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NEET paper leak: CJP calls off 36-day protest ● Govt accepts other demands ● I didn't want 'anti-national forces' to exploit the situation: Outgoing Edu minister

Pradhan finally steps down -- Victory of youth movement

NEW DELHI, July 25: The Cockroach Janta Party on Saturday called off its 36-day agitation after Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan resigned and the government accepted its other demands, a momentous win for the unprecedented youth-led movement that galvanised lakhs of people over irregularities in exams and the NEET paper leak.

Pradhan announced his resignation in a statement, saying the developments of the past 10 days had "saddened" him deeply and that the issue was "not a matter of personal prestige".

Noting that he did not want "anti-national forces" to exploit the situation, Pradhan said he wanted to ensure that "the unity of the nation remains intact", "the future of even a single student should not become entangled in legal complications" and that students devote their time to studies and building their careers.

"Keeping all these considerations in mind, I have sent my resignation to the Hon'ble Prime Minister," he said.

Soon after Pradhan's announce-



Pralhad Joshi replaces Pradhan

NEW DELHI, July 25: Union Minister Pralhad Joshi has been appointed as Education Minister following Dharmendra Pradhan's resignation from the post on Saturday.

Joshi has been given additional charge of the Education Ministry besides his role as Consumer Affairs Minister.

A Rashtrapati Bhavan communique said the President, as advised by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, has accepted the resignation of Pradhan with immediate effect.

It said that on the advice of the Prime Minister, the President has directed that Joshi, Cabinet Minister, be assigned the charge of the Ministry of Education, in addition to his own duties.

Earlier in the day, Pradhan resigned from his post following the Cockroach Janta Party-led student protests across the country, demanding his ouster over the NEET paper leak controversy.

Pradhan said it is not a matter of "individual prestige" for him and he is disturbed to see the series of events that have unfolded in the last 10 days. (PTI)

ensure the withdrawal of all FIRs registered against protesters.

"As the government accepted all our demands, we call off our protests with immediate effect. We appeal everyone to go back home peacefully," Das said.

Jubilant scenes erupted at Jantar Mantar and chants of "Hum Jeet

Gaye" (We have won) rang out across the protest site after Pradhan resigned.

As the celebrations continued, authorities began overseeing the winding down of the demonstration, urging protesters to disperse peacefully, while the Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

PM dials CM to enquire flood relief

GUWAHATI, July 25: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday offered full support to the Assam government in dealing with the ongoing flood havoc, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said.

In a post on X, Sarma said that Modi called him to enquire about the prevailing flood situation.

"He sought an update on the extent of the devastation, the ongoing relief operations and the challenges we are confronting on the ground," he added.

Sarma said that he briefed the PM on the measures the state government is undertaking and its efforts to reach out to every affected family.

"Expressing his deep condolences over the loss of lives and property, the Hon'ble Prime Minister assured the people of Assam that this calamity is being accorded the highest priority and the Government of India will (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Sonowal reviews flood relief in Assam, assures Centre's continued support

GUWAHATI, July 25: Union Minister and former Assam chief minister Sarbananda Sonowal reviewed aid efforts at relief camps in flood-hit areas of the state and directed officials to ensure uninterrupted access to healthcare, food, drinking water and other essential services for the deluge-affected people.

He visited a couple of relief camps in Sivasagar district, interacted with displaced families and instructed officials to remain vigilant and ensure that no flood-affected family faces any hardship in accessing basic necessities.

Sonowal told people at the relief camps that the Central and state governments were working closely to provide timely assistance to every affected person.

"The Government of India stands firmly with the people of Assam during this challenging time. We remain



committed to safeguarding every life and ensuring that relief, healthcare, food and safe drinking water continue to reach every family in need," he added.

"Natural disasters test our re-

silience, but they also bring out our spirit of unity and compassion. Together, with coordinated efforts of governments, voluntary organisations and our citizens, we shall overcome this (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

GUWAHATI, July 25: A domesticated elephant was swept away from the Nagaland hills to the Brahmaputra Valley due to the raging floods, and it has been rescued and is being treated, Assam Forest Minister Jayanta Malla Baruah said on Saturday.

The 53-year-old elephant was swept by the Dikhow River, a tributary of the Brahmaputra, from Namsang in Nagaland and it washed ashore at Bihubor in Assam's Sivasagar district. The pachyderm was safely rescued on Friday and veterinary care was provided to it, the minister said.

"As we continue to strengthen disaster response and animal welfare, our focus remains on ensuring that every life -- human or animal -- receives timely care during emergencies," he said.

The minister said the rescue re-

flected the dedication of frontline personnel, who work tirelessly during floods to safeguard wildlife and domesticated animals displaced by rising waters.

Following the rescue, the elephant safely made its way to Balighat in Simaluguri, where it is currently resting under the supervision of the authorities.

A veterinary team from the Nazira Veterinary Dispensary, supported by the Nazira Mobile Veterinary Unit, promptly reached the site to conduct a comprehensive health examination and provide immediate medical treatment.

Veterinary experts have confirmed that the elephant will remain under continuous observation to ensure a full recovery from the physical stress caused by the flood.

Baruah said, "Every monsoon presents immense challenges for

both people and animals across the Northeast. Timely rescue operations, professional veterinary care and co-ordinated efforts by government agencies play a crucial role in reducing the impact of natural disasters on vulnerable wildlife and domesticated animals, reflecting Assam's growing capacity for compassionate and effective disaster management."

He said that the state government's vision is to build an Assam where disaster resilience goes hand-in-hand with compassion for all living beings.

"Every successful rescue strengthens our commitment to protecting the state's rich natural heritage while reaffirming that humanity is at its best when it extends care to those who cannot speak for themselves," he added.

The flood situation in Assam remained grim (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Arunachal CM expresses solidarity with people affected by Assam floods

ITANAGAR, July 25: Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister Pema Khandu on Saturday expressed his solidarity with the people of flood-hit Assam, offering thoughts and prayers to every family impacted by the devastating deluge in the neighbouring state.

In a social media post, Khandu praised the multi-agency rescue and relief efforts being carried out across the inundated regions.

"My thoughts and prayers are with every family affected by the devastating floods in Assam. Salute to the NDRF, SDRF, Armed Forces, police personnel, volunteers, and everyone working tirelessly in res-

cue and relief operations," the chief minister said.

Extending his support to the victims, Khandu added, "May those affected find strength, safety, and hope. Praying for the waters to recede soon and for Assam to recover stronger."

The flood situation in Assam remained grim on Saturday even as the water level has started to recede in some parts, while 61 people have died of the deluge and over 7.05 lakh people are affected in nine districts.

According to the Assam State Disaster Management Authority's daily flood report, more than 7.05,100 people have (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Assam Police arrest 3 linked to Pak-based Shahzad Bhatti terror network

GUWAHATI, July 25: The Assam Police have unearthed a terror module linked to the Pakistan-based Shahzad Bhatti network and arrested three alleged operatives in the north-eastern state, an official said on Saturday.

The official said the Special Task Force (STF) conducted a coordinated operation on Friday with assistance from the district police of Dhubri, Chirang, and Barpeta.

"During the operation, the STF apprehended one suspect each from Dhubri, Chirang and Barpeta districts," he added.

The operation also resulted in the seizure of five mobile phones, seven SIM cards, Aadhaar cards, bank passbooks, debit cards and incrimi-



nating documents, the official said. "Further investigation is in progress," he added.

Speaking about the exercise, STF senior superintendent of Police

Pranab Kumar Pegu said the operation was launched on the basis of credible intelligence regarding the activities of the Shahzad Bhatti network. (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

India's ancient Buddhist site of Sarnath inscribed on UNESCO World Heritage List

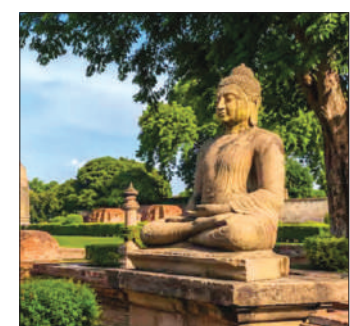
NEW DELHI, July 25: India's ancient Buddhist site of Sarnath in Uttar Pradesh was on Saturday inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List.

The decision was taken during the ongoing meeting of the UNESCO's World Heritage Committee's 48th session in Busan, South Korea.

"New inscription on the @UNESCO #WorldHeritage List: Ancient Buddhist Site of Sarnath, 'India,'" the UNESCO posted on X.

This is India's 45th site to join the list of UNESCO World Heritage.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi hailed the inscription, stating that the site has a deep connection with Lord



Buddha, whose timeless message of wisdom, compassion, and harmony inspires the world.

In August 2025, Union Culture Minister (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

The Starlinks accomplished all their jobs before reentering over the Indian Ocean

SpaceX launches Starship on another test flight, this time with the most advanced Starlinks

CAPE CANAVERAL, July 25: SpaceX's mammoth Starship rocket blasted off Friday on another test flight stretching halfway around the world, this time releasing 20 of the most advanced Starlinks.

Towering 407 feet (124 metres), Starship soared from the company's base at the southern tip of Texas. NASA monitored the flight, a critical step toward using the Starship as a lunar lander for moon crews.

The hourlong journey ended with a splashdown so soft that the spacecraft remained afloat in the Indian Ocean as the SpaceX webcast drew to a close, drawing cheers from employees back at the launch site.

Elon Musk's SpaceX had replaced six of the 33 engines on the first-stage booster after they failed to ignite last week, resulting in a last-second launch abort. The previous Starship flight in May also experienced engine trouble, which prevented the booster from making a controlled return.



This time, all of the engines fired at liftoff, but not enough of them lit back up for the booster's return, causing it to descend too fast and slam into the Gulf of Mexico. The spacecraft continued soaring eastward, popping out the Starlinks one by one 124 miles (200 kilometres) up before reentering. It was the 13th flight of the world's

biggest and most powerful rocket, and the second this year of the new version dubbed V3. Like the previous demo, neither the booster nor spacecraft was meant to be saved, instead plunging into the sea.

The stainless steel, retro-looking spacecraft hovered upright over the Indian Ocean before dropping into the

water, more than 10,000 miles (16,000 kilometres) from where the flight began. It was the best reentry yet, according to SpaceX, with the booster floating amid just a few flames.

"We're really pumped about this," said SpaceX engineer Kate Tice, calling it "lucky flight 13."

The Starlinks accomplished all their jobs before reentering over the Indian Ocean.

After being ejected from the Starship's Pez-like dispenser, the Starlinks managed to communicate via lasers with older Starlink models already in orbit. With more than 10,000 Starlinks currently providing internet, SpaceX boasts the world's largest satellite constellation.

Six of the newly launched Starlinks carried cameras that photographed Starship's heat shield at flight's end, beaming back amazingly crisp shots even as the spacecraft bobbed in the ocean. The heat shield was also equipped with sensors to measure the

extreme pressure placed on the spacecraft during launch. Most of the heat shield's thermal tiles were black, but some were deliberately painted white to simulate missing tiles, part of an experiment to test the shield's robustness.

"Excited for what will be learned from this mission," NASA Administrator Jared Isaacman said on the social platform X.

SpaceX wants to make sure Starship's heat shield can withstand the heat of entry before trying to return it to the Starbase launch pad near the Texas-Mexico border. The company already has used a pair of giant mechanical arms at the pad to capture a Starship booster. The company plans to do the same with the actual spacecraft, which is designed to be totally reusable.

NASA needs Starship to wrap up testing and reach orbit soon so the Artemis III astronauts — three Americans and one Italian — can practice docking their (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Mizoram to submit memorandum to Centre against FCRA amendment bill

AIZAWL, July 25: The Mizoram government and the state's apex church bodies on Saturday decided to jointly submit a memorandum to the Centre, recommending changes to the proposed Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Amendment Bill, 2026, maintaining that the legislation in its present form is unacceptable.

The decision was taken at a meeting between chief minister Lalduhoma and leaders of the Mizoram Kohhran Hruaitute Committee (MKHC) and the Council of Churches in Mizoram (CCM) at the CM's official residence.

During the meeting, the participants held detailed discussions on the proposed amendments to the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act (FCRA) and unanimously expressed the view that the bill, in its current form, was unacceptable, officials said.

It was decided that the state government would prepare a memorandum recommending amendments to the proposed legislation. The meeting also resolved that Lalduhoma would seek an appointment with Union Home Minister Amit Shah to facilitate a visit by a joint delegation of MKHC and CCM leaders to New Delhi to submit the memorandum.

The chief minister was accompanied at the meeting by his advisers, Lalmanpuia Punte and TBC Lalvenchunga, both MLAs.

On Thursday, the Congress had urged Lalduhoma to convene a special session of the state assembly to adopt a resolution opposing the FCRA amendment bill. In a memorandum submitted to the chief minister, the party had alleged (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

India placed in lower 10 pc US tariff bracket; reaffirms commitment to BTA

NEW DELHI, July 25: The government on Saturday said the US has placed India in the lower 10 per cent tariff bracket under its Section 301 measures on alleged forced labour concerns and reiterated its commitment to working with Washington for the early conclusion of the bilateral trade agreement.

The United States Trade Representative (USTR) on July 23 announced the final measures under Section 301 of the US Trade Act, 1974 under which it imposed 10 per cent additional import duty on Indian goods from July 24.

The measures follow USTR's investigation into the acts, policies and practices of 60 economies, including India, relating to the imposition and enforcement of prohibitions on the importation of goods produced with forced labour.

The US had initially proposed 12.5 per cent tariffs on India. These 10 per cent duties replaced the earlier 10 per cent temporary tariffs imposed for 150 days from February 24.

Commenting on the US move, the commerce ministry in a statement said India remained closely engaged with USTR throughout the investigation via detailed written submissions and in-person consultations, including participation in public hearings.

"As a result of these sustained efforts, India has been placed in the lower tier of additional tariffs under the final measures, providing a relative advantage to Indian exports in key sectors," the commerce ministry said in a statement.

It said a substantial share of India's exports to the US (USD 87.31 billion in 2025-26), which currently attract zero additional duties, such as generic pharmaceuticals, smartphones and certain other specified products, continue to remain outside the scope of the additional 10 per cent duty.

Further, products already covered under Section 232 measures, including steel, aluminium and auto parts, are not subject to the additional 10 per cent duty. According to think tank GTRI, these products account for about 8 per cent of



India's exports and they attract 25 per cent or 50 per cent tariffs in addition to the normal US MFN (most favoured nation) duty.

Section 232 sectoral duties are applicable broadly to all countries with limited exceptions. "On account of these exemptions, an estimated 45 per cent of India's exports to the US remain outside the purview of the additional 10 per cent Section 301 duty," the ministry said.

The remaining 55 per cent of exports will attract the additional 10 per cent duty, where India's tariff incidence is comparatively lower than that for most other economies covered by the investigation.

"The government remains committed to working with the US towards the early conclusion of the India-US Bilateral Trade Agreement, as announced on 2nd February 2026 and in accordance with the Joint Statement issued on 7th February 2026," it said.

TEXTILES ISSUE

Allaying concerns of textiles exporters, the ministry said the textile-specific mechanism referenced in the final measures of Section 301 probe on forced labour issues is yet to be established and operationalised and India continues to engage with the US on this matter as part of the ongoing negotiations for the BTA.

Experts and exporters have stated that India has not received

the textile and apparel tariff-rate quota (TRQ) exemption under the new US Section 301 forced-labour tariff.

The exemption applies to specified volumes of textile and apparel exports from Bangladesh, Cambodia, Indonesia, and Malaysia that use US-origin cotton and fibre.

The USTR has announced that textile TRQs (quota-based duty concessions) will be established for Bangladesh, Cambodia, Indonesia, and Malaysia for an initial period of three years.

Under this, these countries would import US cotton and textile goods for final manufacturing and export to the US at a concessional duty.

Bangladesh is one of the major textile exporters in the world. It is also a top competitor of India in the sector. Bangladeshis traders import large quantities of Indian cotton and fibre, but after this TRQ, they may now import from the US. Expressing serious concerns over the 10 per cent duty, the Confederation of Indian Textile Industry (CITI) has said the US tariff could also affect exports of intermediate textile items from India to other nations.

The US is the single-largest market for India's textile and apparel items. Exports of textile and apparel products from India to the US are usually close to USD 11 billion.

In February, Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal ex-

pressed confidence that India will get concessional duty access for garments made using American yarn and cotton under its trade agreement with the US, similar to the benefits currently provided to Bangladesh.

MEANING OF ADDITIONAL 10 PC TARIFF

The tariffs on import duties by the US on its trading partners, including India, are imposed on over and above the existing duties (also known as MFN duty) a product face in the US market.

For instance, a shirt from India that currently attracts a 5 per cent import duty in the US will now face a total tariff of 15 per cent after the additional 10 per cent levy.

WHAT IS LOWER BRACKET OF 10 PC

The USTR in March initiated two Section 301 probes against a number of countries, including India on issues pertaining to forced labour and excess industrial capacity.

In June, the US proposed 12.5 per cent tariffs on 54 countries, including India, for allegedly failing to prohibit the import of goods produced with forced labour. It had proposed a 10 per cent duty on six regions, including Pakistan and the European Union.

In July, India amended its foreign trade policy to prohibit the import of goods produced using forced labour. Washington took note of this amendment and imposed a 10 per cent duty on India.

WHAT HAPPEN TO THE OTHER PROBE

The US has not yet released any report on the probe on the issue of excess industrial capacity.

