

6 **NATION**

7 **NE**

- BJP demands apology from Kejriwal, Congress after Tahir Hussain conviction
- Posters targeting Akhilesh, Mulayam trigger political row in UP
- Nagaland IED blast: Search operations intensified
- Tripura minister meets Union ministers, seeks help to boost textile sector



27 YEARS OF DEDICATED JOURNALISM

www.thehillstimes.in

THE HILLS TIMES

PUBLISHED SIMULTANEOUSLY FROM GUWAHATI & DIPHU

Voice of the hills people

Vol .No. III Issue No. 128 RNI-ASSENSG/2023/86488

GUWAHATI, WEDNESDAY, JULY 15, 2026

PAGES 8 PRICE ₹ 8

Uproar in Assembly over delay in granting ST status to 6 communities • Ranoj Pegu's reply fails to satisfy Oppn

Congress, Rajior Dal MLAs stage walkout



GUWAHATI, July 14: Opposition Congress and Rajior Dal on Tuesday staged a walkout in the Assam assembly over delay in according Scheduled Tribe status to six indigenous communities of the state.

Leader of the Opposition Wajed Ali Choudhury raised the issue as Special Mention under Rule 301, and sought to know when will the ST status be accorded to the communities.

"Why is it taking so much time? The government has so far made repeated announcements, but nothing concrete has come out. At what stage is the decision of the state

and the Centre pending?" the senior Congress leader said.

Replying to the discussion, Assam Tribal Affairs (Plain) Minister Ranoj Pegu said a Group of Ministers (GoM) has already submitted its report in the assembly.

"After that, some groups concerned gave their suggestions and a few of those have been incorporated. That is why we could not send the report to Delhi. Thereafter, the assembly elections took place," he said.

The chief minister has approved the modifications and it will now be sent to the Centre for further action, Pegu said.

When the minister did not give any deadline to accord ST status to the six communities, Rajior MLA Akhil interrupted and asked when it would take place.

With no answer from Pegu, Congress and Rajior Dal MLAs exited the House in protest.

Assam's Moran, Motok, Chutia, Tai-Ahom, Koch-Rajbongshi and Tea-Tribes communities have been demanding ST status for many years.

The GoM had submitted an interim report in the assembly in November last year with its recommendations on the demand for ST status. (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Fresh rain wreaks havoc in four Arunachal districts



ITANAGAR, July 14: Fresh floods, landslides, and heavy rain affected four districts of Arunachal Pradesh in the last 24 hours, damaging houses and public infrastructure, while the number of people affected by the monsoon deluge has risen to 1,02,917 across the state, an official report said on Tuesday.

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

The daily situation report of the State Emergency Operation Centre (SEOC) said that Kamle, Pakke Kessang, Kra Daadi and East Kameng were the districts newly affected during the last 24 hours.

The SEOC said Upper Siang remains the worst-affected district with about 49,259 people impacted, followed by Siang (25,365), Kra Daadi (13,731), East Kameng (6,146) and Namsai (2,657).

While Kamle reported one incident each of heavy rainfall and flooding, Pakke Kessang witnessed one landslide, Kra Daadi recorded three floods and three landslide incidents, while East Kameng reported two flood incidents.

In Kamle district, Kamporjo

circle and Yukar village were affected. In Pakke Kessang, the affected area was Pijirang circle, including Pakro village. Fresh damage was also reported from Nyorig, Tali, Pipsorang and Gangte circles in Kra Daadi district, covering Ruhi, Jha, Tali Town, Tali-Pipsorang road, Balo and Pha villages.

In East Kameng district, Seppa circle, including Type-III Colony and Seppa town, was affected.

No fresh death, injury or missing case was reported during the last 24 hours.

The report said 17 kutchas houses were severely damaged by floods in Kamle district. In Kra Daadi, floods damaged four kutchas houses, one hut and 16 pucca houses. Fresh infrastructure damage was also reported, including one road in Pakke Kessang damaged by a landslide, one bridge and two roads in Kra Daadi damaged by floods and landslides, besides two hostels that were completely destroyed.

In East Kameng, two retaining walls suffered severe and complete damage due to floods in the past 24 hours. Flash floods triggered by incessant rains have washed away an 84-metre (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Litterateur Geeta Upadhyay dies at 87



GUWAHATI, July 14: Noted litterateur, translator and academician, Padma Shri awardee Geeta Upadhyay, died due to age-related ailments in Assam's Tezpur.

She was 87.

A social worker, she was the first Gorkha woman from Assam to obtain a post-graduate degree and was the founder-president of the Assam chapter of the Bharatiya Gorkha Parisangh (BGP), an all-India organisation of the Gorkhas.

Upadhyay was briefly admitted to a private hospital in Tezpur and returned home on Monday afternoon after recovery. She, however, fell ill shortly and died around 9 pm.

"Deeply saddened by the passing of Smt. Geeta Upadhyay, a distinguished educationist and author who immensely contributed to Assamese and Nepali literature," chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said in a social media post.

Honoured with the Padma Shri and the 2026 Sati Sadhani Award, her legacy will continue to inspire generations, he added.

"My heartfelt condolences to her family, admirers and well-wishers in this hour of grief. Prayers for the 'sadgati' of the departed soul," Sarma said. Condoling the death of Upadhyay, BGP, Assam, has declared a week-long mourning from Tuesday, its general secretary Nanda Kirati Dewan said.

Born on February 14, 1939, at Gangmouthan in the then Darrang district (now Biswanath district) of Assam, Upadhyay hailed from a distinguished family.

She was the granddaughter of freedom fighter Chhabilal Upadhyaya, who was also the first president (selected) of Assam Pradesh Congress Committee.

Retiring as the head of the Political Science Department of Sibsagar College, Upadhyay's contributions to both (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

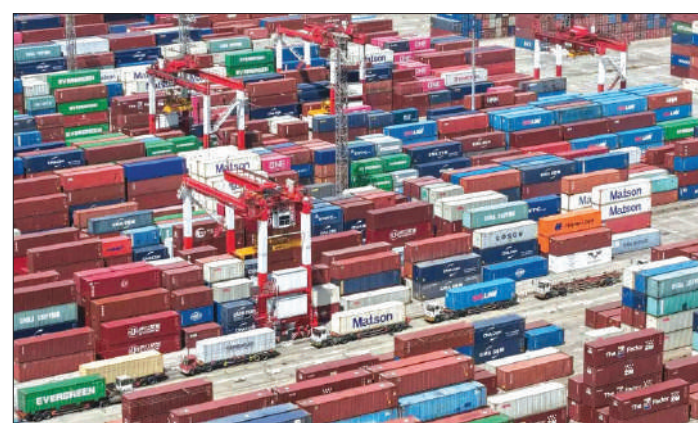
India, China trade rises to USD 91.72 bn in first 6-month

BEIJING, July 14: China's exports to India increased by 21.8 per cent in the first half of 2026 to USD 79.41 billion, while Indian exports to China rose 37.2 per cent to USD 12.31 billion, according to data released by Chinese customs on Tuesday.

The bilateral trade in the six months rose to USD 91.72 billion, registering a 23.6 per cent increase, as trade volumes increased on both sides.

The trade deficit, a major concern for India, rose to USD 67.1 billion in the first half of the year as Chinese exports continued to surge. As per Chinese Customs data, China's exports to India rose to USD 79.41 billion, while its imports from India surged by 37.2 per cent to USD 12.31 billion.

The major products of Chinese exports to India included electrical and electronic equipment, includ-



ing telecom gear, smartphone/PCB parts, semiconductors, lithium-ion batteries, chargers, servers, cables, industrial machinery and computers, organic chemicals, plastics and polymers. Indian exports to China included minerals and mineral ores, refined fuels and petroleum

products, organic chemicals, electronics, agriculture and marine products, base metals and finished goods, gems, jewellery and precious stones, pharmaceuticals and related items. The fastest-growing Indian exports to China included Printed Circuit Boards (PCBs),

OLED/Display Modules, Refined Petroleum, and light naphtha, as per Chinese customs data.

India's bilateral trade with China last year totalled USD 151.1 billion, while Delhi's trade deficit with Beijing widened to USD 112.16 billion during the period.

India's exports to China rose 36.66 per cent to USD 19.47 billion during the last fiscal year, while imports increased 16 per cent to USD 131.63 billion. The trade deficit swelled to an all-time high of USD 112.6 billion in 2025-26 as against USD 99.2 billion in 2024-25.

India has been pressing China to open its IT, pharma and agricultural products, which are India's strong areas, but with little success.

Early this month, Indian Ambassador Vikram Doraiswami said that China importing more Indian products, (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Over six crore tourists visited Assam in last 10 years: Tourism Minister

GUWAHATI, July 14: Over six crore tourists, including 2.4 lakh foreign visitors, visited Assam in the last 10 years, the state Assembly was informed on Tuesday.

Replying to a query by Congress MLA Rekiuddin Ahmed, Tourism Minister Ajanta Neog said a total of 6,04,85,638 visitors toured Assam from 2016-17 to 2025-26.

Out of them, 2,41,192 were foreign tourists from different countries of the world, she added.

Neog informed the House that the highest 98,31,141 tourists, including 18,946 foreigners, came to the Northeastern state in 2022-23, just after the COVID-19 pandemic.

The lowest tourist footfall was recorded in 2020-21 when just 13,52,037 people, including 347 foreign nationals, visited the state due to the pandemic, she added.

Some of the countries from where the largest number of for-



ign tourists visited Assam are from UK, France, UAE, Australia, USA, Switzerland, Nepal, Bangladesh, Canada, Sri Lanka, Japan, Spain, Belgium and Israel, the minister said.

She also said that Australia, Japan and 27 countries of the European Union have recently reviewed their advisories against visiting Assam as the law and order situation of the state has improved considerably. (PTI)

'Assam's debt rose 4.5 times to ₹1.62 lakh cr in last 10 yrs'

GUWAHATI, July 14: The overall debt of Assam has increased more than 4.5 times to ₹1.62 lakh crore in the last 10 years, after the BJP came to power, the state assembly was informed on Tuesday.

Replying to a set of queries raised by a number of opposition MLAs, finance minister Jayanta Malla Baruah in written answers said that Assam had an outstanding debt of ₹35,690 crore as on March 31, 2016.

"As per the latest information from the Accountant General, the total debt of Assam stood at 1,61,761 crore as on March 31, 2025," he added. Out of the total liabilities, ₹18,582 crore are interest-free 50-year loans, the minister told the House. "Therefore, Assam's total loans with interest is ₹1,43,179 crore," he said.

Baruah added that the state has paid ₹9,467.75 crore as interest to various lenders in the 2024-25 fiscal alone. (PTI)

Assam governor facilitates medal-winning para-athletes



GUWAHATI, July 14: Assam Governor Lakshman Prasad Acharya on Tuesday felicitated the state's medal-winning para-athletes in recognition of their exceptional performances at various national and international competitions.

He commended their resilience, dedication and indomitable spirit, describing them as role models who have brought pride to Assam through their achievements.

The athletes honoured were Anishmita Konwar, Ababil Ali, Yesmina Khatun, Surja Saikia, Kutup Ali and Narzima Sulana.

During the interaction with the para-athletes, the governor appreciated Konwar for winning gold medals at the Asian Youth Para Games 2025 in Dubai and the National Para Athletics Championships.

He also appreciated the efforts of the coaches and support staff in nurturing sporting talent and extended his best wishes to the athletes for their future competitions.

The athletes were accompanied by the general secretary of the Paralympic Association of Assam Rajib Dey. (PTI)

He congratulated Ababil Ali for securing a silver medal at the World Para Athletics Grand Prix Championships, Khatun and Saikia for winning gold medals at the National Para Swimming Championships 2026, and Kutup Ali for clinching the gold medal in the long jump event at the National Para Athletics Championships 2026.

Acharya said that their achievements reflect the immense potential of Assam's para sports community and expressed hope that their success would inspire more young people to pursue sports with determination and confidence.

He also appreciated the efforts of the coaches and support staff in nurturing sporting talent and extended his best wishes to the athletes for their future competitions.

The athletes were accompanied by the general secretary of the Paralympic Association of Assam Rajib Dey. (PTI)

Assam flood situation worsens; toll rises to 3

GUWAHATI, July 14: The flood situation in Assam worsened on Tuesday with the death toll rising to three and the number of affected people increasing nearly fourfold to over 37,000, according to an official bulletin.

The latest fatality was reported from the Naduar revenue circle in Sonitpur district during the last 24 hours, the Assam State Disaster Management Authority (ASDMA) said.

Floodwaters have inundated six districts - Sonitpur, Dibrugarh, Lakhimpur, Dhemaji, Jorhat and Sivasagar, affecting 12 revenue circles and 99 villages, the bulletin said.

A total of 37,032 people have been affected by the deluge, with Lakhimpur emerging as the worst-hit district where 35,696 people have been impacted. On Monday, more than 9,600 people across six districts were affected by the floods.

The affected people are being provided relief materials through 20 distribution centres, the ASDMA said.

The State Disaster Response Force (SDRF) rescued 16 people from Sonitpur district during the past 24 hours.

Floodwaters have submerged 1,103.94 hectares of cropland, while two animals were washed away and another 16,139 animals, including poultry, have been affected, the bulletin said. (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Solitary bees are important pollinators that help maintain healthy ecosystems

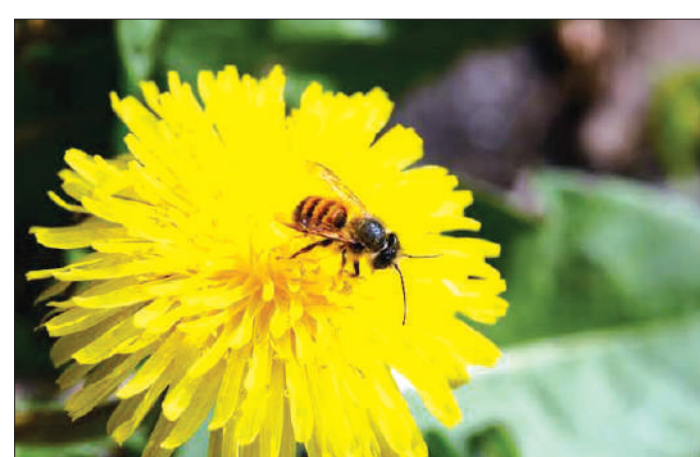
Rare bee species discovered in Arunachal's Siang Valley

ITANAGAR, July 14: Researchers have discovered two new species of rare solitary bees in Arunachal Pradesh's Siang Valley, highlighting the rich biodiversity of the Eastern Himalayas and the need to protect the region's fragile ecosystem, officials said on Tuesday.

The two species - Elaphropoda Triangulata and Habropoda Adi - were discovered by researchers from the Ashoka Trust for Research in Ecology and the Environment (ATREE), Bengaluru, during the recent Siang Expedition. The findings have been published in the European Journal of Taxonomy, the officials said.

The researchers said Elaphropoda Triangulata was named after the triangular markings on its abdomen, while Habropoda Adi was named in honour of the Adi indigenous community of Arunachal Pradesh.

According to the study, each species is currently known from



only one male specimen, making the discovery significant. The researchers said more surveys are needed to understand their distribution, ecology and conservation status.

Solitary bees are important pollinators that help maintain healthy ecosystems and support agriculture. Unlike honeybees, they do

not live in colonies and usually nest alone.

The researchers cautioned that habitat loss, infrastructure development and other human activities could threaten the survival of these newly discovered species.

They stressed the need to conserve the forests and natural habitats of the Eastern Himalayas, one

of the world's recognised biodiversity hotspots.

The discovery adds to the growing list of new species being reported from Arunachal Pradesh, which is known for its rich wildlife and largely unexplored forests.

Welcoming the development, Arunachal Pradesh deputy chief minister Chowna Mein, in a social media post, said the discovery of the two rare solitary bee species reflects the state's extraordinary natural wealth and scientific importance.

He said the findings not only highlight the exceptional biodiversity of the Eastern Himalayas, but also reinforce the need to conserve the region's fragile ecosystems.

Mein congratulated the researchers from ATREE for the achievement, and said such discoveries strengthen the state's position as a globally significant biodiversity hotspot, deserving sustained conservation efforts. (PTI)

Kohima DC asks supervisors to master SIR guidelines

HT Correspondent

DIMAPUR, July 14: Kohima Deputy Commissioner (DC) and District Election Officer (DEO) B Henok Buchem on Tuesday directed supervisors undergoing training for the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of the electoral roll to thoroughly understand the Election Commission of India (ECI) guidelines and procedures to ensure a smooth and credible revision process.

Addressing the training programme at the DC's conference hall, Buchem stressed that the primary objective of the SIR exercise is to include all eligible voters and exclude all ineligible persons from the electoral roll.

He cautioned that the ECI closely monitors the exercise for any lapses and said officials must strictly adhere to the prescribed rules and procedures.

Emphasising the role of Electoral Registration Officers (EROs), Assistant Electoral Registration Officers (AEROs) and supervisors as future master trainers for Booth Level Officers (BLOs), he said they should have a clear understanding of every aspect of the revision process, as they would also interact with political parties, civil society organisations, community leaders and the public.

The DC asked them to keep the relevant provisions, instructions and frequently asked questions "at their fingertips" so they could confidently address queries.

As part of the revision process, training programmes are being conducted for electoral officials, including EROs, AEROs, supervisors and BLOs, to familiarise them with the guidelines, procedures and documentation required for the exercise.

India launches new services output index

14 of 19 sectors post double-digit growth in April

NEW DELHI, July 14: India on Tuesday launched a new monthly indicator to track activity in its services economy, with the first trial release showing broad-based expansion across key sectors and double-digit growth in 14 of 19 sub-sectors in April 2026.

The Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI) released the first sub-sectoral Index of Services Production (ISP), aimed at providing a more timely measure of activity in the formal services sector, which accounts for more than half of India's economic output.

The trial index, based on the 2024-25 base year, covers about 60 per cent of the services sector and tracks monthly movements across areas, including trade, transport, telecommunications, banking, IT services, real estate and hospitality.

The ministry said the index will be published on the 29th of every month, while an overall services production index will be introduced later after assessing the stability of the trial series and expanding coverage.

Wholesale trade, retail, accommodation



tion and food, road transport, air transport, telecommunications, and banking are among the sub-sectors, covering about 60 per cent of the services sector.

