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1,679 illegal B'deshi immigrants repatriated from Assam in last 2 years, House told

91,385 D-voters exist in Assam poll rolls: CM

GUWAHATI, July 13: Assam has over 91,000 'doubtful voters' or 'D-Voters' in the state's electoral rolls at present, chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma informed the assembly on Monday.

Replying to a question by Congress MLA Nurul Islam, Sarma said that out of the 91,385 D-voters in the electoral rolls, the highest number was reported in Sonitpur at 13,719.

Barpeta has 8,081 D-voters, while Udalguri and Nagaon also have over 7,800 names of such doubtful voters in the electoral rolls. The chief minister stated that the process of marking 'D' against the names of voters with disputed or doubtful citizenship credentials

has been implemented in the state since 1997, according to Election Commission directives.

Responding in his capacity as the Home and Political department minister, Sarma said 56,728 D-voters were declared as foreigners by Foreigners' Tribunals (FTs), whereas 831 of those who appealed before the high court were branded as foreigners by the court.

Besides, 65,171 D-voters were declared as Indians by FTs, with the Gauhati High Court and the Supreme Court declaring another 42 and three D-voters as legitimate citizens of the country, he added.

Replying to another question by the Congress's Wazed Ali Choudhury, Sarma said the number of D-

voters in the state was 1,99,596 when the exercise was first carried out in 1997.

He said 2,44,144 cases of D-voters have been sent to FTs so far, out of which 2,05,659 cases have been disposed, and 56,728 persons declared as foreigners.

Besides those of D-voters, 1,90,657 other cases have been so far forwarded to FTs by border police. Of these, 1,55,490 cases have been disposed and 1,15,945 persons have been declared as foreigners. Out of these declared foreigners, 31,789 have been expelled, the chief minister added.

The concept of 'D' voters was introduced in Assam in 1997 by the EC. (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)



Trump says US will blockade Iran in Strait of Hormuz

DUBAI, July 13: US President Donald Trump said Monday that the United States is "reinstating" a blockade on Iran in the Strait of Hormuz and will charge ships for safe passage, after another heavy exchange of fire threatened negotiations aimed at ending the war.

He said on social media that Iranian ships will no longer be able to travel through the strait and America would charge a 20 per cent toll on eligible cargo, as the conflict with Iran has intensified after peace talks failed to deliver meaningful progress.

"We are reinstating the THE IRANIAN BLOCKADE, so named because it is only stopping Iran's ships or customers from entering or leaving," Trump said on

line. "All other countries will have fair and open use of the Strait."

The president said the toll would help cover "any and all costs necessary to do the job of providing safety and security to this very volatile section of the World."

A fifth of the world's oil and gas passed through the strait before Iran asserted control over it after the start of the war. The latest exchange of fire was sparked by an Iranian attack on a container ship on Sunday in the Strait of Hormuz. Iran has asserted control over the critical waterway for international oil and gas since the United States and Israel started the war on Feb. 28. Iran says it has the right to manage traffic through the strait and potentially charge (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

BJP leader, Bakalia vice-chairperson Anita Saikia passes away



HT Bureau

DIPHU, July 13: Anita Saikia, the vice-chairperson of the Bakalia Municipal Board and vice president of the BJP-Langphor Mandal, has passed away suddenly.

Her untimely demise has sent shockwaves through the local political landscape and the community of Karbi Anglong.

Saikia, who served as a dedicated ward commissioner representing Ward No. 4, was a prominent public figure known for her active involvement in town development and public welfare initiatives in Bakalia. Alongside her municipal responsibilities, she held a key organisational role within the ruling party as the vice president of the BJP's Langphor Mandal unit.

Expressing deep grief over the loss, the chief executive member (CEM) of the Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC), Tuliram Ronghang, took to social media to pay his tributes.

"Deeply saddened by the sudden passing of Smt. Anita Saikia Ji (Vice-Chairperson, Bakalia Municipal Board & VP, BJP-Langphor Mandal). Her loss is deeply felt. Heartfelt condolences to her family. May her soul rest in peace. Om Shanti," Ronghang stated.

Local party leaders, municipal board members, and citizens have expressed profound sorrow over her sudden demise, remembering her as a tireless worker dedicated to the progress of the region.

Local authorities and party colleagues have extended their deepest sympathies to the bereaved family members during this difficult time.

Her body was taken in a procession in the office of the Bakalia Municipal Board office premises to enable the people to pay their last respects.

India, Japan hold key dialogue to boost ties in defence industrial collaboration

NEW DELHI, July 13: India and Japan at a key bilateral meeting in Tokyo on Monday discussed ways to deepen cooperation in emerging domains, including defence industrial collaboration, technological innovation, cyber security, space and other areas of shared strategic interest, officials said.

Both sides also expressed satisfaction with the "growing convergence" between the two countries on regional and global security issues, and agreed to continue working closely in the Indo-Pacific, reiterating their commitment to promoting a free, open and rules-based Indo-Pacific region "founded on respect for international law".

The two sides held their eighth Defence Policy Dialogue in Tokyo on Monday, India's defence ministry said in a statement.

The Indian delegation was led by Defence Secretary Rajesh Kumar Singh, while the Japanese delegation was led by vice minister of Defence for Interna-



tional Affairs, Kano Koji.

The two countries held comprehensive discussions on the prevailing regional and global security environment and exchanged views on issues of mutual interest, the statement said.

"The dialogue reviewed the entire

spectrum of bilateral defence engagements, including military-to-military exchanges, cooperation between joint headquarters, maritime cooperation, defence exercises, capacity building, defence equipment and technology cooperation, (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Raijor Dal MLAs walk out of Assam assembly, demand release of 2 arrested rights activists

GUWAHATI, July 13: The two Raijor Dal legislators staged a walkout of the Assam Assembly on Monday to protest against the arrest of two rights activists.

Midway during the Question Hour, party MLAs Akhil Gogoi and Mehboob Muktar stood up and demanded the release of the two apprehended activists, Pranab Doley and Aditya Rabha.

Both the MLAs wore black clothes, while Gogoi displayed a placard with 'Free Aditya Rabha, Pranab Doley' written on it in Assamese.

As Speaker Ranjeet Kumar Dass asked them to take their seats, the two Raijor Dal legislators walked out of the House in protest.

Doley, who has been leading protests over various issues relating to indigenous people's rights and proposed five-star hotels near Kaziranga National Park, was report-



edly detained by police from Guwahati on Sunday.

Rabha, also involved with the land rights movement, was apprehended last week in connection with alleged financial irregularities in a cooperative small savings bank. (PTI)

Police crack ₹ 13 lakh daylight robbery in Arunachal

ITANAGAR, July 13: The police claimed to have cracked a daylight robbery case at a commercial establishment in the Arunachal Pradesh capital, arresting all three accused after a three-week investigation, a senior officer said on Monday.

Capital Superintendent of Police (SP) Jumar Basar said the breakthrough came through sustained fieldwork, advanced technical analysis, and close inter-district coordination.

The incident occurred on June 22 at around 11 AM at a shop located in Gandhi Market, Itanagar.

According to the police, two individuals entered the shop under the pretext of viewing CCTV footage for alleged lost items. Once inside, one of the suspects brandished a knife concealed within a file cover, threatened the cashier, and fled the scene with approximately ₹ 13 lakh in cash. A third accomplice stood guard outside as a lookout.

"The case initially had very limited leads as the accused had meticulously planned the crime, changed clothes, avoided routes covered by public cameras, and concealed their movements," Basar said.

The investigation faced initial hurdles as Smart City CCTV cameras along the suspected escape routes were non-operational at the time of the incident.

To crack the case, a special team was constituted, led by the Itanagar SDPO.

The team analysed over 500 hours of CCTV



footage from private establishments, combined with mobile phone tracking, witness examinations, and field verifications, the SP said.

Police tracking revealed that following the heist, the trio fled toward Seppa in East Kameng district and frequently shifted locations across East Kameng, neighbouring Assam, and various parts of Arunachal Pradesh. Two of the accused were apprehended first, while the third one was arrested nearly three weeks after the robbery.

Investigations revealed that a significant portion of the looted cash was utilised by the accused to purchase a four-wheeler, two-wheelers, and mobile phones.

The SP said they have traced and recovered several of these newly acquired assets and have frozen the bank account of one of the accused. (PTI)

Wildlife habitat restoration key to mitigate human-elephant conflict in Assam: Minister

GUWAHATI, July 13: Assam Forest Minister Jayanta Malla Baruah on Monday stressed on wildlife habitat restoration for mitigating human-elephant conflict in the state.

He said the state government was adopting short-term as well as long-term measures for restoring the natural habitat of the pachyderms, and urged the support of all stakeholders.

Replying to a 'Calling Attention' motion by BJP legislator Padma Hazarika in the assembly, Baruah said it has been observed that wherever encroached forest area has been cleared, instances of elephants entering human habitation have come down.

"Wherever we have been able to clear forest land of encroachment... we have found that human-elephant conflict has decreased there. It has happened in three to four places," he said.

The minister said that while the increase in population of elephants



has been at a normal rate, the dwindling forest cover has led the pachyderms to venture into human habitation.

Development activities along traditional elephant corridors and alleged torture of these animals in some bordering states have led to more elephants entering human

habitations in Assam, even in areas where they were not spotted earlier, Baruah said.

While forest restoration will be a priority long-term measure to mitigate the conflict, short-term steps such as solar fencing, creation of waterholes inside forests, promotion (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Naga Students' Federation raises alarm over illegal influx

HT Correspondent

DIMAPUR, July 13: The inner line regulation commission (ILRC) of the Naga Students' Federation (NSF) on Monday expressed grave concern over reports of illegal immigrants from Bangladesh and Myanmar attempting to enter and transit through various parts of the northeastern region.

"Such developments, if left unchecked, pose serious demographic, socio-economic, cultural and security challenges to the indigenous people," the ILRC said in a statement.

Urging the Nagaland government to immediately strengthen surveillance and enforcement across all entry points into the state, it said the strict implementation of the inner line pass (ILP) system, thorough verification of identity documents, intensified inspections, and enhanced coordination among all enforcement agencies are essential to prevent unlawful entry, movement and settlement within the State.

The ILRC also urged all DCs, district administrations, law enforcement agencies, village councils, town councils, colony and ward authorities, and all concerned stakeholders to remain vigilant and ensure that no individual resides, works or conducts any activity in Naga areas without complying with the provisions of the Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation,

1873, and other applicable laws.

It further warned all individuals or groups who are unlawfully extorting money, harassing, intimidating or exploiting non-Naga residents, students, workers or visitors under the pretext of enforcing the ILP, saying such acts are illegal, wholly unacceptable, and constitute a serious abuse of the ILP mechanism.

"They not only violate the law but also tarnish the reputation, goodwill and integrity of the Naga people as a whole," it stated. The ILRC categorically stated that no person has the authority to collect money, impose penalties or intimidate anyone in the name of ILP except as provided under law.

It said any person found indulging in such activities will be identified and the matter will be pursued with the competent authorities for strict legal action.

The commission further appealed to all responsible citizens to report suspected cases of illegal entry or settlement, violations of the ILP provisions and incidents of extortion, harassment or illegal collection of money in the name of ILP.

It said such information may be reported to the respective colony chairman, village council, district administration, police, or directly to the ILRC-NSF through its official contact number 84138 99928.



'The study indicates that conventional demand-reduction measures remain necessary'

Experts highlight need to explore safer nicotine alternatives alongside existing measures

NEW DELHI, July 13: Experts have highlighted the need to explore safer nicotine alternatives alongside the existing tobacco-control measures, citing a recent Lancet Regional Health Western Pacific study that found New Zealand recording a sharp decline in smoking rates after regulated lower-risk nicotine products were incorporated into its smoking cessation strategy.

According to the study, daily smoking in New Zealand, which had already been declining under conventional tobacco-control measures, fell below 7 per cent by 2022-23 after safer nicotine alternatives, including regulated vaping products, were formally recognised as cessation aids in 2018-19.

Researchers used joint point regression analysis, a statistical technique, to assess smoking trends



and reported that the annual rate of decline accelerated from 3.5 per cent to 17.9 per cent after the policy shift, indicating a nearly five-fold increase in the pace of

reduction.

The findings have relevance for India, which has an estimated 13.5 crore smokers and records around 13.5 lakh tobacco-related deaths

annually, the experts said.

Dr Saurabh Tomar, interventional pulmonologist at Aakash Healthcare, Dwarka, said the study suggests that conventional tobacco-control interventions, while effective, may eventually reach a plateau in reducing smoking prevalence.

"Despite New Zealand implementing measures such as plain packaging, graphic health warnings and repeated tax increases, smoking declined only gradually. The sharper fall came after regulated, substantially less harmful nicotine alternatives were recognised as cessation tools and made available to adults," he said.

According to Tomar, scientific evidence differentiates the health risks posed by tobacco combustion from those associated with nicotine itself. (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Framework deal is ready, to be signed at right time: Official on India-US trade pact

NEW DELHI, July 13: Negotiations for a trade agreement between India and the US are progressing well, and the framework deal is ready, which will be signed at the right time, an official said on Monday.

The official said that India is seeking a comparative advantage on the tariff front in the agreement vis-a-vis its competitor nations.

"There was a very good discussion (with the US team). The framework deal is ready... whenever there is right time, it will be signed. We are negotiating a framework deal and a bilateral trade agreement (BTA), and both things are progressing well," the official said.

Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal and US Trade Representative Jamieson Greer last month held bilateral talks on issues related to the first phase of the bilateral trade agreement here.

Trade deals are all about preferential market access or comparative advantage.

"So that is something which is getting structured, whenever it is ready, things will be signed. But we are on a safe way, our understanding is safe, both sides are very clear what is there in the framework deal, what is being negotiated under BTA, and we are progressing there," the official, who does not wish to be named, said.

The official clarified that there is no dissension, and they do not see any challenge around it.

The bilateral trade is growing between the two countries. India has also been increasing its energy imports from the US.

"So there is no negativity or any sort of differences between India and the US. Both sides know each other's expectations, both sides know what is coming in the framework deal, and both sides know what is beyond the framework deal that is being negotiated between the two sides," the official added.

Separately, in a social media post, Piyush Goyal refuted a media report on the India-US trade pact



and said that India and the US teams are fully engaged in a trade pact that is balanced, commercially meaningful, and delivers tangible benefits for businesses, farmers, workers, and consumers.

"Both sides reaffirmed their commitment to an agreement that is balanced, commercially meaningful, and delivers tangible benefits for businesses, farmers, workers, and consumers in both countries."

"Our teams remain fully engaged in achieving this objective," Goyal said in a social media post.

Addressing the media, Commerce Secretary Rajesh Agarwal said that India is engaged with the USTR on Sec 301 investigations against forced labour and excess capacity concerns.

"We are closely watching the outcome," he said.

The Office of the United States Trade Representative (USTR) launched two separate Section 301 investigations on March 11 and 12, 2026, covering 60 economies over concerns related to forced labour and excess industrial capacity.

The USTR on June 2 issued its findings in the forced labour investigation and proposed additional tariffs on imports from 60 economies.

The proposal includes a 10 per cent tariff on imports from Canada, Ecuador, the European Union, In-

donesia, Mexico, and Pakistan, and a 12.5 per cent tariff on imports from 54 other economies, including India and China.

Pakistan and Indonesia are India's competitors on the trade front.

The measure remains a proposal and has not yet been finalised.

In its submission to the USTR on the forced labour probe, India has asserted that trade issues should be resolved through bilateral trade negotiations rather than unilateral measures, urging the USTR to reconsider its proposed 12.5 per cent tariff, citing inconsistencies in its Section 301 investigation into forced labour concerns.

The draft report on excess capacity is not yet out.

"So we understand that once the draft report comes, it will take 4 to 6 months minimum or maybe more, to complete the final outcome of that. So these investigations are going on," Agrawal said, adding, "as far as the trade deal is concerned, I think trade deal, whenever we are signing, all aspects of the trade relation will get addressed."

After the US Supreme Court struck down the sweeping reciprocal tariffs (25 per cent on India) in February, the Trump administration imposed a temporary 10 per cent tariff on all countries for 150 days from February 24. (PTI)

Guwahati to host 35th JK Architect of the Year Awards

CM Himanta to attend landmark edition celebrating architectural excellence

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, July 13: The 35th edition of the JK Architect of the Year Awards (JK AYA), one of India's longest-running and most prestigious awards dedicated to the architectural fraternity, will be held in Guwahati on July 15.

Instituted and organised by JK Cement Ltd., the awards mark 35 years of recognising excellence, innovation and socially responsible architecture in India.

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma will attend the ceremony as the chief guest.

Launched in 1990, the JK Architect of the Year Awards have emerged as a prominent national platform celebrating outstanding contributions to architecture and the built environment while promoting dialogue and innovation within the profession.

Senior leadership of JK Cement Ltd., including Vice Chairman Dr Nidhipati Singhania, Managing Director Dr Raghavpat Singhania, Joint Managing Director and CEO Madhavkrishna Singhania, and JK AYA Administrator Rana Pratap Singh, are expected to attend the event.

The ceremony will also bring together leading architects, academicians, members of the Association of Architects Assam (AAA), and design professionals from across the Northeast, other parts of India and abroad.

Winners of the 35th edition will be honoured with trophies, citations and cash awards.

JK Cement Ltd., one of India's leading cement manufacturers, is the country's leading producer of white cement and the world's third-largest white cement manufacturer.

The company also has a presence in more than 40 countries and operates international subsidiaries in the UAE and Africa.

The organisers said the event will celebrate three-and-a-half decades of architectural excellence while reaffirming the awards' commitment to promoting innovation and sustainable design in the built environment.

Contd. from Page 1...

91,385 D-voters exist in

It prepared a list including those who could not provide evidence in favour of their Indian nationality. D voters do not exist anywhere else in India.

The issue of D-voters is one of the most contentious topics in Assam's political and social sphere. Several elections have been fought over the issue of illegal Bangladeshi immigrants, who are initially marked as D-voters if their names are found in the electoral rolls. Deletion or regularisation of a D-voter is done as per orders of the Foreigners Tribunals and the subsequent judgements by higher courts.

Meanwhile, the Chief Minister said that more than 1,600 illegal immigrants from Bangladesh have been repatriated from Assam in the last two years.

Replying to a question from AIUDF legislator Badruddin Ajmal, Sarma laid in the Assembly that the state follows the central government's directives in the matter of citizenship, and enough safeguards have been ensured so that human rights violations do not take place while implementing laws in this regard.

"A total of 1,679 illegal immigrants have been repatriated (deported/sent back/expelled) from Assam to Bangladesh in the last two years," Sarma, who also holds the Home and Political Department, said.

