

- 6 NATION**
- 'Saifai syndicate deprived youths of govt jobs': Adityanath's fresh salvo at SP chief Akhilesh
 - Uddhav remembers Ram, Hanuman only during protests: Minister Shirsat
- 7 NORTHEAST**
- Arunachal Cabinet approves ₹ 7,834 cr for infrastructure, education push
 - Flood situation remains grim in Arunachal, two districts hit by fresh landslides



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PAGES 8

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CJP protest: Doctors says Wangchuk's prolonged fast has reached a critical stage ● Climate activist's hunger strike enters 20th day

'I will stay alive till July 20 at any cost'

NEW DELHI, July 17: Educator and climate activist Sonam Wangchuk on Friday asserted that he would "stay alive till July 20 at any cost", even as his indefinite hunger strike entered its 20th day amid a warning from doctors that his prolonged fast has reached a critical stage.

As the Cockroach Janta Party's (CJP) agitation at Jantar Mantar against alleged examination irregularities entered its 28th day on Friday, Congress leader Pawan Khera became the latest political leader to visit Wangchuk and other protesters to express his solidarity.

Addressing supporters at the protest site, Wangchuk acknowledged his weakening physical condition but said his resolve remained unshaken.

"I am weak from the outside but very strong inside. I am sure all of



you are strong from the inside, and outside too. We need this energy for July 20, when we will take out a peaceful march to Parliament. We will go together and present our plea in the temple of democ-

cracy," he said.

"I will stay alive till July 20 at any cost. If you don't come and July 20 is not successful, I will come back as a ghost," he said in a lighter vein, drawing cheers from

Assam eminent personalities urge Wangchuk to end fast, raise concern over health

GUWAHATI, July 17: Over 160 prominent citizens from various walks of life in Assam, including literateurs, academics, poets, journalists and retired government officials, on Friday appealed to activist Sonam Wangchuk to end his indefinite fast, saying that "compassion or civility" cannot be expected from a "wooden-hearted and power-driven" dispensation.

They claimed that Wangchuk has exposed the "heartlessness and insensitivity" of those in power by not responding to his protest.

Wangchuk joined a protest organised by the Cockroach Janta Party (CJP) at Jantar Mantar in New Delhi on June 28 over alleged examination irregularities. He has been on an indefinite fast since then, demanding the resignation of Union education minister Dharmendra Pradhan over alleged irregularities in the NEET-UG examination.

The signatories, in an appeal, said Wangchuk's health had been deteriorating as his hunger strike entered its 20th (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

the gathering.

Wangchuk lost another 350 grams over the last 24 hours, tak-

ing his cumulative weight loss to about 9.5 kg. According to the health (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

Arunachal approves 3 initiatives on healthcare, TB and substance abuse



ITANAGAR, July 17: The Arunachal Pradesh Cabinet on Friday approved three major initiatives to strengthen healthcare and social protection, combat drug and substance abuse and intensify the fight against tuberculosis (TB) through a 30-day statewide integrated health campaign.

The Cabinet led by Chief Minister Pema Khandu approved the launch of CM CARES (Chief Minister's Comprehensive Action for Resilient, Equitable & Healthy State) as an umbrella initiative to improve access to affordable and quality healthcare, financial protection and integrated social support services across the state.

Under CM CARES, existing flagship programmes, including the chief minister Arogya Arunachal Yojana (CMAAY), CM Organ Transplant Services, CM Health Emergency Life Protection Services, CM Free Chemotherapy Services and CM Social Security Schemes, will be strengthened, an official statement said.

The financial assistance under CMAAY for kidney, liver and bone marrow transplants will be increased by ₹ 2.5 lakh each over the existing coverage. Specialised healthcare services, including cochlear implantation and corneal transplantation, will also be covered.

The initiative will expand patient support infrastructure through guesthouses and referral services, besides strengthening early screening and intervention for childhood development disorders, including autism spectrum disorder.

Through the Holistic Ecosystem for Active Living and Wellness (HEAL) framework, the government also seeks to shift focus from treatment to prevention, health promotion and overall well-being.

The cabinet also launched Mission SURAKSHA (State Unified Response Against Drugs, Substance Harm & Addiction), a comprehensive framework to tackle substance abuse and its impact on youth, mental health, HIV, families and community safety.

In another major decision, the Cabinet approved the Ayushman Aarogya Shivar, a 30-day statewide campaign of integrated health camps aimed at taking preventive, promotive and curative healthcare services to people, particularly (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

Assam selects nearly 75K beneficiaries under second phase of Atmanirbhar Abhiyan: Bimal Bora

Staff Reporter

GUWAHATI, July 17: Assam Skill Development, Employment and Entrepreneurship Minister Bimal Bora on Friday said the state government has selected 74,694 beneficiaries under the second phase of the Chief Minister's Atmanirbhar Asom Abhiyan (CMAAA), aimed at promoting entrepreneurship and self-employment among the youth.

Addressing reporters here, Bora said the selected beneficiaries include 74,350 from the general category and 344 professionals such as doctors, engineers, pharmacists, chartered accountants and MBA graduates.

He said each selected beneficiary has already received the first instalment of Rs 75,000, adding, "After completing mandatory training and fulfilling the scheme's conditions, general category beneficiaries will become eligible for finan-



cial assistance of up to ₹ 2 lakh, while eligible professionals can receive support of up to ₹ 5 lakh."

The minister said district-wise three-day entrepreneurship training programmes are currently underway across Assam. The training is being conducted by various government departments depending on the nature of the proposed enterprise.

Those planning ventures in

agriculture are being trained by the Agriculture Department, while prospective handloom entrepreneurs are receiving specialised guidance from the Handloom Department.

Participants are also being trained in bookkeeping, financial management and business operations.

Bora said the training programme is scheduled to conclude by July 31, after which

the remaining financial assistance will be released to eligible beneficiaries.

Highlighting the scheme's progress, he said the Atmanirbhar Asom Abhiyan was launched on September 23, 2023, with the objective of creating a strong entrepreneurial ecosystem and making Assam's youth self-reliant through financial support and capacity-building.

Under the first phase of the scheme, the government had selected over 25,000 general category beneficiaries and more than 200 professionals. The first instalment was followed by an assessment of beneficiaries through around 100 Chief Minister's Fellows, who evaluated fund utilisation, business progress and the need for further handholding.

Based on the assessment, over 12,300 entrepreneurs qualified for the next stage of financial assistance, Bora added.

CM speaks to 'Dhurandhar' director Aditya Dhar for film on Ahom general

GUWAHATI, July 17: Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma has said that he held discussions with 'Dhurandhar' director Aditya Dhar for a movie on legendary Ahom general Lachit Borphukan.

Sarma asserted that a grand-scale Hindi film on Borphukan will further encapsulate him and his heroics at the national and international level.

"The movie 'Dhurandhar' was a big hit. Aditya Dhar was the director and he is among the best known names among his contemporaries," the CM said during a Facebook Live on Thursday evening.

Borphukan was a legendary army commander of the Ahom kingdom (1228-1826), and is known for his leadership in the 1671 'Battle of Saraighat', which thwarted a drawn-out attempt by the Mughal force to take back Assam.

Sarma said he has already spoken to Dhar for a film on Borphukan for a pan-India au-



dience, and the National Award winning filmmaker has told him he will meet the chief minister in August to take the discussion forward.

"I think if our government can produce a film on Lachit Borphukan, we can make his heroics known globally. And, it will be a special achievement for us," Sarma asserted.

The state government's budget for 2026-27, which was laid in the assembly on July 10, has proposed films on the lives of Borphukan and freedom fighter Kushal Konwar. (PTI)

IndiGo to shift flight operations to newly built terminal in Guwahati

Staff Reporter

GUWAHATI, July 17: IndiGo will shift all its arrival and departure operations at the Lokpriya Gopinath Bordoloi International Airport (LGBIA) in Guwahati to the newly built Terminal 2 (T2) from July 20, officials said on Friday.

According to the airport authorities, the transition will come into effect from 12.01 a.m. on July 20, after which every IndiGo flight operating from Guwahati will use the new integrated terminal for check-in, security clearance, boarding and arrivals.

As per officials, the move is a major step in the phased operationalisation of the new terminal, which has been developed to enhance passenger convenience, im-

prove operational efficiency and cater to the rapidly growing air traffic in the Northeast.

The new terminal has been designed with a bamboo-inspired architectural theme that showcases Assam's cultural heritage while incorporating modern infrastructure and sustainable building practices. It has also received international recognition for its design, reflecting the airport's efforts to create a world-class aviation facility in the region.

Airport authorities said passengers travelling on IndiGo flights from July 20 onwards should report directly to Terminal 2 instead of the existing terminal. To ensure a hassle-free transition, the airport has deployed additional staff, installed prominent wayfinding sig-

nage and strengthened passenger information systems across the premises.

"These measures are aimed at helping travellers navigate the new terminal with ease during the initial days of the operational shift," they added.

They also advised passengers to verify their flight details with the airline before leaving for the airport and to arrive well in advance of the scheduled departure time to complete check-in and security procedures without inconvenience.

The transition of IndiGo, the country's largest domestic carrier, is expected to significantly increase passenger movement through the new terminal and further strengthen Guwahati Airport's role as the (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

Three trafficked victims of Assam rescued from West Bengal: Police

TEZPUR, July 17: Three human trafficking victims, including a minor, were rescued from a prostitution network in West Bengal by a joint police team of both states, a police officer said here on Friday.

Sonitpur senior superintendent of Police Barun Purkayastha said that all three victims were females and one belonged to this district.

The other two, including the minor girl, were from neighbouring districts.

Purkayastha said that the trio was lured with the promise of jobs and taken to Siliguri in a neighbouring state, where they were forced into prostitution.

"The rescue operation was carried out with the help of West Bengal police by our team. The victims have been brought back safely," he said.

Police have launched an investigation to identify and arrest those involved in (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

Assam Police becomes NE's first UIDAI-registered OVSE

Staff Reporter

GUWAHATI, July 17: Assam Police has become the first police force in the Northeast and the third in the country to be registered as an Offline Verification Seeking Entity (OVSE) under the Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI), a move aimed at strengthening identity verification, particularly in remote and internet-deficient areas of the state, said Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Friday.

The chief minister described it as a significant step towards making policing more efficient, secure and citizen-friendly.

According to Sarma, the OVSE registration will enable Assam Police personnel to instantly verify an individual's identity by scanning the secure QR code embedded in Aadhaar cards without requiring an internet connection.

The facility is expected to be particularly beneficial in Assam's

geographically challenging regions, including hill districts, char areas, border villages and other remote locations where internet connectivity remains unreliable.

Officials said the offline verification system uses the Aadhaar QR code, which carries a digitally signed and tamper-proof security seal issued by UIDAI. This makes it significantly more difficult for criminals, illegal infiltrators or other offenders to use forged or photocopied Aadhaar cards to mislead law enforcement agencies during verification exercises.

The chief minister also noted that the technology would enhance field-level policing by allowing patrol teams to authenticate credentials instantly without depending on network availability.

Apart from strengthening security measures, the initiative is also expected to improve the delivery of routine police services. Processes (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

'The responsibility of safeguarding our indigenous fish resources ultimately lies with every citizen'

KAAC organises river ranching programme to conserve indigenous fish species

HT Bureau

DIPHU, July 17: In a major initiative to conserve indigenous fish species, protect aquatic biodiversity and promote sustainable ecotourism, the Fisheries and Tourism Departments of the Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC) has jointly organised a river ranching programme at the Kalioni River in the Nilip MAC constituency.

During the programme, which was held on Thursday, thousands of fish fingerlings were released into the river to replenish natural fish populations, restore the river ecosystem and strengthen biodiversity conservation. The initiative aims to preserve Karbi Anglong's aquatic resources while supporting sustainable local development.

Addressing the gathering,



KAAC executive member (EM) in-charge of the Fisheries Department Madhuram Lekhe said the programme marked an important step towards ecological restoration.

Expressing deep concern over the rapidly declining population of native fish, Lekhe urged the public to immediately stop the destructive practice of using chemicals and

harmful pesticides for fishing. Instead, he appealed to the community to return to traditional forest-based fishing methods, such as using specific tree barks or roots, which are significantly less harmful to aquatic life.

"Karbi Anglong is blessed with vibrant river systems like the Kalioni, Karbi Langpi, Kopili and Amrenge. However, overfishing and the widespread use of chemical poisons are rapidly wiping out our indigenous fish species and damaging entire river ecosystems. The use of chemicals for fishing must be completely banned," he added.

Lekhe further underlined that one of the primary objectives of the initiative was to create greater public (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

Stock markets surge on buying in blue-chips; Sensex jumps 965 points

MUMBAI, July 17: Market benchmark indices ended sharply higher on Friday, with the Sensex climbing 964.58 points and the Nifty reaching the 24,330 level, propelled by buying in blue-chip Reliance Industries, bank and IT stocks.

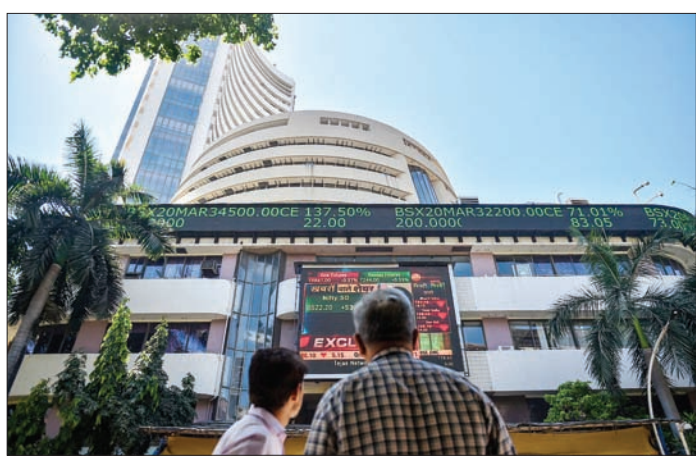
Additionally, a strengthening rupee against the US dollar improved sentiment, even as the broader market remained predominantly negative due to weak global cues, traders said.

After a subdued ending in the previous trade, the 30-share BSE Sensex bounced back 964.58 points, or 1.25 per cent, to settle at 78,151.45. During the day, it surged 1,095.68 points, or 1.41 per cent, to 78,282.55.

The 50-share NSE Nifty climbed 261.55 points, or 1.09 per cent, to end at 24,334.30.

"There is a shift in market momentum, with strong traction moving toward large-cap stocks, led by the IT and banking sectors. This is supported by optimism around business updates and Q1 earnings expectations," Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Investments Limited, said.

The trend appears to be driven largely by domestic institutional investors rotating out of expensive mid and small-cap stocks and into more attractively valued large caps that offer a better risk-reward profile, he added.



On the weekly front, the BSE benchmark climbed 582.06 points, or 0.75 per cent, and the Nifty went up by 127.4 points, or 0.52 per cent.

From the Sensex pack, Tech Mahindra jumped 3.91 per cent after it reported a 28.4 per cent rise in consolidated net profit for the June quarter to Rs 1,465 crore, and expressed confidence about the demand environment.

Kotak Mahindra Bank, Tata Consultancy Services, Reliance Industries, Hindustan Unilever, Mahindra & Mahindra, Axis Bank, ICICI Bank and Bajaj Finance were also among the winners.

Reliance Industries is scheduled to announce its June quarter earnings later in the day.

Sun Pharma, Trent, Bharti Airtel and UltraTech Cement were among

the laggards.

The BSE SmallCap Select index declined 0.32 per cent, and the Mid-Cap Select index dipped 0.07 per cent.

Among sectors, Private Banks Index climbed 1.81 per cent, Top 10 Banks jumped 1.78 per cent, Mid-small Private Banks Quality Tilt (1.65 per cent), Bankex (1.58 per cent), IT (1.38 per cent), Focused IT (1.28 per cent) and Financial Services (1.20 per cent).

Commodities, Industrials, Telecommunication and Metal were the laggards.

Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, climbed 1.79 per cent to USD 85.52 per barrel.

The rupee appreciated 14 paise to settle at 96.28 (provisional) against the US dollar on Friday.

"Indian equity markets ended the week on a strong note, extending their recovery as broad-based buying in heavyweight banking, financial, and IT stocks helped benchmark indices outperform weak global cues. Investor sentiment remained resilient despite persistent concerns over elevated AI valuations, ongoing geopolitical tensions in the Middle East, and heightened volatility in global markets," Ponnudi R, CEO of Enrich Money, an online trading and wealth tech firm, said.

Expectations of healthy quarterly earnings from index heavyweights, including Reliance Industries and leading private sector banks, further supported the positive momentum, he added.

In Asian markets, Japan's Nikkei 225 index, Shanghai's SSE Composite index and Hong Kong's Hang Seng index ended significantly lower. Markets in South Korea were closed on Friday.

