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Assam flood: 3.32 lakh people still remain affected
Ex-gratia amount to families of deceased to ₹ 9 lakh each

7 more deaths in Nazira circle takes toll to 75

GUWAHATI, July 29: The toll in the Assam flood has risen to 75 with seven more deaths reported in the last 24 hours even though the number of affected people has decreased to 3.32 lakh, officials said on Wednesday.

The state government has increased the ex-gratia amount to the families of the deceased to ₹ 9 lakh each and relaxed norms for availing the compensation, they said.

The seven districts of Sivasagar, Charaideo, Golaghat, Jorhat, Nagaon, Sonitpur and Kamrup Metropolitan are still reeling under the deluge, affecting 21 revenue circles and 622 villages, the officials said.

The flood-hit population was at 3.32 lakh, and Charaideo was the worst-hit district with 1.42 lakh people impacted, followed by Sivasagar (97,074) and Jorhat (57,371).

The seven fatalities on Tuesday were reported from Nazira revenue circle of Sivasagar district, taking the toll in the floods this year to 75, the officials said.



On Monday, six districts had been affected by the deluge, with 4.45 lakh people impacted.

Altogether 81 relief camps were operational in the affected districts, in which 32,477 displaced people have taken shelter. Another 34 relief

distribution centres were also functioning.

Multiple agencies, including the Army, Air Force, NDRF, SDRF, Fire and Emergency Services and civil volunteers, continued to carry out relief and rescue operations.

A crop area of 45,341.98 hectares has been submerged, while damage to various infrastructure like houses, cow sheds, schools and anganwadi centres was also reported from across the flood-hit districts.

The intra circle roaming (ICR) facility has been extended in the flood-

affected areas of Sivasagar until 11:59 PM on July 30 or until further orders, to ensure uninterrupted mobile phone connectivity, the officials said.

The ICR facility will also be "available to all in-roamers in the district, enabling subscribers of different telecom service providers to stay connected even if their own network is not connected", one of the officials said. Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said special attention was being given to affected children to help them tide through the difficult times.

"Creating a congenial atmosphere for children in relief camps remains our focus. Dedicated spaces for learning & playing are helping ensure that the impact of floods does not interrupt their childhood and they are not adversely affected due to the ongoing situation," the CM said in a post on social media on Wednesday, sharing photos of children engaged in learning (**CONTD. ON PAGE-2**)

Assam Assembly passes Bill relaxing land ownership in protected areas of 'iconic heritage'



GUWAHATI, July 29: The Assam Assembly on Wednesday passed a Bill allowing "original inhabitants" and certain groups of people to purchase or possess land within a 5km protected radius of "iconic heritage institutions" that are 250 years old or more.

During a discussion on the passage of the Assam Land and Revenue Regulation (Amendment) Bill, 2026, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma claimed that it was the "most secular" law enacted in the state.

"Any religious institution of 250 years old is protected under this law. Now, any family that has been living there for three generations till 2006 will be allowed to live even if it does not have a land patta," Sarma said.

A generation is considered to be of 25 years, and it is irrespective of religion, Sarma said.

"Any other people living there will be evicted if they are staying in an unauthorised manner. Besides, no people from (**CONTD. ON PAGE-2**)

Assam Flood

Centre committed to provide all round assistance: Dilip Saikia



Staff Reporter

GUWAHATI, July 29: Assam BJP president and Lok Sabha MP Dilip Saikia on Wednesday said the Centre has assured all possible assistance to the flood-ravaged state, adding that the Union government is committed to supporting the people of Assam in relief, rehabilitation and long-term reconstruction efforts.

Speaking to reporters after discussions on the flood situation, Saikia said an Inter-Ministerial Central Team is currently in Assam to assess the extent of damage caused by the devastating floods. He said the team has been reviewing the situation on the ground and holding discussions with the state government and other stakeholders.

Saikia said the state government has already submitted a preliminary report to Prime Minister Narendra Modi detailing the losses suffered in the recent floods. According to him, the report covers damage to agriculture, infrastructure, houses and other public assets, besides highlighting the plight of thousands of affected families.

"The Prime Minister has assured us that the Central government will extend all possible support to Assam during this difficult period. He has expressed concern over the hardships faced by the people, particularly in Upper Assam, and has assured that adequate assistance will be provided for relief and rehabilitation," Saikia said. The BJP leader said the Centre is also considering measures to ensure long-term support for flood victims instead of limiting assistance to immediate relief. He noted that special attention is being given to farmers who have suffered extensive crop losses, as well as families whose homes were damaged or destroyed in the floods.

Saikia further said the Prime Minister was informed about the ongoing relief measures being undertaken by the Assam government as well as assistance being provided by BJP workers in the affected districts. He said party workers have been actively engaged in distributing relief materials and extending support to flood-hit families.

Expressing gratitude to Prime Minister Modi, Saikia said the Centre has always stood by Assam during natural disasters and remains committed to helping the state recover from the present crisis.

He expressed confidence that the Union government would continue to provide the necessary financial and logistical assistance for the rehabilitation and restoration of normalcy in the flood-affected areas of the state.

ED Charges 19 in ₹ 1,047.93 Crore Liquor Laundering Case Linked to Assam-Arunachal

Staff Reporter

GUWAHATI, July 29: The Directorate of Enforcement (ED) has filed a prosecution complaint under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), 2002, against 19 accused persons, including five key individuals and 14 bonded warehouse entities, in connection with an alleged large-scale liquor smuggling and money laundering racket operating between Arunachal Pradesh and Assam, officials said on Wednesday.

According to an official statement issued by the ED's Guwahati Zonal Office, the prosecution complaint names Sanjay Dewan, Niraj Sharma, Rajan Lohia, Shankar Deb and



Sameer Mehta among the principal accused. The case pertains to the clandestine manufacture and illegal transportation of liquor from Arunachal Pradesh into Assam, allegedly resulting in massive tax eva-

sion and generation of proceeds of crime.

The money laundering investigation was initiated on the basis of 173 FIRs registered by Assam Police across districts along the Assam-Arunachal Pradesh border.

Banking analysis conducted by the ED found that nine wholesale entities received cash deposits aggregating around ₹ 1,047.93 crore, which the agency has quantified as proceeds of crime. These funds were subsequently transferred through RTGS and NEFT to 14 bonded warehouse entities before being consolidated at the manufacturing level and (**CONTD. ON PAGE-2**)

'Assam Land Bill to protect centuries-old Vaishnavite satras'

Staff Reporter

GUWAHATI, July 29: Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Wednesday strongly defended the Assam Land and Revenue Regulation (Amendment) Bill, 2026 in the Assembly, saying the legislation seeks to protect the cultural and historical identity of the state's centuries-old Vaishnavite satras by restricting land transactions in their surrounding areas.

Replying during the debate on the Bill, Sarma said the government had proposed a five-kilometre protected zone around iconic heritage institutions such as Barpeta Satra, Majuli and Batadrava, where only local residents would be permitted to purchase land.

The chief minister argued that demographic changes over the decades had altered the character of several heritage areas, making legislative intervention necessary to preserve Assam's traditional religious and cultural institutions.

Referring specifically to Barpeta Satra, Sarma said if such a law had been enacted nearly 50 years ago, much of the surrounding area could have been safeguarded. He claimed that multiple mosques had come up within a five-kilometre radius of the historic satra over

the years, leading to concerns among local residents about preserving the institution's heritage.

Stating that the Bill was not aimed at any particular community, Sarma said demographic changes were a reality and the government was addressing the issue in a positive manner. "We have nothing negative against anyone. We only want the remaining heritage institutions to survive," he said.

He urged opposition legislators to support the legislation unanimously, saying the objective was to send a collective message that the Assembly stood committed to protecting Assam's cultural legacy rather than passing the Bill solely on the strength of the ruling alliance's majority. The chief minister also clarified that restrictions would apply only to a handful of identified heritage institutions, including Barpeta Satra, Batadrava and Majuli, and not across the state.

Under the proposed legislation, land transactions within the notified five-kilometre radius of such institutions would be restricted to local residents. The Bill also proposes eviction of illegal encroachers (**CONTD. ON PAGE-2**)

'Narcotics trafficking pattern in NE changes; synthetic drugs, encrypted apps reshape trade'

NEW DELHI, July 29: The pattern of narcotics trafficking through the Northeast region has "changed significantly", with drug syndicates shifting towards synthetic drugs and increasingly using social media and encrypted communication applications to coordinate cross-border smuggling, the government informed Parliament on Wednesday.

In a written reply in the Rajya Sabha, Minister of State for Home Nityanand Rai said the region continues to witness heroin trafficking, however, there has been a "marked increase in the trafficking of Methamphetamine (Crystal Meth/YABA) from Myanmar, particularly through Manipur, Mizoram and Nagaland, reflecting a shift towards synthetic drugs".

"The pattern of narcotics trafficking through the North-Eastern Region has undergone significant changes in terms of the type of drugs trafficked, trafficking routes and modus operandi adopted by drug trafficking syndicates," he said.

The minister also said there were reports of precursor chemicals being smuggled from various parts of the country to Myanmar for the illicit manufacture of synthetic drugs.

According to the reply, traffickers were increasingly exploiting porous and unfenced stretches of the Indo-Myanmar border, forest routes, foot tracks and hilly terrain for cross-border movement of narcotic drugs.

"Narcotics are concealed in legitimate cargo, passenger vehicles and goods carriers, while courier services, parcel networks, social media platforms and encrypted communication applications are increasingly being used for coordination and delivery," the minister said. (**CONTD. ON PAGE-2**)

BJP ally BPF's MLA questions Assam govt over delay in granting ST status to 6 communities

GUWAHATI, July 29: NDA constituent Bodoland People's Front (BPF) MLA Rupam Chandra Roy on Wednesday questioned the BJP-led Assam government over the delay in granting Scheduled Tribe status to six communities of the state.

Raising the matter in the Assembly during Zero Hour, the first-time MLA said the issue gets delayed every time the government report on granting ST status is discussed.

"We want the granting of ST status to all six communities as soon as possible. I urge the government to do the needful in this direction without affecting the existing STs," Roy said.

Assam Tribal Affairs (Plain) Minister Ranaj Pegu said granting ST status to any community is purely a central subject and the state government has sent proposals in this direction on multiple occasions.

"Unless the Registrar General of India gives a positive report and a bill is passed in Parliament, it cannot be done. The central government asked us for modalities in this matter and we have already submitted



a report in the Assembly," he added.

In the meantime, the Assam government has reserved some seats for these communities in medical colleges run by the state, Pegu said.

Assam's Moran, Motok, Chutia, Tai-Ahom, Koch-Rajbongshi and Tea Tribe communities have been demanding ST status for many years, while multiple assurances for granting the reservation are regularly offered by many senior BJP leaders and ministers.

On July 14, during the ongoing Budget session, opposition Congress and Rajgor Dal had staged a walkout from Assam Assembly over not giving Scheduled Tribe status to six indigenous communities of the state.

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

A Group of Ministers (GoM) of the state government had submitted an interim report with its recommendations on the demand for ST status to the Assembly in November last year. The report is yet to be sent to the Centre.

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

The GoM proposed the formation of a new category of 'ST (Valley)', and inclusion of Tai-Ahom, (**CONTD. ON PAGE-2**)

Assam emerges as leading example in tiger conservation: Himanta

'Let us renew our collective commitment to protecting these magnificent animals'

Staff Reporter

GUWAHATI, July 29: Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Wednesday said the state has emerged as one of India's leading examples in tiger conservation, crediting sustained anti-poaching operations, habitat protection and the use of modern technology for the steady rise in the population of the Royal Bengal Tiger.

In a message marking International Tiger Day, the Chief Minister said Assam's conservation model has strengthened wildlife protection while ensuring the preservation of critical tiger habitats across the state's protected areas.

"On International Tiger Day, we celebrate the remarkable success of India's tiger conservation strategy, with Assam emerging as a stellar model of habitat management and wildlife protection," Sarma said in a post on X.



He said the state government's continued emphasis on curbing poaching, safeguarding wildlife corridors and deploying technology-based surveillance systems has played a key role in improving the survival prospects of tigers and maintaining healthy ecosystems. Sarma highlighted the significant

improvement in the tiger population at the Nameri Tiger Reserve, describing it as one of the state's biggest conservation achievements in recent years. According to him, the reserve has witnessed a four-fold increase in its tiger numbers, rising from just three tigers to 12. Calling the development a mile-

stone in Assam's wildlife conservation efforts, the chief minister said it reflected the effectiveness of scientific management practices and coordinated protection measures implemented by the Forest Department.

He noted that Assam's major tiger reserves - Kaziranga, Manas, Orang and Nameri -- continue to provide safe and thriving habitats for the Royal Bengal Tiger, one of the country's flagship species.

The chief minister also reiterated the importance of conserving apex predators for maintaining ecological balance and biodiversity, urging continued public support for wildlife conservation initiatives.

"From Kaziranga and Manas to Orang and Nameri, our tiger reserves continue to stand as secure habitats for the Royal Bengal Tiger. Let us renew our collective commitment to protecting these magnificent animals and (**CONTD. ON PAGE-2**)

APSEZ profit rises 10 pc to ₹ 3,649 crore in Apr-Jun

NEW DELHI, July 29: Adani Ports and Special Economic Zone on Wednesday posted a 10.23 per cent rise in its consolidated net profit to ₹ 3,649.50 crore in the April-June quarter, aided by strong growth in its international ports and marine businesses and steady performance from its domestic ports operations.

It had reported a net profit of ₹ 3,310.60 crore in the corresponding period of FY26, Adani Ports and Special Economic Zone Ltd (APSEZ) said in a regulatory filing.

The total income rose to ₹ 11,673.71 crore in the quarter under review from ₹ 9,422.18 crore in the year-ago quarter.

Expenses also rose to ₹ 7,078.64 crore against ₹ 5,731.88 crore a year ago.

APSEZ Whole-time Director and CEO Ashwani Gupta said, "This balanced growth across businesses reinforces our confidence in achieving Ambition 2031".

Supported by the company's domestic capacity expansion programme targeting 1,000 MMT by 2030, a growing international portfolio, and a rapidly scaling logistics ecosystem, APSEZ is steadily building a more diversified, resilient, and globally relevant transport platform capable of sustaining long-term value creation, Gupta added.

He said APSEZ Q1 FY27 per-



formance underscores the strength of its diversified business model, combining global reach with a multi-modal asset base across geographies, commodities, and customers.

"Our domestic ports business continued to deliver strong growth and remains the bedrock of APSEZ's earnings, while International Ports, Marine, and Logistics have transitioned decisively from scale-up to scale-value, becoming increasingly important drivers of revenue growth and profitability," he added.

India's biggest private port operator, in a statement, said its international ports delivered robust

growth, with revenue increasing 80 per cent year-on-year to ₹ 1,747 crore and EBITDA surging 256 per cent to ₹ 730 crore, led by strong performance in Australia and Colombo, reflecting the increasing maturity of APSEZ's overseas portfolio.

In FY27, Adani Ports expects revenue of ₹ 43,000 to ₹ 45,000 crore and EBITDA of ₹ 25,000 crore to ₹ 26,000 crore.

Volumes increased to 22.8 MMT (Million Metric Tonne) from 7.7 MMT in Q1 FY26, driven by the addition of NQXT Australia and ongoing ramp-up at Colombo.

Australia contributed 10 MMT, followed by Colombo at 6.9 MMT,

Tanzania at 3.7 MMT and Israel at 2.2 MMT. The company said its marine revenue increased 67 per cent year-on-year to ₹ 901 crore, driven by offshore vessel additions and European subsea expansion.

Domestic ports revenue grew 12 per cent, driven by cargo volume growth, superior product mix, and higher realisation, while EBITDA margin stood at a best-in-class 74 per cent.

APSEZ said its gross debt was ₹ 56,776 crore in the first quarter of FY26, and cash balance stood at ₹ 12,428 crore.

The company said TEU rail volumes were impacted due to the ongoing West Asia crisis.

APSEZ continued to build out the asset-light operations with Trucking revenue up 26 per cent, it said. S&P Global Ratings upgraded APSEZ's long-term issuer credit rating and the issue rating on its senior unsecured notes to "BBB" from "BBB-" with a "Stable" outlook.

CARE Ratings and Icrs Limited reaffirmed APSEZ's highest possible domestic rating of "AAA".

