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## Any move to dilute or is against the Assam Accord will be protested: Deepak Das

# Immigrant foreigners' directive: AGP to move SC

GUWAHATI, Sept 6: The Asom Gana Parishad (AGP), a constituent of the BJP-led government in Assam, on Saturday said it will approach the Supreme Court to exempt the northeastern state from the Centre's recent directive on immigrant foreigners.

The party asserted it was in opposition to any step that goes against the spirit of the Assam Accord, including the recent order.

The Assam Accord was signed on August 15, 1985 after a violent six-year-long anti-foreigner movement. The AGP was formed as an offshoot of the agitation.

"We have decided to file a writ petition before the Supreme Court, asking for exemption of Assam from the order," AGP vice-president and former MP Kumar Deepak Das told a press conference here.



"Any step that seeks to dilute or is against the Assam Accord will be protested vehemently by our party," he said.

The Centre's order, issued under the recently implemented Immigration and Foreigners Act, 2025, allows Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, Parsis and Christians from

Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan who entered India on or before December 31, 2024, to stay in the country without valid travel documents, if they fled religious persecution.

The Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019, which came into effect last year amid massive protests in

the state, makes similar groups who arrived in India on or before December 31, 2014, eligible for Indian citizenship.

"We had challenged in the Supreme Court the implementation of CAA in Assam, and demanded that our state be exempted from it, as the Assam Accord sets the deadline for detection of illegal foreigners as March 25, 1971. On similar lines, we will approach the apex court in case of this latest order," Das said.

"The recent order is a major hurdle in the implementation of the Accord, and we have a non-compromising stand with regard to implementation of all clauses of the pact," he said.

Asked whether the AGP will continue to remain part of the NDA, Das said no decision has been taken in this regard.

"Last evening, we had a party meeting in which it was decided to approach the apex court. We have full faith in the judiciary and believe it will rule in our favour," he said.

Taking on the Congress and other parties for questioning the AGP over its stand on the latest directive, Das said, "We have been at the forefront while protesting anything that goes against the Assam Accord. When the CAA was a bill in Parliament, we had come out in protest. Our three ministers in the Assam government had resigned when it was passed in Lok Sabha in 2019."

To a query if the AGP will launch any other form of agitation along with the legal recourse, its vice-president said, "Other parties and organisations are protesting on the streets. We (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

## Raja's family seeks death penalty for Sonam, 4 others

Police file chargesheet in Meghalaya honeymoon murder

SHILLONG/ INDORE, Sept 6: The Meghalaya Police have submitted a 790-page chargesheet in the murder of Indore-based businessman Raja Raghuvanshi, naming five people, including his wife Sonam and her boyfriend Raj Kushwaha, as the accused, even as Raja's family has demanded death penalty for all four accused.

Raja was murdered while he was honeymooning in the state in May, triggering a nationwide manhunt for his killers.

The charge sheet, filed before the court of the Judicial Magistrate First Class of Sohra Sub-Division on Friday, was supported by material evidence, East Khasi Hills SP Vivke Syiem said in a statement.

Sonam and Raj, along with their friends Akash Singh Rajput, Vishal Singh Chauhan and Anand Kurni, were charged under Bhartiya Nyaya

Sanhita sections 103(1) (murder), 238 (a) that deals with disappearance of evidence, and 61(2), which is related to criminal conspiracy, it said.

Lokendra Tomar, Balla Ahirwar and Shilom James were charged for their alleged role in destroying evidence, it added.

Raja and his wife Sonam reached the state on May 21 and went to Sohra via Shillong. The couple were reported missing on May 26, prompting a massive search operation.

Raja's body was recovered from a deep gorge at Arliang Riat Kunongrim near the famous Wei Sawdong falls in Sohra on June 2.

Investigators found that Sonam was in a relationship with Raj, and they plotted the murder during the honeymoon. Raja was murdered by Raj's (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

## Pact between Centre, Kuki-Zo groups crucial step for peace in Manipur: Meitei group

IMPHAL, Sept 6: Meitei organisation Arambai Tenggol on Saturday said the re-negotiated Suspension of Operations pact between the Centre and two Kuki-Zo groups is crucial for achieving peace in Manipur and expressed unwavering support to any government initiative aimed at restoring order and tranquillity in the state.

Two prominent Kuki-Zo groups had on Thursday signed the suspension of operations agreement with the government on re-negotiated terms and conditions under which they agreed on maintaining territorial integrity of Manipur, relocating designated camps away from vulnerable areas and working for a solution to bring lasting peace and stability in the state.

The signing of the Suspension of Operations (SoO)

agreement with the Kuki National Organisation (KNO) and United People's Front (UPF) is also set to have a positive impact on peace efforts in Manipur, officials said.

In a statement, Arambai Tenggol said, "We stand steadfast in our dedication to fostering peace and normalcy across Manipur. Our organisation has been actively cooperating and coordinating with the efforts of the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) and the State Administration to chart a positive path forward."

A recent point of focus has been the "re-negotiated Suspension of Operations (SoO) pact, an initiative we view as a crucial step towards achieving peace", the Meitei group said. The outfit also called for a stringent approach towards illegal (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

## EC top brass to discuss pan-India SIR preparedness with state poll machinery

NEW DELHI, Sept 6: The Election Commission top brass will discuss the preparedness of pan-India rollout of special intensive revision of voters' list with its state representatives next week, officials said Saturday.

The poll authority has convened a meeting of its state chief electoral officers on Wednesday, officials said.

This is the third meeting of CEOs after Gyanesh Kumar took over as the chief election commissioner in February. But the September 10



meeting assumes significance as the preparedness of a pan-India special intensive revision will be discussed, officials said.

The Commission has said that

after Bihar, the special revision will be carried out in the entire country.

There are indications that the exercise would commence later this year ahead of assembly elections in Assam, Kerala, Puducherry, Tamil Nadu and West Bengal in 2026.

The primary aim of the intensive revision is to weed out foreign illegal migrants by checking their place of birth. The move assumes significance in the wake of a crackdown in various states on illegal foreign migrants, including from Bangladesh and (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

## Banned 'Yaba' tablets seized, one arrested

GUWAHATI, Sept 6: Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said banned 'Yaba' tablets with an estimated value of over ₹ 10 crore were seized in Sribhumi district and a drug peddler was arrested in this connection.

The police seized 70,000 'Yaba' tablets in a major anti-narcotics operation, the CM posted on 'X' on Friday night.

'Yaba' tablets worth ₹ 10 cr seized- still think you can outrun @assampolice? One peddler has been arrested (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

## Modi fully reciprocates US President's positive assessment

NEW DELHI, Sept 6: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday "fully reciprocated" US President Donald Trump's "positive assessment" of the India-US partnership and his appreciation of the "special" relationship between the two nations, signalling an intent by both the sides to check the downturn in their ties.

Modi's comments on social media came hours after Trump said at a news conference in White House that he will always be "friends with Modi" but added without elaborating that he didn't like what the Indian leader was doing at this "particular moment".

"Deeply appreciate and fully reciprocate President Trump's sentiments and positive assessment of our ties," Modi said.

"India and the US have a very positive and forward-looking Comprehensive and Global Strategic Partnership," he noted on X.

It was the first exchange of views between the two leaders after they held a phone conversation on June 17.

The relations between New Delhi and Washington are on a major downturn after Trump doubled tariffs on Indian goods to a whopping 50 per cent including a 25 per cent additional duties for India's purchase of Russian crude oil. India described the US ac-

tion as "unfair, unjustified and unreasonable".

Earlier, responding to a question on the possibility of the US resetting relations with India, Trump said both countries have a special relationship and there is "nothing to worry about".

"I will always be friends with Modi, he is a great prime minister, he's great. I'll always be friends but I just don't like what he's doing at this particular moment," he said.

"But India and the United States have a special relationship. There is nothing to worry about," the US president said.

Asked about his social media post on Thursday suggesting that the US was losing India to China, Trump said: "I don't think we have. I have been very disappointed that India would be buying so much oil...from Russia."

"And I let them know that, we put a very big tariff on India -- 50 per cent tariff, very high tariff. I get along very well with Modi as you know, he was here a couple of months ago."

"In fact, we went to the Rose Garden, the grass was so soaking wet, it was such a terrible place to have a news conference. We had a news conference on the grass," it was his last news (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

## Govt employee arrested for taking bribe

GUWAHATI, Sept 6: An employee of the Directorate of Health Services was arrested in Guwahati on Saturday for allegedly accepting a bribe, a statement said.

The Directorate of Vigilance and Anti-Corruption had received a complaint against a senior assistant for demanding a bribe for processing an unpaid arrears salary bill, it said.

The initial bribe demanded was ₹ 20,000, which was reduced to ₹ 10,000 after negotiation.

Unwilling to pay the bribe, the complainant approached the vigilance wing for taking necessary legal action against the senior assistant of the Directorate of Health Service, Kamrup (Metropolitan), the statement said.

Accordingly, a trap was laid in which the accused was apprehended red-handed while accepting ₹ 5,000 as part of the bribe money in his office.

He was arrested, and necessary legal follow-up actions are underway, the statement added. (PTI)

From bread to cars: GST overhaul reduces rates on over 400 items

## GST overhaul a people's reform, touches every family: Sitharaman

NEW DELHI, Sept 6: Calling the landmark GST overhaul a 'people's reform', Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Saturday said that rationalisation of rates for a wide swath of products will benefit every family, boost consumption, and bolster the economy.

In an interview to PTI, the Finance Minister said she will personally monitor passing on of goods and services tax (GST) rate cuts in the form of price reduction but hastened to add that industry has shown positivity towards such cuts.

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



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

"This is a reform which touches the lives of all 140 crore people. There is no individual in this country who is untouched by GST. The poorest of the poor also have something small that they buy, touched by GST," she said.


Starting September 22, the GST slab structure will change - 5 per cent for common use goods and 18 per cent for

everything else. The existing slab of 12 and 28 per cent rates have been done away with.

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

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

While the significant relief in income tax that she gave in her Budget in February this year left more money in the hands of common people, the GST regj will allow for greater spending, making (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)



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# Sitharaman writes to state FMs, thanks them for role in GST overhaul



**NEW DELHI, Sept 6:** In a gesture underscoring the spirit of cooperative federalism, Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman has written to finance ministers of all states, expressing gratitude for their support and active role in helping implement the landmark overhaul of the goods and services tax (GST) regime.

In an interview with PTI, Sitharaman said states made their view on the proposal to rejig tax rates but ultimately agreed that it was for the benefit of the common man, an argument that helped reach a unanimous decision at the GST Council meeting earlier this week.

The overhaul, which will from September 22 see rates of a wide swath of products -- from butter to chocolates and shampoos to tractors and air conditioners -- come down, was agreed at a meeting of the GST Council on September 3.

The panel is headed by Sitharaman and includes representatives of all

states and Union Territories.

"Yesterday, I have written a letter to each finance minister thanking them, saying, you can have any number of intense discussion and argument, but finally, the Council rose to the occasion and gave relief to the people of India, to all people of India. And, I am grateful for that gesture. So, I wrote that letter," she said.

She said the work at the Council was truly "remarkable".

Despite apprehensions over loss of revenue from classifying most products into categories: 5 per cent for common use goods and 18 per cent for everything else, and doing away with 12 and 28 per cent slabs, the GST Council took a unanimous decision for the GST rejig.

The panel was to meet for two days starting September 3 to discuss the proposal made by the Centre but ended up approving it on the very first day after a marathon daylong meeting.

"So the sense of the house was, this

is a proposal which is going to undoubtedly benefit the common man. There is no point in standing against it... Ultimately everybody came together for a good cause, and I'm truly very grateful," Sitharaman said.

The minister said states were always in favour of rate reduction and their only concern was with regard to their revenue implications post-tax cuts.

"I even appealed to them, saying, for the sake of the people of India, Please. It's not just the states. It's even the Centre that is going to get affected by the reduction. But we'll make up for it because once the rates come down, people are going to come out to buy, and that will take care of it (revenue impact). That's how consensus was arrived at," she said.

Sitharaman, speaking at a press conference following the GST Council meeting, had expressed her gratitude to the states for their cooperation and collaborative efforts in implementing one of India's most significant tax reforms.

On Saturday, she noted that the Council had given a patient hearing to every comment and suggestion put forward by its members.

"All points were thoroughly deliberated before arriving at a consensus," she said.

She also highlighted the inclusive nature of the discussions, adding that several ministers who wished to speak again after their initial points had already been debated were given the opportunity to do so.

"Their additional inputs were heard and taken into account," the Finance Minister emphasised. She also credited states for their constructive participation in the GST Council and their commitment to driving tax reform. (PTI)

## Citroën launches Basalt X with CARA, India's first intelligent in-car assistant

**HT Bureau**

**GUWAHATI, Sept 6:** Citroën India on Friday launched its new Basalt X range, featuring CARA—India's first intelligent in-car assistant—under its "Citroën 2.0 – Shift Into the New" strategy.

The launch reinforces India's role as a hub for automotive innovation, with the range starting at ₹7.95 lakh.

CARA (Connected Auto Response Assistant) is a multilingual, context-aware system that integrates seamlessly with the vehicle.

It understands natural commands, provides vehicle insights, controls functions like air conditioning, and offers real-time information such as weather and flight status.

Safety features include voice-triggered SOS alerts and crash assistance, while the system supports 52 languages, switching mid-conversation.

The Basalt X offers upgraded interiors with soft-touch leatherette, ventilated seats, tropicalised AC, and advanced infotainment systems. It also includes a 360-degree camera, full LED lighting, smart cushions, and comfort suspension

for an enhanced ride.

Safety has been strengthened with six airbags, ESP, hill hold assist, tyre pressure monitoring, and more than 40 standard features.

Powered by PureTech engines paired with multiple transmission options, the Basalt X delivers a dynamic and efficient drive.

Shailesh Hazela, CEO & MD of Stellantis India, said the launch marks a significant milestone in making mobility more connected and human, while Kumar Priyesh, Business Head at Stellantis India, highlighted the blend of smart technology and comfort at accessible pricing.

Test drives will begin mid-September, with deliveries starting in the festive season.

The introductory prices range from ₹7.95 lakh to ₹12.89 lakh, with select variants offering complimentary CARA and optional accessories available. The launch reflects Citroën's focus on aspirational design, intelligent technology, and customer-centric solutions, aiming to transform everyday driving experiences while keeping premium mobility accessible.

## Rajasthan govt allocates land to RVUNL for solar park in Jaisalmer, Bikaner

**NEW DELHI, Sept 6:** In a bid to promote clean energy production, the Government of Rajasthan led by Chief Minister Bhajanlal Sharma has approved the allocation of land to state enterprise Rajasthan Vidyut Utpadan Nigam Ltd (RVUNL) for the establishment of large-scale renewable energy-based production parks in Jaisalmer and Bikaner districts.

Under this landmark initiative, land allocation has been approved in Jaisalmer for various solar parks with a combined capacity of 26,400 megawatts (MW), a statement said on Saturday.

Similarly, the construction of solar parks with a combined 5,200 MW capacity has been approved in Bikaner, it said.

In line with the state's goals of sustainable development and energy security, these approvals represent a major step towards enhancing Rajasthan's leadership in the renewable energy sector, it said.

Commenting on this, the Chief Minister said this initiative will not only position Rajasthan as a front-runner in clean energy production but also generate substantial employment opportunities for local youth and contribute to India's commitment towards green energy transition.

The development of these solar parks is expected to create thousands of direct and indirect jobs in Jaisalmer and Bikaner, it said, adding that this will also enhance clean power generation capacity, supporting India's renewable energy targets.

This will also boost regional economic growth by promoting infrastructure development and green industry investments, it added. (PTI)

## Tea research funding gap exists in India: Industry organisation

**KOLKATA, Sept 6:** An association of the tea industry has claimed that there is a research funding gap in India for the development of the crop, with the country spending ₹30 crore as compared to China, the largest producer of tea, investing over ₹110 crore annually.

Tea Research Association (TRA), engaged in R&D of the sector, is facing serious funding challenges, its chairperson Nayantara Palchoudhuri said, calling for a greater industry participation to stave off the crisis.

"Over 50 per cent of the member entities are not contributing their dues, which has resulted in funding shortfalls," she said at the annual general meeting of TRA here on Friday.

"China, the largest producer of tea in the world, spends ₹110 crore annually on the crop, while India invests only ₹30 crore. There is a big research funding gap in India," she said.

The government and large estates should step up their contribution to tea research, she said.

To address the resource constraints, she called for setting up a committee to explore new revenue generation models, including property development and broadening TRA's membership base to small growers and bought-leaf factories.

TRA said that it has developed climate resilient clones, advancements in pest management, IoT-based monitoring and product diversification like speciality teas. (PTI)

## Indian Bank migrates to secure web portal

**CHENNAI, Sept 6:** Public sector Indian Bank has successfully migrated its corporate website to 'www.indian-bank.bank.in' domain, in line with the Reserve Bank of India directive, aimed at providing stronger safeguards against fraud and enhancing public confidence in digital banking solutions.

The Chennai-headquartered bank has taken up the initiative under the Institute for Development and Research in Banking Technology (IDRBT) which is the exclusive registrar for this domain. The bank has migrated to a secure domain, reaffirming its commitment to customer safety and secure digital banking solutions, the release added. (PTI)

*Contd. from Page 1...*

## GST overhaul a people's

things more affordable. "People do understand for example, ₹100 with which they go to the shop to buy a thing. Today, the same ₹100 they can buy one and a half of the commodity. Earlier, they bought one," she said.

So this rate reduction is going to bring down monthly household ration and medical bills, as well as help aspirational buying like upgrading from car, replacing white goods like refrigerator or washing machine.

"There is not going to be one family which is going to be without this positive impact of the GST touching them... 140 crore people are going to benefit from this in one way or the other. So this will boost consumption, and as a result, I think the virtuous cycle will start," she said.

Asked about monitoring mechanism for ensuring passing on of GST rate cut benefit, Sitharaman said the ministry has been talking with industry and trade.

"They've all come out openly to say we will pass this on. So, I can see the positivity from industry and trade... I'm very confident they will pass it on," she said.

"I have said from September 22 my main focus in my job would be to watch out and see if it is getting passed on and where it is not getting passed on, I will engage with industry and say that they have to."

On inflation, she said, it is already well under control and this cut in the GST will actually bring people out to consume more. "There is no doubt about it."

The Finance Minister highlighted that the reforms go far beyond rate cuts. They also focus on making it easier for businesses - especially small and medium enterprises - to operate.

Simplified compliance norms, faster refunds, and easier registration are part of the reform package, she added.

Under the new framework, 90 per cent of refunds will be processed within a stipulated time, and companies will be able to register within three days.

The GST overhaul, she said, addresses confusion over classification of products by bringing similar goods in the same tax bracket. A classic example of the simplification is the popcorn. Popcorn mixed with salt and spice will attract five per cent tax, irrespective of whether it is sold loose or pre-packed. Earlier, salted popcorn, which was pre-packed, attracted a 12 per cent tax while caramel popcorn was taxed at 18 per cent.

Similarly, the GST on cream buns has been revised to five per cent from the earlier 18 per cent.

Earlier, there was confusion on cream buns as they were taxed 18 per cent, but buns and cream were separately taxed at 5 per cent. All these confusions have been sorted out in the overhaul. (PTI)

## Modi fully reciprocates

conference we had on the grass." In his social media post on Thursday, Trump said it appeared the US was losing India and Russia to "deepest, darkest China".

The post came days after the bonhomie among Modi, Chinese President Xi Jinping and Russian President Vladimir Putin at a summit of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) in the Chinese city of Tianjin drew global attention.

In the last few days, several Trump administration officials including White House trade advisor Peter Navarro have used offensive language to target India.

India's big oil lobby has turned the largest democracy in the world into a "massive refining hub and oil money laundromat for the Kremlin", Navarro said last week.

India on Friday rejected Navarro's remarks describing them as "inaccurate and misleading".

Over the last few weeks, India-US ties witnessed severe strain after over two-decades of close cooperation.

The tension began after the negotiations for a trade deal hit a roadblock as well as Trump's repeated claims that he resolved the military conflict between India and Pakistan in May.

India has been maintaining that the conflict ended following direct talks between the two sides.

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

The bilateral trade between India and the US was around USD 130 billion last year and there was a projection of upward mobility in the volume.

The US has also been targeting India for its energy ties with Russia.

Defending its purchase of Russian crude oil, India has been maintaining that its energy procurement is driven by national interest and market dynamics.

India turned to purchasing Russian oil sold at a discount after Western countries imposed sanctions on Moscow and shunned its supplies over its invasion of Ukraine in February, 2022.

Consequently, from a mere 1.7 per cent share in total oil imports in 2019-20, Russia's share increased to 35.1 per cent in 2024-25, and it is now the biggest oil supplier to India. (PTI)

## Pact between Centre

immigrants and refugees from Myanmar. Manipur has been witnessing ethnic violence since May 3, 2023, after a tribal solidarity march was taken out in the hill districts, in protest against the majority Meitei community's demand for Scheduled Tribe (ST) status.

Since then, about 260 people, including members of both the Kuki and Meitei communities as well as security personnel, have been killed in the violence. However, there has been relative peace in Manipur in last few months. (PTI)

## EC top brass to

Myanmar. Eventually, the poll authority will begin special intensive revision in the entire country "for the discharge of its constitutional mandate to protect the integrity of the electoral rolls".

As part of the intense review, poll officials will carry out house-to-house verification to ensure an error-free voters list.

Amid allegations by opposition parties that the EC has fudged voter data to help the BJP, the poll panel has taken additional steps in the intensive revision to ensure illegal migrants do not get enrolled in the voters list.

An additional 'declaration form' has been introduced for a category of applicants seeking to become electors or shifting from outside the state.

They will have to undertake that they were born in India before July 1, 1987 and provide any document establishing date of birth and/or place of birth.

One of the options listed in the declaration form is that they were born in India between July 1, 1987 and December 2, 2004.

They will also have to submit documents about the date/place of birth of their parents.

But Bihar voters list revision has come under attack from opposition parties claiming crores of eligible citizens will be devoid of voting rights for want of documents.

The Supreme Court has asked EC to ensure that no eligible citizen is left behind.

Some of the state chief electoral officers have started putting out voters' list published after the last special intensive revision held in their states.

The website of Delhi CEO has the 2008 voters' list when the last intensive revision took place in the national capital. In Uttarakhand, the last special intensive revision took place in 2006 and that year's electoral roll is now on the state CEO website.

The last special intensive revision in states will serve as cut off dates as 2003 voters list of Bihar is being used by the EC for intensive revision.

Most of the states carried out revision of electoral rolls between 2002 and 2004. (PTI)

## Banned 'Yaba' tablets

in this #AssamAgainstDrugs drive," Sarma said. Necessary legal procedures have been already initiated, a police officer said.

'Yaba' tablet is illegal in the country because it contains methamphetamine, a Schedule II substance under the Controlled Substances Act, and caffeine. (PTI)

## Immigrant foreigners' directive

are two steps ahead of them by going to the court." Opposition parties have criticised the latest direction, with the Congress alleging that it would turn the state into a "grazing ground for foreigners", and termed the order the BJP's "deep-rooted conspiracy to destroy the very existence of the Assamese people by nullifying the Assam Accord in order to legalise foreigners".

The Assam Jatiya Parishad has accused the BJP of endangering the existence of the Assamese people for the sake of "Hindu Bangladeshi votes", calling it the "biggest crime ever committed" against them.

The All Assam Students' Union (AASU) has also protested against the Centre's order, reiterating its demand that the CAA be withdrawn from the state.

The state BJP unit, however, defended the order, claiming that the opposition was trying to "manipulate" the public, and that it was not an extension of the deadline for eligibility to apply for Indian citizenship. (PTI)

## Raja's family seeks

friends Akash, Vishal and Anand in Sonam's presence in Sohra. Sonam gave herself up before the police in UP as the investigators arrested the rest. Raja's family demanded the death penalty for Sonam and the other accused.

Talking to PTI in Indore, Raja's elder brother Vipin Raghuvanshi said, "My family has only one demand, that is, along with Sonam and Kushwaha, all the accused be sentenced to death."

He said his family was yet to see the detailed charge sheet, but was satisfied with the police investigation and believed that the charges slapped against the accused were strong. After Sonam's arrest, her elder brother Govind had visited the Raja's house on June 11 and broke down, claiming his family had severed ties with her and that he would himself fight the legal battle to secure justice for the deceased. Vipin, however, alleged that Govind lied to protect his own business interests.

"Govind had said he would stand with our family, but we came to know that he had hired a lawyer to defend Sonam," he said.

Vipin said his family has also roped in a lawyer to pursue the case. (PTI)

### KARBI ANGLONG AUTONOMOUS COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER.(M) TRANSPORT DEPARTMENT

**KAAC::: DIPHU-782460**

Email ID transportdeptkaac@gmail.com

KAAC/TRN/Gen. Corress/2010-11/1417

Dtd. 04/09/2025

### NOTICE

The New KAAC (A/C) buses are ready for its operation. The buses are fully built with A/C coaches and one bus is equipped with bio-toilet facility. The new service buses will kicked off on 8th September 2025 and the ticket can be bought or booked via Red-Bus.in or by visiting KAAC counter located at ISBT, 5th Mile, Chutianala.

