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## GAURAV GOGOI'S PAKISTAN LINK

# SIT probing 38 individuals, says Himanta

**HT Bureau**  
**GUWAHATI, Sept 15:** Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Monday intensified his criticism of Congress MP Gaurav Gogoi, making it clear that the ongoing probe by the Special Investigation Team (SIT) extends far beyond Gogoi's family.

Addressing a large public rally at Gurufela in Gossaigaon, Sarma said the SIT was examining the role of as many as 38 individuals in connection with the case, not just the MP's wife, as alleged by the Congress.

"The SIT is handling this matter with utmost seriousness. It is not limited to Gaurav Gogoi's wife — in total, 38 people have been scrutinised. Once the report is complete, the entire document will be made public so that people can see for themselves whom the SIT has examined," Sarma declared.



He further assured that the findings would be uploaded on the government's official website for public access, adding that Gogoi's concerns would also be taken into account before the disclosure.

Notably, the SIT, constituted by the state Cabinet earlier this year to

set up on February 17, 2025, was tasked with investigating the role of one Ali Tauqueer Sheikh and his associates. The probe, according to Sarma, has brought to light disturbing revelations that go beyond individual activities and indicate a larger design to undermine India's sovereignty.

"The SIT has also established the involvement of a British national — who is married to an Indian Member of Parliament — in the nefarious activities linked to Ali Tauqueer Sheikh," Sarma said.

The Chief Minister further claimed that the SIT's investigation has exposed how the Ministry of Interior of Pakistan had facilitated the visit of a sitting MP from Assam to that country.

"The role of Pakistan's official machinery in enabling such engagements is a matter of serious concern," (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

## Nupur Bora unlawfully transferred lands of Hindu people to illegal infiltrators: CM ₹ 1.7 cr cash, gold ornaments from ACS officer's home

**HT Bureau**  
**GUWAHATI, Sept 15:** The Chief Minister's Special Vigilance Cell (SVC) on Monday carried out extensive raids at multiple premises linked to Nupur Bora, Circle Officer of Goroimari revenue circle in Kamrup district, and her alleged associate, Lat Mandal Surajit Deka of Barpeta, in connection with corruption charges and seized at least ₹ 1 crore 70 lakhs along with gold ornaments.

According to officials, a large quantity of gold and diamond jewellery was seized from Bora's flat at Gotanagar in Guwahati's Maligaon area along with at least ₹ 1 crore 70 lakhs cash money. The seized currency is being verified with the assistance of the State Bank of India (SBI). Sources also indicated that Bora holds multiple bank lockers in Barpeta and Go-



lughat, which are now under scrutiny by vigilance authorities.

Meanwhile, the vigilance officials also recovered at least ₹ 10 lakh in cash from Bora's associate Surajit Deka's residence in Dangarkuchi in Barpeta district.

The raids were launched in the early hours on Monday soon after Bora and Deka returned to Guwahati late Sunday night following a brief trip to Arunachal Pradesh. Chief Minister Himanta Biswa

Sarma told reporters here, "Nupur Bora unlawfully transferred lands of Hindu people to illegal infiltrators while she was posted in Barpeta. This officer was on the radar of the vigilance cell for the last six months. Today, her house was raided by vigilance officials and more than ₹ 1 crore 70 lakhs was seized. The government will take strict punishment against the corrupt officer."

Bora, who entered the Assam Civil Service in 2019, has previously served in Barpeta and Karbi Anglong. During her posting in Barpeta, she allegedly became embroiled in a multi-crore land scam.

After Bora's transfer to Goroimari in the Kamrup district, fresh complaints of corruption surfaced, including charges of large-scale irregularities in land-related matters. (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

## SC extends protection to scribe

**NEW DELHI, Sept 15:** The Supreme Court on Monday extended the protection granted to senior journalist Siddharth Varadarajan and other journalists, including the consulting editor of online news portal "The Wire", in cases filed against them in Assam over a news article.

A bench of Justices Surya Kant and Joydip Ghosh extended the protection after senior advocate Nitya Ramakrishnan, appearing for Varadarajan and others, said they had written to Assam Police but not received their response.

The top court recorded the submission and adjourned the hearing.

Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, appearing for the Centre, sought to file his response to the main plea challenging the constitutional validity of sedition law — seen as the successor to the colonial-era law — under 2023 Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS).

The PIL was filed by retired Major General S G Vombatkere, an Army veteran and Vishisht

Seva Medal awardee, against the validity of Section 152 (sedition) of BNS.

The top court allowed Mehta to file his response to the plea.

On August 22, the top court restrained Assam Police from taking any coercive action against Varadarajan and others in relation to an article on Operation Sindoor.

The top court, while protecting the journalists, said everyone was expected to follow the law and asked the journalists to join the investigation while calling for a status report.

The FIR was registered against "Foundation for Independent Journalism" and Varadarajan on July 11, at Police Station Morigaon, Assam, under Sections 152 and other BNS provisions.

Similarly, another FIR for the offence of sedition and other BNS provisions was lodged at Gauhati police station for a news article against them.

The provision deals with the "act endangering sovereignty, unity and integrity of India" and says, (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

## Five Bangladeshi students in NIT Silchar suspended for campus violence, to be deported

**SILCHAR, Sept 15:** Five Bangladeshi students of the National Institute of Technology (NIT) Silchar in Assam have been suspended for their alleged involvement in violent clashes on campus and will be deported, officials said on Monday.

The students, enrolled under Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) scholarships, were also allegedly found in possession of narcotic substances during a search of their rooms, NIT Director Dilip Kumar Baidya said.

All five students will be sent back to Bangladesh, he said.

"We have enough evidence to establish that they were actively involved in campus violence and have been suspended for two semesters," the director said.

The incident occurred on September 8 when a group of Bangladeshi third-year students allegedly attacked their compatriots.

"We investigated the matter



thoroughly and suspended the five students for an academic year. They have also been expelled from the hostel as part of the punishment," he said.

Dean of Students' Welfare S S Dhar said narcotics were recovered from the rooms of the accused, which was taken into account while deciding disciplinary action.

"Primarily, the action was for campus violence, but the suspected use of narcotics was also

considered," Dhar said.

According to eyewitnesses, the five students went on a rampage, allegedly under the influence of drugs, and attacked their compatriots on the night of September 8.

"They were armed with rods, knives and screwdrivers, and targeted Bangladeshi students from the final year, causing serious injuries in an attack that lasted nearly 30 minutes," said a student who did not wish to be named.

Another student said the ac-

## Aftershocks continue to hit Assam following 5.8-magnitude quake

**GUWAHATI, Sept 15:** Following a 5.8 magnitude earthquake that hit Assam a day ago, aftershocks rocked parts of the northeastern region with five tremors epicentred in Assam recorded since midnight, official sources said.

While one aftershock was recorded just before midnight, the other four were on Monday, as per information shared by the National Centre for Seismology.

A tremor of 3.1 was recorded at 11.49 pm on Sunday, followed by another of 2.8 magnitude at 1.52 am and a third of 2.4 magnitude at 3.27 am, all with a depth of 5 km and epicentred in Udalguri.

Another aftershock of 3.1 magnitude, epicentred at Udalguri at a depth of 10 km, was recorded at 10.19 am.

A quake of 2.6 magnitude was also recorded at 1.13 pm on Monday, at a depth of 10 km and with epicenter in Karbi Anglong.

There were no reports of loss of life or damage to property in the aftershocks, officials said.

Aftershocks were recorded on Sunday too, after the 5.8 magnitude quake was recorded at 4.41 pm. (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

## Protests erupt in Diphu over viral video

**HT Bureau**  
**DIPHU, Sept 15:** Widespread protests have broken out in Diphu following the circulation of an alleged sex tape involving local MLA Bidya Sing Englang. The All Party Hills Leaders Conference (APHLC — JI Kathar faction) burned an effigy of the MLA at Diphu Bus Stand, accusing him of immoral conduct and demanding strict action. The controversy has sparked outrage across political and civil society groups. The Karbi Anglong District Mahila Congress Committee (KADMCC), a women's wing of the Congress, also staged a protest in front of the Karbi Anglong Sports Association (KASA) gate. Cherisma Rongpi, Chairperson of the media cell of Karbi Anglong District Congress Committee (KADCC), stated, "A video of sitting MLA Bidya Sing Englang engaged in immoral conduct has gone viral on Facebook. As responsible citizens, the Mahila Congress has come forward to denounce such acts. As an MLA, he holds a responsible position, and we did not expect such behaviour."

In a separate press conference, APHLC President JI Kathar described the viral video as a disgraceful incident. He urged the Governor of Assam, the Chief Minister, and the Speaker of the Assam Legislative Assembly to take action by expelling the MLA. Kathar also demanded the arrest of both Englang and the woman involved under Sections 68 and 69 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), 2023.

The Karbi Nimso Chingthur Asong (KNCA) also condemned the incident. General Secretary Kajak Tokbi, speaking at a press conference held at the organization's office, said the incident has brought shame to society. The Women Karbi Students Association (WKSAs) echoed similar sentiments during a press meet held at AK Building near the CEM bungalow. WKSAs President Dimi Hansepi stated, "People have elected Englang as their representative. Being involved in such acts is a disgrace not only to society but to the Assembly constituency he represents. He has no moral right to continue as an MLA and should step down."

## PM inaugurates commanders' conference in Kolkata

**KOLKATA, Sept 15:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday hailed the Armed Forces for the success of 'Operation Sindoor', and urged the defence ministry to implement steps to achieve greater self-sufficiency and innovation to meet future challenges, an official said.

Inaugurating the 16th Combined Commanders' Conference (CCC) at the Eastern Command headquarters of the Army at Vijay Durg, the erstwhile Fort William, here, the PM reviewed the reforms implemented in the last two years, and the plan for the next two years.

Modi also unveiled the 'In-

dian Armed Forces Vision 2047' document.

He was briefed on the operational readiness of the forces in the context of the "new normal" created by Operation Sindoor, future of warfare amid emerging technology and tactics, an official statement said.

"The Prime Minister complimented the Armed Forces for the success of Operation Sindoor," it said.

Operation Sindoor was launched in May in the aftermath of the Pahalgam terror attack, which claimed the lives of 26 people.

It was conceived as a punitive and targeted campaign to dismantle the terror infra-

## Increased adoption of AI can add USD 500-600 billion to GDP by 2035: NITI report

**NEW DELHI, Sept 15:** Accelerated adoption of Artificial Intelligence (AI) across industries can contribute USD 500-600 billion to India's GDP by 2035 on the back of increased productivity and efficiency in the workforce, a NITI Aayog report said on Monday.

The report titled 'AI for Viksit Bharat: The Opportunity for Accelerated Economic Growth' further said that over the next decade, the adoption of AI across sectors is expected to add USD 17-26 trillion to the global economy.

"India's combination of a large STEM workforce, expanding R&D ecosystem, and growing digital and technology capabilities position the country to participate in this transformation, with the potential to capture 10-15 per cent of global AI value," it said.

According to the Aayog, projections show that while AI will create many new roles, it will also displace many existing jobs, particularly in clerical, routine, and low-skill segments.

"Accelerated adoption of AI across industries can contribute USD 500 billion -USD 600 billion over and above India's current GDP growth by 2035, driven by increased productivity and efficiency in the workforce," the report said.

It said the analysis shows that financial services and manufacturing can be most impacted and might have up to 20-25 per cent of their sectoral GDP attributed to AI by 2035.

AI-led productivity and efficiency improvement could unlock USD 50-55 billion in financial services, over and above the current estimated growth for the sector by 2035.

"AI could power automated compliance, fraud detection, and risk management through advanced anomaly detection techniques and privacy-preserving analytics such as secure multi-party computation and federated learning," the report said.

According to the report, AI-enabled systems can reshape credit decisioning, collections, and portfolio management. By leveraging alternative data sources, banks can make more accurate, dynamic, and inclusive lending decisions.

The report noted that potential AI opportunities for India presently include accelerating AI adoption across industries to improve productivity and efficiency, potentially bridging 30-35 per cent of the gap.

"These effects are expected to materialise across both domestic consumption and export markets," it said.

The report also observed that innovation in technology services, strengthening India's reputation as a technology services leader, contributing another 15-20 per cent to the step up could drive the development of higher-value solutions and new business models, enhancing India's competitiveness in the global market.

In manufacturing, the report said USD 85-100 billion could be driven by AI-led productivity and efficiency improvement over and above India's current growth by 2035.

At its current growth rate of 5.7 per cent, India's GDP is projected to reach USD 6.6 trillion by 2035.

However, the report said under the aspirational 8 per cent growth trajectory outlined in the government's vision for the nation known as Viksit Bharat, India's GDP could increase to USD 8.3 trillion, representing an incremental USD 1.7 trillion compared with the current growth path.

Releasing the report, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman emphasised the need for regulations that foster technology innovations for the common good, particularly in artificial intelligence (AI), but not stifle them.

"We do not want regulations that literally wipe out technology itself. We want (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

## HFC-32 has 675 times warming potential of carbon dioxide India's emissions from ACs equal to that of cars now, set to double by 2035: Report

**NEW DELHI, Sept 15:** Air conditioners will become India's biggest greenhouse gas-emitting appliance by 2030, with total emissions projected to more than double to 329 million tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent (CO2e) by 2035, a new survey has found.

The national survey by Delhi-based think tank iFOREST said ACs released 156 million tonnes CO2e in 2024 alone, equal to emissions from all passenger cars in the country. Of this, 52 million tonnes CO2e came from refrigerant leaks.

The report suggested extended producer responsibility, a national refrigerant database and stricter enforcement to mitigate severe implications on climate.

iFOREST said these steps could avoid 500-650 million tonnes of



emissions from refrigerants over the next decade, worth USD 25-33 billion in carbon credits, and save consumers USD 10 billion in refilling costs.

"An AC in India, if refilled every two years, emits as much as a passenger car... From the climate perspective, AC is as damaging as a car," iFOREST president and CEO Chandra Bhushan said.

India's AC stock is projected to rise from 62 million in 2024 to 245 million in 2035, with sales climbing

from 14 million to 40 million. Sales have already been growing 15-20 per cent annually since 2020, driven by urbanisation, higher incomes and rising heat stress.

The survey of 3,100 households across Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata, Chennai, Ahmedabad, Pune and Jaipur found that 80 per cent of ACs are less than five years old, with Jaipur, Kolkata and Pune leading the surge in new purchases.

About 87 per cent of households own a single AC, while 13 per cent own two or more. Multiple ownership is higher in Chennai, Jaipur, Kolkata and Pune, and even lower-income groups are now entering the AC market.

Refilling rates in India are among the highest globally. About 40 per cent of ACs are refilled every year,

though ideally it should be once every five years.

Eight in 10 ACs older than five years need annual refilling, and even one-third of newer machines require it. Consumers spent ₹ 7,000 crore on refrigerant refills in 2024, a figure projected to jump four times to ₹ 27,540 crore by 2035.

HFC-32, the most widely used refrigerant, has 675 times the warming potential of carbon dioxide. Emissions from refrigerant leakage alone are expected to rise from 52 million tonnes CO2e in 2024 to 84 million tonnes in 2035.

On usage, the survey found households run their ACs for an average of four hours daily over the year. Usage spikes to 7.7 hours during summer compared to 3.2 hours in the (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

## Regulations should foster innovations for common good, not wipe them out: Sitharaman

**NEW DELHI, Sept 15:** Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Monday emphasised the need for regulations that foster technology innovations for the common good, particularly in artificial intelligence (AI) but not stifle them.

The government is determined to not only adopt AI technologies but also ensure their responsible application across various sectors, she said while releasing the report 'AI for Viksit Bharat: The Opportunity for Accelerated Economic Growth'.

"We do not want regulation that literally wipe out technology itself. We want regulations because we want a responsible application," she said after releasing the report prepared by Niti Aayog here.

Sandbox provide a testing ground for regulatory mechanisms, enabling a balanced approach that fosters innovation while ensuring necessary oversight, she said, adding, this helps prevent over-regulation that could kill the technology itself.

"India is a country which can understand the implication of a good which comes in our way, although a good is never unmitigated, a good is never without riders, a good is never - on its own - good, it is for us all to use in such a way that it is for the common good. "I think AI is something which we should know how to keep well under our reins and serve for the common good," she said.

Observing that Artificial Intelligence (AI) is not static, the finance minister said, it is rapidly progress-



ing, real-time and dynamic.

"Therefore, all of us will have to be conscious that we don't sit back on the ethics. We need to be clear that regulation has to run the race equally as much as the technology is running it. If the technology is on a sprint, the regulation has to be on the sprint, too," she said.

Speaking about the benefit of AI, she said, it can play a vital role in finding solutions to improve the existing urban areas and to plan new urban centres.

"We need to understand that AI is capable of providing in-situ solutions, allowing people to remain where they are, while delivering the solutions they have been waiting for decades," she said.

Stressing that AI-assisted technologies should be adopted in all districts of India to bring development, she said, "I would want all districts to emerge as success sto-

ries of innovation and development."

Under the guidance of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, she said, AI and related matters have gained significant momentum, with NITI Aayog moving strongly forward.

Talking about the challenges, she said, there can be impact on demographic dividend if adequate upskilling is not provided and make the human capital AI-ready.

"I don't think it's a gloomy picture of so many people who are going to get thrown out of jobs due to AI. In terms of AI-driven upskilling programs, I would want more inputs to come to the government to see how best we can use it," she said.

To accelerate growth in economy, she said, "productivity needs to improve and for that AI adaptation by industry is must. Many of them are doing it, but there is a mis-

match. They are doing AI adoption, but the market is not giving them AI-ready human resources."

Speaking at the occasion, Minister of Electronics and Information Technology Ashwini Vaishnav said, "we are passing through very interesting times when the world is going through so much of turbulence, India is very stable growing at a consistent rate."

Stressing that the growth is inclusive and robust, he said, it's driven by technology and technology is the fundamental base of this growth.

"Over a period of last few decades, the biggest change which has happened, and the biggest factor which has joined this constellation of technologies, is AI, because AI is now affecting practically everything that we do," he said.

Like internet, which changed everything that we did, he said, "AI is also going to fundamentally change the way we work the way we live, the way we consume, the way we teach our children, the way we do healthcare, practically everything is going to be impacted."

That's why it's very important to make sure that India is front runner in AI technology or in the use of AI development of AI, he said, adding, the core of this part will be R&D on one hand, and getting a very, very strong and deep talent pipeline on the other. With regard to Graphics Processing Unit (GPU), he said, against the target of 10,000, India has 38,000 GPUs available for everybody. (PTI)

## Stock markets close lower on profit-taking in IT, auto shares ahead of Fed rate decision

**MUMBAI, Sept 15:** Benchmark Sensex dropped nearly 119 points while Nifty snapped its eight-day winning run in a volatile trade on Monday due to profit-taking in IT and auto shares ahead of the US Fed policy meeting.

Ending its five-day rally, the 30-share BSE Sensex declined by 118.96 points or 0.15 per cent to settle at 81,785.74. During the day, it hit a high of 81,998.51 and a low of 81,744.70.

The 50-share NSE Nifty settled lower by 44.80 points or 0.18 per cent to 25,069.20, halting its eight-day uptrend. Investors stayed on the sidelines as markets await the outcome of this week's US Federal Reserve policy meeting, analysts said.

Among Sensex firms, Mahindra & Mahindra, Asian Paints, Infosys, Titan, Sun Pharma, Tata Consultancy Services, Tech Mahindra and Power Grid were the major laggards.

However, Bajaj Finance, Eternal, UltraTech Cement and Reliance Industries were among the gainers.

"Benchmark indices traded largely flat as investors remained cautious ahead of the Fed policy meeting, with the IT index witnessing profit-taking after last week's rally. While a 25-bps rate cut is largely factored in, markets await guidance on the future rate path to gauge the trajectory for bond yields."

"Strong domestic consumption continues to underpin sentiment and limit downside, while renewed optimism around trade deals and an expected earnings recovery in H2FY26 are further supporting investor

confidence," Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Investments Limited, said.

Broader markets were positive with the Smallcap gauge climbing 0.66 per cent and the Midcap index gaining 0.40 per cent.

"Indian markets ended Monday's session on a muted note, with the benchmark indices slipping into the red amid volatile, rangebound trade," Gaurav Garg, Research Analyst Lemonn Markets Desk, said.

Among sectoral indices, BSE Focused IT dropped the most by 0.63 per cent, followed by IT (0.60 per cent), consumer durables (0.50 per cent), teck (0.45 per cent) and auto (0.32 per cent).

Realty jumped 2.47 per cent, while capital goods (0.61 per cent), industrials (0.61 per cent), telecommunication (0.53 per cent) and power (0.51 per cent) also advanced.

"Benchmark index snapped their eight-session winning streak and ended marginally in the red on Monday, as market participants adopted a cautious stance ahead of the upcoming US Fed policy announcement."

"Despite a 25-bps rate cut being largely priced in, all eyes remain on the Fed's forward guidance for cues on the future interest rate trajectory and its implications for bond yields," according to Bajaj Broking Research.

In Asian markets, South Korea's Kospi and Hong Kong's Hang Seng settled in positive territory while Shanghai's SSE Composite index ended lower. Japan's stock market was closed for a holiday. (PTI)

## PhonePe's Indus Appstore crosses 10 crore device milestone

**HT Bureau**

**GUWAHATI, Sept 15:** Indus Appstore, India's Android app marketplace by PhonePe, has crossed 10 crore devices, marking a significant achievement.

Its success is attributed to its localised experience, offering apps in 12 Indian languages besides English.

Around 40% of users browse the store in regional languages, with Hindi, Marathi, Tamil, and Gu-

jarati leading the way.

The app store has strong user bases in Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, and Maharashtra, with Karnataka and Telangana also among key regions.

Gen-Z (18-27 years) and Gen-Y (27-44 years) together make up nearly 93.5% of users under 45, while 70.6% of users hail from Tier 3 towns and rural areas.

Social media apps are the most popular category, followed by communication, entertainment,

and finance apps.

Priya M Narasimhan, chief business officer, Indus Appstore, said, "Crossing the 10-crore milestone is a proud moment for us. We remain committed to offering users a seamless and safe experience while supporting developers with tools tailored for India's regional and cultural diversity."

The insights shared are based on the platform's lifetime user base analysis.

*Contd. from Page 1...*

## SIT probing 38 individuals

he added. Sarma informed that the Assam government will now examine the SIT report in detail before placing it before the state Cabinet. "Once the matter is discussed in the Cabinet, the information gathered during the enquiry will be made public," he said.

## ₹ 1.7 cr cash, gold

latest operation is part of a wider investigation into these allegations. "The raids are still underway. The total extent of disproportionate assets will only be known once the searches are completed and the lockers are examined," a vigilance official said.

## Aftershocks continue to hit

A tremor of 3.1 magnitude was felt at 4.58 pm, followed by another of 2.9 magnitude at 5.21 pm, and another of 2.7 magnitude and recorded at 6.11 pm, officials said.

At least two people were injured and scores of houses damaged in Assam following the tremors on Sunday. No reports of damages were received from other NE states or parts of West Bengal which had felt the tremors. Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who had wound up a two-day trip to the region and reached Kolkata on Sunday evening, spoke to Assam CM Himanta Biswa Sarma and enquired about the earthquake, assuring all support from the Centre.

The Northeast is in a high seismic zone, and earthquakes frequently hit the region. (PTI)

## SC extends protection

"Whoever, purposely or knowingly, by words, either spoken or written, or by signs, or by visible representation, or by electronic communication or by use of financial means, or otherwise, excites or attempts to excite, secession or armed rebellion or subversive activities, or encourages feelings of separatist activities or endangers sovereignty or unity and integrity of India; or indulges in or commits any such act shall be punished with imprisonment for life or with imprisonment which may extend to seven years, and shall also be liable to fine."

The top court had asked the members of the Foundation and Varadarajan to cooperate with the case's investigation. Varadarajan was booked after the online news portal published an article on Operation Sindoor, under which India targeted terror infrastructure in Pakistan and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir in May in retaliation for the April 22 Pahalgam attack. (PTI)

## PM inaugurates commanders'

Defence to swiftly implement concrete steps to achieve greater jointness, atmanirbharta and innovation to meet future challenges and to prevail against any eventuality," the statement said.

