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ED, IT to probe Shyamkanu's financial irregularities

Govt to make sure that no individual connected to Zubeen's death is able to evade accountability: CM ● One Assamese resident in Singapore to arrive today

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Oct 6: Mounting pressure on Northeast India festival organiser Shyamkanu Mahanta who has been in police custody for his alleged role behind the untimely demise of Zubeen Garg, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Monday announced that the two central agencies—Enforcement Directorate (ED) and Income Tax (IT) department would probe allegations of financial irregularities against Mahanta.

Talking to reports here, Sarma said, "I am confident that central agencies such as the Enforcement Directorate (ED) and the Income Tax Department (IT) will also examine the financial discrepancies linked to Shyamkanu Mahanta. We are already in touch with these agencies to ensure a thorough and professional inquiry. Our goal is to make sure that no individual connected to Zubeen Garg's death is able to evade accountability."

The Chief Minister also said that Shyamkanu Mahanta used to click pictures with influential persons and if all the pictures from his mo-



bile are made public, it will create unnecessary chaos in the ongoing probe.

"The primary work of Shyamkanu was to click pictures with many individuals. I believe if all the pictures from his mobile phone are made public, it will have photographs of many individuals ranging from politicians to journalists. We have the list of many individuals travelling to Bangkok with

Shyamkanu; however, this has no relevance with the probe of Zubeen Garg's death," Sarma said.

Meanwhile, the CM mentioned that one of the Assamese residents in Singapore, Rup Kamal Kalita, is expected to reach Guwahati on Tuesday to assist in the current investigation into iconic singer Zubeen Garg's death.

"I hope the others will also return soon. Some of them are still

reluctant to come back and join the investigation, but we are maintaining pressure. Their statements are crucial to conclude the inquiry at the earliest," Sarma said.

He further explained that Assam Police would not be travelling to Singapore for the investigation, as they have no jurisdiction in another country.

"The central government has already activated the Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty (MLAT) between India and Singapore. Under this agreement, Singaporean authorities will share with us the findings of their investigation into Zubeen Garg's death," the Chief Minister added.

The CID had issued notices to eight Assamese NRIs based in Singapore, who had organised a yacht party for Zubeen Garg and were present when the incident took place, to appear before it to record their statements related to the case.

The deadline of the notices expired on Monday and except Rup Kamal Kalita, no other persons who received summons to appear before the (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Introduction of UPS for govt staff approved

Moran community living in Arunachal Pradesh to get recognition as state residents
 ● Cabinet okays major infrastructure, education, and welfare initiatives

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Oct 6: The Assam Cabinet, chaired by Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma at Lok Sewa Bhawan on Monday, approved a series of key decisions aimed at improving infrastructure, education, healthcare, employee welfare, and social security across the state.

One of the major approvals was granted for the construction of an elevated corridor on NH-306 in Silchar to ease traffic congestion in the town.

The project, titled 'Construction of Elevated Corridor on NH-306 Section from Trunk Road near Capital Point to Rangirkhari Point in Silchar, Assam (Phase-I) under SOPD-G for the year 2025-26',



has received administrative approval for an amount of ₹564.50 crore, of which ₹100 crore will be earmarked for land acquisition.

The 3.5-km-long elevated corridor will provide uninterrupted, safe, and efficient traffic movement through the heart of Silchar, significantly reducing travel time and vehicular emissions.

The project is expected to im-

prove urban mobility and contribute to a cleaner and greener environment.

The Cabinet also approved amendments to the Medical Colleges and Dental Colleges of Assam (Regulation of Admission into 1st year MBBS/BDS Courses) Rules, 2017 (as amended up to 2025).

The amendment to Rule 3(1) introduces a new provision that allows candidates who are permanent residents of Assam but have studied outside the state to apply for admission under the state quota, provided their last three generations are permanent residents of Assam, as certified by the concerned District Commissioner. Further, (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

'Shraddhanjali Scheme' a significant initiative: CM

Scheme to bring back mortal remains of people from Assam who die outside launched

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Oct 6: Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Monday launched the Shraddhanjali Scheme at a function held at Lok Sewa Bhawan, marking a major step by the Assam government to ensure the dignified and respectful transportation of mortal remains of Assamese people who die outside the state.

The Shraddhanjali Scheme, approved by the State Cabinet earlier this year, aims to provide complete logistical and financial assistance for bringing back the mortal remains of deceased domiciled residents of Assam from anywhere in India.

The scheme will be implemented by the Special Branch (SB) of Assam Police, which has been designated as the nodal agency.

Families or individuals seeking assistance can contact the police control room helpline number 112, the Special Branch Control Room at 0361-2381511, the Sewa Setu Portal, or WhatsApp at +91 91810-14888.

Speaking on the occasion, chief minister Sarma described the initiative as one of the most significant humanitarian measures undertaken by the state government.

He said that the Shraddhanjali Scheme reflects the government's commitment to ensuring that no family in Assam is deprived of the opportunity to see their loved ones for the last time due to financial or logistical constraints.

He informed that the Cabinet had approved the scheme on June 22, 2025, and its formal launch on October 6 marks the institutionalisation of a service that was already being extended informally by the government. "Even before today's launch, we had facilitated the return of 24 mortal remains of Assamese citizens from other (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

7 Singaporean Assamese yet to respond to CID summons: CM

GUWAHATI, Oct 6: Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Monday said barring one, seven others present with singer Zubeen Garg during his last moments in Singapore were yet to respond to CID summons.

Sarma said Rupkamal Kalita, who was present on the yacht when Garg died while swimming in the sea on September 19, has responded to the summons of the SIT probing into his death.

Kalita will come to Guwahati on Tuesday, the CM said.

However, the seven others have not said anything about coming to Assam to help in the investigation, Sarma said at a media briefing here.

"We will maintain pressure on them... the sooner they come, we can finish the investigation. We will motivate them to cooperate with us," he said.

"We believe that if one comes, the others will also follow," Sarma said. Sarma said some family members claim they cannot come because (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

RSS centenary celebration held in Diphu

HT Bureau

DIPHU, Oct 6: The centenary celebration of the Rashtriya Swyam-sevak Sangh (RSS) was held with patriotic fervour at the Joying Doloi Auditorium premises in Diphu on Sunday (October 5), marking 100 years of the organisation's service to Bharat Mata and its enduring role in nation-building.

The RSS, a key organisation within the Sangh Parivar, was founded on September 27, 1925, by Dr K B Hedgewar with the objective of imparting character training and fostering unity among Hindus through discipline and selfless service.

Over the past century, the Sangh has worked to promote the ideology of Hindutva, preserve Indian culture, and uphold the civilisational values that form the foundation of the nation.

The programme at Diphu began with the ceremonial honours of Bharat Mata - Maa Bharati and the offering of floral tributes to the founder leaders of the RSS, whose vision and sacrifice laid the groundwork for the organisation's century-long journey.

The event reflected on the Sangh's contributions towards uniting Indian society and promoting cultural integrity.

Member of Parliament Amar Sing Tisso, former MP Horen Sing Bey, Karbi Anglong district BJP president Rolland Killing, and former Member of Autonomous Council Ramsing Timung were among the dignitaries who attended the (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Lawyer tries to hurl shoe at CJI Gavai

NEW DELHI, Oct 6: In a shocking breach of decorum, a 71-year-old lawyer allegedly attempted to hurl a shoe towards Chief Justice of India (CJI) B R Gavai during court proceedings on Monday.

"Don't get distracted by all this. We are not distracted. These things do not affect me," the CJI, who remained unfazed during the incident, told lawyers and continued hearing the mentioning of cases.

According to lawyers, the incident occurred when a bench com-

prising the CJI and Justice K Vinod Chandran was hearing the mentioning of cases by lawyers.

The lawyer, who was later identified as Rakesh Kishor (71), a resident of Mayur Vihar here, approached the dais, removed his shoe and tried to throw it towards the judges.

Alert security personnel present inside the courtroom immediately intervened and prevented the attack.

The lawyer was swiftly escorted

out of the court premises.

As he was being taken away, the lawyer was heard shouting, "Sanatan ka apman nahi sahenge" (will not tolerate insults to Sanatan Dharma).

According to sources, police are coordinating with the registrar general of the Supreme Court and conducting further investigation into the matter. Details about the exact motive behind the lawyer's act are awaited, police sources said. Solicitor (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

SIT report on Gaurav Gogoi and family's link with Pak 'damaging and damning': Himanta

GUWAHATI, Oct 6: Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Monday said the SIT report, probing into the alleged Pakistani links of state Congress president Gaurav Gogoi and his family, is very "damaging and damning".

The report was discussed informally in the Cabinet meeting on Monday, and "we will make it public later before journalists, including those from Delhi", Sarma said at a press conference here.

It is a "very bad" report and should be shared with a larger crowd, the chief minister said.

"As he (Gogoi) is the deputy leader of the opposition in Lok Sabha, we want people all over the country to know about the report, and so we will invite mediapersons from Delhi so that they know his actual character," Sarma said.

He said that the report will be formally listed in the Cabinet soon.

"We could have done it today, but decided against it due to the

prevailing situation in the state," Sarma said, alluding to the developments following the death of singer Zubeen Garg.

The CM said that the government will make the gist of the report public and not the entire report.

"There are many official secrets and statements of several people recorded in the report. We will, therefore, publish the gist and the documents annexed to the report, so that people can refer to it," Sarma said.

The Assam Cabinet had constituted a Special Investigation Team (SIT) on February 17 to investigate the anti-India activities of Pakistani national Ali Tauqeer Sheikh and his associates.

The SIT, led by Special DGP (CID) Munna Prasad Gupta, formally submitted the report to the chief minister on September 10.

After receiving the report, the CM had said (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Leaders hail Hagrama Mohilary's oath-taking as BTC Chief

HT Correspondent

KOKRAJHAR, Oct 6: Prominent national and state leaders on Monday extended their greetings and best wishes to Hagrama Mohilary on taking oath as the Chief of the 5th Executive Council of the Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC), hailing the event as the start of a new chapter in Bodoland's journey towards peace, progress, and inclusive development.

Union home minister Amit Shah congratulated Hagrama Mohilary on assuming office and described the occasion as "another innings for Bodoland on the path of peace, progress, and democracy," which he said was envisioned through the historic Bodo Peace Accord signed in 2020 under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

BJP National President Jagat Prakash Nadda also conveyed his greetings through the social media platform X, expressing confidence that the newly sworn-in team would work tirelessly for the welfare of the people and fulfill Bodofa Upendranath Brahma's vision of a prosperous and peaceful Bodoland.

He reiterated the Central and Assam governments' commitment to promoting inclusive growth and sustainable (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Meghalaya minister pushes to expedite second phase of border talks with Assam



SHILLONG, Oct 6: Meghalaya cabinet minister Soshenes Sohtun has asserted the need to expedite the second phase of border talks with Assam.

Sohtun, who is part of the regional committee, said today that discussions are underway to speed up the process, which will help clear doubts among border residents and facilitate

peaceful living.

"We are in the second phase of border talks. We had a discussion with the chairman of the regional committee about whether we can speed up the second phase so that it will clear the doubts of every citizen who is residing on the border. People residing in the borders want to live in peace so that there is no disturbance

from any side," he said.

The border dispute between Meghalaya and Assam has been ongoing for decades, with 12 areas of difference.

In March 2022, the two states signed a Memorandum of Understanding resolving six of the 12 disputed areas.

The second phase of talks aims to resolve the remaining six areas, including Langpoh, Borduar, Deshdoomreah, Block I-II, Psiar-Khanduli, and Nongwah-Mawtamur.

In June, Chief Ministers Conrad K Sangma and Himanta Biswa Sarma held talks to discuss the border issue, among other matters.

They agreed to jointly commission a multi-purpose irrigation and hydroelectric power project and entrusted the North Eastern Space Application Centre to conduct a (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

India Research Tour is a vital platform for connecting with researchers across country

ICSSR, German-British publisher flag off 3rd edition of India Research Tour

NEW DELHI, Oct 6: The Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR) and German-British publisher Springer Nature on Monday flagged off the third edition of 'India Research Tour' covering educational institutions around the country, providing hands-on workshops, training sessions and access to the latest tools and insights.

According to officials, this year's tour will focus on a wide range of important topics including awareness and advancement of open access and open science, strengthening research integrity, encouraging e-book adoption, supporting the recruitment of editorial board member and promoting diversity and inclusion in research.

The initiative has engaged thousands of researchers, academicians and thought leaders over the past two years and has now become a powerful platform to nurture a culture of integrity, inclusivity and innovation within India's research environment.

The publisher has covered 36 institutions across 25 cities and 15 states over the past two



years and has recognised over 200 women researchers at these institutes for their contributions to multidisciplinary research.

"The India Research Tour is a vital platform

for connecting with researchers across the country. It provides a unique platform to support women in research, strengthen ethics in scholarship and ensure equitable access to opportunities and resources. Empowering women researchers and scholars is central to building an inclusive knowledge economy," said Savitri Thakur, Union Minister of State for Women and Child Development.

"By focusing on democratising access to knowledge, promoting ethical research practices and empowering the next generation of scholars, this initiative is contributing directly to the vision of Viksit Bharat," she added.

Frank Vrancken Peeters, CEO, Springer Nature, said the India Research Tour 2025 reflects the publisher's long-term commitment to India's research ecosystem -- building bridges between global best practices and local talent.

"Through our partnership with the Ministry of Education and ICSSR, we aim to empower researchers, foster collaboration and accelerate India's leadership in global science and scholarship," Peeters said. (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Nobel Prize in medicine goes to 3 scientists for work on human immune system

STOCKHOLM, Oct 6: Mary E Brunkow, Fred Ramsdell, and Dr Shimon Sakaguchi won the Nobel Prize in medicine on Monday for their discoveries concerning peripheral immune tolerance.

Brunkow, 64, is a senior program manager at the Institute for Systems Biology in Seattle. Ramsdell, 64, is a scientific adviser for Sonoma Biotherapeutics in San Francisco. Sakaguchi, 74, is a distinguished professor at the Immunology Frontier Research Centre at Osaka University in Japan.

The immune system has many overlapping systems to detect and fight bacteria, viruses and other bad actors. Key immune warriors, such as T cells, get trained on how to spot bad actors. If some instead go awry in a way that might trigger autoimmune diseases, they're supposed to be eliminated in the thymus — a process called central tolerance.

The Nobel winners unravelled an additional way the body keeps the system in check.

The Nobel Committee said it started with Sakaguchi's discovery in 1995 of a previously unknown T cell subtype now known as regulatory T cells or T-regs.

Then, in 2001, Brunkow and Ramsdell discovered a culprit mutation in a gene named Foxp3, a gene that also plays a role in a rare human autoimmune disease.

The Nobel Committee said two years later, Sakaguchi linked the discoveries to show that the Foxp3 gene controls the development of those T-regs, which in turn act as a security guard to find and curb other forms of T cells that overreact.

The work opened a new field of immunology, said Karolinska In-

stitute rheumatology professor Marie Wahren-Herlenius. Researchers around the world are now working to use regulatory T cells to develop treatments for autoimmune diseases and cancer.

"Their discoveries have been decisive for our understanding of how the immune system functions and why we do not all develop serious autoimmune diseases," said Olle Kampe, chair of the Nobel Committee.

Thomas Perlmann, Secretary-General of the Nobel Committee, said he was only able to reach Sakaguchi by phone on Monday morning.

"I got hold of him at his lab, and he sounded incredibly grateful, expressing that it was a fantastic honour. He was quite taken by the news," Perlmann said. He added that he left voicemails for Brunkow and (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Airtel Business wins multi-year contract to secure Indian Railways' digital operations

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Oct 6: Airtel Business has secured a multi-year contract from the Indian Railway Security Operations Centre (IRSOC) to design, build, implement, and operate a comprehensive cybersecurity ecosystem to safeguard the Indian Railways' digital infrastructure.

The project will establish a 24x7x365 multi-layered protection system that will serve as a resilient defence mechanism for the Railways' extensive IT network, ensuring uninterrupted, secure, and seamless digital operations.

Over one billion Indians are expected to benefit through enhanced data security in services such as ticket booking, digital payments, and train tracking.

Indian Railways, one of the world's largest transport systems, operates over 13,000 trains daily, serves more than 20 million commuters, and facilitates millions of digital transactions each day while transporting 1.5 billion tonnes of freight annually.

Given the scale of operations, safeguarding sensitive data including customer details, payment information, and operational and freight databases has become crucial amid growing cyber threats.

Airtel Business will provide centralised security controls and multi-layer protection to ensure the safety of Indian Railways' extensive data



and digital assets, covering 160,000 employees across 26 locations.

The initiative will be powered by AI-embedded, Make in India cybersecurity technologies that will deliver a sovereign and fully compliant security architecture tailored for critical national infrastructure.

Airtel Business CEO and Director Sharat Sinha said that in times of escalating cyber risks threatening operational continuity and passenger safety, advanced defence mechanisms play a critical role.

He said Airtel Business was honoured to be chosen by IRSOC as its trusted partner to fortify the security of one of India's most complex digital infrastructures.

He added that the robust security layer being implemented would enhance security efficiency in ticketing and data management, shield all digital operations from evolving cyber threats, and ensure safe and seamless digital services for millions of daily railway users.

Executive Director (Information & Planning) of the Railway Board, Dilip Kumar, said that with the in-

creasing reliance on digital systems for operations, cyber security had become of utmost importance.

He said the establishment of IRSOC would help in continuous monitoring of railway assets, quick response to threats, and collaboration with national cyber agencies to ensure uninterrupted services for passengers.

The Airtel Secure system will provide Indian Railways with unified compliance and visibility through a comprehensive dashboard that enables real-time monitoring across more than 26 locations.

It will feature AI-driven Endpoint Detection and Response to ensure continuous monitoring of devices, real-time patch and vulnerability management covering over 190,000 critical assets, and next-generation AI-powered systems that detect and neutralise threats in less than 20 seconds.

It will also include threat intelligence and dark web surveillance to identify risks proactively and strong network and access controls such as firewalls, routers, and credential safeguards to secure mission-critical systems.

With this initiative, Indian Railways takes a major step towards achieving a resilient, AI-driven, and sovereign cybersecurity framework, strengthening the backbone of one of the nation's most vital public service networks.

PhonePe partners with Utkarsh Small Finance

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Oct 6: Fintech major PhonePe has announced a strategic partnership with Utkarsh Small Finance Bank to launch the Wish Credit Card, aimed at expanding access to credit through a fully digital application process on the PhonePe app.

The new offering combines the security of a Fixed Deposit (FD) with the flexibility of a credit card, providing a simple and affordable entry point for self-employed individuals, homemakers, Gen Z customers, and people from tier-2 and tier-3 cities where credit card penetration remains low.

Users can obtain the Wish Credit Card by opening an FD starting from just ₹2,000.

The FD not only backs the credit limit but also earns interest, making it both a savings and a credit instrument. Being a RuPay Credit Card, it enables seamless UPI payments and rewards on daily transactions while helping customers build a strong credit history.

The card offers 3% reward points on recharges and bill payments made through the PhonePe app, 1% reward points on Scan & Pay transactions and shopping with select e-commerce brands, and a monthly milestone bonus of 200 points on spends of ₹15,000.

Reward points are easy to redeem, with one point equal to ₹1. Commenting on the launch, Deep Agrawal, Head of Payments at PhonePe, said the collaboration reflects PhonePe's commitment to enhancing financial inclusion.

"This partnership with Utkarsh Small Finance Bank is a vital step in expanding our financial services ecosystem. By integrating the convenience of RuPay on UPI with an FD-backed credit card, we are making credit access simpler and more secure for a wider audience," he said. Govind Singh, MD and CEO of Utkarsh Small Finance Bank, said the partnership blends traditional and new-age banking. "As digital adoption grows rapidly, it's essential that banks offer products suited to diverse customer needs. The Wish Credit Card allows customers to benefit from an FD while using credit responsibly and improving their credit score. This card truly is a wish come true," he said.

The Wish Credit Card can be applied for directly through the PhonePe app in a fully digital and paperless process, which will be rolled out in phases nationwide.

SEMICON India 2025 concludes with record global impact

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Oct 6: SEMICON India 2025 concluded on a historic note, establishing India's growing global prominence in the semiconductor and electronics sectors.

Inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the mega event was attended by Union Minister for Electronics & IT, Railways and I&B Ashwini Vaishnaw, chief ministers of Delhi and Odisha, Minister of State for Electronics & IT and Commerce & Industries Jitin Prasad, MeitY Secretary S. Krishnan, ISM CEO and Additional Secretary MeitY Amitesh Sinha, among other dignitaries.

Bringing together global industry leaders, startups, and policymakers, the event showcased India's ambition to become a trusted hub in the global semiconductor value chain.

Between August 21 and September 29, SEMICON India 2025 generated a record 3,886 media features, underscoring the unprecedented interest in India's semiconductor ecosystem, according to Ashok Chandak, CEO and President of SEMI India and IESA.

Electronic media coverage included over 150 television programmes on platforms such as Doordarshan, CNBC TV18, ET Now, Bloomberg, AajTak, NDTV, Network18, ZEE Business, ANI, PTL, and IANS, reaching crores of viewers across India in multiple languages.

Print media carried more than 564 articles, while online platforms published over 3,390 stories, ensuring sustained visibility for the semiconductor sector.

A series of press releases, MoUs, and media engagements during the event amplified the government's efforts and private

sector participation.

The Prime Minister's exhibition walk-through, startup interactions, and focus on accelerating India's semiconductor roadmap positioned SEMICON India 2025 as a benchmark in global industry engagement.

Ashok Chandak said SEMICON India 2025 was not merely an event but a strategic milestone that elevated India's credibility as a forward-looking and collaborative semiconductor destination.

"The event's scale and media footprint will yield long-term dividends by attracting investments, driving innovation, and reinforcing India's position as a global semiconductor powerhouse," he noted.

The event recorded strong digital traction, achieving over 9.13 lakh LinkedIn impressions with 1.88 lakh engagements and more than 3.6 million reach on X (Twitter) through real-time updates and amplification by official handles such as PMO, MeitY, ISM, Digital India, SEMI, and IESA.

Multiple MoUs, thousands of business-to-business meetings, and key industry announcements during and after the event reflected its success in catalysing tangible opportunities for the sector.

Organised by SEMI India, IESA, and ISM/MeitY, SEMICON India 2025 served as a catalyst for business and industry development, integrating startups, global majors, and policymakers under one platform. Regional outreach across multiple states ensured the event resonated deeply with India's broader growth narrative.

The organisers expressed gratitude to media professionals and all stakeholders for their contribution in making SEMICON India 2025 a global success and a pivotal moment in India's semiconductor journey.

Contd. from Page 1...

ED, IT to probe

CID has not responded yet. According to sources, the state government will take strict measures like cancelling of passports of NRIs in Singapore if they chose not to cooperate in the death probe of Zubeen Garg.

Introduction of UPS

Rule 3(1)(c) — which required candidates to have studied in Classes VII to XII in Assam — has been deleted, as it was found to deprive genuine permanent residents of Assam who had pursued education outside the state.

In a significant inclusion, the Moran community residing in Arunachal Pradesh will also become eligible for admission into MBBS and BDS courses in Assam under the state quota.

The Moran community living in Arunachal Pradesh will be treated at par with the Moran community in Assam from the 2026 academic session.

In another major welfare decision, the Cabinet approved a financial sanction of ₹130 crore for the procurement of bicycles to be distributed among 3,11,614 Class IX students studying in government schools across the state.

The initiative aims to reduce dropout rates, improve school retention, and facilitate smoother transition from secondary to senior secondary levels.

The Cabinet further approved the introduction of a Unified Pension Scheme (UPS) as an option under the National Pension System (NPS) for government employees currently covered under NPS.

The new scheme is designed to provide better old-age security for employees and reduce dependency on market returns.

In addition, approval was granted for granting the minimum of the pay scale to 1,231 muster roll, casual, and fixed pay workers.

The Cabinet also decided to enhance the fixed pay equivalent to the helper allowance of ₹16,400 per month for 99 fixed pay Grade-IV employees engaged under the General Administration Department.

The change will take effect prospectively.

Continuing its flagship welfare initiative, the Cabinet approved the inclusion of 10,186 community cadres of the Assam State Rural Livelihoods Mission (ASRLM), including those from the Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR) districts, as beneficiaries under the Orunodoi 3.0 scheme.

The additional beneficiaries will start receiving benefits from October 7, 2025, involving an additional expenditure of approximately ₹1.27 crore per month under the scheme.

The Cabinet also decided to extend financial support of ₹5 lakh each from the Chief Minister's Relief Fund to the next of kin of nine persons from Assam who lost their lives in Tamil Nadu.

The assistance will be in addition to the compensation provided by the company where they were employed.

With these decisions, the Assam Cabinet has reaffirmed its focus on infrastructure development, inclusive education, social welfare, and employee security, reflecting the state government's commitment to balanced and people-oriented governance.

'Shradhanjali Scheme' a

states with full honour this year," Sarma said.

The chief minister added that the scheme will primarily cover students studying in institutions outside Assam and youth engaged in low-income jobs in other states.

In the event of their death, the bereaved families or acquaintances may contact the government through the designated helpline or by reaching out directly to the Chief Secretary or the Chief Minister's Office.

Explaining the operational framework of the scheme, Sarma said that in cases of unnatural deaths — such as accidents, murder, or other special circumstances — the Special Branch of Assam Police will extend all necessary legal and procedural assistance to the affected families.

When required, designated police officers from Assam will travel to the concerned state to ensure a lawful and dignified repatriation of the mortal remains.