The company operates a comprehensive ecosystem of 15 strategically located ports and terminals across India's west, south, and east coasts, combined with a diversified marine fleet of 136 vessels and integrated logistics capabilities, including 12 multi-modal logistics parks. (PTI)

Services index shows 16 sub-sectors recorded double-digit growth in May

NEW DELHI, July 29: The government on Wednesday released the second sub-sectoral trial Index of Services Production, which showed eight out of the 19 sub-sectors of formal services recorded double-digit growth in May 2026.

The Ministry of Statistics & Programme Implementation (MoSPI) released the Index of Services Production (ISP) for May 2026 on 19 sub-sectors, with base year 2024-25.

Except for air transport, post & courier and information and broadcasting, all the categories recorded positive growth in May 2026 on an annual basis, according to the trial ISP with a base year of 2024-25, a statement by the statistics ministry said.

According to the statement, 16 out of the 19 sub-

sectors recorded positive growth in May 2026.

Air transport declined by 2.8 per cent, post and courier slipped by one per cent, and Information and Broadcasting contracted by 7.6 per cent in May.

The top sub-sectors reporting strong growth in May 2026 were Accommodation and Food (27.4 per cent), Real Estate (17.7 per cent), Retail Trade (13.3 per cent), Banking (12.1 per cent), and Telecommunications (11.8 per cent), according to the index. The maiden sub-sectors trial ISP for April 2026 was released on July 14, 2026. The monthly ISPs are being published on an experimental basis, the ministry said. The publication of Trial Series would enable MoSPI to examine data quality, test its resilience and also receive feedback from stakeholders and users, it stated. (PTI)

Contd. from Page 1...

7 more deaths in Nazira circle

activities in relief camps. Sarma, in a Facebook Live on Tuesday evening, had announced relaxation in norms for providing ex gratia to the next of kin of those killed or missing in the floods this year. He said mandatory submission of post-mortem report to avail the one-time grant from the government has been waived, with a certificate from the circle officer to suffice.

"Over and above the ₹ 4 lakh ex gratia per victim that is paid at present, we have decided to give additional ₹ 5 lakh to the families of the deceased from the CM's Relief Fund," he said.

In case of people missing in floods, Sarma said it has been decided that an ex gratia of ₹ 9 lakh will be granted to the victims' families if the bodies are not found within a month, with the circle officer authorised to issue the necessary certificate.

For families severely affected in the four worst-hit districts of Sivasagar, Charaideo, Jorhat and Golaghat, the government will provide an interim amount of ₹ 15,000, which can be utilised for their household needs, the chief minister said. For students of Sivasagar and Charaideo districts, the government will once again grant aid for free uniforms and textbooks, besides providing a monetary grant to buy books for higher secondary, undergraduate and postgraduate students. (PTI)

Assam Assembly passes Bill

Hindu or Muslim or any other group will be able to purchase land within that protected area," he added. The Bill states that those who already possess land pattas in the protected areas, irrespective of their religion or social category, will be allowed to stay.

However, no new person will be allowed to purchase land if he or she does not belong to the category of "original inhabitants". Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, indigenous ethnic communities and disadvantaged groups.

According to the Bill, "original inhabitant" is defined as a person who has been living in that protected area along with his family for the last three generations up to January 1, 2006, and one generation has been taken as 25 years.

While Moran, Matak, Chutia, Koch-Rajbongshi and Ahom have been termed as "indigenous ethnic community"; people belonging to tea, adivasi and other communities notified by the government from time to time have been called as "disadvantaged group". "...the District Commissioner of the district, may evict the unauthorised occupants from the territory of the protected heritage area, other than the persons belonging to the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, indigenous ethnic community and disadvantaged groups," the Bill said.

Sarma said the provisions would apply to religious places of all communities if they are 250 years old or more. He added that those already living there with valid land documents would not be affected, even if they do not fall under the permitted categories, as the law would not have retrospective effect.

"I feel this is the most secular law we have ever brought in. Let us create a new greater Assam by respecting each other. We are preventing both religious majorities and religious minorities from entering within 5km of a religious place of 250 years old," he added. (PTI)

ED Charges 19 in ₹ 1,047.93

eventually projected as legitimate business profits. The laundered money was allegedly diverted into personal and Hindu Undivided Family (HUF) accounts and invested in movable and immovable assets.

The ED alleged that the accused operated a well-organised and vertically integrated criminal syndicate that manufactured liquor in Arunachal Pradesh and smuggled it into Assam without mandatory transit permits or Excise Verification Certificates (EVCs). The liquor bottles reportedly carried labels stating "For Sale in Arunachal Pradesh" but were illegally diverted to Assam to evade the state's significantly higher excise duty and Value Added Tax (VAT).

According to the agency, Assam Excise authorities seized more than 2.63 lakh bulk litres of such liquor, valued at approximately ₹ 52.77 crore, in 739 separate cases between January 2023 and April 2026. The ED said these seizures represented only a fraction of the total quantity allegedly smuggled into the state.

The investigation further revealed that the three principal accused -- Dewan, Sharma and Lohia -- had allegedly established near-complete control over Arunachal Pradesh's liquor trade through an elaborate network of manufacturing units, bonded warehouses, wholesale distributors and retail outlets.

The agency alleged that statutory liquor licences issued to indigenous residents of Arunachal Pradesh were illegally taken over without mandatory approvals from district or excise authorities. The original licence holders were allegedly reduced to proxy name-lenders who received fixed monthly payments, while the accused retained complete financial and operational control through undisclosed agreements.

The ED also claimed that several manufacturing units and warehouse companies appointed dummy directors who functioned merely as salaried employees without any decision-making authority. These individuals allegedly signed blank cheques and acted on the instructions of the principal accused.

Investigators further alleged that liquor manufacturing units substantially increased their production capacity without paying corresponding excise duties, generating large quantities of unaccounted liquor that was subsequently smuggled into Assam. Tracing the financial trail, the ED said the proceeds of crime were laundered through a four-stage mechanism involving wholesale entities, bonded warehouses, manufacturing companies and finally the personal accounts of the accused.

According to the agency, unaccounted cash generated through illegal liquor sales was first deposited into wholesale firms' bank accounts, allegedly using hawala channels. To avoid regulatory scrutiny, thousands of invoices were reportedly split below ₹ 2 lakh, while cash deposits were structured below the ₹ 10 lakh reporting threshold. The prosecution complaint has been filed before the Special PMLA Court, and further proceedings in the case are underway.

Assam govt hikes ex gratia

in other parts of the state, he said. "I am sure the people in other parts will not mind the slight deduction for one time," Sarma said. For students of Sivasagar and Charaideo districts, the government will once again grant aid for free uniforms and textbooks, Sarma said.

A monetary grant of ₹ 1,000 for buying books for higher secondary students, ₹ 3,000 for under-graduate students and ₹ 5,000 for post-graduate students in these two districts will be provided. The state government has also decided to waive fees applicable for issue of duplicate educational mark sheets, the CM said.

The funds for the interim relief and for the students will be provided from the CM's Relief Fund, which has collected donations of over ₹ 26 crore since the latest wave hit the state about 10 days ago, Sarma said.

He also said that assessment of damage to houses, livestock, fisheries and crops will begin on August 3, followed by compensation payment to eligible families. Sarma said contributions have been pouring into the Chief Minister's Relief Fund since July 18, with "micro donations" from 4,610 people totalling ₹ 60 lakh.

Some groups and individuals have contributed bigger amounts, which add up to over ₹ 26 crore, he said.

The interim relief, aid for buying books and any other required assistance not covered by government guidelines will be paid from this fund, the chief minister added. (PTI)

'Assam Land Bill to protect

and requires anyone purchasing land in these protected zones to establish that their family has been residing in the area for at least three generations. The provisions would apply to religious institutions that are over 250 years old.

BJP ally BPF's MLA questions

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

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

'Narcotics trafficking pattern in

Rai added that the Moreh-Tamu border continued to remain a major transit point for heroin and methamphetamine originating from Myanmar to various parts of the country.

The minister said cross-border drug trafficking continued to pose a significant challenge, particularly in the North-eastern states because of their proximity to the "Death Triangle" and porous borders with Myanmar, making them vulnerable to transnational trafficking of amphetamine-type stimulants (ATS) and heroin through organised cross-border trafficking networks.

Rai said Drug Law Enforcement Agencies had reported seizures of 4,626 kg of ATS and 2,652 kg of heroin during 2021-2025. He also said vulnerable border stretches covered under the Free Movement Regime had facilitated drug trafficking activities, while syndicates were constantly changing trafficking routes and concealment methods to evade enforcement action.

The minister said the government had taken several measures to tackle the threat, including releasing the Vision Document on Narcotics Control 2026-2029, strengthening the four-tier Narco-Coordination Centre (NCORD) mechanism, and expanding the Narcotics Control Bureau's presence in border areas.

The measures also include establishing new zonal offices in the Northeast and deploying advanced surveillance systems, anti-drone technology and improved border fencing along vulnerable stretches, he said. (PTI)

Assam emerges as leading

preserving the ecological balance of our forests," he said. Assam is home to four notified tiger reserves and has consistently strengthened conservation efforts through habitat restoration, enhanced patrolling, intelligence-based anti-poaching operations and the adoption of technology-driven monitoring systems.

Ardee Industries' ₹ 426 cr IPO to open on Aug 5; fixes price band at ₹ 50-53

NEW DELHI, July 29: Ardee Industries Ltd, a leading firm in secondary metals and circular economy sectors, will launch its Initial Public Offering (IPO) on August 5 to raise up to ₹ 426 crore through a combination of a fresh issue and an offer for sale.

The price band has been fixed at ₹ 50-53 per equity share for its upcoming IPO, valuing the company at ₹ 1,671 crore.

The three-day initial share sale will conclude on August 7, while the anchor investor bidding will take place on August 4, according to a public announcement on Wednesday.

The IPO comprises a fresh issue of equity shares aggregating up to ₹ 320 crore and an Offer for Sale (OFS) of up to 1.99 crore equity shares by promoters. At the upper end of the price band, the total issue size is pegged at about ₹ 426 crore.

Of the fresh issue, ₹ 220 crore will be earmarked for funding the company's incremental working capital requirements, ₹ 22 crore will go towards debt repayment, and the remaining amount will be used for general corporate purposes.

Ahead of the IPO, the company witnessed secondary share transactions worth around ₹ 115 crore involving a mix of institutional

investors, seasoned market participants and family offices.

The transactions, executed in two tranches on July 24 and July 27 at ₹ 53 per share, saw participation from investors, including Ashish Kacholia, Rohit Kothari-led Winro Commercial, Bharat Value Fund, Jaishighani Family Office, Jagdish Master Family Office, Anuj Sheth Family Office and Gagan Chaturvedi Family Office.

Ardee Industries is engaged in the circular economy segment, focusing on the recovery and recycling of end-of-life energy storage products and non-ferrous scrap. It also reclaims critical resources from waste streams and manufactures pure lead and lead alloys used in sectors such as energy storage, e-mobility, automotive and chemicals.

On the financial front, Ardee Industries' revenue from operations rose to ₹ 1,167.65 crore in FY26 from ₹ 462.96 crore in FY24. During the period, profit after tax also climbed sharply to ₹ 84.68 crore from ₹ 8.95 crore.

The company's equity shares are likely to debut on the exchanges on August 12.

Pantomath Capital Advisors is the sole book-running lead manager to the issue, while KFin Technologies is the registrar. (PTI)

Kazakhstan eyes stronger trade ties with West Bengal



KOLKATA, July 29: Kazakhstan is keen to deepen business engagement with West Bengal, as it considers the state a gateway to northeast India and Southeast Asia, the country's ambassador to India, Yeskarayev Azamat, said on Tuesday.

Addressing an interactive session organized by the Merchants' Chamber of Commerce & Industry (MCCI), Azamat said Kazakhstan is looking to expand cooperation with India, particularly West Bengal, across sectors such as pharmaceuticals, mining, energy and manufacturing.

He said Kazakhstan offers a conducive business environment, and is actively engaging with Indian government officials, industry leaders, politicians and

academia to strengthen bilateral economic ties.

Azamat said entrepreneurs from Kazakhstan are interested in exploring business opportunities in West Bengal, which he described as an important commercial gateway to the eastern and northeastern regions of India as well as Southeast Asia.

A high-level business delegation from Kazakhstan is scheduled to visit India in September to hold discussions with leading Indian companies, including the Tata Group, he said, adding that a business forum will also be held in Chennai.

The envoy is also slated to meet West Bengal Chief Minister Suvenudhikari on Wednesday.

Trade between India and Kazakhstan remains below potential despite Kazakhstan being the largest economy in Central Asia with abundant reserves of oil, natural gas, uranium and rare earth minerals, officials said.

Tea, food processing, pharmaceuticals, engineering goods, leather, chemicals, logistics, information technology, fintech, education, tourism and green energy are some of the sectors offering significant scope for collaboration, they said. (PTI)

Stayfree launches upgraded Secure XL with Pad Change Alert

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, July 29: Stayfree, a leading menstrual hygiene brand in India, has launched an upgraded version of its Stayfree Secure XL sanitary pad featuring a new "Pad Change Alert" designed to help users identify the right time to change their pads and reduce concerns about leakage during menstruation.

The company has also rolled out a new television campaign titled "Zero Tension. Double Protection", featuring actor Kiara Advani, to promote the upgraded product.

According to the company, the enhanced Stayfree Secure XL provides up to 12 hours of protection through its Double Leak Lock technology. The product incorporates a two-stage leak detection system in which the inner barrier helps contain menstrual flow, while the outer barrier changes colour to indicate when it is time to replace the pad.

Stayfree said the upgraded product was developed following extensive consumer research and testing, adding that all participants in its consumer study reported a favourable response to the new

product.

Commenting on the launch, Supriya Srinivasa, Marketing Director of Stayfree India, said menstrual periods often bring not only physical discomfort but also anxiety over issues such as leakage, access to toilets and the need to carry extra sanitary pads.

She said the new Pad Change Alert feature aims to reduce this mental burden by helping users know when a pad needs to be changed, enabling them to manage their daily activities with greater confidence and comfort.

India must re-imagine responses to evolving challenges: FinMin report

NEW DELHI, July 29: India will have to re-invent itself and re-imagine its responses to evolving global challenges, especially high energy prices, to achieve strategic leverage, with domestic reforms and swift policy action being crucial to reshape the country's economic trajectory, a Finance Ministry report said on Wednesday.

While flagging upside risks to inflation, fiscal and current account deficits and downside risk to growth in the wake of persistent stand-off in the Gulf region, the Ministry's monthly report said swifter policy responses and their implementation are vital to encourage foreign and domestic investment in the country's economy.

"Global developments related to AI and weaponisation of supply chains in general are reminders of the distance India needs to travel to achieve long-term resilience and strategic leverage. Recent years have been a time for hunkering down and battenning down the hatches. Coming years will be no exception," said the Monthly Economic Review report for July.

"...the recent resurgence in global crude oil prices, if sustained, could re-emerge as a source of pressure on financing of both the fiscal deficit and the current account balance," the report said. It said global economic uncertainty has resurfaced during the month as geopolitical tensions in West Asia escalated, leading to renewed upward pressure on crude oil prices after a brief period of easing. Although the increase remains well below the sharp spike witnessed during the initial phase of the West Asia conflict, uncertainty surrounding the global outlook has increased, it said. Brent futures rose over 5 per cent to USD 88.40 a barrel on Wednesday after the US and Saudi Arabia launched targeted strikes on Iraq.

Since the beginning of the war in West Asia on February 28, crude oil prices have risen significantly, stoking inflation fears. Crude prices soared to a four-year high of USD 126

per barrel in early May from about USD 73 level before the war. The ministry's report said that Indian economy has continued to demonstrate resilience amid a challenging global backdrop. Nonetheless, global challenges show no sign of letting up, with uncertainties mounting.

"So, India has to reinvent itself and re-imagine its responses to global imperatives if it has to achieve strategic leverage. As external conditions evolve, the continued interplay of domestic reforms, prudent macroeconomic management and swift policy responses, backed by consistent on-ground implementation will remain important in shaping India's economic trajectory," the report noted.

While global crude price fluctuations from geopolitical events and potential El Nino weather patterns are being carefully monitored, the domestic inflation outlook remains cautious and structurally well-supported, anchored by active measures to support price stability, robust agricultural commodity procurement and targeted contingency plans in place.

The report said despite heightened global uncertainties, India's economic outlook remains underpinned by resilient domestic fundamentals, continued policy support, and strengthening structural drivers of growth.

Structural reforms of the last decade and infrastructure investments are contributing to growth resilience as is evident in the data for the months of March to June 2026, it said.