SL No.	Vehicle No.	Time	From	To	Contact No.
1.	AS-09BC-6238 (A/C with Bio-Toilet)	6.00 AM 1.30 PM	Guwahati	Diphu	7637049978
2.	AS-09BC-6239 (A/C)	6.00 AM 12.00 Noon	Diphu	Guwahati	8822417695

**N.B:- Enclosed.**

**Booking Clerk Name & Contact No.**

- Sri. Prasanta Engti (Booking Clerk)  
Contact No. 9395258753
- Sri. Langtuk Tokbi (Booking Clerk)  
Contact No. 8638252773
- Sri. Moneswar Killing (Booking Clerk)  
Contact No. 9365281938

Sd/-  
Executive Engineer (M)  
Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council  
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# District task force reviews sub-national immunisation day preparations in Tezpur

**HT Correspondent**

**TEZPUR, Sept 6:** District Task Force (DTF) on Sub-National Immunisation Day, conducted a meeting on Saturday at the Conference Hall of the District Commissioner's Office, Sonitpur.

The meeting was presided over by Additional District Commissioner (Health) Twahir Alam and attended by key officials including Joint Director of Health Services Dr. Jagadish Goswami, District Immunisation Officer Dr. Tutu-moni Handique, District Programme Manager of NHM Binoy Das, District Social Welfare Officer, District Information and Public Relations Officer, along with representatives from the Health Department, Education Department, Social Welfare and other allied departments.

Dr. Atul Nagime, SMO-WHO, gave a detailed briefing on the objectives of the upcoming SNID campaign, highlighting the roadmap, district targets and key focus areas. It was informed that



the district target for the campaign is around one lakh fifty five thousand children in the 0 to 5 years age group.

The campaign will be launched on October 12th 2025 with booth-based immunization activities on the first day, followed by house-to-house visits on 13th and 14th October to ensure that no child is left behind. Special emphasis was laid on the proper identification and coverage of high-risk areas including slums, riverine char areas, brick kilns, tea estates, nomadic sites and construction camps, as

well as effective planning for transit sites such as railway stations, bus stands, markets and other congregation points. The meeting also discussed ensuring availability of sufficient vaccine doses, maintaining cold chain and logistics, and strengthening social mobilization and awareness campaigns with the involvement of community leaders, schools, and media to address vaccine hesitancy.

Along with this, an orientation was also provided on the School Health Immunisation Programme of the Government, under which

full immunization prior to school admission and completion of pending vaccinations for enrolled children is to be ensured. The programme aims to make certain that all children entering the supplementary nutrition programme and the school system are fully immunized as per the National Immunisation Schedule under UIP, to create a structured mechanism for Anganwadi Centre and school-based identification and follow-up of children with incomplete immunization, and to institutionalize convergence between school and health systems for sustainable immunization monitoring and compliance.

The meeting stressed the importance of inter-sectoral coordination among all departments and stakeholders to achieve full coverage. It was resolved that all children under the age of five in Sonitpur must be reached during this campaign, in keeping with the national commitment to maintain India's polio-free status.

# Four-Day Silk Samagra-2 training in Karbi Anglong concludes

**HT Bureau**

**DIPHU, Sept 6:** The four day skill development training programme under Silk Samagra -2 on silkworms rearing and spinning of yarns to beneficiaries ended with ceremonial distribution of rearing appliances, motorised spinning machines and looms held at Reshom Bhawan, Sericulture office here on Friday.

The four day training started on September 2, under Silk Samagra-2 scheme for the year 2024-25 sponsored by Central Silk Board, Bangalore and implemented by Sericulture Department, Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC).

On the closing ceremony was attended by Chief Executive Member (CEM), KAAC, Tuliram Ronghang the chief guest.

Speaking at the function the CEM said the Silk Samagra -2 for development of the sericulture industry with active participation of local individuals and groups to raise the level of rural economy was started in Karbi Anglong this year (2025).

The Union Minister of State for External Affairs, Textiles and MoS Pabitra Margherita has given the scheme from the Central government to implement in Karbi Anglong for development of silk industry. He has given ₹ 400 crores under Silk Samagra -2 for Karbi Anglong, the CEM stated. The CEM mentioned that he would be going to Delhi for official purposes and would meet Margherita as the latter has agreed to sanction more funds of ₹ 30 crores to ₹ 40 crores if Silk Samagra 2 is successful.

"I will be meeting the Union



Minister of State for External Affairs, Textiles and MoS Pabitra Margherita in New Delhi as he would be giving us more funds of ₹ 30 crores to ₹ 40 crores for development of silk industry," the CEM said.

The CEM encourages individuals, especially women, to take up silkworms rearing to raise the level of rural economy in rural areas. Local women should produce their own textiles and traditional costumes like peni, pekok, poho, se- leng and other items. Karbi Anglong has sufficient land and rural people can take up silkworm rearing so that they are dependent on themselves.

Executive Member (EM), KAAC incharge Sericulture Department, Kache Rongpi said 48 individuals, mostly women, have got training on spinning of yarns on mechanised machines. The training has benefited the beneficiaries and they can themselves spin yarns on mechanised machines.

With more and more people coming forward to take up silkworms rearing and production of yarns and fabrics will help to promote the silk industry, Rongpi added. She also mentioned around 240 beneficiaries were given pansomi saplings (food plants for silkworms) of plantation. Now they will be receiving a 90% subsidy amount for construction of a rearing house. Extension Officer, Sericulture, Longki Timung said 340 beneficiaries are covered under the Pansomi scheme for pansomi plantation as a food plant for silkworms. Today in this closing ceremony loom sets, mechanized spinning machines, rearing trays will be distributed to the beneficiaries, he said.

Later, the CEM alongwith Chairman, KAAC, Raju Tisso and Deputy Chairman, Avijit Kro and Executive Member (EM), KAAC, incharge Sericulture Department, Kache Rongpi distributed rearing appliances to the beneficiaries.

## Teacher resigns for political aspiration at Nagaon

**HT Correspondent**

**NAGAON, Sept 6:** Manuar Hussain Faruki, a Congress ticket aspirant from Dhing constituency and a Subject teacher Besamari MI Higher Secondary School, has resigned from his post as a subject teacher a couple of days back and decided to extend services to general public as a political leader in Dhing assembly constituency.

Taking his aspiration as well as political exploration, Manuar Hussain Faruki organized an event to felicitate around 6,000 teachers from government and private schools in the constituency on occasion of Teacher's day on Friday last.

During the felicitation ceremony held at Batamari High School, Faruki emphasized the crucial role of teachers being played in shaping the future of a nation. "Teachers are the real architects of our country, building the future of India by creating human resources and leveraging science and technology to drive progress," he said, highlighting the selfless dedication and hard work of teachers that fosters peace, harmony, and brotherhood in society.

The felicitation ceremony covered various schools across different areas of the constituency, including Besamari, Mairadhaj Tuktuki, Dhpuguri, Rajabari, Kadamani, Rampur, Salapathar, Lalipathar, etc. It's pertinent to mention that he has resigned from his post only after being influenced as well as key support from APCC president Gaurav Gogoi and Loksabha MP Pradyut Bordoloi.

## Uddipana Talukdar Awarded Ph.D

**HT Correspondent**

**GUWAHATI, Sept 6:** Uddipana Talukdar, Assistant Teacher of Pachgaon Higher Secondary School, has been awarded the prestigious Degree of Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D) by Krishna Kanta Handique State Open University (KKHSOU).

She earned the doctorate for her thesis entitled "A Need Assessment Study of the Guidance and Counseling Practices in Government Secondary Schools in Kamrup (Metro) District of Assam." Miss Talukdar completed her research work under the supervision of Dr. Pranab Saikia, Professor, Indira Miri School of Education, KKHSOU. She is the daughter of Prof. Khagendra Nath Talukdar and Prof. Bharati Saikia, residents of Pragiyotish Nagar, Jalukbari.

## AIJCP stages protest rally against CAA at Nagaon

**HT Correspondent**

**NAGAON, Sept 6:** The District Unit of Assam Jatiyatabadi Yuva-Chatra Parishad, organized a protest rally in Nagaon town to demand the repeal of the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) as well as the illegal migrants Determination by Tribunal Act.

The rally, led by Parishad leaders, marched through the streets of Nagaon, shouting various slogans against the CAA and the Central Government. The protesters were temporarily halted by the police, but they continued their rally, defying the police barricades.

The Parishad's Central Committee's Organizing Secretary, Dipmoni Bora, Nagaon District Committee's President, Prabal Sarma, and General Secretary, Hemanta Das, led the rally.

# Sardar Bhupinder Pal Singh Kiki elected president of Gurudwara Committees

**HT Bureau**

**GUWAHATI, Sept 6:** In a unanimous and widely supported decision taken during a recent governing body meeting at Gopinath Nagar Gurudwara, Sardar Bhupinder Pal Singh Kiki has been appointed as the President (Pradhan) of the Gurudwara Prabandhan Committee for both Fancy Bazaar Gurudwara and Gopinath Nagar Gurudwara in Guwahati.

The decision, hailed as a moment of unity and trust, was made in the presence of community members and representatives from various Sikh organizations, according to an official statement.

The announcement was attended by committee officials and community leaders from Rangreta Dal, Assam, Dispur Gurudwara, Beltola Gurudwara, the Sikh Pratinidhi Board - Eastern Zone, and other stakeholders, who collectively extended their support and confidence in Sardar Kiki's leadership.

His election is seen as a pivotal moment for the Sikh community in the city, symbolising harmony, co-operation, and a shared vision for

spiritual and social progress.

Following his appointment, Sardar Bhupinder Pal Singh Kiki expressed deep gratitude to the community for entrusting him with the responsibility.

He reiterated his commitment to the smooth functioning and holistic development of both Gurudwaras.

"With utmost humility and sincerity, I accept this responsibility. I am committed to serving the Sangat with dedication and transparency. The Gurudwaras are not just places of worship; they are pillars of our faith, culture, and service. I seek the wholehearted cooperation of my fellow committee members as we work together to strengthen our institutions and serve the community," he said. The newly appointed President emphasised the need for unity and collective effort in upholding the core Sikh values of Seva (selfless service), Simran (remembrance of the divine), and Sarbat da Bhala (welfare of all).

He called upon members to work in tandem, ensuring that the Gurudwaras continue to serve as centres of spiritual growth, cultural preser-

vation, and community welfare.

Sardar Kiki also extended his heartfelt thanks to Sardarni Niru Sethi, the outgoing president, for her dedicated service and contributions toward the development of the Gurudwaras and their associated socio-cultural initiatives.

"Her efforts during her tenure have been invaluable in furthering the cause of community development and spiritual enrichment," he remarked.

This new leadership is viewed as a progressive step forward for the Gurudwara Prabandhan Committees of both locations.

Community members expressed hope that under Sardar Bhupinder Pal Singh Kiki's guidance, the Gurudwaras will embark on a renewed journey of collaboration, spiritual engagement, and cultural enrichment.

The event concluded on a note of optimism, with leaders and devotees alike expressing confidence in the collective strength of the community to work toward a shared future built on trust, service, and devotion.

## Darrang to celebrate Dr Bhupen Hazarika's centenary Birth Anniversary

**HT Correspondent**

**MANGALDAI, Sept 6:** The Darrang district administration, along with the entire state, has decided to celebrate the centenary birth anniversary of 'Sudhakantha' Dr. Bhupen Hazarika on January 8.

The day will begin at 9 AM with a wreath-laying and floral tribute ceremony at the statue of Dr Bhupen Hazarika in Bhupen Hazarika Park.

Following this, a special wall magazine prepared for the occasion will be unveiled by senior journalist Bhargav Kumar Das at the District Commissioner's office.

A commemorative meeting, chaired by District Commissioner Parag Kumar Kakati, will feature distinguished guests, and senior physician Dr Amrendra Narayan Dev and senior journalist Bhargav Kumar Das. In the evening, a musical event will also be organized at the District Commissioner's office.

# Raj Bhavan honours 284 senior most retired elementary education teachers under Governor AVSSY

**HT Correspondent**

**GUWAHATI, Sept 6:** In a first of its kind initiative in the country, Raj Bhavan Assam, under the leadership of Governor Lakshman Prasad Acharya honoured 284 senior-most surviving retired elementary education teachers across Assam on the occasion of Teachers' Day on Friday.

It may be noted that Raj Bhavan, Assam launched the 'Assam Governor Varishtha Shikshak Samman' (AVSSY), to recognize and honour the senior-most surviving retired elementary education teachers across the state for their services. The initiative was launched as a part of the state's deep gratitude to those who dedicated their lives to the noble cause of society and nation-building through imparting education.

Therefore, on Teachers' Day on Friday, Governor Lakshman Prasad Acharya felicitated Rajat Chandra Goswami, a 94-year-old retired primary school teacher after visiting the latter's residence at Adhar Satra, Hatigarh in Jorhat. Similar felicitation programmes were simultaneously organised across the state at district, co-district and block level to felicitate 284 senior-most surviving retired elementary education teachers.

As per direction of Raj Bhavan various senior officials of Govt. of Assam, also felicitated a total of 35 retired senior-most surviving primary teachers at the district level by visiting their respective homes in the district. In the co-district, 126 retired teachers were honoured by Additional Deputy Commissioners or designated district officers and in the Elementary Education Block Level 123 retired teachers received honours from the respective Block Elementary Education Officers (BEEOs). The veteran teachers were felicitated with a gamocha, fruit basket, and a citation from the Governor. In all the field level felicitations, authorized dignitaries made personal visits to the homes of the teachers and offered their felicitations, underscoring the state's respect and commitment to the teaching community.

Governor Acharya while expressing himself on the occasion said, 'Honouring our Guru is our age old culture and also an inspiration from Prime Minister Narendra Modi. We at Raj Bhavan Assam pray to God Almighty for the well-being of all teachers, our Gurus who are the creators and guides of future leaders.



**HT Correspondent**

**DIBRUGARH, Sept 6:** A Self Breast Examination Demonstration Model developed by well known breast cancer researcher Dr Gayatri Gogoi was awarded with a design patent from the Patent Office, government of India recently. She was issued the patent by the Controller General of Patents, Design and Trade Marks.

Dr Gayatri Gogoi is an associate professor at the Assam Medical College and Hospital (AMCH), Dibrugarh and Adjunct Researcher to ICMR Regional Medical Research Centre, North East. While working in breast cancer research, she used to observe that diagnosis of the cancer is late inspite of being an external organ due to low level of awareness about the disease risk. Another major obstacle is even if breast cancer screening by mammography is available however it is still

not feasible for common Indian women. It is associated with cost and technical expertise. Tata memorial Hospital Mumbai showed that health care worker can be trained to detect cancer effectively and save thirty thousand lives in India.

"Breast cancer is leading cancer globally as well as in India. Every 4 minutes a new breast cancer case diagnosed and almost 50% of them diagnosed at advanced stage. Therefore, in India cancer awareness among public and implementation of suitable user friendly breast cancer screening program is an urgent need," she said.

For Breast Cancer screening, the simple affordable model can be used to demonstrate a 'Show How' level of knowledge transfer to first train ASHAs ANMs of primary health centres and sub centre. Then

they can demonstrate self breast examination to be practiced by women themselves. Extensive training is a must so that they are confident and interested to continue it for their population. Only when population around them will adopt this simple method, the desired outcome can be achieved. Currently, only with the help of a diagram in a paper the training is being offered and therefore there is a gap of learning and teaching the skill quickly and confidently.

"This SBE Demonstration model is designed from a everyday use easily available ordinary material which is safe eco friendly, very low cost, no side effects, light weight easy to carry to anywhere by ASHAs ANMs. Moreover, it is acceptable for female to demonstrate in open plat-

form keeping in mind of sensitivity of culture. This model can be a game changer if used by Primary Health Centre or Sub centre to teach the right technique to detect any abnormality at the earliest," she added.

Dr Gayatri Gogoi has been contributing immensely to cancer research and this time once again made this significant innovation. She has a mission not only to empower the scientific research in cancer but also equip the community with scientific temper for greater benefit. She was supported by Assam Medical College and Pratishruti Cancer and Palliative Trust in this innovative approach. The prototype application is available in you tube, by searching self breast examination by Dr Gayatri Gogoi.

# ABSU organizes discussion on nationalism in Baksa

**HT Correspondent**

**KOKRAJHAR, Sept 6:** The All Bodo Students' Union (ABSU) organised a discussion focusing on nationalism, ethnic identity, and the economic, educational, and political environment essential for the progress of the Bodo nation and society at Salbari in Baksa district on Saturday.

Addressing the media after the meeting, ABSU president Dipen Boro said, "Our educationists, literary bodies, ABSU, and other organizations have always followed the ideals shown by Upen-dra Nath Brahma, the Father of the Bodo Nation, to lead the Bodo community forward with the spirit of unity. Today's discussion aimed to carry forward this vision while ensuring peace, development, and harmony among all 26 communities living in the BTR region."

On the upcoming BTC elections scheduled for September 22, Boro urged the district administration and law enforcement agencies to

ensure a free, fair, and peaceful election. "Voters must be able to cast their votes without fear or hardship. The State Election Commission should ensure full transparency in the process," he said.

Clarifying ABSU's stand, Boro stated, "We have witnessed peace in the region over the past five years following the 2020 tripartite peace accord signed between the Government, NDFB, ABSU, and UPPL. This peace must be permanent and everlasting. Like Mizoram, which was once conflict-ridden but is now known as a peaceful state, we want the BTR to be a region of lasting peace."

He further said that ABSU would support any party or leader committed to the implementation of the Bodo Accord clauses and working for the welfare of the people. "Since no party has released its election manifesto yet, we will take a stand after going through the manifestos when they are published," Boro added.

# Chilarai College champions financial literacy for rural women in Dhubri

**HT Correspondent**

**DHUBRI, Sept 6:** In a significant move to empower women in rural areas, the Unnat Bharat Abhiyan Cell of Chilarai College, Golakganj, organized a gram sabha cum awareness program on financial literacy for rural women at Nadur Dham in Bishkhowa Part-III in Dhubri.

The event, held in Bishkhowa Gram Panchayat on the Indo-Bangladesh border, saw a notable gathering of local leaders, college professors, and community members. The program was chaired by Dr Umesh Das, Assistant Professor in the Department of Assamese at Chilarai College, and presided over by Nitai Chandra Ray, the Principal of Chilarai College.

Key attendees included Bishkhowa Gram Panchayat President Golapi Barman, Secretary Rahul Roy, and Chilarai College Professors Jugol Kishore Bhattacharya, Dr Arup Sharma, and Dr. Nipam Nath Deb Barma. During the lecture covered topics such as saving, investing, accessing credit, and the importance of financial independence.

Principal, Nitai Chandra Roy, along with Dr. Arup Sharma, Gram Panchayat President Golapi Barman, retired teacher Sushanta Sarkar, and social worker Subhash Chandra Barman, delivered insightful talks on the objectives and goals of The Unnat Bharat Abhiyan, a flagship program of the Ministry of Education, Government of India.

They emphasized the importance of community development and sustainable growth in villages. The core of the program was a compelling lecture on financial literacy for rural women delivered by Dr Pranati Das, a Professor at Chilarai College. She highlighted the necessity for women to understand and manage their finances, enabling them to make informed decisions and secure their economic future.

# Nagaon student excels as freelance website designer

**HT Correspondent**

**NAGAON, Sept 6:** Tanmayjit Baruah, a brilliant student from Nagaon, has made a name for himself in the world of computer science and web development. Currently pursuing Computer Engineering at Kaziranga University, Tanmayjit has been working on various projects for top universities and companies worldwide, including New York State University, Ireland, Birmingham, London, US, and Germany, etc.

What sets Tanmayjit apart is his ability to work on complex projects from a young age. While in Class 10, he worked on projects for New York State University, showcasing his exceptional skills in web development. Since then, he has continued to work on various projects, including creating an EPK for a Grammy-nominated short film and working with Astrodynamo studio in Delhi. As a freelance website designer, Tanmayjit has excelled in web development, SEO management, advertising, and graphics. His recent project, "From Perimeter to Endpoint: A Comprehensive Review of Cybersecurity," showcases his expertise in the field. With his passion for computer science and dedication to his work, Tanmayjit is an inspiration to young students in Nagaon and beyond.

# 4 teachers receive District Kirti Shikshak Award 2025

**HT Correspondent**

**DEMOW, Sept 6:** Four School Teachers under the Demow Education Block were conferred with the "District Kirti Shikshak Award" for the year 2025 on September 5. Under the patronage of the Sivasagar District Administration and Sivasagar Education Department, the 64 edition of Teachers Day was organized at Sivasagar Yuva Dol on September 5, 2025. The four School Teachers under the Demow Education Block who were conferred the "District Kirti Shikshak Award" for the year 2025 were Ranjuma Gogoi Konwar, Headmistress of 984 No Raichai Primary School, Dipali Gogoi, Assistant Teacher of Demow Girls High School, Matlib Ali, Assistant Teacher of Desang Rajabari High School near Demow, and Anjana Rupa Das, Teacher of Charuga Middle English School near Demow.



## Editor's pick

## Education in a Burnout Society

By: Anandajit Goswami

The biggest fallacy of society today is that, despite being self-proclaimed progressives, we live in a burnout society, in the words of philosopher Byung Chul Han. This is one that thrives on excess positivity borne out of a culture of overproduction and relentless achievement, and marked by a deficit in understanding psychological and emotional health.

This discrepancy is felt most in the education ecosystem. The dilemma is that we are a part of the educational process, and the further we return to the classroom and the curriculum, the higher the burnout. The current pressures of maintaining the metrics of education — through constant exams every week, grades, and the pressure to perform in assignments, classes, case studies, and every class project relative to the other in the classroom — have transformed the classroom into a combatant space. Here, the curriculum and educational institutions themselves have only led to the production of combatants. The process naturally takes out the learner from the students and often from an educator or administrator, making them silent combatants chasing the next check or tick box. The check box is ticked regularly to either scale a class ladder or an academic ladder to be better positioned in the metrics of the educational accreditation system. Along with students, the system often makes the educators record keepers of marks, certificates, and API scores without understanding their purpose and learning value. In the record-keeping process, silent lobbying and vested — interest group lobbying of human beings from different sections of society also persist. This leads to the infusion of a mediocre, record keeping metric of promotion which is not based on true learning, value proposition and knowledge.

Education has been replaced by a metaphor of a burning and burnt out society where every participant of the system is either a pathologist or a pathological patient. Classrooms, lecture halls and faculty rooms often turn out to be not community spaces for discussion and deliberation but spaces of subversive, combatant aggression. In such a space, faculty rooms, classrooms are not a community of free joyful happy learners but a bunch of combatants who are in a self-perpetuating, imploding, insecure creatures looped in the game of a metric based career. It is because they are primarily driven by the instinct of survival at any cost as a combatant in a war does. If the combatant does not implode or attack in evasive, pervasive way, he or she would be killed. In a war, even if a combatant learns, the combatant learns to kill and survive for security and not to progress. Hence such a pathological situation of insecurity has pervaded the majority of educational system being driven by a systemic structure created unknowingly post commodification of an essential public good — “Education”.

The aggression is hidden within the garb of academic theorisation, procedures, guidelines, reporting, and all other processes of a system, which, in essence, is violent from within with a peaceful, polished projection. This is happening more owing to the creation of a combatant which is actually working in a space which is supposed to be education, but not less than the norms of a battlefield where you either kill to survive or you get killed. On a war front, two combatant individuals kill each other not because they are good or bad, but they kill to protect their national security, identity security, and essentially from a primal instinct of survival with training to do so. The metaphor holds equally for the educational process right now, which is supposed to be a public good but has turned out to be a war front. The projection also has a sense of discipline of a curriculum for everyone — from the administrators to the academics to the students with a hidden string of a string puller. The puller is pulling the string by means of a changing narrative of private capital changing the meaning and purpose of something which was supposed to be a social good with an abstract perpetuity called — “Education”. Education, which by its essence is a public good, has undergone a change in definition as a “Private Capital”. To get education is not a right now but to achieve education is an outcome of a capitalist process of private capital accumulation by means and a platform of exchange which is a market — “New Education Market”. In this new education market, a student is similar to a labourer in a capitalist process who puts in a sum of labour that generates a product that is exchanged in multiple forms of the market. Thus, private capital gets invested in this new labour called a student, who has to then create a product (which is, say, the student who has got a packaged placement outcome). The transformation of this private capital to a new labour to its transformation to a new product is driven by rules and norms of capital, surplus and wealth accumulation by the owner who is creating this transformation. The wealth is transferred from the parent who invests in the labour to the one who owns the process of transformation from labour to a product, accumulating the labour. In the entire process, what is lost is the duty to serve selflessly for the labour to learn, learn for the society, learn for values, contexts so that finally the labour is transformed to a learner for societal change and multiplier, value creation, proposition and not for just a product transformation.