Fourteen of the 19 sub-sectors posted double-digit year-on-year growth in April, with accommodation and food services leading the expansion at 37.2 per cent, followed by retail trade at 30.8 per cent, administrative and support services at 28.7 per cent and real estate at 27.7 per cent.

Only railway and air transport posted a decline in April, according to the trial ISP. "The ISP (Index of Services Production) represents an important milestone in strengthening India's statistical system and improving the measurement of the services sector, which accounts

for more than half of the country's economic activity," MoSPI said in a statement.

Air transport declined by 13.9 per cent, and railway transport was down by 0.4 per cent in April.

Top sub-sectors reporting strong growth in April were 'accommodation and food' (37.2 per cent), retail trade (30.8 per cent), administrative and support services (28.7 per cent) and real estate (27.7 per cent), according to the index.

MoSPI said the release of sub-sectoral ISPs will provide, for the first time, a monthly measure of short-term movements in India's formal services sector, with a coverage of about 60 per cent. "Based on its data sources, namely, GST and Administrative Data, ISP would cover the formal sector enterprises only."

"Accordingly, services which are not covered in ISP are those which are either related to core government activities or are dominated by non-market activities and the informal sector," the ministry said.

Subsequent ISPs will be released on

the 29th of every month.

Briefing media on the trial ISP release, Chief Economic Adviser V Anantha Nageswaran said there is work ahead...the index measures volumes, but the data arrives as values. So, everything depends on how we adjust for prices.

"Building price indices for services is, of course, not an easy task, as it is the case for goods in general, and that is the most valuable investment we can make, and we will continue to make in producing this index of services production," he said.

Coverage will widen, with inclusion of health services, education, and own dwelling businesses sub-sectors that increase coverage to 85 to 90 per cent of the formal services sector activity in the economy.

Dilip Singh, Additional General Manager, MoSPI, said the work is in progress to compile ISP of the sub-sectors, like 'health and residential care', education and ownership of dwelling based on administrative data to ensure coverage of more than 80 per cent of the services activities of the economy. (PTI)

ICICI Prudential launches pension plan focused on retirement security

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, July 14: ICICI Prudential Life Insurance has introduced ICICI Pru Gold Pension Savings, a bonus-linked pension plan aimed at helping customers build a secure retirement corpus while offering flexibility to meet financial emergencies.

The company said the launch comes at a time when India is witnessing a rapid demographic transition, with the number of senior citizens projected to reach 230 million by 2036, making retirement planning increasingly important.

The pension plan is designed to provide capital protection along with bonus-linked growth during the accumulation phase.

It also offers the flexibility of partial withdrawals in the event of

major life events or critical illnesses, enabling policyholders to address urgent financial needs without compromising their long-term retirement goals.

Vikas Gupta, Chief Product Officer of ICICI Prudential Life Insurance, said the product has been developed to help customers transition from active earning years to retirement with financial security and dignity.

He said the plan combines guaranteed retirement benefits with flexibility, including an emergency withdrawal facility of up to 25 per cent of the accumulated corpus and complimentary health check-ups.

To illustrate the product, the company cited the example of a 40-year-old individual investing ₹1.5 lakh annually for 10 years.

Based on assumed returns of 8 per cent per annum, the investment could accumulate to a retirement corpus of around ₹44 lakh by the age of 60, while a 4 per cent return scenario would generate approximately ₹25 lakh.

The plan allows policyholders to withdraw up to 60 per cent of the retirement corpus as a tax-free lump sum at maturity, with the remaining amount available for purchasing an annuity to provide lifelong regular income.

According to the company, the product combines capital protection, bonus-driven growth, tax-efficient retirement benefits, emergency liquidity and health management support to help individuals build long-term financial independence during retirement.

HDFC Bank Parivartan impacts 9.6 lakh through skilling initiatives

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, July 14: Marking World Youth Skills Day 2026, HDFC Bank's corporate social responsibility initiative — Parivartan — announced that it has positively impacted 9.6 lakh individuals through its skill development and livelihood enhancement programmes since inception.

The bank said its skilling strategy combines certified vocational training with livelihood and entrepreneurship initiatives aimed at improving employability and economic self-reliance, particularly among youth, women and underserved communities.

According to HDFC Bank, more than 1.96 lakh young people have undergone formal skill training through industry-aligned and National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC)-affiliated programmes covering sectors such as healthcare, retail, logistics, hospitality, banking, insurance, electric vehicle maintenance, information technology and digital technologies.

The programmes also include soft skills, digital literacy, financial literacy and placement assistance.

In addition to youth skilling, the initiative has supported sustainable livelihoods for over 7.6 lakh women and farmers through training in tailoring, handloom weaving, food processing, poultry farming, dairy management, organic farming, mushroom cultivation and other micro-enterprises.

Beneficiaries have also received mentoring, access to tools, branding, packaging and market linkage support.

The bank said impact assessments indicate that these interventions have strengthened income generation, financial independence and economic resilience, especially among women associated with self-help groups and community enterprises.

Observed globally under the theme "Skills for a Shared Future," World Youth Skills Day 2026 highlights the importance of equipping young people with technical, digital, social and entrepreneurial skills required in a rapidly evolving economy.

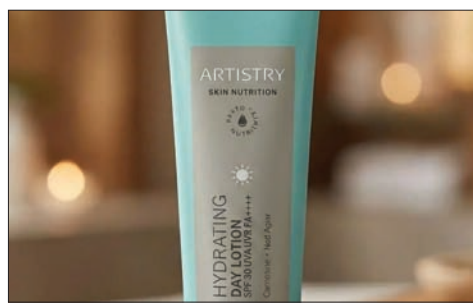
According to the bank's impact assessment for FY 2025-26, training completion rates stood at approximately 85 per cent, while nearly 74 per cent of participants reported improvements in communication skills, digital literacy and interview preparedness.

Placement rates averaged between 44.5 and 45.6 per cent, with several projects recording placement rates of 70 to 92 per cent.

The median monthly income of employed candidates reached approximately ₹15,000, representing nearly a 1.9-fold increase in earning potential after training.

Women accounted for around 56 per cent of participants, while more than 1,000 youth with disabilities benefited from inclusive skilling initiatives.

Amway India launches Artistry Skin Nutrition UV Protect



HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, July 14: Amway India has expanded its skincare portfolio with the launch of Artistry Skin Nutrition Multi-Defense UV Protect, a daily sun protection solution formulated with Nutrilite botanicals and designed to shield the skin from multiple environmental stressors.

The product is the latest addition to the company's Artistry Skin Nutrition range, which focuses on nutrition-inspired skincare by combining botanical ingredients with scientific research to address evolving skincare needs.

Speaking on the launch, Rajneesh Chopra, Managing Director, Amway India, said the Indian skincare market is witnessing growing demand for science-backed and thoughtfully formulated products.

He said the new launch reflects the company's commitment to delivering innovative skincare solutions that blend advanced skin science with the benefits of Nutrilite botanicals.

The Artistry Skin Nutrition Multi-Defense UV Protect offers SPF 50+ and PA++++ broad-spectrum protection against UVA and UVB rays while also helping defend the skin against visible light, including blue light, infrared radiation and free radicals, which contribute to premature skin ageing.

Amway said Artistry is the only beauty brand backed by Nutrilite, integrating the botanical expertise of the nutrition brand into its skincare formulations.

Contd. from Page 1...

Congress, Rajior Dal MLAs

The report recommended a three-tier reservation classification of STs in the state so that the demand can be met without affecting the reservation of the existing tribal groups. If these communities are granted ST status, they will come under reservation for education and jobs.

It has proposed the formation of a new category of 'ST (Valley)', and inclusion of Tai-Ahom, Chutia, Tea Tribes, and Koch-Rajbongshi (excluding undivided Goalpara) in it.

For Moran, Motok and Koch-Rajbongshi (Goalpara), it said they can be included in 'ST (Plains)', and the existing communities in this category "do not have much opposition".

The report also said that dialogue has to continue with all stakeholders for a "conclusive solution", and the final nod has to be given by Parliament through a constitutional amendment. (PTI)

India, China trade rises to

especially pharmaceuticals, coupled with Chinese investments in India, will be "good for the larger country-to-country relationship".

"Obviously, we would like to be able to export more to China. This is nothing unreasonable about suggesting that, particularly in areas where we believe we have a competitive advantage like pharmaceuticals," he said while addressing a panel discussion on "protectionism and global economic governance" at the World Peace Forum organised by China's Tsinghua University here on July 4.

"For instance, we're one of the world's big exporters of pharmaceuticals to advanced markets...We think there is a balance of advantage for both countries, including value for China and, of course, value for the relationship," he said in response to a question.

Answering a question on balanced policy between exports and investments, Doraiswami said Chinese investments are also "good for the larger country-to-country relationship".

"On investments in that context, I think as the relationship is moving towards normalisation, the government of India has taken steps to re-establish opportunity for Chinese businesses to invest in the Indian market," he said in apparent reference to the recent easing of restrictions by the Indian government on Chinese investments.

"Indeed, the policy environment has been specifically changed in the last few months to facilitate greater Chinese investment," he said.

Doraiswami also said that the conversation around improving structural issues around trade is also important.

"How do we find ways in which India and China can be connected with a widening basket of goods that both sides can provide each other, but also a sense that reasonable mechanisms to protect consumers can be applied in a way that enables India also to export more of the goods that it can export elsewhere in the world also to China," he said. (PTI)

Fresh rain wreaks havoc

bridge over the Kumei river, isolating eight villages in Kra Daadi district from the rest of Arunachal Pradesh since Monday. Pipsorang Sub-Divisional Officer Yumlam Pulu and Tali East Zilla Parishad Member Rughu Tama visited the disaster-hit sites.

Pulu said that besides the bridge, more than 20 houses on the riverbanks have been destroyed. He urged the public to strictly adhere to the district administration's safety advisories and avoid venturing near the river. At least 1,02,917 people have been affected by the recent monsoon havoc in 466 villages, including 295 circles, in all 26 districts.

The cumulative impact of the monsoon continues to be significant, with 452 kutcha houses, 100 pucca houses, 44 huts and 24 other houses damaged across the state. Around 561.75 hectares of crop area, including 337.75 hectares under horticulture and 224 hectares under agriculture, have been affected. The disasters have also damaged 153 roads, 24 bridges, 26 culverts, 237 drinking water supply systems, 156 power lines, 224 electric poles, 59 government buildings and 19 schools, besides affecting 1,010 hectares of forest area.

The SEOC said Upper Siang remains the worst-affected district with about 49,259 people impacted, followed by Siang (25,365), Kra Daadi (13,731), East Kameng (6,146) and Namsai (2,657). (PTI)

Litterateur Geeta Upadhyay

Nepali and Assamese literature are noted. She won the Sahitya Akademi Translation Prize in 2012 for translating 'Karengor Ligiri' from Assamese to Nepali as 'Darbarki Susare'.

In 2016, Upadhyay won the Sahitya Akademi Award for her Nepali novel 'Janmabhumi Mero Swadesh', based on the life of her grandfather. (PTI)

Assam flood situation worsens

Damage to roads and other infrastructure has also been reported from some of the affected districts, it added. (PTI)

**OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER (PHE),
DIPHU RURAL W/S DIVISION, DIPHU, KARBI ANGLONG
No. PHEE/DIP/R/WS/SOPD/355-63 Dated 13/7/2026**

SHORT NOTICE FOR AUCTION OF SCRAP/CONDEMNED MATERIALS

In pursuance to the approval of KAAC/2024-25-Scrap-4-Pt-I/360-(A) Dated 08/07/2026, the undersigned invites quotations from interested bidders for Auction of Ferrous/Scrap/Condemned materials as per terms and conditions details of which may be obtained from the office of the undersigned. Interested bidders may collect Bid Documents and details from the office of the undersigned during 11AM to 3PM from 14th July 2026 to 4th August 2026.

Sd/-
Executive Engineer (PHE)
Diphu Rural W/S Division

IPRD/ KAAC/ 2026-27/ 88

HDFC BANK
Registered Office: HDFC Bank House, Senapati Bapat Marg, Lower Parel (West), Mumbai - 400 013 and having one of its office as Retail Portfolio Management at HDFC Bank Ltd, 1st Floor, I-Think Techno Campus, Kanjurmarg (East), Mumbai - 400042.

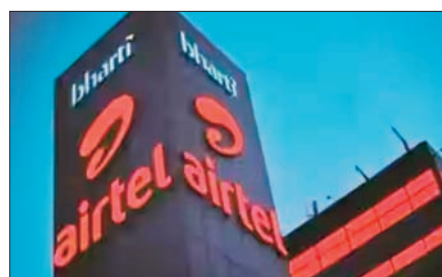
SALE INTIMATION AND NOTICE FOR SALE OF SECURITIES PLEDGED TO HDFC BANK LTD.
The below mentioned Borrowers of HDFC Bank Ltd. (the "Bank") are hereby notified regarding the sale of securities pledged to the Bank, for availing credit facilities in the nature of Loans/Overdraft Against Securities.

Due to persistent default by the Borrowers in making repayment of the outstanding dues as per agreed loans / facilities terms, the below loan / facilities accounts are in delinquent status or classified as NPA (Non-Performing Asset). The Bank has issued multiple notices / loan recall notice to these Borrowers, including the final sale notice on the below-mentioned date whereby, Bank had invoked the pledge and provided 7 days' time to the Borrower to repay the entire outstanding dues in the below accounts, failing which, Bank would be at liberty to sell the pledged securities without issuing further notice in this regard. The Borrowers have neglected and failed to make due repayments, therefore, Bank in exercise of its rights under the loan agreement as a pledgee has decided to sell / dispose off the Securities on or after 22nd July 2026 for recovering the dues owed by the Borrowers to the Bank. The Borrowers are hereby notified to treat this as a notice of sale in compliance of section 176 of the Indian Contract Act, 1872. The Borrowers are, also, notified that, if at any time, the value of the pledged securities falls further due to volatility in the stock market to create further deficiency in the margin requirement then Bank shall at its discretion sell the pledged security within one (1) calendar day, without any further notice in this regard. The Borrower(s) shall remain liable to the Bank for repayment of any remaining outstanding amount, post adjustment of the proceeds from sale of pledged securities.

Sr.	Loan Account Number	Borrower's Name	Outstanding Amount as on 12 th July 2026	Date of Sale Notice
1	XXXXXXXXXX3793	RHEMBOR G SAIBON	9,93,549.64	13-07-2026
2	XXXXXXXXXX6934	JAMES K SANGMA	46,42,718.60	13-07-2026
3	XXXXXXXXXX7572	BRANDON BAZELEY RYMBAI	61,688.25	13-07-2026
4	XXXXXXXXXX9350	PAUL LYNDOH	4,73,010.67	13-07-2026
5	XXXXXXXXXX9146	ABDUS SHUKUR SARKAR	10,08,829.82	13-07-2026

DATE : 15.07.2026
PLACE : MEGHALAYA
Sd/-
HDFC BANK LTD.

Airtel strengthens Odisha network ahead of Puri Rath Yatra



HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, July 14: Bharti Airtel has completed a comprehensive network enhancement programme across Odisha ahead of the annual Puri Rath Yatra, significantly strengthening connectivity to manage the expected surge in voice and data traffic during one of the country's largest religious festivals.

The telecom operator said it has upgraded its network infrastructure in Puri and along major road and rail corridors leading to the holy city.

The enhancements, equipped with 5G technology, are aimed at ensuring uninterrupted voice services and high-speed data connectivity for millions of devotees expected to attend

the festival. Over the past 12 months, Airtel has deployed more than 1,500 new 5G sites across Odisha, expanding its network footprint in all 30 districts and providing enhanced connectivity to over 11 million customers in urban, semi-urban and rural areas.

"Puri Rath Yatra is one of Odisha's most revered and largest public gatherings, attracting millions of devotees from across the country and abroad. Ensuring uninterrupted connectivity during this period is our utmost priority," said Abhirup Chatterjee, Chief Operating Officer, Bharti Airtel.

He added that the extensive network upgrades reaffirm the company's commitment to delivering reliable and high-quality connectivity throughout the festival.

To further enhance customer experience, Airtel Odisha has also introduced Fully Unlimited prepaid plans starting at ₹399, offering unlimited 4G and 5G data along with unlimited voice calls.

The company said the plans are designed to enable customers to stream, work, study and stay connected without daily data restrictions during the festive season.

Cachar drive nets over ₹11 lakh in traffic penalties

Joint enforcement checks nearly 2,350 vehicles, issues 382 challans in crackdown on violations

HT Correspondent

SILCHAR, July 14: A joint enforcement drive carried out across Cachar district between July 4 and July 12 resulted in the detection of numerous traffic and transport violations, with penalties amounting to ₹11,11,500 imposed during the operation.

The district-wide drive was conducted under the direction of the District Magistrate through a coordinated mechanism involving the District Administration, Transport Department, Police, Excise Department and Forest Department.

Enforcement teams carried out intensive inspections at Lalpur, Kalain, Rongpur, Borkhola and Jirighat, checking nearly 2,350 vehicles at major entry points and key road corridors.

The operation followed a joint review meeting held on July 2 at the Office of the District Commissioner, chaired by Food, Public Distribution, Consumer Affairs, Cooperation, Housing and Urban Affairs Minister Kaushik Rai and Cachar Guardian Minister Krishnendu Paul.



The meeting reviewed issues related to road safety, overloading, illegal transportation, traffic management and enforcement of transport regulations.

The ministers directed the district administration to constitute dedicated Joint Task Forces to conduct regular inspections at major entry points to curb overloading, permit violations and other of-

fences under the Motor Vehicles Act. They also emphasised coordinated action among all enforcement agencies to improve road discipline and public safety.

According to the District Transport Office, 382 challans were issued in Cachar between July 1 and July 12, generating penalties of ₹11.11 lakh.

The violations detected included

driving without a valid licence, disobeying traffic signals and lawful directions, riding without helmets, triple riding on two-wheelers, driving without valid insurance, operating vehicles without fitness certificates or permits, failure to produce mandatory documents, overloading of goods vehicles, violation of pollution norms, absence of mandatory reflectors and unauthorised vehicle modifications such as bull bars, crash guards, aftermarket sunroofs and structural extensions.

Officials said the sustained enforcement has improved compliance with road safety regulations, particularly among commercial vehicle operators, and encouraged motorists to carry valid documents and adhere to prescribed safety norms.

The district administration said similar joint enforcement drives will continue across Cachar in the coming weeks and appealed to motorists and transport operators to comply with the Motor Vehicles Act, avoid overloading and follow traffic rules to ensure safer roads.