The report said India's external sector exhibits notable resilience with strong export performance, a services trade surplus, and consistent remittance flows that have strengthened the current account. Furthermore, recent policy measures will provide an impetus to capital inflows in the near term. Together with adequate foreign exchange reserves, these factors are expected to reinforce the external sector's resilience, it added. (PTI)

ICI Prudential launches 10-year life cover option under iProtect Smart Plus

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, July 29: ICI Prudential Life Insurance has introduced a 10-year life cover option under its iProtect Smart Plus plan, aimed at customers with short-term financial commitments such as home loans, children's education expenses and business loans.

The insurer said the new offering is designed to provide a high life cover at comparatively lower premiums during the period when customers have significant financial responsibilities. The plan also includes complimentary health and wellness services worth up to ₹ 67,100, an instant claims payout of ₹ 3 lakh, and a 100 per cent payout upon the diagnosis of a terminal illness.

Commenting on the launch, Manikandan Rajamani, Chief of Distribution at ICI Prudential Life Insurance, said customer expectations regarding financial protection continue to evolve alongside changing life goals. He said the new 10-year policy term expands the company's protection portfolio by combining affordability with features intended to provide meaningful financial security.

Rajamani said the company recorded a 99.3 per cent claim settlement ratio and an average claim turnaround time of one day during the first quarter of FY2027.

Hagrama Mohilary outlines development-focused Budget with emphasis on education, infrastructure and public welfare

BTC presents ₹1,588.31-crore Budget for 2026-27

HT Correspondent

KOKRAJHAR, July 29: The Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) on Wednesday presented a ₹1,588.31-crore Budget for the 2026-27 financial year, with a strong focus on education, infrastructure development and public welfare during the opening day of the two-day Budget Session of the BTC Legislative Council.

Presenting the Budget in his capacity as Chief of the BTC and In-charge of the Finance Department, Hagrama Mohilary proposed a total outlay of ₹1,58,831.32 lakh.

The Budget earmarks ₹90,000 lakh under the Consolidated State Own Priority Development (SOPD) Grant, ₹20,000 lakh for infrastructure development and implementation of the Bodoland Accord, ₹20,000 lakh as special assistance for Centrally Sponsored Schemes, ₹9,757.25 lakh towards infrastructure grants, ₹2,530.22 lakh for administrative grants, ₹2,794.44 lakh as special grants to the BTC, ₹1,000 lakh as ex gratia



for martyrs and another ₹1,000 lakh for the construction of a BTC Guest House in Chennai.

The Council also projected own revenue receipts of ₹9,131.42 lakh against an estimated expenditure of ₹16,285.94 lakh, resulting in a projected deficit of ₹7,154.47 lakh under the normal Budget.

Briefing the media, Executive Member Derhasat Basumatary said the allocated SOPD funds had been distributed among various departments in accordance with the

Annual Operating Plan for 2026-27.

He described the Budget as people-centric and development-oriented, with special emphasis on strengthening the education sector while ensuring balanced growth across all sectors.

During the Question Hour, Executive Member for Education Rabin Narzary informed the House that the Bodofa Super-50 Mission would be revamped and renamed as the UN Brahma Free UPSC,

APSC, NEET and JEE Coaching Programme, with the number of beneficiaries to be increased substantially beyond the existing 50 students.

Narzary said discussions had already been held with reputed coaching institutes in New Delhi and Guwahati to provide free coaching for UPSC and APSC aspirants, while arrangements were also being made to offer free NEET and JEE coaching in Kokrajhar.

Responding to another query on the amalgamation and merger of schools, Narzary asserted that the BTC has constitutional authority to formulate its own education policies and is not bound to implement the Assam Government's policy on school mergers.

He categorically stated that no amalgamation or merger of schools would be carried out in the BTC region under the state government's policy.

The Budget Session of the BTC Legislative Council will conclude on July 30.

Governor reviews Assam flood situation, directs authorities to expedite relief

Lakshman Prasad Acharya stresses uninterrupted rescue operations and early rehabilitation in worst-hit districts



HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, July 29: Governor Lakshman Prasad Acharya on Wednesday reviewed the prevailing flood situation in the state, with particular focus on the flood-hit districts of Sivasagar, Charaideo, Jorhat and Golaghat, and directed authorities to ensure uninterrupted rescue operations and timely relief and rehabilitation for affected families.

The review meeting was held at Lok Bhavan and attended by Additional Chief Secretary, Revenue and Disaster Management Department, L. Sweety Changsan, along with senior officials of the Revenue and Disaster Management Department and the Assam State

Disaster Management Authority (ASDMA).

During the meeting, Changsan presented a detailed assessment of the flood situation, briefing the Governor on the extent of inundation, the affected population, the functioning of relief camps, deployment of rescue teams, availability of essential commodities, restoration of damaged infrastructure and the measures being undertaken by the state government to assist flood-affected people.

Reviewing the situation, the Governor directed the departments concerned to ensure that rescue and relief operations continue without interruption and that all af-

fected people receive timely assistance. He emphasised the need to provide adequate relief materials, safe shelter, potable drinking water, healthcare services and other essential support.

Acharya also called for special attention to the needs of vulnerable sections of society, including women, children, senior citizens and persons with disabilities, so that they receive prompt and adequate assistance during the ongoing crisis.

Stressing the importance of co-ordinated action, the Governor asked officials to maintain close coordination among all departments and field agencies to minimise hardship and ensure the uninterrupted supply of essential services in flood-affected areas.

He also underscored the need to expedite rehabilitation measures to help affected families return to normalcy at the earliest.

The Governor appreciated the efforts of the district administrations, ASDMA, State Disaster Response Force (SDRF), National Disaster Response Force (NDRF), police personnel, healthcare workers, non-governmental organisations and volunteers engaged in rescue and relief operations.

AAJU seeks judicial probe into Upper Assam floods at executive meeting

HT Correspondent

NAGAON, July 29: The central working committee of the All Assam Journalists' Union (AAJU) has demanded a judicial inquiry into the devastating floods that affected Jorhat, Sivasagar and Charaideo districts, while adopting a series of resolutions on journalists' welfare, media rights and public issues during its executive meeting held at the union's headquarters in Tezpur.

The meeting, hosted by the Sonitpur District Journalists' Union, was inaugurated by Tezpur Civil Society president and retired professor Purneshwar Nath, who urged journalists to uphold truth and integrity.

He said journalists should strive to earn public respect by exposing misinformation and standing firmly for facts, adding that courage and honesty are essential to safeguarding democracy.

The session was presided over by AAJU President Pankaj Kumar Nath, while General Secretary Nakul Talukdar outlined the agenda and preparations for the union's upcoming biennial conference.

Among the major resolutions adopted was a demand for the enactment of a Journalist Protection Act and the fair distribution of government advertisements among media organisations based on circulation, along with timely payment of dues.

Expressing concern over the severe floods in Sivasagar, Jorhat and Charaideo, the committee termed the disaster "unnatural" and called for a judicial inquiry into its causes. It also sought adequate compensation for affected families and financial assistance from the Central government for relief and rehabilitation.

The meeting further condemned the alleged assault on youths and students during a democratic protest at Jantar Mantar in New Delhi.

The union announced that its 12th biennial central conference will be held in Biswanath district in early December, and proposed inviting noted educationist, innovator and environmentalist Sonam Wangchuk as the chief guest.

An editorial board for the union's annual journal was also constituted, with Advisor Dhruvajyoti Sarma appointed chairman and executive member Dibyajyoti Nath named editor.

The meeting felicitated Dibyajyoti Nath, senior journalist of Asomiya Pratidin and working president of the Sonitpur District Journalists' Union, for receiving the Ayodhya Prasad Goswami Memorial Investigative Journalism Award.

Journalist Dilip Nath was also congratulated for being honoured with the Assam Janaswartha Joddha award by the Assam Anti-Corruption Forum.

Lions Club of Guwahati Gold holds free eye screening camp at ISBT Betkuchi

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, July 29: The Lions Club of Guwahati Gold organised a free eye screening camp at ISBT, Betkuchi on Wednesday, providing eye examinations and specialist consultations to members of the public as part of its community healthcare initiatives.

The camp was conducted in collaboration with Guwahati Eye & Multispecialty Centre, which served as the medical partner for the programme, while the Assam State Transport Corporation (ASTC) extended support as the event partner.

Renowned ophthalmologist Dr Angshuman Deka conducted eye examinations and offered expert consultations to the beneficiaries.

A total of 96 people availed themselves of the free screening and consultation services during the camp.

The initiative was chaired by Banty Agarwal, with Pankaj Khedia serving as co-chairperson.

Members of the Lions Club of Guwahati Gold actively participated in organising the programme and assisted in ensuring its smooth conduct.

Minister inaugurates CM flood relief kit distribution in Demow

HT Correspondent

DEMOW, July 29: Assam Water Resources and Judicial Department Minister and local MLA Sushanta Borgohain on Wednesday inaugurated the distribution of Chief Minister's Flood Relief Kits for flood-affected families in Demow Co-District at a programme held at the office of the Co-District Commissioner.

The relief materials were dispatched in 23 vehicles for distribution across four panchayats in the Demow constituency.

According to officials, 2,557 relief kits were allocated to Silakuti Gaon Panchayat, 1,330 kits to Gargaon Gaon Panchayat, 1,510 kits to Khelua Gaon Panchayat and 2,011 kits to Lakwa Gaon Panchayat, taking the total number of kits distributed in the first phase to 7,408.

NFR extends six pairs of special trains amid flood-related disruptions

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, July 29: The Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR) has extended the operation of six pairs of special trains to facilitate passenger movement amid the prevailing flood situation and disruptions to normal rail services in parts of Assam.

The extension covers 12 train services operating across the Tinsukia, Lumding and Rangiya divisions, including Mariani-Rangiya, Tinsukia-Bhojo, New Tinsukia-Moranhat, Dibrugarh-Kolkata and two pairs of Lumding-Mariani special trains.

NFR said the trains would continue to operate with their existing schedules, timings, composition and stoppages to meet increased passenger demand caused by flooding and waterlogging.

According to the revised schedule, Train Nos 05831/05832 (Mariani-Rangiya-Mariani) have been extended for one additional trip each on July 31.

Train Nos 05911/05912 (Tinsukia-Bhojo-New Tinsukia) will operate two additional trips each on July 30 and 31, while Train Nos 05913/05914 (New Tinsukia-Moranhat-Tinsukia) have been extended for three additional trips each from July 29 to 31.

Similarly, Train Nos 07641/07642 (Lumding-Mariani-Lumding) will run three additional trips each between July 29 and 31.

Train No 07643 (Lumding-Mariani) will operate two additional trips on July 30 and 31, while Train No



07644 (Mariani-Lumding) will run two additional trips on July 31 and August 1. For long-distance passengers, Train Nos 05932/05931 (Dibrugarh-Kolkata-Dibrugarh) have been extended for five additional trips each.

The Dibrugarh-Kolkata Special will operate every Saturday from August 1 to August 29, while the Kolkata-Dibrugarh Special will run every Monday from August 3 to August 31. NFR has also revised the timing of Train No 05931 (Kolkata-Dibrugarh Special) at Rangiya railway station with effect from August 3.

The train will now arrive at 8.30 pm and depart at 8.40 pm.

Railway officials said detailed information regarding train timings and stoppages is available on the IRCTC website and the official social media platforms of the Northeast Frontier Railway.

Passengers have been advised to verify the latest schedules before commencing their journey.

NFR cancels, reschedules more trains as restoration work continues on hill section

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, July 29: The Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR) has announced the cancellation, rescheduling and regulation of several trains operating through the Lumding-Badarpur Hill Section as restoration work continues near New Harangajao following the settlement of railway tracks on Line-1 and Line-2.

Railway officials said train services are currently being operated through Line-3 with enhanced safety measures while repair and restoration work is carried out on the affected tracks.

According to an official release, Train No 15615 (Guwahati-Silchar Express) scheduled to commence its journey on July 30 and Train No 15616 (Silchar-Guwahati Express) scheduled to depart on July 31 have been cancelled.

Several other services have been rescheduled. Train No 15650 (Narangi-Agartala Express) will now depart at 10.30 pm on July 30, while Train No 15649 (Agartala-Narangi Express) has been rescheduled to leave at 11.30 pm

the same day.

Similarly, Train No 15609 (Guwahati-Sairang Express) and Train No 15611 (Rangiya-Silchar Express) will depart at 11.30 pm on July 30.

Train No 15610 (Sairang-Guwahati Express) has been rescheduled to leave at 9.30 pm on July 30.

Train No 15612 (Silchar-Rangiya Express) will now depart at 5 am on July 31, while Train No 15608 (Silchar-Thiruvananthapuram Central Express) has been rescheduled to leave at 4.10 am on July 31.

Train No 14619 (Agartala-Firozpur Cantt. Express) will depart at 11 pm on July 30.

In addition, Train No 12503 (SMVT Bengaluru-Agartala Humsafar Express), which commenced its journey on July 28, will be regulated en route to facilitate smooth operations during the restoration work.

NFR said restoration work is progressing on a priority basis and advised passengers to check the latest train schedules before commencing their journeys.

Man shot dead inside Raimona National Park

HT Correspondent

KOKRAJHAR, July 29: A 29-year-old man was found dead inside Raimona National Park in Assam's Kokrajhar district on Wednesday, with his family alleging that he was shot by forest guards while collecting firewood.

The deceased has been identified as Phunkha Basumatary, son of Nimal Basumatary and a resident of 2 No Moinaguri village.

According to family members, Basumatary had gone missing at around 3 pm on July 28 after entering the forest to collect firewood.

They alleged that he was intercepted by personnel from the Athiyabari Forest Outpost, who subsequently opened fire on him.

His body was recovered on Wednesday from a forested area on the western side of Saralpara Picnic Spot within the Raimona Forest Area under the Kachugaon Forest Division, along the India-Bhutan international border.

The circumstances leading to the firing could not be independently verified and no official statement had been issued by the Forest Department till the filing of this report.

KVK Karbi Anglong distributes seeds and planting materials to 102 farmers

HT Bureau

DIPHU, July 29: The Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK), Karbi Anglong, on Wednesday distributed quality seeds and planting materials to 102 farmers from different parts of the district during a programme held at its main campus in Amlokhi to promote scientific farming practices and crop diversification.

The programme began with a welcome address by Prakshiya Boruah, Subject Matter Specialist (Agronomy), followed by an outline of the initiative by Dr Monuj Kumar Doley, Senior Scientist and Head of KVK Karbi Anglong.

In his address, Dr Doley underscored the importance of pulse cultivation in improving soil fertility, enhancing household nutrition and increasing farmers' incomes.

The event was attended by Madhuram Lekhe, Executive Member (Fisheries and Information & Public Relations), Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC), who urged farmers to adopt scientific agricultural practices to improve land productivity and achieve sus-

tainable self-reliance rather than depending on government assistance.

Among those present were Bidyashri Langthasa, ACS, Deputy Secretary, KAAC; Dr KD Singha, Chief Scientist, Zonal Research Station (ZRS), Diphu; and Debojit Saikia, Sub-Divisional Agriculture Officer, Diphu.

During the programme, KVK also released two extension publications titled Biosecurity Measures in Pig Farming and Promising Pulse Crops in Karbi Anglong District of Assam to support farmers with technical guidance and improved field management practices.

Following the formal session, all 102 participating farmers received high-quality seeds of arhar, green gram and black gram, along with planting materials such as fodder, dragon fruit, bamboo and arecanut.

KVK officials said the initiative aims to encourage the adoption of scientific pulse cultivation, promote crop diversification and strengthen the long-term livelihood security of farming communities across Karbi Anglong.

Seemanta Chetana Manch conference concludes at NIT Silchar

HT Correspondent

SILCHAR, July 29: The two-day Assam State Conference of Seemanta Chetana Manch, Purvottar (SCMP) concluded at the National Institute of Technology (NIT), Silchar, with delegates from border districts across the state deliberating on issues related to national security, border development and organisational strengthening.

The conference brought together representatives from districts along the Indo-Bhutan border, including Kokrajhar, Chirang, Baksa and Udalguri, as well as the Indo-Bangladesh border districts of Dhubri, South Salmara-Mankachar, Cachar and Sribhumi.

Delegates from Guwahati, North Lakhimpur and Bongaigaon also participated. Governor Lakshman Prasad Acharya, who was scheduled to inaugurate the conference as the chief guest, could not attend due to unavoidable circumstances. In a message, he conveyed his greetings and best wishes for the successful conduct of the event.

The inaugural session began with the ceremonial lighting of the lamp and floral tributes to Bharat Mata, followed by the felicitation of invited guests.