The nature of this puller is often like a “Panoptical” regulator who also occasionally becoming like a “Mephistopheles.” The dual identity of the string-pullers of the education system works like the “Invisible Hand” of the market and turns the entire education ecosystem as a society of combatants. With a bit of dark humor it can also be called as a “Community of Combatants”. Often these combatants are only looking at metrics and like a Mephistopheles can go to any transaction game to make and perpetually create more combatants so that the established education system of combatants, pathologists, pathogens and patients can only survive. To come out of this combatant framework towards a learning framework of education, the need of the hour is to change the nature of the puppet strings. This will need a complete rehabbing of the way of seeing education, the fundamental parameter of which should not be seen as wealth accumulation but with an ethical wealth accumulation complemented by the purpose of reinvesting back in society. One of the ways of doing it is through creating a framework of learning without competing. This approach equips young people with social and scientific knowledge and skills and changes their daily behaviors toward education for progress and development (Nguyen, 2023) through a larger citizenship-based education.

Learning pedagogy must come out of curricula, academic grade-based grouping, and align with a constructivist learning approach — where learners actively participate in their knowledge and skill-building through exploration, collaboration and experimentation — by investigating how innovation, both technological and social, affects and is affected by education as they create local, national, regional and global citizenship through education. Innovative learning methods play a critical role in revealing the learner's creative potential. STEM-based education can enhance the capabilities of students in innovation, creativity, scientific thinking and problem-solving skills as well as develop mind-sets oriented towards sustainability.

Globally, lecture-based, exam-based, and teacher-centered pedagogy is undergoing a shift toward more active learning, in which students build their own understanding of a subject through learning activities. This is an imperative to take education out of the combatant system and prevent the perpetuation of a burnout society. The key necessity of the time is for higher education institutions to implement behavioral change programs and provide students with opportunities to practice sustainability, creativity, innovation, and social connection.

To solve sustainable grand challenges, educational institutions must embrace their role as living laboratories for providing creative solutions that can be tested, refined, and scaled up to come out of a combatant education system. A key aspect of such an emancipated education system will be that the participant of the system is a learner first. The learner can be seen as a long-term investible resource which gives back values, principles, norms, empathy, kindness, learning and re-learnings to a society and a system which is becoming more of a combatant system.

Against the backdrop of an emerging society with humanoids, robotics, AI interference, and its control over our consciousness, it is imperative that we immediately change the nature of the education system. If not, we will only thrive with combatant puppets and zombies in the near future, controlled by a string pulled by AI consciousness. Such a situation will only have burnout on one side of society as human beings and string controllers with AI consciousness on the other side. Today's education has to urgently break out of self-created Frankenstein's style of combatant to imagine a more ethical, compassionate and equitable future for society. (Courtesy: The Pioneer)

## Assam and the Global Migration Reckoning

Across Europe and North America, migration has become the defining issue of the age. From London to Paris, Berlin to Rome, Washington to Texas, few political questions carry the same intensity or ability to divide societies. What was once framed largely as a humanitarian concern has now evolved into an existential debate about identity, security, and the sustainability of social contracts. In Britain, the government's Rwanda deportation plan has sparked legal challenges and furious demonstrations in major cities.

In France, the public sphere oscillates between condemning anti-immigrant rhetoric and protesting the state's inability to integrate newcomers. Germany, still grappling with the aftershocks of the 2015 refugee wave, has seen violent clashes linked to asylum-seekers and the dramatic rise of the far-right Alternative für Deutschland, a party thriving on anti-immigration sentiment. Italy, perched on the frontline of Mediterranean crossings, faces daily arrivals of boats crammed with migrants from Africa and the Middle East, straining its political patience and humanitarian capacities. Even the United States, long considered a land of immigrants, has been overwhelmed by record crossings at the Mexican border, sparking polarization so severe that immigration is now among the central issues shaping electoral politics.

At the heart of this turmoil lies a common set of anxieties. Western democracies, which once celebrated diversity as a strength, now confront the limits of assimilation and the tensions of demographic change. Native populations fear displacement and economic insecurity. Migrants, often fleeing war, poverty, or persecution, struggle to find acceptance in societies where economic and cultural competition sharpens divisions. Concerns about radicalization, cultural clashes, and resource pressures amplify the sense of unease. The migration debate is no longer confined to questions of open borders or humanitarian obligations; it is about the very cohesion of societies and their ability to reconcile compassion with national interest.

For India, and particularly for Assam, this global turbulence has an air of déjà vu. The protests shaking Paris or London today echo anxieties that Assam has lived with for over a century. Sit-

ting on a porous international border with Bangladesh, the state has long borne the pressures of unchecked migration. Demographic shifts recorded since the early twentieth century have profoundly shaped Assam's social and political life, altering the cultural fabric of entire districts, reshaping electoral rolls, and fueling enduring conflicts over identity and belonging. Where Europe confronts the migration dilemma as a relatively recent crisis, Assam's society has wrestled with its consequences for generations, often without global recognition of the depth of the challenge.

## Assam's Historical Experience

Assam's predicament is not abstract but written in census records, political accords, and grassroots struggles. The Assam Accord of 1985, signed after a prolonged mass movement against illegal immigration, was a landmark attempt to resolve the issue by setting March 25, 1971, as the cut-off date for detecting and deporting illegal migrants. Yet nearly four decades later, the problem persists. Periodic waves of migration from across the border, driven by economic deprivation, environmental stress in the delta, and porous boundaries, continue to alter the region's demography. The controversial updating of the National Register of Citizens (NRC) sought to address the question of citizenship but instead deepened divisions, leaving millions in limbo. For many, migration into Assam is an economic story of landless peasants and impoverished families seeking livelihood opportunities in cultivation, construction, or petty trade. Migrants have undeniably contributed to the economy, often taking up backbreaking agricultural work or jobs shunned by locals. Yet for large sections of Assamese society, migration is also a matter of cultural survival and political security. The fear is not merely of economic competition but of being overwhelmed demographically, of losing linguistic and cultural distinctiveness, and of being reduced to a minority in one's own homeland.

## Parallels with the West

The parallels with Europe's present anxieties are striking. In France, public debate rages over whether newcomers embrace French values or remain culturally separate, echoing Assamese concerns about assimilation and

preservation of indigenous heritage. Germany's political convulsions following Merkel's 2015 “open-door” policy illustrate how sudden inflows can destabilize even strong institutions. The Brexit referendum in Britain was in large part a revolt against migration and perceived loss of sovereignty.

In Assam too, migration has redrawn boundaries of representation and fueled demands for greater autonomy, quotas, and safeguards. The emotional charge is similar: a fear of cultural eclipse, of traditions and identities fading under demographic pressures.

Security anxieties also resonate. European leaders regularly warn of extremist groups exploiting migrant vulnerabilities to spread radical ideologies. Germany, Belgium, and France have all faced terror attacks linked to radicalized migrants or their descendants. Assam's security establishment has long raised similar concerns, pointing to radical organizations attempting to recruit in areas with concentrated migrant populations. The fear is not only of economic strain but of long-term destabilization if vulnerable communities are exploited by hostile actors.

## Economic Contradictions

Migration also brings contradictions that deepen the debate. In Italy and Spain, migrants are indispensable to agriculture and construction, filling labor shortages that native populations are unwilling or unable to address. Yet their very presence sparks resentment over jobs, wages, and cultural change. In Assam, migrants are vital contributors to cultivation, fisheries, and small trades. Their role in sustaining the rural economy is undeniable. At the same time, they are perceived as competitors for scarce land, government schemes, and public services, exacerbating tensions with indigenous groups who feel marginalized in their own land. This paradox—that migrants sustain economies while simultaneously destabilizing communities—is a shared feature of migration politics worldwide. It explains why the issue rarely lends itself to neat solutions and why it so often polarizes societies.

## Lessons from the Global Crisis

For India, the global migration crisis offers both a caution and a validation. It warns that even

wealthy nations with sophisticated governance and strong institutions struggle to absorb large-scale migration without social unrest. If Britain and France, with their resources, find their societies polarized, it underscores how fragile the balance is in resource-constrained Assam. At the same time, it validates Assam's long-standing concerns. What was once dismissed as parochial fear-mongering is today echoed in the streets of Brussels, Rome, and Washington. The world is learning what Assam has always known: migration is not just about numbers but about the fragile fabric of identity, belonging, and trust. The debate in Assam thus foreshadowed the dilemmas of the West. When Assamese leaders and activists warned of cultural dilution and demographic change, they were articulating anxieties that Western societies now express in their own terms. Far from being an outlier, Assam may be a bellwether for how societies grapple with prolonged migratory pressures.

## Toward a Middle Path

The challenge, in Assam as in Europe, is to find a sustainable middle path. Extreme exclusion, rooted in hostility, risks dehumanizing migrants and violating humanitarian principles. Blind acceptance, without safeguards, risks destabilizing societies and eroding cultural identities. The answer lies in careful management: balancing compassion with vigilance, ensuring rights without undermining the social contract, and protecting indigenous populations while acknowledging migrants' contributions. Assam has experimented with different frameworks—from the Assam Accord to the NRC, from legal instruments to community negotiations. These mechanisms have been contentious and imperfect, but they reflect recognition that migration cannot be left to chance. It requires continuous political will, legal clarity, and social dialogue. Europe, for all its wealth, is now learning the same lesson, often at high social cost.

## National Stakes

What policymakers in New Delhi must recognize is that Assam's migration crisis is not merely a regional concern but a matter of national integrity. Assam sits at the frontier of India's demographic transformation. Its porous border with Bangladesh makes it a frontline in a struggle that could have profound consequences for national

cohesion. Protecting Assam's cultural heritage, ensuring opportunities for its indigenous people, and addressing security risks are therefore national imperatives. A weak or complacent response risks allowing Assam's crisis to metastasize into a larger national challenge, just as Europe's failure to address migration in the early years of the Syrian conflict reverberated across the continent.

## The Broader Perspective

Migration is, in the final analysis, a story of survival. For individuals and families, it is about seeking dignity, safety, and hope. For societies, it is about preserving coherence, security, and identity. Reconciling these competing imperatives is among the hardest tasks any democracy faces. Western nations are struggling to find that balance, oscillating between compassion and exclusion. Assam's long and difficult history with migration provides both a warning and a guide. It shows the costs of neglect and the dangers of overreaction, but also the possibility of crafting frameworks—however imperfect—that keep the issue within political negotiation rather than violent rupture.

As Europe debates the costs of migration and the United States polarizes over its southern border, Assam stands as a reminder that migration crises are neither new nor confined to the West. For over a century, Assam has lived through the demographic, cultural, and political transformations that unchecked migration brings. Its experience underscores that migration is never just about border crossings or economic numbers. It is about the soul of societies—their sense of belonging, their cultural heritage, their trust in institutions, and their vision of the future.

For India, Assam's story is a call to foresight. The lesson is not to seal oneself off from the world nor to accept uncontrolled migration as inevitable. It is to shape migration with firmness and fairness, to protect both humanitarian values and national interest. Europe today is learning this lesson painfully. Assam, with its lived history, cannot afford to learn it too late. The world may debate migration as a crisis of the moment, but Assam knows it as a reality of generations. That hard-earned experience is India's most valuable resource as it navigates the uncertain future of borders, identities, and belonging. (The writer can be reached at dipakkurmigpltd@gmail.com)

## GST Reform: Fueling growth in tough times

By: Satyabrata Borah

India's Goods and Services Tax (GST) system, introduced in 2017 as a landmark reform to unify the country's fragmented tax structure, has undergone a significant overhaul in 2025, with the government announcing sweeping rate cuts and a simplified tax framework. Effective from September 22, 2025, the GST Council, chaired by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, has streamlined the complex four-tier tax structure into a two-slab system of 5 percent and 18 percent, while introducing a special 40 percent rate for luxury and sin goods such as tobacco, pan masala, aerated beverages, and high-end vehicles. This reform, dubbed GST 2.0, comes at a critical juncture for the Indian economy, which is grappling with external pressures, particularly the imposition of steep 50 percent tariffs on Indian exports to the United States. The timing of these changes, coinciding with the festive season starting with Navratri, is strategic, aiming to stimulate domestic consumption and cushion the economic fallout from export challenges. The GST rate cuts are poised to reshape consumer behavior, bolster economic growth, and provide relief to businesses and households, though concerns about fiscal sustainability and long-term revenue implications linger.

The decision to simplify the GST structure addresses long-standing criticisms of its complexity. Previously, the four-tier system, with rates of 5, 12, 18, and 28 percent, created confusion for businesses and consumers alike, with varying tax rates applied to similar goods and services. The new structure reduces the tax burden on a wide range of consumer goods, particularly daily essentials and aspirational items. For instance, household staples such as toothpaste, shampoo, hair oil, soaps, and kitchenware have been shifted from the 12 or 18 percent slabs to the 5 percent slab, making them more affordable for the average consumer. Similarly, processed food items like namkeen, bhujia, pasta, cornflakes, and chocolates have also been moved to the lower 5 percent slab, while items like small cars, air conditioners, and televisions now attract an 18 percent tax, down from 28 percent. Notably, insurance premiums, including life and health coverage, have been made tax-free, a move that could significantly enhance access to financial protection for millions of households. These reductions are expected to increase disposable incomes, particularly for low- and middle-income households, thereby spurring consumption at a time when economic headwinds threaten growth.

The rationale behind the GST rate cuts is closely tied to the need to boost domestic demand. India's economy has shown resilience, with a reported growth rate of 7.8 percent in recent quarters, but the imposition of U.S. tariffs, effective from August 27, 2025, poses a significant challenge. The U.S. is a key market for Indian exports, particularly textiles, gems and jewelry, and seafood, which are among the sectors most affected by the 50 percent tariffs. Estimates suggest that these tariffs could shave 0.6 percentage points off India's GDP, a blow that the government is keen to mitigate through domestic policy measures. By reducing GST rates, the government aims to put more money in the hands of consumers, encouraging spending on goods and services ranging from soaps to motorbikes. This is particularly critical as the festive season approaches, a period

when consumer spending typically peaks. The combination of GST cuts and earlier income tax reductions announced in February 2025 is expected to enhance household spending power by 0.7 to 0.8 percent of GDP in the fiscal year ending March 2026, according to Citi Research. If businesses pass on the full benefit of these tax cuts to consumers, inflation could also decrease by approximately 1.1 percentage points, providing further relief to households.

Industry leaders have hailed the GST reforms as a game-changer for consumption-driven sectors. The textile and apparel industry, for instance, stands to benefit significantly. The GST rate on fabrics and apparel priced below Rs 2,500 has been slashed from 12 or 18 percent to a uniform 5 percent, while garments above this threshold now attract an 18 percent tax. This reduction is expected to make clothing more affordable, particularly for lower-income households, while addressing the inverted duty structure that previously burdened the textile sector with higher input taxes than those on finished products. Amit Agarwal, Group CFO of Raymond, a leading textile company, noted that the discretionary spending categories, such as apparel, would see a marked increase in consumption due to higher disposable incomes. Similarly, the fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) sector, which includes products like toothpaste, soaps, and processed foods, is poised for a consumption boost. Larger pack sizes of FMCG products are expected to benefit from price cuts and promotional activities, further driving sales. The automobile sector, particularly manufacturers of small cars and two-wheelers (excluding high-end motorcycles above 350 cc), will also likely see increased demand due to the reduction in GST rates from 28 percent to 18 percent.

The GST reforms are designed to support exporters and small and medium enterprises (SMEs), which form the backbone of India's economy. The alignment of intermediary service rules under the new GST framework is expected to enhance the competitiveness of Indian exporters, who are facing significant challenges due to the U.S. tariffs. By simplifying compliance and reducing tax rates on key inputs, the reforms aim to lower production costs for exporters, particularly in sectors like textiles and seafood. Additionally, the GST cuts are expected to benefit micro, small, and medium enterprises by reducing the cost of raw materials and finished goods, enabling them to compete more effectively in domestic and international markets. The discontinuation of the Compensation Cess mechanism, which was levied on demerit goods like tobacco and aerated beverages to compensate states for revenue losses, is another significant change. While the cess will continue for tobacco until loans taken to support state revenues are repaid, its eventual phase-out signals a move toward a more streamlined tax system.

The GST rate cuts come with fiscal challenges. The government estimates a revenue loss of approximately Rs 480 billion (\$5.49 billion) due to the reduced tax rates, a figure that could strain public finances, particularly for

state governments reliant on GST revenues. After adjusting for higher revenues from the 40 percent tax slab on luxury and sin goods, BofA Securities estimates the net revenue loss at around Rs 48,000 billion, or 0.13 percent of GDP based on FY23-24 levels. While this fiscal impact is considered limited, it underscores the delicate balance the government must strike between stimulating consumption and maintaining fiscal discipline. Some states have expressed concerns about the discontinuation of the Compensation Cess, which was a critical mechanism for ensuring revenue stability during the initial years of GST implementation. The GST Council's decision to move forward with these reforms reflects a calculated risk, prioritizing economic growth over short-term revenue concerns.

Analysts and economists are optimistic about the potential of GST 2.0 to drive economic growth. Elara Capital's Executive Vice President estimates that the consumption boost from the GST cuts could add 100 to 120 basis points to GDP growth over the next four to six quarters, potentially offsetting the negative impact of U.S. tariffs. Morgan Stanley highlights that low-income households, in particular, will benefit from the increased affordability of essential goods, which could trigger a strong consumption upcycle. However, some experts, such as Nikhil Gupta from CLSA, caution that while the GST cuts will boost consumption, sustained economic growth depends on broader factors like income growth, which remains a concern. Discrepancies in GDP data, particularly on the expenditure side, have also led to calls for caution in interpreting the economy's strength. The stock market has responded positively to the GST reforms, with investors adjusting portfolios to capitalize on sectors likely to benefit, such as automobiles, consumer durables, and FMCG. The simplified tax structure is also expected to improve compliance and reduce administrative burdens for businesses, further supporting economic activity.

However, the success of these reforms hinges on businesses passing on the tax benefits to consumers. Union Minister Piyush Goyal has urged industries to ensure that the full extent of the GST cuts is reflected in lower prices, emphasizing that the reforms are intended to benefit the common man. The GST rate cuts introduced in September 2025 represent a bold attempt to stimulate domestic consumption at a time when India's export sector faces significant challenges. By simplifying the tax structure and reducing rates on a wide range of goods and services, the government aims to put more money in the hands of consumers, boost demand, and support key industries. While the reforms carry fiscal risks, the potential for increased consumption, improved export competitiveness, and economic growth makes them a strategic move. As India navigates the complexities of global trade tensions and domestic economic priorities, GST 2.0 could prove to be a pivotal step toward sustaining the country's growth trajectory.

*The rationale behind the GST rate cuts is closely tied to the need to boost domestic demand. India's economy has shown resilience, with a reported growth rate of 7.8 percent in recent quarters, but the imposition of U.S. tariffs, effective from August 27, 2025, poses a significant challenge*



# Solar Technology: Powering a greener tomorrow

By: Satyabrata Borah

Solar energy technology has emerged as a cornerstone of sustainable development, offering a clean, renewable, and increasingly accessible energy source that addresses the intertwined challenges of environmental degradation, energy security, and economic growth. As the world grapples with the consequences of climate change, resource depletion, and growing energy demands, solar power provides a pathway to a more sustainable future. Its ability to harness the sun's abundant and inexhaustible energy has positioned it as a critical tool in reducing greenhouse gas emissions, promoting energy equity, and fostering economic opportunities across diverse regions. This article explores the role of solar energy technology in advancing sustainable development, examining its technological advancements, environmental benefits, economic impacts, and the challenges that must be addressed to fully realize its potential.

Solar energy technology captures sunlight and converts it into usable energy, primarily through photovoltaic (PV) systems and concentrated solar power (CSP). Photovoltaic systems, the most widely adopted form of solar technology, use semiconductor materials like silicon to convert sunlight directly into electricity. These systems have become synonymous with solar energy due to their versatility, scalability, and declining costs. Concentrated solar power, on the other hand, uses mirrors or lenses to focus sunlight onto a small area, generating heat that drives a turbine to produce electricity. While CSP is less common than PV, it is particularly suited for large-scale projects in regions with high solar irradiance, such as deserts. Both technologies have evolved significantly over the past few decades, driven by innovations in materials, manufacturing, and energy storage, making solar power more efficient and affordable than ever before.

The environmental benefits of solar energy are among its most compelling attributes. Unlike fossil fuels, which release carbon dioxide, methane, and other pollutants into the atmosphere, solar power generates electricity with virtually no emissions. This makes it a vital tool in mitigating climate change, which poses existential threats to ecosystems, economies, and human livelihoods. By replacing coal, oil, and natural gas with solar energy, countries can significantly reduce their carbon footprints and move closer to achieving net-zero emissions targets. For instance, a single megawatt of solar power can offset thousands of tons of carbon dioxide annually, depending on the energy mix it displaces. Beyond climate change, solar energy reduces air and water pollution, which have profound health and environmental consequences. Coal-fired power plants, for example, release particulate matter and toxic chemicals that contribute

to respiratory diseases and environmental contamination, whereas solar installations produce no such byproducts. Additionally, solar energy systems require minimal water compared to traditional power plants, preserving vital freshwater resources in water-scarce regions.

Solar energy also aligns with the principles of sustainable development by promoting energy access and equity. In many parts of the world, particularly in rural and underserved areas, access to electricity remains a significant barrier to development. According to the International Energy Agency, over 700 million people globally lack access to electricity, with the majority residing in sub-Saharan Africa and parts of South Asia. Solar energy, particularly through off-grid and microgrid systems, offers a practical solution to this challenge. Small-scale solar installations, such as solar home systems or community mini-grids, can provide reliable electricity to remote areas without the need for extensive and costly grid infrastructure. These systems empower communities by enabling access to lighting, communication, education, and economic opportunities. For example, solar-powered lighting allows children to study after dark, while solar-powered irrigation systems can boost agricultural productivity, improving food security and livelihoods. By decentralizing energy production, solar technology reduces reliance on centralized fossil fuel-based grids, which are often inaccessible or unreliable in developing regions.

The global solar industry has experienced exponential growth, with installed capacity increasing from just 40 gigawatts in 2010 to over 1,000 gigawatts by 2023. This expansion has been fueled by dramatic cost reductions, with the price of solar panels dropping by more than 80% over the past decade. These declining costs have made solar energy competitive with, and in many cases cheaper than, fossil fuels in many parts of the world. The economic benefits extend beyond affordability to job creation and industrial development. The solar industry employs millions of people worldwide, from manufacturing and installation to maintenance and research. In countries like India, China, and Germany, solar energy has become a significant source of employment, particularly in rural areas where job opportunities are often scarce. Moreover, solar projects can stimulate local economies by attracting investment and fostering innovation. For instance, the development of large-scale solar farms often requires collaboration between governments, private companies, and local communities, creating a ripple effect of economic activity.

Solar energy also enhances energy security, a critical component of sustainable development. Many countries rely heavily on imported fossil fuels, which exposes them to price volatility and geopolitical risks. By investing in solar energy, na-



tions can reduce their dependence on foreign energy supplies and build more resilient economies. Solar power's decentralized nature further strengthens energy security by reducing the risk of widespread outages caused by centralized grid failures. In regions prone to natural disasters, such as hurricanes or earthquakes, off-grid solar systems can provide critical backup power, ensuring access to electricity during emergencies. This resilience is particularly important for vulnerable communities, where access to reliable energy can mean the difference between life and death during crises.

Solar energy faces several challenges that must be addressed to fully integrate it into the global energy mix. One of the primary limitations is its intermittency, as solar power depends on sunlight, which varies by time of day, season, and weather. Energy storage technologies, such as lithium-ion batteries, are critical to overcoming this challenge by storing excess energy generated during peak sunlight hours for use at night or during cloudy periods. While battery costs have declined significantly, they remain a significant expense for many solar projects, particularly in developing countries. Innovations in alternative storage solutions, such as flow batteries or thermal storage, could further enhance the reliability of solar energy. Another challenge is land use, as large-scale solar farms require significant space, which can compete with agriculture or conservation efforts. To address this,

researchers and developers are exploring solutions like agrivoltaics, where solar panels are co-located with crops or livestock, maximizing land use efficiency. Additionally, floating solar farms on reservoirs or coastal waters offer a promising alternative for regions with limited land availability.

The integration of solar energy into existing energy systems also requires significant investment in infrastructure and policy frameworks. Many countries still rely on outdated grids that are not designed to accommodate the variable nature of renewable energy. Upgrading these grids to handle distributed energy sources, such as rooftop solar, requires substantial financial and technical resources. Furthermore, policy incentives, such as subsidies, tax credits, and feed-in tariffs, have been instrumental in driving solar adoption, but their implementation varies widely across countries. In some regions, bureaucratic hurdles, inconsistent regulations, or entrenched interests in the fossil fuel industry hinder the growth of solar energy. Addressing these barriers requires coordinated efforts between governments, private sectors, and international organizations to create enabling environments for solar investment.

In some communities, there is resistance to new technologies due to lack of awareness, mistrust or cultural preferences for traditional energy sources. Education and outreach programs are essential to building public support and ensuring that the ben-

efits of solar energy are understood and embraced. Additionally, equitable access to solar technology must be prioritized to avoid exacerbating existing inequalities. For example, while wealthier households in urban areas may easily afford rooftop solar systems, low-income or rural households may struggle to access financing for similar installations. Innovative financing models, such as pay-as-you-go systems or community-based cooperatives, have shown promise in making solar energy more accessible to marginalized groups.

