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## UPPL, BPF AND BJP ANNOUNCE CANDIDATES ●PRAMOD TO CONTEST FROM 2 CONSTITUENCIES

# Poll fever hots up in BTC constituencies



HT Correspondent

**KOKRAJHAR/GOSSAIGAON, Sept 1:** With the Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) elections drawing near, major political parties have stepped up their preparations by declaring candidates for the 40-member council.

According to official statements, the ruling United People's Party Liberal (UPPL), its main rival Bodoland People's Front (BPF), and ally Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) have each released lists of nominees, setting the stage for a high-stakes contest in the Bodoland region.

The polls are scheduled for September 22.

The UPPL, which heads the coalition council with the BJP and Gana Suraksha Party (GSP), released its final list of six candidates late on Sunday night.

Party president and incumbent Chief Executive Member (CEM) Pramod Boruah will contest from two constituencies — Dotoma and Goibari — while former Deputy CEM Kampa Borgoyari has been fielded from Debargaon and Chirang Duar.

The BPF, which held power in the BTC from its formation in 2005 until its ouster in the 2020 polls, also announced its full slate of candidates on Sunday.

Former CEM and party supremo

Hagrama Mohilyar will contest from Chirang Duar and Debargaon, setting up a direct clash with his former deputy Borgoyari, who is now with the UPPL.

Other prominent BPF nominees include Azamul Hoque from Fakiragram, Maneswar Brahma from Baganpara, and Jagadish Sarkar from Mwdwibari.

Meanwhile, the BJP, which had earlier announced 28 candidates, declared its nominees for four constituencies in Kokrajhar district, sparking enthusiasm among its grassroots workers.

BTC MCLA Sajal Singh has been fielded from 2 No. Guma, Rahul Narzary from 4 No Jamduar, Maheswar Basumatary from 6 No Kachugao, and Gosai Basumatary from 5 No Saraibil.

Each of these announcements triggered local celebrations, including felicitation programmes, processions, and traditional ceremonies.

Supporters welcomed the candidates with phulam gamosa and aronai, while some also offered prayers at local temples.

Addressing supporters in Kachugao, Maheswar Basumatary asserted that unlike previous representatives, the BJP is committed to delivering real development in the constituency. All four BJP (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

## Manipur civil society groups condemn killing of Thadou leader

**IMPHAL, Sept 1:** Civil society groups of Manipur on Monday expressed shock over the purported killing of a Thadou leader in Assam.

In a statement, the Coordinating Committee on Manipur Integrity (COCOMI) said it has been shaken to its core by the horror and extremity of the murder of Nehkam Jomhao.

The killing is aimed at silencing those who dare to dream of a peaceful and undivided state, the COCOMI said.

Jomhao, who lived in a rented accommodation in Kuki Basti in Assam's Karbi Anglong district, was purportedly killed with sharp weapons on Saturday night and his body thrown into the nearby Jamuna river. His body is yet to be found.

He was a part of the delegation of Thadou Inpi Manipur (TIM) that held talks (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

## Law-abiding Muslims 'will face no problem': Himanta

**PATHARKANDI, Sept 1:** Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Monday said Muslims who abide by the law and culture of the country "will face no problem".

Referring to a Muslim journalist who was present during his interaction with the press on the sidelines of a programme here, Sarma said that when Azharuddin sings in praise of Rabindranath Tagore, "everything in Bharat will become Bharatiya".

"We have been saying that the Muslims who think Bharat is their own are with us. If they are in Bharat, they have to abide by the law and culture of the land. Then there is no problem. You will stay in Barak and listen to the Bangladesh radio, it cannot happen. You should listen to Bharat's radio," he said.

Asked by a journalist about developmental activities in the area, the CM said everything will be taken care of.



Sarma then sought to know the name of the journalist, who introduced himself as Azharuddin. This prompted the chief minister to add with a laugh, "It is because your name is Azharuddin, you are asking such questions. That's why something is wrong with you."

"When Azharuddin will sing 'joygaan' (songs of praise) of Rabindranath Tagore, everything in Bharat will become Bharatiya. Till Azharuddin speaks in favour of

Karimganj, it won't happen," he said, referring to changing the name of Karimganj district to Sribhum.

"Azharuddin should also stand in favour of Tagore, then Hindu-Muslims will become one," he said.

Shaking hands with the journalist, Sarma mentioned the former Indian cricket team captain of the same name and said, "He was a big cricket player. But in the end, he went for match fixing."

The chief minister asserted that Bengali Hindus are 100 per cent safe in Assam, maintaining that they were not facing any problems since he took over.

He said classification as Assamese Hindus, Bengali Hindus, and Tamil Hindus was wrong, as all Hindus are one.

Asked about Hindu people left out of the updated National Register of Citizens (NRC), he said, "Leave the (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

## IIT-G team creates nanosensor for detecting cancer-causing water pollutants



**GUWAHATI, Sept 1:** Researchers at IIT-Guwahati have developed nanosensor from milk protein and thymine for instant detection of cancer-causing water pollutants, the institute said on Monday.

Using carbon dots and ultraviolet lights, the sensor can detect mercury and harmful antibiotic contamination in less than 10 seconds, it said.

With rapid urbanisation, industrial activities and overuse of pharmaceuticals, water contamination is becoming a pressing issue, putting ecosystems and human health at risk worldwide, the institute said in a statement.

Tetracyclines are a class of antibiotics commonly used for pneumonia and respiratory infections. If it is not disposed properly, it can easily enter the environment, contaminating the water, which can result in antibiotic resistance and other health hazards.

Similarly, mercury, in its organic form, can cause cancer, neurological disorders, cardiovascular disease and other life-threatening conditions, it said.

Detecting these pollutants accurately and quickly is essential to protect both water quality and public health.

To address this challenge, the IIT-Guwahati research team has created nanosensor, a sensor built from extremely small materials that are a few billionths of a metre in size, according to the statement.

The sensor uses carbon dots that glow under ultraviolet light. In the presence of harmful substances such as mercury or tetracyclines, the glow of these carbon dots dim, providing a quick and visible signal of contamination, it said.

To ensure its versatile utility, the researchers have tested the sensor in a variety of environments such as tap and river water, milk, urine and serum samples, IIT-Guwahati said.

The research is at a laboratory stage and the findings are subject to further validation, the statement added. (PTI)

## New Immigration & Foreigners Act comes into effect

### Severe punishment for forging passport, visa

**NEW DELHI, Sept 1:** A new Act that regulates matters related to foreigners and immigration and has provisions for heavy punishment for carrying a forged passport or visa came into effect on Monday.

The Immigration and Foreigners Act, 2025, was passed by parliament during the Budget session, and President Droupadi Murmu gave her assent on April 4, 2025.

"In exercise of the powers conferred by sub-section (2) of section 1 of the Immigration and Foreigners Act, 2025 (13 of 2025), the central government hereby appoints the 01st day of September, 2025, as the date on which the provisions of the said Act shall come into force," said a notification issued by Nitesh Kumar Vyas, additional secretary in the Ministry of Home Affairs.

According to the law, henceforth, anyone found to be using a forged passport or visa for entering into India or staying in or exiting from the country will be punishable with a jail term of up to seven years and a fine to the extent of ₹ 10 lakh.

The Act also provides for manda-

tory reporting of information about foreigners by hotels, universities and other educational institutions, hospitals and nursing homes to enable tracking of overstaying foreigners.

All international airlines and ships will also be required to submit at a port or place in India to a civil authority or immigration officer the passenger and crew manifest, the advance information of passengers and crew on board such aircraft, vessel or other mode of transport.

"Whoever knowingly uses or supplies a forged or fraudulently obtained passport or other travel document or visa for entering into India or staying in or exiting from India, shall be punishable with an imprisonment for a term which shall not be less than two years, but may extend to seven years and shall also be liable to fine which shall not be less than one lakh rupees, but may extend to ten lakh rupees," according to the Act.

It also says that any foreigner who enters into any area in India without a valid passport or other travel (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)



## AFGHANISTAN EARTHQUAKE

# 800 dead, 2,500 injured



**KABUL, Sept 1:** A devastating 6.0 magnitude earthquake struck eastern Afghanistan late Sunday night, killing at least 800 people and injuring more than 2,500, according to figures released by the Taliban government.

The tremor, centred near Jalalabad in Nangarhar province, struck at 11:47 pm and was shallow in depth, intensifying its destructive impact. Kunar province

was reported as the worst affected, with entire villages reduced to rubble.

Rescue efforts continued through the night, with desperate survivors digging with bare hands to locate missing relatives as buildings collapsed around them.

Many victims, including children and the elderly, remained trapped under debris, while emergency teams rushed in from

Kunar, Nangarhar, and Kabul to provide medical assistance.

Eyewitnesses described the quake as feeling like "the whole mountain was shaking," with homes collapsing within seconds and people screaming for help.

Survivors recounted harrowing escapes, while others mourned the loss of multiple family members. Poorly constructed houses of mud brick and wood in rural areas added to the scale of destruction.

Authorities cautioned that the death toll could rise as reports from remote mountainous areas are still awaited. Taliban officials assured that all available resources would be deployed for rescue and relief operations.

The disaster comes less than two years after a similar quake in 2023 that killed thousands, underlining Afghanistan's vulnerability to natural calamities. (Further details on Page-6)

## 2.6 magnitude quake jolts state

**GUWAHATI, Sept 1:** An earthquake of 2.6 magnitude struck central Assam on Monday afternoon, officials said.

There is no immediate report of any injury to anyone or damage to property, they said.

A National Centre for Seismology report said the quake was recorded at 3:56 pm in Karbi Anglong district on the southern bank of the Brahmaputra, at a depth of 5 km.

The exact location of the epicentre is around 43 km south-east of Tezpur in central Assam.

People in neighbouring Nagaon, Hojai and Golaghat districts, besides Sonitpur and Biswanath on the northern bank of the Brahmaputra, also felt the tremor, prompting people to scamper out of their homes to open areas.

The northeast falls in the high seismic zone, making earthquakes frequent in the region, the officials said. (PTI)

## India-Russia ties pillar of regional & global stability: Modi

### 'Humanity's call to end the Ukraine conflict as soon as possible'

**TIANJIN (CHINA), Sept 1:** India and Russia stood "shoulder-to-shoulder" even in most difficult situations and their ties are crucial for global peace and stability, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said during a meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin on Monday, amid a major downturn in New Delhi's ties with the US.

Modi and Putin met on the sidelines of the annual summit of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) with a focus on expanding bilateral cooperation in economic, financial, and energy



sectors.

In his televised remarks, Modi also said that 140 crore Indians are "eagerly waiting" to welcome the Russian leader in India in December.

"This is a reflection of the depth and scope of our Special and Privileged Strategic Partnership. India and Russia have always stood shoulder-to-shoulder even in the most difficult situations," he said.

"Our close cooperation is important not only for the people of both countries, but also for global peace, stability, and prosperity," Modi said.

Before the official talks, the two leaders held informal conversation as they travelled to the venue of their bilateral meeting in the same car after concluding engagements at the SCO summit. The Russian president waited for about 10 minutes for PM Modi to join him before boarding the car.

Modi and Putin spent another 45 minutes in the car even after reaching the venue, people familiar with the matter said.

In his remarks at the meeting, Modi also said that India welcomes all the recent efforts towards establishing peace in Ukraine, adding it is humanity's call to find a way to end the hostilities as soon as possible.

"We've been having regular dis-

cussions on the ongoing conflict in Ukraine. We welcome all the recent efforts towards establishing peace," Modi said.

"We hope that all parties shall proceed ahead constructively. A way must be found to end this conflict and establish lasting peace. This is the aspiration of the entire humanity," he added.

It is understood that the Indian side briefed Putin about Modi's phone conversation with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy on Saturday.

After dialling Modi, Zelenskyy said India is ready to make the necessary efforts and to deliver the appropriate signal to Russia.

In his comments, Putin said Russia and India have maintained "special friendly and trust-based" relations for decades and it is the foundation for the future development of the ties. "These relations are entirely (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

## Author traces journey, history, and global fragments of Sankaradeva-era textile

# British Museum's 'Vrindavani Vastra' largest surviving devotional textile, but not oldest: Book

**GUWAHATI, Sept 1:** The Vrindavani Vastra, which the British Museum has agreed to loan to Assam for display in 2027, may not be the only surviving devotional textile of its genre, but is certainly the largest existing one in the world, points out author T. Richard Blurton.

Blurton, in his book 'Krishna in the Garden of Assam', states that it "surely is the largest but not thought to be the oldest... with the earliest such 'Vrindavani Vastra' textile fragments believed to be now in the Los Angeles County Museum of Art and the Musée Guimet in Paris."

Around 20 fragments of the 'Vrindavani Vastra' survive today, some sewn together like the one in the British Museum, and others preserved as single or partial lengths,



the author says in the only book written on the historically significant textile tradition from Assam.

Besides the one in the British Museum, Blurton also highlights

the "comparable but previously little-known textile, the 'Chepstow Coat' in Chepstow Museum, Wales," which resembles a "gentleman's dressing gown, but when the

garment is opened up there is a flash of colour and lively figuration of a lining made up of a 'Vrindavani Vastra'-type woven silk textile."

Other than the large cloth in the British Museum, there are smaller examples that survive as the backing for 'Thangkas' (Tibetan Buddhist religious scrolls) and are now preserved in the British Museum, the Victoria and Albert Museum and the Newark Museum, New Jersey, Blurton claims.

The book traces the journey of the silk textile from the banks of the Brahmaputra in Assam to the monasteries of Tibet and finally to London along with the history, religion and context of the much-travelled textile. The book points out that there is (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

## Grasslands in Manas National Park shrink by 50 pc in three decades

**GUWAHATI, Sept 1:** Grasslands in Assam's Manas National Park and Tiger Reserve have shrunk by nearly 50 per cent in the last three decades due to various factors, including climate change, officials said.

Manas National Park (MNP) and Tiger Reserve Field Director C Ramesh told PTI that grasslands paving the way for woodlands is a natural process that takes over 100 years but it has accelerated in the UNESCO World Heritage Site, forcing herbivorous animals to get concentrated in areas where grasses are available.

"We are witnessing that the grassland expanse is shrinking and woodlands are increasing. That's a part of succession, but it is happening very rapidly, and that is a cause of concern for us as grasslands are crucial for the ecosystem," he said. "As per our records, we have lost



almost 50-60 per cent of our grasslands in the last 30-35 years," he added. Ramesh stated that the trees and shrubs that are replacing grasslands are of native species. With woodlands replacing the grasslands, animals are getting concentrated in areas that have grass.

"Non-territorial animals such as deer roam around the park to feed on grass. Now, they are getting concentrated in available grasslands," Ramesh said. The grasslands of the national park (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)







# PM has to go to all places for diplomatic relations: Himanta

**PATHARKANDI, Sept 1:** Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Monday sought to downplay Congress' criticism of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's talks with Chinese President Xi Jinping, asserting that the PM has to visit various places for diplomatic relations.

Sarma said that even before and after the Pahalgam terror attack, "Chinese people had come and we have to meet them, talk to them".

"The prime minister will go to China, America, England... He will go to all the places for diplomatic relations," Sarma told reporters on the sidelines of a programme here.

"Diplomacy means discussion and negotiation," Sarma added.

The Congress has slammed the BJP-led central government after the Modi-Xi talks, accusing it of "cowardly kowtowing" and capitulation to the "so-called dragon".

The party also termed as "anti-



national" Modi's silence on Pakistan-China "jugalbandi" during Operation Sindoor. India and China on Sunday vowed to expand trade and investment ties to stabilise global commerce as

Modi and Xi agreed to deepen bilateral ties to combat pressing challenges and work towards a "fair" solution to the festering border issue.

The talks between the two

leaders covered a range of issues, including reducing India-China trade deficit, tackling challenges like terrorism, and ensuring fair trade on multilateral platform. (PTI)

## BJP stages protest rally in Diphu against remark on PM's mother

**HT Bureau**

**DIPHU, Sept 1:** In protest against Congress MP Rahul Gandhi, for the 'derogatory' remark made on Prime Minister Narendra Modi's mother by a Congress worker in the presence of Rahul Gandhi during his recent Bihar visit, the BJP workers and supporters led by Chief Executive Member (CEM) of Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC), Tuliram Ronghang and BJP-East Karbi Anglong District Committee, president, Roland Killing, a massive protest rally was organised in Diphu town on Monday. The rally was spearheaded by BJP Lumbajong Mandal, BJYM, and BJMM. The rally was largely attended by leaders, karyakartas, and citizens to defend the dignity of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

The rally kicked off from Karbi Anglong Sports Association (KASA) stadium, went through the busy road of Diphu market and culminated from where it started.

At KASA stadium the CEM



said, "A Congress worker had made a derogatory remark on Prime Minister Narendra Modi's mother in the presence of Rahul Gandhi in a Congress meeting in Bihar. The BJP party East Karbi Anglong strongly condemned the Congress party and Rahul Gandhi, who is an irresponsible leader for the offensive remarks made upon the Prime Minister Narendra Modi's mother. The congress is

trying to defame the Prime Minister and his mother by making such remarks."

The rally was joined by Diphu MLA Bidyasing Bidya Sing Englang; KAAC Chairman, Raju Tisso; Executive Member (EM), KAAC, Madhuram Lekthe and Bili Mohan Khaklary and Member of Autonomous Council (MACs), Headings Rongphar, Johnny Timung and Mongve Rongpi.

## Dr Ajit Baruah receives Nagrik Mahiyan Award

**HT Correspondent**

**GOLAGHAT, Sept 1:** Noted Writer and former Chairman of Golaghat Municipal Board Dr Ajit Baruah was honored with the "Nagrik Mahiyan award -2025" by the citizen forum of Golaghat -- Golaghat Nagrik Mancha on 30 August at Amateur Theatre Hall on its 30th establishment day. Wazidur Rahman, the President of the forum, presided over the felicitation programme where Dr Ajit Baruah remembered his father freedom fighter Biplabi Bir Shankar Baruah and dedicated this award to him. Retd. Professor Dr. Amarendra Nath Dutta, Principal of Furkating College Dr Apurba Saikia and Social worker Shanti Handique were also felicitated on the occasion.

Rohit Gogoi, secretary of the forum, made his inaugural speech and Biswajit Saikia, working President of the forum, stated the journey of the forum until now. Distinguished persons like Retd. Professor and film maker Dinesh Gogoi, Senior journalist Dwipen Dutta, publisher Khirud Ch Goswami and GDA president Sanjib Kr Das were also present in the gathering.

## Samuguri Shiv Mandir Durga Puja forms committee

**HT Correspondent**

**HOWRAGHAT, Sept 1:** In a meeting held in the premises of Samuguri Durga Puja Mandir it was decided that the existing Samuguri Shiv Mandir Durga Puja Committee will be as it is and carry out any further programmes.

The meeting was chaired by Chambhu Goswami and addressed by the Secretary Dulu Dey. The Committee has Arpan Nath as president, Biju Nath as vice president and Dulu Dey as Secretary with 32 members. The meeting also presented the accounts of the old committee.

## KSA urges relocation of APBN camp from Zirikindeng to Restore Samagra Shiksha Office

**HT Bureau**

**DIPHU, Sept 1:** The Hamren District Committee of Karbi Students Association (KSA) of Sumit Timung faction submitted a memorandum to the District Magistrate, West Karbi Anglong, urging for vacating the APBN camp from Zirikindeng for restoration of the office of Block Mission Coordinator of Samagra Shiksha, Socheng Education Block. The memorandum was submitted on August 29 last.

The KSA said during the ethnic violence witnessed in West Karbi Anglong and Karbi Anglong in 2005, and for security reasons the APBN has camped at Zirikindeng occupying the office building of the Block Mission Coordinator, Samagra Shiksha, Socheng Education Block. While the office of the Block Mission Coordinator, Samagra Shiksha office was then shifted to Cherom village.

Though there is normalcy with no unrest, the APBN have not vacated Zirikindeng. The KSA demanded that the APBN camp should be immediately relocated to resume the Block Mission Coordinator, Samagra Shiksha office at Zirikindeng. The memorandum was submitted by secretary, KSA, Hamren District Committee, Rensing Terang; incharge of KSA Hamren district committee, Kangthim Engti and members.

## CM distributes cheques to under Mukhya Mantrir Mahila Udyamita Abhiyan

**HT Correspondent**

**SRIBHUMI, Sept 1:** Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Monday presented financial assistance to women beneficiaries under the flagship Mukhya Mantrir Mahila Udyamita Abhiyan during a special programme held at Pathakkandi in Sribhumi.

Addressing a large gathering of women and local residents, the Chief Minister reiterated his government's commitment to empowering women through sustainable livelihood opportunities and entrepreneurship. He said that the Mukhya Mantrir Mahila Udyamita Abhiyan has been designed to encourage women to become self-reliant by supporting them in launching and expanding small businesses, thereby contributing to the state's economic growth.

While handing over the cheques, Sarma highlighted that women form the backbone of society and

empowering them ensures overall development of the community. He encouraged the beneficiaries to make proper use of the financial assistance by investing in productive ventures such as agriculture, handloom, handicrafts, small-scale trade, and other entrepreneurial activities.

The programme witnessed enthusiastic participation from hundreds of women beneficiaries who expressed their gratitude to the Chief Minister and the state government for the support. Local leaders and officials of the district administration were also present to coordinate the event.

Sarma further emphasized that his government will continue to roll out schemes aimed at women empowerment, skill development, and entrepreneurship promotion, ensuring that women from both rural and urban areas can benefit equally.

## Assam Cong files police complaint against BJP for vandalism, damage to property

**GUWAHATI, Sept 1:** The Assam unit of the Congress on Monday lodged a police complaint against the BJP for vandalism and damage of property during a protest by the saffron party the previous day, officials said.

The BJP had on Sunday organised a march to the Congress headquarters in Assam to protest against alleged abuses hurled at Prime Minister Narendra Modi during the 'Voter Adhikar Yatra' in Bihar.

The Congress' complaint by its state general secretary (administration) Pradyut Kr Bhuyan alleged that the BJP launched a "premeditated attack" on the Rajiv Bhawan, the headquarters of the opposition party.

"The group, numbering more than five persons, acted in a riotous manner, shouting slogans, and forcefully tried to enter the compound, thereby committing criminal trespass," it said.

The complaint also alleged that BJP members tore down posters and banners displayed outside Rajiv Bhawan, causing damage to property belonging to the Congress party.

Congress named BJP vice-presidents Ratna Singh and Juri Sharma Bordoloi, media convener Rupam Goswami, spokesperson Rajiv Sharma and members Gunjan Sharma, Niharendra Sarma, Purabee Roy and Sidhanku Ankur Barua as the instigators of the crowd.

"These individuals were seen

directing the mob, encouraging the vandalism and actively participating in the threats and assault," according to the complaint.

Bhuyan urged the police to register the complaint and initiate an investigation.

When contacted, a senior officer of the Guwahati Police told PTI that no FIR has been registered yet, as the complaint is being probed.

Under the initiative of the BJP Guwahati Metropolitan District, a 'Rajiv Bhawan Gherao' programme was carried out at the Congress headquarters here on Sunday afternoon.

Scores of BJP members had marched from Bhangagarh to the Congress office in ABC point, where police prevented them from

moving further.

