

6 NATION

● LS adjourned for day; no discussion on Bill to amend anti-paper leak law amid Oppn uproar

● Mehbooba's remarks on violence against Kashmiris 'irresponsible': Omar Abdullah

7 NE

● More officers inducted into team probing Tripura DGP's death

● Arunachal: Cong targets CM Khandu govt over border security, healthcare

We remain committed to restoring essential services at the earliest: Himanta

Assam flood situation improves even as toll rises to 68

GUWAHATI, July 27: The death toll in this year's floods in Assam climbed to 68 with two more fatalities, while over 5.24 lakh people remained affected across five districts despite an overall improvement in the situation, officials said on Monday.

The two deaths were reported on Sunday from Charaideo district, which also remained the worst-affected with nearly 1.9 lakh people reeling under water, they said.

Among the other affected districts were Golaghat, Jorhat, Nagaon and Sivasagar, officials said.

Altogether 354 relief camps and aid distribution centres were operating in four districts, taking care of 37,724 displaced people, they said.

Multiple agencies, including the Army, NDRF, SDRF, Fire & Emergency Service and the police, were engaged in the rescue and relief op-



erations, they added.

Embankments, roads, bridges and other infrastructure suffered damage in various districts of the state.

Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said that power restoration work was on in a phased manner.

"As Assam steadily recovers from the floods, power restoration efforts continue across affected districts," Sarma said in a social media post on Sunday. He said following the precautionary suspension of electricity supply during the floods, Power De-

Permanent solution flood problem sought

GUWAHATI, July 27: Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge and Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi on Monday expressed their solidarity with Assam flood victims and demanded a permanent solution to the problem. They demanded a permanent solution to the problem, reminding

how the BJP had come to power with that promise, and urged the governments to ensure relief and rehabilitation at the earliest for the affected people.

"Deeply distressed by the devastating floods in Assam, which have claimed at least 68 precious lives and caused (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

partment teams have been carrying out comprehensive safety inspections while restoring power in a

phased manner across Sivasagar, Jorhat, Charaideo, Dhubri, Bongaigaon and (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Five arrested after Cachar industrial blast kills 4 workers

Staff Reporter

GUWAHATI, July 27: Five persons, including the owner of a factory, have been arrested in connection with the explosion at a rod manufacturing unit in Assam's Cachar district that claimed the lives of four workers, officials said on Monday.

The arrests were made following directions from Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma as police intensified their investigation into the fatal industrial accident that occurred at the company's Pangram unit under the Udharband Assembly constituency. The arrested include the firm's owner, Rakesh Kumar Surana. Police said the remaining accused were associated with the operation and management of the factory.

A case has been registered and further investigation is underway.

A team from the Forensic Science Laboratory (FSL) has also visited the

factory premises to collect scientific evidence to determine the sequence of events that led to the explosion.

The incident occurred on Sunday at around 11 a.m. when molten metal reportedly exploded inside the factory's processing unit, killing four workers on the spot. The blast was so powerful that it was heard across the locality, with locals claiming that the victims' bodies were severely mutilated in the explosion.

The deceased have been identified as Appu Boraik, Kiron Munda, Shyamal Gaur and Sagar Nath, a resident of Agartala in neighbouring Tripura. After doctors at Silchar Medical College and Hospital confirmed their deaths, the bodies were sent for post-mortem examination.

Police, Fire and Emergency Services personnel rushed to the spot immediately after the explosion and rescued (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Govt tables bill to ease acquiring land for affordable housing

GUWAHATI, July 27: The Assam government on Monday presented a bill in the assembly, seeking to ease acquiring land for some specific projects like affordable housing, industrial, defence and aero city in the state.

Tabling 'Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement (Assam Amendment) Bill, 2026' in the state Assembly, the government moved to exempt certain category projects from some stringent clauses of the parent Act.

"The categories include projects relating to national security and defence, rural (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

NGT restrains operation of brick kiln, stone crusher in Assam's Nalbari

GUWAHATI, July 27: The National Green Tribunal (NGT) has barred a brick manufacturing unit and a stone crusher in Assam's Nalbari district from operating until they obtain all mandatory statutory clearances and comply with environmental norms.

The order was passed recently by a Bench of the NGT's Eastern Zone in Kolkata comprising Justice Arun Kumar Tyagi, judicial member, and expert member Ishwar Singh.

The tribunal directed that the JPIS Brick Manufacturing Unit and the PASA Stone Crusher Unit at Chengnoi in Nalbari district shall remain non-operational unless they secure

all required statutory permissions, including a valid Consent to Operate (CTO) from the Assam State Pollution Control Board (ASPSCB), and comply with the environmental guidelines issued by the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) and the ASPSCB.

The matter reached the tribunal after complainants alleged that the proposed brick kiln and stone crusher were being set up near the Pagladiya riverbed in violation of environmental norms, posing a threat to the river ecosystem, local biodiversity, public health and elephant movement in the area.

After examining reports submitted

by a joint committee, the ASPSCB and the district administration, the tribunal noted that neither unit was operational at the time of inspection.

It also observed that the Consent to Establish earlier granted to the JPIS Brick Manufacturing Unit had already been withdrawn by the state pollution control board.

The tribunal directed the ASPSCB to verify whether both units comply with the applicable siting criteria, environmental guidelines and conditions attached to statutory consents.

It said the Board should grant or continue the CTO only if the units fully satisfy all legal and environmental (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Assam empowers tea garden owners to utilise 5 pc land for non-core purposes

GUWAHATI, July 27: The Assam government on Monday introduced a Bill in the Assembly to allow tea garden owners to utilise up to five per cent of their estates for other purposes to generate revenue without involvement of the administration.

Revenue and Disaster Management minister Keshab Mahanta tabled The Assam Fixation of Ceiling on Land Holdings (Amendment) Bill, 2026, proposing to simplify the process for tea garden owners to use a portion of their excess land for non-core purposes.

Presently, tea gardens are allowed to utilise up to a maximum of five per cent of their total garden area for specified ancillary purposes such as promotion of eco-friendly tea tourism, cultivation of food or cash crops, animal husbandry, green energy, social infrastructure and food processing units.

The amendment was brought in to effectively implement these provisions, optimise land utilisation, attract



institutional investments, and enable third-party entities to establish and operate such specialised ventures.

"...it is considered expedient to permit tea garden owners either to execute these permissible activities by themselves or to lease out to any person or entity for a period determined by the state government," Revenue and Disaster Management minister Keshab Mahanta said in the Statement of Objects & Reasons of the Bill. (PTI)



অসম চৰকাৰ

দেশভক্তি দিবস ২০২৬

দেশভক্ত তৰুণৰাম ফুকনদেৱৰ অতুলনীয়
স্বদেশপ্ৰেম, বাগ্মিতা, বৌদ্ধিক তীক্ষ্ণতা আৰু
বলিষ্ঠ সংগ্ৰামী নেতৃত্বই যুগে যুগে প্ৰতিটো
প্ৰজন্মক প্ৰেৰণা যোগাই আহিছে।

চিৰনমস্য নেতাগৰাকীৰ পুণ্য স্মৃতি দিৱসত
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শ্ৰদ্ধাঞ্জলি জ্ঞাপন কৰিছোঁ

ড° হিমন্ত বিশ্ব শৰ্মা
মুখ্যমন্ত্ৰী, অসম

২৮ জুলাই ২০২৬



DIPR/D/HLT/16/28-Jul-26

তথ্য আৰু জনসংযোগ সঞ্চালকালয়, অসমৰ দ্বাৰা প্ৰচাৰিত

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Stock markets snap five-day fall; Sensex jumps 776 pts on sharp drop in crude oil prices

MUMBAI, July 27: Stock markets snapped the five-day losing streak on Monday, with the benchmark Sensex jumping by 776 points following a sharp decline in crude oil prices amid easing tensions in West Asia.

The 30-share BSE Sensex jumped 776.01 points, or 1.02 per cent, to settle at 76,835.78. During the day, it soared 841.74 points, or 1.10 per cent, to 76,901.51.

The 50-share NSE Nifty surged 228.50 points, or 0.96 per cent, to end at 23,995.95, ending its five-day losing trend.

Among Sensex firms, Eternal jumped the most by 5.70 per cent. InterGlobe Aviation, Infosys, Bajaj Finance, Asian Paints and Mahindra & Mahindra were also among the gainers.

HDFC Bank, Power Grid and Axis Bank were the laggards.

Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, tanked 9.40 per cent to USD 87.64 per barrel.

"A pause in strikes in West Asia has eased concerns over rising import costs and inflation, triggering a relief rally in markets. The sharp correction in crude oil prices, along with a decline in long-term bond yields, has also raised hopes of a durable resolution, supported by



signs of long unwinding," Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Investments Limited, said.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth Rs 3,892.77 crore on Friday, according to exchange data.

"After five consecutive sessions of losses, the Indian stock market closed on a positive note, supported by broad-based buying and improving global sentiment. Investor confidence strengthened as easing Iran-US tensions pushed crude oil

prices lower, reducing inflation concerns for India," Gaurav Garg, Analyst, Lemnong Markets Desk, said.

The BSE SmallCap Select index jumped 1.71 per cent and MidCap Select index climbed 1.65 per cent.

MidSmall Private Banks Quality Tilt jumped the most by 2.36 per cent, followed by IT (2.30 per cent), Realty (2.25 per cent), Focused IT (2.09 per cent), Services (2 per cent), Auto (1.53 per cent) and Hospitals (1.43 per cent).

Telecommunication emerged as the only laggard. A total of 2,776 stocks advanced, while 1,580 declined and 202 remained unchanged on the BSE.

"Investor sentiment improved after crude oil prices declined sharply following reports of a temporary easing in geopolitical tensions in the Middle East. The positive undertone was further supported by encouraging quarterly earnings from select companies across sectors, while renewed buying in IT stocks added momentum to the recovery," Ajit Mishra - SVP, Research, Religare Broking Ltd said. In the last five trading days, the BSE benchmark tanked 2,091.68 points, or 2.67 per cent, and the Nifty declined 566.85 points, or 2.32 per cent.

In Asian markets, South Korea's KOSPI, Japan's Nikkei 225 index, Shanghai's SSE Composite index and Hong Kong's Hang Seng index ended higher.

Markets in Europe were trading higher. US markets ended mostly higher.

On Friday, the Sensex declined 331.62 points, or 0.43 per cent, to settle at 76,059.77. The Nifty dipped 102.15 points, or 0.43 per cent, to end at 23,767.45. (PTI)

Salesforce inks twin partnerships in Bengal

KOLKATA, July 27: US-based IT firm Salesforce on Monday announced two strategic collaborations in West Bengal - one to set up the state's first Salesforce Academia Centre of Excellence to train AI-ready talent, and another to deploy an AI-powered patient engagement platform at Vivekananda Hospital Pvt Ltd. The collaboration with Adamas University aims to build industry-ready graduates by integrating Salesforce technologies, including Agentforce, Agentforce 360 Platform, Tableau and Data 360, into the curriculum, it said in a release.

The initiative will offer students hands-on training, industry projects, hackathons and Salesforce certifications through Trailhead, while faculty members will undergo specialised training programmes, it said.

Separately, Salesforce said VHPL has adopted its Agentforce 360 Platform, integrated with the hospital's information management system, to create a connected digital platform for patient engagement. (PTI)

HDFC Bank board imposes ₹ 1 lakh penalty on its MD, CFO and Group head in MSRDC case

NEW DELHI, July 27: The board of HDFC Bank has imposed a monetary penalty of ₹ 1 lakh on the bank's three top executives - Managing Director and CEO Sashidhar Jagdishan, Chief Financial Officer (CFO) Srinivasan Vaidyanathan and Group Head (Retail Assets) Arvind Vohra - for divergence from RBI direction in the Maharashtra State Road Development Corporation (MSRDC) case.

Besides, warning letters were issued to the remaining employees involved in the case related to garnering large deposits from MSRDC between 2017 and 2021 by allegedly paying about ₹ 45 crore under the marketing spends head.

The action comes soon after the appointment of former Chief Election Commissioner and Finance Secretary Rajiv Kumar as part-time chairman of the bank.

Reserve Bank approved Kumar's three-year appointment as chairman of the bank effective from July 15, 2026.

HDFC Bank in a regulatory filing said based on the findings and recommendation of the Special Disciplinary Committee of Independent Directors, the board at its meeting held on July 23, 2026, concluded that the conduct of the employees involved constituted business overreach rather than any mala fide action, personal enrichment, or improper motive.

"However, keeping in view any potential divergence with the applicable RBI Directions and based on the recommendations of the Special Disciplinary Committee of Independent Directors, the board decided to issue warning letters and monetary penalty of ₹ 1 lakh for three senior employees (the Managing Director & CEO, Chief Financial Officer and Group Head - Retail Assets), and warning letters for the remaining employees," it said.

The board further directed that the matter be communicated to the Reserve Bank of India, it said.

Rejecting any wrongdoing in the matter, HDFC Bank's spokesperson in May had said its internal oversight and audit mechanisms are robust and that all matters are handled as per established procedures.

All issues are dealt with in accordance with the bank's established norms, and the full process is always followed before final determination post any internal review, the spokesperson had said in a statement.

"We strongly reject any assumptions of wrongdoing or culpability based on selective material," the statement added.

The clarification was issued after media reports claimed that the bank's audit committee had initiated a formal 'internal vigilance investigation' into payments totalling ₹ 45 crore to MSRDC that were allegedly disguised as marketing expenditure. (PTI)

Investors' wealth surges ₹ 5.10 lakh cr as markets bounce back after five days of decline



NEW DELHI, July 27: Investors' wealth jumped ₹ 5.10 lakh crore on Monday as markets bounced back after five consecutive sessions of losses, following a sharp fall in crude oil prices amid easing tensions in West Asia.

The 30-share BSE Sensex jumped 776.01 points, or 1.02 per cent, to settle at 76,835.78. During the day, it soared 841.74 points, or 1.10 per cent, to 76,901.51.

The 50-share NSE Nifty surged 228.50 points, or 0.96 per cent, to end at 23,995.95.

The market capitalisation of BSE-

listed companies surged ₹ 5,10,561.8 crore to ₹ 4,80,80,037.04 crore (USD 5 trillion) following the rebound in equities.

Among Sensex firms, Eternal jumped the most by 5.63 per cent. InterGlobe Aviation, Infosys, Bajaj Finance, Asian Paints and Mahindra & Mahindra were also among the gainers. HDFC Bank and Axis Bank were the laggards.

Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, tanked 9.40 per cent to USD 87.64 per barrel.

In the last five trading sessions, the BSE benchmark tanked 2,091.68

points, or 2.67 per cent, and the Nifty declined 566.85 points, or 2.32 per cent.

"Indian benchmark indices ended sharply higher, snapping a five-session losing streak, supported by broad-based buying across sectors amid easing geopolitical tensions and a sharp decline in crude oil prices.

"A pause in military strikes between the US and Iran boosted investor sentiment, helping the market open on a strong note with the Nifty reclaiming the 23,900 level," according to Bajaj Broking Research.

The BSE SmallCap Select index jumped 1.71 per cent, and the MidCap Select index climbed 1.65 per cent.

A total of 2,776 stocks advanced, while 1,580 declined and 202 remained unchanged on the BSE.

"A pause in strikes in West Asia has eased concerns over rising import costs and inflation, triggering a relief rally in markets. The sharp correction in crude oil prices, along with a decline in long-term bond yields, has also raised hopes of a durable resolution, supported by signs of long unwinding," Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Investments Ltd, said. (PTI)

India Post defines document, parcel; notifies new speed service rate for bulk customers

NEW DELHI, July 27: The Department of Posts, for the first time, has notified the definition of a document comprising a letter and any printed or complimentary items without resale value, which will attract lower shipping rates, while the rest of the items will fall under the parcel category.

The department has also notified rates of 24 Speed Post and 48 Speed Post services for retail and bulk customers. 24 Speed Post and 48 Speed Post services promise delivery in 24 hours and 48 hours, respectively.

According to the notification, banking, financial services and insurance items like welcome kits or letters, passbooks, cheque books, bank statements, plastic cards, debit cards and credit cards will fall under the category of documents.

The document category will also include government documents

such as PAN Cards, Aadhaar cards, Electoral Photo Identity cards, passports, driving licenses and items, up to 500 grams, like Rakhi envelopes or packages, greeting cards or packages, except merchandise or commercial items. "All items other than the items referred to in Note 1 shall be dealt with under parcel category," the notification said.