Welcoming the delegates, Bablu Kumar Roy, State President of Seemanta Chetana Manch, Purvottar, outlined the objectives of the conference and reaffirmed the organisation's commitment to promoting nationalism, social responsibility and public awareness among people living in border areas.

Delivering the keynote address, A Gopal Krishnan, Akhil Bharatiya Sangraskhak of Seema Jagaran, stressed the strategic importance of India's border regions and called upon citizens to strengthen patriotic values and actively contribute to nation-building. He urged members to work towards national unity, social harmony and the protection of the country's territorial integrity.

Guest of Honour Niharendu Dhar, Deputy Registrar of NIT Silchar, appreciated the efforts of Seemanta Chetana Manch in creating awareness among border communities and fostering national integration.

NTPC Bongaigaon highlights impact of Girl Empowerment Mission

CSR initiative has empowered 210 girls since 2022, with expanded outreach in 2026

HT Correspondent

KOKRAJHAR, July 29: NTPC Bongaigaon on Wednesday showcased the progress and impact of its flagship Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiative, the Girl Empowerment Mission (GEM), during an interaction with representatives of the print, electronic and digital media at its Salakati project.

Addressing the media, Arnab Maitra, Executive Director and Head of Project, NTPC Bongaigaon, described the Girl Empowerment Mission as one of the company's most significant social initiatives, aimed at equipping young girls from rural and underprivileged communities with confidence, leadership skills, knowledge and aspirations to become future change-makers.

Maitra said the programme, launched across three NTPC projects in 2018 with 392 participants, has grown into one of the country's largest residential girl empowerment initiatives, benefiting more than 16,000 girls nationwide.

Aligned with the Government of India's Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao campaign, the programme focuses on developing leadership, life skills and educational aspirations among young girls.

Highlighting NTPC Bongaigaon's contribution, he said the project introduced GEM in 2022 and has since benefited 210 girls through its first four editions.

In the 2026 edition, the number of participants was increased from 40 to 50, enabling more girls from neighbouring communities to take part in the month-long residential programme.

The curriculum combines academic support with spoken English, mathematics, digital literacy, health and hygiene education, yoga, self-defence training, sports, creative arts, personality development, leadership training, environmental awareness and educational exposure visits.

Participants also interact with professionals from diverse fields to broaden their horizons and encourage them to pursue higher aspirations.



Maitra said the programme's greatest achievement lies in building confidence and transforming mindsets among young girls.

He also highlighted a unique feature of the initiative at NTPC Bongaigaon, under which 10 per cent of participants, selected through an independent evaluation, are provided free education at the NTPC

township school, offering long-term educational opportunities to deserving students.

During the interaction, NTPC officials highlighted the wide range of activities conducted under GEM 2026, including personality development sessions, menstrual hygiene awareness, sports and fitness programmes, yoga, art and craft

workshops, dance and cultural training, self-defence classes, mural painting, educational and industrial visits, environmental awareness campaigns and interactive sessions with eminent personalities.

Responding to queries from media representatives, Maitra reiterated NTPC Bongaigaon's commitment to expanding the reach of the Girl Empowerment Mission so that more girls from rural communities can benefit from education, skill development and leadership training.

He was accompanied by Amit Kumar Asthana, Head of Human Resources, along with heads of various departments, who shared insights into the planning, implementation and long-term vision of the programme.

The interaction concluded with NTPC Bongaigaon reaffirming its commitment to investing in the education, confidence and leadership development of young girls as part of its broader efforts to promote inclusive and sustainable community development.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

It's all in how you arrange the thing... the careful balance of the design is the motion.
- Andrew Wyeth

Lessons from Jantar Mantar

Youth and student protests led by the less than three-month-old Cockroach Janta Party (CJP) have won in their battle with the Narendra Modi led government over the resignation of the education minister Dharmendra Pradhan and the other demands for examination reforms. With the government agreeing to most of the demands of the protestors, the CJP suspended the protests on Saturday and announced its decision to follow up the implementation of the assurances given by the centre after one month. Right now, Protesters are the winners, the all-powerful PM is humbled. Opposition parties have rightly called the CJP victory a win for democracy and students' protesters. The INDIA Bloc rallied under Rahul Gandhi in favour of the protesters at Jantar Mantar extending them full support, though the Congress, as a party, kept close distance from the Jantar Mantar protests in the initial days of the movement. But the total integration of the INDIA Bloc with the protesters at the flag end has enabled the opposition to share a small part of the victory. But what next for the opposition in the present political scenario of the country mostly dominated by the BJP and Modi?

It is apparent that PM and his advisers toyed with the idea of diluting the intensity of the protests through some devious means in the early part of last week. Even on Friday night PM appeared confident in his Instagram address meant for his young friends. Instead of having a sobering impact, PM's address enraged the youth so much that thousands of people, apart from the youth, proceeded towards Jantar Mantar on Saturday morning. Many of the experienced officials advised restraint and if needed, one step backward for the time being. The metros were shut, state policies in borders intensified checking, but still, the flow of the people continued on Saturday morning. There was no option for the Modi government. Equally, there was big rage against the Delhi police directly under the control of Home Minister Amit Shah for their actions against the protesters on Friday and Thursday.

What are the lessons from the Jantar Mantar protests? Firstly, the protests were not just the outrage against the NEET examinations question papers leak, but much more, the outburst of the people was to do with the national political climate as a whole. For the educated, the jobs are few, the minorities are being treated as second class citizens, the ruling party is using all the institutions to win elections. Political corruption has reached such a level that the opposition parties are being split and the defectors openly talk of monetary transactions. Nothing less than an electoral autocracy.

Cinema's timeless voice remembered

The passing of K Bhagyaraj marks the end of an extraordinary chapter in Indian cinema. He proved that compelling stories, thoughtful screenplays and authentic characters could leave a deeper impact than spectacle alone. The Tamil Nadu State honours bestowed upon him rightly acknowledge that artists who enrich society deserve the nation's gratitude. His films reflected everyday struggles, celebrated human resilience, and inspired generations of writers and directors. As audiences mourn his loss we should also ensure that his creative legacy is preserved through film archives, educational institutions and public discussions. Great storytellers never truly leave us they continue to live through the ideas they gifted to society.

Dr Vijay Kumar H K

Credibility of Newspapers and the trust of the public

As an indispensable part of the social environment and democratic system, the profound impact that newspapers have extended on human daily life is not merely limited to a medium of supplying news; rather, it is an intellectual process and a social mirror that plays an important role at every moment in determining the nature and dynamics of society. From opening one's eyes in the morning to going to bed at night, the contribution of newspapers in shaping human consciousness, forming opinions, and building an invisible bridge among various strata of society is undeniable. At the very epicenter of this vast process lies credibility and reader trust, which is the sole capital for the survival of a newspaper. When we discuss the credibility of a newspaper, we are actually discussing the mental health and moral standards of a nation or a society, because the more transparent and clean a society is, the character of its media is likewise. However, in the changing circumstances of the present time, where the aggression of technology and commerce challenges human values, safeguarding the credibility of newspapers has become a complex struggle. This struggle is not merely that of newspaper owners or journalists, it is the struggle of every conscious reader, because the future of the journalistic world depends entirely on reader trust.

The trust that readers have in a newspaper is not an emotional relationship built overnight; rather, it is a magnificent edifice of firm belief built over a long period on the foundation of dedication to truth, neutrality, and fearlessness. Observing from the past to the present, it is seen that the newspapers which have prioritized societal interests without thinking merely of commercial profits have always retained people's respect. When readers pick up a newspaper, they want to see their own problems, hopes, aspirations, and the true picture of society in it. They believe that behind every word published on the pages of a newspaper lies the journalist's deep research, search for truth, and accountability. But when this trust develops a fracture, meaning when readers feel that the newspaper has hidden the actual truth or presented news in the interest of a specific party, a negative concept is created in people's minds not just towards that specific paper, but towards the entire media. This negative perception is an ominous sign for democracy, because the media is considered the fourth pillar of democracy, and if this pillar weakens, maintaining societal balance becomes impossible.

Truth and neutrality are the backbone of a newspaper, but in the current complex socio-political context, the definition of 'truth' and its presentation have become controversial subjects. Often it is seen that truth is interpreted in various ways, and the media presents those interpretations before readers according to its own convenience. In such situations, it is natural for readers to become confused. Actually, a newspaper's responsibility is not merely to give a description of events, but to provide a clear concept regarding the causes behind those events, their impact, and future consequences. When a newspaper can go deep into an incident and analyze all its aspects, only then can readers realize the true nature of truth. But in the current fast-paced era, where a wave of new news arises every moment, in such an environment, the time and patience of many media institutions to conduct deep analysis and search for truth have decreased.

As a result, often half-truths or distorted information reach readers, and this creates a crisis of credibility. The reading public today is quite conscious and can gather information from various sources. Therefore, if newspapers think that whatever they serve will be accepted by readers without question, then that would be a big mistake. Respecting this consciousness of readers, newspapers should always be vigilant in improving their standards.

Another important aspect of a newspaper's credibility is its editorial policy and perspective. The editorial page is called the soul of a newspaper, where the paper's own opinions and ideals are reflected. It is on this page that deep discussions and analyses on important issues of society are conducted. The stronger and people-oriented a newspaper's editorial policy is, the more reader trust increases. But unfortunately, at present, the influence of the corporate world or political pressure has become evident in the editorial policies of many newspapers. When readers feel that editorial writings are written under someone's direction instead of independent thinking, those writings hold no value. The independence and neutrality of a newspaper are not merely slogans; they are a code of conduct. Violating this code of conduct causes a newspaper to lose its character. As the conscience of society, newspapers must always speak out against injustice and take the side of the weak classes. Not bowing before power and remaining free from temptations are the best ideals of journalism. The newspapers that have been able to maintain these ideals have succeeded in gaining a place in the hearts



DEGREE OF THOUGHT

By: Himangshu Ranjan Bhuyan

of readers.

At present, the rapid expansion of information technology and the popularity of social media have created a new challenge for print media. It is difficult for print newspapers to compete with the speed at which the news spreads on social media. But amidst this challenge, the importance of newspaper credibility has also increased. Just as fake news, rumors, and propaganda spreading on social media misguide people, people always seek a reliable source to escape from that. In this regard, the role of newspapers is immense. People consider news published in newspapers as a document. Therefore, the responsibility of the print medium is to publish news only after ascertaining its truth without haste. Rather than creating transient excitement like social media, newspapers should focus on depth and analysis. Readers pick up a newspaper not just to know the news, but to ensure the truth of the news and to understand its underlying significance. Only if this trust can be kept alive will the existence of print newspapers remain intact amidst the digital storm.

The language and presentation style of a newspaper are also important factors in gaining credibility. Easy, simple, and dignified language easily attracts readers and takes them to the depths of the subject matter. The language of journalism should be detached and fact-based. The use of excessive ornamentation or emotional words destroys the gravity of the news. Readers want clear and straightforward things. When decency and restraint are seen in the language of a newspaper, readers consider that paper as a distinguished and responsible institution. On the other hand, in trying to create a sensation in headlines, it is often seen deviating from the main subject matter of the news. Such tendencies create annoyance in the minds of readers and reduce the credibility of

the paper. It is extremely important that there is consistency between the news headline and the subject matter. Newspapers should always remember that there are people of different ages and tastes in their reading public, so choosing language and style to be acceptable to all is an art.

The relationship between a newspaper and its readers is not merely one-sided. Newspapers should give equal importance to readers' opinions, complaints, and suggestions. By keeping a specific page or column for readers and facilitating the expression of their free thoughts, a feeling of closeness towards the newspaper arises in readers. When readers see that their voice is published with importance in the newspaper, they think of themselves as a part of that paper. This feeling of partnership strengthens the foundation of the newspaper. Furthermore, newspapers also need to engage in self-criticism occasionally. Admitting one's mistakes and making corrections is not a sign of weakness, rather it is an identity of honesty and courage. Readers always respect humility and honesty. After a news item is published incorrectly, if the paper authority unhesitatingly apologizes and publishes correct information, then reader trust does not break, rather it increases. This transparency is the real yardstick of a newspaper's credibility.

Commercialization and the pressure of advertising have swallowed today's journalistic world to a great extent. Money is needed to run a newspaper, and advertising is its main source. But when the boundary line between advertising and news becomes blurred, that is when problems arise. Often allegations arise of hiding or distorting news in the interest of advertising. Such unethical acts destroy the sanctity of a newspaper. Readers buy and read newspapers by paying money to know the truth, not to be influenced by advertisements. Therefore, there must be a clear distinction between a newspaper's management and editorial departments. Editorial policy should never be controlled by advertisers. The owners of a newspaper cannot afford to forget social accountability along with commercial profits. Because a newspaper is not merely a salable commodity like any other ten items, it is the conscience of society. Transforming this conscience into a commodity will cause irreparable damage to society.

The role of regional media is also very important in safeguarding the credibility of newspapers. The way regional newspapers can feel or express the problems, culture, and emotions of grassroot-level people from close up is not possible for national media. Regional papers are a mirror of their own language and culture for the readers of that region. When these papers highlight local problems in a national or international context, the self-confidence of readers increases. But for this, the standard of regional journalism must improve. Only if the training, safety, and economic security of rural journalists are ensured will they be able to work fearlessly. Often the pages of newspapers are filled only in exchange for the sacrifices and hardships of local journalists. The credibility of the entire media institution depends precisely on their honesty and dedication. Therefore, media institutions should give due dignity to these grassroots-level journalists.

The mindset of the reading public has also changed over time. Today's readers are not merely information receivers, they are analysts. They examine the truth of the information contained in news through various mediums. In such a situation, if newspapers continue to present only conventional news with the old style, the interest of readers will decrease. Newspapers will have to present

new subjects, research reports, and constructive discussions to fulfill the mental demands of readers. Parallel to negative news of society, positive and inspiring stories should also be published. News of only murder, violence, and corruption can make readers despondent. In contrast, good deeds happening in society, the celebration of humanity, and success stories give new hope to readers. A balanced newspaper equally highlights both the dark and light aspects of society.

Attracting the young generation towards newspapers is another big challenge of the present time. Most of the new generation is busy with smartphones and the internet. Reading a newspaper may seem like an old habit to them. But if this generation is to be shaped into socially conscious and responsible citizens, there is no substitute for newspapers. Newspapers can attract them by publishing important writings regarding the problems of the young generation, such as education, employment, mental health, and the use of technology. Furthermore, by giving a touch of modernity to the language and style of newspapers, a connection must be established with the new generation. By organizing special pages or competitions for school and college students, they can be helped in developing the habit of reading newspapers. If future readers cannot be created, the future of newspapers will be dark, therefore special importance needs to be given to this direction.

The degradation of journalistic morality and values is a matter of concern in the present time. The personal self-interest or unethical actions of some journalists put the entire profession to shame. When readers hear that news is published in exchange for money or journalists blackmail, the trust in the media is completely destroyed. To cure this malady, media institutions should take strict measures. Journalism is not merely a livelihood, it is a vow. For those who cannot fulfill this vow, this sacred profession is not meant. The pride of a newspaper depends precisely on the honesty, dedication, and courage of journalists. Readers want such a journalist who can find out the truth even amidst tears and blood. Only those journalists who come to this field with the mentality of serving society can do real journalism.

Finally, a newspaper's credibility and the trust of the reading public are two sides of the same coin. How much importance a newspaper has in a society depends on how much the people of that society trust the newspaper. Earning reader trust is not an easy task, but losing it is very easy. Bringing back once-lost trust is almost impossible. Therefore, every person associated with a newspaper, whether owner, editor, or journalist, should perform their duty very carefully and responsibly. Not distorting truth, maintaining neutrality, and giving the highest place to the public interest is the duty of a newspaper. The day newspapers are able to fulfill this duty, reader trust will remain intact and society too will move forward on the right path. A newspaper should not be merely for news, it should be an ocean of knowledge, thought, and consciousness, where readers can quench their intellectual thirst. Time may change, technology may change, but human eagerness to know the truth and the necessity of trust never end. Embracing this eternal truth, newspapers must protect their existence and remain trusted by the reading public. As a mirror of society, the more transparent a newspaper is, the more beautiful our society and life will be. May this sacred bond of belief and trust remain intact for ages, this is our wish. (References - Several books, multiple articles, and various writings available on the internet have been utilized.)