Markets in Europe were quoting in negative territory in mid-session deals.

US markets ended lower on Thursday.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth ₹ 4,205.56 crore on Thursday, according to exchange data. On Thursday, the Sensex edged up 1.44 points to settle at 77,186.87. The Nifty dipped 5.75 points, or 0.02 per cent, to end at 24,072.75. (PTI)

Gujarat tops Niti Aayog's Investment Friendliness Index, Lakshadweep worst performer

NEW DELHI, July 17: Gujarat, Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu have emerged as the top three states in NITI Aayog's Investment Friendliness Index for states and Union Territories (UTs), as per a report released on Friday.

Lakshadweep was the worst performer followed by Ladakh and Andaman & Nicobar Islands.

The index focuses on eight parameters: infrastructure, business climate, resources, government policy, regulatory ease, institutional environment, financial health and environmental resilience. The rankings had three categories -- large states, hilly and northeastern states and city states and UTs, as per the report released by NITI Aayog Vice Chairman Ashok Kumar Lahiri.

Among large states, Bihar, Jharkhand and West Bengal were the worst performers. Odisha, Madhya Pradesh and Andhra Pradesh were ranked 4th, 5th and 6th among large states. Gujarat leads the ranking, with an overall score of 56.6. The state's score is driven by its strong performance across infrastructure, business climate, financial health, regulatory ease and government policy pillars, with areas of improvement in the resources, institutional environment and environment resilience pillars. The report pointed out that Gujarat's high rank in infrastructure is on account of its efficient port operations and power sector, driven by competitive industrial and commercial power costs and well-contained transmission and distribution (T&D) losses.

Maharashtra records an overall score of 53.7, ranking second in both the large state category and at the pan-India level. The state's score is driven by its leading performance in the business climate pillar, the Aayog said, adding that the score is further supported by a strong performance in

the resources and financial health pillars, with infrastructure and regulatory ease areas for improvement.

Tamil Nadu records an overall score of 53.3, ranking third at the pan-India level and the large state category. The score is driven by its strong performance in the infrastructure and business climate pillar, with financial health emerging as an area for improvement. Uttarakhand, Assam and Himachal Pradesh emerged as the top three states in hilly and northeastern states category.

Releasing the report, Lahiri said investment rate in India is around 25 per cent, which is less than China when its economy was growing fast. "In the last few years, India has been the fastest growing major economy. Investments play a major role in economic growth. India needs more investments as it also boosts demand."

"As we aspire to realise the vision of Viksit Bharat @2047, our challenge is not only to sustain high rates of economic growth but also to ensure that such growth is broad-based, resilient and driven by productivity," he said.

Lahiri said achieving this ambition will require a significant acceleration in investments that expand productive capacity, strengthen manufacturing, create quality employment and foster innovation.

The index covers all 28 states and eight union territories (UTs) and evaluates what makes a state attractive for investors, as well as the challenges investors face.

The Union Budget 2025-26 announced the development of an Investment Friendliness Index to strengthen the spirit of competitive and cooperative federalism by promoting reforms and fostering a conducive investment ecosystem across states. (PTI)

Jio Platforms net profit rises 9.2 pc to ₹7,764 cr in Q1

NEW DELHI, July 17: Jio Platforms on Friday reported a 9.2 per cent increase in profit after tax to ₹ 7,764 crore in the first quarter ended June 2026, driven by sustained gains in subscriber market share, ARPU and sale of digital services.

Jio Platforms (JPL), which houses digital and telecom businesses, had posted profit after tax (PAT) of ₹ 7,110 crore a year ago.

"The Digital Services business continued its growth momentum during the quarter. Jio's performance across mobility, home broadband and enterprise services remained strong, driving healthy earnings growth of 15 per cent Y-o-Y," Reliance Industries Limited Chairman and Managing Director, Mukesh Ambani said in a statement.

During the quarter, Jio Platforms Limited filed its DRHP with Sebi, which is a significant step towards its public listing, he added.

"The upcoming IPO will be an important milestone in Jio's journey and will give investors an opportunity to participate in India's digital growth story," Ambani said.

JPL revenue from operations during the quarter increased by 11.8 per cent to ₹ 39,173 crore from ₹ 35,032 crore in the June 2025 quarter.

"JPL revenue increased by 12 per cent Y-o-Y driven by continued subscriber market share gains, ARPU increase and strong growth in digital services," the company statement said. Its average revenue per user (ARPU) increased by 3.3 per cent to ₹ 215.6 on a better subscriber mix and positive seasonality, partly impacted by promotional schemes for fixed broadband customers.

The company had recorded an ARPU of ₹ 208.8 a year ago.

"Per capita data consumption was 43.7 GB per month with total data traffic growth of 26.9 per cent Y-o-Y during the first quarter, FY'27," the statement said.

Its customer base increased by 7.1 per cent year-on-year to 53.3 crore from 49.8 crore in the June 2026 quarter. (PTI)

Rupee rises 12 paise to close at 96.30 against US dollar

MUMBAI, July 17: The rupee appreciated 12 paise to settle at 96.30 against the US dollar on Friday supported by positive domestic markets and a decline in the US treasury yields.

Forex traders said elevated tensions in West Asia, which pushed up global oil prices, maintained pressure on the local unit; however, a possible intervention by the Reserve Bank of India supported the rupee at lower levels.

In the interbank foreign exchange market, the rupee opened at 96.35 against the greenback and traded in a narrow range of 96.26-96.41. Eventually it settled at 96.30, up 12 paise from its previous close.

On Thursday, the rupee had settled at 96.42 against the US dollar. The US expanded its airstrike

campaign against Iran early on Friday by increasingly hitting bridges, part of President Donald Trump's threats to start striking infrastructure to pressure Tehran to ease its chokehold on the Strait of Hormuz. Iran launched new missile attacks against US-allied nations in West Asia and warned that its attacks would escalate.

According to V K Vijayakumar, Chief Investment Strategist, Geojit Investments, the rally in the rupee was led by the sharp surge in the Indian equity market with the Nifty rising by 261 points.

"The weakness in the chip trade is expected to be positive for India. Rupee has the potential to appreciate further," Vijayakumar said.

Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's

strength against a basket of six currencies, was trading marginally down by 0.02 per cent at 100.74. Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, was trading 2.30 per cent higher at USD 86.17 per barrel in futures trade.

"The rupee was broadly steady on Friday after a likely Reserve Bank of India (RBI) intervention halted its four-day decline," said Anil Kumar Bhansali, Head of Treasury and Executive Director, Finrex Treasury Advisors LLP.

"With no major domestic triggers, the currency continued to consolidate after recent weakness. However, the broader bias for the rupee remains weak as elevated crude oil prices and cautious foreign fund flows continue to weigh on sentiment. (PTI)

Contd. from Page 1...

'I will stay alive

bulletin issued by the medical team attending to him, Wangchuk now weighs 56.55 kg. His blood pressure was recorded at 108/68 mm Hg, blood sugar at 80 mg/dL, pulse rate at 72 beats per minute and oxygen saturation at 96 per cent. Doctors said he showed signs of mild dehydration but remained mentally alert.

On Thursday, doctors had warned that his condition had entered a critical stage due to the prolonged fast and that the next phase could be alarming, with the possibility of organ damage if the hunger strike continued.

Wangchuk, however, had refused to call off the fast, saying that ending it without any response from the government would send the wrong message. He maintained that the focus should now be on making the July 20 Parliament march a success. The issue has also reached the Delhi High Court, which directed authorities to monitor Wangchuk's health daily and provide medical assistance if his condition deteriorates.

The health of others on hunger strike has deteriorated as well. The CPI(ML) Liberation-affiliated All India Students' Association (AISA) said the condition of its activists Neha, Manish and Aameen, who have also been on an indefinite hunger strike at Jantar Mantar, had reached "severe stages".

According to the organisation, Aameen is at risk of hypovolemic shock due to dehydration, Neha's blood sugar level has dropped to a dangerous 49 mg/dL and Manish has lost more than 10 per cent of his body weight. AISA said the three students would continue the fast in solidarity with Wangchuk despite their worsening condition. Political support for the CJP's agitation continued to grow, with Congress leader Pawan Khera visiting Wangchuk and other protesters at Jantar Mantar on Friday.

Khera's visit came a day after Samajwadi Party MP Dimple Yadav met the hunger strikers and urged the Centre to initiate dialogue, and after Aam Aadmi Party chief Arvind Kejriwal, Trinamool Congress chairperson Mamata Banerjee, Shiv Sena (UBT) chief Uddhav Thackeray and Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav reached out to express concern over Wangchuk's health and extend support to the proposed Parliament march.

Over the last week, the agitation has also drawn support from actor Prakash Raj; former Delhi chief minister Atishi; TMC MPs Mahua Moitra and Sagarika Ghose; CPI(M) MP Amra Ram; veteran CPI(M) leader Subhashini Ali; former Kerala ministers K K Shailaja, Thomas Isaac, K N Balagopal and P Rajeev; Tripura Leader of Opposition Jitendra Chaudhury; Samajwadi Party MPs Pushpendra Saroj and Priya Saroj; Shiv Sena (UBT) MP Arvind Sawant; NCP MLA Rohit Pawar; and Bharatiya Kisan Union leader Gurmam Singh Charuni.

A group of eminent citizens, including writer Arundhati Roy, actors Naseeruddin Shah and Ratna Pathak Shah, economist Jayati Ghosh and several academics, have also backed the protesters' demands while appealing to Wangchuk to end his fast.

The CJP has been demanding the resignation of Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan and Rs 1 crore compensation for the families of students who allegedly died by suicide over alleged examination irregularities. The outfit has called for a peaceful march to Parliament on July 20, coinciding with the opening day of the monsoon Session. The CJP protest began on June 20, while Wangchuk joined the agitation on June 28 and has remained on an indefinite hunger strike ever since. (PTI)

Assam eminent personalities

day and urged him to withdraw the protest. "Sonam Wangchuk is a globally renowned environmental activist and educationist who also embodies the pride and aspirations of the Ladakhi people. The government of India should have responded to his peaceful protest much earlier," they said.

"However, expecting compassion or civility from a dispensation that appears wooden-hearted and power-driven is like crying in the wilderness," the appeal added.

The signatories maintained that by persisting with his fast, Wangchuk "has already succeeded in exposing the heartlessness and insensitivity of those in power".

"When the government remains unmoved by such a protracted hunger strike by a person of Wangchuk's eminence and stature, one can only imagine how ordinary citizens and dissenters are treated," they maintained.

The signatories included intellectual Hiren Gohain, former Assam DGP Harekrishna Deka, former Archbishop of Guwahati Thomas Menamparampil, ex-Rajya Sabha MP Ajit Kumar Bhuyan, Sahita Akademi awardees Apurba Sarma and Arupa Patangia Kalita, retired academics, former police and civil services officers, editors and advocates, among others. (PTI)

Govt readies strategy

Insults to National Honour (Amendment) Bill, 2026, listed for introduction, consideration and passing, may be first brought in the Rajya Sabha.

The amendment bill seeks to give the national song Vande Mataram the same statutory protection as the national anthem Jana Gana Mana.

The Monsoon session of Parliament, beginning July 20, is likely to see opposition attack on the government on a variety of issues, including NEET paper leak, death of Indian seafarers in the West Asia conflict and the mixing of ethanol in petrol.

The opposition will also raise the issue of alleged embezzlement of donations at the Ram temple in Ayodhya.

A weakened opposition following assembly poll results in West Bengal, Assam, Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Puducherry, and differences between the Congress and the DMK over the formation of government by the TVK in Tamil Nadu are likely to embolden the ruling alliance in Parliament during the session. (PTI)

Arunachal approves

in remote areas. The campaign will focus on achieving the goal of TB Mukta Arunachal Pradesh through intensified screening, early detection and timely treatment, officials said.

The camps will provide services related to TB elimination, maternal and child health, immunisation, non-communicable disease screening, mental health, eye and oral healthcare, elderly care, nutrition and AYUSH, besides facilitating Ayushman Bharat enrolment. (PTI)

IndiGo to shift

primary aviation gateway to the northeastern states.

Airport authorities said the migration reflects LGBIA's continued focus on expanding capacity, improving connectivity and delivering an enhanced travel experience for passengers.

Three trafficked victims

the trafficking racket. "Efforts are also on to find out if more people are linked to the network. Further investigation is going on," the police officer added. (PTI)

Assam Police becomes

such as tenant verification, character certificate verification, passport police verification and arms licence verification are likely to become faster and more streamlined through offline Aadhaar authentication.

Officials believe the new system will reduce delays caused by poor connectivity and minimise the scope for fraudulent identity documents during police verification procedures.

Highlighting the broader significance of the achievement, Sarma said Assam Police's registration as an OVSE reflects the state's growing emphasis on adopting technology-driven governance and modern policing practices. The state government has in recent years undertaken several digital initiatives to improve public service delivery, law enforcement and administrative efficiency.

With the latest registration under UIDAI, Assam Police joins a select group of police organisations in the country authorised to carry out secure offline Aadhaar verification, a move expected to strengthen identity authentication while making police services more accessible and efficient for citizens across the state.

KAAC organises river

awareness. "The responsibility of safeguarding our indigenous fish resources ultimately lies with every citizen," he said. Detailing the ecological strategy, the EM said the department had selected species compatible with the local ecosystem for release, including rohu, mrigal, grass carp and silver carp. He added that invasive species such as the Thai magur, which pose a serious threat to native aquatic life, were deliberately excluded from the ranching programme.

In a significant conservation measure, Lekthe said the KAAC was actively considering rescheduling the region's traditional community fishing festival. Currently held during March and April, the festival coincides with the critical breeding and spawning season of many native fish species. Fishing during this period severely reduces fish populations by destroying millions of eggs and hatchlings, he said.

To further support local livelihoods alongside conservation efforts, Lekthe announced that the Fisheries Department would soon distribute quality fish fingerlings to selected beneficiaries owning private fish ponds. The move is intended to promote scientific fish farming and enhance fish production across the district.

The programme was also attended by EM in-charge of Tourism Ritesh Enghi, Nilip MAC member Pobitra Rongpi, senior officials of the Fisheries and Tourism Departments, and other local dignitaries.

Sugar associations appeal to institutional buyers, traders to avoid panic buying

NEW DELHI, July 17: Sugar industry bodies ISMA and NFCSF on Friday asserted that there is adequate stock of sweetener in the country and asked institutional buyers as well as wholesale and retail traders to refrain from "speculative buying" amid the recent price rise. In a joint statement, Indian Sugar & Bio-energy Manufacturers Association (ISMA) and the National Federation of Cooperative Sugar Factories Ltd (NFCSF) assured all stakeholders that "India's sugar availability remains comfortable and the country has adequate sugar stocks to comfortably meet domestic consumption requirements."

There is no justification for panic buying or speculative trading in the domestic sugar market, they added.

The all-India daily average wholesale price of sugar has increased to ₹ 4,457.57 per quintal on Friday from ₹ 4,354.37 per quintal a month ago, according to the data compiled by the Department of Consumer Affairs.

Meanwhile, the all-India daily average retail price of sugar has increased to ₹ 47.9 per kg on Friday from ₹ 47 per kg a month back, as per the data. "The industry firmly believes that the recent price movement is not supported by the underlying demand-supply fundamentals. Creating an impression of scarcity when sufficient stocks are available can lead to unnecessary market volatility, disrupt normal trade, and adversely affect consumers as well as downstream industries," the joint statement said. (PTI)

AFFIDAVIT

I, Sohan Lal Chauhan resident of Watijur P.S. Kheroni, West Karbi Anglong would like to mention that in land record No. 50 Dag No. 170/171/172 situated at Pamgaon Kissan under Lanka Mouza where my name and my father's name wrongly recorded as sri Chauhan instead of correct name Sohan Lal Chauhan and my name recorded as Ramdhari instead of correct name Ramdhari Chauhan. This is true

Lions Club of Gauhati installs new office-bearers for 2026-27

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, July 17: The Lions Club of Gauhati installed its new board of directors for the 2026-27 Lionistic Year at a ceremony held at Hotel Kiranshree Grand in Guwahati recently.

Lion Deepak Mittal assumed office as president, while Lion Anil Harilalka and Lion Vivek Jalan took charge as secretary and treasurer, respectively.

The installation ceremony was conducted by Past District Governor Lion Sudhir Choudhary. International Director Lion Suraj Bagla, who attended the function as the chief guest, inducted 26 new members into the club.

He also inaugurated the "Bag of Hopes" project, under which the club plans to distribute 1,100 dry ration bags to economically disadvantaged families during the year.

Among those present were District Governor Manoj Bhajanka, First Vice District Governor Rajesh Agarwala and other Lions leaders.

On the occasion, several members were honoured with the International President's Appreciation Certificates and Pins for their contributions to the organisation.

More than 350 members, guests and family members attended the installation ceremony.