For retail customers, there is no change in service rates, but it has additionally notified rates for bulk booking in the letter category.

An item booked under 24 Speed Post will cost ₹ 38 to ₹ 186 apiece based on the weight and distance of destination with effect from August 1 for retail customers.

A contractual bulk customer will have to pay in the range of ₹ 38 to ₹ 100 for 24-hour speed post service and in the range of ₹ 48 to ₹ 72 for 48 Speed Post service.

In case of 48 Speed Post, the

charges will be in the range of ₹ 48 to ₹ 72 apiece. The new 24 Speed Post and the 48 Speed Post promise delivery within a specified time of 24 hours and 48 hours. These services are currently available only in six cities - Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai, Kolkata, Bengaluru and Hyderabad.

Under the 24 Speed Post service for retail customers, an item weighing less than 50 grams will cost ₹ 38 for local delivery and ₹ 94 apiece for delivery across India, excluding GST. The price slab for the letter category for items weighing 51-250 grams is in the range of ₹ 118 to ₹ 154 apiece, and the third slab in the range of 251-500 grams will be in the range of ₹ 140 to ₹ 186 apiece for retail customers. The 48 Speed Post service will cost ₹ 61 to ₹ 121 apiece based on the weight and shipping destination for retail customers. (PTI)

Beverage makers fail to get any relief from FSSAI on energy drinks misbranding

NEW DELHI, July 27: Food regulator FSSAI has provided 90 days to beverage companies, including PepsiCo and Reliance Retail, to comply with its order to remove the misleading 'energy drinks' claim from their products, according to sources.

On July 1, the FSSAI had issued notices to six beverage firms that sell energy drinks for misbranding and misleading claims. The regulator had said it has not framed any standard for the energy drink category.

The six brands are -- Red Bull Energy Drink, PepsiCo's Adrenaline Rush Energy Drink, Reliance Consumer Products' 'Campa Energy Drink- Gold Boost', Sting Energy Drink, Hell Energy and Coca-Cola-backed Monster Energy.

According to sources, leading energy drink makers under the banner of the Indian Beverage Association (IBA) held a meeting last Friday with the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) CEO and other officials regarding the notices issued by the authority.

In this meeting, food safety officials from some states, including Gujarat and Maharashtra, were also present.

Sources said the industry failed to get any reprieve from the FSSAI.

The regulator has provided 90 days for compliance with its order, which is the removal of the term 'Energy Drink', they added.

The industry sought time to arrange new packaging material. The effective date for the implementation of the order could not be ascertained.

While issuing notice on July 1, FSSAI noted that it has not notified any standard for "Energy Drink" or similar products.

The regulator had stated that these brands have "marketed using descriptors such as energy drink on product branding and labelling".

The FSSAI had further said that the Food Category System under the FSS Regulations is not intended for product naming or labelling purposes.

"Functional or therapeutic claims, including but not limited to 'vitalises body and mind', 'enhancing focus', 'boost energy levels', 'aid in general weakness', or similar conditions, are not permissible for food products under the FSS Act 2006 and the Rules and Regulations made thereunder," the regulator said. (PTI)

Rupee surges 54 paise to settle at 95.99 against US dollar

MUMBAI, July 27: The rupee appreciated sharply by 54 paise to close at 95.99 against the US dollar on Monday, driven by a steep correction in crude oil prices after the US and Iran paused the war in West Asia, triggering hopes of easing global trade tensions.

According to forex traders, the local currency also found support from a firm trend in domestic equities and weakness in the US dollar against major currencies.

At the interbank foreign exchange, the rupee opened at 96.18 and touched the low of 96.27 and high of 95.78 against the greenback during the session. The local unit finally settled at 95.99 against the dollar, up 54 paise compared to its previous closing level.

On Friday, the rupee recovered from its record low levels to settle 20 paise higher at 96.53 against the US dollar. The rupee's all-time low closing level of 96.86 was recorded on May 20.

Anuj Choudhary, Research Analyst, Mirae Asset ShareKhan, said the rupee strengthened to its highest levels in three weeks as the US and Iran halted strikes after two weeks of escalation. (PTI)

Contd. from Page 1...

Assam flood situation improves

other affected areas. "We remain committed to restoring essential services at the earliest and ensuring every affected community returns to normalcy," he added. The chief minister said post-flood rehabilitation will be taken up swiftly, with schools and all damaged infrastructure being fully repaired and restored in due course.

He also said that food grains, including rice bags, are being dispatched continuously to affected areas, medical needs are being actively managed by doctor teams and essential items are being air-dropped where necessary. (PTI)

Five arrested after Cachar

several injured workers. While some were shifted to nearby hospitals for treatment, others sustained minor injuries and were later discharged.

The Assam government has announced an ex gratia of Rs 5 lakh each for the families of the four deceased workers. Udhbarand MLA Rajdeep Goala, accompanied by Cachar deputy commissioner Rahul Kumar Gupta, handed over the financial assistance to the bereaved families and assured them of all possible support from the state government.

Earlier, Assam minister Kaushik Rai had announced that a magisterial inquiry, a police investigation and a separate probe by the Labour Department had been ordered to ascertain the cause of the explosion and examine whether mandatory industrial safety protocols were followed. He had also said the district administration had sought details from the company regarding safety measures in place at the factory.

Meanwhile, local residents alleged that smaller explosions had occurred at the factory in the past but were never officially reported. Family members of one of the deceased workers also alleged that the management initially attempted to conceal the severity of Sunday's incident. Police said these allegations would also be examined as part of the ongoing investigation. Officials further said strict legal action would be taken against anyone found responsible for negligence or violation of industrial safety norms.

Govt tables bill to ease

infrastructure, affordable housing, industrial area and industrial estates established by the state government and its undertakings, industrial corridors and planned urban development in and around airports," Revenue and Disaster Management minister Keshab Mahanta said in the statement of objects and reasons of the bill.

The amendment is intended to facilitate the timely implementation of critical infrastructure and development projects in the state while ensuring that acquisition is limited to the bare minimum land required for such projects, he added. "The bill further seeks to amend section 40 of the principal Act relating to special powers in cases of urgency. The proposed amendment enables invocation of the urgency provisions for acquisition of land required to meet exigencies arising out of natural disasters or calamities declared by the state government," Mahanta said.

The state Cabinet, in its meeting on July 10, had approved the amendment, he added. (PTI)

NGT restrains operation

requirements. The district magistrate of Nalbari was directed to examine objections regarding the area's reported status as an elephant corridor and pass appropriate orders in accordance with law.

The tribunal ordered that neither the JPIS Brick Manufacturing Unit nor the PASA Stone Crusher Unit shall operate without the necessary no-objection certificates, a valid CTO and full compliance with CPCB and ASPCB guidelines and other environmental norms. The tribunal also directed the District Magistrate and the Superintendent of Police, Nalbari, to ensure that neither unit operates illegally. (PTI)

Permanent solution flood

immense suffering and destruction across the State. Almost 10 lakh people across 25 districts were affected," Kharge said in a post on X. He expressed his condolences to the families who have lost their loved ones. "My thoughts are with all those who have lost their homes, livelihoods, crops and livestock," he added. The Congress president said the Union and state governments must mobilise every available resource for rescue, relief and rehabilitation. Substantial assistance from the PM-CARES Fund must be released immediately for the flood-affected families, and adequate compensation must be provided for every life, home and livelihood lost, he asserted.

Kharge also pointed out that in its 2016 Assam Vision Document, the BJP had promised a permanent solution to the state's recurring floods. During the 2021 Assembly election campaign, the Union Home Minister again promised to make Assam "flood-free" within five years. "Ten years of BJP rule have now passed. What happened to those solemn promises? Why has Assam's so-called 'double-engine government' failed to build a comprehensive flood-control, erosion-management and rehabilitation system?" Kharge questioned.

He maintained that Assam needs a permanent, scientifically designed strategy encompassing modern early-warning systems, stronger and regularly maintained embankments, wetland restoration, accountable river-basin management, climate-resilient infrastructure and dignified rehabilitation for displaced families. Kharge also appealed to all Congress leaders, workers and volunteers to provide every possible assistance to the affected people and support the ongoing relief and rehabilitation efforts.

Gandhi, conveying his condolences to the bereaved families, said the news of deaths caused by the devastating floods is deeply saddening. He expressed his solidarity with the lakhs of people affected by the deluge.

"It is expected that the Central and state governments will leave no stone unturned in providing relief and rescue to the affected people," Gandhi said in a post on social media. Mentioning the trail of deaths and damage left by the floods annually in the state, Gandhi affirmed that it was time to find a lasting solution to the problem.

"A system that scientifically prioritises prevention, early warning system, robust infrastructure and rehabilitation — so that people do not have to face such devastation every year," the Congress leader added. (PTI)

LOST
I have lost the following important documents:
Passport No. S1288191
Driving Licence No. MN04 20250000241
PAN No. MLBPS4453B
Aadhaar No. 3279 0663 1921
Registration documents of Royal Enfield Super Meteor 650 (Registration No. MN01AN8430)
Axis Bank ATM Card
Bank of India ATM Card
Voter ID Card
Cash of ₹16,000
Wristwatch
Mobile charger
AirPods
Any assistance in recovering these items will be highly appreciated:
Loitongbam Taison Singh
S/o Loitongbam Nanda Singh
Address: Athokpam Makha Leikai
P.O. & P.S.: Thoubal
District: Thoubal, Manipur
Mobile: 8730975040 / 9612116525

NAME CORRECTION
My actual name is BACHIRAN NESA which is recorded in my all relevant document except addhar card. My addhar card vide no.9291 0587 3390. My name has been recorded as BASIRAN NESA instead of BACHIRAN NESA. BACHIRAN NESA and BASIRAN NESA is the one and same person having single identity which is correct to the best my knowledge and belief.
BACHIRAN NESA.
W/O - EASKAR ALI SHEIKH.

Ministry of Road Transport & Highways
National Highways Authority of India

KARBI ANGLONG AUTONOMOUS COUNCIL :: DEPARTMENT OF REVENUE KAAC:: SECRETARIAT :: DIPHU- 782460

PUBLIC NOTICE

Announcement of Award under Section 3G of the National Highways Act, 1956

Notice is hereby given to all landowners and persons interested that the Competent Authority for Land Acquisition has announced Award No. KAAC/Rev-2030/2025/2277 dated 08.01.2026, under Section 3G of the National Highways Act, 1956, in respect of the land and assets acquired for Kaziranga Elevated Corridor within village Bordeka under Phuloni Revenue Circle pursuant to the Notification S.O.4476(E) Dated 30.09.2025, under Section 3A and the Notification No. S.O. 5932(E) dated 19.12.2025 under Section 3D.

The acquiring agency, NHAI, has deposited the requisite compensation amount All entitled landowners and interested persons are requested to submit their bank-account particulars, identity proof, land records and other relevant document and receive the compensation from the office of the undersigned on working days between 10:00 A.M. and 3:00 P.M., within 60 days from the date of publication of this notice.

Place: Diphu
Date: 23/07/2026

Sd/-, CALA cum Joint Secretary
Department of Revenue, KAAC, Diphu

Building a Nation, Not Just Roads

Shaurya Vijay Yatra concludes

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, July 27: The Shaurya Vijay Yatra, organised by Jawa Yezdi Motorcycles in partnership with the Indian Army, concluded at the Kargil War Memorial in Dras on Kargil Vijay Diwas, marking the completion of a 1,900-km memorial ride that began at the National War Memorial in New Delhi.

The expedition brought together serving and retired defence personnel, Veer Naris, families of martyrs and civilian riders to pay tribute to the courage and sacrifice of the soldiers who fought in the 1999 Kargil War.

A key feature of the yatra was the ceremonial carrying of sacred soil from the National War Memorial to the Kargil War Memorial, symbolising the bond between generations of Indian soldiers and honouring their service to the nation.

Travelling through Himachal Pradesh and Ladakh, the participants paid homage at several military landmarks, including Chandimandir, Rezang La and the Leh War Memorial, before reaching Dras.

The memorial ride, launched in 2021, seeks to bring the stories of India's armed forces to a wider audience by involving members of the riding community alongside serving soldiers, veterans, Veer Naris and families of martyrs.

This year's expedition was flagged off by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh in the presence of senior military officials, veterans and invited guests.

The journey was completed on a fleet of Jawa 350, Jawa 42, Jawa 42 FJ, Yezdi Adventure and Yezdi Scrambler motorcycles, traversing high-altitude mountain roads and key military locations associated with India's defence history.

Anupam Thareja, Co-founder of Classic Legends, said the Shaurya Vijay Yatra was aimed at ensuring that the stories of India's fallen heroes continued to inspire future generations.

He said the initiative sought to reinforce the values of courage, service and national pride by bringing together members of the armed forces and civilians in a shared tribute to the nation's martyrs.

ABSU stages sit-in, presses for implementation of BTR Accord

Student body warns of intensified agitation if pending demands remain unresolved

HT Correspondent

KOKRAJHAR, July 27: The All Bodo Students' Union (ABSU) on Monday organised a two-hour sit-in demonstration at Bodofa Children's Park in Kokrajhar, reiterating its demand for the immediate implementation of the Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR) Peace Accord, 2020 and the fulfilment of several long-pending demands concerning the Bodo community.

Thousands of ABSU leaders, members and supporters participated in the demonstration, carrying banners and placards calling for the implementation of the accord in both letter and spirit.

The protesters demanded the expansion of the BTR boundary, passage of the Constitution (125th Amendment) Bill, 2019 to strengthen the provisions of the Sixth Schedule and the immediate inclusion of additional villages under the Bodoland Kachari Welfare Autonomous Council (BKWAC).

They also sought early elections



to the BKWAC.

Addressing the gathering, ABSU president Khwrmmdao Wary urged the Centre and the Assam government to expedite the implementation of the clauses of

the BTR Peace Accord, stating that the agreement had ushered in a peaceful environment in the region and should now be implemented in full.

The student body also demanded

the grant of Scheduled Tribe (Hills) status to Bodos residing in Karbi Anglong and Dima Hasao districts.

It called for measures to strengthen Bodo-medium education by ensuring the appointment of adequate teachers, timely distribution of textbooks and improvement of educational infrastructure.

Among its other demands, ABSU sought effective implementation of the Forest Rights Act, 2006 to safeguard the rights of forest-dwelling communities and urged the Assam government to release pending Scheduled Tribe scholarships to eligible students without further delay.

The union maintained that the implementation of the BTR Accord and the fulfilment of its demands were essential for the socio-economic, educational and cultural development of the Bodo community. Wary warned that if the pending issues continued to remain unresolved, ABSU would intensify its democratic agitation in the coming days.

Sonitpur begins training for Census 2027 field personnel



HT Correspondent

TEZPUR, July 27: The Sonitpur district administration on Monday launched the district-level training programme for Enumerators and Supervisors for the Householding and Housing Census (HLO) under Phase I of Census 2027, aimed at preparing field personnel for the nationwide exercise.

The training programme will be conducted in phases from July 27 to August 5 at four venues—Tezpur College, Rangapara College, Lokanayak Omeo Kumar Das Col-

lege, Tyagbir Hem Baruah College, Sonitpur Polytechnic and Tezpur Government Higher Secondary School.

It will cover all nine Charge Offices, comprising five Revenue Circles and four Urban Local Bodies, in accordance with the approved training schedule.

On the inaugural day, District Commissioner-cum-Principal Census Officer Ananda Kumar Das visited the training sessions at Tezpur College and Lokanayak Omeo Kumar Das College in

Dhekiajuli, where he interacted with the participants.

Addressing the trainees, Das described Census 2027 as the country's first digital Census and one of the largest national exercises, urging enumerators and supervisors to carry out their responsibilities with sincerity, accuracy and commitment.

A total of 2,415 Enumerators and 416 Supervisors will be trained across the district during the programme.

On the opening day, training was conducted at four venues, covering 820 Enumerators and 131 Supervisors.

Meanwhile, the district administration has appealed to residents to actively participate in the Self-Enumeration process, which will be available from August 2 to August 16.

Citizens will be able to submit their household details online through the official self-enumeration portal before the information is verified by designated Census Enumerators during field visits.

The administration said the digital self-enumeration facility would make the Census process more convenient and encouraged all eligible residents to utilise the platform and contribute to the successful conduct of Census 2027.