History has not yet finished with Elwin Teron

By: Prof Vulli Dhanaraju

Public life occasionally reaches moments that compel society not merely to remember the past but also to reflect upon the future. Elwin Teron's announcement on 28 July 2026 that he would withdraw from active politics is one such moment. His statement marked the close of an important chapter in the contemporary history of Karbi Anglong. It also invited us to think about the responsibilities that remain before the Karbi people.

Every individual has the right to decide when to step away from the demands of political life. After more than four decades of public service, no one can question Elwin Teron's decision to retire from active politics. His years as an activist, negotiator, elected representative, organic intellectual, adviser, constitutional thinker and public servant deserve admiration and gratitude. Yet, while I fully respect his decision, I find myself wishing that he would reconsider one aspect of it. I hope he does not retire from public life.

Politics and public life are not the same. Political office is temporary. Public life is an enduring responsibility. One derives its authority from elections and appointments, while the other draws its legitimacy from experience, wisdom, ideas and moral credibility. History reminds us that many individuals have exercised their greatest influence after leaving formal office. Mahatma Gandhi never held constitutional office in independent India, yet his moral authority shaped the nation. Jayaprakash Narayan transformed public life without seeking political power. Public life is larger than politics because it nurtures institutions, ideas and future generations.

Few individuals have shaped the contemporary history of Karbi Anglong as profoundly as Elwin Teron. His public life was not born out of political ambition but out of a conscious decision to place the collective aspirations of the hill tribes above personal advancement. After completing his Master's degree in International Politics at Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, he had every opportunity to prepare for the Civil Services Examination and pursue a distinguished career in the Indian Administrative Service. Instead, at a defining moment in his life, he chose to return to the hill districts of Assam, where the movement for constitutional autonomy was gathering momentum. Setting aside the prospect of a prestigious bureaucratic career, he dedicated himself to the cause of the Karbi people through the People's Democratic Forum and later the Autonomous State Demand Committee. That decision reflected not

merely political commitment but a profound sense of historical responsibility towards the aspirations, rights and future of the hill tribes, a commitment that has continued to guide his public life for more than four decades.

Elwin Teron's contribution to the successive peace negotiations in Karbi Anglong constitutes one of the most significant chapters of his public life. From the Memorandum of Understanding of 1995 and the UPDS Peace Agreement of 2011 to the landmark Karbi Peace Accord of 2021, he consistently advocated the belief that enduring peace could only be achieved through constitutional dialogue rather than prolonged confrontation. His role in these negotiations reflected a rare combination of political pragmatism, historical understanding and constitutional vision. Rather than viewing peace accords as mere political settlements, he regarded them as opportunities to strengthen democratic institutions and expand the scope of autonomous self-governance. Political scientist John Paul Lederach, one of the foremost scholars of peacebuilding, argues that sustainable peace is created through the patient transformation of relationships and institutions rather than the simple cessation of conflict. Elwin Teron's public life exemplifies this principle. His unwavering commitment to dialogue, negotiation and constitutional engagement helped transform decades of political unrest into a framework for democratic participation, laying the foundations for a more stable and hopeful future for the hill districts.

Yet it would be a mistake to remember Elwin Teron only as a movement leader or negotiator. Much of his most significant contribution has taken place away from public attention. History often remembers those who occupy public office, but it frequently overlooks those who quietly build institutions. Policies do not emerge on their own. Constitutional reforms are not written overnight. Every important legislative proposal, every institutional framework and every administrative reform begin with careful research, drafting, consultation and sustained intellectual labour.

Serving as Chief Adviser to the Chief Executive Member of the Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council, Dr Tuliram Ronghang, Elwin Teron has devoted himself to precisely this kind of work. It is important to clarify a misunderstanding that occasionally appears in public discussions. Some assume that his advisory role implies political membership in the Bharatiya Janata Party. This assumption is incorrect. Elwin Teron has never been

a member of the BJP. His service has been rendered to the institution of the Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council and to the constitutional aspirations of the Karbi people rather than to any political party. Throughout his public life, his commitment has remained centred upon strengthening autonomous governance under the Sixth Schedule and advancing the long-standing aspirations of the hill tribes.

Many of the important policy initiatives undertaken in recent years bear his intellectual imprint. He played the principal role in conceptualising the Karbi Welfare Autonomous Council established under the Karbi Welfare Autonomous Council Act, 2025, in fulfilment of Clause 3.6 of the Karbi Peace Accord. He prepared detailed constitutional responses to the proposed One Hundred and Twenty Fifth Constitutional Amendment Bill from the perspective of the hill tribes. He drafted the proposed Karbi Anglong Police Code, which continues to await legislative approval. He has also worked tirelessly in preparing documents supporting the long-standing demand for the upgradation of Assam University Diphu Campus and the establishment of a separate Central University for hill districts of Assam.

In this respect, Elwin Teron's public life reflects an important constitutional tradition in India. Dr B.R. Ambedkar repeatedly argued that durable social and political change depends not only upon protest but also upon the creation of sound constitutional institutions capable of protecting vulnerable communities. Although working in a very different historical context and at a regional level, Elwin Teron has consistently pursued the same constitutional path by seeking to translate the aspirations of the hill tribes into institutional frameworks, legislative proposals and policy initiatives. His contribution reminds us that constitutional change is sustained not merely by movements but also by those who patiently build institutions.

My own association with some of these initiatives has been deeply enriching. I had opportunities to assist by locating historical records, constitutional references and archival materials while sharing academic perspectives on questions relating to Karbi history, autonomy and institutional development. More importantly, I had the privilege of observing the extraordinary discipline with which Elwin Teron approached public service. Despite recurring health challenges, he rarely allowed physical discomfort to interfere with his responsibilities. On many occasions, I witnessed him working late into the night preparing policy papers, drafting memoranda, responding to com-

munications from different Ministries of the Government of India and the Government of Assam and advising officials of the Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council on complex constitutional and administrative questions. Public service, for him, has never been confined to office hours. It has been an ethical commitment.

Some of my most memorable experiences have been the many conversations that I shared with Elwin Teron and another distinguished Karbi intellectual, Dr Dharamsing Teron. Our discussions frequently extended far beyond immediate political concerns. We spoke about Karbi history, oral traditions, customary institutions, indigenous philosophy, constitutional developments, education and the future of autonomous governance. Those conversations became, for me, an education beyond the university classroom. They demonstrated that intellectual life flourishes not only in academic institutions but also through dialogue among those who remain deeply committed to the future of their society.

The Italian political thinker Antonio Gramsci described certain individuals as "organic intellectuals" who transform the lived experiences of their communities into ideas, institutions, and social action. Elwin Teron's public life exemplifies this ideal. His scholarship has never been separated from public life. His articles, policy papers, speeches and books emerged from decades of engagement with the constitutional aspirations of the Karbi people. His collection of poems, Monsoon Symphony (2023), reveals a reflective literary mind, while his book Slogans, Guns and the Sixth Schedule (2023) documents the historical evolution of the autonomy movement and the constitutional questions that continue to shape the future of Karbi Anglong.

His farewell statement from active politics also carried another important message that deserves careful reflection. It reminded us that although significant progress has been achieved, the larger constitutional aspirations of the Karbi people remain unfinished. The implementation of Article 244A, the effective strengthening of autonomous institutions, the protection of indigenous land and natural resources, the preservation of language and culture, educational advancement, demographic concerns and sustainable development remain central challenges for the future. These are not merely political questions. They are questions about the survival and flourishing of an indigenous society in a rapidly changing world.

The political philosopher Hannah Arendt observed that the strength of a political community

depends not simply upon governments but upon the quality of its public institutions and the willingness of citizens to participate in the common life of society. Her insight speaks directly to the present moment in Karbi Anglong. Peace agreements and constitutional provisions acquire meaning only when they are transformed into strong institutions capable of serving future generations. Much of Elwin Teron's public life has been devoted to precisely this work.

The historian Benedict Anderson similarly reminds us that communities endure because they share memories, institutions and a sense of common purpose. For the Karbi people, preserving historical memory is as important as securing constitutional rights. Every generation must inherit not only political institutions but also the knowledge, values and experiences that sustain them. The task before Karbi Anglong today is therefore not only to pursue development but also to protect its cultural identity, strengthen democratic institutions and prepare younger generations to carry forward the unfinished aspirations of the autonomy movement.

For these reasons, I sincerely hope that Elwin Teron's decision to withdraw from active politics will mark not the conclusion of his public engagement but the beginning of a new phase of service. His own statement speaks of handing over the baton of political leadership to a younger generation, a decision that deserves both respect and admiration. Yet the challenges he himself identifies the strengthening of autonomous institutions, the protection of indigenous land and resources, the preservation of political unity, and the fulfilment of the constitutional aspirations of the hill tribes continue to require experienced minds and thoughtful guidance. Karbi Anglong still needs his scholarship, constitutional insight, institutional memory and intellectual leadership. The younger generation needs mentors as much as it needs political leaders. His experience of the autonomy movement, peace negotiations and institution building is a priceless public resource. I hope he will continue to enrich public life through writing, policy advice, public dialogue and mentorship.

Political office belongs to a particular moment in history. Public life belongs to history itself. The people of Karbi Anglong have benefited from Elwin Teron's service for more than four decades. I sincerely hope they will continue to benefit from his wisdom for many years to come, because history, I believe, has not yet finished with Elwin Teron.

IMD predicts heavy rain, thunderstorms in several Arunachal districts over next 2 days

The monsoon has affected all 27 districts of the state so far



ITANAGAR, July 29: The IMD on Wednesday forecast thunderstorms accompanied by lightning and heavy to very heavy rainfall in several parts of Arunachal Pradesh over the next two days.

According to the meteorological centre here, thunderstorms with

lightning and heavy rainfall (6-11 cm in 24 hours) are very likely at isolated places in East Siang, Lohit, Namsai and Longding districts on Thursday and Friday.

Papum Pare district, meanwhile, is likely to experience very heavy rainfall (12-20 cm in 24 hours) at

isolated places during the same period.

Lower Subansiri, Lower Dibang Valley and Lohit districts are likely to witness thunderstorms with lightning and heavy rainfall at isolated places on Friday and Saturday.

The Indian Meteorological Department (IMD) has also warned of very heavy rainfall over Papum Pare district on Friday and Saturday, cautioning that intense spells of rain may trigger localised flooding, waterlogging and disruption of normal activities in vulnerable areas. The weather office has advised residents, commuters and authorities to remain alert and take necessary precautions in view of the possibility of thunderstorms, lightning and heavy rain across the affected districts over the next two days.

The ongoing spell of floods and landslides has so far claimed seven

lives, injured 29 people and affected 1,49,392 people across the northeastern state.

The monsoon has affected all 27 districts of the state, 343 circles and 594 villages so far.

Since the onset of the monsoon, the state has recorded extensive damage to public infrastructure, including 198 roads, 38 bridges, 30 culverts, 265 water supply schemes, 156 power lines, 239 electric poles, 63 government buildings, 24 schools, 46 fish ponds, 21 retaining walls, 16 flood protection walls and several other public assets.

An estimated 733.66 hectares of crop area have been damaged, comprising 419 hectares of horticulture plantations and 314.66 hectares of agricultural land. In addition, 1,010 hectares of forest area have been affected, the report added. (PTI)

Man found hanging inside Sikkim police station, three personnel suspended

GANGTOK, July 29: A man arrested in a drug-related case was found hanging in the lock-up of a police station in Sikkim's Gangtok district on Wednesday, prompting the authorities to suspend three personnel, an officer said.

A judicial inquiry was ordered following the custodial death of the 55-year-old man in Singtam police station. The body was sent for postmortem.

Purney Darjee had recently been arrested under the Sikkim Anti-Drugs Act on the charge of drug peddling and was on police remand when the incident occurred, the officer said.

According to preliminary findings, Darjee tore a part of a blanket and used that to hang himself inside

the lock-up on Wednesday morning.

"The exact circumstances are being investigated, and all legal procedures have been initiated," the officer said. In the aftermath of the incident, the authorities placed three personnel attached to Singtam police station under suspension pending the outcome of the investigation.

"A judicial inquiry has also been ordered to ensure a fair, transparent and impartial examination of the incident," the officer said.

As mandated in all custodial death cases, the Chief Judicial Magistrate, Gangtok, has initiated the inquiry to establish the sequence of events and determine the circumstances leading to Darjee's death. (PTI)

Manipur MP urges Centre to expedite approval of state's proposals

IMPHAL, July 29: Manipur MP A Sharda Devi on Wednesday urged the Centre to expedite approval of various proposals submitted by the state government, with a special focus on the welfare and rehabilitation of internally displaced persons (IDPs).

She met Union Minister for Women and Child Development Annapurna Devi at Parliament House and discussed issues relating to the development of the state amid the prevailing socio-political situation.

In a post on social media, the Rajya Sabha MP said she requested the Union minister to facilitate approval of the proposals and demands submitted by the Manipur government, stressing the need for timely intervention and enhanced support for communities affected by the ongoing crisis.

The discussions focused particularly on the welfare and rehabilitation of internally displaced persons, she said.

Sharda Devi, who is also the state BJP president, said the Union minister assured her that the Ministry of Women and Child Development would extend all possible assistance to the people of Manipur and give due consideration to the requests raised during the meeting. (PTI)

Tripura CM sends pineapples to Bangladesh PM

AGARTALA, July 29: Tripura Chief Minister Manik Saha on Wednesday sent a consignment of the Kew variety of pineapples to Bangladesh Prime Minister Tarique Rahman as a goodwill gesture, officials said.

A total of 100 packets of the indigenous grown pineapple variety were sent to Dhaka via the Akhaura Integrated Checkpost near here.

The move follows the Bangladesh PM's recent gift of Haribhanga mangoes to the Tripura chief minister.

"In response to the Bangladesh prime minister's gift of delicious mangoes to our chief minister, today, on the CM's behalf, we sent 100 packets of Kew variety pineapples, containing over 600 pieces, to the PM and the people of Bangladesh through the Akhaura Integrated Checkpost," Agriculture & Farmers' Welfare Department Secretary Apurba Kumar Roy told reporters.

"We want the people of Bangladesh to taste our pineapples. The state exports pineapples abroad and we want our state's fruit to gain popularity in the neighbouring country," he said.

Agriculture & Farmers Welfare Department director P B Jamatia said the freshly harvested Kew pineapples were sent to the Bangladesh PM.

"The harvesting season of the Queen variety of pineapples, considered the best from the state, has already ended, which is why we sent the second-best Kew variety to the Bangladesh PM," he said. (PTI)

Chakma council seeks Mizoram govt aid over ₹ 63 cr shortfall, unpaid salaries

AIZAWL, July 29: The Chakma Autonomous District Council (CADC) has sought urgent financial assistance from the Mizoram government after a Rs 63 crore budget shortfall left its employees and pensioners without salaries and pensions for four-and-a-half months, an official said on Wednesday.

The issue was raised by CADC chief executive member (CEM) Nirupam Chakma during a meeting with Chief Minister Lalduhoma here on Tuesday, the official said.

The meeting, held at the chief minister's office, also focused on expediting several long-pending development projects in the CADC area, including the completion of the new secretariat building, operationalisation of a students' hostel, and infrastructure proposals for

schools and fisheries.

Raising the council's financial concerns, the CEM informed the CM that the CADC faced a ₹ 63 crore shortfall during the 2025-26 financial year, resulting in the non-payment of salaries and pensions for four and a half months, he said.

He appealed to the state government for additional financial support to clear the pending dues.

Chakma also urged the state government to support the implementation of the CADC's development plan, which had earlier been submitted to the governor.

In response, the CM advised the council to prepare separate concept notes and Detailed Project Reports (DPRs) for each project component and submit them through the prescribed channels for consideration. Among the major projects discussed was the

completion of the new CADC secretariat building, which has remained unfinished for the past 12 years after the final instalment of funds sanctioned under the 13th Finance Commission Award lapsed.

Lalduhoma instructed the council to prepare a detailed estimate of the remaining work and submit it to the department concerned for further action.

The CEM further sought financial assistance for furnishing the newly constructed CADC students' hostel in Aizawl to enable its early commissioning.

He also requested that two school infrastructure projects and a fish pond development project be included in the state government's priority list, noting that all three proposals are already under consideration. (PTI)

Landslide claims lives of 2 brothers

HT Correspondent

DIMAPUR, July 29: Two brothers, aged 16 and 19, lost their lives when a landslide struck at Upper Penli Ward in Mokokchung town on Wednesday. Their mother, who also sustained injuries in the incident, is currently undergoing medical treatment. They are from Alisophur village under Tuensang district. Upon the arrival of the mortal remains of the two brothers at their native village, village leaders, family members, well-wishers, and members of the Sangtam community gathered to receive them with deep sorrow and pay their final respects.