The conference is being attended by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, National Security Advisor Ajit Doval, Chief of Defence Staff General Anil Chauhan, and Defence Secretary Rajesh Kumar Singh, among others.

Held once in two years, the three-day Combined Commanders' Conference is the apex-level brainstorming forum of the Armed Forces, which brings together the nation's top civilian and military leadership to exchange views and lay the groundwork for the future development of India's military preparedness.

Focusing on reforms, transformation and change and operational preparedness, the theme for this year's conference is 'Year of Reforms - Transforming for the Future', in line with the ongoing modernisation and transformation of the Armed Forces, the statement said.

Over the next two days, the conference would conduct a holistic review of various structural, administrative and operational matters based on the feedback from across the forces, preparedness of the forces in the face of increasing global uncertainties, it said. Deliberations were held on a wide range of strategic issues, including force modernisation, jointness, integration and enhancing operational readiness for multi-domain warfare.

The CCC was last held in Bhopal in 2023, which was inaugurated by Modi. The PM, who arrived in Kolkata on Sunday evening from Assam, left the city in the afternoon for Purnea in Bihar.

This was Modi's fourth visit to Bengal in the past five months and the second within a month. (PTI)

## Increased adoption of

regulations because we want a responsible application," she said after releasing the report prepared by Niti Aayog here. Sandboxes provide a testing ground for regulatory mechanisms, enabling a balanced approach that fosters innovation while ensuring necessary oversight, she said, adding that this helps prevent over-regulation that could kill the technology itself.

"India is a country which can understand the implication of a good which comes in our way, although a good is never unmitigated, a good is never without riders, a good is never on its own good; it is for us all to use it in such a way that it is for the common good. "I think AI is something which we should know how to keep well under our reins and serve for the common good," she said.

Observing that Artificial Intelligence (AI) is not static, the finance minister said it is rapidly progressing, real-time and dynamic. NITI Aayog CEO BVR Subrahmanyam in his foreword said, "If India is to accelerate its growth to the 8 per cent annual rate required for the realization of Viksit Bharat, we have no option but to significantly raise productivity across the economy and unlock new growth through innovation. Artificial Intelligence can be the decisive lever."

Subrahmanyam said with a focused and sector-specific approach, industries such as banking and manufacturing can deploy AI today to improve efficiency, service quality, and competitiveness creating momentum for deeper transformation.

"At the same time, India must nurture frontier innovation, from AI-enabled drug discovery to software-defined vehicles, building the next engines of growth."

The path to 8 per cent growth runs through decisive AI adoption and innovation, he added. (PTI)

## India's emissions from

monsoon season. Nearly 98 per cent of households own three-star to five-star rated ACs, showing high awareness of energy efficiency. The three-star category dominates with a 60 per cent share, followed by the five-star at 28 per cent. Contrary to perception, most households set thermostats between 23 degrees Celsius and 25 degrees Celsius. Around 67 per cent of households keep their AC above 23 degrees, while only a third set it below 22 degrees, mainly in Delhi, Mumbai and Pune.

Bhushan said people are conscious of efficiency but not refrigerants. "We need comprehensive regulation on the refrigerant lifecycle, similar to extended producer responsibility for plastics," he said. (PTI)

## US chief negotiator arriving for day-long talk on bilateral trade deal: Govt official

**NEW DELHI, Sept 15:** Trump administration's chief negotiator Brendan Lynch is arriving here tonight to hold a day-long talk on India-US bilateral trade deal, which were impacted after imposition of 50 per cent import tariffs by the US on Indian goods.

The meeting comes days after Prime Minister Narendra Modi warmly reacted to US President Donald Trump's positive assessment of trade ties between the two countries.

Five rounds of negotiations for the India-US bilateral trade agreement (BTA) have been held, and the sixth round of talks, scheduled from August 25-29, was postponed following the imposition of 50 per cent tariffs on Indian goods by the US.

"We have indicated that in the past also the discussions are going on, the chief negotiator of the US is visiting India tonight and tomorrow will be holding talks to see what can be the picture

"It is not the sixth round of negotiations but it is definitely discussions on the trade talks and trying to see how we can reach an agreement between India and the US," Rajesh Agarwal, India's chief negotiator and a special secretary in the commerce ministry said here on Monday.

He further said India and the US have been engaged in discussions through virtual mode on a weekly basis.

"There have been discussions going on but we were not progressing much because the overall environment was not conducive. Now we see there is a window..." the official said.

He however added that Tuesday's talks should not be seen as a 6th round of talks, but it may decide on future course of action.

"Tomorrow's talks will be a precursor to the sixth

round of negotiations," Agarwal said.

Lynch is the Assistant US Trade Representative for South and Central Asia.

He oversees the development and implementation of US trade policy with regard to 15 countries in the region, including management of the US-India Trade Policy Forum (TPF) as well as coordination of activity under Trade and Investment Framework Agreements (TIFAs) with regional partners.

India's exports have been affected following the imposition of 50 per cent tariffs on shipments to the US.

Last week, Prime Minister Modi had reacted warmly to US President Donald Trump's positive assessment of trade talks between the two countries, expressing confidence that the ongoing negotiations will pave the way for unlocking the limitless potential of the partnership between them.

After weeks of strain in ties over Trump's tough rhetoric following his decision to impose 50 per cent tariff on India, the relations between the two countries have shown signs of a thaw of late.

It was the second time of late when Trump has spoken of his country's ties with India and mixed it with his praise of Modi, who has positively reacted to his comments.

The Trump administration has imposed 50 per cent tariffs on India, including 25 per cent for Delhi's purchases of Russian oil, among the highest imposed on any country in the world.

India has described the US action as "unfair, unjustified and unreasonable". Defending its purchase of Russian crude oil, India has been maintaining that its energy procurement is driven by national interest and market dynamics. (PTI)

## RE unveils upgraded 2025 Meteor 350

**HT Bureau**

**GUWAHATI, Sept 15:** Royal Enfield has launched the all-new 2025 Meteor 350 in India, offering enhanced features, refined performance, and stylish designs across its Fireball, Stellar, Aurora, and Supernova variants.

Designed for relaxed rides and long journeys, the Meteor 350 now comes with upgrades like LED headlamps, Tripper navigation pod, USB fast charging, assist-and-slip clutch, and adjustable levers.

Powered by a 349cc engine with 20.2 BHP and 27Nm torque, the Meteor 350 delivers smooth performance on highways and city roads alike. The new variants feature updated colour schemes—from modern chrome finishes to heritage-inspired styles—catering to diverse rider preferences.

B Govindarajan, CEO of Royal Enfield, highlighted the motorcycle's role as a lifestyle statement, encouraging adventure and effortless riding. The Meteor 350 has already built a global community of over 5 lakh riders and is one of the best-selling cruisers in its class. The new lineup also offers customised Genuine Motorcycle Accessories (GMAs) kits for personalisation.

## Axis Bank's moves 2025 empowers india's brightest students

**HT Bureau**

**GUWAHATI, Sept 15:** Axis Bank, one of India's largest private sector banks, announced the winners of its flagship campus initiative, Moves 2025, aimed at identifying and nurturing the country's brightest young minds.

The competition drew participation from over 21,000 students across 50 top MBA and engineering institutes, including IIMs, IITs, Indian School of Business, XLRI, and FMS.

Focused on discovering the "next big strategic bet for Axis Bank," the competition encouraged students to propose innovative, future-ready solutions in areas such as technology, artificial intelligence, sustainability, rural banking, and marketing.

Conducted through rigorous stages—including assessments, campus rounds, mentorship sessions, and a grand finale—the program tested creativity, analytical thinking, and leadership potential.

The finalists presented their ideas to a jury of senior Axis Bank leaders, including the Executive Director, Heads of Treasury, Bharat Banking, HR, Digital Transformation, Sustainability, Credit, and CEO of Axis Securities.

Winners were awarded cash prizes, career opportunities, and mentorship, bridging academia and industry by offering students real-world exposure and skill development.

Rajkamal Vempati, Group Executive & Head of HR, Axis Bank, stated, "Moves 2025 has been a powerful showcase of ideas, energy, and innovation. Engaging with India's brightest minds reaffirmed our belief in a dynamic future for banking."

With Moves 2025, Axis Bank continues to build a talent pipeline that combines bold thinking, cross-disciplinary problem-solving, and industry readiness, strengthening its position as a forward-looking institution in the financial sector.

## WPI inflation reverses deflationary trend, rises to 4-month high of 0.52 pc in August

**NEW DELHI, Sept 15:** Wholesale price inflation rose to a four-month high of 0.52 per cent in August as prices of food articles and manufactured items inched up, even though fuel and power basket witnessed easing.

Reversing the deflationary trend of the past two months, (-) 0.58 in July and (-) 0.19 per cent in June, the Wholesale Price Index (WPI)-based inflation rose to its highest level since April, when it was 0.85 per cent. Wholesale price inflation was 1.25 per cent in August last year.

"Positive rate of inflation in August 2025 is

primarily due to an increase in prices of food products, manufacturing, non-food articles, non-metallic mineral products and transport equipment etc," the industry ministry said in a statement on Monday. Deflation in food articles narrowed to 3.06 per cent in August, from 6.29 per cent in the previous month. Deflation in vegetables and pulses eased to 14.18 per cent and 14.85 per cent from 28.96 per cent and 15.12 per cent, respectively. In potato and onion, however, the deflation deepened to 44.11 per cent and 50.46 per cent in August, from 41.26 per cent and

44.38 per cent, respectively, in July. Narrower food WPI deflation and higher core inflation have offset the deeper deflation in fuel in August, Barclays said, adding it expects modest increases in WPI in the coming months.

In the case of manufactured products, inflation was higher at 2.55 per cent in August, as against 2.05 per cent in the month before.

Industry chamber PHDCCI President Hemant Jain said among manufactured products, major contributors to inflation were vegetable and animal oils & fats, textiles. (PTI)

# Modi's Manipur visit 'too little, too late': Assam Cong

**GUWAHATI, Sept 15:** The Assam unit of Congress on Monday termed Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Manipur as "too little, too late".

It also claimed that the BJP has made "false accusations" against Congress leaders, including Jawaharlal Nehru, during the prime minister's two-day visit to the state, maintaining that the saffron party was in the "habit of bad-mouthing our leaders".

Addressing a press conference here, party MP Pradyut Bordoloi said, "It took the prime minister more than two-and-a-half years to visit Manipur. And during that period, he visited 39 foreign countries, and some of it multiple times."

"We had been demanding that the prime minister visit Manipur since the strife started in May two years ago," he added.

Bordoloi claimed that Modi, during his visit to Assam, "misrepresented" facts when he accused Congress leaders of supporting Pakistan during Operation Sindoor, launched post-Pahalgam terror attack.



"In his meeting in Mangaldai (on Sunday), Modi said that during Operation Sindoor, Congress leaders supported Pakistan. But Congress has always stood by the Indian armed forces, and it is on record. When there was a discussion on the matter in Parliament, our leader Rahul Gandhi was on record praising our armed forces. Our national president, Mallikarjun Kharge, is on record," the MP said.

"On the other hand, it is the son

of Modi's right-hand man Amit Shah and Assam CM's close friend Devajit Saikia who consented promptly to play cricket against Pakistan in Asia Cup. It shows their hypocrisy," Bordoloi said, referring to ICC chairman Jay Shah and BCCI secretary Saikia.

"We urge you not to shed crocodile tears in North East now," he added.

Bordoloi also took a swipe at BJP and Modi for referring to Nehru during the prime minister's

visit to the state, which concluded on Sunday evening.

Leader of Opposition in Assam Assembly Debabrata Saikia, also addressing the press conference, said that though the BJP is celebrating Bhupen Hazarika's birth centenary, the musical maestro sang about harmony while the saffron party "propagates communal politics".

Bordoloi, while appreciating Modi refraining from making any political statement while participating in Hazarika's birth centenary celebration here on Saturday, pointed out that the function was shifted to a date suitable for the prime minister even though Hazarika's birthday was on September 8. He also claimed that the foundation stone for the Narangi-Kuruwa bridge over the Brahmaputra was originally laid by then CM Tarun Gogoi, with Modi laying the foundation for the second time on Sunday.

"Perhaps, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma forgot to mention it to Modi that Gogoi had already laid the foundation for the bridge," Bordoloi said. (PTI)

## Jersey cow dies in road mishap

**HT Correspondent**

**JORHAT, Sept 15:** A Jersey cow died and other sustained injuries when a truck transporting them from Sivasagar to Nagaon overturned near the Bhogdoi Bridge in Jorhat district on Sunday.

Seven other cows of local breeds that were also on board survived the accident. The truck driver and his helper fled the scene following the incident.

Authorities are investigating the cause of the mishap.

## Assam achieves success in national yoga sports referee exam

**HT Correspondent**

**NAGAON, Sept 15:** In a notable achievement for the state, nine referees from various districts of Assam, including Nagaon, have successfully cleared the Grade-C Yoga Referee Exam conducted by the Yoga Federation of India. The examination was held on September 14.

According to Yoga Guru Prabhat Chandra Borah, Vice President of the Yoga Federation of India and General Secretary of the Assam Yoga Association, the successful candidates from Assam are Sampriti Deka (Nagaon), Swarup Jyoti Deka (Darrang), Rajiv Kumar Mondal (Kamrup Metro), Papari Devi, Supriti Paul, Pompi Saikia, Kabita Bora, Dr Bharati Basumatary, and Kanchan Moni Goswami.

Officials of the Assam Yoga Association have extended their congratulations and best wishes to the successful referees, who have brought pride to the state.

This achievement is expected to further promote the growth of yoga in Assam and open up opportunities for the referees to officiate in national-level yoga events.

## Small tea growers protest in Dibrugarh over plunging green leaf prices

**HT Correspondent**

**DIBRUGARH, Sept 15:** Members of the All Assam Small Tea Growers' Association (AASSTA) staged a protest on Monday outside the Deputy Commissioner's office in Dibrugarh, expressing deep concern over the steep decline in green tea leaf prices. The growers said the sudden price crash has pushed them to the brink of financial ruin.

According to the association, prices of green tea leaves have



nosedived from a peak of ₹ 52 per kg to as low as ₹ 15 per kg — far below the production cost, which ranges between ₹ 25 to ₹ 27 per kg.

"Our demand to the government is to establish a minimum sustainable price (MSP) for green leaf, but they are not taking it seriously. We are facing complete ruin. When it costs us ₹ 25 to ₹ 27 to produce one kg of quality green tea leaves, how can we survive selling at ₹ 15? We are operating at massive losses every day," said Rubul Hatibaruah, president of AASSTA.

He added, "We are peaceful

## CM pledges development, anti-corruption measures at Gurufela rally

**Promises expansion of Orunodoi benefits and new institutions in BTC**

**HT Correspondent**  
**GOSSAIGAON, Sept 15:** With just seven days left for the Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) polls, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma addressed a massive election rally at Gurufela in Saraibil BTC constituency on Sunday in support of BJP candidate Gosai Basumatary.

In his speech, the Chief Minister assured the people that if the BJP forms the BTC government, corruption will be completely eradicated and all welfare schemes will be delivered directly to beneficiaries' accounts without middlemen. He criticised the past 17 years of BPF rule and five

years of UPPL governance, stating that development remained far below expectations.

CM announced that five lakh additional women in BTC will be included under the Orunodoi scheme. He also promised the establishment of a college and a 30-bed hospital in Gurufela, while reiterating that land rights, equal opportunities, and dignity as "first-class citizens" would be ensured for all communities living in BTC.

Citing a recent public demand at Gossaigaon, the Chief Minister said that halts for Vande Bharat, North East Express, and Kamrup Express trains at Gossaigaon Hat station have already been ap-

proved and will begin from 16 September. He further declared ex-gratia assistance of 5 lakh each to the families of five youths who lost their lives in a road accident in Gurufela last year.

The rally also witnessed the participation of Cabinet Minister Ashok Singhal, who expressed confidence in BJP's victory across multiple constituencies including Saraibil. Other key attendees included Tuliram Ronghang, CEM of Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council, BJP candidate Gosai Basumatary, Kokrajhar district BJP vice-president Jethmal Malu, district secretary Iti Sarkar, and several senior leaders.

## High-speed greenfield corridor to pass through 45 Cachar villages

**HT Bureau**  
**GUWAHATI, Sept 15:** The upcoming 4-Lane Greenfield Alignment — a major high-speed corridor under the National Highways and Infrastructure Development Corporation Limited (NHIDCL) — is set to pass through 45 villages in Cachar district, according to a recent notification issued by the Office of the District Commissioner, Cachar.

As per the notice, any new construction or developmental activity within the designated alignment area must receive prior approval from the DC's office, specifically the Land Acquisition (LA) Branch, Silchar. The administration has issued a strict warning that any unauthorised

structures, whether temporary or permanent, constructed after the issuance of this notification will not be eligible for compensation during land acquisition or project implementation.

The proposed alignment includes villages such as Salimabad, Chandinagar, Karai Kandi, Jagdishpur, Rajyeshwarpur, Chandipur, Paikan, Talkar Grant, Khelma, Lakhicherra Khasia Punjee, Bhairabpur, Lakhipur, Baraitoli, and Rajagarh Khasia Punjee, among others. The project is seen as a major infrastructural initiative aimed at boosting connectivity and ensuring faster movement of people and goods across the Barak Valley.

The notification has come into

immediate effect from the date of publication. Both private individuals and commercial entities have been advised to strictly comply with the order. Authorities have emphasised that non-compliance may not only result in denial of compensation but could also lead to delays in project execution.

Once completed, the Greenfield highway is expected to ease the burden on existing routes, facilitate quicker inter-district and interstate travel, and play a significant role in the socio-economic development of the region.

This was stated in a press release issued by the Regional Office of Information & Public Relations, Barak Valley Zone, Silchar, Assam.

## 'Hindi Diwas Samaroh 2025' celebrated at Navodeep HS School

**HT Correspondent**

**KHERONI, Sept 15:** The Hindi Diwas Samaroh 2025 was successfully organised at Navodeep Higher Secondary School, Kheroni Charali, Karbi Anglong as part of the "My Bharat: Mera Yuva Bharat" initiative by the Ministry of Youth Affairs & Sports, Government of India, in collaboration with the Social Development Organisation (NGO).

The event commenced with a ceremonial lighting of the traditional lamp, followed by floral tributes and a gardening activity in front of Swami Vivekananda's portrait, led by Biresh Kr Prasad, Principal of Navodeep Higher Secondary School. Distinguished guests and resource persons were honoured with traditional Gamosas, symbolising the region's rich cultural heritage.

Chhotelal Chauhan, HoD & Assistant Professor, Department of Hindi, Kapili College, delivered an insightful address on the significance of the Hindi language and its pivotal role in fostering national integration. Biresh Kr Prasad highlighted the development of Hindi in academic and community contexts, emphasising its growing influence locally. Jeetendra Harijan, Vice-Principal of Kapili College, spoke on the constitutional journey of the Hindi language, underscoring its official status and the importance of linguistic policies in India.

## Tezpur University professor elected fellow of Indian National Science Academy

**HT Correspondent**

**TEZPUR, Sept 15:** Prof Satya Sundar Bhattacharya from the Department of Environmental Science, Tezpur University, has been elected a Fellow of the Indian National Science Academy (INSA), one of the highest honours in Indian science. The recognition celebrates his pioneering research in soil health, waste recycling, nanofertilizer development, earthworm biology, and sustainable agriculture.

Established in 1935, INSA is India's premier scientific institution, and election to its fellowship is reserved for scientists of exceptional merit. Prof Bhattacharya now joins an elite group of researchers whose work has made transformative contributions

across disciplines.

At Tezpur University, he leads the Soil and Agro-Bioengineering Laboratory, which focuses on a wide range of environmental and agricultural issues. These include the study of plant medicinal compounds under changing environmental conditions, solid waste valorisation, vermicomposting, soil restoration, and the development of nano-enabled solutions for sustainable farming.

Prof Bhattacharya has authored over 100 scientific publications, including 89 in reputed journals, and holds an Indian patent (2020) for a novel soil conditioner, which has since been transferred for industrial application. His research is widely cited, and he has an h-index of 38, according to Google

Scholar.

His contributions have been recognised both nationally and internationally. He received the Gandhian Young Technological Innovation Award in 2018, was elected a Fellow of the National Academy of Sciences, India (FNASc) in 2024, and has served as a Research Professor at Hanyang University, Seoul. He also maintains active research collaborations with Orebro University, Sweden, helping to strengthen international scientific ties.

Prof Shambhu Nath Singh, Vice Chancellor of Tezpur University, congratulated Prof Bhattacharya on his election and extended his best wishes for continued success in his academic and research pursuits.

## Assam: Moran students' body imposes 'economic blockade' demanding ST status

**TINSUKIA, Sept 15:** The All Moran Students Union (AMSU) on Monday launched an "indefinite economic blockade" in Assam's Tinsukia district, demanding Scheduled Tribe (ST) status for the community.

The blockade launched at 5 am on the Makum Bypass of NH-15 affected the movement of commercial vehicles in the district, situated at the eastern tip of Assam along the inter-state boundary with Arunachal Pradesh, officials said.

"It is our long-standing demand for ST status for the Moran community. To press for our demand, which no government has fulfilled, we launched an indefinite economic blockade from 5 am today," an AMSU leader said.

The movement of trucks carrying oil, coal, timber and tea, among others, has been hampered, with hun-



dreds of vehicles stranded on the Makum Bypass.

The blockade has affected normal traffic and the supply of essential commodities, impacting local residents and traders alike.

A police officer said that about 500 trucks have been stranded. "The situation is under control, and there is no law and order problem. We are closely monitoring it," he said. (PTI)

## CEM Pramod Boro addresses Election Rally in Udalguri



**HT Correspondent**  
**KOKRAJHAR, Sept 15:** With just a week remaining for the Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) elections scheduled for September 22, political parties including the United People's Party Liberal (UPPL), BJP, and BPF have intensified their campaigns across the Bodoland region. On Monday, the UPPL's message of Sankalp echoed through Udalguri, emphasising the party's commitment to "Maa, Maati, Jaati, Shiksha, and Shanti" in the Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR).

Chief Executive Member (CEM)

of BTR and UPPL President Pramod Boro led a massive election rally in Udalguri town in support of UPPL candidates. The rally drew thousands of supporters and well-wishers, creating an enthusiastic and energetic atmosphere.

Addressing the crowd, Pramod Boro said, "The overwhelming response we are witnessing across constituencies reflects the people's trust in UPPL's vision for peace, development, and progress in the BTR. We are committed to inclusive growth, women empowerment, quality education, and lasting peace.

## Assam Rifles High School observes Hindi Diwas at Lokra

**HT Correspondent**

**BISWANATH CHARIALI, Sept 15:** Assam Rifles High School, Lokra, celebrated Hindi Diwas by organising speech and essay competitions for students on Sunday, stated a press release. The event was conducted to highlight the importance of Hindi as a unifying language and to instill pride among the younger generation in using and preserving it. A total of 260 students took part in the competitions, delivering

thoughtful speeches and writing inspiring essays that reflected their creativity and awareness. Seventeen teachers actively supported and guided the students, ensuring smooth conduct of the programme. Six personnel of Assam Rifles also attended the event and encouraged the participants. The celebration concluded with appreciation of the winners and a collective resolve to continue promoting Hindi as a language of unity and culture.

## SOUL Docu-Fiction Film Festival 2025

Over 70 films representing 30+ communities to be showcased at three-day event in Guwahati



**HT Bureau**  
**GUWAHATI, Sept 15:** A unique cinematic celebration of Northeast India's cultural heritage is set to unfold as the SOUL Docu-Fiction Film Festival & Competition 2025 will be held from September 19 to 21 at Jyoti Chitran, Kahilipara, Guwahati. Organized under the aegis of Seemanta Chetana Mancha Purvottar, the festival aims to highlight the sacred bond between people and the land through the lens of documentary and fictional storytelling.

Themed "Stories of Unity, Land & Culture,"

SOUL is a tribute to the deeply rooted traditions, rituals, and spiritual practices observed by tribal, ethnic, and religious communities across the region. These customs—whether performed at births, weddings, or seasonal festivals—demonstrate a reverence for nature and the divine force believed to reside in all elements of the environment, from fire and water to trees and mountains.