Asam Sahitya Sabha concludes five-day Kunhi Bhaona festival



HT Correspondent

TEZPUR, July 27: The Asam Sahitya Sabha concluded its five-day central Kunhi Programme and Children's Bhaona Festival recently with a call for a scientific investigation into the recent devastating floods in Upper Assam and renewed emphasis on preserving Assamese language, culture and social harmony.

Addressing the open session at the auditorium of Shri Shri Auniati Branch Satra in Mankata Kacharibari, Debojit Bora, Principal Secretary of the Asam Sahitya Sabha, said the government should determine the causes of the unprecedented floods that affected Charaideo, Sivasagar, Jorhat and Golaghat districts.

He said it was essential to establish whether the floods were caused by cloudbursts, large-scale destruction of hills or other factors so that effective preventive measures could be taken in future.

He also urged the authorities to provide adequate assistance and compensation to the flood-affected people.

Referring to recent linguistic issues in the state, Bora said merely blackening Assamese signboards was not a solution and stressed the need to remove misunderstandings through dialogue.

He urged people to remain vigilant against attempts to create division or hostility in society.

The festival, organised by the Central Kunhi Sub-Committee of the Asam Sahitya Sabha in collaboration with the Dibrugarh Zila Sahitya Sabha and hosted by the Mankata Shatadal Branch Sahitya Sabha, was

held from July 22 to 26 with the objective of encouraging children to develop an interest in Assamese language, literature, culture and heritage.

The concluding day's programme began with a tribute ceremony led by Badan Gogoi, President of the Dibrugarh Zila Sahitya Sabha.

Kusum Sonowal Saikia, President of the Mankata Shatadal Branch Sahitya Sabha, lit the ceremonial lamp in memory of those who lost their lives in the recent floods.

Floral tributes were also paid to Dr Bhupen Hazarika and Zubeen Garg.

The open session was presided over by Mrinal Hazarika, Working President of the Central Kunhi Sub-Committee, while Prasanta Saikia, Convenor of the committee, delivered the welcome address.

The proceedings were conducted by Nomal Chandra Gogoi, a member of the Sabha's central executive committee.

The festival featured children's Bhaona performances, group dances, songs, drama, poetry recitations and other cultural presentations.

During the programme, Bhaonar Aishwarya, edited by Mrinal Hazarika and Prasanta Saikia, and the Dibrugarh Zila Sahitya Sabha Patrika, edited by Anima Koch Gogoi and Kusum Sonowal Saikia, were released.

Several cultural workers were felicitated during the closing ceremony, which concluded with a Bhaona performance by local women and other cultural programmes attended by literature enthusiasts and office-bearers of the Asam Sahitya Sabha.

Activists allege delay in shifting injured elephant for specialised treatment

HT Correspondent

MARGHERITA, July 27: Wildlife activists and members of civil society on Monday alleged that the Divisional Forest Officer (DFO) of the Digboi Forest Division had not granted permission to shift an injured domestic elephant to Kaziranga for specialised treatment despite recommendations from veterinarians.

The allegations were made during a press conference in Margherita by Samiran Hatimuria, a relative of elephant owner Sanjay Duwarah and a member of Aranyam Animal Care and Plan Pizar Veshvan Center, an organisation involved in wildlife rescue and rehabilitation.

According to Hatimuria, the elephant, Mangal Singh, was seriously injured on April 14 after unidentified miscreants allegedly hacked off both its tusks while it was alive in the Lakhpathar Reserve Forest area.

He claimed that four months after the incident, the main accused had not yet been arrested.

Hatimuria said the elephant is currently undergoing treatment at Ketetong Hospital under the supervision of a veterinary team led by



Dr Nayanjyoti Bordoloi and Dr Arindam Pachoni of Margherita Veterinary Hospital.

He further claimed that the attending veterinarians had recommended shifting the elephant to Kaziranga for advanced treatment but alleged that the Digboi DFO, Rohini Kumar Das, had not granted the required permission, preventing the transfer.

Hatimuria criticised what he described as the Forest Department's inaction and urged the authorities to facilitate the elephant's transfer without further delay.

BTC Executive Council reviews governance, development agenda

HT Correspondent

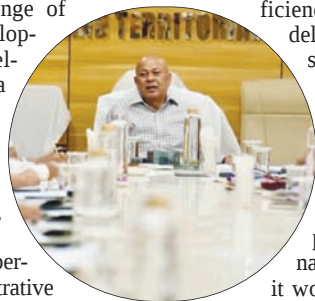
KOKRAJHAR, July 27: The Executive Council (EC) of the Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) on Monday reviewed a range of governance, development and public welfare issues during a meeting chaired by BTC Chief Executive Member Hagrama Mohilary at the BTC Secretariat, Bodofa Nwgr.

The meeting deliberated on key administrative and developmental matters and took several policy decisions aimed at improving governance, strengthening coordination among government departments and expediting

development projects across the Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR).

The Executive Council also discussed measures to enhance the efficiency of public service delivery and ensure the smooth functioning of various departments under the BTC administration.

Reaffirming its commitment to transparent and people-centric governance, the Council said it would continue to prioritise initiatives aimed at improving public services and accelerating the overall socio-economic development of the Bodoland Territorial Region.



providing public services and accelerating the overall socio-economic development of the Bodoland Territorial Region.

Nagaon sends second batch of relief to flood-hit Sivasagar

HT Correspondent

NAGAON, July 27: The Nagaon district administration has intensified its relief efforts for flood-affected families in Sivasagar district, dispatching the second phase of emergency food supplies as part of a large-scale humanitarian initiative.

Responding to an appeal by Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, the administration has undertaken the task of sending 50,000 food packets to Sivasagar with financial support from the Assam State Disaster Management Authority (ASDMA).

Under the supervision of District Commissioner Devashish Sharma, more than 10,000 relief packets were dispatched in the first phase on Sun-

day. Another 10,000 to 12,000 packets were scheduled for dispatch on Monday as part of the second phase.

Each relief packet contains 8 kg of rice, 2 kg of dal, 1 litre of edible oil and 500 grams of salt to meet the immediate food requirements of affected families.

The District Commissioner said the administration aims to send another 16,000 packets in the coming days, taking the total number of relief packets to over 50,000 under the phased operation.

Sharma personally reviewed the relief arrangements during visits to the warehouse at Palashani and the Nagaon Police Reserve Community Hall, where large-scale packing of

relief materials is underway.

Additional District Commissioner Midul Boro, ADC and DDMA Chief Executive Officer Dipankar Barman, District Information and Public Relations Officer Bikash Sharma and District Project Officer Bijayanta Goswami accompanied the District Commissioner during the inspection.

The administration said relief materials are being stocked in advance to ensure uninterrupted supply, with packing and dispatch operations continuing round the clock from three locations in the district.

Officials reiterated their commitment to ensuring timely assistance reaches flood-affected families in Sivasagar.

Lions Club of Gauhati commemorates Kargil Vijay Diwas

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, July 27: The Lions Club of Gauhati, in association with the Leo Club of Gauhati and the Leo Club of Gauhati Girls, observed Kargil Vijay Diwas at the State War Memorial at Dighalipukhuri paying tribute to the soldiers who laid down their lives during the 1999 Kargil War.

The programme was attended by Brigadier Ranjit Borthakur, SM (Retd), as the chief guest and Bimal Chandra Das, ASC, RPF, as the guest of honour.

District Governor Manoj Bhajanka also attended the event. The programme began on Sunday, with a welcome address by Deepak Mittal, President of the Lions Club of Gauhati.

Members of the Lions Club, the two Leo Clubs, NCC cadets and other invited guests participated in the commemorative programme.

The event was organised under the chairmanship of Gaurav Khan-



delia, with active participation from Leo President Arman Sarawgi, Prastuti Boro, Akansha Kakrania, Sristika Chaudhury and Subham Sah. Addressing the gathering, Brigadier Borthakur spoke about the courage, determination and sacrifice displayed by Indian soldiers during the Kargil conflict despite difficult terrain and adverse conditions.

He urged the younger generation

to draw inspiration from the armed forces' commitment to the nation.

The gathering paid floral tributes to the Kargil martyrs and observed the occasion as a mark of respect for the valour and supreme sacrifice of the soldiers who defended the country's sovereignty.

The programme concluded with a renewed pledge to honour their legacy and uphold the spirit of patriotism.

Derhasat Basumatary lauds CSR initiative for promoting education and holistic development of girls

BTC Executive Member visits NTPC Bongaigaon's Girl Empowerment Mission Centre

HT Correspondent

KOKRAJHAR, July 27: Derhasat Basumatary, Executive Member for Health and Family Welfare of the Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC), visited the Girl Empowerment Mission (GEM) Centre at NTPC Bongaigaon and commended the power station for its efforts to empower young girls through its flagship Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programme.

During the visit, Basumatary interacted with the 50 participants of GEM 2026 and encouraged them to pursue their aspirations with confidence, dedication and determination.

He appreciated the residential facilities, learning environment and holistic training being provided under the programme, saying such initiatives play a vital role in nurturing confident, educated and empowered



young citizens.

The BTC Executive Member praised NTPC Bongaigaon for its

continued contribution to the socio-economic development of the region through programmes focusing on ed-

ucation, life skills, health awareness, sports and personality development for girls.

As part of the programme, Basumatary distributed educational kits and mosquito nets among the participants and wished them success in their future endeavours.

He was accompanied by Anurag Gupta, General Manager (Operations and Maintenance), Amit Kumar Asthana, AGM (HR), Roshan Dungk, AGM (HR), and officials from the Human Resources and CSR departments, who briefed him on the activities being carried out under GEM 2026.

The visit reaffirmed NTPC Bongaigaon's commitment to promoting girl-child empowerment and inclusive community development in line with the national Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao initiative.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

The good man is the friend of all living things.
- Mahatma Gandhi

CJP protest and Pradhan's exit

The resignation of Dharmendra Pradhan as Union education minister comes as the result of an attempt by the people of India to enforce as essential an element of democratic governance as accountability. There is no persuasive basis for portraying the demand for Dharmendra Pradhan's resignation as a campaign driven by personal hostility. Neither Cockroach Janta Party founder Abhijeet Dipke nor the young protesters gathered at Jantar Mantar have placed a private grievance against the minister at the centre of their mobilisation. Their case was political and institutional: Pradhan headed a ministry under whose watch the credibility of national examinations has suffered a severe breakdown, and they want responsibility fixed at the top. That distinction matters. Governments frequently respond to uncomfortable movements by questioning the motives, affiliations or personalities of those leading them. Such tactics can distract attention for a while, but they cannot answer the central charge that candidates preparing for life-defining examinations have repeatedly encountered leaks, cancellations, irregularities and administrative uncertainty. The protesters were not merely demanding the punishment of brokers, officials or criminal intermediaries. They were challenging a governing culture in which responsibility appears to travel downwards while authority remains protected at the top.

The agitation turned Pradhan into more than an individual minister. He has become the public face of an examination machinery that millions of young Indians no longer consider trustworthy. His resignation was being demanded not because every leak can be directly traced to his office, but because ministerial responsibility has meaning only when political authority carries consequences for systemic failure. The government's response has tacitly acknowledged the seriousness of the crisis. Officials have been removed, recruitment practices within the testing establishment are being reconsidered, stronger measures against paper leaks have been promised and fast-track judicial mechanisms have been offered. Negotiations with protest representatives have continued, while the Centre sought more time on the demand involving Pradhan. These were not the actions of an administration confronting a marginal demonstration. They were signs of a government attempting to contain an issue that has moved beyond examination management into the realm of political legitimacy. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's intervention also reflected that pressure.

The demand for Pradhan's resignation had consequently acquired symbolic importance. Removing him would not repair the examination system by itself. It would not compensate every affected student, eliminate organised cheating networks or guarantee flawless tests. But it would establish that political accountability is not an obsolete convention and that ministerial office is not insulated from the consequences of prolonged institutional malfunction. The argument that a resignation would amount to conceding guilt misunderstands democratic responsibility. Ministers need not be personally involved in wrongdoing to accept responsibility for failures within their jurisdiction. Resignation can be an acknowledgement that public confidence has been damaged beyond the point at which the same leadership can credibly supervise reform.

Trump's continuing changes in tariff rates creating confusion in Global trade

By: Asad Mirza

In recent times America's trade policy has become a rolling emergency. Though struck down by the Supreme Court, Trump's tariffs have returned through new legal loopholes, hitting 60 nations under a "forced labour" pretext. The revenue keeps flowing, the chaos keeps compounding - and the world, including India, is left recalculating.

Six months ago, the US Supreme Court delivered Donald Trump's trade agenda what looked like a fatal blow, ruling that his emergency tariff powers were unconstitutional. Optimists in boardrooms from Frankfurt to Mumbai assumed the tariff era would quietly wind down before the November midterms. Instead, the past fortnight has delivered the opposite: a "whirlwind week" of new duties, threats and legal manoeuvring that has convinced trade watchers the tariff wall isn't crumbling - it's being rebuilt, brick by brick, on more durable foundations.

Trump had no patience for lengthy tariff investigations when he returned to office, preferring to hammer trading partners immediately to extract concessions - a chaotic approach eventually undone by the Supreme Court's ruling this year. His administration has now shifted into a new phase, building a more durable tariff regime using traditional, court-tested trade statutes it once had little patience for. The centrepiece is a new round of 10-12.5% duties on 60 countries, justified by their alleged failure to enforce bans on goods made with forced labour, timed precisely to backfill a blanket tariff that Congress declined to renew. The choice of legal vehicle matters. These new duties rely on Section 301 of the Trade Act of 1974, a law permitting tariffs against countries engaged in "unjustifiable," "unreasonable" or "discriminatory" trade practices - crucially, one that allows a permanent tariff without going to Congress. It's a workaround built to survive the challenge that felled his IIEPA-based tariffs. The "forced labour" justification has not survived scrutiny well. If Trump was genuinely targeting forced labour, Japan and New Zealand would not face the same tariffs as China, and there wouldn't be a carveout for oil and gas imports.

Trade groups make the point more bluntly: the tariffs cover countries responsible for 99% of US imports by value but include fewer than half the nations on the Labour Department's own forced-labour watchlist. Even Rep Richard Neal, top Democrat on House Ways and Means, called it "too convenient to be taken seriously," warning it cheapens a real human-rights issue into a pretext built on "dubious legal theories and personal grievances".

The honest answer is: it depends what "working" means. On the narrow metric Trump cares most about - revenue - the numbers are undeniably large. June set a new monthly record with \$26.6 billion in customs duties, up from May's \$22.2 billion, bringing the fiscal-year total to \$108 billion, though this remains a small fraction of the \$526 billion the government collects in total monthly receipts. That growing revenue stream is precisely why some economists now warn the tariffs are becoming structurally embedded: with US public debt nearing \$40 trillion, future administrations may become dependent on tariff revenue, making the tariff wall "very durable", according to the Atlantic Council's Josh Lipsky, who argues American financial markets have gone from hating tariffs to tolerating them to actively needing them to help cope with the deficit. And rather than "deglobalising" trade to America's advantage as Trump promised, critics argue the world is instead "reglobalising" around trading partners who commit to rules rather than those who wield tariffs like a club. What makes this tariff campaign distinct from a conventional policy is how personally Trump seems to experience it. He has repeatedly, almost obsessively, invoked one historical ghost: Herbert Hoover. "I never want to be the late, great Herbert Hoover," Trump told Axios, referencing the president whose 1930 Smoot-Hawley tariffs are widely blamed for deepening the Great Depression. (IPA Service)

Permanent solution to Assam's flood problem

Recent floods in the upper Assam districts of Sivasagar, Charaideo, and Jorhat have assumed a devastating form. The rising waters of rivers like Dikhow, Disang, Darika, Jhanji, and Bogdoi crossing danger levels and submerging vast areas of these three districts are caused not only by natural factors but equally by human errors. While it is true that abnormal increases in water flow in the lower plains are triggered by incessant rains in the hilly regions of neighboring states Nagaland and Arunachal Pradesh, the primary factor behind the floods is the extreme shallowness of the riverbeds. Due to massive amounts of sand and silt brought down by the currents from the hills accumulating in the riverbeds, the water-holding capacity of the rivers has decreased abnormally. Overflowing river waters inundating adjacent areas even with slight rainfall has become a routine affair. Historical resources, thousands of bighas of agricultural land, livestock, and normal public life in Sivasagar district have faced deep crises, while floodwaters entering tea gardens and rural areas in Charaideo district have completely disrupted transportation and communication systems. In Jorhat district, floodwaters from the Bogdoi and Kakodonga rivers created terrifying conditions. The frequent breaching of old and weak embankments under intense water pressure proves that current flood management is utterly ineffective. Government responsibility seems to end with providing immediate relief and repairing broken embankments after floods occur every year. Instead of such temporary stopgap arrangements, a well-thought-out, scientific, and long-term plan is urgently needed. Coexisting with nature with an arrogant attitude is impossible; rather, understanding nature's rules and building infrastructure in harmony with them is the main thing. These floods in Upper Assam are not just a disaster, they are a harsh warning for the future. To tackle a complex and all-encompassing problem like floods, old and failed methods must be abandoned and pragmatic, effective policies must be adopted. Along with developing separate flood control systems according to the geographical diversity of each region and district, it is crucial to include the experiences of local people in this planning. These recent disasters have pointed out that if plans existing only on paper are not implemented, Assam's very existence will be endangered in the future.