The party members had protested against Rahul Gandhi and the Congress, and demanded that the Leader of the Opposition in Lok Sabha unconditionally apologise before the people of the country.

BJP leaders have been attacking the Congress after a purported video showed an unidentified person using a Hindi expletive against Modi from a dais raised during the yatra in Darbhanga town, from where Rahul Gandhi, her sister Priyanka Vadra and RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav had left for Muzaffarpur on motorcycles on Wednesday.

PTI could not independently verify the authenticity of the video. (PTI)

## Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma to visit Hojai

**HT Correspondent**

**HOJAI, Sept 1:** Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma will visit Hojai district on Tuesday. As per information, Chief Minister will have a tight schedule in Hojai District. Firstly, CM will distribute cheques among the beneficiaries under MMUA at the District Headquarter Srimanta Sankardev Sports Ground at 10 am and address the Public. After that, at 12:30 pm, CM will participate in the program organized at Gopal Mandir and Geeta Ashram at Doboka. Then, CM will inaugurate the newly built Sir Jagdish Chandra Bose Campus of Rabindranath Thakur Vishwavidyalaya built at Sagar Basti in Hojai. After the inauguration, CM will address the students and dignitaries present. On the other hand, Hojai District Administration is fully prepared to welcome Chief Minister.

## Pradyut Bordoloi visits his home town

**HT Correspondent**

**MARGHERITA, Sept 1:** Senior Assam Congress leader and two-time Nagaon MP Pradyut Bordoloi drew a massive turnout in Margherita on Monday where over more than 500 workers from BJP, AGP and smaller parties formally joined the Congress.

Pradyut Bordoloi arrived in his hometown Margherita where Congress party workers welcome him through a grand motorcycle rally that stretched from Powai Railway Gate to Margherita Congress Bhawan, signalling strong local enthusiasm as at the Congress Bhawan, where Pradyut Bordoloi addressed a packed gathering of nearly 4,000 party workers during a meeting and BLA training camp.

The defections marked a notable boost for the Congress in the 83rd Margherita Legislative Assembly Constituency, a seat where party presence has been

under pressure in recent years.

The shift of workers from rival parties was seen as a morale booster for local cadres ahead of upcoming political battles.

Speaking at the event Pradyut Bordoloi launched a scathing attack on the BJP government, accusing it of failing the people of Assam and promising that Congress would present a stronger alternative.

APCC Secretary Avinash Gogoi, APCC General Secretary Debo Chetia, APCC Spokesperson Mausam Baruah, Tinsukia District Congress Committee vice presidents Rudra Sharma, Satender Prasad, Tinsukia District Youth Congress president Parag Jyoti Konwar, General Secretary (Admin), Margherita BLOCK Congress Committee president (i) Toufik Khan, General Secretary Alfaz Ahmed, Arup Sharma, Social Media Chairman Ritu Konwar and many senior most Congress leaders and workers were present.

## Yoga Vikas Kendra observes 4th foundation day at Surdarshanalaya auditorium

**HT Correspondent**

**GUWAHATI, Sept 1:** The Yoga Vikas Kendra, a unit of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), celebrated its 4th foundation day at the Surdarshanalaya auditorium in Guwahati.

The event was marked with great enthusiasm and fervor. During the inaugural ceremony, Bashistha Buzarbaruah, the Assam Prant Pracharak of RSS, emphasized the importance of Indian yoga tradition in transforming humans into "Nar Narayan" by improving their physical, mental, and spiritual well-being.

Yogacharya Shubhashish Kar, the founder President of the Indian Yoga Culture and Yoga Therapy Center, delivered the inaugural address, highlighting the scientific basis of yoga. He also mentioned that the Chief Minister of Assam, Dr Himanta Biswa Sarma, has plans to establish a Yoga University in the state.

The event included a yoga competition, and distribution of prizes to the winners. The function was attended by over 100 yoga trainees, who were inspired by the speeches and discussions on yoga.

The program was smoothly conducted by Rameswar Thakuria, and the audience expressed their gratitude to the RSS for providing facilities for yoga practice and training through the Yoga Vikas Kendra.



**HT Correspondent**

**NAGAON, Sept 1:** Devsons Group presented the prestigious Devsons special literary award to Paban Kumar Borah, a noted writer from Nagaon. The award, which carries a cash of Rs one lakh, a recitation, memento, jaapi, sorai, and a collection of books, is given annually to recognize outstanding contributions to Assamese literature.

While addressing the occasion, Dr Amarendra Narayan Dev, the founder of Devsons Group and descendant of the historical Darrangi king, emphasized the importance of looking at people with disabilities with respect rather than pity. He also highlighted that the real problem lies not with society but with people's mindset, which has lost trust and empathy.

The ceremony was inaugurated by Bhargav Kumar Das, a prominent figure in journalism of the state, and Pranjal Sarma, a well-known announcer and singer. Paban Kumar Borah expressed his gratitude and stated that the award will make him more accountable as a writer.

Rupam Talukdar, a noted singer from Assam, enthralled the audience with two popular songs. Tarun Azad Deka, a researcher and scholar of folk culture, attended the event as the chief guest and delivered a thought-provoking speech.

The Devsons special literary award has been presented annually since 2015 to recognize the literary talents of people with disabilities in Assam. The award for the current year was given to Paban Kumar Borah for his outstanding contributions to Assamese literature, particularly for his books "Rangmanar Jivan" and "Pratyahban".

## New Bongaigaon Workshop of NFR achieves performance benchmark

**HT Bureau**

**GUWAHATI, Sept 1:** The Carriage & Wagon Workshop at New Bongaigaon under Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR) has achieved a new benchmark in performance and innovation during the month of August 2025.

The workshop successfully carried out the conversion of 10 BRN wagons from fixed-head type to foldable-head type for the first time. This initiative will enhance the availability of high-capacity flat wagons, which play a vital role in transporting

heavy and over-dimensional consignments as well as meeting the logistical requirements of defence forces. In wagon maintenance, the workshop achieved a record outturn of 49 BOXN variant wagons in a single month, backed by innovative in-house modifications such as blocking and reducing door heights. The cumulative outturn of 149 wagons during the month marks a substantial leap when compared to the average monthly outturn of just 12 BOXN wagons in the last financial year. This milestone will significantly contribute towards enhancing

freight wagon availability, thereby supporting the growing transportation needs of Indian Railways.

The workshop carried out its first-ever overhauling of Escort make Bogie Mounted Brake System (BMBS) brake cylinders-a task never before attempted at New Bongaigaon. This new capability will enable smoother maintenance and faster turn-around of BMBS-equipped wagons, underlining the workshop's technical readiness to handle modern freight stock.

## Governor attends 48th State managing committee meeting for Armed Forces Flag Day

**HT Bureau**

**GUWAHATI, Sept 1:** Governor Lakshman Prasad Acharya chaired the 48th state managing committee meeting for administration of Armed Forces Flag Day fund for welfare and rehabilitation of ex-servicemen at the conference hall of NABARD in Dispur, here today. The meeting discussed several issues pertaining to the welfare of the ex-servicemen and their families.

In the meeting, the Governor expressed his appreciation to all stakeholders who have shown their commitment to the cause of soldiers' welfare. He termed the meeting not just an administrative procedure, but a step towards restoring trust and justice for the state's ex-servicemen.

The Governor said, "It is a unique opportunity to chair the State Managing Committee Meeting of the Armed Forces Flag Day Fund that deals with issues related to welfare and rehabilitation of our veterans, war wid-



ows, war heroes, disabled soldiers and their dependents. I always feel a deep sense of pride in being part of events that honour our soldiers whether it is Armed Forces Flag Day, Kargil Vijay Diwas, or interactions with Veer Naris and veterans. The Raj Bhawan remains committed to addressing your

concerns and upholding your dignity."

Stressing on strengthening transparency and integrity in welfare efforts in the institutions like the Rajya Sainik Board, the Governor said that the activities of the Board are directly linked to the lives of the brave soldiers and their families. He observed that the

highest ethical standards should be maintained while managing their welfare.

During meeting, the Governor referred to his recent engagement with the "Rishte Sainik Se" program, organized by the State Sainik Board and the Directorate of Sainik Welfare, where he directly interacted with ex-servicemen for better understanding of their needs and challenges. He observed that the welfare of soldiers and their families is a cornerstone of national development and security, and it is the collective responsibility of the nation to honour and support their sacrifices.

The Governor in the meeting highlighted the efforts being made at both the central and state levels to modernize and improve welfare delivery through digital platforms. He reiterated that initiatives such as the Digital Sainik Portal and e-Governance systems are simplifying access to pensions, healthcare, and welfare benefits.



## QUOTE OF THE DAY

Only the wisest and stupidest of men never change.  
—Confucius

## Upward trend of economy

India's economy has once again surprised on the upside. The first quarter of FY26 clocked a 7.8% expansion, a five-quarter high that has been hailed as evidence of resilience and momentum. In a world where global growth is sputtering, the figure drew applause as another data point in India's much-narrated ascent. Manufacturing grew by nearly 8%, services surged by over 9%, and private consumption expanded by 7%. Government spending also played a decisive role, with the Centre deploying nearly a quarter of its budgeted capital expenditure in just the first three months, while states front-loaded their own allocations. For headline writers, the numbers offered an irresistible story: India sprinting ahead even as others stumble. Yet, scratch beneath the surface and the story looks far less assured. The quarter's print was flattered by statistical quirks, frontloaded activity, and one-off supports. What lies ahead is more sobering. External shocks, fragile consumption, slowing nominal growth, and fiscal pressures threaten to turn this sprint into a stumble. The very factors that made Q1 shine could become drags in the second half of the year.

The most striking distortion comes from the GDP deflator—the measure that adjusts nominal output for inflation. With wholesale and consumer inflation sharply lower, real GDP looks larger even though nominal GDP slowed to 8.8% from 10.8% in the previous quarter. In essence, the economy did not create dramatically more value in rupee terms; falling prices made the same activity appear bigger. This “deflator dividend” exaggerates growth when inflation dips, and shrinks it when prices rise. Policymakers know well that nominal GDP matters more for revenues, debt servicing, and corporate performance. A slowdown from double-digit to single-digit nominal growth is no trivial matter—it means fewer taxes collected, weaker earnings, and more stress on balance sheets. Gross Fixed Capital Formation grew in line with expectations, but the driver was almost entirely the state. The Centre and states delivered the bulk of the push through infrastructure projects, highways, and public works.

Exports boosted the Q1 print, but for reasons that are unlikely to endure. Shipments were frontloaded to beat looming tariffs, with goods to the US surging more than 20% in the April-July period. Now that steep bilateral tariffs are in force, exporters face a very different reality. Labour-intensive sectors such as textiles, apparel, and leather—already operating on razor-thin margins—face the prospect of being priced out of key markets. Some firms may withdraw from global competition altogether, cutting not just output but also employment. The fallout is not confined to factories; it will ripple into small towns and villages where export-linked livelihoods dominate.

## Xi-Modi meeting sends some positive signals for Indian Foreign Policy

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's bilateral talks with the Chinese President Xi Jinping on Sunday at Tianjin in China on the sidelines of Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) summit have sent some very positive signals which may herald the evolution of an independent foreign policy of India voicing the interests of the Global South.

If what the Indian Prime Minister said at the Tianjin talks with the Chinese President is followed up to its true spirit, it is sure to herald into a new era of Indian diplomacy doing away with the direction of the last few years when India was seen by the Global South as the partner of the USA in its global strategy.

The most important outcome of the talks of the leaders of the two Asian countries with the total population of 288 crore, is the emphasis of both China and India on the concept of strategic autonomy and looking at both not as rivals but as partners. Further, both the leaders agreed not to see each other through a third country lens. This understanding can be a game changer for India and China in improving the bilateral relations to a new high. The only condition is there has to be trust between the two leaderships and the strategic autonomy concept has to be followed by both countries in true spirit.

Both Narendra Modi and Xi Jinping held such detailed bilateral discussions after a gap of seven years since their earlier summit talks in 2018. But the situation this time was different in the context of the current trade war against India launched by US President Donald Trump with his imposition of a total of 50 per cent tariffs on Indian exports to USA. This tariff is largest among the Asian countries. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's emphasis not to see relations through third country's prism is specially significant as the Chinese commentators are saying that, re-buffed by Trump, the Indian PM has started wooing China. Narendra Modi challenged this assessment by saying that this was a part of India's faith in strategic autonomy for each country and the right to have independent foreign policy. This has been confirmed also in the statement issued by the Chinese foreign ministry. It is a well known fact that both border issues and India's membership of US sponsored QUAD acted as the major irritants to the improvement of India-China relations since the Galwan clash in 2020. Now on border, Xi said at the meeting that both countries should not let the border issue define the overall relationship. Both countries must handle ties from a strategic and long term perspective. Indian PM must have found this approach of Chinese President quite pragmatic. Otherwise India would not have agreed to start direct air flights to China and making tourist visas more easier for the



Chinese residents.

There is another victory point of the Indian Prime Minister relating to fight against terrorism. Chinese President was candid in condemning the Pahalgal killings and extending support to India's fight against terrorism. The SCO declaration also mentioned Pahalgal killings and called for action against the perpetrators. The SCO naturally did not mention of Pakistan, but the tone of the SCO resolution was far stronger compared to the SCO defence minister's declaration where Pahalgal was not mentioned but Balochistan killings were taken note of. Indian defence minister Rajnath Singh refused to sign that declaration. The change in SCO declaration in favour of India now was due to the efforts of the Indian PM who had far more bigger stature compared to the Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif who was also present at SCO meet as a full member. The main thrust is that if the spirit shown in the Xi-Modi talks is followed up, the other areas like more investments by China in India and allowing India to import more to China can be easily tackled at official level. The domestic market of both these countries are so vast that ways can be found out for collaboration in ensuring that China gets benefit through more investments and India through more exports to China to take care of a part of its trade shock from USA.

But what about India and QUAD? This irritant for China remains. This is all due to Modi's personal tilt in favour of USA during the first regime of Donald Trump. The QUAD summit is scheduled to be hosted by Narendra Modi in India this year and originally Trump was supposed to visit Delhi for that. But latest reports from Washington indicate that Trump may not come to Delhi and even there is uncertainty about Modi hosting it in view of Indian PM's present bitter relations with the U.S. President.

There is a possibility of QUAD summit being shifted to any other member country Japan or Australia. If that happens, Modi will sigh in relief as that will relieve him from acting as a host of QUAD in India.

Both China and India have emphasized on independent foreign policy. That way, India under Modi can remain a member of QUAD but still continue its relationship with China and Russia on the basis of strategic autonomy. But the US state secretary Marco Rubio as also vice president JD Vance ruled out any strategic autonomy for India when it was mentioned by the press in the context of Indian crude oil imports from Russia. So while Indian PM is talking of strategic autonomy, he is denied that by the USA at the moment. So what he will do to defend the strategic autonomy of India in the context of the attacks from the USA in the coming days, that will be of special interest.

There is another possibility but that is remote right now. Trump is a maverick, he very often changes his stance for unpredictable reasons. So if Trump withdraws the additional 25 per cent tariffs on India and become more flexible, Indian PM can respond to that. That will be a part of his strategic autonomy also. Will China still continue to nurse the same views on India as President Xi expressed on August 31. If that happens, there are many such imponderables.

But right now, Prime Minister Narendra Modi is a winner. He has touched the right cords in India's relationship with China. The process of improving the bilateral relationship may start now and people to people contacts start. If the Prime Minister delinks himself from his pro-US tilt and frames the foreign policy on real strategic autonomy, India can have working relationship with the USA, China and Russia at the same time. This should be the objective and it is core of the diplomacy of a multipolar world which both President Xi and PM Modi are aiming at. (IPA Service)

## India-China's sweetened relations herald a New World Order

By: Lalit Garg

When Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chinese President Xi Jinping met on Sunday during the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) summit, the world's attention was inevitably drawn to it. The reason was clear: in a rapidly changing global order, it has become essential for the “Elephant” and the “Dragon” to walk together. Their cordial and constructive dialogue not only reinforced the growing harmony between India and China but also unlocked fresh possibilities for the global economy amid ongoing uncertainties. The warm tenor of their exchanges projected a new horizon of hope and opportunity for both nations and beyond. After a long spell of tensions, a new wind of positivity seems to be flowing in their relations.

The meeting between Modi and Xi was more than mere diplomatic courtesy. It reflected an acknowledgement of the inevitability of dialogue and cooperation in today's shifting international landscape. Both India and China are among the world's largest economies and most populous countries. If they work together, not only will bilateral growth accelerate, but the stability and balance of the entire global order will also be strengthened. Despite lingering concerns such as border disputes and trust deficits, prioritizing economic, strategic, and cultural collaboration can elevate the relationship to new heights. This dialogue is not confined to two neighbors—it is also a message to the world that Asian power equations can counterbalance Western dominance. If both adopt a pragmatic outlook and focus on shared interests, tensions could ease, and Asia's role in world politics would grow stronger.

Most importantly, this meeting signals a shift from dwelling on differences to exploring partnership opportunities. Trade, investment, and technology cooperation could open new avenues. China remains India's largest trading partner, and if their engagement is rooted in balance and trust, their economies could gain unprecedented momentum. The conversation also indirectly challenged America's “bullying” posture. U.S. President Donald Trump's aggressive economic policies and protectionist measures have nudged emerging Asian nations toward alternative alliances. Growing understanding between India and China, combined with Russia's role, points toward the emergence of a “triangular power” that could redefine the balance of power and challenge Western hegemony.

This dynamic inevitably unsettles Pakistan, which has long relied on China in its foreign policy. A closer India-China equation will limit Islamabad's maneuverability. If pursued with balance and caution, this new chapter in bilateral relations could bring stability and equilibrium not just to Asia but to global politics at large. It may even mark a concrete step toward a multipolar world. Yet, India must tread carefully. History shows that China's strategic interests underpin every gesture of friendliness. The unresolved tensions of Doklam, Galwan, and other border disputes cannot be ignored. Similarly, China's expansionist economic policies warrant vigilance. Hence, while the partnership offers immense opportunity, it also carries challenges. For India, sovereignty, security, and strategic autonomy must remain non-negotiable.

This summit also spotlighted the question of counter-terrorism. While the SCO includes fighting terrorism on its agenda, China's past conduct on this issue—particularly its shielding of Pakistan—cannot be overlooked. For instance, during India's counter-terror operations against Pakistan, Beijing's stance ran contrary to Indian interests. Even so, the reality remains that closeness with China is now a necessity of the times. Notably, this was Prime Minister Modi's first visit to China since the deadly 2020 Galwan Valley clash, underscoring the symbolic weight of the encounter. The timing added significance, as Trump's tariff announcements had created global trade turbulence, enhancing the importance of dialogue between Modi and Xi. Particularly meaningful was Modi's assertion that both India and China retain “strategic autonomy” and their bilateral ties should not be viewed through the lens of any third country. This was a veiled reference to U.S. tariffs imposed on India, partly due to its ties with Russia. Modi's statement suggested that bilateral relations can flourish only if such autonomy is respected. Thus, the Modi-Xi meeting was not merely a neighborly exchange but a redefining moment in global politics, signaling new power equations in the 21st century. It foreshadows the rise of a new axis of stability and peace. Strengthening ties among India, China, and Russia hints at the dawn of a new era in global power balance. If effectively nurtured, this triangular alliance could not only bolster Asia's economic and security architecture but also lay the real foundation of a multipolar world. Russia's military strength, China's economic might, and India's democratic and moral influence together can forge a new axis that goes beyond balancing power—it could also advance peace and coexistence.

On the other hand, this emerging balance of power directly challenges America's “hegemonic” approach. Trump's foreign policy, rooted in protectionism, pressure tactics, and trade wars, has raised alarm not only in China but also in India. If the India-China-Russia alignment strengthens, Trump's unilateral policies could lose relevance, reducing U.S. dominance in world politics. This would benefit smaller and developing nations, freeing them from the stranglehold of a unipolar system. In effect, it would promote a democratic balance and a sense of equality in global affairs. It is a welcome sign that the possibility of the Elephant and the Dragon walking together is now being seriously underlined. Yet, much ground remains to be covered. Numerous disputes and mistrust must be overcome, and both sides recognize this. That is why the post-summit statement highlighted that “differences should not turn into disputes.”

## India, China, Russia: A new global power axis?

By: Satyabrata Borah

The prospect of India, China, and Russia uniting to form an alternative power bloc against the United States has become a topic of intense discussion in global politics. As the world transitions toward a multipolar order, the growing cooperation among these three nations, driven by shared interests and strategic alignments, raises questions about their potential to challenge the longstanding dominance of the United States. Through platforms like BRICS, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), and bilateral engagements, these countries have signaled their intent to reshape the global economic and political landscape. However, their differing national interests, historical rivalries, and complex relationships with the United States create significant hurdles. This article explores the dynamics of this potential alliance, the factors driving their cooperation, the challenges they face, and the implications for the global order.

The United States has been the preeminent global power since the end of World War II, wielding unparalleled economic, military, and cultural influence. Its leadership in international institutions like NATO, the World Bank, and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) has allowed it to shape global policies and maintain a unipolar world order for decades. The dollar's status as the world's reserve currency, coupled with the U.S.'s military presence across the globe, has cemented its dominance. However, the rise of emerging powers, particularly India, China, and Russia, has begun to challenge this status quo. These nations, with their significant populations, growing economies, and military capabilities, are increasingly asserting their influence on the global stage, seeking to create a counterbalance to Western hegemony.

The foundation for cooperation among India, China and Russia lies in their shared desire to reduce dependence on Western-dominated systems and assert greater autonomy in global affairs. BRICS, established in 2009 with Brazil and South Africa as additional members, has emerged as a key platform for this collaboration. The group aims to promote economic cooperation and provide an alternative to Western financial institutions. The New Development Bank (NDB), created under BRICS, offers funding for infrastructure and development projects, directly challenging the dominance of the World Bank and IMF. Similarly, the SCO, which includes India, China, Russia, and several Central Asian states, focuses on security and regional stability, fostering military and strategic cooperation. These platforms allow the three nations to coordinate their efforts and present a united front in challenging the U.S.-led order.

China, as the world's second-largest economy, plays a pivotal role in this potential alliance. Its rapid economic growth, technological advancements, and massive investments in projects like the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) have expanded its global influence. The BRI, which spans Asia, Africa, and Europe, aims to create a network of trade and infrastructure that strengthens China's economic ties with other nations. This initiative not only boosts China's geopolitical leverage but also provides an alternative framework for global trade, reducing reliance on Western-controlled systems. Russia's strength lies in its vast energy re-



sources and military prowess. Despite economic challenges due to Western sanctions, particularly following the Ukraine conflict, Russia remains a formidable player in global politics. Its control over natural gas and oil supplies gives it significant leverage, especially in Europe and Asia. India, with its burgeoning population, growing economy, and nuclear capabilities, adds another dimension to this partnership. As one of the fastest-growing major economies, India's strategic importance cannot be overstated. The combined strengths of these three nations such as China's economic might, Russia's military and energy resources and India's demographic and economic potential create a formidable force. Together, they represent a significant portion of the world's population, landmass, and GDP. Their cooperation in areas like trade, technology, and defense could reshape global power dynamics. For instance, their efforts to promote trade in local currencies, bypassing the U.S. dollar, signal a move toward financial independence. Initiatives like the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), led by China, further underscore their intent to create parallel financial systems. Moreover, joint military exercises under the SCO framework demonstrate their willingness to collaborate on security issues, potentially countering U.S. influence in regions like Asia and the Middle East.