According to the GTRI, the Trump administration is expected to announce the results of that investigation, which could lead to additional tariffs on a wide range of industrial products.

BTA

The two are negotiating a bilateral trade agreement. They have finalised a framework deal for the first phase of the pact. India is seeking comparative and competitive advantage over its peer countries at the tariff front. (PTI)

Vizhinjam seaport gets final Customs clearance for EXIM ops

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, July 25: Vizhinjam International Seaport has secured Customs approval to commence EXIM operations, its operator, VISL, said on Saturday.

Vizhinjam International Seaport Ltd said the Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs has granted final approval for the port to officially commence EXIM cargo operations from August 18.

"While Vizhinjam International Seaport, Thiruvananthapuram, has so far functioned exclusively as an international transshipment hub, export-import cargo operations shall commence with effect from August 18, 2026.

"Customs regulation of EXIM cargo will be carried out in coordination with various government and facilitating agencies, such as VISL, AVPPL, the Mercantile

Marine Department, the Port Health Organisation, the Bureau of Immigration, the Coastal Police, authorised banks and port security agencies," the CBIC order dated July 24 said.

As there is currently no designated Container Freight Station attached to the port, the CBIC has imposed several conditions governing EXIM cargo handling.

It said import operations would be restricted to Full Container Load containers eligible for Direct Port Delivery, and such containers must be moved directly from the port terminal to the importer's premises within 48 hours of landing.

The CBIC has directed that no Less-than-Container Load cargo, loose cargo or containers requiring de-stuffing or CFS examination be allowed at the port until a designated CFS becomes operational. (PTI)

Contd. from Page 1...

Pradhan finally steps

(DMRC) reopened all entry and exit gates at nearby stations to facilitate their movement.

Pradhan's resignation marked a significant climbdown for the Narendra Modi government, which had initially dismissed the agitation before gradually opening channels of dialogue with the protesters.

Pradhan is only the second Union minister during Modi's tenure as PM since 2014 to resign following sustained public controversy. The first was M J Akbar, who stepped down as minister of state for external affairs in 2018 after sexual harassment allegations surfaced against him during the #MeToo movement.

Pradhan's resignation is among the few occasions since 2014 that the Modi government has yielded to sustained public or political pressure - the decision in 2015 to shelve the proposed amendments to the land acquisition law and the repeal of the three farm laws in 2021 being two major retreats.

The protests were spearheaded by the BJP, a platform launched by former AAP functionary Abhijeet Dipke as a satirical online campaign in May before it evolved into a nationwide youth movement centred on demands for accountability over the NEET paper leak.

The agitation began at Jantar Mantar on June 20 but acquired national momentum after activist Sonam Wangchuk joined it on June 28 and undertook an indefinite fast with six AISA activists. Wangchuk ended his fast on Thursday night after the Centre's outreach to him. The government's first formal engagement with the BJP leadership came on July 20 at Nadda's residence, even as police cracked down on protesters marching towards Parliament, an action that became a turning point in the agitation and swelled support for the movement.

A second round of discussions was held on Friday after the Centre accepted the BJP's demand that the venue be shifted from a minister's residence to a neutral venue.

Wangchuk's forcible removal from Jantar Mantar to Safdarjung Hospital by police on July 18 had also triggered widespread outrage and broadened support for the agitation.

Reacting to Pradhan's resignation, Wangchuk described it as "a victory of democracy, direct democracy... straight from the streets".

"It is a victory of peace, patience and perseverance," he said, congratulating the BJP, Gen Z and citizens "for shedding fear and the fear of fear and rising up from every corner of the nation".

At Jantar Mantar, protesters erupted in celebration as news of the resignation broke. They danced, waved the tricolour and embraced each other while songs such as "Chak De India" played in the background. Many held portraits of B R Ambedkar, calling the resignation a victory for the movement.

Addressing the jubilant gathering, Dipke said, "We have b***** done it. Pradhan's resignation is proof that if you don't get scared, you can win."

"They used to say that this government does not see resignations. We say the world bends if there is someone who can make it bend," he said. Dipke also thanked Chief Justice of India Surya Kant, whose "cockroaches" remark about unemployed youth had triggered the movement.

"If you had not called us 'cockroaches', I would not have returned to India. If you had not called us 'cockroaches', the youth of the country would not have come out on the streets. If you had not called us 'cockroaches', Dharmendra Pradhan's resignation would not have happened," he said.

Lok Sabha Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi, who had led a dharna of Congress leaders outside the PM's residence on July 21 demanding Pradhan's resignation, said two demands still remained pending -- action against those responsible for alleged atrocities on protesting students and an apology from Prime Minister Narendra Modi to students.

"Daro mat (don't be afraid). Let's get rid of this regime that is attacking India, destroying our Constitution, capturing all our institutions," he said. Speaking to reporters outside 10 Janpath later in the day, Gandhi alleged that Union Home Minister Amit Shah was "directly responsible" for the violence against students, accusing him of authorising the use of "lethal weapons" and pellet guns against protesters.

"We will not accept security forces shooting at students. This will be our major issue in Parliament," he said.

The BJP, however, defended Pradhan, with party president Nitin Nabin saying his decision reflected "the highest standards" of integrity and selfless service.. (PTI)

Death toll up to

of his Nazira constituency and around 30 per cent of the affected people are yet to receive any relief.

At present, the Dikhou river at Sivasagar, Dhanisiri at Nanglamuraghat, Dhanisiri at Numaligarh and Kushiara at Sribhumti are flowing above the danger level. Around 856 villages are under water and 56,606.78 hectares of crop areas have been damaged across Assam, the ASDMA said. Embankments, roads, bridges and other infrastructure have been damaged by flood waters in different districts of the state.

The ASDMA said the administration has been operating 363 relief camps and relief distribution centres in seven districts, taking care of 1,15,205 displaced people at present.

Multiple agencies like the Army, NDRF, SDRF, Fire & Emergency Service, police and civil agencies have rescued around 1,000 people from different parts of Jorhat and Sivasagar, it added.

The authority has distributed 2,109.84 quintals of rice, 383.93 quintals of dal, 129.91 quintals of salt and 9,646.08 litres of mustard oil among the flood victims of the state during the last 24 hours.

On account of widespread flooding, 3,34,020 domestic animals and poultry are affected across the state. (PTI)

Elephant swept away

on Saturday even as the water level has started to recede in some parts. A total of 61 people have died due to the deluge and over 7.05 lakh people have been affected in nine districts, officials said. (PTI)

Sonowal reviews flood

difficult phase and help every affected family rebuild with dignity.

Earlier in the day, Sonowal flagged off the Assam Olympic Association's flood relief mission from Dibrugarh for families in Charaideo, Sivasagar and Jorhat districts, where several areas have been inundated.

The flood situation in Assam remained grim on Saturday even as the water level has started to recede in some parts, while 61 people have died of the deluge and over 7.05 lakh people are affected in nine districts. (PTI)

PM dials CM

extend every possible support to aid our relief, rehabilitation and rebuilding efforts," he added. The people of Assam are deeply grateful to PM Modi for his reassurance and steadfast support during this difficult time, Sarma said. The flood situation in Assam remained grim on Saturday even as the water level has started to recede in some parts, while 61 people have died of the deluge and over 7.05 lakh people are affected in nine districts. (PTI)

Arunachal CM expresses

been affected in Charaideo, Dhemaji, Dibrugarh, Golaghat, Hojai, Jorhat, Karbi Anglong, Nagaon and Sivasagar districts. (PTI)

Assam Police arrest

"The Pakistan-based terrorist-criminal network is allegedly involved in recruitment, online radicalisation, reconnaissance, logistics, espionage, illegal procurement of arms, establishment of sleeper cells and facilitation of terrorist activities in different parts of the country," he added. According to the investigation and intelligence inputs forming part of the case, the network is alleged to operate in association with and under the directions of the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) through Pakistan-based handlers and encrypted communication channels, Pegu said.

"The network operates through and is associated with several front organisations, including Khalistan Armed Force (KAF), Punjab Sovereignty Alliance (PSA), Khalistan Liberation Army (KLA), Sher-e-Punjab Brigade (SPB), United Sikh Brotherhood (USB), Sikh Tigers of Khalistan (STK) and Tehrik-e-Taliban Hindustan (TTH)," he added.

These groups are allegedly used to conceal the network's operational structure and cross-border links, the SSP claimed. During 2026, the TTH claimed responsibility for two targeted killings of Punjab Police personnel on February 22 and May 24, he added. "The network's activities in Assam first came to notice during an investigation in Nalbari district, leading to the arrest of an operative on May 22, 2026," Pegu said. (PTI)

India's ancient Buddhist

Gajendra Singh Shekhawat said that India had submitted a dossier titled 'Ancient Buddhist Site, Sarnath' to the UNESCO World Heritage Centre for the 2025-26 nomination cycle.

He said this in a written response to a query in Lok Sabha.

The World Heritage Committee is one of the two bodies governing the Convention for the Protection of the World's Cultural and Natural Heritage. (PTI)

Mizoram to submit

that the proposed amendments were "detrimental to Christians and non-governmental organisations (NGOs)" and called for urgent steps to formally register Mizoram's opposition to the bill. (PTI)

SpaceX launches Starship

capsule with it next year. Starship is also the vehicle with which Musk intends to build a city on Mars. He's already booking tourist trips to Mars, as well as the moon. The latest test flight was delayed first by the July 16 launch abort, then again on Thursday by thick clouds from Tropical Storm Bertha. (AP)

Many social media links taken down: Govt sources on AI deepfake video of Union Minister Piyush Goyal

NEW DELHI, July 25: Many social media links related to an AI-generated deepfake video of Piyush Goyal have been taken down, government sources said on Saturday, as the Union Minister alleged that his remarks to the media outside Parliament were "maliciously" altered in a clip to spread misinformation, and that he has lodged a police complaint on the issue.

The move comes after a purported digitally-altered video of Goyal surfaced on social media, portraying him as making threatening remarks against students participating in the ongoing nationwide protests over the NEET examination issue.

In a X post early Saturday, Goyal asserted that irresponsible misuse of artificial intelligence to mislead the public cannot and will not be tolerated.

Government sources told PTI that many links

related to the AI-generated deepfake video have been taken down.

Minister for Commerce and Industry Goyal, in his post, flagged the altered videoclip of his conversation with the media outside Parliament. He wrote that the video has been maliciously tampered with using AI to create a deepfake, which is being circulated on social media with the intent to spread misinformation.

"I have lodged a complaint with the police in this regard, and today, on July 25, 2026, at 4:35 AM, an FIR (No. 123/26) has been registered at Chanakyapuri Police Station. Strict legal action will be taken against every individual involved in creating, disseminating, or deliberately promoting this fake video," Goyal warned.

He urged the public to rely only on verified and authentic sources for information.

"I have complete faith that India's aware and

tech-savvy citizens, especially our youth, will not fall prey to such misinformation," he further said.

On Friday evening, the PIB fact-check unit too warned that Pakistani propaganda accounts were circulating an AI-generated deepfake video falsely depicting Union Minister Piyush Goyal making threatening remarks about protesting students.

The manipulated video surfaced against the backdrop of ongoing student protests organised by the Cockroach Janata Party at Jantar Mantar, New Delhi, over irregularities in medical entrance and competitive examinations, and demanding reforms in the education system.

Social media has witnessed a surge in content related to the demonstrations, and authorities have repeatedly cautioned users against relying on unverified videos and posts circulating online. (PTI)

Maruti Suzuki launches new Brezza Turbo Boosterjet

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, July 25: Maruti Suzuki India Ltd has launched the New Brezza Turbo Boosterjet, introducing a turbocharged powertrain and a host of new features aimed at customers seeking enhanced performance, technology and safety in the compact SUV segment.

The company said the new variant has been developed with a focus on delivering a more engaging driving experience while catering to the evolving preferences of younger customers.

The New Brezza Turbo Boosterjet is available at an introductory price starting from ₹7,39,900.

The new model is powered by the Turbo Boosterjet engine, producing 81 kW of power at 5,500 rpm and 170 Nm of torque between 2,000 and 3,500 rpm. It is paired with a new six-speed manual transmission and offers a claimed fuel efficiency of 20.47 kmpl.

Maruti Suzuki will also continue offering the Brezza with its K15C Dual Jet Dual VVT petrol engine featuring Progressive Smart Hybrid Technology.

This variant is available with six-speed manual and automatic transmission options, with the automatic version equipped with steering-mounted paddle shifters. The company claims a fuel efficiency of 21.09 kmpl for the K15C variant.

The Brezza is also available in an S-CNG version featuring a redesigned underbody CNG tank to maximise boot space, along with idle start-stop technology and a six-speed manual transmission.

The company claims a fuel efficiency of 26.9 km/kg for the CNG model.

Commenting on the launch, Partho Banerjee, Senior Executive Officer, Marketing and Sales, Maruti Suzuki India Ltd, said the new Brezza has been designed to appeal to a wide range of customers by combining performance, technology and practicality.

Peerless Hospital Guwahati marks first foundation day



HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, July 25: Peerless Hospital Guwahati celebrated its first Foundation Day on Saturday, marking one year since its inauguration by a series of employee engagement activities and community-focused healthcare initiatives.

The celebrations brought together doctors, nurses, administrative personnel and support staff, with sporting events, including cricket and arm-wrestling competitions, organised to promote teamwork.

A painting competition on the theme of patient safety was also held to reinforce the hospital's emphasis on safe and quality healthcare.

To mark the occasion, the hospital announced a range of healthcare benefits for the public.

The offers include super-specialty consultations for ₹100 in General Medicine, Orthopaedics, General Surgery and Neurocare, a 15 per cent discount on health check-up packages, discounts of up to 25 per cent on ECG, radiology and in-house blood tests based on the bill amount, and laparoscopic gall bladder surgery starting from ₹35,000, subject to terms and conditions.

The offers will remain valid until July

31.

The Foundation Day also provided an opportunity to reflect on the hospital's journey since its inauguration by Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on July 21, 2025.

The hospital said it has expanded its services across multiple specialities while strengthening its focus on patient-centred care, advanced diagnostics and modern medical infrastructure.

Chief Executive Officer Dr Gautam Kr Das said the hospital was established with the objective of making quality healthcare more accessible to people in Assam and the Northeast.

"Our first Foundation Day is a significant milestone. Over the past year, our team has remained committed to delivering compassionate, ethical and patient-centric care.

We are grateful to our patients, employees and well-wishers for their trust and support, and we remain committed to raising healthcare standards in the region," he said.

The hospital said it would continue to focus on clinical excellence, innovation, patient safety and community well-being as it enters its second year of operations.

OPERATION AND MANAGEMENT OF PAY & USE TOILETS IN LUMDING DIVISION			
E-Auction is invited Operation and Management of Pay & Use Toilet at New Halflog in Lumding Division. Catalogue No.: PNU-LMG-08-26. Rate Unit: Annual Licensing Fee. Auction Start Date & Time (All Lots) : At 12:00 hrs. on 12-08-2026.			
Seq No.	Lot No./Category	Days	
AA/1	PnU-LMG-NHLG-Tol-83-26-1 (Pay and Use -Toilets)	1096	
E-Auction Close Date & Time : At 12:30 hrs. on 12-08-2026. Initial Cooling off period is 30 minutes. Successive lots closing interval 10 Minutes. Maximum auto extensions 10 Times. Note : Prospective bidders are requested to visit e-Auction leasing module on IREPS website www.ireps.gov.in for more details.			
		Sr. DCM, Lumding	
 NORTHEAST FRONTIER RAILWAY			
Serving Customers With A Smile			

Kokrajhar concludes entrepreneurship training under CMAAA 2.0

Over 3,100 aspiring entrepreneurs complete month-long capacity-building programme

HT Correspondent

KOKRAJHAR, July 25: The month-long Entrepreneurship Development Programme (EDP) under the Chief Minister's Atmanirbhar Assam Abhiyan (CMAAA) 2.0 concluded on Saturday with a valedictory ceremony at Bineswar Brahma Engineering College (BBEC) in Kokrajhar.

The training programme, conducted from July 8 to July 25, provided entrepreneurial and business management training to 3,196 beneficiaries from all five Legislative Assembly constituencies of Kokrajhar district, with the aim of helping them establish sustainable enterprises.

The valedictory function was attended by BTC Executive Member (Urban Development and Industries & Commerce) Moon Moon Brahma as the chief guest.

General Manager of the District Industries and Commerce Centre (DI&CC) Kishore Gupta, BBEC Nodal Officer Dr Medalsan Ronghang, officials of the DI&CC, CM Fellows, resource persons and beneficiaries were also present.

Addressing the gathering, Moon Moon Brahma congratulated the participants on completing the pro-



gramme and said CMAAA 2.0 was aimed not only at providing financial assistance but also at fostering entrepreneurship, generating employment and strengthening Assam's rural economy.

She urged the beneficiaries to utilise the knowledge gained during the training to establish sustainable enterprises and make use of various government schemes and institutional support available to entrepreneurs.

She also encouraged them to promote innovation and contribute to the vision of an Atmanirbhar

Assam.

Speaking on the occasion, Kishore Gupta highlighted the importance of capacity building in entrepreneurship development, stating that the training had been designed to bridge the gap between financial assistance and successful enterprise creation by providing practical knowledge on business planning, financial literacy, marketing, regulatory compliance, digital tools and enterprise management.