Seemanta Chetana Mancha Purvottar, the organizing NGO, has long worked across the international borders of Northeast Bharat to foster

economic, social, and cultural development in border areas, while instilling a spirit of national unity and patriotism among local communities. With the SOUL Festival, the organisation seeks to preserve and promote endangered indigenous practices through the power of cinema.

The festival will open on September 19 with a grand inaugural ceremony attended by Union Minister of State for Information and Broadcasting Dr L Murugan, Nagaland Tourism and Education Minister Tejmen Imna Along, Minister of Cultural Affairs Bimal Borah, and acclaimed filmmaker Manju Borah.

On September 21, the valedictory ceremony will feature Dr Krishna Gopal Sharma, Sah Sarkaryavah of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS); Ministers Bimal Borah and Pijush Hazarika; and noted Manipuri filmmaker Oinam Doren.

More than 70 documentary films, representing over 30 tribes and communities from Northeast India, have been selected for screening. The festival will also host a prestigious competition segment. The Best Documentary Film will receive a cash prize of ₹ 21,00,000, while the second and third best will be awarded ₹ 2,75,000 and ₹ 2,50,000 respectively. Awards will also be presented for Best Director (₹ 25,000), Best Cinematographer (₹ 20,000), and a Jury's Special Award.

With 865 participants already registered online, the festival promises to be a vibrant confluence of filmmakers, scholars, artists, and cultural enthusiasts. Organisers are calling on the public and cultural institutions for their continued support to ensure the success of this significant cultural initiative.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

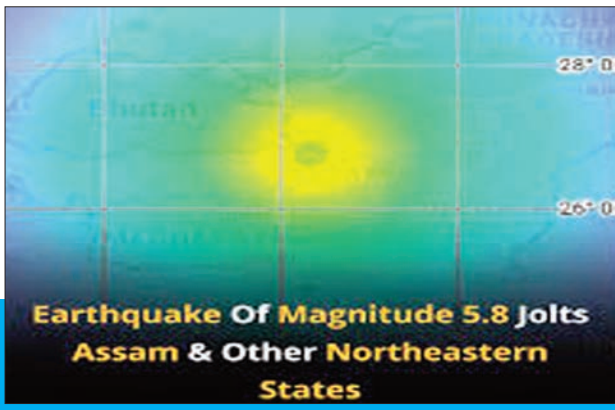
I believe you have to be willing to be misunderstood if you're going to innovate. -Jeff Bezos

Growing military expenditure

World needs a course correction for which a fundamental shift is required, since global military expenditure has been rising fast while sustainable development goals (SDGs) are faltering with too big a financial gap. Global insecurity intensifies, geopolitical rivalries deepen, and global military spending surged to an unprecedented level in 2024 to an all time high at \$2.7 trillion. SDGs faltering with only one in five targets are on the track with an annual financial gap of \$4 trillion. It is revealed in the Report of the UN Secretary-General titled "The Security We Need: Rebalancing Military Spending for a Sustainable and Peaceful Future" on global increase in military expenditure on the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals as requested by Action 13 (c) of the Pact for the Future. Military spending is often justified on the ground of deterrence and national security. However, evidence suggests that heightened military expenditure does not necessarily lead to greater peace or stability. Instead, it often exacerbates geopolitical tensions, fuels arms races and increases risks of conflicts, particularly when coupled with weak governance, rising inequality and systemic mistrust, the report says. Growing military expenditure, the report stated, is crowding out resources essential for social investment, poverty reduction, education, health, environmental protection and infrastructure - undermining progress on nearly all the SDGs.

This presents a case of fundamental shift in how we understand and pursue security. Rather than defining security narrowly in terms of military capability, the reports advocates for a human-centred, multidimensional approach rooted in dignity, human rights, and sustainable development. World needs to recalibrate global approaches to security and development, reversing the dual trends of rising military expenditure and widening financial gaps. While global military spending has risen for the 10 consecutive years, COVID-19 pandemic, armed conflicts, economic volatilities, trade disputes and the ever-worsening effects of climate change have left 2030 SGD goals in peril. Only 35 per cent of targets are on track or making moderate progress, 48 per cent show insufficient progress and 18 per cent show regression compared to 2015 baseline.

Financial gap for SDGs has been widening for years and currently stands at \$4 trillion a year -more than the GDP of the world's fifth largest economy, that is India. Recently, several countries have reduced official development assistance, and now it is estimated that the gap could reach to \$6.4 trillion per year by 2030. Connection is stark: As military budgets increase, financial gap for SDGs grows, endangering collective progress for all humanity. There is heavy concentration of military spending among the 10 largest spenders spending 73 per cent of global expenditure in 2024. This group includes all five permanent members of the UN Security Council.



Earthquake Of Magnitude 5.8 Jolts Assam & Other Northeastern States

By: Himangshu Ranjan Bhuvan

Earthquakes are natural phenomena resulting from the dynamic movements of the Earth's geological structure, causing widespread fear and disruption in human life. In Assam, their impact is particularly profound due to the state's location in India's northeastern region, at the foothills of the Himalayas, where the Indian Plate and the Eurasian Plate constantly collide. This collision generates significant stress beneath Assam's surface, leading to a high likelihood of earthquakes, which have historically caused devastating events, such as the 1897 earthquake of magnitude 8.1 and the 1950 earthquake of magnitude 8.6, profoundly impacting Assam's society, economy, and environment.

Geographically, Assam falls under India's Seismic Zone V, the most vulnerable category, where tectonic plate movements cause earthquakes ranging from minor to major, posing threats to life, property, and development. In recent years, the frequency of earthquakes in Assam has increased. In 2021, a significant earthquake of magnitude 6.4 struck, and more recently, on September 14, 2025, an earthquake of magnitude 5.8, originating in Udalguri district, caused tremors felt across Assam, the Northeast, and neighboring countries. This event instilled fear among the populace and underscored the need for preparedness. From a future perspective, to ensure a resilient Assam where the impact of earthquakes can be minimized, it is imperative to focus on raising awareness, improving construction standards, implementing community-based planning, and strengthening government initiatives to equip Assam's people to face this disaster. T

his article delves into the nature of earthquakes, Assam's geological conditions, the impacts of historical and recent events, their socio-economic consequences, and strategies for future preparedness to enhance public awareness and pave the way for sustainable development. Through this analysis, efforts are made to embrace earthquakes as an inevitable reality and devise strategies to mitigate their effects, fostering a safer and more prosperous future for Assam. Understanding the potential for earthquakes can ensure not only individual safety but also societal stability, laying the foundation for long-term development. Assam's geographical features, such as the Brahmaputra River valley and hilly regions, amplify earthquake impacts, triggering secondary disasters like floods and landslides. Therefore, future planning must consider these factors to enable Assam's people to coexist with these natural forces and build a resilient society.

To understand the nature of earthquakes, one

must grasp the Earth's geological structure, where the crust is divided into several large tectonic plates that are constantly in motion, colliding, diverging, or sliding past each other. This movement releases accumulated stress, resulting in earthquakes. In Assam's case, the collision between the Indian and Eurasian Plates has given rise to the Himalayas, making the region prone to frequent tectonic activity. This activity activates fault lines such as the Main Frontal Thrust, Main Boundary Thrust, and Main Central Thrust, releasing stress and triggering earthquakes. The Kopili Fault, stretching 300 kilometers in length and 50 kilometers in width from western Manipur to the borders of Bhutan, Arunachal Pradesh, and Assam, is a significant contributor to seismic activity. Its strike-slip faulting mechanism causes earthquakes ranging from minor to major, such as the 2021 magnitude 6.4 earthquake in Sonitpur, associated with this fault. The presence of alluvial soil around this fault amplifies seismic waves, increasing earthquake intensity.

The stress accumulated beneath Assam's surface can result in earthquakes exceeding magnitude 7 on the Richter scale, which are highly destructive. Despite the difficulty of predicting earthquakes due to the region's geological complexity, research by institutions like the Geological Survey of India can identify potential fault lines and strengthen monitoring systems. The primary reason for Assam's heightened seismic risk is the steady movement of tectonic plates, colliding at a rate of a few centimeters per year, generating stress that causes not only earthquakes but also secondary phenomena like landslides and floods, further impacting Assam's agriculture and economy.

The Kopili Fault's activity has led to significant events like the 1869 earthquake of magnitude 7.8 and the 1943 earthquake of magnitude 7.3, highlighting its risk. Recent studies indicate that liquefaction in this fault zone exacerbates earthquake impacts. Understanding this nature fosters public awareness and clarifies the need for preparedness, which can reduce future damage. Although predicting earthquakes remains challenging due to geological complexities, research and monitoring can aid in risk management. Assam's seismic activity, driven by tectonic movements, necessitates constant vigilance, and future planning must consider these factors to adopt a path of sustainable development, ensuring public safety.

Assam's history is marked by a long and destructive tradition of earthquakes that have transformed lives and societal structures. The June 12, 1897, earthquake, with a magnitude of 8.1, originating in the Shillong Plateau, affected areas as far as Kolkata, resulting in 1,542 deaths. In Shillong,

all stone buildings collapsed, and landslides in Sohra claimed 600 lives. This earthquake altered Assam's geological structure, uplifting the Shillong Plateau by 11 meters and destroying the Assam-Bengal Railway, halting economic activities and triggering floods in the Brahmaputra River. The August 15, 1950, earthquake, with a magnitude of 8.6 near the Assam-Tibet border, caused 4,800 deaths, altered the Brahmaputra's course, triggered floods, and severely impacted Assam's economy. Villages were submerged due to riverbank erosion, and agricultural lands were destroyed. These historical earthquakes have taught Assam's people to remain vigilant, emphasizing the importance of learning from the past for future planning to strengthen society. Other events, such as the 1930 and 1947 earthquakes, further underscore the region's seismic vulnerability and long-term impacts on society, economy, and environment, including altered river courses, reduced soil fertility, and threatened livelihoods, reshaping Assam's economic structure. Historical data suggests that Assam's seismic cycle may recur, necessitating preparedness to minimize future damage. While these disasters instill fear, they also foster collective resilience, laying the foundation for long-term stability.

The impact of earthquakes extends beyond physical damage, such as building collapses and ground fissures, to profound social, economic, psychological, and environmental consequences that affect Assam's entire framework. A major earthquake disrupts livelihoods, leaving people with long-term trauma, such as fear and anxiety, lowering their quality of life. Environmentally, earthquakes cause deforestation, landslides, and waterbody degradation, impacting biodiversity. In regions like Assam, they trigger secondary disasters like floods, amplifying damage. Analyzing these impacts highlights the need for comprehensive preparedness, addressing not only physical but all aspects, fostering public awareness as a key to reducing future damage. These multifaceted impacts offer an opportunity to strengthen Assam's society through proper planning, learning from disasters to enhance social stability, and improving the economy and society in the long term. In Assam's agriculture-based economy, earthquakes threaten food security and exacerbate mental health issues, delaying recovery. A holistic planning approach is essential to protect the quality of life.

In recent years, the frequency of earthquakes in Assam has risen, underscoring the need for public awareness. On April 28, 2021, a magnitude 6.4 earthquake struck Sonitpur, linked to the Kopili Fault, causing two deaths due to cardiac arrest, several injuries, and landslides, exposing the vul-

nerability of Assam's infrastructure. On September 14, 2025, a magnitude 5.8 earthquake in Udalguri caused widespread fear and cracked walls in several districts. Between 2020 and 2025, Assam recorded 31 earthquakes, with significant events up to magnitude 5.5. In 2024, 78 earthquakes occurred in Assam, the highest in the Northeast, with 61 in March, 39 in August, and 38 in September. These events highlight the ongoing seismic activity and the need for preparedness.

The February 27, 2025, earthquake of magnitude 5.0, linked to the Kopili Fault, was related to the 2021 Sonitpur event, indicating the fault's activity and potential for more severe earthquakes, emphasizing the importance of disaster management. These events keep Assam's populace alert, but learning from the past and improving planning can reduce impacts. Recent history portrays earthquakes as a persistent challenge, necessitating long-term planning to enhance infrastructure and societal resilience. The increased frequency, driven by the Kopili Fault's activity, impacts economic activities and highlights the need for better monitoring and awareness to mitigate damage.

Preparing for future earthquakes in Assam requires a multifaceted approach, with infrastructure improvement being paramount. Most buildings in Assam, constructed using outdated methods, are not earthquake-resistant. Constructing homes, schools, hospitals, and bridges using modern technology, adhering to the Indian Standards Bureau's guidelines, is crucial to reduce damage. The Assam government has formulated policies for earthquake-resistant construction, but stricter enforcement is needed, including retrofitting existing structures, especially in urban areas like Guwahati, where riverbank erosion and landslides risks must be considered.

Training local builders and engineers in earthquake-resistant techniques can enhance construction quality, saving lives and reducing rebuilding costs. Government policies, coupled with public cooperation, can ensure success, and incorporating seismic risks into infrastructure development can foster a resilient future. Unplanned construction and riverbank erosion exacerbate earthquake impacts, necessitating eco-friendly construction to strengthen infrastructure, minimize future damage, and sustain Assam's development.

Public awareness and education are critical to earthquake preparedness, addressing the lack of knowledge about safe behavior during earthquakes in both rural and urban areas. Regular earthquake drills and awareness programs in schools can educate children, while community-based initiatives can teach techniques like "Drop, Cover, and Hold." The Assam government's

The Conclave 2025: North East's problems, possibilities, and a national dialogue

The North East of India has always occupied a paradoxical position in the national imagination. Rich in natural resources, blessed with unmatched biodiversity, endowed with cultural diversity and heritage, it is at once a land of possibilities and persistent problems. To convert those possibilities into real resources, and to address long-standing challenges through meaningful debate, requires the creation of appropriate forums. It was with this vision that Pratinid Media Network conceptualized The Conclave. Over the years, the platform has evolved into one of the most significant intellectual and policy-oriented events dedicated to Assam and the wider North East.

In 2025, the Sadin-Pratinid Group hosted the fourth edition of The Conclave at The Ashok, New Delhi, on September 14 and 15. Spanning two days, the event aimed to bring together diverse voices—political leaders, academicians, spiritual figures, cultural icons, doctors, economists, and social activists—to deliberate on the present realities and future potential of the region. The opening day itself saw seven discussion sessions that explored pressing issues of security, economy, culture, politics, and health.

The inaugural ceremony carried a symbolic gravitas. Spiritual guru and founder of the Art of Living movement, Gurudev Sri Sri Ravi Shankar, officially inaugurated The Conclave 2025 by lighting a ceremonial lantern. The moment, assisted by Pratinid Media Network Chairman Jayanta Baruah, was accompanied by the National Anthem and an audio-visual presentation tracing the journey of the media network from its inception to its current stature.

In his welcome address, Jayanta Baruah made it clear that The Conclave is not merely an event, but an evolving revolution for the North East. He asserted that the platform's objectives were rooted in simplicity and strength: to empower Assam and the North East by creating a national platform for its voices. The presence of Sri Sri Ravi Shankar elevated the moment further. Describing the region as a sacred space, he lauded Pratinid Media Network for its courage to bring authentic news and for providing the North East with visibility at the national level. "News must be alive, only then does it have life," he said, urging conservation of the North East's natural and cultural wealth while emphasizing that India's development would remain incomplete without the progress of its seven sister states.

Borders, Security and Geopolitical Complexities

The first discussion of the day, titled North East and Borders, highlighted the region's geostrategic importance and vulnerabilities. Retired Lt. Gen. Rana Pratap Kalita, Professor Amarjit Singh of Jamia Millia Islamia, and Mirza Zulfiqar Rahman, Visiting Associate Fellow at the Institute of Chinese Studies, participated in the session moderated by journalist Mrinal Talukdar.

Lt. Gen. Kalita noted how developments in neighboring Bangladesh, Myanmar, and Nepal directly influence the North East. The

porous nature of borders has encouraged migration, creating social and ethnic tensions. He argued that border management must be restructured with smart technology, AI-driven systems, and greater deployment of security personnel.

Professor Amarjit Singh described the region as both a challenge and an opportunity, surrounded by multiple international borders that make it central to South and Southeast Asian geopolitics. Youth unemployment and frustration, he warned, risk fueling instability in both neighboring nations and within the North East itself.

Mirza Zulfiqar Rahman characterized the region as a "critical international border zone of India," a vital hub in the Asia-Pacific. He acknowledged improvements in connectivity but stressed that stability and prosperity would ultimately depend on diplomatic and economic ties with neighboring countries.

Culture, Entrepreneurship, and the Film Industry

The second session turned to softer, yet equally vital themes: cinema, culture, and entrepreneurship. Bollywood actor Suniel Shetty shared his personal journey, reflecting on the struggles and resilience that defined his career. In conversation with Pratinid Media Network's Managing Director Rishi Baruah, he emphasized the importance of remaining rooted in cultural traditions.

Shetty spoke warmly about the North East's ability to live its culture rather than merely display it, drawing parallels with his own South Indian heritage. "Staying connected to our roots is the beauty of our country," he said, adding that even his young grandson is being raised within cultural practices. The actor's reflections connected cinema, entrepreneurship, and identity, reminding the audience that creativity and rootedness can co-exist with global ambitions.

Politics and the Road to 2026

The third session, 2026 Assam Assembly Elections, introduced a sharper political tone. Moderated by Pratinid Time Chief Editor Nitumoni Saikia, the discussion featured Assam Pradesh Congress President and MP Gaurav Gogoi.

Gogoi was candid in his criticism of the ruling BJP, challenging Prime Minister Narendra Modi to clarify whether earlier promises on granting tribal status to six ethnic groups within six months were genuine commitments or mere rhetoric. He recalled the legacy of his late father, former Chief Minister Tarun Gogoi, as one of inclusive governance, rural upliftment, and strengthening of public health and education.

He further accused the BJP government of neglecting ethnic issues, failing to adequately address the crisis in Manipur, and allowing essential services like health and education to decline despite expansion in medical colleges. Gogoi's remarks underscored the Congress's focus on listening to the people and rebuilding trust in governance ahead of the 2026 polls.

Economy and Commerce in a National

Framework

Commerce and industry came under focus in the fourth session, which featured Union Minister Piyush Goyal. Moderated by Rishi Baruah, the discussion traced India's economic trajectory under the Narendra Modi government.

Goyal asserted that India's economy had made a remarkable recovery since the turbulence of 2012. He praised reforms such as GST and inflation management, claiming that inflation under the current government was historically low compared to the Congress-led UPA era. He also emphasized the government's close attention to essential commodity prices, citing regular reviews chaired by the Prime Minister.

For the North East, Goyal painted a picture of unprecedented progress in infrastructure and connectivity, with railway and highway linkages reaching every state capital. He reiterated Modi's belief that India cannot progress without the North East and projected India as a \$30 trillion economy by 2047, driven by farmers, artisans, youth, and startups.

Cancer and Healthcare Realities

The fifth session shifted the discussion towards public health, specifically cancer and its care. Chaired by Pratinid Time's Executive Editor Sonit Kumar Bhuyan, the session brought together oncologist Dr. Tapan Saikia, specialist Dr. Arun Deka, IAS officer and activist Devashish Sharma, and cancer survivor Jeena Rajkumari.

Jeena's testimony stood out as she narrated her personal battle with cancer, underscoring the courage required to face both treatment and societal stigma. She emphasized the need for awareness and timely diagnosis. Dr. Saikia pointed to rising cancer cases, particularly breast and oral cancer in Assam, linked to alcohol, tobacco, gutkha, and dietary practices.

Dr. Deka lamented the lack of adequate palliative care and infrastructure, noting that most patients arrive at advanced stages when treatment is less effective. However, he acknowledged improvements in Assam's healthcare system, with fewer patients now compelled to seek treatment abroad. The session highlighted both the urgent challenges and gradual progress in the state's battle against cancer.

Floods, Dams, and Energy Politics

The sixth session revisited one of Assam's most enduring problems—floods and dams. Eminent geologist Bhagwat Pran Duara, Advocate Tularam Gogoi, and former NIPCO executive director Tarun Chandra Bargohain discussed the intersection of natural disasters, infrastructure, and energy politics.

Bhagwat Pran Duara traced Assam's flood problems to its geographical vulnerability, recalling how the 1950 earthquake destabilized the Arunachal mountains and altered the Brahmaputra's flow. The National Flood Commission of 1954, he noted, had proposed immediate and long-term measures, with dams emerging as the dominant solution, though often temporary.

Bargohain criticized flawed planning, pointing out how infrastructure projects ignored local conditions and exacerbated risks. "How long will we continue to compete with the Himalayas?" he asked, arguing that many dams were ill-conceived.

Advocate Tularam Gogoi highlighted the fierce agitation against the Lower Subansiri Hydropower Project and the unresolved safety concerns that remain despite 17 expert committees. His remarks reflected the deep public mistrust towards dam projects in the region, where fears of displacement, ecological damage, and safety hazards persist.

An Open Debate on Politics and Governance

The day concluded with an open discussion featuring Rajya Sabha MP Sanjay Singh of the Aam Aadmi Party. In a candid conversation moderated by Rishi Baruah, Singh revisited AAP's journey from a grassroots movement to political power in Delhi.

He accused the BJP of conspiring against AAP leaders through misuse of investigative agencies and alleged that he himself had been falsely targeted. Singh defended AAP's legacy in Delhi—free electricity, water, education, healthcare, and quality public schools—while acknowledging that political conspiracies had weakened their momentum.

He spoke about his prison experiences alongside Arvind Kejriwal, who had immersed himself in biographies of Gandhi and Mandela. Singh's fiery words ended the day on a note of defiance, asserting that he would continue to criticize the government even more strongly despite attempts to silence him.

A Revolution in the Making

By the end of the first day, it was clear that The Conclave 2025 had achieved more than just debate—it had given the North East a national stage. From spiritual guidance to geopolitical analysis, from cinema to cancer care, from economic reform to environmental crisis, the sessions demonstrated the multidimensionality of the region's challenges and potential.

Union ministers, opposition leaders, spiritual teachers, cultural icons, and grassroots activists all contributed to a single overarching narrative: the North East is indispensable to India's future. Jayanta Baruah's words summed it up aptly—The Conclave is not just an event, but a revolution. By bringing the voices of Assam and the North East into the national conversation, Pratinid Media Network is not only redefining regional discourse but also reinforcing the idea that India's unity lies in respecting its diversity.

The second day of The Conclave promised to carry the conversation further, but even the first day had already marked a watershed moment. For a region often overlooked in the corridors of Delhi, The Conclave 2025 at The Ashok was more than a gathering. It was a declaration that the North East, with all its problems and possibilities, must be placed at the heart of India's destiny. (The writer can be reached at dipakkurmigpltd@gmail.com)

Earthquakes and the Future of Assam

Aapda Mitra scheme trains volunteers to respond during disasters, and enhancing emergency services like fire, medical, and rescue teams is essential. Awareness fosters confidence and reduces impacts. Tailoring programs to Assam's diverse communities using local languages and cultures can boost participation, empowering society to handle disasters. Community-based disaster management committees in villages can address local issues, enhancing Assam's disaster resilience.

Environmental protection is a vital aspect of earthquake preparedness. Deforestation and unplanned use of forests, rivers, and waterbodies increase earthquake impacts, with deforestation raising landslide risks and unplanned construction exacerbating floods. Adopting sustainable development policies, conserving forests, and using eco-friendly construction can reduce risks. Community cooperation in environmental protection can improve living standards and mitigate earthquake impacts, protecting biodiversity and the economy. Stricter forest conservation policies and planned construction to protect riverbanks can reduce secondary disasters, ensuring a balanced environment.

Improving earthquake prediction and warning systems is essential for Assam's future. Modern technology can monitor faults to identify high-risk areas, and coordination between the Geological Survey of India and local administration can strengthen warning systems. Public awareness of alerts enables timely action, saving lives. Installing seismic sensors in areas like the Kopili Fault can improve prediction and reduce after-shock impacts. Local community involvement is crucial, leveraging indigenous knowledge for planning.