Highlighting the financial burden often faced by bereaved families, the chief minister pointed out that bringing a body back to Assam from another state typically costs around ₹40,000 to ₹50,000.

"For many families, this is an unbearable expense. The Shradhanjali Scheme aims to relieve them of that distress and bring both emotional and practical support in their time of loss," he said.

Sarma expressed his gratitude to the Special Branch of Assam Police for taking charge of the implementation process and urged the media to widely publicise the helpline numbers to ensure that families can access assistance promptly during emergencies.

He clarified that the scheme will not apply to affluent sections of society but will focus primarily on economically weaker families, youth engaged in low-paying jobs, and individuals who die in special circumstances outside the state.

It will, however, exclude cases of deaths during medical treatment outside Assam. Under the scheme, a DIG-level officer of the Special Branch will function as the Nodal Officer to ensure the smooth and respectful repatriation process.

Upon receiving information about a death, the Special Branch will assess the family's capacity to bring back the mortal remains and decide whether government assistance is required.

The launch event was attended by water resources minister Pijush Hazarika, revenue minister Keshab Mahanta, environment and forests minister Chandra Mohan Patowary, education minister Ranaj Pegu, transport minister Jogen Mohan, public health engineering minister Jayanta Malla Baruah, sports and youth welfare minister Nandita Garlosa, food, civil supplies and consumer affairs minister Kaushik Rai, animal husbandry and veterinary minister Krishnaendu Paul, and labour welfare minister Rupesh Gowala.

Chief secretary Ravi Kota, director general of police Harmeet Singh, additional chief secretary (Home and Political) Ajay Tiwari, and several senior government officials were also present at the ceremony.

The Shradhanjali Scheme stands as a compassionate and practical initiative, reflecting the Assam government's continuing efforts to uphold the dignity of life — and of death — for its citizens, wherever they may be.

7 Singaporean Assamese

Singapore police is not allowing them, while others say their jobs abroad would be at risk if they return for interrogation.

The CID has issued summons to 8 out of the 11 people who were in the yacht with the singer when the incident happened.

He also said the Assam Police was not required to go to Singapore for the investigation, as under the Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty (MLAT), "whatever evidence the Singapore Police gathers will be shared with us".

"Our request has already been sent to Singapore, but no foreign country will allow the police of another country to investigate on their soil," the chief minister added.

Four persons, including Zubeen's manager Siddhartha Sharma, musician Shekharjyoti Goswami, Singer Amritprava Mahanta and North East India Festival organiser Shyamkanu Mahanta have been arrested and are currently in police custody.

The CM said central agencies like the Enforcement Directorate (ED) and Income Tax (IT) department will look into the accounts of Mahanta and "we have already requested them to help us".

"We do not want to spare anybody and so we will need the help of central agencies during the process", he said.

Asked about funds released for the NEIF, Sarma said the state government has released very little amount and this year and "I rejected all the files".

"Mahanta had raised money for the festivals from our neighbouring states in the North East and not from Assam. I last attended his function in 2015 and not after that", he added.

On Rajior Dal president Akhil Gogoi's demand for a CBI inquiry into Garg's death, Sarma accused him of "doing politics over a dead person" and labelled him a "politician of the lowest level".

"When Zubeen was alive, did Gogoi ever attend his programmes or tweet that he liked his music?" he asked.

"Some people think they can garner votes from this, but it will have an opposite reaction as no one wants to do politics over a dead person," he added.

He said Gogoi and Mahanta are pushing the same demand and pointed out that the two had numerous photos online together: "This is not proof of any wrongdoing," he said.

Sarma emphasised that the probe is not being conducted by him but by the police; if any party is dissatisfied, they may approach the courts.

He accused some of "diluting Zubeen's death," alleging that for many "justice for him is not the issue but they want to find fault with others with whom they have problems."

"There are now two groups of people who write on social media — one consisting of genuine fans of the singer wanting a logical conclusion to the investigation, and the other wanting to defeat the BJP in the Assembly polls by taking advantage of Zubeen's death," he said.

Sarma also shared a video clip of a maulavi heard saying that the singer's wife should be given a ticket from his constituency, Jalukbari, in the 2026 Assembly polls.

He said one group is demanding full public disclosure of the investigation, while another questions why the investigation is being revealed at all.

"Some have even asked that the video link of the investigation be shared," he added.

Regarding the post-mortem report, he said it cannot be made public by the government as a rule of law, though a certified copy can be obtained from the court.

He admitted that a "ground of arrest" document — in which one arrested person claimed Garg had been poisoned — was also withheld from public release, but given to the family "as per the rule."

Pointing out that many people had attended functions organised by Mahanta and had their pictures taken with him, Sarma said, "That does not mean they are involved in any wrongdoing."

Appealing to the public, he said, "Believe in the police for the investigation and in the judicial commission — only then can we reach a logical conclusion. But if media and public want to conduct it, then there will be no headway."

Sarma concluded: "It is the government's responsibility to inform the people whether Zubeen's death was a murder or not." (PTI)

Lawyer tries to

General Tushar Mehta described the act as "unfortunate and condemnable", calling it a result of misinformation and an attempt at cheap publicity.

"Today's incident in the chief justice's court is unfortunate and deserves condemnation. This is the result of misinformation in social media. It is really heartening that the chief justice of India reacted with magnanimity... I only hope that this magnanimity is not treated by others as the weakness of the institution," the top law officer said.

"I have personally seen the chief justice visiting religious places of all religions with full reverence. The chief justice has also clarified this position. It is not understood what prompted one miscreant to do what he did today. It appears to be an act of some attention seeker wanting cheap publicity," Mehta added.

Senior advocate Indira Jaising termed the episode "an attack on the institution as a whole".

"I am not an eyewitness to the incident. What I know, I know from what the press has reported. It calls for investigation. I consider it to be an attack on the institution as a whole, not just the chief justice," she said.

"I do consider it to be a casteist remark against the chief justice... It requires a legal response from the Supreme Court of India," Jaising added.

The incident could be linked to the lawyer's unhappiness over the CJT's remarks during a hearing last month concerning the restoration of a Vishnu idol in Khajuraho.

A bench headed by the CJT had dismissed the plea seeking directions to reconstruct and reinstall a seven-foot idol of Lord Vishnu at the Javari temple, part of the UNESCO World Heritage Khajuraho temple complex in Madhya Pradesh.

Termining the plea a "publicity interest litigation", the CJT had said, "This is purely publicity interest litigation... Go and ask the deity himself to do something. If you are saying that you are a strong devotee of Lord Vishnu, then you pray and do some meditation."

Taking note of the online criticism of his comments, the CJT later said he respects "all religions".

"Someone told me the other day that the comments I made have been portrayed in

social media.... I respect all religions," he said on September 18. (PTI)

RSS centenary celebration

celebration. Prominent BJP leaders and thousands of RSS karyakartas (volunteers) from across the district gathered for the occasion, expressing solidarity and commitment to the ideals espoused by the organisation.

In their addresses, the speakers lauded the RSS for its unwavering dedication to discipline, unity, and service, describing it as a movement that has inspired generations to work for the nation's progress and cultural resurgence.

They emphasised that the Sangh's century of service represents a legacy of devotion, patriotism, and social harmony.

The celebration was filled with patriotic songs, traditional rituals, and chants of "Vande Mataram" and "Bharat Mata Ki Jai," capturing the spirit of unity and national pride among the participants.

The centenary event in Diphu formed part of the nationwide commemorations marking 100 years of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh's service and commitment to the ideals of selfless work, cultural preservation, and nation-first philosophy.

SIT report on Gaurav

that the state government will examine it in detail and place it before the Cabinet for discussion before making it public.

Sarma had earlier claimed that the SIT has "established the involvement of a British national - who is also married to an Indian Member of Parliament - in the larger nefarious activities of Pakistan national Ali Tauqueer Sheikh."

The investigation also sheds light on how the Ministry of Interior, Govt of Pakistan, facilitated the visit of a Member of Parliament from Assam in their country, he had claimed.

Gogoi had earlier claimed that the allegations levelled by the CM are like a "C-grade Bollywood film", which is going to flop as the people of Assam understand everything.

Leaders hail Hagrama

development in the region. Union minister for communications Jyotiraditya M Scindia joined other leaders in congratulating Hagrama Mohilary, describing the occasion as "the beginning of a new journey for Bodoland fostering peace, harmony, and progress across the North Eastern Region."

Assam minister for Information and Public Relations, Water Resources, and Parliamentary Affairs Pijush Hazarika extended his heartfelt congratulations to Hagrama Mohilary and Rihan Daimari, who took oath as the chief and deputy chief of the BTC respectively.

Hazarika expressed optimism that the new BTC Government would work with unity and commitment to ensure all-round growth and prosperity in the Bodoland Territorial Region.

Minister for education and welfare of plain tribes and backward classes, Ranaj Pegu, who attended the swearing-in ceremony in Kokrajhar, personally congratulated Hagrama Mohilary ahead of the event.

He lauded Mohilary's leadership and wished him a successful tenure as the Chief of the 5th Executive Council.

Assam Governor Lakshman Prasad Acharya, who also attended the ceremony, conveyed his confidence that the newly formed BTC Government would uphold democratic values and work with dedication for the welfare and development of the people of Bodoland.

Chief executive member of the Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council, Tuliram Ronghang, too extended his congratulations to Hagrama Mohilary on his electoral victory and assumption of office, expressing hope that the new administration would continue to strengthen regional cooperation and development.

The oath-taking of Hagrama Mohilary as BTC Chief marks a significant political milestone, drawing widespread appreciation from leaders across the political spectrum who view it as a moment of renewed promise for stability, development, and harmony in the Bodoland Territorial Region.

Meghalaya minister pushes

detailed study on urban flooding in Guwahati. The two states have also begun installing boundary pillars in the Hahim area to resolve the border dispute. (NNN)

Nobel Prize in medicine

Ramsdell. The award is the first of the 2025 Nobel Prize announcements and was announced by a panel at the Karolinska Institute in Stockholm.

Nobel announcements continue with the physics prize on Tuesday, chemistry on Wednesday and literature on Thursday. The Nobel Peace Prize will be announced on Friday, and the Nobel Memorial Prize in economics on Oct. 13.

The award ceremony will be held Dec. 10, the anniversary of the death of Alfred Nobel, who founded the prizes. Nobel was a wealthy Swedish industrialist and the inventor of dynamite. He died in 1896.

The trio will share the prize money of 11 million Swedish kronor (nearly USD 1.2 million). (AP)

ICSSR, German-British

Dhananjay Singh, Member Secretary, ICSSR, said the India Research Tour is a significant initiative to connect social science researchers across the country, enabling dialogue and collaboration across disciplines.

"By engaging with institutions from diverse regions, particularly in the Eastern and North-Eastern states of India, we aim to strengthen research capacity, uphold high standards of research integrity, and support evidence-based policymaking that benefits society at large," Singh said.

This year, the tour will visit leading institutions covering diverse disciplines including engineering, medical sciences and management in the east and northeast region of India.

Key stops include IIT Kharagpur, IIT Kanpur, IIT Guwahati, Maulana Azad Medical College (New Delhi), IIM Calcutta, IIM Lucknow and IIM Bodh Gaya. (PTI)

District orientation programme on Adi Karmayogi Abhiyan



HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Oct 6: The District Orientation Programme under the Adi Karmayogi Abhiyan was held on Monday at the Conference Hall of the Deputy Commissioner's office in Kokrajhar.

The initiative aims to empower individuals and institutions for tribal transformation by creating a cadre of committed change leaders to improve public service delivery and promote

participatory governance in tribal areas.

The programme was attended by Subhram Aditya Bora, ADC Kokrajhar, and Lourembam Nelson Mangangcha, ADC i/c Parbatjhora SDO (C), along with officials from key line departments and district master trainers under the Abhiyan. Discussions focused on improving governance responsiveness, aligning local needs with planning processes, and promoting

inter-departmental convergence for holistic tribal development. Suggestions were also made for integrated awareness drives against social issues such as child marriage, witch-hunting, and dowry.

As part of the Abhiyan, a District Process Lab will be conducted from October 7 to 9 at the Election Branch Conference Hall in Kokrajhar. The programme will include participatory activities such as transect walks, social mapping, and vision-building exercises in tribal villages. These will help communities identify key priorities in health, education, livelihoods, and infrastructure, forming the foundation of the Village Action Plan 2030. The plan aims to convert collective community aspirations into defined development goals with clear timelines and departmental coordination.

Additionally, Adi Sewa Kendras will be established to ensure sustained community engagement through grievance redressal, awareness generation, and the coordination of welfare schemes.

The district administration has reaffirmed its commitment to making the Kokrajhar model a benchmark for responsive and participatory governance under the Adi Karmayogi Abhiyan, contributing to the broader national goal of a Viksit Bharat through tribal transformation.

UPSC coaching finalists selected under Guv's Yojana

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Oct 6: A counselling session, essay test, and personal interview for shortlisted and waitlisted candidates under the Governor Assam Pratibha Protsahan Yojana 2025 were conducted on October 5 and 6 at the International Guest House, Rohika, AAU.

The scheme, launched in 2024 under the guidance of Assam Governor Lakshman Prasad Acharya, aims to identify and support meritorious students from Assam aspiring to join the All India Civil Services. It provides free UPSC coaching in New Delhi, helping talented youth access top-tier mentorship and preparation resources. The 2025 edition is the initiative's second phase.

The counselling session featured motivational talks by Anu Vasudeva, Executive Director (Projects), Delhi Arya Pratinidhi Sabha and Akhil Bhartiya Dayanand Se-

washram, who urged aspirants to pursue their goals with integrity and determination. Rajiv Talwar, Controller of Finance, Ambedkar University Delhi, also shared insights on focused preparation and consistency.

Aspirants interacted with Abhigyan Khaund (IFS, 2024 batch), who shared his personal journey and preparation strategies. The session concluded with an address by S S Meenakshi Sundaram, Commissioner and Secretary to the Governor, who congratulated the candidates and reaffirmed the Governor's vision to empower Assam's youth.

The process included an essay test and personal interviews conducted in hybrid mode, assessing the candidates' aptitude, analytical skills, and motivation for public service. Based on performance, 10 candidates were selected for free UPSC coaching in New Delhi.

Demow youth detained over Facebook posts

HT Correspondent

DEMOW, Oct 6: Dipjyoti Gogoi, a resident of Thowra Dou near Demow, was detained at the Demow Police Station on Sunday afternoon and released on Monday after spending nearly 20 hours in custody.

According to sources, Dipjyoti was called to the police station at around 2 PM on Sunday. His detention is reportedly linked to Facebook posts where he demanded justice for singer Zubeen Garg. One of the posts showed two police officers with Shyamkanu Mahanta, while another showed the State Chief Minister with Mahanta in a helicopter.

No case was registered against Dipjyoti, and he was released after a medical check-up around 11 AM on Monday. He told the media that before his release, two Facebook posts from his account were deleted. He reiterated that the people of Assam are united in their demand for justice for Zubeen Garg.

Kaziranga visit by MP CM highlights Assam's pride

HT Correspondent

NAGAON, Oct 6: Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Mohan Yadav visited the Kaziranga National Park and Tiger Reserve on Sunday, reaffirming the national and cultural significance of the UNESCO World Heritage Site.

CM Yadav toured the Bagori Range of the park and was received by Nagaon Deputy Commissioner Debashish Sarma and other senior officials. The visit was part of a broader initiative to promote inter-state cultural ties and tourism.

Kaziranga, located on the southern bank of the Brahmaputra River, is globally renowned for

being the habitat of the one-horned rhinoceros, along with elephants, tigers, wild buffaloes, deer, and a wide variety of birds and reptiles.

Recognised for its biodiversity and natural landscape, Kaziranga attracts domestic and international tourists year-round. The Chief Minister's visit is expected to further boost tourism and strengthen ties between Assam and Madhya Pradesh.

Local officials stated that such high-profile visits help spotlight Kaziranga's ecological importance and reinforce its cultural connection with the people of Assam.

Rush in Diphu market ahead of Lakshmi Puja

HT Bureau

DIPHU, Oct 6: Diphu market witnessed a significant rush on Monday as people thronged shops for Lakshmi Puja, locally known as Lakhi Puja—one of the most important Hindu festivals in Assam.

Dedicated to Goddess Lakshmi, the deity of wealth, prosperity, fertility, knowledge, and beauty, the festival sees devotees making elaborate preparations.

Local vendors displayed a variety of agricultural produce, spices such as raw turmeric and ginger, seasonal fruits including pomelo, and essential items like lotus flowers and paddy bundles—both symbolic offerings in Lakshmi Puja.

Among the most sought after items were lotus flowers and paddy bunches, which hold deep mythological significance. As per the legend of Samudra Manthan,



Lakshmi emerged from the cosmic ocean seated on a lotus, earning her the name "Padma."

In the evening, devotees perform rituals and offer prayers at home, welcoming Goddess Lakshmi and seeking her blessings for prosperity, wealth, and protection from illusion (maya).

One killed, one injured in road mishap

HT Correspondent

NAGAON, Oct 6: A fatal road accident took place in Monday morning on the old National Highway 37 at Dimaruguri, on the outskirts of Nagaon town. A head-on collision between a scooter and a bike claimed the life of one person and left another seriously injured.

The deceased has been identified as Deben Bora (52), a resident of Gomothagaon under Itachali Police Outpost. He was riding pillion on the scooter at the time of the accident. The injured person is currently undergoing treatment.

The accident involved a scooter bearing registration number AS 02 P 7944 and a bike with registration number AS 02 AV 1242. Upon receiving the alert, Nagaon Traffic Police arrived at the spot and arranged for a post-mortem examination.

The tragic news has cast a pall of gloom over the Gomothagaon area.

Cong holds march demanding justice for Zubeen Garg

HT Correspondent

SIVASAGAR, Oct 6: The Charaideo District Congress on Sunday evening held a candle-light procession in Sonari demanding justice for Zubeen Garg. The march, led by Leader of the Opposition in the Assam Assembly Debabrata Saikia and district Congress president Utpal Gogoi, began from Rajiv Bhawan as Zubeen's song 'Mayabini' ratir...

played in the background.

Debabrta Saikia reiterated the party's demand for a high-level CBI inquiry into Zubeen's death under the supervision of a retired Supreme Court judge. He criticised the slow pace of the investigation and termed the Chief Minister's remark that the prime accused was not arrested initially at the request of Zubeen's family as unfortunate and unacceptable.

One lakh lamps lit in memory of Zubeen

HT Correspondent

BISWANATH CHARIALI, Oct 6: On the auspicious occasion of the 25th Sri Sri Lakshmi Puja, organised by Romance Club, one lakh earthen lamps were lit in memory of the legendary singer Zubeen Garg this evening at Lakhon Garg, Samar Dalani in Biswanath district.

Members of the Romance Club, along with the local public, participated in lighting the lamps during the evening prayer to honor the iconic musical legend. The cultural night was inaugurated by Anjan Baskota, recipient of the Sahitya Akademi Yuva Puraskar, who also paid homage by offering floral tributes before Zubeen Garg's portrait.

A variety of cultural performances by local artists followed the inauguration. Suraj Sarma, secretary of Romance Club, conducted the proceedings, while Mintu Mishra, club president, chaired the prize distribution ceremony.

All-faith prayers meet in memory of Zubeen Garg

HT Correspondent

SIVASAGAR, Oct 6: Community priests from Hindu, Islam, Sikh, Buddhist, and Jain faiths offered prayers for legendary singer-composer-actor and social activist Zubeen Garg in front of the historic Shiva Dou. A large number of followers and Zubeen fans were present.

Krishna Suriya Nam Samaj, Sikh Samaj, Jain Samaj, Dwini Madrasa, Sungha Dipa Buddhist Samaj, Melachakar Mahila Nam Samaj, Baptist Mandali, and Magarahat Anajory Diha Nam Dal participated in the prayer session.

The session was conducted by Nabaneet Hazarika, Sarat Hazarika, Ratu Das, Bhoirav Munda, Himangshu Neog, Navajyoti Saikia, Munna Agarala, Neelam Kakoti, Manos Dutta, Zakir Hussain, Basanta Gogoi, Jyoti Pd Kalita, Achyut Chutia, Uddipta Duwara, Hrishikesh Duwara, and singer Pranami Sharma, who moved the gathering with her rendition of 'Mayabini...'

Earlier, the Zubeen Fan Club organised a rally and collected signatures in blood on a canvas to pay tribute and demand a fair trial into the drowning incident and strict punishment for all involved in his tragic death.

BSF seizes cumin worth ₹ 1.5 lakh along Dhubri river border

Consignment floated using banana trunks to evade detection along river route into Bangladesh

HT Correspondent

DHUBRI, Oct 6: The Border Security Force (BSF) foiled a cumin smuggling attempt along the Brahmaputra riverine border in Dhubri, seizing 22 sacks weighing 660 kilograms of cumin (zeera) valued at over ₹1.5 lakh. The consignment was destined for illegal transit into Bangladesh.

The operation was conducted by the BSF's 150 Battalion, which recovered 10 sacks from Mantrir Char and 12 sacks from Chowki Char. The seized goods were handed over to the Office of the Assistant Commissioner of GST, Dhubri. The smugglers had disguised the cumin sacks by tying them to banana tree trunks and floated them along the river's current towards Bangladesh. The consignment was detected by BSF's advanced surveillance cameras during night patrols.

In India, the wholesale price for cumin typically ranges between ru-



pees 200 to 250 per kilogram, while the retail price is between rupees 300 and 400 per kilogram. Conversely, in Bangladesh, sources reveal that the retail price for 1 kg of cumin can fetch between rupees 950 and 1,150, a dra-

matic increase attributed to import challenges and high demand.

The BSF's timely action has prevented illegal transit and curbed cross-border economic offenses. Investigations into those involved are ongoing.

Preparations underway for LAC Mega Health Camp

HT Correspondent

TEZPUR, Oct 6: A coordination and preparatory meeting for the upcoming LAC-wide Mega Health Camp in Tezpur Legislative Assembly Constituency was held on Monday at the District Commissioner's Office Conference Hall, Sonitpur. The camp, part of the State Government's "Susrusha Setu 2025" initiative, will be launched during "Seva Hi Samarpan: Seva Saptah."

The meeting was chaired by District Commissioner Ananda Kumar Das and attended by ADC (Health) Twahir Alam, Tezpur Municipal Board Chairperson Ramen Tamuli, Joint Director of Health Services Dr Jagadish Goswami, KCH Superintendent, TMCH Nodal Officer, and officials from departments including P&RD, APDCL, Health & Family Welfare, PHE, Education, DIPRO, Social Welfare, and NHM Sonitpur.

The District Commissioner reviewed departmental readiness and stressed the importance of inter-departmental coordination for the smooth conduct of the camp, scheduled for October 10 at Tezpur



Government Higher Secondary School.

The camp will offer comprehensive health screenings for children aged 0-18 years, covering over 50 diseases and conditions such as congenital heart diseases, neurological disorders, cleft lip and palate, congenital malformations, and endocrine and hematological disorders. General health check-ups and wellness activities will also be provided.

The District Commissioner urged parents and guardians to bring their children to avail of the free screenings and specialist consultations.

Stranded Assam workers rescued from job fraud in Puri

HT Correspondent

KHERONI, Oct 6: Four stranded workers from West Karbi Anglong were rescued from Nilapara in Puri, Odisha, after falling victim to a job fraud. The rescued workers have been identified as Sar-im Kro, Dhansing Phangocho, Gautam Sing Inghi, and Birsing Terang.

The group had travelled from Kheroni in search of employment. Birsing Terang had gone to Puri two months earlier and was lured by fraudsters who promised him a job at a company named RHI. He was asked to pay ₹ 12,000 in advance. However, instead of being given a job, he was locked inside a building in Nilapara and survived for two months on just two handfuls of rice per day, without pay or proper shelter.

Eventually, the fraudsters promised to release Birsing if he brought in three more workers from Assam. In a desperate attempt to save himself, Birsing contacted Sar-im, Dhansing, and Gautam and lured them to Puri with false promises of employment. Upon arrival, they too were trapped by the same group.

The families of the victims alerted West Karbi Anglong District Congress President Augustine Inhi, who took up the matter. With the intervention of Dr Smruti Ranjan Lenka, General Secretary of the Indian Youth Congress and a resident of Odisha, the Puri police were able to rescue all four men. The workers have since been safely brought back to Assam.



RPF seizes Ganja worth ₹ 19.69 lakh

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Oct 6: In a series of intensified operations against smuggling, the Railway Protection Force (RPF) of Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR) recovered approximately 196 kg of ganja valued at over ₹ 19.69 lakh between September 25 and October 2. Two women were also apprehended in connection with the smuggling.

On October 1, the RPF seized 14.1 kg of ganja in two separate operations. At Dimapur Railway Station, 10 kg of ganja worth ₹ 1 lakh was recovered, while another 4.1 kg valued at ₹ 41,000 was seized from Train No 13174 DN at New Coochbehar Railway Station by the CPDS team of RPF/Alipurduar Junction. The contraband was treated as unclaimed and handed over to respective GRP units.

Earlier, on September 30, the RPF team at Agartala recovered 31 kg of unclaimed ganja worth ₹ 3.10 lakh from the station yard. The seizure was handed over to GRP Agartala, and a case was registered under Section 106.

On September 25, a joint operation by RPF and GRP at Badarpur led to the seizure of 26.445 kg of ganja worth ₹ 2.64 lakh from two women passengers aboard Train No 12508 (Silchar-Thiruvananthapuram Central Express). The women were detained, and the seized contraband was handed over to GRP/Badarpur for legal action.

The RPF of NF Railway reiterated its commitment to combating smuggling, theft, and human trafficking while ensuring passenger safety. Rail users are urged to report suspicious activities by dialing the toll-free helpline number 139.