Dr Medalsan Ronghang commended the participants for their enthusiasm and acknowledged the

efforts of the organising team and resource persons in successfully conducting the month-long programme.

During a beneficiary feedback session, participants shared their experiences and said the training had improved their understanding of entrepreneurship, enhanced their confidence and encouraged them to pursue self-employment as a sustainable livelihood.

Mementoes were presented to the resource persons in recognition of their contribution to mentoring and guiding the participants throughout the programme.

The Entrepreneurship Development Programme covered beneficiaries from sectors including agriculture and horticulture, fisheries, veterinary services and other business sectors, reflecting the government's emphasis on promoting diversified entrepreneurship across the district.

Officials said the successful completion of the programme marked a significant milestone in the implementation of CMAAA 2.0 in Kokrajhar and would contribute to enterprise creation, employment generation and sustainable economic development in the district.

Assam Sahitya Sabha extends flood relief in Upper Assam, seeks aid for bereaved family



HT Correspondent

TEZPUR, July 25: The Assam Sahitya Sabha on Saturday visited flood-affected areas of Charaideo and Sivasagar districts, distributed relief materials among affected families and appealed to the Assam government to rehabilitate the family of a flood victim who lost several members in the disaster.

A Sabha delegation led by Vice-President Padum Rajkhowa and Principal Secretary Debojit Bora visited flood-ravaged areas, including Rajapal, Duwara Gaon, Nazira, Garmur, Sonari,

Simaluguri, Charaideo and Lakuwa, where they interacted with affected residents and distributed relief materials.

The relief packages included bottled drinking water, ORS sachets, biscuits, flattened and puffed rice, soap, medicines, mosquito repellent coils, candles and matchboxes.

The delegation also visited the family of Rohini Duwara at Garmur Abhoyapuriya village in Sivasagar district.

Rohini Duwara lost his life in the floods, while his two sons, Bidyut Duwara and Biplob

Duwara, daughter Bidisha Duwara, and wife Tutumoni Duwara also died in the tragedy.

Expressing condolences to the bereaved family, the Sabha appealed to Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma to arrange their rehabilitation and urged the government to provide adequate compensation to the families of all those who lost their lives in the floods.

The organisation also expressed concern over the extensive damage caused by flash floods, cloudbursts and hill-cutting in parts of Jorhat, Sivasagar, Charaideo and Golaghat districts, stating that many affected areas continue to face shortages of drinking water and food, while healthcare services and livestock have also been severely affected.

Meanwhile, another Sabha team led by President Dr Basanta Kumar Goswami and Central Office Secretary Dr Jyotirekha Hazarika visited flood-hit areas of Jorhat and Golaghat on Friday and distributed relief materials among affected residents.

The relief programmes were joined by office-bearers and volunteers of the Assam Sahitya Sabha, the Asom Jatiyatabadi Yuva Parishad, the Jatiyatabadi Mahila Parishad, the voluntary organisation Waris, and members of the reception committee for the Sabha's forthcoming Duliayan session.

Sonitpur administration moves to preserve Tezpur's heritage monuments

HT Correspondent

TEZPUR, July 25: The Sonitpur district administration has stepped up efforts to scientifically preserve and restore Tezpur's ancient monuments and sculptures, while also improving tourism infrastructure in the historic town. The initiative follows longstanding demands from local organisations for the conservation of several heritage structures, particularly the historic Harjaravarma inscription, which is threatened by erosion and submergence in the waters of the Brahmaputra. The Tezpur Sahitya Sabha had recently submitted a memorandum seeking urgent measures to protect the inscription.

Following the appeal, District Commissioner Ananda Kumar Das inspected the site along with representatives of the organisation and directed the concerned departments to initiate necessary conservation measures. On Friday, the District Commissioner conducted another review meeting with officials of the Central

and State archaeology departments to assess the progress of the proposed preservation efforts.

The inspection was attended by Assistant Commissioner Arunabh Barkotoky, Public Works Roads Department Executive Engineer Nitayanjan Barkotoky, Water Resources Department Executive Engineer Khanindra Barman, Tezpur Sahitya Sabha Secretary Dr Pallab Bhat-tacharya, and other officials.

The team visited the historic Harjaravarma inscription at Rudrapada (Bhairavpada) on the banks of the Brahmaputra, where the District Commissioner reviewed its condition and directed the concerned departments to take appropriate measures for its protection and long-term preservation. The officials also visited Agnigarh Park to inspect the progress of the under-construction lift facility being developed to improve accessibility for visitors and enhance the tourist experience at one of Tezpur's most popular attractions.

NFR speeds up restoration in flood-hit Tinsukia division

Over 700 workers deployed as round-the-clock efforts continue to restore rail connectivity

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, July 25: The Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR) is carrying out round-the-clock restoration work in flood-affected sections of the Tinsukia Division to restore normal train services at the earliest.

Railway officials said extensive repair and protection works are underway at multiple locations with large-scale deployment of manpower, machinery and construction materials.

Between Simaluguri and Lakwa, cess protection and railway formation strengthening works are in progress.

A ballast rake has been positioned at the site, while boulders are being unloaded to reinforce the damaged formation.

In the Simaluguri-Namtiali sec-

tion, restoration of the railway formation is continuing with simultaneous unloading of stone dust and boulders to facilitate the reopening of the affected stretch.

Protection measures are also underway in the Amguri-Selenghat section, where sandbags, bamboo piling and rail piling are being used to stabilise flood-damaged areas.

The mobilisation and unloading of sandbags, rails and boulders are continuing alongside the repair work.

Similarly, in the Simaluguri-Sibsagar Town section, bamboo piling and cess protection works are in progress, while ballast is being continuously supplied to strengthen the track formation and expedite restoration.

According to the NFR, more

than 700 labourers, supported by heavy machinery including Poclains and JCBs, have been deployed across all affected locations.

Large quantities of ballast, boulders, sandbags, stone dust and rails are being transported and utilised to rebuild the damaged railway infrastructure.

Senior officials of the Tinsukia Division are closely monitoring the restoration work to ensure effective coordination, timely deployment of resources and strict adherence to safety standards.

The NFR said restoration activities are being carried out on a war footing with the objective of resuming train operations safely at the earliest while ensuring the integrity of railway infrastructure and passenger safety.

BTC hands over green leaf vehicles to tea growers in Udalguri

HT Correspondent

KOKRAJHAR, July 25: Deputy Chief of the Bodoloi Territorial Council (BTC), Rihon Daimari handed over two green leaf carrying vehicles to small tea growers' organisations in Udalguri district to strengthen the region's tea sector and support sustainable livelihoods on Saturday.

The vehicles were distributed at a programme held at the conference hall of the District Industries and Commerce Centre (DICC) in Udalguri.

One vehicle each was handed over to Swmikhur Small Tea Farmer Producer of No 4 Rajagarh, Dimakuchi, and the Saboj Deep Tea Growers Society of Rajagarh, Dimakuchi.

The vehicles were provided under the Cess Utilisation Amendment Policy, 2017 of the Government of Assam through the Directorate of Tea for the transportation of green tea leaves by small tea growers.

Addressing the gathering, Daimari

said the initiative would enable growers to transport freshly plucked green leaves more efficiently, reducing post-harvest losses and improving returns to farmers.

He said the scheme would strengthen the small tea sector while empowering local growers and Self-Help Groups, contributing to a more self-reliant and sustainable rural economy.

Daimari also said the Directorate of Tea provides financial assistance under the scheme by offering a subsidy of up to 75 per cent of the actual cost of the vehicle to eligible Self-Help Groups, firms and cooperative societies of small tea growers approved by the respective District Level Society.

The programme was attended by Additional District Commissioner (i/c), Sub-Divisional Officer (Civil), Bhergaon, Ringkhang Basumatary, members of small tea growers' societies, Self-Help Groups and officials from various departments.

Illicit liquor worth over ₹4 lakh seized in Sootea

HT Correspondent

BISWANATH CHARIALI, July 25: A joint team of Sootea and Biswanath police seized a large quantity of illicit liquor worth more than ₹4 lakh during a raid at a shop in Sootea Old Centre on Friday night.

Police said the operation was carried out following a specific input about illegal storage and sale of liquor.

During the search, officers recovered liquor of various brands allegedly stocked for illegal sale.

The owner of the shop, identified as Baruah Store, was apprehended, and the seized liquor was taken into police custody.

Local residents alleged that the shop had been engaged in the illegal sale of liquor for a long time, claiming that despite the absence of any licensed wine shop in the Sootea area, alcoholic beverages were readily available at several local shops. Residents also expressed concern over the widespread availability of illicit liquor in Sootea, Jamgurihat and Itakhola, alleging that easy access to alcohol has contributed to addiction among young people and caused social and economic problems in the area.

Police have launched an investigation to ascertain the source of the seized liquor and identify others involved in the alleged illegal trade.

Sonitpur DC urges residents to join Census 2027 self-enumeration

HT Correspondent

TEZPUR, July 25: Sonitpur District Commissioner-cum-Principal Census Officer Ananda Kumar Das has appealed to residents of the district to participate in the Self-Enumeration process for Census 2027 by submitting their household details through the online Self-Enumeration (SE) Portal.

The digital initiative forms part of the House Listing Operation (HLO) for Census 2027 and enables households to furnish their census information online before the visit of census enumerators.

The Self-Enumeration Portal will remain open from August 2 to August 16, allowing citizens to complete the process through the dedicated online platform before field enumeration begins.

The District Commissioner made a special appeal to government employees across

departments, institutions and offices to lead by example by completing their self-enumeration within the stipulated period.

He urged officials to encourage colleagues, family members, neighbours and the general public to participate in the digital exercise, stating that government employees have a key role in promoting public awareness and participation in the census process.

The district administration has also requested all Heads of Departments to disseminate information about the self-enumeration facility among their staff, provide necessary assistance wherever required and ensure maximum participation under their respective establishments.

Appealing to all eligible households, the administration urged residents to make use of the digital facility and contribute to the successful conduct of Census 2027.

Assam Rifles organises free medical camp in Jatinga village

HT Correspondent

HAFLONG, July 25: The 26 Assam Rifles, based in Haflong organised a free medical health check-up camp at Jatinga village in Dima Hasao district as part of its community outreach initiatives on Saturday. The camp was organised under the aegis of the Agartala Sector in association with the Dima Hasao Ex-servicemen Committee, Assam Rifles, with the aim of providing basic healthcare services to residents of remote areas.

More than 150 villagers, including children, underwent medical examinations for common ailments during the camp. Free medicines were also distributed to all patients.

Medical officers of the Assam Rifles interacted with members of the local community, addressed their health-related concerns and advised



them on preventive healthcare measures and healthy living practices.

Villagers expressed appreciation for the initiative and thanked the organisers for providing free medical consultation and medicines.

The Assam Rifles said such outreach programmes reflect its continued commitment to supporting communities in remote and border areas by extending essential healthcare services alongside its security responsibilities.

Assam Rifles conducts health awareness camp in Lokra

HT Correspondent

BISWANATH CHARIALI, July 25: The Lokra Battalion of the Assam Rifles on Saturday organised a health awareness camp at Lokra to promote preventive healthcare and healthy living among the families of Assam Rifles personnel and members of the local community. The camp focused on creating awareness about personal hygiene, balanced nutrition, sanitation, prevention of communicable diseases, maternal and child healthcare, and the adoption of healthy lifestyle practices.

Medical personnel interacted with participants, addressed their health-related queries and highlighted the importance of timely medical consultation and preventive care in maintaining overall well-being.

The programme witnessed enthusiastic participation from the families of Assam Rifles personnel as well as local residents, reflecting the close relationship between the force and the community. Through such outreach initiatives, the Assam Rifles said it remains committed to promoting healthcare awareness, strengthening civil-military relations and contributing to the welfare of people living in the region.

Partnership focuses on healthcare, education and women's empowerment in Jagiroad Morigaon, Tata Electronics launch community development initiatives

HT Correspondent

JAGIROAD, July 25: The Morigaon district administration, in collaboration with Tata Electronics (Tata Semiconductor Assembly and Test Pvt Ltd - TSAT), recently launched a series of community development initiatives covering healthcare, education and women's empowerment in Jagiroad.

The programmes were inaugurated by District Commissioner Anamika Tewari at the Lakshminath Bezbaruah Conference Hall of Jagiroad College in the presence of Vaswati Samrah Barthakur, Head of Regional Strategy and Ecosystem, Tata Electronics, senior officials of the district administration, company representatives and other dignitaries.

Additional District Commissioner Anusuya Sharma welcomed the gathering and highlighted the importance of collaboration between the administration and Tata Electronics in promoting sustainable and inclusive development.

An overview of the initiatives was presented by Dharitri Borgohain,

representing the company's Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) wing.

Addressing the programme, Vaswati Samrah Barthakur stressed the need for community participation and long-term partnerships to ensure the sustainability of development initiatives, while Ashish Satish Kumar Mishra, Head of Projects at Tata Electronics, reiterated the company's commitment to social development through its CSR programmes.

Speaking on the occasion, Bidyananda Barkakoty, Adviser to the North Eastern Tea Association (NETA), welcomed the launch of Project Chameli, describing it as an important initiative for empowering women from tea-tribe communities.

District Commissioner Anamika Tewari said strong partnerships between the government, industry and local communities were essential for achieving inclusive and sustainable development.

She expressed confidence that the initiatives would strengthen healthcare services, improve educational



infrastructure and create livelihood opportunities for women in the district. During the programme, Joint Director of Health Services Dr Sallendra Borthan Bora presented the Nikshay Mitra Certificate to Tata Electronics in recognition of the company's support for tuberculosis patients under the PM TB Mukh Bharat Abhiyan.

Under the healthcare component,

Tata Electronics launched a sustained hygiene and sanitation programme at Mahatma Gandhi Model Hospital to strengthen infection prevention and maintain a safe healthcare environment.

The company has also adopted 150 tuberculosis patients under the PM TB Mukh Bharat Abhiyan by providing nutritional support, while the adoption of another 250 patients

is in progress.

The education initiative covers Nakhola High School, Bapuji High School, Jagiroad Higher Secondary School, Gopal Krishna High School and Sahid Laxmi Deka High School.

The programme includes the construction of toilet blocks, mid-day meal kitchens and dining halls, development of smart classrooms and STEM laboratories, installation of safe drinking water facilities, green boards and classroom furniture.

As part of the women's empowerment initiative, Project Chameli was launched to provide tea walkthrough experience training to ten young women from tea-tribe communities.

The programme aims to equip participants with tea tourism guiding skills while enhancing their communication skills, confidence and employability.

The district administration thanked Tata Electronics for its continued CSR partnership and acknowledged the support of all stakeholders involved in implementing the initiatives.

NFR cancels, reschedules trains after track settlement in hill section

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, July 25: The Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR) has cancelled, rescheduled and regulated several trains following the settlement of railway tracks near New Harangajao station on the Lumding-Badarpur hill section.

According to the NFR, train operations have been disrupted after track settlement affected both Line-1 and Line-2 near the station.

At present, all train movements are being routed through Line-3 under strict monitoring and enhanced safety measures.

In the interest of passenger safety, the operation of passenger trains through the affected section has been suspended during night hours from 7 pm to 5 am.

During the daytime, trains are being allowed to pass through the section under regulated conditions while restoration work continues.

Railway authorities said engineering teams, personnel and heavy machinery have been deployed on a war footing to restore the damaged track, with efforts underway to resume normal train services at the earliest.

As a result, Train Nos 15617 (Guwahati-Dullabcherra), 15618 (Dullabcherra-Guwahati), 15615 (Guwahati-Silchar) and 15616 (Silchar-Guwahati) have been cancelled on the scheduled dates announced by the railway.

Several other services, including the Narangi-Agartala, Agartala-Narangi, Guwahati-Sairang, Sairang-Guwahati, Agartala-Deoghar, Rangiya-Silchar, Silchar-Rangiya and Agartala-Rani Kamalapati Special trains, have been rescheduled to late-night or early morning departures.

Meanwhile, Train No 12503 (SMVT Bengaluru-Agartala Express), commencing its journey on July 24, will be regulated en route as operational conditions permit.

The NFR has advised passengers to check the latest train timings before commencing their journey and said restoration work is progressing continuously to ensure the safe resumption of normal services.

Social Consciousness in Sudhakantha's Songs

Social injustice, exploitation, and tyranny met a fierce, uncompromising voice of protest in Dr. Hazarika's music, fueling a deep revolutionary current. Outdated social dogmas, blind superstitions, and rigid orthodoxies constantly faced his relentless scrutiny and progressive ideals. Ordinary people found the courage to stand against torture and poverty, fight for their rights, and establish justice through his inspiring compositions. That revolutionary spirit remained constructive and creative, relying on art, culture, and human values rather than weapons...

By: Himangshu Ranjan Bhuyan

Dr. Bhupen Hazarika was never merely a celebrated artist, composer, or vocalist. He embodied a vast social consciousness whose voice and creations laid bare the raw, unfiltered realities of his contemporary world. His songs functioned as living documents—capturing the profound truths of human existence, the cries of social inequality, and the eternal values of humanity with astonishing melody. Right from the dawn of his artistic journey, he felt an intense commitment to society, a dedication that infused every single creation with a noble purpose. Music was never just a source of entertainment for him; it served as a powerful instrument for establishing social justice, unity, and human dignity. Spanning from national awareness to universal humanism, and from revolutionary calls to environmental mindfulness, his social vision achieved a rare, harmonious balance. This monumental talent earned him a singular standing not just within Assamese society, but on the global stage, where his art became a symbol of universal human emotions and hopes. He stood as a true visionary, his body of work remaining an eternal wellspring of inspiration for people across every social stratum.