Three NFR stations redeveloped under Amrit Bharat Station Scheme

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, July 14: Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR) has completed the redevelopment of Majbat, Jalpaiguri Road and Haldibari railway stations under the Amrit Bharat Station Scheme, marking another milestone in the modernisation of railway infrastructure in the region.

The three stations—Majbat in Assam's Rangia Division, Jalpaiguri Road in Alipurduar Division and Haldibari in Katihar Division—have been upgraded to provide improved passenger amenities while reflecting the local heritage and cultural identity of their respective regions.

According to NFR, the redevelopment has been carried out at an estimated cost of ₹10.19 crore for Majbat station, ₹34.80 crore for Jalpaiguri Road station and approximately ₹26 crore for Haldibari station.

The upgraded stations feature modern station buildings, improved circulating areas, spacious waiting halls, enhanced platforms, foot overbridges with lifts where provided, Divyangjan-friendly facilities, modern toilets, advanced



passenger information systems, better lighting, landscaping and other passenger-centric amenities.

NFR said the redevelopment is expected to significantly improve passenger convenience, strengthen regional connectivity, promote tourism and contribute to the socio-economic development of the surrounding areas.

The railway stated that the upgraded stations will also support local economic growth by promoting tourism, trade and em-

ployment opportunities.

Initiatives such as One Station One Product are expected to provide a platform for local artisans and indigenous products while transforming railway stations into vibrant public spaces with improved multimodal connectivity.

NFR said the redevelopment reflects Indian Railways' vision of creating modern, inclusive and passenger-friendly transport hubs across the country.

ONGC contains gas bubbling at Sivasagar site

HT Correspondent

SIVASAGAR, July 14: Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) has successfully brought under control a localized low-intensity gas bubbling incident reported at Napam Baruwati in the Geleki Field under its Assam Asset. According to an ONGC corporate communication, the gas bubbling was confined to a single location.

Following the incident, the company deployed a multidisciplinary team of experts to secure the site, which was barricaded and placed under continuous surveillance with regular methane monitoring.

The company stated that only very low concentrations of methane were detected during monitoring using hand-held gas detectors. ONGC also verified all available pipeline drawings and conducted physical inspections using underground pipeline-locating equipment.

The investigations confirmed that no buried pipeline exists beneath or in the vicinity of the affected location. To contain the gas seepage, the site was excavated and the pit was sealed on July 13 using a chemical barite treatment followed by a cement-concrete mixture. The company said the bubbling subsided after the treatment and the situation is now stable and under control.

Reiterating its commitment to public safety and environmental protection, ONGC said it would continue to monitor the site while maintaining transparent communication with all stakeholders.

Summer workshop begins in Tamulpur to promote traditional arts



HT Correspondent

KOKRAJHAR, July 14: The Assembly Constituency-wise Summer Workshop 2026 was inaugurated at Tamulpur Government Middle School on Tuesday under the drama workshop section as part of an initiative to promote traditional art forms among children and youth.

The workshop has been organised by the Department of Cultural Affairs in collaboration with the Tamulpur District Administration.

The initiative aims to preserve and promote folk culture, music, dance, theatre and other traditional art forms by passing on the region's cultural heritage to the younger generation.

It also seeks to nurture the creative talents of children and young participants through structured training.

The inaugural programme was attended by former nominated council member Hemanta Kumar Rabha, Assistant Commissioners Kunal Pathak and Bidisha Bora, Principal of Tamulpur Junior College Asim Deka, Cultural Officer Siddhartha Das, senior citizen Girish Chandra Mahanta, cultural activists Abhijit Das and Chinmoy Pathak, along with students and other participants.

Similar inaugural programmes under the Summer Workshop initiative were also held at various locations across the district, including the Goreswar Assembly Constituency.

The workshop will continue until July 28, providing participants with training in various cultural and performing arts.

BTC inaugurates temporary bamboo bridge over Baonai River



HT Correspondent

KOKRAJHAR, July 14: Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) Chief Executive Member Hagrama Mohilary on Tuesday inaugurated a 600-metre-long temporary bamboo bridge over the Baonai River at Tumbagan Ghat, providing much-needed connectivity to residents of the border areas of Kokrajhar and Dhubri districts.

Constructed by the BTC Government at its own expense, the bridge has been built as an interim measure to ease the hardships faced by local residents, who had long depended on a small wooden boat to cross the river due to the absence of a permanent bridge.

Speaking at the inauguration, Mohilary said the temporary bridge was constructed to address the con-

nectivity problems and daily inconvenience faced by people in the area.

He expressed hope that the structure would serve commuters until a permanent reinforced cement concrete (RCC) bridge is completed.

The BTC chief informed that the government has already sanctioned ₹3.41 crore under a World Bank-funded programme for the construction of a permanent RCC bridge at the same location and said work on the project would commence shortly.

Following the inauguration, Mohilary interacted with local residents and heard their grievances and developmental demands. He assured them that the BTC Government would prioritise the construction of roads and bridges to strengthen connectivity and improve public infrastructure in the region.

The programme was attended by BTC Executive Member Mrithunjay Narzary, MCLA Antaj Ali, Additional Chief Engineer, PWD (BTC), Jaga Mohan Basumatary, former MCLA Debojit Narzary, senior government officials and a large number of local residents.

KAAC CEM donates first MLA salary to CM's Relief Fund



HT Bureau

DIPHU, July 14: Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC) Chief Executive Member and MLA of the 111 Rongkhang Assembly constituency, Tuliram Ronghang, has donated his first salary as a Member of the Assam Legislative Assembly to the Chief Minister's Relief Fund as a gesture of support for people affected by emergencies and natural calamities.

Ronghang handed over the cheque to Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma at Dispur on Tuesday.

Speaking on the occasion, Ronghang said it was a privilege to contribute his first salary to the relief fund, describing the donation as a small gesture of solidarity with people facing hardship and emergencies.

"Public service is a responsibility built on compassion, accountability and a commitment to the welfare of our people. I remain grateful for the opportunity to serve and will continue striving to contribute in every way I can for the greater good of Assam and Karbi Anglong," he said.

The contribution reflects Ronghang's commitment to public service and his continued support for initiatives aimed at the welfare of the people of Assam and Karbi Anglong.

Kokrajhar DC reviews farmer registry drive

HT Correspondent

KOKRAJHAR, July 14: District Commissioner Pankaj Chakravarty on Tuesday reviewed the progress of the Farmer Registry drive in Kokrajhar district and directed officials to accelerate enrolment through better coordination and intensified field-level efforts.

The review meeting, held at the Bodoland Administrative Staff College, was attended by the Additional Deputy Commissioner (Agriculture), Circle Officers, Lot Mandals/Land Revenue Assistants, District Agriculture Officer, Divisional Forest Officer, Project Director of the Integrated Tribal Development Project (ITDP), forest officials, MIS personnel, Agriculture Development Officers and Agriculture Extension Assistants.

The meeting assessed the progress of farmer enrolment, the organisation of special registration camps, resolution of mutation-related issues, registration of eligible beneficiaries holding Forest Rights Act (FRA) pattas, and strategies for the timely implementation of the programme.

Chakravarty stressed the importance of close coordination among all departments, proactive monitoring at the field level and the prompt resolution of operational bottlenecks to ensure that all eligible farmers are enrolled within the stipulated timeframe.

Nagaon woman accuses businessman husband of years of domestic abuse

HT Correspondent

NAGAON, July 14: A woman from Nagaon has accused her husband, a prominent local businessman, of subjecting her to years of physical and mental abuse, prompting police to launch an investigation following the registration of an FIR.

Addressing the media, Kakoli Saikia, a resident of Panigaon, alleged that she had suffered continuous domestic violence at the hands of her husband, Debajit Saikia, also known as "Bacha", since their marriage in 2007.

The couple has two daughters. Kakoli alleged that the abuse began shortly after their marriage.

She claimed that a back injury she sustained a few years ago, which was reportedly described at the time as the result of a bathroom fall, had in fact been caused by an assault.

She further alleged that her husband frequently assaulted her over minor is-

sues, made derogatory remarks about her parents, humiliated her during public events and prevented her from completing her law degree and taking up a teaching job after graduation.

Kakoli also alleged that her 11-year-old daughter was assaulted by her father.

Referring to ongoing family disputes, including a domestic violence case reportedly filed by her mother-in-law against Debajit Saikia, she said she had sought a divorce but that her husband had refused.

"I only want to live free from him and ensure the safety of my two daughters. I do not want any property or money from him," she told reporters. She also alleged that her husband had threatened to kill her soon after their marriage.

Following the complaint, Kakoli lodged an FIR at the Itachali Police Outpost in the presence of State Women's Commission member Mamoni Bora.

Police subsequently conducted her medical examination.

According to police sources, Debajit Saikia, who owns two business dealerships, was summoned to the police station on Tuesday.

Police said he later left the premises in a vehicle and has been directed to surrender his licensed firearm. A search has been launched to locate him.

Expressing support for the complainant, Mamoni Bora said the State Women's Commission would stand by Kakoli Saikia and oppose all forms of violence against women.

Kakoli has also appealed to the Chief Minister for intervention and justice. Police said the matter is under investigation.

The allegations made by the complainant are yet to be tested in court.

The accused's response or version was not available at the time of filing this report.

Fifteen-day summer workshop begins in Haflong

HT Correspondent

HAFLONG, July 14: A 15-day summer workshop aimed at promoting cultural awareness and youth development began on Tuesday at Saraswati Vidya Mandir School, Boro Haflong, under the Haflong Legislative Assembly Constituency in Dima Hasao district.

The workshop is being organised by the Department of Cultural Affairs in association with the Dima Hasao district administration. More than 30 students from Classes VI to XII from different schools participated on the opening day, with the number of participants expected to increase in the coming days.

North Cachar Hills Autonomous Council Executive Member Donpainon Thaosen attended the inaugural programme as the chief guest.

Additional Deputy Commissioner Shaurya Sharma, District Information and Public Relations Officer Purabi Phonglo, and other dignitaries were also present.

During the 15-day programme, participants will receive training in various art forms, including



singing, dancing and terracotta making.

District Cultural Officer Gautam Bodo said the workshop aims to help students connect with their cultural roots while developing a deeper appreciation of their unique heritage.

At the same time, he said, exposure to modern art forms would encourage a well-rounded artistic outlook among the participants.

A similar workshop will commence at PM Shri Maibang Higher Secondary School under Maibang Sub-Division on Wednesday.

Bishnuram Nunisa honoured with Kridabandhu Award on 60th birthday

HT Bureau

DIPHU, July 14: Veteran sports administrator Bishnuram Nunisa was felicitated with the Kridabandhu Award by the Human Power Foundation on the occasion of his 60th birthday in recognition of his outstanding contribution to the development of sports in Assam.

A delegation of the Human Power Foundation, led by its president Bidya Ingti and secretary Anjana Das, visited Nunisa's residence at Sunderpur, Guwahati, where he was honoured in the traditional Assamese manner with a gamosa, chele, japi, citation, memento and a tree sapling.

Noted social worker Karabi Bora was also present during the programme.

The Human Power Foundation conferred the Kridabandhu (Friend of Sports) Award in recognition of Nunisa's long-standing contribution to the promotion and development of sports in the state.

Over the years, Nunisa has held several key positions in sports administration, including Vice-Presi-



dent of the Sepaktakraw Federation of India, Vice-President of the Assam Olympic Association, Vice-President of the Assam Gymnastic Association, Joint Secretary of the Assam Cricket Association, President of the Karbi Anglong Cricket Association, and Joint Secretary of the Karbi Anglong District Sports Association.

He currently serves as the General Secretary of the Assam Sepaktakraw Association, where he continues to work towards the promotion and development of the sport across the state.

Extending their best wishes, members of the Human Power Foundation expressed hope that Nunisa would continue his dedicated efforts towards the advancement of sports and the welfare of athletes in Assam.

Assam's Sanchipat art featured at Bharat Tex 2026

Nagaon's Sujit Das showcases centuries-old manuscript painting tradition at Indie Haat

HT Correspondent

NAGAON, July 14: Assam's traditional Sanchipat Puthichitra (manuscript painting) has found a national platform at Indie Haat during Bharat Tex 2026, with noted manuscript artist Sujit Das of Nagaon representing the state's rich artistic heritage through live demonstrations and an exhibition in New Delhi.

Indie Haat, inaugurated as part of Bharat Tex 2026, celebrates India's diverse handloom and handicraft traditions.

The event was inaugurated by Neelam Shami Rao, Secretary, Ministry of Textiles, in the presence of Dr M Beena, Development Commissioner (Handlooms), Amrit Raj, Development Commissioner (Handicrafts), Vrunda Manohar Desai, Textile Commissioner and Vice-Chairperson of the Textiles Committee, and Tanu Kashyap, Director General of the National Institute of Fashion Technology (NIFT).

Curated by NIFT as the knowledge partner, the exhibition showcases India's living craft traditions,



featuring master artisans, GI-tagged crafts, heritage textiles and contemporary design innovations from across the country.

Representing Assam, Sujit Das is conducting a live demonstration and exhibition of the state's centuries-old Sanchipat Puthichitra tradition at the National Crafts Museum, New Delhi, from July 10 to 19.

Using traditional natural pig-

ments such as Hengul and Hailat, he demonstrates the intricate process of painting on Sanchipat, prepared from the bark of the agar tree.

The art form is closely associated with illustrated manuscripts of sacred texts including the Bhagavata Purana, Kirtan Ghoxa, Ramayana and Mahabharata.

During the inaugural programme, Das also interacted with Union Tex-

tiles Minister Giriraj Singh and Textile Secretary Neelam Shami Rao, highlighting the historical significance of Assam's manuscript painting tradition and stressing the need for greater documentation, preservation and national and international recognition of the rare art form.

A recipient of the Senior Fellowship of the Centre for Cultural Resources and Training (CCRT) under the Ministry of Culture, Das has devoted himself to reviving and promoting Assam's traditional manuscript painting.

His work was recently selected for the 65th National Exhibition of Art organised by the Lalit Kala Akademi, marking the first time Assam's Sanchipat Puthichitra has been featured in the Akademi's history.

Having represented Assam and India in exhibitions across more than 35 countries, Das continues to play a leading role in preserving and promoting the state's unique manuscript painting tradition on the global stage.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

*Poetry is when an emotion has found its thought
and the thought has found words.*
- Robert Frost

Unemployment rate

Unemployment rate in million-plus cities is higher under the usual status at 4.9 per cent compared to 4.8 per cent in urban India, while stark inequality in earnings also persists among various categories – such as casual and regular wage workers within and in comparison to both areas. The report titled “Labour Market Dynamics in Million-plus Cities” released recently for the year 2025 by National Statistics Office, Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation revealed that female unemployment was higher at 6.4 per cent in usual status in urban India compared to 6.1 per cent in million-plus cities. Male unemployment in usual status was higher at 4.5 per cent in million-plus cities while it was lower at 4.2 per cent in urban India. However, in Current Weekly Status (CWS) the unemployment rate in both urban and million-plus cities India was as high as 6.8 per cent. In million-plus cities the unemployment rate in CWS for male was 6.2 per cent and for female it was as high as 8.8 per cent. In urban India, unemployment rate in CWS for male was 6.1 per cent and for female 8.9 per cent. A comparison of wages/ earnings indicates that workers in million-plus cities enjoyed a clear earnings advantage over the urban India average across all employment categories. The earnings premium was observed for both male and female; however, it was particularly pronounced among female workers. Female self-employed workers earned about 58% more than their urban India counterparts, while female casual labour earned about 18% higher daily wages.

Workers in million-plus cities on average worked for 49.5 hours per week compared to 47.1 hours in urban India. Both male and female workers in million-plus cities reported higher average hours worked than workers in urban India across all employment categories. The male population not in the labour force in million-plus cities was largely characterised by those pursuing education, with 53.5% reporting the desire to continue studies as their primary reason. Health and age-related reasons followed at 38.9%. Among females outside the labour force, child care responsibilities/ personal commitments in home-making accounted for 68.7%, making these the predominant reason for female non-participation.

In 2025, the PLFS underwent a significant redesign, with the survey cycle transitioning from the earlier July-June framework to a calendar year (January-December). Further, in the urban sector, each million-plus city is considered a separate stratum, enabling the generation of reliable labour force indicators for each million-plus city, the report says. In recognition of the analytical and policy significance of large urban centres, this dedicated report has been prepared using first-visit data collected under the PLFS during the January-December 2025 survey cycle, in addition to the regular PLFS publications.

India-UK trade agreement is a test of competitiveness, not just commerce

DEGREE OF THOUGHT

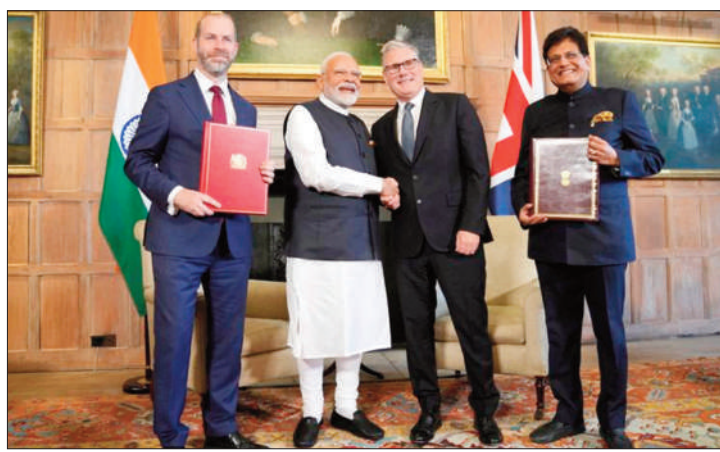
By: R Suryamurthy

The entry into force of the India-UK Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) on July 15 has understandably been celebrated as a diplomatic triumph and an economic milestone. Yet the temptation to portray the agreement merely as another free trade pact promising higher exports and lower tariffs risks obscuring its far greater significance. CETA is less about dismantling customs duties than about exposing the structural strengths—and weaknesses—of two economies attempting to redefine their place in an increasingly fragmented global trading order.

For India, the agreement represents a decisive departure from nearly a decade of cautious trade policy that had often privileged protection over integration. After walking away from the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) in 2019 amid fears of import surges, New Delhi has returned to the negotiating table with a markedly different philosophy: selectively embrace globalisation where domestic industry is confident enough to compete, while insulating politically sensitive sectors that remain vulnerable to international competition.