Training youth as volunteers can aid rescue efforts, and community-based committees can address local challenges, enhancing disaster management. The government's role is pivotal, requiring strict policies, awareness campaigns, and disaster funding to improve services. Research investment can enhance prediction, and private-sector collaboration can advance efforts, ensuring a safer future. The Assam government's initiatives are strengthening local capacity, and expanding such projects will make disaster management more effective.

In conclusion, earthquakes are an inevitable part of Assam's reality, but awareness and preparedness can mitigate their impact. Infrastructure, awareness, environmental protection, and government efforts can ensure a safer future, with community cooperation fostering sustainable development. By addressing these challenges, Assam's people can minimize the damage caused by earthquakes and build a resilient society.

# India's economic playbook: GST and reforms in Trump times

By: Satyabrata Borah

In the wake of India's transformative Goods and Services Tax (GST) reforms, dubbed GST 2.0, the nation stands at a critical juncture. With global economic headwinds intensifying, particularly due to the imposition of 50% tariffs on Indian exports by the United States under President Donald Trump, India must act swiftly to bolster its economic resilience. These tariffs, introduced in late August 2025 as a response to India's continued oil purchases from Russia, have disrupted India's export sector, affecting industries such as textiles, auto parts, and industrial machinery. The United States remains India's largest trading partner, and the tariffs pose a significant challenge to economic growth. However, India's economy has demonstrated remarkable strength, growing at 7.8% in the first quarter of fiscal year 2026, according to government data. The GST reforms, effective from September 22, 2025, have simplified the tax structure into two primary slabs of 5% and 18%, with a 40% slab for luxury and sin goods, aiming to boost domestic consumption and ease the burden on households. While these reforms are a significant step, they alone cannot fully counter the external pressures of global trade disruptions and tariff wars. To maintain its trajectory as one of Asia's fastest-growing economies, India must pursue a broader set of reforms to address structural bottlenecks, enhance competitiveness, and cushion the impact of external shocks. Drawing on insights from experts like Amitabh Kant, former CEO of NITI Aayog, and other economic analyses, this article outlines ten critical reforms India needs to implement in these challenging times.

India must prioritize reducing the high cost of logistics, which currently accounts for 13-14% of GDP, significantly higher than the 8-9% in developed economies. Inefficient logistics inflate

the cost of doing business, making Indian goods less competitive globally. Investments in modernizing transportation infrastructure, such as expanding dedicated freight corridors, upgrading ports, and streamlining last-mile connectivity, are essential. Digital platforms integrating logistics networks can further reduce delays and costs, enabling small and medium enterprises to compete effectively in domestic and international markets.

Power sector reforms are crucial to lower operational costs for businesses. India's industrial electricity tariffs are among the highest in Asia, driven by inefficiencies in state-owned distribution companies and reliance on costly imported coal. Accelerating the transition to renewable energy, particularly solar and wind, can reduce costs while aligning with global sustainability goals. Privatizing distribution networks and enforcing stricter financial discipline on state utilities will improve reliability and affordability, making Indian manufacturing more competitive.

Land acquisition remains a significant hurdle for industrial and infrastructure projects. Lengthy approval processes and disputes over land ownership increase project costs and deter investment. Streamlining land acquisition through a transparent, digitized land registry system and time-bound clearance mechanisms can unlock vast tracts of land for industrial use. States must also be incentivized to reform land policies, ensuring alignment with national economic goals.

Bureaucratic red tape continues to stifle business efficiency. Despite improvements in ease of doing business rankings, India's regulatory environment remains cumbersome, particularly for small businesses. Simplifying licensing, reducing compliance burdens, and digitizing administrative processes can create a more business-friendly ecosystem. A single-window clearance system, fully implemented across states, would significantly

reduce delays and corruption. Judicial reforms are critical to enforce contracts and resolve disputes swiftly. India's judicial system is overburdened, with millions of pending cases delaying business resolutions. Establishing dedicated commercial courts with strict timelines for case disposal and promoting alternative dispute resolution mechanisms, such as arbitration, can enhance investor confidence. Training judges in commercial law and leveraging technology for case management will further expedite processes.

The manufacturing sector requires a sustained push to create high-quality jobs and drive long-term consumption. India's ambition to become a global manufacturing hub is challenged by high input costs and inadequate infrastructure. Incentives for advanced manufacturing, such as electronics and semiconductors, coupled with skill development programs, can position India as a viable alternative to China in global supply chains. Policies like the Production Linked Incentive scheme should be expanded to include more sectors, with a focus on export-oriented industries.

Disinvestment of public sector enterprises must be accelerated. Many state-owned companies operate inefficiently, draining public resources. Privatizing non-strategic enterprises, such as certain public sector banks and manufacturing units, can unlock capital for infrastructure and social welfare programs. A clear roadmap for disinvestment, with transparent bidding processes, will signal India's commitment to market-driven reforms.

Labor market reforms are essential to balance flexibility with worker protections. While recent labor codes have consolidated regulations, their implementation varies across states. Uniform adoption of these codes, coupled with incentives for formalizing the workforce, can boost productivity and attract investment. Simultaneously, expanding social security nets for informal workers will ensure inclusive growth, addressing the needs of India's vast labor force.

Agricultural reforms must be prioritized to enhance rural incomes and stimulate demand. Despite contributing significantly to GDP, agriculture suffers from low productivity and fragmented markets. Scaling up digital platforms like e-NAM (National Agriculture Market) to

connect farmers directly with buyers can reduce intermediaries and increase profits. Investments in cold storage, irrigation, and climate-resilient crops will further boost productivity, supporting rural consumption and reducing the urban-rural economic divide.

India must invest heavily in innovation and technology to stay competitive in a rapidly changing global economy. Research and development spending remains low, at less than 1% of GDP. Increasing public and private investment in emerging technologies, such as artificial intelligence, green energy, and biotechnology, can drive productivity gains. Establishing innovation hubs and providing tax incentives for startups will foster a culture of entrepreneurship, positioning India as a leader in high-tech industries.

These reforms, while ambitious, are not without challenges. The GST 2.0 reforms, which reduced tax rates on consumer durables from 28% to 18% and processed foods from 12% to 5%, are expected to boost GDP by 0.6-1.2%, according to analysts. However, they also risk short-term revenue losses for states, which must be offset through improved tax compliance and economic growth. The tariffs imposed by the United States, affecting over half of India's exports, threaten industries like textiles and auto parts, which employ millions. Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman has emphasized that the government is committed to supporting exporters through targeted relief measures, but these must be complemented by structural reforms to enhance competitiveness.

The global economic landscape, marked by volatility and protectionism, demands that India move beyond incremental progress. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's strategic response to the tariffs, through GST reforms and a focus on domestic consumption, has been lauded as a bold counterpunch. By reducing taxes on everyday goods like soaps,

electronics, and small cars, the government has put more money in the hands of consumers, particularly the middle class and rural populations. This approach aligns with the festive season, starting with Navratri, to maximize consumption during a period of high spending. However, as Amitabh Kant notes, steady progress alone will not suffice in the face of global headwinds. India must shift key policies from the planning stage to implementation, ensuring that reforms are not derailed by bureaucratic inertia or political resistance.

Critics argue that the GST reforms, while beneficial for consumers, may not fully offset the export losses from tariffs. India's export competitiveness in the United States, its largest market, is at risk, particularly for labor-intensive sectors. To address this, the government must diversify export markets, strengthening trade ties with regions like the European Union, Southeast Asia, and Africa. Free trade agreements, negotiated swiftly and strategically, can open new avenues for Indian goods, reducing reliance on the U.S. market.

India's economic resilience, demonstrated over the past five years through global shocks, provides a strong foundation. Dr Arvind Virmani of NITI Aayog projects a 6.5% GDP growth for fiscal year 2026, supported by GST 2.0 and income tax reforms. Yet, forecasts from BMI, a Fitch Solutions company, suggest growth may slow to 5.8% in 2025-26 and 5.4% in 2026-27 due to tariff impacts, underscoring the urgency of broader reforms. By addressing logistics, power, land, bureaucracy, judiciary, manufacturing, disinvestment, labor, agriculture, and innovation, India can not only counter external pressures but also solidify its position as a global economic powerhouse. The path forward requires bold execution, stakeholder collaboration, and a relentless focus on implementation to ensure that India's economic potential is fully realized in these turbulent times.

By: Diganta Barooah

Gita is a light house for many generations for its emotional, intellectual and spiritual development. It gives invaluable contribution to the Indian philosophy and it is considered to be the essence of Upanishads. In modern time human beings are living in stressful conditions due, to unlimited desires, high ambitions, material comforts and unnecessary competitions. They do not realize that this material comfort will never make them happy since then they run behind it and ultimately lose their peace of mind. Unhappy and unhealthy mind creates many health problems, mental disorders and chronic diseases. Bhagwad Gita teaches us how to live peaceful and stress free life.

Mentally healthy man creates healthy Society. Even mindedness is the best solution to overcome the critical condition. Intolerance, anger, anxiety, greed, ego, lust, these are the enemies of human beings. We can control them with the help of teaching of Gita. Gita is a light house for many generations for its emotional, intellectual and spiritual. development. It gives invaluable. Sir Charles Wilkins, Warren Hastings, the first Governor General of India declared in the preface of the English edition of Gita that "the Writer of the Indian philosophies will survive, when the British domination in India shall long have ceased to exist and when the sources which is yielded of wealth and power are lost to remembrance " Since then many a thinker and poet in the west has sung the praises of the Gita." Western thinker realizes that few religious books are there in the world which appeals to modern mind. Gita is one of them. In modern time human beings are living in stressful conditions due ambitions to unlimited desires, high ambitions, material comforts and unnecessary competitors.

They do not realize that this material comfort will never make them happy even if they run behind it and ultimately they lose their peace of mind. BhagwadGita is the conversation between Lord Shrikrishna and his devotee Arjuna. When Arjuna saw his relatives, friends respected elders and teachers on the battlefield he became overwhelmed with compassion and said to Lord Krishna - " Being my relatives present before me in such a fighting Spirit, I feel the limbs of my body quivering and my mouth drying up, my bow is slipping from my hands I am unable to stand and my mind is reeling. Seeing Arjun full of compassion Shrikrishna said, "Give up such petty weakness of heart and arise."

"Klyabyam Ma Smagamh Parthnautatwayupadyate A KshudramHrudaysadayadaurbalyamtyaktv otishthaparantap"

Arjuna doesn't want to counterattack his respected grandfather Bhisma and Guru Dronacharya. He was very much confused about his duties and asked Krishna to enlighten him - "I am your disciple please teach me, what is the best for me. Shrikrishna was a friend, Philosopher and guide of Arjuna. He teaches to Arjuna, what are the duties of Kshatriya? He should perform his duties with nonattachment. Lord Krishna teaches Arjuna and through him to all of us. Swami Vivekananda had explained one verse of Gita as a Mantra :

"Ashochyanvashochasuum' (" you are worrying unnecessarily.") This when it is used as a Mantra can save us from endless worries and anxieties. Krishna's timeless teachings, drawn primarily from the Bhagavad Gita and the Mahabharata, offer practical wisdom for navigating the complexities of modern life. Rather than existing solely as ancient religious texts, these lessons provide a framework for personal growth, ethical conduct, and finding purpose in a chaotic world.

Central concepts and their modern relevance

## 1. The importance of dharma (righteous duty)

The lesson : In the Bhagavad Gita, Krishna advises the warrior Arjuna to perform his dharma, or righteous duty, without hesitation, even when faced with difficult circumstances.

Modern application : This teaching encourages individuals to act according to their responsibilities and core values, whether in their personal or professional lives. It provides a blueprint for ethical living and making decisions based on principle rather than convenience.

## 2. The principle of selfless action (Karma Yoga)

The lesson : Krishna emphasizes performing one's duties with full effort but without attachment to the results. He states, "You have a right to perform your prescribed duties, but you are not entitled to the fruits of your actions".

Modern application : In today's high-stress, outcome-driven society, this lesson is a powerful antidote to anxiety and burnout. By focusing on the process and our efforts rather than obsessing over success or failure, we can find greater fulfillment and inner peace. This concept is especially relevant for students and professionals facing intense pressure to achieve.

## 3. Managing the mind (Jnana Yoga and meditation)

The lesson : Krishna teaches that the mind can be either our best friend or our worst enemy. He encourages the pursuit of knowledge and the practice of self-control to achieve a focused and tranquil mind.

Modern application : In an age of digital distraction and rising mental health challenges, Krishna's teachings on mindfulness and meditation are more relevant than ever. Practices that help still the mind are crucial for managing emotions, enhancing concentration, and improving overall mental well-being.

## 4. The nature of the self (Atman)

The lesson : A fundamental teaching is the distinction between the temporary physical body and the eternal soul (Atman). Krishna reminds Arjuna that the soul cannot be killed and that worldly events are fleeting.

Modern application : Understanding the impermanence of life helps individuals develop resilience and emotional stability. By looking beyond material existence, one can maintain equanimity in the face of life's inevitable challenges, embracing change with grace.

## 5. Leadership and emotional intelligence

The lesson : Krishna's multifaceted role as a diplomat, charioteer, and advisor in the Mahabharata exemplifies effective leadership. He guided with wisdom, integrity, empathy, and strategic vision.

Modern application : Managers and leaders can learn from his example by practicing humility, listening actively, motivating their teams, and acting with integrity. Krishna's balancing of mentorship, empathy, and decisive action offers a powerful model for navigating complex professional environments.

## 6. Universal compassion and connection

The lesson : Krishna emphasizes the interconnectedness of all beings and the importance of treating everyone with equality, compassion, and respect. His relationships, including his profound friendship with the impoverished Sudama, demonstrate this universal love.

Modern application : In a world still grappling with social divisions and prejudice, these teachings promote inclu-

sivity and brotherhood. His life serves as a reminder to value others based on their character, not their status, and to cultivate kindness in all interactions. Sri Krishna spells out the purpose his incarnation in Gita as "to establish Dharma"(Dharma sansthaapanaarthaaya ). In the Sangh Pararthana recited in every Shakha, Karyakartas say that we are organizing to protect Dharma (kritvaa asmad dharma rakhshanam). In a way, we are only instruments in fulfilling the mission of Sri Krishna. Krishna's life can be a beacon of light for us walking in this path.

Rama and Krishna – most worshipped avatars:

Many are the incarnations of God. But Sri Rama and Sri Krishna are the most worshipped because their lives present the situations that we encounter in our own lives. They embodied the ideals in life by following which we all can enrich our own lives. Sri Rama's image brings in our mind a sense of awe and respect. His personality is tall and magnanimous. Whereas, Sri Krishna's personality has two sides. He is at once very extra-ordinary, superhuman and at once he is that adorable child from next-door, enchanting and playful. Every mother can see Krishna in her own child.



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India must invest heavily in innovation and technology to stay competitive in a rapidly changing global economy. Research and development spending remains low, at less than 1% of GDP. Increasing public and private investment in emerging technologies, such as artificial intelligence, green energy, and biotechnology, can drive productivity gains. Establishing innovation hubs and providing tax incentives for startups will foster a culture of entrepreneurship, positioning India as a leader in high-tech industries.

These reforms, while ambitious, are not without challenges. The GST 2.0 reforms, which reduced tax rates on consumer durables from 28% to 18% and processed foods from 12% to 5%, are expected to boost GDP by 0.6-1.2%, according to analysts. However, they also risk short-term revenue losses for states, which must be offset through improved tax compliance and economic growth. The tariffs imposed by the United States, affecting over half of India's exports, threaten industries like textiles and auto parts, which employ millions. Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman has emphasized that the government is committed to supporting exporters through targeted relief measures, but these must be complemented by structural reforms to enhance competitiveness.

The global economic landscape, marked by volatility and protectionism, demands that India move beyond incremental progress. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's strategic response to the tariffs, through GST reforms and a focus on domestic consumption, has been lauded as a bold counterpunch. By reducing taxes on everyday goods like soaps,

electronics, and small cars, the government has put more money in the hands of consumers, particularly the middle class and rural populations. This approach aligns with the festive season, starting with Navratri, to maximize consumption during a period of high spending. However, as Amitabh Kant notes, steady progress alone will not suffice in the face of global headwinds. India must shift key policies from the planning stage to implementation, ensuring that reforms are not derailed by bureaucratic inertia or political resistance.

Critics argue that the GST reforms, while beneficial for consumers, may not fully offset the export losses from tariffs. India's export competitiveness in the United States, its largest market, is at risk, particularly for labor-intensive sectors. To address this, the government must diversify export markets, strengthening trade ties with regions like the European Union, Southeast Asia, and Africa. Free trade agreements, negotiated swiftly and strategically, can open new avenues for Indian goods, reducing reliance on the U.S. market.

India's economic resilience, demonstrated over the past five years through global shocks, provides a strong foundation. Dr Arvind Virmani of NITI Aayog projects a 6.5% GDP growth for fiscal year 2026, supported by GST 2.0 and income tax reforms. Yet, forecasts from BMI, a Fitch Solutions company, suggest growth may slow to 5.8% in 2025-26 and 5.4% in 2026-27 due to tariff impacts, underscoring the urgency of broader reforms. By addressing logistics, power, land, bureaucracy, judiciary, manufacturing, disinvestment, labor, agriculture, and innovation, India can not only counter external pressures but also solidify its position as a global economic powerhouse. The path forward requires bold execution, stakeholder collaboration, and a relentless focus on implementation to ensure that India's economic potential is fully realized in these turbulent times.

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# China warns of countermeasures against US tariffs

### China terms as 'bullying' US call to G7, NATO to impose tariffs for importing Russian oil

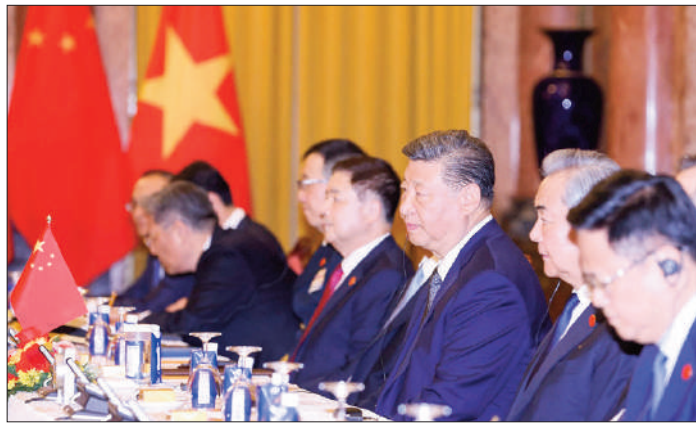
**BEIJING, Sept 15:** Beijing on Monday described the US call to G7 and NATO countries to impose tariffs against China and other countries importing Russian oil as a "typical act of unilateral bullying" and "economic coercion", and threatened countermeasures if Washington's call is heeded.

China's rejection of the US push came even as the Chinese and US delegations reconvened in Spain on Monday for the second day of their talks on economic and trade issues.

At a regular news briefing, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Lin Jian said that China's normal economic and energy cooperation with countries around the world, including Russia, is legitimate, lawful, and above reproach.

He made the remarks when asked to comment on reports that the US has asked G7 and NATO members to collectively impose additional tariffs on China for purchasing Russian oil to pressure Beijing to play a role in ending the Russia-Ukraine conflict.

"The US move is a typical act of unilateral bullying and economic coercion, which seriously under-



mines international trade rules and threatens the security and stability of global industrial and supply chains," Lin said.

"Facts have proven that coercion and pressure are unpopular and will not solve the problem. China's position on the Ukraine crisis is consistent and clear. Dialogue and negotiation are the only viable way out," he said.

US President Donald Trump on Saturday said NATO countries should impose 50 to 100 per cent tariffs on China and stop buying oil from Russia to help end the Ukraine conflict.

long arm jurisdiction," he said, adding that if China's legitimate rights and interests are harmed, it will take resolute countermeasures and firmly safeguard its sovereignty, security and development interests.

He said, "The majority of countries, including the US and Europe, continue to engage in trade with Russia. The normal exchanges and cooperation between Chinese and Russian enterprises comply with WTO (World Trade Organisation) rules and market principles, are not targeted at any third party, and should not be subject to interference or influence from any third party."

On Saturday, China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi also rebuffed the US call to G7 countries, saying that war cannot solve problems and sanctions only complicate them. While Bessent's statement did not name any country, the US has often blamed India and China for purchasing Russian oil even when there are no tariffs on Beijing for it. The Trump administration has imposed 50 per cent tariffs on India, including 25 per cent for Delhi's purchases of Russian oil. (PTT)

On the same day, Treasury Secretary Bessent, during a call with G7 finance ministers, reiterated President Trump's call to the bloc's partners about joining the US in imposing tariffs on countries purchasing oil from Russia to end the war in Ukraine.

Lin said since the very first day of the Ukraine crisis, China has been taking an objective and impartial stance, promoting peace talks.

"We firmly oppose parties directing the issue at China and firmly oppose the imposition of unlawful, unilateral sanctions and

# British politicians condemn Elon Musk's comments at anti-migrant rally



**LONDON, Sept 15:** Prime Minister Keir Starmer faced calls on Monday to sanction Elon Musk after the X and Tesla owner told an anti-immigration rally that violence is coming to Britain and they must fight or die.

Starmer denounced violence on the fringes of Saturday's 100,000 or more "Unite the Kingdom" demonstration in London organised by far-right campaigner Tommy Robinson.

Police said 26 officers were injured, four seriously, as protesters tried to breach lines separating them from a smaller anti-racist counter-demonstration. There were 25 people arrested at the event, and the Metropolitan Police said more arrests would follow.

Addressing the demonstration by video link, Musk called for the

dissolution of Parliament, an early election and a change of government in Britain. He told protesters, "violence is coming to you", and "you either fight back or you die."

Ed Davey, leader of the Liberal Democrats, the third-largest party in Britain's Parliament, urged Starmer and Conservative opposition leader Kemi Badenoch to join him in condemning Musk's attempt "to sow discord and incite violence on our streets" and interfere with British democracy.

They should "consider what sanctions Elon Musk should face as a consequence," Davey said.

Equalities Minister Jacqui Smith said Musk's remarks "were wrong and they were dangerous." Business Secretary Peter Kyle called the comments "slightly incomprehensible" and "totally inappropriate."

ate," but said the demonstration showed free speech was alive and well.

Starmer has not commented directly on Musk's comments. He wrote on X that peaceful protest "is core to our country's values. But we will not stand for assaults on police officers doing their job or for people feeling intimidated on our streets because of their background or the colour of their skin."

This is not the first time Musk, an erstwhile ally of President Donald Trump, has supported hard-right and far-right figures in Europe, including Robinson, a convicted fraudster and founder of the anti-Islam English Defence League, whose real name is Stephen Yaxley-Lennon, and the Alternative for Germany party, or AfD.

Musk is also a critic of attempts by the UK and other European governments to clamp down on harmful online content, something he argues restricts free speech.

Saturday's demonstration follows growing political concern about unauthorised immigration, especially the arrival of migrants across the English Channel in small boats. More than 30,000 people have made the dangerous crossing from France so far this year despite efforts by authorities from Britain, France and other countries to crack down on the people-smuggling gangs behind the trips. (AP)

# 3 ministers inducted by new caretaker PM Karki sworn in

**KATHMANDU, Sept 15:** Nepal President Ramchandra Paudel on Monday administered the oath of office to three ministers inducted by newly appointed caretaker Prime Minister Sushila Karki into her cabinet. Karki, 73, the Himalayan nation's first woman prime minister, assumed office on Sunday. She inducted Kulan Ghising, Rameshwor Khanal, and Om Prakash Aryal as ministers later in the day. The swearing-in ceremony of the three ministers took place at the President's Office, Sheela Niwas, Maharjunj, here.

Former finance secretary Khanal has been sworn in as Finance Minister, while former Nepal Electricity Authority managing director Ghising has taken charge of three portfolios: energy, water resources and irrigation; physical infrastructure and transport; and urban development. Aryal, an advocate, has been sworn in as Minister for Home Affairs and for Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs. Soon after the swearing-in ceremony, they assumed their respective offices.