Arms, ammunition seized in Manipur's Imphal East

IMPHAL, July 29: Security forces seized a cache of arms and ammunition, including rifles, mortar shells and hand grenades, during a search operation in Manipur's Imphal East district, police said on Wednesday.

The seizure was made at the foothills of Seijang Cheirao Ching area on Tuesday, a police statement said.

"One .303 rifle with magazine, three 12-bore single barrel guns, one .22 rifle, one anti-riot gun, three mortar shells, two hand grenades, 43 live rounds of ammunition of different calibres, three tear smoke grenades, and five wireless sets were recovered during the operation," it said.

Security forces have been conducting search operations and area domination exercises in the fringe and vulnerable localities across all districts of Manipur since ethnic violence broke out three years ago. More than 260 people have been killed and thousands rendered homeless in ethnic strife between Meiteis and Kuki-Zo groups since May 2023. (PTI)

Centre hands over Chumoukedima blast case to NIA

HT Correspondent

DIMAPUR, July 29: The Government of India has handed over the July 13 blast case in Chumoukedima district to the NIA.

"The Government of Nagaland has been informed that the Government of India, Ministry of Home Affairs, vide its communication dated July 27, 2026, has entrusted the investigation of the explosion case registered at Chumoukedima Police Station concerning the incident that occurred at Khopanal, Chumoukedima Village, on 13 July 2026, to the National Investigation Agency (NIA)," Nagaland police PHQ said in a press release on Tuesday.

According to the central government, it formed the opinion that a scheduled offence, under the National Investigation Agency Act, 2008, has been committed in the case.

In exercise of the powers conferred under Sections 6(5) and 8 of the Act, the Centre has directed the NIA to take over the investigation of the case, considering the gravity of the offence and its national security implications.

The Nagaland police release added that the Nagaland government and Nagaland police will coordinate with the NIA for handing over the case as required by the law.

One Assam Rifles personnel was killed and four others were injured in the blast.

Strengthening rural infra is Arunachal govt's priority: Minister

ITANAGAR, July 29: Arunachal Pradesh minister Pasang D Sonu said that strengthening rural infrastructure remains a key priority for the state government to support socio-economic development and boost tourism.

After inspecting bridge construction projects over the Yargyap Chu River in Shi-Yomi district, which shares a border with China, on Tuesday, the state tourism minister emphasised the government's commitment to building resilient connectivity to enhance the overall quality of life.

During his visit, the minister reviewed the progress of the motorable bridge at Thargelling Village, the arch bridge connecting Mechukha and Dorjelling, and the 150-metre steel composite bridge at Tsenang (Farge) under the Chief Minister's Comprehensive State Road Development Plan-I.

Highlighting their strategic importance, Sonu said these projects will significantly improve regional connectivity and facilitate the smooth movement of people and essential services.

He instructed officials concerned to maintain strict quality standards and ensure timely completion of the projects.

Sonu, who also holds the education portfolio, later inspected a convention hall under construction, Mechukha Government Higher Secondary School, and the primary school at Lhalling to review developmental needs and existing facilities. (PTI)

Red Cross's role has become more important than ever: Nagaland gov



HT Correspondent

DIMAPUR, July 29: Nagaland Governor Nand Kishore Yadav on Wednesday stressed that the role of the Red Cross has become more important than ever, highlighting the increasing challenges posed by natural disasters, public health emergencies, climate change, substance abuse and other humanitarian concerns.

Addressing the 39th annual general meeting of the Indian Red Cross Society, Nagaland State Branch (IRCSN), at Lok Bhavan in Kohima, Yadav, who is also the president of the IRCSN, called for enhanced preparedness, greater resilience, promotion of voluntary blood donation, expansion of first-aid training and continued outreach to those most in need.

He also urged strengthening humanitarian service and community resilience. Describing the Indian Red Cross Society as a symbol of hope, compassion and selfless service for over a century, Yadav said guided by the fundamental principles of the Red Cross, the organisation has continued to serve vulnerable communities with dedication and dignity.

He commended the Nagaland state branch for its sustained humanitarian efforts in disaster preparedness and response, first aid, health awareness, voluntary blood donation, youth engagement and community welfare.

He also acknowledged the dedication and commitment of its volunteers, members, district branches and partners in advancing the society's humanitarian mission. Expressing satisfaction over the strengthening of district branches and the growing participation of youth in humanitarian activities, Yadav said the strength of the Red Cross lies in vibrant local institutions and committed volunteers who are always prepared to serve communities in times of need.

Nagaland Chief Minister and vice president of the IRCSN, Neiphiu Rio congratulated the Red Cross fraternity for its unwavering commitment to humanitarian service and lauded the organisation's remarkable contributions in alleviating human suffering and serving vulnerable communities.

Mizoram gets first State Human Rights Commission

Vankung became a permanent judge in August 2023 and retired in March this year

AIZAWL, July 29: Mizoram constituted its first State Human Rights Commission (SHRC), with Governor Vijay Kumar Singh administering the oath of office to its chairperson and two members on Wednesday, officials said.

Former Gauhati High Court judge Justice (ret'd) Marli Vankung was sworn in as the commission's first chairperson at a ceremony held at Raj Bhavan, while retired Mizoram Judicial Service officer Vanlalemawia and retired IAS officer K Lal Nghinglova took the oath as members, they said.

Chief Minister Lalduhoma, speaker Labiakzama, leader of the opposition Lalchhandama Ralte, and cabinet ministers were among those who attended the swearing-in ceremony.

Justice Vankung, born in 1964, holds degrees in English, Law and International Legal Studies. She joined the Mizoram Judicial Service in 1989 and served in various judicial positions before being appointed an additional judge of the Gauhati High Court in October 2021. She became a permanent judge in August 2023 and retired in March this year, officials said.

Vanlalemawia, born in 1966, joined the Mizoram Judicial Service in 2011 and served in different judicial capacities before retiring in March 2026 as the Presiding Officer of the Motor Accident Claims Tribunal, Aizawl, they said.

Nghinglova, born in 1956, began his career as a district information and public relations officer in 1983 before joining the IAS (AGMUT cadre) in



1996. He served in several senior administrative positions in Mizoram and Delhi, including as principal secretary to the Mizoram government, before retiring in November 2016.

The commission was constituted on the direction of the Gauhati High Court, where Zofa Welfare Organisation (ZWO) had filed a PIL regarding it. (PTI)

No.CHD/UDDA/FC/NIT/2026-27/95 Dated the Kokrajhar 23rd July/2026

SHORT TENDER NOTICE

Sealed tenders affixing court fee of Rs. 8.25 (rupees eight and paise twenty five) are invited by the CHD, Urban Development Department, BTC, Kokrajhar from the reputed Government registered Contractor/Firm/Supplier for the works **under 15th FC Untied Grant (1st & 2nd Installment) for the year 2025-26.**

The detailed tender documents may be obtained from the office of the undersigned during office hours from 23rd July to 11th August 2026 up to 3.00 pm on application in plain paper along with payment of prescribed Bid Cost (non-refundable) for each work in the form of demand draft in favour of the 'Principal Secretary, BTC, payable at 'Kokrajhar'.

The last date for submission of the completed tender is 12/08/2026 upto 2.00 pm and shall be opened on the same day at 3.00 pm in presence of contractor or his/her authorized representative.

Sd/- CHD,
Urban Development Department,
BTC Kokrajhar

IPR(BTC)/C/2026-27/949

AFFIDAVIT

Through an affidavit sworn before Executive Magistrate, Dipu Judicial Court - I Meera Rabidas W/O Rajendra Rabidas have declared and affirmed that my son actual name is Ram Rabidas as per his birth certificate vide no. 1317, but by mistake in his ADHAAR card vide no.27898005567 my son name has been recorded as "Bibek Rabidas" instead of "Ram Rabidas". The name of Ram Rabidas and Bibek Rabidas are the name of one and single person.

Meera Rabidas do mention that in my Vill- Karkok Harijan Basti P.O.- Kachupukhuri P.S.- Howrahgaht, Dist- Karbi Anglong

AFFIDAVIT

I, Tajfuz Rahman, S/O-Atar Ali, R/O-Vill-Majorborti, P.O-Jaluguti, P.S.-Mikribheta, Dist-Morigaon, (Assam) have corrected my name from Tajfuz Hussain to Tajfuz Rahman through a Notary Public at Morigaon on 21/07/2026. Tajfuz Rahman and Tajfuz Hussain is the same and one person.

AFFIDAVIT

I, Miss Archita Bordoloi daughter of Sri Krishna Kt. Bordoloi resident of Udali No.2 Bakulighat, Karbi Anglong would like to mention that in my Aadhaar Card vide No. 7173 7063 4749 my Date of Birth is wrongly recorded as 07-02-2007 instead of my correct DOB 01-02-2007.

ASSOCIATE SIGNALLING WORKS

E-Tender No.: SNT-24-LMG-2026-27; Date: 24-07-2026. E-tenders are invited by the undersigned for the following work. **Name of Work** : Associate signalling works in connection with BG Through turnout renewal (without sleepers) (Total-137 sets) in Guwahati-Lumding and BG Through turnout renewal (with sleepers) (Total- 32 sets) in Lumding-Jamuri section (Grand Total - 169 sets) under the jurisdiction of Sr. DENI/Lumding. **Tender Value**: ₹52,14,408.14; **Bid Security**: ₹1,04,300.00. E-tender will be Closed at 15:00 hrs. on 17-08-2026 and Opened at 15:30 hrs. on 17-08-2026. For details visit: www.treps.gov.in

Sr. DSTE, Lumding

NORTHEAST FRONTIER RAILWAY
"Serving Customers with a smile"

REPAIRS, RESTORATION/ MAINTENANCE OF SIGNALING ASSETS

E-Tender No.: SNT-08-LMG-2026-27-RT; Dated: 27-07-2026; E-Tender is invited by the undersigned for the following work: **Name of work** : Reliability improvement by means of repairs, restoration/ maintenance of signaling assets under the jurisdiction of SSE/Sig/Hill/Lumding/IC. **Tender Value**: ₹1,66,44,293.22/-; **Bid Security**: ₹3,32,900/-; Date & time of closing of tender at 15:00 hours and opening at 15:30 hours on 18-08-2026. Complete information alongwith the tender document of above e-tender will be available in the website www.treps.gov.in

DSTE, Lumding

NORTHEAST FRONTIER RAILWAY
"Serving Customers with a Smile"

ENGAGEMENT OF FACILITATORS FOR ISSUE OF UNRESERVED TICKETS THROUGH AUTOMATIC TICKET VENDING MACHINES OVER LUMDING DIVISION

Advertisement Notice No.: C-LMG-04-2026 Dated 16.07.2026

The Senior Divisional Commercial Manager, Lumding Division, for and on behalf of President of India invites application from **Retired Railway Employees, Spouse/Son/Daughter of Retired Railway Employees of Northeast Frontier Railway and General Public** for engagement of Facilitators in 06 locations for issue of Un-reserved tickets through Automatic Ticket Vending Machines (ATVM) which is going to be installed at stations over Lumding Division. The engagement to work as facilitator will be for two years initially and will be extended from time to time as per extant policy guidelines. The selected applicant will not have any claim for employment in Railways by the virtue of engagement as ATVM facilitator. No remuneration/salary/wages will be paid by the Railway. The selected facilitator will be allowed to retain the bonus as applicable from time to time on ATVM Smart Cards. For further details, please refer Para No.3 Terms and Conditions on eligibility of Bonus.

The list of stations, Number of ATVMs and the number of facilitators to be engaged against each station are furnished below:

Sl. No.	Station Name	Code	Category	No. of ATVM	No. of Facilitators reqd.
1	Guwahati	GHY	NSG-2	5	5
2	Kamakhya	KYQ	NSG-2	4	4
3	Dimapur	DMV	NSG-3	2	2
4	New Haffong	NHLG	NSG-4	2	2
5	Lumding	LMG	NSG-4	2	2
6	Bhairabi	BHRB	NSG-6	1	1

The advertisement notice and application form are available in the Northeast Frontier Railway website at www.nfr.indianrailways.gov.in. **Retired Railway employees, Spouse/Adult child of Retired Railway Employee of Northeast Frontier Railway and General Public** who are interested to work as facilitator to issue un-reserved tickets through ATVM shall submit their applications duly filling in all the columns in the application and signing on all the pages of the application. (a) The application forms with all relevant rules and conditions are available from **22.07.2026 at 10:00 hrs. up to 17:00 hrs. of 20.08.2026**. The application can be obtained from the office of Sr. Divisional Commercial Manager, Lumding, Northeast Frontier Railway at any working days (Monday to Friday) from 10:00 hrs to 17:00 hrs. The cost of application form is ₹ 100/- (Not refundable). The same has to be deposited in Booking Office, Lumding and original MR has to be attached along with application form. (b) **Application Box for Dropping/Submission of Application will be kept in the Chamber of Assistant Commercial Manager/Lumding, Northeast Frontier Railway**. (c) Application can also be downloaded from Northeast Frontier Railway website at www.nfr.indianrailways.gov.in. The cost of application form is ₹100/- (Not refundable). Applicant will have to attach Bank Draft/DD issued by any schedule commercial bank equal to prescribed value of ₹ 100/- in favour of **FA&CAO, N. F. Railway, Maligaon** payable at Lumding towards the cost of application form.

The application shall be super scribed as: "Application for ATVM facilitator at _____ Railway Station in the category of Retired Railway Employee/ Spouse/Adult child of Retired Railway Employee of Northeast Frontier Railway and General Public" and submitted in a sealed cover to the office of the Senior Divisional Commercial Manager, Lumding, Northeast Frontier Railway on or before 13:00 hrs. of 21.08.2026. Application received after 13:00 hrs of 21.08.2026 will not be accepted.

1	Date of availability of application form in websites	From www.nfr.indianrailways.gov.in from 22.07.2026
2	The filled in Application forms will be received by this office	From 22.07.2026 at 10:00 hrs. up to 20.08.2026 at 17:00 hrs.
3	Date & time for submission of applications	From 22.07.2026 at 10:00 hrs. up to 21.08.2026 at 13:00 hrs.
4	Place of submission of applications	Senior Divisional Commercial Manager's Office, 2 nd Floor, DRM Building, N.F. Railway, Lumding, Assam- 782447
5	Opening date & time of tender	16:00 hrs. on 21.08.2026

Divisional Commercial Manager, Lumding

NORTHEAST FRONTIER RAILWAY
"SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE"

Pak defence minister says PoK protesters 'enemies' like India; rules out dialogue as toll rises to 37



ISLAMABAD, July 29: Pakistan Defence Minister Khawaja Asif has termed the protesters in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir as "enemies" like India and ruled out dialogue with them, even as the Joint Awami Action Committee (JAAC) on Wednesday claimed that security forces have killed 37 people in the last two days.

"There will be no dialogue with the protesters. I bracket them with India. I put them in the same category as India and consider them as enemies of Pakistan," Asif told reporters on Tuesday.

However, the Prime Minister's Adviser Rana Sanaullah told reporters that the JAAC held a meeting with him and presented its 38 demands.

Alleging that the protesters want to seize Muzaffarabad and Mirpur through force, Sanaullah on Tuesday claimed that they were currently engaged in an "India-like attack".

Sanaullah claimed that no one was killed in clashes between the law enforcement personnel and protesters.

However, the JAAC, a collective of activist groups, on Wednesday said that 37 unarmed peaceful protesters and people, including women and children, who were not even protesting, have been killed by Pakistani forces in the last two days. The party's claim could not be independently verified.

It said the violence erupted on Monday when the JAAC launched a long march, coinciding with the first phase of polls for the so-called legislative assembly in PoK.

In a statement, the JAAC said that a large number of people are critically injured with bullet wounds. "Hospitals are under forces' control, doctors have been removed, medical stores have no medicines left. Volunteers who try to pick up the dead or injured are also being fired upon," it said.

It urged 'Doctors Without Borders' to immediately send independent international medical teams to Rawalakot.

Meanwhile, shops and markets in Mirpur remained closed on Wednesday, BBC Urdu reported.

The authorities have suspended internet services in the region. Besides, there has been a complete media ban in Pakistan on the coverage of the JAAC protest.

Speaking to Geo News on Tuesday, Sanaullah said that militants once trained by Pakistan eventually turned their guns against the country.

The protesters in PoK are similar to the 'mu-

jahideen' whom Pakistan had trained in the past, but later they turned against us, Sanaullah said while responding to questions about the unrest in PoK.