That calibrated approach is visible throughout CETA. Nearly 99 per cent of Indian exports enter Britain duty-free almost immediately, while India's tariff reductions on British products unfold gradually over a decade. Agriculture, dairy, edible oils and several politically sensitive commodities remain protected. The agreement therefore represents neither wholesale liberalisation nor protectionism; rather, it reflects a new doctrine of strategic openness in which market access is carefully exchanged for competitiveness gains.

Whether this balancing act succeeds, however, will depend far less on what governments negotiated than on what businesses accomplish after the ink has dried. The most immediate beneficiaries are undoubtedly India's labour-intensive manufacturing sectors. Textiles, garments, leather, footwear, engineering goods, marine products and processed foods finally gain tariff parity with competitors that



have long enjoyed preferential access to the British market. For decades, Indian exporters have argued that tariffs—not productivity—placed them at a disadvantage against suppliers from Bangladesh, Vietnam and Turkey. That argument will now be tested. If exports fail to accelerate despite zero-duty access, the uncomfortable conclusion will be unavoidable: tariffs were only part of India's competitiveness problem. This distinction matters because modern trade agreements have evolved beyond border taxes. The real contest increasingly revolves around logistics efficiency, quality certification, digital supply chains, environmental compliance, design capability and speed to market. Tariff preferences can open the door, but they cannot compel international buyers to walk through it. Indeed, CETA may prove less a story of tariff elimination than of institutional preparedness.

The Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs' decision to replace traditional certificates of origin with a self-certification framework exemplifies this shift. On paper, digitising origin verification appears an administrative reform. In practice, it signals the emergence of a more sophisticated trade architecture in which customs compliance, traceability and digital authentication become integral components of competitiveness. The agreement therefore demands a different kind of exporter—one capable not merely of producing competitively priced goods but of navigating complex rules of origin, maintaining digital documentation, satisfying increasingly stringent product standards and integrating into sophisticated global supply chains. That challenge

is especially acute for India's MSMEs. Industry bodies have understandably hailed CETA as transformative, and there is substance behind the optimism. Labour-intensive sectors should experience measurable gains, engineering exporters have an opportunity to move deeper into British manufacturing ecosystems, while food processors and seafood exporters gain access to premium consumer markets previously constrained by high tariffs. Yet optimism should not become complacency.

Small manufacturers continue to face chronic disadvantages in logistics costs, fragmented supply chains, access to technology, export finance and quality certification. Britain's consumers are unlikely to purchase Indian products simply because tariffs have disappeared. They will continue to demand consistency, sustainability, traceability and internationally recognised quality standards. Export competitiveness, in other words, begins where tariff preferences end. Perhaps the most strategically significant aspect of CETA lies not in merchandise trade but in services. Britain's opening of 137 services sub-sectors, combined with the Double Contribution Convention exempting Indian professionals from dual social security contributions for up to five years, represents a structural gain for India's knowledge economy. Unlike manufacturing, where India's comparative advantage remains contested, services have become India's most durable source of international competitiveness.

Information technology, consulting, financial services, engineering and healthcare already account for

much of India's global commercial presence. By reducing regulatory friction rather than simply customs duties, CETA acknowledges a fundamental reality of twenty-first century trade: intellectual capital increasingly matters more than physical merchandise. Yet here too the agreement raises larger questions. As artificial intelligence reshapes professional services and automation alters global outsourcing patterns, India cannot indefinitely rely on labour-cost arbitrage. The next generation of services exports will depend upon innovation, specialised expertise and technological leadership rather than merely abundant skilled labour. For Britain, meanwhile, CETA reflects equally profound strategic calculations.

Post-Brexit Britain has spent years attempting to demonstrate that independent trade policy can compensate for diminished access to European markets. The agreement with India, one of the world's fastest-growing major economies, therefore carries significance extending well beyond commerce. It offers British manufacturers privileged access to a market expected to become the world's third-largest economy within this decade while reinforcing London's ambition to remain a global commercial hub. The beneficiaries are already evident. Scotch whisky producers secure tariff reductions that transform one of their largest emerging markets. Premium automobile manufacturers obtain carefully calibrated access to India's previously protected passenger vehicle segment. Aerospace suppliers strengthen their position within India's expanding aviation ecosystem. Yet even Britain should temper expectations.

India's tariff reductions remain phased, quota-bound and strategically selective. Sensitive sectors continue to enjoy substantial protection, while domestic manufacturing policies continue to favour local production under initiatives such as Make in India and Production-Linked Incentive schemes.

This reflects perhaps the agreement's defining characteristic: neither side has embraced unfettered free trade. Both have negotiated carefully managed liberalisation designed to maximise strategic advantage while minimising domestic political disruption. That realism may ultimately become CETA's

greatest strength.

Nevertheless, one unresolved issue threatens to undermine much of the goodwill generated by the agreement: Britain's proposed Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM). If Indian exports, having secured preferential tariff access, subsequently confront carbon-related border taxes, the agreement risks becoming internally contradictory. Traditional tariffs may disappear only to be replaced by climate-linked trade barriers. While environmental objectives are legitimate, carbon pricing must not evolve into disguised protectionism that disproportionately disadvantages developing-country exporters still navigating their industrial transition. This issue extends beyond India and Britain. It reflects the increasingly uneasy intersection between trade policy and climate policy—a frontier likely to dominate international economic diplomacy over the coming decade.

Ultimately, CETA should not be judged by the number of tariff lines liberalised or by optimistic projections of bilateral trade reaching \$100 billion or even \$120 billion by 2030. Such targets are politically attractive but economically secondary. The agreement's real legacy will depend upon whether Indian manufacturers become globally competitive without tariff handicaps; whether British investors deepen industrial partnerships rather than merely expand exports; whether services evolve into higher-value collaboration instead of transactional outsourcing; and whether both governments resist the temptation to replace conventional protectionism with more sophisticated regulatory barriers.

Trade agreements rarely transform economies on their own. They merely alter incentives. It is firms—not governments—that create exports, innovate products and build supply chains. CETA has opened one of the widest commercial corridors India has ever negotiated with a developed economy. Whether that corridor becomes a highway of industrial transformation or merely another underutilised preferential arrangement will depend not upon customs notifications or diplomatic ceremonies, but upon competitiveness, productivity and execution. The negotiation is over. The harder test has only just begun. (IPA Service)

El Nino's Shadow Over India

By: Satyabrata Borah

The vast expanses of the tropical Pacific Ocean seem incredibly remote from the emerald tea gardens of Assam, the bustling financial hubs of Mumbai, or the sun-drenched paddy fields of Punjab. Yet, an invisible, planetary-scale umbilical cord links them in a dance of climate patterns that dictates the economic fortunes and emotional well-being of over a billion people. Every few years, a quiet revolution takes place in the waters off the coast of South America, a phenomenon known to the world as El Nino. Though it translates gently from Spanish as “the little boy” or “the Christ Child”, its footprint on the Indian subcontinent is anything but gentle.

El Nino is the uninvited guest that disrupts the life-giving rhythm of the southwest monsoon, bringing with it the looming shadows of drought, soaring temperatures, agricultural anxiety, and economic strain. To truly understand its impact on India is to look beyond scientific graphs, bar charts, and sea-surface temperature anomalies. It is to understand the human cost of a shifting breeze, the delicate chemistry of global winds, and the profound resilience of a nation that must reinvent its relationship with water in an era of unprecedented climate volatility.

To grasp how a warming ocean thousands of miles away can dry up an Indian farm, one has to imagine the global atmosphere as a massive, interconnected breathing apparatus. Under normal conditions, a pattern called the Walker Circulation governs the tropical Pacific. Strong trade winds blow from east to west, pushing warm surface water toward Indonesia and the western Pacific. As this warm water piles up in Asia, it heats the air above it, causing it to rise, form clouds, and dump torrential rains. Meanwhile, on the opposite side of the ocean near Peru, cold water rises from the deep ocean to take its place, creating a high-pressure zone of cool, dry air. This massive conveyor belt of air and water keeps the global climate balanced, and it aligns beautifully with India's summer plans. The rising air over the western Pacific helps strengthen the low-pressure system over the Indian subcontinent, which effectively acts as a giant vacuum cleaner, pulling in moisture-laden winds from the Indian Ocean. This is the birth of the Indian monsoon, a four-month meteorological carnival from June to September that delivers nearly eighty percent of the country's annual rainfall.

When El Nino awakens, this entire global conveyor belt is turned upside down. The trade winds that normally push warm water toward Asia begin to weaken, and sometimes they even reverse direction. Without these winds to hold it back, the massive pool of warm water accumulated in the western Pacific begins to slosh backward across the ocean toward South America. The epicenter of rising air, cloud formation, and heavy rainfall shifts along with this warm water, moving away from Asia and toward the central and eastern Pacific. As a result, the air over the western Pacific and parts of Southeast Asia sinks instead of rising, giving birth to massive high-pressure zones that suppress cloud formation. For India, this atmospheric flip-

flop is catastrophic. The giant vacuum cleaner that usually pulls moisture from the Indian Ocean loses its suction power. The monsoon winds become sluggish, late, and dry. Instead of the steady, dark, rolling clouds that bring joy to millions, the skies over India remain stubbornly blue and hazy, or they tease with scattered, unpredictable showers that do little to quench the thirst of the baked earth.

The human toll of this atmospheric breakdown is felt first and most acutely by the Indian farmer. Agriculture remains the social and economic backbone of India, employing nearly half of its workforce. What makes this sector incredibly vulnerable is that more than half of India's arable land lacks artificial irrigation. These lands depend entirely on the monsoon, meaning millions of farmers are effectively playing a high-stakes game of roulette with the sky every single year. When El Nino curtails the monsoon, the consequences ripple through rural life like a slow-moving shockwave. Seeds sown in anticipation of June rains wither in dry soil. The transplanting of rice, a crop that requires fields to be flooded with water, is delayed or abandoned entirely. Rivers shrink to muddy trickles, and the water levels in crucial underground aquifers drop rapidly. In states like Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, and parts of Karnataka, the sight of cracked, mosaic-patterned soil becomes a heartbreaking visual testament to El Nino's presence. A failed crop is not just a financial loss; it is a profound existential crisis for farmers. In rural India, agriculture is financed through loans taken for seeds, fertilizers, and equipment. When the rain fails and the harvest disappears, the debt remains, leading to a vicious cycle of poverty and mental anguish that has historically contributed to spikes in rural distress and migration. Families are forced to cut back on food, pull children out of schools, and migrate to overcrowded cities in search of daily wage labor. The loss of livestock due to a shortage of green fodder further strips away the safety nets of these rural households. In this way, a temperature fluctuation in the Pacific Ocean translates directly into empty plates, disrupted education and broken dreams in villages across the Indian heartland.

The pain of a compromised monsoon quickly migrates from rural fields to urban marketplaces, manifesting as the dreaded specter of food inflation. When the production of staples like rice, pulses, sugarcane, oilseeds, and vegetables drops, supply chains contract, and prices soar. In India, where a significant portion of an average family's budget is spent on food, a sudden spike in the price of onions, tomatoes, or rice can throw household finances into complete disarray. This food inflation forces the central bank, the Reserve Bank of India, into a difficult corner. To curb rising prices, the bank often has to raise interest rates or keep them high, which slows down borrowing, reduces industrial investment, and cools down the overall economic growth of the country. A single year of El Nino can shave off precious percentage points from India's Gross Domestic Product, proving that despite India's rise as an industrial and technological powerhouse, its economy remains, at its core, a gamble on the monsoon.

El Nino leaves a scorching imprint on human health and comfort by triggering intense, prolonged heatwaves. Because the weakened monsoon fails to cool the subcontinent during the summer months, temperatures soar to unbearable heights. In recent years, El Nino phases have coincided with record-breaking summer temperatures, with many regions in northern and central India seeing the mercury breach forty-five degrees Celsius, and occasionally touching fifty degrees. These are not just uncomfortable temperatures; they are lethal. Heat exhaustion and heat stroke claim lives, particularly among outdoor laborers, construction workers, street vendors, and the elderly who cannot afford air conditioning or lack access to clean, cold drinking water. The psychological toll of living under a relentless, oppressive heat dome is immense, draining the productivity and vitality of cities and towns alike. Furthermore, the combination of extreme heat and stagnant air worsens urban pollution, trapping dust and toxic particles close to the ground and causing a surge in respiratory illnesses.

While drought and heat are El Nino's primary weapons, it also wields a paradoxically cruel tool: extreme, localized flooding. One might think that a weak monsoon means less rain everywhere, but the atmospheric chaos caused by El Nino often results in highly erratic rainfall distribution. Months of dry spells can be interrupted by a single week of hyper-intense, concentrated downpours. The parched, hardened earth cannot absorb this sudden deluge of water, leading to severe flash floods. Cities with outdated or clogged drainage systems, like Mumbai, Chennai, or Bengaluru, can find themselves submerged in a matter of hours under these freak weather events. This erratic nature of the monsoon makes planning almost impossible. A farmer might watch his crops die from a lack of water in June and July, only to see the remnants of his field washed away by a torrential cloudburst in August. This unpredictable volatility is perhaps the most exhausting aspect of El Nino, replacing the predictable rhythm of the seasons with a constant state of anxiety. The crisis deepens as the water scarcity touches India's energy sector. India relies heavily on hydroelectric power for a significant portion of its electricity grid, especially to meet peak summer demands when air conditioners and fans are running continuously. Hydroelectric dams require robust water levels to spin their giant turbines. When El Nino starves the reservoirs of inflow, power generation drops precisely when the nation needs it most. This triggers widespread power outages and rolling blackouts, crippling small businesses, interrupting manufacturing, and making the oppressive summer heat even more unendurable for families trapped in dark homes. To compensate for the shortfall in clean hydro energy, the country is often forced to burn more coal and diesel, worsening air quality and accelerating the very greenhouse gas emissions that drive global climate instability.

The ecological consequences of El Nino are equally profound and long-lasting. India's rich biodiversity, housed in its dense forests, wetlands, and marine ecosystems, is finely tuned to the monsoon

cycle. When the rains fail, wild animals face severe water and food shortages inside protected reserves, forcing them to venture out into human settlements. This drastically increases instances of human-wildlife conflict, leading to tragic casualties on both sides as elephants, leopards, and deer clash with villagers defending their crops and homes. In the aquatic realm, the lack of fresh river water flowing into estuaries alters the salinity of coastal waters, disrupting the breeding cycles of fish and shrimp. This delivers a devastating blow to traditional fishing communities along India's vast coastline, who find their daily catches shrinking and their livelihoods hanging by a thread. Even the spectacular coral reefs of the Lakshadweep and Andaman islands suffer, as the elevated ocean temperatures associated with global El Nino events lead to widespread coral bleaching, threatening the delicate marine food webs that rely on these underwater rainforests.

Confronted with this recurring oceanic threat, India has not stood still. Over the decades, the nation has evolved an intricate architecture of resilience, blending ancient wisdom with cutting-edge science. The first line of defense is predictive technology. The Indian Meteorological Department now employs advanced supercomputers and sophisticated climate models to spot the early warning signs of El Nino brewing in the Pacific months in advance. This early warning system allows the government to warn farmers, alter sowing schedules, and stock up on food grains well before the dry spell begins. Rather than reacting to a crisis after it arrives, the country is learning to prepare for it, moving from a strategy of disaster relief to one of proactive risk management.

In the fields, a quiet revolution toward climate-smart agriculture is underway. Agricultural scientists are developing and distributing crop varieties that are drought-tolerant and require significantly less water to mature. Rice varieties that can survive dry spells and millets, nutrient-rich grains like ragi, bajra and jowar that thrive in arid conditions with minimal water, are being aggressively promoted as alternatives to water-thirsty crops like sugarcane and traditional paddy. Governments are also encouraging micro-irrigation techniques, such as drip and sprinkler systems, which deliver water directly to the roots of the plant, minimizing evaporation losses and ensuring that every drop of water counts.

Simultaneously, there is a powerful resurgence of interest in traditional water harvesting systems. For centuries, diverse communities across India built ingenious structures tailored to their local geography such as the johads of Rajasthan, the ahars and pyries of Bihar, and the stepwells of Gujarat. These systems were designed to catch the heavy rainfall of a brief monsoon and store it underground or in open reservoirs to sustain communities through dry years. Today, citizen groups, non-governmental organizations, and forward-thinking local governments are desilting these ancient structures, reviving dead rivers, and constructing check dams. By recharging the local water table, these initiatives create a buffer zone against El Nino's dry spells, proving that sometimes the best solutions to modern climate chal-

lenges are found by looking into the past.

Managing El Nino requires massive logistical coordination at the policy level. The government maintains a massive strategic buffer stock of food grains, particularly rice and wheat, which can be released into the market to stabilize prices and prevent hoarding when domestic production dips. Social safety nets, like the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, play a vital role during El Nino years by providing guaranteed wage labor to rural households whose agricultural income has vanished. This injection of cash prevents desperate migration to cities and allows families to survive the lean months with their dignity intact. Furthermore, crop insurance schemes are being progressively refined to ensure that when a farmer loses everything to an ocean-induced drought, financial compensation arrives quickly enough to prevent them from falling into the trap of high-interest debt. The challenge of El Nino can no longer be viewed in isolation. We live in an era undeniably shaped by global climate change. The relationship between El Nino and global warming is an active, urgent area of scientific study, and the emerging picture is deeply concerning. While El Nino is a natural, cyclical phenomenon that has existed for millennia, rising global temperatures are altering its behavior. A warmer atmosphere holds more moisture and traps more heat, acting like an amplifier for extreme weather. Scientists warn that while the frequency of El Nino events might not drastically change, their intensity is likely to increase. The droughts they cause could become more severe, the heatwaves more oppressive, and the erratic rain bursts more destructive. For India, this means the historical patterns they once relied on to predict and prepare for El Nino are becoming increasingly unreliable.