ICICI Prudential Life posts 27.8% rise in Q1 profit

HT Bureau

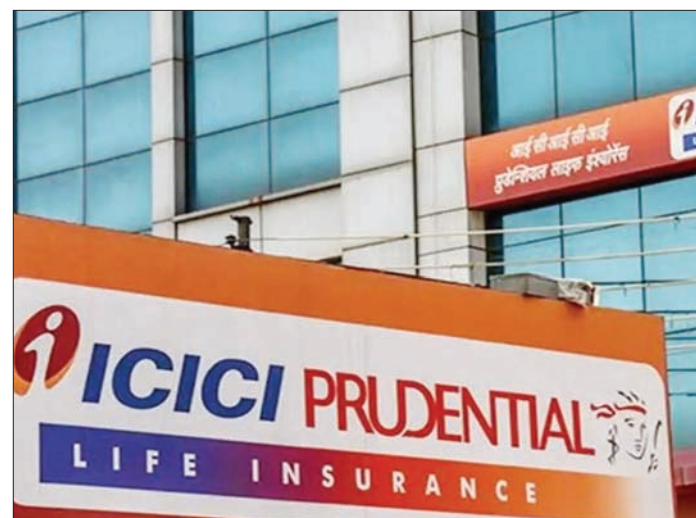
GUWAHATI, July 17: ICICI Prudential Life Insurance reported a 27.8 per cent year-on-year increase in net profit to ₹386 crore for the quarter ended June 2026, while paying a total of ₹4,666 crore in benefits to policyholders during the first quarter of FY2027.

The company said it settled ₹1,306 crore in death claims and disbursed ₹3,360 crore as maturity and survival benefits during the quarter.

Its retail protection (term insurance) business registered a 60.4 per cent year-on-year growth.

Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer Anup Bagchi said the company maintained a customer-centric approach, achieving a 99.3 per cent claim settlement ratio during the quarter with an average turnaround time of one day for non-investigative claims.

He said the company would continue leveraging technology, artificial intelligence and digital capabilities to improve operational efficiency and customer experience.



The savings cost-to-premium ratio also declined by 50 basis points to 13.6 per cent, providing greater scope for investment in innovation and digital initiatives.

The company's Board of Directors has also approved a proposal to rename the insurer as ICICI Life Insurance Limited, subject to regulatory approvals.

According to the company, the proposed name reflects the strength and legacy of the ICICI brand while its focus remains on expanding its reach and strengthening its presence in India's growing life insurance market.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

It is far better to be alone, than to be in bad company
- George Washington

Burnham new UK PM-designate

Andy Burnham was on Friday confirmed as the newly elected leader of the UK's governing Labour Party, becoming the prime minister-designate to take charge at 10 Downing Street next week. The 56-year-old member of Parliament for Makerfield in northern England, on track to become Britain's seventh prime minister in a decade, admitted that it was the "last chance" for Labour to deliver the change promised at the last general election in July 2024. On Monday, Burnham will be invited by King Charles III to form a new government after outgoing PM Keir Starmer formally tenders his resignation to the British monarch. Parliamentary speculation about incoming premier Andy Burnham's Cabinet picks reached fever pitch while Sir Keir declared his "political journey at an end." Mr Burnham is set to be elected Labour leader on Friday and will take over in Downing Street on Monday, despite a quixotic move by Bermondsey MP Neil Coyle to nominate a rival. Mr Coyle, an always abrasive and sometimes abusive rightwinger, nominated Hornsey MP Catherine West as a protest against Mr Burnham's coronation. Ms West has, however, made it clear that like almost every other Labour MP she is backing Mr Burnham. Those same MPs gave Sir Keir a standing ovation — against parliamentary rules — at the end of his final Prime Minister's Questions in the Commons, an event by turns oleaginous, self-righteous and lachrymose.

They were joined by many opposition MPs, but not the Tories or Jeremy Corbyn, who remained seated. This was hardly surprising, since Sir Keir once again took the opportunity to peddle falsehoods about Labour under Mr Corbyn. Bitter to the end, he accused Labour of having been found institutionally antisemitic under Mr Corbyn's leadership, a lie that brought a stinging rebuke. Promising to govern on behalf of "forgotten places everywhere", he declared: "From here we do it differently. We win by being us, boldly, confidently, authentically us. Labour. That's how we win." Earlier, Labour's National Executive Committee (NEC) chair Shabana Mahmood announced the results of the leadership election at a special party conference in London. "There was only one nominated MP... hardly a nail biter," said Mahmood, expected to either hold on to her role as home secretary or be elevated to the post of Chancellor under a Burnham premiership.

Failure to promote Mr Miliband as planned would be seen on the left as a further negative indication regarding Mr Burnham's political direction. It could also leave Mr Miliband in a tussle for the Foreign Secretary's job with his brother David, who is anxious to return to British politics after going off in a huff in 2011 following the younger Mr Miliband becoming leader. The fact that no decision has been yet made over the chancellor is making Labour MPs nervous that they may be getting behind another indecisive leader.

Entrepreneurship and Assam's Future

Entrepreneurship has moved from the margins of economic policy to the centre of Assam's development debate. That shift deserves attention because the state's long-term prosperity will depend less on the number of government jobs it creates and more on the number of businesses its people establish. Assam has spent decades confronting familiar economic concerns such as unemployment, migration of educated youth, slow industrial expansion, and uneven regional development. Those challenges remain real, yet the circumstances surrounding them have changed. Digital technology, better connectivity, improved financial inclusion, and a more supportive policy framework have opened opportunities that did not exist for an earlier generation. Young entrepreneurs no longer require enormous capital to launch a business. They can build software companies, food-processing units, tourism ventures, digital marketing firms, agricultural enterprises, renewable energy solutions, logistics services, and creative industries with comparatively modest investments if they receive timely mentoring, access to finance, and reliable infrastructure. The Assam Start-up and Innovation Policy 2025 reflects this changing outlook by encouraging innovation through financial incentives, incubation support, GST reimbursement, and assistance for technology-driven enterprises. The policy recognises that entrepreneurship is not confined to urban technology companies but extends across agriculture, healthcare, education, manufacturing, green technology, and rural enterprises. Such recognition marks an important departure from conventional industrial policy. Yet public policy alone cannot create entrepreneurs. Society must also abandon the long-standing belief that economic security rests almost exclusively in government employment. That perception has shaped career choices across Assam for generations, partly because industrial growth remained limited and private employment opportunities were relatively scarce. Today the economy demands a different mindset. Businesses generate employment, introduce innovation, expand markets, and stimulate investment across multiple sectors. Every successful enterprise creates suppliers, service providers, transport operators, accountants, designers, technicians, and skilled workers. Entrepreneurship therefore creates an economic mul-

tiplier that salaried employment alone cannot match. Assam possesses considerable strengths that support such transformation. Its tea industry enjoys global recognition. Bamboo resources remain underutilised despite vast commercial possibilities. The state's petroleum and natural gas reserves provide opportunities for downstream industries. Rich biodiversity offers prospects for eco-tourism and biotechnology. Traditional sectors such as handloom, silk, fisheries, horticulture, and food processing can produce greater value through branding, quality certification, modern packaging, and digital marketing. The state's strategic location within the Act East framework also provides access to expanding regional markets across Bangladesh and Southeast Asia. These natural and geographical advantages will generate sustained economic growth only when capable entrepreneurs convert them into competitive businesses that can survive national and international competition.

The greatest challenge before Assam therefore lies not in identifying opportunities but in building an ecosystem where entrepreneurs can flourish with confidence. Many first-generation business founders continue to struggle with limited access to finance, complex regulatory procedures, inadequate market linkages, and the absence of experienced mentors. Commercial banks often remain cautious when evaluating startup proposals without substantial collateral, while private investment continues to concentrate in larger metropolitan regions. Incubation centres can bridge this gap by providing business development support, legal guidance, product validation, networking opportunities, and investor connections during the difficult early years of a company's life. The Startup Assam initiative has attempted to strengthen such institutional support by encouraging incubators and structured mentorship programmes throughout the state. Even so, entrepreneurship cannot succeed without parallel improvements in physical infrastructure. Reliable electricity, high-speed internet, efficient logistics, modern industrial estates, warehousing facilities, and dependable transport systems remain essential components of a competitive business environment. Encouragingly, Assam has accelerated reforms aimed

at improving the ease of doing business while simultaneously attracting major industrial investments, including semiconductor manufacturing and advanced technology sectors. Large projects matter not only because they create direct employment but also because they stimulate extensive networks of local suppliers, maintenance companies, software firms, transport operators, training institutions, and specialised service providers. Local entrepreneurs must prepare themselves to participate in these emerging value chains rather than remaining passive observers of industrial expansion. Educational institutions also carry a major responsibility. Universities and colleges should encourage innovation, product development, interdisciplinary research, intellectual property creation, and commercial problem-solving instead of limiting their role to examination-oriented instruction. Entrepreneurship education should expose students to practical business challenges, financial planning, digital commerce, and market analysis from an early stage. Equally important is the need to broaden participation. Women entrepreneurs, tribal communities, rural innovators, and small-scale producers often possess commercially viable ideas but lack institutional support and market access. Inclusive entrepreneurship strengthens both economic growth and social stability because it distributes opportunities across regions and communities instead of concentrating them in a few urban centres. Assam's startup policy has acknowledged this reality by identifying sectors such as Artificial Intelligence, AgriTech, GreenTech, FoodTech, and TravelTech as priority areas while extending additional support to women-led and socially inclusive enterprises. Such policy direction reflects a more comprehensive understanding of economic development, one that values innovation alongside social inclusion.

Assam now faces an opportunity that arrives only occasionally in the economic history of a region. Infrastructure is improving. Digital technology continues to reduce barriers to business formation. Government policy increasingly favours innovation and enterprise. National initiatives promoting manufacturing, digital services, and regional connectivity have created favourable condi-

tions for private investment. Yet none of these developments will automatically transform the state's economy. Sustainable progress depends upon execution, institutional credibility, entrepreneurial ambition, and consistent public confidence. Administrative processes must remain transparent and predictable. Financial institutions should expand credit access for deserving first-generation entrepreneurs without imposing unnecessary procedural delays. Industry associations must create stronger partnerships with universities and technical institutes. Established businesses should mentor emerging enterprises instead of viewing them solely as competitors. Entrepreneurs themselves carry an equal responsibility. They must focus on productivity, innovation, customer satisfaction, ethical business practices, and financial discipline rather than expecting government incentives to compensate for weak business models. Competitive markets reward quality, efficiency, and adaptability. They rarely reward complacency. Assam's young population possesses the talent required to compete nationally and internationally if the surrounding ecosystem supports experimentation and calculated risk-taking. Society must therefore accept that entrepreneurial failure forms part of economic progress rather than representing permanent personal defeat. Economies known for innovation reached their present position because they encouraged repeated attempts, continuous learning, and institutional support for ambitious individuals. Assam has every reason to pursue a similar path. The state possesses abundant natural resources, cultural richness, strategic geography, improving infrastructure, and an expanding policy framework that increasingly recognises entrepreneurship as an engine of growth. If these advantages converge with skilled human capital, responsive governance, stronger financial institutions, and a culture that values enterprise, Assam can gradually reduce unemployment, retain talented youth, diversify its economy, expand exports, and strengthen its position within India's emerging growth story. The debate about Assam's future should therefore move beyond discussions of employment alone. The more important question concerns how many young people possess both the confidence and the opportunity to become job creators. The answer to that question will shape the state's economy for decades to come.

DEGREE OF THOUGHT
By: HIMANGSHU RANJAN BHUYAN

The Impact of War on Global Warming

By: Mowsam Hazarika

War has long been viewed through the lenses of geopolitics, human suffering, and economic disruption. Yet, in the 21st century, another dimension has become increasingly evident—its profound and often irreversible impact on the environment, particularly on global warming. At a time when the world is striving to limit temperature rise and mitigate climate change, armed conflicts are silently accelerating environmental degradation, undermining global sustainability efforts.

The relationship between war and climate change is complex and multifaceted. From direct greenhouse gas emissions to long-term ecological destruction, wars contribute to global warming in ways that are both immediate and enduring. Understanding this hidden cost is essential for building a more sustainable and peaceful future.

1. Massive Greenhouse Gas Emissions from Military Activities

Modern military operations are among the most energy-intensive activities in the world. Armies rely heavily on fossil fuels to power tanks, armored vehicles, fighter jets, naval fleets, and logistical supply chains. These machines consume enormous quantities of diesel, aviation fuel, and other petroleum products, releasing significant amounts of carbon dioxide (CO₂) into the atmosphere.

For example, a single fighter jet can burn thousands of liters of fuel in just a few hours of operation. Large-scale military exercises and prolonged conflicts multiply this consumption many times over. Naval fleets, including aircraft carriers, require continuous fuel supply, while ground forces depend on extensive transportation networks for troop movement and supply delivery.

What makes the situation more concerning is that military emissions are often excluded or underreported in international climate agreements. This lack of transparency means that the true carbon footprint of global military operations remains underestimated. As a result, one of the largest contributors to greenhouse gas emissions operates largely outside the scope of climate accountability.

2. Destruction of Industrial Infrastructure and Toxic Releases

War frequently targets critical infrastructure, including oil refineries, chemical plants, power stations, and storage facilities. When these structures are bombed or damaged, they release hazardous pollutants into the air, soil, and water.

Burning oil wells and fuel depots produce massive clouds of black smoke filled with carbon particles and toxic gases. These emissions not only degrade air quality but also contribute directly to global warming by trapping heat in the atmosphere. Similarly, damage to chemical plants can release methane, nitrogen oxides, and other potent greenhouse gases.

The environmental consequences of such destruction can persist for years or even decades. Contaminated sites continue to leak pollutants, and the process of cleanup and restoration is often slow and resource-intensive. In many cases, the environmental damage caused by a single conflict can outweigh years of progress in

emission reduction.

3. Deforestation and Loss of Carbon Sinks

Forests play a crucial role in regulating the Earth's climate by absorbing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. However, war often leads to widespread deforestation, either directly through military activities or indirectly through human displacement and resource exploitation.

Explosions, fires, and land clearing for military operations destroy vast areas of forest cover. In conflict zones, governance structures collapse, leading to illegal logging and unregulated exploitation of natural resources. Displaced populations may also rely heavily on forests for fuel and shelter, further accelerating deforestation.

The loss of forests has a double impact on global warming. First, it reduces the planet's capacity to absorb CO₂. Second, it releases the carbon stored in trees back into the atmosphere. This combination significantly amplifies the effects of climate change.

4. Soil Degradation, Water Pollution, and Ecological Imbalance

War severely disrupts natural ecosystems. Bombings and military activities contaminate soil with heavy metals, chemicals, and explosive residues. Agricultural lands become infertile, and biodiversity is severely affected.

Water bodies are also at risk. Oil spills, chemical leaks, and waste dumping pollute rivers, lakes, and groundwater sources. This not only harms aquatic life but also disrupts the natural processes that help regulate climate.

Healthy ecosystems play a vital role in maintaining environmental balance. When these systems are damaged, their ability to absorb carbon and regulate temperature is diminished, contributing further to global warming.

5. Carbon-Intensive Post-War Reconstruction

The environmental cost of war extends far beyond the battlefield. Once conflicts end, countries face the enormous task of rebuilding destroyed infrastructure. Reconstruction requires large quantities of cement, steel, and other materials whose production is highly energy-intensive.

Cement manufacturing alone is responsible for a significant share of global CO₂ emissions. When combined with the energy required for transportation and construction, post-war rebuilding can lead to a substantial increase in greenhouse gas emissions.

Moreover, reconstruction efforts are often carried out under urgent conditions, with little emphasis on sustainability. This results in inefficient designs and missed opportunities for adopting green technologies.

6. Disruption of Climate Governance and Policy Priorities

War shifts national and global priorities away from environmental protection toward immediate security concerns. Governments increase defense spending, often at the expense of climate initiatives and renewable energy investments.

International cooperation also suffers during times of conflict. Diplomatic tensions make it difficult for countries to collaborate on global climate agreements and sustainability goals. This delay in collective action can have long-term consequences for efforts to combat global warming.

In addition, conflicts can disrupt supply chains for clean energy technologies, slowing down the transition to a low-carbon economy.

7. Impact on Agriculture and Food Systems

Agriculture is both a victim and a contributor to climate change in times of war. Conflicts destroy farmland, irrigation systems, and storage facilities, leading to reduced agricultural productivity.

Farmers are often displaced, and traditional farming practices are disrupted. As a result, countries may become dependent on imported food, which involves carbon-intensive transportation and storage.

Food shortages can also lead to unsustainable practices, such as overexploitation of land and water resources. These practices further degrade the environment and increase greenhouse gas emissions.

8. Long-Term Environmental Consequences

One of the most troubling aspects of war is its long-term environmental impact. Landmines and unexploded ordnance render large areas unusable for agriculture or habitation, leading to land degradation and loss of productivity.