Comprehensive humanism and a deep-seated faith in egalitarianism formed the bedrock of his music. He placed human life far above all narrow divisions and sectarian divides. His philosophy remained crystal clear: human beings must never be fractured by lines of religion, caste, creed, or language, because everyone belongs to a single human family. His compositions powerfully articulated class divisions, the chasm between the rich and the poor, and the agonizing echoes of social exploitation. Those who had suffered centuries of neglect, deprivation, and marginalization found their deepest sympathies and warmest affections in him. His art became the voice of hungry laborers, toil-driven workers, and destitute souls robbed of their rightful entitlements. That egalitarian vision dreamed of a society stripped of exploitation and grounded in justice, where every individual could live with dignity and equality. Religious,

ethnic, or political manipulation designed to divide people drew his sharpest criticisms. Above all wealth and power, human dignity reigned supreme in his worldview. This humanist message lent his music a universal appeal, carrying his melodies far beyond Assam's borders into various parts of India and nations across the world. Time and again, his songs urged humanity to recognize each other as fellow human beings, aid the suffering, and build a world saturated with compassion.

The earthy scent of Assam's soil, its natural splendor, and the proud history of the Assamese nation pulsed vividly through his songs. Honoring his heritage, he drew strength from the past to propel contemporary society forward with fresh vigor. Assam's history of cultural synthesis, the fierce bravery of Lachit Barphukan, and the humanistic philosophy of Srimanta Sankaradeva were immortalized through his lyrics. The Brahmaputra River recurred as a deeply significant symbol throughout his work. To him, the mighty river was never just a body of water; it represented the strength, harmony, and eternal flow of the Assamese identity. Along its banks, diverse ethnic groups and their rich cultural mosaic coalesced into harmonious notes and words. True strength for Assam, he firmly believed, resided in the unity and affection of its people. His nationalist sentiment held zero room for blindness or narrow provincialism; instead, it championed a broad, open-minded perspective where deep reverence for one's own heritage met equal respect for foreign cultures. His music anchored Assamese society firmly to its roots while constructing bridges of solidarity with the global human community. This brand of nationalism was fundamentally humanistic—concerned not merely with regional advancement, but with the welfare of all humankind.

Social injustice, exploitation, and tyranny met a fierce, uncompromising voice of protest in Dr. Hazarika's music, fueling a deep revolutionary current. Outdated social dogmas, blind superstitions, and rigid orthodoxies constantly faced his relentless scrutiny and progressive ideals. Ordinary people found the courage to stand against torture and poverty, fight for their rights, and

establish justice through his inspiring compositions. That revolutionary spirit remained constructive and creative, relying on art, culture, and human values rather than weapons. Corruption, moral decay, and political self-serving motives faced sharp satirical blows in his tracks. Untouchability, caste prejudice, and religious divisions were evils he fought tirelessly to eradicate in pursuit of an egalitarian society. By laying bare the suffering of the hungry, the laboring, and the deprived, his songs galvanized them to transform their pain into strength and step into the struggle. Every single word functioned like a spark, igniting fresh hope and critical thought within human minds. Such a defiant, progressive mindset earned him the title of a "revolutionary artist"—a timeless guide for a society striving for change. Human struggle, his music demonstrated, is an eternal process, and every individual bears the responsibility to play their part.

Environmental consciousness and humanity's profound bond with nature constituted another thoughtful dimension of his social awareness. Plundering nature for selfish gains, he realized, would unleash catastrophic challenges upon the entire human race. Forests, rivers, and wildlife commanded a sensitive, affectionate gaze in his artistry. Nature was never treated merely as a scenic backdrop; it stood as the very foundation of existence and a vital teacher. Unchecked exploitation of natural resources under the guise of industrialization and modernization drew his stern warnings. Far-sighted and responsible, his ecological message exhorted humanity to acknowledge its debt to nature and fulfill its duty of protection. Trees represented more than mere shade-providers; they were essential factories supplying breath to all living creatures. Beyond this, the concept of the mighty Brahmaputra assumed a profound philosophical depth in his tracks, symbolizing life's momentum, struggles, hopes, and trials. Much like the ceaseless flow of a river, human existence remains defined by continuous transformation and struggle. His songs emboldened listeners to navigate this current with courage and resilience. Joy and sorrow arrive in turns, and



accepting both equally defines authentic living. Expanding the boundaries of his social consciousness, these environmental themes and deep truths encouraged humanity to contemplate its exact place and responsibility within the vast universe.

Culture and the masses found a powerful bridge in Dr. Bhupen Hazarika. Grassroots emotions and feelings found their true expression through his artistic medium. Folk melodies wrapped in simple, accessible language carried his message straight to every stratum of society. Blending indigenous Assamese tunes, instruments, and lyrical styles with modern musical elements, he forged a uniquely popular aesthetic. This technique served as an exceptional vehicle for social awareness. Art and culture never served as mere recreational tools in his hands; they operated as formidable instruments for social discourse, critique, and transformative communication. The everyday emotions, love, sorrows, and struggles of ordinary workers, farmers, and marginalized people beamed clearly through his work, allowing every listener to spot their own reflection. Lasting, profound societal impact, he believed, could only be achieved by art capable of touching human hearts. His creations reflected the cultural soul of Assam, binding the community together while pointing toward a better tomorrow. Political systems, cultural currents, and human predicaments alike felt the touch of his versatile artistic spirit.

Relevance defines Dr. Bhupen Hazarika's social consciousness even in the present day. Exploitation, poverty, injustice, caste prejudice, and ecological crises remain stubborn fixtures across the global landscape, echoing the very issues he sang about. Modern society continues to find compelling reasons to reflect on these challenges and seek solutions through his catalog. Humanism and egalitarian philosophy will forever remain pertinent, because the struggle for human dignity and equality never concludes. Collective human unity, love, and resilient fighting spirit can overcome any hurdle—a hope that echoes loudly through his legacy. His music offers courage, inspires resistance against injustice, and paints a picture of a better future. Depth of social vision, humanistic philosophy, and revolutionary messages guarantee his status as a legendary, epoch-shaping intellect rather than just a singer. Preserved as an invaluable asset for Assamese society, his work not only brings peace to the mind but also reminds us of our civic duties and responsibilities. By weaving together people from all walks of life and building bridges of affection and brotherhood, his songs built a lasting monument. The social reforms and human values championed through his music remain indispensable guides for contemporary society. (References—Several books, multiple articles, and various writings available on the internet have been utilized.)

Sir Garfield Sobers: A guiding star in the world of cricket

By: Dr Ratan Bhattacharjee

It is the story of a boy from Barbados who became a global icon, a man whose name will forever be spoken with reverence. He coached, mentored, advised, and inspired. Young cricketers looked at him not merely as a legend but as a guiding star. His presence at cricketing events, his gentle smile, his thoughtful words—all carried the weight of a man who had lived the game more fully than anyone else. He was Sir Garfield St Aubrun Sobers who was popularly known as Sir Garry Sobers to his admirers. He occupies a place that is almost mythical. His extraordinary versatility, effortless brilliance and charismatic personality made him not only the greatest all-rounder in cricket history but also one of the finest sportsmen the world has ever witnessed. But time, relentless and impartial, touches even the greatest. Sobers' gradual retreat from public life has been a quiet one, marked not by dramatic announcements but by the gentle fading of appearances. His health has become fragile, his voice softer, his movements slower. The man who once leapt like a panther now walks with the careful steps of age. Yet even in this twilight, Sobers retains a dignity that commands respect. His eyes still carry the spark of memory, the glow of a life lived in extraordinary fullness.

His passing away is an end of an era which is not just a moment; it is a feeling. It is the realization that a giant has stepped back, leaving behind footprints too large to be filled. Sobers' era was defined by elegance, versatility, courage, and imagination. It was an era when cricket was not dominated by technology, analytics, or commercial spectacle, but by pure human brilliance. Sobers represented the soul of cricket, the part of the game that cannot be measured by numbers or captured by machines. His genius was organic, instinctive, and deeply human.

The history of cricket has produced many legendary batsmen, bowlers and captains, but only a handful of complete

cricketers. Born on 28 July 1936 in Bridgetown, Barbados, Sobers grew up in a modest family where sport was an integral part of life. As a child, he excelled not only in cricket but also in football and basketball. His remarkable athleticism soon caught the attention of cricket selectors, and at just 17 years of age, he made his Test debut for the West Indies against England in 1954. Initially chosen as a left-arm spinner, Sobers soon transformed himself into an exceptional batsman and an astonishingly versatile bowler capable of bowling left-arm fast-medium, orthodox spin and wrist spin with equal effectiveness.

Sobers was admired by the greatest names in cricket. Sir Donald Bradman considered him among the finest cricketers ever, while later all-rounders such as Kapil Dev, Ian Botham, Imran Khan and Jacques Kallis were often measured against the "Sobers standard." Even today, every discussion about the greatest all-rounder inevitably begins with his name. His honours reflect his unparalleled contribution. He was named Wisden Cricketer of the Year in 1964, was knighted by Queen Elizabeth II in 1975, became one of the National Heroes of Barbados in 1998, and was inducted into the ICC Cricket Hall of Fame in 2009. The International Cricket Council's annual award for the world's best men's cricketer, the Sir Garfield Sobers Trophy, bears his name, ensuring that every generation remembers his greatness. Beyond statistics, Sobers brought joy to cricket. He played with freedom, imagination and confidence. His smile, sportsmanship and love for the game endeared him to fans across continents. Whether playing in Barbados, England, Australia or India, he was celebrated not merely as a West Indian star but as a global ambassador of cricket. Sir Garry Sobers' career statistics remain astonishing. In 93 Test matches, he scored 8,032 runs at an average of 57.78, including 26 centuries, while taking 235 wickets and holding 109 catches. In first-class cricket, he amassed more than 28,000 runs and claimed over 1,000 wickets, achievements

ments that underline his extraordinary all-round excellence.

Sobers' batting like that of Indian legendary cricketer Maharaja Ranjit Singh was a blend of grace and aggression. His drives were elegant, his hooks fearless, and his timing impeccable. He possessed the rare ability to dominate the world's best bowlers while making the game appear effortless. In 1958, at Kingston, Jamaica, he created history by scoring 365 not out against Pakistan, becoming the youngest player to score a triple century in Test cricket. The innings remained the highest individual Test score for an astonishing 36 years, until Brian Lara surpassed it in 1994. If his batting dazzled spectators, his bowling bewildered opponents. Few cricketers in history have possessed such versatility. Depending on the pitch and match situation, Sobers could open the bowling with lively pace or switch to slow orthodox spin and even chinaman deliveries. He finished his Test career with 235 wickets, proving that he was as valuable with the ball as with the bat.

Fielding was another dimension of his greatness. Whether stationed at slip, in the covers or close to the wicket, Sobers displayed remarkable anticipation, safe hands and athletic brilliance. His 109 Test catches reflected only a fraction of his immense contribution in the field. As captain of the West Indies from 1965 to 1972, Sobers inspired a generation of Caribbean cricketers. His leadership was positive, adventurous and fearless. Under his captaincy, the West Indies achieved memorable victories, including their first Test series win over Australia. His bold approach helped shape the aggressive brand of West Indies cricket that later dominated world cricket during the 1970s and 1980s.

When the world speaks today of Sir Garfield St Aubrun Sobers, it does not merely recall a cricketer; it remembers a phenomenon, a force of nature, a man whose genius seemed to defy the boundaries of human possibility. His retirement from public life, his gradual withdrawal from the frontlines of cricketing discourse, and the quiet settling of age upon his once agile frame mark not just the passing of time but the closing of a chapter in the book of world sport. Sobers was not only the greatest all-rounder cricket has ever known; he was the embodiment of cricket's poetry, its unpredictability, its grace, and its fierce competitive spirit. To speak of Sobers is to speak of cricket itself, because for decades the two were inseparable.

By the time he made his Test debut at the age of sixteen, he was already a prodigy, though the world had not yet grasped the scale of his potential. The legend truly began in 1958, when Sobers scored 365 not out against Pakistan, breaking Len Hutton's record and becoming the youngest man to hold the



highest individual Test score. That innings was not just a display of endurance; it was a revelation. Sobers batted as though he were painting strokes on a canvas, each shot a brush dipped in sunlight. His drives shimmered, his pulls thundered, his cuts sliced through the air with surgical precision. It was an innings that announced the arrival of a genius who would redefine the sport. Even today, cricket lovers speak of that knock with reverence, as though it were a sacred text. The sixes he struck in a single over off Malcolm Nash in 1968 remain one of cricket's most iconic moments. It was not brute force; it was artistry. Sobers seemed to lift the ball effortlessly, sending it soaring into the sky as though gravity itself had bowed before him.

Yet Sobers was more than statistics, more than records, more than the sum of his achievements. He was a symbol of Caribbean pride, a beacon for a region emerging from colonial shadows and asserting its identity on the world stage. In the 1960s and 70s, when West Indies cricket became a cultural force, Sobers stood at its forefront, a leader whose presence inspired confidence and unity. He played with a joy that reflected the rhythm of calypso, the warmth of island life, and the resilience of a people who had endured centuries of struggle. Sobers carried the Caribbean on his shoulders, and the Caribbean carried him in its heart. His captaincy was marked by courage and innovation. He believed in attacking cricket, in pushing boundaries, in trusting instinct over caution. Sobers

was never afraid to take risks, because he understood that greatness is born from daring. His leadership shaped the ethos of West Indies cricket, paving the way for the golden era of Lloyd, Richards, Holding, and Marshall.

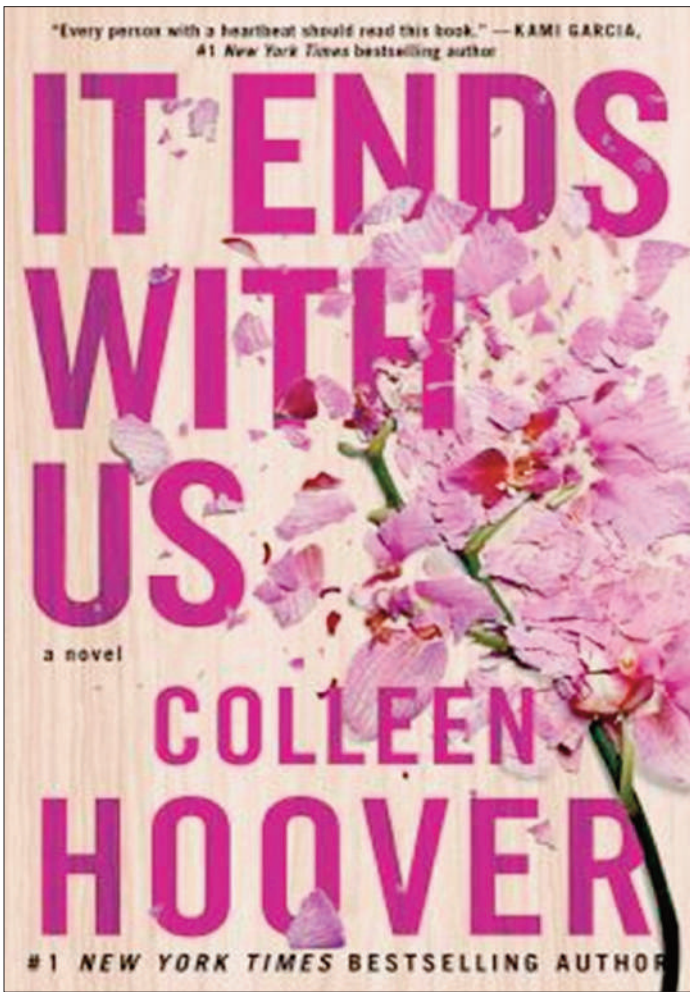
Today, when young fans watch cricket dominated by power hitting, data driven strategies, and hyper specialization, Sobers stands as a reminder of a time when one man could master every dimension of the sport. His legacy is not merely in the record books but in the imagination of cricket lovers. He showed what was possible when talent meets passion, when discipline meets creativity, when sport becomes art. But Sobers was never merely a batsman. He was the complete cricketer, the rarest of rare combinations. He could bowl fast enough to intimidate, spin enough to deceive, and field with an athleticism that made him a natural phenomenon. His catch at backward point, his leap at mid wicket, his reflexes in the slips—each was a testament to his instinctive mastery. Sobers was a one man orchestra, capable of producing every note the game required. When he walked onto the field, he carried with him the confidence of a man who knew he could change the course of a match with bat, ball, or brilliance in the field. Sobers' era may be ending, but his influence will never fade. Every all-rounder who dreams of excellence in multiple disciplines carries a piece of Sobers' legacy. Every batsman who seeks elegance, every bowler who seeks versatility, every fielder who seeks excellence—all walk in the path he

carved. Sobers' life is a testament to the power of sport to transcend boundaries. He united nations, inspired generations, and elevated cricket to a form of expression that touched the human spirit. His story is not merely a cricketing biography; it is a narrative of resilience, creativity, and the pursuit of excellence.