This changing reality underscores an uncomfortable truth: managing El Nino is no longer just about waiting out a bad year and hoping for a better monsoon the next. It requires a fundamental, permanent shift in how India values, manages, and conserves its water. The country can no longer afford to treat water as an infinite, cheap commodity. Industrial water recycling, strict regulations on groundwater extraction, the rejuvenation of urban lakes, and the massive scaling up of rainwater harvesting must transform from sporadic environmental projects into core, non-negotiable pillars of national development. Every drop of water saved during a bountiful monsoon year is an investment in survival for the inevitable El Nino year that will follow. The story of El Nino and its effect on India is a profound reminder of our shared planetary existence. It is a narrative that collapses the vast distances of our world, showing how a subtle shift in the winds over the Pacific Ocean can shape the price of a meal in a Delhi household or test the resolve of a farmer in Telangana. It highlights the vulnerability of a developing nation striving to lift millions out of poverty while constantly buffeted by the volatile whims of a changing climate. Yet, more than anything, it is a story of human endurance. Year after year, facing the threat of a missing monsoon, the people of India adapt, innovate, and persevere. By marrying modern science with time-tested traditional wisdom, and by shifting from a culture of water exploitation to one of water reverence, India is slowly building a future where its prosperity is no longer entirely held hostage by the unpredictable rhythms of a distant ocean.

Why won't villagers support a woman's complaint to fix a streetlight?

By: Stiti Sahoo

In my first semester of Masters, I had a paper titled Polity and Society in India, in which, as a part of my course requirement, I had to work on the topic: "Limits of Representative Democracy and Local Governance."

During that process, while having repetitive discussions with my professor, I was unable to grasp what exactly he meant when he talked about the "limits of democracy". I used to wonder, what could even be the bad thing about democracy and representative governance? According to me, democracy was one of the best things humanity had created. The idea that people have a voice, that representatives are chosen by the people, that governance gets legitimacy from citizens, felt so powerful and meaningful. Of course, ideally. But still, what exactly could be the limitations and demerits of something which seemed so functional? What could I possibly research and critically examine about it?

I knew that democracy had problems. I had read about inequality, exclusion, power structures, representation, participation and institutions. But somewhere, my understanding remained limited to the theoretical world of classrooms and books. I could understand that problems existed, but I had not yet experienced how these problems appeared in the ordinary, everyday lives of people.

Fast forward to today. Before the beginning of my third semester, I am at my village and I am about to leave in a week. Somewhere between my everyday life here and the theories I have studied, I think I have experienced probably one of the many aspects my professor was trying to make me understand. I am still not sure if I have grasped even one percent of those discussions.

I do not know how important this particular incident is for any theorist, or for the theories and concepts we often read and discuss in disciplines like sociology, public policy and political science. I do not know how much relevance it holds for administrative examinations, government policies, or even for an ordinary citizen. But I want to share it because maybe this is how we understand society, not only through books, but through the small incidents happening around us.

An ordinary Streetlight and the extraordinary questions it raised.

A couple of days ago, right in front of my house, which sits at a chowrah (crossroad), a defining moment occurred. This crossroad houses our village 'thakura ghara', the vital space where all the village MEN gather to discuss every minute and important decision. It is supposed to be the most functional, deliberative area of our local ecosystem.

It is monsoon here in Odisha. The reptiles are coming out, which is natural, and we ought to learn to coexist with them. But during a usual evening gathering, an elderly uncle narrowly escaped a fatal snake bite and had to be rushed to the hospital. The danger was not only because of nature; it was also intensified by the absence of a functional streetlight in the entire area. While a few private households cast faint light into the darkness, it is nowhere near enough to make the public path safe.

That was when I thought of writing a letter to the Block Development Officer (BDO), who, as far as my understanding goes, is responsible for the Panchayat Samiti office of my block. I bypassed the local panchayat office because,

frankly, there isn't one physically present in this panchayat, I do not even know if it exists on paper. The beautiful irony here is that the Sarpanch of this entire panchayat belongs to my village itself. He is the elected representative responsible for many villages under this Panchayat, and he is aware of many such issues, including this very issue of street lights. Yet, the issue continues to exist. So I thought, let me formally raise it with the senior executive authority above him.

I drafted the application in both English and Odia so that language would not become a barrier for anyone, including the villagers, to understand the issue and the purpose of the application. I printed it out and put my signature first, knowing well the inherent fear people have of putting their names on official complaints. My parents and cousins signed it next. Hoping to showcase the collective seriousness of the issue, I decided to gather signatures from the wider village.

I went to the very same Thakura Ghara where a meeting of the village headMEN was going on regarding an upcoming festival. I carried the printed application and explained that since everyone was aware of the snake bite incident, I wanted to raise the issue of street lights because there was no functional light in this area and very few functional lights in the entire village.

And perhaps this was the moment where I felt what my professor was trying to explain.

The first reaction was not about the street light, it was about me.

Beyond the Streetlight: when the voice became more important than the concern.

It was almost like a silent question: how can a girl come forward and raise an issue when the great MEN of the village are already here? One person explicitly said, "Why is she interfering in this when the village 'murabi' (the guardians/heads) are present?" A murabi is usually understood as an elder, a respected guardian, someone who guides the community. But in this particular context, I could not stop thinking about how closely this idea connects with patriarchy. Because sometimes authority is not only about formal positions. Sometimes it is about who society naturally accepts as someone who can speak, decide and represent.

To be precise, I translate murabi here as patriarch. The crushing irony? The man who said this was the very uncle who had just been saved from the snake bite.

Further, I requested one of them to read and explain the letter to everyone present so that they would understand what they were signing. My Odia is not fluent enough to explain every administrative aspect of the letter properly, and I thought someone from the village explaining it would make people more comfortable and engaged. I wanted people to understand the issue, not just put their signatures without knowing what they were supporting. But slowly, the actual issue started disappearing.

At first, one person casually dismissed it by saying that the lights already existed, they were just not functional. When I said that this was exactly what I had mentioned in the letter, that the existing lights were non-functional and therefore the public spaces remained unsafe, he responded that we should not write anything wrong without even reading the application. He then passed the letter to another person, saying that he had not brought his glasses. The next person directly turned towards the Odia page. Instead of reading the concern or understanding the issue being raised, he started pointing out the few spelling



mistakes that had occurred while typing Odia in the Word application. He said that the office would not accept such an application because of these mistakes.

I found it strange because the first page contained the English version, which clearly explained the issue, and the purpose of the application was not to display linguistic perfection but to communicate a genuine concern to the concerned authority. Somewhere, the actual problem shifted from the absence of street lights and the safety of villagers to minor errors in typing. Later, he said, "I will write it by hand tomorrow, you leave it for now." I could not help but wonder where this urgency and initiative had been before, when the issue itself had existed for so long. What remains unsaid in the language of governance.

Later, some of the missing pieces of the situation started becoming clearer to me. I came to know that some of the people present there shared close relations with the Sarpanch and were possibly connected with the beneficiaries of village funds. I cannot claim to know the complete reality behind these relationships, but it made me think about how informal networks, personal connections and local power structures often influence the way governance functions at the grassroots level.

Another villager quietly explained to me the reason behind people's hesitation. He said that raising such a complaint with the BDO could create problems for the Sarpanch and the local Vidhayak (MLA). There was a fear that those who signed the application might face political consequences or conflicts. It was not a direct refusal because people did not care about the issue; rather, it reflected a deeper fear of challenging existing power relations. Because sometimes silence does not come from the absence of awareness. Sometimes it comes from the awareness of the possible consequences of speaking.

Yet, amidst this hesitation and fear, I also saw something hopeful. When I spoke to some villagers, including those who may not be formally literate, many of them agreed that the problem existed. They acknowledged the darkness and the

absence of functional street lights. I could see a certain hope in their eyes, perhaps a feeling that someone was at least trying to raise an issue that affected their everyday lives.

Maybe I failed there.

Maybe I could not properly explain my approach, the importance of collective participation, or why their signatures mattered. Maybe I could have communicated better. And perhaps that is also something I need to learn, because democracy is not only about raising questions before institutions; it is also about understanding people, building trust, and creating spaces where they feel safe enough to participate.

Many people later told me: "You are here for less than a week, why are you interfering?", "You should focus on your studies.", "This is how the system works. Nothing can be changed." Maybe they were right about the complexity of the system. Maybe I am still naive. Maybe my understanding is incomplete. But one thing I know is that asking for a basic public facility cannot be considered interference. It is a basic duty of citizenship. If a citizen cannot even demand a functional street light in their own village, then what exactly does participation in democracy mean? So, even if I have only one signature, I will still submit the application. And I have already done so through email.

When theories found their way into life.

Looking back at this through the lens of my academic training, the theories have suddenly taken on flesh and blood. I am seeing exactly how education, gender, personal alliances, and social positioning dictate the functioning of grassroots democracy. Even when representation becomes necessary for addressing a collective issue, the question remains: who gets to represent that issue? What is the gender, class, caste and social position of the person raising the concern, and how do these factors influence the way their voice is received? How do existing identities, personal interests, ego, social hierarchies and established relationships shape the response of the very people who are supposedly being represented? Sometimes, it appears that the resolution of the issue becomes secondary to the question

of who receives the recognition for resolving it. The problem matters, but so does the ownership of the solution, the authority attached to it, and the social position of the person who gets to be seen as the one who brought change.

Further, the fear of the Vidhayak, the very elected representative chosen to represent people's concerns, even when citizens are asking for something as basic as a street light, made me think about the gap between the existence of democratic institutions and the spirit in which democracy is actually experienced by people. It made me question how democracy functions not only through elections and formal structures, but also through everyday relationships of power, fear, dependence and social hierarchy. I want to further understand this relationship between legislature and executive, the actual working of separation of powers, checks and balances, administrative procedures and the realities of bureaucracy. Perhaps I will understand more as I continue following this application and interacting with the administrative system.

Here, I remember something my professor said during one of our discussions: "Who are you to decide what development is? Who are we to decide what 'the people of India', the very source from whom the legitimacy of the Constitution comes, need? How can we, sitting in our classrooms and academic spaces, decide what development, modernisation, legality or progress should mean for them? Who are we to define their aspirations?" Those questions have stayed with me. And now, standing in my own village and reflecting on this experience, I find myself constantly questioning my own position. Am I allowing my personal experience to become bigger than it is? Am I projecting my own understanding of what people need onto a larger reality? Am I, in C. Wright Mills' terms, mistaking a "personal trouble" for a larger "public issue"? Or perhaps, is this exactly how we begin to understand society, by looking closely at the everyday experiences through which larger structures reveal themselves?

Maybe the challenge is not to immediately categorise an experience as either personal or public, but to understand the complex relationship between the two and how one often reveals the other. How an ordinary incident in front of one's house can open questions about democracy, representation, power, gender, governance and the functioning of institutions. I am still pondering over these questions. I do not have a definite answer yet. But perhaps the process of questioning itself is a part of understanding society. Anyways, I would read, reflect and ponder over it more, and try to think in the right direction through the complex layers of how society and its different aspects work. I do not want to arrive at conclusions too quickly, because perhaps understanding society requires the patience to sit with contradictions, uncertainties and questions.

For now, I would simply try to do my duty as a citizen. A little confused, with some doubts about my own discourse and understanding, but still fearless and eager to learn, improve and see beyond my own limited perspective. Because to save the world, I first need to save myself. Not from the fear of getting killed, questioned or misunderstood, but from my own half-baked knowledge, my preconceptions, and my limited capacity to understand both problems and solutions within the vast complexity of everyday human life, the daily mundane yet beautiful life that continues to teach me, challenge me and reshape my understanding of society. (Courtesy: Youth Ki Awaaz)

Collaborative effort can make the difference between life and death

By: Swapna Majumdar

Four in ten children are underweight in Madhya Pradesh, according to the latest National Family Health Survey (NFHS-6). Parvati Bhabhar, a resident of Ratlam's Ghodakedha village in Madhya Pradesh, is relieved her son is no longer one of them. However, she knows that he had a lucky escape.

Had she not registered with Sneha, an initiative to improve the health and nutrition of women and children, implemented by the Centre for Health Education, Training and Nutrition Awareness (CHETNA), a non-profit, she would have remained ignorant about her anaemia and its impact on her underweight newborn. Neither would she have known how to turn their health conditions around.

Parvati had returned to work as a daily wage labourer soon after giving birth, just as she had done in the cases of her previous two children, without paying much attention to either her own nutrition or that of her third child. She had neither time nor the energy, as she always felt tired, for exclusive breastfeeding for his first six months, an imperative for his well-being and growth, particularly as he was an underweight baby.

One of the reasons identified by NFHS for the increase in the percentage of underweight children in MP from 33 per cent to 39.7 per cent is the weak focus on the first 1000 days beginning from pregnancy to the child's second birthday, vital to the both physical and cognitive development. Further, NFHS-6 found that exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months had fallen to 56.4 per cent compared to 74 per cent (NFHS-5) and only 12 per cent of children aged six to 23 months received a minimum acceptable diet.

Fortunately for Parvati and her son, CHETNA was conducting a survey on

nutritional anaemia in her village as a part of their Sneha initiative, focusing on improving maternal and child nutrition in the first 1000 days from conception to a child's second birthday in 25 villages in Ratlam district. While assessing the health and nutrition of pregnant, lactating and newly married women as well as children in the 0-2 age group, they found Parvati anaemic with her haemoglobin at just 9.5g/dL and her one -year-old son showing early signs of malnutrition, weighing just 6.8 kg.

Evidence indicates that infants born to anaemic mothers often have lower iron stores at birth. According to NFHS-6, only 39.6 per cent of women took iron-folic acid tablets for 180 days or more during pregnancy, indicating inadequate maternal nutrition. Maternal malnutrition and poor breastfeeding practices contribute to adverse pregnancy outcomes and have lasting effects on a child's growth and cognitive development.

But focused attention can make a difference, as shown by CHETNA. Using its four decades of experience on working on the health and nutrition of women and adolescents, CHETNA was able to develop strategies to improve both Parvati's and her child's health using targeted interventions in collaboration with the local frontline health workers (AWWs, ASHAs and ANMs) and sustained follow-up efforts by its committed Sneha team.

One of the reasons why the programme has been able to reach out and impact so many women and their young children is because it has smartly used multi-pronged strategies that have demonstrated effectiveness in CHETNA's earlier nutritional interventions.

These include early identification of nutritional risks and, timely monitoring, including arranging for blood transfusions and follow-up of pregnant

women, lactating mothers, and children under two years of age. Organising regular health check-up and growth monitoring camps for children less than two years to enable early detection of growth faltering and anaemia risk helped facilitate timely referrals, iron supplementation, and nutrition counselling, contributing to the prevention of anaemia during early childhood. By conducting structured home visits and group meetings to promote early antenatal care registration, adherence to iron folic acid supplementation, they were able to make families, especially women and their mothers-in-law, aware of good breastfeeding practices, appropriate complementary feeding, and dietary diversity.

Importantly, the rapport built enabled counselling and integration of gender-sensitive messaging to address traditional practices of women eating last and the least. To support improved nutrition at home, CHETNA distributed nutrition kits to mothers.

These kits included dates, ghee pouches, peanuts, and drumstick leaves. Mothers were also given demonstrations and iron-rich recipes using these ingredients to improve nutrition.

The good news is that Parvati and her child are not the only ones to benefit. Over 375 pregnant women and 1000 lactating mothers with children in the 0-2 age group registered under the Sneha programme are learning about their nutritional anaemia and how they can improve their health and that of their young children with simple behavioural and dietary changes and better feeding practices.

Many of the women are, like Parvati, no longer anaemic and their children have shown steady weight gain and growth, underlining how a collaborative effort can make the difference between life and death. (Courtesy: The Pioneer)

Shahrnush Parsipur, author of 'Women Without Men': Iran loses one of its bravest literary voices

By: Hind Elhinnawy

The death of the Iranian novelist and feminist writer, Shahrnush Parsipur, at the age of 80 marks the loss of one of the most courageous and original voices in modern Persian literature. For more than five decades, Parsipur wrote women into spaces from which they had often been excluded: history, politics, spirituality and even storytelling.

Imprisoned under both the shah and the Islamic Republic, censored, banned and eventually exiled, she remained committed to a simple but radical idea: women deserve to be the authors of their own lives.

Born in Tehran in 1946, Parsipur entered Iranian literature at a time when female writers occupied only a small corner of the literary landscape. After studying sociology at the University of Tehran in the late 1960s, she emerged as part of a generation of female writers who transformed the modern Persian literary landscape.

Exposing systems of power and the pioneering work of academic and writer Simin Daneshvar, Parsipur came to be recognised as a distinctive voice in a wave of female authors who expanded the possibilities of modern Persian fiction. After publishing short stories and novellas throughout the late 1960s and early 1970s, Parsipur published *The Dog and the Long Winter* in 1976, further establishing a literary career that would eventually make her one of the most influential voices in modern Persian literature.

Parsipur's commitment to speaking openly about power and injustice came at a heavy personal cost.

In the 1970s, while working as a producer and editor for Iranian National Television, she resigned in protest after the execution of two poets by Savak, the shah's secret police. Her opposition to repression led to her first imprisonment.

The 1979 Revolution did not bring greater freedom to Parsipur. After returning to Iran from France, where she had been studying Chinese language and civilisation, she was arrested again and spent four years and seven months in prison during the 1980s.

Rather than silencing her, those years deepened her determination to write. Soon after her release, she published *Touba and the Meaning of Night*, the novel that brought her widespread recognition among Iranian readers. She later documented her experiences of incarceration in *Prison Memoir and Kissing the Sword*. International recognition followed, including, in 1994, the Lillian Hellman-Dashiell Hammett Award for writers persecuted for exercising their freedom of expression.

What distinguishes Parsipur from many political writers is that she never reduced literature to ideology. Instead, she used imagination to expose systems of power. Her novels are filled with women searching, not simply for rights or equality, but for meaning, autonomy and selfhood.

In *Touba and the Meaning of Night*, Parsipur followed a woman's search for spiritual meaning against the backdrop of 20th-century Iran's political upheavals, placing female experience at the centre of the nation's history. *Women Without Men* further developed this through imagining entirely new possibilities for women's lives. First published in 1989 and later banned in Iran because of its frank engagement with female sexuality and social taboos, *Women Without Men* went on to become Parsipur's most widely read and celebrated work.

Part fable and part political allegory, the novella follows five women searching for freedom beyond the limits imposed by family, convention and authority. Through magical and often surreal encounters – including a woman who becomes a tree – the

novel envisions new worlds of possibility for women.

An underground classic.

Censorship only amplified the novel's impact. Banned in Iran and circulated informally for years, *Women Without Men* became an underground classic.

In March 2026, its first full English-language translation introduced Parsipur to a new international readership and earned a place on the International Booker Prize longlist. More than three decades after its original publication, the novel's questions about women's freedom remained as urgent as ever.

Parsipur spent a lifetime asking what might happen if women stopped seeking permission to be free.