Sharing the list in the House, he said the repatriation took place between July 1, 2024 and June 30, 2026, after identification of the illegal immigrants.

While some of the illegal immigrants were 'sent back', others faced 'expulsion', while a few were returned to their home country through the process of 'deportation'. Sarma said no identified illegal immigrant is repatriated if any appeal is pending in the High Court or the Supreme Court.

Asked about the procedure followed by the government to 'push back' the infiltrators, the CM said that the subject of citizenship is a matter under the central government.

The state government follows the existing provisions of law as well as the directions issued by the Centre from time to time while taking actions against illegal immigrants. The Assam government does not deal directly with any other foreign country, bypassing the Centre, he said. (PTI)

India, Japan hold key

including maritime technology, and enhanced institutional interactions," it said. The two delegations also discussed ways to deepen cooperation in emerging domains, including defence industrial collaboration, technological innovation, cyber security, space, and other areas of shared strategic interest, the officials said.

The key meeting followed soon after Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi's visit to India from July 1 to 3 for the 16th India-Japan annual summit. It was Takaichi's first official visit to India.

During the meeting in Tokyo, both sides also reviewed the significant progress made in bilateral defence co-operation since the previous Defence Policy Dialogue, and reaffirmed their commitment to further strengthening the India-Japan Special Strategic and Global Partnership, the officials said.

Both sides welcomed the "steady expansion" of defence cooperation and underscored the importance of maintaining regular high-level exchanges and dialogue mechanisms.

"They discussed the probable outcomes of the forthcoming ministerial visits, including 2+2, later this year," the defence ministry said. Defence Secretary Singh appreciated Japan's continued engagement with India in the defence sector and highlighted the importance of strengthening practical cooperation under the framework of the India-Japan Special Strategic and Global Partnership. Kano Koji reaffirmed Japan's commitment to further expanding defence ties with India across priority areas, the officials said.

Earlier in the day, the defence secretary called on Japanese minister of defence, Shinjiro Koizumi, and conveyed the greetings of defence minister Rajnath Singh. Both sides reaffirmed the "growing momentum" of the India-Japan Special Strategic and Global Partnership, the statement said.

He also presented an invite from Rajnath Singh to the Japanese defence minister for his visit to India at the earliest opportunity. The defence secretary commenced his visit by laying a wreath at the Self-Defense Forces Memorial Stone in Tokyo, paying tribute to the members of the Japan Self-Defense Forces who made the supreme sacrifice in the service of their nation.

"The visit underscored the growing and deepening defence ties, mutual respect, and shared commitment of India and Japan towards peace, security, and stability in the Indo-Pacific region," the defence ministry said. (PTI)

Wildlife habitat restoration

of Assam lemon plantations as natural barriers, scientific evaluation of beekeeping as an elephant deterrent and better equipped Rapid Response Teams, among others, are also being pursued by the department, he said. "To address the issues of human-elephant conflict and monkey menace, we will be holding a meeting with the MLAs on July 15," Baruah said.

Earlier, raising the issue, Hazarika sought a scientific approach in tackling human-elephant conflict. (PTI)

Experts highlight need

"It is the combustion of tobacco that generates thousands of toxic chemicals responsible for lung cancer, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and cardiovascular disease. Public policy should recognise this distinction while strengthening smoking cessation efforts," he said.

The study also noted that New Zealand strengthened safeguards for young people by enforcing age restrictions, limiting flavours, banning disposable vaping devices and capping nicotine concentrations.

According to the researchers, youth smoking among 14-15-year-olds continued to decline to historically low levels during the same period, even as youth vaping prevalence increased.

Dr Satish Kumar, senior consultant of internal medicine at Pacific One Health Hospital, Delhi, said although India and New Zealand differ significantly in demographics and healthcare systems, tobacco dependence follows similar biological principles.

"The study indicates that conventional demand-reduction measures remain necessary but may not be sufficient to produce rapid declines in smoking, particularly among socio-economically disadvantaged populations. "Regulated access to substantially less harmful nicotine alternatives complemented traditional tobacco control measures and accelerated progress," he said.

The experts also pointed to the distinction between tobacco harm reduction and nicotine elimination, arguing that the two objectives require different policy approaches.

They noted that the World Health Organization has included nicotine replacement therapies in its Essential Medicines List since 2009, while India's Drugs Technical Advisory Board has exempted 2 mg nicotine gum under Schedule K, recognising its role in smoking cessation.

The experts said India continues to face low unassisted quit rates among smokers and limited access to structured tobacco-cessation services. They suggested that evidence from New Zealand could inform future discussions on strengthening smoking cessation strategies while maintaining strict safeguards against youth uptake and nicotine initiation. (PTI)

Trump says US will blockade

fees in accordance with an interim peace deal reached last month. The US and others dispute that, citing international law on freedom of navigation, and the American military has tried to establish an alternative route outside of Iranian control.

Iran and the US are nearly halfway through the 60-day period in which they were supposed to negotiate a permanent end to the war and an agreement on Iran's disputed nuclear program. Instead, a series of attacks over the strait have raised fears of a return to all-out war and further disruption to the global economy.

Oil prices jumped nearly 5 per cent on Monday before falling back. US benchmark crude, which had risen to nearly USD 120 a barrel at the height of the war, was trading at around USD 72.92. Markets were mixed.

The US military said it struck dozens of sites in the strikes on Monday, including air defence systems, radar sites, missile and drone equipment, and small boats. It said Iran does not control the Strait of Hormuz.

The European Union's top diplomat, Kaja Kallas, called for the strait to be open, as it was before the war. "Freedom of navigation has to be respected," she said.

Mohammed Mokhber, an adviser to Iran's supreme leader, wrote that Tehran would fight for the strait. "We defend it so that in the future, for the passage of our ships, we are not forced to pay tribute to the enemy!" he wrote on X. "Retreating from this vital matter has no place in the mind of any friend of Iran."

Iran's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard, a key power centre in the country's theocracy that controls its ballistic missile arsenal, said the Strait of Hormuz is "our territory, and we will not allow a rogue and child-killing army from the other side of the world to continue its illegal interference in it."

Missile alert sirens sounded three times Monday in Bahrain, home to the US Navy's 5th Fleet, and Kuwait said it was intercepting hostile fire. There was no immediate word on damage in either country.

In Jordan, the kingdom's military said it shot down four Iranian missiles in an incident that "resulted in zero casualties or material damage." Jordan also hosts US military forces and aircraft.

In Iran, authorities reported attacks in Hormozgan, Khuzestan and Markazi provinces and said at least two people were killed, according to state-run IRNA news agency. Semiofficial Iranian media also reported strikes in the eastern Sistan and Baluchestan province, which is on the coast of the Gulf of Oman.

The attacks continued hours after the US ended its strikes — again raising the possibility of Gulf Arab states retaliating against Iran. There were unclaimed attacks on Iran on Thursday.

A base belonging to the armed wing of an Iranian Kurdish opposition group based in Iraq's semi-autonomous Kurdistan region came under drone attack on Monday, according to Rebaz Sharifi, a local commander. There were no immediate details on casualties or damage.

No group immediately claimed responsibility. Iran supports a number of powerful militias in Iraq.

Early on Sunday, the US military said it hit some 140 targets, including missile and drone launch sites, ammunition dumps and communication equipment — a far-heavier set of attacks than in two previous rounds of strikes in the last week.

Iran retaliated by attacking nations in the region hosting US military forces.

Sunday's attacks stretched to Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, Jordan and even Oman, which shares the strait with Iran. Oman, which has long been an interlocutor between Tehran and the West, summoned an Iranian diplomat to criticise the attack.

Iran's chokehold on the strait has loosened as the US military supports vessels moving along a southern route hugging the coastline of Oman. That new route has angered Iran, which has launched repeated attacks on ships using it.

Traffic through the Oman route dropped over the weekend to minimal levels, indicating that operators continue to prioritise perceived security over more direct transit options," the ship-tracking website MarineTraffic.com said.

Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesperson Esmail Baghaei blamed Washington for the chaos gripping the region. "Considering the memorandum of understanding's fourteen clauses, the Americans have, in this brief period, in one way or another, slaughtered its various components," Baghaei told journalists Monday.

Baghaei also said Iran wouldn't agree to visits by the International Atomic Energy Agency to nuclear sites the US bombed in 2025, where Tehran's stockpile of highly enriched uranium is believed to be entombed.

Trump suggested last week that the interim deal in the war was "over." But mediators, including Pakistan, Qatar and Egypt, have continued efforts to reach a final agreement to end the war. A regional official involved in mediation, speaking on condition of anonymity to discuss the sensitive talks, said efforts to shore up the ceasefire continued Sunday. Pakistan said its foreign minister spoke by phone with Iran's top diplomat and urged "de-escalation" on both sides. (AP)

IIMCIP launches second edition of Prakriti Incubation Launchpad

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, July 13: The IIM Calcutta Innovation Park (IIMCIP) has launched the second cohort of the Prakriti Incubation Launchpad, a 12-month incubation programme aimed at nurturing sustainability-focused startups across the Northeast.

Implemented in partnership with the Pernod Ricard India Foundation (PRIF), the programme seeks to support early-stage and early-revenue startups developing solutions in the circular economy and sustainable development sectors.

Building on the success of its inaugural edition, the programme will select 12 startups from the region for incubation, mentorship and business development support.

In the first cohort, 12 startups were shortlisted from 36 ventures, with the top six receiving reward grants to-

talling ₹ 70 lakh.

The second edition will focus on startups working in green manufacturing, waste management and recycling, clean technology, environment-friendly innovations, and sustainable indigenous products.

Applications for the programme are open until July 31, 2026, with the selected startups expected to begin incubation in August.

The top six ventures will be identified in December 2026, while the programme will conclude with a final summit in March 2027.

The selected startups will be eligible for reward grants of up to ₹ 15 lakh each, in addition to fellowship support.

Participants will receive one-on-one mentoring from IIMCIP, capacity-building workshops, guidance on business model development, finan-

cial management, go-to-market strategies, investor readiness, and access to market and industry networks. The programme is open to startups from the Northeastern states that are at the minimum viable product (MVP), early-stage or early-revenue stage and are working on sustainability and circular economy solutions.

Speaking on the launch, Ajay Jain, Chairman of the IIM Calcutta Innovation Park Board, said the Northeast possesses immense entrepreneurial potential rooted in its rich biodiversity, indigenous knowledge and traditional practices.

"With more than a decade of engagement with the Northeast startup ecosystem, we aim to bridge existing gaps and nurture enterprises that can transform the region's unique strengths into scalable, market-ready and sustainable businesses," he said.

LG Electronics sets up Robotics Business Center to accelerate AI-driven growth



HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, July 13: LG Electronics (LG) has announced the establishment of a dedicated Robotics Business Center to accelerate the commercialisation of its robotics business and strengthen its position in the rapidly evolving Physical AI sector.

The new business unit, which became operational on July 1, will report directly to Chief Executive Officer Lyu Jae-cheol and will oversee the entire robotics value chain, including business development, sales, supply chain management and manufacturing operations.

The move comes four months ahead of LG's annual organisational restructuring, underscoring the company's strategic emphasis on robotics as one of its key future growth businesses.

The Robotics Business Center will be headed by Song Si-yong, formerly a senior executive at LG's Production Engineering Research Institute, and will function as an end-to-end business organisation responsible for driving the company's robotics strategy.

As part of the restructuring, LG will also establish a dedicated data factory to support robot training and enhance the development of its Robot Foundation Model (RFM).

The company said the facility, cur-

rently being developed at its Yangjae Research and Development Campus in Seoul, will begin operations later this year and will generate high-quality operational data to improve next-generation robotics systems.

According to the company, the new governance structure is intended to streamline decision-making, strengthen in-house technology development and improve cost competitiveness.

The centre will also leverage expertise from other LG Group companies, including LG CNS and LG AI Research, under its "One LG Solution" strategy while expanding partnerships with global technology firms.

LG plans to pursue a three-pronged strategy targeting the industrial, commercial and residential robotics markets.

The Robotics Business Center will complement the company's existing portfolio, which includes home robots, industrial robotics through Robostar, and commercial robotics solutions developed by Bear Robotics. The company has designated 2026 as the launch year for the expansion of its robotics business, with the goal of becoming a leading provider of Physical AI solutions.

As part of this strategy, LG will integrate robot products, core components, data-generation capabilities and the broader LG ecosystem to accelerate commercial deployment in real-world applications.

The company also announced plans to manufacture robotic actuators domestically by leveraging more than six decades of expertise in motor technology to strengthen its future robotics supply chain.

NAME CHANGE

I have Changed my name from Mohammed Islam Uddin to Islam Uddin by swearing a notarial affidavit at Srimita Sankardevnagar, Hojai (Assam).

Islam Uddin
S/o-Gulazar Ali
Vill-Pub Samarali, Ps.-Murajhar,
Dist-Hojai (Assam)

AFFIDAVIT

I, Sri Jeremy Engti son of Kensing Engti resident of Village Lower Dilaji, Joyising Teron Gaon, PO & PS Diphu, Karbi Anglong would like to mention that in my PAN Card and in Adhaar Card my name wrongly recorded as Andre Hmar instead of my original name Jeremy Engti and my father's name wrongly recorded as Chawnglinkhum Hmar instead of Kensing Engti. My Date of Birth has been also wrongly recorded as 11-11-1993 instead of 11-11-2026. This is true.

IRCON INTERNATIONAL LIMITED
(A Govt. of India Undertaking)
Website: www.ircon.org, CIN: L4520DL1976GOI008171
in Northeast Frontier Railway

e-PROCUREMENT NOTICE

e-Procurement No.: IRCON/ELECT/5035/RE NFR PKG 6/OT/2B,
Dated: 10.07.2026

e-Open Tender in double packet system for and on behalf of IRCON International Limited is invited from bidders for the work of "Design, supply, erection, testing and commissioning of 132/27 kV, 21.6/30.24 MVA Traction Substations (TSS) at Bokajan & Diphu and construction of SP cum SSP at Dhansiri including all associated Civil, Electrical, S&T & SCADA system with the work of Dismantling and utilising equipments of TSS at Dhansiri of Lumding - Furkating section of Lumding Division of Northeast Frontier Railway".

Estimated Cost of Work (Rs.): 18,35,29,440/- Incl. of all taxes, duties, levies & GST @18%

End Date & Time of e-Bid submission: 30.07.2026 at 15:00 Hrs.

For further details, visit website: <https://etenders.gov.in/> eprocure/app. Corrigendum, if any, would be hosted only on the website.

Chief General Manager/Electrical/PH,
IRCON INTERNATIONAL LTD (IRCON), Flat No-4A, 4th Floor,
Poddar House, K.P. Road, Near Chowkidgee, Dibrugarh - Assam, Pin 786001

in NORTHEAST FRONTIER RAILWAY

ASSAM POWER DISTRIBUTION COMPANY LIMITED
(A Govt. of Assam Public Limited Company)

PUBLIC NOTICE

This is to inform the general public of area of MAILLOO, BELBARI-1, BELBARI-2, WATIZUR NO.1, WATIZUR EKRAHOLA, WATIZUR BENGALI BASTI, DIKHEIM MAJ GAON, WASHAIKONG-1, WASHAIKONG-2, BOROWASHLING, MONBU NEPALI BASTI, JANGPHANGLANGSO NEPALI BASTI, DISMAO-1, CHOTOWASHLING-1 that the newly constructed 21.00 Km, 33kV overhead line from 33kV at Mailloo 33/11kV Sub-Station, West Karbi Anglong district to the newly constructed 33/11kV Block Bazar Sub-Station, Dima Hasao district, Assam under the ADSELR Scheme funded by AIB is ready and proposed to be charged and energized on Dtd. 06-07-2026 at 9:00 AM or onwards at any time.

Therefore, all concerned, and the general public are hereby cautioned not to approach, touch, climb or interfere with the said line and its associated equipment and keep safe distance from the 33kV line.

Any unauthorized contact with the line may result in serious injury, electrocution, or loss of life.

If any eventuality caused due to violation of this notice, APDCL will not be responsible under any circumstances.

This notice is issued in the interest of public safety.

Sd/- Chief Executive Officer
KANCH Electrical Circle, APDCL (CAR), Diphu

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BTC launches bamboo projects worth ₹ 37 crore

New nursery-cum-production centres to boost livelihoods and bamboo-based industries in BTR

HT Correspondent

KOKRAJHAR, July 13: Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) Chief Executive Member Hagrama Mohilary on Monday laid the foundation stones for two Bamboo Nursery-cum-Production Centres under the Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region's (MDoNER) Special Development Projects (SDP), aimed at strengthening the bamboo economy and generating rural employment in the Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR).

The projects will be established at Khayerghutu in Srirampur under Gossaigaon Civil Sub-Division of Kokrajhar district and Aipowali in Chirang district at a combined estimated cost of ₹ 37.13 crore.

The Khayerghutu centre will be developed over 55 bighas at an estimated cost of ₹ 9.82 crore, while the Aipowali project will be set up across 100 bighas at a cost of ₹ 27.31 crore.

The Khayerghutu programme was attended by BTC Executive Member Mrithyunjay Narzary, MCLA Imthas Ali, Additional Chief Engineer-cum-CHD of PWD, BTC, Jaga Mohan Basumatary, senior officials and local residents.



At Aipowali, BTC Executive Member James Basumatary, MCLAs Kampa Borgoyary, Sukursing Mushahary and Nandalal Mogor, along with senior government officials, were present.

Addressing the gatherings, Mohilary said the projects had originally been proposed during the previous BTC administration under former BTR Chief Executive Member Pramod Boro, but could not be sanctioned at the time.

He said the present BTC government secured approval through sustained coordination with the Centre

and the Assam Government.

The BTC chief said the centres would be operated through private agencies on a lease basis to ensure efficient management and long-term sustainability.

He expressed confidence that the projects would generate substantial employment while promoting bamboo cultivation and bamboo-based industries across the region.

Mohilary also announced that the road connecting Srirampur and Khayerghutu would be constructed soon and directed the Public Works Department to prepare the neces-

sary estimates.

He assured that the BTC Government would closely monitor implementation to ensure timely completion of both projects.

The Bamboo Nursery-cum-Production Centres will include tissue culture laboratories, primary and secondary hardening units, bamboo groves, administrative buildings, internal roads, parking facilities, water supply systems, electrical infrastructure and other supporting amenities.

Each project is expected to generate direct employment for around 1,225 people, including laboratory professionals, technicians, electricians, helpers and administrative staff, while creating indirect livelihood opportunities for approximately 2,775 people.