Former chief justice Karki was appointed as the Prime Minister at the recommendation of agitating 'Gen Z' group to head the caretaker government, which is mandated to conduct fresh elections on March 5, 2026. She took oath on September 12, ending days of political uncertainty after the abrupt resignation of prime minister K P Sharma Oli following widespread anti-government protests spearheaded by 'Gen Z' group against a ban on social media and alleged corruption. (PTT)

# Protests should be peaceful: Marcos Jr

### Philippine President supports public outrage over corruption

**MANILA, Sept 15:** The Philippine president on Monday encouraged the public to express their outrage over massive corruption that has plagued flood-control projects in one of Asia's most typhoon-prone countries but said street protests should be peaceful.

President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. vowed that an investigation by an independent commission would not spare even his allies in the House of Representatives and the Senate, where several legislators have been identified and accused in televised congressional hearings of pocketing huge kickbacks, along with government engineers and construction companies.

Marcos first spoke about the corruption scandal in July in his annual state of the nation speech.

Unlike recent violent protests in Nepal and Indonesia, street rallies against alleged abuses in the Philippines have been smaller and relatively peaceful.

Outrage has largely been vented online, including by Catholic church leaders, business executives and retired generals.

A planned protest on September 21 in a pro-democracy shrine in the Manila metropolis near guarded upscale neighbourhoods, where some of the corruption suspects live in affluence, is expected to draw a larger crowd. Police forces and troops have been placed on alert.

"If I wasn't president, I might be out in the streets with them," Marcos said of anti-corruption protesters.

"Of course they are enraged, of course they are angry, I'm angry," Marcos added, calling on the protesters to demand accountability. "You let them know your sentiments, you let them know how they hurt you, how they stole from you, shout at them and do everything, demonstrate, just keep it peaceful."

But Communications Undersecretary Claire Castro said over the weekend that "people who have ill intentions and want to destabilise the government" should not exploit the public's outrage.

Defence Secretary Gilberto Teodoro, Jr. and military chief of staff Gen. Romeo Brawner Jr. issued a joint statement late Friday rejecting a call for the country's armed forces to withdraw support from Marcos in response to public outrage over the corruption scandal. They did not elaborate, but underscored



that the 160,000-member military was non-partisan, professional and "abides by the constitution through the chain-of-command."

During a recent rally, a speaker called on the military to end its loyalty to Marcos and called on Filipinos to stage a non-violent "people power" revolt similar to army-backed uprisings that ousted Ferdinand Marcos, the current president's late father and namesake, in 1986 and Joseph Estrada in 2001.

The House of Representatives and the Senate have been investigating alleged substandard and non-existent flood-control projects in separate televised inquiries. Dozens of legislators, senators, construction companies and public works engineers have been identified and accused of pocketing huge kickbacks that financed lavish lifestyles with mansions, European luxury cars and high-stakes casino gambling in a country still wracked by poverty.

The Philippines has spent an estimated 545 billion pesos (USD 9.6 billion) for thousands of flood mitigation projects in the last three years alone.

The projects were under government review to determine which ones are substandard or non-existent, as Marcos said he found during recent inspections in some flood-prone areas, including in Bulacan, a densely populated province north of Manila. (AP)

# Japan, South Korea show enduring rift over sexual slavery issue in letters to UN



**SEOUL, Sept 15:** Japan's government on Monday defended its stance on wartime sexual slavery and described South Korean court rulings ordering Japanese compensation as violations of international law, after UN investigators criticised Tokyo for failing to ensure truth-finding and reparations for the victims. In its own response to UN human rights rapporteurs, South Korea called on Japan to "squarely face up to our painful history" and cited how Tokyo's refusal to comply with court orders have denied the victims payment.

The statements underscored how the two Asian US allies still hold key differences on the issue, even as they pause their on-and-off disputes over historical grievances to stabilise bilateral relations.

A group of UN investigators in July sent letters to Japan and South Korea as well as China, the Philippines, Indonesia, the Netherlands and East Timor — where sexual slavery victims also come from — over what they described as the countries' failures to "ensure access to truth, justice, remedy, and reparations for survivors." The governments were given 60 days to respond, but only the responses from Japan and South Korea were posted on a UN website on Monday.

UN investigators had asked Japan to address various concerns, including claims that its past investigations and reparations regarding sexual slavery were insufficient, that it continues to evade state and legal responsibility, and its refusal to comply with three South Korean court rulings from 2021 to 2025 or-

dering compensation for victims.

Japan responded by reiterating its long-standing position that all compensation matters with South Korea over sexual slavery victims were settled by past agreements, including the 1965 treaty normalising relations and a separate 2015 deal aimed at resolving their differences on the issue. The Japanese statement, issued by its permanent mission in Geneva, claimed that the recent Korean court rulings violated the principle of state immunity in such lawsuits and urged Seoul to "take appropriate measures to remedy its breaches of international law as a country."

Japan in past years has strongly rejected South Korean court rulings ordering the government in Tokyo and Japanese companies to provide reparations to Korean victims of sexual slavery and also wartime forced labour, another legacy of Japan's brutal colonial rule of Korea before the end of World War II. Japan says the rulings violate its sovereign immunity and go against the 1965 treaty. South Korean courts contend that sovereign immunity does not protect foreign states from accountability for crimes against humanity or wrongful acts committed on South Korea's territory against its nationals. Following Japan's refusal to comply with the court orders, some South Korean experts and survivors, including Lee Yong-soo, have called on Tokyo and Seoul to jointly refer their sexual slavery disputes to UN's International Court of Justice, but no action yet has been taken. Historians say tens of thousands of women from around Asia, many of them Korean, were sent to front-line military brothels to provide sex to Japanese soldiers. At the time of the 2015 deal, 46 of the 239 women who registered with the Seoul government as victims were still alive in South Korea, but there are now only 6. (AP)

# China says Nvidia violated antimonopoly laws, according to preliminary investigation

**LONDON, Sept 15:** Chinese regulators said on Monday that a preliminary investigation found that chipmaker Nvidia violated the country's anti-monopoly laws. The State Administration for Market Regulation said in a one-sentence statement that it would carry out "further investigation" into Nvidia, the world's leading semiconductor manufacturer.

The statement said the investigation centred on Nvidia's purchase of network and data transmission company Mellanox Technologies.

Nvidia didn't respond immediately to a request for comment.

Regulators said last year that they were investigating the company for suspected violations stemming from the USD 6.9 billion acquisition of Mellanox in 2019.

The decision ratchets up pressure on the US as officials from Washington hold trade talks with Beijing's representatives in Spain this week.

Beijing has been tightening scrutiny of the US chip industry. On Saturday, China's Ministry of Commerce said it was carrying out an anti-dumping investigation into certain analogue IC chips imported from the US, including commodity chips that are commonly made by companies such as Texas Instruments and ON Semiconductor.

US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent is meeting Chinese Vice Premier He Lifeng in Madrid for negotiations on tariffs and national security issues related to the ownership of social media platform TikTok. The talks were scheduled from Sunday to Wednesday.

It's the fourth round of discussions after meetings in London, Geneva and Stockholm. The two governments have agreed to several 90-day pauses on a series of increasing reciprocal tariffs, staving off an all-out trade war. (AP)

# UK police arrest man on suspicion of racially motivated rape of British Sikh woman

**LONDON, Sept 15:** The UK police investigating a racially aggravated sexual assault of a Sikh woman have arrested a man on suspicion of rape.

Police said the man, in his 30s, was detained on Sunday and remains in custody as part of their enquiries into the "racially motivated rape" in Oldbury, West Midlands region of England, reported last Tuesday. The West Midlands Police said the woman, in her 20s, is continuing to receive support as the investigations continue.

"This is a significant development in the investigation, and we want to thank the community for their continuing support," said Chief Superintendent Kim Madill of Sandwell Police.

"The investigation remains ongoing and we would urge people not to speculate as we work to identify and trace all those who may have been involved," she

said. The police force also stressed the importance of allowing the judicial process to follow its course as legal proceedings are "now active" in the case, which sent shockwaves within the community.

"I am deeply shocked by the horrific attack on a young Sikh woman in Oldbury. This was an act of extreme violence but is also being treated as racially aggravated, with the perpetrators reportedly telling her that she 'does not belong here'," Preet Kaur Gill, British Sikh member of Parliament from the West Midlands region, posted on social media.

"She does belong here. Our Sikh community and every community has the right to feel safe, respected, and valued. Racism and misogyny have no place in Oldbury, or anywhere in Britain. My thoughts are with the victim, her family, and the Sikh community," she said. (PTT)

# 'Summit convened in wake of Israel's airstrikes on Doha' Pak PM Shehbaz leaves for Qatar to attend emergency meeting of Arab-Islamic nations

**ISLAMABAD, Sept 15:** Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Monday left for Qatar on a day-long visit to participate in an emergency meeting of Arab-Islamic nations in Doha to discuss a possible unified response to Israel's attack on the Hamas leadership in the Gulf country.

The summit has been convened in the wake of Israel's airstrikes on Doha on September 9 and the worsening human rights situation in Gaza. Five Hamas members and a Qatari security officer were killed in the attack.

Defence Minister Khawaja Asif, Information Minister Attaullah Tarar and PM's Special Assistant Tariq Fatemi are accompanying Prime Minister Shehbaz, while Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar is already in Doha.

It was Shehbaz's second visit to Qatar within a week. He travelled to Doha on Thursday to



meet Qatar's Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani and express solidarity following Tel Aviv's attacks targeting residential areas in Doha.

Several top leaders of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) member countries are expected to participate in the Doha summit. The meeting aims to send

a strong message to Israel.

Qatari Prime Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani on Sunday urged the international community to abandon its "double standards" during a closed-door meeting of Arab and Islamic foreign ministers in Doha.

"What encourages Israel to continue its behaviour is the silence of

# Trump calls slain Indian-origin motel manager 'well-respected', flags immigration issue

**HOUSTON/NEW YORK, Sept 15:** US President Donald Trump has described the Indian-origin motel manager brutally beheaded in Dallas as a "well-respected person" and said the accused in the case will be charged with first-degree murder.

Chandra Mouli "Bob" Nagamallaiah, 50, was killed last week at the Downtown Suites motel by co-worker Yordanis Cobos-Martinez, a 37-year-old undocumented Cuban immigrant with a violent criminal history.

In his first comments on the heinous killing, Trump blamed his predecessor President Joe Biden's immigration policies, calling the attacker an "illegal alien" who should have been deported.

"I am aware of the terrible reports regarding the murder of Chandra Nagamallaiah, a well-respected person in Dallas, Texas, who was brutally beheaded, in front of his wife and son, by an illegal alien from Cuba who should have never been in our country," Trump said in a post on Truth Social on Sunday. He said the criminal, who is in custody, "will be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the Law. He will be charged with murder in the first degree."

The US president added that the accused in the case was previously arrested for "terrible crimes", including child sex abuse, grand theft auto, and false imprisonment, but was released back into the homeland under "incompetent" former president Biden because Cuba did not want "such an evil person in their country."

"Rest assured, the time for being soft on these illegal immigrant criminals is over under my watch! Secretary of Homeland Security Kristi Noem, Attorney General Pam Bondi, Border Czar Tom Homan, and many others in my Administration, are doing an incredible job in making America safe again," he said. Nagamallaiah, originally from Karnataka, was attacked with a machete in the motel where he lived and worked.

Congressman Raja Krishnamoorthi said he is horrified by Nagamallaiah's brutal murder, stressing that he was a hardworking Indian-American immigrant killed in front of his wife and 18-year-old son. (PTT)

# APESA celebrates 58<sup>th</sup> Engineers' Day

Focus on deep technology, excellence, and professional reforms in Arunachal Pradesh



## HT Correspondent

**ITANAGAR, Sept 15:** The Arunachal Pradesh Engineering Service Association (APESA) celebrated the 58th Engineers' Day on Monday, September 15, 2025, with great enthusiasm and a focus on advancing engineering practices across the State.

The event was organised in line with the State Government's notification declaring Engineers' Day as an annual calendar event, following directives from the Government of India and the Government of Arunachal Pradesh as per letters Nos RW/NH-33044/56/2022 S&R (P&B) dated August 31, 2022, and GS-91/2022/248 dated September 6, 2022,

respectively. The day marks the birth anniversary of Bharat Ratna Sir Mokshagundam Visvesvaraya, a celebrated engineer and statesman, and has been observed in Arunachal Pradesh since 2022.

The theme for this year's celebration, "Deep Technology and Engineering Excellence: Driving India's Techade," guided a seminar where engineers, government officials, and academicians gathered to discuss how modern technologies can be applied to infrastructure development and service delivery.

Biyuram Wahge, minister for health & family welfare and water resource department, graced the occasion as the

chief guest.

In his address, he highlighted the vital role of engineers in project execution and urged them to uphold professionalism in their work.

He appreciated the engineering fraternity by stating, "Science is about knowing and engineering is about doing. Nature is created by God and engineers have made it convenient for human beings. From 'pin to aeroplane and phone to drones,' every advancement we witness today stems from the tireless work of engineers. They have transformed water into electricity, purified drinking water, built roads, bridges, and infrastructure, and contributed immensely to the nation's economy and development."

Responding to APESA's charter of demands, the minister assured that the State Government is supportive in principle and will consult the competent authorities to take action on key requests.

These include having technocrats lead the Works Department as Secretaries to the Government, adopting the Arunachal Pradesh Engineering Service Rules, and constructing a common Engineering Secretariat to host professional bodies such as INDEF, APESA,

IBC, IRC, and IEI.

Kaling Tayeng, IAS, Principal Secretary for Home, Border Affairs, PWD, Political and Divisional Commissioner (West), attended the event as the guest of honour.

He stressed the importance of applying deep technology practically in the field and informed engineers that the government would soon begin training newly recruited officers and engineers for better implementation of policies and programs.

Citing examples such as the Civil Secretariat's wall and the Trans Arunachal Highway stretch from Banderdewa to Papu Nallah, he reminded engineers that lapses in workmanship could affect public trust and urged them to be diligent, sincere, and committed to high-quality execution.

Er TK Tara, president of APESA, delivered the keynote address and reiterated the demands presented in the organisation's ongoing 10-point charter.

He urged the government to expedite action on critical issues such as ensuring engineers head the departments, implementing the state engineering service rules, and constructing a common secretariat for professional bodies.

He also encouraged the engineering community to self-reflect on whether projects are being executed according to approved plans and designs and called for improvements wherever gaps are found.

A major highlight of the celebrations was the felicitation of "Lifetime Achievement Awardees."

Instituted by APESA this year, the award honored retired Chief Engineers from various departments for their outstanding contributions to infrastructure and service delivery.

The awardees for 2025 included Er Bar Takum from the Department of Power, Er Robin Nani from the Public Works Department, Er Atek Miyu from the Department of Hydro Power Development, and Er Taka Tapak from the Public Health Engineering and Water Supply Department.

These awards were selected by a Screening Committee appointed by the President of APESA.

The seminar also featured presentations by esteemed academics such as Dr Ningrinla Marchang from North Eastern Regional Institute of Science and Technology (NERIST), Nirjuli; Jagdip Rahul from Rajiv Gandhi University, Doimukh; and Dr Pallabi Kalita Hui

from the National Institute of Technology (NIT), Jote.

These resource persons shared their insights on the theme of the day, highlighting the transformative potential of deep technologies in engineering.

Er Tapi Tai, secretary general of APESA, delivered the concluding remarks and emphasized the relevance of applying deep technologies, particularly drones, to the unique challenges faced by Arunachal Pradesh.

He encouraged young participants to embrace the latest technologies for the benefit of the State and the Nation.

In an official statement, the State Government expressed its commitment to supporting the engineering community and working toward fulfilling their demands.

It reaffirmed that initiatives such as Engineers' Day celebrations and related seminars are part of broader efforts to foster innovation, strengthen infrastructure, and ensure the professional growth of engineers.

The event concluded with renewed determination among the engineering fraternity to implement advanced technologies and pursue excellence for the sustainable development of Arunachal Pradesh.

## Centre, Arunachal ink pact for special development package in Siang region

Officials claim scheme will uplift quality of life

**ITANAGAR, Sept 15:** The Centre and Arunachal Pradesh government on Monday signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) for implementation of a special development package for Siang Region, marking a major step towards livelihood generation and infrastructure development in the frontier state.

The initiative is being undertaken as a pre-investment activity of the proposed Upper Siang Multipurpose Project (SUMP), an official communicate said here.

The MoU was signed in the presence of Arunachal Pradesh Chief Secretary Manish Kumar Gupta, state coordination, planning and investment commissioner Ankur Garg; secretary to the water resources, river development and ganga rejuvenation department under the union Jal Shakti ministry V L Kantha Rao; union power secretary Pankaj Agarwal, and S K Sinha, commissioner (B&B) of the ministry, respectively.

Under the package, multiple intervention areas have been identified, including livelihood activities, creation of new infrastructure facilities, and upgradation of existing assets in Siang and Upper Siang districts.

Focus sectors include animal husbandry, piggyery, fisheries, poul-



try farming, horticulture, handloom, bamboo, eco-tourism, and bee keeping.

Officials emphasised that the scheme will uplift the quality of life while strengthening the socio-economic fabric of the region.

As part of the comprehensive package, the package will also facilitate marketing and branding of local products.

Distinct identities will be created for textiles, bamboo-based goods, and other indigenous crafts, enabling artisans to reach wider markets.

Further, infrastructure support such as common facility centres, craft-based resource centres, marketing and sourcing hubs, urban haats, emporia, and raw material

depots will be established across the region.

Senior officials highlighted that the initiative reflects the Centre's commitment to foster inclusive growth and sustainable development in Arunachal Pradesh.

They added that the package represents a significant investment in the future of Siang and Upper Siang districts, aiming to empower local communities, create sustainable livelihoods, and lay the foundation for comprehensive regional development.

The initiative is expected to provide long-term socio-economic benefits while preparing the ground for the strategic Upper Siang Multipurpose Project, the communicate said. (PTI)

## Arunachal schoolgirls march 65 km to highlight teacher shortage

**ITANAGAR, Sept 15:** At least 90 students from Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya (KGBV) at Nangnyo in Pakke Kessang district of Arunachal Pradesh marched around 65 km to highlight the alleged acute shortage of teachers in their institute.

The students, in their blue school uniform, embarked on a foot march from Nyangno village on Sunday, walked the entire night and reached Lemmi, the district headquarters, this morning, an official said.

Video clips of their march at night and in the morning surfaced on social media. PTI could not independently verify the authenticity of the clips.

Led by students of Class 11 and 12, the protestors demanded immediate posting of teachers in Geography and Political Science.

The students held posters reading 'a school without a teacher (is) just a building'. They also raised slogans in support of their demand.

The school education department recruited teachers following the rally, according to an official.

The protestors claimed that they were left with no option as their repeated pleas for the subject teachers were left unanswered by the school and the higher education department officials.

"The students were protesting the acute shortage of teachers in the school," Pakke Kessang Deputy Director of School Education (DDSE) Deepak Tayeng said



on Monday. He said the students did not inform about their march to the hostel warden of the school authorities. The school's headmistress admitted there is a shortage of Geography and Political Science teachers, but it has adequate tutors for the remaining subjects.

The courses have already been completed for the half-yearly examinations, she added. Established in 2011-12, the school is being managed by an NGO, Sei Donyi Charitable Trust, and aims to provide education for girls from disadvantaged communities in educationally backward

areas.

The school, at present, has over 90 students and has a headmistress, a warden and at least 13 teachers.

The department is functioning as per norms and contacted the NGO chairman on this issue, said a senior department official.

Last month, the department had engaged two contractual teachers for the smooth functioning of the school, the official claimed.

Speaking about the shortage of teachers, the DDSE admitted that there is a shortage of subject teachers in the school.

Last month, a walk-in interview

to recruit three teachers was conducted by the DDSE office, Tayeng said, adding that they are awaiting approval from higher authorities.

The midnight march, which sent shockwaves among parents, authorities and the general public, has yielded results with the authorities saying that the department has approved the recruitment of teachers.

The DDSE said that the department has approved the appointment of a Geography and Political Science teacher after the midnight shocker. (PTI)

## Diploma in Yoga Education concludes successfully in Pasighat

Empowering youth and promoting holistic wellness

### HT Correspondent

**PASIGHAT, Sept 15:** The month-long Diploma in Yoga Education, an intensive residential training program, concluded successfully in Pasighat with a formal graduation ceremony held on Sunday, September 14 at Seva Bhawan.

The program, organised by Siang Trust under the aegis of Manipur International University (Miphil) and supported by faculty from Yog Gurukul Asom (Guwahati), witnessed the successful completion of training by eleven participants, including seven women from seven different districts of Arunachal Pradesh.

These trainees are now certified Yoga teachers, ready to promote wellness in their communities.

The rigorous curriculum offered both practical and theoretical instruction, covering human anatomy as well as Yoga practices such as Asanas (physical postures), Pranayam (breathing techniques), and Dhyana (concentration methods).

The training aimed to equip participants with comprehensive knowledge and skills to practice and teach Yoga in a structured manner, with a focus on holistic health and disease prevention.

Er Tapi Darang, MLA of the 38th Pasighat East constituency, attended the graduation ceremony as the chief guest.

In his address, he highlighted the relevance of Yoga in maintaining a healthy, peaceful, and disease-free life.

He praised the organisers for their sustained efforts in promoting Yoga and encouraged similar initiatives to enhance community well-being through traditional wellness practices.

He assured full support to the endeavors of Siang Trust, applauding their contribution to spreading awareness and training local youth.

The graduating trainees shared their experiences and expressed how the course had transformed their lifestyle, mindset, and approach to holistic health.

Many reported improved physical fit-



ness, mental resilience, and a deeper understanding of Yoga's benefits in daily life.

Bhabesh Goswami, head of Yog Gurukul Asom, Guwahati, graced the event as the special guest.

He lauded the participants' commitment and perseverance in completing the demanding program and encouraged them to use their newfound skills for community service and personal growth.

Group captain Mohonto Panging Pao, VM (Retd), President of Siang Trust, presented a detailed report on the Trust's objectives and community service initiatives since its establishment in 2018.

He emphasised the organization's efforts in promoting Yoga through various platforms, including annual diploma courses and programs conducted on the International Day of Yoga.

He highlighted the Trust's commitment to fostering wellness, reviving traditional knowledge, and empowering individuals, especially women, to lead health-focused initiatives in their communities.

The event was attended by a distin-

guished gathering of eminent personalities, including Kaling Dai (Former ZPC, East Siang), Onyok Pertin (Former Director, IPR), Saibal Bhattacharjee (Former Joint Director, Health & Family Welfare), Kaling Dai (Joint Director, Health & Family Welfare), Tajom Tasung (President, Donyi Polo Yelam Kebarang), Rumi Tasung, and Dangi Perme.

Their presence underscored the community's commitment to advancing health and wellness initiatives through Yoga.

The Diploma in Yoga Education is slated to be conducted annually, and the successful completion of this program marks a significant milestone in promoting Yoga education in Arunachal Pradesh.

By empowering local youth—particularly women—to become torchbearers of traditional wellness practices, the program is expected to have a far-reaching impact on community health, resilience, and holistic development.

The graduation ceremony celebrated not only academic achievement but also a collective step forward in strengthening wellness culture across the State.

## Financial Inclusion Camp organised at Gungu Khamir

### HT Correspondent

**SANGDUPOTA, Sept 15:** As part of the Nationwide Financial Awareness Saturation Campaign and following directions from the Department of Financial Services, New Delhi, a Financial Inclusion Camp was organised on September 15, 2025, at the Panchayat Bhawan in Gungu Khamir, Upper Balijan, Papumpare.

The camp aimed to promote financial inclusion and strengthen the reach of flagship schemes such as the Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY), Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana (PMJJBY), Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana (PMSBY), Atal Pension Yojana (APY), and the re-verification of KYC for inactive PMJDY accounts.

The event witnessed a large turnout, including villagers from the IV Upper Balijan Zilla Parishad Constituency, members of the Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRI), self-help groups (SHGs), and community bodies such as HGB/GB. The camp provided a platform for villagers to access banking services, enroll in government schemes, and update their KYC documents.

Speaking at the camp, Abhijit Majumdar, general manager, RBI Itanagar, stressed the significance of updating KYC documents, such as Voter ID, Aadhaar card, and driving license, to keep PMJDY accounts active and operational.