Wildlife habitats are destroyed, and many species face extinction due to habitat loss and pollution. The recovery of ecosystems can take decades, and in some cases, the damage is irreversible.

Climate change itself can also become a driver of future conflicts, creating a vicious cycle. Resource scarcity, water shortages, and extreme weather events can lead to tensions and instability, increasing the likelihood of further conflicts.

The Way Forward: Integrating Peace and Sustainability

Addressing the impact of war on global warming requires a comprehensive and coordinated approach. Some key measures include:

- Inclusion of military emissions in global climate reporting frameworks
- Protection of environmentally sensitive areas during conflicts
- Adoption of green technologies in defense and reconstruction
- Strengthening international laws to prevent environmental damage during war
- Promoting peacebuilding initiatives as part of climate strategy

Sustainable development and peace are deeply interconnected. Without stability, environmental protection efforts cannot succeed, and without a healthy environment, long-term peace remains fragile.

Conclusion

War is not only a humanitarian tragedy but also an environmental crisis with far-reaching implications. Its contribution to global warming is significant, yet often overlooked in mainstream discussions on climate change.

As the world faces the growing threat of rising temperatures, extreme weather events, and ecological collapse, it is crucial to recognize the role of conflict in exacerbating these challenges. Reducing global warming is not just about technological innovation or policy reform—it also requires a commitment to peace.

In the final analysis, the path to a sustainable future lies in harmony—between nations, between people, and with nature itself.

How the Malacca Strait Became the World's Ultimate Geopolitical Crucible

By: Dipak Kurmi

The global maritime landscape is undergoing a profound structural transformation, driven by systemic vulnerabilities in classical trade arteries and the relentless friction of great-power competition. While the Strait of Hormuz has traditionally occupied the center of energy security conversations, its ongoing blockade has pushed it into a state of severe geopolitical strain. In its place, the Malacca Strait has rapidly emerged as the undisputed gravity well of international trade, maritime security, and naval posturing in the Indo-Pacific region. The scale of this transition is starkly reflected in regional shipping telemetry. On July 14, 2026, ship trackers operating in Kota Kinabalu, located on the eastern periphery of Malaysia, recorded an astonishing 281 vessels transiting the Malacca Strait in a single day. This figure dwarfs the historical average of 134 ships that crossed the Strait of Hormuz daily during its pre-blockade peak, illustrating how global logistics have rapidly adapted to avoid Middle Eastern chokepoints. Not since the Suez Canal crisis of 1956, which triggered a monumental geopolitical tsunami across the Eastern Hemisphere, has a single maritime gateway experienced such a rapid and consequential rediscovery of its strategic importance.

The primary catalyst for this historic realignment is the unresolved crisis of access rights within the Persian Gulf. Prior to the implementation of the twin blockades enforced by the United States and Iran, the Strait of Hormuz operated under long-standing norms of free international passage. However, the collapse of recent interim agreements and the escalation of hostilities have fundamentally altered this paradigm. Iran has discovered that its geographic proximity to the chokepoint grants it immense geopolitical leverage, allowing it to disrupt shipping, target tankers, and even attempt to impose unilateral transit tariffs on commercial vessels. Despite a series of tit-for-tat military strikes and the implementation of a fragile, heavily contested ceasefire, the underlying legal and physical disputes regarding passage rights remain entirely unresolved. This persistent instability has forced global merchant fleets to seek safer, more predictable shipping lanes, thereby placing an unprecedented operational burden on the Malacca Strait. This shifting dynamic has elevated the roles of the four primary custodian states—Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, and Singapore—who are tasked with monitoring, regulating, and securing this critical maritime corridor. Measuring approximately 900 kilometers in length and narrowing to just 65 kilometers in width, the Malacca Strait is flanked by the territories of Malaysia, Singapore, and Indonesia. Together, these waters facilitate the transit of 24 percent of global seaborne trade, 45 percent of all maritime oil shipments, and 23 percent of the world's total cargo traffic. The strait also hosts some of the most critical port infrastructure on the planet, including Singapore and Malaysia's Port Klang, which stands as the second-busiest container hub globally, a premier container trans-shipment node, and the largest ship-refueling hub in existence. Ensuring that this congested waterway remains entirely free of disruption is a paramount security priority for a diverse coalition of global actors, including China, the United States, India, Japan, and the member states of ASEAN. For the four custodian nations, managing this corridor is not merely an administrative duty, but a vital instrument of sovereign leverage. Consequently, these regional powers have redoubled their cooperative efforts to keep the connected expanses of the South China Sea and the Indian Ocean open, stable, and insulated from external aggression.

However, maintaining this tranquility has become increasingly difficult as the broader security environment in the South China Sea and the Taiwan Strait continues to deteriorate. In the shadow of the ongoing Gulf War, regional tensions have been magnified by the Chinese coast guard's introduction of aggressive new sea patrols off the eastern coast of Taiwan. Beijing continues to assert sweeping historical claims over virtually the entire South China Sea, directly defying the landmark 2016 UNCLOS arbitral ruling. Although this international ruling was formally re-endorsed by Western powers last week, it was once again rejected by China, which views the preservation of its maritime claims and its sovereignty over Taiwan as non-negotiable core components of its One China policy. While China maintains maritime territorial disputes with seven distinct ASEAN member states, it has managed to maintain functional and cordial relations with most of them, leaving North Korea as its only true good-weather ally in the region. To protect its interests, Beijing has spent decades delaying the finalization of a binding South China Sea code of conduct, which was first proposed by ASEAN in 2003. Much like its stalling tactics with India over the delineation of the Line of Actual Control, China has systematically dodged ASEAN negotiators on the code. This dynamic changed recently when the Philippines, acting as the current ASEAN chair, successfully bound Beijing to a strict 2026 negotiation deadline.

For China, the vulnerability of the Malacca Strait represents an existential security challenge, a concept famously termed the Malacca dilemma by President Hu Jintao during an economic conference in 2003. This dilemma stems from the reality that approximately 80 percent of China's crude oil imports, 70 percent of its natural gas, and

over 1.5 trillion dollars worth of its annual exports must pass through this narrow waterway. Because a prolonged disruption of this corridor would be economically catastrophic, Beijing has spent over two decades searching for viable alternative routes to bypass the strait. One potential option involves rerouting vessels southward through the Sunda and Lombok Straits within Indonesian waters. However, these detours have been largely discounted by maritime operators due to severe geological hazards, narrow channels, and the prohibitive costs associated with extended transit times. Similarly, continental alternatives have run into severe logistical and geopolitical roadblocks. The 62 billion dollar China-Pakistan Economic Corridor connecting Xinjiang with Gwadar Port, alongside the 2.5 billion dollar China-Myanmar Economic Corridor linking Kyaukphegy Port to Yunnan, are technically operational. However, both land routes remain largely underutilized due to security threats, including the ongoing civil war in Myanmar. While continental oil pipelines from Kazakhstan and Russia offer some relief, they are insufficient to fully offset China's maritime dependency, a reality that dominated strategic discussions at this month's World Peace Forum in Beijing. Recognizing these vulnerabilities, the United States has adopted a proactive posture to guarantee freedom of navigation through the Malacca Strait, motivated by its failure to prevent the closure of the Hormuz Strait. On April 14, 2026, the United States and Indonesia announced a major defense cooperation partnership aimed at strengthening their bilateral military ties and aligning their maritime surveillance capabilities. This development coincided with a major organizational shakeup within the American military establishment. Following the renaming of the Department of Defense to the Department of War, the Pentagon reverted its Indo-Pacific Command back to its traditional moniker, the US Pacific Command. By dropping the Indo designation, the command has renewed its focus on direct Pacific partnerships, launching several joint security projects designed to safeguard the Malacca Strait. Because the Indonesian archipelago sits astride the Malacca Strait and controls the secondary equatorial passages of the region, Jakarta is the critical partner in these contingency plans. These operations are particularly focused on the Phillips Channel near Singapore, which represents the strait's narrowest and most vulnerable point at just 2.8 kilometers wide. These collaborative defense efforts are being integrated into the newly established ASEAN Maritime Centre for the Protection of the Strait of Malacca and the South China Sea for Encroachment by Major Powers, which was launched in May 2026. Modeled after India's Information Fusion Centre for the Indian Ocean Region in Gurugram, this new hub aims to provide real-time maritime domain awareness and coordinate defensive responses among local states.

This shifting balance of power has also prompted other ASEAN members to reconsider their infrastructure strategies. On June 18, 2026, Thailand's Prime Minister Anutin Charnvirakul publicly highlighted the vulnerability of traditional maritime chokepoints, noting that almost all ASEAN economies had been negatively affected by the Hormuz blockade, with the notable exception of energy-independent, Petronas-rich Malaysia. In response, Thailand announced the revival of its ambitious 36 billion dollar land corridor project. This massive infrastructure initiative seeks to construct a land bridge connecting two deep-water ports: Ranong on the Andaman Sea and Chumphon on the Gulf of Thailand. By linking the Indian and Pacific Oceans, this land corridor is projected to reduce logistics costs by nearly 30 percent and cut transit times by up to 14 days for large cargo containers. While China is a primary investor and would be a key beneficiary of this bypass, the project has introduced significant economic anxiety in Singapore, which stands to lose its historic status as the primary trans-shipment and refueling hub of Southeast Asia.

Meanwhile, India is leveraging its unique geography to establish itself as a major security actor at the western entrance of the Malacca Strait. The Indian territory of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands sits just 40 nautical miles from the 6-degree channel, which serves as the primary western approach to the strait. New Delhi is capitalizing on this positioning through the 5 billion dollar Great Nicobar Project, which involves building a massive deep-water trans-shipment port at Galathea Bay. On July 4, 2026, former naval chief and Lieutenant Governor of the islands, Admiral D.K. Joshi, met with military advisors to review the strategic utility of the project. While INS Baaz, India's southernmost naval air station, is located nearby, its runway is not yet long enough to support large, long-range maritime patrol aircraft. This militarization represents a dramatic shift from 1989, when an initial Indian proposal to expand the airbase sparked formal protests from Indonesia and became a prominent Time magazine cover story. This historical friction has been largely resolved by Prime Minister Narendra Modi's recent diplomatic outreach to Jakarta, which culminated in a landmark BrahMos missile deal this week. By strengthening security ties with Indonesia, New Delhi has opened up new possibilities for cooperation. If India maintains the political will and military capabilities to back up its maritime ambitions, it is well-positioned to leverage its geographic presence near the Malacca Strait to offset Chinese pressure along their disputed land border.

'I Don't Think I'll Ever Retire': The Workers Struggling To Save For Old Age

By: Alfie Packham

“I am 35 and have essentially nothing saved for my future, which is a huge concern.” Sarah* works in library services in Oxford – full-time at one library and part-time at another. She has saved £5,000 into her pension.

After finishing her PhD in 2020, she said she had “good intentions of contributing to pension schemes. But because I then had a succession of part-time jobs, I never started. I never thought, this is a job I’ll be doing for long enough.”

Sarah is part of a growing cohort in Britain who are not saving enough for their retirement – 15 million people, according to a report by the Pensions Commission. Its independent group of experts warned the figure could rise to 19 million without urgent action.

The problem was particularly acute for women, the government-backed body said, with female savers approaching retirement having private pension pots on average half the size of those held by their male counterparts. Women had a median pension wealth of £81,000, versus £156,000 for men.

Despite now working more than full-time, Sarah has not opted in to her workplace pension scheme, with contributions of about £130 a month, owing to the cost of living. “I live alone in a small flat where my rent and essential bills come to £1,500 per month and my full-time salary is £1,880,” she says.

Her part-time job brings in an extra £500 a month. “With that, I’m able to pay for necessities, but I haven’t been on holiday in years. I don’t have a car. I don’t go out. So I’m not choosing lifestyle over saving.”

While Sarah is relatively young, she worries her savings won’t catch up. “My peers who have been in full-time employment since they were 21 have got a lot more saved than I have. My financial situation is starting to feel worse as I’m getting older. I’m not going to get a high-powered, well-paid job any time soon.”

She was one of many people who got in touch after the Guardian asked how much pension savers had managed to put aside and what this meant for their retirement plans.

‘I don’t think I’ll ever retire’

Danny, a freelance graphic designer from London, has been unable to save into a pension and is yet to finish repaying the £30,000 bounce-back loan he took out during the Covid-19 pandemic.

“Every time I have saved, something falls over and the savings diminish,” says the 54-year-old. “It’s always been the mortgage deposit or pension savings that take a hit. First it was the financial crash, then Covid, now the wars.”

Thinking about his financial situation in the future is “frankly terrifying” as a single father with two children, he says. “I don’t know how I will survive on a state pension. Every time I start to stress about it, I find another 10 years have



gone by and I’m sitting in exactly the same position. I don’t think I’ll ever be in a place where I can retire.”

Danny says he may consider retraining as an electrician. “The reality is that whilst I’ve done this for 30 years, I’m really beginning to think I need some kind of plan B, because I’m not going to get any inheritance.

“It’s doubly hard when you’re saving on your own,” he adds. “I worry that my kids will need unexpected financial support in the future.”

According to the Pensions Commis-

sion, 45% of working-age adults in the UK are not saving into a pension. Their report found that only 4% of self-employed workers are saving for retirement, and about 30% of private pension pots were accessed at the earliest possible opportunity.

The trade body Pensions UK has also estimated that just 23% of the working population are on track to reach a “moderate” lifestyle of £32,700 a year for one person when they retire.

‘I worry about the quality of life’
Even some of those who have pensions

are concerned about how long their savings will last. Kevin, 64, a digital user experience designer from Yorkshire, has managed to save £58,000 into his workplace pension and owns a house “in a cheap area”, but still worries it won’t stretch far.

“I’m not complaining, and I am aware people are much worse off, but I don’t quite know how the bills are going to stack up, without turning the heating off in winter,” he says. “I’m single and live alone so I don’t have any of the benefits of shared bills. I just worry about the quality of life.”

Kevin was a professional musician until his late 30s. “Until recently I’ve never earned enough to put a lot away,” he says. “My income was very low. Then I started working in a fairly low-paid publishing job as an editor.”

He had to withdraw £15,000 from his pension pot 10 years ago when he suddenly lost his job. “It would have been possible to save a bit more if I’d never gone on holiday and somehow made do without a car.”

Rather than giving up work altogether, Kevin plans to retrain as a part-time therapist. “I’ve got three years till I retire, and it takes three years to qualify as a counsellor,” he says. “I just need it to run a car and heat the house.”

‘You don’t know where the market is going to be’

Martin*, from Marlborough in Wiltshire, has saved a total of £39,000 into his pension since 2017, when he started

working as a content editor. “I’m just contracting at the moment, for very little pay,” he says.

“[As a contractor] you’re not in a job long enough to be able to save for a pension either. When you’re younger, you don’t really think about saving until you actually start having life responsibilities.”

He lives with his mother and supports a child. “Child support is another expense, and I’m trying to save some money for when they’re older as well.”

Martin has been trying to find a full-time role for the last two years. “Looking through LinkedIn and Indeed, more and more of these content editing jobs are contracting roles,” he says.

“[The job market] has been quiet, especially in the content media world. A lot of these jobs now pay very little. I’m also trying to compete with other people who are younger than me.”

While doing contract work, Martin saves about £500 a month into a private pension. He says he first started to think about his retirement plan after his father died 12 years ago. “My mum’s got his pension but it wasn’t as much as I thought it would be,” he says.

But he is uncertain as to when or if he’ll be able to retire. “I don’t know how long I’ll carry on working for,” he says. “The world economy is so unpredictable. You don’t know where the market is going to be. The world is changing so quickly.”

* Names have been changed (Courtesy: The Guardian)

APGCL Recruitment 2026 – 66 AM & JM Vacancy, Online Apply

Assam Public Service Commission (APSC) has released two (2) employment notifications for the recruitment of 66 Assistant Manager and Junior Manager posts under Assam Power Generation Corporation Limited (APGCL). This is an excellent opportunity for candidates looking to build their career in power sector.

Interested and eligible candidates may check this article for detailed official notification, educational qualification, age limit, salary details, and application procedure to be followed.

APGCL Recruitment Details

1. Assistant Manager
No of posts: 35 posts
Discipline-wise vacancy:
Electrical: 10 posts
Mechanical: 6 posts
Information Technology: 3 posts
Instrumentation: 2 posts
Civil: 10 posts
Human Resource: 4 posts
Scale of Pay: Rs 37,300.00- 1,12,000.00, GP: Rs 14,200.00

Educational Qualification:
Assistant Manager (Electrical, Mechanical, Information Technology, Instrumentation, Civil):

Candidates must have a Full time Bachelor of Engineering (B.E)/Bachelor of Technology (B.Tech) degree in respective branch of engineering should be from University/institution approved by All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) and the course duration should be of minimum 4 years after HSSLC or equivalent or 3 years after completion of full time Diploma course in Engineering from any Govt./Govt. recognized/AICTE approved Polytechnic/institution for 2 years (Base) + 2 Years (Diploma) + 2 Years (Engineering) course from Govt./Govt. recognized/AICTE approved institution.