The projects are also expected to benefit nearly four lakh bamboo growers, harvesters, transporters, artisans and others associated with the bamboo sector.

According to BTC officials, each centre will produce nearly 5.88 lakh quality bamboo seedlings annually through its nurseries and tissue culture units, significantly strengthening the region's bamboo value chain and supporting large-scale plantation activities.

Water shortage delays paddy transplantation in Nagaon

HT Correspondent

NAGAON, July 13: Paddy transplantation has been delayed across large parts of Nagaon district as agricultural fields continue to face an acute water shortage despite recent rainfall, leaving farmers worried over the prospects of the current cultivation season.

With the month of Ahaaf drawing to a close, farmers in several parts of the district are yet to complete the transplantation of sali paddy seedlings, a crucial agricultural activity usually undertaken during this period.

Agriculture remains the backbone of Assam's rural economy, and the delay has caused concern among farmers in Kaliabor, Samaguri, Puranigudam, Uriagaon, Telia Pohukata, Difalu, Karaiyani, Rupahi, Juria, Dhing, Hatisung, Raha, Kamrup, Kathiatoli and Barhampur, where transplantation is normally completed during Ahaaf.

In some areas, the process extends into the months of Saon and Bhadra.

Farmers recalled that in earlier years, abundant rainfall during Bohag and Jeth filled rivers, canals, wetlands and other water bodies, ensuring adequate water for sowing and transplanting.

Paddy seedlings were generally transplanted 25 to 30 days after sowing, resulting in healthy crops and good yields.

This year, however, even after intermittent rainfall, many fields remain dry, preventing farmers from transplanting seedlings.

The situation has put considerable pressure on the district's agriculture-based economy and the livelihoods of farming families.

Agricultural experts and local residents attributed the crisis to irregular rainfall, the effects of climate change, shrinking wetlands, inadequate water conservation measures and the poor condition of irrigation infrastructure.

They pointed out that many irrigation schemes in the district have become non-functional, leaving farmers heavily dependent on rainfall.

The situation is particularly striking in Kamrup Revenue Circle, where the Kapili, Nishari and Borna rivers usually trigger floods during this time of the year.

This season, however, farmers are struggling with water scarcity, with cracks appearing in paddy fields in several areas.

In the Kachua and Kamrup Agricultural Circles, several electric-powered irrigation schemes drawing water from the Kapili and Nishari rivers have reportedly become defunct.

Damaged canals connected to these schemes have further aggravated the crisis.

Residents also said that four solar-powered irrigation units installed at Tetelisor in Kamrup are insufficient to meet the area's irrigation requirements.

Farmers and local residents have urged the government to immediately restore defunct irrigation facilities to protect the kharif paddy crop and provide relief to the farming community.

NFR completes 100pc LHB conversion of long-distance passenger trains

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, July 13: Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR) has achieved complete conversion of all long-distance passenger trains operating over its network from conventional Integral Coach Factory (ICF) coaches to modern Linke Hofmann Busch (LHB) coaches, marking a significant milestone in passenger service modernisation.

With the completion of the conversion, all 103 long-distance passenger train services running over the NFR network—including 55 NFR-owned trains and 48 trains belonging to other railway zones—are now operating with LHB coaches.

The railway said the achievement represents a major step towards enhancing passenger safety, comfort and operational efficiency in line with Indian Railways' modernisation programme.

The transition was carried out in phases.

During the 2025-26 financial year, six pairs of long-distance trains were upgraded from ICF to LHB coaches, while five new pairs of long-distance services were introduced with LHB rakes.

In the current financial year, trains such as the Rani Kamalapati-

Agartala Special Express were also converted, completing the zone's full LHB transition for long-distance services.

LHB coaches, built using advanced German technology, offer significantly improved safety through anti-climbing and anti-telescopic features that minimise the risk of coaches piling up during accidents.

They also provide better ride stability, higher operating speeds, improved suspension, advanced braking systems, lower noise and vibration levels, and enhanced fire safety.

Constructed from stainless steel, the coaches require less maintenance and provide passengers with a smoother, quieter and more comfortable journey on long-distance routes.

NFR said the achievement underscores its commitment to adopting modern technologies and improving passenger services across the Northeast.

The railway added that the complete transition to LHB coaches would not only enhance travel experience but also contribute to safer, more efficient and environmentally sustainable railway operations.

Udalguri's Rupa Nirala to represent India at World Deaf Beauty Pageant



HT Correspondent

MANGALDAI, July 13: Rupa Nirala, a young woman from Shuklai village in Dimakuchi of Udalguri district, has been selected to represent India at the World Deaf Beauty Pageant to be held in the Czech Republic from July 20 to 29.

Rupa, the youngest daughter of Dharma Nirala and Lata Nirala, earned the opportunity after winning the gold medal and securing first place at the National Deaf Beauty Pageant held in Punjab.

Earlier, she had also won the Miss India Deaf Pageant, bringing recognition to Assam.

Following her national victory, the organisers of the international pageant issued an invitation asking her to complete the necessary passport and visa formalities.

Coming from a financially constrained family, Rupa faced difficulties in arranging the expenses for her international participation.

Her father works in a private company in Guwahati.

After learning about her situation, Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR) Chief Executive Member Hagrama Mohilary extended financial assistance to support her participation in the global event.

On Saturday, a delegation of BPF leaders led by Gautam Sharma, Vice-President of the Bodoland Students' Union, visited Rupa's residence at Shuklai and handed over the financial assistance on behalf of Mohilary.

Local BPF leaders Khagen Basumatary, Ramesh Bodo and Khrin-jay Bodo were also present.

Rupa's family and residents of Dimakuchi expressed gratitude to Mohilary for extending timely support.

She is scheduled to leave for the Czech Republic on July 19.

Seven-member family escapes as fire destroys house in Diphu

Bamboo house gutted in Panbari; police probe arson angle after owner's allegation

HT Bureau

DIPHU, July 13: A seven-member family, including several children, escaped unhurt after a devastating fire completely destroyed their three-room bamboo house at Panbari in Diphu, Karbi Anglong, late on Sunday night.

The fire broke out at around 10 pm at the residence of Mohidul Ali and was first noticed by neighbours, who immediately alerted the Fire and Emergency Services.

Firefighters rushed to the spot and managed to bring the blaze under control, preventing it from spreading to nearby houses.

As the family was away from home when the fire broke out, no casualties or injuries were reported. However, the house was completely reduced to ashes.

The exact cause of the fire is yet to be ascertained. However, the house owner has alleged that the blaze was deliberately set by miscreants.

Police have taken note of the allegation and are expected to conduct a detailed investigation to determine the cause of the incident.

Summer theatre workshop begins in Tezpur

HT Correspondent

TEZPUR, July 13: A 15-day summer theatre workshop, organised by the Cultural Affairs Department, Government of Assam, in collaboration with the Sonitpur district administration and Kalibari Surjyodoy Sangha, commenced in Tezpur recently.

The workshop, being held at the historic Baan Rangamancha auditorium in Tezpur Kalibari, will continue until July 28.

Tezpur MLA Prithiraj Rava inaugurated the workshop by cutting the ceremonial ribbon in the presence of eminent theatre personalities.

The programme began with the lighting of a ceremonial lamp and floral tributes before the portraits of Dr Bhupen Hazarika, Zubeen Garg, noted poet and theatre artiste Rafiqul Hussain and Bijoy Sankar Saikia.

Among those present were nationally acclaimed actress Dr Jahanara Begum, veteran stage and film actress Bina Patangia, playwright and director Pankaj Jyoti Bhuyan, Baan Theatre Vice-President Mrigen Chandra Bora, General Secretary Jitumoni Deva Choudhury, Secretary Pankaj Jyoti Bhuyan, Sonitpur District Cultural Development Officer Anchumoi Basumatary, theatre artistes Babul Barthakur, Sanjay Krishna Gohain Baruah

and Alimpon Choudhury, Asamiya Bhasha Unnati Sadhini Sabha Secretary Luit Sharma and Kalibari Surjyodoy Sangha Secretary Manas Pratim Bora, among others.

The inaugural function, anchored by actress Darshana B Mahanta, was presided over by senior theatre artiste and Baan Theatre member Babul Barthakur.

Addressing the gathering, MLA Prithiraj Rava said the workshop had been organised under the guidance of Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma to identify and nurture talented youngsters from across the state during the summer vacation.

He said the initiative would provide a platform for aspiring artistes to develop their skills and contribute to the growth of Assam's theatre movement.

Dr Jahanara Begum, Bina Patangia, Mrigen Chandra Bora, Jitumoni Deva Choudhury and Anchumoi Basumatary also addressed the inaugural session, highlighting the importance of theatre in promoting art and culture.

On behalf of Kalibari Surjyodoy Sangha, playwright and director Pankaj Jyoti Bhuyan, who will serve as one of the trainers, expressed gratitude to the organisers and participants for making the initiative possible.

Three held in anti-poaching operations at Raimona National Park

HT Correspondent

KOKRAJHAR, July 13: The Forest Department has arrested three persons in separate anti-poaching operations carried out in and around Raimona National Park in Kokrajhar district, intensifying its crackdown on illegal wildlife activities in the protected area.

In the first operation, conducted during routine patrolling between Compartments 6 and 7 under the Sanfan Range, the Jاناغاon Beat team apprehended Ramal Goyary, son of Santala Goyary and a resident of Bwrimakha FRA village in the Gongia area.

According to forest officials, Goyary and a few others had allegedly entered the core area of the national park for fishing, which is prohibited within the protected forest.

During interrogation, officials found that Goyary was an absconding accused in a wildlife offence case registered on July 15, 2024, in connection with the illegal hunting of a spotted deer inside Raimona National Park.

The other individuals accompanying him managed to escape into the forest before they could be apprehended.

Forest officials said efforts are underway to identify and arrest the remaining suspects.

In a separate operation, the Central Range of Raimona

National Park, in coordination with the Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB), arrested two more alleged poachers following a sustained intelligence-based operation.

The action was launched after forest authorities received credible information nearly three weeks ago regarding the movement of suspected poachers in the Right No 6/7 area of the national park.

After continuous surveillance and intelligence gathering, a joint operation led to the arrest of Sukur Mushahary (35), son of Ramwinda Mushahary, and Parbeswar Narzary, son of Krishna Narzary, both residents of Thakampur (Habrul).

Preliminary investigations indicate that the duo was allegedly involved in the illegal hunting of endangered wildlife species within the ecologically sensitive national park.

Forest officials said investigations are continuing to identify and apprehend other members of the suspected poaching network.

Reiterating its commitment to protecting the rich biodiversity of Raimona National Park, the Forest Department warned that strict legal action would be taken against anyone involved in poaching, illegal fishing or unauthorised entry into protected forest areas.

Lions Club, Guwahati Gold organises Bhagavad Gita & brain spark workshop

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, July 13: The Lions Club of Guwahati Gold successfully organised a Bhagavad Gita & Brain Spark Workshop on Sunday evening in with 27 children participating enthusiastically.

The programme commenced with a welcome and introductory address by Preety Agarwalla, followed by Vinita Khetawat, who invited the mentors to share a brief about the workshop.

The session was conducted by Rubi Sen and Dipika Agarwal, who beautifully blended the timeless teachings of the Bhagavad Gita with interactive learning and personality development activities.

The workshop began with offering flowers to Lord Krishna, chanting "Hare Krishna", "Om" and recitation of the 'Guru Shloka'.

An engaging audio-visual pres-



entation on Lord Krishna, the Pandavas, and the Kauravas introduced children to important values from the Bhagavad Gita.

The mentors encouraged the children to seek the blessings of their parents and elders, dream big, work hard, and place their faith in Lord Krishna.

The children also learned how to create a Future Vision Board, participated in relaxation and stretching exercises, and enjoyed a lively dance session. The programme concluded with a Vote of Thanks by

Ruchi Agarwal.

The workshop was jointly chaired by Preety Agarwalla, Vinita Khetawat and Ruchi Agarwal.

The event was graced by the presence of the club's office bearers, including President Anupam Agarwalla, Secretary Amit Poddar and Treasurer Sidhartha Khetawat.

Other Lions Club members present included Mamta Saraf, Sumita Singhal, Pinky Prajapati, Gomati Agarwal, Ajay Singhal, Rakesh Kr Agarwal and Pooja Agarwal.

The workshop received an overwhelming response from both children and parents, making it a memorable and meaningful initiative by the Lions Club of Guwahati Gold. Through this enriching programme, the club reaffirmed its commitment to nurturing moral values, positive thinking, and holistic development among young minds.

NTPC Bongaigaon launches Project SRIJAN to promote artisan livelihoods

CSR initiative to train rural artisans in eco-friendly toy making and embroidery

HT Correspondent

KOKRAJHAR, July 13: NTPC Bongaigaon has signed a Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) with the Zankla Foundation, the CSR arm of Zankla Studio, to implement Project SRIJAN, a livelihood-oriented initiative aimed at promoting sustainable artisan livelihoods while preserving indigenous cultural heritage.

The agreement was signed in the presence of Anab Maitra, Executive Director and Head of Project, NTPC Bongaigaon; V Jayanarayanan, Chief General Manager (HR, CSR, LA & R&R), NTPC Limited and P K Sahu, AGM (CSR), NTPC Limited.

Also present were Amit Kumar Asthana, Head of HR, NTPC Bongaigaon, Kirat Brahma, Founder of Zankla Foundation, officials of NTPC and representatives of the foundation.

Project SRIJAN will benefit 15 selected beneficiaries from two villages affected by the NTPC Bongaigaon project.

Participants will receive structured training in eco-friendly toy making and embroidery, with the objective of equipping them with marketable skills and creating sustainable livelihood opportunities.



ties.

Beyond skill development, the project will provide continuous mentoring and handholding support to help beneficiaries establish income-generating enterprises. The initiative also includes systematic beneficiary identification, implementation planning, documentation and regular monitoring.

A unique feature of the project is the involvement of the Bardwi Shikla

Ladies Club of NTPC Bongaigaon, which will mentor women beneficiaries and support them in translating their newly acquired skills into sustainable livelihoods.

The programme will leverage the expertise of Zankla Studio, an Assam-based creative and social enterprise founded by designer Kirat Brahma.

The studio is known for producing handcrafted eco-friendly soft toys and

heritage-inspired products rooted in the cultural traditions and folklore of the Bodo community while promoting artisan empowerment.

Over the years, it has trained more than 70 artisans and directly supported over 30 livelihoods.

Speaking on the occasion, Anab Maitra said CSR initiatives should focus on creating long-term livelihood opportunities at the grassroots by combining skill development, creativity, mentoring and market linkages.

Kirat Brahma said Project SRIJAN would help nurture local talent while creating eco-friendly products inspired by the region's indigenous heritage, thereby combining cultural preservation with economic empowerment.

NTPC has approved financial assistance of up to ₹ 15 lakh, excluding GST, for the implementation of the 12-month project.

Through Project SRIJAN, NTPC Bongaigaon aims to build a sustainable ecosystem where traditional craftsmanship, livelihood generation and indigenous cultural heritage complement one another, creating lasting socio-economic benefits for local communities.

Hamro Swabhiman Trust celebrates Bhanu Jayanti in New Delhi

HT Correspondent

BISWANATH CHARIALI, July 13: Hamro Swabhiman Trust celebrated Bhanu Jayanti 2026 with a national-level programme at Rajendra Bhavan, ITO, New Delhi, bringing together writers, educationists, social activists and lovers of Nepali language, literature and culture from Delhi and the National Capital Region. The programme began with floral tributes and the ceremonial lighting of a lamp before the portrait of Adi Kavi Bhanu Bhakta Acharya, regarded as the pioneer of Nepali literature. Speakers highlighted his enduring contribution to Nepali language and literature, describing his works as a cornerstone of the cultural identity of the Nepali-speaking community.

The chief guest, Ambika Joshi, Counsellor at the Embassy of Nepal in New Delhi, said language forms the identity of every society and nation and appreciated initiatives aimed at preserving and promoting the Nepali language. Representatives of various organisations working for the promotion of Nepali language and literature, along with eminent writers and educationists, called for greater efforts to encourage literary and cultural activities.

The event featured an essay competition, cultural performances and the announcement of the National Nepali Literature Awards 2026 in the fields of literature, poetry, prose and

journalism.

A major highlight of the programme was the release of the Nepali translation of "Magadha", the Sahitya Akademi Award-winning work of Shrikant Verma, translated by veteran New Delhi-based writer Dharma Raj Thapa.

Prizes in the Nepali-language essay competition were awarded to Shubham Bhandari, Utsav Gyawali and Anushka Ghimire.

The Trust also announced the recipients of the National Nepali Literature Awards 2026.

Vedika Rai of Darjeeling was selected for the National Nepali Literature Award, while P Lucky Sherpa of Darjeeling received the poetry award, Arjun Thapa of Tingling Tea Estate was chosen for prose, and Ruben Gurung of Siliguri was selected for journalism.

The awardees will be formally felicitated with citations and mementoes at a ceremony in New Delhi on September 14.

The programme was conducted by Trust Executive Chairman Shivali Gyawali.

Hamro Swabhiman Trust Secretary General Anita Chetry said the organisation would continue organising literary, educational and cultural programmes to preserve and promote the Nepali language.

Trust President Narayan Shrestha described the life and literary contributions of Bhanu Bhakta Acharya as a lasting source of inspiration for the Nepali community.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

Christopher Columbus, as everyone knows, is honored by posterity because he was the last to discover America.- James Joyce

Is Nepal heading for unrest?

Ten months after toppling one government, Nepal's Gen Z is confronting the one it built. A brutal eviction drive, a driver's self-immolation and a widening crackdown on dissent are testing whether Balen Shah's "new politics" differs from the old. Nepal is witnessing an uncomfortable rerun. Less than a year after a youth uprising burned down Singha Durbar and forced KP Sharma Oli from office, the generation that engineered that upheaval is back on the streets - this time against the very leader it helped install. Prime Minister Balendra Shah, the rapper-engineer-turned-mayor who rode Gen Z's fury to a landslide victory in March 2026, is now facing the first sustained public revolt of his premiership. The trigger is not corruption or a social media ban, but bulldozers. Since late April, the government's eviction campaign against squatter and informal settlements along the Bagmati and other riverbanks in Kathmandu Valley has flattened the homes of more than 2,600 families - an estimated 15,000 people. Framed as a drive to reclaim encroached public land, the operation initially enjoyed broad support: even the RSP's election manifesto had promised a scientific separation of "genuine" landless families from opportunistic encroachers using satellite mapping and biometric verification.