Geologically, the Himalayan mountain range north of the Brahmaputra valley is young and its soil composition is extremely fragile. Heavy rainfall in these hilly regions during the monsoon season causes severe soil erosion as water rushes down to the plains at high speeds. Deforestation, unscientific farming, and haphazard infrastructure development in the hills have further magnified the extent of this erosion. Millions of tons of soil, sand, and stones resulting from this erosion flow down with river water and accumulate in the riverbeds of the plains, a process known as siltation. In the case of a massive river like the Brahmaputra, the volume of this silt is so immense that its bed is rising progressively every year. As the riverbed becomes elevated, its capacity to hold water diminishes completely, forcing the river to widen as a direct consequence. Under such circumstances, the embankments constructed in the name of flood control have started yielding completely opposite results. Ever since the tradition of building embankments began in Assam following the devastating earthquake of 1950, it has been unscientific. By confining the river from both sides, these embankments prevented the silt-laden water from spilling over into the fields along the banks, forcing it to accumulate entirely within the space between the two embankments. As a result, the riverbed became many feet higher than the adjacent populated areas or agricultural lands. The current situa-



tion has reached a stage where river water flows above human heads, and whenever any part of an embankment becomes slightly weak, the water breaches that section and rushes violently to devastate villages. This old method of relying on embankments has multiplied the severity of floods rather than preventing them. Alongside this, the failure to properly repair embankments due to departmental negligence is another serious problem. The stopgap repairs hurriedly carried out with soil and sandbags just before the monsoon are washed away by the very first wave of water. Hoping for flood control solely by relying on embankments is a futile endeavor; therefore, breaking away from this archaic mindset and undertaking a comprehensive project based on the natural course and hydrology of rivers has become indispensable. Instead of considering embankments as the sole protective shield, they must be viewed merely as a minor component of overall flood management.

Whenever the topic of a permanent solution to the flood problem is raised, two main measures generally come to discussion: river dredging and the construction of high-altitude water reservoirs. Dredging the Brahmaputra and its tributaries is an extremely expensive and technologically complex process. Although the idea of removing silt from riverbeds to increase depth sounds very simple, it is difficult to implement in reality. In a river where millions of cubic meters of water and countless silt flow every second, conducting dredging operations results in new silt accumulating and filling those spots within a few days. Therefore, instead of dredging the entire river, it is reasonable to conduct dredging only in scientifically selected and sensitive locations. Especially in places where silt has accumulated to form river islands and obstructed the natural flow of water, pushing it toward the banks, extracting silt is crucial. Alongside dredging, constructing multi-purpose water reservoirs capable of retaining water in the upper reaches of the rivers, namely the hilly regions of Arunachal Pradesh, Bhutan, and Nagaland, is critically necessary. These multi-purpose projects will help reduce the intensity of floods by holding excess water during the monsoon season and regulating river water levels by releasing that water during the dry season. However, since the Northeastern region is an extremely earthquake-prone zone, very high-standard geological studies and safety measures must be undertaken when constructing such large dams. Any faulty construction could invite a disaster even greater than this in the future. Another subject demanding utmost attention alongside dam construction is massive afforestation in catchment areas. Soil erosion has increased due to the destruction of vegetation on mountain slopes, and therefore, a robust tree planting and conservation program must be undertaken jointly with the hill states. The more tree roots grip and hold the soil, the more the amount of silt flowing down into the rivers will decrease. Unless the influx of silt

can be controlled, no amount of dredging or dam construction downstream will make any sense. Any flood planning must be administered as a comprehensive process starting from the source of the river down to the mouth. This massive natural force can never be controlled through fragmented and sporadic efforts; instead, every step must be ensured to act complementarily.

Beyond traditional engineering systems, emphasizing the restoration and conservation of ecosystems for the permanent remedy of flood situations is currently considered the greatest necessity. From ancient times, the geographical structure of Assam had evolved a natural system of flood control. Innumerable beels, marshes, reservoirs, and wetlands surrounding the Brahmaputra and Barak valleys acted as natural reservoirs that absorbed excess water during the monsoon. When river waters swelled, these water bodies retained that water and significantly reduced the ferocity of floods. However, rapid population growth, urbanization, and unplanned industrial development have led to these wetlands falling victim to continuous encroachment. Filling land to build residential areas, industries, and government offices in these wetlands has left no space for water accumulation. The artificial flooding in Guwahati city and other parts of the state is a burning example of this, where destroying natural wetlands through encroachment causes entire regions to submerge with slight rainfall today. The natural connection of these beels with rivers has been completely severed due to road construction and other infrastructure. To escape from floods, these encroached wetlands must be restored at any cost. Rivers need a designated space to spread their water, a principle known as the "room for the river" policy. Instead of trying to force rivers to flow through narrow embankments, any permanent construction within a specific distance on both banks of the river must be strictly prohibited. Those areas should only be used for agriculture or activities that do not suffer major damage when floods occur. Embankments must be constructed at a sufficient distance from the riverbanks to allow the river enough space to widen when waters rise. This will reduce the intensity of water and minimize the risk of embankment breaches. Flood control is possible only by re-establishing the connectivity of wetlands with rivers and ensuring the natural flow of water. Giving battle to this massive force of nature using only iron, cement, and soil dams without coexisting with the environment is never possible. The dream of a flood-free Assam will always remain a mirage without the revival of water bodies.

For a permanent and far-reaching solution to the flood problem, technological and environmental steps alone are not enough; there is also an extreme necessity for strong administrative and policy reforms. Currently, the responsibility of flood control and water management is divided among several separate government departments, leading to a severe lack of coordination. Putting an end to this fragmented system, a separate and supreme authority must be established for the comprehensive water management of the

Brahmaputra and Barak valleys. This authority should include not only bureaucrats or politicians, but national and international-level hydrologists, river experts, environmentalists, and engineers. This organization must be completely freed from political interference and given full power to implement a definitive master plan. Since Assam's floods possess a large inter-state and international dimension, a robust agreement and communication system must be established with neighboring states Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Meghalaya, and neighboring countries Bhutan and China for real-time exchange of water volume and weather forecast data. The use of advanced technology for early monitoring of river course changes through satellites, accurate weather forecasting via modern meteorology, and alerting populations in vulnerable areas has become indispensable. Instead of limiting government responsibility to shifting populations to relief camps during floods, steps must be taken such as building houses on elevated platforms in flood-prone areas, developing and cultivating special crop varieties capable of withstanding floods, and building permanent infrastructure for drinking water and sanitation during floods. Rather than seeing an unrealistic dream of completely eradicating floods, the real challenge is to control the destructive power of floods through scientific planning and use their positive aspects for the state's economic development. A renaissance must be initiated giving priority to the livelihoods and security of the people living on riverbanks. Without proper political willpower, a corruption-free administration, abundant fund allocation, and active public participation, a permanent solution to Assam's flood problem can never become a reality. This problem is no longer in a condition to tolerate further negligence or delay, making it the right time to take strict action right now.

An important aspect often overlooked in discussions on permanent solutions to the flood problem is the socio-economic development of people in flood-affected regions and their direct participation in flood management. Floods slowly push the entire rural economy toward death. Burdened by debt due to massive losses every year, farmers become trapped in a vicious cycle of poverty. One-time relief provided by the government cannot offer any permanent solution to this economic devastation. Therefore, building an alternative economic system capable of adapting to floods is extremely essential. Cottage industries based on pisciculture, duck rearing, and aquatic plants must be promoted so people can earn a living during floods. In the agriculture sector, crop practices must be introduced that can be harvested before floods arrive or cultivated within a short time after floods recede. On the other hand, prioritizing local opinions and traditional knowledge must be made mandatory when preparing any flood control project. It is impossible for any external engineer looking merely at maps to understand the character and behavior of rivers as thoroughly as people living on riverbanks for generations. Public participation in determining the locations for constructing embankments, excavating canals, or building sluice gates will help make projects more effective. In addition, village-level monitoring committees must be formed to supervise the quality of construction work so that corruption by contractors and departmental officials can be curbed. Corruption has harmed Assam's flood management system the most. Despite the allocation of crores of rupees, embankments break every year due to substandard work, and the public has to suffer. Along with taking strict legal action against this corruption, social audits of every project must be made mandatory. The flood problem is not just a seasonal disaster; it is a continuous struggle going on throughout the year. Assam can be rescued from this terrible problem only through the combined efforts of government goodwill, administrative transparency, and public awareness. The time has come to implement plans with war-footing urgency rather than keeping them confined to government files.

Deshbhakta Tarun Ram Phukan

A patriot with a literary soul

By: Zahid Ahmed Tapadar

Among the architects of Assam's freedom movement who also enriched Assamese literature, Deshbhakta Tarun Ram Phukan occupies a place of singular distinction. Alongside Karmabir Nabin Chandra Bordoloi, he belonged to that rare generation of leaders who balanced the arduous responsibilities of the national struggle with an enduring commitment to literature. Remarkably, both these freedom fighters continued their literary pursuit even while imprisoned, enriching the treasury of Assamese literature from behind prison walls.

Tarun Ram Phukan was one of the foremost torchbearers of Assam's national awakening, a herald of the Assamese renaissance, and a leader guided by profound humanistic ideals. In the history of India's freedom movement, he inspired the people of Assam through his fearless resistance to British rule and infused new vigour into the Non-Cooperation Movement in the province. His resolute leadership and unwavering dedication helped connect Assam's struggle with the larger national movement led by Mahatma Gandhi. His indomitable spirit, selfless patriotism and uncompromising devotion to the cause of freedom continue to inspire generations. It was in recognition of these qualities that the people of Assam affectionately conferred upon him the title "Deshbhakta"—the Patriot.

His patriotism, however, was inseparable from his love for Assam, its people and its cultural heritage. A steadfast champion of the Assamese language, literature and culture, Tarun Ram Phukan played a vital role in nurturing Assamese literary identity during a formative period in its history. His devotion to the motherland inspired him not only to fight against colonial rule but also to work for social reform and the intellectual advancement of society. Yet, even in the midst of an unrelenting freedom struggle, he never allowed his literary pursuits to fade.

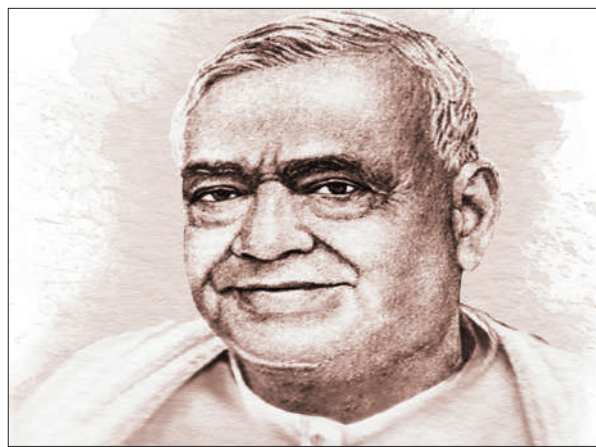
Though his literary output was not extensive, every work reflected remarkable scholarship, artistic refinement and intellectual depth. A man of extraordinary versatility, Phukan was a freedom fighter, politician, lawyer, linguist, poet, lyricist, essayist, hunter, chronicler of hunting adventures and an accomplished humorist. Gifted with exceptional linguistic ability, he studied Bengali, Odia, Hindi, Sanskrit, Persian, Urdu and English literature during his student years. This broad literary exposure shaped his worldview and inspired his lifelong commitment to writing in As-

samese. His literary works reveal a remarkable range of interests—from poetry and social reform to hunting narratives, essays and lyrical compositions. His first collection of poetry, Stutimala, remains an important milestone in Assamese literature. The fifty-four poems included in the volume were composed while he was imprisoned during the Non-Cooperation Movement and were later published in 1926. His second book, Jounattwa, dealt with questions of sexual life and social attitudes towards sexuality. Literary scholar and journalist Chandraprasad Saikia observed that the book revealed Phukan's graceful prose style while reflecting the fearless idealism of a committed social reformer.

A celebrated hunter in his youth, Tarun Ram Phukan also made a pioneering literary contribution through Mor Shikhar Kahini (My Hunting Tales), the first published collection of hunting narratives in Assamese. The work remains a unique addition to Assamese prose. His lyrical compositions include Jibanar Gati, Devi, Jonali, Epahi Phul and Nihoni Bhangoriyar Geet. Among these, Nihoni Bhangoriyar Geet, written in the folk dialect of Kamrup, became immensely popular for its simplicity, musicality and close affinity with the rhythms of rural life. His essays, including Mahatmar Kathor Brata Tapasya, Sabhyatar Samasya, Antaratikata, Nabin Smriti and Swayattashasan Aru Swadhinata, were published in the influential literary journal Aban and earned widespread appreciation. These writings revealed the breadth of his intellectual interests and his progressive reflections on society, nationalism and governance.

Beyond his own writings, Phukan also helped shape the intellectual direction of modern Assamese literature. Among his other important works, Asam Sahitya Sabhar Bhashanabali is regarded as one of his finest contributions and remains a valuable treasure of Assamese literary heritage. In recognition of his distinguished service to Assamese language, literature and culture, he was elected President of the Tenth Session of the Asam Sahitya Sabha, held at Goalpara in 1927.

Tarun Ram Phukan firmly believed that translation was indispensable to the growth of Assamese literature. He argued that meaningful engagement with world literature through translation would enrich Assamese letters and broaden the intellectual horizons of its readers and writers alike. He encouraged the study of both Indian and international literature, convinced that exposure to the world's great literary traditions was essential for the flowering of creative talent.



What distinguished Tarun Ram Phukan was not merely the breadth of his accomplishments but the harmony he maintained between public service and literary expression. Equally admired for his wit and eloquence, he possessed a rare ability to combine wisdom with gentle humour. An exceptional orator, he was fluent not only in Assamese and English but also in Bengali, Hindi, Urdu and Sanskrit, and could converse comfortably in several indigenous languages spoken across Assam. His essays often drew upon quotations from Sanskrit, Urdu and English, reflecting the breadth of his scholarship. His speeches were remembered for their elegance, warmth and remarkable ability to illuminate even the most complex subjects with clarity and humour. Tarun Ram Phukan wrote in lucid, graceful Assamese that resonated with readers from all walks of life. His simplicity of expression became one of the hallmarks of his literary style. Paying tribute to his mastery of language, Karmabir Nabin Chandra Bordoloi once wrote with admiration: "Phukan Dangoriya had no shortage of words in Assamese. Few writers, I believe, have employed such powerful and expressive language with such artistic finesse."

Tarun Ram Phukan's life stands as a rare confluence of courage, scholarship and literary excellence. He fought for India's freedom with unwavering conviction while nurturing the growth of Assamese language, literature and culture with equal dedication. His legacy continues to inspire generations of readers, writers and patriots alike. Recognising this extraordinary contribution, the Government of Assam, following a decision of the State Cabinet chaired by Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, has observed 28 July, the death anniversary of Deshbhakta Tarun Ram Phukan, as Deshbhakti Divas across the State every year since 2021—an enduring tribute to one of Assam's finest sons.

University Education will get a booster in Assam

By: Dr Ratan Bhattacharjee

The adage goes, "University can teach you skill and give you opportunity, but it can't teach you sense, nor give you understanding. Sense and understanding are produced within one's soul." University education in Assam stands today at a pivotal juncture, poised for transformation as the state government signals a renewed commitment to higher learning in the 2026-27 financial framework. For decades, Assam's universities have carried the weight of history, culture, and intellectual aspiration, yet they have also struggled with infrastructural gaps, outdated curricula, limited research funding, and uneven access. The new budgetary vision, however, suggests a decisive shift toward modernization, inclusivity, and global alignment. It is not merely an administrative exercise but a philosophical reimagining of what higher education can mean for a region rich in diversity, talent, and cultural heritage. The promise of a booster for university education in Assam is therefore not just a fiscal announcement; it is an invitation to rethink the future of learning, research, and innovation in the state.