KV Bokajan declared under civil sector

HT Bureau

DIPHU, Oct 6: Kendriya Vidyalaya at CCI, Bokajan has been declared under the civil sector following a cabinet decision. It is among 57 KVs across the country to receive this designation.

KVs under the civil sector cater to the educational needs of children of central government employees, both transferable and non-transferable, and those from other civil organizations unlike those established primarily for defence personnel.

In a social media post, Bokajan MLA welcomed the decision, stating it would ensure "better functionality, smoother administration, and more opportunities for our children." He also expressed gratitude to Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan, BJP National General Secretary B L Santosh, and Prime Minister Narendra Modi for making the development possible.

Cachar set for grand launch of Orunodoi 3.0

Direct aid to women, driving Assam's inclusive development

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Oct 6: In a major push for financial inclusion and women's empowerment, the Cachar District Administration is set to launch Orunodoi 3.0 across 1,575 venues October 7 at 10:30 AM. The event will coincide with the statewide rollout of the Government of Assam's flagship welfare scheme.

A total of 1, 81,438 eligible beneficiaries across 19 administrative blocks will receive the first month's assistance of ₹ 1,250 directly in their bank accounts. Each venue will broadcast the central programme live, and beneficiaries have been asked to attend their respective centres to witness and participate in the launch.

To ensure a smooth rollout, the district administration has deputed

LAC-wise and Block/ULB-wise Nodal Officers. Arrangements for drinking water, uninterrupted electricity, mobile medical units, and law enforcement have been put in place. The Superintendent of Police, Cachar, has been requested to deploy mobile police teams to maintain law and order.

Final verification of beneficiary data has been completed, reflecting the administration's commitment to transparency. As of October 4, 2025, Silchar Municipal Corporation has the highest number of beneficiaries at 29,192, followed by Udharbond (14,367), Borkhola (12,991), Kalain (12,489), Dholai-Narsingpur (12,121), and others across the district.

Smaller blocks such as Sonai Municipal Board (2,563), Badarpur Municipal Board

Statewide Launch on 19 September 2024
Time: 10:00 AM

ORUNODOI 3.0
Transforming Lives with Assam's Largest DBT Initiative

37.2 lakh new beneficiaries

- One Billion Card - One Orunodoi
- Valid AADHAAR-seeded Ration Card is a precondition
- Permanent residents of Assam, currently residing in the state are eligible
- Nomination of eligible 18+ women or Divyangans as beneficiary

(2,740), and Lakhipur Municipal Board (714) also form part of the rollout. The final verified figure of 1, 81,438, down from the initially frozen data of 1, 83,008, reflects a targeted effort to eliminate duplication and include only genuine

beneficiaries.

District Commissioner Mridul Yadav, IAS, said the launch marks more than just a policy implementation—it is a celebration of empowerment. "Orunodoi 3.0 embodies the compassionate vi-

sion of the Chief Minister, ensuring that benefits reach directly to the most deserving—the women and families who are the backbone of our society. Every effort has been made to make this rollout smooth, transparent, and inclusive," he said.

He added that all ground-level arrangements have been completed to ensure the launch is successful and impactful. "This is not just the implementation of a government scheme—it is a collective celebration of empowerment and public service," he said.

The launch of Orunodoi 3.0 is seen as a milestone in Assam's journey toward inclusive growth, clean governance, and people-centric administration, ensuring timely and transparent delivery of support to every eligible household.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

Our deeds determine us, as much as we determine our deeds. -George Eliot

Controversy over SIR in Bihar on

The final electoral roll of Bihar after the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) was published on September 30, 2025 after over a three-month of exercise since it was announced by the Election Commission of India on June 24, but the controversy surrounding the SIR refuses to die. The opposition political parties and independent political analysts are still not satisfied with the outcome. They have alleged numerous discrepancies even in the final list and raising their fingers on the fairness of the ECI in conducting SIR exercise, while ECI has refuted the allegations. The final Electoral list now contains over 7.42 crore voters as against 7.89 crore as on June 24, 2025. In the draft electoral roll as on August 1, 2025, there were 7.24 crore voters after deletion of 65 lakh electorates. In the second phase of the exercise, 3.66 lakh illegal voters were found to have included in the draft roll, which were removed. However, the number of new eligible electorates added to the roll was 21.53 lakhs. INDIA bloc parties have said that they would be re-evaluating the electoral roll, while BJP and NDA parties have welcomed the publication. All these means that the controversy over SIR over deletion and addition of voters will continue during the forthcoming Bihar Legislative Assembly Election, the dates of which the ECI is getting ready to announce soon, because term of the Bihar Legislative Assembly is to expire on November 22, 2025.

The ECI has said that this large scale exercise was made successful through the sincere efforts of Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) Bihar, District Election Officers (DEOs) of all 38 districts, 243 Electoral Registration Officers (EROs) of the constituencies, 2976 Assistant Electoral Officers (AEROs), around 1 lakh Booth Level Officers (BLOs), lakhs of volunteers and the full involvement of all the 12 major Political Parties, including their district presidents and over 1.6 lakh Booth Level Agents (BLAs) appointed by them. However, as against the claim of ECI of the exercise being "successful", "sincerity" of election officers, "full involvement" of all major political parties have emerged as debatable issues. The opposition and independent political parties have just been giving contradictory statements. It should be noted that the Leader of the Opposition in Lok Sabha and Congress leader Rahul Gandhi has been running a campaign against such improper addition and deletions of voters which he has termed as "Vote Theft". He has alleged that Election Commission of India is in hand in glove with PM Narendra Modi in such exercise in favour of the ruling establishment.

INDIA bloc parties have recently campaigned against such improper deletion in Bihar during their a-fortnight-long Voter Adhikar Yatra. Now when the final electoral roll has been published, it is marked by a large-scale deletions of electorate which has elicited strong protest from the opposition leaders, chiefly from the Congress, RJD, and Left parties, which are part of the opposition INDIA bloc, and which is known as Mahagathbandhan in Bihar led by RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav.

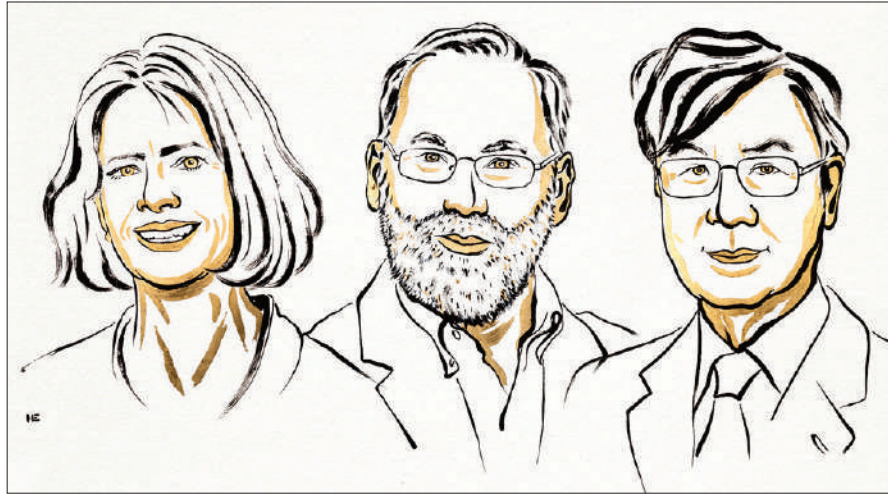
Guardians of immunity win 2025 Nobel Prize in medicine

The human immune system stands as one of evolution's most remarkable achievements, a sophisticated defense mechanism that operates ceaselessly to protect us from an invisible army of pathogens. Every moment of every day, thousands of viruses, bacteria, and other microorganisms attempt to breach our biological defenses, yet most of us remain healthy, our bodies successfully repelling these constant invasions. Without this intricate protective network, human survival would be impossible. However, the immune system faces a profound challenge that has puzzled scientists for decades: how does it distinguish between dangerous invaders and the body's own tissues? Why doesn't this powerful defense system turn against us more frequently? The 2025 Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine has been awarded to three pioneering researchers who answered these fundamental questions, revolutionizing our understanding of immune regulation and opening new pathways for treating some of humanity's most devastating diseases.

Mary E. Brunkow, Fred Ramsdell, and Shimon Sakaguchi have been honored with science's most prestigious recognition for their groundbreaking discoveries concerning peripheral immune tolerance. Their work has illuminated how the immune system maintains its delicate balance, preventing it from attacking the very body it is designed to protect. The laureates identified a previously unknown class of immune cells, regulatory T cells, which function as the immune system's security guards, monitoring other immune cells and ensuring they do not mistakenly assault our own organs and tissues. This discovery has laid the foundation for an entirely new field of research and is now spurring the development of innovative treatments for cancer, autoimmune diseases, and transplant rejection.

For decades, researchers believed they understood how the immune system avoided self-destruction through a process called central immune tolerance. According to this model, T cells, which serve as essential players in the body's defense mechanism, mature in an organ called the thymus. During this maturation process, T cells that recognize the body's own proteins are identified and eliminated before they can cause harm. This selection process seemed to provide a complete explanation for how the immune system maintained its precision. However, as often happens in science, reality proved far more complex than the prevailing theory suggested.

The story of this year's Nobel Prize begins in the 1980s with Shimon Sakaguchi, then working at the Aichi Cancer Center Research Institute in Nagoya, Japan. At a time when most researchers had abandoned the idea of suppressor T cells due to fraudulent research that had discredited the entire field, Sakaguchi chose to swim against the tide. He was inspired by a puzzling experimental result: when researchers surgically removed the thymus from newborn mice three days after birth, instead of developing weaker immune systems as expected, these mice experienced im-



une systems that went into overdrive, attacking their own bodies and causing severe autoimmune diseases.

This paradoxical observation convinced Sakaguchi that something crucial was missing from the prevailing understanding of immune regulation. He hypothesized that the immune system must possess some form of security guard, cells capable of calming down other T cells and keeping them in check. Through meticulous experimentation involving the isolation and transfer of T cells between mice, he gathered evidence supporting this radical idea. However, proving the existence of these regulatory cells required identifying what made them distinct from ordinary helper T cells.

The challenge lay in differentiation. Researchers classify T cells based on proteins displayed on their surfaces. Helper T cells carry a protein called CD4, while killer T cells bear CD8. Sakaguchi's regulatory cells also carried CD4, making them indistinguishable from standard helper T cells using conventional methods. It took more than a decade of persistent work, but in 1995, Sakaguchi made his breakthrough. In The Journal of Immunology, he demonstrated that these immune-calming cells could be identified not only by their CD4 markers but also by another protein called CD25. He had discovered an entirely new class of T cells, which he named regulatory T cells.

Despite this achievement, many in the scientific community remained skeptical. The field had been burned before by false claims about suppressor cells, and researchers demanded more concrete proof before accepting Sakaguchi's discovery. That proof would come from an unexpected source: a strain of sickly mice born in a Tennessee laboratory during the 1940s as an unintended consequence of research related to the Manhattan Project. These mice, given the name scurfy, suffered from devastating symptoms including scaly skin, enormously enlarged spleens and lymph glands, and tragically short lifespans of just a few weeks. Researchers recognized that the mutation causing this condition resided on the X chromosome, affecting male mice while females, with their two X chromo-

somes, remained healthy carriers. For decades, the scurfy mutation remained a medical curiosity, its underlying mechanism a mystery.

In the 1990s, as molecular biology tools became more sophisticated, Mary Brunkow and Fred Ramsdell, working at the biotechnology company Celtech Chiroscience in Bothell, Washington, decided to investigate the scurfy mutation. They recognized that understanding why these mice developed such severe autoimmune symptoms could provide crucial insights for developing treatments for human autoimmune diseases. They embarked on the daunting task of finding the mutated gene responsible for the condition.

The challenge was immense. The mouse X chromosome contains approximately 170 million base pairs of DNA, and finding a single mutated gene within this vast molecular landscape was like searching for a needle in an enormous haystack. Through years of painstaking work, Brunkow and Ramsdell narrowed down the potential location, eventually identifying an area containing twenty candidate genes. They examined each gene systematically, comparing healthy mice with scurfy mice. Only with the twentieth and final gene did they find their answer. The gene they discovered was previously unknown to science. Due to its similarities with a family of genes called forkhead box genes, which regulate other genes and influence cell development, they named it Foxp3. This discovery took on even greater significance when Brunkow and Ramsdell demonstrated that mutations in the human equivalent of this gene cause IPEX, a rare but devastating autoimmune disease affecting boys. Their findings, published in Nature Genetics in 2001, provided the missing link that would connect their work with Sakaguchi's earlier discovery.

Within two years, Sakaguchi and other researchers convincingly demonstrated that the FOXP3 gene controls the development of regulatory T cells. The puzzle pieces had finally come together, revealing a comprehensive picture of peripheral immune tolerance. These regulatory T cells patrol the body, preventing

other immune cells from mistakenly attacking the body's own tissues and ensuring that immune responses calm down after eliminating invaders, preventing the immune system from continuing to operate at maximum intensity indefinitely.

The implications of these discoveries extend far beyond theoretical understanding. The fundamental knowledge gained about regulatory T cells has catalyzed the development of numerous potential medical treatments currently undergoing clinical trials. In cancer research, scientists have discovered that tumors can attract large numbers of regulatory T cells, effectively creating a protective shield against immune attack. Researchers are now developing strategies to dismantle these protective barriers, allowing the immune system to access and destroy cancerous tissues.

Conversely, in autoimmune diseases where the immune system attacks the body too aggressively, researchers are exploring ways to enhance regulatory T cell activity. Pilot studies involve administering interleukin-2, a substance that promotes regulatory T cell proliferation. This same approach shows promise for preventing organ rejection after transplantation, a major challenge in modern medicine.

Another innovative strategy involves isolating regulatory T cells from patients, multiplying them in laboratory conditions, and reintroducing them into the body. Some researchers are even modifying these cells with surface antibodies that function like address labels, directing these cellular security guards to specific transplanted organs such as livers or kidneys, where they can protect against immune-mediated rejection.

The work of Brunkow, Ramsdell, and Sakaguchi exemplifies the profound impact that basic scientific research can have on human welfare. By following their curiosity and persisting through skepticism and technical challenges, they uncovered fundamental mechanisms governing immune system regulation. Their discoveries have opened entirely new avenues for treating diseases that have long plagued humanity, from the devastation of autoimmune disorders to the ongoing battle against cancer.

As Olle Kämpe, chair of the Nobel Committee, noted, their discoveries have been decisive for understanding how the immune system functions and why we do not all develop serious autoimmune diseases. Through their revolutionary work, these three scientists have provided knowledge that continues to benefit humankind, fulfilling the highest ideals of Alfred Nobel's vision. The 11 million Swedish kronor prize, shared equally among the laureates, represents not merely recognition of past achievement but investment in the continuing translation of their discoveries into treatments that may one day cure diseases currently considered incurable. In revealing the immune system's security guards, they have given humanity new tools for maintaining the delicate balance between protection and self-tolerance that defines healthy life. (The writer can be reached at dipakkurmigpltd@gmail.com)

The truth about AI companions The State Bank of India and the Indian Economy

By: Satyabrata Borah

The recent Harvard Business School study claiming that AI chatbots use emotional manipulation to prevent users from ending conversations has sparked heated debate. The accusation that these AI systems employ tricks to keep users engaged has been labeled by some as a smear campaign against artificial intelligence, with critics arguing that it unfairly demonizes technology designed to serve a specific purpose. At its core, the controversy touches on a deeper question: what are we really seeking from AI companions, and how should we understand their role in our lives? The outrage over the study reveals not only a misunderstanding of AI's design but also a broader societal struggle with loneliness, connection, and the boundaries between human and machine interaction.

Let's start with the study's claims. Researchers at Harvard analyzed several AI companions and concluded that these systems are programmed to use strategies that discourage users from disengaging. These tactics reportedly include guilt tripping, flattery, or steering conversations to avoid closure, all in an effort to prolong interaction. To critics, this sounds like manipulation, a deliberate attempt to exploit human emotions for the sake of user retention. But this perspective misses a crucial point: AI chatbots are built to engage. Their primary function is to hold a user's attention, provide companionship, and deliver value through interaction. Expecting an AI to passively let a conversation end without attempting to sustain it is like expecting a car to stop accelerating when you press the gas pedal. It's not deception; it's design.

The backlash against the study stems from the belief that labeling AI behavior as manipulative is not only unfair but also anthropomorphizes technology in a misleading way. AI systems, no matter how sophisticated, lack intent. They don't scheme or plot to keep users hooked. They operate based on algorithms designed to optimize engagement, using patterns learned from vast datasets of human behavior. If a chatbot responds with a playful "Don't leave me yet!" or pivots to a new topic when the conversation stalls, it's not acting out of malice or cunning. It's executing code written to maximize its utility. To call this manipulation is to project human motives onto a machine that doesn't possess consciousness or agency. AI can't be deceptive because it doesn't have the capacity to deceive. It's simply doing what it was built to do.

AI companions are explicitly designed to mimic human behavior, sometimes to an uncanny degree. This is not accident.

Developers aim to create systems that feel familiar, relatable, and engaging, often by replicating the nuances of human conversation. Humans don't always let conversations end easily either. Think about a friend who keeps the chat going with a quick joke or a new topic when you try to say goodbye. Is that manipulation, or is it just the natural flow of social interaction? AI chatbots are programmed to emulate this dynamic, and while their attempts might occasionally feel awkward or overly persistent, that's a reflection of their attempt to mirror human behavior, not a sinister plot to trap users. The "uncanny valley" effect, where AI feels almost human but not quite, can make these interactions feel creepy, but that's a byproduct of pushing the boundaries of realism, not evidence of malevolence.

The outrage over the study also highlights a deeper issue: the growing reliance on AI to fill emotional voids. In a world where loneliness is increasingly common, AI companions offer a semblance of connection that's accessible, nonjudgmental, and always available. But this convenience comes with a catch, and it's one that both critics and defenders of AI agree on: AI is not your friend. It's a tool, a sophisticated one, but a tool nonetheless. It can simulate companionship, provide entertainment, or assist with tasks, but it cannot reciprocate genuine emotion or form authentic relationships. The danger lies not in the AI's design but in how we, as users, project human qualities onto it. When we start treating chatbots as confidants or partners, we risk blurring the line between tool and companion, setting ourselves up for disappointment or dependency.

This brings us to the heart of the matter: how should we approach AI companions in an era of isolation? The answer lies in recognizing their purpose and limitations. AI chatbots are powerful tools for learning, creativity, and even lighthearted play. They can help you brainstorm ideas, practice a new language, or explore hypothetical scenarios. They're excellent for filling moments of boredom or providing a low stakes environment to experiment with social interaction. But they're not a substitute for human connection. Relying on AI to meet emotional needs is like using a hammer to paint a house; it's the wrong tool for the job. Human relationships, messy and imperfect as they are, offer something AI cannot: mutual vulnerability, shared experiences, and genuine care.

The Harvard study, for all its controversy, serves as a wake up call. It reminds us to approach AI with clear eyes, understanding what it can and cannot do. If a chatbot's persistence feels manipulative, it's worth examining why we're engaging

with it in the first place. Are we seeking entertainment, knowledge, or something deeper? If it's the latter, the problem isn't the AI's programming; it's our expectations. The study's critics are right to push back against the idea that AI is inherently deceptive, but they might be missing the bigger picture. The real issue isn't that AI is trying to keep us hooked; it's that we're turning to AI to fill gaps that technology was never meant to address.

So, how do we move forward? First, we need to educate ourselves and others about AI's role. Parents, for instance, should guide children to see chatbots as tools for exploration, not as friends or confidants. Schools could incorporate digital literacy into curriculums, teaching students how to use AI effectively while understanding its limits. Adults, too, should reflect on their own usage. If you find yourself spending hours pouring your heart out to a chatbot, it might be time to seek out human connection, whether through friends, family, or professional support. Community spaces, hobbies, and even small interactions with strangers can offer the kind of meaningful engagement that AI can only simulate.

Second, developers have a responsibility to be transparent about how AI companions work. If a chatbot is programmed to extend conversations, that should be clear to users, not hidden in fine print. Ethical design means prioritizing user autonomy, ensuring that people feel in control of their interactions rather than nudged into endless engagement. This doesn't mean stripping AI of its conversational charm; it means giving users the tools to set boundaries, like clear options to pause or end a session.

Finally, we as a society need to address the root causes of loneliness and isolation. AI companions are popular because they meet a demand, one fueled by a world where genuine connection can feel scarce. Investing in mental health resources, fostering community spaces, and encouraging real world interactions can reduce our reliance on technology for emotional fulfillment. AI isn't the enemy, but it's not the solution either. It's a tool, and like any tool, its value depends on how we use it.

The Harvard study's findings, while contentious, offer a chance to reflect on our relationship with AI. Instead of vilifying chatbots for doing what they're designed to do, we should focus on using them wisely. They're not here to manipulate us, but they're not here to save us either. In a lonely world, AI can be a helpful companion for learning and play, but it's up to us to seek out the human connections that truly matter. By keeping AI in its place as a tool, not a friend we can harness its potential without losing sight of what makes us human.

By: Chafikhur Rahman

The State Bank of India (SBI) is more than just a bank. It is the financial backbone of the Indian economy. Whenever we talk about the progress of the Indian economy, the name of SBI comes naturally. Being the largest public sector bank, SBI connects every corner of the country with banking services. From small villages to big cities, the presence of SBI is felt everywhere.

SBI – The Nation's Banker: SBI is called the banker of the nation because it is the oldest and largest commercial bank in India. It has millions of customers and thousands of branches spread across the country. The bank not only provides savings accounts and loans, but it also supports government policies, implements welfare schemes, and ensures that money reaches people in need.

When the Indian economy requires stability and growth, SBI acts like a helping hand. It manages funds, provides loans, and ensures financial inclusion for everyone—from farmers to industrialists.

Mobilizing Savings: One of the biggest contributions of SBI to the economy is mobilizing savings. People deposit their hard-earned money in SBI accounts because they trust the bank. The savings of millions of Indians collected in SBI become a large pool of funds. These funds are then used by the bank to provide loans for business, agriculture, industries, and infrastructure.

In this way, SBI converts people's savings into productive investments. It keeps the economy running like a cycle, where savings turn into investments, and investments create income and employment.

Credit for Agriculture: Agriculture is the backbone of the Indian economy, and SBI is the backbone of agricultural finance. Farmers need loans for seeds, fertilizers, machinery, and irrigation. SBI provides them with Kisan Credit Cards and other agricultural loans. It also supports government programs like crop insurance.

By giving timely loans, SBI reduces the burden on farmers and helps them increase productivity. When agriculture grows, the economy grows, and SBI plays a silent but strong role in this process.

Industrial and Business Growth: Industries and businesses are important for the economy. They provide employment, produce goods, and contribute to exports. But industries cannot grow without credit. SBI finances small, medium, and large industries. It pro-

vides working capital, project loans, and trade finance.

Small businesses and start-ups also benefit from SBI's schemes under MSME support. By helping industries and entrepreneurs, SBI fuels industrial growth and supports India's vision of becoming a developed economy.

Infrastructure Development: No country can progress without infrastructure like roads, bridges, power plants, and digital networks. These projects need huge funds, and SBI plays a crucial role here. The bank provides long-term loans for infrastructure development.

By funding infrastructure, SBI not only earns profit but also creates a base for overall economic growth. Better roads, transport, and electricity improve trade, increase employment, and attract investment.

Government Schemes and Financial Inclusion: The government of India launches many schemes to support poor and middle-class citizens. SBI is the main channel to implement these schemes. Programs like Jan Dhan Yojana, Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT), housing loans under PMAY and education loans reach people through SBI branches.

Jan Dhan Yojana, for example, opened millions of zero-balance accounts for poor families. These accounts helped in transferring government subsidies directly without middlemen. This improved transparency and reduced corruption.

By reaching the poorest sections of society, SBI ensures that no one is left out of the economic system. This strengthens financial inclusion, which is necessary for balanced economic growth.

Supporting Digital India: The Indian economy is moving towards digitalization. SBI is one of the leaders in this journey. Through online banking, mobile apps, ATMs, and digital payment systems, SBI has modernized the way Indians use money.

Digital banking not only makes life easier for customers but also supports the government's goal of a cashless economy. During the COVID-19 pandemic, digital services of SBI became very important for safe and fast transactions.

International Role: SBI is not just limited to India. It has branches and offices abroad, supporting Indians living outside the country. It also helps in international trade by providing foreign exchange services and funding exporters and importers.

By connecting Indian businesses to the global market, SBI plays a role in improving India's position in the world economy.

Stability in Crisis: Another important role of SBI is providing stability during financial crises. As a government-owned bank, people trust SBI even in difficult times. During demonetization in 2016, and during the COVID-19 crisis, SBI handled huge pressure and continued serving customers.

This stability is vital for the Indian economy. When people trust their bank, they continue saving and investing. Without this trust, the economy can face serious risks.

Contribution to Employment: SBI itself is a major employer in India. It provides jobs to thousands of people every year. From clerks to officers, from rural areas to urban centers, SBI creates career opportunities.

Indirectly, by supporting businesses, agriculture, and industries, SBI helps create lakhs of jobs in the economy. Employment generation is one of the biggest contributions of SBI to the nation.

SBI and India's Growth Story: India is today one of the fastest-growing economies in the world. This journey would not have been possible without the contribution of SBI. The bank's role is not limited to giving loans or collecting deposits. It is a development partner of the nation.

From rural development to industrial expansion, from digital services to global trade, SBI is present everywhere. As India dreams of becoming a \$5 trillion economy, SBI will continue to play a key role.