What has provoked outrage is not the principle of clearing riverbanks but the sequence - eviction first, rehabilitation later, if at all. Roughly 325 families were moved into temporary holding centers, several of which then flooded, most visibly at Kirtipur. Earlier this month the government ordered residents to vacate even these shelters, though many said they had nowhere else to go. Anger crested when a driver, Ganesh Nepali, set himself on fire after a dispute with municipal police, an act protesters have turned into a symbol of state indifference toward the poor. The Joint National Squatters Front has since organised marches under banners reading "End atrocities against the poor," while young activists who once cheered Shah's ascent now accuse his administration of treating the landless as an inconvenience rather than a constitutional obligation - a betrayal, they say, of the accountability and inclusion Gen Z fought for in September 2025.

Balen Shah's administration has largely defended the evictions as overdue land management, insisting a distinction is being maintained between genuine landless families and encroachers occupying public or private land for profit. Rights groups see it differently: the National Alliance of Women Human Rights Defenders has condemned what it calls "inhumane treatment" and "unlawful detention." Shah's government needs to recognise that Gen Z's original demand was never simply a change of faces in Singha Durbar - it was a demand for institutions that treat citizens, especially the poorest, with due process.

Monsoon and Assam's agrarian life

The arrival of the monsoon has always marked the beginning of the busiest and most demanding period in the agricultural calendar of Assam. For the state's farming communities, rain is not merely a seasonal phenomenon but the very foundation upon which rural life, agricultural productivity, and economic survival depend. Long before the first showers arrive, farmers prepare themselves mentally and physically for months of relentless labour that will determine the success or failure of the year's harvest. Across the villages of Assam, the landscape undergoes a dramatic transformation as dry fields gradually fill with water, signalling the commencement of paddy cultivation. From dawn until dusk, cultivators remain occupied with a succession of demanding tasks that leave little room for rest. Agriculture in Assam continues to rely heavily on the rhythm of nature, and despite gradual technological advancements, a large proportion of farmers still depend upon traditional methods and the timely arrival of monsoon rains. Every stage of cultivation—from preparing nursery beds to harvesting mature crops—is intimately connected with rainfall, making the monsoon the lifeblood of Assam's agrarian economy. The season also reflects the remarkable resilience of farming families, whose lives revolve around the soil and whose unwavering commitment ensures food security for society as a whole. Their labour, often carried out under difficult and uncertain conditions, represents generations of accumulated knowledge and experience passed down through rural households. The monsoon is therefore not simply a climatic event; it is the period during which the relationship between human effort and nature becomes most visible, defining both the economic and cultural fabric of rural Assam.

With the first substantial rainfall, agricultural activities gather momentum across the countryside. Farmers lead their bullocks into waterlogged fields before sunrise, carrying traditional ploughs and yokes that continue to remain indispensable in many villages. The fields are ploughed repeatedly until the soil becomes soft enough for transplantation. Afterwards, the land is levelled carefully with harrows to ensure proper retention and distribution of water. Embankments surrounding the fields are repaired or reconstructed because heavy rainfall often damages those built during the previous season. Strong embankments prevent valuable water from escaping and protect young crops from erosion. Simultaneously, separate nursery beds are prepared on slightly elevated land where paddy seeds are sown after repeated ploughing, levelling and careful removal of weeds. Within a month, healthy seedlings emerge, ready for transplantation into the main fields. Every stage requires tremendous physical endurance. Farmers spend entire days standing ankle-deep or knee-deep in mud, guiding bullocks through slippery fields while rain continues to fall around them. Traditional bamboo rain shields provide only limited protection, and wet clothes become an unavoidable part of daily life throughout the season. Meals are frequently eaten hurriedly beside the fields as family members bring food from home before everyone returns immediately to work. Weather conditions constantly dictate the pace of cultivation. Insufficient rainfall forces farmers to draw water manually from rivers or canals, while excessive rainfall demands immediate drainage through carefully managed embankments. Such dependence upon natural forces requires continuous observation, practical wisdom, and extraordinary perseverance.

Once the seedlings attain sufficient growth, transplantation begins, marking one of the most labour-intensive phases of paddy cultivation. Entire families participate in uprooting the seedlings from the nursery beds, tying them into bundles, and transporting them to the prepared fields. Women play an especially significant role during transplantation, patiently placing each seedling in orderly rows while standing for hours in muddy water. Their movements display remarkable rhythm and precision developed through years of experience. Maintaining proper spacing between seedlings is essential for healthy crop development and higher yields. Yet the work is physically exhausting, requiring

constant bending that places enormous strain on the back and waist. The timing of transplantation is equally critical. Excessive rainfall may flood the fields, making transplantation impossible until water levels recede, whereas inadequate moisture hardens the soil and hinders the process. Farmers therefore monitor changing weather patterns continuously throughout the season. Another persistent challenge comes from leeches, insects, and other organisms thriving in the wet environment. Traditional remedies such as applying mustard oil or lime to the feet offer only partial relief. Workers frequently pause to remove leeches before resuming their tasks without complaint. Since seedlings cannot remain uprooted for long without affecting their growth, transplantation must be completed swiftly. This necessity has traditionally strengthened community cooperation in Assamese villages, where neighbours willingly assist one another by working collectively from one field to another. Such mutual support not only accelerates agricultural operations but also reinforces social bonds that have sustained rural society for generations.

Completion of transplantation does not reduce the workload. As paddy plants establish themselves, weeds begin competing for nutrients, water, and sunlight, threatening overall productivity. Farmers therefore undertake regular weeding by hand, carefully removing unwanted vegetation while ensuring that delicate rice plants remain undisturbed. This demanding work once again requires long hours in muddy fields under unpredictable weather conditions. At the same time, Assam's farmers must confront one of the region's greatest agricultural challenges—annual flooding. Continuous monsoon rains frequently cause rivers and tributaries to overflow, submerging vast stretches of cultivated land. Fields nurtured through weeks of painstaking labour can disappear beneath floodwaters within hours. If water remains stagnant for extended periods, paddy plants decay and die, forcing farmers to undertake emergency drainage by cutting embankments or clearing blocked channels. Floods may also wash away protective embankments, requiring immediate reconstruction once waters recede. Livestock management becomes equally important during such emergencies. Cattle and buffaloes must be shifted to safer elevated areas while alternative fodder sources such as banana plants and reeds are collected because natural grazing grounds often remain submerged. Even fields spared by floods face threats from insects and crop diseases. Farmers continue relying upon traditional ecological practices, including erecting bamboo perches to attract insect-eating birds and lighting fires during the night to discourage harmful pests. Alongside these agricultural responsibilities, rural households must keep their surroundings clean, control rapidly growing vegetation, and repair houses damaged by continuous rainfall. Every day of the monsoon therefore introduces fresh responsibilities requiring constant attention and hard work.

Agarian life during the rainy season extends well beyond paddy cultivation. Kitchen gardens surrounding rural homes become highly productive as abundant rainfall encourages the rapid growth of vegetables such as bottle gourd, ridge gourd, pumpkin, cucumber, and okra. Farmers devote valuable time to removing weeds, constructing bamboo supports, and protecting these crops from pests. These gardens enhance household food security while providing additional income through local market sales. Monsoon also brings opportunities for fishing, an activity deeply integrated into Assam's rural economy. Floodwaters carry fish from rivers, streams, and wetlands into paddy fields, allowing farmers to supplement their diets using traditional fishing equipment including bamboo traps, jkoi, khaloi, and various indigenous implements. Fish trapped overnight along field embankments often provide nutritious meals for farming families. Agricultural tools require constant maintenance throughout this period. Ploughs, harrows, hoes, and yokes are cleaned after each day's work to prevent deterioration caused by persistent mud and moisture. Damaged implements are repaired using locally available materials, reflecting the self-reliant nature of vil-

lage life. Heavy rainfall occasionally prevents outdoor agricultural work, yet these days seldom become periods of rest. Instead, farmers engage in bamboo and cane craftsmanship, producing baskets, sieves, trays, and numerous household articles essential for everyday living. Women contribute significantly through weaving on traditional looms, producing textiles that continue Assam's rich weaving heritage. Every member of the household remains actively engaged in productive work, illustrating the remarkable efficiency with which rural communities utilise every available hour during the monsoon season.

As the rainy season gradually progresses towards its conclusion, paddy fields undergo another transformation. Lush green plants begin producing panicles, signalling the approach of harvest. This critical stage demands careful management because both insufficient and excessive water can adversely affect grain development. Farmers therefore monitor field conditions continuously, adjusting water levels through embankments whenever necessary. Protecting ripening crops from birds becomes another important responsibility. Traditional scarecrows erected across the fields sway in the wind, discouraging birds from feeding on developing grain. Livestock care also assumes greater importance because humid conditions encourage diseases affecting cattle, buffaloes, and goats. Farmers maintain clean cowsheds, improve drainage, apply traditional herbal treatments, and use smoke to repel insects that trouble domestic animals. Human health similarly faces constant challenges. Continuous exposure to muddy water frequently results in skin infections, fever, colds, and other ailments. Nevertheless, agricultural responsibilities leave little opportunity for prolonged rest, compelling farmers to continue working despite physical discomfort. Preparations for post-harvest storage begin even before harvesting itself. Granaries are repaired, walls are replastered using mud and cow dung, and storage bins are strengthened against rodents and insects. Firewood collected and dried before the rainy season becomes essential for cooking during prolonged wet weather. These activities demonstrate how farming households carefully plan every aspect of agricultural production, combining inherited knowledge with practical experience to safeguard their harvest from cultivation through storage.

The significance of the monsoon for Assam extends far beyond agricultural production. It shapes the social organisation, cultural identity, and economic stability of rural communities across the state. Although modern irrigation systems, mechanisation, and scientific farming practices are gradually expanding, a substantial proportion of Assam's agricultural landscape continues to depend primarily upon seasonal rainfall. Consequently, the arrival, distribution, and intensity of monsoon showers determine not only crop yields but also household incomes, employment opportunities, and food availability. Farmers must constantly adapt to uncertainty, balancing optimism with caution as they confront irregular rainfall, floods, pests, diseases, and fluctuating climatic conditions. Their resilience reflects an enduring relationship with the land that has survived through generations despite numerous environmental and economic challenges. The cooperative traditions visible during transplantation, flood management, and other agricultural operations also highlight the importance of community solidarity within rural Assam. Every family member contributes according to ability, ensuring that agricultural activities continue without interruption throughout the demanding season. The monsoon thus becomes a powerful symbol of collective effort, perseverance, and hope. It reminds society that the abundance enjoyed after harvest originates from months of unseen labour performed under difficult circumstances. The fertile paddy fields that characterise Assam's landscape stand as enduring testimony to the determination of countless farming families who transform rain, soil, and human effort into food that sustains the wider population. Appreciating the realities of monsoon agriculture therefore requires recognising not only the ecological importance of rainfall but also the immense dedication of the agrarian communities whose tireless work forms the foundation of Assam's rural economy and ensures the continuity of one of the state's oldest and most vital traditions.



DEGREE OF THOUGHT

By: Himangshu Ranjan Bhuyan

US-Iran confrontation: A renewed threat to global peace

By: Lalit Garg

The fragile ceasefire painstakingly achieved after years of hostility between the United States and Iran appears to be on the verge of collapse even before completing its intended duration. Iran's recent attacks on American military installations, followed by massive U.S. retaliatory airstrikes, have once again pushed the world to the edge of a dangerous conflict. This is no longer merely a bilateral military confrontation; it has evolved into a serious challenge to global peace, economic stability, and the very values of humanity. At a time when the international community should be united in addressing pandemics, economic slowdown, climate change, and energy insecurity, renewed military escalation by major powers threatens to derail global progress.

The growing tensions over the Strait of Hormuz have further intensified the crisis. Nearly one-fifth of the world's crude oil passes through this vital maritime corridor. Any disruption would not only trigger soaring oil prices but also send shockwaves through the global economy. Inflation would accelerate, production costs would rise, supply chains would be disrupted, and developing nations would bear the heaviest burden. The flames of war never remain confined within national borders; ultimately, their consequences engulf the entire world. Perhaps the most tragic dimension of this conflict is that innocent civilians, sailors, and ordinary people suffer the greatest losses. Recent incidents affecting Indian seafarers and damage to the strategically important Chabahar Port project—developed with India's cooperation—demonstrate that modern conflicts are never restricted to the nations directly involved. International trade, energy security, and global confidence all become casualties of war.

The United States often presents itself as the guardian of democracy and the international order. Yet its foreign policy has frequently relied on sanctions, military pressure, and displays of overwhelming force. Economic coercion, military intervention, and political intimidation

cannot produce lasting peace. True global leadership is measured not merely by military strength but by restraint, wisdom, and moral responsibility toward the international community. Power without prudence inevitably becomes an instrument of destruction. Iran, on its part, must also recognize that using international maritime routes as strategic leverage neither conforms to international law nor strengthens global trust. No nation's security can remain sustainable unless it builds an atmosphere of cooperation, transparency, and mutual confidence with its neighbours and the wider international community. A security doctrine built upon fear and retaliation ultimately undermines its own foundations.

The leadership style of President Donald Trump has added another layer of uncertainty to the crisis. At one moment, he advocates decisive military action; at another, he speaks of negotiations and peace agreements. Such contradictory signals weaken diplomatic credibility and generate instability in international financial and energy markets. Every statement by the leader of a major power has consequences that extend far beyond national borders, influencing investments, trade, energy markets, and the lives of billions. Leadership, therefore, demands patience, consistency, and credibility. History offers an unmistakable lesson: wars have never produced permanent solutions. From the First and Second World Wars to Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya, and Syria, military conflicts have claimed millions of lives, displaced countless people, and created fresh crises. Ultimately, solutions have always emerged through dialogue and diplomacy. If negotiations are inevitable in the end, why should they not begin at the outset? This is the fundamental question confronting humanity today. India has consistently offered the world a vision rooted in peace, coexistence, and non-violence. The land of Gautama Buddha, Lord Mahavira, and Mahatma Gandhi has taught that true victory lies not in defeating an enemy but in eliminating enmity itself. India's foreign policy continues to draw inspiration from the ideals of Vasudhaiva Kutum-

bakam—the world is one family—and global fraternity. By consistently advocating dialogue, diplomacy, and peaceful resolution of disputes, India has earned respect as a balanced power, a trusted partner, and a credible voice for peace.

In the present crisis, India is uniquely positioned to play a constructive role. It enjoys balanced relations with the United States, Iran, and the Gulf nations. Through the United Nations and other multilateral platforms, India can actively contribute to de-escalation and confidence-building efforts. Simultaneously, it must strengthen its long-term strategies to safeguard energy security, maritime trade, and the safety of millions of Indians living and working abroad. The need of the hour is not the victory of one nation over another, but the victory of humanity itself. Lasting prosperity and genuine respect cannot be achieved through an arms race. True strength lies not in missiles, bombs, or warships, but in trust, cooperation, and dialogue. War never resolves problems; it merely creates new ones. Non-violence is not a sign of weakness—it is the highest expression of courage, self-discipline, and enlightened statesmanship. The international community must send a clear message that unilateral aggression, strategic arrogance, and the politics of fear cannot be accepted. Global institutions, especially the United Nations, must become more effective, impartial, and proactive in preserving peace. If the world fails to restrain the forces of militarism today, future generations will inherit a far more dangerous and unstable world.

Humanity's collective hope is that the United States will exercise its power with wisdom, Iran will embrace restraint and prudence, and both nations will abandon the language of weapons in favour of meaningful dialogue. Peace remains the foundation of sustainable development, dialogue is the only path to enduring solutions, and non-violence continues to be humanity's greatest strength. This is the call of our times, the expectation of humanity, and the indispensable necessity for a peaceful future.

Adulteration-Free India: The true foundation of a developed nation

By: Lalit Garg

India is steadily advancing toward becoming the world's third-largest economy. The resolve to build a Developed India by 2047 has become an integral part of the nation's collective consciousness. Modern expressways, bullet trains, the digital revolution, remarkable achievements in space exploration, and rapid progress in artificial intelligence are undoubtedly matters of national pride. Yet, amidst these accomplishments, there exists a deep blemish that tarnishes the very face of this progress—adulteration. Adulteration is not confined merely to food products; it symbolizes the adulteration of human conscience, morality, and social responsibility. It is profoundly shameful for any civilized society that while doctors prescribe milk, ghee, fruits, paneer, and nutritious food to children, the elderly, the sick, and the weak to restore their health, the very milk available in the market is contaminated with detergent and urea, ghee is laced with hazardous chemicals, fruits are artificially ripened with toxic substances, and even life-saving medicines are increasingly found to be counterfeit. Under such circumstances, one is compelled to ask: Where can people seek the assurance of a healthy life? If India truly aspires to become a New India, a Developed India, and a Strong India, its foremost national mission must be to become an Adulteration-Free India.

This is not merely the tragedy of consumers; it is a national tragedy. A civilization that has revered food as sacred through the dictum "Annam Brahma" (Food is Divine) and has cherished the universal prayer "Sarve Bhavantu Sukhinah" (May all beings be happy) cannot afford the irony of food itself becoming poison. Recent incidents from various parts of the country expose the horrifying magnitude of this menace. Thousands of litres of counterfeit milk have been seized, along with adulterated honey worth millions, fake ghee, synthetic khoya, contaminated spices, and substandard edible products. Most alarming of all is the discovery that counterfeit and substandard ingredients have infiltrated life-saving medicines. Such acts are not merely violations of law—they are crimes against humanity. Anyone who knowingly contaminates the food or medicine consumed by children, pregnant women, the elderly, or patients for the sake of profit is not merely an unethical trader but a criminal against society.

The root cause of adulteration is not simply economic greed; it is the moral degradation of society. Earlier generations believed that one could never attain happiness by causing suffering to others. Ethical values, religious principles, and social accountability restrained dishonest practices. Today, however, the blind pursuit of quick wealth has crushed human sen-

sitivity. For many, profit has become the only religion, regardless of the human lives endangered in the process. This crisis extends far beyond public health; it threatens national security and economic development. Adulterated food contributes to cancer, kidney and liver diseases, cardiovascular disorders, hormonal imbalances, and severe malnutrition among children. It places an enormous burden on healthcare systems, pushes families into financial distress, and diminishes the nation's productivity. Furthermore, when the quality of Indian food products comes under suspicion, India's credibility in international markets also suffers. A truly developed India cannot be built merely on towering infrastructure and economic growth; it requires healthy citizens sustained by a trustworthy food system.