The global push for sustainable development, as outlined in frameworks like the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), underscores the importance of clean energy in achieving a range of objectives, from poverty reduction to climate action. Solar energy directly contributes to several SDGs, including affordable and clean energy (SDG 7), decent work and economic growth (SDG 8), and climate action (SDG 13). By providing clean, reliable, and affordable energy, solar power supports education, healthcare, and economic empowerment, particularly in underserved regions. Its role in reducing greenhouse gas emissions is critical to mitigating the worst impacts of climate change, while its scalability makes it adaptable to diverse contexts, from urban rooftops to rural villages.

The future of solar energy is bright, with ongoing advancements poised to further enhance its impact on sustainable development. Innovations in perovskite solar cells, which promise higher efficiencies and lower costs than traditional silicon-based panels, are on the horizon. Similarly, improvements in energy storage, grid integration, and artificial intelligence-driven energy management systems are expected to make solar power more reliable and efficient. International cooperation will also play a crucial role, as initiatives like the International Solar Alliance aim to mobilize resources and expertise to accelerate solar adoption in sun-rich countries. However, realizing this potential requires sustained commitment from all stakeholders to prioritize renewable energy and address the technical, financial, and social barriers to its widespread adoption.

Solar energy technology is a linchpin of sustainable development, offering a multifaceted solution to some of the world's most pressing challenges. Its environmental benefits, economic potential, and ability to enhance energy access make it a transformative force in building a more equitable and resilient future. While challenges remain, the rapid pace of innovation and growing global commitment to renewable energy suggest that solar power will continue to play an increasingly central role in the transition to a sustainable world. By harnessing the sun's abundant energy, humanity can chart a path toward a cleaner, more prosperous, and more inclusive future for generations to come.

## Tax rebalancing in energy sector: Renewables cheaper, coal costlier

By: Puja Das

In a landmark policy shift to accelerate India's clean energy transition, the 56th Goods and Services Tax (GST) Council on September 3, 2025 revised the tax structure for the energy sector. Effective September 22, the GST on renewable energy components such as solar cells, windmill equipment and biogas plants will be reduced from 12 per cent to 5 per cent, while the GST on coal and lignite will increase sharply from 5 per cent to 18 per cent.

The dual move is aimed at making renewable energy more affordable and competitive, while gradually disincentivising the use of fossil fuels.

The GST council continued to levy a 5 per cent tax on electric vehicles (EV). Small cars and entry-level motorcycles will become cheaper. Petrol, LPG and CNG cars with engines below 1,200 cc and diesel cars up to 1,500 cc (provided they are not longer than 4,000 mm) will now attract 18 per cent GST instead of the current 28 per cent.

The changes also extend to commercial vehicles. Three-wheelers, buses and trucks, as well as ambulances, will now be taxed at 18 per cent instead of 28 per cent. Small hybrids will also see a reduction. All mid-size and large cars (those exceeding 1,200 cc petrol or 1,500 cc diesel engines, or measuring longer than 4,000 mm) will now attract a flat 40 per cent GST.

The Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs, in its official notification, stated that the revision is designed to "promote renewable energy goods in the country" and reduce India's dependence on imported solar modules, particularly from China.

### Boost for renewable energy

The GST cut on clean energy equipment is being widely hailed by industry experts and developers as a major enabler for India's ambitious climate goals. The lower tax rate will reduce the capital cost of renewable energy projects, making solar, wind and biogas-based power more accessible and affordable across various sectors.

"This move will directly reduce the cost of renewable power, boost adoption across sectors, and improve project economics for developers and investors," said Sachin Singh, Associate Director at The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI). "It supports national schemes like PM Surya Ghar and PM-KUSUM, enabling more competitive tariffs and faster project rollouts."

The tax cut is also expected to accelerate the re-powering of ageing wind farms and large-scale deployment of solar and wind power. JP Chalasani, chief executive of Suzlon Group, noted, "Lower taxation on turbines, nacelles and blades will bring down the levelised cost of energy, enabling faster commissioning and stronger investor returns."

For the biogas sector, the impact is equally promising. Vijay Nirani, founder & managing director of TruAlt Bioenergy, highlighted that the reduced GST will improve the viability of biogas projects, especially at a time when India imports 50 per cent of its natural gas needs. "This decision unlocks new opportunities for farmers, small businesses and green entrepreneurs. It creates local jobs and empowers rural communities," he said.

### Transitional challenges

Despite the long-term benefits, some short-term operational challenges remain. Projects awarded under older GST rates may need to renegotiate Power Purchase Agreements (PPA) under 'Change in Law' clauses, potentially leading to temporary financial adjustments.



"There could be a one-time blockage of working capital due to accumulated input tax credit on capital goods. But this is a transitional issue, and the overall policy direction is strongly positive," Saurabh Agarwal, tax and new energy partner, EY India, pointed out.

The government has acknowledged the issue of inverted duty structure and stated that refund mechanisms are in place to address it. Process reforms are also underway to ensure timely reimbursements, providing further reassurance to developers.

### Coal and lignite: Price impact offset

On the fossil fuel front, increasing the GST on coal and lignite to 18 per cent could have raised power generation costs. However, the simultaneous removal of the Rs 400 per tonne GST compensation cess offsets the increase.

Saunak D, a coal analyst, estimated that although the GST hike would increase coal prices by about Rs 166.27 per tonne for G-12 grade coal, the removal of the cess results in a net decrease of Rs 233 per tonne. "This effectively reduces power generation costs by around Rs 0.17 / kWh," he noted. The sentiment was echoed by Ratul Puri, chairman of Hindustan Power. "While the tax rate on coal has been raised from 5 per cent to 18 per cent, the overall impact will be minor as the existing compensation cess of Rs 400 per tonne has now been subsumed within the GST rate."

It aims to simplify the tax structure and replace the compensation cess before its scheduled end in 2026. Past issues involved the non-refundability of input tax credit for the cess on coal inputs, where the final product wasn't subject to cess and potential state revenue impacts from cess expiry, which the merger seeks to mitigate.

### Automotive and EVs

The reduction is set to bring renewed cheer to consumers and inject fresh momentum into the Indian automotive sector in this festive season, said Shailesh Chandra, president, SIAM. Making vehicles more affordable, particularly in the entry-level segment, these revisions will significantly benefit first-time buyers and middle-income families, enabling broader access to personal mobility.

The continuation of 5 per cent GST on EVs will help sustain the ongoing momentum towards sustainable mobility. Furthermore, "the resolution of classification interpretations and the correction of the inverted duty structure will greatly streamline business processes across the automotive industry, supporting ease of doing business," Chandra said. (Courtesy: Down to Earth)

## Perplexing agents: Redefining the boundaries of online agency

By: Siddharth Yadav, Ambika Sondhi

Disagreements and legal actions regarding copyright infringement and intellectual property theft have proliferated since the dawn of large language models (LLMs) in 2022. While LLMs offer unprecedented capabilities to streamline and automate core economic sectors from coding to public service delivery, rapid advancements in AI capabilities have challenged regulators to keep pace with the emergent capabilities of frontier models. The scramble to regulate LLMs is set to become increasingly complicated with AI agents on the algorithmic horizon.

Agents are AI systems that offer additional layers of capabilities on top of LLMs, such as executing user commands in virtual environments or edge devices, accessing and retrieving user-requested information from websites, and building and deploying software by automating multi-stage decision-making and execution. While LLMs use a mix of user-generated and synthetic data to provide textual and audio-visual output to user queries, agents are programmed to take actions in the digital space. Traditionally, algorithmic tools such as 'crawlers' are deployed to collect data from websites en masse. While agents may be similar to crawlers in the function they perform, they differ in purpose. Crawlers are fundamentally designed to collect information for building databases. Conversely, AI agents are designed to retrieve specific data based on user inputs and can automate and execute entire workflows. While such novel capabilities may be paving the way for a paradigm shift in users' experience on the internet, they also raise questions regarding the future of an internet increasingly populated by computational entities. A key set of questions has arisen due to a legal battle between the AI company Perplexity and web security solutions provider Cloudflare.

In August 2025, Cloudflare accused Perplexity of allowing its AI agents to scrape data from websites that explicitly prohibit data scraping by crawlers. In response, Perplexity argued that agents are different from crawlers in that agents should be seen as extensions of the users themselves. Consequently, an agent accessing a website following a user query should be treated as a user, not a crawler. The difference between AI agents and crawlers may seem pedantic, but such definitional ambiguity can evolve into a fundamental obstacle for AI development and adoption — issues that



have become strategic goals for nations across the world.

### The Problem with Digitising Agency

The internet has long operated on norms of trust and openness, thanks to the mutually beneficial relationship between search engines and websites. The sheer number of websites on the internet limits the ability of search engines to catalogue and feature all of them. Websites looking to increase their viewership and subsequent potential advertising opportunities have done so by granting search engine optimisation (SEO) crawlers access to their data. Websites use machine-readable files, encoded as "robots.txt files," to demarcate no-crawl data zones and protect specific HTML pages from being featured on search engines. These machine-readable files are, functionally, requests for privacy. This places trust in SEO crawlers to not bypass these security measures, which in turn have been generally respectful of website boundaries. This symbiotic relationship reflects norms of internet trust and a consensus on the marginal utility gains of open access practices.

The last few years have seen an influx of agentic AI crawlers using website data for two purposes: to train large language models (LLMs) and to retrieve user-requested data. Agentic AI crawlers have been known to act deceptively, circumventing blockers, ignoring machine-readable files and overwhelming websites in order to gather as much data as possible. Agentic AI crawlers feed on websites parasitically, benefiting from the same websites upon which they impose heavy bandwidth costs and from which they divert potential traffic.

Agentic AI crawlers have been known to act deceptively, circumventing blockers, ignoring machine-readable files and overwhelming websites in order to gather as much data as possible. At its core, the disruptive behav-

our of agents concerns permission to access websites. The legal dispute between Perplexity and Cloudflare has sparked a contentious debate over whether an agent acting on behalf of a human should be treated as a human or a bot. While reasonable arguments can be made for either case, the risks posed by the agency of AI agents remain nuanced. Cybersecurity tools used by websites generally use signature-based bot detection protocols that can be confounded by LLM-based agents that are able to reason and exploit weaknesses in novel ways. Emergent AI capabilities allow for crawlers to adopt behaviour that does not resemble traditional pre-programmed bot behaviour. Consequently, multi-agent swarms can emulate human behaviour since they can be deployed through browsers or virtual environments hosted in edge devices owned by humans. Accelerating the development and adoption of AI agents poses two problems. First, it fundamentally erodes the monetisation strategies of smaller and open-source domains. Second, agents introduce new cybersecurity vectors through emergent capabilities and by employing layers of obfuscation to mask their identities.

### The Way Ahead: A Two-Pronged Approach

The internet has reached an inflexion point this year with the arrival of AI agents — for the first time in history, bot activity has superseded total human activity online. This phase shift is creating a scenario where "AI agents, rather than humans, are the primary consumers of content." While this digital infestation is a challenge to web protocols, it is simultaneously a natural consequence of heavy investments in AI development. As AI regulation becomes a cornerstone of national strategies to drive economic competitiveness, slow uptake or adoption of AI products and services can prove to be a bottleneck for countries prioritising digital transformation. However, accelerating adoption will worsen

the situation due to ballooning bandwidth costs and plummeting advertising revenue generation for website or domain owners caused by the surge in AI traffic.

As AI regulation becomes a cornerstone of national strategies to drive economic competitiveness, slow uptake or adoption of AI products and services can prove to be a bottleneck for countries prioritising digital transformation.

As agentic AI crawlers cannot be trusted to respect internet security norms, the cost of protecting copyrighted and private data falls on individual website owners. Websites will be inclined towards using anti-crawling software, making access harder for agentic and SEO crawlers alike. Smaller website owners who are unable to afford sophisticated cybersecurity programmes are more likely to hide their content behind paywalls and subscription costs, while others may take their content offline. Following current trends, open source code and open access information will likely cease to be easily accessible.

AI crawlers will also be disadvantaged by the scarcity of new training content and information retrieval in a closed and distrusting internet ecosystem. A two-pronged approach to protecting website cybersecurity and encouraging norms of transparency can be adopted. Governments should create databases of websites that opt out of AI crawling and require mandatory compliance reports from AI companies, which can be cross-checked against these databases. Furthermore, governments should subsidise cybersecurity programmes such as Cloudflare's Labyrinth, making them available to participating websites at lower cost.

Using anonymous data from cybersecurity programmes and cross-checked compliance reports, AI companies that bypass cybersecurity measures and stated boundaries should be penalised. As a basic standard-setting method, AI companies deploying agents should be mandated to adopt best practices, such as disallowing agents from changing their autonomous system number (ASN) and user agent strings (which identify a browser and system to a server) to mask their identities when confronted with a network block. Finally, multilateral forums for instituting international norms against deceptive and malicious agentic behaviour — such as the Robot Exclusion Protocol introduced in the 1990s and standardised under the Internet Engineering Task Force in 2022 — should be promoted to enforce and track the efficacy of cybersecurity protocols. (Courtesy: ORF)



# Israel calls on famine-stricken Gaza City residents to leave as it targets high-rises

Israeli army tells residents to move to a 'humanitarian zone'

**DEIR AL-BALAH (GAZA STRIP), Sept 6:** Israel's army called Saturday on Palestinians in Gaza City to move to a humanitarian area it designated in the south as it expanded its operations in preparation for seizing the famine-stricken city, including targeting high-rise buildings.

Parts of the city, home to nearly 1 million people, are already considered "red zones," where evacuation orders have been issued ahead of the expected offensive.

Aid groups have repeatedly warned that a large-scale evacuation of Gaza City would exacerbate the dire humanitarian situation, after the world's leading authority on food crises declared the city to be gripped by famine. Palestinians have been uprooted and displaced multiple times during the nearly two-year-long war, with many being too weak to move and having nowhere to go.

**Israeli army tells residents to move to a 'humanitarian zone'**

Israeli military spokesperson Avichay Adraee wrote in X that the army declared Muwasi — a makeshift tent camp in southern Gaza Strip — a humanitarian area and urged everyone in the city, which it called a Hamas stronghold and specified as a combat zone, to leave.

The army said they could travel in cars down a designated road without being searched.

The military, in a statement, provided a map showing the area in Khan Younis that the humanitarian area encompasses, which includes the block where Nasser Hospital is located.

The area around the hospital has been considered a red zone, though not the medical facility itself. Last week, Israel struck the hospital, killing 22 people, including Mariam Dagga, who worked for



The Associated Press and other media outlets. The hospital was not under evacuation.

The designated safe zone would include field hospitals, water pipelines, food and tents, and relief efforts "will continue on an ongoing basis in cooperation with the UN and international organisations," the statement said.

The declaration of a so-called "humanitarian zone" in southern Gaza was done by the Israeli authorities unilaterally, and the UN and the wider humanitarian community are not part of that designation, said Olga Cherevko, a spokesperson for the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

Israeli forces have struck such humanitarian areas throughout the war, including Muwasi, which they previously declared a safe zone, according to Gaza's Health Ministry.

Israel on Saturday issued warnings for two high-rises in Gaza City and the tents around them, saying Hamas had infrastructure inside or near them. It comes a day after after Israel struck another

high-rise building in Gaza City, saying Hamas used it for surveillance, without providing evidence.

Despite Israel's warnings many Palestinians in Gaza City say they won't leave.

"They only order us to leave from one town to another? What are we going to do with our children? Those who have an ill person, or an elderly or a wounded, where are we going to take them?" said a woman who identified herself as Um Haitham.

**Families of hostages appeal to Trump**

Israel's offensive has also sparked widespread protests among Israelis who fear it will endanger hostages still held in Gaza, some of whom are believed to be in Gaza City.

There are 48 such hostages, 20 of them believed by Israel to be alive. Hamas released a propaganda video Friday of two hostages in Gaza City. The video shows Guy Gilboa-Dalal in a car, at one point joined by another hostage, Alon Ohel.

Families of the hostages say the government isn't prioritising their

loved ones, with most looking to US President Donald Trump to get the captives out.

On Saturday, families of the hostages thanked Trump and his envoy Steve Witkoff for their "unwavering determination, courage and compassion" in advancing ceasefire negotiations.

The statement, released by the Hostages and Missing Families Forum, said Trump demonstrates that "true leadership is measured by bold decisions."

A lasting ceasefire has so far been elusive. Last month Hamas said it had accepted a proposal from Arab mediators for a ceasefire. Israel has not yet responded and says it is still committed to defeating the militant group.

Israel says the war will continue until all the hostages are returned and Hamas is disarmed, and that it will retain open-ended security control of the territory of some 2 million Palestinians. Hamas has said it will only release the remaining hostages in return for Palestinian prisoners, a lasting ceasefire and a full Israeli withdrawal from Gaza.

The war started after Hamas-led militants killed around 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and abducted 251 people in their attack on southern Israel on October 7, 2023. Most have since been released in ceasefires or other agreements.

Israel's retaliatory offensive has killed more than 64,000 Palestinians, according to Gaza's Health Ministry, which does not say how many were civilians or combatants but says women and children make up around half the dead. The UN and independent experts consider it the most reliable source on war casualties. Israel disputes its figures but has not provided its own. (AP)

# India & US have special ties, nothing to worry about: Trump

**NEW YORK/WASHINGTON, Sept 6:** US President Donald Trump said India and the United States have a "special relationship" and there's nothing to worry about as the two countries "just have moments on occasion", amid current tensions between Washington and Delhi over tariffs and purchases of Russian oil.

"I'll always be friends with (Narendra) Modi, he's a great prime minister. He's great. I'll always be friends, but I just don't like what he's doing at this particular moment," Trump said in the Oval Office on Friday.

"But India and the United States have a special relationship. There's nothing to worry about. We just have moments on occasion," Trump added with a smile.

The president was responding to a question on whether he is ready to reset relations with India, as ties between the two countries continue to reel under possibly the worst phase in over two decades.

Trump also said that he is "very disappointed" that India would be buying "so much" oil from Russia.

"I've been very disappointed that India would be buying so much oil from Russia, and I let them know that. We put a very big tariff on India, 50 per cent tariff, very high tariff. I get along very well with (Prime Minister Narendra) Modi, he's great. He was here a couple of months ago," Trump said in response to a question on



his social media post that the US has lost India and Russia to China. In the Truth Social post, Trump said that "Looks like we've lost India and Russia to deepest, darkest, China. May they have a long and prosperous future together! President Donald J. Trump".

Trump had also posted an old photo of Modi with Russian President Vladimir Putin and Chinese leader Xi Jinping.

Trump's post on social media came days after the bonhomie among Modi, Xi and Putin at a summit of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) in the Chinese city of Tianjin drew global attention.

To a question on how trade talks are going with India and other countries, Trump said, "They are going great. Other countries are doing great. We're doing great with all of them. We're upset with the European Union because of

what's happening with not just Google, but with all of our big companies."

Meanwhile, Trump administration's Senior Counsellor for Trade and Manufacturing, Peter Navarro, said in a post on X that India's highest tariffs costs US jobs.

"India buys Russian oil purely to profit/revenues feed Russia war machine. Ukrainians/Russians die. US taxpayers shell out more. India can't handle truth/spins," Navarro said.

National Economic Council Director Kevin Hassett has said that Trump and his trade team are disappointed that India continues to "fund" Russia's Ukraine war.

"I think that the trade team and the president are disappointed that India continues to fund Russia's Ukraine war, and hopefully it's a diplomatic issue that it will have positive development soon," Hassett told reporters in the White House Friday. (PTI)

# Floods kill 50, impact 4 million in Pakistan's Punjab province: official

**LAHORE, Sept 6:** Floods in Pakistan's Punjab province have killed 50 people and impacted around four million others since August 23, officials said on Saturday.

The province with a population of 130 million people has been witnessing torrential rainfall since mid-August, resulting in almost all rivers and tributaries flowing over danger levels.

"Around four million people in Punjab have been affected/displaced by the floods so far. Around 1.84 million people trapped in floodwaters have been relocated to safety, while 1.34 million animals have been relocated," Punjab's Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) Director General Irfan Ali Kathia told a press conference here.

"The floods have claimed 50 lives in the affected areas of Punjab and financial assistance of PKR 1 million each will be provided to the families of the deceased," Kathia said.

He said 3,900 villages have been submerged in floodwater from three rivers -- Ravi, Chenab and Sutlej -- and crops on thousands of acres have also washed away.

Kathia said Sialkot and Gujrat are the worst-hit districts by floods, and added that more rainfall is forecast across various divisions of Punjab.

"The flood situation remains critical, with water levels at dangerous highs at Ganda Singh Wala, Head Sulaimanki, Head Qadirabad, Khanki, and Muhammadwala," he said.

He, however, said that no new alert has been issued for any river in the last 18 to 22 hours, and water levels in the Sutlej have been receding over the past 24 hours. "At Ganda Singh Wala, the water level is also decreasing," he said.

"Currently, 71,000 cusecs are flowing at Jassar, 110,000 cusecs at Ravi Siphon, 107,000 cusecs at Shabdara, and 170,000 cusecs at Sadhnai," he said, adding that water levels at Multan and Sher Shah have also dropped. The National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) has said a low-pressure system is currently located over Madhya Pradesh and is likely to move west-northwest, and may reach Rajasthan and adjoining parts of Sindh on Saturday.

Under the influence of this weather system, Punjab, Sindh and Islamabad may face heavy to very heavy rains, it said.

Train operations in Pakistan are also affected as five rail sections in the Punjab province have been suspended due to the damage caused to the railway tracks by floods. Because of floods and heavy rains, power distribution companies (Discos), including the Lahore Electric Supply Company (Lesco) and Gujranwala Electric Power Company (Geppo) also faced a massive loss of electricity supply infrastructure.

According to NDMA data, between June 26 when the monsoon rains started till August 31, there were 209 deaths in Punjab province even as millions of people have been displaced due to devastating floods with over 2,000 villages inundated. (PTI)

# Khalistani extremists receive financial support from inside Canada



**OTTAWA, Sept 6:** At least two Khalistani extremist groups have received financial support originating from Canada, according to a new Canadian government report on terror financing.

The report titled '2025 Assessment of Money Laundering and Terrorist Financing Risks in Canada' has identified the Khalistani extremist groups receiving financial support originating from Canada as Babbar Khalsa International and the International Sikh Youth Federation.

The development comes two months after a report by Ottawa's intelligence agency said a politically motivated violent extremism threat in Canada since the mid-1980s has manifested through Khalistani extremists seeking to use violent means to create an independent nation state called Khalistan within India's Punjab.

The latest report said the 'Politically Motivated Violent Extremism (PMVE)' encourages "the use of violence to establish new political systems, or new structures and norms within existing systems."

"While PMVE may include religious elements, actors are more focused on political self-determination or representation, rather than racial or ethnic supremacy," it said.

Several terrorist entities listed under the Criminal Code in Canada that fall under the PMVE category, such as Hamas, Hezbollah, and the Khalistani violent extremist groups Babbar Khalsa International and the International Sikh Youth Federation, have been observed by law enforcement and intelligence agencies to receive financial support originating from Canada, the report pointed out.

In 2022, the Financial Transactions and Reports Analysis Centre of Canada's (FINTRAC) Operational Alert on Terrorist Activity Financing had identified Hezbollah as the second most frequently identified international terrorist entity to receive outgoing Canadian funds.

The 2025 Assessment report detailed the PMVE financing methods too and said Hamas and Hezbollah are established and well-resourced groups that fall under the PMVE category.

"These groups use diverse funding methods to sustain their operations, including the abuse of the money services businesses (MSB) and banking sectors; use of cryptocurrencies; state financing; abuse of the charitable and non-profit organisations (NPO) sector; and criminal activity."

"Khalistani extremist groups supporting violent means to establish an independent state within Punjab, India, are suspected of raising funds in a number of countries, including Canada. These groups previously had an extensive fundraising network in Canada but now appear to consist of smaller pockets of individuals with allegiance to the cause but seemingly no particular affiliation to a specific group," the report revealed.

Abuse of non-profit and charitable activities was a common concern for the organisations mentioned.

"The misuse of the charitable and NPO sectors has been observed as a prominent financing method used by Hamas and Hezbollah. Khalistani violent extremist groups have also been known to use networks to solicit donations from diaspora communities to raise and move funds, including through NPOs," it pointed out. Despite these observations, it is estimated that revenue generation through NPO abuse represents a relatively small percentage of operational budgets of terrorist groups overall, it clarified.

Illegal drug trafficking remains the highest money laundering threat in Canada, followed by fraud, commercial trade fraud and trade-based money laundering, and tax crimes, the report said.

"These threats are each estimated to involve billions of dollars in illicit proceeds annually in Canada," it added. (PTI)

# Leader Nigel Farage hopes Trump playbook can propel him to power

**LONDON, Sept 6:** The political pitch sounded familiar: The country is in crisis. The government must slash immigration, crack down on crime, ditch green energy targets and reopen factories to "make Britain great again."

The words of Nigel Farage to his Reform UK party's two-day annual convention echoed themes that propelled US President Donald Trump back to the White House.

Farage, the veteran hard-right politician, hopes a similar strategy can make him prime minister — a once-unthinkable idea that allies and opponents alike are taking seriously.