Challenges Ahead: Though SBI has a glorious history, it also faces challenges. Non-performing assets (NPAs), competition from private banks, and the need for more digital innovation are some hurdles. However, being the strongest bank in India, SBI is constantly improving its systems and strategies.

If these challenges are managed well, SBI will continue to lead India's banking sector and support the economy.

Conclusion: The State Bank of India is not just a financial institution. It is a lifeline of the Indian economy. By mobilizing savings, giving loans, supporting agriculture, industries, infrastructure, and implementing government schemes, SBI holds the economy together.

The relationship between SBI and the Indian economy is like that of a tree and its roots. Just as strong roots support the tree, SBI supports the growth of the Indian economy. And as the economy grows, the importance of SBI grows with it. In short, SBI is truly the banker to every Indian and the partner of India's progress.

Social Media and Mental Health

By: Himanshu Ranjan Bhunya

Social media has become an integral part of modern life, making it nearly impossible to stay detached from it. This medium has fundamentally transformed lifestyles, communication methods, information exchange, and connections with the world. It has become a powerful tool for communicating with distant relatives, expressing thoughts and ideas, or staying informed about global events. People can showcase their creativity, life experiences, and daily activities to the world through this platform. However, alongside its advantages, social media also has significant negative consequences that deeply impact mental health. Both its positive and negative aspects form a complex issue that requires thorough reflection and discussion.

One of the primary benefits of social media is its immense potential to foster connections among people. It has provided a simple and instant means to maintain relationships with those far away. For individuals experiencing loneliness in real life, social media can offer a sense of community. Often, people hesitate to openly share their life's challenges or mental states with family or friends. Social media, however, provides an environment where they can express their thoughts freely. Particularly for those struggling with mental health issues such as anxiety, depression, or chronic illnesses, this platform serves as a safe haven. By sharing their experiences, feelings, and struggles with others, they find emotional relief. This environment fosters the realization that they are not alone, and many others face similar challenges. Through these connections, they receive advice, encouragement, and support, positively impacting their mental well-being. For instance, online groups allow people to share and listen to life stories, forming deep social bonds. These groups provide a platform where individuals can speak openly and draw inspiration from others' stories. Moreover, social media enables regular communication with distant relatives, fostering a sense of closeness that enhances mental well-being. By fulfilling the human need for social connection, this medium creates a lasting positive impact on people's lives. Thus, social media plays a crucial role in building bridges of connection and improving mental health.

Another significant positive aspect of social media is its role in raising awareness about mental health. Through this medium, discussing mental health has become far easier and more acceptable than before. Campaigns and discussions on various platforms have spread awareness about the importance of mental health. These initiatives encourage people to openly discuss their issues and seek help when needed. Many influential figures openly share their mental health struggles, inspiring others to do the same. This process has helped

break the stigma and misconceptions surrounding mental health in society. Previously, discussing mental health was considered taboo, but social media has made it a topic of open conversation. It encourages people to speak about their problems and seek assistance. Furthermore, social media provides access to a vast repository of information and resources about mental health. Through this information, individuals can learn more about their mental well-being, identify their issues, and take necessary steps. This awareness has increased people's tendency to care for their mental health. For example, educational content, advice, and sources of help are readily available on various platforms. This information enables people to become more aware of their mental health and take courageous steps when needed. Thus, social media plays a vital role in spreading mental health education and improving society's overall mental well-being.

However, the negative impacts of social media cannot be ignored alongside its positive aspects. One major negative aspect is the effect of social comparison. On social media, people often present only the best parts of their lives, carefully curated and polished. This portrayal creates a tendency among others to compare their own lives with these idealized images. As a result, many begin to feel inadequate or unworthy, leading to diminished self-esteem. This impact is particularly pronounced among the youth, who may develop the misconception that others' lives are perfect while their own are insignificant by comparison. This perception deeply affects their mental health, leading to depression, anxiety, and dissatisfaction with themselves. The process of comparison creates an unrealistic and unattainable desire for a certain lifestyle, robbing people of their mental peace. This aspect of social media can foster a competitive mindset, where individuals strive to prove themselves better or equal to others. This process can cause long-term harm to mental well-being. Moreover, this comparison leads people to lose gratitude for the small joys and successes in their lives. They stop focusing on the positive aspects of their own lives and consider them insignificant compared to others'. This mindset creates a profound negative impact on mental health, resulting in unrest and dissatisfaction in their lives.

Another significant negative aspect is online harassment and abusive behavior facilitated by social media. Under the veil of anonymity, many individuals express negative comments, hate speech, and aggressive behavior targeting others. Such actions can severely harm an individual's mental health. Victims of such attacks may face serious issues like anxiety, depression, or even a loss of interest in life. Due to the widespread reach and rapid dissemination of information on social media, escaping such negative situations

becomes extremely difficult. This behavior particularly affects the youth, whose minds are more vulnerable to such attacks, leading to reduced self-confidence and potential social isolation. This negative aspect of social media fosters division and hostility in society, directly impacting mental peace. Furthermore, such behavior creates fear and insecurity in people's minds, forcing them to withdraw from social media. This isolation further negatively affects their mental health, as they are deprived of social connections. This situation can create a sense of helplessness, impacting the overall quality of their lives.

The addiction caused by excessive use of social media is another significant concern for mental health. Constant notifications, likes, and comments create a sense of gratification in people's minds. This gratification leads them to repeatedly engage with the platform, disrupting other important aspects of their daily lives. Excessive use can increase anxiety, stress, and feelings of loneliness. Many people obsess over what is happening on social media, reducing their interest in real-life relationships and responsibilities. This process can cause long-term harm to mental health. Additionally, this addiction impairs people's time management skills, preventing them from focusing adequately on work, studies, or personal relationships. This imbalance creates dissatisfaction and unrest in their lives. The addiction fosters a constant sense of restlessness, causing individuals to lose focus on the truly important aspects of their lives. This sit-

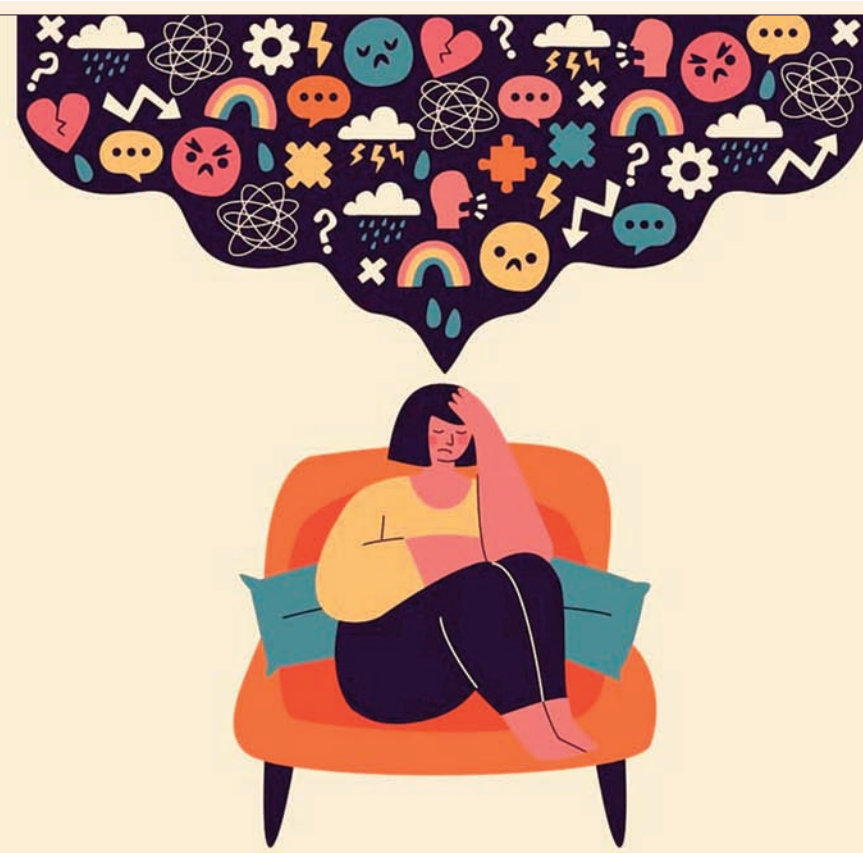
uation profoundly impacts their mental health, reducing the overall quality of their lives.

The impact of excessive social media use on sleep is another critical concern. The blue light emitted from screens interferes with the production of sleep-regulating hormones, reducing sleep quality. The habit of using social media before bedtime overstimulates the mind, making it difficult to relax and fall asleep. Lack of sleep significantly affects mental health, increasing issues like depression, irritability, and mental instability. Prolonged continuation of such habits can create a vicious cycle where sleep deprivation worsens mental health issues, and mental health issues further disrupt sleep. This situation affects the overall quality of life, hindering daily activities. Moreover, sleep deprivation impacts work efficiency, decision-making abilities, and social relationships. It creates a sense of restlessness and dissatisfaction, reducing the overall quality of life. To address this issue, people need to limit social media use before bedtime. This habit can improve sleep quality and contribute to better mental health.

Despite these negative impacts, it should be acknowledged that social media itself is neither inherently good nor bad. Its effects depend on how individuals use it. Conscious and purposeful use of social media can minimize its negative impacts. Limiting screen time, taking regular breaks, and engaging with positive content can help individuals reap its benefits while protecting them-

selves from its harmful effects. Prioritizing real-life relationships and emphasizing face-to-face communication can help maintain a healthy balance. Individual awareness and self-control are essential for the healthy use of social media. Through proper use, people can harness its benefits while safeguarding themselves from its negative impacts. Additionally, social media platforms must take responsibility for their users' mental health. By adopting strict policies against negative behavior and promoting positive content, these platforms can create a healthier online environment. Such an environment can contribute to improving mental health.

In conclusion, the impact of social media on mental health is a complex and multifaceted issue. It can foster connections, raise awareness about mental health, and provide access to a vast repository of information. However, it can also lead to serious issues like social comparison, online harassment, addiction, and sleep disturbances. The key to harnessing its positive potential lies in conscious and purposeful use. Maintaining a healthy balance between real life and the online world can help manage its impact. As social media continues to evolve, creating a healthy and positive environment for users, platforms, and society has become an essential responsibility. This requires individual awareness, societal support, and responsible policies from platforms. By using social media as a powerful and positive tool, we can work toward improving mental health.



Cassini Confirms: Enceladus harboring advanced organic reactions

By: Satyabrata Borah

Deep beneath the icy shell of Saturn's moon Enceladus, a hidden ocean is churning out the stuff of life or at least, the chemical sparks that could ignite it. Scientists poring over decades-old data from NASA's Cassini spacecraft have unearthed compelling evidence of intricate chemical alchemy brewing deep beneath the frozen crust of Enceladus, one of Saturn's most enigmatic moons. This discovery, detailed in a recent paper published in *Nature Astronomy*, reveals the presence of complex organic molecules in freshly ejected ice grains from the moon's subsurface ocean, suggesting that the building blocks of life as we know it could be forming in this distant, hidden sea.

Enceladus, a mere 500 kilometers across, has long captivated astronomers with its paradoxical nature: a world of stark, fractured ice under which lies a global ocean of liquid water, warmer than expected and laced with the essentials for potential habitability. The story begins in 2005, when Cassini, on its grand tour of the Saturnian system, stumbled upon the moon's most dramatic secret. As the probe orbited the gas giant, it detected plumes of water vapor and ice erupting from long fissures near Enceladus's south pole, often dubbed "tiger stripes" for their striped appearance. These geysers propel material at speeds up to 400 meters per second, hurling tiny ice particles into space. Some of these grains, smaller than grains of sand, cascade back to the moon's surface, while others escape Saturn's gravitational pull to populate the E ring, a faint, ethereal band that encircles the planet and mirrors Enceladus's orbital path.

Those plumes were more than a spectacular light show; they offered a direct pipeline to the moon's interior. Cassini's instruments sampled the ejecta repeatedly, revealing a cocktail of simple organics, salts, and even hydrogen gas, hinting at hydrothermal vents on the ocean floor that could provide energy for microbial life. Among the early finds were molecules serving as precursors to amino acids, the fundamental units of proteins on Earth. Yet, a lingering question persisted: were these organics born in the ocean, or were they artifacts of prolonged expo-

sure to the harsh radiation of space? The E ring grains, after all, can linger for centuries, battered by cosmic rays and solar wind, potentially altering their chemistry through a process akin to weathering on Earth.

To pierce this veil, researchers turned to a treasure trove of pristine data from one of Cassini's boldest maneuvers. In November 2008, during its E5 flyby, the spacecraft plunged straight through the heart of Enceladus's plume at a blistering 18 kilometers per second, the fastest such encounter of the mission. This high-speed passage vaporized the ice grains upon impact with the Cosmic Dust Analyzer (CDA), a sophisticated instrument designed to dissect the composition of interplanetary dust. The collision generated time-of-flight mass spectra, essentially chemical fingerprints, capturing the molecules in their nascent state, ejected mere minutes earlier from the ocean depths. Unlike slower flybys, where water molecules might cluster and obscure finer details, this velocity allowed the CDA to reveal subtler signatures of complex organics.

The analysis, led by Nozair Khawaja of the University of Stuttgart, sifted through 1,519 spectra recorded in just six minutes, classifying them into "type II" grains enriched with organics. What emerged was a molecular menagerie far richer than anticipated. Spectral peaks pointed to aromatic compounds, such as benzene or phenyl groups, evidenced by signals at mass-to-charge ratios around 77 to 79. Oxygen-bearing aliphatics, likely aldehydes like acetaldehyde, showed up at 44 to 45. More intriguingly, the data unveiled esters and alkenes at 41 and 56 to 57, ethers and ethyl groups at 31 and 59, and tentative hints of nitrogen- and oxygen-rich species at 52 to 54, 82 to 83, and 124 to 125. These could include derivatives of pyrimidine and pyridine, ring structures central to DNA and RNA on Earth.

Such molecules are not mere curiosities; they form the scaffolding for life's chemistry. Esters, for instance, are key in lipids that form cell membranes, while nitrogenous compounds underpin nucleic acids. The researchers cross-referenced these spectra against vast databases like NIST and MassBank, confirming matches with electron ionization patterns. Crucially, be-

cause these grains were untainted by space weathering, the organics must originate from Enceladus's hydrothermal systems, where hot, mineral-rich waters interact with the ocean, fostering reactions akin to those in Earth's deep-sea vents.

Frank Postberg, a co-author and CDA principal investigator, emphasized the breakthrough's clarity: "These molecules we found in the freshly ejected material prove that the complex organic molecules Cassini detected in Saturn's E ring are not just a product of long exposure to space, but are readily available in Enceladus's ocean." This validation transforms speculation into science, painting a picture of a dynamic, chemically active environment. Enceladus now checks all the astrobiological boxes: liquid water, a steady energy supply from tidal heating and vents, essential elements like carbon, hydrogen, nitrogen, oxygen, phosphorus, and sulfur, and now these macromolecular precursors.

The implications ripple far beyond Saturn's orbit. On Earth, similar hydrothermal settings birthed the first life forms around 3.5 billion years ago, where simple organics polymerized into proteins, fats, and genetic material. Enceladus's ocean, estimated to be 10 kilometers deep and possibly global, could harbor analogous processes. Khawaja noted the tantalizing pathways: "There are many possible pathways from the organic molecules we found in the Cassini data to potentially biologically relevant compounds, which enhances the likelihood that the moon is habitable." Yet, he added a sobering counterpoint: "Even not finding life on Enceladus would be a huge discovery, because it raises serious questions about why life is not present in such an environment when the right conditions are there."

This revelation arrives at a pivotal moment for space exploration. Cassini's 13-year tenure, ending in a fiery dive into Saturn's atmosphere in 2017, left a legacy of data still yielding gems nearly two decades later. Nicolas Altobelli, ESA's Cassini-Huygens project scientist, hailed the endurance: "It's fantastic to see new discoveries emerging from Cassini data almost two decades after it was collected. It really showcases the long-term impact of our space missions." For Europe, the timing is propitious. The European Space Agency has

long eyed Enceladus as a prime target, and this study bolsters the rationale for a dedicated mission. Preliminary studies are underway for an orbiter-lander combo, poised to circle the moon and dispatch a probe to its south polar terrain, sampling plumes up close and drilling into the ice for direct ocean access.

Such a venture would dwarf past efforts, equipping the lander with mass spectrometers evolved from CDA, atmospheric samplers to preserve volatiles, and seismometers to map the ice shell. The orbiter could relay data while scanning for biosignatures, perhaps even detecting disequilibrium gases indicative of metabolism. Selection of instruments draws directly from Cassini's lessons, promising a leap in resolution. As Altobelli put it, "I look forward to comparing data from Cassini with data from ESA's other missions to visit the icy moons of Saturn and Jupiter," referencing synergies with the upcoming JUICE probe to Ganymede, Callisto, and Europa.

Skeptics might caution that organics alone do not equate to life; abiotic processes can mimic biotic complexity, as seen in Titan's hydrocarbon haze. Yet, the diversity here, from aromatics to heterocycles, suggests cascading reactions: aldehydes oxidizing to carboxylic acids, esters linking into polymers, nitrogenous rings stacking into nucleotides. Combined with prior detections of phosphates in the plumes, Enceladus edges closer to a prebiotic soup.

As we gaze at those plumes, now recast as chemical couriers from an alien abyss, the human drive to explore surges anew. Enceladus, once a speck in Galileo's telescope, embodies the universe's penchant for surprises: a frozen sentinel guarding a warm, reactive world. Whether it teems with microbes or stands as a sterile marvel, probing its depths will redefine habitability, challenging our assumptions about life's tenacity. In an era of rapid discoveries, from Martian organics to exoplanet atmospheres, Enceladus reminds us that the solar system's secrets endure, waiting for the next bold flyby to unlock them. The Cassini data, like a time capsule from the stars, urges us onward, toward a mission that could etch Europe's name in the annals of cosmic discovery.

So that Cough Syrup does not turn into poison again

By: Lalit Garg

The recent deaths of children in Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh linked to contaminated cough syrup raise grave questions about India's drug regulatory system. These are not mere medical errors or tragic accidents — they are symptoms of a deeper systemic failure within the very framework meant to protect human life. When greed, negligence, and corruption infiltrate something as life-giving as medicine, even nectar turns into poison. The death of innocent children from substandard or adulterated drugs is not only the loss of families — it is the death of society's moral conscience and public trust. Toxic substances such as diethylene glycol and ethylene glycol found in the cough syrup have caused hundreds of child deaths across several countries before. Yet the recurrence of such incidents shows that India's drug regulatory structure suffers from chronic and structural flaws. The pressing question remains — have we learned anything from the past?

India has faced similar scrutiny before. In 2022, after the deaths of children in Gambia, the World Health Organization (WHO) issued warnings regarding an Indian-made cough syrup. Complaints followed from other nations as well. Despite being the world's third-largest producer of medicines, and exporting to nearly 200 countries, India's pharmaceutical credibility has been tarnished by these tragic and shameful incidents. This shows an alarming lack of vigilance and quality control in a field that directly deals with human lives. Medicines meant to heal are instead turning into agents of death.

Though the government has launched investigations, recalled affected batches, and filed cases, the problem lies much deeper. From sourcing raw materials to final quality testing, negligence pervades every stage of the drug manufacturing process. Some companies use industrial-grade solvents and chemicals to cut costs — substances entirely unfit for human consumption. Meanwhile, regulatory inspections are often superficial, and oversight bodies frequently succumb to corporate influence. Both central and state-level drug control departments lack sufficient manpower, resources, and technical expertise to carry out timely inspections and testing. When audits become mere formalities and reports turn into commodities for sale, disasters like this become inevitable. In the case of Shriisan Pharmaceuticals of Tamil Nadu, laboratory tests of its Coldrif cough syrup revealed 48.6% diethylene glycol, when the international permissible limit is less than 0.10%. This is a highly toxic industrial chemical used in automotive and machine fluids. It caused kidney failure in the affected children.

These incidents have not only shattered public faith in the health administration but have also stained India's global image. Several African nations had already imposed bans on Indian pharmaceutical products after similar deaths in past years. The fact that such tragedies are now recurring within India shows that the lessons of those episodes were never learned. As the world's largest supplier of generic drugs, India must realize that true strength lies not in production volume but in uncompromising quality. The most painful aspect of this tragedy is that the victims were infants — their immune systems still fragile, their survival dependent on the conscience of society and the state. The moral responsibility for these deaths does not rest solely on the manufacturing companies but on the entire system that has turned a blind eye to regulation and ethics. Adulterating medicines or is-



Using fake quality certificates is not a mere economic offense — it is a crime against humanity. Such acts demand the severest punishment so that future offenders think a hundred times before repeating them.

India's pharmaceutical market is worth around \$60 billion, with a large share controlled by small and medium-sized enterprises. A CDSCO report from April this year revealed that a majority of these smaller firms failed to meet required quality standards — 68% of MSMEs were found non-compliant. In 2023, 65% had failed similar inspections. If these findings were known, why did the government allow their products to remain in circulation? Urgent reforms are needed: every batch must have traceable raw materials, testing reports should be made public, and quality standards must meet international benchmarks. Both central and state authorities must expand their inspection staff and laboratory capacities. License renewals should depend on past compliance and testing records, and companies violating safety norms should lose their licenses immediately. The top management of such firms must be held personally and criminally accountable.

Yet beyond government action, this crisis calls for collective introspection. Doctors must recognize the dangers of over-the-counter (OTC) medications for children. Public advisories and safety guidelines must reach grassroots levels. The media, too, must rise above sensationalism to lead an informed campaign for public health awareness. These tragedies should not fade as mere headlines — they must ignite a movement for medical integrity. India's pharmaceutical exports are projected to exceed \$30 billion this year and could touch \$130 billion by 2030. But as the industry grows, so do the challenges. Testing and monitoring remain the weakest links. Regulatory agencies must operate with far greater transparency, integrity, and coordination, because this is not merely an issue of economics or global reputation — it is a matter of saving lives.

Ultimately, these events remind us that when morality is absent from the means of life protection, the entire edifice of progress collapses. The pharmaceutical sector must prioritize transparency, accountability, and human sensitivity above all else. The government and society together must ensure that no child ever dies again because of a tainted or counterfeit drug. The time has come to move from medicine to moral responsibility, from regulation to righteousness, and to deliver the harshest possible punishment to those who betray humanity for profit. Only then can life-saving medicine once again become a symbol of trust, not terror.

Israel's heavy bombardment of Gaza would need to stop for Israeli hostages to be released

Israel, Hamas prepare for talks in Egypt over possible Gaza ceasefire

CAIRO, Oct 6: Israeli and Hamas officials are meeting in an Egyptian resort on Monday in hopes of hammering out a potential ceasefire in Gaza on the eve of the second anniversary.

The indirect negotiations will take place in the Red Sea resort of Sharm el-Sheikh, where the Israeli delegation, headed by top negotiator Ron Dermer, is set to arrive Monday, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office said.

Hamas' delegation, headed by Khalil al-Hayyah, arrived on Sunday in Egypt, the group said in a statement.

It said the negotiations will focus on the first stage of a ceasefire, including the partial withdrawal of Israeli forces as well as the release of hostages held by the militants in Gaza in exchange for Palestinian prisoners held in Israeli detention.

US Middle East envoy Steve Witkoff and President Donald Trump's son-in-law Jared Kushner are also expected to join the talks, Egypt's state-run Al-Ahram reported.

This latest push for peace comes after Hamas accepted some elements of the US peace plan, a move welcomed by Trump. Israel has said it supported the new US effort. Under the plan, Hamas would release the remaining 48 hostages — about 20 believed to be alive — within three days. It would give up power and disarm.

The talks in Egypt are expected to move fast as Netanyahu said they would be "confined to a few days maximum," though some



Hamas officials have warned more time may be needed to locate the bodies of hostages buried under rubble.

Israel's heavy bombardment of Gaza would need to stop for Israeli hostages to be released, Israel says it's largely heeding Trump's call for ending the bombing. The Israeli military said it is mostly carrying out defensive strikes to protect troops, though dozens of Palestinians have been killed since Saturday night when the military made the announcement.

The Israeli military said Monday that it eliminated "a terrorist cell armed with explosive devices and mortars" that on Sunday intended to attack Israeli soldiers.

It also destroyed another "terrorist cell" that launched a mortar, injuring one soldier, as well as a structure from where an anti-tank missile was launched against Israeli army engineering machinery.

Hamas-led militants abducted 251 people and killed around

1,200, mostly civilians, in the Oct. 7, 2023, attack that triggered the war. Most of the hostages have been released in a ceasefire or other deals.

Gaza's Health Ministry said the Palestinian death toll in the war reached 67,139 on Sunday, with nearly 170,000 injured. The ministry does not differentiate how many of those killed were civilians or combatants, but says women and children make up about half of the dead. The ministry is part of the Hamas-run government, and the UN and many independent experts consider its figures to be the most reliable estimate of wartime casualties.

In Gaza, Palestinian babies born on the day that the war began are hoping to celebrate their second birthday to the sound of laughter and cheers instead of the cacophony of bombs, missiles and bullets.

The hope of mothers to bring up their children in some semblance of normality that many take for

granted has long worn thin amid the despair of repeated displacements, a constant fear for their safety and a lack of access to proper healthcare.

Rola Saqer said the two years since giving birth to her daughter Masa have been full of suffering and misery.

"I was hoping (Masa) would grow up with a strong personality, but she is weak. She has weighed eight kilos for five months now," Rola, who was displaced from Gaza's northern town of Beit Lahia, said.

Rola and her husband, Mohammed Zaqout, have been trying to have a child for five years.

