris Olympics bronze medallist Nazym Kyzaibay of Kazakhstan in the 48kg final, for gold at the Worlds said she had set her sights on the World Cup in India in November.

"The World Cup will be held in India in November, and I want to win a gold medal there as well to make a name for the country. No one is perfect, and I will have to work on my skills and train hard. You learn a lot from defeats.

"After winning, you are happy for a couple of days, but you learn a lot from defeats. This was my first World Championship. I am very happy," said Minakshi.

Nupur, who bagged silver in Liverpool, said India winning four medals, including two gold, a silver and a bronze, had given the team the confidence of a far better showing in the World Cup.

"We had a good experience there. India was ranked third overall. We won four medals. Now, India will host the World Cup in November, and we will try to win as many medals as we can for the country.

"We've seen each other's struggles. When they (teammates) get success, it feels like personal success," said Nupur. (PTI)

Neeraj Chopra time at World C'ships: Star begins title defence with qualifying round

TOKYO, Sept 16: Indian javelin superstar Neeraj Chopra will begin his World Championship title defence with the qualification round here on Wednesday, taking on a blockbuster field that also features Olympic gold-winning Arshad Nadeem of Pakistan and Diamond League champion Julian Weber of Germany. Chopra will aim to become the third male javelin thrower in history to defend the World Championships gold he had won in 2023 edition in Budapest.

Czech legend Jan Zeleny (1993, 1995), who is now Chopra's coach, and Anderson Peters (2019, 2022) of Grenada are the other two who have won the world championships crown on two consecutive occasions. Chopra is set to face Nadeem for the first time after the 2024 Paris Olympics, giving him a chance to

avenge his second-place finish in the French capital. Nadeem had won gold in Paris with a monster throw of 92.97m while Chopra had a best of 89.45m that night. The Chopra-Nadeem clash will, however, not happen on Wednesday as the two rivals have been placed in two different groups in the qualifying round. They are expected to clash in the final round on Thursday.

Weber, Peters, Kenya's 2015 world champion Julius Yego, 2012 Olympic champion Keshorn Walcott of Trinidad and Tobago, veteran Jakob Vadlejš of Czech Republic as well as Brazil's Luiz da Silva, another 90m thrower, make up the rest of the starry field.

It would be a historic competition for India as Sachin Yadav, Yashvir Singh and Rohit Yadav will join Neeraj on the field, the biggest num-

ber among competing countries in the event. Chopra has been handed a wild card as defending champion while the other three made the cut through world rankings.

Chopra has been clubbed with Weber, Walcott, Vadlejš and Sachin in the 19-man Group A qualification round on Wednesday, while the 18-strong Group B will have Nadeem, Peters, Yego, Da Silva, Rohit, Yashvir, and rising Sri Lankan Ramesh Tharanga Pathiranga among others. Those who reach automatic qualifying mark of 84.50m or the best 12 will make it to the final round to be held on Thursday.

In the last edition in Budapest, Chopra had thrown 88.17m to win the gold, while Nadeem (87.82m) and Vadlejš (86.67m) had pocketed silver and bronze respectively.

It will not be easy for the 27-year-



old Chopra to nail the gold in Tokyo -- though it's the same arena where he won the Olympic gold to script history in 2021.

Chopra breached the coveted 90m mark with a 90.23m throw at the Doha Diamond League in May

but the year has also seen the Indian superstar logging some mediocre distances. He had failed to breach 85m in two competitions, went past a little over 85m on two occasions, and had a 86m-plus effort in another event. His second best throw this

year was 88.16m. On form, Weber will start as favourite as he has been the most consistent this season. The 31-year-old German has sent the spear to 90m-plus distances three times this year. He is the world leader with 91.51m and his confidence is high after winning the Diamond League trophy last month.

In head-to-head against Weber this season, Chopra trailed 1-3, the last meeting being last month's Diamond League Final where the Indian could only come up with an 85.01m for a second-place finish.

Nadeem, 28, has come into the World Championships after participating in just one event with the whole season. He won gold with a throw of 86.40m at the Asian Championships in South Korea in May, and that effort booked his place in the global showpiece. (PTI)