Percentage of Marks: A minimum of 60% marks in the qualifying examination of B.E/ B.Tech for the said post is required. However, in respect of SC/ST candidates, minimum 50% marks is must in the qualifying examination of Bachelor Degree.

Assistant Manager (Human Resource):

- Candidates must have a 02 (Two) years full time degree of Master in Business Administration (MBA/post Graduate Diploma in Management (PGDM) with specialization in (Human Resource Management/Personnel Management/Industrial Relations) from any Indian University/ institution approved by AICTE/UGC).
- Percentage of Marks: A minimum of 60% marks in the qualifying in the examination of MBA/PGDM for the said post is required. However, in respect of SC & ST candidates, minimum 55% marks is must in the qualifying examination of MBA/PGDM Degree.

2. Junior Manager
No of posts: 31 posts
Discipline-wise vacancy:
Electrical: 12 posts
Mechanical: 6 posts
Information Technology: 2 posts
Instrumentation: 2 posts
Civil: 9 posts
Scale of Pay: Rs 25,000.00- 92,000.00, GP: Rs 12,100.00

Educational Qualification: Candidates must have a Full time 3 years Diploma course (after HSLC or equivalent) in respective branch of engineering from any Govt./Govt. recognized/AICTE approved Polytechnic/institution or 2 years (Base) + 2 Years (Diploma) course from Govt./Govt. recognized/AICTE approved institution.

Percentage of Marks: A minimum of 60% marks in the qualifying examination of Diploma course for the said post is required. However, in respect of SC/ST candidates, minimum 50% marks is must in the qualifying examination of full time Diploma course.

Other Criteria of APGCL Recruitment
Citizenship: Candidates must be Indian Citizens as defined in Articles 5 to 8 of the Constitution of India.

Residency:
(i) The candidate must be a permanent resident of Assam.
(ii) The candidate must produce PRC issued in Assam for educational purpose/ Employment Exchange Registration certificate as proof of residency along with the online application form.

Small Family Norms: The candidates have to submit a declaration regarding “The Small Family Norms” in Form-A at the time of applying for the post.

Age Limit

The candidates should not be less than 21 (Twenty-One) years of age and not more than 38 (Thirty-Eight) years of age as on 1st April 2026.

Age Relaxation: The relaxation of upper age limit for reserved categories are as follows:

Category	Age Relaxation
OBC-NCL	3 years
SC/ST	5 years
PwBD	10 years

Application Fee of APGCL Assistant Manager Recruitment
Application Fee: The category-wise application fee is as under

Category	Amount
General	Rs 297.20
OBC/MOBC	Rs 197.20
BPL	Rs 47.20
SC/ST/PwBD	Rs 47.20

How to Apply for APGCL Recruitment?

Interested and eligible candidates may apply online for these posts by visiting at official recruitment portal of Assam Public Service Commission. They may follow below mentioned steps .

- Scroll down, go to Important Web-Links section.
- Click on Online Application Form link.
- A new webpage will be opened.
- Enter all your personal and educational details as required.
- Upload your passport sized photograph and signature and other required documents.
- Pay the application fee as per your category and at the end click on submit button.
- Don't forget to take a print of submitted application form.

Important Dates of APGCL Vacancy 2026

Starting date of submission of online application: 22nd July 2026 (JM)
Last date of submission of online application: 21st August 2026 (JM)
Starting date of submission of online application: 24th July 2026 (AM)
Last date of submission of online application: 23rd August 2026 (AM)

MHRB Assam Recruitment 2026 – 492 Posts, Online Apply

Name of Post	Registrar / Demonstrator / Resident Physician etc.
No of Posts	492 posts
Qualification	Post Graduate qualification MD/ MS/ DNB/MDS
Age Limit	21 to 45 years
Application Fee	Rs 150/- or Rs 250/-
Start Date	16th July 2026
Last Date	28th July 2026

Medical and Health Recruitment Board (MHRB), Assam has released an employment notification for the recruitment of 492 Registrar / Demonstrator / Resident Physician etc. posts in Government Medical College & Hospitals under Medical Education & Research Department. Interested and eligible candidates may check this article for detailed official notification, educational qualification, age limit, salary details, and application procedure to be followed.

MHRB Assam Recruitment Details

Name of post: Registrar / Demonstrator / Resident Physician etc
No of posts: 492 posts

Name of departments: Anatomy, Anaesthesiology, Bio-Chemistry, Cardiology, CTVS, Dermatology, Dentistry, ENT, Emergency Medicine, FSM, Hematology, Microbiology, Medicine, Medical Oncology, Neurology, Neurosurgery, Nephrology, Nuclear Medicine, Orthopaedics, Ophthalmology, O&G, Physiology, Psychiatry, Pathology, Plastic Surgery, Paediatrics, PM & R, Pulmonary Medicine (TB & Chest), Radiology, Radiotherapy, Surgery, SPM (Community Medicine), Urology

Pay: Rs.57,700/- - Rs.1,82,400/- PM (Academic level 10) plus other allowances as admissible under Rules.

Eligibility Criteria of MHRB Assam Recruitment
Age Limit: Candidate should not be less than 21 Years and more than 45 Years as on 01/01/2026, irrespective of category of applicants (As per Govt. OM No.ABP.55/2023/25 dated 04/07/2023).

The upper age limit is relaxable by (if applicable):

(i) For Persons with Disabilities (PWD) by 10 years irrespective of SC/ST/OBC and General Category of candidates as per Govt. Notification No.ABP.144/95/121 dated 28/10/2015.

Educational Qualification:

Broad Speciality:
• A Post Graduate qualification MD/ MS/ DNB/MDS in the concerned subject from an institute under any Indian University recognised by National Medical Commission (previously MCI) / National Board of Education (NBE)/ Dental Council of India for the following Departments – Anaesthesiology, Dentistry, Dermatology, ENT, Emergency Medicine, FSM, Medicine, Microbiology, Orthopaedics, Ophthalmology, O&G, Pharmacology, Pathology, Psychiatry, Paediatrics, PM & R, Radiology, Radiation Oncology, Surgery, SPM (Community Medicine), TB & Chest (Pulmonary Medicine), Nuclear Medicine.

• A Post Graduate qualification MS (Anatomy) / M.Sc (Medical Anatomy) with Ph.D in Medical Anatomy for Anatomy Department, as per latest notification of NMC, New Delhi.

• A Post Graduate qualification MD (Biochemistry) / M.Sc (Medical Biochemistry) with Ph.D in Medical Biochemistry for Biochemistry Department, as per latest notification of NMC, New Delhi.

• A Post Graduate qualification MD (Physiology) / M.Sc (Medical Physiology) with Ph.D in Medical Physiology for Physiology Department, as per latest notification of NMC, New Delhi.

Super Speciality:

A Post Graduate qualification MD/DNB in General Medicine for Medical Super Speciality (Cardiology, Neurology, Endocrinology, Nephrology, Medical Oncology)
A Post Graduate qualification MS/DNB in General Surgery for Surgical Super Speciality (Plastic Surgery, CTVS, Neuro-Surgery, Urology, Paediatric Surgery)
Candidates having DM/ M.Ch./ DNB in the concerned super speciality subject will be given preference/ weightage

Application Fee

Candidates have to pay a certain amount as application fee depending up on their category. The details are as given below:

Category	Fee
UR	Rs 250/-
OBC/MOBC/SC/ST	Rs 150/-
PWD	Nil

Application fee may be deposited, through Treasury Challan in the Head of Account “0210-Medical and Public Health-01-Urban Health Services-800-Other Receipt”.

OR

Fees can be deposited online using Government Receipt Accounting System-GRAS (Website: <https://assamegras.gov.in>). Candidates may pay the requisites fees (as admissible for the category mentioned above). Printed copy of Treasury Challan generated through GRAS should be submitted at the time of interview. In Remarks column, candidate may write the post applied for.

How to Apply for MHRB Assam Recruitment?

Interested and eligible candidates may apply online for these vacancies by visiting at official recruitment portal of MHRB. They may follow below mentioned steps.

- Scroll down; go to Important Web-Links section.
- Click on Online Application Form link.
- A new webpage will be opened.
- Enter all your personal and educational details as required.
- Upload your passport sized photograph and signature and other required documents.
- At the end click on submit button.
- Don't forget to take a print of submitted application form.

Important Dates of MHRB Vacancy 2026

Starting date of submission of online application: 16th July 2026
Last date of submission of online application: 28th July 2026

AAI Apprentice Recruitment 2026 – 95 Posts @ NE Region

Name of Post	Apprentice
No of Posts	95 posts
Qualification	Degree, Diploma & ITI
Age Limit	18 to 26 years
Application Fee	N/A
Start Date	7th July 2026
Last Date	28th July 2026

AAI Apprentice Recruitment 2026

Airports Authority of India, Regional Head Quarters, (North Eastern Region) has released an employment notification for the recruitment of 95 Graduate/ Diploma/ Trade Apprentice posts at various airports in the North Eastern Region. Interested and eligible candidates may check this article for detailed official notification, educational qualification, age limit, salary structure and application procedure to be followed.

AAI Apprentice Recruitment Details

1. Apprentice (Degree Level)
No of posts: 31 posts
2. Apprentice (Diploma Level)
No of posts: 31 posts
3. Apprentice (Trade/ ITI Level)
No of posts: 33 posts

Discipline-wise Vacancy

Field / Trade	Graduate	Apprentice	Diploma	Apprentice	ITI	Apprentice
Civil Engineering	8		10			0
Electrical Engineering	10		10			0
Electronics / IT / Computer Science						
Engineering	10		6			0
Mechanical Engineering	3		5			0
Fitter (ITI)	0		0			7
Mechanic (Motor Vehicle)	0		0			12
Electrician	0		0			14
Total	31		31			33

Eligibility Criteria of AAI Apprentice Recruitment

Domicile: Only Indian Nationals from the North Eastern Region (NER) are eligible.

Age Limit: Candidates' minimum age is to be 18 years and maximum age is 26 years as on 28.07.2026. (Relaxation in upper age limit for categories like SC/ST/OBC/PWBD etc. as per Govt. of India guidelines is applicable).

Year of completion of educational qualification: Candidates passed Degree/ Diploma in 2024 or after 2024 are eligible.

Educational Qualification:

Graduate/Diploma: Candidates should possess full time (regular) four years degree or three years (regular) diploma in Engineering in any of the above-mentioned streams, recognized by AICTE, GOI.

ITI Trade: Candidates should possess ITI/ NCVT certificate of the above-mentioned trades from institutions recognized by AICTE, GOI.

How to Apply for AAI Recruitment ?

The interested candidates are required to apply through BOAT's/ RDAT's web portal www.nats.education.gov.in (for graduate/diploma apprentices) and www.apprenticeshipindia.org (for ITI Trade) by finding establishment Airports Authority of India – RHQ NER, Guwahati (ID – EASKMC000039 (BOAT)/ E08201800006 (NAPS)) and click on the apply button in the next page. After successful application, the message “Successfully applied for the training position. Based on availability, you will be communicated by the establishment” will appear.

Candidates should register themselves with the concerned portal (NATS/NAPS) prior to applying for apprenticeship training in AAI without fail (Annexure I, II, III & IV). Applications received online through NATS/NAPS portal will only be considered. Correspondence/ Communication in any other manner will not be entertained.

Important Dates of AAI NER Apprentice Vacancy 2026

Starting date of submission of online application: 07th July 2026

Last date of submission of online application: 28th July 2026

'Saifai syndicate deprived youths of govt jobs': Adityanath's fresh salvo at SP chief Akhilesh

'The Saifai syndicate that once snatched away the employment can no longer do so'

SHAMLI (UP), July 17: Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Friday claimed that a "job syndicate" had allegedly deprived deserving youths of government employment before 2017 and added that the network had been dismantled, asserting that recruitment was now being carried out transparently.

In an apparent swipe at the Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav over government jobs, Adityanath branded the alleged network as the "Syndicate of Saifai", a reference to the native village of Yadav.

The chief minister made these remarks while addressing a function to inaugurate and lay the foundation stone for various development projects in Shamli district.

"Now, when government jobs are advertised in Uttar Pradesh, the syndicate of Saifai that once snatched away the employment rights of the youth can no longer do so. Today, every family and



every section of the society gets an opportunity to secure government jobs," he said.

The chief minister also alleged that before the BJP came to power in the state in 2017, people faced action for expressing their religious beliefs.

"Before 2017, people were lathi-charged and even fired upon for raising the slogan 'Jai Shri Ram'. Kanwar Yattras were stopped, routes were blocked, and Ramleela processions were not allowed," he

said.

Claiming that the situation had changed, Adityanath said the BJP-led NDA government was working for farmers and the youth.

"Today, we can proudly say that the vision Chaudhary Charan Singh had for farmers and young people is being realised by the BJP and NDA government. On the one hand, farmers are being empowered, while on the other, employment and job opportunities are being created for the youth," he

said.

Highlighting the state's law and order situation, the chief minister said security was being provided not only to citizens, but also investors, helping attract investment and promote development.

Referring to the annual Kanwar Yatra, Adityanath said the government was ensuring complete security and all necessary facilities for devotees.

"Today, no one stops the Kanwar Yatra. It is progressing peacefully and with enthusiasm. The government stands with the kanwariyas, and the administration and security forces are serving them," he said.

Appealing to the Kanwar pilgrims to maintain discipline, he said, "We are descendants of Lord Ram, belong to the land of Lord Krishna and are devotees of Lord Shiva. We must uphold Ram's maryada, Krishna's values and Shiva's simplicity. There should be no unruly behaviour over trivial issues." (PTI)

Uddhav remembers Ram, Hanuman only during protests: Minister Shirsat

CHHATRAPATI SAMBHAJI-

NAGAR, July 17: Maharashtra Minister Sanjay Shirsat on Friday took a sharp dig at the Shiv Sena (UBT), claiming its agitation over alleged donation embezzlement at the Ayodhya Ram temple proves that party chief Uddhav Thackeray only remembers Lord Ram and Hanuman during protests.

BJP leader and former MP Navneet Rana also targeted Thackeray over the issue, claiming that his 'Ram Raksha Andolan' was an attempt to save his party.

Speaking to reporters in Chhatrapati Sambhajnagar, Shirsat pointed out the "irony" of the 'Ram Raksha' protest, stating that Thackeray had skipped the grand consecration ceremony of the Ayodhya temple in 2024 despite being invited.

"It is their agitation, and there is no need to talk much about it. But this shows that he (Uddhav) remembers Lord Ram and Hanuman only during the protest. He also read the Hanuman Chalisa and has started becoming religious," he said.

The Shiv Sena minister also



cited the instance when former ex- MP Rana was jailed for a few days because she announced she would recite the Hanuman Chalisa outside Thackeray's Mumbai residence, 'Matoshree', in 2022.

The government will not put any restrictions on the Sena (UBT) for its protest in Nagpur on July 18, he said.

Asked about the opposition party inviting chief minister Devendra Fadnis to the Nagpur protest, Shirsat said they cannot force anyone to attend the agitation, and pointed out that Thackeray did not attend the consecration of the Ayodhya Ram temple and had ignored the invitation. The minister also hinted at

"changes" in the state politics, citing talks between NCP (SP) president Sharad Pawar and the NDA.

"Changes are occurring in politics. I have heard that Sharad Pawar is talking to the NDA. Senior leaders Jayant Patil and Sunil Tatkare are holding talks separately. The outcome of these talks will be known in a few days or a week," he said.

The Shiv Sena leader further said he hoped that the ongoing hunger strike by activist Sonam Wangchuk in New Delhi, demanding Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan's resignation over alleged irregularities in the NEET-UG examination, would end soon. (PTI)

Gyanesh Kumar a 'weapon of mass destruction' for electoral rolls: Jairam Ramesh

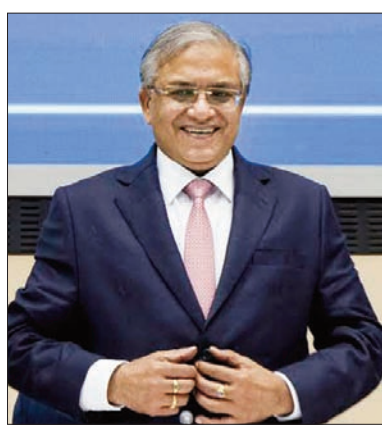
NEW DELHI, July 17: Congress leader Jairam Ramesh on Friday slammed Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar as a "complete weapon of mass destruction" for electoral rolls in the country and said the opposition would push for his removal as the poll panel chief.