The government's renewed focus begins with infrastructure, the backbone of any university system. Assam's universities, many of which were established decades ago, have long required upgrades to laboratories, libraries, hostels, and digital facilities. The budget's emphasis on modernizing campuses reflects an understanding that physical spaces shape intellectual possibilities. Smart classrooms, digital libraries, and high speed internet connectivity are no longer luxuries but necessities for students competing in a global knowledge economy. The proposal to strengthen university infrastructure through targeted grants and public private partnerships marks a significant departure from earlier incremental approaches. It recognizes that universities must evolve into dynamic ecosystems where technology, pedagogy, and research converge. The introduction of digital learning platforms across campuses further underscores this commitment, ensuring that students in remote districts have access to the same

quality of education as those in urban centers.

Research, long the Achilles' heel of Assam's higher education landscape, receives special attention in the new vision. For years, universities in the state have struggled to secure adequate funding for research projects, laboratories, and faculty development. The budget's proposal to establish dedicated research innovation hubs within major universities marks a turning point. These hubs will serve as incubators for interdisciplinary research, encouraging collaboration between departments, industries, and global institutions. The focus on research is not merely academic; it is strategic. Assam's unique biodiversity, cultural heritage, linguistic diversity, and socio economic challenges offer fertile ground for groundbreaking research in fields ranging from environmental science to anthropology, from biotechnology to digital humanities. By investing in research infrastructure and funding, the government aims to position Assam's universities as centers of knowledge production rather than mere knowledge consumption.

Another transformative aspect of the budget is its emphasis on faculty development. Universities thrive when faculty members are empowered with opportunities for training, research collaboration, and international exposure. The proposal to introduce global faculty exchange programs reflects a recognition that academic excellence requires continuous engagement with global trends. Faculty members will have opportunities to collaborate with international universities, attend conferences, and participate in advanced training programs. This not only enhances the quality of teaching but also enriches the intellectual environment of campuses. The budget also proposes incentives for young scholars, including doctoral and post doctoral fellowships, to encourage talented students to pursue academic careers. By nurturing the next generation of educators and researchers, Assam aims to build a sustainable academic ecosystem capable of driving long term growth.

Student welfare forms another crucial pillar of the government's vision. The budget proposes expanded scholarships, fee waivers,



and financial assistance programs to ensure that higher education remains accessible to students from economically weaker sections. The introduction of merit cum means scholarships reflects a commitment to equity, ensuring that financial constraints do not hinder academic aspirations. The government also plans to strengthen hostel facilities, particularly for female students, to create safe and supportive environments. Mental health support, career counseling, and skill development programs are being integrated into university systems to address the holistic needs of students. These initiatives collectively aim to create campuses where students feel supported, empowered, and inspired to pursue their dreams.

The budget also recognizes the importance of aligning university education with industry needs. Assam's economy is evolving, with emerging sectors such as IT, biotechnology, tourism, and renewable energy offering new opportunities. The proposal to establish industry academia collaboration cells within universities aims to bridge the gap between academic learning and practical application. These cells will facilitate internships, apprenticeships, and collaborative projects with industries, ensuring that students gain hands on experience and are job ready upon graduation. The introduction of skill based courses, vocational training modules, and

entrepreneurship programs further strengthens this alignment. Universities are being encouraged to offer courses in emerging fields such as artificial intelligence, data science, climate studies, and digital marketing, reflecting a forward looking approach to curriculum design.

One of the most visionary aspects of the budget is its emphasis on regional inclusivity. Assam's diverse districts, each with unique cultural and socio economic characteristics, require tailored educational interventions. The government's proposal to establish satellite campuses and regional study centers aims to decentralize higher education and bring it closer to underserved communities. These centers will offer specialized programs based on local needs, such as agricultural studies in rural districts, cultural studies in heritage rich regions, and environmental studies in ecologically sensitive areas. This approach not only expands access but also ensures that university education remains relevant to local contexts.

The budget also highlights the importance of preserving and promoting Assam's cultural and linguistic heritage through university education. The proposal to strengthen departments dedicated to Assamese, Bodo, Mising, and other regional languages reflects a commitment to cultural preservation. Universities will receive funding to support research in

cultural diversity on campuses but also strengthens Assam's position as an educational hub in the region. Collaborative degree programs, joint research initiatives, and international conferences will further enhance global engagement. Environmental sustainability forms another important dimension of the budget. Universities are being encouraged to adopt green campus initiatives, including solar energy systems, waste management programs, and biodiversity conservation projects. The introduction of eco campus certification reflects a commitment to creating environmentally responsible institutions. These initiatives not only reduce the ecological footprint of universities but also instill environmental consciousness among students.

As one reflects on the budget's proposals, a larger narrative emerges — a narrative of transformation. University education in Assam is being reimagined not as a static institution but as a dynamic force capable of shaping the future of the state. The budget's emphasis on infrastructure, research, faculty development, student welfare, industry alignment, cultural preservation, technology, internationalization, and sustainability collectively forms a comprehensive vision. It recognizes that universities are not merely centers of learning but engines of social, cultural, and economic development. University education in Assam continues to grapple with a series of deep rooted obstacles that hinder its growth and limit its ability to meet the aspirations of students across the state. The most persistent challenge is infrastructural inadequacy. Many universities still operate with outdated laboratories, insufficient classroom facilities, and libraries that have not kept pace with digital advancements. This infrastructural lag creates an uneven academic environment where students struggle to access modern learning tools, despite the growing emphasis on digital learning and global academic standards.

Alongside infrastructure, the shortage of qualified faculty remains a critical concern. Frequent vacancies, limited opportunities for professional development, and the absence of global faculty exchange programs restrict the intel-

lectual vibrancy of campuses and reduce exposure to contemporary research trends.

Research output in Assam's universities also remains limited due to inadequate funding, outdated equipment, and minimal collaboration with industries or international institutions. Without strong research innovation hubs, universities struggle to produce impactful studies or attract major research grants. Student welfare presents another obstacle, as financial constraints, limited hostel facilities, and insufficient mental health support often create barriers for learners from rural and marginalized communities. Scholarships such as merit cum means support exist, but they are not always adequate to meet rising educational costs. Curriculum rigidity further weakens the system. Many programs remain disconnected from emerging fields like AI, climate studies, and biotechnology, leaving graduates underprepared for evolving job markets. Weak industry academia collaboration means fewer internships, fewer skill based courses, and limited practical exposure. Regional disparities also persist, with universities in remote districts lacking resources available in urban centers. These obstacles collectively reveal that while Assam's higher education system holds immense potential, it requires sustained investment, modernization, and structural reform to truly flourish.

The promise of a booster for university education in Assam is therefore a promise of hope. It imagines campuses where students engage in cutting edge research, where faculty members collaborate with global institutions, where cultural heritage is celebrated, where technology enhances learning, and where education becomes a transformative force. The mist over Assam's rivers and hills may remain unchanged, but beneath that mist, a quiet revolution in higher education is unfolding — one that promises to reshape the destiny of the state and empower generations to come. (International Tagore Awardee Multilingual writer and poet Dr Ratan Bhattacharjee is a Former Affiliate Faculty of Virginia Commonwealth University Richmond, USA. proftratanbhattacharjee@gmail.com)

E20 is not India's problem, the way it was imposed is the real issue

By: R Suryamurthy

India's nationwide rollout of E20 petrol has become one of the rare public policy initiatives where both the government and its critics can claim to be right.

The government is correct in arguing that ethanol blending strengthens India's energy security, reduces dependence on imported crude oil, lowers greenhouse gas emissions and creates a new income stream for millions of farmers. Equally, consumers are justified in questioning why a programme designed to deliver macroeconomic benefits appears to have been implemented with limited public consultation, inadequate consumer choice and an expectation that motorists should simply absorb the transition costs in the national interest.

The controversy, therefore, is no longer about ethanol. It is about governance. It is about whether governments can pursue transformative economic policies by treating citizens as stakeholders or merely as participants in a grand national experiment.

The debate intensified after the Attorney General, during proceedings before the Supreme Court, reportedly referred to the rollout as an "experiment."

Although the Centre subsequently clarified that the remark related to ethanol procurement mechanisms rather than the E20 programme itself, the damage had already been done. The controversy gathered further momentum when a consumer court in Chhattisgarh held Maruti Suzuki and a dealership liable after concluding that E20 fuel had contributed to damage to a customer's vehicle. Whether the judgment ultimately survives judicial scrutiny is almost beside the point. Public confidence, once shaken, is difficult to restore.

Ironically, the controversy threatens to overshadow one of the most remarkable achievements of India's energy policy. In just over a decade, India has increased ethanol blending from 1.53% in 2014 to 20% in 2026, achieving its target five

years ahead of schedule. According to the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas, the programme has displaced more than 316 lakh metric tonnes of crude oil imports, saved nearly Rs 1.98 lakh crore (US\$23 billion) in foreign exchange, generated over Rs 1.66 lakh crore (US\$19 billion) in income for farmers and reduced carbon dioxide emissions by almost 952 lakh metric tonnes. Few government programmes can point to such measurable outcomes in such a short period.

Those achievements explain why New Delhi has defended the programme with unusual vigour. India imports almost 88.5% of its crude oil, making petroleum its largest merchandise import. Depending on global oil prices, the country's annual crude oil import bill fluctuates between US\$155 billion and US\$170 billion, accounting for nearly one-fourth of merchandise imports. Every geopolitical disruption—from the Russia-Ukraine war to instability in West Asia and attacks on shipping in the Red Sea—translates into higher import bills, a weaker rupee, wider current account deficits and imported inflation.

For policymakers, therefore, ethanol is not merely an alternative fuel. It is an instrument of economic sovereignty. Every litre of domestically produced ethanol blended into petrol reduces dependence on imported hydrocarbons, improves the balance of payments and cushions the economy against external shocks over which India has little control. From a strategic perspective, few would dispute the logic. Yet public policy cannot be judged solely by macroeconomic arithmetic.

The fundamental weakness of the E20 rollout lies in the assumption that what is economically beneficial for the nation must automatically be politically acceptable to its citizens.

That assumption has rarely held true. Energy transitions invariably redistribute costs and benefits. The benefits are diffuse, collective and long term. The costs are immediate, visible and personal. Motorists do not measure policy success by foreign exchange savings or improvements in the current account deficit. They judge it by what hap-

pens every time they visit a fuel station or service centre. If a driver notices lower mileage, even by three or four percent, or suspects increased maintenance costs, no amount of macroeconomic reasoning is likely to change that perception.

The government itself acknowledges that vehicles designed for lower ethanol blends may experience a 3-5% decline in fuel economy, although it argues that ethanol's higher octane rating improves combustion and offsets part of the loss. For a family driving 15,000 kilometres annually, that translates into additional fuel expenditure of roughly Rs 3,000 to Rs 3,500 a year.

Individually, the amount is modest. Politically, it is significant because consumers see the cost while the benefits remain largely invisible. The government's defence—that extensive testing by the Automotive Research Association of India (ARAI), the Society of Indian Automobile Manufacturers (SIAM), Indian Oil Corporation and automobile manufacturers found no evidence of widespread engine damage—is scientifically credible. It is equally true that service records covering millions of vehicles have not demonstrated systemic failures attributable to E20.

But public confidence is not built by laboratory data alone. Trust depends as much on transparency as on technical evidence. That is where the government appears to have underestimated the challenge.

Rather than proactively publishing independent long-term studies, creating transparent mechanisms for monitoring consumer complaints and allowing a phased transition for older vehicles, policymakers largely relied on administrative assurances that E20 was safe.

The result was predictable. Individual cases, however anecdotal, acquired disproportionate public significance because there was no trusted independent mechanism capable of separating isolated incidents from systemic problems.

India's experience also differs fundamentally from that of other major ethanol-producing countries. Brazil, widely regarded as the global benchmark, spent nearly five decades building its biofuel ecosystem. It gradually increased blending mandates while simultaneously encouraging automobile manufacturers to develop flex-fuel vehicles capable of running on anything from gasoline to nearly pure ethanol. Today, consumers retain the freedom to choose between gasoline and ethanol depending on market prices.

The United States adopted an equally cautious approach. Standard petrol remains E10, while E15 and E85 are largely restricted to vehicles specifically certified for those fuels. Europe introduced E10 only after prolonged compatibility testing, extensive public communication and continued availability of lower-blend fuels for older vehicles. Thailand relied primarily on pricing incentives rather than mandates. Consumers were persuaded. They were not compelled.

India, by contrast, compressed into roughly a decade what Brazil accomplished over almost half a century. That remarkable administrative achievement has also become its greatest political vulnerability. Speed is often celebrated in public administration. Yet rapid implementation frequently comes at the expense of consultation, in-



stitutional learning and public trust.

The E20 programme illustrates that paradox perfectly. The debate also exposes another uncomfortable reality. India's biofuel policy remains heavily dependent on sugarcane, one of the country's most water-intensive crops. While the government increasingly promotes maize, agricultural residues and second-generation ethanol, sugarcane continues to dominate production. Environmental economists have long argued that evaluating ethanol solely through the prism of reduced crude imports ignores its broader ecological footprint.

The "food versus fuel" debate cannot be dismissed as ideological opposition. It reflects legitimate concerns over groundwater depletion, land-use changes and the possibility that greater emphasis on fuel crops could eventually increase dependence on imported edible oils, pulses or fertilizers even as petroleum imports decline.

Reducing one strategic dependence by creating another would represent a questionable policy trade-off. The government argues that only surplus food grains are diverted after food-security requirements are met and that modern distilleries operate under Zero Liquid Discharge norms. Those safeguards are important. Whether they remain sufficient as ethanol demand continues to expand is another matter.

Perhaps the biggest lesson from the current controversy is that India has reached the limits of mandate-driven energy policy. The first phase of the ethanol revolution was fundamentally an engineering challenge involving production capacity, supply chains and fuel distribution. The second phase is about legitimacy.

KPMG India has correctly argued that the country's next objective should be to move "from scale creation to system intelligence." That transition demands more than expanding ethanol production. It requires widespread deployment of flex-fuel vehicles, diversification into second-generation biofuels, transparent pricing mechanisms, independent technical oversight and, above all, restoration of consumer confidence. Public trust

cannot be legislated. It has to be earned.

The government should therefore resist the temptation to treat criticism of E20 as opposition to energy security. Democracies are strengthened when major public policies withstand scrutiny rather than evade it. Independent studies on long-term engine performance should be published in full. Consumer grievance mechanisms should be strengthened. Legacy vehicle owners should have access to clear compatibility guidance. Future decisions on moving beyond E20 should be preceded by open consultation rather than administrative notification.

The irony is that India does not need to abandon its ethanol programme. It needs to democratise it. The economic rationale remains compelling. The geopolitical case is even stronger. An energy-importing nation of 1.4 billion people cannot indefinitely remain hostage to volatile global oil markets. Ethanol will almost certainly remain an essential component of India's transport-energy strategy, even as electric mobility gradually expands. But successful energy transitions are measured not merely by the number of litres blended or billions of dollars saved. They are measured by whether citizens willingly embrace the transition. India's ethanol programme has unquestionably reduced crude imports, strengthened farm incomes and enhanced energy resilience. Those achievements deserve recognition. Yet they should not obscure a more fundamental truth.

In a democracy, policy success is not determined solely by economic efficiency. It is determined by public legitimacy. The E20 controversy is therefore not a referendum on ethanol. It is a referendum on how India chooses to manage transformative change. If policymakers learn that lesson, E20 may yet become a global model for balancing energy security with democratic accountability. If they do not, one of India's most successful import-substitution programmes risks becoming a cautionary tale about the dangers of allowing administrative ambition to outpace public consent. (IPA Service)



'Members are elected to the Lok Sabha to discuss Bills, and not to raise slogans'

LS adjourned for day; no discussion on Bill to amend anti-paper leak law amid Oppn uproar



NEW DELHI, July 27: The Lok Sabha on Monday could not take up a Bill seeking to enhance punishment for those found guilty of leaking public examination question papers, as a relentless opposition continued its protest seeking a response from the government on the police action against protesting students.