Ironically, India possesses comprehensive laws, regulatory agencies, and food safety mechanisms. Yet the adulteration industry continues to flourish. The principal reasons are corruption, weak enforcement, delayed judicial proceedings, and inadequate punishment. Authorities often limit their action to raiding small retailers during festive seasons, while the larger networks frequently escape accountability. Unless offenders are punished swiftly and severely, this poisonous trade will continue unabated. The nation now requires not merely legislation but unwavering political will. Every district should have state-of-the-art food testing laboratories.

Mobile food testing units must reach every village and urban locality. Modern technologies such as Artificial Intelligence, blockchain-enabled supply chain monitoring, and digital traceability should be employed to ensure transparency from production to consumption. Special fast-track courts should be established to adjudicate cases involving counterfeit medicines and adulterated food within months. Such offences should no longer be treated as ordinary economic crimes but should be legally recognized as heinous crimes against public health.

However, the government alone cannot eradicate this menace. Society bears an equally important responsibility. Consumers must become vigilant by purchasing certified products, reporting suspicious items, and participating in public awareness campaigns. Schools, colleges, social organisations, and religious institutions must actively promote ethical education and consumer awareness. If society begins to treat adulteration not only as a legal offence but also as a socially unacceptable act deserving public condemnation, this evil can be effectively curbed. A developed nation is not defined solely by economic prosperity. It is a country where citizens can consume food without fear, where medicines heal rather than harm, where commerce is built upon trust, and where honesty is rewarded as the foundation of

economic success. The remarkable achievements of countries such as Japan and Germany rest not only on technological excellence but equally on uncompromising quality standards and moral discipline. If India aspires to become a global leader, it must first transform its marketplace into a marketplace of trust.

The time has come to launch a nationwide "Adulteration-Free India Campaign." Just as the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan inspired mass participation in improving sanitation, a similar people's movement must now be initiated against adulteration. This should not remain merely a government programme but evolve into a national awakening. Every citizen must pledge never to adulterate products, never to encourage adulteration, and never to accord social respect to those who engage in such unethical practices. We must also recognize that adulteration ultimately harms not someone else's family but society as a whole.

The trader who adulterates products today lives within the same society. His own children breathe the same air and purchase goods from the same markets. In reality, adulteration is nothing less than preparing poison for one's own future. When India celebrates one hundred years of Independence in 2047, it will deserve to be called a truly developed nation only if it is recognized not merely for its economic strength but also for its purity, credibility, and moral integrity. We must strive to build an India where milk is pure milk, medicine is genuine medicine, food nourishes life, and business is founded upon trust. That alone will define a truly self-reliant, prosperous, and developed India.

India has long been known for yoga, Ayurveda, wholesome nutrition, ethical living, and the timeless philosophy of "Sarve Bhavantu Sukhinah." This identity will remain meaningful only if purity and reliability are ensured in our food, medicines, and consumer products. A nation where food symbolizes trust, medicine safeguards life, commerce is guided by ethics, and consumers can shop without fear—that alone represents the true vision of a developed India.

The present moment calls upon us to strengthen the moral foundations of our nation alongside its physical infrastructure. If adulteration is not eradicated, much of our progress will prove hollow. Therefore, governments must enact stringent laws, enforcement agencies must act fearlessly, the judiciary must ensure swift justice, and society must ignite a movement of moral awakening. Let us pledge today: "Pure Food, Healthy Families. An Adulteration-Free India is the Foundation of a Developed India." This commitment alone can ensure that by 2047 India emerges not only as an economic superpower but also as a nation admired for its integrity, public health, and unwavering trustworthiness.

When the Monsoon fails: Eastern Kaziranga's dry fields and the future of farming



Farmer Kandura Pegu explains how his farmland is gradually drying up due to inadequate rainfall, making it difficult to prepare the land for paddy transplantation.

By: Monuhar Pegu

For generations, farmers in Eastern Kaziranga have measured time not by calendars but by the arrival of the monsoon. The first steady rains of June and July have always marked the beginning of one of the most important agricultural activities of the year, the transplantation of paddy seedlings. It is a season of collective labour, bustling fields, and hope for a good harvest.

This year, however, that familiar rhythm has been broken.

Across Eastern Kaziranga Landscape, large stretches of paddy fields remain dry. The nurseries are ready, but the seedlings cannot be transplanted because there is not enough water in the fields. Every day, farmers wait for rain that never seems to arrive. They look at the sky with growing uncertainty, knowing that each passing day narrows the window for successful transplantation.

What we are witnessing is not merely a delayed monsoon. It is another reminder that climate change is no longer a distant possibility—it is already reshaping the agricultural landscape of Assam.

Eastern Kaziranga Landscape is predominantly a rainfed agricultural region. Nearly 95% of its farmland depends directly on seasonal rainfall (ICAR-CRIDA, 2012).

Unlike irrigated agricultural belts, farmers here have very limited alternatives when the monsoon fails. The entire Kharif season revolves around the timely arrival of rain. Without it, every stage of cultivation from land preparation to transplantation and crop establishment is disrupted.

The consequences are visible everywhere. Acres upon acres of agricultural land remain uncultivated during what should be the busiest farming season. In many villages, farmers have

already postponed transplantation several times in the hope that sufficient rainfall will arrive. Some continue preparing their fields repeatedly, while others have simply decided to wait because planting in dry soil would almost certainly result in crop failure.

"Every morning, we wake up hoping for rain, but the clouds pass without a drop," says Kandura Pegu, a 40-year-old farmer from Balijan Adorsha Mising Gaon in Golaghat district of Assam. "If we cannot transplant the paddy seedlings now, we may lose the entire season. Then how will we survive? How will we feed our children?"

Pointing to his dry fields, he says the family has no means to irrigate them. "We cannot afford to buy water pumps or install irrigation facilities. We depend entirely on the monsoon, but there has been no support from the Agriculture Department. Farmers like us have been left on our own."

The situation is particularly worrying because this is also the period when Assam traditionally prepares for floods. For decades, July has been associated with overflowing rivers, waterlogged fields and communities adapting to seasonal inundation. Ironically, many farmers in Bokakhat now find themselves praying for rain rather than fearing floods.

Horuti Pegu, a 54-year-old farmer from Agorlatoli village in Golaghat district says, "This is not an isolated occurrence. Last year also witnessed unusual rainfall patterns, and this year's prolonged dry spell further confirms that the agricultural calendar which farmers have relied upon for generations is becoming increasingly unpredictable." "The old certainty of the monsoon is gradually disappearing," she added.

Importance of Natural Flood, Indigenous Seeds and Traditional Knowledge

The changing climate is affecting not only upland paddy fields but also the wetlands that have

long sustained traditional farming systems. Bokakhat, located close to the Kaziranga landscape, has extensive wetland ecosystems where indigenous deep-water paddy varieties have been cultivated for generations. These varieties are specially adapted to seasonal flooding and rising water levels. Farmers have preserved these seeds over centuries because they perfectly match the ecology of Assam's floodplains.

Today, however, many of these wetlands are drying before the crops can even be transplanted. This raises an uncomfortable question. What happens to flood-adapted farming systems when floods themselves become irregular?

The issue is not simply about losing one crop. It is about the gradual disruption of an entire ecological relationship between rainfall, wetlands, indigenous seeds, soil fertility and farming knowledge that has evolved over centuries.

Floods have always been viewed as destructive events in Assam, but they have also played an important ecological role. Seasonal floods replenish wetlands, recharge groundwater, deposit nutrient-rich sediments and naturally restore soil fertility across floodplain agriculture. Farmers have traditionally understood this relationship and adapted their cropping systems accordingly.

"If natural flooding continues to decline or becomes increasingly erratic, the consequences will extend beyond water availability. Soil fertility, wetland ecology, fisheries, groundwater recharge and biodiversity may all be affected. These ecological changes will ultimately influence agricultural productivity in ways that are only beginning to become visible", Horuti Pegu added.

Yet despite these emerging realities, our agricultural planning continues to assume that the monsoon will behave as it always has.

This is perhaps the most worrying aspect of the current situation.

Traditional Irrigation system and government support

The repeated occurrence of delayed rainfall should have prompted serious investment in irrigation infrastructure across rainfed regions. Instead, thousands of farmers continue to depend almost entirely on uncertain rainfall. Every year, governments announce schemes for agricultural development, climate resilience, and rural infrastructure. Yet when the rains fail, farmers are left with few practical options.

This is where an important question must be asked of the Agriculture Department and other concerned agencies.

What concrete steps have been taken to reduce the dependence of rainfed farmers on increasingly unpredictable monsoons?

The answer cannot simply be compensation after crop losses occur. Farmers do not want relief packages after their crops fail. They want the means to cultivate successfully in the first place.

Fortunately, Assam already possesses many examples of community-based water management like the "Dong System" (a collective traditionally managed water irrigation system) in Bodoland of Assam, that deserve greater attention. Across different parts of the state, traditional irrigation channels, community ponds, lift irrigation systems, water harvesting structures and locally managed distribution networks have

enabled farmers to cope with seasonal water shortages. These systems demonstrate that collective irrigation is both technically feasible and socially sustainable.

Why, then, are such successful models not being replicated in highly rain-dependent regions like Eastern Kaziranga Landscape?

Strategic action for future irrigation system in Assam

Climate adaptation cannot remain limited to policy documents and conference discussions. It must reach the fields where farmers make daily decisions about sowing, transplanting and harvesting. Investment in small-scale irrigation infrastructure, farm ponds, check dams, solar-powered lift irrigation, wetland restoration and community-managed water distribution systems should become an urgent priority. Equally important is strengthening village-level institutions capable of managing these resources collectively.

At the same time, Assam must begin rethinking its broader agricultural strategy. Climate resilience cannot be achieved through irrigation alone. It requires integrated planning that combines water conservation, restoration of wetlands, promotion of indigenous climate-resilient crop varieties, community seed systems, agroecological farming practices, local weather advisory services and landscape-level natural resource management.

The present crisis should therefore be seen not simply as a failure of rainfall but as an opportunity to rethink how we support agriculture in Assam.

If today's dry spell continues, the impact will extend far beyond reduced production. Small and marginal farmers, who constitute the overwhelming majority of cultivators, depend almost entirely on the Kharif crop for household food security and annual income. A failed season means increased borrowing, reduced food availability, lower purchasing power and greater vulnerability throughout the year. It also threatens the continuity of traditional farming knowledge as younger generations lose confidence in agriculture as a viable livelihood.

Standing in the fields of Eastern Kaziranga today, one cannot help but notice the silence. Instead of the usual sounds of transplantation, there is waiting. Waiting for clouds. Waiting for rain. Waiting for a season that refuses to begin.

But farmers cannot continue waiting forever.

Climate change is already rewriting the rules of agriculture in Assam. The question now is whether our institutions will recognise this reality and respond with urgency, or whether they will continue relying on outdated assumptions while farmers shoulder the burden alone.

The dry fields of Eastern Kaziranga Landscapes are sending a clear message. Agriculture in Assam can no longer depend solely on the



Farmer Horuti Pegu stands in the middle of her paddy field, cleaning the bunds while explaining the impacts of erratic rainfall on farming in the Kaziranga landscape.

As an agroecologist and a farmer from the Kaziranga landscape, I believe that the answers already exist within many of our traditional farming systems. Communities have conserved indigenous rice varieties capable of surviving floods, droughts and uncertain seasons. Farmers possess generations of knowledge about managing water, soils, wetlands and biodiversity. Public policy should strengthen these systems rather than overlook them.

mercy of the monsoon. If governments are serious about protecting food security, rural livelihoods and the future of farming, investment in climate-resilient irrigation and community-based water management must become an immediate priority. The rains may still arrive. But the time for action cannot wait for the next cloud. (An Agroecologist, Practice Farmer, An Independent Social Researcher and Co-Founder of Manihori Integrated Farm based in Kaziranga Assam.)

Railway station bookstalls are deserted: Has the internet era taken away the culture of reading?

By: Dr Satyavan Saurabh

Indian railway stations have not only been hubs for passenger traffic, but they have also long symbolized the nation's cultural and intellectual consciousness. Book stalls like Wheeler's used to attract travelers' attention upon entering any railway station, big or small. Buying a newspaper before embarking on a journey, selecting a magazine, or picking up a novel for the journey was a common practice. Rail travel and books were seemingly complementary. But today, those same book stalls appear deserted. Places that once thronged with book and magazine buyers now see only a handful of customers. At many stalls, books have been replaced by water bottles, biscuits, chips, cold drinks, and other edibles. This scene reflects not only the changing nature of the market but also the changing reading culture of society.

Over the past two decades, technology has profoundly transformed human life. Smartphones, the internet, and social media have made access to information easy, fast, and accessible. Today, nearly every piece of information in the world is available on a mobile screen within seconds. News, books, research papers, magazines, videos, podcasts, and audiobooks—everything is integrated into a single device. This technological revolution is undoubtedly one of the greatest achievements of human civilization. But it also raises a significant question: has this digital convenience reduced the need for printed books and magazines? The deserted book stalls at railway stations make this question even more relevant.

There was a time when readers eagerly awaited new copies of magazines like Dharmayut, Saptahik Hindustan, Kadambini, Sarika, Navneet, Ravivar, Hans, Sarita, Mukta, Grihashobha, Vanita, Meri Saheli, Pratiyogita Darpan, Chandamama, Madhu Muskan, Mayapuri, Manohar Kahaniyaan, Reader's Digest, India Today, and Outlook. Railway station bookstalls were the biggest selling points for these magazines. Millions of passengers traveling long distances purchased magazines according to their interests. Comics for children, competitive exam material for youth, home and family magazines for women, and novels and story collections for literature lovers were readily available. This wasn't just a business, but a vibrant reading culture.

Today, the situation has completely changed. Many prestigious magazines have closed. The circulation of many magazines has been limited. Even those that continue to be published, print far fewer copies than before. Booksellers say that now travelers' first choice is not books, but mobile phones. Most people waiting on train platforms are seen engrossed in their mobile screens rather than looking at the bookshelves.

The Internet is considered the biggest reason for this change. It has democratized knowledge and information. Previously, one had to visit a library or purchase a book to obtain information on a topic. Today, that same information is freely available online. Thousands of books are available in PDF format. Kindle and other e-book platforms have transformed the way books are read. Audiobooks have also provided a reading option for those with limited time. From this perspective, the habit of reading has not disappeared, but rather, its medium has changed. But this is only half true. The real concern is the tendency to over-read through reading. Most content available on digital media is designed for quick consumption. Social media platforms don't allow users to focus on any one topic for long. Reels, short videos, and short posts constantly move people from one content to another. As a result, the tendency for in-depth study, reflection, and analysis is weakening.

Psychologists also believe that constantly changing digital content affects human concentration. People used to spend days reading a novel or book. Now, it's becoming increasingly difficult to concentrate on a single topic for more than a few minutes. The amount of information has increased, but the depth of knowledge seems to be decreasing. This is why it's important to understand the difference between reading and watching. Watching a video and reading a book are two different mental processes. Books encourage the reader to imagine, analyze, and reflect, while videos present most of the visual content directly. The changing landscape of railway station book stalls not only tells the story of technology, but also reflects changing lifestyles. Today, people have less time and more busy schedules. Even long train journeys have become a medium for mobile entertainment. Previously, a four-hour journey would have meant reading a book; now that same time is spent on social media, web series, games, and watching videos.

The education system has also been affected by this change. Students' studies are becoming increasingly exam-oriented. The habit of reading outside the curriculum is steadily declining. School and college libraries lack the same hustle and bustle as before. Digital notes and online coaching have significantly reduced the need for printed study materials. While this change is convenient, it has weakened the tradition of literary and general reading.

Even within families, the reading environment is no longer what it once was. Children were once gifted storybooks on their birthdays. Homes used to have small bookshelves. Newspapers were read by the entire family. Today, children have smartphones and tablets in their hands from a young age. Digital entertainment options are so abundant that books are

losing their appeal. It's also true that the publishing industry itself hasn't fully adapted to the times. It was slow to develop a balanced strategy, combining content, attractive presentation, and digital platforms with the changing interests of younger readers. As a result, social media has captured a significant portion of the readership.

However, the picture isn't entirely bleak. The large participation of young people in India's World Book Fair, Jaipur Literature Festival, regional book fairs, and literary events indicates that the interest in good books hasn't waned. Online book sales are also steadily increasing. This suggests that readers exist, but their purchasing and reading habits have changed. Today, there's no need to create a conflict between books and digital media. The need of the hour is to use both in a balanced way. E-books and printed books can coexist. Concepts like modern digital book kiosks, special displays of books in local languages, attractive book corners for children, and "book cafes" can be developed at railway stations. Bookstalls can regain their relevance if passengers are encouraged to read while traveling.

The Railway Ministry, publishers, and booksellers must work together to develop a new strategy. Instead of simply selling books, the station should offer a reading experience. Local literature, books in regional languages, travel literature, children's books, and popular books on contemporary topics should be prominently displayed. Features like digital payments, online ordering, and book pickup at the station can also open up new possibilities in this area.

There's a need to revive a reading culture in schools and colleges. Exam preparation alone cannot be the goal of education. Regularly reading books on literature, history, science, biography, and society will enhance the overall development of students' language, thinking, and personality. Families should also set aside a few minutes a week for "screen-free reading." This small initiative can foster a lifelong reading habit in children.

The government could also launch initiatives like the "Reading Culture Mission" at the national level. Schemes like modernizing public libraries, establishing library corners at railway stations, mobile libraries, and promoting local language literature could revitalize the reading culture.

Ultimately, it wouldn't be fair to say that the internet has killed books. While it has transformed the way we read, it has also fragmented people's attention. The challenge isn't technology itself, but its unbalanced use. If mobile phones become a medium of knowledge, they complement books, but if they become limited to entertainment and quick consumption, they pose a challenge to reading culture. (Dr Satyavan Saurabh, PhD (Political Science) is a poet and social thinker.)

Securing the Siang: Why infrastructure matters more than paper treaties

By: Dibya Shankar Bhattacharya (Retd)

In a recent article, "The strategic alignment of the Ganga treaty of renewal and protection of Siang River basin" published in The Arunachal Times, it was suggested that India should rely on transboundary water treaties rather than building strategic infrastructure to secure the Siang River basin. However, the argument that India should abandon the Siang Upper Multipurpose Project (SUMP) in favour of upgraded diplomatic treaties fundamentally misreads both the geopolitical realities of transboundary water management and the genuine sentiments of the indigenous communities in Arunachal Pradesh. While forging a unified Ganges-Brahmaputra-Meghna ecological treaty sounds like an elegant solution in academic corridors, relying solely on international diplomacy while halting crucial physical infrastructure ignores the immediate, existential threats posed by the upstream Chinese dams. The proposition that distant geopolitical agreements can substitute for on-the-ground disaster preparedness and tangible water security is a dangerous strategic miscalculation that leaves India's northeast vulnerable.