However, the path to forming a cohesive alternative power bloc is fraught with challenges. One of the most significant obstacles is the complex relationship between India and China. Despite their cooperation in BRICS and the SCO, the two nations have a history of border disputes, most notably the 2020 Galwan Valley clash, which strained bilateral ties. India's concerns about China's growing influence in South Asia, particularly through projects like the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), add to the tension. India's participation in the Quad, alongside the United States, Japan, and Australia, is explicitly aimed at countering China's regional dominance. This alignment with Western powers complicates India's role in any anti-U.S. alliance. While India maintains a policy of strategic autonomy, balancing its relationships with both Western and non-Western powers, its deepening ties with the United States,

particularly in defense and technology, create a delicate balancing act.

Russia's relationship with both India and China also presents challenges. Historically, Russia and India have enjoyed strong ties, particularly in defense, with Russia being a major supplier of military equipment to India. However, Russia's growing dependence on China, especially after Western sanctions following the Ukraine conflict, has shifted its geopolitical calculus. Russia's economic vulnerabilities make it a junior partner in any potential alliance with China, potentially limiting its influence. Furthermore, Russia's strained relations with the West push it closer to China, but this alignment may not always align with India's interests, given New Delhi's efforts to maintain cordial ties with the United States.

Another critical factor is the differing national priorities of these three countries. China's aggressive foreign policy and territorial ambitions often clash with the interests of its neighbors, including India. Its dominance in any potential alliance could create unease for India and Russia, both of which value their sovereignty and strategic independence. India, in particular, has consistently pursued a non-aligned foreign policy, avoiding full alignment with any single power bloc. This approach allows India to engage with both Western and non-Western powers, maximizing its strategic flexibility. However, it also means that India may hesitate to fully commit to an anti-U.S. alliance, especially if it risks alienating key partners like the United States, which provides critical technology and investment.

Russia's economic constraints further complicate the equation. While it possesses significant military and energy resources, its economy is heavily reliant on energy exports and is significantly smaller than those of China and India. Western sanctions have further weakened Russia's economic position, making it dependent on China for trade and investment. This imbalance could lead to tensions within the alliance, as China may seek to dominate decision-making. Additionally, Russia's focus on countering NATO and Western influence in Europe may not fully align with the priorities of India and China, which are more focused on Asia and the Indo-Pacific.

Despite these challenges, the potential for India, China and Russia to form an alternative power bloc cannot be dismissed. The global order is undergoing a profound transformation, with the rise of multipolarity challenging the unipolar dominance of the United States. The growing influence of non-Western institutions like BRICS and the SCO reflects a broader shift toward a more balanced global system. These platforms provide a space for India, China, and Russia to coordinate their efforts and amplify their collective voice. For instance, their advocacy for reforms in global governance, including greater representation in the United Nations Security Council, highlights their shared goal of challenging Western dominance.

The economic dimension of this potential alliance is particularly significant. By promoting trade in local currencies and developing alternative financial systems, these countries aim to reduce their dependence on the U.S. dollar and Western financial institutions. This shift could have far-reaching implications for global trade and finance, weakening the United States' ability to use economic sanctions as a tool of foreign policy. Moreover, their combined technological advancements, space exploration, and renewable energy, could position them as leaders in the next phase of global innovation.

Geopolitically, the alignment of India, China, and Russia could reshape regional dynamics. In Asia, their cooperation could counterbalance U.S. influence in the Indo-Pacific, where the United States has sought to strengthen alliances through initiatives like the Quad and AUKUS. In the Middle East and Africa, China's BRI and Russia's energy diplomacy could complement India's growing engagement, creating a network of influence that challenges Western dominance.

However, the success of this alignment will depend on their ability to manage internal tensions and present a united front. The United States, for its part, is unlikely to cede its influence without a response. It has already taken steps to counter the rise of this potential bloc, including strengthening alliances in Asia, imposing sanctions on Russia, and engaging India as a strategic partner. The U.S.'s technological and military superiority, coupled with its network of global alliances, ensures that it remains a formidable force. However, its ability to maintain unipolar dominance is increasingly under strain as emerging powers assert their influence.

The prospect of India, China, and Russia forming an alternative power bloc against the United States holds significant potential but is tempered by substantial challenges. Their cooperation through platforms like BRICS and the SCO demonstrates their ambition to reshape the global order, but historical rivalries, differing national interests, and complex relationships with the United States complicate this endeavor. The success of such an alliance will depend on their ability to navigate these challenges while leveraging their collective strengths. As the world moves toward a multipolar future, the interplay between these nations and the United States will shape the trajectory of global politics, economics, and security for decades to come. Whether they can truly emerge as a cohesive counterweight to U.S. dominance remains an open question, but their efforts signal a transformative shift in the global balance of power.



## Between Washington and Beijing

## India's balancing act in an unsettled world

By: Dipak Kurmi

The unfolding turbulence of global politics has once again reminded India of the precarious tightrope it must walk between its two most significant external interlocutors — the United States and China. That equation has become even more complex in the second Donald Trump presidency, where Washington's strategic compass appears increasingly erratic, while Beijing continues to project tactical flexibility without conceding on any substantive issue. For India, whose national security and economic aspirations intersect with both powers in crucial ways, the challenge lies in avoiding the trap of being reduced to a mere pawn in great-power rivalries, while simultaneously ensuring that its own interests are neither neglected nor undermined.

The so-called "Trump factor" is already complicating New Delhi's calculations. Unlike his first term, when the United States decisively shifted to treating China as a "strategic competitor," Trump's current approach lacks coherence. His pursuit of what he has described as a "beautiful deal" with Beijing privileges short-term trade gains over strategic clarity. For China, the perception is that it has stared down Washington in their bruising battles over tariffs, export controls, and trade restrictions. In this environment, the United States' reliability as a long-term security partner for India is once again under question. Trump has underplayed Delhi's geopolitical relevance, weakened the sense of bipartisan continuity that had bolstered India-US ties, and sent troubling signals on issues ranging from tariffs to Pakistan to India's sourcing of oil from Russia.

Against this backdrop, the recent overtures between India and China — including Foreign Minister Wang Yi's visit to New Delhi — must be viewed with nuance. The visit produced a 10-point understanding, including commitments to resume direct flights, reopen three border trade points, and restart discussions on long-pending boundary issues. These are welcome gestures, but they are hardly indicative of a reset. At best, they mark the continuation of a tactical thaw that began when Prime Minister Narendra Modi met President Xi Jinping in

Kazan in October last year. Yet, the fundamental question remains: how serious is China about addressing India's legitimate concerns? Evidence so far points more to Beijing's tactical outreach than any structural accommodation of Indian interests.

The border remains the single most intractable challenge. After Chinese incursions in eastern Ladakh, disengagement has remained incomplete. Restrictions continue on Indian troop patrolling and on the grazing rights of herdsmen in areas traditionally accessed by them, now classified as "buffer zones." De-escalation talks have barely progressed, but the two sides have at least agreed to begin discussing the principles and modalities of disengagement. Whether these discussions can bridge the yawning trust deficit remains doubtful. Beijing's record of military assertiveness offers little comfort, and for New Delhi, the danger of mistaking temporary pauses for durable solutions is high.

What is particularly worrying is the spectre of China-Pakistan battlefield collaboration, vividly demonstrated during Operation Sindoor in May 2025. This was not the familiar pattern of rhetorical support or discreet arms supply. China's involvement was far more direct, encompassing the provision of advanced weaponry, real-time intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance inputs, integration of command-and-control systems, and close operational advisory support. It effectively expanded the theatre of conflict without Beijing's formal military deployment. Such developments underscore the risks of underestimating the China-Pakistan axis, which remains India's most acute external security threat.

India's anxieties are not confined to the military domain. China has embarked on a massive hydropower project on the upper reaches of the Brahmaputra, reportedly three times the size of the Three Gorges Dam. This poses grave risks to the lower riparian, India, whose interests were raised forcefully with Wang Yi but with little satisfaction. Meanwhile, Beijing has demonstrated its willingness to weaponise India's economic dependencies. In recent months, China has blocked or restricted supplies of critical inputs — from rare-earth mag-



nets to specialised fertilisers and tunnel-boring machines — and asked Foxconn to withdraw several hundred Chinese technicians from its Indian factories. Though some easing of supplies may occur after negotiations, the larger problem of vulnerability will persist so long as India remains dependent on Chinese supply chains for vital goods.

The perception gap between Delhi and Beijing has been made starker by Chinese state media coverage of Wang Yi's visit. While India sought to project the discussions as an attempt to normalise ties without compromising its core concerns, Chinese readouts claimed that India had given assurances on Taiwan being part of China and reaffirmed its commitment to the One-China Policy. The Ministry of External Affairs was quick to clarify that there was no change in India's stance. Even more troubling was Beijing's assertion that Modi and Wang jointly opposed "unilateral bullying," a barely veiled swipe at Washington. Such portrayals are designed to exploit turbulence in India's relations with the US, reinforcing China's belief that New Delhi might be pressured into softening its stance.

The challenge for India is therefore twofold:

navigating an increasingly unreliable United States and resisting a tactically accommodating but strategically unyielding China. The temptation to make common cause with Beijing in response to Trump's unpredictability must be firmly resisted. For all of Washington's inconsistencies, China remains India's primary strategic challenge, with a serious deficit of convergent interests. Beijing has shown little inclination to address border disputes on equitable terms, moderate its military assertiveness, or reconsider its deepening alliance with Pakistan. On the contrary, it continues to test India's red lines while dangling limited economic or diplomatic gestures as bargaining chips.

In this fraught landscape, India's diplomacy must proceed with realism rather than romanticism. As the Prime Minister conveyed to Wang Yi, New Delhi seeks stable, predictable, and constructive relations with Beijing. But stability cannot be achieved at the cost of overlooking unpalatable facts. China will need to do much more to convince India that its overtures are substantive and not cosmetic. Until then, any talk of a reset is premature. The process of normalisation, if it unfolds at all, will be slow, incremental, and carefully calibrated.

Meanwhile, the United States remains a necessary but complicated partner. Despite Trump's short-termism, India cannot afford to dilute its strategic alignment with Washington, particularly in the Indo-Pacific where China's naval ambitions continue to grow. The Quad, defence cooperation, and technology partnerships are instruments that India must strengthen regardless of the political vagaries in Washington. What India must avoid is allowing tactical turbulence in India-US relations to drive it into Beijing's embrace.

Equally critical is the need for India to reduce its vulnerabilities to Chinese economic coercion. The diversification of supply chains, the building of indigenous technological capacity, and the pursuit of stronger trade and investment partnerships with like-minded democracies are essential for minimising leverage Beijing currently holds. The debate on "de-risking" from China is no longer academic; it is a practical necessity for safeguarding national security.

The Prime Minister's forthcoming visit to Tianjin must be viewed through this prism of pragmatism. Expectations of a breakthrough should be moderated, for the structural asymmetries in the relationship are too deeply entrenched to be resolved by one round of dialogue. Yet, dialogue remains necessary to prevent the relationship from sliding into uncontrolled hostility. The art lies in talking without succumbing, in engaging without conceding, and in maintaining the space for manoeuvre even amid sharpening global polarities.

For India, the bottom line is clear. The real answer to anxieties arising from Trump's erratic policies does not lie in seeking comfort with China, but in strengthening its own capabilities, diversifying partnerships, and carefully calibrating diplomacy with both great powers. The road ahead will be neither smooth nor linear, but India has little choice but to pursue a path of cautious engagement, strategic autonomy, and relentless focus on national interest. In the unsettled world of today, where allies can appear unreliable and adversaries can feign accommodation, survival and success depend not on sentiment but on statecraft. (the writer can be reached at [dipakkurmipltd@gmail.com](mailto:dipakkurmipltd@gmail.com))

## Vanishing Village: Dharali's Deadly Deluge

By: Satyabrata Borah

Imagine the serene beauty of the Himalayas suddenly turning into a scene of utter chaos. On a seemingly ordinary afternoon in Dharali, a picturesque village nestled in Uttarakhand's Uttarakashi district, life was upended in mere seconds. It was August 5, 2025, around 1:30 PM, when a deafening roar echoed through the valleys. What started as a trickle from the Kheerganga river quickly swelled into a monstrous wave of water, mud, and debris, sweeping away homes, hotels, shops, and everything in its path. Villagers and tourists alike scrambled for higher ground, their screams drowned out by the relentless force of nature. This wasn't just another rainstorm; it was a catastrophic event that left the village in ruins, claiming lives and leaving dozens missing. But as rescue teams comb through the wreckage, questions arise: Was this truly a cloudburst, or something even more insidious lurking in the fragile Himalayan ecosystem?

Cloudbursts have long been the stuff of nightmares in mountainous regions like the Himalayas. Picture this: a massive, dark cumulonimbus cloud, pregnant with moisture, hovering over a small area. In a matter of minutes the sky unleashes a torrent of rain, often exceeding 100 millimeters per hour. It's like a balloon bursting overhead, dumping water with such intensity that the ground can't absorb it. The result? Flash floods, landslides, and mudslides that carve through landscapes like a hot knife through butter. These events are triggered by a perfect storm of factors: warm, moist air rising rapidly, cooling at high altitudes, and condensing into heavy droplets. In hilly terrains, the orographic effect amplifies this, making places like Uttarakhand particularly vulnerable. Historically, cloudbursts have wreaked havoc here; just last year, similar incidents in Ghansali and other areas claimed lives and disrupted communities. But in Dharali's case, the story might be different, as experts now suspect it wasn't a classic cloudburst at all.

Eyewitness accounts paint a harrowing picture. Videos circulating on social media show the disaster unfolding in under 20 seconds: buildings crumbling like cardboard, roads vanishing under a sea of sludge, and people clinging to whatever they could find.

The ancient Kalpedar Shiva temple, a revered site standing for centuries, was buried under debris, its sanctity violated by the flood's fury. The Bhagirathi river,

a lifeline for the region, was partially blocked, forming an artificial lake that now threatens downstream areas if it bursts. Dharali, known for its proximity to Gangotri and its appeal to pilgrims and tourists, was a bustling spot with homestays and eateries. In an instant, it became a ghost town. The floodwaters from the Kheerganga, a tributary, surged with such velocity that they swallowed entire structures, leaving behind a landscape scarred by boulders and silt.

The human toll is heartbreaking. As of August 6, 2025, the death toll stands at five, with bodies recovered amid the rubble. Over 100 people remain missing, including 11 Indian Army jawans stationed nearby and groups of tourists from Kerala and Maharashtra who were enjoying the scenic beauty. One group of 28 from Kerala, many settled in Maharashtra, vanished without a trace, while 51 others from Maharashtra are stranded but safe. Families back home are in agony, glued to news updates and praying for miracles. The injured are being treated at makeshift camps, like the army facility in Harsil, but the scale of destruction has overwhelmed local resources. Beyond lives lost, the economic impact is staggering. Dharali's economy revolves around tourism. With hotels and shops reduced to rubble, livelihoods have been erased overnight. Roads like the Uttarakashi-Harsil highway are washed out, bridges collapsed, and even a government helipad submerged, isolating the area further.

Rescue operations kicked into high gear almost immediately, showcasing the resilience and coordination of India's disaster response teams. The Indian Army, State Disaster Response Force (SDRF), National Disaster Response Force (NDRF), and Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) have deployed over 150 personnel, using drones, tracker dogs, and earthmoving equipment to sift through the debris.

The Indian Air Force has mobilized helicopters like Mi-17s and ALH Mk-III, though dense fog and incessant rain have grounded many flights. So far, 413 people have been rescued, with teams airlifting the vulnerable to safety. Uttarakhand Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami has been hands-on, conducting aerial surveys, meeting affected families, and directing operations from the State Emergency Operations Centre. Prime Minister Narendra Modi personally called Dhami, assuring full central support, while Union Home Minister Amit Shah expedited additional teams. Even neighboring states like Uttar Pradesh have offered aid. Yet, challenges

persist: landslides block access routes, communication lines are down due to poor connectivity, and heavy rains continue to hamper efforts. Schools in Dharali and nearby Harsil are closed, and rail services on the Haridwar-Dehradun route are suspended due to mud on tracks.

But here's where the plot thickens: Was it really a cloudburst? Initial reports screamed "cloudburst," but data tells a different tale. The Indian Meteorological Department recorded only 6.5mm of rain in Harsil and 11mm in Bhatwari over 24 hours—hardly enough to trigger such devastation. Experts from the IMD and geologists suspect a glacier collapse or a glacial lake outburst flood (GLOF). Satellite images reveal glaciers and at least two glacial lakes upstream, one near the Kheer Gad stream. A sudden breach could have released a massive volume of water, amplified by melting ice and accumulated debris. This mirrors the 2021 Chamoli disaster, where a rock-ice avalanche killed over 200 people and destroyed hydropower projects. Uttarakhand hosts over 1,260 glacial lakes, with 13 deemed high-risk by the National Disaster Management Authority, five of them extremely dangerous.

Climate change is the elephant in the room—rising temperatures accelerate glacier melt, forming unstable lakes that can burst with seismic activity or heavy snowmelt. Human factors exacerbate this: unchecked construction, deforestation, and tourism infrastructure weaken the fragile ecosystem, making slopes prone to erosion.

This incident isn't isolated. Uttarakhand has seen a spate of similar calamities. Just weeks ago, on August 1, 2024, a cloudburst in Ghansali, Tehri Garhwal, caused widespread damage. Before that, events in 2023 and earlier have left scars. The state, often called the "abode of gods," is ironically on the frontline of climate-induced disasters. Experts warn that without proactive measures, these will only intensify. Prevention starts with better monitoring: installing early warning systems for GLOFs, using satellite tech to track lake levels, and enforcing strict building codes in vulnerable zones. Reforestation can stabilize slopes, while community education on evacuation drills saves lives. Governments must invest in resilient infrastructure and integrate climate adaptation into development plans. International cooperation, given the transboundary nature of Himalayan rivers, is crucial too.

As the sun sets on another day of frantic searches in Dharali, the village's fate serves as a stark reminder of nature's unpredictability and our vulnerability. The Himalayas, majestic and life-giving, can also be unforgiving. Yet, in the face of tragedy, stories of heroism emerge: soldiers braving the elements, villagers helping strangers, and a nation rallying together. This event calls for reflection—on how we treat our environment, on preparedness, and on the urgent need to combat climate change. For the people of Dharali, rebuilding will be arduous, but with support, they can rise from the ruins. Let this be a wake-up call: respecting nature isn't optional; it's essential for survival. In the end, as rivers calm and communities heal, we must ensure such devastation doesn't repeat, honoring the lost by forging a safer tomorrow.

## Cultivation of Milky mushroom (Calocybe Indica)

By: Dr Neethi Baruah &amp; Dr Manjurma Gogoi

Milky mushroom (*Calocybe indica*) is a tropical edible mushroom native to India and is well-suited for warm and humid climates. It's gaining popularity because it is easy to cultivate, highly nutritious, and fetches good market prices. This mushroom can be cultivated at temperature of 30-35°C. Its cultivation is similar to oyster mushroom with a difference that bags are cased and mushrooms appear on the top side only. Its high biological efficiency, better keeping quality, simple cultivation technique and white attractive colour are major factors for its popularity. It is more popular in South India in Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh.

**Substrate and its Preparation:** The mushroom can be grown on a wide range of substrates like straws of paddy, wheat, ragi, maize, bajra, cotton stalks and leaves, sugarcane bagasse, cotton and jute wastes, etc. However, cereal straws (paddy/wheat), which are easily available in abundance, are favoured. Straw is chopped in small pieces (2-4 cm size) and used for cultivation. Substrates do not need to be composted but those exposed to rain or harvested prematurely (i.e. green in colour) are not desirable. Substrate is soaked in fresh water for 8-16 hours. This period can be reduced when pasteurization is to be done by steam. It is easier to soak straw if it is first filled in gunny bag and dipped in water.

**Pasteurization/Sterilization:** Pasteurization/sterilization can be achieved by any of the following ways-

(a) Hot water treatment - Water is boiled and chopped wet straw filled in gunny bag is submerged in hot water for 40 minutes to achieve pasteurization. This is very popular method particularly with small growers.

(b) Steam pasteurization Wet straw is filled inside insulated room either in perforated shelves or in wooden trays. Steam is released from a boiler and temperature inside substrate is raised to 65°C and maintained for 5-6 hours. Air inside the room is circulated to achieve uniform temperature in the substrate.

(c) Autoclaving Substrate is filled in polypropylene bags (35 x 45 cm, holding 2-3 kg wet substrate) and sterilized at 15 psi for 1 hour. Once pasteurization/sterilization is over straw is shifted to spawning room for cooling and spawning.

(d) Chemical sterilization technique Technique defined for oyster mushroom (straw soaked in solution having 75 ppm bavinin and 500 ppm formalin) can also be used. In South India many farmers are using this technique. However in 5-10% of bags, spawn run may not be complete and *Coprinus* appears in such cases.

**Spawning and Spawn Running:**

Spawning methods are similar to that mentioned for oyster mushroom. However, layer spawning is most commonly used in milky mushroom. Higher spawn dose of 4-5% (wet wt. basis) is used which is almost double than that we use in oyster mushroom. Normally a bag having 5 kg wet substrate (= 2 kg dry substrate) may require about 200 gram spawn. Moisture content in the substrate is highly important and it should be around 60%. Higher moisture leads to incomplete spawn run. After spawning bags are shifted to spawn running room and kept in dark where temperature between 25-35°C with 80% RH is maintained. It takes about 20 days for substrate to get colonised and after that bags are ready for casing.

**Casing:** Casing means covering the top surface of fully colonised bags, with pasteurized casing material. After complete spawn run, the bags are cut open from the top and are cased. The soil and sand, or coir pith, FYM and other materials can be used for casing. Casing thickness is 3-4 cm. The pH of casing material is adjusted to 7.8-7.9 with chalk powder. The casing is ster-

ilized by autoclaving or using chemicals. It is either sterilized in autoclave at 15 psi for one hour or chemically treated with formaldehyde solution (2%) about a week in advance of casing. Temperature of 30-35°C and RH 80-90% are maintained thereafter for entire cropping cycle.

**Cropping:** It takes about 10 days for mycelium to reach to top of the casing layer, thereafter fresh air is introduced and minimum 3-4 air changes per hour are required. The bags are watered regularly as the good moisture and humidity is important. Similarly, diffused light is also important for the initiation and growth of the fruit bodies. Light should be provided for maximum duration during entire cropping period. It is believed that blue light is more useful for induction of pinheads. These changes in environment result in the initiation of fruiting bodies within 3-5 days. The mushrooms appear on the top of bag just like that in button mushroom within two weeks. Mushrooms are harvested by twisting, cleaned and packed in perforated polythene/polypropylene bags for marketing. The mushrooms keep on growing but it is advised to harvest these when these are about 10 cm long. The bigger mushrooms become fibrous. The mushroom has white colour as indicated by its name and has good keeping quality. The fruit bodies can be easily kept at room temperature for 3-4 days. The mushrooms can be used for making pickles or cooked just like other mushrooms. Due to strong aroma, it is advisable to boil these fruit bodies in water for 10-15 minutes and discard the water before their use in different recipes.