Opposition parties on April 24 had submitted a fresh notice in the Rajya Sabha seeking to move a motion for the removal of Kumar.

The opposition's fresh charges on Kumar's "proved misbehaviour" included "continued partisan asymmetry in the enforcement of the Model Code of Conduct".

Asked whether the opposition will push for action against Kumar on the notice submitted in April, Ramesh told PTI, "We haven't heard anything on that. Absolutely, we have to push. I mean he's a complete weapon of mass destruction as far as electoral rolls are concerned."

"The most devastating indictment of Mr Gyanesh Kumar has come from a very senior IAS officer, who was the



first director general of the Unique Identification Authority of India, and has a culturally very important name -- Ram Sevak Sharma. He's written an article detailing how damaging and devastating the entire SIR exercise has become," the Congress general secretary in-charge communications said.

So, this is not just what the Congress party is saying or what Trinamool Congress is stating, Ramesh said.

"I mean this is a retired civil servant who has worked in the Modi government, he was given important positions and he's come out of course retired election commissioners have come out very openly (against SIR)," Ramesh said.

He pointed out that opposition parties submitted a notice on April 24 for moving a motion for the removal of the chief election commissioner.

"Mr Gyanesh Kumar is just executing what he's told to do by the home minister (Amit Shah)," Ramesh alleged.

The Monsoon session of Parliament is scheduled to start from July 20 and conclude on August 13.

Ramesh and TMC leader Sagariika Ghose submitted the notice in April to the Rajya Sabha secretary general.

"In the Rajya Sabha, 73 opposition MPs have just submitted a new notice of motion to their Secretary General to present an addressed resolution to the President of India, urging the removal from office of the Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar," Ramesh had said on X. (PTI)

Amit Shah on three-day Bengal visit from Friday

KOLKATA, July 17: Union Home Minister Amit Shah will arrive in North Bengal on Friday night for a three-day visit to the state, during which he will review border security, law and order, and the implementation of the new criminal laws, and inaugurate development projects in Siliguri and Kolkata.

He is scheduled to land at the Bagdogra airport, near Siliguri, around 9 pm and will be received by West Bengal Chief Minister Suvedu Adhikari.

Shah will then proceed to the Border Security Force (BSF) Frontier Headquarters at Kadamtala, where he will stay overnight.

On Saturday, he will visit the BSF's 18th Battalion Border Outpost at Jumagach near the boundary with Bangladesh.

Shah will interact with BSF personnel, address a Prashasti Sammelan, participate in a plantation drive, and inaugurate and lay the foundation stone for several BSF-related development projects.

Later in the day, the Union home minister will chair a meeting at Uttar Kanya in Siliguri to review border management and security-related issues in West Bengal.

He will also assess the implementation of the three new criminal laws in the state and hold a separate meeting on matters related to birth and death registration.

Union Minister Sukanta Majumdar said the focus of Shah's official visit to the state is on border security and management. The home minister will leave for Kolkata on Saturday evening. (PTI)

'Must move forward with modern mindset': PM unveils ₹ 4,700 cr projects in Chandigarh

CHANDIGARH, July 17: Unveiling multiple development projects worth over ₹ 4,700 crore in Chandigarh, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday said the journey towards 'Viksit Bharat' must be accompanied by a modern mindset focused on technologies and healthcare services of the future.

"We must take decisions that benefit not only the present generation but also continue to serve generations to come. We must build institutions that grow stronger with the passage of time. The BJP-led NDA government is moving ahead rapidly in this direction," he said.

Modi was addressing a gathering at Punjab Engineering College (PEC) in Chandigarh after inaugurating and laying foundation stones of various projects spanning healthcare, education and road infrastructure.

Modi reached PEC following his visit to Haryana's Jind, where he flagged off India's first hydrogen-powered train between Jind and Sonapat.

Union Health minister J P Nadda, Railway minister Ashwini Vaishnaw, Punjab Governor and Chandigarh Administrator Gulab Chand Kataria, Congress MP Manish Tewari were also present at the PEC event.

On this occasion, Modi also praised retired IPS officer Inderjit Singh Sidhu, who recently received the Padma Shri last month for his decades-long voluntary cleanliness drive.

"He has earned recognition as the 'Broom Warrior.' Through his efforts, he has inspired people in Chandigarh to embrace cleanliness in a unique way," said Modi.

Calling the launch of India's first hydrogen-powered train "a huge beginning," Modi said for Viksit Bharat, "we must move forward with this modern mindset regarding the technology of the future, transportation of the future, and health services of the future."

Stressing that infrastructure development is the roadmap for the economic progress of any nation, he said for the first time, infrastructure is being developed in the country with a holistic approach as he referred to various projects launched in Chandigarh and Haryana's Jind.



He said these development projects will boost industry and commerce while making life easier for people.

Speaking about the health sector, Modi said new AIIMS institutions are now operational and also said hundreds of new medical colleges have been established across the country.

"The number of speciality hospitals for the treatment of serious diseases such as cancer has also increased. Here in Chandigarh too, I had the opportunity to inaugurate the Homi Bhabha Cancer Hospital. Today, the hospital is serving thousands of patients," he said. He further said equal attention is being given to strengthening primary healthcare facilities in villages.

To reinforce the health system at every level, the Ayushman Bharat Health Infrastructure Mission was launched, he said.

"Under this mission, a nationwide network of critical care blocks, integrated public health laboratories, and public health units has been created," he said.

He said today, nearly 1.75 lakh Ayushman Arogya Mandirs are functioning across the country, from urban and rural areas to tribal regions.

"These centres not only provide primary healthcare services but also offer different health service packages," he said.

Stating that his government is also making healthcare more accessible through technology, he said more than 48 crore telemedicine consultations have been conducted across the country under the eSanjeevani Mission.

Even people living in remote areas are now able to consult doctors at major hospitals, he said.

The expansion of healthcare services has led to significant improvements, he said, adding that more than 90 per cent of institutional deliveries in the country are taking place. (PTI)

Hydrogen-powered train successful example of Make in India campaign: PM

JIND (HARYANA), July 17: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday flagged off from here India's first hydrogen-powered train connecting Jind to Sonapat in Haryana, calling it a successful example of the 'Make in India' campaign.

With this, India has joined a select group of countries that have operational hydrogen-powered trains and marks an important step towards the adoption of clean and sustainable mobility in the railway sector.

The 89-km distance between Jind and Sonapat will be covered in two hours, with the train halting at 12 intermediate stations.

After flagging off the train, the prime minister also dedicated to the nation and laid foundation stone of various development projects worth ₹ 14,700 crore.

Addressing a public gathering later, Modi called the hydrogen-powered train a successful example of the 'Make in India' campaign.

Today, Indian Railways has taken a major step and this hydrogen train from Jind to Sonapat is the world's most powerful hydrogen train, he asserted. Referring to the West Asia conflict, Modi said India receives huge quantity of petrol, diesel, LPG gas, and fertilizers through the Strait of Hormuz.

However, for the last three to four months, this path has continuously become a battlefield, he said. Despite the war and oil crisis, India's railways and the country's development vehicle has not stalled, he said.

"If this situation had arisen before 2014, the work of India's railways would have come to a complete standstill," he asserted.

Modi also said that his visit to Jind has opened a window to old memories. "I cannot forget the love I have got," he said.

Jind's 'ghee' and 'ghevar' have not changed in years but its 'tevar' (attitude) has, he said, while adding Jind is becoming a model of BJP's good governance.

Names of Jind, Sonapat and Haryana will come up whenever there is mention of hydrogen train, I congratulate the entire country, he added.

Addressing the gathering, Vaishnaw said today is a historic day. (PTI)

Karnataka to hold GBA elections by December, says CM Shivakumar

NEW DELHI, July 17: Following the Supreme Court's order, Karnataka chief minister D K Shivakumar on Friday said the state government is committed to holding elections to the five city corporations under the Greater Bengaluru Authority (GBA) by December.

The Supreme Court had initially directed that the GBA elections be completed by June 30. This was subsequently extended to August 31 after the state government cited administrative constraints and sought more time. The apex court on Friday further extended the deadline to the end of December in view of the ongoing Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls.

"We will complete all local body elections by December," Shivakumar told reporters in the national capital. He added that the government aims to complete elections to all local bodies, including zilla, taluk and gram panchayats, and municipal corporations, by the end of this year.

The polls are to be held for the five city corporations created



under the GBA framework, which replaced the erstwhile Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) structure as part of Bengaluru's civic governance overhaul. The new system envisages decentralised administration through five corporations covering 369 wards across the city.

Minister for Greater Bengaluru Development Krishna Byre Gowda said conducting the polls while the SIR exercise is still on would undermine both processes.

He said that with two separate

voters' lists likely to exist by August 8 — the old list and the one emerging from the SIR — going ahead with elections on the old rolls could throw up a discrepancy of nearly three lakh voters, which would be difficult to explain to the public and could raise questions over the credibility of the process.

"It is clear to us that if we conduct elections in parallel while the SIR is underway, neither the SIR nor the election will be held properly. It is not practically possible. (PTI)

Prashant Kishor's party moves EC alleging model code violations by BJP in Bankipur



PATNA, July 17: The Jan Suraj Party on Friday said it has sought the Election Commission's intervention in alleged violations of the model code of conduct in Bankipur assembly seat of Bihar by the BJP which is facing a challenge from its founder Prashant Kishor.

Addressing a press conference, Jan Suraj Party state president Manoj Bharti said a memorandum to this effect has been submitted to the state's Chief Electoral Officer by "our high-level delegation".

He said, "Our memorandum has highlighted that BJP workers have been prowling the streets of Patna, posing as municipal corporation workers. They have been tearing our posters and banners off

the walls of houses, even though we had obtained the consent of the owners".

Later, posters and banners of the BJP are pasted on the same walls, the Jan Suraj Party leader alleged.

"When we have confronted some of these self-proclaimed municipal workers, demanding their identity cards, they have run away. The EC must step in to prevent this serious breach of the model code of conduct," Bharti said. He also claimed that the BJP has also come out with a number of "false and misleading posters" targeting Prashant Kishor."

The by-poll has been necessitated by the resignation of BJP national president Nitin Nabin, who got elected to the Rajya Sabha a few months ago. Kishor, who seeks to rejuvenate his fledgling party, which was drubbed in the assembly polls held last year, has entered the fray, claiming that it was a "referendum" on the popularity of the BJP-led government in the state.

The BJP, which has never lost the seat since 1995, has this time fielded a low-key youth wing leader Neeraj Kumar Sinha, in what is being seen as a sign that the party is confident of a runaway victory in Bankipur. (PTI)

The hospital claimed the coexistence of all three conditions in one patient is extremely rare

Woman undergoes breast cancer, heart surgeries in single operation

NEW DELHI, July 17: Doctors at a private hospital in Greater Noida have successfully performed a rare six-hour surgery on a 65-year-old woman, treating early-stage breast cancer along with severe narrowing of the aortic valve and a critical coronary artery blockage in a single operation, the hospital said on Friday. According to ShardaCare-HealthCity, the patient underwent a modified radical mastectomy for breast cancer, aortic valve replacement and coronary artery bypass grafting during the same surgical procedure.

The hospital claimed the coexistence of all three conditions in one patient is extremely rare and described it as the first such case in the Delhi-NCR region.

The woman, a retired media professional, had initially sought treatment after noticing a lump in her right breast and was diagnosed with early-stage breast cancer, the statement said.

She was initially scheduled to undergo breast-conserving surgery.

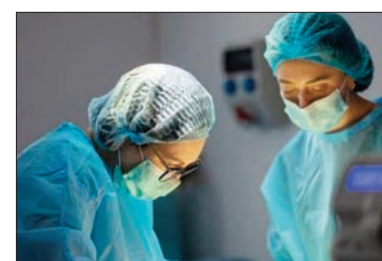
However, during routine pre-operative evaluation, doctors detected an abnormal heart murmur, prompting further cardiac investigations. An echocardiogram revealed severe aortic stenosis caused by a bicuspid aortic valve, a congenital condition in which the aortic valve has two leaflets instead of the normal three, the statement said.

Coronary angiography also found a 90 per cent blockage in the left anterior descending (LAD) coronary artery, one of the heart's main blood vessels, it stated.

Doctors said the patient had not reported any significant cardiac symptoms despite having two potentially life-threatening heart conditions.

A multidisciplinary team comprising specialists from surgical oncology, cardiology, cardiac anaesthesia and cardiothoracic and vascular surgery reviewed the case before deciding to perform all three procedures in a single operation.

Because breast-conserving surgery would have required radiotherapy after



wards and the patient also urgently needed open-heart surgery, the team opted for a modified radical mastectomy along with the cardiac procedures after obtaining consent from the patient and her family, the hospital statement said.

"The aortic valve was extremely narrowed, making the procedure particularly challenging. Performing all three surgeries together required meticulous planning and seamless coordination across multiple specialties," said Dr Akhil Kumar Rustagi, Senior Director and Head of Cardiothoracic and Vascu-

lar Surgery.

"Successfully completing this combined procedure not only prevented a potentially fatal cardiac event but also ensured that the patient's cancer treatment was not delayed," he said.

Dr Rustagi said the case underlined the importance of thorough pre-operative evaluation, noting that the patient's serious heart conditions were detected despite the absence of major symptoms.

Dr Hemkant Verma, senior consultant and unit head, Surgical Oncology, said the discovery of severe cardiac disease required the treatment plan to be completely revised.

"Instead of proceeding with cancer surgery alone, a multidisciplinary strategy was developed that allowed us to address all major health concerns in a single operative session. This approach not only enabled timely cancer treatment but also spared the patient from undergoing multiple major surgeries and recovery periods," he said. (PTI)

Arunachal Cabinet approves ₹ 7,834 cr for infrastructure, education push

Cabinet also unveiled a series of reforms aimed at boosting employment, entrepreneurship

ITANAGAR, July 17: The Arunachal Pradesh Cabinet on Friday approved ₹ 7,834 crore for schemes covering roads, power and education, besides reserving 20 per cent posts in uniformed services for former Agniveers.

At the meeting chaired by Chief Minister Pema Khandu, the Cabinet also unveiled a series of reforms aimed at boosting employment, entrepreneurship and ease of doing business in the state.

It approved ₹ 2,334 crore for the second phase of the Chief Minister Comprehensive State Road Development Plan for improving road connectivity in district headquarters and decongesting roads in the capital complex, an official statement said.

Under the first phase of the plan, 67 road and bridge projects involving an expenditure of ₹ 899.58 crore were sanctioned during



2019-24, of which 62 have been completed. The Cabinet directed departments that the remaining projects be completed by March 2027.

Another ₹ 2,000 crore was approved for the CM Comprehensive State Rural Road Development Programme over three years to provide all-weather road connectivity to areas not covered under the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana.

The Cabinet also sanctioned ₹ 2,000 crore under the CM Comprehensive State Power Development Programme for upgrading and modernising critical power infrastructure and improving the reliability of electricity supply.

The programme aims to bring down aggregate technical and commercial losses to 18 per cent by March 2029.

At the meeting, the Cabinet approved 20 per cent reservation for

retired Agniveers in constabulary and equivalent posts in the state police, Indian Reserve Battalion, fire and emergency services as well as in mineral guards, forest guards, special tiger protection force, foresters and prison wardens.

The Agniveer scheme, introduced by the Centre in 2022, provides for the recruitment of youth (between the ages of 17.5 and 21 years) into the Army, Navy and Air Force for a four-year tenure, including military training and active service.

The Cabinet also approved ₹ 1,500 crore for phase two of Mission Shikshat Arunachal for 2026-29 to bridge infrastructure gaps in schools, strengthen teacher training and capacity building and improve real-time monitoring through the Arunachal Vidya Nidhi platform. (PTI)

Flood situation remains grim in Arunachal, two districts hit by fresh landslides

ITANAGAR, July 17: The flood situation in Arunachal Pradesh remained grim, with fresh landslides and floods reported from two districts in the last 24 hours, officials said here on Friday.

The ongoing spell of rain-triggered floods and landslides has so far claimed seven lives and affected 1,13,674 people across the state.

According to the state Disaster Management Department's evening report, Upper Subansiri and Upper Siang reported fresh rain-related damage during the period.

As many as 26 districts, 321 circles and 546 villages in the state have been affected by monsoon deluge so far.

In Upper Subansiri, flash floods and landslides affected four circles -- Giba, Nilling, Chetam and Daporijo -- covering 35 villages in the last 24 hours. Reports received during the period indicated damage to roads, culverts, a bridge and retaining walls due to flash floods



and landslides.

In Upper Siang, heavy rainfall affected Silli village under Katan circle, impacting 264 people, according to the report. A hydroelectric project was also reported damaged following heavy rainfall.