He elaborated on the benefits of social security schemes like PMJJBY, PMSBY, and APY, which the Central Government has introduced to provide wider coverage for the unorganized and marginalised sectors.

He explained that these schemes are essential tools to ensure financial security and resilience among vulnerable communities.

Pradeep Kumar Das, chief manager & Lead District Manager (LDM), SBI, Papumpare, addressed villagers' concerns and clarified various aspects of these schemes.

He also advised participants to exercise caution while using mobile banking, warning them against sharing OTPs or PINs

over phone calls and avoiding links received through WhatsApp or SMS that could be fraudulent.

Bank officials patiently listened to grievances raised by the villagers regarding banking services and resolved several complaints on the spot.

For complex issues that could not be addressed immediately, customers were advised to contact the bank's nodal officer and approach the RBI Banking Ombudsman if unresolved after 30 days.

The camp also featured an interactive session by the coordinator of Moneywise CRISIL Foundation, an NGO engaged by RBI and NABARD.

The coordinator explained the details of social security schemes in the local language, ensuring that villagers fully under-



stood how to access benefits and enroll in the programs.

As part of the outreach efforts, brochures and forms outlining the three social security schemes were distributed to villagers to facilitate enrollment.

During the camp, 25 beneficiaries enrolled in PMSBY, 15 beneficiaries enrolled in PMJJBY, and 25 KYC updates were successfully completed.

In an official statement, the organisers reaffirmed their commitment to spreading financial literacy and ensuring that vulnerable populations are equipped with the necessary tools and information to access government-backed financial protection schemes.

The camp was seen as a significant step toward strengthening financial inclusion and empowering rural communities to participate in formal banking and insurance systems.

## 21 farmers from Shi-Yomi undertake exposure tour

### HT Correspondent

**ITANAGAR, Sept 15:** In an effort to enhance agricultural practices and promote better livestock management, a group of 21 farmers from Shi-Yomi district recently participated in a five-day exposure tour to Upper Shillong and Guwahati.

The initiative, sponsored by the Veterinary Department, was aimed at equipping farmers with practical knowledge and advanced techniques related to cattle rearing, dairy development, and improving cattle productivity.

The exposure tour took place from September 10 to September 14 and provided the participants with an opportunity to interact with experts, study innovative farming practices, and observe modern dairy facilities.

During the visit, the farmers toured several cattle farms and dairy units in Shillong and Guwahati, where they learned about state-of-the-art equipment, feed management, disease control, and breeding methods designed to enhance livestock health and yield.

The team was led by Junter Tali, Veterinary Officer, Shi-Yomi district, who guided the farmers throughout the tour and facilitated interactions with specialists in animal husbandry.

The farmers actively engaged in discussions and shared their experiences, while also exploring avenues to implement the best practices in their own communities.

According to an official statement from the Veterinary Department, the exposure tour is part of a broader strategy to empower farmers, boost local dairy production, and ensure sustainable agricultural development.

# SC: Will set aside Bihar SIR exercise if any illegality found, can't stop SIR across country

**NEW DELHI, Sept 15:** The Supreme Court on Monday said it was presuming that the Election Commission, being a constitutional authority, is presumed to follow the law and the mandated rules.



Reforms (ADR), said that the ECI is moving ahead with the preparations for conducting the SIR exercise in other states. "We have to address the court on the legal aspect of the exercise. If it is found that there is a perversion of a constitutional scheme, we may press that this may not continue. There is no question of proceeding with other states and establishing fait accompli," he submitted. The bench told him that the court cannot stop the poll panel from conducting the SIR exercise. Advocate Vrinda Grover, appearing for some activists, said no one should be denied a right to vote because of an illegal methodology. The bench said, "Please take it from us. If we find any illegality in the methodology adopted by ECI at any stage of SIR in Bihar, the entire exercise will be set aside." Senior advocate Abhishek Singhvi, appearing for several opposition political parties, including the Congress, requested the court to take up the matter at the earliest as the ECI has announced the SIR exercise across the country. Justice Kant said, "We can't express any opinion in piecemeal. Whatever they are proposing in the

meanwhile, our judgment for Bihar SIR, will obviously have an impact." Advocate Prashant Bhushan, appearing for the Rastriya Janta Dal, alleged that the Election Commission was acting in gross violation of the rules and their own manual. "There is virtually no transparency. Their rules require that within one day objections be uploaded on their website, so that people can see who has applied for deletion, etc. This is not being followed." "They have uploaded only 30 per cent of the objections and requests for additions, etc. They are only following the court's order and not their own rules," he submitted. The bench said, "The Election Commission, being a constitutional authority, is presumed to follow the law and the mandated rules." Justice Kant said it would hear the matter in detail on October 7 and consider all legal aspects of the exercise. Advocate Ashwini Upadhyay submitted that he has filed an interlocutory application for the recall of the September 8 order, which said that the Aadhaar card

# Delhi BMW accident: Despite repeated pleas, accused took victims to hospital 19 km away

**NEW DELHI, Sept 15:** The wife of the senior government official killed in a collision between their motorcycle and a luxury car near the Delhi Cantonment Metro station had repeatedly pleaded with the accused couple to get them admitted to a nearby hospital, but to no avail, according to the FIR lodged in the case. "The lady took us to a small hospital in GTB Nagar, far from the accident site," the bereaved woman told police in a statement, which is now part of the FIR. Meanwhile, police sources said the hospital where the victim was taken was linked to the accused. "So far, we have learned that the hospital, which is almost 19 kilometres away from the accident site, is linked to the accused. We are checking and verifying all the facts," said the sources.



Van driver Mohammad Gulfam, who rushed all four injured people to the hospital, has also made a similar claim. "I was driving a loading vehicle; I stopped and rushed the injured to a hospital in Azadpur after the man and the woman in the car asked me to take them there," he told PTI. The police have contacted Gulfam to record his statement. Deputy Secretary in the Department of Economic Affairs, Navjot Singh (52), a resident of Hari Nagar, was killed in the accident on the Ring Road near the Delhi Cantonment Metro station on Sunday afternoon. His wife sustained serious injuries. They were returning home after visiting the Bangla Sahib Gurdwara. The woman, who was allegedly driving the BMW car, and her husband were also injured in the incident. The Gurugram couple was admitted to a hospital for treatment. They are in the business of manufacturing leather saddles, seats, covers, belts and other products. The police said the woman driver of the BMW was taken into custody on Monday following her discharge from the hospital. A case of culpable homicide has been registered in the matter. In her statement to police, Navjot Singh's wife, Sandeep Kaur, said, "I was constantly requesting them to take us to the nearest hospital as my husband was unconscious and needed immediate treatment. Instead, the lady took us to a small hospital in GTB Nagar. That lady told me her name was Gagan Preet Kaur." "My husband was wearing a turban at the time of the crash. But I was wearing a helmet. The crash occurred around 1 pm on Sunday," she was quoted as saying in the FIR. "When we reached near Delhi Cantonment Metro Station, a blue BMW car came from behind at high speed and hit my husband's motorcycle. My husband fell on the road and sustained very serious injuries and multiple fractures to the head, mouth and legs. I too suffered injuries and multiple fractures in the accident on my head and legs. After some time, I also fell unconscious," she said. The FIR records that the BMW was being driven by a woman with a male co-passenger. They put the injured couple into a van-type vehicle and were driven to GTB Nagar.

The police noted 1.30 pm as the time of occurrence and the spot near Metro Pillar No. 67 on Ring Road towards Naraina. Further investigation into the case is underway, the police said. On Sunday, Singh's son said his parents were returning from Bangla Sahib Gurdwara. "They were on their way to Hari Nagar via Dhaura Kuan when the incident happened. Instead of taking them to a nearby hospital, they were taken (to a hospital) nearly 22 km from the accident site. My mother suffered a head injury, even though she was wearing a helmet, and a fractured femur," he had told PTI. Videos, he also alleged negligence on the part of the hospital authorities in admitting his parents. The son claimed that his mother was made to sit in the lobby at the hospital despite her serious condition, while the husband of the BMW driver, who suffered minor injuries, was immediately admitted. "Because of this negligence and delay, my father was declared dead, and my mother kept screaming in pain," he added. The family later shifted her to Venkateshwara Hospital for better treatment. "My mother, who is a teacher, is devastated, and so are we," he said. According to the police, the luxury car and the two-wheeler involved in the collision have been seized, and a forensic examination of the accident site has been conducted. Visuals, capturing the immediate aftermath of the crash from the site of Sunday's BMW accident on Ring Road, have gone viral on social media. They show the car overturned and victims lying injured on the road. In the videos, the blue BMW can be seen turned turtle in the middle of the road, its windshield shattered and doors open. A woman, believed to be the driver, is seen struggling to pull passengers out of the mangled vehicle as passersby gather around the scene. Navjot Singh, the man who was riding the motorcycle hit by the BMW, is seen lying motionless in a pool of blood near the car on the road. His motorcycle is spotted lying nearby. Singh's wife is also visible in the videos, lying injured a short distance away from the car. Several people can be seen approaching her to check if she was conscious and able to stand. (PTI)

## Valmiki Corporation 'scam' CBI searches premises of former Karnataka minister

**NEW DELHI, Sept 15:** The CBI on Monday conducted searches at the premises of former Karnataka minister B Nagendra and 15 other locations in the state and Andhra Pradesh in connection with the Valmiki Scheduled Tribes Development Corporation 'scam', officials said. The case involves serious allegations of transferring government funds to personal accounts of Nagendra's relatives from the accounts of Karnataka Maharshi Valmiki Scheduled Tribes Development Corporation. Founded in 2006, the Valmiki Corporation was established to implement developmental schemes aimed at improving the socio-economic conditions of Scheduled Tribes communities in the state. The CBI had registered the case on a complaint from the deputy general manager of Union Bank of India, where the account of Valmiki Corporation was maintained, alleging misappropriation of over Rs 84 crore through illegal transfer and withdrawal from the accounts of the corporation between February 21, 2024 and May 06, 2024. The case had started as a bank fraud matter against Nagendra in June 2024 but during the probe the

CBI collected some records which corroborated the complaint that funds were allegedly transferred into the accounts of the former minister's sister and brother-in-law, the officials said. The CBI, which was confined to examining limited irregularities, got the clearance of the Karnataka High Court to conduct a full-fledged investigation in July. The high court ordered the state's Special Investigation Team (SIT) to transfer all case-related documents and evidence to the central agency. The high court had given orders on a petition filed by MLA Basanagouda R Patil praying in November last year for directions to the CBI to file a final report before the court, and to submit interim status reports during the pendency of the petition. Since then, the high court has been monitoring the investigation. Four status reports have so far been filed by the CBI before the high court. The agency has found instances of diversion of government funds belonging to the Scheduled Tribes Welfare Department and the Karnataka German Technical Training Institute (KGTI). Nagendra was the minister of Scheduled Tribes Welfare Department. (PTI)

## ECI has recognised Anbumani as PMK president till Aug 2026, says advocate Balu

**CHENNAI, Sept 15:** The Election Commission of India has officially recognised Dr Anbumani Ramadoss as president of the PMK till August 2026, the party spokesperson and advocate K Balu announced on Monday. So, his expulsion from the party by his father, Dr S Ramadoss, who is the founder of Pattali Makkal Katchi, on September 11, does not hold water, he indicated.

"We have received a communication from the ECI accepting the extension of Dr Anbumani's tenure as PMK president till August 2026," Balu told reporters here. The formal letter accepting the extension of term of office bearers of the PMK, as per the resolution of the party's general council convened under Anbumani's leadership on August 9 in Mahabalipuram, was received today, he said. (PTI)

NO. ACEH/CS/GAD/18/2024-25/21, NOTIFICATION  
It is for general information to all concerned that the Tender invited vide this office Press Notice No ACEH/CS/GAD/18/2024-25/11, Dated 09/06/2025 for the work "Construction of Guest House Cum Conference Hall," Hamren West Karbi Anglong is hereby cancelled as per Chief Engineer's letter No.CE/TB-II(Bldg)/79/2025-03, Dated 11.09.2025.  
Sd/-  
Additional Chief Engineer,  
P.W.D. (R&B), Hills, Assam,  
Diphu.  
DIPR /C/HLT/165/16-Sep-25

## BJP 'working like a gang': Akhilesh

**LUCKNOW, Sept 15:** Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav on Monday alleged that the BJP was "not a political party but working like a gang" as he demanded a proper investigation into the allegations against advocate Akhilesh Dubey in Kanpur. The former Uttar Pradesh chief minister was referring to the case of Kanpur lawyer Dubey who is accused of running an extortion racket by allegedly filing fake rape cases against businessmen. An SIT probe has allegedly named several police and Kanpur Development Authority (KDA) officials, with multiple FIRs filed and arrests made. "In Kanpur, such serious cases have come to light involving murders, blackmailing, fake encounters, land deals and money transactions that if they are properly investigated, the entire government will be exposed," Yadav told reporters. "Even IPS officers are involved and settlements are happening at the chief minister's residence and office. This is a new trend, a new way of running the state. "If action is taken in all these matters, the entire face of the government will be exposed. Even if only Kanpur cases are properly investigated, it will completely

expose the government showing that the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) is not a political party but a gang, operating like a gang there," the SP leader claimed. Yadav accused the BJP government of running the state "with pressure" tactics rather than by the "Constitution and law" and cited recent cases in Kaushambi and Ghazipur as examples. In a bid to woo the Vishwakarma community, Yadav announced that if voted to power in 2027, a grand golden statue of Lord Vishwakarma would be installed at the Gomti Riverfront in Lucknow. "The riverfront will become one of the most prestigious sites in the country," he said, urging the community to support his party. On the issue of employment, Yadav reiterated that his party opposed the outsourcing of jobs and would ensure permanent jobs with reservation benefits if voted to power. He also flagged the shortage of staff in state medical colleges, saying it was affecting students' education. He accused the BJP government of diverting attention from core issues such as urban flooding, stray cattle menace and "unfulfilled" Smart City promises by stoking controversies, including through "provocative" statements from seers. (PTI)

GOVERNMENT OF ASSAM  
OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR OF MEDICAL EDUCATION, ASSAM  
SIXMILE: KHANAPARA: GUWAHATI  
No. e. DME/UG/2025/663865/18  
**EDUCATIONAL NOTICE**  
**2<sup>ND</sup> ROUND ONLINE COUNSELLING FOR ADMISSION INTO 1<sup>ST</sup> YEAR MBBS/BDS COURSES IN THE GOVERNMENT MEDICAL & DENTAL COLLEGES OF ASSAM, FOR THE SESSION 2025**  
In pursuance of the new schedule fixed by the Government of India and in partial modification to this Directorate earlier Educational Notice vide No. e. DME/UG/2025/663865/17, dated 04/09/2025, this is for information of all concerned that the result for 2<sup>nd</sup> round Online Counselling for Admission into the vacant MBBS/BDS seats in the Government Medical and Dental Colleges of Assam for the session 2025 under State quota seats, which was scheduled to be declared on 19/09/2025, will now be declared on 22/09/2025 as per the schedule given below.  
Candidates provisionally selected under Pwd category (DIVYANG), whose Pwd status were not assessed earlier by the Medical Board, are directed to report with all their relevant certificates in original to the office of the Principal cum Chief Superintendent, Gauhati Medical College & Hospital, Bhangagarh, Guwahati (Hospital premises), for verification of their disability status by the Medical Board on 24/09/2025 (10:00 AM), failing which, his/her allotment shall be cancelled.  
All provisionally selected candidates shall have to be present in their respective allotted institutions for necessary document verification and admission as directed on 26/09/2025 and 27/09/2025.  

Sl. No.	Schedule	Date
1	Result	22/09/2025
2	Pwd (DIVYANG) verification	24/09/2025
3	Reporting/joining	26/09/2025 and 27/09/2025

Candidates are directed to visit the official website of this Directorate [www.dme.assam.gov.in](http://www.dme.assam.gov.in) regularly for updates.  
Sd/-  
Director of Medical Education, Assam  
DIPR /D/HLT/164/16-Sep-25

## Entire Himalayan range facing ecological crisis: SC

**NEW DELHI, Sept 15:** The Supreme Court on Monday said the issue concerning ecology and environmental conditions was not going to be limited to Himachal Pradesh only as the entire Himalayan range, which was "very violent" this time, was facing it. A bench of Justices Vikram Nath and Sandeep Mehta said it would pass its order on September 23 in the suo motu matter concerning issues relating to ecology and environmental conditions prevailing in Himachal Pradesh. "Ultimately, it is not going to be limited to Himachal only. It is the entire Himalayan range that is facing this. This time around, it has been very very violent," Justice Mehta observed. During the hearing, Himachal Pradesh's advocate general and additional advocate general informed the bench about a report filed by the state in the matter. "We will give you a brief

order after summarising everything so that you can get specific instructions," the bench said. Senior advocate K Parmeshwar, who is assisting the court as an amicus curiae in the matter, said the report filed by the state covered many aspects, including tree cover. "The report covers a number of aspects. It might not be possible to deal with all the aspects at one go. They have covered from tree cover to mining aspect, glaciers etc.," he said. Parmeshwar flagged that there were no specifics in the report. He said the state had contended in the report that there were some concerns with glacier reduction and glacier movement but those specifics were not there. "All that the report promises is to set up of a committee to look into these," the amicus said, adding that the canvass

was too broad. The state's additional advocate general referred to a part of the report which said Himachal Pradesh was actively working on creation of a state-level glacier registry. The report said the integrated studies of Himalayan cryosphere was conducted by comparing glacier inventories of period from 2016 to 2019 with year 2001-2002 for various basins in Himachal Pradesh. "The following findings of the scientific analysis reveals that while glacier numbers have largely remained stable or shown minor increases, their total area has declined, indicating gradual shrinkage...." it said. The report said the recent devastations in the form of high-intensity rainfall, cloudbursts, flash floods, landslides, variations in snowfall patterns, and receding glaciers were manifestations of climate change, an undeniable global

phenomenon resulting from extensive industrialization, rising greenhouse gas emissions and unsustainable practices at regional, national and global levels. On the concern raised by the court regarding destruction caused by hydropower projects, the report said such projects might not be considered the primary cause of destruction in the state. "Recent flash floods and cloudbursts have occurred in areas far away from hydropower installations. These destructive events were mainly caused by cloudbursts happening at higher altitudes and mountain peaks where no hydropower projects exist," it said. The report also said national highway projects in the state were undertaken after due diligence, planning and coordination with the various stakeholder departments, and includes public consultation where applicable. (PTI)

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Transnational conspiracy case

# SC seeks NIA's response to ascertain status of trial

**NEW DELHI, Sept 15:** The Supreme Court on Monday sought the response of the National Investigation Agency to ascertain the status of trial against an accused arrested in Manipur on charges of "waging war" against the nation and alleged links with some Myanmar-based rebel groups.

A bench of Justices Vikram Nath and Sandeep Mehta was hearing the accused's plea against the April order of the Delhi High Court rejecting his bail plea.

The counsel for petitioner Moirangthem Anand Singh said his client was arrested in September 2023 and since been languishing in jail.

"We are not inclined to consider your prayer for bail," the bench observed.

The counsel said the other accused in the case were released on bail except the petitioner.

"May be. You see your role. Specific roles have been assigned. You are the owner of the vehicle wherein the people wearing camouflaged uniforms, having



arms..." the bench said.

The counsel submitted though the chargesheet was filed, charges were not framed till date.

"Issue notice to ascertain the status of the trial," the bench said and posted the matter after four weeks.

The high court denied him bail on the ground of flight risk and the possibility of witnesses being influenced.

"Considering the volatile situation that exists in Manipur and the

evidence indicating his involvement in the alleged offences.

Singh was arrested in September 2023 from Manipur and brought to the national capital for questioning.

He was one of the five persons arrested by Manipur Police for allegedly possessing weapons looted from a police armoury.

The NIA alleged Singh's arrest was in a case of "transnational conspiracy" by Myanmar-based terror groups to wage war against the government of India by exploiting the ethnic unrest in Manipur.

Before the high court, the accused argued that the allegation of transnational conspiracy was not borne out by any evidence placed on record.

Singh was then appealing against an order of a special NIA court which denied him bail in the case.

Over 260 people were killed and thousands displaced in the ethnic violence that broke out in Manipur in May 2023. (PTI)

# House of Kuki leader 'torched' in Manipur's Churachandpur district

**CHURACHANDPUR/IMPHAL, Sept 15:** Tensions flared in Manipur's Churachandpur district after the residence of a Kuki leader was allegedly set on fire by a mob, officials said on Monday.

The residence of Kuki National Organisation (KNO) leader Calvin Aikhenhang was torched late on Sunday night, they claimed.

However, a section of locals in Churachandpur claimed that a short circuit triggered the fire.

KNO is a signatory to the Suspension of Operations (SoO) pact with the Centre.

The residence of another Kuki leader, Ginza Vualzong, who is the spokesperson of the Kuki Zo Council (KZC) and the Indigenous Tribal Leaders' Forum (ITLF), was also targeted by miscreants, but timely intervention by locals helped prevent the house from being set on fire, officials said.

On September 4, two prominent Kuki-Zo groups signed the SoO agreement with the Centre on re-negotiated terms and conditions, under which they agreed to maintain the territorial integrity of Manipur, relocate designated camps away from vulnerable areas, and work towards a solution to bring lasting peace and stability to the state.



The signing of the SoO pact with KNO and the United People's Front (UPF) is also set to have a positive impact on peace efforts in the restive state, officials had said.

Separately, civil society group Kuki-Zo Council (KZC) had decided to open National Highway-2, which passes through Manipur, for free movement of commuters and essential goods.

However, on Monday, the KZC clarified that it has not "declared the reopening of NH-2" and that "no free movement has been permitted on this route."

In a statement, the council said: "Our request was only to the people of Kangpokpi district to extend cooperation to the security forces,

# Airtel to set up first eastern zone data center in Tripura: CM



**HT Correspondent**

**AGARTALA, Sept 15:** Tripura Chief Minister Manik Saha on Monday said that engineers play an important role in the overall development of the country as well as the state, and their contribution is highly significant in infrastructure development.

He also informed that Airtel is setting up a data center in Tripura — the first in the Eastern Zone.

Saha was speaking at a program organised on the occasion of the 58th Engineer's Day 2025 at Pragya Bhavan in Agartala.

At the program, the chief minister extended greetings to everyone on the occasion of Engineer's Day.

He said Bharat Ratna Dr M Visvesvaraya made significant contributions to drinking water resource management, for which he was awarded the Bharat Ratna.

"Today, on the occasion of Engineer's Day, I pay my respects to him. We have various engineering institutions in Tripura — Tripura Institute of Technology, Polytechnic Institute, National Institute of Technology, Indian Institute of Information Technology (IIIT), IIT, IITM, Techno India, and other engineering colleges are functioning in the state," he said.

The chief minister emphasised that the contribution

of engineers is undeniable in developing both the country and the state.

"Without them, it is not possible to move forward in any situation. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has repeatedly said that India will be developed by 2047. He has laid out a roadmap in this regard. For this purpose, we have also started a roadmap towards a Developed Tripura by 2047. In this regard, Tripura ranks fifth in the whole country. If infrastructure is not developed, the state cannot progress either. The Prime Minister has also given special importance to infrastructure development. In this budget, about ₹7,000 crore has been allocated for infrastructure. Engineers are needed to develop this infrastructure. From building design to bridges and roads, engineers play an indispensable role," Saha said.

He further stated that engineers must work with greater responsibility.

"It is necessary to ensure accuracy in the implementation of projects. With technological advancement, the responsibilities of engineers have also increased significantly. Using engineering techniques, e-offices have been launched in the state — from the cabinet to the district, sub-division, block, and three-tier panchayats. Many initiatives are being implemented in our state using engineering expertise," the chief minister said.

Saha also highlighted the entrepreneurial ecosystem in the state.

"There are about 2.1 lakh entrepreneurs among MSMEs in our state. Airtel is building a data center in Tripura, for which we have already provided land. This will be the first data center in the Eastern Zone. Work in the health sector can also be enhanced using drones and AI. Today, on the occasion of Engineer's Day, we should pledge to take Tripura forward. Engineers must explore ways to utilize the state's own resources so that the life and livelihood of common people become easier, and the per capita income and GSDP of the state increase," Saha said.