A central pillar of the opposition to SUMP relies on the assumption of universal local resistance, often citing the destruction of ancestral lands and culture. However, this narrative is heavily shaped by external observers rather than the affected communities themselves. On June 28, 2026, a meeting of project-affected families who support the proposed project's Pre-Feasibility Report (PFR) was held in Boleng, resulting in the constitution of the Siang Development People's Forum (SDPF). The SDPF leadership rightly observed that most of the criticism has come from individuals residing outside the project-affected area who do not fully understand the realities facing the local population. Far from a unilateral imposition, the project has proceeded through extensive consultative processes and sustained dialogues across villages of likely project-affected families of both districts. Consequently, MoU's for the PFR have reportedly been signed by a substantial majority of the likely project-affected villages. In a democratic society, the voices of these directly affected communities must be duly respected, and allegations that the project will destroy Adi culture and society are based on misinformation designed to create unnecessary apprehension.

Critics who frame SUMP primarily as an ecological hazard conveniently overlook the far

greater danger cascading down from the Yarlung Tsangpo. The ongoing construction of major hydropower projects by China on the upstream reaches of the river threatens to fundamentally alter the river's flow regime. The local indigenous population recognizes that in the event of an extreme flood or an emergency release of water by Beijing, downstream communities face catastrophic risks and therefore the need for creating dam reservoirs to mitigate and protect from such flooding. For these frontline citizens, there is a significant difference between the unplanned, devastating flooding that could arise from upstream manipulation and a planned, scientifically assessed development process. Therefore, the issue is primarily one of safety, security and the long-term welfare of the Adi people, with power generation being the other aspect of the project. Far from SUMP being an aggressor; it is a vital water shield necessary for the downstream communities to plan their future settlements, livelihood activities and disaster preparedness.

Furthermore, the assertion that India can neutralize Beijing's water weaponization by presenting a unified diplomatic front at global forums completely ignores historical precedent. Critics may need to look at the Mekong River, where six countries reside downstream of China's extensive cascade of mega-dams. Despite decades of multilateral diplomatic pressure and the existence of frameworks, where downstream nations attempt to negotiate equitable sharing, China remains unbound by water-sharing treaties and routinely manipulates the river's flow, devastating downstream agriculture and ecosystems. Beijing does not yield to the pressure of lower riparian states relying solely on legal theories. Expecting a different outcome for the Brahmaputra basin by merely signing an upgraded accord with Dhaka borders on negligence.

True security cannot be achieved by relinquishing India's right to build necessary, protective infrastructure in the fleeting hope, that an international tribunal will rein in a superpower that actively rejects customary environmental law. India must prioritise the physical security and disaster preparedness of Arunachal Pradesh. By listening to the pragmatic voices of the local communities and securing the region with the Siang Upper Multipurpose Project, the nation can establish a robust, physical defence of its sovereignty and its citizens. (The author is a well-known Army veteran, strategic affairs expert and a practicing advocate in Gauhati High Court)

'If the Cong govt continues to support anti-national elements, communal tensions will increase'

BJP accuses Cong of hijacking SIR process; urges Karnataka govt to stop issuing PRCs

CHAMARAJANAGAR (KARNATAKA), July 13: Senior BJP leader R Ashoka on Monday demanded that the Congress government in Karnataka immediately stop issuing permanent residence certificates, accusing the ruling party of hijacking the SIR process through these certificates.

The Leader of Opposition in the Legislative Assembly said this poses a threat to national security.

"Through the SIR process, only Indian citizens are being granted voting rights. However, the Congress government is hijacking the process," Ashoka said.

He questioned, "Why are permanent residence certificates (PRCs) being issued after so many years of independence, asking whether all citizens had been living without proper status until now?"

Claiming that there are a large number of Bangladeshi citizens in the country, the LoP said if such people are issued certificates, it would become impossible to deport them. He alleged that the government was taking this step to appease minorities.

Asserting that only the central government has the authority to grant citizenship, Ashoka said, if people are found not to be Indian citizens, the Centre takes steps to send them back to their respective countries.

He alleged that when Congress ally and TMC chief Mamata Banerjee was in power in West Bengal, many Bangladeshis entered the state, but Congress did not question it. He said similar problems exist in Assam and Bihar and accused Congress of being responsible for the beginning of the Naxal problem.

He criticised Congress leaders, saying



they had ignored these issues for years and were now blaming the BJP.

Ashoka claimed, "If the Congress government continues to support anti-national elements, communal tensions will increase."

He alleged that cases against some Muslim organisations had already been withdrawn and said certificates should not be issued merely to appease them.

Noting that chief minister D K Shivakumar should have already declared drought-affected areas in the state, the LoP said, instead, the Karnataka Pradesh Congress Committee meeting has passed a resolution demanding Rs 10,000 crore from the central government.

He alleged that "no survey has been conducted, drought has not been officially declared, and there is no information about fodder and water availability, yet the state government is demanding funds from the Centre."

He said a responsible state government must first conduct a survey and submit a report to the Centre before relief can be provided. The central government sends its officials to assess the situation, obtain reports, and then release funds.

Ashoka added that compensation is provided every year through the State Disaster Response Fund (SDRF) and demanded that the state government provide an account of

how those funds were used. He accused the government of trying to shift blame onto the Centre instead of taking responsibility.

Alleging that Cauvery water is secretly being released to Tamil Nadu without providing water to farmers in the Krishna Raja Sagara (KRS) command area, the BJP leader also criticised the government for asking farmers not to cultivate crops, saying that if cultivation was to be discouraged, the government should have announced compensation.

Ashoka said his arrival in Chamarajanagar was delayed because of the large number of potholes on roads in the region. He said the district minister should have inspected the situation and listened to farmers' problems but had failed to do so.

Claiming that the government is now conducting surveys and reducing the number of beneficiaries under the Gruha Jyothi scheme, he accused the government of misappropriating Rs 5,000 crore under the Gruha Lakshmi scheme without providing accounts.

He demanded that the government immediately clear all pending payments.

He accused Congress of betraying people in the name of guarantee schemes, saying that what was promised in the manifesto was different from what is being implemented. He alleged that the party promised benefits to everyone, but is now deceiving people.

Ashoka accused Congress of using Karnataka as an "ATM" and claimed that Siddaramaiah had taken a three-year "contract" while Shivakumar had been given the remaining two years. He criticised the government for not carrying out a cabinet reshuffle despite the passage of time. (PTI)

SC stays Madras HC order directing TN govt to ensure ban on cow slaughter in state



NEW DELHI, July 13: The Supreme Court on Monday stayed the Madras High Court order which directed the Tamil Nadu government to ensure that no cow or calf is slaughtered in the state.

A bench of Justices Vikram Nath and Sandeep Mehta passed the order while hearing a plea filed by the state government challenging a May 27 order of the high court.

The state government termed the order contrary to the Tamil Nadu Animal Preservation Act, 1958. The Act permits the slaughter of cows aged over 10 years that are unfit for work and breeding, on the basis of a certificate issued by a competent authority.

The apex court agreed to hear the matter and issued notice to the respondents, including the one on whose plea the high court had passed the order, seeking their replies.

During the hearing, the bench orally observed that the last paragraph of the high court order prima

facie required correction.

In that paragraph, the high court had said, "We allow this writ petition with a direction to the state of Tamil Nadu to ensure that no cow or calf is slaughtered on the eve of Bakrid or on any other day."

The high court had also said that authorities, particularly the chief secretary and the additional director general of police (law and order), are obliged to issue suitable instructions to all officials concerned to ensure that there is no breach of this order.

The top court has posted the matter for hearing after four weeks.

The Tamil Nadu government challenged the May 27 order of the high court, which directed the state authorities to ensure that no cow or calf is slaughtered in the state either on the eve of Bakrid on May 28 this year or on any other day.

The high court had passed the order on a plea seeking directions that slaughter be carried out at designated places only. (PTI)

Sivankutty demands police investigation into alleged BJP election fund misuse

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, July 13: Senior CPI(M) leader V Sivankutty on Monday demanded a comprehensive police probe into alleged financial irregularities in the BJP's Assembly election campaign, citing media reports of large-scale misappropriation of party funds.

In a statement, Sivankutty alleged that media reports had raised serious questions about expenditure incurred on hiring helicopters and vehicles for the election campaign.

He referred to reports alleging irregularities in a contract worth Rs 3.5 crore for the production of one crore party flags, saying the issue could not be treated lightly.

Claiming that public contributions and funds collected from party workers had allegedly been misused, the CPI(M) leader said a thorough police investigation was needed to ascertain the truth and bring the facts before the public.

He urged the police to initiate a thorough investigation and take appropriate legal action to uncover the facts behind the allegations, asserting that the public had a right to know the truth.

The BJP, however, had earlier rejected the allegations.

In a recent Facebook post, Kerala BJP president Rajeev Chandrasekhar had termed as "false" an alleged BJP office circular being circulated on social media and television channels in his name.

He had claimed that no financial irregularities related to the Assembly election campaign had been detected within the party and said the BJP had completed audits at the national, state, district, and constituency levels soon after the polls.

Chandrasekhar had maintained that the party's election campaign in Kerala was carried out through a transparent system, pointing to the BJP's performance in winning three Assembly seats and putting up strong contests in several constituencies as evidence of its organisational strength. (PTI)

Prashant Kishor, BJP's Neeraj Sinha file nomination papers for Bankipur bypolls

PATNA, July 13: Jan Suraj Party founder Prashant Kishor and BJP candidate Neeraj Kumar Sinha on Monday filed their nomination papers for the July 30 bypoll to the Bankipur assembly seat in Bihar.

Kishor, who is seeking to wrest the BJP bastion vacated by the party's national president Nitin Sinha a couple of months ago, was accompanied by his wife, Jahnavi Das, a medical practitioner from Assam.

Das, who generally shuns the limelight, chose to accompany her husband as he made his electoral debut.

After filing his nomination papers, Kishor told reporters, "This is not just my 'naamankan' (nomination) but a call for a political change in Bihar where people with criminal records must give up their chair."

Kishor has been claiming that the bypoll would serve as a "referendum" on the NDA government in Bihar and that his victory would compel chief minister Samrat Choudhary, the first BJP leader to head a government in the state, to



step down.

Kishor has repeatedly referred to a murder case registered against chief minister Samrat Choudhary in the 1990s.

The Indian Political Action Committee (I-PAC) founder, who floated the Jan Suraj Party about two years ago, reached the collectorate in a procession that began at the Dak Bungalow crossing, about a kilometre away. Earlier in the day, he addressed a public meeting at a ground near the police lines.

Before filing his nomination papers, Kishor offered prayers at Baba Harihar Nath Temple in Sonapur. He later proceeded from

the Scout Guide Ground near Sinha Library in Patna to the collectorate, accompanied by a large number of supporters and party workers.

On the BJP side, senior leaders, including local MP Ravi Shankar Prasad and state unit president Sanjay Saraogi, accompanied Sinha, a 32-year-old Bharatiya Janata Yuva Morcha leader, who was fielded after Abhishek Kumar "Bunty" withdrew from the contest.

Abhishek had filed his nomination papers last week but later withdrew his candidature, citing "family reasons".

"People of Bankipur have always been in support of BJP, and opposed the 'jungle raj' of Lalu Prasad. Our candidate is a simple, booth-level worker. People will make him win with a decisive mandate," Ravi Shankar Prasad told reporters.

Choudhary and NDA partners like Deputy CM Vijay Kumar Choudhary (JDU) and state LJPRV president Raju Tiwari were also present during the nomination. (PTI)

Prove 'poaching' charge or face ₹ 100 cr defamation suit: BJP to Omar Abdullah

SRINAGAR, July 13: The BJP on Monday threatened to initiate a defamation suit against Jammu and Kashmir chief minister Omar Abdullah if he does not apologise or fails to provide evidence substantiating his allegations of poaching against the opposition party in the union territory.

"The BJP Jammu and Kashmir has sent a legal notice to Chief Minister Omar Abdullah through post/mail, demanding that he either provide concrete evidence to substantiate his allegations of 'poaching' against the BJP or issue a public apology within seven days," a party spokesperson said in a statement here.

If Abdullah fails to provide evidence or does not apologise, the BJP will initiate a defamation suit of ₹ 100 crore against him over his remarks alleging that the BJP was offering ₹ 20-30 crore to MLAs, the spokesperson warned.

The chief minister, while addressing National Conference (NC) workers at Hazratbal last week, alleged that the BJP is trying to bring down his government by engineering a split in his party.

He also claimed that an NC MLA from Jammu told him that he was offered ₹ 20-30 crore and a ministerial berth to switch sides to the saffron camp. (PTI)

Congress says its delegation stopped by police from meeting Dalit woman's family in Meerut

MEERUT (UP), July 13: A Congress delegation comprising MPs and senior leaders was stopped by police at the Kashi toll plaza on Monday while on its way to meet the family of a Dalit woman whose body was found two days after she went missing in Meerut in May, the party said.

The delegation, which included MP Imran Masood and the party's UP incharge Rajendra Pal Gautam, was forced to turn back after waiting for nearly one-and-a-half hours. The party announced a protest at Delhi's Jantar Mantar on July 27 and said it will raise the issue in Parliament.

Speaking to PTI after returning, Gautam alleged that the police initially detained the delegation on the pretext of briefing them about the case, before refusing permission to meet the family, citing law and order

concerns.

Responding to the allegations, Circle Officer (Daurala) Shiv Thakur told PTI, "The Congress delegation had come to meet the victim's family and has returned." He declined to comment further.

According to police, 20-year-old Lalita Gautam, who had gone missing from the TP Nagar area on May 15, was found dead in the Rohta area on May 17. The main accused, Ankush Kumar (23), was arrested on May 18, while another accused was held for allegedly destroying evidence.

The incident had led to a protest by her family and community members. Congress chief Mallikarjun Kharge had attacked the BJP dispensation, saying it has exposed the "anti-Dalit" face of that party's double-engine

government.

The Congress president's remarks came after seven people were arrested and more than 30 others booked for unlawful assembly and attacking police personnel, among other charges, in connection with the protest over the woman's murder.

Rajendra Pal Gautam said the Congress had earlier demanded Rs 1 crore as compensation for the victim's family, a government job for one family member, a speedy investigation, prompt filing of the charge sheet and trial in a fast-track court, but no action had been taken on these demands.

He also alleged that while leaders of some other political parties were allowed to meet the family, the Congress delegation was denied permission. (PTI)

BJP attacks Rahul, Priyanka over absence from landslide-hit Wayanad

NEW DELHI, July 13: The BJP on Monday attacked Congress leaders Rahul Gandhi and Priyanka Gandhi Vadra for not visiting the landslide-hit Wayanad despite several people dying in the July 7 tragedy.

The ruling party at the Centre said their "insensitivity and apathy" demand a clear and categorical apology from the Gandhi family.

There was no immediate reaction from Congress to the BJP's attack.

The party also asked Rahul Gandhi to disclose details of his recent foreign trip, which it said has been "shrouded in mystery." It asserted that the public is entitled to know whether any of his overseas engagements has a "bearing on India's political or strategic interests."

BJP national spokesperson and Rajya Sabha MP Sudhanshu Trivedi said Rahul Gandhi, who represented Wayanad in the Lok Sabha before vacating the seat, promised that the constituency would have "two MPs" after Priyanka Gandhi Vadra was elected from there.

"Rahul Gandhi ji is not on the ground. When he left the constituency and passed the baton to his sister Priyanka Gandhi ji, he openly said: 'Now Wayanad will be having two MPs.' But unfortunately, both the MPs, who belong to the Gandhi family, are not visible at all on the ground. This is a deceit to the people of Wayanad and the people of Kerala," he told PTI Videos.

Trivedi questioned Gandhi's absence from public view and his reported foreign travel to claim that the



Congress leader's location will become known once he makes "anti-India" statements from abroad.

"At times, people of some constituencies feel that their MP is absconding. But here the case is more peculiar: An MP is absconding from the country!" he said.

Trivedi said no amount of defence by Jairam Ramesh, whom he called Rahul Gandhi's "friend, philosopher and guide", can cover up the Gandhi siblings' failure to discharge their duties towards the people of Wayanad.

"Though Jairam Ramesh ji is a well-read person, all his intelligence and knowledge will not be able to overcome the injustice which has been done to the people of Wayanad and the misconduct of Rahul Gandhi. Whatever Jairam Ramesh ji's doing, it is nothing but a fig leaf cover on a monumental failure," he added. (PTI)

Chhattisgarh assembly's monsoon session begins with heartfelt tributes to Teejan Bai

'Teejan Bai's life was an inspiring example of struggle, dedication and perseverance'

RAIPUR, July 13: The Chhattisgarh assembly on Monday paid rich tributes to renowned Pandvani exponent and Padma Vibhushan awardee Teejan Bai, who passed away on July 5, with members across party lines recalling her immense contribution to folk art and culture.

The five-day Monsoon Session of the assembly began with Speaker Raman Singh mentioning the demise of Teejan Bai, who died at All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) here at the age of 70.

Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai, leader of opposition Charan Das Mahant, for-



mer chief minister Bhupesh Baghel, minister Rajesh Agrawal and other

members paid homage to the legendary folk artist.

Describing her death as an irreparable loss to the cultural world, Sai said Chhattisgarh had lost one of the finest jewels of its rich folk tradition.

He said Teejan Bai elevated the 'Kapalik' style of Pandvani singing to new heights and earned national and international recognition for the traditional storytelling art through her exceptional talent.

"Her unique blend of singing and acting, vivid portrayal of characters and powerful narration captivated audiences across the world. Teejan Bai's life was an inspiring example of struggle, dedication and perseverance," Sai said.

At a time when women had little participation in Pandvani performances, she broke social barriers and carved out a distinct identity, inspiring future gen-

erations of artists, he said.

He noted that she showcased Chhattisgarh's cultural heritage in several countries across Asia, Europe and other parts of the world, helping establish the state's cultural identity on the global stage.

The chief minister said Teejan Bai was honoured with several prestigious awards, including the Padma Shri, Padma Bhushan, Sangeet Natak Akademi Award and the Padma Vibhushan, India's second-highest civilian honour, in 2019.

She remains the only personality from Chhattisgarh to have received the Padma Vibhushan, he said.

Sai also recalled that President Droupadi Murmu, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and several Union ministers had paid tributes to the legendary artist after her demise.

Several universities had conferred honorary D Litt degrees on Teejan Bai in recognition of her contribution to preserving and promoting Indian folk music and culture, the CM added.