In 1994, Parsipur left Iran for California. Exile gave her safety, but it never gave her distance. Iran remained the backdrop to her writing, her politics and her hopes for the future, even after decades abroad.

Even in her final public interventions, Parsipur remained fiercely independent. During the recent military conflict involving Iran, she opposed foreign military intervention, arguing that "freedom cannot be given to Iran from outside" and that "the people of Iran themselves must win their own freedom". Her position was entirely consistent with a life spent resisting all forms of domination – whether exercised by monarchs, religious authorities or foreign powers.

Parsipur leaves behind a body of work that transformed Persian literature, but also something less tangible and perhaps more lasting: a powerful example of how to speak, write and live without surrendering to fear.

Throughout her life, Parsipur refused to accept the limits imposed upon her – as a writer, as a woman or as a citizen. That refusal became the defining force of both her life and her work. (Courtesy: The Conversation)

'The biggest culprit here is Arvind Kejriwal on whose behest this happened'

BJP demands apology from Kejriwal, Congress after Tahir Hussain conviction

NEW DELHI, July 14: A day after former AAP councillor Tahir Hussain was convicted in the murder of Intelligence Bureau officer Ankit Sharma during the 2020 northeast Delhi riots, the BJP on Tuesday launched a fresh attack on AAP national convener Arvind Kejriwal, demanding an apology from him.

The saffron party also targeted the Congress, blaming its party leaders for the 2020 Delhi riots, and demanded an "unconditional apology" from Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi, alleging that they indulged in "vulture politics" and "appeasement politics" instead of standing by the family of the slain intelligence officer.

A Delhi court on Monday convicted Hussain and 4 others in the Ankit Sharma murder case.

Hussain was an AAP councillor at the time of the incident but was later suspended by the party when his



name surfaced in the case. Welcoming the court's verdict, BJP national spokesperson Gaurav Bhatia said it was, "a victory of the Constitution, law, justice and the people".

The verdict ensures that rule of law will prevail in India and that the accused will have to face the might of law, regardless of how influential or well-connected they are, he said. The verdict also pro-

vides the "healing touch" that the victim's family and the society needed, Bhatia added.

Addressing a press conference at the BJP headquarters here, Bhatia alleged, "The biggest culprit here is Arvind Kejriwal on whose behest this happened. Attempts were made to cover up the case and political protection was given to Tahir Hussain. After he was ar-

rested, Kejriwal went into hiding and did not utter a word."

Hussain's "ties" with Kejriwal remain intact even today, the BJP leader alleged, adding that the AAP chief continues to provide him "political protection".

Targeting the Congress, Bhatia alleged, "Sonia Gandhi is equally culpable, as is Rahul Gandhi. After the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) was passed by Parliament, Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi created an atmosphere of confusion by claiming that Muslims would lose their citizenship with its implementation."

"When a conspiracy was being hatched for the riots, Sonia Gandhi said 'ye aar paar ki ladai hai' (it's a do-or-die battle). When a senior leader makes such a provocative statement through a religious lens and riots follow, Sonia Gandhi must bear responsibility for it," he alleged. (PTI)

Posters targeting Akhilesh, Mulayam trigger political row in UP

LUCKNOW, July 14: Controversial posters targeting Samajwadi Party founder Mulayam Singh Yadav and party chief Akhilesh Yadav appeared at several places in Uttar Pradesh on Tuesday, triggering a political controversy with the party accusing the BJP and allies of trying to inflame communal sentiments.

State Minister and Suheldev Bharatiya Samaj Party (SBSP) chief Om Prakash Rajbhar, however, defended the posters and said they were "appropriate".

The posters, which were put up in Lucknow, Mathura, Sitapur and Barabanki, among other places, depicted Mulayam Singh Yadav and Akhilesh Yadav with caps that are typically associated with the Muslim community. They also carried the slogan, "Dil mein Babar, munh mein Ram" (Babar in the heart, Ram on the lips). The identity of those who put up the posters was not immediately known.

The development comes amid



an ongoing political slugfest over the alleged embezzlement of Ram temple donation funds in Ayodhya, an issue repeatedly raised by the opposition in recent weeks.

In Sitapur, the posters surfaced near the highway and Kanshiram Colony on the bypass, prompting SP workers to remove them.

Samajwadi Party (SP) MP Anand Bhaduria personally removed one of the hoardings with the party workers and termed the

incident "an act of cowardice". "This is the second time such hoardings have appeared. I firmly believe the BJP is behind this. Wherever such posters are found, they should be torn down and burnt," Bhaduria said.

In Mathura, SP district president Virendra Yadav alleged that "anti-social elements" had tried to disturb communal harmony by putting up objectionable hoardings. (PTI)

Congress workers hold 'Sunderkand path' at BJP office in Gurugram, detained



GURUGRAM, July 14: High drama unfolded at the BJP headquarters in Gurugram on Tuesday after Congress workers reached the premises and recited Sunderkand in protest against the alleged Ram temple donation embezzlement row.

As soon as the Congress members, carrying copies of Hanuman Chalisa, reached the BJP office 'Gurukamal', the police stationed there began dispersing them, leading to a scuffle between the workers and the personnel.

Gurugram district Congress committee members Pankaj Dawar and Vardhan Yadav had announced a 'Sunderkand path' near the BJP office at 11 am, prompting the Sector-40 police to issue notices to both leaders on Monday night, asking them to maintain law and order,

Inspector Rajesh Bagri said.

In light of the proposed Congress protest, the police imposed preventive measures under Section 163 of Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS) within a 300-meter radius of the BJP office early in the morning.

Following police persuasion, Congress workers sat down on the main road near the barricades and started their 'Sunderkand path'. A few moments later, Congress members attempted to cross the barricades, forcing the police to detain them and send them to police lines, where they allegedly again began reciting the 'Sunderkand' right there. The police detention of Congress workers drew a sharp reaction from the party, which accused the government and the police of adopting oppressive tactics.

Meanwhile, the BJP dismissed the entire episode as a political stunt.

BJP district president Sarvapriya Tyagi said that Congress leaders should have come inside the office to recite Sunderkand, adding that the saffron party would have joined them.

Police sources said that holding a religious event right outside the office of a political party could trigger a confrontation between two groups, potentially disrupting the city's traffic and security arrangements. (PTI)

Nitin Nabin appeals to people to vote for BJP candidate in Bankipur bypoll

PATNA, July 14: BJP president Nitin Nabin on Tuesday appealed to people to vote for Neeraj Kumar Sinha, the party's candidate in the by-election to the Bankipur assembly constituency in Patna.

Nabin is on a two-day visit to Patna to campaign in his former constituency ahead of the bypoll, necessitated by his resignation from the seat.

Speaking to reporters, he urged the people to extend the same support to Sinha that they had shown him over the years.

"I hope that the affection and blessings you (people of Bankipur) gave me as your younger brother will also be extended to my younger brother Neeraj Sinha. He will work with the same trust and commitment and further accelerate Bankipur's development," he said.

The BJP president welcomed the party's decision to field a grassroots worker for the bypoll.

"Neeraj Sinha belongs to the family of one of our Jan Sangh-era workers, and he is a young



leader whom the people of the constituency know as a committed party member. He may not be widely known as a prominent public figure, but his service to the people in the areas where he has worked is immense," he said.

Recalling his family's long association with the constituency, Nabin said his late father, Naveen Kishore Prasad Sinha, had nurtured the constituency through years of struggle and dedication.

"I also spent the last 20 years walking shoulder to shoulder with the people of this constituency, sharing in their joys and sorrows," he said.

Nabin said the BJP had focused on improving Bankipur's infrastructure by building parks, community halls and roads while ensuring access to drinking water, electricity and other basic amenities.

Expressing confidence in the party nominee, he said Bankipur would emerge as one of Bihar's most developed assembly constituencies under Neeraj Kumar Sinha's leadership.

The BJP last week named Sinha as its candidate for the Bankipur bypoll. Voting will be held on July 30, and the counting of votes will take place on August 3. (PTI)

Kejriwal writes to PM, seeks meeting over E20 petrol

NEW DELHI, July 14:

AAP chief Arvind Kejriwal on Tuesday sought an appointment with Prime Minister Narendra Modi to discuss concerns over E20 petrol, requesting that options for pure and E20 petrol be made available at fuel stations, with lower prices for ethanol-blended petrol.

In a letter to the PM, Kejriwal said he wanted to explain the technical issues and the feedback he received from people related to the matter during his proposed meeting.

Kejriwal said customers should have the choice to buy either pure petrol or E20 petrol at fuel stations.

"If someone wants pure petrol, they should get that option and those wanting E20 should also have that choice," he said.

Kejriwal said he had written to the prime minister after interacting with people and understanding their concerns regarding E20 petrol. The AAP chief also sought a reduction in E20 petrol prices, saying the blended fuel provides lower mileage compared to regular petrol.

Kejriwal said the party has started an online petition for citizens to share their experiences with E20 petrol and urged people to share their concerns on mileage and others, he added.

He appealed to people to sign the petition in large numbers and said all responses collected would be submitted to the prime minister during their meeting. Kejriwal expressed hope that PM Modi would provide him an appointment soon.

The AAP leader also urged party workers and others concerned to visit petrol pumps and service stations, interact with consumers and share their experiences through videos on social media platforms. (PTI)



Oppn faking faith, BJP built Ayodhya as Sanatan's cultural capital: Adityanath



LUCKNOW, July 14:

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Tuesday accused the opposition parties of "faking faith" and the Samajwadi Party in particular of allowing namaz at the Hanumangarhi Temple, as he sought to deflect criticism over the Ayodhya Ram Temple donation theft row.

This is the second time since his July 10 Ayodhya visit that Adityanath touched on the more than two-decade-old issue.

"Those who used to facilitate namaz at Hanumangarhi are now commenting on Ayodhya and matters of faith. Questions are being raised today by such people concerning a sacred site like Hanumangarhi," Adityanath said at an event organised by Republic Bharat news channel in Lucknow.

BJP leader Brijlal, who in 2003 served as Inspector General of Police (law and order) and later went on to become the DGP, conceded that the plan was to hold namaz during Ramadan on the steps of Hanumangarhi Temple in November of that year.

"Yes, it is correct. Back in the day, aided by the then IG zone, there was indeed a plan to hold namaz on the steps of Hanumangarhi temple," Brijlal told PTI.

However, he said, the venue was changed after the intervention of then SSP Faizabad, and the namaz and iftar were held at Hanumangarhi Mahant Gyan Das's residence, adjacent to the temple.

IG (zone) VN Rai, under whose jurisdiction Faizabad (now Ayodhya) came, gave a different version of what transpired back then.

"I just want to know if I was behind it all and if namaz wasn't held still due to the then SSP's intervention, it means the then SSP disobeyed orders of his superior. Is it possible?" Rai asked, dismissing Brijlal's claim.

Claims and counterclaims notwithstanding, Adityanath sought to call out the SP over the matter.

"Those who are faking faith committed this sin (namaz at Hanumangarhi temple steps), whereas the BJP established Ayodhya as the cultural capital of Sanatan Dharma," he said.

"Talking about faith and theft in Ram Temple Ayodhya are those who had committed dacoity on the rights of the poor," he added.

Although the chief minister admitted that theft of donations was "unfortunate", he questioned the credentials of those criticising his government over it.

"Whatever happened was unfortunate. An SIT is investigating the matter... Resignations have been tendered on moral grounds. Yet questions are being raised," he said. On Monday, the Supreme Court directed the Special Investigation Team (SIT) formed by the Uttar Pradesh government to submit a report in the matter.

A bench comprising Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justices Joymalya Bagchi and V Mohna also issued a notice to the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust on pleas seeking a time-bound probe into the theft. Narendra Kumar Goswami, one of the three petitioners, moved the top court seeking a CBI probe into the matter.

He also sought a Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) audit of the finances of the trust, which manages the affairs of the Ram Temple. Meanwhile, in his speech, Adityanath spoke about "transformational changes" that have come around in the state since he came to power in 2017.

"Under the guidance of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the firm resolve of the double engine government, Uttar Pradesh today has emerged from the category of a 'BIMARU' state and become one of the country's top three economies," he said.

Before 2017, a riot took place every third day in UP, and curfews continued for months, he said. (PTI)

Akhilesh appeals to Sonam Wangchuk to end fast

LUCKNOW, July 14: Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav on Tuesday appealed to educator and climate activist Sonam Wangchuk to end his indefinite fast at Jantar Mantar in Delhi, saying no sacrifice holds significance for the "insensitive" BJP government.

The former Uttar Pradesh chief minister's appeal comes on the 24th day of the Cockroach Janta Party's (CJP) protest at Jantar Mantar and the 17th day of Wangchuk's indefinite hunger strike.

"We humbly request and earnestly appeal to Shri Sonam Wangchuk ji to break his fast. His life is invaluable to the entire world because it embodies the same commitment to humanity and the environment as it does to democracy," Yadav posted on X.

"The BJP government, which he is attempting to awaken through his fast unto death, is itself a principle-less and corrupt system. In its insensitivity and heartlessness, the sacrifice of anyone holds no significance; therefore, expecting any sense of propriety or change of heart from BJP members is utterly futile," he said.

"For them (BJP), no one's life holds any value. For them, money is paramount. They are intoxicated with the arrogance of wealth earned through corruption. Hoping for change in them is in vain. Those who are arrogant cannot be reformed," he added.

Yadav also targeted the BJP over the donation theft at the Ram temple in Ayodhya. (PTI)

BJP accuses Karnataka Cong of using taxpayers' money to build party cadre

NEW DELHI, July 14: The BJP on Tuesday accused the Karnataka government of diverting taxpayers' money to the pockets of Congress workers through its proposed Bharat Jodo Yuva Sanghas, alleging the initiative is a "party cadre-building exercise" at a time when the state is grappling with mounting debt.

The allegations came after the Karnataka government on Monday issued an order to establish 10,000 Bharat Jodo Yuva Sanghas (youth clubs) across the state to promote leadership, sports, culture, scientific temper and social harmony.

BJP national spokesperson Shehzad Poonawalla alleged the Congress' philosophy is to "line its own pockets with taxpayers' money".

"The Congress has always believed in taking away the people's resources for the benefit of one family. So whether it is the Congress party at the Centre or in Karnataka, their philosophy is simple -- pocket the people's money," he said in a video posted on X.

He alleged the Congress government is diverting public funds to strengthen its party organisation despite Karnataka facing a debt of over ₹ 7 lakh crore.

"At a time when Karnataka is burdened with a debt of more than ₹ 7 lakh crore and every year thousands of crores are spent on interest payments, instead of cutting wasteful



expenditure, they are using the people's resources and taxpayers' money to fill the coffers of the Congress party and benefit its karyakartas," he alleged.

Poonawalla also claimed that despite paying high taxes, people of Karnataka continue to face poor infrastructure and public services while state funds are allegedly diverted through scams or distributed among Congress workers.

"The Congress government in Karnataka is a curse for the people of the state. They pay the highest taxes, bus fares, metro fares, hospital charges and garbage collection tax. But instead of using that money to improve roads, infrastructure, or public facilities, it is either being siphoned off through corruption, such as the MUDA

scam and contractor scam, into the pockets of Congress leaders, or is now being distributed through these Bharat Jodo clubs," he alleged. Terming the Bharat Jodo Yuva Sanghas a "brand new scam", Poonawalla alleged that the clubs were an indirect way of transferring state funds to Congress workers.

"The Congress government is setting up Bharat Jodo clubs and has earmarked ₹ 10 lakh for each club. Every trainer in these clubs will receive ₹ 24,000 a month. This is basically an indirect way of paying state funds to Congress karyakartas," he claimed. He further alleged corruption in appointments to state corporations and boards and accused the Congress of usurping public land. (PTI)

Centre pre-approves 1 lakh rural houses for Bengal under PMAY before survey completion

'We have pre-approved the construction of one lakh homes'

KOLKATA, July 14: The Centre has pre-approved the construction of one lakh rural houses in West Bengal under the Pradhan Mantri Awaas Yojana even before the completion of survey work and the physical verification process, Chief Minister Suvenudh Adhikari announced on Tuesday.

The state has identified and approved 2.56 crore job card holders for 125 days of guaranteed work under the VB-G RAM G scheme and has received the Centre's in-principle nod to process and approve additional applications, he added.

The announcements were made following a high-level meeting between Union agriculture minister Shivraj Singh Chauhan and the state government, represented by Adhikari, Panchayat and Rural development minister Dilip Ghosh,



ministers of other departments and senior officials of the state and Centre at the secretariat.

"The survey work for the rural housing scheme in Bengal is being carried out rapidly and will be followed by a mandatory physical verification process. We have pre-approved the construction of one lakh homes so that once the due

diligence process gets completed, no time is lost in initiating the building of houses," Chauhan said.

The approvals were made in addition to the previously allotted ₹ 1,000 crore for laying 2,400 km of rural roads in the state under the PM Gram Sadak Yojana and Rs 700 crore for MNREGA, Adhikari said.

"In accordance with the promises made by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, we had pledged to give jobs in hand, food in belly and roof above the heads of the economically marginalised people."

"Thanks to the guidelines we received from the Union agriculture minister at the meeting today, we have taken a step forward to fulfil at least two of those three promises," the chief minister said.

He stated that the survey and verification deadline for the rural housing scheme has been extended from July 20 to August 15 in the wake of monsoon-related hurdles.

Chouhan said the Rural Welfare Ministry has sanctioned Rs 8,508 crore for development of West Bengal's villages for nine months till March 31, 2027, the total outlay for which will be over ₹ 12,064 crore with contribution from the

state government.

"My heart ached, and my soul wept when I visited Bengal during the previous regime whose non-cooperation with the Centre had deprived the people of sanctioned benefits worth ₹ 82,492 crore, the work for which had begun long before but never got completed."

"I am happy that under the Suvenudh Adhikari government, those obstacles have now been removed and Bengal's development process can now be fast-tracked," the Union minister said.

Chouhan added that a collaborative effort from experts of the Indian Council for Agricultural Research (ICAR) and state universities was being attempted to prepare an agricultural road map for the state, the first presentation of which was made at Tuesday's meeting. (PTI)

Tripura minister meets Union ministers, seeks help to boost textile sector, railway connectivity

AGARTALA, July 14: Tripura Tribal Welfare Minister Bikash Debbarma met Union Minister for Textiles, Giriraj Singh, in New Delhi and sought the Centre's support to boost the state's textile sector.