As the House reassembled at 5 pm, opposition members continued sloganeering amid calls by the chair to discuss the Public Examination (Prevention of Unfair Means) Amendment Bill as the matter pertained to the future of crores of youth.

Parliamentary Affairs minister Kiren Rijiju said several members, including those from the

opposition, were prepared to participate in the debate but the Congress and "some of its friends" were causing disruptions and not allowing a debate.

The chair then adjourned the House for the day.

Adjourning the House earlier in the day, Speaker Om Birla had asked the government and the opposition to sort out differences and start a debate on the Bill at 5 pm.

Birla gave the government and the opposition parties a three-hour window to settle differences so that a discussion on the Bill could begin in the House.

Birla said six hours have been allocated to

discuss The Public Examinations (Prevention of Unfair Means) Amendment Bill, adding that more time can be given based on the sense of the House.

He said the members are elected to the Lok Sabha to discuss Bills, and not to raise slogans.

Since the Monsoon Session of Parliament began on July 20, the opposition has been raking up the NEET paper leak issue due to which no legislative business has been taken up so far, except for the introduction of two Bills.

When the House met on Monday, two days after Dharmendra Pradhan resigned as the education minister, the opposition demanded a response from the government on the alleged use of force on protesting students at the Jantar Mantar and other parts of the country.

The government has been reaching out to the opposition parties to end the stalemate so that the House can function smoothly.

The government on Monday introduced The Public Examinations (Prevention of Unfair Means) Amendment Bill, which seeks to amend the anti-paper leak law passed in 2024 with provisions for a jail term of up to 10 years and a penalty of up to Rs 10 crore, within days of large-scale student protests against the NEET paper leak that rocked the nation.

The proposed legislation was introduced by Minister of State for PMO, Jitendra Singh, amid protests and sloganeering by the opposition demanding a response from the government on the police crackdown on students during the Cockroach Janta Party-led 'Chalo Sansad' march on July 20. (PTI)

Mehbooba's remarks on violence against Kashmiris 'irresponsible': Omar Abdullah



SRINAGAR, July 27: Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Monday said PDP president Mehbooba Mufti should have stayed home instead of going to Jantar Mantar and justifying the use of force against Kashmiris, and that she should apologise for her remarks.

"Irresponsible" statements made by people who have been in a position of power can act as a deterrent for ordinary people to fight for their rights, Abdullah told reporters outside his private office.

Mehbooba visited Jantar Mantar on July 23 to extend support to the Cockroach Janta Party-led protest against alleged examination irregularities. While opposing police action against student protesters in Delhi, the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) chief appeared to defend the use of pellet guns in the valley in the past, saying that it was different in Kashmir as the security forces were fighting militancy.

The comments drew backlash from rival political parties, including Abdullah's National Conference (NC). The PDP, however, accused the ruling NC of using artificial intelligence to twist Mehbooba's statement at Jantar Mantar.

Abdullah said, "When a former chief minister says use of force is justified in Kashmir for fighting militancy, who will come out to fight for their rights? It

would have been better if she had not gone to Jantar Mantar."

"When we (politicians) support oppression and use of force by the Centre, who will support us if people want to protest for the restoration of statehood? They will not come out because Mehbooba ji has said 'yeh to banta hai (this is acceptable)'," he added.

The CM said Mehbooba did not visit Jantar Mantar for the NC's protest to demand the restoration of Jammu and Kashmir's statehood, but went there for the students' protest.

"She did not go to Jantar Mantar for Jammu and Kashmir. But she went there and justified the misuse of power and force on the pretext of fighting militancy."

"How does she justify it? Should the children not get justice because there is militancy? Should passports be stopped because there is militancy? Should laws not be implemented because there is militancy? I could not understand how it is justified," Abdullah said. He said the PDP leader has an old habit of singing different tunes in Delhi and back home.

"For a second, let us say that she was trying to please some people there. She has not forgotten the old habit of speaking different languages at different places," he added.

Abdullah said Mehbooba should apologise for her statement.

"She would not lose stature if she had called you (media) to her office and said she was carried away by emotions and she is sorry for it. Instead of apologising, they are rubbing salt on wounds. One of their MLAs is saying that it is AI. Are we fools?" he asked.

"Now you are challenging the wisdom of the people by saying that it is AI generated. What you said was unfortunate. At least accept it. You have not apologised for the 2015 accord with the BJP and you have not regretted the 2016 situation. Now you are saying it is par for the course," he said. (PTI)

'Are they terrorists': Oppn slams BJP over 'use of AK-47' on student protesters in Bihar

NEW DELHI, July 27: The Congress on Monday slammed the BJP over allegations that AK-47 rifles were used to target protesting students in Bihar, with Rahul Gandhi demanding Prime Minister Narendra Modi's apology and action against those who "attacked" the students.

A police constable was suspended after a video purportedly showing him using an AK-47 rifle during a student protest in Bihar's Siwan district on July 25 went viral on social media. Siwan SP Puran Kumar Jha told PTI that no one was injured in the firing and an inquiry has been initiated as there were clear instructions to the police force not to open fire during the demonstration.

In a post in Hindi on X, Rahul Gandhi said, "The entire system is downright murderous against students. Reports are coming in that AK-47s have been fired at protesting students in Bihar, and hundreds have been arrested and booked under FIRs."

"Modi ji, what happened to your promise that no FIRs would be filed against students and that they would be released? Instead, they are being subjected to deadly attacks and brutality," he said.

"Pellet guns were used against students in Delhi, and AK-47s in Bihar. Whether it is Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Bihar, or Delhi -- the pattern is the same everywhere," he said.

"I have said it before: this government is dishonest. Reform is beyond its capability. It will renege on its promises and use every tactic to suppress the students' voices," Gandhi said.

He called on PM Modi to apologise to the country's students and take action against those who attacked and brutalised them.

The BJP, however, accused the Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha of trying to "manufacture a protest" and create an atmosphere of anarchy by alleging that AK-47 rifles were used against agitating students in Bihar, and demanded that he apologise for spreading "ca-



nards and falsity".

The ruling party termed Gandhi's statement "not only deeply unfortunate, but a sin".

Reacting to reports of use of AK-47 rifles, Congress MP Priyanka Gandhi Vadra said that the protesting students are not terrorists.

"Even now, FIRs are being registered against students in Bihar and West Bengal. I have heard, though I have not verified it, that parents of girls who participated in the protests received calls asking why they had allowed their daughters to join the demonstrations."

"Can't girls protest? Pellet guns, AK-47s, are they terrorists? What is wrong with these people," she said. "And what was the need for AK-47s and such weapons at the protest site? The students are not terrorists," she said.

Congress general secretary in-charge organisation KC Venugopal attacked Shah over the issue.

"Where is Amit Shah hiding? He should explain who ordered the use of AK-47s in Bihar and pellet guns in Delhi during the students' protests," Venugopal told reporters in the Parliament House complex.

Congress MP Manish Tewari said the fundamental question is whether it is justified to use pellet guns or AK-47 rifles against unarmed and non-violent protesters.

"The answer is absolutely no. The Supreme Court has laid down a standard operating procedure for handling protests. Authorities must first announce prohibitory orders, then use water cannons if required, followed by lathi-charge, tear gas, and only in the most extreme circumstances can firing be ordered by the duty magistrate or the senior-most police officer present. (PTI)

Delhi transport unions plan 'E-20' protest march to Parliament on August 4

NEW DELHI, July 27: Delhi-based transport bodies have announced a protest march to the Parliament on August 4 demanding withdrawal ethanol-blended petrol.

The call has been given by the Delhi Taxi and Tourist Transporters and Tour Operators Association and others.

"We are planning to hold a protest march to Parliament on August 4 against ethanol blended petrol demanding its withdrawal. We want to give a wake-up call to the member of parliaments who are sleeping till now on this issue, as the problems in vehicles from the ethanol blending are coming from across the country," Sanjay Samrat, president, Delhi Taxi and Tourist Transporters and Tour Operators Association, said.

"We do not want to make this a political issue, and are not associated with any 'E-20 Janta Party' or Cockroach Janta Party or any other political party," Samrat added, referring to the online movement against the E20 fuel, a blend of 20 per cent ethanol and 80 per cent petrol.

Harish Sabharwal, national president, All India Motor Transport Congress, said they are protesting against the government for making E20 fuel the only choice for commuters.

"We have said that ethanol blended petrol should not be forced upon commuters, there should be a choice, currently there is no option being given. We are supporting the protest march to Parliament, there is no call for any strike given by the association as of now," he said.

"This is a major issue, this is damaging vehicles, we hope the government makes E 20 blended petrol a



choice for commuters," Rajender Kapoor, president, All India Motor & Goods Transport Association, said.

The protest announcement comes days after 'E-20 Janata Party', an online movement formed along the lines of the CJP, was launched on social media, garnering huge followers on Instagram and X.

The E20 ethanol-blending policy has been in the midst of a major controversy, centring on claims of reduced vehicle mileage, potential engine wear, and alleged conflicts of interest.

The government has defended the programme, ruling out any immediate plan to increase blends beyond 20 per cent and asserting that the fuel is safe, clean, and helps farmers. (PTI)

NEET paper leak row won't end with Pradhan's exit, says Shiv Sena (UBT)



MUMBAI, July 27: The Shiv Sena (UBT) on Monday claimed the NEET paper leak issue will not end with Dharmendra Pradhan's resignation as the Union education minister, alleging that Prime Minister Narendra Modi's governance continues to harm the nation.

In a scathing editorial in its mouthpiece 'Saamana', the party dismissed the government's proposed anti-paper leak legislation as

mere deception, alleging that the law is the same as before, only the quantum of punishment has changed.

The editorial stated that the government's stance was not to bow before the "cockroaches" (the Cockroach Janata Party).

The "arrogant" government baton-charged and trained guns on cockroaches, but the country's youth did not leave Jantar Mantar, it said.

"Dharmendra Pradhan's resignation will not end the issue. The governance of 'big Pradhan' (PM Modi) and his administration have been harmful to the country. Home Minister Amit Shah's hands are stained with blood, and public anger will also be directed at him," it claimed.

It further alleged that the Public

Examinations (Prevention of Unfair Means) Amendment Bill, 2026, proposing up to 10 years' imprisonment and up to Rs 10 crore fine in cases of paper leak, is essentially the same as the old law, with a higher quantum of punishment.

The bill is a way of deceiving students and parents, the party alleged.

Pradhan resigned on Saturday, after weeks of the Cockroach Janta Party's agitation in Delhi that galvanised lakhs of people over irregularities in exams and the NEET paper leak.

The CJP called off the agitation after the government agreed to the outfit's other demands, including "honourable" compensation to the families of students who committed suicide and withdrawal of FIRs against protesters in Delhi and other

BJP-ruled states.

The Opposition party claimed that PM Modi and Shah had become a subject of ridicule, as the youth came up with creative slogans and memes to criticise the government.

The creativity of the youth and digital technology flourished during the CJP's movement, it said.

It highlighted that 20 student suicides ignited anger and united the country, driving young protesters to Jantar Mantar.

Shah ordered a lathi-charge (baton charge) on students, and there were even orders to open fire, if necessary, the party claimed.

The home minister cannot escape accountability, and PM Modi will eventually have to apologise to the nation for their "inhumane" actions, it said. (PTI)

been specifically mentioned. We clarify for the sake of abundant caution that mere filing of the present application and taking of cognisance of the same by this tribunal does not by itself warrant any demolition without following due course of law," the bench said.

It directed the Delhi government authorities to list all the encroachments made and to ensure that appropriate eviction proceedings are initiated against all the encroachers in accordance with law, subject to orders passed by the Supreme Court, the Delhi High Court, or any other court of law.

It directed the filing of additional status reports regarding further action taken, including measures to prevent discharge of untreated sewage in the pond and removal of solid waste from the water and periphery of the pond.

The matter has been posted on September 8 for further proceedings. (PTI)

It emphasised that education cannot be strengthened through announcements and publicity alone; it requires sound policies, adequate resources, and timely implementation. Singh said when government schools fail to provide quality education, the adverse impact on employment is inevitable. (PTI)

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India-Nepal rail freight gets boost with first direct container train

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, July 27: In a landmark achievement for India-Nepal rail connectivity, the first-ever direct commercial container freight train, comprising 40 wagons carrying a consignment of canola, successfully completed its journey from Kolkata Port to Biratnagar Customs Yard in Nepal recently, said an official statement on Monday.

The historic movement marks the operationalisation of the revised India-Nepal Rail Transit Protocol and opens a new chapter in cross-border freight transportation.

"The train operated seamlessly under the revised transit framework, allowing direct rail movement of bulk cargo from Kolkata Port to Biratnagar without transshipment at the border," the statement added.

It further said that it is expected to significantly reduce transit time, logistics costs and cargo handling while improving trade efficiency between the two neighbouring countries.

The achievement builds upon the broad-gauge rail link between Joghani (India) and Biratnagar

(Nepal) inaugurated in June 2023 by the Prime Minister of India Narendra Modi and the former Prime Minister of Nepal. Following the signing of the revised Letter of

Exchange (LoE) in November 2025, direct commercial rail movement to Nepal has now become a reality, the statement said.

The Northeast Frontier Railway said that the milestone highlights the growing role of Northeast Frontier Railway in strengthening international rail connectivity and facilitating seamless cross-border trade.

"The initiative is expected to boost bilateral commerce, improve logistics efficiency and further reinforce India's commitment to enhancing regional connectivity through modern railway infrastructure," NFR stated.

Building on this historic achievement, NFR will continue to strengthen cross-border rail connectivity, enhance freight logistics and support the growing trade and economic partnership between India and Nepal through efficient, reliable and customer focused railway services.

BJP govt in Haryana has failed to strengthen school infrastructure: State Cong chief

CHANDIGARH, July 27: Haryana Congress president Rao Narender Singh alleged on Monday that the state's BJP government has failed to strengthen school infrastructure and ensure timely teacher recruitment.

Singh said thousands of teaching positions remain vacant in government schools across the state. Many schools continue to function without subject-specialist teachers, while recruitment processes have been pending for years, he said.

"The government has failed both to strengthen school infrastructure and to ensure the timely recruitment of regular teachers. As a result, students' education, competitive preparedness, and prospects are being severely affected," the Congress leader said in a statement.

Singh said while the state government continues to make grand claims and spend heavily on advertisements highlighting education improvements, the actual condition of government schools tells a completely different story.

He claimed the Union Ministry of Education's Unified District Information System for Education Plus report points to "dilapidated school buildings and inadequate basic infrastructure".

"The BJP government must explain why its claims of educational reform over the past nearly 12 years have failed to translate into reality," he said.

He emphasised that education cannot be strengthened through announcements and publicity alone; it requires sound policies, adequate resources, and timely implementation. Singh said when government schools fail to provide quality education, the adverse impact on employment is inevitable. (PTI)

It directed the Delhi government authorities to list all the encroachments

NGT asks authorities to create biofencing, other restorative measures for Delhi pond

NEW DELHI, July 27: The National Green Tribunal (NGT) on Monday directed authorities to create bio-fencing by planting shrubs and trees as a restorative measure for a pond in the Kanganheri village in southwest Delhi's Kapashera.

The green body was hearing an execution application seeking implementation of the tribunal's September 2024 directions to "take appropriate steps for restoration of the pond to its original size and shape." The directions were passed in a matter seeking restoration of the encroached and polluted water body.

In its order on Monday, a bench of judicial member Justice Arun Kumar Tyagi and expert member A Senthil Vel noted that the Irrigation and Flood Control (I&FC) Department and the district magistrate of southwest district had filed status reports.

Noting the reports, it said that con-

struction of a pucca permanent boundary wall to restore the pond could result in the obstruction of rainwater or surface run-off water flow from the catchment area to the pond, leading to its degradation and stagnation.

"Therefore, the option of creation of bio-fencing by way of plantation of an appropriate number of shrubs and trees on the periphery needs to be looked into, particularly so as the same will also add to the aesthetic look and contribute to control of air pollution."

"Further, the pond needs to be periodically cleaned, and the authorities concerned have to ensure that solid waste is not dumped in the water or the periphery of the pond. For this purpose, appropriate display boards with appropriate warnings may be installed at the appropriate places," the tribunal said.

It directed the DM to involve the deputy conservator of forests (DCF) con-



cerned for carrying out the requisite plantation during the ongoing monsoon season.