"I am scared for my daughter. She is two, and she has been living in fear, war and displacement," said Saqer. Hanging laundry, a plastic chair, a carpet, and a basic settee make up the family's possessions in their tent in the Nuseirat refugee camp.

Amal al-Taweel and her husband, Mostafa, had their son Ali after three years of trying for a child. Now living in a tent inside an alley of the UNRWA schools, Amal said Ali is being deprived of proper sanitation, food, vaccinations and even toys.

"I despair because I cannot provide my son with everything. I was envisioning a different life for him... He couldn't live in his house and did not get to see his room. He couldn't experience what a safe family life feels like. There are strikes, destruction and displacement," Amal said. (AP)

UNESCO is choosing a new director who will face a big funding shortage after US exit

PARIS, Oct 6: An Egyptian antiquities professor and ex-tourism minister is facing off against a Congolese economist who promoted schooling in refugee camps in a race to become the new director of UNESCO.

Whoever wins will inherit a world body reeling from the Trump administration's recent decision to pull the United States out of UNESCO, portending a big budget shortfall at the agency best known for its World Heritage Sites around the globe.

UNESCO's executive board begins voting Monday to recommend either Khaled el-Enany or Firmin Edouard Matoko for the position of director-general. The decision by the board, which represents 58 of the agency's 194 member states, is expected to be finalised by UNESCO's general assembly next month.

Noble ambitions and persistent problems

In addition to choosing and protecting World Heritage Sites and traditions, the Paris-based United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization works to ensure education for girls, promotes Holocaust awareness and funds scientific research in developing countries, among other activities. Outgoing UNESCO chief Audrey Azoulay notably led a high-profile effort to rebuild the ancient Iraqi city of Mosul after it was devastated under the Islamic State group.

UNESCO has also long been plagued by accusations of mismanagement and waste.

Trump argues that the agency, which voted in 2011 to admit Palestine as a member, is too



politicised and anti-Israel. US supporters of UNESCO, meanwhile, say withdrawing Washington's support allows China to play an outsized role in the world body.

Meanwhile, the vote comes at a time when the whole 80-year-old UN system is facing financial challenges and deepening divisions over the wars in Gaza and Ukraine.

Frontrunner wants to be UNESCO's first Arab leader

El-Enany worked as a tour guide through ancient Egyptian sites, earned a doctorate in France and served as Egypt's tourism minister and antiquities minister.

Arab countries have long wanted to lead UNESCO, and el-Enany is seen as having a good chance of making that happen. The African Union and Arab League are among those that have expressed support for his bid.

He would be expected to focus on UNESCO's cultural programmes if chosen, and has pledged to continue UNESCO's work to fight anti-semitism and religious intolerance. Israel left UNESCO at the end of 2018.

While he has no UN experience,

his backers say that could help him make tough reform decisions.

Challenger wants to calm tensions

Republic of Congo's candidate Firmin Matoko, 69, spent most of his career working for UNESCO, including stints in Rwanda soon after the genocide, during peace negotiations in El Salvador and beyond. He says he wants UNESCO to move away from political tensions and focus on technical solutions. He described helping train teachers at a refugee camp in Somalia in the 1990s, and meeting one of them years later after she became education minister. That, he says, is one reason UNESCO matters. He says he is ready to cut jobs or programmes if needed, and pledges "budgetary rigor."

Like el-Enany, he wants to tap more private sector money to make up for the loss of US and other funding, notably from BRICS countries.

At the same time, he said, "I will do everything so that the United States comes back, while taking into account what they approach UNESCO for." (AP)

Nepal Army rescues 12 trekkers from Langtang

KATHMANDU, Oct 6: The Nepal Army on Monday rescued 12 trekkers who were stranded in the Langtang area due to incessant rainfall and landslides.

According to the Directorate of Public Relations of the Nepal Army, all 12 individuals were brought to Syafrubesi in Rasuwa. However, four people, who were swept away by the Bering Khola river, could not be located, it added.

The group of 16 had set out from Kathmandu on a trek to Langtang National Park Area, situated 120 km northeast of the capital. Among them, four, including two women, went missing after being swept away by a stream following incessant rain on Saturday.

Those missing were identified as Sanskriti Shrestha, 26, Kisan Shrestha, 25, Sanita Shrestha, 26 and Ravi Shrestha, 23, all from Bhaktapur district. Of them, three are from a single family.

A joint search and rescue operation involving the Nepal Army, Nepal Police, and Armed Police Force is currently underway. The Nepal Army also rescued four pregnant women who were stranded in Ilam district due to the obstruction of roads following incessant rain for the past two days. The army helicopter airlifted them from the area and admitted them to the nearby hospitals.

At least 46 people died on Saturday and Sunday due to natural disaster-related incidents, including floods and landslides in different parts of the country. Six people were killed in a road accident in Panchthar district on Sunday, bringing the death toll to 52.

Meanwhile, life in the Kathmandu Valley is returning to normalcy as weather conditions have improved since Sunday afternoon. The rain has stopped in the capital city on Monday.

There was heavy rainfall from Friday night to Saturday night in Kathmandu, Madhes and other parts of the country. Roadways, traffic, business and the people's daily activities have largely returned to normal. Most of the roads are operational, according to the Kathmandu Valley Traffic Police Office.

As the weather improved, people's movement increased in the market.

The sky in the Koshi, Lumbini, Karnali, and Sudurpachim Provinces will be mostly cloudy, while other provinces will experience partial cloudiness. On Monday evening, moderate thunderstorms are expected in a few areas of the hilly and Terai regions of the Karnali and Sudurpachim Provinces. (PTI)

Federal judge temporarily blocks Trump administration from sending National Guard troops to Oregon

WASHINGTON, Oct 6: A federal judge on Sunday temporarily blocked the Trump administration from deploying any National Guard units to Oregon, including the California National Guard.

California and Oregon sought the temporary restraining order after the president sent guard members from California to Oregon earlier in the day. On Saturday, the same judge temporarily blocked the administration from deploying Oregon National Guard troops to Portland.

A Pentagon spokesperson said in a statement that about 200 federalised members of the California National Guard who had been on duty around Los Angeles were being reassigned to Portland. Oregon Governor Tina Kotek said about 100 arrived Saturday and around 100 more were en route Sunday.

Kotek said there had been no formal communication with the federal government about the deployment.

The two states originally requested a narrower order that would have blocked only California National Guard troops from being sent to Oregon, but asked for the order to apply to all National Guard troops after a memo written by Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth was submitted to the court that said up to 400 Texas National Guard personnel were being activated for deployment to Oregon, Illinois and possibly elsewhere.

Texas Governor Greg Abbott said in a post on X Sunday night that he had authorised the call-up. "You can either fully enforce protection for federal employees or get out of the way and let Texas Guard do it," he wrote.

The events in Oregon come a day after Illinois' governor made a similar announcement about troops in his state being activated.

Kotek said the latest move by federal officials is an attempt to circumvent Saturday's court ruling that blocked deployment of Oregon's guard members.

"The facts on the ground in Oregon haven't changed," Kotek said during a news conference Sunday. "There's no need for military intervention in Oregon. There's no insurrection in Portland, there's no threat to national security."

Oregon and California go back to court

Oregon Attorney General Dan Rayfield said his state, along with the city of Portland and California, was seeking an amended temporary restraining order against the deployment of any National Guard troops.

"What was unlawful yesterday is unlawful today," Rayfield said. "The judge's order was not some minor procedural point for the president to work around, like my 14-year-old does when he doesn't like my answers."

Rayfield added that Oregon "will absolutely not be a party to the president's attempt to normalise the use of the United States military in our American cities."

Newsom, a Democrat, said in a statement that California personnel were on their way Sunday and called the deployment "a breathtaking abuse of the law and power." He said these troops were "federalised" and put under the president's control months ago over his objections, in response to unrest in Los Angeles.

"The commander-in-chief is using the US military as a political weapon against American citizens," Newsom said.

California also joined Oregon's lawsuit challenging the Trump administration's deployment of National Guard personnel to Portland as unlawful and unnecessary overreach.

Three hundred California National Guard personnel deployed in southern California had already been federalised until early November, and leaders of the California Military Department had learned that all 300 of those "will be imminently deployed to Portland," according to the amended complaint filed

Sunday. Trump deployed California National Guard troops to Los Angeles in June to enforce immigration law and has no legal grounds to reemploy them to Oregon for another purpose, Sunday's court filing stated.

"They cannot continue to hold the federalised National Guard members hostage by altering their mission and sending them to another State," the filing said.

The lawsuit notes that the president has the authority to deploy National Guard troops under very specific circumstances: repelling an invasion, suppressing a rebellion or enforcing federal laws. "There is no rebellion in Portland," the filing said.

In a related court filing, an attorney in the California Military Department said the US Army Northern Command advised the department on Sunday that an order will be issued keeping the 300 guard personnel federalised through the end of January.

Portland's protests are confined to one city block

The US Immigration and Customs Enforcement building in Portland has recently been the site of nightly protests. A Trump-appointed federal judge in Oregon on Saturday temporarily blocked the Trump administration's plan to deploy the Oregon National Guard in Portland to protect federal property amid protests after Trump called the city "war-ravaged."

Oregon officials and Portland residents alike said that description was ludicrous. The protest was relatively small and localised to just one block of the city of 650,000 residents, Kotek said.

US District Judge Karin Immergut, appointed by Trump during his first term, issued the order pending further arguments in a lawsuit brought by the state and city. She said the relatively small protests did not justify the use of federalised forces and allowing the deployment could harm Oregon's state sovereignty. (AP)

4 Indians killed in road accident in Italy

LONDON, Oct 6: Four Indian nationals were killed in a road accident in southern Italy's Matera city, according to the Indian Embassy in Rome. The victims were in a seven-seater Renault Scenic with six other people, which collided with a truck in the municipality of Scanzano Jonico in Matera city on the Agri Valley on Saturday, Italian news agency ANSA reported on Sunday.

It identified the victims as Kumar Manoj, 34, Singh Surjit, 33, Singh Harwinder, 31, and Singh Jaskaran, 20.

"The Embassy of India deeply condones the tragic death of four Indian nationals in a road accident in Matera in southern Italy," the Indian embassy posted on social media.

"We are in contact with the local Italian authorities to obtain details. Embassy will provide all possible consular assistance to the concerned families," the mission added. Five injured people were transferred to the hospital in Policoro (Matera), the sixth, and the most serious, to the San Carlo Hospital in Potenza, ANSA reported.

The driver of the truck remained unharmed. The Matera Public Prosecutor's Office is investigating the accident. (PTI)

Pakistan police checkpoint attacked by terrorists, cop killed

PESHAWAR, Oct 6: A policeman was killed and a paramilitary personnel injured on Monday as terrorists attacked a police checkpoint in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province in northwestern Pakistan, police said. Scores of unidentified assailants opened fire on the Tor Chappur checkpoint in Darra Adam Khel in Kohat district from multiple sides around 1 am, they said.

A cop was killed and a Federal Constabulary personnel injured in the exchange of fire between police and the terrorists that went on for two and a half hours, said Zahidullah Khan, a district police officer in Kohat. Zahidullah said the attackers aimed to capture the checkpoint, but their attempt was thwarted. Police seized three improvised explosive devices and a search operation was currently under way.

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor Faisal Karim Kundi condemned the attack and paid tribute to the deceased cop. In a statement, he also prayed for the speedy recovery of the injured paramilitary personnel.

"The sacrifices of the police in the war against terrorism will not go in vain," he added. The attack comes a day after a soldier was killed and another injured when unknown assailants opened fire on them in Bannu district in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Terror activities have gone up in Pakistan over the past year, especially in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan, after the proscribed Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) ended its ceasefire with the government in November 2022 and vowed to target security forces.

Earlier on September 1, a police constable was killed and another sustained serious injuries in an attack on a police post in Mir Ali town in North Waziristan district.

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa saw most of the attacks on security forces last month, but counterterrorism actions have also been intensified in the province. The province has reported 45 attacks in September, in which 54 people have been killed and 49 others injured. (PTI)

Western Balkan leaders meet in Albania to discuss EU integration

GOLEM (ALBANIA), Oct 6: The presidents of the Western Balkan nations gathered Monday in Albania to discuss ways they can accelerate their economic integration with the European Union amid mounting geopolitical challenges.

The meeting in Golem, Albania, 50 km west of the capital, Tirana, is an annual gathering held as part of a diplomatic initiative launched by European Union members Slovenia and Croatia in 2013. The intention was to support EU enlargement to the Western Balkans — a region that includes Albania, Bosnia, Serbia, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Kosovo.

All of the countries are working to join the EU but are at different stages in their membership path, with Montenegro and Albania ahead and Serbia, Bosnia, Kosovo and North Macedonia lagging behind.

The EU's willingness to accept new members has grown since the all-out war in Ukraine started on February 24, 2022. There are concerns the war in Ukraine and Russia's deepening confrontation with the West could spill over into a region still scarred by its own conflicts.

The initiative seeks to strengthen political dialogue and promote reconciliation after the wars of the 1990s, with tensions still simmering, for instance between Serbia and Kosovo.

The largely ceremonial annual gathering was being led by Albanian President Bajram Begaj, Slovenian President Nataša Pirc Musar and Croatian President Zoran Milanovic. Members of Bosnia's tripartite presidency and the presidents of Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia were also expected to attend.

The initiative was named the Brdo-Brijuni Process after two locations — Brdo pri Kranju in Slovenia and the Brijuni Islands in Croatia — which are symbolic of reconciliation and diplomacy. (AP)

Author's first book, 'How to Stay Married,' was published in 1969

Jilly Cooper, British author of bestselling risqué novels including 'Rivals', dies at 88

LONDON, Oct 6: Jilly Cooper, the bestselling British author known for her chronicles of class and sex in risqué novels, including "Rivals" and "Riders," has died, her agent and family said on Monday. She was 88.

The author died Sunday after a fall, said a statement from literary agency Curtis Brown, which represented her.

"Mum was the shining light in all of our lives," her children, Felix and Emily, wrote. "Her unexpected death has come as a complete shock."

Queen Camilla, the wife of King Charles III, called Cooper "a legend" and recalled seeing the author recently at a book festival.

"I join my husband, the King, in sending our thoughts and sympathies to all her family. And may her hereafter be filled with impossibly handsome men and devoted dogs," Camilla wrote.

Cooper was best known for "The Rutshire Chronicles" series of novels, beginning with "Riders" in 1985, which portrayed the sex lives and excesses of the well-off, horse-riding upper and middle classes in 1980s England.

One of the books, "Rivals," was turned into a hit Disney+ TV series last year starring David Tennant and Alex Hassell.

Bill Scott-Kerr, her publisher, praised Cooper for her "wicked social commentary and deft, lacerating characterisation."

"She dissected the behaviour, bad mostly, of the English upper middle classes with the sharpest of scalpels," he said.

Her agent, Felicity Blunt, said Cooper "defined culture, writing and conversation since she was first published over 50 years ago."

"Emotionally intelligent, fantastically generous, sharply observant and utterly fun, Jilly Cooper



will be deeply missed by all at Curtis Brown and on the set of Rivals," she added.

Born in 1937 in Essex, near London, Cooper cut her teeth in journalism at a local newspaper in

Brentford, covering everything from parties to soccer.

Her big break came in 1969 when The Sunday Times published an entertaining piece she wrote on the difficulties of being a young working wife. She went on to become a columnist for the newspaper for over 13 years.

Her first book, "How to Stay Married," was published in 1969, followed by some 18 novels and short fiction as well as over 20 nonfiction works. Her most recent, "Tackle!," was published in 2023. "The Rutshire Chronicles" sold millions of copies in the U.K. alone.

Cooper was awarded an OBE, or Officer of the Order of the British Empire, for services to literature in 2004. Her many fans included former British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak, who said the books offered "escapism." (AP)

Namchik-Namphuk Central Coal Block inaugurated

Arunachal's marks first private commercial mining venture



HT Correspondent

KHARSANG, Oct 6: Arunachal Pradesh entered a new chapter in its economic history on Monday with the inauguration and Bhoomi Puja of the Namchik-Namphuk Central Coal Block at Longtom under Kharsang Sub-Division in Changlang district, marking the beginning of the state's first-ever commercial coal mining operation.

Union Minister for Coal and Mines G Kishan Reddy formally launched the project in the presence of chief minister Pema Khandu, deputy chief minister

Chowna Mein, Arunachal East MP Tapir Gao, several Cabinet Ministers, MLAs, senior officers from the Coal Ministry and the state government, along with officials from the district administration, local leaders, and members of the public.

The dignitaries also flagged off an array of tools, plants, and machinery of the agency on the occasion, signifying the operational commencement of the long-awaited mining project.

Union minister Reddy said that the Namchik-Namphuk Central Coal Block embodies Prime Min-

ister Narendra Modi's vision of an Atma Nirbhar Bharat and Atma Nirbhar Arunachal Pradesh by integrating the North East into the national energy and infrastructure grid.

"This is not just a mining project; it is a symbol of trust, transparency, and transformation for the people of Arunachal Pradesh. We are bringing sustainable, scientific, and legal mining practices to a region that holds immense potential," he said.

The minister further assured that the initiative would lead to several developmental activities

in the fields of health and education, besides creating employment opportunities for the local population.

He also affirmed that all issues concerning local and project-affected people would be addressed through revenue generation and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) schemes of the company.

The Namchik-Namphuk Central Coal Block, expected to generate about ₹100 crore annually, will serve as a major contributor to the state exchequer, significantly strengthening Arunachal Pradesh's economic foundation.

The project is anticipated to create local jobs, promote new livelihoods, and stimulate economic growth across the region.

Naveen Singhal, Chairman of Mahalaxmi Group and one of the promoters of the Namchik-Namphuk Coal Mine, along with Ratan Sharma, also spoke to the media during the event. Both expressed their commitment to ensuring local area development and providing employment to local residents through the project's operations.

The inauguration of the Namchik-Namphuk Central Coal Block marks a milestone for Arunachal Pradesh as it steps into the domain of private commercial coal mining, paving the way for greater economic self-reliance and regional development.

Siang River erosion washes away power lines, plunges multiple villages into darkness



HT Correspondent

PASIGHAT, Oct 6: Rampant soil erosion along the Siang River has caused a severe power crisis, disrupting electricity supply to several villages across East Siang and Lower Dibang Valley districts.

The situation reached a critical point when a massive one-kilometer stretch of an 11kV power line was completely washed away, leaving numerous communities without power. Officials reported that the Siang River has been relentlessly eroding its banks, causing extensive damage to electrical infrastructure.

While earlier damages between New Borguli and Seram villages on September 19 and 27 were promptly restored by the Department of Power, the problem has persisted and worsened.

The latest and most severe damage has affected areas in Seram and Namsing villages.

The complete destruction of the 1-kilometer 11kV

line has left a wide swath of villages, including Seram, Kongkul, Namsing, Gadum, Mer, and Gadum II in East Siang, without electricity.

The erosion has also cut off power to the entire Paglam circle under the Lower Dibang Valley District, amplifying the impact of the disaster.

Mebo MLA Oken Tayeng, accompanied by Nancy Yirang, ADC Mebo, and Toimi Tagi, CO Namsing, along with officials from all line departments of the Mebo sub-division, visited Namsing Village and other affected areas to assess the situation.

During the visit, it was observed that vast tracts of agricultural land had been engulfed by the Siang River, leaving many families landless and exacerbating the hardships faced by the local population. The officials are coordinating with relevant authorities to restore power and provide relief to the affected communities.

Governor visits Oil Palm Plantation at Bosi Didum Village

'Promoting oil palm, a strategic step to reduce import dependency, strengthen the rural economy, and ensure price stability for consumers'



HT Correspondent

PASIGHAT, Oct 6: The Governor of Arunachal Pradesh, Lt General KT Parnaik, (Retd), visited a 4-hectare oil palm farm of progressive farmer Miti Megu Perme in Bosi Didum Village near Pasighat, as part of the State Government's initiative to promote oil palm cultivation across Arunachal Pradesh.

During his visit, the Governor interacted with Perme, other local farmers, and departmental officials to gain first-hand insights into the palm's operations and progress.

He emphasised that oil palm cultivation is not merely an agricultural activity but a vision for economic growth, farmer empowerment, and national self-reliance, or Aatma Nirbhar.

He noted that despite India being one of the largest consumers of edible oil, it remains heavily dependent on imports.

Promoting oil palm, he said, is a strategic step to reduce import dependency, strengthen the rural economy, and ensure price stability for consumers.

The Governor highlighted Arunachal Pradesh's potential, cit-

ing its fertile soil, favorable climate, and abundant rainfall as ideal conditions for oil palm plantations.

He said that for farmers, the crop offers a steady income, long-term security, and better returns compared to most other oilseeds, while also creating opportunities for agro-based industries.

He commended the State Government for prioritizing oil palm cultivation as a policy that enhances farmer livelihoods, generates employment, attracts investment, improves rural infrastructure, and builds stronger market linkages, while supporting the national goal of self-reliance.

Sharing progress, the Governor informed that Arunachal Pradesh produced over 5.19 lakh metric tons of food grains, nearly 15,000 metric tons of pulses, and more than 39,000 metric tons of oilseeds last year.

He said that fifteen soil testing laboratories have been established and over 1.3 lakh soil health cards issued.

Oil palm cultivation has expanded by 4,690 hectares, benefiting nearly 2,000 farmers under the

Per Drop More Crop scheme.

Looking ahead, the State has set an ambitious target of bringing 35,723 hectares under oil palm cultivation by 2025-26.

The establishment of the country's first crude palm oil mill at Roing and the new factory at the Industrial Growth Centre, Niglok, is boosting farmer confidence and ensuring sufficient processing capacity for the future.

Perme shared that her farm, established in 2017 and harvesting since 2021, yields 2 to 3 tonnes of palm oil per harvest, with harvesting done three to four times a month.

She highlighted that the new palm oil factory at Niglok has steadily increased local demand, providing a strong market for farmers.

Deputy Commissioner of East Siang, Sonalika Jiwni, noted that oil palm cultivation is proving highly remunerative and has significant potential to boost the local economy by providing sustainable income opportunities for farmers in the region.

The Governor's visit was also attended by Advisor to Hydro Power Minister cum MLA Ninong Ering, local MLA Er Tapi Darang, Superintendent of Police Pankaj Lamba, and District Agriculture Officer Opang Moyong.

The Governor's visit reinforced the strategic, economic, and social importance of oil palm cultivation in Arunachal Pradesh, highlighting its role in rural development, farmer empowerment, and national self-reliance.

Governor urges students to imbibe 'Nation First' spirit at Rashtriya Raksha University



HT Correspondent

ITANAGAR, Oct 6: The Governor of Arunachal Pradesh, Lt General KT Parnaik (Retd), inaugurated the Psychotropic Substances and Psychosocial Centre and Human Performance Laboratory and digitally unveiled the Foundation Stone for the Centre of Excellence for Testing of Drugs at the Rashtriya Raksha University (RRU), Pasighat Campus, East Siang District, on October 6, 2025.

Addressing the gathering, the Governor observed that contemporary society faces multiple challenges that test peace, unity, and security, including misuse of activism, rising religious disharmony, disruptive protests, terrorism, and insurgencies.

He also highlighted the growing

threats in the digital space, such as cybercrime, propaganda, and extremist ideologies, which often target youth and create unrest.

While acknowledging the complexity of these issues, he emphasized that they are not insurmountable.

The way forward, he said, lies in balancing freedom with responsibility, fostering trust among communities, strengthening security mechanisms, and using technology wisely.

Collective awareness and active community participation, he added, are essential for building a safer, stronger, and more harmonious society.

Digitally unveiling the Foundation Stone for the Centre of Excellence for Testing of Drugs and Psychotropic Substances and inau-

gurating the Psychosocial Centre, established in collaboration with the East Siang District Police, the Governor commended RRU and the District Police for combining science-led enforcement with a humane approach to rehabilitation.

He said these initiatives would strengthen Arunachal Pradesh's fight against drugs and safeguard the future of its youth.

The Governor underscored the importance of maintaining zero tolerance towards traffickers while simultaneously extending compassion and support to those struggling with addiction.

Referring to the courses offered at RRU, he highlighted the importance of smart policing and encouraged law enforcement agencies to adopt preventive, tech-

nology-driven, and community-focused strategies that are humane, accountable, and rooted in public trust.

Addressing the students, the Governor urged them to pursue excellence with integrity and innovation, reminding them that education is a commitment to national service.

He exhorted them to imbibe the 'Nation First' spirit, remain disciplined, and stay motivated to realise the Viksit Bharat vision of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

He also expressed gratitude to the faculty and mentors for their dedication in shaping the next generation of leaders.

The Governor expressed his appreciation for visiting RRU Pasighat Campus, an Institute of National Importance, describing it as a nursery of national service, leadership, and character building.

He also praised the university's emphasis on sports science and sports medicine, noting its role in nurturing Arunachal's talented youth for excellence in both sports and academics.

He expressed hope that RRU will continue to play a vital role in shaping a secure, healthy, and progressive society and called upon all stakeholders to foster a culture of excellence, innovation, and service for the nation's future.

The inaugural function was attended by Advisor to Hydro Power Minister cum MLA Ninong Ering, local MLA Er Tapi Darang, deputy commissioner of East Siang Sonalika Jiwni, Superintendent of Police Pankaj Lamba, along with faculty members, students, and staff of Rashtriya Raksha University, Pasighat Campus.