This candid reference appeared to acknowledge the long-term consequences of Pakistan's policy of supporting and training militants.

He said the protesters included members of organisations with access to weapons with "no genuine political demands".

"They want to use people as human shields and play a game," he said, adding that the law-enforcement agencies had no option but to act against the protesters.

Pakistan's involvement with militant groups during the Afghan war and their subsequent activities has long been the subject of international scrutiny.

Several studies have documented the state's support for militant groups operating in Afghanistan and Kashmir, while also tracing how parts of the militant infrastructure later contributed to violence inside Pakistan.

In the first phase of elections on Monday held in 13 seats, the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz secured nine seats, while the Pakistan Peoples Party got four. The second and third phases of the remaining 32 seats will be held on August 2 and 10, respectively.

It is a direct contest between the two parties in PoK because former prime minister Imran Khan's party Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf has boycotted the polls. The first phase of the election was marred by violence and massive rigging allegations.

The JAAC has been holding a series of protests in PoK since last month over 12 contentious seats of the so-called regional legislative assembly. It alleges that the establishment manoeuvres these seats to install a prime minister of its choosing.

India on Tuesday described the elections as an attempt by Pakistan to camouflage its illegal occupation and hide its "grave" human rights violations in the region.

"India's position on this matter has been clear, consistent, and well known. The entire Union Territories of Jammu and Kashmir, and Ladakh, including the areas currently under Pakistan's illegal and forcible occupation, are integral and inalienable parts of India," External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said in Delhi.

"As we have stated earlier, the ongoing mass protests in Pakistan-occupied Jammu and Kashmir are the direct consequences of Pakistan's economic exploitation, its denial of the people's fundamental rights, and its administrative oppression," he said.

The JAAC began protests and a long march across PoK on June 9. Before Monday's violence, 40 people had reportedly been killed during the unrest, including 34 protesters and six police and paramilitary personnel.

The government had opened negotiations with the JAAC to end the protests before the legislative assembly elections, but the talks have so far failed to yield a settlement.

There are 53 seats in the so-called PoK legislative assembly - 45 are directly elected, while eight are reserved for women, technocrats and clerics. (PTI)

Rescuers search for survivors after 7.1 quake kills 18 in southwestern Japan

KUMAMOTO (JAPAN), July 29: Soldiers and emergency workers combed through a badly damaged shopping mall and collapsed houses looking for trapped survivors Wednesday after a powerful earthquake that killed at least 18 people, including a foreigner, in southwestern Japan.

The magnitude 7.1 earthquake that hit a day earlier in the Kumamoto area on the southern main island of Kyushu also left at least 62 people injured, six of them seriously, the prefectural government said. The tally has been steadily growing, fanning fears it may continue to rise.

Some of the most serious damage was at the Aeon Mall shopping centre in Kashima city, which was bustling with thousands of people when the quake happened. The company said some 3,000 customers were evacuated to a parking lot before a gas explosion happened in another part of the mall, where some people were still working.

Fumika Ono was shopping at a



mall with her older sister when the ground shook so fiercely she lost her balance and ducked. Children began screaming and goods scattered on the floor. The 19-year-old was among the crowd of shoppers who managed to escape safely.

The sweltering weather heightened worries about the survivors as rescuers braved the heat. It remained unclear how many people might still be missing.

In the Nuyamazu district, a pair of temple gates at a 16th-century Buddhist temple collapsed. They had just been repaired five years ago.

Yuki Kiyozumi, deputy chief priest at the temple, recalled how she had to crawl on the floor because the shaking was so violent. She had just returned home from a meeting and was about to feed her cat.

"I don't even know if or how we can rebuild them again," she said, while cleaning up damaged ornaments and furniture.

Some of the most serious damage was at the Aeon Mall shopping centre in Kashima city, which was bustling with thousands of people when the quake happened. The company said some 3,000 cus-

tomers were evacuated to a parking lot before a gas explosion happened in another part of the mall, where some people were still working.

The mall's second floor collapsed, trapping people. Witnesses said the explosion shook the area as much as the quake.

Three people remained missing, while four deaths were confirmed at the mall site, according to Aeon President Akio Yoshida.

"We take it seriously that an explosion happened and precious lives were lost," Yoshida told a news conference in Kumamoto, where he bowed deeply along with two other executives.

Japanese media footage of the mall showed that part of the ceiling had caved in, and metal pieces and other debris were scattered about as helmeted and masked rescue workers searched the area.

Kiyoshi Matsunaga, 74, who lives in the mall's neighbourhood and was at a supermarket just a few blocks away, said he thought he was going to die. (AP)

India's Shanghai envoy meets Shaoxing CPC secy

BEIJING, July 29: Indian Consul General to Shanghai Pratik Mathur met HE Shi Huifang, secretary of the ruling Communist Party of China's Shaoxing city in Zhejiang province on Wednesday.

The meeting took place while Mathur was on an official visit to the city.

"Both sides had an engaging discussion on Party Secretary Shi's recent visit to India, where he visited Delhi and Bengaluru," the Indian Consulate in Shanghai posted on X.

Mathur thanked the city's leadership for the support extended to the Indian athletics team during the second Asian Relay Championships last month when Indian athletes won multiple medals highlighted by a historic gold in the 4x100 mtr women's relay event, the post said. (PTI)

5 Indians held in Thailand for abducting 3 tourists: Report

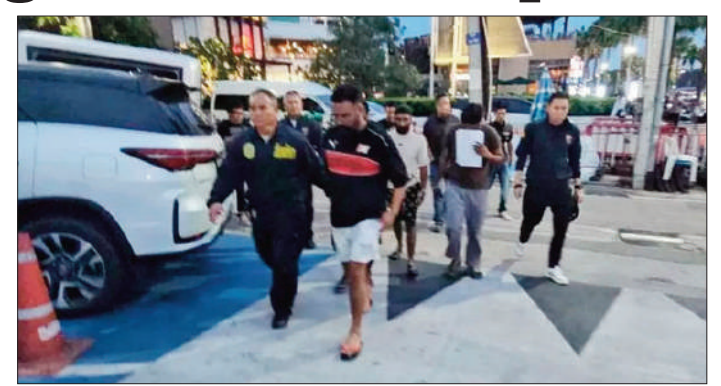
BANGKOK, July 29: Five Indian nationals have been arrested in Thailand for allegedly abducting three fellow countrymen and demanding a ransom for their release, according to a local media report.

The five suspects were arrested at a hotel in Bangkok's Khlong Tan area on Tuesday while they were waiting to board an outbound flight, the Bangkok Post reported, citing the police.

The suspects were identified as Avtar Singh (38), Jagjit Singh (38), Rambalak Kumar (24), Sukhbir Singh (37) and Kulra Singh (27).

The suspects told investigators that they were instructed by a Pakistani national, whom they had known through a chat application over the past month, to abduct the three Indian men - all of them tourists.

The alleged mastermind is believed to be based in Dubai and had planned to receive ransom



payments in cryptocurrency, according to the report.

The police told the press that the accused were promised valuables, cash and airline tickets to leave Thailand after carrying out the operation. The victims were allegedly lured to Pattaya through what was advertised as a low-cost seven-day holiday package.

But they were instead taken to a

house, where they were held captive for several days and tortured before being rescued by police on Monday evening, the report added.

The investigation began after the Indian Embassy in Thailand alerted Chonburi Immigration Police and Pattaya City Police on July 21 following complaints from the victims' relatives. The Nation newspaper reported. (PTI)

Russia charges Telegram founder Pavel Durov with aiding terrorism, puts him on wanted list

MOSCOW, July 29: Russia's main domestic security agency said Wednesday that Pavel Durov, founder of the messaging app Telegram, has been charged with aiding terrorism and put on an international wanted list.

The charges against Durov, who was born and began his career in Russia but later moved abroad, came as the Russian authorities restrict Telegram, one of the most popular messaging apps in the country. It is part of a long-term effort to bring the internet under the Kremlin's full control that has intensified since Moscow launched its full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022.

The Federal Security Service, also known as the FSB, accused Telegram's administration in a statement of failing to remove "numerous channels, chats and bots" that are "actively used by Ukrainian intelligence agencies, terrorist, and extremist organisations to prepare and coordinate acts of sabotage and terrorism, mass murder, and cyber-fraud" in Russia, which resulted in "numerous human casualties."

The agency accused Ukrainian security services of using a popular dating chat bot on Telegram to lure and recruit Russians for "sabotage and terrorist ac-



tivities," and said 46 users of the chat bot, from 12 to 22 years old, have been detained across Russia since July 2025.

Durov earlier this year announced that the Russian authorities opened a criminal investigation against him and accused them of fabricating pretexts to restrict access to Telegram as part of an attempt to "suppress the right to privacy and free speech."

If convicted, Durov could face up to life in prison in Russia.

Under President Vladimir Putin, Russian authorities have engaged in multipronged efforts to rein in the internet. They have adopted restrictive laws and banned websites and platforms that don't comply and focused on improving technology to monitor and manipulate online traffic.

Multiple popular social media

platforms, such as Facebook, Instagram and X, have been banned in Russia; YouTube has been throttled; popular messaging apps, such as Signal and Viber, have been blocked, and the most popular ones -- WhatsApp and Telegram -- have been restricted.

While it's still possible to circumvent some of the restrictions by using virtual private network services, many of them are routinely blocked, too.

At the same time, Russia actively promotes the "national" messaging app known as MAX, which critics say could be used for surveillance. The platform is touted by developers and officials as a one-stop shop for messaging, online government services, making payments and more. It openly declares it will share user data with authorities upon request, and experts also say it doesn't use end-to-end encryption.

Durov has faced criminal investigations elsewhere. In 2024, he was arrested in Paris over allegations that his platform was being used for illicit activity, including drug trafficking and the distribution of child sexual abuse images. (AP)

Curfew extended indefinitely in parts of Nepal bordering India, PM Shah expresses grief over violence

KATHMANDU, July 29: Curfew has been extended indefinitely in parts of Nepal's India-bordering Sunsari district, as Prime Minister Balendra Shah expressed grief over the communal violence that left one person dead and several injured. The restrictions in the district were first imposed on Monday after communal violence erupted on Sunday in the Kaptun area.

One person was killed and more than a dozen people, including security personnel, were injured when police opened fire to disperse clashing groups after a dispute during celebrations by two religious communities, police said.

Expressing grief over the violence, Prime Minister Balendra Shah in a social media post on Tuesday pledged justice for the bereaved family, compensation for those affected and action to bring those responsible to justice.

Shah paid tribute to the person killed and wished the injured a speedy recovery.

"The government stands in deep solidarity with the affected families and reiterated its commitment to ensuring justice for them," he said.

"The death and injuries of citizens from gunfire by security personnel are matters of serious concern, and an investigation has been initiated," the prime minister said. He promised action against those found guilty.

The government is seriously reviewing the

entire incident, and necessary decisions and corrective measures will be implemented, Shah said. He urged citizens to remain restrained, refrain from provocation, anger, and retaliation, and contribute to maintaining social harmony, mutual trust and tolerance.

The local administration issued a fresh notice at 9 pm on Tuesday, notifying that curfew orders have been extended from the earlier five places to six areas in the district.

The curfew has been imposed for an indefinite period or until further notice, and violators are warned of legal action. Any type of gathering, demonstration, sit-in, public meeting and movement of people is prohibited within the curfew zone, said the notice.

The curfew has been imposed on the East-West Highway that lies within Itahari Sub-metropolitan City Ward No 16 and 17, the East-West Highway that lies within Ramdhuni Municipality Ward Nos 1 and 5, and the entire areas of Inarua Municipality, Duhabi Municipality, Bhokraha Narsingh Rural Municipality, Koshi Rural Municipality, Gadhi Rural Municipality, Devanganj Rural Municipality, Harihar Rural Municipality and Barju Rural Municipality.

Sunsari, situated in southeastern Nepal along the border with India's Bihar, is a crucial transit and commercial corridor between the two countries. (PTI)

Heat wave threatens to intensify France's mega-fire near Bordeaux

LEGE-CAP FERRET (FRANCE), July 29: A wildfire covering an area four times the size of Paris remained uncontained in southwest France on Wednesday as temperatures were forecast to reach 40 C (104 F), threatening to erase firefighters' overnight gains.

Authorities in the Gironde region said the blaze had not spread further during a calm night, but warned that forecast heat and winds could cause the flames to surge again.

At the command centre in Lege, firefighters bent over maps spread across a car hood as commanders tracked three danger zones: northern Cap-Ferret, the wooded corridor around Marcheprime, Cestas and Saint-Jean-d'Illac, and a military site near Martignas, where a significant new outbreak required a major deployment.

More than 2,200 firefighters and over 20 aircraft remain mobilised, supported by crews from across France and European partners.

"We strike quickly and strike hard at any new smoke emissions," Gironde fire commander Matthieu Jomain said.

The fire forced 220,000 people to flee at its peak. Tens of thousands have since been allowed home, but authorities warned that the danger had not yet passed.

The extreme heat strips moisture from vegetation and drives humidity down, turning grasses, brush and forest litter into faster-burning fuel. Winds can lift embers over firebreaks and ignite new fronts beyond the reach of crews.

Meteo-France, the national meteorological service, said Wednesday would be the hottest and driest day of the week, with elevated wildfire danger across every region of the country.

Drought now covers mainland France and Corsica, with soils approaching the record dryness reached in August 2022, the agency said.

In other regions, firefighters



have secured two major victories. In Landes and Var fires were fixed, meaning their advance had been halted. That left Gironde as France's biggest remaining wildfire battle, Interior Minister Laurent Nuñez said.

Smoke from the Gironde and Landes fires also triggered an ongoing particulate-pollution episode in both departments, regional air quality monitors said.

The Gironde authorities ordered 4,000 more people out of tourist

sites along the Atlantic coast on Tuesday, widening what may be France's largest peacetime evacuation.

"The situation remains complicated. That's clear. We're not out of the woods," said Gironde prefect Sophie Brocas, who also authorised 60,000 evacuees to return to three Bordeaux suburbs untouched by fire.

The opposing movements — thousands ordered out of coastal resorts as others returned with mo-

bile phones on and emergency bags packed — captured how precarious the fire's hold remained.

At the height of the evacuations, roughly 330,000 people were driven from homes and vacation sites across France and Spain.

Spain is braced for its fourth heat wave of the summer, with several blazes still out of control, including the largest in its recorded history. Even so, Spanish authorities began lifting evacuation and stay-at-home orders for thousands of people after firefighters made progress.

At its height, the Gironde blaze created a black thundercloud, electrified and lit from within. It generated lightning, strong winds and new fires beyond the original front. The phenomenon, known as a pyrocumulonimbus, was the first recorded in France. More than 1,160 square kilometers (448 square miles) have burned across France this year, according to the Interior Ministry. (AP)

Indian mission monitoring safety of 13 seafarers aboard vessel in Ukraine

KYIV, July 29: The Indian Embassy in Ukraine on Wednesday said it was closely monitoring the situation involving a merchant vessel carrying 13 Indian seafarers near Ukraine's Black Sea coast, following reports that it was under threat from repeated drone and missile attacks.

The embassy said it was in constant touch with all concerned authorities to ensure the safety and security of the Indian crew onboard MV AMIR1.

The latest development comes days after four Indian crew members were onboard merchant vessel MV AGN Ragnar when it was struck at Ukraine's Odesa port on July 25. Two of the Indian seafarers remain missing, with India coordinating with Ukrainian authorities in the ongoing search operation.

"A situation regarding MV AMIR1 with Indian seafarers onboard has been brought to our attention. We attach the highest priority to this and are in constant touch with all concerned to ensure safety and security of all Indians



onboard," the Indian Embassy in Kyiv said in a post on X.

The statement came after the Forward Seamen's Union of India (FSUI) urged the government and other authorities to immediately secure the safety of the crew and arrange their evacuation.

According to the FSUI, MV AMIR1 is currently docked at Ukraine's Chornomorsk port with 15 crew members on board, including 13 Indians. The union alleged that repeated drone and missile attacks were taking place in the immediate vicinity of the vessel, leaving the crew in constant fear of a direct strike. (AP)

Rahul Gandhi targets Home Minister Amit Shah over police action against student protesters

'The so-called home minister of this country does not have the courage to come and sit here'

NEW DELHI, July 29: In a no-holds-barred attack, Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi on Wednesday alleged that Home Minister Amit Shah had authorised police excesses and firing against student protesters, triggering a massive uproar in the Lok Sabha during a debate on the bill to amend the anti-paper leaks law.