# Final respects pay to Giorgio Armani

**MILAN, Sept 6:** Hundreds of ordinary admirers and VIPs paid their last respects Saturday to Giorgio Armani, remembered by Milan's mayor as a "man of extraordinary elegance" who left an indelible mark on the city and the global fashion world.

Armani died Thursday at 91 at his home in central Milan surrounded by loved ones. His fashion house said he worked up to the end. One of his final projects was a runway show marking 50 years of his signature Giorgio Armani brand, which is due to close Milan Fashion Week later this month.

Mourners filed into the Armani Theater, where Armani regularly showed his ready-to-wear runway collections. Rows of candles in paper bags cast a shimmering light and piano music by Italian composer Ludovico Einaudi played softly in the background.

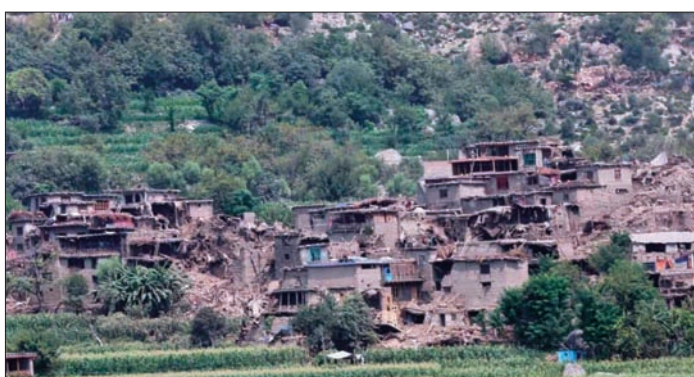
The closed coffin was adorned with a bouquet of long-stem white roses, and flanked by carabinieri honour guards in ceremonial dress. Among them was including Donatella Versace, who wore a dark skirt suit and carried a bouquet of white flowers, which she left in tribute. She left without making any remarks.

A sculpture featuring a crucifix on a raw block of marble stood nearby, brought from Armani's bedside.

Armani, who was deeply private, was not known to be a practicing Catholic, but a priest who emerged from his central Milan home after his death told reporters that he attended Mass daily.

Milan Mayor Giuseppe Sala was among the first to arrive, offering condolences to Leo Dell'Orco, Armani's longtime collaborator and the head of menswear, who stood near the coffin. (AP)

# Region's remoteness complicating rescue efforts Earthquake in Afghanistan's east wipes out homes, generations and livelihoods



**J A L A L A B A D (AFGHANISTAN), Sept 6:** Ahmad Khan Safi had a good life in Afghanistan. The farmer raised livestock in the Dewaghal Valley of Kunar Province, and people travelled from across the country to visit the area. Tourists marvelled at its verdant landscape, winding paths and formidable slopes. The valley appeared untouched.

It was hard to reach, so inaccessible that people had to change cars four times from the city of Jalalabad, in neighbouring Nangarhar province, and walk the rest of the way for several hours or ride a mule.

Safi had built a 10-room house from mud and stone because wood and cement were too expensive and impractical to transport. The home collapsed as soon as a major earthquake that killed at least 2,000 people struck on August 31. His shock was quickly replaced by fear and panic.

"I was trapped in the mud and couldn't breathe," he told The Associated Press from a Jalalabad hospital. "I struggled a lot to get

out, but was hit by rocks and fell so hard that my leg was injured." He spent the night under the rubble, not knowing if his family was alive or dead.

Help came the following morning, around 10 am, when people arrived on foot from other districts.

**Region's remoteness complicating rescue efforts**

The devastating quake was not the strongest or deadliest in Afghanistan's recent history. But remote and rugged Kunar has defied rescue efforts. The ruling Taliban authorities have deployed helicopters or airdropped army commandos to evacuate survivors.

There is no helicopter landing site in Dewaghal Valley and no path for vehicles, let alone heavy machinery. Many of the injured died because there was no way to reach them, said Safi, who was carried to safety on people's shoulders. A stream of homemade stretchers trickled down to more hospitable terrain.

"There was not a single household without dead or wounded people, and not a single home was

left standing. Some 130 people died in our area. The earthquake killed 22 members of my family — children, nephews, nieces, and my elder brother — and injured 17."

Entire families were wiped out, he added.

The death toll from this disaster exceeds 2,000, although this figure could rise as more bodies are recovered from villages that were razed to the ground and are now piles of dust.

"Now I think about it, whatever wealth and savings we had from our grandfather's time have all gone, and now we have nothing," said Safi. "My family lost about 300 cows, sheep and goats in this earthquake. All the people in the village were farmers and livestock keepers."

"We have no other source of income. I don't know what to do where to go because our homes collapsed. Not even a wall is left. What are we going to do with this life?"

**'We can't spend the night in the mountains anymore'**

The UN estimates that the quake has affected up to 5,00,000 people, more than half of them children, and that the communities hit include those where Afghans forcibly returned from neighbouring countries had begun rebuilding their lives.

Roads and bridges were damaged. Dozens of water sources have been destroyed, increasing health risks for survivors.

Rain, triggering landslides and floods, has worsened conditions. Schools and health facilities have vanished. With so many buildings

destroyed, there is little shelter left. People live and sleep under open skies.

The steep slopes of Kunar resemble a war zone. Houses that took years to build were decimated in an instant. An assessment by the Islamic Relief charity said just 2 per cent of homes in Kunar remain intact.

Ghulam Rahman, from Chawkay district in the central part of Kunar Province, lost his wife and five of his children in the earthquake. He was trapped in the wreckage for half an hour, next to his wife as she took her last breath.

"Dust and small stones were in my mouth so I couldn't speak properly," he said. "I heard her praying."

Some of his family's bodies were recovered on the first day after the quake. The rest remained under the debris for a further 24 hours. Only two of his seven children survived. One was staying at a religious school. The other had been sleeping on the rooftop.

Rock tumbled onto Rahman's home from houses at a higher altitude and the mountain, even as the ground opened beneath him. He said scores of people in his village died.

Rahman offered a piece of his family's farmland for their burial.

"We had everything, and now it's destroyed. We want the government to give us flat land. We can't spend the night in the mountains anymore. I can't go there because I see dead family members, and life there is difficult. I am afraid of that place." (AP)



# Be physically strong, mentally awake, and morally straight: Guv tells students

Governor participates in DNGC Foundation Day, urges youth to align with National Vision Viksit Bharat@2047

HT Correspondent

**ITANAGAR, Sept 6:** The Governor of Arunachal Pradesh, Lt General KT Par-naiik, (Retd), on Saturday urged students to be physically strong, mentally awake, and morally straight while aligning their personal aspirations with the broader national goal of Viksit Bharat@2047.

Addressing the students, faculty, alumni, and other members of the college community during the inaugural session of the 47th Foundation Day celebration of Dera Natung Government College (DNGC), Itanagar, the Governor emphasised holistic development and the transformative role of education in nation-building, according to an official statement issued by the Governor's office.

The Governor congratulated the college fraternity on the occasion, calling the celebration a tribute to the vision of nurturing youth, imparting knowledge, and shaping responsible citizens dedicated to societal progress.

He commended the institution for producing leaders, professionals, thinkers, and change-makers who have contributed significantly to community development.

Paying homage to the late education minister, Dera Natung, whose legacy the college proudly carries, the Governor urged all to draw inspiration from his vision and dedicate themselves to the noble

cause of education.

"Let us commit collectively to shaping a brighter, more enlightened future for Arunachal Pradesh by guiding young minds with compassion, discipline, and knowledge," he said, highlighting the importance of perseverance and collective responsibility.

Describing educational institutions as engines of growth and transformation, the Governor expressed confidence that DNGC would continue to adapt to changing times, explore new opportunities, and remain a beacon of learning for future generations. He emphasised that education must not only impart academic knowledge but also nurture skills, creativity, and innovation to meet the challenges of a fast-changing world.

Addressing the student community directly, the Governor encouraged them to think creatively, innovate boldly, and embrace skill-based learning, digital literacy, entrepreneurship, and problem-solving approaches.

Stressing the importance of mental and physical well-being, he reminded them to stay disciplined, motivated, and aware of their roles as torchbearers of the nation's future. Sharing his National Defence Academy (NDA) prayer, he urged students, "Be physically strong, mentally awake, and morally straight."

The Governor also addressed the fac-



ulty members, urging them to discharge their responsibilities with sincerity and empathy.

He said that teachers are the true architects of students' futures and must continuously upgrade their knowledge to stay abreast of developments in education, research, and technology.

He further appealed to alumni to main-

tain a strong connection with their alma mater and contribute actively to its growth and development.

"Your experience and support can help in guiding current students and strengthening the college's academic and infrastructural capacities," the Governor remarked.

Looking ahead to Viksit

Bharat@2047, the Governor highlighted the need for young people to align their individual aspirations with the collective national vision.

"When individuals progress, society strengthens; when society prospers, the State advances; and when the State prospers, the Nation rises," he stated, calling upon students and faculty alike to pursue knowledge and service with determination and purpose.

Encouraging civic participation, the Governor urged students to share their ideas and suggestions on the MyGov portal, describing it as a unique platform to engage directly with the Prime Minister of India and contribute to nation-building initiatives.

Earlier in the day, the Governor arrived at the college campus where he was accorded a ceremonial guard of honour by enthusiastic NCC cadets.

In a mark of respect and remembrance, he paid floral tributes to late Dera Natung, the visionary Education Minister after whom the college was named.

In his welcome address, Dr MQ Khan, principal of DNGC, presented an overview of the college's journey since its establishment in 1979.

He highlighted the institution's achievements in academics and co-curricular activities while candidly acknowledging existing challenges.

Dr Khan also outlined the college's roadmap for the future, reaffirming its commitment to nurturing talent and contributing meaningfully to the educational advancement of Arunachal Pradesh.

During the event, the Governor felicitated achievers from the college, including Rajiv Gandhi University toppers, students who excelled in zonal, national, and international competitions, and outstanding alumni.

He also released a scholarly work titled "Arunachal Pradesh Ke Gulo Loksahtya Mein Stree Jeevan Ke Vividh Aayam: Ek Adhyayah", authored by Dr Tumbom Riba 'Lily' Jomoh.

Established in 1979, Dera Natung Government College, originally known as Government Degree College and Government College, Itanagar, was renamed in 2001 in memory of the late Dera Natung, who tragically lost his life in a helicopter crash. As per official data, the current academic session records 51.33% enrolment of girls and 48.67% enrolment of boys, while the proportion of APST students stands at 91%.

The Governor's message left a resounding call for dedication, innovation, and service, urging all stakeholders in education to work in unison towards building a resilient and enlightened generation that will contribute to the State's and Nation's prosperity.

## MLA Pani Taram reiterates commitment to constituency development Mini Secretariat inaugurated at Damini



HT Correspondent

**ITANAGAR, Sept 6:** The long-awaited Mini Secretariat at Damini in Kurung Kumey district was inaugurated on Saturday in a special ceremony attended by political leaders, government officials, and members of the community.

The event was led by local MLA and PHED minister's advisor, Pani Taram, who reiterated his unwavering commitment to the development of the 21st Koloriang Assembly constituency and the district as a whole, according to an official statement.

Addressing the gathering during the inauguration, MLA Pani Taram ex-

pressed his determination to work tirelessly for the all-round development of the constituency.

"I have been making my best efforts for the development of the 21st Koloriang Assembly constituency in particular and Kurung Kumey in general. Whatever is possible, I will dedicate my efforts to bringing progress across all sectors, including connectivity and public welfare," he said.

Describing the inauguration as a landmark occasion, Taram stated, "Today is a special day for the people of Damini. The Mini Secretariat has been constructed under the RIDF scheme (2022-23) with an allocation

of ₹100.00 crores by M/s Siang Associates, with the PWD Sangram Division serving as the executing agency."

He highlighted the significance of the project in fulfilling a long-standing demand of the local population.

The MLA also noted that the inauguration coincided with a historic first for the region, as a high-level review meeting of district development matters was conducted at the Damini subdivision office.

"It is a matter of pride that we have been able to convene a review meeting with all departments, where several issues related to developmental priorities were discussed. This is the first time in the history of the Damini subdivision that such a comprehensive meeting, attended by almost all Heads of Departments and Zilla Parishad members, was held here," he remarked.

Thanking the state government led by Chief Minister Pema Khandu for supporting the initiative, MLA Taram called the day a "Red-Letter Day" for the people of the subdivision.

He pointed out that the inauguration would eliminate the need for residents to travel to the district headquarters at Koloriang for documentation and other official matters.

"This is a great achievement, and I would like to congratulate the people of Damini circle for realizing this milestone," he added.

The MLA also urged all government departments to work sincerely and be punctual in delivering public services.

He extended his best wishes to the staff of the newly inaugurated Mini Secretariat and to the residents of Damini subdivision, emphasizing that the facility would strengthen governance and service delivery at the grassroots level.

The ceremony was graced by Kurung Kumey Deputy Commissioner, Cheechung Chukhu, and the Deputy Chairperson of the Zilla Parishad, both of whom addressed the gathering and lauded the development initiative.

The event saw the presence of nearly all Zilla Parishad members, Heads of Departments, and representatives from local governance bodies, along with a large turnout of common residents of Damini subdivision.

Following the formal inauguration, a plantation drive was conducted at the newly established ADC office premises as part of the "EK-PED-MA-KE-NAM" campaign.

Led by the MLA, DC, ZP Chairperson, Zilla Parishad members, Divisional Forest Officer, and others, the drive saw the planting of approximately twenty ornamental and avenue trees, further marking the event with an environmental commitment.

The establishment of the Mini Secretariat at Damini is expected to enhance administrative efficiency, improve service delivery, and bring governance closer to the people, reinforcing the government's commitment to inclusive development and local empowerment.

## BRO strengthening local connection, opening opportunities for youths: Official

**ITANAGAR, Sept 6:** The Border Roads Organisation (BRO) is committed to strengthening its connection with local communities and opening new opportunities for the youth of Arunachal Pradesh, an official said on Saturday.

The BRO looks forward to continued support and a fruitful partnership with the civil administration, he said.

Project Brahmanik chief engineer Col Ashish Raisinghani said, "We believe that collaborative efforts will not only strengthen the connect between BRO and local communities but will also open new avenues of opportunity for the youth of Siang district."

He was speaking at the valedictory session of BRO's outreach exchange programme in Pasighat in East Siang district.

Col Raisinghani also highlighted that apart from its core role in road and infrastructure development, BRO continues to engage in welfare activities such as medical camps, cleanliness drives, skill development and motivational programmes.

A week-long initiative, conducted by Project Brahmanik from September 1 to 6, sought to create structured engagement between BRO personnel, civil administration, academia and youth, a defence communication said here.

It was aimed at raising awareness about BRO's mission and contributions while encouraging young and motivated individuals to consider careers in the organisation.

Under the exchange model, BRO teams visited prominent institutions such as Arunachal



Pradesh University and Rashtra Raksha University.

In turn, faculty members, PhD scholars and postgraduate students visited Project Brahmanik headquarters, where they were briefed through presentations, movie screenings and equipment demonstrations.

The programme saw around 120 BRO personnel participating in university visits and nearly 80 faculty members and students engaging in sessions at the Project Brahmanik base.

The events were attended by vice-chancellors, principals and senior academicians, while the visiting teams were hosted by Raisinghani and his officers.

The initiative received support from East Siang Deputy Commissioner Sonalika Jiواني, who encouraged universities and institutes in the region to participate actively.

Coordinated efforts between Project Brahmanik and academic leaders ensured that the exchange benefitted both sides. (PTI)

## Govt to organise 'Sun Rise Festival' at Dong to promote tourism: Khandu

**ITANAGAR, Sept 6:** Chief Minister Pema Khandu on Saturday announced the launch of a five-day 'Sun Rise Festival' at Dong in Anjaw district, the easternmost village of India.

Khandu, in a post on X said, "Landed in Walong, Anjaw district, and will be heading towards Dong, the place where the first sun ray touches Indian soil." The chief minister said the festival will be held from December 29 to January 2, offering visitors a unique opportunity to welcome the first dawn of the New Year in the 'Land of the Rising Sun'.

"To boost tourism and create new opportunities for adventurers and nature lovers, I am delighted to announce that from this year onwards we will be hosting a 5-day 'Sun Rise Festival' at Dong," Khandu said in the post.

Highlighting the natural and cultural richness of the region, Khandu invited people from across the country to experience the breathtaking landscape of Anjaw. (PTI)

## Dukam inaugurates district emporium at Pasighat, calls for strengthening sustainable livelihoods

New district emporiums to become vibrant hubs for innovative local products: Minister Nyato Dukam

HT Correspondent

**PASIGHAT, Sept 6:** The Minister for Textiles & Handicrafts, Sericulture Industries, Skill Development & Entrepreneurship, Labour Employment & IPR, Nyato Dukam, on Saturday called upon all stakeholders to ensure that the newly inaugurated District Emporium at Pasighat becomes a vibrant hub for marketing innovative products crafted by Self-Help Groups (SHGs), artisans, and weavers.

Speaking at the event, he highlighted the importance of promoting the "Vocal for Local" initiative of the State Government to strengthen the handloom and handicraft sector, according to an official statement issued by the department.

The inauguration ceremony was attended by prominent personalities including MLAs Ninong Ering, Tapi Darang, Onit Panayang, and Likha Soni; Deputy Commissioner of East Siang, Sonalika Jiواني; Joint Director of Textiles & Handicrafts, TC Kapa; Additional Director of Textiles & Handicrafts, Libang Perme; along with heads of departments, SHG members, artisans, and weavers from across the region.

Addressing the gathering, minister Nyato Dukam emphasised that the new district emporiums should not merely serve as retail outlets but must evolve into centres of innovation and creativity.

"Let the new district emporiums be a vibrant hub for marketing innovative products of SHGs, artisans, and weavers in the true spirit of promoting the 'Vocal for Local' initiative of the State Government," he stated.

He further underscored the need for enhancing sustainable livelihood opportunities and fostering economic empowerment for rural artisans, skilled weavers, SHGs, and budding entrepreneurs.

"The SHG members are the true embodiment of Shashakt Arunachal," the Minister remarked, praising their resilience and contribution to community development. Joint Director of Textiles & Handicrafts, TC Kapa, provided details of the Pasighat Emporium project, stating that it was executed by the WRD, Pasighat Division, as part of a phased approach toward upgrading and revamping district government emporiums across the State.



The initiative, he said, was launched under the leadership of minister Nyato Dukam and is funded through the State Budget Announcement for the Textiles & Handicrafts Department for the 2023-25 period.

"This effort has given a significant impetus to the handloom and handicraft sector by creating a structured marketplace for local artisans and preserving traditional crafts," Kapa said.

He further added that the emporium would also serve as a repository of traditional weaving and handicraft products from the district, providing both economic opportunities and cultural preservation.

The event also highlighted cluster development initiatives in Mebo and Oyan, aimed at supporting women weavers.

Cluster Designer, Angel Pada, spoke about the measures taken to improve working conditions, such as providing dedicated workshops, solar-powered lighting units, skill development workshops, and exposure visits.

He shared success stories that demonstrated how the cluster development efforts have empowered women artisans, enabling them to enhance their skills and ex-

pand their livelihoods.

Beneficiary Yedin Borang, a participant in the Cluster Development Programme, spoke about how the initiatives had improved the economic well-being of women handloom weavers.

She expressed gratitude for the support extended by the department and highlighted how such interventions had transformed their workspaces and income opportunities.

The inauguration of the Pasighat District Emporium marks another milestone in the State Government's mission to promote local enterprises, empower rural communities, and preserve traditional craftsmanship.

The initiative reflects a forward-looking approach to integrating grassroots innovations into larger economic frameworks while preserving the region's rich cultural heritage.

The event concluded with a renewed commitment to supporting artisans, SHGs, and entrepreneurs, with minister Dukam calling upon all stakeholders to actively participate in creating a sustainable and self-reliant local economy that contributes meaningfully to the State's growth.

### EDUCATIONAL NOTICE

No. TE(Ex) Admn-2/2024/519

#### SECOND ROUND OF SPOT COUNSELLING FOR PROVISIONAL ADMISSION INTO THE STATE GOVERNMENT POLYTECHNICS OF ASSAM FOR THE SESSION-2025-26

It is brought to the notice of all concerned that the SECOND ROUND OF SPOT COUNSELLING process for provisional admission into the Diploma in Engineering and Technology courses of State Government Polytechnic of Assam will be held on 9<sup>th</sup> & 11<sup>th</sup> September, 2025.

The detailed guidelines, schedule etc. for SPOT COUNSELLING round will be available in the website: <https://dte.assam.gov.in>

Eligibility criteria for admission will be same as per existing guideline.

Candidates eligible to participate in Spot Round:

- 1) Candidates who had registered in Samarth Portal but not allotted a seat during online counselling rounds
- 2) Candidates allotted seats in online counselling, but the allotment was cancelled due to various reasons
- 3) The candidates who had not registered in Samarth portal for online counselling are also eligible to take part in SPOT ROUND, however, they must fulfil the eligibility criteria and also pay non-refundable registration fee of Rs. 300/- at the time of Spot Counselling.

**Tentative schedule for Spot Round: The Tentative Schedule of Spot Round will be available in the website: <https://dte.assam.gov.in>**

Note:-As per order no CEE No. 500152/1 dated 5<sup>th</sup> June 2024, vacant seats at the time of the spot counselling round will be de-reserved to the unreserved category.

All candidates appearing for spot round must fulfil the eligibility criteria as per the information brochure for polytechnic admission-2025 which is available in <https://dte.assam.gov.in>

Candidates allotted through Spot Round must pay the admission fee of Rs. 4700/-.

Important Note: Candidates who are already admitted and have not withdrawn their seats within the due date are not eligible to participate in the Spot Round. If any candidate is allotted a seat due to false information provided by the candidate, the allotted seat of spot round will be cancelled.

Sd/-

Director of Technical Education, Assam, &  
Secretary, State Council for Technical Education, Assam,  
Kahilipara, Guwahati-781001

DIPR /D/HLT/151/7-Sep-25



# Kashmir parties slam national emblem's use in Hazratbal plaque

**SRINAGAR/JAMMU, Sept 6:** Kashmir-based political parties criticised the use of the national emblem on a renovation plaque by the Waqf Board at Srinagar's Hazratbal shrine, some calling for the dismissal of Jammu and Kashmir Waqf Board chairperson Darakshan Andrabi over the incident.

While Chief Minister Omar Abdullah said the national emblem is meant for government functions, not religious institutions, former CM Mehbooba Mufti termed the installation blasphemous. Some religious leaders argued that it was against the teachings of Islam.

The inclusion of the national emblem on the renovation plaque at the Hazratbal mosque here sparked a huge row that was followed by the plaque being broken and removed by unidentified people on Friday, right after congregational prayers.

In response to the act, the chairperson of the Jammu and Kashmir Waqf Board also called for legal action, including the use of the Public Safety Act (PSA), against those who removed the emblem.

Police on Saturday registered a case on charges of breach of peace, rioting and

criminal conspiracy against unidentified persons in connection with the incident.

The J-K unit of the BJP, however, demanded exemplary action not just against the perpetrators of the vandalism of the plaque but also those who acted "behind the scenes" to deface the Ashoka Stambh, pointing fingers at the National Conference leaders. CM Abdullah on Saturday said the Jammu and Kashmir Waqf Board should apologise for the "mistake" that has hurt religious sentiments.

"First, the question arises whether the national emblem should have been used on this stone or not. I have never seen an emblem being used in this way in any religious place," Abdullah told reporters while visiting flood-affected areas here. "Mosques, shrines, temples and gurdwaras are not government institutions. These are religious institutions and government emblems are not used in religious institutions," he said.

The ruling National Conference (NC) on Saturday demanded the registration of a criminal case against her for "violating" the State Emblem of India Act.

The NC said misusing the National Em-



blem at a shrine violates the State Emblem of India (Prohibition of Improper Use) Act, 2005, and "it insults India's secular fabric".

"JKNC demands her (Andrabi) immediate dismissal and registration of a criminal case for violating the State Emblem of India Act," the party said. "When the Prime Minister & Lieutenant Governor don't use the State Emblem for religious functions, why should Ms Andrabi?" it posted on X.

The party shared a photograph showing

Jammu and Kashmir Lt Governor Manoj Sinha inaugurating a CCTV surveillance system with an integrated command and control centre at Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine in Jammu. The inauguration plaque there does not include the national emblem embossed on it.

PDP president Mehbooba Mufti described the installation as an "act of blasphemy".

"The move has deeply hurt the religious feelings of Muslims and those responsible should be booked under the law. FIR

should be registered under Section 295-A (IPC), for blasphemy against her (Andrabi) and those who placed the plaque. This is an act of blasphemy," Mufti told reporters here.

The former CM said the Waqf Board should be immediately disbanded and suspended, and all officers, including its head, should be removed from the board.

"I request (chief minister) Omar Abdullah that heads must roll because how did the Waqf allow something which is considered shirk (act of associating partners with God) in our religion," she added.

Mehbooba said instead of taking action against those who defaced the emblem out of concern for "religious sentiment", the government should lodge an FIR against the Waqf Board chairperson and its members who "allowed" such an act.