**Water Management:** Water management is very important for a good and healthy crop. During spawning the water content should be low (around 60-62%) as there are problems in spawn run if water content is high. Also, during rainy season controlled watering is required and watering once in a day may be enough. During winter watering twice may be sufficient. However during summer as water loss is high, it becomes very difficult to maintain required RH and moisture of the substrate. During such period one should spread sand on floor and use mist sprayer 3-4 times and frequently check the moisture of the casing by touch so as to maintain RH of at least 80-85% inside cropping room. The mushroom is cultivated in huts made of coconut leave or other materials. To maintain high humidity the bags are kept below ground for homogeneous temperature and humidity. The cost of production depends upon the cost of raw material, yield/unit, production level and the wholesale price and method of cultivation is same. This species, however, does not have the off smell and this strain can be stored up to 10 days in refrigerator and 3-4 days at room temperature (20-26°C).

**Strains and Nutritive Value:** ICAR-DMR Solan has released a variety DMR-Milky 334. The fruit body weight is 33-38 g. The fruit body colour is white with yield around 74-82 kg/100 kg of dry wheat /paddy straw. Another strain of *Macrocybe* mushroom viz., DMRMacrocybe-1 has also been released. This species is similar to milky mushroom and method of cultivation is same. This species, however, does not have the off smell and this strain can be stored up to 10 days in refrigerator and 3-4 days at room temperature (20-26°C). Milky mushroom is rich in both the essential and non essential amino acids that make it a perfect source of quality protein. It can be easily preserved for a longer period of time as compared to other mushrooms. The very important property of this mushroom is that it is rich in the anti-oxidant i.e. ergothioneine which helps in replenishing the organs of the body like bone, kidney, liver, etc. It is a rich source of riboflavin and selenium.





# Earthquake destroys villages in eastern Afghanistan and kills 800 people

*Buildings in Afghanistan tend to be low-rise constructions, mostly of concrete*

**KABUL, Sept 1:** Desperate Afghans clawed through rubble in the dead of the night in search of missing loved ones after a strong earthquake killed some 800 people and injured more than 2,500 in eastern Afghanistan, according to figures provided Monday by the Taliban government.

The 6.0 magnitude quake late Sunday hit towns in the province of Kunar, near the city of Jalalabad in the neighbouring Nangarhar province, causing extensive damage.

The quake at 11:47 pm was centred 27 kilometres east-northeast of the city of Jalalabad in Nangarhar province, the US Geological Survey said. It was just 8 kilometres deep. Shallower quakes tend to cause more damage. Several aftershocks followed.

Footage showed rescuers taking injured people on stretchers from collapsed buildings and into helicopters as people frantically dug through rubble with their hands.

A Taliban government spokesman, Zabihullah Mujahid, said at a press conference Monday that the death toll had risen to 800 with 2,500 injured. He said that most of the casualties were in Kunar province.

Buildings in Afghanistan tend to be low-rise constructions, mostly of concrete and brick, with homes in rural and outlying areas made from mud bricks and wood. Many are of poor construction.



One resident in Nurgal district, one of the worst-affected areas in Kunar, said nearly the entire village was destroyed.

"Children are under the rubble. The elderly are under the rubble. Young people are under the rubble," said the villager, who did not give his name. "We need help here," he pleaded. "We need people to come here and join us. Let us pull out the people who are buried. There is no one who can come and remove dead bodies from under the rubble."

**Homes collapsed and people screamed for help**

Eastern Afghanistan is mountainous, with remote areas. The quake has worsened communication.

One survivor described seeing homes collapse before his eyes and people screaming for help.

Sadiquallah, who lives in the Maza Dara area of Nurgal, said he was woken by a deep boom that sounded like a big storm approaching. Like many Afghans, he uses only one name.

He ran to where his children were sleeping and rescued three of them. He was about to return to grab the rest of his family when the room fell on top of him.

"I was half-buried and unable to get out," he told The Associated Press by phone from Nangarhar Hospital. "My wife and two sons are dead and my father is injured and in hospital with me. We were trapped for three to four hours until

people from other areas arrived and pulled me out."

It felt like the whole mountain was shaking, he said.

Rescue operations were underway and medical teams from Kunar, Nangarhar and the capital Kabul have arrived in the area, said Sharafat Zaman, a health ministry spokesman.

Zaman said many areas had not been able to report casualty figures and that "the numbers were expected to change" as deaths and injuries are reported. The Taliban government's chief spokesman, Zabihullah Mujahid, said "all available resources will be utilized to save lives."

Nearby Jalalabad is a bustling trade city due to its proximity with neighboring Pakistan and a key border crossing between the countries. Although it has a population of about 300,000 according to the municipality, it's metropolitan area is thought to be far larger.

Jalalabad also has considerable agriculture and farming, including citrus fruit and rice, with the Kabul River flowing through the city.

A magnitude 6.3 earthquake struck Afghanistan on October 7, 2023, followed by strong aftershocks. The Taliban government estimated at least 4,000 people perished in that quake. The UN gave a far lower death toll of about 1,500. It was the deadliest natural disaster to strike Afghanistan in recent memory. (AP)

## World shares mixed as investors watch for further news on Trump's tariffs



**BANGKOK, Sept 1:** World shares were mixed on Monday as investors watched for further developments after a US court ruled against President Donald Trump's sweeping higher tariffs.

US markets were to remain closed on Monday for the Labor Day holiday. The futures for the S&P 500 and the Dow Jones Industrial Average edged 0.1 per cent higher.

The US Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit ruled Friday that Trump went too far when he declared national emergencies to justify imposing sharply higher

import taxes on almost every country on earth.

The ruling largely upheld a May decision by a specialised federal trade court in New York. But the 7-4 appeals court decision tossed out a part of that ruling striking down the tariffs immediately, allowing the administration time to appeal to the US Supreme Court.

European markets opened higher, with Germany's DAX up 0.5 per cent to 24,018.29 and the CAC 40 in Paris rising 0.4 per cent to 7,735.88.

Britain's FTSE 100 added 0.3 per cent to 9,212.78.

In Asian trading, Hong Kong's Hang Seng jumped 2.2 per cent to 25,617.42, while the Shanghai Composite index added 0.5 per cent to 3,875.53.

A government survey released Saturday showed China's factory activity improved marginally in August, with the purchasing managers index, or PMI, issued by the National Statistics Bureau rising to 49.4 from 49.3 in July. The survey

is on a scale of 0 to 100 where 50 marks the cutoff for expansion.

Another, private sector survey called the RatingDog China General Manufacturing PMI showed the general PMI at 50.5 last month, up from 49.4 in July. Averaging the two surveys yields a PMI of 49.9, suggesting some resilience in the manufacturing sector despite U.S. tariffs of over 50 per cent on Chinese goods, Zichun Huang of Capital Economics said in a commentary. China and the US are still negotiating over a broad trade agreement.

"The PMIs suggest that China's economy accelerated last month, thanks to faster growth across manufacturing and services. But we don't see much upside over the rest of the year," Huang said.

Japan's Nikkei 225 index fell 1.2 per cent to 42,188.79, while the Kospi in South Korea shed 1.4 per cent to 3,142.93.

Shares also fell in Australia, with the S&P/ASX 200 losing 0.5 per cent to 8,924.70. (AP)

# PM Modi calls for shunning double standards in combating terrorism



**TIANJIN (CHINA), Sept 1:** The Pahalagam terror attack was not only an assault on India's conscience, but was also an open challenge to every nation that believes in humanity, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Monday, strongly pitching for shunning "double standards" in combating terrorism.

In the presence of Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, Chinese President Xi Jinping and many other global leaders, Modi, addressing the annual summit of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), said fighting terrorism is the "duty towards humanity".

In a clear message to Pakistan and those supporting it, Modi asked: "It is natural to ask -- can the open support for terrorism by certain countries ever be acceptable to us?"

"We must state it clearly and in one voice: double standards on terrorism are unacceptable. Together, we must oppose terrorism in every form and manifestation. This is our responsibility towards humanity," he said.

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

The strikes triggered four days of intense clashes that ended with an understanding on stopping the military actions on May 10.

In his remarks, the prime minister said India has been bearing the grave scars of ruthless terrorism for the last several decades.

"Countless mothers have lost their children, and innumerable children have been left orphaned. Recently, we witnessed the most heinous face of terrorism in Pahalagam," he said.

"This attack was not only an assault on the conscience of India, but also an open challenge to every nation, and every individual who believes in humanity," he said.

Modi expressed his "deep gratitude" to all the friendly nations that stood by India during this moment of grief.

The prime minister, elaborating on India's vision and policy towards the grouping, floated an acronym for SCO. "S for Security, C for Connectivity and O for Opportunity," he explained.

"I would like to emphasise that security, peace, and stability form the foundation of any nation's development. However, terrorism, separatism, and extremism remain major challenges along this path,"

he said.

Modi said terrorism is not only a threat to the security of individual nations, but a shared challenge to all of humanity.

"No country, no society, no citizen can consider themselves completely safe from it. That is why India has consistently stressed the importance of unity in the fight against terrorism," he said.

The prime minister also underlined the importance of connectivity for regional growth and development.

"We believe that every effort towards connectivity must uphold the principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity. This is also enshrined in the core principles of the SCO Charter," he said.

"Connectivity, that by-passes sovereignty, ultimately loses both trust and meaning," he added.

The comments are seen as an indirect reference to China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). India has been opposing it as a part of the project goes through Pakistan-occupied Kashmir.

The prime minister also proposed the creation of a Civilisational Dialogue Forum under the SCO.

"Such a platform will allow us to share the richness of our ancient civilisations, art, literature, and traditions on a global stage," he said.

The prime minister also emphasised ensuring the development of the Global South.

Keeping aspirations of the Global South confined in outdated frameworks is a grave injustice to future generations, he said.

Highlighting India's development journey, Modi said it is moving ahead with the mantra of "reform, perform and transform".

Be it Covid or global economic instability, we have tried to convert every challenge into an opportunity, he said. (PTI)

## 5 Pak army personnel killed in helicopter crash in PoK

**-ISLAMABAD, Sept 1:** Five Pakistan army personnel, including two officers, were killed on Monday after their helicopter crashed in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir's Gilgit-Baltistan region.

An Mi-17 helicopter, on routine training, attempted to "crash-land" after developing a technical fault, the army said in a statement, adding that the accident occurred at around 1 am near Hudor village, about 12 kilometres away from Thakdas Cantonment, in Diamer.

Those killed were identified as Major Atif, pilot in command; Major Faisal, co-pilot; Naib Subedar Maqbool, flight engineer; Havilar Jahangir, crew

chief; and Naik Amir, crew chief. "Training missions are part of routine activities of army aviation to maintain operational readiness for performing tasks varying from operational support to humanitarian assistance and disaster relief," it said.

Earlier, Gilgit-Baltistan government spokesperson Faizullah Faraq said "one of our helicopters" crashed in Chilas area of Diamer district, killing five crew members. His statement gave an impression that the helicopter belonged to the Gilgit-Baltistan government and that those killed also belonged to the regional government.

However, hours later the



army's media wing confirmed that it was an army aviation aircraft. Separately, Diamer Senior Superintendent of Police Abdul Hameed said the helicopter was conducting a test landing on a newly-proposed helipad.

It is the second helicopter crash in recent weeks after a copter of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government crashed last month. (PTI)

## Yemenis mourn loss of Houthi prime minister, government officials killed by Israel

*The British military's United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations centre, which monitors Mideast shipping*



**ADEN (YEMEN), Sept 1:** Hundreds of Yemenis in the capital city of Sanaa mourned Monday morning the loss of Houthi Prime Minister Ahmed al-Rahawi, who was killed Thursday along with a number of ministers and government officials by an Israeli airstrike.

Attendees gathered for the funeral of the Houthi officials, which was held at Shaab Mosque and broadcast by Al-Masirah TV, a Houthi-controlled satellite news channel.

Crowds inside the mosque, where funeral prayers were held, chanted against Israel and the United States as they mourned the deaths of the officials, including the foreign affairs, media and culture, and industrial ministers.

Funeral attendees Ahmed Khaled and Fathy Mahmoud told the AP that families of the officials arrived in ambulances for the funeral, where the bodies were placed in caskets inside the mosque.

"We're participating in this funeral because Israel killed those officials and that's enough reason to attend their funeral," Ahmed Azam, another attendee, told the AP.

Al-Rahawi was the most senior Houthi official to be killed in the Israeli-US campaign against the Iranian-backed rebel group. Other ministers and officials were wounded, the statement added without providing details.

The Houthis said in a statement earlier that the officials were targeted during a "routine workshop held by the government to evaluate its activities and performance over the past year."

"We entered a huge and influential war and clashed with the US. This war was not only military-focused but also economic as Israel targeted everything," Acting Houthi Prime Minister Mohamed Muftah said in his address at the funeral Monday.

He confirmed that despite Israeli attacks, ports are still functioning and that there is no food or fuel crisis.

The August 24 strike came three days after the Houthis launched a ballistic missile toward Israel that they said was the first cluster bomb launch since 2023.

Separately, Yemen's Houthi rebels said Monday they launched a missile at an oil tanker off the coast of Saudi Arabia in the Red Sea, potentially renewing their attacks targeting shipping through the crucial global waterway.

Houthi military spokesman Brig. Gen. Yahya Saree claimed responsibility for the launch in a prerecorded message aired on Al-Masirah. He alleged the vessel, the Liberian-flagged Scarlet Ray, had ties to Israel.

However, the maritime security firm Ambrey described the ship as fitting the Houthis' "target profile," as the vessel is publicly Israeli owned.

Eastern Pacific is a company that is ultimately controlled by Israeli billionaire Idan Ofer. Eastern Pacific previously has been targeted in suspected Iranian attacks.

In a statement, Eastern Pacific said that "the vessel has not sustained any damage and continues to operate under the command of its Master. All crew members on board the Scarlet Ray are safe and accounted for."

The British military's United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations centre, which monitors Mideast shipping, earlier reported a ship heard a splash and a bang off its side near Yanbu, Saudi Arabia.

The Houthis rebels have been launching missile and drone attacks on Israel and on ships in the Red Sea in response to the war in Gaza, saying they were acting in solidarity with Palestinians. Their attacks over the past two years have upended shipping in the Red Sea, through which about USD 1

trillion of goods pass each year.

From November 2023 to December 2024, the Houthis targeted more than 100 ships with missiles and drones over the Israel-Hamas war in the Gaza Strip. In their campaign so far, the Houthis have sunk four vessels and killed at least eight mariners.

The Iranian-backed Houthis stopped their attacks during a brief ceasefire in the war. They later became the target of an intense weeklong campaign of airstrikes ordered by US President Donald Trump before he declared a ceasefire had been reached with the rebels. The Houthis sank two vessels in July, killing at least four on board with others believed to be held by the rebels.

The Houthis' fresh attacks come as a new, possible ceasefire in the Israel-Hamas war remains in the balance. Meanwhile, the future of talks between the US and Iran over Tehran's battered nuclear programme is in question after Israel launched a 12-day war against the Islamic Republic in which the Americans bombed three Iranian atomic sites.

Israel launched a series of airstrikes last week that killed the Houthi prime minister and several Cabinet members. The Houthis' attack on the ship appears to be a response, along with Sunday's raids on UN agency offices, where at least 11 employees were detained.

A UN official said the world body was unable to contact many of its staff in the Houthi-held areas as of Monday morning. The official, speaking on condition of anonymity to discuss the matter, said the 11 UN staffers who were detained include international and local workers, and a senior international official. The rebel group also seized documents and other materials from the UN offices, according to the official. (AP)

## North Korean leader inspects new missile factory ahead of visit to China

**SEOUL (SOUTH KOREA), Sept 1:** North Korea said Monday leader Kim Jong Un inspected a new weapons factory that's key to his plan to accelerate mass production of missiles in a weekend visit before he departs for a major military parade in China.

North Korea's official Korean Central News Agency did not disclose the location of the factory Kim visited Sunday, but it may be in Jagang province, a hub of the country's munitions industry that borders China.

Both China and North Korea confirmed last week that Kim will make his first visit to China in six years to attend a military parade in Beijing on Wednesday, which marks the 80th anniversary of the end of World War II and China's resistance against Japanese wartime aggression.

The 26 foreign leaders invited by Chinese President Xi Jinping also include Russia's Vladimir Putin, who has received major wartime support from Kim in his invasion of Ukraine, making the Beijing event a show of three-way alignment against U.S. efforts to strengthen security cooperation with South Korea and Japan.

South Korean media speculated Kim could depart for China by train sometime Monday, pointing to heightened security measures at the Chinese border town of Dandong, where rail traffic was reportedly halted and hotels stopped receiving foreign guests.

KCNA said the factory had assembly lines to speed missile production and reported that Kim praised scientists and workers and

ratified plans for improvement.

South Korean officials say Kim has pushed to accelerate munitions production as he supplies Russia with large quantities of military equipment, including artillery and ballistic missiles.

Kim has also sent thousands of troops since last fall to fight alongside Russian forces against Ukraine, as he prioritizes Moscow as part of a foreign policy aimed at expanding ties with nations confronting the United States.

Since aligning with Russia, North Korea has become more vocal in international affairs beyond the Korean Peninsula, issuing diplomatic statements on conflicts in the Middle East and in the Taiwan Strait, while portraying itself as a part of a united front against Washington.

Some experts say Kim's presence at the multilateral event in Beijing is part of efforts to develop partnerships with other nations close to China and Russia.

China remains North Korea's largest trade partner and economic lifeline, and Kim's attendance at the Beijing military parade is also seen as an attempt to showcase ties with a major ally and boost leverage ahead of a possible resumption of negotiations with Washington. Kim met US President Donald Trump three times during Trump's first term, but their diplomacy never recovered from their collapsed second summit in 2019 in Vietnam, where the U.S. rejected North Korea's demands for major sanctions relief in exchange for partial steps toward denuclearization. (AP)



# Arunachal CM calls for balancing development and cultural tradition, launches projects

*'If we forget our roots, our culture and our language, we will never be truly developed'*



**ITANAGAR, Sept 1:** Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister Pema Khandu on Monday underlined the need to pursue development while staying rooted in tradition, as he laid foundation stones for multiple infrastructure projects in Lower Dibang Valley district and later joined the Solung Festival celebrations of the Adi community at Roing, the district headquarters.

Khandu said development initiatives must go hand in hand with the preservation of cultural identity, stressing that the people of Arunachal Pradesh embrace modernity without losing sight of their heritage.

Speaking at the Solung festival of the Adis, Khandu stressed that culture and identity must go hand in hand with development.

"If we forget our roots, our culture and our language in the race to development, we will never be truly developed," he said.

Lauding the Adis, one of the largest tribes of the state, for preserving their rich heritage, Khandu pointed out that each tribe's distinct culture, cuisine and dialect are its true identity.

Reiterating his appeal to use local dialects in daily life, Khandu remarked, "I firmly believe that cultural erosion starts when a member of the community does not learn his or her mother tongue."

While admitting the importance of English and Hindi, he asserted that they should not come at the cost of mother tongues.

He urged elders to speak to children in their native languages and encouraged youth to practice their dialects to pass them on to future generations.

"As a Monpa (tribe member), I have to take ownership of my culture, my language. As an Adi, you have to do the same. No one from the other part of the world will come to preserve your culture

and language. It is upon us to preserve our respective culture, language and faith through practicing these in our daily life," he added.

Khandu said that the state government has set up the department of indigenous affairs to assist tribes in preserving their heritage, calling upon community-based organisations to brainstorm with officials for effective measures.

He also praised the improved road connectivity of Roing, recalling his 2011 visit when he had to cross rivers by ferry multiple times.

"In the coming years, Roing in particular and Lower Dibang Valley in general is all set to step into a next level of developmental stage, by courtesy the Dibang Multipurpose Hydroelectric Project," the CM said.

The projects launched by the chief minister include 20-bedded hostel buildings with kitchens, dining halls and war-

den quarters at CUPS Sirang, Keba, and Middle School Kangkong, along with a 120-bedded hostel at Government Secondary School Paglam. Four-unit type quarters will also come up at GSS Paglam and the CUPS campuses, officials said.

Other works include infrastructure creation for the electrical sub-division at Dambuk, improvement of township roads in Dambuk and Paglam, and construction of a quarter for the Principal of Government Model College, Roing.

Reviewing progress of the under-construction bridge over the Sissiri River on the Bomjir Paglam road, Khandu, in a post on X, said the structure would significantly boost connectivity in the region.

Once completed, this bridge will provide all-weather connectivity to villages like Bizari, Anpum, Loklung and Paglam. It will ease travel and open up new opportunities for the area, he observed. (PTI)

## Arunachal Minister places state's sanitation needs at Jal Shakti round table in New Delhi

**HT Correspondent**

**ITANAGAR, Sept 1:** Minister for Public Health Engineering and Water Supply (PHE & WS), Mama Natung, attended the round table conference and dialogue exchange convened by the Ministry of Jal Shakti at Bharat Mandapam, Pragati Maidan, New Delhi, and highlighted the specific requirements of Arunachal Pradesh's sanitation programme.

According to an official statement, the meeting was chaired by Union Minister of Jal Shakti, C R Patil, and reviewed the performance of states and Union Territories in the final year of implementation of the Swachh Bharat Mission (Gramin) 2.0 (SBM-G).

The meeting assumes significance as SBM-G 2.0 is scheduled to conclude in the current financial year, with its successor mission, SBM 3.0, expected to be launched from the next financial year.

During the review, Patil urged all states and Union Territories to expedite efforts to meet the targets of SBM-G 2.0 within the stipulated timeframe.

Representatives from across the country placed their concerns and suggestions before the Union Minister.

Placing the case of Arunachal Pradesh, Natung sought a review of the convergence of 30 per cent of the Fifteenth Finance Commission (FFC) funds with SBM,



stressing the need for flexibility to meet the state's unique geographical and developmental challenges.

He further appealed for enhancement of the 1 per cent administrative cost allocation for Arunachal, citing the additional expenses involved in implementing programmes in hilly and difficult terrain.

The Minister also pressed for an increase in the allocation for Information, Education, and Communication (IEC) activities, recommending an enhancement from the existing 3 per cent to ensure better awareness and behavioural change campaigns in remote areas.

He additionally called for revising the rates for solid and liquid waste management, as well as

plastic waste management, to strengthen long-term sustainability of sanitation initiatives in the state.

Accompanying Natung at the conference were Commissioner, PHED, Bidol Tayang, IAS, and Chief Engineer (Sanitation), Er S Yoncha, who also participated in the deliberations.

According to the official statement, the round table provided an opportunity for states and Union Territories to share experiences and challenges, while contributing to the roadmap for the upcoming SBM 3.0.

Arunachal Pradesh's submissions focused on bridging critical gaps in resources and support to ensure effective sanitation coverage in the state's hilly and sparsely populated regions.

the impact of growth in their daily lives," he said. Khandu said the interaction with engineers and workers reflected the "commitment to finish this project by 2032". "We met the men and women building this future, and their dedication is inspiring," he noted.