# NH-29 at Chumoukedima partially opened

**HT Correspondent**

**DIMAPUR, Sept 15:** The affected stretch of NH-29 (Dimapur-Kohima road) along Chathe-Tsiedukhru (Pagalaphar) in Chumoukedima district, which was closed due to landslides on September 14, has been partially opened for vehicular traffic on Monday, Dimapur commissioner of police Aotula T Imchen said in a traffic advisory.

The advisory was issued on the recommendation of the National Highways and Infrastructure Development Corporation Ltd.

It said vehicular traffic (light motor vehicles) along the affected highway stretch will be allowed in a single lane with restricted traffic regulation.

The advisory said movement of heavy motor vehicles (upto 6 wheels) along the stretch of the road will be allowed only from 8 am of Tuesday.

It said non-essential halt or stoppage along the affected stretch should be avoided, especially during rainfall.

The bypass route from New Chumoukedima to Old Chumoukedima and vice versa will be open for traffic movement in a staggered manner.

The advisory added that in case of heavy rainfall, the said stretch of the highway will be closed for vehicular movement without notice.

# Organisations support Nagaland RMSA 2016 teachers' demand for pay parity



**HT Correspondent**

**DIMAPUR, Sept 15:** Many organisations, including student bodies, have come out in support of the 2016 batch RMSA teachers of Nagaland who have been agitating for the last few days, demanding pay parity with their colleagues under SSA 2010, 2013 and RMSA 2013.

The Lotha HoHo Wokha, in a release, on Monday expressed pain over the fates of thousands of students, who are attending classes without teachers in as many as 133 government schools

all over the state.

It stated that this is impacting the academic careers of thousands of students at a time when their annual and selection examinations are approaching.

The hoho said as a welfare state, the Nagaland government is expected to uphold the rule of law and listen to the grievances and rights of its citizens.

Stating that the RMSA 2016 batch teachers have been agitating for the past several days, it said the impasse is only jeopardising the careers of the students and the fall-

out will ultimately affect the governance of the government.

Citing the Supreme Court order dated May 28, which upheld the Gauhati High Court verdict in favour of the RMSA teachers, the hoho said the state government is deemed to honour and act upon it to unlock the present imbroglio.

It hoped that good sense will prevail on the state government.

On Sunday, the Ao Students' Conference has served a five-day ultimatum to the Nagaland school education department, demanding full compliance with court orders to resolve pending matters related to the 2016 batch of Nagaland RMSA teachers.

Expressing concern over the impact, the student body said the situation has affected the functioning of 133 government high schools and 367 teachers across Nagaland. It said the disruption of academic activities "unacceptable."

The state government had filed a review petition in the apex court and said the matter is still sub judice. It appealed to the agitating teachers to resume their duties while the case is pending.

# Notices issued to two leaders for making communal remarks in Tripura

**AGARTALA, Sept 15:** A Tipra Motha Party (TMP) block president and a leader of Amra Bangali, a political party, were served separate notices to appear before the West Agartala police station in Tripura for allegedly making communal remarks, an official said on Monday.

In a video, Gautam Buddha Debbarma, the TMP block president of Charilam in Sepahijala district, was heard saying: "Bengalis will have to flee from Bishramganj (in Sepahijala district) because it is not 1980, it is 2025. If Tripura or Agartala is owned by Amra Bangali, who is the owner of Bishramganj? If you can bring 200 people with sticks, we can also do the same thing with 500 people wielding swords."

According to him, Bishramganj was donated by Maharaja Bir Bikram Kishore Mankiya Debbarma to one Manik Debbarma, a resident of the locality, in 1928.

PTI, however, could not independently verify the authenticity of the video.

After the video went viral on social media on Saturday, a suo motu FIR was lodged against Debbarma on Sunday night, asking him to appear before police for making 'communal remarks', officer-in-charge of West Agartala police station Rana Chatterjee said.

"A specific case under section 196(a), 352, 353(V) of BNS was registered against Debbarma, and he has been asked to appear at the police station by Tuesday," he said.

On August 30, Amra Bangali leader Gauranga Rudrapaul staged a rally in Agartala and made a 'provocative speech' claiming Bengalis in Tripura are the sons of the soil and not the outsiders. (PTI)

# Two-Day Tripura Assembly session from Sept 19

**HT Correspondent**

**AGARTALA, Sept 15:** The two-day-long eighth session of the 13th Tripura Legislative Assembly will begin on September 19 and continue until September 23, said Parliamentary Affairs Minister Ratan Lal Nath on Monday.

After attending the Business Advisory Committee (BAC) meeting at the Tripura Legislative Assembly, the Minister said that from September 19 the Assembly

session will start.

"Governor Indra Sena Reddy Nallu has summoned it. As Speaker Biswabandhu Sen is unwell, as per the rules of business of the Tripura Legislative Assembly, Deputy Speaker will preside. Today, the BAC report was placed under the chairmanship of the Deputy Speaker Ramprasad Paul in the presence of all the delegations from BJP, CPI(M) and Tipra Motha Party. Leader of the Opposition Jitendra Chaudhury was ab-

sent due to personal work. We want to hold discussions for the betterment of the people. Today, a discussion was held that the Assembly will start on September 19 and conclude on September 23," said Saha.

The Minister further informed that as Prime Minister Narendra Modi is arriving in Tripura for an event on September 22, there will be no House on that day and the business will be held the next day, i.e., on September 23.

# Engineers Day to be restricted holiday for engineers in Sikkim from next year: CM

**GANGTOK, Sept 15:** Sikkim Chief Minister Prem Singh Tamang on Monday announced that Engineers' Day, observed on September 15, will be a restricted holiday in the state from next year, but only for engineers. "You (Engineers) should visit your colleges, enjoy the company of your colleagues on the restricted holiday to chill yourself and remind old memories," he said.

"National Engineer's Day observed on September 15 will be a restricted holiday from next year

onwards in Sikkim, but only for the engineers," the CM said while addressing a function here.

The Engineers' Day is celebrated on the birth anniversary of the legendary Indian engineer and Bharat Ratna awardee M Visvesvaraya Ji, known as the "Father of Indian Engineering".

"Visvesvaraya ji's visionary leadership, integrity, and unparalleled contributions to nation-building continue to inspire generations of engineers," the chief minister said. (PTI)

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# Two major rivers overflow in Imphal valley

Large tracts of agricultural land submerged



**IMPHAL, Sept 15:** Two major rivers breached embankments in different parts of Manipur's Imphal valley on Sunday night, flooding large tracts of agricultural land and residential areas, officials said on Monday.

The Irlir river overflowed at Kshetrigao, inundating farmland, residential areas and roads in Imphal East district.

The Wangjing river was also flowing above the danger level, submerging Sangaiyupham and Wangjing areas in Thoubal district, officials added.

A relief camp set up at Wangjing Kodompokpi Sports Complex was also severely wa-

terlogged.

An iron bridge at Yairipok, built across the Thoubal river, was swept away by strong currents, cutting off several villages between Imphal East and Thoubal districts.

Meanwhile, the Manipur Fire Services rescue team evacuated more than 100 stranded residents at Yairipok Khoirom Mayai Leikai in Imphal East and shifted them to temporary relief centres.

The residential compound of Congress state president Keisham Meghachandra at Wangkhem in Thoubal district was also flooded, official said. (PTI)

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# 'VIMUKT' WINS NETPAC AWARD AT TORONTO INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL



**NEW DELHI, Sept 15:** "Vimukt", which marks the directorial debut of Jitank Singh Gurjar, has received the NETPAC Award at the Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF).

Presented by the Network for the Promotion of Asian Cinema (NETPAC), the award recognizes outstanding feature films from Asia and the Pacific, spotlighting fresh voices and bold visions in filmmaking.

"Vimukt", also titled "In Search of the Sky", follows a couple who travel to Maha Kumbh with their mentally challenged son hoping to find a cure for him.

Producer Pooja Vishal Sharma said, "We are

overjoyed with the news from TIFF. This award reaffirms my belief of backing stories that are raw, real, and transformative. 'Vimukt' was a labor of love, and it is incredibly rewarding to see it connect with the world at such a prestigious platform."

"Winning the NETPAC Award at TIFF is not just a personal milestone, but a recognition of the countless unheard voices that inspired this film. I am humbled and grateful to the jury for believing in our story and to my writer and producer Pooja for believing in me," Gurjar said.

He also credited cinematographer Shelly Sharma for her contribution to the film.

Co-producer Madhu Sharma added that the award is an acknowledgement for not only the team's dedication but also "Jitank's craft as a filmmaker." "We set out with a small team and limited resources to make this film, there were a hundred reasons why we couldn't or shouldn't have made this film but this win is a big validation on the idea as to why people should not let resources or budgets stop them from telling the stories they wish to tell," said Shelly Sharma.

The film features actors Nikhil Yadav, Meghan Agrawal, and Raghavendra Bhadoriya. (PTI)

# SUDHEER BABU, SONAKSHI SINHA'S 'JATADHARA' TO RELEASE IN NOVEMBER



**NEW DELHI, Sept 15:** "Jatadhara", starring Sudheer Babu and Sonakshi Sinha, is all set to release in theatres on November 7. Backed by Zee Studios and Prerna Arora, the film is directed by Abhishek Jaiswal and Venkat Kalyan. The movie investigates the enigma of Anantha Padmanabha Swamy Temple, examining myths and theories about its alleged supernatural powers, according to the official logline. "Zee Studios is proud to bring 'Jatadhara' to the world. It's not just cinema; it's an experience that redefines scale, storytelling, and vision. Our partners Ess Kay Gee Entertainment, along with Sudheer Babu, Sonakshi Sinha, and the cast, are set to take audiences into a realm they've never seen before," said Umesh Kumar Bansal, CBO of Zee Studios.

"After the success of 'Rustom' with Zee Studios, I am proud to return with an even bigger collaboration with Umesh ji through 'Jatadhara'. I am re-

ally grateful. This film is backed by a deeply rooted story that blends our cultural ethos with a global cinematic scale. With our vision and our incredible team, we are bringing audiences a rare experience—one that is both emotionally powerful and visually unforgettable," said Arora.

"'Jatadhara' is rooted in a folk tale where darkness collides with divine power, bringing audiences face-to-face with the presence of God. It's a story of faith, fear, and cosmic destiny," Jaiswal and Kalyan added.

The film is produced by Umesh Kumar Bansal, Shivin Narang, Aruna Agarwal, Prerna Arora, Shilpa Singhal, and Nikhil Nanda and co-produced by Akshay Kejriwal and Kussam Arora. It also features actors Divya Khosla, Shilpa Shirodkar, Indira Krishna, Ravi Prakash, Naveen Neni, Rohit Pathak, Jhansi, Rajeev Kanakala and Subhalekha Sudhakar, and will release in both Telugu and Hindi. (PTI)

## Priyanka Chopra congratulates Owen Cooper for Emmy Win

**NEW DELHI, Sept 15:** Actor Priyanka Chopra congratulated "Adolescence" star Owen Cooper, who has become the youngest ever person to win the Emmy for best supporting actor in a limited series at the age of 15.

Chopra reposted a reel on her Instagram stories which featured Cooper reacting to his name being announced and looking visibly overwhelmed on the stage. She also added a teary eyed, clapping and heart emoji alongside it.

The star also reposted another clip by Variety which featured Stephen Graham winning best lead actor in a limited series for "Adolescence". She added the heart and clapping emoji to the reel. The critically-acclaimed Netflix show also won outstanding limited or anthology series and Erin Doherty won for best supporting actress in a limited series for her performance on the show. "Adolescence" was

a four-part miniseries which followed 13-year-old Jamie Miller, played by Cooper, who is accused of murdering his classmate. The series then goes on to explore how and why this crime happened. Graham plays Jamie's father and is also the co-creator of the show while Doherty plays Jamie's therapist. (PTI)



## Daisy Ridley, Jameela Jamil and Ambika Mod to participate in Gaza fundraising table read

**LONDON, Sept 15:** Stars Daisy Ridley, Jameela Jamil and Ambika Mod are set to appear for a fundraising table read of Jane Austen's "Pride and Prejudice", an event hosted by industry advocacy group Cinema For Gaza.

The event, which is scheduled to take place on October 12 at the Troxy in East London, will be donating to the charity Medical Aid for Palestinians as per Deadline.

Helmed by Nida Manzoor, the wider cast includes Jenna Coleman, Morfydd Clark, Nish Kumar, Susan Wokoma, Mawaan Rizwan, Priya Kansara, Amar Chadha-Patel, Jeff Mirza, Shazia Mirza, and Asim Chaudhry. It will be helmed by director Nida Manzoor.

The advocacy group, alongside Susan Wokoma, shared a poster of the pictures of all participants on their social media handles which read, "All profits go to Medical Aid

for Palestinians (MAP)". "It's been a heavy weekend. But we resist and persist. On Sunday, 12th October, I'll be taking part in the brilliant @cinema4gaza's live-table read of Pride & Prejudice, at London's iconic Troxy venue, in aid of the desperately essential @medicalaidforpala." Wokoma wrote in the accompanying caption. Cinema for Gaza was created by UK film professionals Hanna Flint, Julia Jackman, Leila Latif, Sophie Monks Kaufman, and Helen Simmons, with support from Rebecca Osias and Guy Lodge and has raised 269,206 euros so far. Last year, the group organized a fundraising auction, where contributors included names like Tilda Swinton, Rami Youssef, Peter Capaldi, Imelda Staunton, Brian Cox, Joseph Quinn, Mike Leigh, Misan Harriman, Joanna Hogg, Aimee Lou Wood, and Josh O'Connor. (PTI)

## Teja Sajja-starrer 'Mirai: Super Yodha' earns ₹ 81.2 crore at box office

**NEW DELHI, Sept 15:** "Mirai: Super Yodha", headlined by Telugu star Teja Sajja, has collected ₹ 81.2 crore at the worldwide box office during its opening weekend, the makers confirmed on Monday.

Produced by TG Vishwa Prasad and Krithi Prasad of People Media Factory, the film released in theatres worldwide on September 12.

Directed by Karthik Gattamneni, the film also features Manchu Manoj, Ritika Nayak, Shriya Saran, Jagapathi Babu, and Jayaram in key roles.

Production banner People Media Factory shared the box office numbers on its official X handle. The film opened with ₹ 27.20 crore and went on to earn ₹ 28.4 crore and ₹ 25.6 crore at the worldwide box office, respectively.

"From South to North, from India to Overseas. #MIRAI is rewriting history everywhere. Record-breaking ₹81.2 Cr Gross Worldwide in just 3 DAYS for #BrahmandBlockbuster-

Mirai. India's most ambitious action-adventure is now the most celebrated film across the globe," read the caption. "Mirai: Super Yodha" is produced by TG Vishwa Prasad and Krithi Prasad of People Media Factory. Gattamneni penned the screen-



play, alongside Manibabu Karanam, who also wrote dialogues.

The film released in Hindi, Tamil, Kannada, Malayalam, Bengali, Marathi, and Chinese languages. It is presented by filmmaker Karan Johar in Hindi. (PTI)

## It's funny, irreverent but not frivolous: Twinkle Khanna-Kajol on new chat show

**MUMBAI, Sept 15:** Bollywood actors Twinkle Khanna and Kajol, friends in real life, are turning hosts for "Two Much with Kajol and Twinkle" and they hope their fun dynamic resonates with the viewers as they invite celebrity guests like Aamir Khan, Salman Khan, Govinda, Alia Bhatt and others for fun-filled conversations.

The Prime Video Original, produced by Banijay Asia, premieres on September 25 in India and across 240+ territories worldwide, with a new episode dropping every Thursday.

"We try to go a little bit deeper than other chat shows. I think that is our USP. We have fun. It's irreverent, but it's also not frivolous at all. It's got some gravitas," Twinkle said at the trailer launch of the show on Monday.

Kajol, who is making her debut as a chat show host, said, "There's a lot of laughter and fun, but I think what's nice about it is also the fact that our guests have also spoken about their views and their viewpoints in the nicest possible way, in the nicest possible setting, with the coolest questions, just to give us enough."

The chat show trailer also shared snippets from the two hosts' conversation with guests like Vicky Kaushal, Karan Johar, Kriti Sanon, Jahnvi Kapoor and Varun Dhawan.

Asked who was the most fun to host among them all, Kajol initially named Salman and Aamir but quickly amended and named Govinda as her favourite guest.

"I think our most favorite two guests on the show would have to be

Salman and Aamir. No, actually, to be very honest, my favorite guest on the show was Govinda. I have to say that he was so super entertaining. Not to say that everybody was not nice but Govinda is Govinda. He's an icon," she said.

Twinkle said she and Kajol share a bond that goes beyond friendship.

"I tease her and I call her 'behen' (sister) on the show, but it's kind of true. We are not friends, we are like sisters. We bicker, we make fun of each other, but we trust each other. We both have each other's back and I think that's very important to have on a show like this," Twinkle said.

Kajol said their chemistry on the show works because they are not competing but helping each other shine. "We're literally building each other

up and that's wonderful to work with," she said.

"I think we have an innate understanding. We find similar things funny. We find each other very funny. I'm her biggest cheerleader and she is mine," Twinkle added.

Johar, who himself has been a talk show alum, having hosted the popular "Koffee with Karan" also appears as a guest on the show.

The two stars said that he is a great speaker but they trouble him a lot off camera. "I think Karan is a very good speaker. He has done this chat show for so many years that he is a very good speaker," Kajol said.

"She's being nice. We trouble him off camera, on camera and he tries to wiggle his way out. I'm not sure if he succeeded," Twinkle added. (PTI)



## Man City humbles Man United 3-0 in the Premier League, Liverpool back on top

MANCHESTER, Sept 15: Manchester City is back to winning ways. Manchester United is back to square one.

City utterly dominated the 197th Manchester derby on Sunday, winning 3-0 on another humbling day for United coach Ruben Amorim.

It could have been so much worse for the red half of Manchester as City threatened to turn it into a rout at the Etihad Stadium.

Haaland scored twice in the second half and also hit the post to make it seven goals in a week following the five he hit for Norway against Moldova on Tuesday.

Phil Foden opened the scoring for City with a header in the 18th minute and Pep Guardiola's team never looked back.

The win ended City's two-game losing run in what has been an unconvincing start to the season. The problems are quickly mounting for Amorim, however, in a campaign that has already seen his team suffer a humiliating exit from the English League Cup against fourth-tier Grimsby.

Afterwards Amorim had a message for United fans.

"I will do everything, always thinking about what is best for the club," he said. "I really want to win games, so I'm suffering more than them."

In the day's other Premier League game, Mohamed Salah scored a stoppage-time penalty as Liverpool beat Burnley 1-0 to move back to the top of the standings.

United's latest setback came in front of glum-looking co-owner Jim Ratcliffe, who hired Amorim last year to return the 20-time English champion to the summit of European soccer and backed him heavily in the transfer market in the summer.

Any form of comeback feels a long way off right now.

United has won just once in five games in all competitions this season - a 3-2 victory against Burnley, which required a stoppage-time penalty from Bruno Fernandes. (AP)

## USAIN BOLT ON HIS TRACK GREATNESS 'I WANTED TO SET HIGH STANDARDS AND I DID'



TOKYO, Sept 15: On the night track turned to Jamaica once again to find the World's Fastest Man, the greatest Jamaican sprinter was in a sky box in the stadium — his presence literally hovering over a sport that hasn't been the same since he left.

Oblique Seville might be the new 100-meter world champion. Usain Bolt remains the only track star of this century whose fame cascades well beyond sports.

Eight years since his retirement, nobody has come close to matching his times or his presence. In an interview before Sunday night's races at the track world, he said he feels great about that, because "that's what I worked for."

"When I was competing, I was working to break the benchmark," he said. "Now that I've retired, it's a great feeling to know that I'm the benchmark if you want to be the best, you

want to be a legend. I wanted to set high standards and I did. I'm happy about that."

The numbers tell part of this story: Eight Olympic gold medals. Eleven gold medals at world championships. Three world records — 9.58 seconds in the 100, 19.19 in the 200 and 36.84 in the 4x100 relay — that still stand.

No runner has come within .12 seconds of either of his individual marks since he retired. Asked why that is, despite a world in which shoe and track technology gives runners a bigger boost than 15 years ago when he was in his prime, Bolt offered a window into why he remains his sport's most engaging ambassador.

"Do you really want the answer? We're just more talented," he said. "You look at it. I'm just saying, you can't run faster (just) with brand-new spikes."

Speed, though, is only part of Bolt's story. It was his ability to

use the platform to entertain and bring people together — a skill that couldn't be overlooked in an era when the Olympics needed a recharge — that made Bolt one of track's most important characters.

From his trademark bow-and-arrow pose to his leisurely victory laps around the track with the reggae music blaring — from his mile-wide smile to the joy he so effortlessly exuded despite the excruciating nature of his work — he elevated the sport into a personality-driven lovefest and gave people a reason to watch.

"It's the personality," he said. "I think a lot of people, they try to be fun but it comes off different. It's just having a good time. If you try too hard, it's not going to be the same. But I was just having a good time. That's how I looked at it. I tried to engage with fans and that's why they gravitated to it."

Sunday marked Bolt's first

appearance at an Olympics or worlds since he exited the sport after the 2017 championships in London.

He is now the father of a 5-year-old daughter, Olympia Lightning Bolt, and 4-year-old twin sons, Saint Leo and Thunder Bolt. To them, Bolt is just Dad. But the greatest sprinter of all time said their view might change at the next world championships — two years from now in the place where his career lifted off like a rocket: Beijing.

"I'm excited because I get to bring my kids and I can tell them. Listen, this is where it all happened," he said of the 2008 Olympics where he set three world records and won three gold medals. "I've shown my kids videos and stuff like that. They'll be 6 and 7, and they'll kind of understand the moment, and I can explain to them what their dad has done over the years." (AP)

## Barcelona routs Valencia 6-0 with goals from Raphinha, Lewandowski and López



MADRID, Sept 15: Raphinha, Robert Lewandowski and Fermin López scored two goals each as Barcelona routed Valencia 6-0 in the Spanish league.

The match was played at the team's training facility because the Catalan club doesn't yet have the proper permits to reopen the renovated Camp Nou stadium.

Barcelona got the victory despite playing without the injured Lamine Yamal.

It was the third win in four matches to open the season for Barcelona, which moved within two points of early league leader Real Madrid, which won 2-1 at Real Sociedad on Saturday.

Barcelona had to play its first home league game of the season at the 6,000-capacity Estadi Johan Cruyff while it waits for the permits that will allow it to return to the Camp Nou, which will seat nearly 100,000 fans.

The Johan Cruyff facility typically hosts the Barcelona women's team and men's reserve and youth squads.

Barcelona played the last two seasons at the city's publicly owned Olympic Stadium while renovation work at the Camp Nou took place. Barcelona in control.

Barcelona was in control from the start against Valencia. López scored his goals in the 29th and 56th minutes. Raphinha netted in the 53rd and 66th and Lewandowski got on the board in

the 76th and 86th.

Both Raphinha and Lewandowski scored their goals after coming off the bench. Unconfirmed Spanish media reports said Raphinha did not get to start because he was late reporting to the team on Sunday, though Barcelona coach Hansi Flick later said it was a technical decision not to start him following his stint with Brazil during the international break.

Lewandowski, playing his 150th game with Barcelona, had not previously scored for the club in this league season.

"We were in control from the start. We knew what we had to do to get the victory," Barcelona midfielder Marc Casadó said. "We played our game. The scoring chances and the goals came."

Valencia, sitting near the bottom of the standings with two losses, had only two attempts with one of them on target.

Barcelona has outscored Valencia 18-1 in the last three matches between the clubs.

Other results

Real Betis rallied to draw 2-2 at Levante, which had built a two-goal lead in the first 10 minutes.

Osasuna won for the second time by beating Rayo Vallecano 2-0, while Celta Vigo earned a 1-1 draw with Girona at home thanks to a stoppage-time penalty kick converted by Borja Iglesias. (AP)

## Mariners eye fresh start to make mark in Asia



KOLKATA, Sept 15: India's top football club Mohun Bagan Super Giant will look to underline their continental ambitions when they open their AFC Champions League 2 campaign against Turkmenistan's Ahal FK at the Salt Lake Stadium here on Tuesday.