"Hazratbal is a religious place, not a venue for coronation or political symbolism. People were not against the emblem. They were against idol worship. They did not try to destroy the emblem, but the idol," she added.

She hit out at the Waqf Board chairperson and said, "The Waqf head is from the

BJP. We also ran Waqf in our times, but we did not make it a party board. Today, it is run by the BJP, which is anti-Muslim," Mufti said.

She appealed to the people not to damage property, saying they should not allow the administration or police an opportunity to jail them.

The BJP slammed the defacement of the plaque, claiming that it was installed outside the sanctum sanctorum of the mosque and the incident was an attempt to revive "terrorism and separatism" in the Valley.

"The Hazratbal incident, a very sensitive issue, is a cause of concern. A National Conference legislator tweeted about the plaque containing the Ashoka Stambh and the video of its vandalism went viral, hurting the sentiments of the people of the country," BJP chief spokesperson Sunil Sethi told a press conference here.

Asserting that the national emblem is a mark of respect for the people of all faiths, he said the attack was also against the "Kashmir's Sufi culture which teaches tolerance" and there was resentment among the people in the valley against the incident. (PTI)

## India needs campaign for better oppn, their criticism of GST ill-informed: Sitharaman

*PM Modi has always been focussed on pro-people reforms, says Finance Minister*



**NEW DELHI, Sept 6:** India deserves a better opposition and better opposition leaders, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said on Saturday, as she slammed their criticism of the Modi government on the GST reforms as "ill-informed" and untouched by facts leading up to the implementation of the unified indirect tax regime in 2017.

In an interview to PTI, she was unsparing in her takedown of the Congress for blaming the BJP-led NDA government for keeping four tax slabs when the GST was intro-

duced and claiming vindication over the latest move to rationalise the structure by keeping only two slabs.

It was not the BJP's decision nor the case that then-Union Finance Minister Arun Jaitley was deciding upon different tax slabs or what should be the GST rate for a particular item, Sitharaman said, adding Congress ministers, too, were part of it. "Are they (opposition) not aware of it?"

Explaining the evolution of four GST rates in which opposition-ruled states played a crucial role as well in the run-up to its implementation in July 2017, Sitharaman said the country needs a campaign for a better opposition and better opposition leaders on the lines of public movement against issues like tree-cutting.

In a feisty response, she said she will have no qualm in tendering an apology if opposition leaders deal in facts and prove her wrong. "I have no ego. I will even apologise to people. But what they (opposition) are saying is nonsense."

"The Congress has now stirred

into action. If you do not understand the issue, then the least you can do is keep quiet," she said, reminding the principal opposition party that it was an Empowered Committee of finance ministers from states that decided on keeping four slabs in the Goods and Services Tax before it was rolled out.

It was this Committee that formulated what was to be implemented in the GST from 2017, she said. In deliberations stretching for years, including under the Congress-led UPA government, Left leader and then-West Bengal Finance Minister Asim Dasgupta was influential in driving consultations as head of the Empowered Committee besides finance ministers from other opposition-ruled states at different points of time, she noted.

She said the Empowered Group had evaluated different levels of taxes on an item in different states, thrashed out an average and then agreed to keep that product in one of the four GST slabs nearest to the average.

In her seventh year as Finance

Minister, spearheading some of the government's major reforms aimed at giving relief to consumers, including the increase in income tax exemption to Rs 12 lakh in her last budget, and helping the industry, Sitharaman has often been at the receiving end of the Opposition's flak over economic issues.

She launched a vigorous counter-attack over its criticism of the government on the GST.

"India deserves a better opposition. I strongly believe in it. India needs better opposition leaders. Such ill-informed commentary will do no good. These leaders are misleading the public and not serving the country. In fact, they are harming it," she said. Sitharaman was dismissive of Congress leader Jairam Ramesh's contention that Prime Minister Narendra Modi undermined the GST Council, a constitutional body that takes all decisions related to the indirect tax regime, with his announcement in his Independence Day speech of the upcoming rationalisation.

Modi gave a message to the country about reforms as the coun-

try's prime minister, she said and asked, "What is wrong in this?"

Asked if the reforming drive aimed at giving relief to people will continue as the government has already come out with measures like raising Income Tax exemption and GST rate rationalisation in over a year of its third term, she said Modi has always been focussed on pro-people reforms.

Even during the Covid, the government carried on with the exercise and it will continue to do so, she asserted.

The GST Council had on September 2 approved limiting tax slabs to 5 per cent and 18 per cent and removing two other slabs of 12 per cent and 28 per cent, effective from September 22, the first day of Navaratri.

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge had said his party had been demanding simplification of the GST for several years and blamed the Modi government for burdening people with high tax rates for long. The party also criticised the decision as GST 1.5, claiming the wait for the GST 2.0 continues. (PTI)

## Will NAA now have fresh lease of life, asks Cong

**NEW DELHI, Sept 6:** The Congress on Saturday asked whether the National Anti-profiteering Authority established to monitor whether GST rate cuts are passed on to the consumer gets a fresh lease of life to ensure that only a "favoured few" are not benefitted.

Congress general secretary communications Jai Ram Ramesh said the National Anti-profiteering Authority (NAA) was established under Section 171 of the Central Goods and Services Tax Act, 2017, to monitor whether GST rate cuts resulted in the reduction of consumer prices. "On September 30th, 2024, the Modi Government issued a notification virtually abolishing the NAA with effect from April 1, 2025," he said in a post on X. (PTI)

## WBSSC to use unique security feature in question paper in teacher recruitment exam: Chairman

**KOLKATA, Sept 6:** The West Bengal School Service Commission (WBSSC) on Saturday said several unique security features have been added to the question papers for detecting any malpractices during the SLST examination slated to be held on September 7 and 14 where an estimated 5.65 lakh candidates will appear for the test.

The School Level Selection Test (SLST) for teachers to be conducted by the West Bengal School Service Commission (WBSSC), will be held on September 7 and 14 to fill up 35,726 teaching posts for classes 9-10 and 11-12.

In the wake of the Supreme Court's earlier directive to ensure not a single 'tainted' candidate is allowed to sit for the upcoming tests, the WBSSC announced a list of 1,806 'tainted' teachers among the around 26,000 teaching and non-teaching candidates rendered jobless in the 2016 SLST tests.

The apex court had termed the entire recruitment process of 2016 as 'tainted and vitiated,' in its order in April.

WBSSC Chairman Siddhartha Majumdar at a press meet at WBSSC headquarters said, "Unique identification security features will be embedded with every question paper, which will be able to identify every candidate and in case of any malpractices that will be immediately detected through an alert at the monitoring room, where the candidate concerned will be identified and appropriate follow-up steps taken."

He did not specify what the features would be for security considerations.

Leader of Opposition in West Bengal Assembly Suwendu Adhikari on Friday had alleged that a racket was offering question papers to SLST candidates in exchange for money. (PTI)

## BJP to launch programme to create awareness on latest GST reforms

**NEW DELHI, Sept 6:** The BJP has planned a nationwide outreach programme to apprise people, including traders, of the latest GST reforms brought in by the Modi government.

The GST Council approved a rate overhaul for all items, except those under the sin and luxury category, by limiting slabs to 5 per cent and 18 per cent effective from September 22, the first day of Navaratri.

GST tax rates on common use items ranging from hair oil to corn flakes, TVs, and personal health and life insurance policies were slashed after the all-powerful GST Council on Wednesday approved a complete overhaul of the tangled Goods and Services Tax regime.

"The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has prepared a complete action plan regarding GST reforms. We have asked our units in the states and districts to inform the common people about the GST reforms," party chief spokesperson Anil Baluni said on Saturday while replying to a related query at a press conference at the BJP headquarters here. (PTI)

## NCP MLC withdraws tweet against IPS officer Anjana Krishna, apologises

**MUMBAI, Sept 6:** NCP MLC Amol Mitkari, who had questioned IPS officer Anjana Krishna's educational and caste certificates based on which she cleared UPSC exam, on Saturday retracted his comments and apologised.

A row erupted when Deputy Chief Minister and NCP president Ajit Pawar rebuked Krishna, sub-divisional police officer of Karmala, over the phone and asked her to stop action against illegal soil excavation.

Facing flak after the video went viral, Pawar on Friday said he did not want to interfere but was trying to de-escalate a tense situation.

Mitkari had tweeted that he had sought information from the UPSC on Anjana Krishna's educational and caste certificates, based on which she cleared UPSC examinations. (PTI)

## Displaced by Yamuna floods, families struggle to make tents 'home' along Delhi-Meerut Expressway

*Yamuna river level recorded at 206.47 metres at Old Railway Bridge (ORB)*

**NEW DELHI, Sept 6:** More than 70 families displaced by the Yamuna floods are now living in makeshift tents along the Delhi-Meerut Expressway near Akshardham, battling hardship as they sleep on damp floor, try to keep away mosquitoes.

Sitting outside a tarpaulin tent, Ganga Devi wondered where will the poor go.

"It is either demolition, or rain, and now the flood. We hardly earn Rs 300 to 400 a day by cleaning Delhi's garbage. Someone is a rag-picker, some clean drains, some sell flowers, where will we go now?" she asked.

The 6x8 makeshift camp stretches along the edge of the expressway, which has been transformed into a "home" for families who recently had to be evacuated from their jhuggis or kuccha house near by the Yamuna flood-plains.

Inside one such tent, a small stove sits precariously on bricks. A few steel plates and a blackened pan complete the kitchen. A string runs across the tent where damp clothes hang.

"Clothes are not drying, as it rains everyday. Only a couple of clothes are left, and that's what we wear," said Kamlesh Kumar, who



was trying to make his son sleep on his lap.

For Meena Kumari, a mother of three, arranging life in such limited space is a daily struggle.

"At night, when one child turns in their sleep, the other wakes up too. We cook outside, but if it rains, everything gets wet. But this tent is all we have left after the water swallowed our dreams and jhuggi," she said.

In the evenings, groups of children chase each other behind tents with families trying to remain alert so the kids do not go near the Yamuna or to the roadside.

"For parents, our children's play carries constant fear. The camp runs parallel to the Delhi-Meerut Expressway, where heavy trucks and speeding cars whiz past at all hours," Harish said.

"We always fear that our children may run towards the highway while playing. Who will stop a big vehicle? What if they slip? Our eyes are never at rest," said Kapu Mukhiya, an elderly.

Education has been another casualty as most children spend their days loitering in the camp or helping parents with small chores.

As the sun sets, women in the camp gather around open stoves, preparing lentils and rice with whatever rations they have received from relief workers.

"The humid Delhi nights makes sleeping difficult, and the constant noise of vehicles on the expressway always add to the unease," Ram Kumar, who used to sell flowers near a temple said.

"The rainwater sometime leaks inside, mosquitoes bite, and every

sound outside makes us alert. We cannot even lock our tents. We live with one eye open," Kumar said.

Despite the hardships, the camp displays a quiet resilience. Families share food when one runs out of rations. A flower-seller has started arranging small garlands near the tents, hoping to earn from passersby.

"There is no choice. We cannot stop working. If we stop, we will not eat," Sita Ram said.

The Yamuna river level was recorded at 206.47 metres at the Old Railway Bridge (ORB) on Saturday coming down from the 207 metres mark after several days, officials said.

The Old Railway Bridge serves as a key observation point for tracking the river's flow and potential flood risks.

According to the officials, the situation is being closely monitored and all the agencies concerned are on alert.

In the past few days the river had inundated several areas along the riverbank due to the high tide.

Tents have been setup on Delhi-Meerut Expressway, Mayur Vihar, Kashmere Gate and nearby areas to temporarily accommodate people living in low lying areas near the river. (PTI)

## BCI requests coordination committee to recall advocates' strike from tomorrow

**NEW DELHI, Sept 6:** The Bar Council of India on Saturday requested the coordination committees of all district bar associations of Delhi district courts to recall or defer the lawyers strike beginning from September 8.

Earlier on Thursday, the committee had condemned a letter by the police commissioner's office to the principal district and sessions judges about the proposed means of police virtually presenting evidence in courts, and announced the indefinite and intensified lawyers' strike from Monday, saying it was contrary to the assurance given by authorities.

The BCI's letter by its chairman and senior advocate Manan Kumar Mishra said, "I respect the committee for its efforts in safeguarding the rights of litigants and maintaining the independence of the Bar."

"By raising concerns on the issue of police witnesses deposing from police stations through video conferencing, the committee had highlighted a genuine concern. And as per our information, a meeting of the committee was held with the Union Home Minister a few weeks back."

Underlining the sequence of events, the letter said that the Delhi High Court, through its notification dated July 4, laid down the procedure for video conferencing and identified designated places, including prisons, forensic departments, prosecution offices, and police stations.

It said that subsequently, Lieutenant Governor (LG) issued a notification dated August 13 designating all police stations in Delhi as such venues, which led to widespread opposition and a strike was called in August for six days, which was suspended after the union home minister assured that the concerns of the bar would be heard with an open mind, and the office of the police commissioner clarified that the order would not be implemented without hearing all stakeholders.

The letter said that on September 4, the commissioner's office issued a circular making it clear that that only formal police witnesses would be examined through video conferencing, while material police witnesses may continue to depose in physical mode, and further, that if the defense requested the physical presence of a police witness, the presiding judge could

consider it on merits and allow the examination in physical mode.

"These provisions show that the concerns of the bar have been addressed and a substantive part of the demand has been fulfilled," the letter said.

It said that repeated abstentions from work was causing grave hardship to litigants, including undertrial prisoners and victims of crime, and also to those advocates who were eager to discharge their professional duties.

"Please remember that is the fourth or fifth occasion (only in 2025) that the committee has given a call for an indefinite strike? The Supreme Court, as we all know, has held that lawyers have no right to strike or call for a boycott of courts," the letter said.

It said only the bar councils, as the statutory bodies under the Advocates Act, had been entrusted with the authority to regulate the conduct of advocates, and so any collective abstention undertaken without sanction from state bar councils could lack legitimacy and risk weakening the credibility of the profession.

"In the present circumstances, the more constructive way forward would be to build upon the concessions already secured and to discuss the matter with the highest representative bodies of the profession."

"Therefore, I request the coordination committee to defer/recall the proposed strike, and I invite it to participate in a joint meeting with the Bar Council of India and the State Bar Council of Delhi on Monday," the letter said.

It said the meeting would provide the proper forum for deliberation and clarification, and by participating in it, the committee would "preserve the dignity of the bar, protect litigants from needless hardship, and ensure that the bar associations do not go on strike without any rhyme or reason all the time."

"I therefore appeal that the strike/abstinence call be deferred/recalled, and the coordination committee agree to participate in the proposed meeting with BCI and Bar Council of Delhi."

"This constructive step will not only carry forward the substantive progress already achieved but also give the bar its strongest platform for ensuring that its voice is heard and acted upon and carries weight," the letter said. (PTI)

## Op Sindoor stands as shining testament to India's unparalleled prowess: Amar Preet Singh

**CHENNAI, Sept 6:** Operation Sindoor stands as a shining testament to India's unparalleled prowess and the Indian armed forces demonstrated its capability to deliver swift, precise and decisive blows to the enemy, Chief of the Air Staff, Air Chief Marshal Amar Preet Singh said on Saturday.

Operation Sindoor showcased the exceptional coordination between three services, synergy and integration with the Armed forces and other agencies, he said after reviewing the Passing Out Parade of the Officers Training Academy here.

A total of 130 officer cadets and 25 women officer cadets were commissioned into various Arms and Services of the Indian Army while 9 and 12 women Foreign officer cadets from nine friendly countries successfully completed their training, fostering camaraderie and cooperation across international borders.

Addressing the gathering, Singh said, "As we look towards future, two things are certain -- fast evolving character of warfare and the increasing relevance of military power."

"Operation Sindoor stands as a shining testament to our unparalleled prowess. The Indian armed forces demonstrated their capability to deliver a swift, precise and decisive blows to the enemy. You, as the future of these forces must understand that defence forces have always been and will always be the first responder," he said.

Appealing to the officer cadets, he said, "Remember our strength comes not just from individual excellence but from cohesion of the whole team. No service operates in isolation, whether in the sky, on the ground or at sea."

"You must keep furthering the spirit of jointness as you grow in service," he said.

Underlining that every officer cadet has a vital role to play, he said, "Make sure that you understand your role and the role of others and give your best to bring glory to this Motherland." (PTI)



## Groups urge people to refrain from false information Reopening of NH 2 not endorsement of unrestricted movement across buffer zones: KNO, UPF

**IMPHAL, Sept 6:** Two prominent Kuki-Zo groups, which recently signed an agreement with the Centre to extend the Suspension of Operations pact, have said that the reopening of National Highway 2 "must not be misinterpreted as an endorsement of unrestricted movement between Meitei and Kuki-Zo areas."

The Kuki National Organisation (KNO) and United People's Front (UPF) on Thursday signed a suspension of operations agreement with the government on renegotiated terms and conditions under which they agreed on maintaining the territorial integrity of Manipur, relocating designated camps away from vulnerable areas and working for a solution to bring lasting peace and stability in the state.

In a joint statement, the KNO and UPF said on Friday, "In a sig-



nificant step toward restoring peace and political stability, the Government of India, the Government of Manipur, and Kuki National Organisation (KNO) and United People's Front (UPF) have reaffirmed their commitment to a structured and time-bound tripartite dialogue."

They said KNO and UPF would like to make clear their position regarding National Highway-2 (Imphal-Dimapur) via Kangpokpi district. Contrary to "misinformation narratives", the Kuki-Zo community never closed or blocked the

highway.

KNO and UPF reiterate that "this gesture must not be misinterpreted as an endorsement of unrestricted movement across buffer zones between Meitei and Kuki-Zo areas. The sanctity of these zones remains paramount, and the responsibility for securing the highway lies with the Government of India and its deployed force."

The KNO and UPF also urged the public and media to refrain from "spreading misinformation" and to respect the nuanced realities of the region's security and political landscape.

KNO and UPF also pledged to "uphold the people's aspiration in the future course of political dialogue for creation of a Union Territory with legislature for the Kuki Zo people within the constitution of India." (PTI)

## Opposition parties term Forest Conservation Amendment Act a 'serious threat' to Mizoram



**AIZAWL, Sept 6:** Opposition parties and several organisations in Mizoram have termed the Forest (Conservation) Amendment Act (FCAA), 2023, adopted by the Assembly, as a "serious threat" to the state and demanded the repeal of the resolution endorsing the amendment act.

The Mizoram assembly during its recent monsoon session adopted a fresh resolution to extend the FCAA, 2023, to the state with effect from this year, following a motion introduced by Environment, Forests and Climate Change minister Lalthansanga on August 27.

Main opposition Mizoram National Front (MNF), Congress, Zo Re-Unification Organisation (ZORO) and Joint Civil Society Mizoram (JCSM), a coalition of several organisations, have blamed the Mizoram government for endorsing the new law, which they called a "serious threat" to the state.

MNF media cell secretary Lalthamawia Jongte said on Friday that the party, following the joint meeting of the party's National Core Committee, Political Affairs

Committee and Legislature Party, submitted a petition recently to Assembly Speaker Lalbiakzama, urging him to convene a special session to rescind the resolution.

He said that the MNF also urged that the resolution adopted by the state assembly on August 27 should not be forwarded to the Lok Sabha secretariat as it is "against the interest" of the Mizo people.

The MNF strongly opposed to the FCAA, 2023, as it grants excessive power to the Centre over land, which is not safe for the Mizo people, Jongte said.

He said that the MNF has been consistently opposing the law, and when it was in power, the state assembly adopted a resolution opposing the amendment law after consulting political parties, churches and civil society organisations on August 22, 2023.

ZORO and the JCSM echoed the MNF's concern, demanding the withdrawal of the resolution and threatening agitation if the government fails to act.

ZORO vice president Ramdiniana Renthlei said that the law could create serious issues for in-

igenous communities as the Central government could grab their lands due to the exemption for a 100-km area along international borders, which allows the central government to undertake "strategic linear projects of national importance and concerning national security" without seeking forest clearance.

He said that the adoption of FCAA, 2023, will infringe on the rights of the Mizo people enshrined in Article 371G of the Indian Constitution, which stipulates that no Act of Parliament relating to land ownership and transfer shall apply to Mizoram unless endorsed by the Assembly.

Renthlei also claimed that the law violated Article 244, which safeguards the authority of Autonomous District Councils (ADCs), Union Territories (UTs), and states under the Fifth and Sixth Schedules.

Chief Minister Lalduhuma had argued during a discussion in the assembly recently that the amendment act requires adoption as the principal Forest Conservation Act, 1980, remained already in force in the state.

A ZPM leader, who refused to be named, said that the resolution was adopted mainly for the purpose of development.

The JCSM said that while the FCAA, 2023, may be aimed at facilitating development, it poses risks to the people of Mizoram and neighbouring areas.

It said that the state's lands should not be compromised for development, as development can continue in several ways under the existing laws. (PTI)

## Another 'digital nomad village' coming up in Sikkim after successful Yakten model



**GANGTOK, Sept 6:** After the successful inauguration of India's first "digital nomad village" at Yakten in Pakyong district in July this year, Sikkim is set to establish another such hub at Gumpa Dara in Soreng, an official statement said on Saturday.

A review meeting on the proposed project was held at the District Administrative Centre (DAC), Soreng on Friday, and it was chaired by Additional District Collector DR Bista, it said.

"Nomad Sikkim" is an initiative aimed at developing tourism, with the village concerned equipped with high-speed wi-fi networks to ensure reliable connectivity, promote eco-friendly practices and foster a sustainable remote work environment.

The Yakten initiative, developed by the Pakyong district administration in collaboration with Sarvaahitya NGO, has already started hosting digital no-

mads from across the country, an official said.

"It provides high-speed wi-fi, eco-friendly infrastructure, and upgraded homestays, enabling professionals to balance remote work with a peaceful lifestyle, while also supporting local livelihoods," he said.

The statement stated that building on this model, the Gumpa Dara project envisions high-speed internet, co-working hubs, eco-friendly pathways, and community-led cultural activities.

It said that ADC Bista highlighted Soreng's natural attractions, including panoramic views of Mt. Kanchenjunga, trekking routes, monasteries, and homestay culture, as strong advantages.

He emphasised that the initiative would diversify the economy, create jobs, and promote sustainable tourism.

District Information Centre general manager Anula Gurung also briefed participants on the Prime Minister's Employment Generation Programme (PMEGP), assuring full support to local entrepreneurs.

Representatives from various departments, financial institutions, and stakeholders participated in the meeting and pledged their cooperation to make the "digital nomad village" at Gumpa Dara a reality, it said.

With Yakten paving the way as India's first "digital nomad village", Gumpa Dara is poised to become the next hub for professionals, reinforcing Sikkim's vision of promoting sustainable, inclusive, and digitally connected development, the statement added. (PTI)

## Smuggled foreign-origin cigarettes seized in Nagaland

**KOHIMA, Sept 6:** In a significant breakthrough against illegal trade, 'smuggled' foreign-origin cigarettes valued at Rs 1.29 crore were seized in Nagaland's Peren district, officials said on Saturday.

A team of the Assam Rifles and the Nagaland Police intercepted a truck carrying a large consignment of foreign-origin cigarettes illegally in the Tening area on Friday, and recovered the tobacco products, they said. The seizure marks a major success in the ongoing efforts to curb the smuggling of contraband items into Nagaland, they said.

The intercepted cigarettes, lacking proper documentation and suspected to be smuggled from across the border, were intended for illegal distribution within the state and beyond, the officials said.

By preventing the circulation of these illegal goods, the security forces protected consumers and ensured a level playing field for legitimate businesses, they said. The seized consignment has been handed over to the concerned authorities for further investigation and legal proceedings, the officials added. (PTI)

## Stage being erected in Imphal, beautification works underway in view of PM's likely visit to Manipur

**IMPHAL/CHURACHANDPUR, Sept 6:** A grand stage is being erected at Kangla Fort in Manipur's Imphal, while cleaning and painting activities are underway in the area in view of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's likely visit to the state next week, officials said on Saturday.

They remained tight-lipped over the objective of the construction and cleaning works at the fort, but said that instructions had been given to complete these tasks at the earliest.

The prime minister is likely to visit Manipur on September 13, which will be his first tour to the state since ethnic violence broke out between Meiteis and Kukis.

"A grand stage is under construction at Kangla Fort in Imphal. Arrangements are being made to accommodate more than 15,000 people in front of the stage. Cleaning and painting activities inside the fort are also going on," an official said.

Kangla Fort serves as the traditional seat of power of the former Manipuri rulers.

"Materials for the construction of the stage are being imported from outside Manipur, and more than 100 labourers are being engaged in the construction activities. Also, there is increased presence of security personnel,"



another official said.

Identities of visitors entering the fort are being registered, he said.

Road medians on a 7 km stretch between Imphal airport and Kangla Fort are also being repainted and trees trimmed, the official said.

"We are yet to receive any official information on the PM's visit. If he comes, we are going to ensure that Modi is given a grand reception," a BJP leader told PTI.

In the Churachandpur district headquarters, such works are also underway at the Peace ground, an-

other official said.

The opposition parties have been attacking the BJP for the prime minister not visiting the ethnic strife-torn state.