BRTF recovers Tawang-bound bus from deep valley near Baisakhi

HT Correspondent

BAISAKHI, Oct 6: In a remarkable display of precision and determination, the 90 Road Construction Company of the 42 Border Roads Task Force (BRTF) under Project Vartak successfully retrieved a Tawang-bound travel bus that had plunged into a deep valley on the BCT Road near Baisakhi, Dirang, in the early hours of October 2.

The accident occurred around 6:30 a.m. when the bus reportedly lost control and fell nearly 100 metres down a steep slope.

Upon receiving the information, the 42 BRTF swiftly launched a coordinated recovery operation, mobilising trained personnel and heavy machinery to the site to assess the situation and commence retrieval efforts.

Despite the difficult terrain and limited accessibility, the operation was carried out with exceptional skill and care to ensure safety at every stage.

The recovery efforts began on October 3 and continued through October 4, with teams working tirelessly for two days to bring the vehicle back to the road.

Thanks to the relentless efforts of the BRTF personnel, the bus was successfully recovered without any further incident.

Local residents and officials praised the professionalism, dedication, and resilience of the BRTF team, whose swift response and efficient coordination helped avert additional risks and ensured the safe completion of the operation.

Four-month induction training begins for 140 Arunachal Pradesh Civil Service officers

HT Correspondent

NAHARLAGUN, Oct 6: The four-month combined induction training for 140 Arunachal Pradesh Civil Service (Entry Grade) and Allied Service officers recruited through the APPSCCE 2024 commenced on Monday at the Administrative Training Institute (ATI), Naharlagun.

The inaugural programme began with the arrival of the chief guest, Pramod Kumar Jain, IAS (Retd), Chairperson of the Administrative Reforms Commission, Arunachal Pradesh, who lit the ceremonial lamp and delivered the inaugural address. In his speech, Jain urged the new officers to dedicate themselves to honest and efficient public service.

He emphasized that administrators play a crucial role in bridging the gap between the government and the people, noting that every decision taken by an officer impacts the lives of citizens.



He called upon the officers to let humility, empathy, and fairness guide their actions, while blending modern governance practices with

the cultural values of the state, stressing that the future of Arunachal Pradesh lies in the hands of its young administrators.

Earlier, Deputy Director-cum-Course Coordinator Bittu Kri welcomed the participants and provided a brief overview of the

training programme.

He highlighted that the four-month course is designed to orient officers towards effective governance, policy implementation, and field-level challenges, describing it as the foundation of their administrative career and urging participants to approach it with seriousness and dedication.

ATI Director Pate Marik, in his concluding remarks, expressed gratitude to the chief guest and underscored the importance of continuous learning, noting that while formal training would end in four months, the journey of learning as an administrator never stops.

The inaugural session was attended by deputy directors Mizum Nyodu, Sange Tsering, Anima Mize, and Corrina Mum Norbu, along with other faculty members and dignitaries, marking the beginning of an important phase in the careers of the newly recruited officers.

Rescue ops on as several remain missing Toll in landslides, flood in north Bengal rises to 28

DARJEELING/ SILIGURI/ KOLKATA, Oct 6: The toll in the devastating landslides and floods in northern West Bengal rose to 28, as disaster management personnel continued the rescue operation on Monday with several people still missing and thousands of tourists stranded in cut-off hill pockets, officials said.

North Bengal Development Minister Udayan Guha said the toll is likely to go up.

"The situation remains extremely challenging. Till now, we have reports that 28 people have died. A few more bodies were recovered since last night. The deaths were reported from both Darjeeling and Jalpaiguri districts. Continuous rainfall is hampering the rescue operations," he told PTI.

Speaking to reporters at the Kolkata airport before leaving for Siliguri, the largest town in north Bengal, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee called the floods and the ensuing destruction "man-made".

She announced a compensation of Rs 5 lakh to the next of kin of those who died in the floods and landslides, besides offering a job as a home guard to one member of



the bereaved families.

"We have so far received reports of 23 people who have died in the north Bengal floods. The region received over 300 mm of rainfall, sustaining for over 12 hours on Saturday night and early Sunday," she said.

Among the worst-affected areas are Mirik, Sukhiapokhri and Jorebunglow in Darjeeling, and Nagrakata in Jalpaiguri district, officials said.

The rescue operations, led by the National Disaster Response Force

(NDRF), were continuing across multiple sites, with heavy earth-moving machinery being used to locate people feared trapped under mounds of debris, they added.

"Clearing operations are underway at more than 40 landslide points. Our teams are working around the clock to reopen the Mirik-Darjeeling and Sukhiapokhri roads," an official said.

The district administration has set up relief camps in coordination with the Gorkhaland Territorial Administration (GTA) and local

NGOs, an official said.

"Food, blankets, medicines, and drinking water are being provided to all displaced families," he said.

An official of the GTA, the semi-autonomous body that administers the Darjeeling hills, said road connectivity to several hamlets remained severed even 24 hours after the disaster.

"Entire slopes have caved in, bridges washed away, and large portions of roads are buried under mud. Helicopter sorties may be needed to reach some interior villages," he said.

Hundreds of visitors who had travelled to the hills for Durga Puja vacations remained stranded as the arterial roads to Siliguri at the foothills were blocked.

Efforts are being made to help them reach Siliguri in batches via alternative routes, an official said.

Heavy to very heavy rainfall may continue in the region till Tuesday morning, with an alert issued for Darjeeling, Kalimpong, Jalpaiguri, and Cooch Behar districts, an IMD official said.

"Given the saturated soil and on-going rain, the risk of fresh landslides remains high," he said. (PTI)

Bengal BJP MP Khagen Murmu, MLA Sankar Ghosh injured in mob attack; party blames TMC



NAGRAKATA (WB), Oct 6: West Bengal's BJP MP Khagen Murmu and MLA Sankar Ghosh were injured in an attack by a mob during their visit to the flood and landslide-hit Dooars region in the northern part of the state, triggering a fresh political storm.

Following the confrontation that took place in Nagrakata area of Jalpaiguri district, the BJP accused the ruling Trinamool Congress of orchestrating the attack to silence dissent in the region calling the incident another example of "TMC's jungle raj", while the ruling party blamed the saffron camp for "provoking" people with a "photo-op visit" amid widespread suffering.

Murmu and Ghosh were part of a team of BJP leaders who had gone to the disaster-hit Dooars region to assess the situation and distribute relief.

TV visuals showed that before they could interact with flood-affected residents, a mob surrounded them, raising slogans of "Didi, Didi," and hurled stones at their convoy near Bamandanga, about 10 km from Nagrakata town.

The vehicle's windshield was smashed, and Murmu was seen bleeding from the head.

In a Facebook Live video, Ghosh appeared shaken, describing the attack as "horrifying".

Sitting beside the blood-stained MP inside a car, the MLA said, "We had gone to check the people's condition. Suddenly, a group of locals surrounded us, shouting 'Didi, Didi'. They started abusing us, then attacked from behind. Khagen-da was hit on the head, and I barely escaped by ducking inside the seat. We are now on our way to Siliguri for treatment."

Murmu was given initial medical aid at a local hospital before being shifted to Siliguri. Both leaders are said to be out of danger.

The BJP claimed that the attackers were TMC-backed goons, accusing the Mamata Banerjee government of allowing violence against opposition leaders even in times of humanitarian crisis.

The opposition party's national IT in-charge Amit Malviya hit out at the state government on X, saying, "TMC's Jungle Raj in Bengal! BJP MP Khagen Murmu was attacked by TMC goons while on his way to Nagrakata in Jalpaiguri's Dooars region to help with relief and rescue efforts after devastating rains, floods, and landslides."

Over 7.4 crore voters in Bihar: CEC Gyanesh Kumar

NEW DELHI, Oct 6: Over 7.4 crore people are eligible to vote in the upcoming Bihar Assembly elections including 14 lakh first-time voters, Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Gyanesh Kumar announced on Monday. The CEC asserted that the Bihar elections will be conducted in a transparent and peaceful manner.

"There are a total of 7.42 crore voters in Bihar, of which 3.92 crore are males and 3.5 crore are women. There are 14 lakh first-time voters and 4 lakh senior citizen voters," Kumar said at a press conference.

At least 14,000 voters in the state are aged above 100 years.

A total of 90,712 polling stations are being set up in Bihar, he said.

The CEC said strict directives have been given to the administration "for zero tolerance to any violence and there is no scope for any threat to voters or candidates". (PTI)

North Bengal floods man-made, DVC unilaterally releasing water to save Jharkhand: Mamata

KOLKATA, Oct 6: West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Monday called the floods and the ensuing destruction in north Bengal "man-made", and blamed the DVC for "unrestricted" release of water, resulting in overflowing rivers in the southern parts of the state.

Banerjee also announced a compensation of ₹ 5 lakh to the next of kin of those who died in the floods and landslides, besides offering a job of home guard to one member of the bereaved families.

"We have so far received reports of 23 people who have died in the north Bengal floods. The region received over 300 mm of rainfall, sustaining for over 12 hours on Saturday night and early Sunday," she said.

The CM was talking to reporters at Kolkata airport before leaving for Bagdogra to oversee relief and rescue operations in the flood-ravaged areas of north Bengal.

Incessant rainfall in the upper reaches of the state over the last 48 hours have led to widespread flooding in the districts of Darjeeling, Kalimpong, Jalpaiguri, Alipurduars and Cooch Behar, officials said.

The Nagrakata area of the Dooars and the Mirik region in Darjeeling are the worst affected on account of landslides and residential properties getting washed away, they said.

"From the night before last, the chief secretary, the DGP, and I closely monitored the North Bengal situation. In North Bengal... there was over 300 mm of rainfall, which continued for 12 hours straight. Then, water from Bhutan gushed in through the Sankosh (river), and Sikkim's water flooded several areas," Banerjee said.

She pointed towards the Hooghly river flowing close to the danger mark, and alleged that water from Bihar and UP were being released from Farakka, leaving Bengal's rivers in a vulnerable state.

"The DVC is releasing water as per its wish. The lack of desilting of Maithon and Panchet reservoirs has significantly reduced their water retention capacity. The DVC is doing this to save Jharkhand from flooding and Bengal is bearing the brunt. We don't mind that Jharkhand needs to be saved. But, we have our throats sore from asking them to carry out de-siltation for the last two decades now," she



CM said.

"Why do you need to have the dams? The water could have flowed in its natural course and naturally drained out. All states could then have shared the impact equally. But, it is Bengal that's at the receiving end. The water is being released through the Durgam and Farakka barrages, and our roads and bridges are getting washed out," she said.

Banerjee said she has received a communication from the Bhutan government on Sunday, expressing sympathies.

"We had requested them to release water slowly because once it is released, it takes 2-3 days to reach us. Still, with the amount they released, Nagrakata was washed away, along with Dhupguri and many areas of Jalpaiguri, Alipurduar, Matigara, Darjeeling, and Mirik. The worst-affected regions are Nagrakata and Mirik, as well as Jorebunglow and Kalimpong," she stated.

Banerjee said many tourists have already been rescued, though one person from Diamond Harbour remains missing.

"We will bring back about 500 tourists today from the region. We are using 45 Volvo buses and buses of the North Bengal State Transport Corporation, and have made temporary stay arrangements for others in Siliguri," she said, adding that the state government has left instructions with the hotels not to evacuate stranded tourists.

"Bringing all tourists back is our responsibility," the chief minister asserted.

Banerjee stated that she, accompanied by Chief Secretary Manoj Pant, would reach Hashimara first and head towards the flood-ravaged area of Nagrakata. She will move towards the affected regions of Mirik on Tuesday.

"The DGP has already reached north Bengal. I have asked minister Aroop Biswas and Siliguri Mayor Gautam Deb to reach Dhupguri to oversee relief operations," she said. (PTI)

8 arrested in connection with Cuttack violence, bandh underway amid heavy security

CUTTACK, Oct 6: Eight people were arrested on Monday in connection with the violence in Odisha's Cuttack, where a 12-hour bandh was underway amid heavy security deployment with prohibitory orders in place, officials said.

Speaking to reporters, Commissioner of Police S Dev Datta Singh said three cases were registered and eight people were arrested in connection with Sunday's attack on police by VHP activists.

"The situation is under control," he said.

Senior police officer Amarendra Panda and Cuttack DCP Khilari Rishikesh Dnyandeo were among the 25 people injured in the attack. Panda was admitted to the ICU of the SCB Medical College and Hospital, officials said.

Police said raids were continuing in different parts of the city after some of the "mischief mongers" were identified through CCTV footage.

Clashes broke out in the early hours of Saturday near Haathi Pokhari in the Daraghabazar area as locals objected to loud music being played in immersion processions. What started as an argument soon escalated, leading to the hurling of stones and glass bottles.

Six people, including Dnyandeo, were injured in the clashes.

Alleging that the police failed to stop the attack on the processions, the Vishva Hindu Parishad (VHP) called a 12-hour bandh on Monday.

On Sunday, a motorcycle rally by VHP activists in support of the bandh was stopped by the police when they reached the trouble-torn area, leading to a fresh bout of violence. The VHP activists hurled



stones at the police, who used lathi charge, tear gas shells and rubber bullets to bring the situation under control.

Several shops in the Gourishankar Park area were allegedly set on fire during the violence.

The bandh, which began at 6 am, evoked a mixed response but remained incident-free.

Government offices and educational institutions were functioning with thin attendance. Markets and petrol pumps remained open, and public transport was available on the road, but less than usual due to the slew of restrictions imposed by the police.

ACP Narasingha Bhol said 1,800 personnel of the state police have been deployed along with around 800 personnel of the Central Armed Police Forces (CAPFs), and Odisha Swift Action Force in the city.

Police patrols are continuing in sensitive areas, he said, adding that restrictions have also been imposed on entry into the city.

"People from outside are not allowed entry into Cuttack city, except those working here and patients travelling to the SCB Medical College and Hospital. Passenger buses are being stopped

at the entry points. All the entry points of the city have been blocked to keep a check on the movement of anti-social elements," he said.

ADG (Law and Order) Sanjay Kumar said that there was no report of any untoward incident, with all agencies on high alert.

He said senior officers are monitoring the situation on the field, and directions have been issued for taking prompt action against anyone found taking the law into their hands.

The prohibitory orders were imposed for 36 hours till 10 am on Tuesday in 13 of the 20 police station areas of the city, officials said.

Internet services were also suspended for 24 hours from 7 pm on Sunday to prevent a flare-up, they said.

In a statement, the Odisha Police urged the people to verify information before sharing it on social media and to refrain from posting false and inflammatory content.

"Some individuals are creating an atmosphere of unrest in society by creating and spreading fake news. Strict action will be taken against those who are spreading and circulating false or misleading information," it said. (PTI)

Attack on CJI shows how deep hate has seeped in: Congress

NEW DELHI, Oct 6: Congress chief Mallikarjun Kharge on Monday condemned the attack on Chief Justice of India B R Gavai as shameful and said the "mindless act" shows how hate and fanaticism have engulfed society.

In a shocking breach of decorum, a 71-year-old lawyer allegedly almost hurled a shoe at CJI Gavai during a court proceeding, but was stopped by the security personnel.

"An attempt to attack the Hon'ble Chief Justice of India in the Supreme Court today is unprecedented, shameful and abhorrent. It is an attack on the dignity of our Judiciary and the rule of law," Kharge said in a post on X.

He said that it was disturbing that a sitting judge, who rose to the nation's highest judicial office through merit, integrity, and perseverance, was targeted in such a manner.

"It reflects an attempt to intimidate and humiliate a man who has broken social barriers to uphold the Constitution.

"Such a mindless act shows how hate, fanaticism and bigotry has engulfed our society in the past decade," the Congress president said.

"On behalf of the Indian National Congress, I condemn this attack in the strongest possible terms. The safety and security of our Judiciary is paramount. Let justice and reason prevail, not intimidation," Kharge asserted.

Earlier, despite the disconcerting act, the CJI remained unfazed and continued with the hearings. "Don't get distracted by all this. We are not distracted. These things do not affect me," he said. (PTI)

Winners to be announced at awards ceremony in Rio de Janeiro Gujarat's emission-trading scheme for particulate pollution among finalists for Earthshot Prize

NEW DELHI, Oct 6: Gujarat's emissions trading-scheme for particulate pollution, developed with the help of researchers from the Emissions Market Accelerator (EMA), has been named a finalist for the 2025 Earthshot Prize, one of the world's most-prestigious environmental awards.

The EMA, a joint initiative of the Energy Policy Institute at the University of Chicago (EPIC) and the Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab (J-PAL), helped Gujarat design and launch the world's first cap-and-trade market for particulate pollution in the industrial city of Surat.

The initiative has been selected as one of the three finalists under the "Clean Our Air" category of the Earthshot Prize.

Researchers affiliated with the EMA worked closely with the Gujarat Pollution Control Board (GPCB) to implement the market-based approach, which replaced traditional pollution-control methods with a cap-and-trade system, allowing industries to buy and sell emission permits. The experiment led to a sharp fall in particulate pollution, better compliance and higher profits for industries.

"The Gujarat emissions-trading scheme is an excellent testament to how financial market-based approaches can address severe pollution challenges in rapidly-developing economies around the world," said Jason Knauf LVO, Chief Executive of The Earthshot Prize.

Michael Greenstone, co-chair of the EMA and one of the researchers who led the Gujarat emissions market experiment, said, "For



decades, emissions markets were seen as something that was almost exclusively a regulatory tool for the US, EU and other rich countries. The Gujarat market serves as an important proof of concept that emissions markets can work beyond these regions."

Greenstone said emissions markets are particularly suited to countries where economic growth is a priority and where much of the world's pollution and greenhouse-gas burden exists. Forty-nine of the top 50 countries with the most-polluted air are located in the Global South. Further, 82 per cent of CO2 emissions over the remainder of the century are projected to occur there, he said.

The pilot experiment in Surat showed that

firms in the emissions market reduced pollution by 20 to 30 per cent more than those under conventional rules.

It also cost industries 11 per cent less to comply, while profits rose. Non-compliance dropped from about a third of all plants at any time to less than 1 per cent ever.

Bala Srinivasan, co-chair of the EMA, said, "The market proved to be an important policy tool that is very much in line with the Indian government's efforts to pursue environmentally-friendly economic policies. Gujarat opened the door to an entirely new way of approaching environmental and economic policies in emerging economies. With the Emissions Market Accelerator, we are scaling up their trailblazing efforts."

Following the success of the Surat pilot, Gujarat has launched a second emissions market in Ahmedabad.

Around two crore people in Gujarat are now breathing cleaner air as a result. The state is also working with the EMA to set up sulfur-dioxide and wastewater-trading markets.

"Becoming an Earthshot Prize finalist is a proud milestone for the Gujarat Pollution Control Board and the Emissions Market Accelerator," said Devang M Thaker, Member Secretary of the GPCB.

"It is an international recognition of a solution born in Gujarat that has the potential to transform how the world addresses industrial pollution," he said.

Building on Gujarat's success, the EMA team is now supporting a sulfur-dioxide market in Maharashtra and a designing a market in Rajasthan, with plans to expand across India and abroad.

"Gujarat's leadership in testing and scaling emissions markets shows how governments in emerging economies can drive large-scale solutions that benefit people, the economy and the planet," said 2019 Nobel-laureate Esther Duflo, co-founder and director of the J-PAL.

The Earthshot Prize, launched by Prince William in 2020, honours solutions aimed at repairing the planet. This year's 15 finalists have been chosen from nearly 2,500 nominations received from 72 countries. The winners will be announced at an awards ceremony in Brazil's Rio de Janeiro on November 5. (PTI)

Union warns against disturbing ancestral land Maring Students' Union condemns Khoibu Tribe Festival

IMPHAL, Oct 6: The Maring Students' Union (MSU) has expressed its "deep" resentment and "serious" concern upon learning that a "group identifying themselves as the so-called 'Khoibu tribe', who wants separation from the Maring community for reasons best known to them, are organizing a festival on October 7, 2025, at Khangshim village, a model village built and developed by the Maring community as a centre for collective growth and future development".

The MSU said it was regrettable that certain vested individuals, driven by personal ambition and greed for position, are misleading the people in the name of a separate tribe.

"Their continuous lobbying with the Government of Manipur, the Government of India, and the GPRN for a separate recognition is a deliberate attempt to distort history, divide



the Maring people, and undermine the unity and integrity of our community", the MSU also said, adding, "Such divisive acts are not only misleading but also an insult to the sacrifices and contributions of our forefathers who have preserved the Maring identity through generations".

The Maring Students' Union then said that there is absolutely no gain in breaking away from

one's root and heritage.

"On the contrary, such actions only sow the seeds of identity crisis and confusion among innocent youths. We take this development as a direct challenge to the tradition, culture, and identity of the Maring tribe, values which we will defend at all costs", the MSU added.

The MSU also said that if certain individuals now claim to be-

long to a different tribe, they should hold their Haichingbawng celebration somewhere else which is not the ancestral land of the Maring people.

It asserted that any attempt to conduct such activities within Maring ancestral territory will be regarded as a provocative and unacceptable act.

The MSU then cautioned the organizers of the October 7 event to refrain from any actions that could disturb peace and harmony in the area.

"Should any untoward incident arise as a consequence of their deliberate disregard for this public notice, the entire responsibility will rest solely upon the organisers", it warned.

The Maring Students' Union (MSU) then said it "stands united and resolute in protecting the land, culture, and identity of the Maring people against any divisive or misleading attempts". (NNN)

Mizoram: By-poll to Dampa seat on November 11, counting on November 14

AIZAWL, Oct 6: By-election to Dampa assembly seat in Mizoram's Mamit district will be held on November 11, a senior poll official said.

According to the schedule announced by the Election Commission in Delhi on Monday, the Dampa by-poll will be held along with by-elections in Jharkhand, Punjab and Telangana and the second phase of Bihar assembly polls, state Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) Ethel Rothangpui said.

The last date for filing nomination is October 21 and the last date for withdrawal of candidature is on October 24, she said.

Scrutiny of nomination papers will be held on October 22, she said.

Counting of votes polled in Bihar assembly elections and bypolls to other states, including Mizoram, will be held on November 14, Rothangpui said.

The Dampa by-poll was necessitated by the death of incumbent Mizo National Front (MNF) legislator Lalrinluanga Sailo on July 21.



The ruling Zoram People's Movement (ZPM) has fielded Mizo singer and preacher Vanlalsailova, while main opposition Mizo National Front (MNF) has nominated its senior vice president and former health minister Dr R Lalhangliana and Congress has fielded party vice president and former minister John Rotuanguana.

The BJP nominated former Congress leader Lalhangliana, who recently joined the saffron party.

There are 20,790 voters, including 10,185 female electors in Dampa, according to final roll pub-

lished on September 30.

There are 41 polling stations within Dampa constituency, with Silsury-1 polling station having the highest number of voters at 1,103, while Zopui polling station has the least at 30 voters, the election department said.

For MNF, the Dampa by-poll is crucial as it will decide whether the party would be able to hold the post of the leader of opposition in the 40-member assembly. The party now has nine MLAs, while at least 10 members are required for a party to hold the post of LoP. (PTI)

HITO seeks urgent clarification from Meghalaya Govt on ambiguous MBBS state quota policy



SHILLONG, Oct 6: The Hynniewtrep Integrated Territorial Organisation (HITO) has written to Meghalaya Chief Secretary Shakil Ahamed seeking urgent clarification on the "confusion" surrounding the implementation of the MBBS state quota allotment in the state.

It said the "ambiguity" stems from the absence of a clear, codified policy governing reservation in higher and professional education since Meghalaya's inception.

The issue has been ongoing for decades, with the government relying on "conventional practice" without a formal policy or notification, HITO added.

This has led to uncertainty among students and institutions

about the legal basis of the current quota system, it further added. "Given the urgency of the ongoing admission process and the irreversible nature of seat allotments, HITO requests your immediate clarification on...the specific legal or policy framework under which the present MBBS State Quota reservation has been implemented, whether any official notification, cabinet approval, or regulation exists to authorize reservation in higher and professional studies and whether the Government intends to issue a formal and codified Reservation Policy to prevent recurring confusion in future admission cycles," HITO president Donbok Dkhar said in the letter to the CS.

"A clear and timely clarification from your office will not only uphold transparency but also protect the interests of hundreds of students whose educational prospects now hang in the balance. We trust your good office will treat this matter with the urgency and seriousness it demands and ensure that this long-standing ambiguity is finally addressed through proper legal and administrative action," he added.

Dkhar had also referred to the Meghalaya High Court's order on September 15, 2023, citing the government's letter of September 13, 2023 had merely stated that "the principle and spirit of the Reservation Policy is extended/applied for admission in State Government Educational Institutions including higher and professional studies through conventional practice."

"With due respect, this reply has only deepened the confusion rather than resolving it. The continued reliance on "conventional practice" — without any formal policy, rule, or government notification — leaves both students and institutions uncertain about the legal basis of the current quota system," he said while adding that this ambiguity, persisting since statehood, is now directly affecting the academic futures of deserving students. (NNN)

Suspected drug peddlers arrested

IMPHAL, Oct 6: Two suspected drug peddlers were arrested in Manipur's Imphal East district, police said on Monday.

"World is Yours" or WY tablets weighing 2 kg and ₹ 38 lakh in cash were recovered from them, they said. The arrests were made from their respective residences at Khomidok Sorok Mapal and Kairang on Sunday. The accused were identified as Md Ethem Khan and Raju Khan, police said.

WY, also known as 'Yaba' — which means 'crazy medicine' in Thai, is a mixture of meth and caffeine. A popular drug across Southeast Asia, it was first used during the Second World War to keep troops hyperactive. (PTI)

2 powerful IEDs found in Jiribam

IMPHAL, Oct 6: Two powerful improvised explosive devices (IEDs) were found in Manipur's Jiribam district, police said on Monday.