As we reflect on Sobers today, we do not mourn the end of an era; we celebrate the era itself. We celebrate the artistry of his batting, the magic of his bowling, the electricity of his fielding. We celebrate the humility of his character, the generosity of his spirit, the wisdom of his presence. We celebrate a man who gave the world not just performances but memories, not just victories but inspiration. Sir Garfield Sobers remains, and will always remain, the gold standard of cricketing greatness. His era may be passing into history, but history itself will never forget him. The sun may set on the horizon of his active life, but the glow of his legacy will continue to illuminate the world of cricket for generations to come. In the quiet twilight of his years, Sobers stands not as a fading star but as an eternal constellation—fixed, brilliant, and unforgettable.

Sir Garfield Sobers: a name that will never dim, a legacy that will never fade, an era that will never truly end. (International Tagore Awardee multilingual columnist and writer Dr. Ratan Bhattacharjee is a former Affiliate Faculty Virginia Commonwealth University and at present President Kolkata Indian American Society. He may be reached at profratanbhattacharjee@gmail.com.)





By: Nayanjyoti Baruah

I've read several books that engage with the subject of domestic violence, but few have unsettled me as deeply as Colleen Hoover's *It Ends with Us*. Beneath the surface of what initially appears to be a conventional romantic narrative lies a disturbing exploration of domestic abuse, patriarchal power, emotional dependence, and the difficult process of breaking generational cycles of violence. The novel's significance lies not merely in its depiction of physical abuse but in its examination of the psychological and social conditions that make abusive relationships difficult to leave. Through Lily Bloom's experiences, Hoover invites readers to reconsider the simplistic assumption that victims can easily escape violence once they recognise it.

The novel acquires additional significance from Hoover's personal connection to the subject. In her au-

thor's note, she discusses her family's experience with domestic violence and acknowledges that her father once physically assaulted her mother. However, *It Ends with Us* should not be regarded as a straightforward autobiography. Rather, Hoover transforms an experience rooted in personal history into a fictional narrative that explores the broader social and psychological dimensions of domestic violence. The novel therefore operates simultaneously as a personal reflection and as a commentary on a social problem that continues to affect individuals and families across generations.

At the centre of the narrative is the relationship between Lily Bloom and Ryle Kincaid. What makes their relationship particularly compelling is that Ryle is not introduced as an obvious villain. He is intelligent, successful, attractive, ambitious, and capable of genuine affection. His relationship with Lily initially devel-

ops through mutual attraction and emotional intimacy. This complexity is crucial to Hoover's representation of domestic abuse because it challenges the assumption that abusive partners are always recognisable as cruel or dangerous from the beginning.

As Lily and Ryle's relationship develops, however, the distinction between love and violence becomes increasingly blurred. Ryle's behaviour exposes the disturbing contradictions that often exist within abusive relationships. His violent actions are followed by remorse, apologies, and promises that he will change. Lily therefore finds herself caught between the man she loves and the man who harms her. The emotional conflict becomes more complicated because Ryle is not violent all the time; moments of tenderness coexist with moments of brutality. The novel thus presents domestic violence not as a simple opposition between love and hatred but as a destructive cycle in which affection, fear, guilt, hope, and violence become psychologically entangled.

This cycle is central to understanding Lily's struggle. From an outsider's perspective, leaving an abusive relationship may appear to be an obvious and immediate decision. Yet Hoover demonstrates that victims often remain because abusive relationships can involve emotional attachment, economic dependence, fear, social pressure, and the persistent hope that the person they love will change. Ryle's repeated apologies and promises create the possibility of a better future, even when his actions repeatedly contradict those promises. Lily's difficulty in leaving therefore becomes an important part of the novel's psychological realism.

Lily's experience becomes even more complex because it echoes the violence she witnessed during her childhood. Her mother's relationship with her father provides the emotional and psychological background



But the money was still not enough to cover future expenses. Pronita felt she had to bear her own expenses. She really wanted to share her father's burden. She was strong and determined, ready to take on challenges to fulfil her aims and desires in life. After much struggle with her thoughts, Pronita fell asleep to wake up the next morning with a new task.

The next morning, her mother handed her a bag containing everything she would need to run her food cart, including vegetables, flour, oil, spices, utensils, tissue paper packets, sauces, chutneys, knives, etc. She fed Pronita a spoonful of a curd-and-sugar mix, as per tradition, whenever someone was about to start a new work to bring success and good luck. Pronita ate, smiled, and sought her parents' good wishes. She left with her pushcart, carefully operating it with her hands as she dragged it on the road.

After half an hour, she reached the town's main market area and stalled her food pushcart at one corner under the shade of a tall tree. There were several other food carts stalled nearby. Pronita arranged all her things and the portable gas stove on the cart. She began to fry and roast on the large flat and slippery Tawa on the stove. As the day passed, Pronita sold a good number of food items, including vegetable chowmein, tikkis and chat, bhel, puchkas, and spicy veg burgers. There were mostly young women and school children among the food lovers, rather than older men. A young woman asked, "There was an uncle who used to sell off the food items at this point, but we have not seen him for the last couple of days. It's his cart, right?" "Oh, yes, he is my father. He is not keeping good health. So, I came in his place to run the food cart,"

replied Pronita with a smile. The young woman nodded and smiled back at her.

Pronita felt content at the quick selling of her food items. However, her eyes could not avoid the number of gazes on her that day. It was a different world for her, one she had not known or met anyone in before. She was reluctant at one moment, but at the very next, happy and confident to sell her goods. At home, it was a different world altogether. It was a comfort zone for her with all the love, affection and care from her parents and her young sister. But the external world she was witnessing was fast-moving, based on monetary terms, where she had to sell her food for its monetary value. But at home, in her own world, the value of everything is calculated with love. She could sense the envy, fake smiles, and the hard labour one puts in to bring food to the table at home every night. It was a constant struggle for survival meant for families like hers, which required sensitivity and attention to understand.

Pronita was content by the end of the day after a good sale, and she felt her decision was the right one. By late evening, she reached her small rented home. Her mother looked at her carefully, trying to figure out whether the day had been spent in good vibes. Pronita smiled and handed her a good amount of money after the day's hard toil. She kept some money for her pocket money. She brought her sick father fruits and medicines, and a chocolate bar for her young sister. Her mother's eyes were a little moist as she thought her daughter had grown into a big, mature, and responsible person in the true sense. She served tea and snacks. That evening was special to them, an evening of hope to be cherished.

Breaking the Cycle: A Critical reading of domestic violence and patriarchy in colleen hoover's it ends with us

her own childhood. Her decision to leave therefore becomes more than an act of personal liberation; it becomes an attempt to prevent violence from passing from one generation to another.

The title *It Ends with Us* acquires its deepest meaning at this moment. Lily recognises that she cannot change the past, but she can determine whether the pattern continues into the future. Her decision is therefore not based on the disappearance of love but on the recognition that love cannot justify violence. She does not leave because she suddenly stops caring about Ryle. She leaves because she understands that protecting herself and her daughter must take precedence over preserving an abusive relationship. As she says "I need to know what you would say to our daughter if the man she loves with all her heart ever hurts her", it defines her strong resistance not to follow the path again. At the end of the novel, Lily makes a decisive break with the cycle of violence, making it clear that the suffering, abuse, and domestic violence she has endured must end with her rather than become a legacy inherited by her new-born daughter. Her decision reflects a profound act of maternal courage and resistance: she refuses to allow the traumas of her own life to shape or define her daughter's future. In this sense, the novel's conclusion becomes a powerful rejection of the intergenerational transmission of domestic violence, affirming that the atrocities she has suffered must end with her and must not be carried forward into her daughter's life.

Atlas Corrigan's character provides an important contrast to Ryle and expands the novel's discussion of masculinity and love. Atlas represents a model of affection based on patience, respect, emotional security, and responsibility. His relationship with Lily is not defined by possession or control. When they reunite as adults, Atlas accepts Lily and her

daughter and becomes a source of stability in their lives. His character therefore demonstrates the possibility of a relationship in which love does not require fear or submission.

However, Atlas should not be interpreted simply as the man who "rescues" Lily. Such a reading would undermine the novel's most important message. Lily's liberation ultimately comes from her own decision to break the cycle of violence. Atlas may offer emotional support and represent the possibility of a healthier future, but it is Lily who makes the decisive choice. Her strength lies in recognising that she must take responsibility for her own life and for the environment in which her daughter will grow up.

The contrast between Atlas and Ryle also allows Hoover to present two competing models of masculinity. Ryle's behaviour is marked by possessiveness, impulsivity, and violence, while Atlas represents emotional maturity, patience, and respect. The novel therefore challenges cultural assumptions that sometimes mistake dominance for strength or possessiveness for love. Through this contrast, Hoover suggests that healthy masculinity is not defined by control but by the ability to respect another person's autonomy and emotional well-being.

Nevertheless, the novel is not without its limitations. Its treatment of domestic violence is emotionally powerful and accessible, but at times it relies on conventions associated with popular romantic fiction to resolve a deeply complex social problem. The introduction of Atlas as a romantic possibility may unintentionally suggest that happiness after abuse is closely tied to finding another partner. In reality, recovery from domestic violence is rarely so linear or romantically resolved. Survivors may require financial independence, emotional support, community assistance, counselling, and considerable time to rebuild their lives. The novel's conclusion is

therefore emotionally satisfying but can also be regarded as somewhat idealised.

Despite these limitations, *It Ends with Us* remains culturally significant because it brings the subject of domestic violence into the mainstream of popular fiction. Its most important contribution is perhaps its challenge to the assumptions readers often make about victims and abusive relationships. Abuse is not always visible from the outside. Victims do not necessarily leave immediately. Abusers are not violent at every moment. And love does not automatically disappear when violence enters a relationship.

Ultimately, *It Ends with Us* is not merely a story about an abusive marriage or a complicated love triangle. It is an exploration of the relationship between love, power, memory, trauma, and personal agency. Through Lily's journey, Hoover examines how patriarchal attitudes, emotional manipulation, economic dependence, and generational trauma can shape individual lives.

The novel's most powerful message is contained in Lily's decision to end the cycle. Her choice to leave is not a rejection of love but a rejection of violence. It is not an act of weakness but an assertion of dignity and agency. By choosing a different future for herself and her daughter, Lily transforms the meaning of the novel's title into a declaration of resistance: the violence that began in one generation does not have to be inherited by the next.

In the final analysis, *It Ends with Us* asks readers to look beyond the visible act of violence and examine the complex circumstances that sustain it. Its enduring value lies in its insistence that victims should be understood rather than judged, and that leaving an abusive relationship should not be interpreted as a failure of love. Instead, it can be an act of courage—the moment when an individual decides that the cycle of violence will end with them.

Two Worlds

By: Meenakshi Gogoi

Every day, in the hustle and bustle of Padmapur's market area, Rikhiram would set up his food pushcart. But since the last two days, he had not been able to sell his food and was lying in bed due to viral fever and cough. He knew what could be the loss of two days' income and, so, his close-knit family of three. His wife and two daughters. Pronita, his elder daughter, was sensible and responsible, studying in college. She insisted that she would run his food cart until he was better. Her father got her and did not prohibit her from going to the market and selling food items. He wanted her to share responsibilities as the eldest child. Rikhiram did not consider her any less than a boy from the day she was born. She brought happiness to their lives over the years through her school and college results. But her mother had objections. She was not supportive of Pronita taking the food cart out. She asked hoarsely, "It's not an easy task to drag the food cart on the road. How will you do that?" Pronita calmly but with confidence replied, "Maa, it is a light pushcart and has got four wheels to drag it off. I can control the wheel speed. Have faith in me." Her mother remained silent and sat down in a chair, thinking that Pronita would keep her words. Eventually, Pronita convinced her mother that she would be fine. It was only a matter of a few days until her father would get back to work.

Rikhiram knew his daughter was outspoken, accountable and aware of her rights and desires. It was not always easy to see such traits in a college-going young woman who dared to sell food from a cart. She was brought up with much love and affection, freedom, and a reasonable degree of discipline to distinguish between what is good and bad, right and wrong. Her father gave her the freedom to think and act in ways that could bring good outcomes for her. He always explained to her that freedom would come with responsibility, and those who followed this rule could be the truly successful ones, whatever they did in their

lives. That night, Rikhiram, while going to bed, spoke to his wife to relax her anxiety. He said, "Pronita is our elder daughter. Her young sister would learn to be strong and confident by seeing her sister be decisive and independent. One day, she would have to look after herself and us. So, let her go and do it." Her mother lay in bed silently, praying to God, closing her eyes and slowly falling asleep, keeping her worries at bay.

While in bed, Pronita's young sister said, "Didi, take me with you to work tomorrow. I will help you." "That's not needed. You will go to school and help Maa at home instead, when I am away. Alright," softly replied Pronita. And her young sister nodded. Pronita planted a kiss on her forehead and patted her with care to make her fall asleep.

However, Pronita's mind was stuck on the debt her father owed at the nearby grocery shop. She learnt about the debt when she went to buy masoor dal and potatoes the other day. The shopkeeper kept a debt register in which he recorded the amounts taken by creditors. She spotted her father's name on the debt list, with a debt of 5,000 rupees owed to the shopkeeper. He added an extra amount of money to the debt for the things she purchased that day. Her mother did not give her money, asked her to buy things on credit, and made an entry in the grocery shop's debt list under her father's name. Pronita had no idea of the previous debts, though they were not a very large amount taken by her father. The shopkeeper was a good person and friendly with her father. She felt perhaps that was the reason he gave her the things, was being lenient with her father, and would take money when her father got well and pay him later. That night, Pronita speculated about her family's expenses. She knew her father's main expenses were paying her college fees and purchasing study material for her Civil Services Exam, as she had aspired to become an IAS in the future. Her mother was contributing her little money from sewing her neighbours' clothes at home and selling her home-made varieties of papads and chaklis.

Mapping the living landscapes of the Brahmaputra: A landmark study on Chars and Beels

By: Mowsam Hazarika

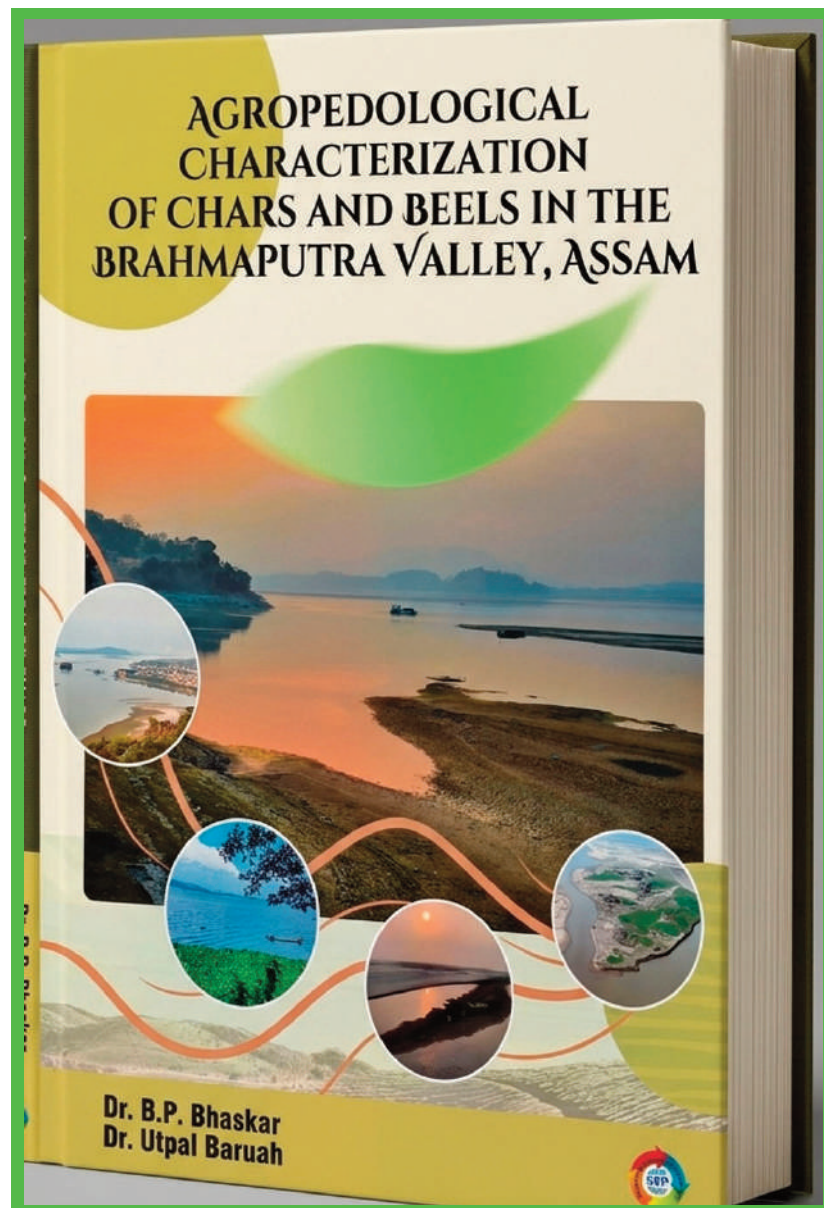
River valleys are universally acknowledged as dynamic habitats that sustain multiple ecosystems of immense ecological value, yet they remain increasingly vulnerable to a range of global threats. While some attribute these disruptions to natural environmental processes, the prevailing consensus underscores human-induced changes as the primary cause. Within this context, wetlands emerge as particularly fragile and distinctive ecosystems. Their survival—along with the broader health of river valleys—is closely tied to land management practices and the extent of natural resource exploitation.