The Kolkata giants, who secured direct entry into Asia's second-tier competition by defending their ISL Shield last season, are featuring in the event for the second year running and are determined to make a deeper run this time.

Mohun Bagan SG were considered "withdrawn" from the 2024-25 season of AFC Champions League 2 after refusing to travel to Iran for their October 2 match against Tractor SC, citing security concerns. The AFC had then said all of Mohun Bagan's results in Group A "stand cancelled" and would not count towards the final standings. This time, the city heavyweights enter the international meet on the back of a mixed run in domestic competitions. The Mariners' Durand Cup 2025 campaign ended in the quarter-finals, where they lost 1-2 to arch-rivals East Bengal despite a late goal from Anirudh Thapa.

Earlier, they had successfully defended their ISL Shield to book a direct berth in ACL 2, finishing eight points clear of FC Goa.

In continental football, Mohun Bagan reached the inter-zonal play-offs in 2021 and 2022 before a group-stage exit in 2023-24, and will now be eager to make their presence felt in Asia.

There were questions mark over their goal-poaching ability following their Durand Cup quarter-final exit against East Bengal.

But reinforcements in Brazilian

forward Robson Robinho and defender Mehtab Singh have bolstered an already star-studded squad.

Full-back T Abhishek Singh and winger Kiyan Nassiri's return further add depth, leaving the side eager to prove their mettle beyond domestic success.

Ahal FK, on the other hand, can be seen as the lightest challenge in a Group C that also includes Jordan's Al Hussein SC and Iranian powerhouse Sepahan.

Yet, the Turkmenistan club, who were champions in 2022 and consistent campaigners in continental football, have shown enough grit to reach this stage.

Ahal FK reached the group stage via the playoffs, defeating Tajikistan's Regar-TadAZ Tursunzoda 2-1, and currently sit second in their domestic league.

Known for their resilience and direct approach, they could pose a tricky test for the Mariners in the Group C opener.

Ahal's strength lies in their discipline and counter-attacking sharpness, led by national team players such as winger Elman Tagayev and versatile right-back Hakmuhammet Bashimov.

A solid showing against Asian heavyweights like Al Ain and Pakhtakor in last season's Champions League underlines their ability to frustrate bigger clubs.

For Mohun Bagan, the home fixture offers the perfect chance to set the tone and it remains to be seen if the Jose Molina-coached side would be able to find their rhythm back.

The other match in Group C will see Jordan's Al-Hussein SC host Iranian powerhouse Sepahan S.C. on Tuesday.

Kickoff: 7.15pm IST. (PTI)

## Luka Modric joins exclusive 40 club with milestone goal in Milan win

MILAN, Sept 15: Luka Modric scored days after his 40th birthday to join an exclusive club and give AC Milan a 1-0 win over Bologna in Serie A.

Modric, who celebrated his birthday on Tuesday, became the sixth player to score in the Italian league after turning 40, including most recently Zlatan Ibrahimovic and Fabio Quagliarella.

"I hope someone next time will not remind me of my age anymore," Modric said with a laugh.

Milan coach Massimiliano Allegri was sent off late on — in his third league match back in charge of Milan — for dissent after a penalty awarded to the Rossoneri was revoked on video review.

In familiar scenes from his time at Juventus, Allegri angrily threw off his jacket and also sarcastically shouted "Bravo" at the officials as he was escorted away.

"At that moment I had some things to say to the fourth official, fortunately the jacket saved me,"

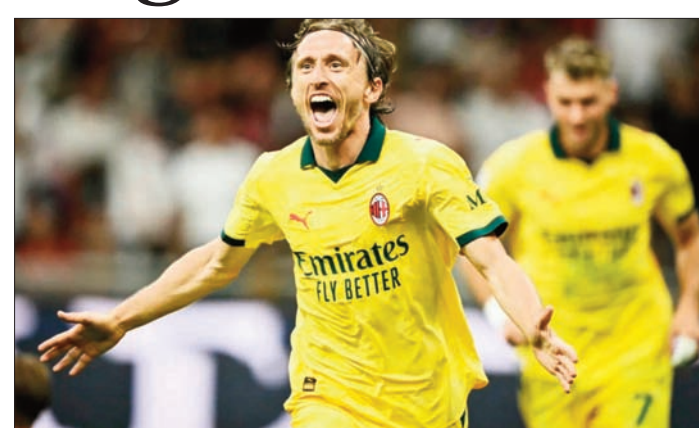
said Allegri, who also heaped praise on Modric.

"Luka is an extraordinary player and it's a pleasure to watch him, but he is also a really humble guy, and that's a demonstration of what a great champion he is. He knows a minute before where the ball will go, and he has such extraordinary technique."

Pervis Estupinan hit the post for Milan in the first half but Allegri's team struggled to break Bologna down until the 61st minute.

Modric started the move midway inside his own half, finding Ruben Loftus-Cheek to go forward and spread the ball for Alexis Saelemaekers. The Belgium international cut inside and rolled it across for the onrushing Modric to drive into the back of the net from just inside the area.

Samuele Ricci, who had just come off the bench, saw an effort come off the post and Milan hit the woodwork for a third time in the match through Santiago Giménez.



The match also saw Adrien Rabiot and Jonathan Rowe face each other following a locker room bust-up that forced them both out of Marseille last month. Rabiot started the match for Milan, while Rowe came on in the second half for Bologna.

Argentinian forward Giovanni Simeone scored his first Serie A goal in more than a year to help

fashion in the 59th minute, starting and finishing the move.

The 30-year-old got past his marker to spark a counter and then played a one-two with Cyril Ngonge, getting on the return pass to curl a magnificent strike into the top-right corner.

Someone last scored in the Italian league in August 2024.

Nicola Zalewski grabbed a goal and an assist and also hit the crossbar to help Atalanta crush Lecce 4-1 for its first win since Ivan Juric replaced Gasperini.

Giorgio Scalvini headed in Zalewski's corner shortly before half-time for the opener.

The Poland wing back scored his first goal for the club in the 70th, cutting inside between two defenders and drilling into the bottom left corner.

That came either side of a brace from Charles Ketelaer and after Zalewski had seen a free kick crash off the bar early in the second half. (AP)

## From golden highs to medal-less lows: India's split fortunes at World Boxing Championships

NEW DELHI, Sept 15: India's campaign at the World Boxing Championships was a tale of two extremes.

While the women scripted history, delivering the country's best-ever overseas showing, the men endured a humbling low, returning without a single medal for the first time in 12 years.

Jasmine Lamboria (57kg) and Minakshi Hooda (48kg) rose to the occasion with breakthrough triumphs, showcasing grit and tactical maturity to begin the LA Olympics cycle on a high.

The seasoned Pooja Rani (80kg) and Nupur Sheoran (80+kg) added to the glory with a bronze and silver respectively as India finished third in the medals table behind heavyweights Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan.

However, it should be noted that apart from Jasmine's medal, the other three podium finishes

came in non-Olympic divisions, where competition was less intense. For instance, Nupur's draw featured only 10 boxers, while 12 pugilists competed in the 80kg category.

The Championships also underlined the importance of consistent exposure. After the Paris Olympics, the Boxing Federation of India (BFI) chose not to send boxers to several international events, claiming those tournaments were affiliated with the old world body, IBA, and participation risked suspension from the new governing body, World Boxing.

Yet powerhouses like Uzbekistan, Turkey and Kazakhstan competed in those very tournaments, as well as the IBA World Championships in March. Many of the same boxers went on to finish on the podium in Liverpool.

By contrast, Indian male boxers

featured in only two international events since Paris, while the women competed in just one.

Jasmine reaped the reward of consistent training and competition. Since her Paris exit, she has competed in two domestic tournaments and one international event.

Two-time world champion Nikhat Zareen (51kg), returning from an injury layoff, looked understandably rusty.

Having won two titles, her reputation preceded her, but she was troubled once again by an Asian opponent who resorted to excessive clinching to disrupt her rhythm.

Though Nikhat survived that challenge, she fell short against a familiar adversary in two-time Olympic flyweight silver medalist Buse Cakiroglu of Turkey.

With the new Olympic cycle in its nascent stage, and the Asian

Games and Commonwealth Games scheduled for next year, Nikhat may now face competition from Minakshi.

The new 48kg world champion, who has previously boxed in the 52kg division, could consider shifting categories, adding to the contest for spots.

Olympic medalist Lovlina Borgohain (75kg) also struggled. Forced to miss the Nationals, she was required to play a domestic tournament in late June-July just to enter the camp.

Heading into the Worlds with minimal training, she produced an insipid display and bowed out in the first round. She may now face competition from the likes of Pooja Rani in the 75kg category.

The underwhelming men's campaign ended without a medal for the first time since the 2013 edition. The disappointment came on the back of the highs of 2023

in Tashkent, where India had secured three bronze medals, their best-ever haul.

This year, the squad featuring a mix of youth and experience struggled to make an impact. Under performing old campaigners like former medallists Amit Panghal, Deepak Bhoria, Shiva Thapa made way for youngsters.

But only Jadumani Singh (50kg) and Abhinash Jamwal (65kg) reached the quarterfinals of the 10-member squad.

The men's field was undeniably tougher. Several Indian boxers received first-round byes but ironically, a few might have benefitted from playing an extra bout to settle into rhythm.

Despite the barren return, a few bright sparks emerged.

Abhinash, who has stepped out of the shadow of Shiva, showed he belongs on the international stage. (PTI)

# Handshake Gate: PCB wants Pycroft removed; Will India receive trophy from Naqvi if they win final?

**DUBAI, Sept 15:** The Indian players' refusal to exchange handshakes with their Pakistani counterparts after an Asia Cup clash here snowballed into a major controversy on Monday as an irate PCB sought the removal of match referee Andy Pycroft, holding him responsible for the fiasco that has stirred fresh tensions between the two arch-rivals.

India captain Suryakumar Yadav had justified his team's stand after the seven-wicket win on Sunday, stating that it was meant to show solidarity with the families of Pahalgam terror attack in which 26 people were gunned down by Pakistan-backed terrorists.

This was after the team drew severe backlash for playing against the traditional foes. The Pakistan Cricket Board reacted angrily to the entire turn of events and after complaining to the Asian Cricket Council (ACC), it has now sought the ICC's intervention.

Incidentally, PCB chief Mohsin Naqvi is the current head of ACC, while the ICC is helmed by India's Jay Shah. The Asia Cup, however, is not an ICC event and is managed by the ACC.

"The PCB has lodged a complaint with the ICC regarding violations with the Match Referee of the ICC Code of Conduct and the MCC Laws pertaining to the Spirit of Cricket. The PCB has demanded an immediate removal of the Match Referee from the Asia Cup," Naqvi said on 'X'.

The PCB had earlier stated that Pycroft "asked (Pakistan) captain Salman Ali Agha, at the time of the toss, not to shake hands with his Indian counterpart."

Pakistan team manager Naved Cheema has also filed a complaint with the ACC alleging that it was on Pycroft's insistence that team



sheets weren't exchanged between the two skippers as is the norm.

The BCCI is yet to respond to the PCB's statements but it is reliably learnt that if India make the tournament's final on September 28, the players won't be sharing the presentation dais with Naqvi, who is expected to hand over the winner's trophy as ACC head.

Both teams avoided bumping into each other during customary warm-up and then at the toss, the rival skippers handed over their respective team sheets to Pycroft.

"Team manager Naved Cheema lodged a strong protest against Indian players' behaviour of not shaking hands. It was deemed as unsporting and against the spirit of the game. As a protest we did not send our captain to the post match ceremony," read a PCB statement issued earlier.

India's stand, which will be discussed and debated for some time to come, was in stark contrast to the apolitical position that players tend to maintain when it comes to Pakistan.

"Together, we came here, we took a call and I feel we came here just to play the game. I think we gave the proper reply," Suryakumar replied to a PTI query when asked about the stance taken by his team.

When a Pakistani journalist asked whether the refusal to shake hands with opposition players after the seven-wicket win was "politically motivated", the skipper replied: "I feel few things, few things in life are ahead of sportsman's spirit also. We stand with victims of Pahalgam terror attack and dedicate this victory to our Armed Forces."

The sentiment was echoed by head coach Gautam Gambhir while talking to the tournament broadcaster.

It is understood that BCCI and the team management got into a huddle to discuss their stance as opposition parties in India as well as the social media erupted in protest against the match, calling it a case of putting money above the sentiments of families devastated by the Pahalgam terror attack which killed 26 people in April.

Gambhir and senior players were unanimous about not shaking hands at any given time during the match. The decision wasn't an instant one and was taken after due deliberation, eventually greenlighted by senior people in the BCCI.

It must be noted that Gambhir's personal stand on playing Pakistan is quite clear -- "No sporting ties till terror activities continue on Indian soil."

It is understood that 'no handshake' is a policy decision that would be maintained throughout the course of the Asia Cup if the teams happen to meet again in a Super Four Clash next Sunday followed by a potential meeting in the final on September 28.

"Look, if you read the rule book, there is no specification about shaking hands with the opposition. It is a goodwill gesture and a sort of convention not law that is followed globally across the sporting spectrum," a senior BCCI official told PTI on conditions of anonymity.

"If there is no law, then the Indian cricket team is not bound to shake hands with an opposition with whom there is a history of strained relationship," he added.

Historically, not shaking hands for political reasons is not a new

thing in international sports.

In a women's singles match at the 2023 Wimbledon, Ukrainian Elina Svitolina didn't shake hands with Belarus's Victoria Azarenka after the former won her match.

Svitolina had made it clear that she won't shake hands with any player from Russia or Belarus since the two countries attacked her nation.

The Wimbledon authorities didn't penalise Svitolina and Azarenka for not upholding the sportsman spirit.

Geopolitical tensions at times grip sporting rivalries but do not come in the way for regular niceties. For instance, USA and Iran, the two nations who have been diplomatically at war with each other, shook hands during their football World Cup games despite the political climate.

While there has been severe criticism on playing Pakistan, it must be noted that it is the Indian government which has made a policy that Indo-Pak cricket matches at multi-nation events will be allowed. There is an inherent reason for that.

Cricket has now officially entered the Olympic Programme for the Los Angeles Games in 2028 and India wants to host the 2030 Commonwealth Games and the 2036 Olympic games in Ahmedabad.

If one wants to host events of such magnitude then not playing Pakistan at multi-nation events -- global or continental -- makes for very poor optics for the International Olympic Committee and can severely dent chances of playing hosts.

Therefore, cricket matches at Asia Cup and World Cup will continue but bonhomie has ended for the foreseeable future. (PTI)

# Central Zone beat South Zone by 6 wickets to lift Duleep Trophy



**BENGALURU, Sept 15 :** Central Zone survived some nervous moments to beat South Zone by six wickets and clinch the Duleep Trophy after a hiatus of 11 years here on Monday.

Chasing a modest target of 65, Central Zone's top-order batters were tested by South bowlers on a crumbling fifth day track at the BCCI CoE grounds, but they did not have too many runs to defend.

Akshay Wadkar (19 not out, 52 balls) and first-innings centurion Yash Rathod (13 not out, 16 balls) were at crease when Central eventually went past the target at 66 for four in 20.3 overs to annex their seventh title in Duleep Trophy.

However, South can take heart from the fight they showed in the second innings (426) and with the ball in the final innings, delaying Central's walk to victory.

Left-arm spinner Ankit Sharma accounted for Danish Malewar (5) with a delivery that spun sharply and took the edge of the Central opener's bat en route to wicket-keeper Mohammed Azharuddeen.

He later added the wicket of Central captain Rajat Patidar, who played a hurried slog sweep to get

caught at mid-on by MD Nidheesh.

Pacer Gurjapeet Singh, who earned an India A call on Sunday, picked up the scalps of Shubham Sharma and the promoted Saransh Jain, who was later adjudged player of the series, to create some anxious moments in the Central camp.

But player of the match Rathod and Wadkar steered Central home without further damage.

For Patidar, it was his second title this year after guiding Royal Challengers Bengaluru to victory in the IPL, and he was understandably delighted.

"Every captain likes winning trophies. But our players showed a lot of character across the tournament and I am very happy about it."

"Here the wicket was slightly dry so we decided to bat first. I am pleased for Danish and Yash, they batted well here all the tournament," Patidar said during the post-match presentation ceremony.

South skipper Azharuddeen said reaching the final of the Duleep Trophy will work as a motivation for them in a long domestic season, which now enters the Ranji Trophy phase from October 15. (PTI)

# Lakshya, Satwik-Chirag eye first title of season at China Masters Super 750



**SHENZHEN (CHINA), Sept 15 :** Fresh from a final's appearance, Lakshya Sen will look to ride on his new-found momentum, while Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty too will aim to carry forward their consistency at the China Masters

Super 750 badminton tournament beginning here on Tuesday.

Lakshya, who reached his first major final in two years at the just-concluded Hong Kong Open after a prolonged spell of poor form and fitness issues, opens against France's Toma

Junior Popov. The 24-year-old from Almora, who finished fourth at the Paris Olympics, hasn't been his best with multiple early exits but he turned it around to make the summit clash.

"I just need to believe in myself more. I need to keep the same from day one what I was doing, the process," he said.

Eighth seeds Satwik and Chirag have been India's most consistent performers this season, with six semifinal finishes, a second World Championships bronze and a runner-up effort at Hong Kong last week. The Asian Games champions, still chasing their first crown of 2025, will start against Malaysia's Junaidi Arif and Roy King Yap. It was their first final in 16 months, and while the Indians fell short, the performance underlined progress as they prepare to once again challenge the world's top pairs.

"I think the way we are playing, we are up right there. It's just a matter of time and we should believe in ourselves," Satwik said on Sunday.

Youngster Ayush Shetty, who

shocked Japan's Kodai Naraoka last week, will look for another strong run when he faces sixth seed Chou Tien Chen of Chinese Taipei. Ayush had beaten the veteran en route to his maiden BWF title at the US Open Super 300 last June.

In women's singles, two-time Olympic medalist PV Sindhu will hope to rediscover her top game when she takes on Denmark's Julie Dawall Jakobsen.

The 30-year-old, ranked 14th, had stunned China's world No. 2 Wang Zhi Yi to reach the World Championships quarterfinals but faltered against Line Christophersen last week.

In women's doubles, the Panda sisters — Rutuparna and Swetaparna — face Malaysia's Ong Xin Yee and Carmen Ting.

In mixed doubles, Rohan Kapoor and Ruthvika Shivani Gadde will meet Japan's Yuichi Shimogami and Sayaka Hobara, while Dhruv Kapila and Tanisha Crasto, quarterfinalists at the World Championships, open against second seeds Feng Yang Zhe and Huang Dong Ping of China. (PTI)

# India can win the women's World Cup provided they handle pressure, says Sulakshana Naik

**MUMBAI, Sept 15 :** The Indian women's team is more than capable of winning the World Cup at home provided it handles the pressure, former wicketkeeper-batter Sulakshana Naik said on Monday.

India, who have never won the ODI World Cup in any of its previous 12 editions, will co-host the eight-team tournament with Sri Lanka with all eyes on Harmanpreet Kaur and Co. to end the long wait for a title.

Naik, who played two Tests, 46 ODIs and 31 T20Is for India, on Monday recalled an advice received from the 1983 World Cup winner Sandeep Patil while playing the 2010 T20 World Cup in the Caribbean when talking about dealing with pressure.

"This side is very much capable of winning the World Cup. The only thing I am worried about is the pressure. They shouldn't take the pressure," Naik said during a panel discussion during the World Cup trophy tour here.

"I had spoken to Sandeep Patil on how to handle pressure, as to why the men handle it and why we cannot handle it. At that time, he had given me very simple advice."

"He said, 'get used to it — that is the only thing. The men are used to it. They do not care'," Naik, also a member of the BCCI's Cricket Advisory Committee, added.

MCA also unveiled a special wall at the academy here which features photographs of Mumbai's women captains.

"From Diana Edulji ji leading India in the first World Cup to today's stars like Jemimah Rodrigues, our players have carried the city's legacy with pride. This special wall is a tribute to our women captains, whose contributions will continue to inspire generations," said MCA president Ajinkya Naik.

Former India player Sangita Kintware said the spinners will have an important role to play.

"Spinners are going to be the key for this World Cup. But it has to be a collective effort. You can achieve this by supporting each other," she said. (PTI)

# Siraj named ICC Player of the Month

**DUBAI, Sept 15:** India pacer Mohammed Siraj of India was on Monday named ICC Player of the Month for August following his heroic effort in the fifth and final Test against England.

Orla Prendergast of Ireland too was named player of the month alongside Siraj.

Siraj's superb match-winning effort on the final day of the Test series against England helped India win The Oval Test match by six runs. Siraj grabbed three wickets on the dramatic final morning of the fifth match to finish with nine wickets in the match as the Indian team drew the series 2-2. "It is a special honour to be named ICC Player of the Month. The Anderson-Tendulkar Trophy was a memorable series, and it was one of the most intense contests I have been part of."

"I am proud that I could contribute with some important spells, especially in the decisive moments. Bowling against a top batting line-up in their home conditions was challenging, but it also brought out the best in me," said Siraj.

Ireland all-rounder Prendergast won the award ahead of Pakistan's wicketkeeper-batter Muneeba Ali and the Netherlands' seam bowler Iris Zwilling. (PTI)

# Hesson attributes heavy loss to frenzied start and middle over squeeze

**DUBAI, Sept 15 :** A frenzied start and Indian bowlers putting a squeeze on the batters in the middle overs were the main reasons behind Pakistan's heavy loss to the arch-rivals in their Asia Cup match here, said head coach Mike Hesson.

Opting to bat, Pakistan lost two wickets in eight balls and could never really recover from that body blow, ending with a below par 127. India gunned down the target inside 16 overs.

"Look I think with the bat we were a little bit frenzied at the start. The ball held in the surface as we expected but we didn't respond as well as we would like there."

"We got to the end of the powerplay and we were in the game and then we got squeezed and that built up a lot of pressure during the middle overs."

"I think the more big games you play the more trust you have in your own game and we've certainly got some players who are finding their feet but they certainly want to be in the battle and as I said



we'll come back stronger in a few days' time," said Hesson.

He also defended the decision to bat first on a slow surface.

"Not so much recent history but certainly longer term history, it does (make sense to bat first). Over

the last six games and even throughout the whole tri-series, sides won chasing.

"There's not as much dew as there has been in the past, so dew's not really a factor. I guess these used surfaces, they're slow and

they get slower. So, in many ways, runs on the board the other day can help, but we didn't bat well enough."

"So that's the reality, whether we batted first or second we weren't good enough at the bat," said the former New Zealand coach.

Pakistan play the UAE in their final league game on September 17. Hesson is confident that his players will bounce back from the heavy defeat.

"Today we were outplayed. I don't think we can hide from that but we've certainly performed really nicely with the bat in recent times. We might not have huge names but we've got some quality players that scrap really hard for Pakistan and we've got over par on the majority of the games we've played with the bat."

"With the ball, we're finding new bowlers that are helping Pakistan win games, like Saim Ayub sort of getting back to his best, Suifan also had his moments. So look, we're not far off," added Hesson. (PTI)

# New FIH Pro League season to begin on Dec 9 in Argentina and Ireland

**LAUSANNE, Sept 15:** The 2025-26 season of the FIH Hockey Pro League will get underway on December 9 in Argentina and Ireland, with a record 144 matches lined up across 10 host nations.

The seventh edition of the "League of the Best" will feature two newcomers — Ireland women and Pakistan men — promoted from the FIH Hockey Nations Cup 2024-25.

The winners of both the men's and women's leagues will directly qualify for the 2028 Los Angeles Olympic Games.

The season will get underway with Germany taking on Belgium men in Ireland, while action will continue in Argentina later in the day with men's champions Netherlands facing League debutants Pakistan. Belgium, England and Germany men, along with Belgium, England and Ireland women will play the first block of matches in Ireland. In Argentina, the Leonas and Leonas will face Netherlands and Pakistan men, as well as Germany and Netherlands women, respectively. (PTI)

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