"Admittedly, there are encroachments on the area of the pond and in the status reports, such encroachments have also

More officers inducted into team probing Tripura DGP's death

'Probe team headed by Pathak has been reconstituted by adding seven more officials'

AGARTALA, July 27: Seven more officials have been inducted into the team probing the death of former Tripura DGP Anurag Dhankar, an official order issued by West Tripura SP Namit Pathak said on Monday.

The move comes amid demands by the CPI(M) and the Congress for a judicial probe into Dhankar's death.

Dhankar, who had led the CBI probe into the alleged Rs 13,000-crore Punjab National Bank fraud involving diamondaire Nirav Modi and the reinvestigation into the 1984 anti-Sikh riots, was found hanging in the washroom attached to his chamber at the state police headquarters here on July 20.

"In the interest of ensuring a thorough, coordinated and expeditious investigation of the case, the probe team headed by Pathak has been reconstituted by adding seven more officials," the order said.

It said a daily briefing would be held to review the progress of the investigation, discuss case developments, assign tasks and formulate the strategy for further investigation.



"A daily progress report containing the investigation carried out, evidence collected, technical analysis undertaken and further action proposed shall be submitted to the West Tripura SP by all officers concerned," it said.

Earlier in the day, a CPI(M) legislature party delegation met Governor Indrasena Reddy Nallu and sought his intervention for a High Court-monitored probe into Dhankar's death.

"Like us, people across the country find it hard to believe that an officer like Dhankar, who suc-

cessfully led the CBI in several high-profile cases, died by suicide by hanging in his office chamber, the most secure place in the state. His body was found in the washroom attached to his chamber in full uniform, with his cap lying on the floor," CPI(M) state secretary Jitendra Chaudhury told reporters.

He claimed that Dhankar had received the ceremonial guard of honour at the police headquarters, a weekly ritual, barely an hour before the incident and showed no signs of stress or tension.

"The officer who was entrusted

with the security of 44 lakh people in Tripura would end his life in this manner? There are reasonable grounds to question the suicide theory," Chaudhury said.

He said the CPI(M) delegation urged the governor to direct the state government to order a high court-monitored investigation to ensure justice for Dhankar's family.

"We have no objection to the three-member team headed by West Tripura SP Namit Pathak probing the case, but the entire probe should be monitored by the high court," he said.

On Sunday, senior Congress MLA Sudip Roy Barman also demanded a judicial probe into the death of Dhankar.

Responding to the demands, BJP MLA Ranjit Das alleged that the opposition parties were trying to mislead the people over the unfortunate death of the DGP.

"Both Chaudhury and Roy Barman have been trying to mislead the people over the death of the DGP for political mileage. A probe has already begun in a completely transparent manner," Das said. (PTI)

Arunachal: Cong targets CM Khandu govt over border security, healthcare



ITANAGAR, July 27: The Congress in Arunachal Pradesh on Monday launched a scathing attack on the BJP-led state government, accusing it of evading accountability on issues of border security, alleged corruption in the health sector, deteriorating education system and governance, while demanding greater transparency and public scrutiny.

Questioning the government's stand on the India-China border situation, Arunachal Pradesh Congress Committee (APCC) working president Tanga Byaling, in a statement, alleged that Chief Minister Pema Khandu and Home Minister Mama Natung were downplaying concerns over alleged Chinese incursions and encroachments instead of addressing the ground realities faced by people living in border areas.

"If the state government is so confident that there are no Chinese incursions or encroachments, let the CM and the HM come to the Indo-Tibetan border along with a media team and verify the ground reality themselves," he said, urging the government to stop making statements from the comfort of offices in Itanagar.

He also criticised the BJP government for repeatedly referring to the 1962 India-China war whenever the border issue is raised, saying the concern today is the present secu-

rity situation, particularly developments after 2020.

"The people are asking questions about what is happening today. The issue is the present border reality and the developments after 2020," he said, adding that border residents were aware of the situation and that "national security cannot be treated as a political public relations exercise".

Byaling's response came after Natung on Sunday dismissed allegations of Chinese encroachment into Indian territory in the Taksing sector of Upper Subansiri district, terming the claims "lies and social media rumours".

Speaking to reporters on the sidelines of the Kargil Vijay Diwas celebrations here, Natung said there has been no intrusion by the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) into any part of the state.

"There has been no encroachment in Arunachal Pradesh by the Chinese. All these are just lies and social media rumours. Our jawans are protecting our border 24x7. No Chinese would dare encroach into Indian territory, and I can assure you that these are all rumours and nothing else," the minister had said.

Byaling also levelled allegations of corruption and administrative failures in the health department, claiming that despite huge expenditure on medicines and medical equipment, many district hospitals

and health centres continue to face shortages of doctors, specialists, medicines and basic facilities.

"The government must explain where the public money is going and why patients are not receiving the healthcare they deserve," the former home minister said, demanding complete transparency in procurement of medicines and equipment and an independent investigation into alleged financial irregularities.

He also sought a statewide verification of pharmacies, alleging that some were being operated by unqualified or unlicensed persons, which, he said, posed a serious threat to public health.

The Congress leader further questioned recruitment in the health department, alleging irregularities in appointments while qualified Arunachal Pradesh Scheduled Tribe (APST) pharmacists, laboratory technicians and other healthcare professionals remained unemployed.

He demanded a comprehensive review of recruitment rules, selection procedures, merit lists and compliance with reservation norms.

Targeting the education department, Byaling alleged that several schools across the state were functioning without adequate teachers, infrastructure and basic facilities, while some existed only on paper.

"The government cannot claim development while the future of our children is being neglected," he said, calling for a public audit of schools, teacher vacancies, infrastructure and utilisation of education funds.

Byaling said the government should stop responding to public concerns with "propaganda" and instead provide clear answers on border security, healthcare, education and governance.

"The people of the state deserve truth, governance, transparency and accountability," he said, adding that the Opposition would continue to raise these issues until the government took concrete action and ensured greater transparency. (PTI)

Sikkim MP urges Gadkari to fast-track solution

GANGTOK, July 27: Sikkim's MP Indra Hang Subba on Monday urged Union Road Transport Minister Nitin Gadkari to expedite a permanent solution to the recurring landslides on NH-10, describing the road as the state's lifeline.

During a meeting with Gadkari at Parliament House in New Delhi, Subba submitted a memorandum about the repeated landslides that frequently disrupt traffic on the highway, affecting the supply of essential commodities, tourism, trade and the daily lives of people.

The MP called for a comprehensive geotechnical investigation of the vulnerable stretch and proposed the construction of tunnels, according to a statement issued by his office.

He said repeated slope stabilisation measures have failed to prevent landslides in the area.

A tunnel-based alternative would ensure safer all-weather connectivity, minimise monsoon-related disruptions and enhance the long-term resilience of NH-10, he added.

Subba also urged Gadkari to engage experts to identify the most suitable engineering solution and ensure its timely implementation. (PTI)

CPI(M) delegation meets Tripura gov, demands HC-monitored probe into DGP's death case

AGARTALA, July 27: A CPI(M) legislature party delegation in Tripura on Monday met Governor Indrasena Reddy Nallu and sought his intervention for a high court-monitored probe into the death of former DGP Anurag Dhankar, who had led the CBI probe into the alleged ₹ 13,000-crore Punjab National Bank fraud involving diamondaire Nirav Modi and the reinvestigation into the 1984 anti-Sikh riots, was found hanging in the washroom attached to his chamber at the state police headquarters here on July 20.

"Like us, people across the country

find it hard to believe that an officer like Dhankar, who successfully led the CBI in several high-profile cases, died by suicide by hanging in his office chamber, the most secure place in the state. His body was found in the washroom attached to his chamber in full uniform, with his cap lying on the floor," CPI(M) state secretary Jitendra Chaudhury told reporters.

He claimed that Dhankar had received the ceremonial guard of honour at the police headquarters, a weekly ritual, barely an hour before the incident and showed no signs of stress or tension.

"The officer who was entrusted

with the security of 44 lakh people in Tripura would end his life in this manner? There are reasonable grounds to question the suicide theory," Chaudhury said.

He said the CPI(M) delegation urged the governor to direct the state government to order a high court-monitored investigation to ensure justice for Dhankar's family.

"We have no objection to the three-member team headed by West Tripura SP Namit Pathak probing the case, but the entire investigation should be monitored by the high court," he said. (PTI)

Large cache of arms, ammunition recovered in Manipur's Imphal East

IMPHAL, July 27: A large cache of arms and ammunition were recovered in Manipur's Imphal East district, police said on Monday.

Acting on a tip-off about the movement of armed men in the Wakha Ching area, teams of the Special Commando Unit and the 6th India Reserve Battalion (IRB) launched a search operation around 6.15 pm on Saturday, they said. During an extensive search of the forested area at Wakha Hill, the security personnel recovered four suspicious plastic bags containing 29 firearms along with magazines, they said.

The seized weapons included five self-loading rifles (SLRs), four INSAS rifles, two AK Ghatak rifles, one INSAS light machine gun (LMG), six .303 rifles, three double-barrel breech-loading (DBBL) guns and seven single-barrel breech-loading (SBBL) guns, police said. (PTI)

TEJAS workshop held in Dibang Valley to promote grassroots entrepreneurship

DPIIT initiative aims to strengthen startup ecosystem and support aspiring entrepreneurs in non-metro regions



HT Correspondent

ANINI, July 27: The Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) under the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, in collaboration with the Arunachal Pradesh Innovation & Investment Park (APIIP) and the Dibang Valley district administration, organised a TEJAS (Transforming Entrepreneurial Journeys Across State & Districts) workshop at Anini on Monday to encourage entrepreneurship and innovation at the grassroots level.

Held at the Circuit House Conference Hall in Anini, the workshop was part of the nationwide TEJAS initiative aimed at identifying, mentoring and supporting aspiring entrepreneurs, startups and students from non-metro regions by providing access to resources, mentorship and institutional support.

The programme was attended by Circle Officer Anmol Singh (APCS) representing the district administration, ZPM Dree Eta Mih, ZPM Mathu Siyo Miwu, District

Planning Officer Zeela Meto, SBI Anini Branch in-charge H Jamatiya, representatives of self-help groups, tour operators, Panchayati Raj Institutions, startups, students and aspiring entrepreneurs.

Technical sessions were conducted by Rohan Sachdeva of Startup India, DPIIT, who outlined the Startup India ecosystem and opportunities available to entrepreneurs.

Sutanu Sen, Project Head of APIIP, spoke on the startup ecosystem in Arunachal Pradesh, while H. Jamatiya briefed participants on banking and loan schemes available for entrepreneurs.

Officials including Anmol Singh, Dr M. Amin Khan, Fellow at the District Planning Office and Ronit, Assistant Fellow, discussed the role of the district administration in promoting entrepreneurship and explained various Central and State government schemes designed to support startups and small enterprises.

More than 120 participants, including entrepreneurs, students, NGOs and startup enthusiasts, attended the workshop, which focused on business ideation, access to government schemes, funding opportunities, market linkages and innovation across different sectors.

Participants were also introduced to the benefits of Startup India recognition, incubation support and access to national platforms for startups.

The organisers said the TEJAS initiative, being implemented across 132 districts in the country, is intended to build an inclusive startup ecosystem in line with the vision of Atmanirbhar Bharat and Viksit Bharat@2047.

Pasighat panel reviews implementation of MY Bharat programmes

HT Correspondent

PASIGHAT, July 27: The District MY Bharat Committee on Monday reviewed the implementation of youth development programmes and discussed measures to strengthen coordination among government departments for effective youth engagement.

The meeting was attended by members of the committee under the chairmanship of the district authorities.

Welcoming the participants, District Youth Officer Praveen Rao highlighted the vision of MY Bharat in promoting youth participation, volunteerism, leadership and nation-building through various initiatives.

The Chairperson emphasised the need for greater inter-departmental coordination and urged all depart-

ments to actively support MY Bharat programmes to ensure wider participation of young people.

The committee reviewed the progress of Youth Clubs, volunteer registration, convergence with line departments, preparation of the district activity calendar and promotion of the MY Bharat portal.

During the meeting, it was decided to nominate nodal officers in all departments, intensify volunteer registration drives, strengthen Youth Clubs, organise joint awareness programmes, prepare a district activity calendar, conduct monthly review meetings and enhance digital outreach and publicity for effective implementation of MY Bharat initiatives.

The meeting concluded with a vote of thanks proposed by District Youth Officer Praveen Rao.

Monasteries pillars of heritage, social harmony: Arunachal Guv

ITANAGAR, July 27: Arunachal Pradesh Governor Lt Gen (Retd) KT Pamaik has termed monasteries as living institutions that preserve the state's rich Buddhist heritage, nurture moral values and strengthen social harmony, saying they have remained repositories of ancient wisdom while also contributing to cultural tourism and peaceful coexistence.

The governor made the remarks during his maiden visit to the Sang-ngag Choekhor Dargyeling Monastery, popularly known as Chilipam Monastery, in West Kameng district on Sunday, where he offered prayers and participated in a special ceremony for peace, prosperity and the well-being of humanity.

Lauding the monastery's contribution to society, he said institutions like Chilipam have played an invaluable role in preserving Buddhist traditions, spiritual values and the cultural heritage of the region, an official statement said here on Monday.

"Monasteries such as Chilipam are far more than places of worship. They are living



institutions that nurture moral values, foster compassion and serve as repositories of ancient wisdom that continue to guide society towards peace, harmony and mutual respect," he said.

Drawing from his years of service in Buddhist regions from Ladakh to Arunachal Pradesh, including Bhutan, Pamaik said Buddhist institutions have made a significant contribution to strengthening social cohesion and promoting tolerance and understanding among communities.

He said the monastery's distinctive architecture, sacred relics, vibrant monastic traditions and serene sur-

roundings attract devotees, pilgrims, scholars and tourists from across the country and abroad.

Such heritage sites, he added, not only preserve the state's cultural legacy but also promote cultural tourism.

During the visit, the governor interacted with the monastery's spiritual head and abbot, Rimpoché Trulku Tenzin Jigme, who briefed him on its initiatives to impart spiritual education, preserve Buddhist teachings and guide young people towards a life rooted in discipline, compassion and ethical values.

Appreciating the monastery's efforts, Pamaik

stressed the importance of involving the younger generation in preserving Arunachal Pradesh's rich cultural and spiritual heritage.

A special prayer ceremony was organised at the monastery, where monks offered prayers and blessings for peace, harmony and the well-being of humanity, reflecting the Buddhist ideals of universal brotherhood and collective well-being.

Local MLA Tseten Chombay, commissioner to the governor Pawan Kumar Sain, West Kameng deputy commissioner Dr Dilip Kumar Chetia, Superintendent of Police D W Thungon and Sherdupken community leaders accompanied the governor during the visit.

Located around 15 km from Rupa in West Kameng district, Chilipam Monastery is one of Arunachal Pradesh's prominent Buddhist centres.

Perched atop a hill overlooking the Eastern Himalayas, it is known for its religious significance, traditional architecture and tranquil surroundings, drawing visitors from across India and abroad. (PTI)

Rio flags off 549 vehicles for Nagaland police modernisation

HT Correspondent

DIMAPUR, July 27: Nagaland Chief Minister Neiphiu Rio flagged off 549 new police vehicles and 12 mobile forensic vans at the Chumoukedima police complex on Monday in a major step toward strengthening policing, mobility and scientific investigation in the state.

Addressing the flagging-off programme, Rio asked police personnel to utilise the vehicles responsibly and transparently, deploy them strictly based on operational requirements, prioritise district executive forces and remote areas, ensure regular maintenance and timely servicing, and replace condemned vehicles promptly to maintain an efficient fleet. He said the vehicles were procured under the Assistance to States and Union Territories for Modernisation of Police Scheme for the financial year 2025-26.

He noted that the initiative is the first major outcome of a broader police modernisation programme under which Nagaland has secured nearly ₹ 150 crore for upgrading policing infrastruc-

ture, including mobility, CCTV surveillance, automatic number plate recognition (ANPR) systems and smart police suite.

Rio said the 549 vehicles, procured at an approximate cost of ₹ 81.65 crore, would replace 35 to 40 per cent of the ageing police fleet, significantly enhancing the operational readiness of the force. He stressed that mobility is crucial for effective policing in Nagaland's difficult terrain, where timely response to emergencies, crime prevention, investigation and disaster response depend on reliable transportation.