Leader of Opposition Charan Das Mahant said Teejan Bai was the pride of Chhattisgarh and that hardly anyone in the state was unfamiliar with her art.

The Congress MLA said former prime minister Rajiv Gandhi had recognised her extraordinary talent, leading to her being conferred the Padma Shri in 1988.

Mahant also urged the state government to institute an award in Teejan Bai's name to honour excellence in folk arts.

The House observed a two-minute silence as a mark of respect before Speaker Raman Singh adjourned the proceedings for five minutes. (PTI)

Haryana Cong chief seeks relief package from PM, claims state going through 'crisis'

CHARKHI DADRI, July 13: Haryana Congress president Rao Narender Singh on Monday urged Prime Minister Narendra Modi to announce a special relief package for the state during his proposed visit, alleging that Haryana was passing through a period of crisis affecting farmers, labourers, employees, students, and youth.

Addressing reporters after paying tributes to late Satyavan Dhankhar, father of former Charkhi Dadri District Youth Congress president Anil Dhankhar, Rao said the Centre should extend financial relief in view of the prevailing situation in the state.

He also expressed concerns over the law and order situation, alleging that crime was on the rise in Haryana and that even elected representatives did not feel secure.

He accused the BJP-led state government of failing to maintain law and order. Rao further alleged that the education system in Haryana and across the country was facing a serious crisis due to repeated exam paper leaks.

He claimed that nearly 100 paper leak incidents had taken place in the past 12 years, affecting the future of millions of students.

Referring to alleged irregularities in the NEET examination, he claimed that 21 meritorious students across the country had died by suicide, including one from Haryana. He demanded immediate corrective measures from the Centre and said Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan should resign, accepting moral responsibility.

Rao also referred to the alleged theft at the Ram temple donation and claimed that influential people were being protected in the case. (PTI)

Fresh floods, landslides disrupt normal life in several districts of Arunachal

At least 97,182 people affected by flood in 425 villages

ITANAGAR, July 13: Fresh floods and landslides triggered by incessant rain disrupted road connectivity and damaged public infrastructure in several districts of Arunachal Pradesh on Monday, an official statement said.

The ongoing spell of rain-triggered floods and landslides has so far claimed seven lives and left 29 people injured across the state.

At least 97,182 people have been affected by the flood in 425 villages in all 26 districts. The calamity has caused widespread damage to agriculture and public infrastructure. A total of 541.75 hectares of crop area has been affected, while around 1,010 hectares of forest area has also been impacted.

Infrastructure losses include damage to 150 roads, 19 bridges, 21 culverts, 221 water supply systems, 58 government buildings, 156 power lines, 224 electric poles, 10 hydel projects, two hospitals and three schools. Hundreds of houses have also been damaged across the state, the statement added.

The State Emergency Operation Centre (SEOC) said heavy rainfall in the upper reaches of the Kumei River early on Monday triggered flash floods in Kurung Kumei district, causing extensive damage



in Parsi-Parlo circle and Damin sub-division.

In Damin sub-division, a bridge connecting Huri and Damin was washed away, snapping road connectivity.

An Anganwadi Centre was completely damaged, while an inspection bungalow, a rice mill, churches, prayer houses and other public infrastructure sustained significant damage.

The Inspection Bungalow was inundated, a church was damaged, and a bridge connecting Pagam village was washed away, the statement said.

The floods also caused extensive dam-

age to St Thomas School, a prominent educational institution in the area. The entire campus was submerged, damaging buildings, classrooms, teaching materials, furniture, equipment and teachers' quarters, it said, adding that academic activities have been halted.

The flash floods severely affected transportation, public infrastructure and residential properties. The district administration is coordinating with paramilitary forces, police and other stakeholders to assess the damage and carry out relief measures. A detailed assessment is underway to ascertain the extent of the

damage and identify immediate restoration requirements, the statement said.

Additional Deputy Commissioner (ADC) Nabam Tajik said that among the worst-affected areas is Huri, where the 66-metre Bailey hanging bridge connecting Damin and Huri was washed away, cutting off the village from the rest of the district.

Tajik said the district administration is coordinating with Border Roads Organisation (BRO) to restore the bridge, with restoration expected to take approximately two weeks. The flood also washed away the Luksang Valley Bridge and the recently inaugurated Hutar Valley Bridge, both under the BRO.

In addition, several Wire Rope Suspension Bridges (WRSBs) across Kumei and Tamin rivers were either damaged or washed away, disrupting connectivity to villages including Machang, Huri, Ruba, Katuk, Pagam, Pachik, Chote, Lania, Mangio, Dalang, Pachang, Nyokuriang, Pado, Yaluba, Seriang and Tawariang.

In Pakke Kessang district, a massive landslide blocked National Highway 13 near Pakro village on Monday. District officials said restoration of the affected stretch is expected to take two to three days. The district administration has advised commuters to avoid travelling on the Itanagar-Seppa Road until further notice.

In West Kameng district, a portion of the road leading to the Sela Tunnel was washed away due to heavy rainfall. Au-

thorities have advised commuters to use the old Sela Road as an alternative route.

The Potin-Kimin Road in Papum Pare district has remained blocked since Sunday evening after a landslide near Shiv Mandir.

Flood was reported from Lower Dibang Valley and West Siang, while, heavy rainfall affected Papum Pare and Kamle and a landslide incident was reported from the Itanagar Capital Region (ICR).

In Lower Dibang Valley, the affected circles were Dambuk, Koronu and Roing. The affected locations included Sisiri river, Dambuk, Pophung, Bizari, Chake village, Samak river, Simar Korong, Cheta Nallah and Sita Nallah.

In West Siang, the affected circles were Darak, Kamba and Yomcha and the affected villages and localities included Poyom, ADC Complex Kamba, Kesitali, Dego Kamki, NEC Farm Kamba, Siru Tali, Seri Tali, Kesi Tali, Yaki Tato, Nomu, Libu Bene, Nomuk Bagra, Nomuk Momir, Hipin Karbak and Karbak Moku.

In Papum Pare, Jote village under Sangdupota circle was affected, while Dollungmukh village under Dollungmukh circle in Kamle district also reported heavy rain-related impacts.

In the ICR, Sanglo Putung-II under Naharlagun circle was affected by a landslide.

In East Kameng, flood affected Lower Taruso Colony and Kameng Tempa under Seppa circle. (PTI)

Three held in arson case: Manipur home minister



IMPHAL, July 13: Manipur Home Minister Govindas Konhoujam on Monday said CRPF personnel and state security forces have been deployed at Kanto Sabal in Imphal West district where a mob of around 600 people allegedly set fire to a number of houses recently.

Speaking to reporters on the sidelines of a programme, Konhoujam condemned the incident and said more arrests were likely in the coming days.

"We strongly condemn the arson. Hopefully, within the next couple of days, there will be more arrests. We have asked the security forces to remain alert," he said.

"Three persons have been detained out of 20 people who were picked up in connection with the incident. Further action will follow. CRPF and state forces have already been deployed. A high-level security meeting was also convened on Sunday evening. The government will conduct a thorough investigation into the matter," Konhoujam said.

A mob of around 600 people from neighbouring Kuki-majority Kangpokpi district, while taking out a rally against road blockades on Saturday, entered Kanto Sabal and allegedly torched three houses, triggering fresh communal tension in the area.

Police had said on Saturday that Kamrang Lhouvum (65), chief of Hengjiang village, and Pagin Hangshing (30), a resident of Khunkho Kuki village, were arrested in connection with "the case registered regarding the mob disturbance and attempt by miscreants to set fire to abandoned houses at Kanto Sabal".

More than 260 people have been killed in ethnic violence between the Imphal Valley-based Meitei and the adjoining hills-based Kuki communities in Manipur since May 2023. (PTI)

Nag

Landslide disrupts traffic movement on NH 10

GANGTOK, July 13: A landslide near Bagpul on National Highway 10 on Monday disrupted vehicular traffic movement from West Bengal's Siliguri to Gangtok, an official said.



Authorities have deployed machinery and personnel to clear the landslide debris at Bagpul around 24 km from Siliguri, they said.

A massive traffic congestion has been reported with hundreds of vehicles stranded on National Highway 10, which connects Gangtok, the capital of the Himalayan state, with Siliguri in West Bengal due to the landslide at Bagpul, officials said.

Commuters have been urged to remain patient, follow instructions from traffic personnel, and avoid non-essential travel through the affected route until the situation improves, they added. (PTI)

Three militants arrested in Manipur

IMPHAL, July 13: Three militants belonging to two banned outfits were arrested from two districts of Manipur for their alleged involvement in extortion activities, a police statement said on Monday.

Another person with alleged links with insurgents was also nabbed and arms and ammunition were seized from his possession.

An insurgent belonging to the banned United Peoples' Party of Kangleipak (UPPK) outfit was apprehended in Porompat area in Imphal East district on Saturday. He has been identified as Salam Bijanda Singh (37). A militant of Kangleipak Communist Party (Nong-drenkhomba) was arrested from Wangkhei Ayangpalli in Imphal East district on the same day. Another cadre of KCP (Nongdrenkhomba) was also nabbed the same day from Khurai Nandeibam Leikai in Imphal East district. He has been identified as Md Motim (31).

Meanwhile, security forces arrested a person with alleged links with militants in Yairipok Pechi Road area under the jurisdiction of Yairipok police station in Thoubal district on Sunday.

A self-loading rifle with a magazine and 10 cartridges were also seized from the possession of the man, identified as Chagisongtanbou Nkhamnamai (46), the statement added. (PTI)

Assam Rifles jawan dead, 4 injured in Nagaland IED blast

KOHIMA, July 13: An Assam Rifles jawan was killed and four others were injured in a suspected improvised explosive device (IED) blast in Chumoukedima district of Nagaland on Monday, a Defence official said. The explosion reportedly targeted an Assam Rifles vehicle during an operational movement, PRO Defence Col Amit Shukla said.

Security forces have launched a search operation in the area, while the injured personnel have been shifted for medical treatment.

Further investigation is underway, he said.

The authorities have not yet released the identity of the victims or confirmed who was responsible for the attack. (PTI)

Mizoram govt urges tourists to defer travel as heavy rain causes inundation, landslides

AIZAWL, July 13: Incessant rainfall has caused inundation and landslides in several districts of Mizoram, prompting the Lalduhoma government to urge tourists to postpone their visits to the state over public safety concerns, officials said on Monday.

At least 100 families have so far been evacuated in Tlabung town and neighbouring areas in south Mizoram's Lunglei district near the Bangladesh border due to the overflowing of the Khawthlangtuipui river, they said.

Around 200 travellers remained stranded at Bualte village in Lunglei due to a massive landslide on the National Highway 54 that links Lawngtlai and Siaha districts, they said.

Although earth-moving machinery has been used to clear debris, continuous rainfall has repeatedly caused fresh mudslides, the officials said.



In an advisory, the tourism department appealed to visitors from outside the state to avoid travelling to Mizoram until weather conditions improve.

It also requested those who have already made travel plans to reschedule their trips, warning that continued adverse weather could lead to further disruptions and pose serious risks to travellers.

The advisory follows days of continuous rainfall that has caused damage in different parts of the state, with overflowing rivers, landslides and infrastructure damage reported from several locations.

On July 10 night, when the rain briefly stopped, the authorities managed to partially clear the debris on roads and allow several ve-

hicles to pass.

However, fresh rainfall blocked the road again, and works were underway to ensure vehicular movement, the officials said.

The debris of a massive landslide or rockfall at Ngaizel on the southern outskirts of Aizawl that occurred early last week is yet to be cleared, continuing to block the Aizawl-Thenzawl-Lunglei highway, the police said.

Water from the swollen Mat river has also submerged several farmlands in Serchhip district, the officials said.

According to the India Meteorological Department (IMD), Aizawl Centre, Serchhip recorded the highest rainfall in the last 24 hours at 34 mm, followed by Khawzawl at 17.5 mm and Siaha at 16.5 mm.

Aizawl recorded 8.4 mm and Lunglei experienced 14 mm rainfall during the same period, it said. (PTI)

Arunachal Guv stresses stronger prosecution for timely justice

ITANAGAR, July 13: Arunachal Pradesh Governor Lt Gen (Retd) KT Parnaik on Monday stressed the need to strengthen the state's prosecution system and ensure speedy justice, particularly in cases involving crimes against women and children.

The governor also called for better coordination among investigating agencies, prosecutors and other stakeholders.

Parnaik made the remarks when the state's newly appointed Additional Advocate General Dugmar Kamduk called on him at Lok Bhavan, here, an official statement said.

Expressing concern over the comparatively low rate of prosecution and conviction in cases involving crimes against women and children, the governor said such offences require prompt, sensitive and effective legal action.

He said a strong and efficient prosecu-

tion system is vital to reinforce public confidence in the justice delivery system.

Parnaik also stressed the need to strengthen the directorate of prosecution through capacity building, professional training and improved institutional support.

He said a robust prosecution mechanism is essential to protect the rights of citizens, improve the effectiveness of law enforcement and ensure that offenders are brought to justice.

Congratulating Kamduk on assuming the constitutional responsibility, the governor conveyed his best wishes for a successful tenure.

He expressed confidence that the Additional Advocate General would discharge his duties with professionalism, integrity and commitment while upholding the rule of law and serving the interests of both the government and the people of the state. (PTI)



Arunachal minister reviews education reforms, road projects

ITANAGAR, July 13: Arunachal Pradesh Education Minister Pasang Dorjee Sona on Monday said the state government is committed to strengthening transparency, efficiency and institutional excellence through reforms in the education sector.

Chairing a meeting at the Assembly office here, the minister reviewed the proposed recruitment rules for the post of deputy director of elementary education, which would provide for promotions from the post of block education officer.

Sona said the discussions focused on evolving a "transparent, merit-based and well-defined promotional framework" that would strengthen administrative efficiency while creating better career advancement opportunities for officers in the education department.

"A robust and progressive service structure is essential for motivating our officers and further improving the quality of educational administration across the state," he said.

Sona, who also holds the post of the Rural Works Department, reviewed the progress of ongoing road connectivity projects in Shi-Yomi district during a meeting with the RWD divi-



sion. The minister said the meeting assessed the status of various projects and discussed challenges affecting their execution.

Sona stressed the need for better coordination among all stakeholders to ensure that development works progress without unnecessary delays.

"I directed the department to strengthen monitoring and establish a dedicated mechanism for closer supervision of the PMGSY projects so that implementation can be accelerated and accountability improved," he said.

The minister said the government remains committed to expediting road connectivity projects in Shi-Yomi district for the benefit of the local population. (PTI)

BBBP awareness camp held at GHSS Anini

HT Correspondent

ANINI, July 13: An awareness camp under the Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP) initiative was organised at Government Higher Secondary School (GHSS), Anini, to sensitise students and faculty members on the protection, education, health and overall well-being of children, with special emphasis on the girl child.

The programme featured awareness sessions by District Child Protection Officer (DCPO) Dilip Linggi, advocate Oki Mihu, and a Medical Officer from the Rashtriya Bal Swasthya Karyakram (RBSK) of the Health Department.

The resource persons highlighted the objectives of the BBBP initiative and discussed key issues including the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, prevention of child marriage, mental health and the importance of safeguarding children's rights.

Students were encouraged to remain aware of their rights and responsibilities and to seek timely support whenever required.

As part of the programme, the Health Department conducted routine health screening of the students to assess their general health and promote preventive healthcare.

Sikkim CM extends 'Bhanu Jayanti' greetings

Youth urged to preserve Nepali literary heritage

GANGTOK, July 13: Sikkim Chief Minister Prem Singh Tamang on Monday extended greetings to the people of the state on the occasion of Bhanu Jayanti, paying rich tributes to the pioneering Nepali poet, Adikavi Bhanubhakta Acharya, on his 212th birth anniversary.

In a public message, Tamang said the day transcends the mere celebration of a literary icon, and described it as a profound tribute to the enduring power of language, literature, and culture in shaping a progressive society.

The CM emphasised the invaluable role writers, poets, and scholars play in guarding rich traditions and passing cultural values down to future generations.

"The legacy of Adikavi Bhanubhakta Acharya continues to inspire us to cherish our mother tongue and uphold our cultural heritage," Tamang said.

He said the poet's life and works serve as a guiding light for everyone who believes in the transformative power of education and literature.

The chief minister made a strong appeal to the state's youth, calling on future generations to embrace the beauty of the Nepali language and actively contribute to its enrichment.



He expressed hope that this year's 'Bhanu Jayanti' celebrations would inspire deeper harmony, wisdom, and peace across communities.

The celebrations began with Governor Om Prakash Mathur offering garlands to the statue of the poet at Nepal Udayan at Zero Point.

During the day, thousands participated in a grand 'Shobha Yatra' brought out in Gangtok on the occasion.

The procession, organised by Nepali Sahitya Parishad, Sikkim (NSP), witnessed the participation of ministers,

MLAs, representatives of social organisations and common people. Traditional attire-clad participants paid tributes to the poet through cultural performances.

A programme was also organised at Manan Kendra, where eminent litterateur Sukraj Subba was conferred with the prestigious 'Bhanu Puraskar 2026'. It was presented in recognition of Subba's lifelong contribution to the promotion, preservation, and development of the Nepali language and literature. (PTI)

CM Saha inaugurates first Agartala Municipal Corporation-run hospital

AGARTALA, July 13: Tripura Chief Minister Manik Saha inaugurated a 50-bed hospital here, the first such health facility to be run by the Agartala Municipal Corporation.

Speaking at the event on Sunday night, Saha expressed confidence that the hospital would play a crucial role in delivering quality healthcare services to residents of the city and its surrounding areas.

The Agartala Municipal Corporation will run the hospital with help from the Health and Family Welfare Department, an official said.

The hospital would also provide outpatient department (OPD) services in the evening,

ensuring greater accessibility to medical care.

Describing the initiative as a pilot project, the chief minister said that if the model proves successful, the government will consider expanding similar facilities to the remaining 19 urban local bodies across Tripura.

He also stated that the government is planning to implement an integrated system to strengthen the delivery of advanced healthcare services at the primary level.

Highlighting the hospital's modern infrastructure, Saha said that every bed in the facility has been equipped with oxygen supply, ensuring improved emergency and critical care services. (PTI)

No.B/CRD/E-Auction/6999 Dated Kajalgaon the 07/07/2026

SHORT SALE NOTICE

Sealed tender affixing a Court Fee Stamp of Rs. 8.25 (Rupees eight and two five paise) only is hereby invited from the intending tenderers (Individuals & Firms) for grant of 1 (one) No. of Mining Contract Area (MMCA) i.e. "Bhur River Sand Gravel & Boulder Mahal" at Deosri under Runkhata Range (5.0 ha.) for collection of Sand Gravel & Boulder from the said MMCA (Mahal) under this Division to be received up to 3-00 p.m. of 03/08/2026 under sections 32,33,34,35,36 & 37 of the AMMC Rule, 2013. The detailed terms & conditions for the tender have been issued in the Sale Notice dated 08/07/2026. The copy of the Sale Notice along with Tender Papers may be collected from the Office of the undersigned on payment of Rs. 200/- (Rupees two hundred) only.