The Dibang Multipurpose Project, being developed by NHPC on the Dibang River, is envisaged as India's largest hydropower project with an installed capacity of 2,880 MW. Along with electricity generation, it will provide significant flood moderation benefits to Assam and downstream areas, officials said.

Though the project has faced delays due to environmental and land acquisition challenges, key clearances have been secured in recent years, and enabling infrastructure such as roads and bridges is being put in place, they said. (PTI)

## Dibang hydropower project will ensure jobs, open new avenues in tourism: Arunachal CM

**ITANAGAR, Sept 1:** Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister Pema Khandu on Monday asserted that the 2,880-MW Dibang Multipurpose Project (DMP) will go far beyond electricity generation, promising employment, development funds and new opportunities for people of the state. Khandu, during the day, inspected preparatory work at the project site along with NHPC Chairman and Managing Director Sanjay Kumar Singh.

In a post on X following his visit to the site at Munli, the CM said, "Arunachal Pradesh is set to receive about Rs 700 crore every year in free power from the 2,880-MW Dibang Multipurpose Project alone."

"More than the megawatts, the project is about jobs for our youth, funds for local development, and new opportunities in tourism and business. It's about making sure that the people of Dibang and across Arunachal feel

the impact of growth in their daily lives," he said. Khandu said the interaction with engineers and workers reflected the "commitment to finish this project by 2032". "We met the men and women building this future, and their dedication is inspiring," he noted.

The Dibang Multipurpose Project, being developed by NHPC on the Dibang River, is envisaged as India's largest hydropower project with an installed capacity of 2,880 MW. Along with electricity generation, it will provide significant flood moderation benefits to Assam and downstream areas, officials said.

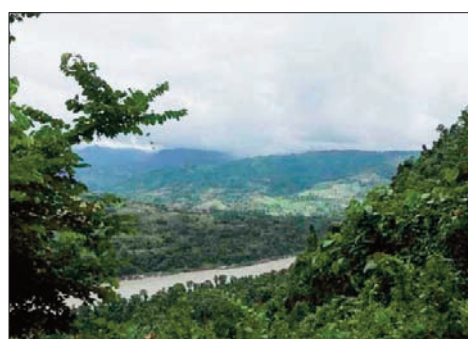
Though the project has faced delays due to environmental and land acquisition challenges, key clearances have been secured in recent years, and enabling infrastructure such as roads and bridges is being put in place, they said. (PTI)

## IMD forecasts light rain over next 72 hours, heavy showers likely during weekend

**ITANAGAR, Sept 1:** The Indian Meteorological Department (IMD) on Monday forecast light to moderate rainfall across Arunachal Pradesh in the first half of the week, with the likelihood of heavy showers in some eastern districts by the weekend.

According to the daily weather report provided by the meteorological centre here, light to moderate rain occurred at a few places in the state during the past 24 hours.

During the day, Ziro and Bomdila registered 2 cm of rain each, while Tawang and Dirang received 2 cm and 1 cm, respectively.



On Tuesday, a generally cloudy sky with light rain is expected at a few places.

The IMD said maximum temperatures will remain 4 to 5 degrees Celsius above normal across the state.

For Itanagar, the maximum and minimum temperatures have been forecast at 31 degree Celsius and 26 degree Celsius, respectively, while Pasighat is expected to record 29 degree Celsius and 23 degree Celsius.

On September 3, light to moderate rainfall is likely in West Kameng, East Kameng, Papum Pare, Siang, and Lower Subansiri districts, while isolated rainfall is forecast in Tawang, Kira Daadi, and Shi Yomi districts.

On September 4, scattered to fairly widespread rain is projected in central and western parts of the state, including Papum Pare, West Siang, and East Siang. On September 5, light to moderate rain is likely to continue at a few places, the IMD said.

On September 6, heavy rain is likely at isolated places, particularly in eastern districts such as Changlang, Tirap, and Longding. On September 7, heavy rain is likely at isolated places across the state. (PTI)

## GUPS Kharteng celebrates Golden Jubilee, marks 50 years of educational service

**HT Correspondent**

**KHARTENG, Sept 1:** Government Upper Primary School (GUPS), Kharteng, celebrated its Golden Jubilee on Monday, completing 50 years since its inception in 1975.

According to an official statement, the day-long programme was marked by cultural performances, alumni interactions, and tributes highlighting the school's role in shaping education in the region.

Welcoming the gathering, Head Master Pam Dorjee recalled the rich legacy of the institution.

As per school records, the school was originally established on September 1, 1975, as the Inter Village School, Kharteng.

Over the decades, it gradually evolved into a key centre of learning, providing education to several generations of students in the area.

The jubilee celebration was graced by Circle Officer of Lungla, Ama Nungnu Mara, as the chief guest.

Deputy Director of School Edu-



cation, Tawang, Hrider Phuntsok attended as the guest of honour, while Director of Jhamtsel Gyatsel Children's Community, Lobsang Phuntsok, joined as the special guest.

All three dignitaries lauded the contribution of GUPS Kharteng in nurturing young minds and building a foundation for future leaders.

The event witnessed enthusiastic participation from alumni who shared fond memories of their student life and acknowledged the school's role in shaping their personal and professional growth.

Their reflections underscored the lasting impact of the institution on successive batches of learners.

The cultural segment of the pro-

gramme featured traditional dances, songs, and performances by students, showcasing the talent and vibrancy of the school community.

The lively presentations added colour and energy to the historic occasion, symbolising the unity of past and present generations.

Delivering the vote of thanks, District Art and Cultural Officer, Tawang, Sonam Tsering—himself an alumnus of GUPS Kharteng—expressed gratitude to the dignitaries, participants, and the community for their wholehearted support.

He said the Golden Jubilee was not only a celebration of the school's achievements but also a reminder of its responsibility to continue providing quality education in the years to come.

According to the official statement, the Golden Jubilee marked both a milestone and a reaffirmation of GUPS Kharteng's enduring commitment to serve as a pillar of education for the region, with the promise of carrying forward its legacy into the future.

## Arunachal minister urges youth to uphold culture, resist drugs



**ITANAGAR, Sept 1:** Arunachal Pradesh Civil Aviation, Urban Development and Land Management Minister Balo Raja on Monday called upon the youth of Upper Siang district to preserve cultural pride, remain vigilant against

drug abuse, and set an example for other districts by maintaining cleanliness after festivities.

Addressing the inaugural function of the three-day Solung Festival at Yingkiang, the district headquarters, the minister said such festivities should be celebrated meaningfully, not only to showcase tradition but also to reflect social responsibility.

He praised the Adi community as one of the most intellectual societies and urged them to uphold age-old customs while embracing flexibility for growth and development, an official statement said here.

Raja further acknowledged the leadership of Chief Minister Pema Khandu, describing him as a young and dynamic leader steering

Arunachal Pradesh towards inclusive growth, while commending Prime Minister Narendra Modi's efforts to take the nation's development to the next level.

The minister formally inaugurated the festival by performing the traditional ritual Taku Tabatnam at the general ground, followed by the Solung Anthem presented by the Donyi Polo group of Yingkiang. He also released the Solung Souvenir Book.

Tuting-Yingkiang MLA Alo Libang, in his address, urged the gathering to preserve the sanctity of the festival and safeguard cultural identity for future generations.

Upper Siang Deputy Commissioner Talo Jerang reminded the public that the occasion should be seen not as an obligation but as a celebration of heritage.

Adi Bane Kebang district unit president Katan Kombo stressed the need to protect the very fabric of the festival. The opening day of the festival featured traditional rituals, Ponung dances, community feasts, and cultural performances, reflecting the rich heritage and unity of the Adi community. (PTI)

## Solung Festival 2025 begins in Yingkiang with three-day celebrations of Adi culture

**HT Correspondent**

**YINGKIONG, Sept 1:** The three-day celebration of Solung Festival 2025 began here on Monday with grandeur and enthusiasm, bringing together the Adi community to showcase its rich cultural heritage and spirit of unity.

According to an official statement, the opening day was marked by traditional rituals, cultural performances, and addresses by distinguished guests.

The inaugural function was graced by Minister of Civil Aviation, Urban Development and Land Management, Balo Raja, as the chief guest.

Extending his greetings to the people, the Minister expressed happiness at being part of the festival.

In his address, he emphasised that festivals such as Solung should be celebrated in a meaningful way that reflects both cultural pride and social responsibility.

He called upon the youth to remain vigilant against drug abuse, urging that Upper Siang should set an example for other districts to emulate. Stressing on environmental consciousness, he underlined the importance of cleanliness after the festival.

Describing the Adi community as one of the most intellectual societies, he encouraged them to uphold their traditions while adopting flexibility for progress and development.

The Minister also acknowledged the lead-



ership of chief minister Pema Khandu, describing him as a young and dynamic leader steering Arunachal Pradesh towards inclusive growth.

He further praised Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision for taking the nation's development to the next level.

To formally inaugurate the celebrations, Raja performed the traditional ritual of Taku Tabatnam at the general ground, followed by

the Solung Anthem presented by the Donyi Polo group of Yingkiang.

On the occasion, he also released the Solung Souvenir Book.

Health Minister and local MLA Alo Libang, addressing the gathering, urged the community to preserve the sanctity of the festival, safeguard cultural identity, and uphold age-old traditions for future generations.

Guest of honour and President of the Upper Siang GB Welfare Association, Akkong Libang, spoke on the mythological origins of the Solung Festival, narrating how the celebration came into practice.

Deputy Commissioner Talo Jerang highlighted the objective of the festival, urging people not to view it as a ritual obligation but as a true celebration of heritage.

Adding further depth to the occasion, ABK President (Upper Siang Unit), Katan Kombo, stressed the importance of protecting the very fabric of Solung celebrations for posterity.

Retired DVO, Dr Emo Lego, also narrated the mythological essence of the festival, enriching the audience with its deeper cultural significance.

Delivering the vote of thanks, Central Solung Celebration Committee, Yingkiang, President Er Nanong Nangkar expressed gratitude to the chief guest, dignitaries, participants, and community members for their wholehearted support in making the event successful.

According to the official statement, the celebrations featured traditional rituals, ponung dances, community feasts, and various cultural presentations, reflecting the vibrancy and unity of the Adi community.

The festival will continue for the next two days with further programmes showcasing tradition, community spirit, and cultural pride.



The BJP leader noted that the ruling party suffered setbacks in states like UP and Maha

## Rahul insulting voters in arrogance, belittling position of LoP: BJP

**NEW DELHI, Sept 1:** The BJP on Monday mocked Rahul Gandhi's claim that he will soon come out with a "hydrogen bomb" as part of his "vote chori" charge, saying that his "atom bomb" had turned out to be a damp squib, and accused him of demeaning his position of the Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha with irresponsible comments.

Taking on Gandhi, whose Vote Adhikar Yatra concluded in Patna, for his barbs at Prime Minister Narendra Modi, BJP leader Ravi Shankar Prasad said the Congress leader and his party have a history of "abusing" Modi. But people, he added, have repeatedly rejected Gandhi and reposed faith in the prime minister.

By alleging fraud and deceit behind the BJP's victories under Modi's leadership, the Congress leader has been insulting voters, he said. "This is arrogance and we will tell voters to punish him for his arrogance," he said.

The former Union minister took repeated jabs at RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav as well for playing "second fiddle" to Gandhi in Bihar despite the Congress lacking a political base in the state. Yadav has claims over the chief minister's chair but has ceded the front seat to Gandhi, he added.

The Yatra, he asserted, will have no impact on the Bihar assembly polls, expected to be held in October-November.

Defending the ongoing Special Intensive Review of electoral rolls in the state, Prasad claimed that the opposition's campaign against it is solely driven by two reasons. Op-



position leaders want "right and might to capture booths" and that infiltrators should be allowed to vote, he said, recalling the state's history of booth-capturing.

Gandhi's campaign, he asserted, is born out of his frustration over the Congress' repeated poll defeats, and if he carries on with a similar conduct, then his party will suffer an even worse fate.

The BJP leader noted that the ruling party suffered setbacks in states like Uttar Pradesh and Maharashtra in the 2014 Lok Sabha elections due to the opposition's "false" campaign that the Modi government would change the Constitution if it were re-elected.

However, people soon realised the truth and voted the BJP to record wins in Haryana and Maharashtra, he added, asserting that the ruling alliance will notch up a similar victory in Bihar.

The SIR removed from electoral rolls 22 lakh dead voters and eight

lakh duplicate voters, he said, wondering if their names should have been allowed on the voters' list.

The BJP's sharp attack on Gandhi and his allies came after he said his party will soon come out with a "hydrogen bomb" of revelations about "vote chori" and that Modi will not be able to show his face to the country afterwards.

"We will not let them (BJP) murder the Constitution and that is why we took out a yatra. We got a tremendous response. People came out in large numbers and raised the slogan 'vote chor gaddi chhor'," the Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha said.

Gandhi had called his allegations about the electoral roll irregularities in the Mahadevpur assembly segment in Karnataka's Bangalore central Lok Sabha seat an "atom bomb".

Hitting back, Prasad said Gandhi's so-called atom bomb was not even like the Diwali fire-

cracker that does not go off.

"One really has to try hard to understand what he means in his speeches in and outside Parliament... The world has not really seen the impact of a hydrogen bomb. Now Rahul Gandhi is talking about it," he said sarcastically.

He accused Gandhi of repeatedly demeaning his position as the Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha with his irresponsible comments.

Prasad said the Congress leader did not even once condemn the use of a Hindi expletive against the prime minister from the dais during his Yatra. The expletive targeted Modi's mother but Gandhi did not say a word, and it shows his arrogance and hate against him, he added.

With Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge saying that the BJP will soon discard Chief Minister and JD(U) president Nitish Kumar like trash, Prasad asserted that the BJP's alliance with Kumar was formed to rid the state of corruption and provide good governance which it has delivered.

Prasad also highlighted what he described as internal rumblings within the RJD's ruling family, noting that Yadav's sister Misa Bharti, who represents Patliputra in Lok Sabha, was not part of the concluding event of the Yatra even though her constituency overlaps Patna city.

He said both Gandhi and Yadav are facing trial in corruption cases but were making big claims about morality. Yadav's father and RJD president Lalu Prasad Yadav was convicted on corruption charges, he said. (PTI)

## Except RJD, CPI(ML) no party assisted excluded electors: EC

99.5% voters filed eligibility docs

**NEW DELHI, Sept 1:** The Election Commission of India on Monday informed the Supreme Court that approximately 99.5 per cent of the 7.24 crore voters submitted eligibility documents for the special intensive revision (SIR) exercise in poll-bound Bihar.

The EC further claimed apart from RJD and CPI-ML no other political party assisted electors to file claims and objections in the prescribed formats.

A bench of Justices Surya Kant and Joydip Bagchi was informed by the poll panel that individual electors demonstrated more "alertness and proactiveness" for they had submitted 33,326 forms for inclusion in the draft roll and 2,07,565 forms for deletion, besides first time voters filed over 15 lakhs applications for inclusion in the electoral roll.

"According to the records, approximately 99.5 per cent of the electors (out of 7.24 crore) featured in the draft electoral roll for the state of Bihar have already submitted their eligibility documents pertaining to the SIR exercise," senior advocate Rakesh Dwivedi, appearing on behalf of the poll panel, said in a note.

He said the exercise of verification of the documents, which was underway, would be completed by September 25 in line with the schedule provided in the SIR order of June 24.

The poll panel, which contradicted the claims of the RJD and the CPI (ML) in number of claims filed said, "In particular, it is submitted that apart from CPI-ML and RJD, none of the other recognised political parties have, either through their office bearers or validly appointed BLAs, assisted any elector out of the approximately 65 lakh whose names are not included in the draft electoral roll to submit Form 6 with declaration. None of the other recognized political parties have enabled filing of claims or objections in the prescribed format." Referring to its August 31 bulletin, the EC said an overwhelming majority of forms received from both political parties and individuals were for exclusion of names featuring in the draft electoral roll.

"Of the total 128 forms received on the draft rolls from political parties, 103 are for deletion (Form 7) and only 25 are for inclusion (Form 6). This number represents a minuscule fraction of the total number of electors of Bihar," it said.

The EC further said, "Although the individual electors have demonstrated more alertness and proactiveness, they too have submitted only 33,326 forms (Form 6) for inclusion in the draft roll and 2,07,565



forms (Form 7) for deletion." On the new eligible citizens attaining age of 18 years or more, the EC said a total of 15,32,438 applications for first-time inclusion in the electoral roll had been received.

"These applications are distinct in nature as they pertain to fresh enrolment and not to claims or objections relating to existing electors," it said.

The poll panel said only 33,351 claims had been received with respect to the around 65 lakh voters excluded from the draft roll published on August 1 on account of death, permanent shifting or duplication.

"Post the order of this court dated August 22, 2025 till August 30, 2025, only 22,723 claims have been filed for inclusion and 1,34,738 objections have been filed for exclusion," it said. Opposing the prayer of the RJD and AIMIM for the extension of the deadline for filing claims and objections, the poll panel said extending it beyond September 1, would disrupt the entire schedule for finalisation of electoral roll.

"The period between September 1, 2025 to September 25, 2025 is fixed for considering claims and objections, and the same also involves consideration of issuing notices and responses to doubtful cases. Thus, any extension of timelines will lead to disruption of the exercise and finalisation of electoral roll," it said.

The EC, however, clarified that filing of claims or objections or corrections could be submitted after the September 1 deadline.

"The applications submitted for claims, objections or corrections after September 1, 2025 will be considered after the electoral roll has been finalised. The process of consideration of claims and objections continues until the last date of nominations, and all inclusions and exclusions are integrated in the final roll," it added. (PTI)

## Govt will implement HC directives on Maratha stir: Fadnavis

**PUNE/MUMBAI, Sept 1:** The administration will implement the Bombay High Court directives on Manoj Jarange-led Maratha quota protest, Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis said on Monday.

He also stated that the government is deliberating on finding legal options to resolve the stand-off over the Maratha quota demand.

Fadnavis' assurance comes shortly after the HC noted that Jarange and his supporters have prima facie violated the conditions.

A bench of Justices Ravindra Ghuge and Gautam Ankhad stated that since the protesters do not have valid permission to continue the stir, it expects the state government to follow the due procedure laid down in law by initiating appropriate steps.

The government shall also ensure no more protesters, as claimed by Jarange, shall enter the city henceforth, it said.

"The government will implement the High Court directives," Fadnavis told reporters in Pune and rejected the charge that law and order had collapsed.

"There have been sporadic incidents (related to Maratha demonstrations) which have been cleared by police within minutes," he said.

The court observed that some violations had taken place regarding the permissions granted to the protest in Mumbai, he said.

"I was travelling, so I do not know exactly what the court observed. I got to know that the court has observed that some violations have taken place regarding the permissions given to the protest in Mumbai. The court has expressed displeasure over whatever is happening on the roads of Mumbai," he said.

On resolving the protest, Fadnavis further said that discussions can't take place on the mic, and we should know whom to hold talks with.

Fadnavis said state cabinet minister Radhakrishna Vikhe Patil had shown willingness to hold talks with a delegation but their demand is to hold discussions before a mic.

"We are not adamant. The government is studying their memorandums to see if a positive outcome can come out. If someone from their side comes forward for talks, the process to find a solution will be expedited," the CM asserted.

He also stated that legal options on the demands of protesters were discussed in a meeting chaired by him this morning with his deputies, Ajit Pawar and Eknath Shinde, on the situation arising out of the quota stir. "We deliberated all the legal options and worked to find legal solutions, which will stand in court," he said.

Fadnavis also condemned the alleged harassment of female journalists by some protesters. (PTI)

## BJP-RSS will dump Nitish where garbage is dumped: Kharge

**PATNA, Sept 1:** In a scathing attack on Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar, Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge on Monday said the JD(U) chief used to talk of socialism earlier but then "fell into the lap" of the BJP-RSS, which will dump him "where garbage is dumped".

Kharge alleged that Prime Minister Narendra Modi is attempting to win the Bihar Assembly polls through "vote chori" (vote theft), and asserted that the BJP-led NDA's "double-engine" government in Bihar would be voted out soon, with a new government of the poor, backwards and Dalits being formed.

Targeting Kumar, Kharge said, "Once upon a time, he used to go around and talk about socialism and praise Ram Manohar Lohia and George Fernandes and others. Where did those socialist ideas go? Now you have gone and fallen into the lap of the BJP-RSS."

"This BJP-RSS will dump you where garbage is dumped," the Congress president said, launching a sharp attack on the Janata Dal (United) chief.

His remarks came after INDIA bloc constituents held a march marking the culmination of the "Voter Adhikar Yatra" led by Congress leader Rahul Gandhi and other Mahagathbandhan leaders that covered 1,300 kilometres and passed through 110 Assembly constituencies, covering 25 of the 38 districts in Bihar ahead of the upcoming state election.

"This Voter Adhikar Yatra was discussed throughout the country. There were attempts to disrupt it but people of Bihar and the Mahagathbandhan did not back down," Kharge said.

"Modi is attempting to win the Bihar polls through vote chori. Be alert. If you are not alert, Modi and (Amit) Shah will ruin you," he claimed.

"This double-engine government will not be there in six months and the new government that will be formed will be of the poor, women, Dalits and backwards," the Congress chief said.

"People in Manipur are dying but Modiji is visiting the world. He keeps visiting countries. Sometimes he hugs (US President Donald) Trump and sometimes he makes

the Chinese President (Xi Jinping) sit on a swing. Even those who do not want a hug, he forcibly hugs them," Kharge said.

The Congress chief said since there are a number of speakers, he will not speak for long and put out his speech later for everyone to read.

In a post on X, Kharge said the 15-day yatra has awakened the entire country and while the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) tried to create obstacles in its way, the people of Bihar ensured that it was a resounding success.

"Whenever the rights of the weaker sections of the country are threatened, Rahulji raises his voice for them. 'Bharat Jodo Yatra', 'Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra' and 'Jai Babu-Jai Bhim-Jai Samvidhaan' and now this yatra is a part of this series. Wherever this yatra passed in Bihar, crores of people came out on the streets to support it. Democracy supporters stood with them across the country. The voice of the yatra reached the entire world," he said.

The people of Bihar will uproot this "double-engine corrupt government", Kharge added.

"The Supreme Court also accepted that the opposition was right on the issue of the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls. We wanted the vote theft of Bihar should be discussed in Parliament. The entire opposition kept protesting, but they kept protecting the Election Commission and did not allow any discussion," Kharge said.

Bihar has always guided the country with its knowledge, power and passion in times of crisis, he said.

"For the last 11 years, the Modi government has been destroying democracy in instalments. For this, it adopts new methods of theft. First, it distributed the wealth of the poor worth crores of rupees to a few close friends. The profitable public sectors were handed over to them, then the opposition governments were toppled with their financial power. Now after the theft, they have resorted to 'dacoity'," Kharge said.

"Nitishji himself came to us. But he turned back in fear. He did not have the strength to fight against injustice. Leaving the socialist ideology, he followed RSS, BJP," the Congress chief said. (PTI)

## Debate possible only if rival speaks: Oppn VP candidate

**HYDERABAD, Sept 1:** Alleging that his rival and ruling NDA nominee C P Radhakrishnan is "neither visible, nor speaking", Opposition's Vice Presidential candidate B Sudershan Reddy on Monday said a healthy debate would have been possible if he had spoken.