In today's world, truly pristine river valleys have become rare, often bearing visible imprints of human interference. Yet, amidst this reality, there are encouraging signs. Certain landscapes such as chars and marshy lands have witnessed reduced human pressure in recent years, opening up opportunities for ecological restoration and conservation. Parallely, advancements in environmental management have fostered the development of scientific tools and strategies aimed at regulating resource use more sustainably.

The book "Agropedological Characterization of Chars and Beels in the Brahmaputra Valley, Assam", authored by Dr BP Bhaskar and Dr Utpal Baruah, is a significant contribution to this evolving discourse. Both authors, distinguished scientists formerly associated with ICAR-NBSS&LUP, bring together decades of research to present a comprehensive and objective-oriented study of soils in the Brahmaputra Valley. The work lucidly explains soil-geomorphic relationships through well-designed illustrations, offering a strong regional perspective essential for understanding river valley ecosystems.

This volume stands out for its rich, geo-referenced datasets, making it an invaluable resource for soil scientists, geographers, and researchers exploring fluvial processes and pedogenesis. The authors have adopted a systematic and rigorous methodology to conduct soil surveys in the challenging and often inaccessible floodplain wetlands. Their work addresses a long-standing gap in understanding the biophysical constraints affecting wetland agriculture.

What makes this book particularly noteworthy is its synthesis of three phases of research, enriched with case studies and insights from on-farm demonstration trials. The inclusion of recent references enhances its academic relevance, while field photographs vividly capture the dynamic nature of the Brahmaputra and the evolving landscapes of chars and beels. These visuals also reflect the enduring resilience of traditional rainfed rice systems that have sustained livelihoods for centuries.



The book is thoughtfully structured into eight chapters covering introduction, regional overview, climate, morphological dynamics, geomorphic processes, hydro-pedological investigations, agronomic interpretations, and detailed characteristics of beel lands. Each chapter is further subdivided, ensuring depth and clarity in presentation. Of particular significance are the hydro-pedological studies conducted in Majuli and the beel areas of Jorhat, which provide valuable insights into the formation of hydric soils classified under Entisols and Inceptisols.

Building on this scientific foundation, the authors propose rice-based cropping systems tailored to the unique ecological conditions of chars and beels. They also address various management challenges and examine both traditional and modern agronomic practices. The concluding sections on river restoration outline practical techniques and critical considerations,

making the work relevant not only for researchers but also for policymakers and development practitioners.

Comprising 216 pages, the book includes 54 tables, 41 figures, and an extensive list of 258 references, along with a comprehensive glossary. Its depth and clarity make it a valuable addition to professional literature and an important educational resource. By bridging soil science with agricultural practice, the authors have created a work that enhances our understanding of river valley ecosystems and their sustainable management.

This book is highly recommended for anyone interested in wetland soils, riverine ecology, and sustainable agriculture. It is hoped that such region-specific studies will continue to enrich academic resources and inspire further research, ultimately contributing to improved livelihoods and ecological resilience in the Brahmaputra Valley.

Leaders react to Union Minister Dharmendra Pradhan's resignation, hail youth protest

'Big salute to the Indian youth whose determination and courage made this possible'

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, July 25: Kerala leaders, including chief minister V D Satheesan, on Saturday reacted to the resignation of Union Education minister Dharmendra Pradhan following the BJP-led protest at Jantar Mantar over the NEET paper leak, calling it a "victory" for sustained youth-led agitation.

In a statement, the Kerala CM congratulated the country's youth for their determination and courage, saying the resignation of Pradhan came after attempts to suppress student protests had failed.

He said that the resignation of Pradhan was inevitable and it came late, only after there was no way left for him to hold on to office.

"Big salute to the Indian youth whose determination and courage made this possible. I welcome Pradhan's resignation, which came after attempts to beat down and suppress protesting students failed," he said.

Calling it a victory for students across the country, the chief min-



ister said Leader of the opposition Rahul Gandhi and other opposition parties had stood firmly with the protesters throughout the agitation. "Despite serious allegations against Pradhan, the Prime Minister and the BJP tried to shield him. But in the end, he had to step down in disgrace following the protests," Satheesan said.

Describing the development as "a historic victory", he said authoritarian forces were forced to bow before the spirit of the struggle.

He also accused the Centre of "adopting undemocratic methods"

by trying to suppress the protests, provoking demonstrators, dragging the Leader of the Opposition on the streets and assaulting opposition MPs.

"Examinations like NEET must be conducted in a transparent and error-free manner. The Centre should never again gamble with the future and lives of students," Satheesan added.

State Higher education minister Roji M John said the resignation was the result of relentless and united struggles across the country.

In a Facebook post, he wrote

that "the edge of time and history's sword has not broken, the struggles do not cease."

"Following relentless and united struggles across the entire nation, Pradhan has resigned. Long live democracy," he said.

State labour minister Bindhu Krishna said the Centre had "bowed before the anger of the youth."

Congratulating the youth protesters and the opposition leadership, she said justice had finally been delivered to the families of the 20 youths who lost their lives during the agitation.

She said the government should provide compensation to the bereaved families and extend support to them. Bindhu Krishna also called for the withdrawal of all cases registered against thousands of youths who staged democratic protests, expressing hope that the government would take that step.

CPI(M) Rajya Sabha MP AA Rahim also welcomed Pradhan's resignation, saying struggles never stop and what appears impossible eventually becomes possible. (PTI)

Focus should be on reforming education system, not Pradhan's resignation: BSP chief Mayawati

LUCKNOW, July 25: As the Centre and opposition sparred over the alleged NEET paper leak case amid the Cockroach Janata Party's (CJP) protest, Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) president Mayawati on Saturday said the political sparring should not overshadow the need for comprehensive reforms in the education system.

In a post on X, the former Uttar Pradesh chief minister said the protesters' demands for the resignation of Union education minister Dharmendra Pradhan had become the centre of political confrontation, while the real issue of reforming the examination system should not be lost.

"Although the peaceful sit-in at Jantar Mantar has received widespread public sympathy, both the opposition and the government are engaged in intense politics over the protesters' adamant demand for the resignation of the Union education minister. The real issue of necessary, comprehensive reforms in the education system should not disappear," she said.

Mayawati also alleged that opposition parties were competing to capitalise on the issue "from the streets to Parliament", leading to



heightened tensions between the government and the opposition.

"Such confrontation is turning intense and could spread in one form or another to the states. I advise my party workers to remain alert and vigilant," she said.

The BSP chief said the issue had become completely politicised and alleged that police action against protesters at Jantar Mantar had further aggravated the situation.

She also linked the controversy to repeated disruptions in the ongoing Monsoon session of Parliament.

"Because of this atmosphere of tension and confrontation, the current Monsoon session has not functioned properly even for a sin-

gle day so far, effectively halting the government's accountability on many other important issues concerning the country and public interest," she said.

Mayawati further said the government's response appeared focused on punitive action after paper leaks had taken place rather than preventing such incidents.

"The measures being explored by the government to deal with the CJP movement reflect strict action after paper leaks caused by corruption and incompetence. However, appropriate steps to prevent such heinous crimes from occurring in the first place are not visible, leading to growing public dissatisfaction," she said. (PTI)

Cong, SP ruined students' future: Adityanath at Fatehpur amid NEET paper leak row



FATEHPUR (UP), July 25: Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Saturday hit out at the Samajwadi Party (SP) and the Congress, accusing them of ruining the future of students and youths, while crediting the Narendra Modi government for taking stringent steps against examination paper leaks and "copying mafia".

Addressing a public meeting in Fatehpur district, Adityanath said the previous SP government had neglected development, farmers and the youth.

Referring to the Centre's proposed anti-paper leak legislation, the chief minister welcomed Prime

Minister Narendra Modi's recent decisions to curb examination malpractices.

"The Union Cabinet has approved a law under which those who play with the future of students by leaking question papers will face a minimum of 10 years' imprisonment and a fine of up to Rs 10 crore. The Bill will now come before Parliament. The copying mafia will be wiped out; no one can save them," Adityanath said.

He alleged that "the copying mafia is the legacy of the Congress and the Samajwadi Party", and that they nurtured and protected these

elements, and "today they are shedding crocodile tears."

The chief minister said action had already been initiated against those involved in examination irregularities.

"Those responsible for leaking the NEET question paper have been arrested. You also saw that 37 officials of the National Testing Agency (NTA) have been dismissed from service. Their properties will be attached, and they will be punished. These are steps taken by Prime Minister Modi keeping in mind the bright future of students, on which the future of the country depends," he said.

Adityanath also praised the Centre's initiatives for youth, including Startup India, Stand-Up India and the National Education Policy (NEP), saying they had created new opportunities for young people.

"The National Education Policy has enabled India's youth to compete globally. Today, when our young people go abroad, they carry themselves with pride and earn respect. I welcome these decisions on behalf of the youth and students of Uttar Pradesh," he said. (PTI)

Time has come to remove this govt, 'daro mat': Rahul Gandhi after Pradhan's resignation

NEW DELHI, July 25: Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Saturday congratulated students and youth over education minister Dharmendra Pradhan's resignation and urged other groups to show courage and stand up, saying it is time to remove the government.

He said two demands are still pending: action against all people who committed "atrocities" against the students protesting against paper leaks and an apology from Prime Minister Narendra Modi to the students.

In a video message posted on X after Pradhan's resignation, the leader of the opposition in the Lok Sabha said, "Daro mat (don't be afraid). Let's get rid of this regime that is attacking India, destroying our Constitution, capturing all our institutions."

Pradhan resigned from his post on Saturday following student protests across the country for his ouster over the NEET paper leak issue. Gandhi said his resignation is a huge step towards rebuilding the education system.

"It's a symbolic step because he was a symbol, but it is still a big step," he said. "I want to congratulate every single student, every single youngster who came out on the streets and fought for democracy, fought for the future of this country and defended the Constitution. I am proud of you. Well done."

The Congress leader also said Pradhan's resignation is a signal to other communities - farmers, labourers, poor people -- that is being oppressed by the government. "There is wisdom and courage in standing up," Gandhi said. Gandhi reminded the government that two of their demands were still pending. "The first and most important one - anybody who has raised a finger on our students, beaten them, shot at them, has to be held accountable; and people who have organised it, people who've implemented it - all have to be punished." (PTI)

Mamata joins NEET paper leak protest in Kolkata after HC bars rally

KOLKATA, July 25: Former West Bengal chief minister and TMC supremo Mamata Banerjee on Saturday joined a protest at Padmapukur here in support of students agitating over the NEET paper leak issue after the Calcutta High Court refused permission for a proposed rally, with the demonstration triggering a confrontation between police and supporters of the TMC's Kalighat faction.

Police detained Beliaghata MLA Kunal Ghosh and student leader Baishwanar Chattopadhyay while attempting to disperse the gathering, prompting Banerjee to rush to the protest site before later proceeding to Lalbazar police headquarters on a scooter.

The protest was organised by the Kalighat faction of the Trinamool Chhatra Parishad (TMCP), along with the party's youth and IT wings, against the alleged NEET paper leak.

The organisers had planned a march from Padmapukur to Moulali via CIT Road.

The Calcutta High Court, however, declined permission for the rally after the organisers approached it following the police's decision to withdraw an earlier permission.

The matter was heard by Justice Sougata Bhattacharyya in a special sitting on Saturday. The court observed that in view of the violence reported during Left student or-



ganisations' NEET protest in Kolkata on Friday, permission for another rally could not be granted in the prevailing circumstances.

Despite the court's order, supporters assembled at Padmapukur from the afternoon, leading to a face-off with police when they tried to remove the gathering. Scuffles broke out as police detained Ghosh and Chattopadhyay.

Addressing protesters, Banerjee said her party had honoured the court's order by not taking out a rally but questioned why police were preventing what she described as a peaceful demonstration.

"We are not holding the rally because we respect the HC order. But why are the police stopping a peaceful gathering? It was only a two-hour programme. They are afraid of us, and the people will give them the answer," she said. (PTI)

If you stop the movement, it will grow across country: AAP

NEW DELHI, July 25: The Aam Aadmi Party on Saturday warned the central government against "suppressing" voices of students and young protesters, saying "if you stop the movement, it will grow across the country".

Senior AAP leader Gopal Rai demanded that police should immediately release all student leaders arrested in Patna and Gujarat protesting on NEET exams. There was no immediate response from BJP on the matter. The remarks come amid raging protests in the capital led by the Cockroach Janata Party (CJP), demanding reforms in the examination system and the resignation of Dharmendra Pradhan over the NEET paper leak, among others.

"The central government is trying to suppress the movement by using police and arresting the youth leaders protesting. While on one hand, the BJP government says they want to resolve this by talking but in reality protestors are being arrested in Gujarat," Rai said addressing a press conference.

"If you do this and stop the movement, it will grow across the country. These actions show that BJP government is trying to stop this movement by suppressing their voices," he said. Rai said the government will soon have to take a decision on how they want to proceed, otherwise it will spread across Gujarat and other states.

The NEET paper leak has snowballed into a major political challenge for the ruling party with protests erupting in many parts of the country, especially the BJP-led protests at Jantar Mantar. (PTI)

Vijayan accuses CM Satheesan, UDF of 'Sangh Parivar seva' over Waqf board appointments

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, July 25: Leader of Opposition Pinarayi Vijayan on Saturday accused Chief Minister V D Satheesan and the UDF of doing "Sangh Parivar seva" by agreeing to implement the amended Waqf Act, allowing the appointment of non-Muslims to the Waqf board.

Vijayan alleged that the UDF and Satheesan "openly surrendered" to the Sangh Parivar and toed its agenda.

The allegations were made by the CPI(M) veteran at a press conference in response to the CM's recent remarks accusing Vijayan of attempting to turn the Muslim community against the UDF government through "communal remarks" over the Waqf board appointments issue.

"The leader of opposition made incorrect, communal remarks to spread communalism and turn the Muslim community against the government. Such attempts by the opposition leader or the CPI(M) to blame the government on the issue will not succeed," the CM had said at a press conference here recently.

"It was his (Vijayan's) government that



stated that non-Muslims would be appointed to the board. It is on record. We said we would constitute the board taking into consideration the averments made in the petitions before the High Court, but the pleas should be dismissed," he added.

Speaking to reporters here on Saturday, Vijayan said the UDF government and the chief minister had turned Kerala into the "first state to accept the amended Waqf Act which mandates inclusion of non-Muslims on the Board."

The former chief minister said: "This is clear Sangh Parivar seva, and it has been

seen by everyone. So, he (the CM) started making baseless statements against me. The LDF government had always upheld the religious freedom guaranteed under the Constitution. I had taken that stand when I was CM and continue to do so. I have not changed that."

He said the Kerala Assembly had passed a resolution during the LDF rule opposing the Waqf Act amendments. However, he alleged that the current UDF government and the CM had "surrendered before the Sangh Parivar agenda" by moving ahead with it. (PTI)

Student protest victory marks beginning of BJP government's end: CPI(M)

KOCHI, July 25: CPI(M) general secretary MA Baby on Saturday described the resignation of Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan as a landmark victory for the student-led agitation over the alleged NEET examination irregularities, asserting that it marked "the beginning of the end" of the BJP government at the Centre.

Addressing reporters here, Baby said the success of the agitation was the BJP government's second major political setback after it was forced to repeal the three contentious farm laws following the year-long farmers' protest.

"Some television channels described this as the first time the Narendra Modi government had been forced to bow before a public agitation. We should not forget the historic farmers' movement under the Samyukta Kisan Morcha, which compelled the government to withdraw the three anti-farmer laws after more than a year of struggle," he said. Calling the latest development an equally significant victory, Baby said the Union minister directly responsible for the education sector had ultimately been forced to resign despite attempts by Prime Minister Narendra Modi to shield him.

"The beginning of the end of BJP rule has been marked through the victory of this student protest," he said, expressing hope that the remaining demands of the agitation would also be achieved through continued public campaigns.

Baby said the agitation at Jantar Mantar, which began on June 20 and continued for 35 days, witnessed an unprecedented mobilisation of students and youth from across the country.

"This is the victory of one phase of the struggle led by students and youth. It is also the victory of opposition political parties and a large section of public figures who normally do not intervene in political issues," he said. (PTI)

Got ₹ 70,000 cr from Centre since BJP formed govt, else bankruptcy certain: WB Fin Min

KOLKATA, July 25: West Bengal received ₹ 70,000 crore from the Centre since the BJP came to power in May, saving the state from going bankrupt, said finance minister Swapna Dasgupta in the Assembly on Saturday.

Highlighting that the previous government had left the state groaning under a debt of more than ₹ 8 lakh crore, he said that without the Central funding, many welfare schemes in West Bengal would have shut down.

Addressing the House during a discussion on the Appropriation Bill presented in the Assembly, Dasgupta said ₹ 70,000 crore has been received by the current government from the Centre, without which West Bengal would have gone "bankrupt".

The Bill, authorising expenditure by the state government from its consolidated fund, was passed in the assembly on Saturday.

During discussion on the bill, he



said the BJP government in the state will have to make several additional provisions, including one about an arbitration award in favour of Tata Motors over a dispute concerning land allotted for setting up a car manufacturing unit.

The award is under challenge by the West Bengal Industrial Development Corporation (WBIDC) before the Calcutta High Court.

Tata Motors left Singur to set up the Nano car plant in Gujarat's Sanand in October 2008, following

a prolonged anti-land acquisition agitation led by the then opposition leader Mamata Banerjee.