"In a meeting with the Union textiles minister, I discussed a wide range of issues aimed at the overall development and long-term growth of Tripura's textiles, handloom, handicrafts and sericulture sectors," he said in a social media post. He said a series of proposals were placed before the Union minister to unlock the state's rich potential in handloom, bamboo and cane-based handicrafts, sericulture and indigenous traditional crafts during the meeting on Monday.

The proposals included establishing an integrated textile park, a silk park, a National Institute of Design (NID), an Indian Institute of Handloom Technology (IIHT) and a Central Silk Reeling School (CSRS) in the northeastern state.

Debbarma, who also holds the



Handloom, Handicrafts and Sericulture portfolio, said the discussions also covered promotion of bamboo-, pineapple- and banana fibre-based industries, development of craft villages, establishment of a handicrafts museum, strengthening of export infrastructure, and enhancement of institutional capacity.

In a separate meeting with Railways Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw, he raised issues concerning rail-

way connectivity in Tripura.

A memorandum was submitted requesting the approval for stoppages of three express trains at Mungiakami railway station in Khowai district.

The memorandum also sought the beautification of the station, construction of a modern foot-over-bridge to ensure safe movement of passengers, and improvement of other essential railway infrastructure. (PTI)

Nagaland IED blast: Search operations intensified

NSCN-IM condemns 'cowardly terrorist act'

KOIHIMA/IMPHAL, July 14: Security forces on Tuesday intensified search operations in Nagaland's Chumoukedima district after an Assam Rifles jawan was killed and four other personnel and a civilian were injured in an IED blast targeting a vehicle on the previous day, a Defence official said.

Havildar Mohd Iqbal from Jammu and Kashmir was killed and four other Assam Rifles personnel were injured in the improvised explosive device (IED) blast close to a vehicle of the paramilitary force near Sukhovi on Monday afternoon.

Operations intensified on Tuesday with additional columns of the Assam Rifles and Nagaland Police inducted into the area, a Defence PRO said. The Defence PRO also said "all four injured personnel were stable" and operations were underway to track down those responsible for the attack.



Havildar Mohd Iqbal of 28 Assam Rifles was posted with the Assam Rifles Training Centre and School at Sukhovi in Nagaland. Born on August 3, 1981, he had enrolled in the force on April 5, 2003. Hailing from Kallar Mohra village in Poonch district, he is survived by his wife Nasim Akther, officials said. A wreath-laying ceremony in honour of the fallen soldier is scheduled to be held on

Tuesday afternoon at the Assam Rifles Training Centre and School at Sukhovi, they said.

The Assam Rifles personnel were travelling in a mini truck when the blast occurred. A civilian nearby was hit on the leg by a flying object from the blast, officials said, adding that an autorickshaw was also completely damaged.

Meanwhile, the NSCN/GRPN (NSCN-IM) on Tuesday strongly

condemned the IED blast near Khopanal, Sukhovi, describing it as a "cowardly terrorist act" which was aimed at disrupting peace in the region.

In a statement, the outfit said the use of improvised explosive devices and anti-personnel mines could not be justified, warning that such attacks put civilian lives at risk, spread fear among the public and undermine the peace that people of the region have worked to preserve.

While distancing itself from the attack, it said it would seek to establish the facts behind the explosion and identify those responsible and urged the public not to speculate over the incident and appealed for cooperation so that those behind the blast could be held accountable.

No militant group has so far claimed responsibility for the attack. (PTI)

NU project enables women SHGs to earn over ₹ 30 lakh



HT Correspondent

DIMAPUR, July 14: A Nagaland University community-based initiative has empowered women SHGs in Zunheboto district to earn through backyard poultry initiative, proving how scientific backyard poultry farming and low-cost egg incubators can significantly boost rural livelihoods and nutritional security.

This project enabled the SHGs to collectively generate more than ₹ 30.8 lakh while increasing the local availability of poultry meat and eggs.

The 'Promoting Sustainable Livelihood and Nutritional Security of Women SHGs through Low-Cost Egg Incubator and Backyard Poultry Production' project was executed by Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK), Zunheboto, under Nagaland University with financial support from the National

Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD).

The initiative addresses one of Nagaland's pressing challenges — a substantial gap between the demand and supply of poultry meat and eggs.

According to the annual administrative report (2022-23) of Nagaland animal husbandry and veterinary services department, the state faces an annual shortfall of more than 1,520 lakh eggs and nearly 38.5 metric tonnes of meat, making locally sustainable poultry production essential for improving food security.

The project was led by principal investigator Dr Rakesh Kumar Chaurasia, principal scientist and head, KVK Zunheboto, Nagaland University, who provided continuous technical guidance, regular field visits, disease monitoring and capacity

building to ensure the successful adoption of improved poultry farming practices.

The impact of this project was published in the International Journal of Agriculture Extension and Social Development (https://doi.org/10.33545/26180723.2026.v9.i4Sa.3545), a peer-reviewed journal that publishes research on agricultural extension, rural development, agricultural education, and the social dimensions of agriculture and allied sciences.

The programme covered 60 women SHG members across five villages of Sumisetsu, Zaphumi, Lumami, Alaphumi and Shichimi in Akuluto block of Zunheboto district.

Participants received scientific training in backyard poultry management along with rainbow rooster day-old chicks, feed for the initial 20 days, vaccination and medication support, poultry equipment, and low-cost egg incubators that enable year-round chick production at the village level. Highlighting the impact of this project, Dr Chaurasia said an important innovation of the project has been the introduction of low-cost incubators at the village level.

He said the incubators have already begun producing chicks, creating a sustainable local supply that is expected to reduce dependence on external sources while supporting poultry farmers in neighbouring villages.

NPCC condemns IED blast in Chumoukedima



HT Correspondent

DIMAPUR, July 14: The Nagaland Pradesh Congress Committee (NPCC) on Tuesday strongly condemned suspected IED blast near the Assam Rifles Training Centre (ARTC), Shokhuvi, in Chumoukedima district on Monday, which claimed the life of Havildar Mohd Iqbal of the Assam Rifles and left four other security personnel injured.

Calling it a cowardly and reprehensible act, the NPCC, in a release issued by its communication department, urged the authorities concerned to conduct a thorough, impartial, and time-bound investigation to identify those responsible and bring them

to justice in accordance with the law.

It also called upon all citizens to remain calm, maintain communal harmony, and extend full cooperation to the investigating agencies.

Stating that violence has no place in a democratic and peace-loving society, the NPCC said such acts not only endanger innocent lives but also threaten the hard-earned peace and stability that the people of Nagaland have long aspired to preserve.

"At a time when the state continues to move forward on the path of reconciliation and development, such incidents are deeply unfortunate and deserve unequivocal condemnation," the release said.

Saying that the people of Nagaland have consistently rejected violence as a means of resolving differences, the NPCC reaffirmed its commitment to the principles of peace, dialogue, democracy, and the rule of law.

Expressing its deepest condolences to the bereaved family of Havildar Iqbal, who made the supreme sacrifice in the line of duty, it prayed for the speedy and complete recovery of the injured personnel undergoing treatment.

49.5 kg of opium seized in Senapati

IMPHAL, July 14: Manipur Police have seized 49.5 kg of opium in Senapati district, an official statement said on Tuesday.



A police team conducting naka checking at T Khullen along Imphal-Dimapur NH-2 on Sunday morning signalled a four-wheeler to stop, but the vehicle sped away.

The police team chased the vehicle and later found it abandoned at some distance.

On scrutiny, the team found 49 packets of opium weighing a total of 49.5 kg concealed in compartments of the floor of the vehicle.

Police also seized the identity documents of the owner of the vehicle, following which he was arrested. (PTI)

Nagaland taxes dept conducts field inspection in Dimapur



HT Correspondent

DIMAPUR, July 14: The Nagaland state taxes department, Dimapur unit, carried out a two-day field inspection at various business establishments in Dimapur district as part of its ongoing efforts to strengthen GST compliance, promote awareness among traders and vendors, and verify business activities at the ground level.

The inspection was conducted from Monday by a team of officers led by the deputy commissioner of state taxes Chievtishu Nythe.

During the inspection, the officials verified the issuance of GST bills and invoices by registered vendors, conducted stock verification, reviewed business activities, and examined GST registration details to ensure compliance with the provisions of the NGST Act.

The team also interacted with

business owners to clarify GST-related queries and encouraged voluntary tax compliance.

As part of the awareness drive, officers educated traders and consumers on the importance of issuing and obtaining proper GST invoices, emphasizing that GST bills help ensure transparency, curb tax evasion, and contribute to the State's development.

According to the department, while a majority of the registered taxpayers inspected were found to be complying with GST provisions, certain discrepancies were detected in some establishments.

These cases will be examined further in accordance with the provisions of the NGST Act, 2017, it stated.

The state taxes department has appealed to all business establishments to issue GST invoices for every taxable supply and maintain proper books of account.

It also urged consumers to insist on GST bills for every purchase.

It reiterated that such field inspections and awareness drives will continue regularly to promote a fair, transparent, and compliant tax environment across Nagaland.

Massive landslide sweeps away 2 houses, eatery, shop in Mizoram

AIZAWL, July 14: At least two houses, a roadside eatery and a shop have been swept away by a massive landslide in a village in south Mizoram's Lunglei district early Tuesday, officials said.

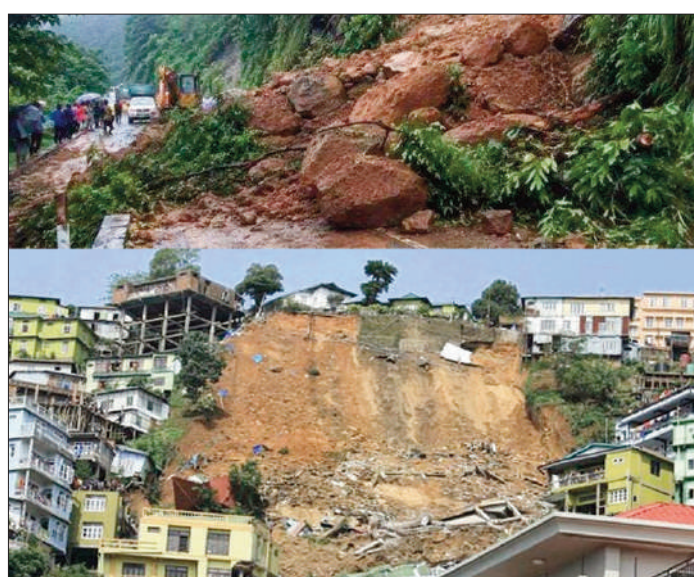
No casualty has been reported as the occupants and their belongings were evacuated before the incident, which also affected traffic movement on National Highway 2 linking Lunglei with Lawngtlai district, they said.

The landslide swept away two houses that stood on the other side of the road in Tawipui South village at around 5 am, officials said.

The area has experienced several minor mudslides over the past few days, starting on July 9.

Residents living near the affected area had already moved their belongings to safer locations on Monday after signs of an imminent landslide became apparent, officials said. The occupants of the affected buildings had also been relocated, preventing any loss of life, officials said.

The company, which monitors the highway, is yet to clear the debris as the area continues to experience



soil drops from the cliff, they said.

Tawipui South is located about 45 km from Lunglei and about 30 km from Lawngtlai town, which has been cut off from the rest of the state due to the landslide.

Mizoram has been experiencing incessant rain since around July 3,

causing landslides, rockfalls and floods at several locations.

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) has warned of heavy rain accompanied by thunderstorms with lightning in almost all parts of the state, including Aizawl for three days from Tuesday to Thursday. (PTI)

Development visible in every corner of Tripura: CM

AGARTALA, July 14: Tripura Chief Minister Manik Saha on Tuesday unveiled projects worth ₹ 105.73 crore in Gomati district, asserting that rapid infrastructure development was now visible across every corner of the state.

The projects unveiled in Udaipur included two school buildings and a synthetic turf football ground, while foundation stones were laid for a sub-divisional hospital, two more school buildings, a PWD office and a district labour office.

"In the last financial year, I either inaugurated or laid the foundation stones for projects worth ₹ 1,500 crore, while this year the figure has already reached around ₹ 221 crore. It shows massive infrastructure development is taking place in the state," he said.

The CM said the state's annual budget had increased from ₹ 32,000 crore in 2025-26 to ₹ 34,000 crore in 2026-27, while capital expenditure had risen from ₹ 7,000 crore to ₹ 10,000 crore. Referring to the 'Destination Tripura: Business Conclave-2026', held on July 9 and 10, Saha said the response from investors had exceeded expectations.

"I had expected investment agreements worth ₹ 1 lakh crore to be signed, but the total reached ₹ 1.21 lakh crore. This is testimony to the investment-friendly atmosphere created in the state. Investors, entrepreneurs and business leaders are now keen to invest in different sectors," he said. Finance Minister Pranajit Singha Roy said annual spending on infrastructure development has increased substantially under the BJP government.

"The previous regime used to spend around ₹ 3,000 crore a year on infrastructure development. Now it has increased to ₹ 8,000 crore. The government is investing in infrastructure to make Tripura an investment-friendly destination, which will create employment opportunities for the youth," he said. (PTI)



CM Farm+ planting materials distributed to North Garo Hills farmers

Over 4,200 beneficiaries receive saplings to promote high-value horticulture under state scheme

HT Correspondent

RESUBELPARA, July 14: The Office of the District Horticulture Officer, North Garo Hills, on Tuesday distributed quality planting materials to farmers under the CM Farm+ scheme at the Multipurpose Cooperative Society Hall in Mendipathar, with the aim of promoting high-value commercial horticulture and enhancing farmers' income.

The programme seeks to encourage the cultivation of high-value horticultural crops by providing quality planting materials, improved farm inputs and scientific production technologies, while also promoting the conservation of indigenous crop varieties.

Agriculture, Farmers' Welfare, Fisheries and Tourism Minister and Resubelpara MLA TD Shira, who attended the programme as the chief guest, urged farmers to adopt scientific cultivation prac-



tices, including the use of quality planting materials, proper spacing and organic manure.

Addressing beneficiaries receiving saplings of black pepper, dragon fruit, vanilla and passion fruit, he advised them to remain patient as the crops require time to mature and stressed the importance of following good agricultural practices.

Shira also encouraged farmers to participate in training programmes organised by the Agriculture and Horticulture Departments to enhance their skills and productivity.

He highlighted state government initiatives such as CM Farm+, FOCUS, FOCUS+ and CM-ELEVATE for creating livelihood opportunities and promoting rural entrepreneurship.

Kharkutta MLA and MNREDA Chairman Rupert Momin cited the recent dispatch of a 10-metric-ton consignment of premium pineapples from North Garo Hills to Delhi as evidence of the district's agricultural potential.

He urged farmers to expand the cultivation of high-value crops while avoiding excessive use of chemicals that degrade soil health.

Deputy Commissioner MSN Marak encouraged beneficiaries to view agriculture as a sustainable livelihood and advised them to

maintain their plantations properly to improve productivity and income.

District Horticulture Officer MLG Momin said the CM Farm+ scheme aims to boost farmers' income through the cultivation of high-value crops.

She informed that more than 1,000 hectares have been identified for expansion of such crops across the district over the next three years.

She added that 4,294 beneficiaries in North Garo Hills have received quality planting materials, including black pepper, vanilla, dragon fruit and passion fruit saplings, along with other farm inputs under the scheme.

Assistant Directors of Horticulture SG Momin and Carlos Sangma also attended the programme, which concluded with the distribution of planting materials to beneficiaries by the dignitaries.

Arka Abhed tomato variety boosts prospects for Lower Subansiri farmers

HT Correspondent

ZIRO, July 14: A new disease-resistant tomato variety, Arka Abhed, is transforming tomato cultivation in Arunachal Pradesh's Lower Subansiri district by helping farmers overcome recurring crop losses and achieve significantly higher yields. Introduced by the Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK), Lower Subansiri, the variety has gained popularity among growers after demonstrating strong resistance to diseases that commonly affect tomato cultivation in the region's humid, high-rainfall conditions.

KVK first conducted On-Farm Trials (OFTs) of the variety in 2023 to evaluate its suitability for the district's agro-climatic conditions.

Following encouraging results, the programme was expanded through Front-Line Demonstrations (FLDs) during the 2024-25 season, enabling farmers to adopt the variety on a larger scale. Developed by the ICAR-Indian Institute of Horticultural Research (IIHR), Arka Abhed offers resistance against four major tomato diseases—Tomato Leaf Curl Virus, Bacterial Wilt, Early Blight and Late Blight—which frequently cause heavy crop losses in the region. The variety has also reduced farmers' dependence on chemical pesticides, lowering cultivation costs and labour requirements while enabling the production of safer and cleaner vegetables.

According to KVK, Arka Abhed has a yield potential of 70 to 75 tonnes per hectare. The fruits, weighing about 90-100 grams, are firm and have a longer shelf life, reducing post-harvest losses during transportation to distant markets and allowing farmers to secure better prices. A representative of KVK Lower Subansiri said the successful transition of the variety from experimental plots to farmers' fields demonstrates the potential of climate-resilient technologies to improve agricultural productivity and strengthen rural livelihoods. Building on the success of the initiative, KVK Lower Subansiri plans to continue providing training and technical support to enable more farmers across the district to adopt the high-yielding variety and promote sustainable tomato cultivation.

Eight Arunachal villages cut off as flash floods wash away arterial bridge

ITANAGAR, July 14: Flash floods triggered by incessant rains have washed away an 84-metre bridge over the Kumei river, isolating eight villages in Krua Daadi district from the rest of Arunachal Pradesh since Monday.

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.

Pipsorang Sub-Divisional Officer Yumlam Pulu and Tali East Zilla Parishad Member Rughu Tama visited the disaster-hit sites.

Pulu said that besides the bridge, more than 20 houses on the riverbanks have been destroyed. He urged the public to strictly adhere to the district administration's safety advisories and avoid venturing near the river. (PTI)

New Zealand beats West Indies by 5 wickets in the 2nd ODI to level the series 1-1



PROVIDENCE, (GUYANA), July 14: Left-arm spinner Jayden Lennox took 5-19 as West Indies collapsed from 63-0 to be all out for 138 and New Zealand went on to win the second one-day cricket international by five wickets.

New Zealand faced a difficult chase on a sharply turning pitch and was 96-5 before Tom Latham made 37 in an unbroken partnership with Mark Bracewell to guide New Zealand to its target with 104 balls remaining on Monday.