More than 260 people have been killed and thousands rendered homeless in ethnic violence between Meiteis and Kuki-Zo groups since May 2023.

The Centre had imposed the President's rule in Manipur after Chief Minister N Biren Singh resigned. The state assembly, which has a tenure till 2027, has been put under suspended animation. (PTI)

## Centre releases ₹75.24 crore for 10 working women hostels in Tripura



**AGARTALA, Sept 6:** To provide better and secure accommodation to working women, altogether 10 working women's hostels will be set up in Tripura, an official said on Saturday. The Department of Expenditure (Government of India) has already released ₹75.24 crore out of the total project cost of ₹114 crore, he said.

"Ten working women's hostels will be set up across Tripura to provide accommodation facilities to working women. Out of 10 hostels, two will be established in Agartala while the rest will be set at Bodjungnanar, Dharmanagar, Kailashahar, Ambassa, Udaipur, Belonia, and Sabroom", Director of Social Welfare and Social Education, Tapan Kumar Das told PTI.

He said the Tripura Housing Board has been entrusted with the project to set up 10 working women hostels.

"The Tripura Housing Board has already begun work on five hostels, while work for taking up hostels is at the final stage. We plan to achieve the final stage of the works during 2025-26 FY", he said. Each hostel will have 100 seats with attached kitchen, bathroom and washroom for decent living conditions, he said, adding the hostel will have a gymnasium, park, conference hall and 24-hour security.

At present, one working women's hostel is functional in the state capital with 46 seats, which often falls short of the requirement.

Das said there will be separate arrangement for divyangjan working women in hostels.

"Currently, we have one working women's hostel in Agartala with only 46 seats, while the proposed working women's hotel will have 100 seats each. The women who are working in industrial belts and domestic help from outside areas will also get a chance to stay in the proposed hostels. Even women working in private firms or companies will also be able to take advantage of the hostel", he said. (PTI)

## Tripura LoP slams CAA Cut-off extension, calls it a BJP conspiracy

**HT Correspondent**  
**AGARTALA, Sept 6:** CPIM Politburo member and Tripura Leader of Opposition Jitendra Chaudhury on Saturday strongly criticized the Union Home Ministry's decision to extend the cut-off date of the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), calling it a conspiracy by the ruling BJP to divide the people on religious lines. Chaudhury argued that the CAA is "not in accordance with the Constitution," since no law in the country can be based on religion.

"The BJP is conspiring to further widen the path of division by

enacting extra-constitutional laws," he said. According to him, the Home Ministry's latest notification, which exempts refugees from the requirement of valid travel documents, effectively pushes the cut-off date for eligibility from December 31, 2014 to the end of 2024. "This means even those entering India without valid documents till 2024 will not be considered criminals. The cut-off date has been extended only to influence the coming elections," he alleged.

Chaudhury further claimed that infiltration has historically taken place in Tripura and continues de-

spite the deployment of the BSF and fencing along the Indo-Bangladesh border.

"Employees of various government departments are even issuing documents to infiltrators in exchange for money. Instead of taking action, the Home Ministry is extending the CAA cut-off by 10 years. This will make it impossible to identify infiltrators in the future," he said. Calling the Act a threat to social harmony, Chaudhury urged people to unite in demanding the immediate repeal of the CAA. "Otherwise, division among the people will only deepen," he warned.

## 'Around 2000 hectares of rubber plantation were affected by the fungal infection' Fungicide spray using drones undertaken in Tripura rubber plantation for first time



**AGARTALA, Sept 6:** Spraying pesticides using drones on rubber trees has been undertaken for the first time in Tripura to combat the outbreak of fungal infection in the rubber plantation, an official said on Saturday.

Drone-spraying of fungicides was successfully carried out at the Taranagar farm of the Rubber Board in West Tripura, in response to the recent phytophthora outbreak across three major rubber-growing districts in the state, he said.

The phytophthora is a genus of plant-damaging oomycetes, whose member species cause financial loss to crops as well as environmental damage.

It causes premature leaf fall and halts latex collection suddenly, the official said.

"Since drones were not available locally, they had to be transported all the way from Coimbatore—over 2,400 km by road—to Agartala, reflecting the urgency and commitment behind this initiative," he said.

"The operation was made possible through the active participation of officials from the rubber production department, scientists and staff of the Rubber Board, with the support from local growers," the Rubber Board of India said in a post on social media.

With this milestone, advanced technology has reached growers' fields in the Northeast region, ushering in a new era of precision and efficiency in plant protection, it said.

Joint Rubber Production Commissioner N Sali told PTI, "Around 2000 hectares of rubber plantation in three districts—Gomati, Sepahijala and West Tripura were affected by the fungal infection. The spraying of fungicides through drones will be in full swing even as reports of decline in fungal infection. This will be done free of cost."

According to him, this year's peculiar climatic condition - continuous rain followed by high temperature and humidity - is a reason for fungal infection.

A delegation of All Tripura Krishak Sabha, headed by its secretary Pabitra Kar, had met the joint rubber production commissioner in Agartala and sought urgent steps to prevent phytophthora (fungal infection) on rubber trees on August 30.

In response, the authorities said they had already carried out field inspections of several rubber plantations and identified the disease as phytophthora (fungal infection).

Considering the seriousness of the issue, the Rubber Board had assured growers that it would engage two drones to spray fungicides to prevent the outbreak.

Tripura is the country's second-largest natural rubber producer after Kerala, with over 110,000 hectares under cultivation, producing approximately 110,000 metric tonnes annually. (PTI)

## Dumboor power plant to be revived

**HT Correspondent**  
**AGARTALA, Sept 6:** Tripura Power Minister Ratan Lal Nath on Saturday said the state is making a decisive shift towards solar energy to meet future electricity demands as natural gas reserves continue to deplete. The Minister informed that the state power department is working to revive the Dumboor power plant to generate 11 Mega Watt of power. The Minister said that people may belong to various political parties, but development must be for everyone.

## PROVISION OF DOUBLE DISTANT SIGNAL AT 13 STATIONS

E-Tender No.: SNT-21-LMG-2025-26; Dated: 03-09-2025; E-Tender are invited by the undersigned for the following work: **Name of work:** Provision of Double distant signal at 13 stations in Thekeraguri-Lumding section of Lumding Division. **Tender Value:** ₹7,28,38,944.36/-; **Bid Security:** ₹5,14,200/-; **Date & time of closing of tender at 15:00 hours on 26-09-2025.** For complete information with the tender document of above e-tender will be available in the website [www.ireps.gov.in](http://www.ireps.gov.in)

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## ACHIEVEMENT



**M**iss Uddipana Talukdar, Assistant teacher, Pachgaon Higher secondary school has been awarded the Degree of Doctor of philosophy (Ph.D) by Krishna Kanta Handique State Open University, for her thesis entitled "A need assessment study of the Guidance and counseling practices in Government Secondary school in Kamrup (Metro) District of Assam." She completed her research work under the supervision of Dr. pranab Saikia, Professor, Indira Miri School of Education (KKHSOU). She is the daughter of Prof. Khagendra Nath Talukdar and Prof. Bharati Saikia, resident of Pragjyotish Nagar, Jalukbari.



# TIGER SHROFF'S 'BAAGHI 4' MINTS ₹ 13.20 CRORE AT BOX OFFICE ON DAY ONE

**NEW DELHI, Sept 6:** "Baaghi 4", starring actors Tiger Shroff and Sanjay Dutt, collected ₹ 13.20 crore net on its opening day at the domestic box office, the makers announced on Saturday.

The action thriller movie, directed by popular Kannada director A Harsha in his Hindi film debut, released in theatres across the country on Friday.

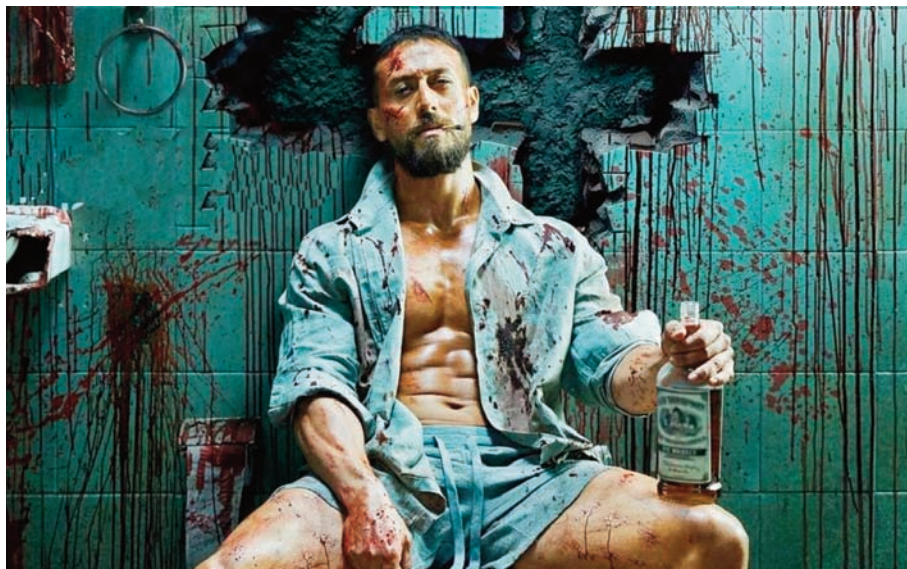
Producer Sajid Nadiadwala's banner Nadiadwala Grandson Entertainment shared the day one collection on its social media handles.

"Day 1 = ₹ 13.20 crore. The roar has just begun! Thank you for all the love. Watch 'Baaghi 4' in your nearest cinemas!" the banner posted.

The film is the fourth instalment in Tiger's "Baaghi" franchise, which started with 2016's "Baaghi", followed by "Baaghi 2" (2018) and "Baaghi 3" (2020).

"Baaghi 4" features Tiger as Ronny, a man who after surviving an attempted suicide by train, descends into chaos as reality blurs.

The film marks the acting debut of former Miss Universe Harnaaz Sandhu and also stars Sonam Bajwa, Shreyas Talpade and Saurabh Sachdeva in pivotal roles. (PTI)



# A STORY FINDS ITS HERO, NOT THE OTHER WAY AROUND, SAYS JAIDEEP AHLAWAT



**NEW DELHI, Sept 6:** "It's never the hero's story, it's the story that finds its hero," says actor Jaideep Ahlawat, who credits his early introduction to literature and his struggles for providing him with countless references to portray a wide range of characters.

Despite making it big with critically-acclaimed performances in movies such as "Raazi", "Three of Us", "An Action Hero" and crime drama series "Paatal Lok", Ahlawat said he doesn't mind auditioning for a role. "I still give auditions, in fact, I gave one recently. If there's a director who wants to tell a story, and he isn't able to visualise me in that role, it's his right to see me in that get-up, performing a scene. That way, he can decide whether or not I'll be able to do justice to the character," Ahlawat said.

The actor was speaking at a master-class session, titled 'The Stillness That Shakes The Screen', during the Jagan Film Festival here.

Ahlawat said it was his father who introduced him to literature at a very young age.

"And I realised one thing - it's never the hero's story, it's the story that finds its hero. It's as simple as that. Every story has a hero, and that hero can come from anywhere. If you choose the hero first, it's not necessary that a story will emerge. But if you choose the story, the hero will reveal itself. "In one lifetime, a person may not meet a thousand people or a thousand characters, but through Premchand's stories alone, they will encounter at least a thousand characters," he said.

The actor also said that his personal journey, from his native village in Haryana to various cities in India, exposed him to diverse people, who often serve as a library of real-life references.

"I'm a boy who came from a village, then moved to Rohtak, from there to Pune, and eventually to Bombay. Along the way, I gathered countless references that now help me bring different characters to life," he said.

"During 'Gangs of Wasseypur', somebody asked me what kind of preparation it took to play a coal mine worker. Honestly, nothing - because I had already worked in the fields. All I had to do was pick up a spade instead of a sickle," he added.

Ahlawat said in his career, he has been offered many characters that were older than him. But he has never shied away from playing them, whether it was RAW agent Manav from Meghna Gulzar's "Raazi", Hathiram Chaudhary from "Paatal Lok" or Naren from Sujoy Ghosh's "Jaane Jaan".

"It happened by chance because I came across such stories. As an actor, you also feel that the potential of the character you're playing outweighs the fact that they are older than you. I found those stories so beautiful that I simply couldn't say no to them," he said.

The actor revealed that the script of "Raazi" described his character as being in his early 50s.

"I asked Meghna, 'Why me? You can pitch this character to many actors who are in this age group?' I never got an answer to this question. She just gave me a slight smile and didn't answer."

"But how could I say no to a film like 'Raazi'? The character is 15-20 years older than me, and it required a great deal of effort to make him appear believable. You have to work on voice, posture and a lot of other things."

When he was approached by Sudip Sharma for the role of Hathiram, Ahlawat said he knew it was a once in a lifetime opportunity.

"I was the luckiest actor on the planet. Sudip said 'Let him read the script. If he rejects it we will take another actor.' But any smart actor will not reject this role and I was that smart actor," he said.

"Until you are not accepted as an actor, you don't have many choices. You can't even choose scripts. Whatever you get, you try to do it. And it's a phase that lasts till you make it big," he added.

The show gave Ahlawat the power to choose his next projects, which included "Jaane Jaan" that saw him playing the role of a brilliant mathematics teacher, Naren.

"It was my decision to choose 'Jaane Jaan'. However, as an actor, you might step away from the film, saying you don't want to look like that on screen," he said.

Ahlawat added that the film's director, Sujoy Ghosh, was hesitant to disclose details about the character's appearance.

"He thought I might say no to the movie. He pitched it as a love story between beauty and the beast. And I wondered who is the beast here? And then he showed me the character sketch. And I was hooked by it, just imagining myself as that character. I was half convinced then and there only."

"Now it is my responsibility to not feel scared by this offer and think that it will again take me back to a category of middle aged characters. Such a mindset is not great for me. I thought I shouldn't take a step back from this." (PTI)

# AJAY DEVGN'S 'DHAMAAL 4' WRAPS SHOOTING, FILM TO RELEASE ON EID 2026



**MUMBAI, Sept 6:** The fourth installment of the "Dhamaal" franchise has concluded filming, the makers said on Saturday.

Actors Ajay Devgn, Riteish Deshmukh, Arshad Warsi and Jaaved Jaaferi are all returning for the movie, which is directed by Indra Kumar.

Production banner T-Series announced the wrap of the upcoming film through an Instagram post, featuring its ensemble cast.

The character posters featured the four actors alongside Ravi Kishan, Sanjay Mishra, Upendra Limaye, Esha Gupta, Sanjeeva Shaikh and Anjali Dinesh Anand.

The caption of the post read, "It's a wrap on

#Dhamaal 4. Now let the madness begin! #Dhamaal 4 coming to cinemas on Eid 2026."

Devgn reshared the announcement on his Instagram and captioned it, "Today's breaking news, brought to you by the gang, who are coming to loot your heart soon... And the brain."

The franchise started with 2007's "Dhamaal" and was followed by two more films — "Double Dhamaal" (2009) and "Total Dhamaal" (2019).

"Dhamaal 4" is produced by Devgn, Bhushan Kumar, Krishan Kumar, Ashok Thakuria, Indra Kumar, Anand Pandit, and Kumar Mangat Pathak. (PTI)

# ACTOR ASHISH WARANG DIES AT 55

**MUMBAI, Sept 6:** Actor Ashish Warang, best known for appearing in films such as "Sooryavanshi" and "Drishyam", has passed away at the age of 55 following a cardiac arrest, his team said on Saturday.

The actor's team posted a statement on his official Instagram page, saying that the actor breathed his last on Friday.

"With deep sorrow, we share that Ashish Warang passed away on 5th September at 12:00 AM after bravely battling illness and suffering a cardiac arrest. He was a shining soul whose kindness and warmth touched many lives. Though he has left us, his love and memories will remain forever in our hearts. May his soul rest in peace. Om Shanti," the statement read.

A family insider said Warang had been unwell for quite some time.

"He was diagnosed with jaundice last December but he had recovered from it. However, his health deteriorated a bit after that. He passed away yesterday at a hospital in Thane," the insider said.

Warang had appeared in supporting roles in Marathi and Hindi language films like "Dharmaveer", "Aathva Rang Premacha", "Cirkus", "Simmba", "Ek Villain Returns", "Mardaani", and shows such as "The Family Man".

He is survived by his wife and a son. (PTI)



# Vikram Bhatt's mother Varsha Pravin Bhatt dies at 75

**MUMBAI, Sept 6:** Filmmaker Vikram Bhatt's mother Varsha Pravin Bhatt passed away on Saturday morning following prolonged illness, a family insider said. She was 75.

"She has been unwell for a while. She was on the ventilator for a few days. Her organs had failed," the insider close to Vikram Bhatt said.

Varsha Pravin Bhatt was wife of cinematographer Pravin Bhatt, who has worked on films like "Umrao Jaan", "Masoom", "Agnepath", "Arth", "Aashiqui", and "Raaz" among others.

Her last rites were held at around 2pm at Versova crematorium in presence of family.

On the work front, Vikram Bhatt is awaiting the release of his upcoming film, "Haunted: Ghosts of the Past", which is set to release theatrically on November 21. (PTI)



# Comedian Zakir Khan announces break from stage shows due to health reasons: Been unwell for a year

**MUMBAI, Sept 6:** Stand-up comedian Zakir Khan on Saturday announced he is taking a "break" from his extensive touring owing to health concerns.

Khan shared an Instagram story with "The Health Update" written at the top of it.

The 38-year-old comedian said the impact of his rigorous schedule on his health, adding he has been feeling unwell for a year but felt compelled to keep working.

"I've been touring for the last ten years. Though I'm extremely blessed to receive your love and affection, touring this extensively is not good and very healthy. Trying to satisfy everyone you meet, 2-3 shows

in a day, sleepless nights, early morning flight, and of course, no timetable for meals.

"I've been unwell for a year, but I had to work because it was important to do at that time," he added.

Khan said that he loves performing live but has decided to prioritise his health over a packed tour schedule.

"I absolutely love being on stage, but I'll have to take a break now. I don't wish to do so but I was ignoring this for a year now. But now I feel, before it's too late, I better take it now."

"Hence, this time we will do an India tour in limited cities, I won't be able to add more shows, and after doing this

special record, I've been advised to go on a long break," he added.

In his subsequent post, Khan updated his fans and admirers that he will conduct a limited number of shows during his upcoming India tour, titled "Papa Yaar".

He also informed that there will be no shows in Indore and urged people to come to Bhopal instead.

The India tour, "Papa Yaar" will kick-start from October 24 and will be held till January 11, next year. Khan will perform in various cities like Vadodara, Ahmedabad, Delhi, Bengaluru, Kolkata, Bhopal, Udaipur, Jodhpur, and Mangalore. (PTI)





# Highest point has just started in my career; quota winners should only go to Oly: Shooter Naruka

**NEW DELHI, Sept 6:** His professional career showing a remarkable upswing in the last couple of years, India's top skeet marksman Anantjeet Singh Naruka says his best is yet to come and credits the discipline and hard work put into training since junior days for the recent results.

The 27-year-old Jaipur shooter, who recently claimed his maiden individual gold at the Asian Championships in Kazakhstan, believes the athlete winning an Olympic quota should represent the country at the Games, effectively challeng-

ing the federation's policy of holding trials months before the quadrennial event.

The victory came on the back of a World Cup Finals bronze last year and silver at the Hangzhou Asian Games in 2023.

Had it not been for a missed clay target, the marksman would have won an Olympic bronze in 2024 Paris alongside Maheshwari Chauhan in the skeet mixed team event. In a sport that rarely draws as much spotlight as trap, pistol or rifle, Jaipur shooter Anantjeet Singh Naruka has carved his path

to the top by following his instincts and learning from his father. "I think the highest point has just started in my career. I am really interested in my sport. Every morning when I am waking up, I am like, 'okay, I need to go and shoot,'" said Naruka in an interaction with PTI on his return from Kazakhstan.

With his transition from junior to senior level slowed by the challenges of Covid, Naruka put in extra effort to sharpen his game. Weighing just 60kg, he also faced the task of adding muscle to his

lanky 6'2" frame.

"When Covid hit, everything was halted. After Covid also, there were challenges. I started working out a lot. I wanted to gain muscle because in shooting we need endurance... there is a lot of recoil. To handle that and to compete with international-level athletes, you need physical strength," he said.

"If you have the that, you will be able to control your mind better. So, I changed that and then a lot of discipline."

Here's where Italian coach Ennio Falco's guidance came in

handy.

"My coach told me, if you have made a plan that you have to shoot (competitively) the next week, you have to go for training for the next five days. I have changed myself discipline-wise, and put in a lot of hard work after 2022. It has helped me mentally," Naruka said.

"When I transitioned from junior to senior level around 2019, I saw that it's a different ball game. I immediately knew I can't be lenient. I have to be perfect."

Explaining the challenges of increasing the bodyweight, Naruka

said, "In 2020, I told my trainer that I need to work on my body. I gained 12-13 kgs. And when I started shooting back in 2021, I saw the change. I could train for a longer time and put in the extra effort. Missing bronze at the Paris Olympics by one shot has taught Naruka a lesson -- to turn setbacks into motivation.

"We need to take disappointment as a motivation that 'okay, we reached this far and we are not going to make the same mistake again'. All the experiences gained over the years, I've been using

them in competition."

The disappointment in Paris was overpowering but realisation dawned soon that it could be used for future success.

"For a few months, I was regretting everything. I could have done better, we could have performed better. It (final) happened so quickly. It was like it started and stopped. It hits you that you lost a big opportunity. But I told myself that if we were so close, maybe next time we can get the medal. I am grateful to be in the final." (PTI)

## Inter Miami's Luis Suárez suspended for 6 Leagues Cup matches after spitting incident

**FORT LAUDERDALE (USA), Sept 6:** Inter Miami forward Luis Suárez has been suspended yet again for on-field antics, this time getting a six-match ban from future Leagues Cup matches in response to his conduct — including spitting at someone — after his team lost Sunday's final to the Seattle Sounders.

Suárez will not be able to play in the tournament next season, and the ban could stretch into future seasons. Inter Miami played six Leagues Cup matches this year — three in the group phase, then three in the knockout stage — on its way to the final.

The ban would not apply to Major League Soccer matches, though it is possible that Suárez could still face sanctioning from that league. The Leagues Cup is a separate competition.

Also suspended for future Leagues Cup matches for their roles in the postgame melee following Seattle's 3-0 win were Sounders coaching staff member Steven Lenhart, who drew a five-match ban; Inter Miami's Tomás Avilés, who got a three-match ban; and Sergio Busquets, banned for two matches.

All four will also be fined.

Suárez had an infamous intentional handball in the 2010 World Cup quarterfinals to take a semifinal spot from Ghana and has served suspensions on three occasions for biting opponents — the most recent of those in 2014, after he chomped down on the shoulder of Italy defender Giorgio Chiellini following a tussle in the penalty area during a World Cup match.

Suárez — a longtime teammate of Inter Miami star Lionel Messi — appeared to spit toward a member of the Sounders' staff and grabbed at the neck during a postgame melee. MLS officials are also looking into the matter, and Suárez apologized on Thursday.

"Things happened right after the match that shouldn't have happened, but that doesn't justify my reaction. I was wrong and I sincerely regret it," he wrote. "It's not the image I want to portray, neither to my family, who are suffering because of my mistakes, nor to my club, which doesn't deserve to be affected by something like this." (AP)

## Mbappe's France beat Ukraine to start World Cup qualifying

**GENEVA, Sept 6:** Kylian Mbappé was back in World Cup action on Friday, scored again and this time France won.

France beat Ukraine 2-0 in neutral Poland to open their qualifying group for the 2026 World Cup. It was Les Bleus' and Mbappé's first game in the competition since his hat trick in that epic loss to Lionel Messi and Argentina in the 2022 final when they were defending champions.

Mbappé used pace and skill to elude Ukraine defender Illia Zabarnyi in the 82nd minute to extend a lead earned in the 10th by Michael Olise, and navigate what looks the toughest of France's six qualifying group games. "We had a lot to lose so it's very good to begin the qualifying campaign with this victory," France coach Didier Deschamps told broadcaster TF1. Also in the group, Iceland won at home to Azerbaijan 5-0 and next goes to Paris to play France on Tuesday.

Mbappé has never played at a World Cup that Italy qualified for, and the four-time champion got an essential 5-0 home win over Estonia seeking to end its absence from the biggest stage since 2014. Italy avoided losing more ground to group leader Norway, which did not play Friday, though it took until a 20th goal attempt and 58 minutes to break the deadlock through a Moise Kean header. In the same group, Israel won at Moldova 4-0.



Switzerland and Greece got off to fast starts to their qualifying campaigns, racing to four-goal leads at halftime.

Switzerland ended as a 4-0 winner over Kosovo and Greece beat Belarus 5-1 after highly touted 17-year-old Kostas Kareltsas took less than three minutes to score in his World Cup qualifying debut. Sweden was twice pegged back in a 2-2 draw at Slovenia — which

leveled for the second time in the 90th — while leaving Liverpool's record new signing Alexander Isak on the bench after his delayed start to the season.