The finance minister said the previous government had broken budgetary discipline over the years.

"This is the Appropriation Bill, not a misappropriation bill, which had become the trend in the state previously," Dasgupta said in response to a query by TMC MLA Sabina Yasmin about ensuring funds are not misused.

Pointing to former minister and veteran TMC legislator Sobhandeb Chattopadhyay's assertion that West Bengal under the Mamata Banerjee government had secured top-tier rankings in various parameters, including investment in heavy industries and panchayati raj and law and order, Dasgupta said these are decided by the Central government based on data and provided by the state. (PTI)

Investigation into paper leak cases to be completed within two months: Bill

For organised crimes, the bill proposes a minimum sentence of seven years

NEW DELHI, July 25: A bill to amend a two-year-old anti-paper leak law, which proposes to set up fast-track courts in every state for speedy trials of accused, is set for introduction in the Lok Sabha on Monday.

According to the Public Examinations (Prevention of Unfair Means) Amendment Bill, 2026, investigations into paper leak cases are to be completed within two months.

The bill circulated to the Lok Sabha members ahead of its introduction says that individuals involved in paper leaks or unfair means in exams will get jail terms for a minimum of 5 years and a maximum of 10 years, and a fine of up to ₹ 50 lakh.

For organised crimes, the bill proposes a minimum sentence of



seven years and a fine of up to ₹ 10 crore.

All the states and UTs will be directed to set up fast-track courts, which will conduct hearings swiftly and complete the trial within three months of filing of the chargesheet, the bill says.

Amid the ongoing students' agi-

tation at the Jantar Mantar and different parts of the country seeking accountability in education, Prime Minister Narendra Modi had promised a law to deal with cases like the NEET-UG paper leak.

He also said that cases of accused in such cases will be tried in fast-track courts.

On Friday, the Union Cabinet cleared the bill for its introduction in Parliament.

The Public Examinations (Prevention of Unfair Means) Act, 2024, which the bill proposes to amend, was enacted to prevent resorting to unfair means in public examinations.

The bill notes that in recent years, there have been some incidents of question paper leaks and malpractices in examinations conducted by public examination authorities, "which tend to affect the transparency and fairness of the public examinations system".

The amendment bill seeks to empower all the state governments and UT administrations to designate any court of session to be a special fast-track court to try offences under the proposed law. (PTI)

Southern China on alert for Typhoon Noul as Hong Kong cancels flights



HONG KONG, July 25: Typhoon Noul is bringing winds and heavy rain to southern China and Hong Kong over the weekend, with the region on high alert and dozens of flights cancelled.

Hong Kong's Observatory said Noul, which had intensified with maximum sustained winds of 140 kph near its centre, was moving on Saturday steadily across the northeastern part of the South China Sea and edging closer to the coast of eastern Guangdong.

The city's observatory forecasts Noul could make landfall Sunday morning around the vicinity of the southern Chinese cities of

Huizhou and Shanwei, bringing strong winds and squally showers to parts of the region. China's weather centre, meanwhile, expects Noul to make landfall between late Saturday and early Sunday.

Hong Kong airport's website showed more than 150 flights had been cancelled for Saturday and Sunday.

As Noul approaches Hong Kong, parts of a large scaffolding on a high-rise building collapsed on Saturday afternoon, local police said, adding that initial reports indicated there were no injuries.

China's National Meteorological Centre expects parts of southeastern Guangdong and the southern coast of Fujian will experience heavy rain over the weekend.

More than 20,000 people had been evacuated by late Friday in the southern Guangdong province, according to local media. Train services in the province have been cancelled for Sunday, according to the China News Service.

Taiwan's Central Weather Administration said Noul was bringing rainfall to parts of southern and eastern Taiwan. It was passing over waters south of Taiwan, and was moving away from the island Saturday. (AP)

Russian, Ukrainian officials report 11 dead in latest attacks

A series of drone incursions by Russia and Ukraine have hit Romania

KYIV, July 25: Ukrainian forces attacked tourist resorts in the partly Russian-occupied Zaporizhzhia region, killing eight people, Moscow-installed officials said on Saturday, while authorities in Ukraine's northeastern Sumy region said a Russian drone strike killed three people.

Two children were among the eight people killed in the attack on the resorts, Yevgeny Balitsky, the Kremlin-installed regional head, said Saturday, adding that 14 people were wounded.

Ukraine did not immediately comment on the attack.

Sumy regional head Oleh Hryhorov said on Saturday three people were killed when a large fire broke out after a Russian drone struck a "civilian facility," adding that the victims were drivers for private Ukrainian postal and courier service Nova Poshta.

Russia's defence ministry said it attacked a "storage and launch site" for



Ukrainian drones in the Sumy region.

In Zaporizhzhia, in southeastern Ukraine, a Russian drone attack late Friday hit a shopping centre, causing a fire that spread over a 500-square-meter area and injuring several people, regional head Ivan Fedorov said.

A major Russian attack on Friday on a site hosting a defence industry event near Kyiv killed at least 10 people and

wounded nearly 100 others.

Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy warned in his evening address on Friday that intelligence assessments indicated that Russia was preparing missiles for a large attack, saying there were indications that this could happen in the next 48 hours.

On Saturday, Romania's defence ministry said its forces "safely shot

down" a drone that breached its airspace in an "unpopulated area" near the Ukrainian border. The drone was "shot down by a Romanian pilot from an F-16 aircraft," President Nicolae Dan said in a post on Facebook.

Saturday's interception came after a drone was shot down around Padina, northeast of the Romanian capital, Bucharest, on Friday.

A series of drone incursions by Russia and Ukraine have hit Romania and other NATO members since Moscow launched its full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022.

In June, a Ukrainian maritime drone exploded at the Black Sea port of Constanta, while three other sea drones exploded outside the port. No one was hurt. A Russian drone that was part of an attack on Ukraine in May went astray and struck an apartment building in eastern Romania, injuring two people. (AP)

11 European tourists and 1 local rescued after speedboat sinks in Indonesia

PALU (INDONESIA), July 25: Indonesian rescuers found alive 11 European tourists and a local crew member who went missing after their speedboat apparently broke apart and sank in rough weather off a bay on Sulawesi island, officials said Saturday. Search teams continued looking for the vessel's captain.

The vessel departed a dive resort in Tojo Unauna regency of Central Sulawesi province on Friday morning bound for Marisa Port in the neighbouring Gorontalo province but failed to arrive as scheduled, said Heriyanto, Head of the Gorontalo Province Search and Rescue Office.

A local tour guide reported the missing boat to the search and rescue office at 3:40 pm (local time) on Friday, prompting an immediate search operation, said Heriyanto, who, like many Indonesians, uses a single name.

"Concerns arose when their speedboat had not arrived by afternoon," Heriyanto said. "We immediately launched a search mission overnight."

Five Dutch nationals, three Germans, a Czech man, a Belgian

man, a French woman and two Indonesian crew members were on board, according to Indonesian authorities.

There was no immediate comment from the national embassies of the tourists.

Heriyanto said dozens of search and rescue teams were deployed in a search operation covering approximately 300 square nautical miles of waters along and around Tomini Bay, a renowned marine tourism destination, with dozens of islands dotting its vast waters, based on the tour boat's route projections. A thermal-imaging drone and diving equipment were also being used in the search, he said.

Indonesia's meteorological agency forecast generally clear skies in the area, but rescuers on Saturday have faced challenging sea conditions, including strong winds and waves reaching up to 2.5 metres (8 feet) high.

As of Saturday afternoon, rescue teams on two speedboats searching waters where the vessel was believed to have disappeared eventually located all 11 foreign tourists and one crew member alive. However, the boat's 29-year-old captain

President Murmu winds up three-nation European tour; departs for Delhi

BUCHAREST (ROMANIA), July 25: President Droupadi Murmu on Saturday successfully concluded her three-nation European tour, during which discussions were held to further strengthen bilateral partnership in key sectors including trade and tourism among others.

Murmu started her tour with a state visit to Moldova on July 20, the first by any Indian head of state, during which she held discussions with her Moldovan counterpart Maia Sandu covering the entire spectrum of bilateral ties.

The two countries also agreed to strengthen cooperation in various areas of mutual interest, including agriculture, logistics and infrastructure, healthcare and pharmaceuticals, renewable energy and innovation.

After Moldova, Murmu visited North Macedonia from July 21 to 22. She is the first Indian president to visit this landlocked country in Southeast Europe.

During this visit, both countries agreed to double bilateral trade and discussed cooperation in key sec-



tors including tourism, hospitality and filmmaking.

The discussion came up during a meeting between President Murmu and her counterpart Gordana Siljanovska-Davkova, which was followed by delegation-level talks. She also addressed the Assembly of North Macedonia as well as the inaugural session of the India-North Macedonia Business Forum.

Murmu then arrived in Romania on July 23 — the first visit by an Indian head of state to the country in over three decades.

During her visit, India and Romania agreed to double trade over the next three years and strengthen cooperation in defence, among

other key areas of bilateral partnership.

She held discussions covering bilateral ties with her Romanian counterpart Nicusor Dan.

Murmu addressed the India-Romania Business Forum on Friday in the country's capital Bucharest and separately held wide-ranging discussions on bilateral relations with Prime Minister Ilie Bolojan.

The president also interacted with members of the India-Romania Parliamentary Friendship Group.

There are over 13,500 Indians in Romania, including approximately 10,000 workers.

Murmu was also conferred an honorary doctorate by the Bucharest University of Economic Studies here.

The "Doctor Honoris Causa" is the university's highest academic distinction, awarded to eminent personalities for exceptional contributions to academia, public service and international cooperation.

Murmu on Saturday met Indian community members before leaving for the airport. (PTI)

France deploys massive cargo aircraft to dump flame retardant on wildfire

LEGE-CAP FERRER (FRANCE) July 25: France was preparing to use a massive specially adapted cargo aircraft to dump flame retardants Saturday on a wildfire that has forced the evacuation of tens of thousands of people, including from some suburbs of the wine region city of Bordeaux. Interior Minister Laurent Nunez said the hulking A400M aircraft will join what is expected to be a "long and very difficult" battle against the blaze raging in the Gironde region of western France.

That blaze and another wildfire in the Landes region have together forced 197,000 people to evacuate, he said. With winds expected to shift in a westerly direction on Saturday afternoon, potentially driving the fire closer to Bordeaux, fire crews and authorities were digging trenches, using retardants and taking other steps to block it, Nunez said. He said the fire was about 30 kilometres west of the city.

The government mobilized soldiers to join the battle against the flames and rushed in 1.5 million face masks to protect against choking smoke. The prefect of the Gironde region that includes Bordeaux ordered the evacuation of parts of three of the

city's western suburbs. Other towns and villages further west of the city were also ordered to evacuate. Prime Minister Sebastian Lecornu described the fires as unprecedented and said the Gironde blaze had become so strong that it was generating its own winds.

"Our priority is clear: protecting human lives," he posted on X, adding that evacuation orders "must be respected without delay."

He said firefighting teams were being reinforced Saturday with the addition of hundreds of soldiers and that breathing masks were being rushed to the Gironde region for those exposed to the clouds of potentially noxious fumes.

All told, massive forest fires have forced the evacuation of more than 260,000 people in southwestern France and central Spain.

The virulence of the wildfires, fuelled by high temperatures and the long-term effects of climate change, caught fire crews and authorities off guard in both countries. Firefighters in Spain said the blazes spread so fast and violently that they could not be tackled head on. (AP)

Trump returns to correspondents' dinner for rambling, insult-filled speech 3 months after shooting

WASHINGTON, July 25: President Donald Trump returned to the rescheduled White House Correspondents' Association dinner Friday night, delivering a rambling, hour-long speech that praised some journalists, took potshots at others, made jokes about public figures' weight and intellect, and quipped about a third presidential term.

He assured the crowd of journalists, though, that he'd scrapped the most biting parts of his remarks.

"That was going to be a doozy," Trump said about the speech he'd been prepared to give in April, before a gunman upended the original dinner and forced its postponement.

"As I said three months ago, the show must go on," the president said to begin his remarks, hailing the decision to reschedule the dinner. He referred to "the attempted mass murder" that could have happened that night in April, but then moved largely to humour — and insults.

Trump's return to the corre-



spondents' dinner — and his promise to come back next year as well — represented a notable moment in his relationship with the news media, which he has attacked, sued and taken administrative action against since he began his second term early last year.

Among the audience members were reporters he had denounced and barred from events.

Trump's sometimes off-colour speech, which lasted just over an hour, was full of vague potshots directed at individuals he doesn't

like — from Jane Fonda to Bruce Springsteen to "Barack Hussein Obama." The audience, reacting at first with some friendly laughs, slowly quieted to scattered titters as the insults piled up.

Among other targets of Trump's humour: Late-night hosts Jimmy Fallon and Jimmy Kimmel; Rep. Ilhan Omar, D-Minn.; California Gov. Gavin Newsom; former New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie; and Trump's own speechwriters, whose jokes he sometimes criticised even as

he delivered them. Some of the comments flirted with racism.

The president also spent some time expressing pride in the ballroom at the Waldorf Astoria hotel, formerly the Trump International Hotel. "It's great to be back at a place that I know very well, because I built it," Trump said.

He also made reference to the journalism awards that had been handed out earlier in the evening, most of them for stories challenging him and his administration. "Do I have a say in those awards?" he asked with a grimace.

He made a brief mention of the Iran war and several remarks about the ballroom he is building at the White House. He also used the occasion to joke about the possibility he would serve a third term — something barred by the US Constitution's 22nd Amendment.

"Just like my presidency, the second time is always better," the president quipped. "And the third time will be better yet." (AP)

UN chief urges international community to back Syrians during visit to Damascus

DAMASCUS, July 25: UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres appealed to the international community Saturday to support the people in Syria at the start of his first visit to the Arab country as UN chief, nearly two years after the fall of Bashar Assad.

Guterres' visit is the first by a UN secretary-general to the Syrian capital since 2009.

Shortly after his arrival, Guterres held talks with Syria's interim president, Ahmad al-Sharaa, before taking a tour of the old quarter of Damascus and the famous Umayyad Mosque.

Guterres' visit to Syria comes as the country is trying to recover from the deadly conflict that broke out in March 2011 leaving nearly half a million people dead and causing widespread destruction that would cost tens of billions of dollars to rebuild.

"I have just arrived in Damascus for a visit of solidarity," Guterres posted on X at the start of his three-day visit. He added that the United Nations stands with Syria at this "pivotal moment."

"I appeal to the international com-



munity to spare no effort to support the people of Syria as well," the UN chief wrote.

Since the five-decade Assad family rule came to an end in December 2024, when fighters led by gunmen loyal to al-Sharaa stormed Damascus, the nation has been struggling to recover from years of conflict and the effects of crippling Western sanctions. While the United States and Europe have lifted many of the sanctions imposed during the rule of the Assad dynasty, the impact on the ground has so far been limited.

Cuts to international aid have worsened living conditions for many.

The United Nations estimates that 90 per cent of Syria's population lives in poverty.

The World Bank released an assessment last year that said rebuilding Syria after over a decade of civil war is expected to cost about USD 216 billion.

During his stay in Syria, Guterres is scheduled to visit the UN force deployed along the border with Israel.

After taking power, al-Sharaa said that he had no desire for a conflict with Israel. But Israel was suspicious of the new Islamist-led leadership and quickly moved to take control of the buffer zone. (AP)

'There is always room for improvement' Trump orders new signs outside Smithsonian saying some exhibits are inaccurate

WASHINGTON, July 25: President Donald Trump ordered his administration Friday to install signs in front of the Smithsonian Institution's US history museum telling visitors that some of the exhibits are inaccurate, his latest move to reshape how the story of the United States is told.

Trump's move follows a report released July 4 by his Domestic Policy Council saying leaders of the Smithsonian and its National Museum of American History don't tell history "in a way that is inspiring, unifying, and worthy of our great republic."

The president lacks authority to quickly fire the Smithsonian leadership or to order changes to exhibits, so his executive order targets the sidewalks out front, which are maintained by the National Park Service. His executive order calls for signs telling visitors about the White House report and directing them to resources for what he calls "accurate information regarding America's history." It also calls for a temporary exhibit that corrects information he deems



inaccurate.

Smithsonian officials did not immediately respond to a request for comment. Anthea M Hartig, director of the American history museum, pushed back on the White House report during congressional hearings this week.

"As we continue to fact check the report, we unwaveringly attest that it does not fairly or accurately characterise the full body of work at the museum," she

told lawmakers. "There is always room for improvement. But I also know the beauty and the inspiration and the expertise that lies in our collections, our exhibits, and our programming."

The Smithsonian operates outside the executive branch and museum directors report to Secretary Lonnie Bunch, who is subject to oversight from a Board of Regents.

Trump's escalating effort to force

changes at the Smithsonian marks the Republican president's latest move to transform cultural pillars of society, such as universities and art, that he considers out of step with conservative sensibilities. Trump had himself installed as chairman of the John F Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts with the aim of overhauling programming, and his handpicked board voted to add his name to the building, only to have a federal judge later order the signs to be removed.

Trump has also imposed changes on historical sites beyond Washington, including in Philadelphia, where the administration won a court ruling last week allowing it to reinstall interpretive panels that critics say whitewash the history of slavery at the site of President George Washington's home. Advocates, academics and officials have been concerned for months that the version that complies with Trump's order could give a history that plays down the pain in the nation's past in favour of a more triumphant view. (AP)

More health workers strike as Ebola cases in Congo near 3,000, including over 1,300 deaths

BUNIA (CONGO), July 25: Health workers at an Ebola treatment centre in eastern Congo went on strike Saturday over payment issues, disrupting care for patients in the epicenter of the country's rapidly growing outbreak.