New Zealand's 400th win in one-day internationals leveled the five-match series at 1-1 after West Indies won the first match by seven wickets.

Lennox claimed his first five-wicket total in his seventh one-day international after a belated international debut at 31 and his figures from eight overs were the third-best by a New Zealand spinner in ODIs.

He set in motion a collapse which saw the West Indies lose all 10 wickets for 65 runs after a solid opening stand between John Campbell (43) and Akeem August (18).

Lennox shared with Mitchell Santner the key wickets of Keacy Carty who made 95 and captain Shai Hope who made an unbeaten 87 in a partnership of 131-runs in the first match on Saturday.

Santner bowled Carty for 18 with a ball which pitched on middle and turned sharply to beat the bat while Lennox bowled Hope for 7 with a ball that pitched on middle and leg and straightened past the inside edge.

Amir Jangoo's 24 was the only other major contribution for West Indies which lost its last five wickets in 10 overs.

Henry Nicholls (17) and Will Young (28) gave New Zealand a brisk start, putting on

35 for the first wicket at almost five runs per over.

In a double setback, New Zealand lost both Young and Mark Chapman (0) in quick succession. Chapman was run out second ball, taking a chancy run from a push to cover only to be beaten by Vitel Lawes' quick and accurate throw.

Nicholls was out with the total 52-3 before Daryl Mitchell and Latham combined to put on 42 for the fourth wicket. Mitchell made 28 and seemed likely to be in at the close but made a rash decision to charge a ball from Khary Pierre and was stumped.

Dean Foxcroft was bowled by Pierre shortly afterwards, raising the pressure on New Zealand but Latham and Bracewell (18) held out until the end. Bracewell passed 1,000 runs in one-day internationals. The third match in the five-match series is scheduled for Thursday, also in Guyana. (AP)

Manav-Manush combine climbs to world No 2 in ITTF rankings

NEW DELHI, July 14: Indian table tennis reached a milestone on Tuesday as three doubles pairs across the men's, women's, and mixed doubles entered the top 10 of the latest ITTF World Rankings.

Leading the charge are Manav Thakkar and Manush Shah, who climbed to World No. 2 in the men's doubles rankings — the highest-ever ranking achieved by an Indian pair in any doubles discipline.

In women's doubles, Diya Chitale and Yashaswini Ghorpade broke into the top 10 by reaching World No. 10, while Diya Chitale and Shah rose to World No. 5 in the mixed doubles rankings.

It is the first time that India have had three doubles pairs — one each in men's, women's and mixed doubles — simultaneously ranked inside the top 10.

The achievement highlights India's growing stature as one of the strongest doubles-playing nations with the country's partnerships consistently challenging traditional powerhouses such as China, Japan, South Korea and Chinese Taipei.

The milestone also comes at a significant juncture for the sport, with doubles set to return to the Olympic programme at the Los Angeles 2028 Games, increasing the importance of the event on the international circuit. (PTI)

Haryana sweeps team titles at U-23 National Wrestling Championship

ROHTAK, July 14: Hosts Haryana stamped their authority by sweeping the overall team titles in men's freestyle, Greco-Roman and women's wrestling at the U-23 National Wrestling Championships here on Tuesday.

The host state topped the men's freestyle division with 200 points, the Greco-Roman category with 195 points, and the women's wrestling field with 183 points at the three-day domestic event.

Services Sports Control Board (SSCB) finished runners-up in both men's freestyle (138 points) and Greco-Roman (165 points), while Maharashtra claimed the second spot in the women's wrestling team standings with 160 points.

In the men's freestyle category, Haryana and SSCB athletes shared the major honours alongside strong performances from Punjab.

In the 74kg weight category, Narender of SSCB bagged the gold medal after defeating Himachal Pradesh's Naveen, while Rishabh Jakhar of Punjab and Yash of Haryana completed the podium with bronze medals. The 79kg title went to Haryana's Paras, who overcame a tough challenge from SSCB's Yash, while Priyanshu of Delhi and Vishal Kumar of Punjab locked in the bronze medals.

Sahil Dalal asserted SSCB's strength in the 86kg class by winning the gold medal over Haryana's Himanshu Anil, with Sumit Thakur



of Himachal Pradesh and Anuj Tomar of Uttar Pradesh securing the bronze medals.

In the heavyweight 125kg division, Jaspooran Singh of Punjab wrestled his way to a gold medal finish against Uttar Pradesh's Lakshay Kumar, while Rohit of Haryana and Rishabh Singh of Rajasthan signed off with the bronze medals. The Greco-Roman discipline mirrored a similar battle for dominance, with Haryana and SSCB leading the charge. Nikhil opened Haryana's gold account in the 55kg class by beating Uttar Pradesh's Vishesh, leaving Aman of SSCB and Vanshdeep Singh of Punjab with a bronze each.

In the 60kg division, Khundong-

bam of SSCB secured the crown against Maharashtra's Samarth Gajanan, while Vinay Tomar of Uttar Pradesh and Ashpreet Singh of Delhi took the bronze medals.

SSCB's Sagar Singh won the 67kg title over Mauli Sagar Tipugade of Maharashtra, with Yogesh of Delhi and Sonil Kumar of Haryana finishing third. Haryana found more gold through Vinit Dahiya in 72kg, who beat Delhi's Anuj Kumar, and Tushar in 77kg, who bested Punjab's Atul Lohan.

SSCB's Deepak Punia captured the 82kg gold over Delhi's Vishesh Kumar, while Vinay Vitthal Pujari of Maharashtra claimed the 87kg title ahead of SSCB's Manav Sharma. Haryana closed out the

Greco-Roman segment with a double-gold performance from Piyush Kumar, who dominated both the 97kg and 130kg categories by defeating Uttarakhand's Umang in both finals, while Moksh Chaturvedi of Madhya Pradesh and Satya Narayan of Odisha secured bronze across both heavy weight classes.

The competition in Women's Wrestling saw a stellar display of technical superiority from the host state, alongside Maharashtra.

Madhya Pradesh's Priyanshi Prapaj broke through in a highly competitive 50kg field to secure gold against Rajasthan's Komal Verma, leaving Haryana's Sneha and Maharashtra's Neha Kiran with bronze medals. Haryana then unleashed a wave of gold medals, starting with Kirti at 53kg, who overcame Punjab's Sonal, and Jyoti in 55kg, who defeated Karnataka's Shalini Sayer Siddhi.

Reena continued the golden run for the hosts in 57kg by defeating Tanvi Gundeshi Malmud of Maharashtra, while teammate Simran secured the 59kg title over Himachal Pradesh's Prerna Mehta.

SSCB celebrated gold in the 62kg category as Anjali clinched the title over Haryana's Janvi. Chandigarh's Khushi Rani produced a clinical performance to capture the 65kg gold against Haryana's Tannu, while Ashwini Vishnoi of Rajasthan won the 68kg crown over Punjab's Rajni. (PTI)

Satwik-Chirag pair pulls out

Sindhu sails into Japan Open second round



TOKYO, July 14: Satwiksairaj Rankireddy's recurring shoulder problem forced him and Chirag Shetty to retire from their Japan Open opener even as P V Sindhu eased into the women's singles second round with a straight-game win over Malaysia's Wong Ling Ching here on Tuesday.

The world No.4 Indian pair, who ended a two-year title drought by winning the Singapore Open but had to withdraw from Indonesia Open last month, retired after losing the opening game 19-21 to Denmark's Daniel Lundgaard and Mads Vestergaard.

Chief doubles coach Tan Kim Her said the Indian duo will be skipping the China Open next week and focus on rehabilitation to get back to shape for the home World Championships in August.

"It still needs some time to recover. We have at least four weeks to get back in shape ahead of World Championships," Tan told PTI.

Two-time Olympic-medallist Sindhu, who is currently world no. 10, produced a compact performance to notch up a 21-14 21-11 win over 37th-ranked Wong Ling Ching of Malaysia in the opening round of the BWF Super 750 event.

India's Dhruv Kapila and Tanisha Crasto too advanced to the second round after defeating Scotland's Alexander Dunn and Julie Macpherson 21-16, 21-14 in their mixed doubles opener.

However, Rohan Kapoor and Ruthvika Shivani Gadde bowed out in the opening round after losing 11-21, 10-21 to top seeds Feng Yan Zhe and Huang Dong Ping of China.

Sindhu vs Wong

Sindhu controlled the proceedings from the outset, dictating the pace of the rallies to open up a 7-4 lead. Although Wong attempted to stay in touch, her unforced errors allowed the Indian to steadily pull away and take an 11-6 advantage at the mid-game interval.

The Indian ace looked comfortable in the rallies, mixing up her strokes effectively to extend her lead to 14-9. Her backhand net dribbles, deft drops and well-disguised half-smashes came off with precision.

While there were stray errors, including a long toss and a wide cross-court net shot from the Indian, Wong failed to make the most of those opportunities.

A straight smash earned Sindhu seven game points, and she wrapped up the opening game in the second attempt.

Sindhu resumed in similar fashion after the change of ends, racing to an 8-2 lead before taking an 11-3 cushion at the interval.

The gap only widened thereafter as Wong continued to struggle with her accuracy, allowing Sindhu to surge to a 16-5 lead. The Malaysian briefly strung together three points before another error handed the initiative back to the Indian.

A smash into the net from Wong gave Sindhu 10 match points. The Indian squandered the first with a long return before Wong found the net on the next point to hand Sindhu a comfortable straight-game victory.

Later in the day, Hariharan Amsakarunan and MR Arjun will face Chinese Taipei's Lee Jhe-Huei and Yang Po-Hsuan in another men's doubles match. (PTI)

Lord's success strengthens case for more women's red-ball cricket: Shantha Rangaswamy

NEW DELHI, July 14: India's emphatic 270-run victory over England in the first-ever women's Test at Lord's in London has strengthened the case for expanding red-ball cricket in the women's game, former India captain Shantha Rangaswamy said, urging the BCCI to revive longer-format domestic competitions across age groups.

The Indian women's team produced one of the finest victories in its history as Yastika Bhatia struck a memorable century at the 'home of cricket', while Kranti Gaud claimed a five-wicket haul to enter the Lord's honours board.

Off-spinner Sneha Rana then sealed the win with four wickets in the second innings.

"I think this is the best thing that could have happened for Indian women's cricket. Playing at Lord's for the first time ever, in their first Test there, and India wins," Rangaswamy told PTI in an interview.

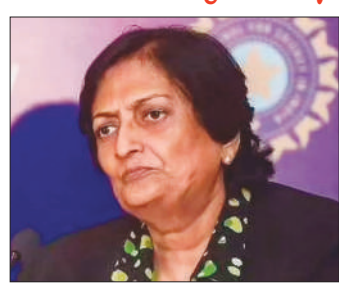
"India, in fact, demolishes England by a huge margin of 270 runs and two of them make it to the honours board. I think you can't ask for anything better than this."

The former all-rounder believes India's performance highlighted the importance of red-ball cricket in developing technically sound players.

"In fact, when I was in the Apex Council, I used to plead that they should have a multi-day format for women's cricket. Last year they restarted it, but only at the international level and that too on a knockout basis," she said.

"I would urge the BCCI, they must start with a multi-day format for Under-19s, Under-23s and seniors like it was done years back. That's the only way our girls will learn the skills. Just see the skill level they displayed."

Drawing parallels with the men's game, Rangaswamy said



longer-format cricket remains the foundation of technical excellence. "Players like Virat Kohli or Steve Smith can do well in all three formats because of their superior technique. That is what needs to be inculcated in domestic cricket at all levels."

Rangaswamy said she had a conversation with Yastika Bhatia, who returned from a lengthy injury layoff to register a memorable hundred after missing India's victorious ODI World Cup campaign last year.

"I talked to Yastika because she's come out of injury and still performed incredibly well. That calls for a lot of conviction and self-confidence. She played brilliantly."

"So did Smriti, but while Smriti got 80 and a fifty, Yastika made a three-figure mark," she said.

Rangaswamy also praised the bowling unit, particularly Sneha Rana who has continued to excel in the longest format despite being out of India's current white-ball squads.

"I was pleasantly surprised at the way our girls fought and shocked the English team wilted under pressure."

"Not just this Test, even the previous one she played, Sneha was the main bowler. She has shown her skills in the longest format."

"Just because she's not there in T20s or ODIs, I have a feeling she can come back to the ODI format given her consistent performances." (PTI)

DSA majority members constitute ad hoc panel to conduct polls, bypassing president

NEW DELHI, July 14: Factional feud erupted in Delhi Soccer Association (DSA) as majority of its members constituted a three-member ad hoc committee to run the day-to-day affairs of the organisation and hold elections in August.

The two decisions were taken in an Extraordinary General Body Meeting (EGBM) bypassing President Anuj Gupta.

The EGBM held here on Sunday fixed August 30 as the date for the DSA elections DSA. It authorised the ad-hoc panel to take charge of DSA with immediate effect till an elected executive committee assumes office.

Gupta, on his part, termed the move as "illegal", claiming that "people who are not even members are trying to take over DSA".

The EGBM appointed Young Boys FC President Bharat Singh Mehra as head of the

ad hoc committee with Collegian FC President Susanta Deb and Ajmal FC President Li-aquat Ali as the other members.

According to the minutes of the meeting in possession of PTI, 60 members of the DSA attended the EGBM -- 47 permanent council members, six provisional members, two associate members and five institutional members. The EGBM was called by Liaquat Ali, also the treasurer, and the meeting was chaired by one of the vice-presidents, Jagdish Chander Malhotra.

Gupta was elected DSA president in March 2023 after former chief Shaji Prabhakaran became the General Secretary of the All India Football Federation (AIFF). The term of the 21-member executive committee ended in March this year.

Mehra said the EGBM was called as the

term of the DSA executive committee elected in 2022 had ended and the elections were not held on time.

"The term of the executive committee has ended on March 19 this year and the president (Gupta) has not called for elections of the organisation. He is trying to postpone the elections," Mehra told PTI.

"He had called for an EGBM on May 24 but just a day prior postponed it on the basis of a letter from the AIFF."

When contacted, Gupta said, "It is completely wrong. Nothing has changed. Some members who are not even members have tried to takeover the DSA with illegal means. They have not even complied with the court order and have done contempt. I will be moving to court immediately."

He said the AIFF extended the term of

every state association till the national body's elections, set to be held in December this year. The AIFF's elections, in turn, were to be held before September but the Sports Ministry had allowed the National Sports Federations whose polls fall in 2026 to postpone them till the end of the year.

Mehra countered to Gupta's claim, saying that the sports ministry's directive for extension of term was subject to approval by the general body of the NSF, and that would extend to state units under a national federation.

The minutes of the EGBM, a copy of which has been submitted to AIFF, claimed that the Executive Committee of the DSA has ceased to exist as 12 of its members have submitted their resignations, leading to lack of quorum for any meeting (one-third plus one) as per Article 24 (Xiii). (PTI)

Aggression mixed with patience was key to India's epic Test win: Muzumdar



LONDON, July 14: Tons of patience mixed with the right amount of aggression was the key to Indian women's cricket team's epic Test win over England, said chief coach Anmol Muzumdar as he lauded centurion Yastika Bhatia for her "special knock" and pacer Kranti Gaud for her "controlled line and length."

Gaud's seven-wicket match haul and Bhatia's hundred played a big role in India's historic 270-run win over England in what was the first ever women's Test played on the

hallowed turf of Lord's.

"Yeah, you can say that (it was a perfect game). We batted well, we bowled extremely well and we fielded even better, it was a good game for us," Muzumdar said during the press-conference.

"I wouldn't be able to pinpoint one particular thing... I think we were disciplined in our approach towards our batting. And disciplined in our bowling as well, sticking to the basics of cricket."

"While bowling, as I said, good line and length, controlled line and length. Aggression mixed with patience. So I think that was a key factor for this win."

Bhatia's 113 off 158 in the second innings helped India set England a mammoth 457-run target. The hosts could manage just 186 in 62.5 overs.

"I think it was a special knock. Needless to say that coming at Lord's has to be a brilliant one. One which she and all the team members would remember," Muzumdar said.

"Not just that, I was really im-

pressed with the way she has come out of the injuries. Last couple of years, she has been tormented with some major injuries."

"And the way she has defied all those things and stayed true to the game. Also, her shot selection was superb, I felt. And she paced her innings really well. So I guess it was a lovely knock to watch from outside."

Gaud emerged as the Player of the match after snapping 5/37 and 2/54 in the two innings.

"I think Kranti, the control that she showed was superb. She was just right there in the channel. Her control on her line and length was superb, never erred on the shorter side. "Probably an odd delivery here and there, but she was more or less on the good length area, which we have been speaking about for a long time, and I think she has got the rewards of just sticking to controlled line and length."

We've world-class players

Asked if India worked on their batting ahead of the match, Muzumdar said: "I think we al-

ways know in the group that our batting is our strength. We have got some terrific world-class players, Smriti (Mandhana), Jamie (Jamimah Rodrigues), Harman (Harmanpreet Kaur), Deepti (Sharma), Shafali (Verma), and also not to forget Richa (Ghosh). They are world-class players."

On Bhatia's wicket-keeping role in red-ball cricket, the India coach said: "Yastika, whenever she was available, she was our first choice keeper. And she proved it really nicely."

"She also took some good catches. And yeah, I mean, going forward, that will be the case. Yastika did her debut, I think, a couple of years back against England at DY Patil Stadium."

On a potential Women's World Test Championship, Muzumdar said: "Obviously, we would be pleased if that happens...I've always maintained that Test Cricket is the ultimate format of the game. And our group knows it. Not just the leadership group, but also the players coming through. (PTI)

Sports Ministry grants conditional recognition to JFI's interim body

NEW DELHI, July 14: The Sports Ministry has granted conditional recognition to the interim body of the Judo Federation of India (JFI), which was elected last month following a Delhi High Court order, warning that "irregularities" in compliance with judicial directions would lead to its suspension.

The JFI was governed by a court-appointed administrator since 2022, but in a ruling in February this year, the Delhi HC asked the body to conduct an Annual General Meeting and align itself with the provisions of the National Sports Governance Act that came into effect earlier this year.

As a result, the body elected an interim Executive Committee, which is led by veteran sports administrator Mukesh Kumar with Bance Brata Das as Secretary General and Shailesh Tilak as Treasurer. "...it has been decided to grant recognition to the Executive Committee of the Judo Federation of India (Interim body) with immediate effect," the ministry notification stated. (PTI)