Addressing a press conference, which was also attended by Telangana Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy and the ruling Congress leaders, Sudershan Reddy said he favoured a healthy debate and that his intention is not to speak lowly about his rival.

"My rival is not visible. He does not speak. It is not known where he is, what he is doing. If both candidates speak, there will be a debate, a conversation. There would have been an opportunity to introduce to the people. Not only to the voters. Somehow, I did not get that opportunity," he said.

Asked to elaborate his comments, he said he made the remark with the view that a healthy conversation would have taken place if Radhakrishnan also spoke. Responding to a question on the most pressing Constitutional challenge that India faces today, Reddy said the greatest concern is the "deficiency" in the functioning of the Election Commission of India. (PTI)

No. SMED/DMCH/VRDL/Staff/151/2023/885

### EXTENSION OF LAST DATE OF RECEIPT OF APPLICATION FOR THE FOLLOWING POSTS IN MEDICAL COLLEGE LEVEL VIRAL RESEARCH DIAGNOSTIC LABORATORY (VRDL) UNDER DHR AT DIPHU MEDICAL COLLEGE & HOSPITAL, DIPHU

With reference to the advertisement No. SMED/DMCH/VRDL/Staff/151/2023/786 dated 14-08-2025, the last date of receipt of applications for the post of Research Scientist-B (Medical) & Research Scientist-B (Non-Medical) is hereby extended till 06-09-2025.

Sd/-  
Principal-Cum-Chief Superintendent  
Diphu Medical College & Hospital  
Diphu, Assam

DIPR /D/HLT/143/2-Sep-25

## World running out of time to act on climate change without cooperation: COP30 president

**NEW DELHI, Sept 1:** The world risks "running out of time" to act on climate change without cooperation, COP30 President Andre Correa do Lago warned on Monday and stressed on the need to bridge the political and financial divide between developed and developing nations.

He also criticised US President Donald Trump's reluctance to engage in climate negotiations. "We understand that President Trump is not going to listen to me. And the problem is that he does not want to talk about the emissions of specific countries," Correa do Lago told reporters. Trump has withdrawn the United States from the Paris Agreement on climate change. This is the second time he has directed the US to exit the agreement. He had done so during his first administration and the US rejoined under the Biden administration.

Correa do Lago acknowledged that climate negotiations have long been marked by a sharp divide between developed and developing nations.

"The problem of the negotiation of climate change since the beginning is divided very much the developed countries and the developing countries, because the developing countries insist very much on the necessity of the rich countries to provide the way for developing countries to have a cleaner development," he said.

"And on the other side, developed countries only want commitments from the developing countries without giving the means to evolve. So this divide is very strong," he said.

The COP30 chief stressed that bridging the gap is urgent. "We have to try to bridge that, because science tells us we have very little time. The world risks running out of time to act on climate change without cooperation between developed and developing countries," he said.

"So I think that we have to start to think that the main issue is not to be right, but the main issue is really to combat climate change and to have an effective way of making de-



velopment something that is cleaner and to bring jobs, to bring new jobs, and to improve the quality of life of people."

Noting that the challenge is immense, Correa do Lago said the scale of climate change makes it impossible to address financial and structural issues in the same way it was thought possible 30 years ago.

"Today, climate change is impacting the entire global economy. Most of our activities will need to be transformed. This is not just about environmental action but it is about investment, innovation, and building a new economy,"

he said. "Ultimately, climate change demands economic solutions. Our countries are rich in talent, entrepreneurs, and capable governments who can imagine and lead this new path of development," he said.

He also said that COP30 has to be a meeting of the entire world corresponding to the seriousness of the situation. "This is not just about climate change this time. This will have an impact on jobs, economy. We need to exchange many plans and ideas with the government as well as the civil society," he said.

COP30, scheduled to take place in Belem, Brazil, in November 2025, will mark the first time the UN climate summit is hosted in the Amazon region.

The agenda started with pollution. Now we talk about climate change, which is a much bigger and more complex phenomenon. But the first direct impact on people is pollution," he said, recalling how it spurred movements in Europe and the United States in the 1960s and 1970s.

Citing progress in Brazil and India, he highlighted Sao Paulo's "amazing" reductions in air pollution through biofuels and noted India is taking similar steps. However, he acknowledged such solutions can be expensive and called for international cooperation to make them affordable.

COP30 CEO Ana Toni echoed Lago's message, saying that pollution control offers an opportunity to link health and climate goals.

"At COP30, what we're trying to achieve is really accelerating actions that help both development, the well-being of people and prosperity," she said. (PTI)

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

No.133PSC/CON/Exam-17/2024-2025

### NOTIFICATION

The Assam Public Service Commission has shortlisted the following candidates for document verification in connection with the recruitment to the post of Assistant Accounts Officer (AAO) (Class-III post) of Assam Electricity Grid Corporation Limited (AEGCL) (Advt. No.12/2024 dated 07/06/2024), Screening Test (OMR + Written) of which was conducted by the Commission on 06/04/2025.

The date(s) of document verification will be notified shortly. Roll Number of candidates called for document verification are stated below (horizontally):

10001	10070	10183	10273	10387	10428	10433	10494	10964	10992
10997	19418	19642	19686	19706	19888	20153	20187	20210	20233
20266	20345	20406	20415	20421	20471	20569	20638	20725	21040
21117	21154	21185	21315	21645	21661	21667	21736	21793	21853
21867	22187	22345	22435	22852	22868	23018	23062	23367	23441
23492	23640	23694	23767	23874	24050	24106	24134	24167	24251
24352	24511	24528	24755	24775	25007	25111	25117	25196	25214
25352	25665	25686	25814	25826	25878	25909	25911	26063	26080
26187	26222	26354	26606	26676	27314	27437	27492	27518	27537
27559	27745	27849	27864	28066	28186	28315	28404	28455	28590
28722	28741	28781	28838	29176	29195	29912	29917	30025	30038
30073	30074	30159	30375	30428	30463	30474	30541	30588	30627
30664	30694	30964	31011	31172	31248	31284	31287	31300	31454
31471	31476	31482	31489						

N.B.: Notification may be accessed through the APSC's website [www.apsc.in](http://www.apsc.in).

Sd/-  
Principal Controller of Examinations,  
Assam Public Service Commission,  
Jawaharnagar, Khanapara, Guwahati-781022.

DIPR /D/HLT/142/2-Sep-25



## Discussion on prohibiting 'satanic worship' Nagaland assembly session start today

**KOHHIMA, Sept 1:** The three-day monsoon session of the Nagaland assembly will begin on Tuesday.

The session assumes significance as the House is scheduled to discuss the 'prohibition of satanic worship in Nagaland'.

Former home minister and NPF MLA Kuzholuzo (Azo) Nienu will take up a calling attention notice on the issue under Rule 54 of the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business.

The assembly secretariat, in its communication to Nienu, confirmed that the matter had been admitted as one of "urgent public importance".

The matter will be discussed after the Question Hour on the first day of the session.

Nagaland, a Christian-majority state, has not seen such issues raised in the assembly.

Advisor for Urban Development and Municipal Affairs Department, MLA Zhaleo Rio, voiced grave concern over what he described as the "shocking rise" of satanic practices in parts of the



state. In a statement, he said that such activities undermine the state's "deep-rooted Christian faith, erode traditional values, and could mislead vulnerable youth".

"Satanic worship is not only alien to our way of life but also dangerous to the moral and spiritual foundation of our society. If left unchecked, it can destroy families, create fear and confusion, and weaken our cultural integrity," he said.

Zhaleo urged churches, tribal bodies, students' organisations, and community leaders to remain vigilant and proactive in safeguarding the younger generation.

He also appealed to the government to take concrete steps through awareness campaigns, monitoring of suspicious activities, and strict action against those promoting such practices.

He further cautioned that the spread of such rituals has the po-

tential to create division and destabilise peace in Naga society, stressing that "Nagaland must stand united in faith and purpose to resist these dangerous influences".

According to the assembly secretariat, the three-day session, with a recess on Wednesday, is expected to take up legislative business, government reports, and discussions on issues of public importance.

Question Hour and other listed matters will also be taken up during the sitting, it said.

The assembly is also likely to take up the discussion of the demand of five major tribes to review the decades-old job reservation policy and the implementation of the Inner Line Permit (ILP), besides the political issue.

Ahead of the session, the Political Affairs Committee on the Naga Political Issue, composed of members from all the political parties, held a closed-door meeting at the Chief Minister's Residential Complex. (PTI)

## Tripura CM urges representatives of panchayati raj institutions to maintain transparency



**AGARTALA, Sept 1:** Tripura Chief Minister Manik Saha on Monday urged elected representatives of panchayati raj institutions (PRIs) to ensure all-round development at the grassroots level to boost the state's economy.

Speaking at a programme, Saha said around 70 per cent of the state's total population lives in villages, which play a crucial role in powering the state's growth engine.

"The PRIs should not only keep themselves busy in selecting bene-

ficiaries for various government schemes, but should also work for the overall development in the rural areas with transparency", he said.

Lauding the performance of the PRIs, he said the northeastern state has received as many as seven national awards for the successful implementation of various government programmes last year.

"Be it Panchayat Devolution Index (PDI) or Panchayat Advancement Index (PAI), the state's PRI bodies have been doing excellent

work. Out of 1,176 gram panchayats, 42 GPs have got grade A, while 4,728 GPs received grade B and 406 secured grade C under Panchayat Advancement Index (PAI) prepared by the Ministry of Panchayati Raj", he said.

Claiming that the northeastern state is marching in the right direction, the CM said the state's per capita income is the second after Sikkim, and also second in GSDP after Assam, as far as the northeastern states are concerned.

Saha also highlighted the success of the 'Amar Sarkar' portal in solving people's local grievances in a time-bound manner.

"The Amar Sarkar portal has solved 95 per cent of the complaints so far. It brings people closer to the administration to solve their problems, be it water, electricity or roads", he said.

Panchayat Minister Kishor Barman and Panchayat and Rural Development secretary Abhishek Singh also spoke during the programme. (PTI)

## PMLA court summon to Naga revolutionary leader wrong: NNPGs



**HT Correspondent**

**DIMAPUR, Sept 1:** The working committee of Naga National Political Groups (NNPGs) on Monday termed the summon orders issued to NSCN-IM (Nikki) president Niki Sumi, his wife Shelly Sumi and relatives by the PMLA special court in Imphal West on September 26 to answer "charges" as a "deliberate criminalisation" of the Naga political issue, which is unacceptable.

"It is wrong to enforce the Indian judiciary system and jurisprudence against the Naga revolutionary leaders when political deliberations are on for a possible solution," the media cell of the committee said in a release.

Convener of the working committee N Kitovi Zhimomi and its co-conveners believed that it is neither in the interest of the Government of India nor the Nagas to

summon Naga revolutionary leaders at this hour.

The committee said it is very unfortunate and a grim reminder that the Government of India has no political will to solve the decades-old Indo-Naga issue.

The release reminded that the Government of India had invited the working committee of NNPGs to New Delhi and the Agreed Position was signed with it on November 17, 2017. It added that thereafter, the political negotiations continued for two years and were successfully concluded on October 31, 2019.

It also pointed out that in the status paper (serial number 15), there is a clause under "Ending All Hostilities" which says "all criminal and other proceedings initiated against Naga revolutionary cadres, political and civil society members, religious institutions and public servants whatsoever in connection with the Naga revolutionary freedom movement shall be quashed/withdrawn..."

The committee went on to say that the Government of India had acknowledged the Naga history and identity and the Nagas too had acknowledged the contemporary political realities, as both parties negotiated for an enduring and harmonious peaceful coexistence.

## Mizoram launches operation against trafficking and use of drugs and narcotics

**AIZAWL, Sept 1:** The Mizoram government on Monday launched a full-scale operation to curb the growing menace of drug trafficking and substance abuse in the state, an official said.

The operation will last till December, during which a 30-member squad of police in coordination with civil society group Young Mizo Association (YMA), community leaders and other law enforcement agencies will step up vigil in areas particularly along the India-Myanmar border and inter-state boundaries, he said.

The campaign titled "Operation Against Trafficking and Use of Drugs and Narcotics in Mizoram" was launched by Home Minister K Sapdanga, in presence of Excise and Narcotics Minister Lalnghinglova Hmar in Aizawl.

Sapdanga said that the increasing inflow and supply of drugs into Mizoram has caused serious concern and badly affected the state.

The state government, together with civil society organisations, particularly YMA, has been making earnest efforts to curb the rampant increase of drugs as it poses several challenges to the society, he said.

Sapdanga said that the government has given due consideration to a coordinated and effective drive to curb the drug menace.

"To ensure the safety of the state from drugs, a campaign named 'Operation Against Trafficking and Use of Drugs and Narcotics in Mizoram' has been launched, which will last till December," the home minister said.

The state police also formed a 30-member squad, which underwent training for the job.

The squad commenced its duty on Monday and will work in close coordination with community leaders and YMA volunteers to ensure effective enforcement, officials said.

On August 7, a joint meeting of the home department, excise and narcotics department, police, subsidiary Intelligence Bureau (SIB) and Central Young Mizo Association (CYMA) was held in Aizawl to chalk out strategies for the operation, according to officials. It was observed at the meeting that drug supply mostly comes from Myanmar, and 22 points along the international border were identified through which drugs enter from the neighbouring country.

It was decided at the meeting anti-drug awareness campaign will be launched in areas close to the 22 entry points or border villages and stepping up vigil across the state, they said.

An awareness drive in various border villages in east Mizoram's Champhai district, which shares a border with Myanmar, was held between Au-

gust 25 and August 29.

According to officials, drugs are smuggled into Mizoram mainly from Myanmar, and they are transported to other states from where they are re-transported to Mizoram in consumable quantities.

Sapdanga, accompanied by home officials, district officials and leaders of CYMA visited Vairengte, Bairabi and other villages along the state border with Assam to strengthen vigilance at entry points on August 30.

According to the state excise and narcotics department, 53 people, including 7 women, have died of drug abuse in the current year so far.

More than 1,900 people, including 235 women, have died due to drug abuse since 1984 when the first drug-related death due to heroin was reported in the state, it said.

According to police data accessed by PTI, the force alone seized various drugs, including 2,350 kg of Methamphetamine tablets, 89 kg of crystal meth and 243 kg of heroin, altogether worth ₹ 770.95 crore during the period 2020 to May 2025.

The Excise and Narcotics Department also seized various drugs, including 212.987 kg of heroin, 568.991 kg of methamphetamine and 1566.662 kg of ganja, altogether worth ₹ 152.43 crore from 2020 to 8 August. (PTI)

## Two militants arrested in Manipur

**IMPHAL, Sept 1:** Manipur Police have arrested two militants belonging to the banned PREPAK (PRO) outfit in separate operations in Imphal East and West districts, an official statement said on Monday. The arrests were made in Takhel Awang Leikai in Imphal East district and Khongampat Mantri Leikai in Imphal West district on Sunday, it said. (PTI)

### PRESS RELEASE

"ONE MAN INQUIRY COMMISSION HEADED BY JUSTICE ANIMA HAZARIKA, FORMER JUDGE OF GAUHATI HIGH COURT TO INVESTIGATE INTO THE INCIDENT OF UMRANGSO MINES TRAGEDY AND FIX RESPONSIBILITY ON CONCERNED OFFICERS, INDIVIDUALS, MINING COMPANIES AND INSTITUTIONS IF ANY"

Whereas a One Man Inquiry Commission headed by Justice Anima Hazarika, former Judge of the Gauhati High Court, has been constituted by the Governor of Assam to investigate into the incident of Umrangso Mines Tragedy and fix responsibility on concerned officers, individuals, mining companies and institutions if any and the Notification in respect of the same has been issued by the Government of Assam, Political (A) Department, Dispur, Guwahati-6 being Memo No. ECF-606737/3 dated 24/01/2025, fixing the following terms of reference of the Commission:-

1. To ascertain the facts, circumstances and causes leading to the incident of the tragedy resulting in the reported death of 4 (four) persons and several others missing.
2. To ascertain person(s)/organization(s) responsible for the illegal activities if any of rat-hole mining in the area.
3. To determine if there were any lapses on the part of any Authority, and, if so, to fix responsibility thereof;
4. To suggest measures so that such situations/ incidents are dealt with effectively in future.
5. Any other matter relevant to the subject matter of the inquiry.

Whereas the One Man Inquiry Commission shall record the evidences, statements etc. in order to conduct the Inquiry in the Room No.212 of the Assam Administrative Staff College, Khanapara, Guwahati-781022 on 09-09-2025 and 11.09.2025 from 10.30 a.m. to 4.00 p.m.

Now therefore, if any person(s), organization(s), family members of the victims have any information about the incident or is/are willing/desirous to give oral evidence/material evidence before the Inquiry Commission he/she/they is/are requested to appear before the Commission at **Room No.212 of the Assam Administrative Staff College, Khanapara, Guwahati-781022 on 09-09-2025 and 11.09.2025 from 10.30 a.m. to 4.00 p.m.** for recording the same.

Sd/-

Secretary,

One Man Inquiry Commission headed by Justice(Retd.) Anima Hazarika "Meenakshi", House No. 41, Ambikagiri Nagar, R.G. Baruah Road, Guwahati-24

DIPR /D/HLT/141/2-Sep-25

## 2 Arambai Tenggol members arrested, 11 sophisticated firearms seized

**IMPHAL, Sept 1:** Manipur Police have arrested two members of Meitei group Arambai Tenggol (AT) for their alleged involvement in arms trafficking and seized 11 sophisticated firearms from their possession, an official statement said on Monday.

The AT members were nabbed in Imphal West district on Saturday.

"They were allegedly in the possession of illegal firearms for the purpose of weapon trafficking and for committing prejudicial activities," the police statement said.

Seven HK33 rifles, two M4A1 carbines, two .45 pistols, 40 empty magazines of different types and 100 cartridges of .45 calibre were seized from their possession, it said.

The arrested persons were identified as Laishram Tondomba Singh (27) and Tourangbam Amarjit Meitei (20), both residents of Lamding Mamang Leikai in Thoubal district.

They were produced before a court, which sent them to a nine-day police custody.

Arambai Tenggol, in a statement issued on Monday, claimed, "The prejudicial activities of the two arrested were not related in any way with the group and were being done on their personal level."

Arambai Tenggol has been accused by Kuki groups of being widely involved in ethnic violence in the state.

The group also surrendered more than 240 firearms to the law enforcement agencies in February following calls from Governor Ajay Kumar Bhalla to lay down arms.

More than 260 people have been killed and thousands rendered homeless in ethnic violence between Imphal Valley-based Meiteis and adjoining hills-based Kukis in Manipur since May 2023. (PTI)

## Nagaland medical students' strike over regularisation enters day 2

**KOHHIMA, Sept 1:** The indefinite strike launched by the Nagaland Medical Students' Association (NMSA) against the state government's decision to regularise 280 contractual health workers entered its second day on Monday. In a notification issued on August 18, the Health and Family Welfare Department approved the regularisation of medical officers, dentists, Ayush practitioners, and nurses through a departmental screening committee.

The NMSA contended that the decision bypasses constitutionally mandated recruitment processes and violates the Nagaland Health Service Rules, 2006, which require all class-I gazetted officer posts to be filled through the Nagaland Public Service Commission (NPSC).

However, the department clarified in a statement that the regularisation of 98 Covid-19 medical officer appointees was carried out in compliance with an order of the Kohima Bench of the Gauhati High Court dated August 1.

The court had dismissed writ petitions filed by the NMSA challenging the state government's special recruitment drive, observing that the petitioners had "no locus standi" to question the policy decision, it said.

With this ruling, the interim order of November 21, 2024, which had earlier suspended the recruitment, stood vacated, it added.

The department said the regularisation was processed through a departmental screening committee as a "one-time dispensation" and for-

malised through the August 18 notification. NMSA president Photo S Rochill said the association "stands firmly against the notification" and will continue its peaceful agitation until the order is revoked.

He demanded that all sanctioned posts be requisitioned to the NPSC or Nagaland Staff Selection Board (NSSB) and filled through open advertisement, written examination, and viva voce as per service rules.

"The issue is about safeguarding fairness, merit, and equal opportunity in the State," he asserted.

Confederation of Tribal Associations of Nagaland (CTAN) convener Meshenlo Kath voiced strong opposition to the regularisation process, calling it "unconstitutional and arbitrary". (PTI)

## SHGs from 4 states participate in Dimapur rural artisans affair

**HT Correspondent**

**DIMAPUR, Sept 1:** Forty-three self help groups (SHGs) from Nagaland as well as Arunachal Pradesh, Sikkim, and Manipur are participating in the 10th Regional Sale of Articles of Rural Artisans Society (SARAS) Fair 2025, providing a platform for rural artisans and entrepreneurs to exhibit and

sell their products. The 10-day fair, organised by the Nagaland State Rural Livelihoods Mission (NSRLM), began at Supermarket Dimapur on Monday and was inaugurated by director, rural development department, M Mongna Konyak.

The fair will continue till September 10, with stalls remaining open daily from 9 am to 7 pm.

## Aadi Karmayogi Abhiyan launched in Kohima

**HT Correspondent**

**DIMAPUR, Sept 1:** The Aadi Karmayogi Abhiyan, a mission-driven cadre for tribal development, was launched at the State Council of Educational Research and Training (SCERT) in Kohima on Monday. Along with the launch of the programme, a four-day training on the scheme, co-hosted by Union ministry of tribal affairs and Nagaland's tribal affairs department, for officials from 12 districts of the state commenced at the SCERT.

Adviser, tribal affairs & election, H Tovihoto Ayemi, who was the chief guest, in his address, stated that the Aadi Karmayogi Abhiyan is a flagship national mission launched by Union tribal affairs ministry to bring about grassroots change and empower local leadership from different walks of life to become change leaders in their own



communities.

He said the core objectives of the Aadi Karmayogi are to empower tribal communities by nurturing global leadership and strengthening governance from the grassroots level to build a network of 20 lakh+ tribal leaders across one lakh villages and 550 districts in 30 different states and Union territories in India. Ayemi added it is aimed to ensure

that the governance system is responsive, inclusive and people-centric, where every tribal community gets the services and opportunities they deserve.

Secretary, tribal affairs department, Angelina Tajen, in her short speech, highlighted the Dharti Aaba Janatiya Gram Utkarsh Abhiyan (DAJGUA), a scheme launched on October 2, 2024.

For Nagaland, she said, there are 15 departments converging together, with each department making its own interventions to the scheme.

Highlighting the convergence mode, Tajen said all relevant departments are coming together to help build the nation with a cadre of trained, changed leaders at the village, block, district and state level.

She added that the DAJGUA will be implemented in 608 villages in Nagaland.

## Over 4 lakh ganja plants destroyed in Tripura's Sepahijala district

**AGARTALA, Sept 1:** Around 4.28 lakh ganja saplings were destroyed by joint forces in Tripura's Sepahijala district, police said on Monday.

Such a huge quantity of ganja plants has been uprooted for the first time in the district in day-long operations, an official release said.