Rio observed that almost half of the existing police fleet had become old, unserviceable or had crossed the permissible service life, affecting policing across districts, police stations, IRB battalions, highway patrols and investigation units.

Highlighting emerging security challenges, Rio said organised extortion, drug trafficking, cybercrime, financial fraud, human trafficking and crimes against women and children require specialised investigation and greater technological capability.

TBDB/15 th FC/47/2024-25/				
TENDER NOTICE				
The B.D.O. Tihu-Barama Dev. Block has been re-invited Sealed tender affixing a non-refundable Court fee stamp of Rs. 8.25 (Rupees eight & twenty five) only in the prescribed form against the following scheme from the Govt. registered Contractors/Firms of appropriate class. The tenders will be received in the Office of the undersigned up to 2.00 PM on 19/08/2026 and will be opened on the same date & place at 3.00 P.M.				
Sl. No.	Name of works	Tender Amount (Approx)	Cost of Tender Paper	Time of Completion of Work
1	Const. of Community Toilet at Dolbari Daoga Afad Bijab Khuli (AC-128534022) under 15 th FC (Tied Grand) for the year 2025-26 during 2026-27	Rs. 17,85,833.00	Rs. 500/-	3 (three) Months from the date of issue of F.W.O.
The Tender not accompanied by the Earnest Money Deposit(EMD) is liable to be rejected				
Terms and condition details may be seen at the Office Notice board. Tender papers may be obtained from the office of the undersigned in any period of mentioned working days on payment of non refundable Rs. 500.00 (Rupees Five hundreds) only in cash for each Tender paper.				
Sd/-Block Dev. Officer cum Chairman, Tender Committee, Tihu-Barama Development Block, Barama				
IPR(BTC)/C/2026-27/924				

Dated Barama the 23rd July, 2026

Esha strikes gold, Manu claims bronze in women's 25m pistol at ISSF World Cup

HANGZHOU, July 27: The fast-rising Esha Singh grabbed the gold by upstaging Olympic-medallist Manu Bhaker, who took the bronze to complete a double-podium finish for India in the women's 25m pistol event of the ISSF World Cup (Rifle/Pistol/Shotgun) here on Monday.

The 21-year-old Esha produced a commanding display in the final, registering 40 hits to seal the gold medal, while Paris 2024 double Olympic-medallist Manu fought through a tense, highly-competitive field, winning a crucial shoot-off before finishing with 28 hits to secure bronze.

The Indian squad set the bench-mark early in the qualification round.

Manu topped the qualifying standings with an outstanding score of 586-20x, closely followed by Esha in second place with 585-18x to comfortably advance to the eight-shooter final.

Former Asian Games gold-medallist Rahi Sarnobat posted 582-16x, while Simranpreet Kaur Brar (576-20x) and Abhidnya Ashok Patil (573-16x) delivered steady performances competing under Ranking Points Only



(RPO) status.

Reflecting on overcoming the mental pressure following her record-setting World Cup gold in Munich earlier this season, Esha said, 'This match was very pressure-riding

for me because of the previous medal I had. The better you get in your event, the more you feel that weight of prestige you have to conquer. I'm happy that I was able to get past it today and grateful that I had the abil-

ity to endure it.

'I really love competing here in Hangzhou. Recalling how the competition went during the Asian Games, where I won four medals, I was really excited to come back. Being familiar with the range, the lighting, and the atmosphere in the final hall definitely counted in my favour.'

Speaking after the match on her performance and building momentum for the season ahead, Manu said, 'This medal is very important because it acts as a stepping stone. It gives me clarity on what is working and the direction I want to head in.

'While the medal surely boosts my confidence, the experience I gained from this competitive match will help even more as we look ahead to major assignments like the World Championships and Asian Games.'

The gold medal adds another landmark achievement for Esha, who hails from Hyderabad.

Earlier this season at the ISSF World Cup in Munich, Esha scripted history by setting both the senior and junior world records with 43 hits in the final. (PTI)

Jackson Koivun wins the 3M Open in his 3rd pro start

BLAINE (USA), July 27: Jackson Koivun felt the nerves but never flinched, securing his first PGA Tour win in the face of a strong finish by the world's top-ranked player and clear fan favorite in Scottie Scheffler.

Koivun won the 3M Open by three strokes Sunday in only his third start as a professional, holding off Scheffler with a closing 5-under 66 for a tournament-record 25-under 259 total.

'All throughout the crowd I kept hearing, Scottie's coming, Scottie's coming,' the 21-year-old Koivun said. 'I just tried to tune that out and keep playing the golf I knew I could.'

Scheffler, who played five groups ahead of Koivun, surged into contention with a 63 but settled for his fifth runner-up finish this season. His lone win this year was in his first start at The American Express in California.

'We're seeing a lot of really, really good young talent in the game today,' Scheffler said. 'When you see the guys come out of college, they're really, really prepared, even more prepared than we were coming out.'

Hideki Matsuyama, Brian Harman, Chandler Phillips and Denny McCarthy tied for third at 20 under.

Koivun played a safe and steady game on a 97-degree afternoon at the TPC Twin Cities, going bogey-free for the second straight day after a 61 in the third round gave him a three-shot cushion after 54 holes. His par-saving putt on the 9th green after his approach landed in the sand gave him an energy boost for the back nine.

'Might be the biggest putt I made all week,' Koivun said. 'Scoreboard

was right there, and I saw exactly how I stood. If I missed that, then I only had a two-shot lead — where last time I checked I had a five-shot lead. So making that was huge for my momentum.'

Lee Hodges held the previous 3M Open record, finishing at 24-under 260 in 2023.

Koivun, who became the fourth rookie winner this season, missed the cut at the John Deere Classic in Illinois and tied for 10th at the ISCO Championship in Kentucky earlier this month. He made 10 starts as an amateur on tour events.

Earning \$1,584,000 for his win in Minnesota, Koivun also jumped 124 spots in the FedEx Cup standings into 70th, the last place above the cut for the playoffs with two regular season events remaining on the schedule.

'I feel like I've gotten a lot better over the past couple years of being able to beat guys with my mentality,' said Koivun, who broke the NCAA career record for per-round stroke average (68.89) and helped lead Auburn to the national championship last month. 'Sometimes I watch guys hit on the range and I don't feel like I'm the most talented out there, but if I can go out there and believe and use my brain to my advantage, then that's definitely kind of like a superpower.'

Scheffler, who began the final round six shots back, needed a collapse by Koivun to catch up. That never came.

Scheffler played a nearly flawless game, save for a 5-foot birdie putt on the 14th hole that lipped in and out. As he was conducting his post-match interview, Koivun birdied the 16th to go 25 under. (AP)

Shreshankar, Sathyanathan qualify for CWG long jump finals

GLASGOW, July 27: M Shreshankar qualified for the men's long jump final by breaching the automatic qualifying standard, while Lokesh Sathyanathan advanced on the basis of his top-12 finish at the Commonwealth Games here on Monday.

Shreshankar, whose season's best is 8.38 metres, jumped 8.01m here to earn direct qualification from Group A.

The qualification standard has been set at 8m or at least the 12 best performers.

The 27-year-old was the only athlete to earn direct qualification from Group A, while five other made the finals as top-12 best performers.

Shreshankar, who is hoping to improve on the silver medal that he won in the 2022 edition of the Games, said the conditions were tough.

'Qualification went quite well, it was tricky conditions for everyone. It was cold and windy and it was raining also in between but I qualified in the first attempt, so very excited for the final,' Shreshankar told PTI.

He is on a comeback trail after recovering a career-threatening knee injury -- a ruptured patellar tendon -- in April 2024, for which he underwent a surgery.

The breakdown had robbed him of a highly anticipated maiden appearance at the Paris Olympics.

He recorded his season's best performance only last month in the National Inter-State Senior Athletics Championships in Bhubaneswar. (PTI)

No more sweets till LA Olympics, says Savita as Indian women eye World Cup, Asiad podium



NEW DELHI, July 27: No sweets, no chocolates, or fast food until the Los Angeles Olympics -- this is the self-imposed diet pledge taken by the Indian women's hockey team as they sharpen their focus on securing podium finishes at the FIH World Cup and the Asian Games, says the legendary goalkeeper Savita Punia.

The Indian team, which scripted history with a fourth-place finish at the Tokyo Olympics, continues to follow their strict fitness regime introduced by the strength and conditioning coach Wayne Lombard, who is back with the team as scientific advisor and head of athletic performance during the Olympic cycle.

'Wayne is as good a trainer as he is strict. He has set very high standards for fitness and always says that if you want to achieve something, you must be willing to sacrifice,' Savita told PTI in an interview.

She recalled the first decision was to eliminate sugar and junk food from the team's diet before the Tokyo Olympics, and the change in the team's fitness levels is evident.

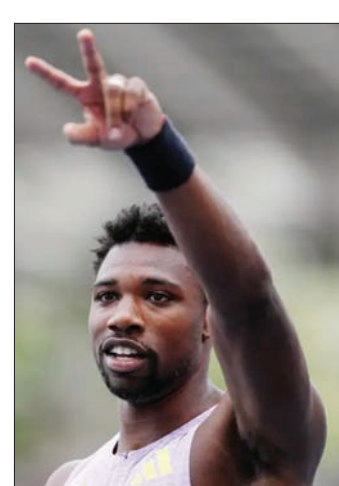
'The first thing in this diet plan was (to) cut out sugar. There were no sweets, chocolates or fast food in the kitchen and that hasn't changed. Recently, after winning the FIH Nations Cup in New Zealand, a cake was ordered for the team, but we all laughed because none of us was going to eat it,' she said.

'Our fitness level has improved immensely, and that is very important in modern hockey,' she added.

The veteran custodian, who has represented India in more than 300 international matches, said the biggest difference from the Tokyo Olympic campaign is that players are now self-motivated to maintain fitness standards and there is no need to keep a watch.

COIMBATORE, July 27: A total of 30 teams across three divisions will take part in the 16th edition of the Hockey India Junior Men National Championship starting here from Tuesday. Promotion and relegation will add further significance to every fixture in the competition, which will culminate on August 8, as the teams placed in Division A will compete for the title, while the teams in Divisions B and C will be engaged in a battle for promotion to the next division.

Division A will have 12 teams divided into



I'll be good.'

This marked only the fourth time Lyles has lost a 200 since he started dominating the distance in 2018, shortly after Usain Bolt left the sport. Two of those losses have come at the last two Olympics. Earlier in the week, Lyles won the 100 meters, the distance where he is the reigning Olympic champion.

Kaalund said he came to nationals just 'to train myself against the best.'

'I wasn't looking for (any)

medals, I just wanted to see where I was,' he said. Joining him at the top of the medals stand was Jefferson-Wooden, whose main challenger, Gabby Thomas, has been running well but decided not to run at nationals.

There are no world championships this year, though world athletics is introducing the Ultimate Championships, where a \$150,000 first prize will be on the line in a race expected to feature Jefferson-Wooden, Thomas and Julien Alfred, who finished runner-up to Thomas at the Paris Games.

The LA Games are two years away.

'I feel like with women's sprints today it's like that every single time we line up,' Jefferson-Wooden said. 'I watch their races. They watch mine. These next few years are going to be interesting to see.'

Davis-Woodhall denied victory after protest of her final jump in women's long jump, Olympic and world champion Tara Davis-Woodhall appeared to have won in dramatic fashion after her last of six jumps placed her in the lead, much the same as what happened at the Olympic trials two years ago. (AP)

Intense competition expected in Hockey India Junior Men National C'ship in Coimbatore

four pools of three teams each. Pool A comprises Hockey Haryana, Hockey Madhya Pradesh, and Hockey Unit of Tamil Nadu. Pool B consists of Hockey Association of Odisha, Manipur Hockey, Dadra & Nagar Haveli and Daman & Diu Hockey.

Pool C will have Hockey Punjab, Hockey Jharkhand, and Delhi Hockey, while Pool D features Uttar Pradesh Hockey, Hockey Karnataka, and Hockey Bengal.

After the conclusion of the league stage, top two teams from each pool will compete

in the quarterfinals to be held on August 5. The semifinals will be on August 6 while the playoff for the third-placed side will be on August 8.

The bottom two ranked teams in Division A will be relegated to Division B.

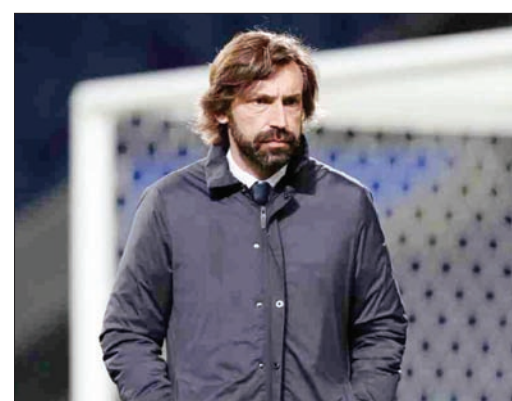
Division B will have 10 teams divided into two pools of five teams each. Pool A features Hockey Maharashtra, Hockey Uttarakhand, Hockey Jammu & Kashmir, Hockey Himachal, and Kerala Hockey.

Pool B consists of Hockey Andhra

Pradesh, Hockey Chandigarh, Hockey Arunachal, Bihar (BSSA), and Chhattisgarh Hockey. The top two teams from this division will earn promotion to Division A while the bottom two teams will be relegated to C.

Eight teams will be a part of Division C, divided into two pools. Pool A includes Assam Hockey, Goans Hockey, Hockey Rajasthan, and Hockey Mizoram, while Pool B features Telangana Hockey, Le Puducherry Hockey, Hockey Gujarat, and Tripura Olympic Association. (PTI)

Andrea Pirlo out of contention for Italy job amid flap over deal with Russian betting firm



ROME, July 27: Andrea Pirlo is out of contention for the Italy job amid political concerns over a sponsorship deal with a Russian betting firm.

The flap over Pirlo reportedly has Paolo Maldini considering stepping down just 16 days into his new job as the technical director charged with restoring order for the Azzurri.

This after Pep Guardiola and Carlo Ancelotti had already turned down offers to coach a national team that has failed to qualify for three straight World Cups.

The crisis surrounding Italy's once-proud squad is expanding to new dimensions four months after the four-time World Cup champion was beaten by Bosnia and Herzegovina in a qualifying playoff.

Pirlo himself confirmed that he was out in an Instagram post Monday, saying he 'heard last night that I'm no longer the candidate for the Italy national team job.'

Several Italian politicians had raised concerns about Pirlo's contract to be an ambassador for Fonbet, saying the national team coach should not have conflicting views on Italy's support for Ukraine in the war with Russia.

Pirlo, who had been prepared to leave his current job as coach of Dubai United, was an unpopular choice after unsuccessful stints coaching Juventus and Sampdoria — despite having been one of the standout players when Italy last won the World Cup in 2006.

Pirlo said the Fonbet deal was linked to his job in the United Arab Emirates and is 'exclusively for commercial and sports' purposes.

'Attributing a political significance to that collaboration means attributing beliefs to me that I have never expressed and don't belong to me,' Pirlo added. 'My love for Italy doesn't depend on a job. It's part of my history, my identity and it will remain forever.'

Pirlo was a 3rd choice

Pirlo was at best a third choice after Brazil coach Ancelotti and former Manchester City manager Guardiola turned down offers from Maldini and special adviser Leonardo.

But Pirlo was preferred by his former AC Milan teammate Maldini ahead of figures like former Italy coaches Roberto Mancini and Antonio Conte because he was seen as someone more willing to adapt to new policies and promote younger players in an attack-minded system.

Gennaro Gattuso, another former Milan player, left as Italy's coach by mutual consent in April after the defeat in Bosnia.

Now Mancini and Conte are back being discussed for the job, while Maldini is reportedly upset that Pirlo was turned down.

The final decision lies with Italian soccer federation president Giovanni Malagò, who was elected in June after leading the Milan Cortina Olympics organizing committee and, previously, the Italian Olympic Committee.

Mancini and Conte

Mancini coached Italy to the European Championship title in 2021 then failed to get the Azzurri to the following year's World Cup before bolting to take over Saudi Arabia's national team. He left Saudi Arabia in 2024 and was most recently coach at Al-Sadd in Qatar. Conte coached Italy to the quarterfinals of the 2016 European Championship and was most recently at Napoli. Another option could be former Inter Milan coach Simone Inzaghi, who is currently coaching in the Saudi league.

Whoever gets hired will be Italy's fourth coach in as many years. (AP)