Upper Siang remains the worst-hit district with 49,259 affected people, followed by Siang (25,365), Kra Daadi (13,731), Upper Subansiri (9,550), East Kameng (6,786), Namsai (2,657) and Anjaw (1,011), the report stated. Official figures show that 804

houses have been damaged across the state, including 614 kutchas and 120 pucca houses.

The cumulative loss to agriculture and horticulture has increased to 603.75 hectares, comprising 240 hectares of agricultural land and 363.75 hectares of horticulture plantations, it said.

The damage to infrastructure across the state remained extensive, with 177 roads, 28 bridges, 30 culverts, 240 water supply facilities, 156 power lines and 224 electric poles affected. (PTI)

CM Tamang launches 'CM-SAATHI' initiative to provide free JEE-NEET coaching



GANGTOK, July 17: Sikkim Chief Minister Prem Singh Tamang launched 'CM-SAATHI', a major education initiative aimed at providing free, high-quality coaching and academic support to students preparing for national-level entrance examinations such as JEE and NEET.

Developed in collaboration with the Government of India's SATHEE initiative, the programme will offer expert video lectures, study materials, mock tests, practice questions, doubt-solving support and technology-enabled learning to students across Sikkim, an official release said on Friday. The chief minister said the initiative reflects the government's commitment to ensuring that no student is denied opportunities be-

cause of financial constraints.

"CM-SAATHI will provide free, world-class coaching and academic support for JEE and NEET aspirants and ensure that quality coaching reaches the homes and schools of our students, regardless of their financial background," Tamang said on Thursday after launching the CM-SAATHI initiative. The programme is expected to benefit more than 2,000 students from over 40 government and private schools across Sikkim. The initiative will also strengthen the capabilities of science and mathematics teachers through collaboration with IIT Kanpur.

Tamang said he has requested the Ministry of Education to explore extending similar support to other competitive examinations, including CUET, CLAT, NDA and UPSC Foundation programmes, so that students from diverse academic streams can benefit.

"CM-SAATHI is more than a programme; it is an investment in the aspirations of our youth and the bright future of Sikkim," he said. (PTI)

Arunachal has witnessed robust economic growth, major infrastructure push: Khandu

ITANAGAR, July 17: Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister Pema Khandu on Friday said the state has witnessed significant economic growth, massive expansion in infrastructure and connectivity and marked improvement in education, healthcare and social welfare over the past decade, laying a strong foundation for its emergence as a developed and strategically important frontier state.

Interacting with reporters here to commemorate 10 years of his government, Khandu said the state's Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP) has increased by nearly 149 per cent and the state Budget by over 238 per cent.

"The state's own resources have grown more than five-fold, while per capita income has more than doubled, making Arunachal one of the fastest-growing economies in the Northeast," he claimed.

Highlighting the infrastructure push, the chief minister said annual road construction increased from around 300 km in 2016 to nearly 1,800 km, while the rural road network expanded more than three-fold. Over 4,000 km of National Highways are currently under construction.

He added that the Donyi Polo Airport has emerged as a major aviation hub with expanded connectivity, cargo operations and



daily Delhi flights, while more than 25 destinations are connected by helicopter services.

Over 2,600 new 4G towers have also improved digital connectivity in remote areas, he said.

Khandu said historic investments under the Frontier Highway and Vibrant Villages Programme are transforming border areas, with more than 1,000 km of roads being constructed to connect habitations.

Several previously inaccessible border villages now have all-weather connectivity, strengthening development as well as national security.

On education sector, he said Mission Shikshat Arunachal 2029 has been launched to transform school education and projects

worth ₹ 750 crore have been sanctioned for upgrading schools, hostels and related infrastructure.

Over 2,600 students from the state qualified NEET in 2025, while the scheme for academic excellence supports students aspiring to study at leading global universities. AI-enabled monitoring systems are also being introduced to improve learning outcomes.

The SEE Trinity initiative aims to create over 25,000 employment and self-employment opportunities for youth, he added.

Referring to the healthcare front, Khandu said a comprehensive ₹ 3,666-crore expansion plan has been launched, while more than two lakh families receive cashless treatment under Chief Minister Arogya Arunachal Yojana (CMAAY) and PM-JAY.

MBBS seats at TRIHMS have doubled from 50 to 100, while new medical colleges are coming up at Pasighat, Namsai and West Kameng. A state cancer hospital and other specialised healthcare institutions are also under development, he said.

"Maternal and child health indicators have improved significantly, with a reduction in infant mortality and immunisation reaching near-universal levels," the chief minister said. (PTI)

NSCN-IM militant surrenders in Arunachal's Tirap

ITANAGAR, July 17: An insurgent belonging to the banned NSCN-IM outfit on Friday surrendered before security forces in Tirap district of Arunachal Pradesh, officials said.

The insurgent, identified as 'self-styled' Lieutenant Colonel Penngam Konyak (42), surrendered at the superintendent of police office in Khonsa.

Konyak, a resident of Nyasa village in Mon district of neighbouring Nagaland, laid down a pistol and some cartridges before a joint team of police, Assam Rifles and the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF).

Officials said the militant's decision to lay down arms was a result of sustained pressure and strategic psychological operations conducted by security forces to restore peace in the troubled Tirap district.

"This surrender reinforces the collective commitment of the administration and security agencies towards wiping out insurgency, restoring societal harmony, and creating an environment conducive to economic development in the region," a senior police officer said. (PTI)

Mizoram's Lawngtlai district resolves to strengthen measures against illegal immigration



AIZAWL, July 17: Authorities in Mizoram's Lawngtlai district on Friday resolved to strengthen measures against illegal immigration and strictly monitor commercial activities involving undocumented entrants, an official statement said.

The decision was taken during a high-level meeting of officials from the district administration, Lai Autonomous District Council (LADC), police, Assam Rifles, representatives of village councils and non-governmental organisations (NGOs). It was chaired by Lawngtlai Deputy Commissioner Donny Lalruatsanga.

Lawngtlai district in the southern part of Mizoram shares borders with Myanmar and Bangladesh.

Addressing the meeting, LADC Chief Ex-

ecutive Member (CEM) C Lalsawmzuala underscored the need to ensure close coordination among the government, village councils, NGOs and churches to tackle illegal immigration.

While acknowledging the importance of cross-border trade with neighbouring countries, he cautioned that unregulated business activities involving illegal entrants could adversely affect locals if left unchecked.

Stressing the role of the Assam Rifles in safeguarding the international boundary, he urged the paramilitary force guarding the India-Myanmar border to remain vigilant in protecting the security and interests of the people.

The CEM said maintaining peace, public safety and law and order in Lawngtlai district remains a top priority of the LADC administration, and assured the participants that all measures would be taken in accordance with the law and in the interest of the public, the statement said.

Lalruatsanga said biometric enrolment of refugees, being carried out in accordance with the Ministry of Home Affairs' directives, is nearing completion. He directed all village councils and hotels to ensure proper registration of refugees and undocumented entrants, and warned against providing shelter to individuals staying illegally. (PTI)

Tripura govt will write to Gadkari for immediate repair of NHs: CM Saha

AGARTALA, July 17: Tripura Chief Minister Manik Saha on Friday said his government would write to Union Road Transport and Highways Minister Nitin Gadkari for immediate repair works of highways in the state.

This came hours after the Congress's Tripura unit president, Asish Kumar Saha, criticised the chief minister over the worsening condition of national highways in the northeastern state.

"Following my directive, PWD Secretary Kiran Gitee reviews the condition of the national highways. A letter requesting Union Minister Nitin Gadkari to undertake immediate repair work on the national highways will be sent shortly," Chief Minister Saha told reporters.

He said that he had raised the issue with the Union minister during a visit to the national capital a month ago.

"I had a meeting with Union Minister Nitin Gadkari over the connectivity issue. I apprised him about the condition of the national highways in the state. We are putting pressure on the ministry because it maintains the national highways," he said.

Earlier in the day, Tripura Congress president Asish Kumar Saha had slammed CM Manik Saha, who is also in charge of the public works department portfolio, over the condition of the national highways in the state.

"None of the national highways in Tripura are motorable. The government must improve the national highways at the earliest," he said. (PTI)

Sikkim Univ Students Association extends support to Sonam Wangchuk's indefinite hunger strike

GANGTOK, July 17: Sikkim University Students' Association (SUSA) has extended its support to educator and climate activist Sonam Wangchuk, who is on an indefinite hunger strike at Jantar Mantar, New Delhi, over alleged examination irregularities.

Wangchuk on Friday asserted that he would "stay alive till July 20 at any cost", even as his indefinite hunger strike entered its 20th day amid a warning from doctors that his prolonged fast has reached a critical stage. The Cockroach Janta Party's (CJP) protest at Jantar Mantar over alleged examination irregularities entered its 28th day, with Wangchuk urging people to ensure a massive turnout for the outfit's proposed march to Parliament on July 20.

SUSA in a press statement on Thursday voiced concern over Wangchuk's deteriorating health and said that his peaceful protest had grown into a larger movement demanding accountability and transparency in public examinations. The student association alleged that recurring paper leaks, abrupt cancellations and adminis-



trative failures have severely eroded public confidence in national testing agencies. Referring to the 2026 NEET-UG controversy, SUSA said the cancellation of the examination following allegations of widespread paper leaks affected more than 2.28 million candidates, triggering psychological stress, delayed admissions and financial hardship for families. It added that similar concerns had also surfaced in examinations such as UGC-NET and CUET.

SUSA said students from Sikkim and the North Eastern region bear a disproportionate burden when national examinations are disrupted

due to geographical isolation, limited coaching facilities, connectivity challenges and the high cost of travelling outside the region for preparation and counselling.

In its statement, the association demanded the introduction of end-to-end digital encryption, biometric authentication and AI-based monitoring to prevent paper leaks. It also called for the creation of an independent Examination Integrity Commission with representation from the judiciary, academia, civil society and state governments to oversee the functioning of the National Testing Agency and other testing bodies. (PTI)

Farmers' welfare, systematic governance reforms among biggest strengths of ZPM govt: Mizoram CM



AIZAWL, July 17: Mizoram Chief Minister Lalduhoma on Friday asserted that farmers' welfare and systemic governance reforms were among the biggest strengths of the Zoram People's Movement (ZPM) government.

He said the state government has also introduced extensive reforms in the administrative system.

"One of the key strengths of our government is its commitment to supporting and uplifting farmers. Our government has introduced extensive reforms in the administrative system. Those who claim they cannot see any change in governance, simply do not wish to acknowledge them," Lalduhoma said at an

event in East Lungdar village.

He said the government's commitment to providing assured prices for agricultural produce "has been fulfilled", with procurement currently covering five crops -- ginger, broom grass, chilli, turmeric and broom bamboo -- and plans are underway to expand the list.

Lalduhoma said that "unlike" previous governments, the present dispensation is committed to prudent financial management, and does not permit unnecessary expenditure.

The chief minister said that his government is also working towards promoting cluster-based farming, enabling farmers cultivating similar crops to grow those in designated areas to improve efficiency, production and marketing.

Lalduhoma also said the state government is awaiting approval for the proposed ₹ 250-crore Arthakaw-Zawlei road project, a 65-km stretch in Hrangturzo constituency, under the Prime Minister's Development Initiative for North East Region. (PTI)

Tripura govt transfers 4 IPS, 44 TPS officers

AGARTALA, July 17: The state government has transferred four Indian Police Service (IPS) officers and 43 Tripura Police Service (TPS) officers, an official notification said.

Sudhambika R, IPS, the SP of Unakoti district has been transferred and made the new SP, Cyber Crime, replacing Nabadwip Jamatia, IPS, who is posted as Commandant of TSR 15th battalion, the notification issued by the General Administration (GA) department on Thursday said.

Sankar Debnath, IPS, will be the new SP of Economic Offences while Priyamadhuri Majumder is the new SP, Vigilance Organisation, replacing Jeremia Darlong.

Darlong has been made Commandant, Counter Insurgency Anti Terrorists (CIAT) School in Dhalai district.

Kishan Kumar, who was the head of CIAT School in Dhalai district, has been posted as SP, SCRB (State Crime Record Bureau), while Chandan Saha, the Additional SP of Special Branch, has been given additional charge of SP, Mobile Task Force (MTF), which works for detection of illegal infiltrators. Pannalal Sen is the new SDPO, Sadar subdivision, who will look after the policing system in Agartala city, replacing Debaprasad Roy, the notification added. (PTI)

Mizoram targets 2,649-hectare plantation expansion under second phase of CM's Rubber Mission

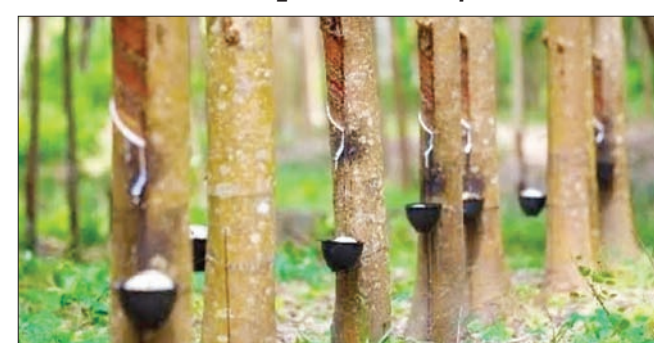
AIZAWL, July 17: The Mizoram government aims to expand rubber plantations in the state by 2,649 hectares in eight districts under phase two of the Chief Minister's Rubber Mission, an official said on Friday.

Launched in 2024, the five-year programme's objective is to expand rubber plantations by 11,500 hectares and turn rubber cultivation into a major driver of the state's rural economy.

The mission entered its second phase this year, targeting 2,649 hectares across 117 clusters in eight districts, Mizoram's Land Resources, Soil and Water Conservation Director Vanlal-muanpuia Chhangte said.

He informed reporters that 2,580 partners are participating in this phase with plans to plant 11.92 lakh rubber saplings.

To encourage participation, the government has announced a comprehensive four-year support package for beneficiaries



that includes providing free rubber saplings, replacement plants, annual supplies of fertilisers and plant protection chemicals, and support for fencing, among others, Chhangte said.

Financial assistance will be released only after field verification of plantation work, and payments will be made directly into beneficiaries' bank accounts, he said.

Chhangte said the government has also announced that

100 units of rubber processing machinery will be procured during the current year and provided to farmers with mature plantations who lack the resources.

The third phase of the mission is likely to be launched in 2027, the officer said, adding the extent of the plantation coverage in this phase is yet to be finalised.

Chhangte told reporters that the state has nearly 50,000 hectares of land suitable for rub-

ber cultivation, but only around 7,000 hectares have so far been developed since rubber cultivation began in the state in 1982.

The government believes that rubber cultivation offers multiple benefits beyond income generation, including reclaiming wastelands, conserving water resources, controlling soil erosion, and providing a sustainable alternative to shifting cultivation, he said.

However, the high cost of setting up plantations has limited large-scale expansion in the past, he said.

Chief Minister's Rubber Mission not only seeks to expand plantation coverage but also to resolve challenges faced by existing rubber growers and strengthen the marketing network for rubber products.

Phase one of the mission began in early 2025, covering 1,000 hectares in Mamit and Kolashib districts. (PTI)

Root digs in as England level series with four-wicket victory over India

CARDIFF, July 17: A steadfast Joe Root anchored England's series-leveling four-wicket win over India in the second ODI here after the visitors' batting once again seemed vulnerable with senior player Rohit Sharma's struggles triggering fresh speculation around his future.

Root delivered an unbeaten 99 off 133 balls to steer England home and keep them alive in the three-match series that will conclude at the Lord's on Sunday. That game could well be Rohit's final in India colours after he struggled to a 47-ball 26, adding to the pressure on him. He looked out of touch as India were dismissed for 233 in 44 overs on Thursday. Virat Kohli (65) and Shreyas Iyer (66) ensured that the bowlers had something to fight with after other batters disappointed.

In reply, Root's was a model innings that showed how to control a chase on a track that offered sharp bounce, making the Indian pace trio menacing during the early part of the run chase.

His 72-run stand for sixth wicket with Will Jacks (30) sealed the game after England had their own struggled after being reduced to 125 for five. The chase was completed in 44.1 overs.

Root used the big square dimensions of the field to keep the scoreboard ticking. Since the target was a small one, England were never under scoreboard pressure which allowed Root to score runs at a slow pace.



He came tantalizingly close to a hundred but Gus Atkinson hit the winning boundary to deny him.

Earlier, Rohit once again found himself under intense scrutiny with every dot ball adding to the pressure. Opposition teams have decoded the flaws in his technique and left-arm seamers, who create awkward angles, are quickly introduced to pose problems for the former India skipper.

Save a six off Atkinson, not one stroke from Rohit inspired any confidence.

After six deliveries from Sam Curran went without a single, he was also unable to negotiate Adil Rashid. His misery was ended by Will Jacks when his nothing short of a lap sweep turned into a top edge dolly for Jos Buttler.