"Acting on a tip-off, a team led by Jatrapur Police Station officer-in-charge Smriti Kanta Bardhan, along with Tripura State Rifles personnel, destroyed 12 nursery plots, uprooting nearly 2 lakh saplings in the deep forest areas in South Moheshpur, Katalia under the Sonamura sub-division on Sunday," it said.

Simultaneously, a large-scale operation was conducted in several areas, mostly forest land, under the Sonamura Police Station limits by a team led by officer-in-charge Taspa Das, along with active support from BSF and forest personnel on the same day, it said. (PTI)

## Drug Control Department with State Drugs Testing Laboratory, Assam to Conduct Major Drugs Sample Drive in September 2025 to Check Quality of Medicines

**GUWAHATI:** The Drug Control Department of Assam is set to launch a major state-wide sample collection drive in September 2025 to crack down on the sale of sub-standard and spurious drugs and ensure the safety of medicines available in the market.

In a directive issued to all the Drugs Inspectors across the state, the department has mandated the collection of maximum drug samples from their respective jurisdictional districts. This intensive drive aims to significantly increase the number of samples collected and tested, providing a more comprehensive overview of the quality of drugs emphasizing on highly consumed drug circulating in the state of Assam.

All collected samples will be promptly submitted to the State Drugs Testing Laboratory (SDTL) located in Jalukbari, Guwahati. The newly inaugurated SDTL, a first-of-its-kind facility in the North East region, is equipped with advanced technology to analyze the samples for quality, composition, and efficacy. The establishment of this lab has been hailed as a significant step towards medical self-reliance and strengthening the state's healthcare infrastructure.

The drive is a proactive measure to safeguard public health and build confidence in the pharmaceutical supply chain. The test results from the SDTL will be crucial in identifying any counterfeit or poor-quality drugs and taking swift action against those involved in their sale. The department has stated that strict action, including legal actions and cancellation of licenses, will be taken against any establishment found to be in violation of drug quality standards.

The department's enhanced focus on drug quality control is expected to benefit consumers by ensuring they have access to safe and effective medicines, while also providing a regulated environment for the legitimate pharmaceutical industry to thrive. This initiative highlights the government's commitment to prioritizing the health and well-being of the citizens of Assam.

Sd/-

Drugs Controller(I/c), Assam Hengrabari, Guwahati-36

DIPR /D/HLT/140/2-Sep-25



# RAJINIKANTH-STARRER 'COOLIE' EARNs ₹ 504 CRORE AT BOX OFFICE

**NEW DELHI, Sept 1:** "Coolie", featuring superstar Rajinikanth, has crossed the mark of ₹ 500 crore with its worldwide box office collection.

Released on August 14, the film is directed by Lokesh Kanagaraj, known for projects such as Karthi's Kaithi, Vijay's Master and Leo, and Kamal Haasan's Vikram.

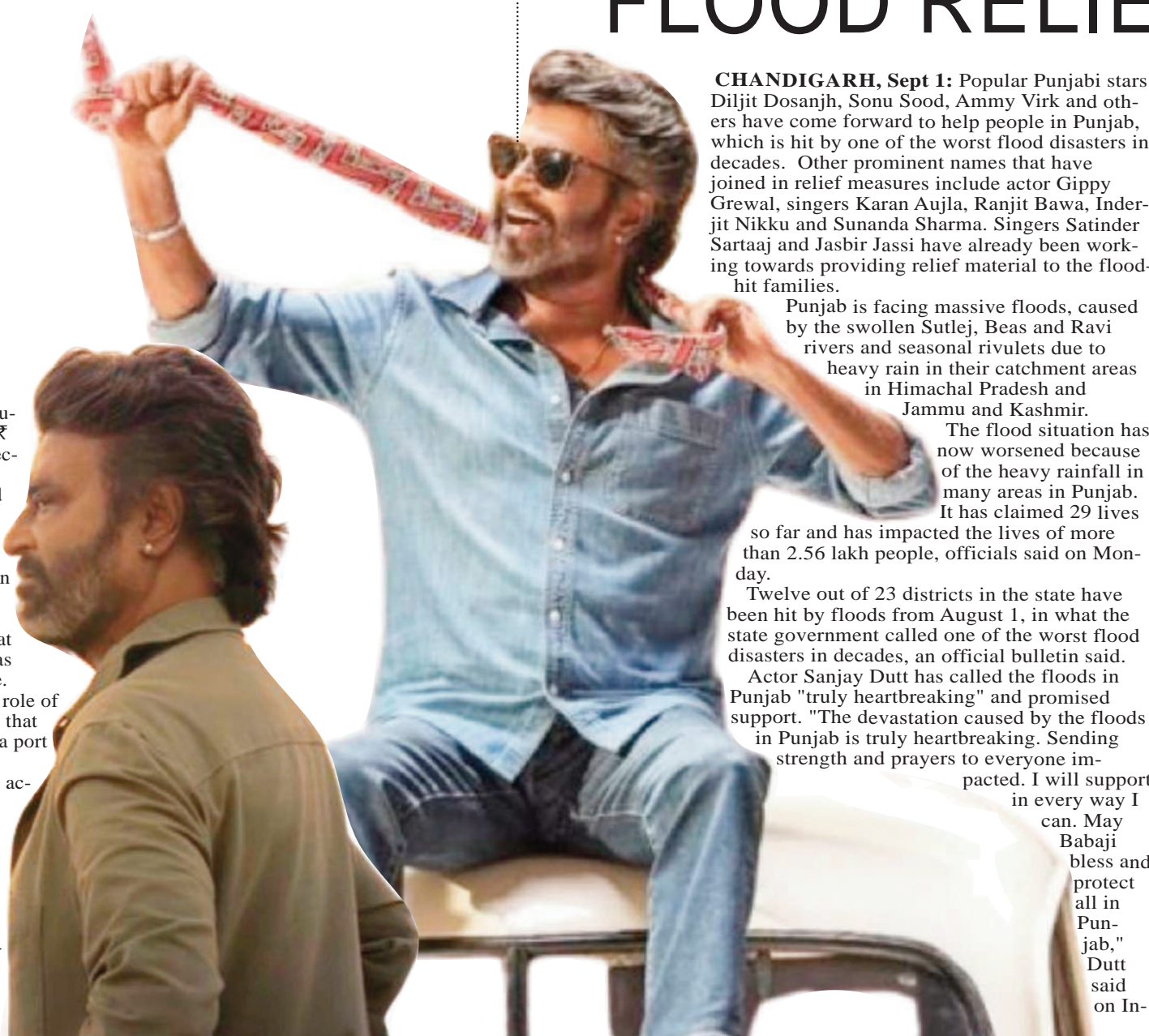
ATF price cut 1.4%, commercial LPG down by ₹ 51.50 According to the trade tracking website Sacnilk, the total collection of the film, which opened with ₹ 151 crore, stands at ₹ 504 crore at the worldwide box office. It has earned ₹ 327 crore at the domestic box office.

The film features Rajinikanth in the titular role of a coolie who stands up to a corrupt syndicate that exploits and abuses his former colleagues in a port town.

The star-studded cast also includes notable actors, Soubin Shahir, Upendra, Shruti Haasan, Sathyaraj, with Nagarjuna as the antagonist and Bollywood star Aamir Khan in a special appearance.

"Coolie" is Rajinikanth's 171st film as a lead actor and also marked his first collaboration with Kanagaraj.

Backed by Sun Pictures, the film is distributed by Pen Studios. It released alongside Ayan Mukerji's War 2 starring Hrithik Roshan and Jr NTR in the lead roles. (PTI)



# PUNJAB FLOODS: SONU SOOD, DILJIT DOSANJH AND GIPPY GREWAL JOIN FLOOD RELIEF EFFORTS

**CHANDIGARH, Sept 1:** Popular Punjabi stars Diljit Dosanjh, Sonu Sood, Ammy Virk and others have come forward to help people in Punjab, which is hit by one of the worst flood disasters in decades. Other prominent names that have joined in relief measures include actor Gippy Grewal, singers Karan Aujla, Ranjit Bawa, Inderjit Nikku and Sunanda Sharma. Singers Satinder Sartaaj and Jasbir Jassi have already been working towards providing relief material to the flood-hit families.

Punjab is facing massive floods, caused by the swollen Sutlej, Beas and Ravi rivers and seasonal rivulets due to heavy rain in their catchment areas in Himachal Pradesh and Jammu and Kashmir.

The flood situation has now worsened because of the heavy rainfall in many areas in Punjab. It has claimed 29 lives so far and has impacted the lives of more than 2.56 lakh people, officials said on Monday.

Twelve out of 23 districts in the state have been hit by floods from August 1, in what the state government called one of the worst flood disasters in decades, an official bulletin said.

Actor Sanjay Dutt has called the floods in Punjab "truly heartbreaking" and promised support. "The devastation caused by the floods in Punjab is truly heartbreaking. Sending strength and prayers to everyone im-

acted. I will support in every way I can. May Babaji bless and protect all in Punjab," Dutt said on In-

stagram. Sood said he stands with Punjab and anyone who has been affected by this flood disaster is not alone.

"Together with all of you, we will get everyone back on their feet," he wrote on his Facebook.

"If you need any kind of help, please don't hesitate to message 'I will do our best to reach out and support you in any way we can. Punjab is my soul. Even if it takes everything, I will not back down. We are Punjabis' and we do not give up," he said.

In a video message, Sood said many areas including Ferozepur, Tarn Taran, Fazilka have been affected by floods.

"Whatever assistance you can provide you must do," he said, adding that his sister Malvika Sood, who had unsuccessfully contested the 2022 Punjab assembly polls from Moga seat, was already providing relief material. Dosanjh has adopted 10 flood-affected villages in Gurdaspur and Amritsar in collaboration with the NGOs and local administration.

Dosanjh's team shared on Instagram that it was working on providing immediate relief. After water recedes, it will focus on rehabilitation of affected families and long term re-building measures in a phased manner. "Together, we can rebuild," said his team.

Grewal sent truckloads of silage for the cattle in the flood-hit area in Ajnala.

Aujla too came forward and said he was helping affected people with medicines, boats, food and fodder for cattle. He urged his fans to provide assistance to the affected villagers. "I and my team stand by Punjab," he shared on Instagram. Virk said he and his team will support 200 affected families.

"Seeing our people without a roof over their heads has left me devastated. In our small effort to bring comfort and stability, we are adopting 200 houses to support those who have lost everything. This is not just about shelter, it's about giving hope, dignity, and strength to start again. May we all come together in whatever way we can to support those in need," said a message shared by Virk on X. (PTI)



# Ankita mourns death of co-star Priya Marathe: You will always live in my heart and memories

**NEW DELHI, Sept 1:** Actor Ankita Lokhande penned a lengthy note on social media on Monday, remembering her late friend and "Pavitra Rishta" co-star Priya Marathe.

Marathe died on Sunday after a long battle with cancer. She was 38. The "Swatantrya Veer Savarkar" actor shared a series of throwback pictures on her Instagram handle and said Marathe was always there for her. "Priya was my first friend from Pavitra Rishta. Me, Prarthana and Priya... our little gang... it always felt so wholesome when we were together. Priya, Prats, and I lovingly called each other wedee in Marathi, and that bond was truly special," the post began.

"She was there in my good days and held me through my sad days... never once missing to show up when I needed her. She never missed attending the Gauri Maha

Aarti during Ganpati Bappa, and this year, I'll pray for your soul there, my wedee... while missing you dearly."

"Priya was the strongest she fought every battle with so much courage. Aaj ti nahiye amchya sobat, and it breaks my heart to even write this. Losing her is a reminder that we really never know the battles someone is fighting behind their smile.. So, be kind... always...Priya, my dear wedee, you will always live in my heart and in my memories. Thank you for every laugh, every tear, every moment. Until we meet again... Om Shanti," she concluded.

"Pavitra Rishta" aired in 2009 and had its final episode in 2014. The drama show had Lokhande in the role of Archana Manav Deshmukh. Marathe essayed the role of Varsha in the show, which also featured late actor Sushant Singh Rajput. (PTI)



# Nidhi Saxena on 'Secret of a Mountain Serpent': Haven't seen many women who allow themselves to be in love

**NEW DELHI, Sept 1:** Filmmaker Nidhi Saxena says through her new film "Secret of a Mountain Serpent", which had its world premiere at the Venice International Film Festival, she wanted to explore women's desire and how there is a certain guilt associated with it.

Set in a Himalayan town against the backdrop of the Kargil War, the film explores the life of Barkha, played by Trimala Adhikari, and the other women who are left behind as most of the men are gone. Barkha ultimately finds herself drawn to Manik Guho, a mysterious outsider played by Adil Hussain. Throughout the film, the local legend of a serpent who still waits for the promise of a love unkept, comes to life.

"I feel that it's important to talk about women's desire. I haven't seen many women allow themselves to be in love. When it comes to sacrificing something, love is the first thing women sacrifice like it's the most unimportant thing.

"Like, they are not allowed to desire. And if they allow themselves to desire something, especially sexually, and emotionally, then it's a sin with guilt associated with it which is what I grew up seeing even in my school friends," Saxena told PTI in a virtual interview from Venice. The filmmaker, a Film and Television Institute of India (FTII) graduate, debuted with her acclaimed 2024 film "Sad Letters of an Imaginary Woman".

"Secret of a Mountain Serpent" fuses magic realism and folklore to tell the story of its protagonist, who has refused to surrender to her loneliness, the director said.

"My protagonist feels why should she sacrifice herself for someone who is absent? She has waited for long, but then she let herself go with the flow of her desire and I feel it's a very brave thing to do. Women who long and wait are always put on a pedestal. But my protagonist takes charge of her desire and allows herself to fall in love again," she said.

Ultimately, the film is about the desire to be free and to not be bound by societal expectations of morality which Saxena calls the "ultimate desire".

"Love should not know boundaries, the limitation of social burden or morality made up by society. Usually people tell us, even on TV, what to desire and how to desire. So what will the ultimate desire be? I thought maybe it's freedom. So for me, the film is like freedom to desire and desire for freedom."

Saxena started working on the movie right after she won Busan Asian Cinema Fund for her 2024 film "Sad Letter of an Imaginary Woman" at the Busan Film Festival. That film also revolved around loneliness..

The filmmaker said "Secret of a Mountain Serpent" was informed by her years spent living in the mountains

though she primarily grew up in Jaipur.

"I was inspired to write this film while I was living in Almora and Kausani. I have seen a lot of men from the mountains migrate for work. And most of them are in the Army and it's normalized in mountains that husbands go away for work and women are left behind. There is an inherited loneliness in the mountains itself," she said.

Saxena said she chose to weave a touch of magic realism in her story as she is inspired by her favourite writers Gabriel García Márquez, Juan Rulfo, Hiraki Murakami and Vinod Kumar Shukla.

She has also incorporated the folklore around serpents as she believes they are another symbol of desire.

"In countries like South Africa, Spain and even India, snakes are always associated with desire. So I knew my symbol had to be something ancient so I created a snake, and it's related to sexual desires. This film is filled with symbolism."

"Secret of a Mountain Serpent" also stars Pushpendra Singh, Richa Meena, Aaradhya Mehta, Rashmi Kandpal, Paru Upreti and Heeraballabh Kandpal alongside locals and non-actors of the region.

The film is co-produced by Forest Flower Films, the banner of Cannes Camera d'Or winner Vimukthi Jayasundara and Richa Chadha and Ali Fazal's Pushing Buttons studios. (PTI)





# Hamilton and Ferrari need some Monza magic at the ‘Temple of Speed’ after disastrous Dutch GP

**ZANDVOORT (NETHERLANDS), Sept 1:** Monza is where the magic happens for Ferrari. And the Italian Grand Prix couldn't come at a better time. Formula 1's annual pilgrimage to the "Temple of Speed" this week brings a chance for Lewis Hamilton and Charles Leclerc to rebound from race-ending crashes at the Dutch Grand Prix on Sunday. It was only Ferrari's second Grand Prix this year without scoring points and Hamilton also picked up a grid penalty for Monza.

The only Italian on the grid,

Mercedes' Kimi Antonelli, wants to "put in the trash" a practice crash at Monza last year, and make up for ending Leclerc's race on Sunday. Success has been rare for Italian drivers at Monza, though.

There isn't much that seven-time world champion Lewis Hamilton hasn't done in F1, but racing for Ferrari at Monza will be something "unique."

It's Hamilton's 19th race at the high-speed Italian track, but his first in red. He's spoken of wanting to enjoy his racing again after a difficult start with Ferrari, and in-

sisted Sunday he'd made progress despite sliding into the barriers at the Dutch Grand Prix, "so to come away with that is definitely painful."

Worse was to come later that day as Hamilton was handed a five-place grid penalty for the Italian Grand Prix for failing to slow down enough for yellow flags before Sunday's race at Zandvoort.

Hamilton had a taste of racing in red in Italy at the Emilia Romagna Grand Prix at Imola in May, and dedicated his result — fourth place — to the Ferrari fans. He still has-

n't been able to get onto the podium in a Grand Prix race for Ferrari. "The support this team has around the world from the tifosi is unmatched and so I'm sure it'll be a unique experience," Hamilton said last week.

Even some of Ferrari's most troubled F1 seasons have been redefined by success at Monza, like in 1988 when Gerhard Berger took an emotional first win for the team since the death of founder Enzo Ferrari. Leclerc won there in his first Ferrari season in 2019 and again last year.

"I think our first experiences are going to be very different because Lewis has lived so many incredible moments already," Leclerc said Thursday.

"I'm pretty sure that he will still be shocked by how special this week feels, but he's gone through a lot more than I had done back then. I just came from Sauber to win in Monza with Ferrari, which was unbelievable. So it was all at once and it was quite crazy."

It's been 20 years since an Italian driver was on the Monza podium.

Kimi Antonelli arrived in F1 with plenty of hype as the youngster succeeding Hamilton at Mercedes. Crashing 10 minutes into his first F1 practice session for Mercedes at Monza last year was a tough introduction. "I have amazing memories, but also really, really bad ones," Antonelli said last week. "It's going to be important to just have a clean weekend, clean sessions and just put in the trash what happened. I think it's going to be a really special weekend." Putting Antonelli in the car a year ago was a gamble and

"maybe a mistake", Mercedes team principal Toto Wolff admitted Friday, but argued it would have been a major confidence-builder without the crash.

Antonelli has two points finishes in his last nine races after a strong start to 2025. He was competitive on pace at the Dutch Grand Prix but it all went wrong when he tried to overtake Leclerc and instead tipped the Ferrari driver into the barrier. Mercedes has yet to formally confirm Antonelli or teammate George Russell for 2026. (AP)

## Lyon leaves it late to beat 10-man Marseille 1-0 in French league - (A)

**LYON (FRANCE), Sept 1:** Lyon finally prevailed in a 1-0 win over 10-man Marseille thanks to a late own-goal from Leonardo Balerdi in the French league on Sunday.

Lyon substitute Nicolas Tagliafico struck the crossbar and teammate Pavel Šulc's pressure forced the despairing Balerdi on the line to bundle the ball into his own net in the 88th minute.

Lyon had two goals ruled out in the first half, and Marseille had defender CJ Egan-Riley sent off in the 29th for taking down Malik Fofana when he was through on goal.

The visitors improved after the break despite their numerical disadvantage. Hamed Junior Traoré and Pierre-Emile Højbjerg both missed good chances for Marseille.

It's Marseille's second loss from three league games so far this season.

Lyon was without star player Georges Mikautadze, who has been linked with a move away to alleviate the financial situation at the club.

The seven-time French champion was in June demoted to the second tier because of financial irregularities and debts estimated at 175 million euros (\$203 million), but it secured its top-division status on appeal.

Paris FC celebrated its first win since clinching promotion as it defeated visiting Metz 3-2 in a game watched by Red Bull head of global soccer Jürgen Klopp. The energy drinks manufacturer is a minority stakeholder in the team backed by France's richest family, the Arnaults of luxury empire LVMH.

Paris' Ilan Kebbal scored twice for the hosts — the first was a penalty — before Boubacar Traoré drew the visitors level at 2-2. Moses Simon scored what proved to be the winner in the 67th and Metz ended the game with 10 men as Sadibou Sané, who got the opening goal, was sent off in the 80th.

The win gave Paris its first points after opening losses to Angers and Marseille.

Also Sunday, Monaco enjoyed a 3-2 win over Strasbourg thanks to a stoppage-time winner from Takumi Minamino, Le Havre defeated Nice 3-1, and Angers drew with Rennes 1-1. (AP)

# Alcaraz uses some behind-the-back magic to reach the US Open quarterfinals

**NEW YORK, Sept 1:** Carlos Alcaraz hit a behind-the-back shot at the U.S. Open to win a point in a 7-6 (3), 6-3, 6-4 victory over Arthur Rinderknech on Sunday that made the Spaniard the youngest man in the Open era to reach 13 Grand Slam quarterfinals.

"Sometimes, I practice it, I'm not going to lie," the No. 2-seeded Alcaraz said about the bit of wizardry he delivered in the first set. "But I mean, I don't practice it, like, too many times. Just in practice, if the opportunity is there, I will try. In the match, it's kind of the same. If I have the opportunity, why not?"

At 22 years and 3 months old, Alcaraz is about 6 months younger than Boris Becker was when he got to major quarterfinal No. 13.

Alcaraz's opponent on Tuesday will be No. 20 Jiri Lehecka, a 23-year-old from the Czech Republic. Lehecka advanced to his second Slam quarterfinal with a 7-6 (4), 6-4, 2-6, 6-2 win over Adrian Mannarino.

Early on against Rinderknech, a Frenchman who played college tennis at Texas A&M, Alcaraz closed a love hold that made the score 2-all in spectacular fashion. Moving to his right at midcourt, Alcaraz found himself in what appeared to be a bad spot when Rinderknech wrong-footed him.

But Alcaraz wrapped his racket around his body and flicked a



shot up the line.

Perhaps startled that the point wasn't over, Rinderknech hit a volley that landed in the net. A big smile crossed Alcaraz's face as he looked over at his coach, Juan Carlos Ferrero, in the stands. Alcaraz then placed his right index finger behind his ear, as if acknowledging the spectators' cheers.

"The people like it; I like play-

ing tennis like this," Alcaraz said. "My style of tennis fits pretty well to the energy here."

Alcaraz wound up taking that set in a tiebreaker. Then, midway through the second, Alcaraz produced another highlight-worthy effort with a no-look passing winner, racing forward to get to a short ball and glancing down the line as though he was going to hit to Rinderknech's backhand, but

instead steering a forehand cross-court.

By the last game, even Rinderknech was smiling at other next-level strokes by Alcaraz, who has won 54 of 55 service games through four matches this year at Flushing Meadows. He claimed the title here in 2022 for the first of his five Grand Slam trophies.

Alcaraz is into his fourth major

quarterfinal of 2025, the first time in his career he's gone 4 for 4 in that category in a season.

He lost to Novak Djokovic at that stage at the Australian Open in January, won the French Open in June and lost to No. 1 Jannik Sinner in the final at Wimbledon in July.

Rinderknech was appearing in the fourth round of a major for the first time. (PTI)

# Dusan Vlahovic sweeps aside transfer speculation with another goal for Juventus

**ROME, Sept 1:** Juventus would sell Dusan Vlahovic to any buyer with enough cash for the highly paid center forward.

Yet the Bianconeri can hardly get by without him.