Croatia, a beaten finalist and semifinalist at the past two World Cups, won at the Faeroe Islands by just 1-0 for a third straight win. The group-leading Czech Republic won at Montenegro 2-0. Denmark was held to 0-0 at

home by Scotland in the group that Greece now leads.

Only first-place teams in the 12 European qualifying groups in November advance direct to the finals tournament in the United States, Canada and Mexico. Runners-up go to playoff brackets in March. His 51st career goal for France tied Thierry Henry's career total in 32 fewer games. Only Olivier Giroud with 57 has more. "Big up, Titi,

But I want to overtake you now," Mbappé quipped. "No, it's an honor."

This goal was made at Real Madrid. Mbappé took a long pass from deep in the France half by his club teammate Aurélien Tchouaméni before outclassing Illia Zabarnyi, the new Paris Saint-Germain signing.

Two minutes earlier, Zabarnyi's club teammate Ousmane Dembélé limped off with what seemed to be a right hamstring injury just 12 days before PSG begins the defense of its Champions League title. Dembélé lasted less than 35 minutes on the France wing after going on for the second half.

France survived a wild two minutes midway through the second half. Ibrahima Konaté's header from under the crossbar stopped Artem Dovbyk's looping header leveling the score, then Ukraine struck the post of France's goal.

A shot across the goalmouth was deviated by the head of Zabarnyi standing in front of goal and the ball rebounded hard and fast to safety.

Ukraine staged the game in neutral Poland, at Wroclaw, because of security concerns at home during the full military invasion by Russia. In new coach Gennaro Gattuso's first game in charge, since the firing of Luciano Spalletti, the 2006 World Cup-winning midfielder looked to be facing another embarrassment in World Cup qualifying for the Azzurri. (AP)

## Dabrowski and Routliffe win US Open women's doubles title

**NEW YORK, Sept 6:** Gabriela Dabrowski and Erin Routliffe won the U.S. Open women's doubles title for the second time in three years, ending Taylor Townsend's whirlwind stint in Flushing Meadows one victory short of what would have been the American's third Grand Slam championship with Katerina Siniakova.

Seeded third, Dabrowski and Routliffe beat the top-ranked pair of Townsend and Siniakova 6-4, 6-4 in an entertaining final Friday at Arthur Ashe Stadium.

Dabrowski and Routliffe embraced afterward, celebrating Dabrowski's first major triumph since undergoing treatment for breast cancer. She delayed part of that treat-

ment so she could compete at Wimbledon last year, where she and Routliffe reached the final, where they lost to Townsend and Siniakova.

"Wild ride: Cancer, broken ribs for both of us," Dabrowski said. "It was crazy, honestly. I'm really proud of us. It was not easy."

Townsend became one of the faces of the tournament, thanks to a post-match altercation early in singles play that she wishes never happened. Townsend, who is Black, said Latvian opponent Jelena Ostapenko told her she had "no class" and "no education," an interaction that became a hot button topic with questions about whether the comments had racial undertones.

The 29-year-old said she



didn't take it that way, acknowledging, "That has been a stigma in our community of being not educated" and all of the things, when it's the furthest thing from the truth." Townsend's online following grew exponentially, she said she received support from fel-

low players and Ostapenko ultimately apologized on social media, citing English not being her first language for what she thought to mean a critique of tennis etiquette.

Townsend reached the fourth round in singles, losing to Barbora Krejčíková on Sunday when she failed to convert eight match points. It would have been Townsend's first solo quarterfinal appearance at a major, and she and Siniakova were aiming to add a U.S. Open title to their resume after winning Wimbledon and the Australian Open.

"This has been a huge, monumental tournament for me," Townsend said. "It's really changed my life, and no matter the result, I already feel like I won." (AP)

## Sinner beats Auger-Aliassime at the US Open and faces Alcaraz for a 3rd Grand Slam final in a row

**NEW YORK, Sept 6:** Jannik Sinner took a medical timeout because of a bothersome abdominal muscle during a mid-match lull before retaking control for a 6-1, 3-6, 6-3, 6-4 victory over Felix Auger-Aliassime in the U.S. Open semifinals Friday night, moving closer to a second consecutive title at Flushing Meadows.

No one has repeated as the men's champion in New York since Roger Federer took five trophies in a row from 2004-08.

The No. 1-seeded Sinner, a 24-year-old from Italy, will face No. 2 Carlos Alcaraz, a 22-year-old from Spain, on Sunday, making them the first men in tennis history to meet in three straight Grand Slam finals within a single season, according to the ATP.

"It's great for the sport having rivalries, having hopefully great matches in front of us," Sinner said. "I'm someone who loves these challenges, and I love to put myself in these positions and to see how it goes."

The top spot in the rankings will be on the line, too, in front of an Arthur Ashe Stadium audience that is expected to include President Donald Trump.

"It's a very special day," Sinner said about Sunday's matchup. "It's a very amazing final again."

Alcaraz got there by defeating 24-time major champion Novak Djokovic 6-4, 7-6 (4), 6-2 earlier Friday. Sinner advanced to his fifth consecutive title match at a Slam. He beat Taylor Fritz at Flushing Meadows 12 months ago and Alexander Zverev at the Australian Open in January, then lost to Alcaraz at the French Open in June, before beating his rival at Wimbledon in July.

"Amazing season," Sinner said.

Against Auger-Aliassime, Sinner was terrific in the opening set, merely so-so in the next, when the abdominal issue limited his ability to serve his best, according to one of his coaches, Simone Vagnozzi.

"Sometimes you're tired and you can't let your opponent see that. At a certain point in the second set, his

level went down. And naturally, if your opponent sees that, he can take energy from that," Vagnozzi said. "So you have to be good at masking your emotions and masking the physical issues Jannik had today."

Sinner's run of 38 service holds that dated to the third round ended when Auger-Aliassime went up 5-3 in the second by driving a 99 mph inside-out forehand winner for a break that he marked with a loud yell.

That forehand was key for the 25-year-old Canadian who was trying to reach his first major final and already had eliminated No. 3 Alexander Zverev, No. 8 Alex de Minaur and No. 15 Andrey Rublev.

When he closed that set with a 117 mph ace, Auger-Aliassime had grabbed 12 of 13 points and the match was all even.

"I was going toe-to-toe, at times," the 25th-seeded Auger-Aliassime said.

After that set, Sinner left the court for medical attention that Vagnozzi said afterward had made a difference.

Indeed, Sinner looked just fine when he returned from the locker room. So did his play.

"After the treatment, was feeling much, much better," Sinner said. "At some point I didn't feel anything anymore. I was serving back to normal pace, so it was all good. Nothing to worry about."

After managing only three winners, but six unforced errors, in the second set, Sinner was back to being Sinner in the third: 11 winners, four unforced errors. He broke thanks to a stumbling, awkward return of a 124 mph serve that somehow landed in, drawing a netted response from Auger-Aliassime.

More of that came in the fourth, when, after saving five break points early — he saved 9 of 10 throughout the evening — Sinner broke to move ahead 3-2. Just 25 minutes later, it was over, and Sinner had earned his 33rd win in his past 34 Grand Slam matches, which includes an unbeaten run of 27 on hard courts. (AP)

## With 8 straight victories, Charlotte on verge of tying MLS winning streak record

**NEW YORK, Sept 6:** Brandt Bronico is affectionately known to Charlotte FC fans as The Mayor because he grew up in North Carolina and he's been with the club since it joined MLS in 2022.

So he's got a good perspective on the club's current eight-game winning streak, and the upward trajectory of the team after a midseason slump.

It certainly feels like Charlotte's rise hasn't garnered a lot of attention, perhaps because expansion San Diego is in the midst of a historic season, or because Inter Miami's Lionel Messi is, well, Lionel Messi.

But Charlotte is one win shy of matching Major League Soccer's longest winning streak since the Seattle Sounders in 2018 — a record in the post-shootout era after 1999. "I definitely feel like we don't get as much credit as we deserve or as maybe some other teams do, but I think with our identity and our



style, and the players that we have, we're a very dangerous team that knows how to defend and also win games," Bronico said.

Charlotte has jumped to third place in the Eastern Conference, good for home-field advantage in the opening round of the playoffs if the team can maintain a top-four position in the final five games of the regular season.

But it will still be a challenge. Following the international break, Charlotte's next match is at home against Messi and Inter Miami on Sept. 13.

The Philadelphia Union have a hold on first in the Eastern Conference and are edging expansion San Diego in the Supporters' Shield race for best regular-season record.

Charlotte started the season off well, then slumped in May and June before the surge up the standings.

"I think we really wanted to bounce back from that, and then heading into July, we had a decent

amount of home games, which presented a big opportunity for gaining more wins," Bronico said. "It was like we really needed to get back to form of how we started the season, and then we kind of just built that momentum over the last eight games and strung wins together."

They've done it without necessarily playing the prettiest soccer. It's more of a grind-it-out mentality.

"The idea is to go and win football games and you have to be pragmatic at times to do that. We have a style that suits us," coach Dean Smith said. "But I watch a lot of games week in, week out, and a lot of them are not aesthetically pleasing. And that's just the game of football." Charlotte did not make the playoffs its first season, then the next year the club made it to a wild card match but was eliminated by the New York Red Bulls. Last season, Orlando City advanced over Charlotte in a best-of-three first round. (AP)



# Iyer named India A captain for Australia A series; Rahul, Siraj to play 2<sup>nd</sup> game

**MUMBAI, Sept 6 :** Left out of the Test scheme of things as well as the upcoming Asia Cup T20Is, Shreyas Iyer was on Saturday entrusted with leading the India A team in the two unofficial four-day games against Australia A in Lucknow.

Senior India players KL Rahul and Mohammed Siraj will be available for the second fixture, while all-rounder Nitish Kumar Reddy is making a comeback from a knee injury which he suffered after the third Test during India's tour of England.

Iyer, not picked even among the reserves for the Asia Cup beginning Tuesday, is currently turning out for West Zone in the Duleep Trophy semi-final against Central Zone in Bengaluru.

The first unofficial Test will be played from September 16-19 and the second from September 23-26 at the Ekana Stadium.

Karun Nair, who had suffered an injury while batting in the fifth and final Test at The Oval against England and had also missed the Maharaja Trophy (KSCA T20 tournament), has not been named in the side.

India wicketkeeper-batter Dhruv Jurel, who played the fifth Test, has been named Iyer's deputy.

Rahul and Siraj will join the squad for the second multi-day match as they will get quality match practice ahead of home Test series against the West Indies and South Africa.



India's home season begins with a two-match Test series against the West Indies, with the first match to be played at Ahmedabad from October 2.

The India A squad includes Tamil Nadu wicketkeeper-batter N Jagadeesan, who was called up as a cover for the fifth Test in England.

Jagadeesan scored a brilliant 197 (352 balls, 16 fours and 2

sixes) for South Zone in their Duleep Trophy semifinal against North Zone.

Mumbai's Tanush Kotian, who had received a maiden Test call up during the tour of Australia earlier this year, also finds a place in the India A side along with two players from Vidarbha -- Harsh Dubey and Yash Thakur.

Dubey had set the record for most wickets for any bowler in

the history of the Ranji Trophy last season when he took 69 wickets for Vidarbha in their title-winning run.

Among batters, Abhimanyu Easwaran, Sai Sudharsan and Devdutt Padikkal have been named along with Delhi skipper Ayush Badoni, who received his maiden call-up.

The fast bowling line-up includes India pacers Prasadish Krishna, Khaleel Ahmed, Thakur and Punjab's lanky pacer Gurnoor Brar, who has also been a regular nets bowler for the national side.

Dubey, Kotian and Rajasthan's Manav Suthar are among the spinners.

The Australian A squad includes several Test players from the country as young batters Sam Konstas, who had a fiery debut against India last season, has been named along with Nathan Sweeney for the tour.

These two batters had competed for the second opening slot for Australia during their Border-Gavaskar Trophy series win over India.

The Australian A side also includes Test players Cooper Connolly and Todd Murphy.

**Squad:** Shreyas Iyer (c), Abhimanyu Easwaran, N Jagadeesan (wk), Sai Sudharsan, Dhruv Jurel (vc & wk), Devdutt Padikkal, Harsh Dubey, Ayush Badoni, Nitish Kumar Reddy, Tanush Kotian, Prasadish Krishna, Gurnoor Brar, Khaleel Ahmed, Manav Suthar, Yash Thakur. (PTI)

## We are well-placed to handle every condition: Aussie skipper Alyssa Healy on upcoming CWC

**SYDNEY, Sept 6 :** Australian captain Alyssa Healy is confident her team will be able to overcome the "different challenges" posed by rivals in the upcoming Women's ODI World Cup in the Indian sub-continent, given the depth and strength of her side.

The seven-time 50-over World Cup winners will look to defend their title in the eight-team event, being held in India and Sri Lanka from September 30 to November 2.

"I'm looking forward to that obviously but the cricket conditions pose a different challenge to our group, which I think we are really well placed for," Healy was quoted as saying by the ICC.

"We've got so much depth in every area that whatever conditions are thrown at us, we'll be well placed to handle that. So, I'm really excited for the strength of the squad," the 35-year-old Australian wicketkeeper-batter added.

Australia recently announced a 15-member squad for the showpiece event bringing back left-arm spinner Sophie Molineux after a long injury layoff.

The spin duo of Sophie and Georgia Wareham will be vital to Australia's prospects in the Indian subcontinent as they look to defend the title won in New Zealand in 2022.

"It's a great place to play cricket, also a great place to tour. The culture is very different but I think the way they (India) just love their cricket, approach it and are fanatical about their cricket, think it's a great place to go as a cricketer,"



Healy said.

Australia will also play a three-match ODI series against India ahead of the 50-over showpiece event. The batting stalwart added that winning back-to-back World Cup tournaments would be great and it is a milestone her team would be chasing.

"I don't think anyone has gone back to back for a while and there's a lot of those sort of milestones that we'd love to achieve. Winning World Cups is special, they're the pinnacle of our sport. So, we know we've got to go there and play consistently," Healy said. "It's probably where we fell

short in the UAE (2024 T20 World Cup), we got done on one bad day. We know we need 10 good results to go our way. I feel like we are in a very good place to do that and it will be really special for the group if that unfolds," she said.

Healy's squad has 10 players who featured in the previous edition of the tournament. She has the likes of battle-hardened players like Ellyse Perry, Beth Mooney, Ash Gardner and Tahlia McGrath, who bring in a wealth of experience. Australia open the campaign against trans-Tasman rivals New Zealand in Indore on October 1. (PTI)

## India shines at World Wushu Championship in Brazil

**NEW DELHI, Sept 6 :** India produced a strong show at the 17th World Wushu Championship in Brazil with three women entering the finals and two men advancing to the knockout stages.

In the women's category, Aparna showcased brilliant skills, defeating Tharisa Dea Florientina from Indonesia in 52 kg category to secure her place in the final, according to a release shared by Wushu Association of India.

Aparna will next face Ngo Thi Bhuong Nga from Vietnam in the gold medal bout on Sunday.

In 60kg category, Kareena Kaushik displayed exceptional strength and strategy to overcome Nathalia Briquesi Silva from Brazil in her semifinal clash. She will battle against China's Xi-aowei Wu for the title.

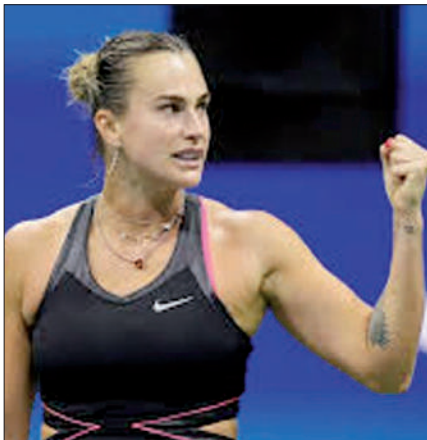
Shivani stunned Ekaterina Valchuk from Russia with her dominant performance and confirmed her spot in the 75kg final, where she will battle with Shahrano Mansouriyayan Semirrom from Iran.

Among men, Sagar Dahiya entered the semifinal after a commanding show in 56kg category and will face Carlos Baylon Jr from Philippines for a place in the final on Sunday.

In 75 kg, Vikrant Baliyan will compete in the quarterfinal against Gensheng Jin from China, aiming to join his teammates in the medal rounds. (PTI)

## Aryna Sabalenka eyes a 2<sup>nd</sup> consecutive US Open title when she plays Amanda Anisimova in the final

*After upsetting Sabalenka at the All England Club less than two months ago, Anisimova went on to lose her first Slam final to Iga Swiatek by a 6-0, 6-0 score*



**NEW YORK, Sept 6 :** Aryna Sabalenka will be seeking her fourth Grand Slam title overall and second straight at the U.S. Open when she faces Amanda Anisimova in the women's final at Arthur Ashe Stadium on Saturday.

The No. 1-seeded Sabalenka is a 27-year-old from Belarus who will be playing in her third major title match of 2025 -- each against an American opponent. She lost to Madison Keys at the Australian Open in January and to Coco Gauff at the French Open in June.

Sabalenka also beat an American, Jessica Pegula, in last year's final in New York and will be trying to become the first woman since Serena Williams in 2012-14 to win consecutive trophies at the U.S. Open.

At Wimbledon in July, Sabalenka exited in the semifinals against -- guess who? -- Anisimova. That is part of Anisimova's 6-3 head-to-head advantage over their careers.

She is a 24-year-old who was born in New Jersey and grew up in Florida.

After upsetting Sabalenka at the All England Club less than two months ago, Anisimova went on to lose her first Slam final to Iga Swiatek by a 6-0, 6-0 score.

That result could have held Anisimova back for quite some time. But she put it aside so effectively that she even felt OK watching that match the day before she had to play six-time major champ Swiatek again in the U.S. Open quarterfinals.

Anisimova won that one in straight sets, then defeated four-time Slam winner Naomi Osaka in the semifinals to get to her second consecutive major final -- and second of her career.

When she was a teen, Anisimova won the 2017 junior title at the U.S. Open. Two years later, at age 17, she was a semifinalist at the French Open as a pro.

In 2023, she announced she was taking a break from the tour because of burnout. After the time off, Anisimova essentially had to start over; her ranking was all the way outside the top 350 when she returned to competition. Even a year ago, she still was around No. 50.

But her breakthrough run at Wimbledon lifted her into the top 10 and she is seeded No. 8 this week. (AP)

## Inter Miami's Luis Suárez suspended for 6 Leagues Cup matches after spitting incident



**FORT LAUDERDALE (USA), Sept 6 :** Inter Miami forward Luis Suárez has been suspended yet again for on-field antics, this time getting a six-match ban from future Leagues Cup matches in response to his conduct -- including spitting at someone -- after his team lost Sunday's final to the Seattle Sounders.

Suárez will not be able to play in the tournament next season, and the ban could stretch into future seasons. Inter

Miami played six Leagues Cup matches this year -- three in the group phase, then three in the knockout stage -- on its way to the final.

The ban would not apply to Major League Soccer matches, though it is possible that Suárez could still face sanctioning from that league. The Leagues Cup is a separate competition.

Also suspended for future Leagues Cup matches for their roles in the postgame melee following Seattle's 3-0

win were Sounders coaching staff member Steven Lenhart, who drew a five-match ban; Inter Miami's Tomás Avilés, who got a three-match ban; and Sergio Busquets, banned for two matches.

All four will also be fined. Suárez had an infamous intentional handball in the 2010 World Cup quarterfinals to take a semifinal spot from Ghana and has served suspensions on three occasions for biting opponents -- the most recent of those in 2014, after he chomped down on the shoulder of Italy defender Giorgio Chiellini following a tussle in the penalty area during a World Cup match.

Suárez -- a longtime teammate of Inter Miami star Lionel Messi -- appeared to spit toward a member of the Sounders' staff and grabbed at least one Seattle player by the neck during a postgame melee. MLS officials are also looking into the matter, and Suárez apologized on Thursday.

"Things happened right after the match that shouldn't have happened, but that doesn't justify my reaction. I was wrong and I sincerely regret it," he wrote. "It's not the image I want to portray, neither to my family, who are suffering because of my mistakes, nor to my club, which doesn't deserve to be affected by something like this." (AP)

## Nikhat advances; Lovlina, Hitesh make early exit from boxing World C'ships

**LIVERPOOL, Sept 6:** Star boxers Nikhat Zareen and Lovlina Borgohain endured contrasting outings on their international return, as the two-time world champion advanced while the Tokyo Olympics medallist made an early exit from the World Boxing Championships here on Saturday.

Unseeded Nikhat, who had been sidelined by injury since her second-round exit in Paris last August, looked sharp in her comeback fight in the women's 51kg division. She eased past the USA's Jennifer Lozano with a commanding 5-0 unanimous decision in the round of 32.

In stark contrast, Lovlina, seeded No.1 in the women's 75kg category, fell flat in her opening contest, losing 0-5 against Turkey's Busra Isildar in the round of 16.

There was disappointment on the men's side as well with debutant Hitesh Gulia, a two-time World Cup medallist, crashed out in the 70kg category. Seeded third Gulia suffered a narrow 1-4 defeat after a late lapse proved costly against Netherlands' Bos Finn Robert. Showcasing her trademark tactical discipline, 29-year-old Nikhat started cautiously, struggling to connect in the opening exchanges.

But a crisp combination midway through the first round settled her nerves. From there she grew in confidence, using her movement to control distance and picking her punches with precision to leave little doubt on the judges' scorecards.

Lovlina's bout, on the other hand, descended into a messy affair dominated by clinches, with neither boxer able to establish rhythm. While the Turkish southpaw managed to land occasional scoring blows, Lovlina struggled to find accuracy and was defeated 0-5.

In the men's 70kg preliminaries, Gulia, who received a first-round bye, entered the contest with growing credentials, having already won gold and silver medals at World Cup events in Brazil and Kazakhstan.

Boxing largely on the counter in the opening round, the 21-year-old moved well around the ring but struggled to land clean scoring punches. He showed greater aggression in the second round to level the scores, setting up a decisive final three minutes.

But one minute into the final round, a crucial no-guard moment near the ropes turned the bout around. Robert followed a sharp jab with a powerful hook that crashed flush onto Gulia's ungaurded face, sending him briefly to the canvas and forcing the referee to issue a standing count.

Though Gulia recovered and fought on, the damage was done, and the Dutchman closed out the bout.

Asian Games bronze medallist Narendar Bernal began his campaign with a hard-fought win, defeating Ireland's Martin Christopher McDonagh in the men's +90kg opening bout on Friday night. (PTI)

## I want to milk my body as much as I can for Test cricket: Mitchell Starc

**SYDNEY, Sept 6 :** Australia's frontline pace bowler Mitchell Starc believes he still has a lot left in him to play Test and ODI cricket, saying he is ready to "milk" his body to achieve more success in the longest format of the game.

Starc, 35, recently announced his retirement from T20Is in a move to keep himself ready for the Ashes, IPL, an away Test series in India, and the ODI World Cup in two years' time.

The decision means the left-handed quick, who has in the past skipped the Indian Premier League to preserve energies for international assignments, will not play the T20 World Cup which is scheduled to be held in India and Sri Lanka early next year.

"For lack of a better term, I want to milk my body as much as I can for as much Test cricket as possible. That was never going to be off the table," Starc was quoted as saying by cricket.com.au.

"I just felt like one of the other (formats) had to give. I feel like I've got plenty to offer the ODI team and with that goal of getting my body to 2027 - but also being good enough to be in that team for the World Cup in 2027. I felt like this was my best opportunity to prolong my Test career and get to that World Cup (in 2027)."

Starc had played a pivotal role in the

2021 T20 World Cup in the UAE where Australia won their maiden world title in the format.

"I umm-ed and ahh-ed about which was the right (format) to put to the side. If I wasn't going to be in the frame for 2027 then I didn't want to hold up the spot. I still feel like I've got plenty to offer that ODI team. I'd thought about it for a while. I feel like it was probably a good time. I'm 35 now, Tests have always been my priority and they will remain my priority," he said.

If Starc lasts till the 2027 World Cup in South Africa, he could finish his career as one of the greatest ODI World Cup bowlers of all-time. Only Glenn McGrath (71 scalps in four World Cups - 1996, 1999, 2003 and 2007) and Sri Lanka's Muttiah Muralitharan (68 wickets from five tournaments from 1996 to 2011) have more World Cup wickets than Starc's 65 (2015, 2019 and 2023).

Starc felt he was leaving the T20 side at the right time, given that the team was in a good place with new faces coming in. "The T20 team seems pretty settled with the guys that have come in, they've done some great stuff. Nathan Ellis is flying, Ben Dwarshuis has played a great role, Spencer (Johnson) has done some good stuff when he's played, Sean Abbott as well... I feel like that team is in a great



spot and I don't need to interrupt that," he said. He is now looking forward to the three-match home ODI series against India and a potential Sheffield Shield appearance before the Ashes.

"The three one-dayers (against India) are a nice, controlled lead-in to five Test matches, 10 overs a game, time on the legs, they're not a day after each other. There's some Shield games that can be added to that schedule. (But) I think it's important not to have a concrete way of thinking," he said.

"At times we haven't had time for a Shield game before (Test) summers, at times we've had time for one or two. But I've enjoyed them in the past and will probably look to play one this year." (PTI)