The number of confirmed cases of Ebola in Congo has reached 2,973, including 1,309 deaths, according to government data released Friday in what authorities say is the fastest-growing outbreak on record.

Activities at the Elikya Ebola Treatment Center in Bunia, Ituri province, were largely paralysed after doctors, nurses and security staff stopped work.

About a hundred health workers protested outside the treatment centre on Saturday. They said the unpaid bonuses were undermining morale and disrupting patient care, and called on Congolese authorities to settle the arrears so they could resume their work.

In a statement issued Friday, staff said they had unanimously voted to strike from Saturday until "concrete solutions" were found to resolve "two months of unpaid performance bonuses".

Last week, health workers at Bunia General Hospital, the region's largest medical centre, went on strike over unpaid salaries.

Some had told The Associated Press they have not received any payment since they started work at the onset of the outbreak.

The World Health Organisation says more than 100 healthcare workers have been infected since the beginning of the outbreak.

The Central African nation has been battling the Ebola outbreak caused by the rare Bundibugyo virus since May 15. A total of 766 patients remain in isolation or in hospitals, while 540 have recovered so far, according to data from Congo's Ministry of Health.

The eastern province of Ituri accounts for nearly 90% of confirmed cases.

The outbreak continues to spread faster than health officials can track despite an expanding response.

A key challenge is that health authorities have yet to identify the outbreak's patient zero, while displacement from armed conflict and mining-related movements have made it difficult to trace thousands who have come in contact with infected individuals.

The response is being hampered by a funding gap, attacks on health centres, an ongoing conflict in eastern Congo and mistrust among local communities. (AP)

AITA, Administrator headed for showdown over constitution at today's EGM

NEW DELHI, July 25: The All India Tennis Association's (AITA) Extraordinary General Meeting (EGM) on Sunday is likely to witness a confrontation between the federation and court-appointed Administrator Justice (Retd.) Gita Mittal, with the two sides deeply divided over the constitutional amendments that will determine the body's future governance.

The document prepared by the AITA Executive Committee, accessed by PTI, shows that while numerous technical changes suggested by Justice Mittal have been accepted, several major governance proposals have been rejected in favour of the federation's own draft.

The EC repeatedly argues that many of the Administrator's recommendations either go beyond the National Sports Governance Act or are not required for statutory compliance.

While both seek to align AITA's constitution with the National Sports Governance Act, 2025, they differ sharply on several key governance issues, including voting rights, the composition of the General Body and Executive Committee, athlete representation, tenure norms and powers of various committees.

The battle lines have effectively been drawn even before Sunday's meeting, where Gita Mittal won't be present but the observers appointed by her will watch the proceedings.

It has been learnt that both parties have agreed on the procedural part of the EGM after a meeting on Saturday. It has also been learnt that the petitioners had moved court seeking elections in AITA state bodies first but the court allowed the existing bodies to vote during election.

It may be mentioned that the court has allowed AITA to vote clause by clause on the amendments proposed by the Administrator.

Justice Mittal's draft proposes a governance model aimed at reducing the dominance of state associations by limiting each state Affiliate to a single vote in the General Body, increasing athlete representation and introducing several structural safeguards. In contrast, the AITA is not favouring many such proposals, arguing they go beyond the mandate of the Sports Governance Act and dilute the role of the state associations.

State votes at the heart of dispute

Perhaps the most contentious issue is voting rights.

The Administrator has proposed reducing every state affiliate's voting strength from two votes to one while expanding representation for Sportspersons of Outstanding Merit (SOMs). According to sources, AITA will oppose the move, arguing that state bodies represent millions of stakeholders and should continue to enjoy two votes each.



The AITA is also not in favour of giving voting rights to associate Affiliates and opposes making National Sports Board registration a pre-condition for voting, pointing out that the Board itself has not yet been constituted.

Executive Committee composition another flashpoint

The two drafts also differ significantly on the structure of the Executive Committee. Justice Mittal has proposed five seats for Sportspersons of Outstanding Merit, a cap on representation from any one state and additional representation for "state associations of distinction."

AITA is in favour of retaining only two SOM seats while arguing that additional reserved seats and state caps have no basis in the Act and could undermine democratic representation.

Women representation, tenure and age

The Administrator has sought higher reservation for women in the Executive Committee and proposed stricter tenure and age restrictions for office-bearers.

The AITA wants to stick to what it calls the statutory minimum under the Sports Governance Act, retaining four reserved posts for women and keeping the upper age limit at 75 years, citing international practice within the International Tennis Federation.

Committees and governance

The federation has also opposed several proposals concerning the Ethics Committee, Dispute Resolution Committee and Athletes' Committee.

AITA prefers retaining its own structures for the Ethics and Dispute Resolution Committees, arguing they are more con-

sistent with the law and better suited to AITA's functioning.

Sunday's meeting assumes significance

The EGM assumes added significance because the constitutional amendments have to be considered clause-by-clause following directions of the Delhi High Court, which had appointed Justice Mittal as Administrator while allowing the elected Executive Committee to continue handling day-to-day affairs.

How the General Body votes on the competing proposals could determine not only AITA's future governance structure but also the roadmap for conducting elections under the new legal framework.

Former President Anil Khanna's presence at EGM

Anil Khanna, who was at AITA helm and called the shots for a considerably long period, will be present as a nominee of the Bihar association. He was vice president of the association till 2023.

Interestingly, Khanna had nothing to do with Bihar, and has been a president of the Delhi Lawn Tennis Association (DLTA) in his career. Bihar Tennis Association president Akhuri Bishwadeep said Khanna was an "advisor" to them and there was nothing wrong in nominating him.

"Mr Khanna has always guided us. Major governance changes are to be discussed in EGM. All states will have to adopt changes,

so we wanted somebody to understand and guide us for future action. I will also be there," Bishwadeep, who has held the post of AITA CEO in the past, told PTI.

In the run up to the EGM, the AITA Trust and its functioning has also come under the scanner.

"This is irrelevant matter. The court has asked the Administrator to amend the constitution and conduct elections. Anything beyond that is irrelevant to the day," said an AITA official.

Background

The constitutional exercise stems from the litigation surrounding AITA's 2024 elections, which were challenged before the Delhi High Court by former Davis Cup captain Somdev Devvarman and former doubles player Purav Raja.

While declining to dissolve the elected Executive Committee, the court appointed Justice Gita Mittal as Administrator to oversee the process of bringing the federation's constitution in line with the National Sports Governance Act before fresh elections are held.

Over the past several months, Justice Mittal held consultations with stakeholders, including players and administrators, before circulating a draft constitution.

The Executive Committee subsequently prepared its own draft, leading to two competing versions that will now be placed before the General Body. (PTI)

Atletico signs Lee Kang-In from PSG

MADRID, July 25: South Korea midfielder Lee Kang-In has agreed to join Atletico Madrid from Paris Saint-Germain, the Spanish club said Saturday.

Atletico said the player would sign a contract through June 2031. The transfer fee was undisclosed but it is reportedly between 35 and 40 million euros (\$39.8 million and \$45.5 million).

The 25-year-old Lee played all three group-stage games at the World Cup, where South Korea failed to advance after losing twice.

Born in Incheon, Lee moved to Spain when he was 10 to join Valencia's training academy and ended up playing 62 games for the club. After a stint with Mallorca, he joined PSG in 2023, scoring 16 goals in 124 appearances.

He will now play for an Atletico side that finished La Liga in fourth place and reached the Copa del Rey final last season. Lee will help fill the creative void left by Antoine Griezmann, who has left for the MLS as Atletico's all-time top scorer. (AP)

OL Lyonnes signs Barcelona's Salma Paralluelo



LYON (FRANCE), July 25: French women's champion OL Lyonnes signed Spain forward Salma Paralluelo from Barcelona on a four-year contract on Saturday.

Lyon announced the signing on X. A standout junior athlete, the 22-year-old Paralluelo scored twice for Barcelona when it routed Lyon 4-0 in the Champions League final in May, and helped Spain win the World Cup in 2023.

Paralluelo is also a world champion at Under-17 and Under-20 level, and finished third in the Balon d'Or voting in 2023 and 2024.

"Wanted by Europe's top clubs, Salma Paralluelo has chosen to join the Lyon project to open a new chapter in her career and continue her development at the highest level," the French champion said.

The club has won the women's Champions League a record eight times and is recruiting strongly under president Michele Kang.

It has signed goal-scoring midfielder Caroline Weir from Real Madrid, goalkeeper Maria-Luisa Grohs from Bayern Munich and Sweden international Johanna Ryting Kaneryd from Chelsea. (AP)

Diksha lone Indian to make the cut at Women's Scottish Open



DUNDONALD LINKS (SCOTLAND), July 25: Diksha Dagar compiled one-over 73 in the second round and was the only Indian

to make the cut at the Women's Scottish Open.

With rounds 74-73 she is 3-over and tied 35th with two more

rounds to go.

Pranavi Urs (84-71) with a 13-shot difference between her rounds was 11-over and missed the cut as did Avani Prashanth (80-77).

The cut fell at +6 with 65 players making it through to the weekend in Scotland.

Diksha had three birdies on the second, seventh and the 14th but also dropped shots on the third, sixth, 13th and the 15th.

Currently inside Top-10 of the LET Order of Merit, Diksha needs a strong result to make it to the AIG Women's Open, a Major for women next week.

Korea's Jenny Shin picked up where she left off a day earlier and put on an excellent performance to hold a five-stroke lead at the mid-way mark.

Shin, who has one LPGA Tour title to her name, opened with a 66 (-6) in Scotland and followed it up with a 67 (-5) on day two at Dun-

donald Links.

Germany's Esther Henseleit is in solo second place on six-under-par after a bogey-free round of 68 (-4), which included an eagle and two birdies, on day two in Scotland.

Korea's A Lim Kim is in outright third place on -5 after an even par round which included two birdies and two bogeys.

Four players are in a share of fourth place with Thai duo Pajaree Anannarukarn and Patty Tavatanakit alongside Japan's Erika Hara and 2024 champion Lauren Coughlin.

LET winner Anannarukarn had four birdies and one bogey on her scorecard during her round of 69 (-3).

Korea's Ina Yoon moved up to eighth place on three-under after a round of 68 (-4) with Ecuador's Daniela Darquea and Korea's Mi Hyang Lee in T9 on one-under-par. (PTI)

Inspired by Rory, Mannat Brar works on technique, strength after maiden pro triumph

NEW DELHI, July 25: Rory McIlroy's perseverance in completing a career Grand Slam has left a lasting impression on India's teenage golfer Mannat Brar, who is focused on refining her game and building physical strength as she aims to compete with the world's best.

The 19-year-old from Chandigarh, who clinched her maiden professional title at the Hero Women's Pro Golf Tour event in Bengaluru last month after overturning a seven-shot deficit in the final round, says she often looks to the Northern Irishman for inspiration.

"I always idolized Rory McIlroy a lot. And even now, just, I think yesterday or day before, I was just seeing a random interview of his, which was before he won the Masters..."

"...it was some interviewer asking him that, you must have wanted to win the Masters at this point. And he said, 'I've not won, but it's not from a lack of trying. I think these words, it's really stuck with me because as golfers, we all want to win.' Brar told PTI during an interview.

"Sometimes we try too hard, but we never try too less. And that's something I see in myself also, that results really don't matter, but to keep knocking on doors, to keep working hard towards that one goal, it's something I really admire in Rory. Brar's victory in Bengaluru only strengthened the belief



she had carried for years.

"I believed I could win this tournament even two or three years ago. It was just a matter of chance that I didn't," she said.

"I obviously I have performed very well. And when I was an amateur on the national circuit, being an amateur, and I always believed that I can win and might sound cliché to say this, but I always knew that I'm a winner."

"So winning, I think just brought in the trophy. But the belief I had in myself of being a winner was always there."

While still an amateur, Brar had finished tied 11th at the Indian Open in 2024. In April this year, she finished as the top female competitor (Tied-4th overall) in a mixed-field professional event at the IGPL Invitational Congo.

Reflecting on the impact of Indian Golf Premier League (IGPL) on her career, she said: "The IGPL has been incredible. Playing along-

side men for the same prize money is rare in women's sport and very validating."

"It also allowed me to learn from experienced golfers like Udayan Mane."

Working on technically sound and physically stronger

Brar, who is working under renowned coach Jassi Garewal at the Roundglass Academy, said the past year has been about making technical improvements while becoming physically stronger.

"I've been with him for more than five years and we've been really working on my swing. He's always told me that, I have great feel. I am very artistic. I can play. I can always manage to play good golf. But he wants to get me to play good golf by being technically very sound," she said.

"And that is what I'm working on the most. Other than the technical aspects, I've also been working on my body a lot, spending a lot of time in the gym... I've been working a lot on mobility, strength, activation, those sort of things."

Brar, who credits her Army upbringing for instilling discipline and commitment from a young age, was never that fond of sports initially.

She was pushed into tennis and basketball to stay active and then later she picked up golf and simply fell in love with the game.

The teenager has no plans to rush her progress despite becoming a professional winner at 19. (PTI)

Pakistan team cops penalty for fielding six players in five-a-side game against India



LAHORE, July 25: The Pakistan hockey team management was left red faced when the umpires penalized the side for fielding six instead of five players against India in the five-a-side international event being held in Muscat, Oman.

The incident took place on Friday night when as soon as the match started the umpires spotted six Pakistani players on the field whereas only five are allowed.

As a result the umpires sent out two players, leaving Pakistan with just three players on the field and India took full advantage of the comic situation slamming in 8 goals.

A reliable source said that when the interim President of the Pakistan Hockey Federation learnt about the incident he was pretty upset and has demanded an explanation from the team management which includes chief coach Tahir Zaman and coaches Rehan Butt, Qamar Ibrahim and Umar Bhutta.

Apparently the management has conveyed that the misunderstanding happened because of some players not understanding the communication with the coaches.

In the 2022 Men's Hockey Asia Cup held in Jakarta also a similar blunder from the Pakistan hockey team management resulted in Pakistan losing a qualification match to Japan after their late goal equalizer was disallowed by the umpires as they had 12 players instead of 11 on the field.

The outcome eventually resulted in Pakistan not qualifying for the 2023 World Cup and head coach, Khawaja Junaid being handed a life ban by the PHF.

But the ban was lifted and Junaid is now in the main fold of the senior team management. (PTI)

We want to write own piece of history in WC, says Indian men's hockey coach Fulton



NEW DELHI, July 25: Fully aware of the legacy he is chasing, Indian men's hockey team chief coach Craig Fulton is determined to break the 51-year-old medal jinx at the World Cup, and said the Harmanpreet Singh-led is eyeing to "write its own piece of history" in the upcoming showpiece.

Fulton, who guided India to their second consecutive bronze medal at the Paris

Olympics, very well knows that consistency will be key if India are to win a drought ending medal at the upcoming World Cup in The Netherlands and Belgium from August 15 to 30.

Eight-time Olympic gold medalist, India boast of only three World Cup medals, the last of which -- a gold -- came way back in the 1975 edition in Kuala Lumpur under Ajit Pal Singh's captaincy.

"1975 was the last time India won it and what's important is to get consistency in the tournament and bring that consistency into the Asian Games and we win the Asian Games as a priority as well," the 51-year-old South African told PTI.

"We are excited about the opportunity. Tournament hockey is about playing your best hockey when it counts, you got to

peak at the right time and have really strong squad through all the lines. We have shown in Paris that we can put in an experienced squad with some youth. We have a good chance and we can beat any team on our day."

"I am fully aware about the legacy of Indian hockey and also the fact it hasn't gone really well in the World Cup, we would love to change that, we would love to write our own piece of history in Indian hockey."

Placed in Pool D along side Wales, England and arch-rivals Pakistan, Fulton emphasised on the need to start well in the tournament.

"We have tough group and we need to do good job against Wales in game 1 and really focus on building momentum and try to get to the end of the tournament where you play your best hockey."

Currently ranked eight in the world, Fulton has already set his realistic goals from the World Cup and the Asian Games that follows within three weeks' time.

The Asian Games holds greater significance for India as it is a qualifying event for the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics.

"The ideal goal is we want to win every tournament we play. So in Asia we won every tournament we played, that's ideal. Realistic is down to ranking. So now we are ranked 7th or 8th in the world now, so we have a 5 per cent chance of winning the World Cup through ranking but that does that stop us winning it, 'No'."

"But that's what people will perceive as you are ranked 8th in the world. For me ranking is important after the tournament not before."

"Even though we are no.1 in Asia realisti-

cally doesn't guarantee we are winning if we don't do our basics right, be 100 per cent in everything, everything needs to fire."

Fulton selected a mixed squad for the World Cup, clubbing experienced players with youngsters like defender Yashdeep Siwach and striker Aditya Arjun Lagale, and he explained the rationale behind his decision.

"We have nice connection in the last 18 months. Yashdeep started with the Pro League, previously done very well, is a good, solid defender and we need cover in that area."

"Aditya is a long-term prospect. He has played really well, he is an exciting player and we need to give him an important tournament. We need people to cover more than one position, Yashdeep can also play in the midfield. (PTI)