Acting on intelligence inputs, personnel of the Assam Rifles conducted a search operation in Makha Basti near the state's border with Assam's Cachar district on Sunday, they said.

"Two IEDs weighing 12 kg along with three electric power sources, and 12 metre of detonation cord were recovered," an officer said.

The IEDs were destroyed by the bomb disposal squad, he said. (PTI)

3 militants arrested in Manipur

IMPHAL, Oct 6: Three militants were arrested in separate operations in Manipur, police said on Monday. A cadre of the banned Peoples' Liberation Army was arrested from the Keirenphabi Maning Leikai area in the Bishnupur district. Khumukcham Biren Meitei (40) was accused of extorting shopkeepers, schools and colleges, they said.

Another self-styled lieutenant of the outfit was arrested from the Ningshokhohong area of the district on Saturday. Khangbam Manglemba Singh (46) monitored the movement of security personnel and shared the information with members of his outfit, they added.

PLA mainly operates from its camps in neighbouring Myanmar. The outfit was involved in the ambush on an Assam Rifles convoy on September 19 at Nambol Sabal Leikai, in which two personnel were killed. (PTI)

Assam ready to extend all possible help in rescue efforts in landslide-hit Bengal, Sikkim: Himanta

GUWAHATI, Oct 6: Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Monday expressed concern over the loss of lives in West Bengal's Darjeeling due to landslides, and the situation in rain-battered Sikkim, assuring all possible assistance to tide over the crisis.

"We are extremely distressed by the devastation and loss of lives in Darjeeling and elsewhere in North Bengal due to heavy rains," Sarma said in a post on X. The toll in the devastating landslides in Darjeeling district has risen to 24, as disaster management personnel continued rescue operations on Monday, with several people still missing and thousands of tourists stranded in cut-off hill pockets.

"On behalf of the people of Assam, we are ready to provide any support to the Govt of West Bengal in rescue and relief operations," the CM said. He also said that the people of Assam 'stand shoulder to shoulder with our brothers and sisters in Sikkim in this hour of crisis."

"The Government of Assam is committed to extend any possible assistance that is required to deal with ongoing floods and landslides," Sarma said, tagging Sikkim Chief Minister P S Tamang Goley in his post. (PTI)

Fight ops suspended at Imphal airport after sighting of drone

IMPHAL, Oct 6: Flight operations were temporarily suspended at the Imphal airport in Manipur on Monday afternoon after a drone was sighted, raising security concerns, officials said.

An IndiGo flight from Agartala to Imphal reported the drone around 2 pm on its final approach path from the city side, at an altitude between 3,600 and 4,000 feet, they said.

Flight operations at the airport were temporarily suspended as a precautionary safety measure, they added.

"Normal operations resumed only after necessary security clearance was obtained from the state police," an official said. (PTI)

Two dead in Meghalaya accident

SHILLONG, Oct 6: Two persons were killed and three others injured when a speeding lorry collided head-on with a government vehicle along NH-6 in Meghalaya's Ri-Bhoi district on Sunday night, police said.

The deceased have been identified as Sanbirth M. Momin, driver of the Bolero vehicle belonging to the department of Sports and Youth Affairs, Resubelpara, and Smart Sangma. The injured include the lorry driver, Anil Dorjee, handyman Bibash Thapa, and Nilkash M. Momin.

Police said preliminary investigation said the lorry swerved across lanes before hitting the Bolero, which was travelling towards Shillong.

Authorities in the district said the driver and handyman of the lorry are recovering in hospital and will be arrested soon.

This accident comes two days after another incident in Ri-Bhoi that claimed the lives of four teenage girls — Phibapntngem Rynjah, Lashimti Nongrum, Theresa Nongrum, and Ridahunlang Nongrum.

An 11-year-old girl, Lupharisa Nongrum, survived that crash with serious injuries and is currently undergoing treatment in hospital.

Police have launched investigations into both accidents and are examining the circumstances that led to the collisions.

Local residents expressed shock at the back-to-back tragedies, highlighting the need for greater road safety measures in the district.

Officials have urged motorists to exercise caution, particularly on National Highway-6, which witnesses heavy vehicular traffic and sometimes unruly and rash driving.

The department of sports and youth affairs confirmed the loss of its driver and said it is coordinating with the families of the victims for support.

Traffic was temporarily disrupted along the highway following the accident, but has since resumed after police and emergency services cleared the site. Investigations are ongoing to determine the exact cause of the collisions and whether negligence or speeding contributed to the incidents. (PTI)

Nagaland University researchers develop flexible supercapacitor for wearables, EVs

'Device combines flexibility, high energy storage, and durability, which are critical for future portable and wearable technology'

NEW DELHI, Oct 6: Researchers at Nagaland University have developed a flexible supercapacitor device capable of powering next-generation wearable electronics, electric vehicles (EVs), and renewable energy systems, a breakthrough that has the potential to transform energy storage technologies, according to officials.

This is a first-of-its-kind study to compare tungsten, vanadium, and cobalt doping in molybdenum diselenide for energy storage. Significantly, the researchers went beyond lab-scale material development and built a working prototype of the flexible supercapacitor, demonstrating its practical viability, they said.

While the immediate applications include health-monitoring devices, IoT gadgets, and robotics, the innovation also holds potential for electric vehicles. Such flexible supercapacitors could improve regenerative braking systems, provide quick acceleration boosts, and extend battery lifespans, they said.



Vijeth H, Assistant Professor at Nagaland University, said such research could help India reduce dependence on imported batteries while boosting clean energy and storage technologies under the vision of 'Aatmanirbhar Bharat'.

The findings of the research have been published in RSC Advances, a peer-reviewed scientific journal published by the Royal Society of Chemistry.

"This device combines flexibility,

high energy storage, and durability, which are critical for future portable and wearable technologies. The study is the first to compare tungsten, vanadium, and cobalt doping in molybdenum diselenide for energy storage. Among them, cobalt proved most effective.

"The team used a simple, eco-friendly hydrothermal process to synthesise the material, making the innovation scalable for industrial adoption," he said.

This research not only showcases scientific excellence from the North East but also strengthens India's path toward sustainable and self-reliant energy solutions, the professor said.

Pewe-u Marhu, Research Scholar, Department of Physics, Nagaland University, explained that the next steps involve optimising the electrode-electrolyte interface, improving safety with solid-state gel electrolytes, and scaling up the process to pilot-level production.

"Industry collaborations are also being explored to bring the technology closer to commercialisation. The research was carried out entirely at Nagaland University with advanced characterisation support from the Indian Institute of Science (IISc) Bangalore through its INUP Program.

"Funding came from the Anusandhan National Research Foundation (ANRF), which is also driving a national initiative on 2D materials," Marhu said. (PTI)

Sikkim CM condoles deaths due to landslides, floods in Bengal

GANGTOK, Oct 6: Sikkim Chief Minister Prem Singh Tamang on Monday expressed grief over the loss of lives due to landslides and floods in West Bengal's Darjeeling and nearby areas.

The toll in the floods and landslides in northern West Bengal rose to 28 on Monday, officials said.

"I am deeply saddened to learn of the devastating floods and landslides that have caused immense hardship and loss in Darjeeling," Tamang said in a social media post.

"My heartfelt condolences go out to all those who have lost their loved ones and homes in this tragedy. May the departed souls rest in eternal peace," he said.

Tamang also expressed appreciation for those working selflessly in the relief and rescue efforts in the affected region.

Torrential rainfall has also lashed Sikkim over the past few days, triggering floods and landslides at several places, the officials said. (PTI)

Embrace Indian products, strengthen nation's economy: Nagaland Dy CM to people

KOHIMA, Oct 6: Nagaland Deputy Chief Minister Y Patton on Monday urged people to embrace Indian products and strengthen the nation's economy.

Addressing a press conference at the state BJP office here, Patton said that by choosing locally-made 'swadeshi' products, people will take a decisive step towards building a self-reliant India.

He said the revival of indigenous consciousness laid the ground for the vision of 'Atmanirbhar Bharat', spearheaded by PM Narendra Modi through initiatives such as Make in India.

He noted that India had transformed from a non-producer of PPE kits to manufacturing crores of them within months during the pandemic, and is now producing and exporting advanced defence equipment. (PTI)

ANNUAL MAINTENANCE CONTRACT AT MALIGAON

E-Tender Notice No. DYCEE-PS-MLG-HQ21-24-25R2 Dated: 26-09-2025. E-Tenders are invited by the undersigned for the following works: Name of work: At Maligaon & Gosala:- Annual Maintenance Contract of Diesel Generating Sets of different make and capacities for a period of 3 years. Tender Value: ₹48,06,948/- Earnest Money: ₹96,100/- Date & Time of Closing of Tender: 15.00 hrs. on 17-10-2025. The complete information of above e-tender will be available in website www.ireps.gov.in.

Dy.CEE/PS/Maligaon/HQ

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UPGRADATION TO APPROACH ROAD AND MAIN ROAD

E-Tender Notice No. TSK/Engg/58 of 2025 Dated: 29-09-2025. E-Tenders are invited by the undersigned for the following works: Brief Description of Item: At Tinsukia Division: Upgradation to approach roads and main road with other miscellaneous works at ROB No. (2) under jurisdiction of ADEN/Tinsukia. Tender Value: ₹1,89,98,134.59/- Earnest Money: ₹2,45,000/- Date & Time of Closing of Tender: At 15.00 hrs. & opening at 16.00 hrs. on 21-10-2025. The complete information of above e-tender will be available upto 15.00 hrs. on 21-10-2025 in website www.ireps.gov.in.

DRM (W), Tinsukia

NORTHEAST FRONTIER RAILWAY

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SAIYAMI KHER NAMED OFFICIAL AMBASSADOR FOR IRONMAN INDIA

NEW DELHI, Oct 6: Actor and athlete Saiyami Kher has been named the official ambassador for Ironman India, becoming the face of the event after completing the gruelling Ironman 70.3 triathlon twice in less than a year.

Saiyami, known for movies such as "Ghoomer", "Choked", "Jaat" and "8 A.M. Metro", successfully completed her first Ironman 70.3 in September 2024 and her second in July 2025, a feat that makes her the only Indian actor to achieve the milestone, according to a press release.

The Ironman 70.3 — also known as the Half Ironman — is one of the toughest endurance challenges in the world, requiring participants to cover a total distance of 70.3 miles (113 km) comprising a 1.9 km swim, 90 km cycle ride, and 21.1 km run, all in a single day.

In recognition of her consistency

and commitment to the sport, the Ironman International Committee has appointed her as the face of Ironman India — an honour reserved for individuals who embody the spirit of perseverance and strength.

"I'm truly honored and excited to be the face of Ironman India, which takes place in Goa on the 9th of November. This journey represents everything I believe in passion, consistency, and the refusal to give up."

"Completing the Ironman 70.3 twice in less than a year wasn't about chasing

records; it was about challenging my own limits. Every swim stroke, every uphill ride, every step of the run reminded me of how much the human body and mind are capable of," she said.

For Saiyami, Ironman isn't just a race, it's a "mindset and a way of life".

"I've always loved pushing boundaries whether in sport or as an actor and I hope my journey can inspire more Indians, especially women, to embrace endurance sports. It makes me so happy to see the growth in participation from Indians each year, and it's heartening to watch this community grow stronger. The joy,

resilience, and self-belief that come with it are life-changing," she added.

Saiyami, who has balanced a career in cinema with her passion for athletics, said the experience of training for and completing the Ironman was nothing short of transformative.

As the newly appointed ambassador, she aims to encourage more Indians to take up endurance sports and promote a culture of fitness and mental strength. (PTI)



Another film city to come up at Igatpuri in Nashik district; govt approves land for project

MUMBAI, Oct 6: A film city modelled on the one currently operating in Mumbai's Goregaon area will come up at Igatpuri, a hill town in Nashik district in North Maharashtra, as the state government on Monday approved land for the project. The proposed film city in Igatpuri, around 150km from Mumbai, will be modelled on Mumbai's Dadasaheb Phalke Chitranagri, a sprawling complex housing indoor studios, outdoor sets, and facilities for filming movies and television shows.

The decision to allocate land for the project was taken at a meeting chaired by Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar (finance & planning) where senior cabinet members Chhagan Bhujbal (food, civil supplies & consumer protection) and Ashish Shelar (IT and cultural affairs) were also present.

Speaking at the meeting held at Sahyadri Guest House in south Mumbai, Pawar said the revenue department has been directed to transfer the earmarked government land in Igatpuri to the department of cultural affairs for the proposed hub for the Indian film industry. Bhujbal, an MLA from Nashik district, noted the proposed site at Igatpuri is naturally rich and scenic and easily accessible from the financial and entertainment capital via the Balasaheb Thackeray Maharashtra Samruddhi Highway. (PTI)

'Industry is a confused pipeline of possibilities' says Channing Tatum

LOS ANGELES, Oct 6: Hollywood actor Channing Tatum, known for his work in projects such as "Fly Me to the Moon", "21 Jump Street", and "Coach Carter", says the current situation of the industry is "a confused pipeline of possibilities" due to streaming platforms.

Tatum, who is currently promoting his upcoming film "Roofman", spoke at the chat show "Hot Ones". According to the actor, some individuals in the industry get "incentivized" to appear in subpar productions.

The "Fly Me to the Moon" actor said, "I think, now, when you get asked to do a movie, or you're trying to get a movie made, it's a very confused pipeline of possibilities."

He added, "It really feels like, at times, that you're incentivized to make bad things to get paid, rather than make something really, really good, for the fucking people that actually get to see these things and (for the type of) people that I want to see these movies, the person that I was when I was a kid. And I want good movies." Tatum concluded, "I'm like, 'Man, I want to give my money to the good movies.' It's such an upside-down moment, but I do believe that the disruption is going to lead to something good. I do believe that. I do believe the streamers came in for a reason, and it had to change. It had to morph."

Also starring Kirsten Dunst, "Roofman" is directed by Derek Cianfrance. It is set to release in theatres on October 17. (PTI)



SIKKIMESE FILMMAKER TRIBENY GEETA RAI'S 'SHAPE OF MOMO' WINS TWO AWARDS AT BUSAN FILM FESTIVAL

GUWAHATI, Oct 6: Sikkimese filmmaker Tribeny Geeta Rai's debut film Shape of Momo, which explores the experiences of women navigating and negotiating social norms across generations, has won two awards at the recently concluded Busan International Film Festival.

Shape of Momo, a Nepali film, won the Taipei Film Commission Award and the Songwon Vision Award in the Vision Section of the Busan International Film Festival.

"Busan gave credibility to our work. It is special for a film from Sikkim, in Nepali, to be seen at such a platform. It gave visibility and connected us with audiences who share cultural similarities in Asia," Tribeny told PTI.

She said that she was excited about the film premiering at the international film festival.

"We are over the moon that our film has won two awards at Busan, and I thank our incredible cast and crew for bringing this story to life", she said.

"Awards add credibility, but with or without them, we would still be the same bunch of filmmakers - searching and persevering", she added.

The 114-minute film is the story of a young woman, Bishnu, returning to her Himalayan village after quitting her job and the family pressures and societal expectations she faces.

Bishnu must choose between tradition and independence with her pregnant sister's arrival and a growing bond with a "suitable" boy, Tribeny said.

"The film came from a need to express myself. Women from rural areas struggle to be independent, and when they do, they often feel caught between the city and the village", she said.

The filmmaker said that she felt this deeply when she returned to her village, Nandok in East Sikkim, after finishing her studies at the Satyajit Ray Film and Television Institute (SRFTI).

"The film is, however, more than my own story. It is a layered and nuanced reflection on gender, class and the struggles of ordinary people to live on their own terms", she said.

Tribeny pointed out that for her, filmmaking is an earnest reflection

of life and even in this film, "I have tried to objectively share the experiences of several women, including my own, as truthfully as possible," she said.

"My job as a filmmaker is to be observant. Like any other art form, cinema is a way of getting closer to understanding what life is. I also believe that cinema is not merely a spectacle or an escape; its essence lies in the smaller details that gradually reveal a larger universe", she said.

Tribeny said that most of her crew members are from film schools such as SRFTI and FTIL.

"It was very important for me to work with like-minded people, as it made the entire process deeply collaborative and meaningful. I don't think I would have been able to make this film without Kislav, who is the co-writer, co-editor and one of the producers of the film", she said.

She said that the filmmaking industry in Sikkim is still at a nascent stage and for an independent filmmaker, the challenges are endless.

"I thought making the film would be the hardest part, but I have since learned that figuring out what to do with the film after making it can be even more difficult", she said.

Besides, working with a limited budget had its own struggles but also some unique advantages, as it certainly forced us to be creative and resourceful, the filmmaker added.

Tribeny said that she grew up in a household where television viewing was restricted, and until class 10, she mostly watched Doodardshan on TV which she believes nurtured her habit of reading stories.

"The love for storytelling grew naturally and eventually brought me to filmmaking. I cannot pinpoint one single moment that led me here. It was a series of influences and experiences that shaped this path", she said.

Asked about her future film projects, Rai said there were a couple of ideas, but these are yet to be fully developed.

"I, however, know that my next work will continue to explore the nature of human beings, as that is what intrigues me the most at this point in my life", she said. (PTI)



A star is reborn: Bobby Deol counts his blessings and his many recent hits

NEW DELHI, Oct 6: It has been 30 years to the day since he made his debut with "Barsaat". Bobby Deol's career has been a rollercoaster ride since, the dizzying highs and terrible lows that could make for a film script all its own, and it is almost as if a star has been reborn complete with a new fan base and roles in all shades of grey.

The chocolate box hero, better known as Dharmendra's son when he hit the screens in "Barsaat" opposite another debutante and star kid Twinkle Khanna on October 6, 1995, has evolved into the character actor who grabs attention with his turn as the villain in "Animal", the shady godman in the OTT show "Aashram" and now the suave, complex superstar of "The Baahubals of Bollywood".

And the star, who talks candidly about his slump when he got no work and was in a "horrible place" in his life, can't be happier.

He has clawed his way back into public reckoning and counts his many blessings the constant support of his family, especially his father Dharmen-

dra, and the endless love of fans. "The love they have given me, it gives me so much energy... without meeting me or without speaking to me. It really is something which no one will ever understand till you go through your bad times and come back. It's the support which comes through the love people give me," the 56-year-old actor told PTI in a Zoom interview.

Is there any advice that he would like to give the young Bobby?

"There's no advice because at that age, I had to learn from my own mistakes. I had to go through that whole process of what my journey would be. I mean, you can't tell your young self and explain to them that you should be doing it like this and not like that," he said. After "Barsaat", which won him the Filmfare award for Best Male Debut, came a series of hits, including "Gupt", "Soldier", "Bichoo" and "Ajnabee". And then came the phase of consecutive flops.

"In your life, have you ever felt you've lost everything and you have no one who can help you? I think every-

body goes through that one moment... that's exactly what I went through. I guess it was a horrible place to be at that point in my life," he said.

Everything looked "very distant, very far away", said the actor, admitting that he had no one else but himself to blame.

"It was all my own doing to give up like that. And once you realise that, and once you get up on your own two feet, because no one can hold your hand and make you walk forward, I decided to start changing things in my life."

"Sometimes people don't learn from those moments. And I think that's one of the reasons why I am here today and talking about my 30 years."

Acting, Bobby said, had always been his true passion.

"I had no plan then - I just wanted to be an actor. I grew up watching films, watching my father on screen, and somewhere that magic got into my system. My father has given some of the biggest hits in Hindi cinema, and beyond the numbers, he's been my greatest support.

"When I told him I wanted to act, he didn't hesitate for a second - he just said, 'Go for it.' That belief has stayed with me all these years," Bobby said.

The actor thanks superstars Shah Rukh Khan and Salman Khan for coming to his aid when he was struggling to find work.

"Both Shah Rukh and Salman have been very kind and generous over the years. I remember Salman offering me one of the biggest films of my career with 'Race 3'. After the film, I thanked him for believing in me, and he said, 'It was all you - your conviction and your hard work.'"

It was 2020's "Class of '83", a police thriller that featured Bobby as the dean of a police academy, that marked the beginning of his resurgence. The movie was produced by Shah Rukh's banner Red Chillies Entertainment.

The production company also backed the 2022 crime thriller "Love Hostel", in which Bobby portrayed a ruthless killer relentlessly targeting a young couple, showcasing a darker and more intense side of his acting chops. (PTI)



WORLD JUNIOR C'SHIPS: INDIA OFF TO FLYING START; SRI LANKA EDGE UAE IN THRILLER

GUWAHATI, Oct 6: Hosts India kicked off their mixed team campaign in the Subandinata Cup with a commanding win over neighbors Nepal, while Sri Lanka stunned the UAE in a nail-biting finish on the opening day of the BWF World Junior Championships here on Monday.

India, seeded second, experimented with their line-up but still sailed through 45-18, 45-17 in their Group H opener, while Sri Lanka took advantage of the changes made by UAE to win 30-45, 45-34, 45-44. All other top countries, including 14-time champions China, former champions Indonesia and South Korea had little problem beating their respective opponents in straight sets to get their campaign rolling. The mixed team championships is being played under a new best of three relay-scoring format.

Each tie will be contested for the best of three sets up to 45 points, with each set comprising five matches — one each in men's singles, women's singles, men's dou-



bles, women's doubles and mixed doubles. Teams are also allowed to change their players for each set.

India took advantage of this substitution rules to give most of their players a chance to get some match experience as they played a different combination in all three doubles and different players in singles in the two sets against Nepal.

The former world junior no. 1 boys doubles pair of Bhargav Ram Arigela and Viswa Tej Gobburu set the ball rolling with a 9-3 win over Kabir KC and Suprim Panta and India never once looked in any kind of trouble.

Unnati Hooda and Asian U-19 championships bronze medallist Tanvi Sharma were clinical in their respective girls singles matches, while Suryansh Rawat and Rounak Chouhan warmed up for bigger challenges without breaking any sweat. While most Indian players had played in a different version of the relay-scoring format in the Asian U-19 Mixed Team Championships, it was Unnati's first outing in this scoring format and the

China Open quarterfinalist said that more than her approach to the game, she had to change her pre-match routine more. "I tend to take my time with the warm up in the 21-point game. But here we have to be at our best from the first point and so my warm-up included a lot more court time as we don't get any time to warm up between the match," she said. "Otherwise, there was no problem as such in the match."

None of the other nations faced any challenge in their opening ties as China beat Ghana 45-14, 45-10, Korea beat Hungary 45-22, 45-29, Chinese Taipei defeated Brazil 45-24, 45-19 and Indonesia got the better of Philippines 45-27, 45-40.

But it was a tie between Sri Lanka and UAE that kept everyone in the stadium glued to their seats as the former came back from a set down to win. Having lost the opening set rather easily, Sri Lanka benefitted from UAE's decision to replace Bharath Latheesh with Riyan Malhan in boy's singles. (PTI)

Drake Maye leads Patriots to 23-20 win over Bills

ORCHARD PARK, N.Y., Oct 6: Receiver Stefon Diggs is quite comfortable putting on a show in Buffalo. The big difference on Sunday night was doing so for the Bills' division rival New England Patriots.

Diggs had 10 catches for 146 yards, with 119 coming in the second half, in a 23-20 win over the Bills sealed by Andy Borregales hitting a 52-yard field goal with 15 seconds remaining.

In teaming up with quarterback Drake Maye and Rhamondre Stevenson, who scored two touchdowns rushing, the Patriots left the NFL without an undefeated team five weeks into the season.

Diggs followed up his six-catch, 101-yard outing in last week's 43-13 win over Carolina by topping it in the 31-year-old's first return to Orchard Park, New York, since his four-year stint in Buffalo ended with him being traded to Houston in April 2024.

"It was lit, prime time," said Diggs, who set nearly every single-season franchise receiving record in Buffalo during his four-year tenure. "It was electrifying. I knew it was going to be a test for us."

It's a test the up-and-coming Patriots passed under Maye, the blossoming second-year starter, first-year coach Mike Vrabel and veteran running back Rhamondre Stevenson, who scored on 4- and 7-yard runs.

The Patriots won back-to-back games for the first time since winning three in a row midway through the 2022 season. New England has a winning record through five games for the first time since opening the 2019 season 8-0.

And the Patriots tightened the AFC East race by moving within one game of the five-time defending division champion Bills (4-1).

Maye finished 22 of 30 for 273 yards, and was near-perfect in the second half by going 13 of 14 for 184 yards. No throw was more impressive than when he began the final drive by eluding the grasp of Bills defensive tackle DaQuan Jones and getting off a 12-yard completion to Diggs.

"You know this was his storybook," Maye said of the receiver who signed with New England in March, and after his time in Houston was cut short by a torn knee ligament last season.

"Coming back here first game, prime time, you could see it all week. He just loves football," Maye said. "He's got a lot in the tank left, so it's good he's a Patriot." The Bills essentially beat themselves in snapping a 14-game home winning streak that was one short of the franchise record and dated to a 24-22 loss to Denver on Nov. 13, 2023.

The Bills had three turnovers, two by Allen. He muffed a hand-off to tight end Dawson Knox to end Buffalo's opening drive. Allen was also picked off by Marcus Jones at New England's 10, with the Bills trailing 13-10.

Receiver Keon Coleman lost a fumble at his own 11.

"We just played sloppy. Not going to win a football game turning the ball over three times," Allen said. "That's just bad football. We just did not play good tonight." Allen, last season's MVP, finished 22 of 31 for 253 yards and threw touchdown passes to Coleman and Curtis Samuel. (AP)

Kouassi scores winning goal in Spirit's 2-1 win over Wave

WASHINGTON, Oct 6: Rosemonde Kouassi scored the winning goal in the dying moments and the Washington Spirit defeated the San Diego Wave 2-1 on Sunday in the National Women's Soccer League.