Having turned down transfer offer after transfer offer, Vlahovic came off the bench and scored for the second consecutive match in Juventus' 1-0 win at Genoa in Serie A on Sunday.

In the 73rd minute, Vlahovic rose far above his marker to redirect a corner from Serbia teammate Filip Kostic — another player who has surprisingly remained in Turin.

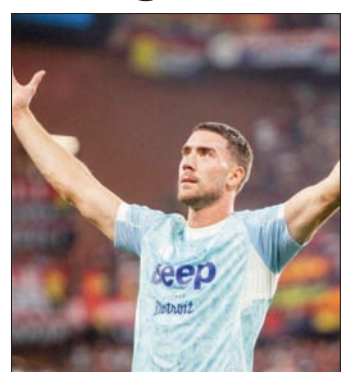
Juventus has been trying to offload Vlahovic and his 12 million euros (\$14 million) salary — the highest in the

league — before his contract expires after this season. Without much success, though, since Vlahovic has so far seemed determined to stay ahead of Monday's market closure.

Juventus joined defending champion Napoli, promoted Cremonese and Roma with a perfect six points from the opening two rounds.

Juventus goalkeeper Michele Di Gregorio preserved the victory with two saves in stoppage time, first pushing away a strike from Caleb Ekuban around the post and then punching away a header from Patrizio Masini that had hit the crossbar.

Inter Milan was the most impressive side during Serie A's opening round, routing



Torino 5-0. In the second round, the Nerazzurri were a big disappointment, getting beat 2-1 by Udinese on Sunday in their home opener.

Inter went ahead early on with a goal from Denzel Dumfries. But a foul by Dumfries resulted in a penalty that

Keinan Davis converted for Udinese to equalize and then Arthur Atta also scored before the break after Inter lost possession at mid-field.

Inter, which is still clearly a work in progress under new coach Cristian Chivu, had a potential equalizer from Federico Dimarco annulled for offside.

Francesco Pio Esposito, a highly touted 20-year-old striker, came on in the second half to make his Serie A debut for Inter but didn't make much of an impact.

Also, Lazio beat Hellas Verona 4-0 with goals from Matteo Guendouzi, Mattia Zaccagni, Valentin Castellanos and Boulaye Dia.

Torino and Fiorentina drew 0-0 (AP)

# Understanding the game and players is key, says mental conditioning coach Paddy Upton

**RAJGIR (BIHAR), Sept 1:** Renowned mental conditioning coach Paddy Upton has worked across different sports during an illustrious career, but he believes the principles of the job remain the same: Understanding the need of the game and players.

Upton, who was a part of the support staff under head coach Gary Kirsten during India's 2011 Cricket World Cup-winning campaign, is currently associated with the men's hockey team at the ongoing Asia Cup here.

He was also part of the Indian hockey team's bronze medal-winning campaign at the Paris Olympics, and triumphant sides of last year's Asian Champions Trophy and 2022 Asian Games.

"The principles of teamwork remain the same. There is a different type of teamwork in hockey, multiple players need to connect, whereas cricket is also a teamwork but more individual."

"But the principles of remaining focussed, the principles of managing distractions -- like scoreboard, like fans, like opposition, like making mistakes, all remain the same," the 55-year-old Upton told PTI in an interview.

Upton's career mainly revolved around cricket, having worked with the South African team and many T20 franchises around the world, including Rajasthan Royals in IPL.

But he has also worked in other sports like rugby and most recently hockey.

"Working in hockey, I don't know very much about the game and I am not from India. I am still a visitor here, so my approach is really to listen, pay attention to understand the environment, understand the game, understand each individual," the South African said. "Only when I understand I will be able to step in and offer some assistance."

Asked about his methodology while working with the Indian hockey team, Upton said: "It is both one on one and team sessions. We do workshops with the

team and I also do one-on-one sessions. In the end it depends on the coach and captain, what they want."

Upton said the focus of the Indian hockey team right now is to build towards next year's World Cup, Asian Games, and the 2028 Olympics.

"My previous experience was the year in the lead-up to the Olympics, then they were definitely in a building phase and had a very clear strategy to build towards the Olympics from the fitness perspective, strategy perspective, and mental guide perspective."

"And now towards this is phase two of building towards the World Cup, Asian Games and the big picture - the Olympics. So the team is in a building phase. They have got very good leadership, particularly in coach Craig Fulton and Harmanpreet. They are just building the foundation without getting ahead of ourselves," he said.

Upton has a high regard for the Indian hockey team's professionalism and work ethics, but said there is still room for improvement.

"The team is incredibly professional. I am amazed at the work ethic, the physical work ethic, how hard they train sometimes in difficult conditions. These are very dedicated, professional hockey players. It's very exciting to be involved with a team like this," he said.

"(But) there are some habits that players are aware of, coaches are aware of and we are working towards that. We always have a shorter focus on what we can learn from today's game and a long-term focus that we don't want to be arriving at our best in the first round, but what we want to do is slowly build towards the business end of the tournament."

India defeated China 4-3 and then scrapped past Japan 3-2 to enter the Super 4s stage of the Asia Cup tournament, the winner of which will qualify for next year's World Cup. (AP)

# Bayern still searching for Harry Kane backup after summer of transfer frustration

**BERLIN, Sept 1:** Bayern Munich's search for a backup for star forward Harry Kane was continuing on the last day of the summer transfer period Monday.

Bayern's efforts to sign Senegal forward Nicholas Jackson on loan from Chelsea failed late Sunday after an injury to his teammate Liam Delap forced a rethink on the deal. The clubs had reportedly reached agreement, but Delap's injury on Saturday put a halt to proceedings. Chelsea, which had reportedly asked the player to return to London, would only consider a permanent switch and Bayern insisted on a loan. They failed to reach agreement.

Bayern powerbroker Uli Hoenes last month said the club should only make loan signings for the rest of the transfer window, avoiding any more big-money signings following the arrival of Luis Diaz from Liverpool. This, despite the departures of Kingsley Coman and Leroy Sané.



It complicated efforts by Max Eberl, Bayern's board member for sport, to reinforce the squad after a summer in which he failed to sign Germany players Nick Woltemade or Florian Wirtz from Stuttgart and Bayer Leverkusen, respectively.

Apart from Diaz, Bayern's only other significant reinforcement of the transfer period was Jonathan Tah's arrival on a free transfer from Leverkusen.

Media reports suggested Bayern had switched attention to Atalanta's Ademola Lookman or Leipzig's Loïs Openda, though the latter was reportedly set for a move to Juventus.

It was a summer of upheaval for Leverkusen after seeing star coach Xabi Alonso return to Real Madrid. Wirtz moved to Liverpool rather than Bayern, and he was followed by other key players from the 2024 Bundesliga-winning team like Granit Xhaka, Jeremie Frimpong, Amine Adli and Tah. Piero Hin-

capie was expected to move to Arsenal.

Leverkusen sporting director Simon Rolfes moved to replace them with a host of promising young players including Morocco winger Eliesse Ben Seghir from Monaco, Loïc Badé from Sevilla, Malik Tillman from PSV Eindhoven and Ibrahim Maza from Hertha Berlin, while also signing the likes of Lucas Vázquez from Real Madrid for experience.

New coach Erik ten Hag's future was already in doubt after failing to win either of Leverkusen's opening two Bundesliga games, however. After losing Woltemade to Newcastle, Enzo Millot to Saudi club Al-Ahli, and Germany forward Deniz Undav to injury, Stuttgart was reportedly working on the signings of South Korea forward Oh Hyeon-gyu from Genk and Moroccan attacking midfielder Bilal El Khannouss from Leicester City. (AP)



# Women's WC champs to get nearly ₹ 40 cr pay cheque, biggest ever in tournament's history

**DUBAI, Sept 1:** The winners of the upcoming ICC Women's Cricket World Cup will receive the biggest-ever prize money in the history of the tournament, a massive hike from USD 1.32 million (₹ 11.65 crore) in the previous edition to USD 4.48 million (₹ 39.55 crore), the sport's global governing body announced on Monday.

The 13th edition of the global showcase event, beginning on September 30, is being jointly hosted by India and Sri Lanka.

Overall, the eight-team event will witness nearly a three-fold increase in prize money, with the ICC announcing a total prize purse of USD 13.88 million (₹ 122.5 crore approx) for the mega event.

"The International Cricket Council (ICC) today announced a staggering four-fold increase in prize money for the ICC Women's Cricket World Cup 2025 to be hosted by India from 30 September to 2 November. The ICC sets a new benchmark for women's cricket as champions walk away with a record USD 4.48 million in prize money," said a statement from the global cricket body.

"The overall prize money at the eight-team tournament totals USD 13.88 million, which is a rise of 297 per cent from the USD 3.5 million (₹ 31 crore approx) at the last edition held in New Zealand in 2022. The total prize pot eclipses the prize money at the ICC Men's Cricket World Cup 2023, which had total prize money of USD 10 million (₹ 88.26 crore approx)."

The runners-up will now receive USD 2.24



million (₹ 19.77 crore approx), an increase of 273 per cent in comparison to the USD 600,000 (₹ 5.30 crore) England received for reaching the final, while the two losing semi-finalists will be richer by USD 1.12 million (₹ 9.89 crore approx) -- up from USD 300,000 (₹ 2.65 crore approx) in 2022) each.

The group-stage win will earn the victors USD 34,314 (₹ 30.29 lakhs). The teams finishing fifth and sixth will take home USD 700,000 (₹ 62 lakh approx) each and those in seventh and eighth place will earn USD 280,000 (₹ 24.71 lakh approx). Each participating team will take home USD 250,000 (₹ 22 lakh approx).

ICC said the move is aimed at increasing the popularity of women's cricket worldwide and to bring about a parity with men's cricket.

"The increased prize money aligns with the ICC's strategy to focus on the growth of the women's game and a decision to introduce pay parity was announced ahead of the ICC Women's T20 World Cup 2024," the statement added.

The winner of the tournament, to be held across five venues - Guwahati, Indore, Navi Mumbai and Visakhapatnam in India and Colombo in Sri Lanka - will receive USD 4.48 million, a 239 per cent increase from the

USD1.32 million (₹ 11.65 crore) awarded to Australia when they won their seventh title three years ago. The winners' purse at the last Men's World Cup was USD 4 million (₹ 35.31 crore approx).

"The increased prize money aligns with the ICC's strategy to focus on the growth of the women's game and a decision to introduce pay parity was announced ahead of the ICC Women's T20 World Cup 2024."

ICC chairman Jay Shah said it was a move to prioritise women's cricket and was a "defining milestone" for the game.

"This announcement marks a defining milestone in the journey of women's cricket. This four-fold increase in prize money is a landmark moment for women's cricket and reflects our clear commitment to its long-term growth. Our message is simple, women cricketers must know they will be treated on par with men if they choose this sport professionally."

The ICC statement added that the prize money increase underscores the global body's ambition to deliver a world-class Women's Cricket World Cup and to inspire the next generation of players and fans.

"Women's cricket is on a remarkable upward trajectory, and with this step we are confident the momentum will accelerate. We call upon all stakeholders, fans, media, partners, and Member Boards, to join us in championing the women's game and ensuring it receives the recognition and respect it deserves." (PTI)

## Captain Nitish Rana powers West Delhi Lions to DPL 2025 title



**NEW DELHI, Sept 1:** Former KKR skipper Nitish Rana once again showed his prowess in the shortest format with an unbeaten 79 off 49 balls as he propelled West Delhi Lions to its maiden Delhi Premier League (DPL2025) title beating Central Delhi Lions by six wickets.

Chasing 174, the Lions were jolted early as Central Delhi Kings' bowlers Simarjeet Singh and Arun Pundir struck in quick succession, leaving them in tatters at 48 for 3 inside the fifth over.

The pressure of a big final was evident, but captain Rana stepped up when it mattered the most. Alongside Mayank Gu-sain, he steadied the chase with a 42-run partnership. Gusain (15 off 11) fell to leg-spinner Tejas Baroka, but by then, the skipper had already seized control.

Rana then found an ideal ally in former MI player Hrithik Shokeen, and the pair ensured there were no further setbacks. While Shokeen anchored with a composed 42 not out off 27 balls, Rana unleashed a master-class of controlled aggression, hitting as many as seven sixes.

Their unbroken stand not

only nullified the Kings' bowling attack but also carried the Lions over the finish line.

Earlier, batting first, the Central Delhi Kings produced a remarkable turnaround after a shaky start to post a competitive 173/7 in 20 overs with skipper Rana doing the star turn by bringing himself into the attack. He bowled tight off-breaks to end with figures of 1/16 in four overs.

The Kings' top order faltered under pressure, with wickets tumbling at regular intervals. At one stage, they were left reeling at 78/6, and the West Delhi Lions looked firmly in control.

But the script changed dramatically when Yugal Saini and Pranshu Vijayan came together at the crease. The duo showed grit, composure, and smart shot selection to stitch a game-changing 78-run partnership for the seventh wicket. Yugal anchored the innings with a determined 65 off 48 balls, mixing steady accumulation with timely boundaries. At the other end, Pranshu played the perfect aggressor, smashing a brilliant unbeaten 50 off just 24 deliveries. (PTI)

## Ashwin in talks with ILT20 organisers for registering his name in auctions: Reports

**NEW DELHI, Sept 1:** Having retired from all forms of Indian cricket, spin great Ravichandran Ashwin has now confirmed his interest in being part of the auctions for the next edition of ILT20, which will be held in the UAE from December 2 to January 4, 2026.

Ashwin, who will turn 39 in another couple of weeks, had recently announced his retirement from the IPL, which has now made him eligible to play in franchise-based T20 leagues across the globe.

India's second-highest wicket-taker across formats with 765 scalps from 287 international games, will be the most high-profile name to play in a global league outside IPL if any franchise happens to pick him at the auctions.

"Yes, I am in talks with the organisers. Hopefully, I will have a buyer if I register for the auction," Ashwin was quoted as saying by Cricbuzz.

The auction is scheduled to take place on September 30 in Dubai and registration for the same will be completed by September 10. This is the first time that ILT20 will have an auction as it followed the Draft System to pick players during earlier seasons.

Among prominent Indians, who have played in ILT20, the name that instantly comes to mind is Ambati Rayudu, who had in an earlier season played for MI Emirates.

But Rayudu was never as big a name as Ashwin, who was one of India's match-winners in the Test format. (PTI)

## Djokovic's neck bothers him during a US Open win

**NEW YORK, Sept 1:** Novak Djokovic was cruising along with a big early lead in his U.S. Open fourth-round match on Sunday night when his neck started bothering him. That didn't stop Djokovic from dominating 144th-ranked qualifier Jan-Lennard Struff 6-3, 6-3, 6-2 to reach his record 64th Grand Slam quarterfinal.

"What gives me a lot of encouragement right now, and positivity, is the way I played tonight," Djokovic said. "Best performance of the tournament so far. Hopefully I can keep that going."

Djokovic was ahead 4-0, 15-love when he hit a nicely angled volley winner to go up 30-love in that game. The 24-time Grand Slam champion immediately grabbed at the back of his neck and started turning his head.

The 38-year-old Djokovic kept trying to stretch his neck or flex his right shoulder between points, and he went on to drop that game and the next one, too. But he soon regained the upper hand against Struff, who beat Frances Tiafoe in the previous round and was trying to get to a major quarterfinal for the first time.

After improving to 8-0 against Struff, Djokovic now carries a 10-0 head-to-head record into his quarterfinal on Tuesday against 2024 U.S. Open runner-up Taylor Fritz.

"I expect players that never won against me



to come out on the court and try something different and try to make me feel maybe uncomfortable and play more aggressive, or not, whatever," Djokovic said. "I don't think there's going to be any major changes with Taylor, because, obviously, you stick to the kind of a game plan that got you to the quarters, and you know what your strengths are ... which for him

obviously is serve and forehand."

The No. 4-seeded Fritz, the last American man in the bracket, moved into the quarterfinals with a 6-4, 6-3, 6-3 victory Sunday against No. 21 Tomas Machac of the Czech Republic.

"The thing is, I think it's spanned over so many years. The first almost seven or eight times I played him, I probably just wasn't a good enough player to really have that much of a chance unless I have the best day ever and he has a bad day," Fritz said. "Only the last couple times we've played, I think, I've been this just better player that can, I'd say, compete and have chances."

After Djokovic finished off that opening set against Struff, he was visited by a trainer for treatment during the ensuing changeover. Djokovic was given a massage to his neck and shoulder. If he was still in discomfort, his play wasn't really affected at all. During the break after that set, Djokovic had his right forearm massaged. But again, there were no signs of trouble when the ball was in play.

Djokovic had trainers work on him earlier in the tournament, too, including for blisters on a foot in the first round and for a lower-back issue in the third.

He's won four championships in New York, most recently in 2023. (AP)

## Taylor Townsend fails to convert 8 match points, falls to Barbora Krejckikova at the US Open

**NEW YORK, Sept 1:** Taylor Townsend couldn't convert eight match points in a second set that ended with a 25-minute tiebreaker and was eliminated from the U.S. Open on Sunday with a 1-6, 7-6 (13), 6-3 loss to Barbora Krejckikova.

With fans chanting "Let's go Taylor! Let's go Taylor!" for a player who became a fan favorite during the tournament after her

confrontation with Jelena Ostapenko following her second-round victory, Townsend was repeatedly a point away from what would have been her first Grand Slam quarterfinal.

But Krejckikova, a two-time Grand Slam singles champion, erased seven match points in the tiebreaker, broke Townsend's serve twice in the third set and advanced to face No. 4 seed Jessica Pegula

on Tuesday. "It just stings, because I literally gave everything," Townsend said. "She came up with some really, really great tennis in moments where she was down, and I thought I had it."

Townsend hugged Krejckikova at the net after the match, then sat in her sideline chair and began crying before leaving the court to a standing ovation as she dabbed her eyes with a towel. (AP)

## Jessica Pegula is back in the US Open quarterfinals and faces Krejckikova, Djokovic to play Fritz



**NEW YORK, Sept 1:** Jessica Pegula is back in the quarterfinals of a Grand Slam tournament, which used to be her roadblock.

The way Pegula is playing at this U.S. Open, it may be just another stop on the way back to the final.

The No. 4 seed rolled into the last eight by routing fellow American Ann Li 6-1, 6-2 in just 54 minutes on Sunday. She will face Barbora Krejckikova on Tuesday after the two-time Grand Slam champion fought off eight match points in a second set that ended with a 25-minute tiebreaker and beat Taylor Townsend 1-6, 7-6 (13), 6-3.

Townsend was trying to reach her first quarterfinal in her 31st Grand Slam appearance. Pegula hasn't dropped a set this year at Flushing Meadows, and only once was she even kept on court for more than 1 hour, 15 minutes.

"Probably the best match, honestly, I've played since, like, before Wimbledon I feel like from the start to finish. So that was encouraging," Pegula said of Sunday's victory. "I was just hitting the ball, doing everything well, executing my strategy very well and got through it pretty quick."

Pegula had been 0-6 in Grand Slam quarterfinals before upsetting Iga Swiatek in that round last year. She went on to reach the final,

where was defeated by Aryna Sabalenka. But she wasn't sure her tennis was ready for a follow-up when she returned to New York.

She had lost four of her previous six singles matches coming into the U.S. Open, and said she played so poorly while practicing with Sabalenka a few days before the tournament that she stopped early, opting instead for an escape room with some friends and a couple of drinks.

Things have certainly gotten better since.

"Like I said, I haven't been feeling my best on court, so to be able to come back and make another quarterfinal here is something I'm definitely proud of," Pegula said. "Of course, I want to go further and do more and win the tournament, but I feel like just on a personal kind of goal level, I'm happy with the way I've been able to kind of turn some of my tennis around the last few weeks."

The 58th-ranked Li was the highest-ranked player Pegula has faced in the tournament, but the 25-year-old was overpowered in her first appearance in the round of 16 in a major. Pegula broke her all four times she served in the 25-minute first set, and she had just five winners against 19 unforced errors in the match.

Pegula will certainly be the fresher player Tuesday. Krejckikova, who missed nearly five months to begin the season with a back injury, rallied late to knock off 10th-seeded American Emma Navarro in 2 1/2 hours in the third round, then went 3 hours, 4 minutes Sunday — 98 minutes alone for the second set.

"I don't worry. I'm not really thinking about it right now," Krejckikova said. "I'm just really happy that I won today, because, I mean, also, if one point didn't go my way, I would have been searching for flights." Carlos Alcaraz hit a behind-the-back shot to win a point in a 7-6 (3), 6-3, 6-4 victory over Arthur Rinderknecht that made the Spaniard the youngest man in the Open era to reach 13 Grand Slam quarterfinals. Novak Djokovic reached his record 64th career Grand Slam quarterfinal by defeating qualifier Jan-Lennard Struff 6-3, 6-3, 6-2 despite being bothered by his neck.

Next for Djokovic is a meeting against Taylor Fritz, last year's runner-up and the only American man remaining. Djokovic is 10-0 against Fritz, who beat No. 21 Tomas Machac in straight sets. Sabalenka returned to the quarterfinals with a 6-1, 6-4 win over Cristina Bucsa. Sabalenka's next opponent will be 2023 Wimbledon champion Marketa Vondrousova, who defeated 2022 Wimbledon champion Elena Rybakina 6-4, 5-7, 6-2 at night with the help of 13 aces, including three in the last game.

Coco Gauff and Naomi Osaka will meet in a fourth-round matchup, six years after Osaka beat a then-15-year-old Gauff in the same round. Wimbledon champions Jannik Sinner and Iga Swiatek also will be in action as the remaining quarterfinal matchups are set. Venus Williams and Leylah Fernandez will play their third-round women's doubles match against the No. 12-seeded team of Ekaterina Alexandrova and Zhang Shuai. (AP)



**BENGALURU, Sept 1:** Giving a detailed plan for 'RCB Cares', Royal Challengers Bengaluru on Monday said that the foundation will work closely with IPL and the Karnataka State Cricket Association to design better crowd management protocols after 11 people were crushed to death in a stampede during the team's trophy celebrations earlier this year.

Having already announced ₹ 25 lakh compensation for the families of those who lost their lives during the IPL celebrations, RCB Cares stated that it has been formed to "support, empower and elevate our 12th Man Army through meaning-

ful action."

The foundation has proposed a six-point formula to achieve the goal but it can only be put to effect once it gets requisite clearance from the government authorities.

The agenda includes: "Providing Provide Support That Goes Be-

yond Financial Aid.

Secondly, it wants to "work closely with stadium authorities, sporting bodies, and league partners to design better crowd management protocols."

The franchise is also promising a "fan-safety audit framework" besides training on-ground partners annually on crowd management and emergency response.

In addition, the team will work to "empower communities with real opportunities" and "invest in independent research on crowd safety."

The remaining two suggestions are to "elevate fan memory into something permanent" and also "create in-stadia jobs and nurture local talent".

"RCB Cares", according to the franchise, is a long-term plan to be closely involved with fan welfare.

The inquiry that followed the tragedy in June, blamed RCB for the large gathering which ran into lakhs due to social media invitations by the team.

It was also concluded that the franchise did not seek the requisite clearances to organise the celebrations and the police found itself massively outnumbered by the fans, who jostled to get inside the Chinnaswamy Stadium. (PTI)