Sd/- Divisional Forest Officer,
Chirang Division, Kajalgaon

IPR(BTC)/C/2026-27/795

India outplay England to win historic Lord's Test by 270 runs

LONDON, July 13: A stellar all-round performance fuelled India's famous 270-run win over England in the first-ever Women's Test staged at the iconic Lord's here on Monday.

Needing four wickets to wrap up the game overnight, India completed formalities in the morning session on day four, dismissing England for 186 in 62.5 overs despite a dogged half-century from Sophie Ecclestone.

It was a clinical performance from India in a format they don't play often, beating an out of sorts England fair and square in the "Home of Cricket".

Resuming their second innings at 130 for six, England batted for more than 90 minutes before succumbing to Indian bowlers. India had set a mammoth 457-run target for the hosts.

England's lead scorer Amy Jones (54 off 80) was the first wicket to fall on the day with Sneha Rana having her caught at mid-wicket.

Sophie Ecclestone, who was dropped twice off Gaud, too put up some resistance batting alongside



Issy Wong (1 off 33) but they only delayed the inevitable.

Deepthi Sharma cleaned up the tail by removing Lauren Bell and Wong in quick succession. Rana bowled a beauty to finally get rid of Ecclestone, triggering on field celebrations and in the Indian dressing room.

Both India and England had endured disappointment in the preceding T20 World Cup and with

Lord's hosting a Women's Test 142 years after it conducted the first men's Test, there was a lot at stake for both teams.

The foundation of the win for India was laid by Smriti Mandhana and Yastika Bhatia, who scored a memorable hundred on day three, before Kranti Gaud headlined the bowling performance with a five-wicket haul and her name on the Lord's Honours Board.

The Indian batters showed a lot more application than their English counterparts on a pitch that offered seam movement and by day three the odd ball was keeping low.

Pacers Gaud and Sayali Satghare outbowled their opponents, using the slope effectively to generate plenty of seam movement. Off-spinner Rana too was able to maintain the pressure created by the seamers.

With the massive win, India also maintained their superior record against England in the longest format. In the 16 Tests both teams have played, India have won four games, England one while the remaining 11 matches were drawn.

India's only defeat to England came way back in 1995.

The Indian team had got a pep talk from the great Sachin Tendulkar before the start of day's play. ICC chairman Jay Shah was also watching the action from the stands with Tendulkar, who later shook hands with the players.

It was also a farewell game for England veteran Tammy Beaumont and former captain Heather Knight. (PTI)

Under-fire India turn to Ro-Ko to find winning touch against rampaging England

BIRMINGHAM, July 13: Veterans Virat Kohli and Rohit Sharma will not only have to perform for themselves but also play a key role in lifting the sagging Indian spirits against an upbeat England when the two sides clash in a three-match ODI series, starting here on Tuesday.

Kohli and Rohit, along with Jasprit Bumrah, are back in the mix to play the format in which bilaterals have been losing both context and sheen amid growing popularity of T20 cricket.

The 39-year-old Rohit and the soon-to-be 38 Kohli still have the fire in their bellies and the runs to show for their efforts as they aim for a ODI World Cup swansong.

Facing Jofra Archer and Josh Tongue on tracks, which are spicier compared to sub-continental featherbeds, is a different challenge. But the duo has smashed English bowlers enough over the years to know what is required of them.

But their presence for this series certainly holds more significance after the Indian team, under a new T20 skipper Shreyas Iyer, lost all but one of its seven T20I matches in the ongoing tour.

The only match they didn't lose was a game that got abandoned. The 0-2 defeat versus Ireland and 0-4 thrashing handed by England has opened a Pandora's Box with BCCI calling for a performance review.

In this backdrop, a team management, which hasn't exactly made things easier for the two modern day legends, will be compelled to welcome them with open arms in order to stem the rot.

An ODI series win can hardly gloss over the inadequacies of T20 squad's disastrous show but it would certainly work as a confidence-booster. The return of skipper Shubman Gill, another prolific 50-over batter and the experienced KL Rahul, makes it a fabulous quartet of top-order batters, who can turn any game on its head.

Add Shreyas Iyer to the mix, and there should be little concern about the batting unit.

However, it is the bowling unit that needs to do some serious strategic thinking even as Bumrah, after a well-earned rest, makes a comeback.

India's new fast bowling gurnoor Brar, after an impressive start against Afghanistan at home, will face a completely different challenge with his lengths on English tracks.



Arshdeep Singh will certainly add dimension as the left-arm seamer in the pack while Shivam Dube, a forced choice due to the absence of an injured Hardik Pandya and Nitish Kumar Reddy, will be the fourth seamer at Edgbaston.

Both Washington Sundar and Axar Patel were massive disappointments during the T20I series in both batting and bowling. But they are unlikely to bear any consequences as they outscore the team's best spinner, Kuldeep Yadav, on perception of "better willow wielding" abilities.

Kuldeep, by a country mile, is a better spinner and the only one among the three with an ability to turn the ball even when there is nothing on offer from the surface.

One advantage that India will have against England is that the hosts haven't played any 50-over cricket since January 27 when they were on an away tour of Sri Lanka.

Having played a lot of T20 cricket and a few Tests (against New Zealand), England will also need to get back into the groove for the format even though the high of a one-sided T20 series will keep them in perfect mental frame. The inclusion of Joe Root in the batting ranks will only add more depth to English batting with Harry Brook and Jacob Bethell providing the explosive firepower alongside Jos Buttler.

Having humiliated the Indian bowlers in Southampton in the final T20I, Buttler and Brook will again like to send them on a leather-hunt with more overs at their disposal.

Match Starts: 3:30pm IST. (PTI)

I am Terminator, Abhishek is Terminator 4, Vaibhav is Terminator 6: Yuvraj

LONDON, July 13: Yuvraj Singh has come up with a fitting analogy to describe the evolution of fearless Indian batters, likening himself, Abhishek Sharma and teenage sensation Vaibhav Sooryavanshi to different versions of the iconic Hollywood franchise "Terminator", starring Arnold Schwarzenegger.

The former India all-rounder, who has mentored Abhishek over the years, believes the 15-year-old Sooryavanshi represents the next stage in the progression of attacking batting and said he would be delighted to work with the youngster in the future.

Speaking to JioHotstar, Yuvraj said, "I always call myself a Terminator. Now there is Terminator 4, Abhishek Sharma, who is four times better than me. And after him comes Terminator 6, Vaibhav Sooryavanshi, who has evolved even more."

"I did my part in my time, Abhishek elevated it, and now Vaibhav is setting new standards. This is the third phase of the same journey. It is great to see the sport evolving," said Yuvraj, who watched the Wimbledon men's singles final alongside Abhishek and Sooryavanshi.

"When I watch (Jannik) Sinner and (Carlos) Alcaraz, I see how tennis is changing. I see the same evolution in Abhishek and Vaib-



hav. I have spent a lot of time training Abhishek, and I would love to spend time with Vaibhav as well. He has a great career ahead of him. He is a serious player in the making, and I believe he will get there."

The batting prodigy, on his part, said the interaction with Yuvraj gave him valuable lessons that extended beyond technique.

"Yuvi Paaji is my idol too. Meeting him for the first time was a special moment. I got to spend time with him and he shared a lot of insights about the game."

"He spoke about the mental side of the game, how to handle pressure, and the importance of believing in yourself. It feels great to have so much to learn from someone like him. I am sure it will help me a lot in my career going forward," Sooryavanshi said.

Abhishek, who has flourished under Yuvraj's mentorship, said he could relate to the teenager's emotions. (PTI)

Baartman's consistency in hitting right areas key to his success, says Steyn

JOHANNESBURG, July 13: Former South Africa pace great Dale Steyn is mighty impressed with Otneil Baartman's consistency and believes it has been the primary reason for his continued success in the SA20 league.

Baartman is the leading wicket-taker in the four-season history of the SA20, and Steyn has worked with him in the past at Sunrisers Eastern Cape.

Baartman, who has claimed 61 wickets across four seasons, dismissed 20 batters in just nine matches during his maiden stint for the Paarl Royals in the 2025-26 edition and played a significant role in David Miller and Co reaching the second qualifier before they were knocked out by the eventual champions, Sunrisers Eastern Cape.

"I'm always looking at guys who can consistently land the ball in the right area. The thing about T20 cricket is that you can bowl badly and still pick up wickets. You can get your bad ball caught on the boundary or something like that," Steyn said, speaking to SA20.

"But for me, somebody like Otneil Baartman, what he's done season after season has earned him a spot in that South African team. I'm looking at guys who can consistently land the ball in the hot zone for a long period of time."

The 33-year-old Baartman's ability has seen him soar up the bowling charts in the United States, where he is playing the Major League Cricket for the Seattle Orcas.

He has taken 16 wickets in eight matches at a strike-rate of 10.87.

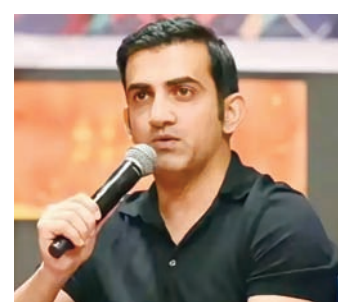
Steyn believes that Baartman's ability to keep things simple makes him a standout bowler and one of the best in the current crop.

Baartman, who comes from a small town in the Western Cape, said doing the basics well in the fast-paced T20 format is the only way to succeed as a bowler.

"When the ball is flying everywhere, you just have to keep your head down and stay consistent," Baartman explained. (PTI)



Gambhir can't be blamed alone, he didn't get the best players to deliver: MSK Prasad



NEW DELHI, July 13: Head coach Gautam Gambhir did not have the best of the players at his disposal during the T20I series against England and Ireland, with all-rounder Hardik Pandya and pacer Jasprit Bumrah not in the touring team, according to former India cricketer and ex-chairman of the selection committee MSK Prasad.

Pandya was left out of the team due to fitness issues while Bumrah was rested for the shortest format. India lost both the series -- 0-2 against Ireland and 0-4 against England.

"Just because the team has not done well, we cannot put the onus on head coach alone. We cannot say Gambhir has not inspired the team. At the same time, just be-

cause we won tournaments or World Cups doesn't mean that it's only Gambhir who has inspired the team. It is a combination of many things. It is too premature to write off Gambhir," Prasad told PTI in an interview on Monday.

"What we have to assess is when we play the next T20I series when the whole side is there, including Bumrah and Pandya, how does this team fare? Then we can talk about who is inspiring whom, or whether the captain is able to handle it, or coach is able to handle it. So, the next T20 series is something we have to really assess."

Prasad also wondered why Sanju Samson is axed at the drop of a hat.

"Why the axe is always on Sanju? Dropping Sanju was a big mistake. He is the best player in English conditions. He is extremely good when the wickets are hard and have bounce," he said.

"He delivered match-winning performances in quarter-finals, semi-finals and finals of the recently won T20 World Cup. He is the player of the World Cup. And suddenly, in 2-3 matches, he doesn't get runs and you are dropping him." (PTI)

7 bronze medals secured in Asian U-19 & U-23 Boxing C'ships

JAKARTA, July 13: Indian boxers remained a strong force at the Asian U-19 and U-23 Championships with eight of them advancing to the finals across men's and women's U-23 categories and seven others securing bronze medals after semifinal finishes here.

In the U-23 women's category, five Indian boxers progressed to the finals.

Nisha (54kg) defeated Hyeju Lee of Korea, while Nikita Chand (60kg) registered a win against Sari Kokufu of Japan.

Kajal (65kg) sailed past Gulzina Melsvek of Kyrgyzstan on Sunday. In all the bouts referees had to stop the contest due to the Indians' overwhelming domination.

In the higher weight categories, Muskan (75kg) won 5:0 against Toirova Oysha of Uzbekistan while Priyanka (+80kg) recorded a dominant 5:0 win over Panar Seithkankyz of Kazakhstan.

In the U-23 men's category, three Indian boxers advanced to the finals.

Vishvanath Suresh (50kg) delivered a commanding 5:0 win over his Philippines opponent, while Ganga (55kg) edged past Japan with a 3:2 split decision. (PTI)

Satwik-Chirag return to spearhead India's campaign at Japan Open

TOKYO, July 13: Fresh from ending a two-year title drought and returning after a brief injury layoff, India's top men's doubles pair of Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty will spearhead the country's campaign at the USD 950,000 Japan Open Super 750 badminton tournament beginning here on Tuesday.

The third-seeded duo, who pulled out of the Indonesia Open last month after Satwik aggravated a recurring shoulder injury, will be eager to resume from where they left off after ending a two-year title drought with the Singapore

Open crown.

They begin their campaign against Denmark's Daniel Lundgaard and Mads Vestergaard.

India's singles challenge will once again rest on Lakshya Sen, P V Sindhu and the rapidly rising Ayush Shetty, while several doubles combinations will look to make deep runs at one of the biggest events on the BWF World Tour.

Lakshya, a finalist at the All England Championships earlier this year, will open his campaign against Japan's Koki Watanabe. The

world No. 14 has enjoyed a steady season with multiple quarterfinal appearances, though his early exit at the Indonesia Open came as a surprise.

Ayush, who has emerged as one of India's brightest prospects, faces a stern opening test against second seed and former world champion Kunlavut Vitidsarn of Thailand. The 20-year-old has continued his upward trajectory after winning the US Open Super 300 last year and finishing runner-up at the Badminton Asia Championships this season. (PTI)

What to know about new rules and technology behind FIFA World Cup's most contentious calls

ATLANTA, July 13: It was another game-changing moment at the World Cup that had more to do with television replays in a room far away than a moment of brilliance on the field.

The sending off of Switzerland's Breel Embolo in Saturday's quarterfinal game against Argentina was the latest call that may have left fans scratching their heads, not least because of the confusing nature of the newly implemented law that swung the match.

It is called the "mistaken identity" rule. Yet, technically, Embolo was not shown a second yellow card — resulting in a red — for a case of mistaken identity. It was because the referee Joao Pinheiro did not see in real time that the forward had simulated a foul under a challenge from Argentina's Leandro Paredes.

Paredes was initially shown a yellow card, which is a key factor. Under FIFA rules, because Paredes was shown a card, the video assistant referee (VAR) can intervene and recommend that the on-field official review the sideline monitor.

After review, the referee deemed Embolo to have committed a "clear simulation" and showed him a second yellow card and sent him off.

The rules state that the VAR can assist when the referee penalises the "wrong team for an offence that results in a red or yellow card being shown to the wrong

player."

It was a pivotal point in the match, coming five minutes after Switzerland had made it 1-1. Argentina won 3-1 after extra time.

"The referee made the wrong decision," Switzerland coach Murat Yakin said. "I know they will protect their referee, but this rule destroyed our game today, and it's very painful, and to be eliminated in that way hurts a lot."

It is not the first time at this World Cup that teams have hit out against new rules or technology.

Germany infuriated by disallowed goal

Newly tightened regulations contributed to Germany's shock elimination in the round of 32.

Defender Jonathan Tah's potentially game-winning goal in extra time against Paraguay was ruled out after VAR review for a foul on goalkeeper Orlando Gill.

Replays showed Germany's Waldemar Anton push Gill to the ground, but the minimal contact led to criticism of the decision. FIFA's referees chief Pierluigi Collina said officials had been told to punish incidents when players try to block opponents and make no attempt to play the ball, especially where goalkeepers are concerned.

Germany went on to lose the game in a penalty shootout, with Tah firing a de-



cisive spot kick over the bar.

Elimination could have a seismic effect on German soccer, with coach Julian Nagelsmann resigning and Jurgen Klopp expected to take over.

High tech ball costs Croatia

The words "connected ball technology" will likely haunt Luka Modric and Croatia for years to come.

The high-tech soccer ball fitted with "advanced sensors" used at this World Cup cost Croatia a dramatic late equaliser against Portugal in the round of 32.

Josko Gvardiol thought he'd scored in added time to make it 2-2, but the goal was ruled offside after VAR review because the in-ball sensors picked up the slightest of touches from Croatia's Igor Mantanovic in the buildup that was undetectable to the naked eye or even video replays.

FIFA said the in-ball sensors, which capture data 500 times per second, were so finely tuned to be "capable of determining any slight contact ... allowing officials an unprecedented level of data to

make fast, accurate decisions." Croatia coach Zlatko Dalic, who has since stepped down, was not impressed. "All these decisions take the joy out of football," he said.

Egypt heartbroken against Argentina

It was shaping up to be one of the great World Cup upsets. Egypt led 2-0 against defending champion Argentina in the round of 16 and might have been 3-0 up if not for VAR.

With the score at 1-0 in the second half, Egypt's Mostafa Zico finished off a sweeping attack. But wild celebrations were cut short when a foul on Argentina's Lisandro Martinez earlier in the move was confirmed on video review, and the goal was disallowed.

Argentina staged a spectacular late comeback to win 3-2.

Egypt coach Hassan Hassan launched a furious tirade.

"We have suffered injustice," he said. The Egyptian soccer federation went further.

"Several key incidents raised serious concerns and left profound questions about the consistency and fairness of decisions that directly influenced the course of the game," it said.

Questions were raised about the amount of time between the foul on Martinez, which happened deep in Egypt's half, and the goal at the other end of the

field.

FIFA referees chief Collina responded to criticism to say there was "no defined limit regarding either the distance from goal or the amount of time between the incident and the goal."

"Nobody can question the integrity of the FIFA World Cup match officials," he added.

A double blow for Norway against England

The high-tech sensor was called into action again as England beat Norway 2-1 in the quarter-finals.

Norway's players and staff were adamant the ball hit a cable that suspends overhead cameras in the buildup to Jude Bellingham's equalising goal in the first half. If it had, play would have been stopped.

But FIFA insisted there was no contact, saying the sensor "showed no peak in the heartbeat of the ball when in the air, and therefore no evidence that the ball touched the overhead wire."

Norway also had a goal disallowed when the score was 1-1 after VAR spotted a foul by Erling Haaland on England's Elliot Anderson. The infringement came before the corner was taken and, under new rules to try to limit fouls by attacking teams during corner routines, VAR is allowed to intervene regarding incidents that happen even before the ball is kicked. (AP)