While Kohli's confident innings

reminded all and sundry of his salad days, Rohit's form only indicated that he is nearer to the end than ever before.

Kohli's 66-ball-knock had eight delectable hits to the fence but none more aesthetically pleasing than the bowler's back-drive off Jofra Archer.

However, it was painful to see one of India's greatest ODI stalwarts struggle to a painstaking 26 off 47 balls which included nine dots in a row before he surrendered in a meek fashion.

Together, Rohit and Kohli added 60 in 10 overs but everyone present in stands at the Sophia Gardens would agree there was nothing called a partnership. Only Kohli scored as Rohit gasped for breathing space.

The middle-order caved in inex-

plicably with four wickets lost for 15 runs in a space of 26 deliveries as Jofra Archer (3/47 in 10 overs) breathed fire in each spell that he bowled.

Saqib Mahmood (2/52 in 9 overs) and Atkinson (3/50 in 9 overs) were also among wickets.

Vice-captain Iyer turned out to be the batting hero for India as he countered the short ball well but didn't get much support from the other end. India nonetheless started their 233-run defence confidently as Bumrah got one to move a shade from length forcing Ben Duckett to nick one to Ishan Kishan behind stumps.

Prasidh bowled an even better delivery to Jacob Bethell which reared up from length while Harry Brook's short but sweet 16 ended with a poor shot off Gurnoor Brar giving Kishan his third catch.

However, Root was unperturbed by the help that Indian pacers extracted off the surface. He took the least risk while batting against Bumrah and attacked Prasidh.

In company of Sam Curran (26),

he added 41 runs before Kishan stood up to stumps to prevent the all-rounder from giving Shivam Dube's military medium the required charge.

The result was a smart catch to dismiss Curran.

With Washington Sundar ruled out of the series due to a hamstring niggle, onus was on Axar Patel, who cleaned up Jos Buttler. But Root too control to take England past the finishing line. (PTI)

New Zealand beats West Indies by 6 wickets in the 3rd ODI to take a 2-1 series lead

PROVIDENCE (GUYANA), July 17: West Indies collapsed from 67-1 to be all out for 140, handing New Zealand a six-wicket win in the third one-day cricket international Thursday and a 2-1 lead in the five-match series.

The collapse mirrored that of the second match in which the West Indies fell from 63-0 to 138 all out as New Zealand won by five wickets, leveling the series after losing the first match by seven wickets.

New Zealand's run chase was cautiously paced at 3.5 runs per over and ended in the 40th over at 141-4, with 63 balls remaining.

Henry Nicholls made 24 and Will Young 23 in a solid partnership for the first wicket. Daryl Mitchell made 28 in the middle of the innings and Tom Latham and Dean Foxcroft saw New Zealand home in an unbroken partnership of 52 for the fifth wicket.

Latham again was reliable, making 31 from 53 balls while Foxcroft made 22 from 28.

Left-arm wrist spinner Vitel Laves put some pressure on the Kiwis with three early wickets but the target was too small to maintain that pressure.

West Indies lost eight wickets in just over 20 overs in the face of excellent spin bowling from left-armers Jayden Lennox who took 4-52 to go with his 5-19 in the second match of the series. Mitchell Santner took 2-15 from 8.1 overs and Michael Bracewell 2-33 on another turning pitch at Providence Stadium.



Lennox has been player of the match in the last two internationals. All of his nine wickets have been bowled or lbw.

"There's obviously not secret to it, it's keep the stumps in play," Lennox said in a post-match television interview. "You have to let the pitch do what it does. We can't control that but if we put the ball in the right area we're obviously going to get some rewards."

West Indies opener Campbell injured

Things began to go awry for West Indies when opener John Campbell was carried from the field on a stretcher in the sixth over after tearing a hamstring while running between wickets.

West Indies was 25-0 at that point and 38-1 when Campbell's opening partner Akeem Auguste was brilliantly caught by Santner off the bowling of Jacob Duffy to provide a

rare wicket for the seamers.

Lennox bowled West Indies captain Shai Hope (8) and Mitchell Santner removed Sherfane Rutherford (4). Keacy Carty loomed as a danger to New Zealand, making 48 from 77 balls before being trapped lbw by Bracewell. When he was out the total was 121-4 but the last five West Indies wickets fell for 19 runs and Campbell was unable to return and resume his innings.

"It's always challenging batting first in Guyana," Hope said. "I'm not being a good captain when it comes to winnings the toss."

"We still have to find ways of scoring in tough conditions. I still felt they bowled really well but we have to find ways to score in these challenging conditions."

The series now moves to Bridgetown, Barbados where the fourth international will be played on Sunday. (AP)

Pilik Choudhury Memorial Inter-District U-15 School Football Tournament from tomorrow

HT Correspondent

MORIGAN, July 17: The Pilik Choudhury Memorial Inter-District School Football Tournament (U-15 Boys), 2026-27 will commence on Sunday at the Manipur Mini Stadium in Morigan.

Organised under the aegis of the Department of Sports and Youth Welfare, Assam, the tournament marks the beginning of a statewide initiative aimed at identifying and nurturing promising young football talent while promoting sportsmanship, discipline and healthy competition among school students.

Director of the Department of Sports and Youth Welfare, Ankur Bharali (ACS), will inaugurate the tournament.

The department has completed all necessary preparations to ensure the smooth conduct of the competition, which is expected to bring together talented young footballers from different districts of the state.

I wouldn't say Rohit is struggling: Batting coach Kotak

CARDIFF, July 17: India batting coach Sitanshu Kotak has dismissed criticism of Rohit Sharma's form, insisting that the former India captain is neither under pressure nor enduring a slump despite his failure to come good in the second ODI against England here.

Rohit, who now plays only the ODI format, managed 26 off 47 balls on Thursday as India went down by four wickets, allowing England to level the series.

In the opening ODI too, the veteran opener had failed to make an impact, scoring just 11, though India cruised to victory thanks to half-centuries from Shubman Gill, Washington Sundar and Axar Patel.

With Rohit's modest returns inevitably coming under scrutiny, Kotak threw his weight behind the skipper.

"I don't think a player of Rohit's calibre will come under any kind of pressure. He's too good a player to feel that," said Kotak during the post-match press conference.

"Yes, he didn't make runs in the two matches but I don't think that makes any difference. Today also, it looked like he'll probably get a good inning out. But that's okay," he replied when asked if someone like Yashasvi Jaiswal or Ishan Kishan could get a look-in for the



opener's slot in ODIs after the series concludes.

"So, I wouldn't use the word he was struggling but maybe the shots he normally plays on the up and all, which is because of the double bounce. Probably he felt it wasn't comfortable."

Kotak said even the best batters can take time to find their rhythm, attributing Rohit's modest returns to his inability to get through the early phase of his innings rather than any deeper issue.

"I've played lot of cricket and I've seen lot of cricket. On a day there are a lot of batters that I've seen they don't get that momentum they're looking for and that can happen. You might see a completely different innings from

Rohit Sharma at Lord's (third and final ODI of the series on Sunday)," he insisted.

Kotak pointed to the contrasting innings of Shubman Gill and Virat Kohli in the series so far, saying both batters benefited from getting through the early phase of their knocks, which allowed them to build confidence.

Rohit, by comparison, was dismissed before he could settle into his innings.

"Shubman got a quick start in first ODI, Virat got a quick start but Rohit probably didn't get that start (and) he didn't get going. That's what I felt. I've seen that happening to a lot of batters, not just Rohit, so I wouldn't use the word he was struggling," added

Kotak.

He said that the pitch was two-paced, which troubled the Indians batting first, though it settled down in the second half and helped Joe Root play a match-winning unbeaten 99.

"I felt the fuller deliveries came on nicely to the bat, but the back-of-length balls were holding up a bit and bouncing slightly more in the first innings. In the second innings, though, they weren't getting up as much," explained Kotak.

But he also maintained that lack of partnerships was not the reason for India's loss.

"In the last match, there was a partnership. And even today, I think, overall, India were 178 for 3, when Virat was playing. Till then, the partnerships were good. I think, unfortunately, Washington (Sundar) got injured...and he obviously got out.

"After that, we lost two quick wickets (Axar Patel and Shivan Dube) and that made a difference. Had we scored 270-280, it would have been a really challenging score," said Kotak.

"And then, in the second half, the wicket maybe got little slower, and Joe Root just stayed on the wicket. If we would have got Root out, it would have been interesting," he said. (PTI)

Swede Joakim Alexandersson returns as India U-17 women's team head coach

BENGALURU, July 17: Sweden's Joakim Alexandersson has taken charge as head coach of the India U-17 women's national team, less than a year after leaving the role, as the squad begins preparation for the AFC U-17 Women's Asian Cup 2027 qualifiers in October.

The first batch of 24 players reported for camp-cum-trials which began here on Wednesday.

India have been drawn in Group E alongside hosts Malaysia, Syria and Iraq for the qualifiers to be held from October 5 to 11. Players born on or after January 1, 2010, are eligible for the tournament.

Head coach Joakim Alexandersson has taken charge of the U17 women's team for the new qualification cycle. Pamela Conti, who coached the team in the AFC U17 Women's Asian Cup 2026, departed at the end of her contract in May," the All India Football Federation (AIFF) said in a release.

Alexandersson guided the previous batch to qualification for the 2026 tournament after India beat Uzbekistan 2-1 in Bishkek in October last year. In January this year, the AIFF appointed Italian Pamela Conti to take charge of the team for the AFC U17 Women's Asian Cup 2026.

Under Conti, less than three months ago, the U17 team created history by reaching the Asian Cup quarter-finals for the first time.

"The current camp represents the first step in building on that historic achievement, with the objective of qualifying for back-to-back AFC U17 Women's Asian Cups for the first time," the AIFF said.

"While 24 players have initially reported to the camp, the selection process remains ongoing. Addi-



tional players are expected to join following further scouting across the country," it added.

With Conti at the helm of the U17 side, Alexandersson was given charge of the U20 team in the AFC U20 Women's Asian Cup 2026 in which India were eliminated in the group stage.

Earlier this month, Alexandersson attended the Khelo India Performance Assessment Camp in New Delhi, where he assessed a number of young players. The Swede also visited the FIFA-AIFF Telangana Talent Academy in Hyderabad as part of the player identification process.

The scouting process will continue during the inaugural AIFF U17 Women's Youth League 2026-27, which kicks off in Naranipur, Chhattisgarh, on July 18. Later this month, Alexandersson will travel to the competition to monitor performances and identify additional players for the national team camp.

Further evaluations will take place over the coming weeks before the Young Tigresses' preliminary squad for the AFC U17 Women's Asian Cup China 2027 Qualifiers is finalised and announced. (PTI)

MMA fighter Sangram Singh takes on Pakistani rival tomorrow

NEW DELHI, July 17: Indian mixed martial arts (MMA) fighter Sangram Singh is set for one of the biggest contests of his combat sports career as he takes on Pakistan's Mohammed Abid Ali for the prestigious STRIKE Asia Champion Title in Kuala Lumpur on Sunday. The title fight has generated significant anticipation across the combat sports fraternity, with the winner set to be crowned the STRIKE Asia Champion.

The contest also marks another important milestone in Sangram's remarkable transition from professional wrestling to mixed martial arts. A two-time Commonwealth heavyweight wrestling champion, Sangram has enjoyed a flawless start to his professional MMA career.

He announced himself on the global stage by defeating Pakistan's Ali Raza Nasir in just 90 seconds on his MMA debut in Georgia before registering impressive victories over Tunisia's Hakim Trabelsi in the Netherlands and France's Florian Coudier in Argentina. (PTI)

AIFF invites applications for SOM roster under new sports governance law

NEW DELHI, July 17: The All India Football Federation on Friday invited applications from retired players for inclusion in its Sportspersons of Outstanding Merit (SOM) roster, a key requirement under the National Sports Governance Act which the AIFF adopted at its Special General Body Meeting in May. The federation said it will prepare separate rosters comprising 20 male and 20 female Sportspersons of Outstanding Merit, who meet the eligibility criteria prescribed under the new legal framework.

A minimum of four SOMs with voting rights (two male, two female) are required to be inducted into the General Body.

According to the AIFF notice, applicants must be

Indian citizens, at least 25 years of age, of sound mind, and must have retired from active competition, having not participated in any event leading to district, state or national selection for at least one year before submitting the application. Applicants must also satisfy at least one of the tier-based eligibility criteria. The highest tier is for applicants who have been Olympic or Paralympic medalists.

Tier 2 is for participants in at least two separate Olympic or Paralympic Games. Tier 3 covers participants in at least one Olympic or Paralympic Games.

Tiers 4 to 9 comprises those who have been medal winners at the World Championships, Asian Games, and Commonwealth Games. (PTI)

Maradona above Messi in WCs, will be of same status if Argentina win trophy again: Bhutia

NEW DELHI, July 17: Former India captain Bhaichung Bhutia rates Diego Maradona above Lionel Messi in their World Cup performances but said the current Argentine skipper would reach the status of the 1986 Cup-winning hero if the South American country wins the 2026 edition title on Sunday.

Argentina face Spain in the 2026 World Cup final in New York on Sunday. Messi also led Argentina to title in the 2022 World Cup in Qatar.

Maradona led the 1986 Argentina side to victory and was also the captain of the team that lost to Germany in the final in 1990.

For Bhutia, Maradona's exploits of single-handedly winning the 1986 World Cup for Argentina would put him above Messi. But he said a second World Cup trophy for Messi on Sunday will take him on equal standing with Maradona.

"It's difficult to compare. But for me, it's Maradona because he single-handedly won the 1986 World Cup which I don't think any player in history has done that. I watched him in 1986 World Cup and other matches as well," Bhutia told PTI in an interview, when asked to rate

Maradona and Messi in the World Cups. "I think Messi is almost near. If he can win this World Cup, I think he will obviously reach the status of Maradona. He (Messi) has already won one World Cup but to overtake Maradona I think he needs one more World Cup to win," said the former India striker.

"Messi is a great player but he's got a great team around him who really works for him. For Maradona he had to work for everybody and also create those goal-scoring opportunities (for himself)."

Maradona, who died in 2020 at the age of 60, played in four World Cups (1982, 1986, 1990, 1994) and scored eight goals from 21 matches.

Messi, on the other hand, is playing in his sixth World Cup (2006, 2010, 2014, 2018, 2022 and 2026) and has scored 21 goals from 33 appearances so far. He also led Argentina to a runners-up finish in the 2014 World Cup, losing 0-1 to Germany in the final.

"Spain slight favourites against Argentina"

For Bhutia, Spain are a complete side and they are the favourites to win the title against Argentina on Sunday, though he



feels that the Messi-led team cannot be written off after the so many stupendous come-back wins.

"Spain has a complete team structure, they have a better midfield, they don't really wait for a single player or moment," said Bhutia, Indian football's poster boy in the first decade of this century.

"But again, when everybody thought Argentina are down and out, they have come back strong. They have found

something or the other way to come back and win matches when it looked like they have lost it. So definitely, Argentina can be unpredictable but I still feel Spain has got a better chance to win the World Cup."

He felt Spain beating France in the first semifinals was not much of a surprise but England losing to Argentina after taking 1-0 lead in the second semifinal was a "shock" to him.

"Strong in midfield, good at building up from behind with a lot of possession, Spain have played like that throughout. France could have changed a little bit tactically, especially in midfield to win more battles, because they had four great players attacking wise. Mbappe and Olise were starved (of services). That made a big difference and Spain really dominated the match."

"The second semifinals was a bit of a surprise. I had expected England to win against Argentina because Argentina had been struggling. England took a lead but after that the way they went defensive was something which was shocking."

"They (England) should have kept that momentum in terms of attacking, defending 20-30 minutes against a side like Argentina is difficult. After 20-30 attacks, one or two is bound to go in. The 12% possession England have from their goal to Argentina's match winning goal shows that they were too defensive minded."

On Messi, whose sublime assist led to Argentina's match-winning goal, Bhutia said, "Big players rise in big occasions. If you give him one chance, he will either

score or create a chance."

Bhutia refused to read too much on claims that Argentina were favoured by the Video Assistant Referee (VAR) system than any other team in this World Cup, but said the on-field referee could have taken "common sense" decisions, especially against Switzerland.

"Law-wise, I don't think it really favoured Argentina as such but there are some occasions where the decisions could have been taken more on a common-sense basis."

"Especially the Switzerland vs Argentina game, the second yellow card and hence the red card (to a Swiss player) can be as per law wise, but there are a lot of things where you don't have to go by law and it can be overlooked by the referee. That incident was not anywhere in the middle of the field, the ball had gone out for end throw."

Bhutia also has no problems with the VAR and the use of technology. "It's all right because decisions are coming quite fast, it's not stopping and delaying a game or making it boring. I think we've got the technology right except for one or two occasions." (PTI)