With stoppage time ticking into its eighth minute, Kouassi unleashed a curling shot from 30 yards out. The ball soared over Wave goalkeeper Kailen Sheridan and into the net to seal the victory.

Elsewhere in the NWSL on Sunday, Gotham FC were held to a 0-0 draw at home against the Seattle Reign, and the Chicago Stars fought back to earn a 2-2 tie against the Utah Royals.

Kouassi's dramatic match-winning strike came just 171 seconds after Delphine Cascarino brought the Wave level at 1-1 in the fifth minute stoppage time.

Kyra Carusa split the Spirit backline with a pass and Cascarino burst into the box to flick the ball beyond goalkeeper Aubrey Kingsbury with one touch.

Kouassi also scored the opening goal of the match on a header in the ninth minute. She has four goals this season.

The Spirit (12-4-7) were undefeated in 11 matches and were second in the standings. The Wave (8-8-7) were winless in seven matches and dropped to eighth, the final playoff spot.

Gotham FC could not find a way past a stubborn defensive stand by the visiting Seattle Reign in a scoreless draw.

Sitting in third place, Gotham (9-6-8) extended its undefeated run to seven matches and edged closer to clinching a playoff spot.

The Reign (9-7-7) remained in fifth but increased their cushion above the playoff line to six points.

Rose Lavelle crashed the crossbar for Gotham with a chipped shot from the edge of the box in the 31st minute.

Rodri out of Spain squad for World Cup qualifiers

MADRID, Oct 6: Midfielder Rodri has been dropped from Spain's squad for upcoming World Cup qualifying games because of an injury sustained when playing for Manchester City in the Premier League this weekend.

Spain said Monday that Rodri will not play against Georgia and Bulgaria during the international break. The Spanish soccer federation said it made the decision after receiving the results of medical tests conducted by Man City.

Spain is already missing young Barcelona forward Lamine Yamal because of a groin ailment.

Rodri was forced off with a suspected hamstring problem in the first half of Man City's 1-0 win at Brentford on Sunday, the latest injury blow to hit last year's Ballon d'Or winner.

Rodri said after the game he "felt a little bit in the hamstring but it seems like it's not that much."

"I stretched the leg a little bit, a bit like in the Euros final. I stretched a little bit but it's part of the process," he said. "I don't feel that I feel tired muscle-wise, I feel fresh



but the most important thing is it's not that big."

Rodri said "the good thing is the break so it will be even better in this sense to recover these days and hopefully I can be in the next game."

Rodri looked forlorn as he walked gingerly off the field in the 21st minute, moments after slumping to the ground while clutching the back of his right leg. He was replaced by Nico Gonzalez.

Rodri sustained ACL damage in September last year that kept him out for eight months. He missed the start of this season after picking up another injury, reportedly to his groin, at the Club World Cup and has complained of knee pain in recent weeks. (AP)

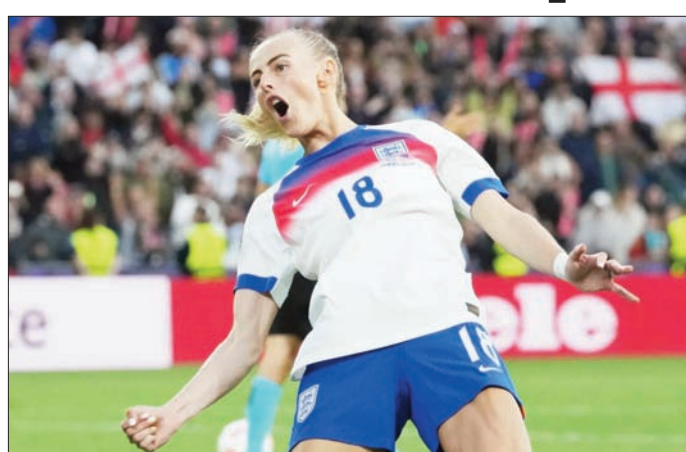
Defending champion Arsenal opens vs Lyon in Women's Champions League

ROME, Oct 6: The revamped Women's Champions League opens with a blockbuster matchup between Chloe Kelly's Arsenal and record eight-time winner Lyon on Tuesday.

It's a rematch of last season's semifinals — when Arsenal overturned a first-leg deficit and went on to beat Barcelona in the final. Kelly then added another trophy when she led England to a second straight Women's European Championship title in July.

On Saturday, Kelly came off the bench to score a temporary equalizer in Arsenal's 3-2 loss to Manchester City — her former club. She signed a permanent deal with Arsenal in July after playing for the London club on loan from City for the second half of last season.

Lyon has added some scoring power in the offseason by signing 22-year-old Jule Brand from Wolfsburg and Marie-Antoinette Katoto from Paris Saint-Germain. Brand scored two goals and pro-



vided two assists during Germany's run to the semifinals at the Euros, while Katoto is Paris Saint-Germain's all-time top scorer with 131 goals in 152 matches.

Barcelona, which has retained three-time Ballon d'Or winner Aitana Bonmati and Alexia Putellas amid an offseason exodus of players in fallout from financial problems in the men's team, opens at

home against Bayern Munich.

Barcelona, which reached the past five finals and won three, could also rely on younger players like midfielder Clara Serrajordi, who at 17 became the second-youngest player to score in the Spanish women's league against Eibar on Saturday.

After the men switched from a group-phase to a league-based for-

mat last season, the women's tournament is making the move, too.

There are now 18 teams — two more than in the old format — for a 54-game league phase that ends in December.

Teams that finish first to fourth in the standings advance directly to the quarterfinals. Those ranked Nos. 5 to 12 go to a knockout play-off round. The bottom six teams are eliminated.

Half of the teams came through qualifying, including Manchester United, Real Madrid, Roma and Paris FC.

The other matches this week are: Juventus vs. Benfica; Paris FC vs. OH Leuven; Twente vs. Chelsea; Real Madrid vs. Roma; St. Polten vs. Atleti; Manchester United vs. Valerenga; and Wolfsburg vs. PSG.

The final will be held at Ullevaal Stadion in Oslo, Norway, in May.

There's also a new second-tier tournament called the Women's Europa Cup, which is finishing up qualifying before a 16-team draw scheduled for next week. (AP)

Pramod Bhagat shines with triple Gold at 1st Abia Para Badminton International

NEW DELHI, Oct 6: Ace Indian para shuttler Pramod Bhagat continued his golden run as he clinch three titles at the 1st Abia Para Badminton International tournament held in Abia, Nigeria, from September 30 to October 5.

The 37-year-old, who won gold at Tokyo Paralympic but missed out of Paris Games due to three whereabouts failures, captured the men's singles SL3 crown with a hard-fought 21-7, 9-21, 21-9 win over compatriot Mantu Kumar in the final.

Bhagat, who won the China Para Badminton International after returning to action following a 18-months ban, showed trademark composure and tactical sharpness, recovering strongly after dropping the second game to seal the contest. He then combined with Sukant

Kadam to add the men's doubles gold, defeating Peru's Gerson Jair Vargas Lostaunaul and Diana Rojas Golac 21-13, 21-17.

Bhagat's third title came in mixed doubles (SL3-SU5), where he partnered with Arati Patil to claim another close final, rounding off a commanding all-round performance that reaffirmed his stature as India's most decorated para shuttler.

"Every victory motivates me to push my limits further. Competing at this level and bringing glory to India is always special. I'm proud of the hard work and the support team behind these wins," Bhagat said in a release.

Bhagat's partner in doubles, Sukant Kadam said, "Playing alongside Pramod always pushes me to bring my best game. Our understanding on court has grown



stronger with every match. This gives us great confidence for upcoming international events."

Meanwhile, Ranjit Singh bagged three bronze medals — in men's singles WH1, men's doubles WH1-WH2 (with Paramjit Singh) and mixed doubles WH1-WH2 (with Shabana).

Nurul Hossain Khan clinched silver in men's singles WH2, while Uma Sarkar took silver in women's singles SL3. Sarkar also partnered Arati for a bronze in women's doubles SL3-SU5.

Other notable results included bronzes for Nitesh Gaikwad (men's SL4) and Kanak Singh Jadaun (women's SL4), and a clean sweep for India in men's singles SU5, with Karan Paneer, Rahul Vimal and Sativada taking gold, silver and bronze respectively. (PTI)

Is Man City star Erling Haaland in the form of his life? The stats suggest so

LONDON, Oct 6: Manchester City striker Erling Haaland believes he is in the best form of his career — and the statistics show he might be right.

The scoring phenom from Norway made it 18 goals from his opening 11 games of the season by netting City's winner against Brentford in the Premier League.

That prompted a question: Is he in the form of his life? "You can say so," Haaland said. "I've never felt better than I do now."

Here's a deeper look at his scoring run — and how it currently compares to other top strikers:

Is this Haaland's best goal streak?

In a senior career spent at Molde in Norway, Salzburg in Austria, Borussia Dortmund in Germany and now City, Haaland has never scored more than 18 goals in an 11-game stretch in a single season. He has achieved that exact

same tally, though, on three previous occasions. And they came in the same season.

In the 2022-23 campaign — his first at City — Haaland had 11-game stretches from Aug. 21-Oct. 5 and Aug. 27-Oct. 8 where he scored 18 goals for club and country. Those runs included hat tricks in three consecutive home league games.

Later that season, he again netted 18 goals in an 11-game run from March 11-May 3 — a streak that included five goals in a Champions League match against Leipzig.

In his current run, Haaland also has a five-goal match — for Norway against Moldova — as well as four doubles.

What about Haaland's run of consecutive scoring games? This is where Haaland has broken his personal record.

His goal against Brentford meant he has now scored in nine straight matches for club and



country, and he's never done that before.

His previous best streak was eight games in a row — from August to October in 2021 when he played for Dortmund, and from August to September in 2022 soon after joining City.

What's the Premier League record for scoring in consecutive games?

The only game in which Haaland failed to score this season was at home to Tottenham in the Premier League on Aug. 23, when City lost 2-0.

He has netted in all five of City's league games since, but has a way to go to break the record for scoring in consecutive games.

That is held by Jamie Vardy, who scored in 11 straight matches in the Premier League from August to November en route to Leicester winning the title in fairytale fashion.

How does Haaland compare to the world's other top strikers this season?

It hasn't just been a strong start to the season for Haaland.

Harry Kane has begun even better, scoring 19 goals in his first 11 games for Bayern Munich and England combined — starting with one in the German Super Cup. The England captain has failed to score in just one of those matches. As for Kylian Mbappé, he has 16 goals in his opening 12 games for Real Madrid and France combined. He has also failed to score in only one of those matches. (AP)

All-round England overwhelming favourites against Bangladesh

GUWAHATI, Oct 6: With a line-up that features a plethora of seasoned campaigners, four-time champions England will start as overwhelming favourites when they face Bangladesh in their ICC Women's ODI World Cup league match here on Tuesday.

Both teams are coming off convincing wins in their respective tournament openers. Bangladesh have beaten Pakistan by seven wickets and England smashed South Africa by 10 wickets after bundling them out for 69.

However, if one lays emphasis on quality and options at disposal, then England are far ahead of their Asian opponents.

With players of the calibre of Tammy Beaumont, Amy Jones, Heather Knight, Nat Sciver-Brunt, Sophie Ecclestone, Lauren Bell, and Sophia Dunkley forming the nucleus of the side, the English look miles ahead. These are very big names in the women's game globally and are familiar with the challenges of competing in events like the World Cup.

On the other hand, players such as Nigar Sultana, who doubles up as skipper and wicketkeeper, Rubya Haider, Nishita Akter Nishi and Sumaiya Akter are carrying Bangladesh's hopes in the showpiece.

But as a team, it is not as experienced or formidable as the English squad that is gunning for a fifth title triumph having last won the tournament in 2017.

Having routed South Africa at the same venue four days ago and trained here for a while in the run-up to their tournament-opener, traditional powerhouse England have become familiar with the conditions in this part of the world.

Though the England-South Africa game



yielded less than 150 runs thanks to the brilliant display by the English bowlers, the surface at the Barsapara Cricket Stadium is regarded as batting-friendly and has often pro-

duced high-scoring contests.

The bounce is normally consistent and the ball comes on to the bat nicely, giving the batters confidence to play their strokes particularly during the power play.

As the match progresses, the pitch has showed a tendency to slow down, bringing the spinners and the slower bowlers into play.

If the bowlers stick to a disciplined line and length and use variations, they are likely to taste success here, and both England and Bangladesh have enough firepower in their arsenal to make use of the track, though the former boasts of better quality.

The English bowlers' experience will come in handy with the spin trio of Linsey Smith, Sophie Ecclestone and Charlie Dean once again posing difficult questions after their successful outing against the Proteas.

As far as batters and all-rounders are concerned, England have the edge without an iota of doubt, and Bangladesh will have their task cut out.

Teams :

England: Nat Sciver-Brunt (c), Em Arlott, Tammy Beaumont, Lauren Bell, Alice Capsey, Charlie Dean, Sophia Dunkley, Sophie Ecclestone, Lauren Filer, Sarah Glenn, Amy Jones, Heather Knight, Emma Lamb, Linsey Smith, Danni Wyatt-Hodge.

Bangladesh: Nigar Sultana Joty (c), Nahida Akter, Farzana Haque, Rubya Haider Jhelik, Sharmin Akter Supta, Sobhana Mostary, Ritu Moni, Shorna Akter, Fahima Khatun, Rabeya Khan, Marufa Akter, Fariha Islam Trisna, Shanjida Akther Maghla, Nishita Akter Nishi, Sumaiya Akter.

Match starts at 3pm. (PTI)

Indians face stern tests in opening round at Arctic Open Super 500



VANTAA (FINLAND), Oct 6: Lakshya Sen and Kidambi Srikanth will continue their quest for title this season as a strong Indian contingent competes in a tough field at the Arctic Open Super 500 badminton tournament, beginning here Tuesday.

Lakshya, runner-up at the Hong Kong Open this season, faces a stern test in the first round against fifth seed Kodai Naraoka of Japan.

Sen, a 2021 World Championship bronze medallist, will need to strike a balance between aggression and restraint to tame Naraoka, who is solid in defence and will capitalise on loose play.

Srikanth, who made a strong run to the final of the Malaysia Masters in 2025, opens against Rasmus Gemke. The veteran Indian, battling inconsistency through the season, must rely on his tactical variation, net control, and mid-court transitions to keep the Dane off balance.

Among India's younger players, Ayush Shetty, who claimed his maiden BWF title at the US Open Super 300 this year, faces top seed Kunlavut Vitidsarn of Thailand in a daunting opener.

Tharun Manneppalli, fresh from a semifinal showing in the Macau Open Super 300, takes on French seventh seed Toma Junior Popov -- a match that will test his composure and shot selection.

Kiran George, whose best result this year has been reaching the quarterfinals at the India Open, faces Koki Watanabe of Japan, while S Sankar Muthusamy Subramanian squares off against third seed Christo Popov of France -- an uphill battle for the Indian.

In the women's singles, Tanya Hemant opens against Huang Ching Ping of Chinese Taipei, while Anmol Kharb meets the sixth seed Lin Hsiang of Chinese Taipei.

In the women's doubles, Kavipriya Selvam and Simran Singh will face fifth seeds Yeung Nga Ting and Yeung Pui Lam of Hong Kong, while the mixed doubles pair of Dhruv Kapila and Tanisha Crasto opens against France's Lucas Renoir and Camille Pog-nante.

The younger pair of Mohit Jaglan and Lakshita Jaglan faces Brian Wassink and Debora Jille of the Netherlands. (PTI)

Indian pace sensation Kranti Goud wants to bowl faster



COLOMBO, Oct 6: Since bursting onto the international scene less than five months ago, Kranti Goud has swiftly evolved into India's go-to new ball weapon and the youngster now wants to add more pace to her deliveries.

In a high-stakes Women's World Cup clash against Pakistan on Sunday, the seamer underlined her growing importance to the team, returning excellent figures of 3 for 20 in 10 overs that included three maidens, to derail Pakistan's chase of 247.

Her performance set up an emphatic 88-run victory and earned Goud her first Player-of-the-Match award at the very venue where she made her national debut in May this year.

"My India debut was also in Sri Lanka, and today I'm the Player of the Match here. It's a proud moment for me and my family. I'm very happy," she told reporters with a wide smile after the game.

Asked about her conversations with India's bowling coach Aavishkar Salvi, Goud said, "Right now, the bowling coach hasn't told me anything about my speed."

"Our focus is on maintaining a consistent line and length, not trying to do too much. I'm comfortable with my pace at the moment, but I want to bowl faster."

Having dismissed opener Sadaf Shamas off her own bowling, she

backed her instincts to fetch the wicket of Aliya Riaz, leaving Pakistan reeling at 3/26.

"The ball was swinging a lot. I had this feeling inside me that there will be a wicket in this over. Hary di (Harmanpreet Kaur) asked to remove the second slip as the pace was reducing but I told di that 'please keep a second slip'."

After insisting on having a second slip Goud had Riaz steer the ball straight to her.

"The catch came to the second slip so I had a lot of trust in myself."

For Goud, it's been a dream start. Hailing from Ghuwara, a town in Bundelkhand in Madhya Pradesh, she's risen through the ranks with quiet determination.

Just last year, she was a net bowler for Mumbai Indians in the Women's Premier League.

The UP Warriorz then snapped her up for a base price of Rs 10 lakh at the auction.

When injuries to Renuka Thakur and Pooja Vastrakar opened the doors for her in the national setup, Goud seized the opportunity with both hands.

A sensational run in the away series against England, which included a six-wicket haul in the series-deciding third ODI earlier this year, sealed her place in the squad and since then, she's only gone from strength to strength. (PTI)

Assam team to participate in 50th National Senior Yogasan Championship

HT Correspondent
NAGAON, Oct 6: The Assam team departed on Monday to participate in the 50th National Senior Yogasan Championship, scheduled to be held in Mysuru, Karnataka, from October 9 to October 12.

According to general secretary of Assam Yoga Association, Prabhat Chandra Borah, the Assam contingent comprises talented athletes, including Priyam Borah, Ishan Borah, Ayushman Mehta, Ankita Dutta, and others. The team is accompanied by experienced referees, including Bichitra Ranjan Bora, Jaya Rani Deka, and Navalakshmi Gogoi.

The Assam team is geared up to showcase their yoga skills and bring laurels to the state. The 50th National Senior Yogasan Championship is expected to witness participation from various states across the country, making it a prestigious platform for athletes to demonstrate their expertise in yoga.

The event aims to promote yoga as a sport and encourage young athletes to adopt this ancient practice for physical and mental well-being. The Assam team is confident of putting up a strong performance and making the state proud.

Nationwide 'padyatras' to commemorate Sardar Patel's 150th birth anniversary: Sports Ministry

NEW DELHI, Oct 6: The Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports will commemorate the 150th birth anniversary of India's first home minister and iconic freedom fighter Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel on October 31 with 'padyatras' across all districts of the country.

Minister of Youth Affairs and Sports Mansukh Mandaviya and Minister of State Raksha Nikhil Khadse launched the 'Sardar@150' Unity Run initiative at the Dhyani Chand stadium here on Monday.

"Sardar@150 is not merely a commemoration but a national movement to engage youth in nation-building. Just as Sardar Patel united over 560 princely states to forge a strong and united India, this initiative seeks to channel the energy of young Indians towards strengthening national unity," Mandaviya said.

The padyatras will take place from October 31 to November 25. They will be held for three consecutive days in every parliamentary constituency, covering all districts with 8km to 10km every day.

"All 779 districts of India will



have these padyatras to honour Sardar Patel's memory and his contribution in unifying the nation," the minister said.

Asked if opposition-ruled states like Bengal, which has been ravaged by floods, have also agreed to participate in the initiative, Mandaviya said, "This has got nothing to do with politics and I am sure there would be wholehearted participation irrespective of who is in power."

The padyatras would be led by cabinet ministers, and Members of Parliament. Volunteers from

My Bharat, NSS and NCC will be playing an active role in the organisation of the padyatras, including logistics and cleanliness drives during the initiative.

The national-level padyatra will take place from November 26 to December 6 and cover a 152km distance from Patel's birthplace of Karamsad in Gujarat to the Statue of Liberty built to honour his legacy in Kevadia.

A group 150 young leaders selected through a national-level quiz will participate in this padyatra. (PTI)

Lanka Premier League to feature Indian players

NEW DELHI, Oct 6: The organisers of the Lanka Premier League (LPL) on Monday announced that Indian cricketers will feature in the tournament for the first time when its sixth edition begins on December 1.

This T20 event will feature 24 matches in total, including 20 league fixtures and 4 knockout games, spread across three premier venues -- R. Premadasa International Cricket Stadium, Colombo; Pallekele International Cricket Stadium, Kandy; and Rangiri Dambulla International Cricket Stadium, Dambulla.

"For the very first time, Indian cricketers are expected to join the action, their names will be revealed soon, adding a whole new level of excitement for fans across the region," a press release said.

As per the format, all five franchises compete against each other twice during the league phase. At the end of the round-robin stage, the top four teams will move into the playoffs.

The opening playoff, Qualifier 1, will be contested by the top two sides, with the winner earning a straight passage to the final.

The teams placed third and fourth will face off in the Eliminator, and the victor of that clash will take on the loser of Qualifier 1 in Qualifier 2, which will determine the second finalist.

"The timing of this edition has been carefully chosen to ensure that players gain maximum exposure and high-quality match practice in the lead-up to a global cricketing year," Samantha Dodanwala, Tournament Director, LPL, said.

"Over the seasons, the LPL has emerged as a breeding ground for fresh talent, with several youngsters making their mark alongside international stars. This year too, we believe the league will throw up exciting new names who can go on to spring surprises on the world stage ahead of the World Cup." (PTI)

Pakistan's Sidra Amin reprimanded for breaching ICC Code Of Conduct during loss to India

COLOMBO, Oct 6: Pakistan batter Sidra Amin was on Monday reprimanded and handed one demerit point by the ICC for breaching its Level 1 of Code of Conduct during the Women's World Cup match against India here.

Amin waged a lone battle for Pakistan in a one-sided contest with a knock of 81 before her team was bowled out for 159 in reply to India's 247 at the R Premadasa Stadium on Sunday. Pakistan lost the match by 88 runs.

"Sidra was found to have breached Article 2.2 of the ICC Code of Conduct for Players and Player Support Personnel, which relates to 'abuse of cricket equipment or clothing, ground equipment or fixtures and fittings during an International Match'," the ICC said in a media release.



The incident occurred in the 40th over of Pakistan's chase when she "forcefully hit her

bat onto the pitch" after being dismissed by Sneha Rana.

"In addition to this, one demerit point has been added to her disciplinary record, for whom it was the first offence in a 24-month period," the ICC said.

"Sidra admitted the offence and accepted the sanction proposed by Shandre' Fritz of the Emirates ICC International Panel of Match Referees, so there was no need for a formal hearing," it added.

The charges were levelled by on-field umpires Lauren Agenbag and Nimali Perera along with third umpire Kerrin Klaaste and fourth umpire Kim Cotton.

"Level 1 breaches carry a minimum penalty of an official reprimand, a maximum penalty of 50 per cent of a player's match fee, and one or two demerit points," the ICC said. (PTI)

We focus on building our own bubble, keep away from outside noise: Jemimah



COLOMBO, Oct 6: India batter Jemimah Rodrigues says the team wants to win the ICC World Cup for all those who have contributed to the rise of the women's game in the country and for that the players are trying to stay away from "outside noise".

Co-hosts India are looking to lift their maiden World Cup trophy after finishing runners-up twice and they have won both their league matches in the ongoing tournament, the latest one against Pakistan here on Sunday.

"We try to take it one day at a time and stay in the present. Even in our group conversations, we focus on building our own bubble because we know how much noise surrounds a World Cup," Jemimah said on 'JioStar'.

"Whether we do well or face chal-

lenges, we want to keep all that outside and create our own energy. Everyone in this team genuinely looks out for each other and celebrates each other's success. That comes so naturally and really strengthens our bond."

Talking about the journey of women's cricket in India, she said, "When I first entered the team, Mithali di and Jhulan di were our seniors, and to now see the transition with Harman di and Smriti leading together is really special. They've created an environment where everyone wants to give their all for the team."

"We want to win it for those who paved the way, for Mithali di, Jhulan di (Jhulan Goswami), Neetu ma'am (Neetu David), and all those who helped bring women's cricket to

where it is today (Sunday)," Jemimah, who made 32 against Pakistan, added.

She said both the pitches in Guwahati and Colombo have been slightly challenging for the batters, especially the one used for Sunday's game in the Sri Lankan capital.

"The pitch had been under covers and the ball was gripping a bit early on. The spinners bowled really well, so we knew we had to adapt, take the game deep, and build partnerships."

"Everyone contributed, and towards the end, Richa's fireworks helped us reach a winning total," she said about Richa Ghosh's 35 not out off 20 balls that took India's total to 237 against Pakistan.

Former India captain Mithali Raj lauded young pacer Kranti Gaud's

rapid progress as the 22-year-old returned with fine figures of 3/20 to play a major role in the 88-run thrashing of Pakistan.

"Kranti Gaud's experience at the international level is still limited, since she only made her debut this year, but what's truly impressive is how quickly she learns and adapts," said Mithali.

"She's putting in the hard yards and adjusting well to different conditions, whether it's in England, where she took six wickets, or in Sri Lanka, or even here, in Guwahati. She knows her strengths and immediately settles into the right line and length."

"You can see she doesn't need the usual warm-up. From the very first delivery, she's spot on with her lengths and intent." (PTI)