The BJP hit back, accusing Gandhi of telling a "bundle of lies", and demanded that he apologise for "misusing" the House by making "baseless" allegations.

While targeting Shah, Gandhi also took an oblique dig at the BJP and its core supporters by referring to three categories -- students, those who think they know everything and pretend to be God, and the "andhbhakt" who believes the second category is God.

Participating in the debate on



The Public Examination (Prevention of Unfair Means) Amendment Bill-2026, Gandhi claimed that the home minister is not present in the Lok Sabha because he is "scared". His remark drew objections from the treasury benches.

The home minister "authorised" violent action against students, the

Congress leader alleged, referring to the crackdown by security forces during the march to Parliament on July 20 during the BJP-led protest on the NEET paper leak issue.

"The so-called home minister of this country does not have the courage to come and sit here..."

Why is the home minister not here today? The home minister is not here today because he is scared. He put pellets into the blood of our students," Gandhi said.

Speaker Om Birla immediately intervened, saying the discussion was not on the Home Minister and added that Gandhi must provide proof to substantiate his allegations.

Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju objected to Gandhi's remarks and demanded he apologise. "On what basis have you said this? This is highly objectionable. You should apologise," Rijiju said.

The House was adjourned twice due to the uproar over Gandhi's remarks and he could not complete his address. Later, while speaking in the House, Union Minister Jitendra Singh said no bullet was fired and only tear gas was used. (PTI)

Forces seeking to undermine Sanatan culture, anti-national conspiracies afoot: Adityanath

GORAKHPUR, July 29: Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Wednesday alleged that certain forces were trying to undermine India's progress and destroy Sanatan culture and traditions, and urged people to remain vigilant against 'anti-national conspiracies'.

Addressing a gathering at the end of Ram Katha at Gorakhnath temple on the occasion of Guru Purnima, Adityanath said people must understand conspiracies being hatched against the country and remain cautious of those who, he claimed, were acting as spokespersons for forces opposed to Sanatan culture.

"If society remains alert against such forces and works towards self-improvement, it will remain prosperous. A prosperous society will ensure that no one can stop the nation from moving on the path of progress," he said.

The chief minister said India had witnessed rapid development over



the past 12 years and expressed confidence that the country would be among the world's top three economies in the next two to three years.

He alleged that some countries and organisations were unhappy with India's rise and were attempting to create instability, unrest and disorder in the country.

Adityanath mentioned that Naxalism, which once affected around 120 districts, had now been eliminated from all districts, but

claimed that those who had encouraged the movement could re-emerge in different forms.

Drawing a parallel with the mythological character Kalnemi from the Ramayana, he urged people to remain vigilant against individuals who, directly or indirectly, participated in conspiracies against India.

The chief minister noted that every major phase of India's progress had faced challenges and called for unity to safeguard the country's cultural heritage and stability.

Without taking names, Adityanath alleged that some individuals attempted to create obstacles during Sanatan festivals and glorified characters opposed to Hindu traditions.

He said those who insulted "matrushakti" (womanhood) and the "matrubhumi" (motherland) deserved stringent punishment, citing episodes from the Ramayana to underline his point. (PTI)

Left-backed student groups protest at Jantar Mantar against alleged police crackdown on activists



NEW DELHI, July 29: Students from several Left-affiliated organisations on Wednesday held a protest at Jantar Mantar against the alleged police crackdown on student activists, demanding the release of those detained during the recent demonstrations and an end to what they described as the "criminalisation" of student protests.

Protesting under the banner "Student-Youth Unity: Long Live!", the demonstrators gathered at the site just days after the month-long agitation that culminated in the resignation of former Union education minister Dharmendra Pradhan.

The protest was organised following a joint call by Left organisations, including the Jawaharlal Nehru University Students' Union (JNUSU), to mobilise "against the police crackdown on the students and youth of Bihar, Bengal and other states".

The demonstration was joined by mem-

bers of the All India Students' Association (AISA), Students' Federation of India (SFI), All India Students' Federation (AISF), Krantikari Yuva Sangathan (KYS), All India Democratic Students' Organisation (AIDSO), DSF, PDSU, PSA, PSYA, ACNS, COLLECTIVE, DISHA and PACHHAS, among others.

Protesters raised slogans such as "Chhatron ki girafatari band karo" (stop arresting students) and "Chhatron ka criminalisation nahi chalega" (stop the criminalisation of students).

Several demonstrators carried placards demanding action against the police personnel involved in the use of force during the July 20 protest march, with one of them reading, "Punish the policemen responsible for the brutality on 20th July".

Addressing the gathering, student leaders alleged that participants in the recent protests were being targeted by authorities and claimed that several social media accounts linked to the movement had been blocked.

"We can see how the authorities are targeting students across the country for protesting. We want to tell you that you are not alone; we stand with you. If they think students are scared of lathi charge, they are wrong," a member of the Krantikari Yuva Sangathan (KYS) said. (PTI)

₹ 20 crore cash, 15 kg gold seized in Birbhum; biggest haul since Partha Chatterjee case

SURI, July 29: In one of the biggest recoveries of suspected illegally amassed cash and gold since the ED's haul from properties linked to former West Bengal minister Partha Chatterjee's close aide four years ago, the police on Wednesday seized at least ₹ 20 crore in cash and 15 kg of gold in Birbhum district.

Police said 14 gold bars weighing one kilogram each and 10 gold biscuits of 100 grams each, valued at around ₹ 21.5 crore at current market prices, were recovered from the two-storey residence of Minar Mondal, a former government bus driver-turned stone trader at Deucha village.

The cash, packed inside multiple bags, was still being counted at the time of filing of this report and had already crossed ₹ 20 crore, officers said.

Police identified Minar as the brother-in-law of absconding businessman Tullu Mondal alias Mohd Nazibuddin, who has substantial interests in Birbhum's stone quarrying business and whom Chief Minister Suwendu Adhikari described as an "sand mafia" operator.

The recovery comes amid a wider crackdown on alleged illegal mining and revenue leakages in Birbhum, a district long under the scanner over allegations

of illegal quarrying and organised crime linked to the stone trade.

A total of nearly ₹ 50 crore in unaccounted cash, along with gold and foreign exchange, had been recovered from properties linked to Arpita Mukherjee, a close aide of former education minister Partha Chatterjee, during Enforcement Directorate raids in July 2022 tied to the school jobs recruitment scam in the state.

Tullu had figured in the CBI's probe into the multi-crore cattle smuggling case. In August 2022, the agency searched several of his properties, besides his office and godown in Mohamad Bazar area of the district. The Enforcement Directorate later summoned him to Delhi for questioning in November that year.

Within 48 hours of receiving the ED summons, Tullu was arrested by Birbhum police in connection with a murder case registered in October 2022. A police source claimed that after securing bail, he went into hiding following the declaration of the state election results in May this year.

Police said Tullu handled a significant portion of Birbhum's stone trade and was allegedly a close associate of Bir-



hum Trinamool Congress chief Anubrata Mondal, who was arrested by the CBI in the cattle smuggling case and, after getting bail, has joined the Ritabrata Banerjee-led dissident faction within the party.

Minar and his son were detained at the house during the search operation and

were being questioned about possible additional locations where cash could have been stored, police said.

"Minar was in charge of one of the seven toll gates in the area through which trucks from stone quarries passed and collected revenue from the transporters. He is likely to have swindled a large volume of cash meant for government coffers, and this is a portion of that wealth the police have now recovered," a source said.

According to police, Minar was earlier employed as a driver with the North Bengal State Transport Corporation before quitting the job a few years ago to join his relative's stone business.

Earlier, highlighting what he termed "massive revenue leakage and illegal quarrying in the TMC era", the chief minister cited official figures from Birbhum to claim a sharp rise in revenue collection following intensified enforcement after the BJP came to power in the state.

Adhikari said monthly collections from stone quarries under the previous administration were around ₹ 35-40 lakh, while the current government collected ₹ 83 crore between mid-June and mid-July. (PTI)

Jitendra Singh rejects Rahul's allegations against Shah; says no bullet fired on protesters



NEW DELHI, July 29: Union minister Jitendra Singh on Wednesday said in Lok Sabha that no bullet was fired on students protesting in the national capital against the NEET fiasco as he dismissed Congress leader Rahul Gandhi's allegations that Union home minister Amit Shah had ordered firing on students.

Replying to the debate on the Public Examination (Prevention of Unfair Means) Amendment Bill, 2026, the minister for state for PMO said the authority to issue order for firing rests with the magistrate, not with a minister and Gandhi lacked experience in public life and hence has levelled such allegations.

He said Gandhi alleged that the home minister has ordered firing on protesters in Delhi but was not able to authenticate that allegation.

"The first and fundamental point is he should know that when no shots were fired in the first place, the question of giving an order does not

arise at all. (Jab goli chali hee nahi, toh aadesh dena ka sawal hee paida nai hota)," Singh said, dismissing the allegations levelled by the leader of opposition in Lok Sabha.

He said the authority to issue such an order rests with the magistrate, not with a minister. "No bullet was fired, only tear gas was used," Singh said, strongly defending Shah.

On Gandhi's allegations that Shah's cavalcade has 30 vehicles, Singh again rejected the suggestion and took a dig at him saying the leader of the opposition does not even know the counting.

On Gandhi's remarks that the home minister had gone on foreign travel, the minister said Gandhi should know that Shah has never visited a foreign country.

"So without facts, and without a sense of responsibility, saying something in the House and then leaving the House, cannot be the behaviour of a responsible leader of opposition," he said.

Earlier, Gandhi alleged that Shah had authorised police excesses against student protesters, triggering a massive uproar in Lok Sabha during the debate on the bill.

"The home minister is not here today because he is scared," Gandhi said, drawing objections from the treasury benches.

The home minister "authorised" violent action against students, the Congress leader alleged, referring to the crackdown by security forces during the march to Parliament on July 20 during the BJP-led protest on the NEET paper leak issue. (PTI)

NGT directs Delhi govt to remove encroachments from Saket forest land in 4 months

NEW DELHI, July 29: The National Green Tribunal has directed the Delhi government to clear all illegal encroachments from a forest land in Saket within four months. The green body was hearing a plea alleging that the land mafia is capturing a specific khasra number land, a designated forest land, in Saket's Sadulajab locality and almost deforesting it, besides several private persons are encroaching upon it and raising illegal constructions.

In an order dated July 27, made available on Wednesday, a bench of NGT chairperson Justice Prakash Shrivastava and expert member Afroz Ahmad noted that the tribunal had earlier formed a joint committee, which in its report said that out of the original 19 bighas of forest land in the khasra number, only 6.12 bighas were physically found at the site.

The bench also noted that the committee's report of August 2024 said that while revenue records and a 1996 notification designated the 19-bigha plot as a "reserved forest", no boundary pillars were visible, and the panel's inspection found permanent structures, including a temple, a large platform or 'chabutra', and building extensions encroaching upon the land. The report also highlighted a permanent loss of tree canopy in a portion of the land. Besides, the site was found littered with piles of garbage and plastic waste, posing a choking hazard to local wildlife, including birds and squirrels, the bench further noted. (PTI)

Supreme Court grants bail to 2 Indian Mujahideen operatives

NEW DELHI, July 29: The Supreme Court has granted bail to two alleged Indian Mujahideen operatives, who were in custody since 2014, saying their continued incarceration was "grossly violative" of the right to liberty enshrined under Article 21 of the Constitution.

A bench of Justices Vikram Nath and Sandeep Mehta noted that the petitioners -- Mohd Saquib Ansari and Waqar Azhar -- were incarcerated in connection with a terror case lodged in Delhi for nearly 12 years with no prospect of an early conclusion of the trial.

"The progress of the trial has been extremely slow and there appears to be no prospect of the trial being concluded in the near future," the bench said in its July 27 order. It also noted that one of the co-accused was already enlarged on bail.

The top court passed the order on separate pleas filed by Ansari and Azhar challenging an April order of the Delhi High Court that had refused to grant them bail in the case registered by the Special Cell of Delhi Police in November 2011.



"...we feel that the continued incarceration of the petitioners in this case is grossly violative of the right to liberty enshrined under Article 21 of the Constitution of India," the bench said.

It noted that the petitioners were arrested in connection with three FIRs, including two registered in Rajasthan, in 2014 and had remained in custody ever since.

The bench said that in one of the cases lodged in Rajasthan, both the petitioners were convicted by a trial court in March 2021 and subsequently, the sentence awarded to them was suspended by the high court. It said trial in another case registered against them in Rajasthan was pending and both the petitioners had already been

granted bail in that case.

"Having appreciated the submissions advanced at bar and upon going through the record, we find that the petitioners have, more or less, been implicated in three separate FIRs for overlapping allegations," the bench said.

It directed that the petitioners be released on bail on such terms and conditions as may be imposed by the trial court in connection with the FIR registered in Delhi, subject to them not being required in any other case.

The bench said the petitioners would continue to cooperate with trial.

It said if the trial court or the prosecution finds that they are delaying the conclusion of trial, failing to cooperate with the trial, or otherwise misusing the liberty granted to them, it would be open to the prosecution apprising the apex court about it for appropriate orders.

The bench made clear that observations made by it were confined to the adjudication of petitions seeking bail and shall not be construed as an expression on the merits of the case. (PTI)

Current Waqf Board problems arose as LDF govt delayed its reconstitution: Kerala CM

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, July 29: Kerala Chief Minister V D Satheesan on Wednesday said that the previous Left government delayed reconstitution of the state Waqf Board and that led to the current problems related to the implementation of the amended Waqf Act in appointing members to it.

Satheesan, at a press conference here, said that the tenure of the previous Board ended on December 14, 2024 and the then government had told the Kerala High Court on November 29, 2024 that the new Board will be constituted within four months. He said that usually the process to reconstitute the Board starts before its tenure expires.

"However, the Left government waited till the Act was amended on April 8, 2025 and reconstituted the Board in February 2026. Had it been reconstituted before the amendment, it would have remained in operation till expiry of

its tenure and by then the courts would have given a decision regarding the amendment," the CM said.

"If they had not delayed the Board reconstitution, we would not have been facing the problems that we are now," he added.

Satheesan claimed that the then LDF government delayed reconstitution of the Board as under the earlier Waqf Act, opposition party members would also be a part of it. He further said that recently when the constitution of the current Board was challenged in the High Court, the government sought that the pleas be dismissed.

He said that when the Board went in appeal to the Supreme Court against the High Court order, it told the apex court that the government had sought dismissal of the petitions. The Board also told the Supreme Court that two non-Muslims will be appointed in

the body and that the current government was not doing so as it had just come to power, the CM said.

Satheesan claimed that when the apex court sent the matter back to the High Court, it did not interfere with section 14 of the Unified Waqf Management, Empowerment, Efficiency and Development Act which mandates the inclusion of non-Muslims. "The Supreme Court said that maximum three non-Muslims can be appointed and minimum two. Otherwise the maximum was seven," he claimed.

"So, the High Court is hearing the matter. Let its decision come. Then we will act accordingly. There is no urgency now," he said.

Last week, opposition leader Pinarayi Vijayan had accused 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. (PTI)

Kerala to modernise legal education, considering law university: CM Satheesan

'The govt aimed to transform Kerala into one of the country's leading higher education hubs'

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, July 29: Kerala Chief Minister V D Satheesan on Wednesday said the government was planning a comprehensive overhaul of legal education in the state. As part of the initiative, it is "seriously considering" setting up a Directorate of Legal Education and a law university, he said.

Speaking after handing over appointment orders to 35 assistant professors for government law colleges at the Secretariat Durbar Hall here, Satheesan said the government aimed to transform Kerala into one of the country's leading higher education hubs by updating courses in line with evolving industry requirements.

He said the proposed Directorate of Legal Education and law university would help strengthen legal education in the state.

The CM said new subjects such



as maritime law would be introduced to tap Kerala's growing potential as a port-based economy, while outdated teaching methods

would be revamped to meet contemporary requirements.

He said the government was also focusing on strengthening in-

dustry-academia collaboration and introducing employment-oriented courses to improve students' job prospects.

Referring to the appointment of the 35 assistant professors, Satheesan said the issue had come to his attention during his Puthuyuga Yathra as Leader of the Opposition after aspirants submitted representations, including one from a student in Kozhikode.

After assuming office, the government examined the pending files and expedited the recruitment process under the leadership of Higher Education Minister Roji M John, fulfilling its promise to the candidates, he said.

Satheesan urged the newly appointed teachers to uphold the responsibilities of the profession and serve as role models for students and society. (PTI)

Gulveer wins historic silver in men's 10,000m

GLASGOW, July 29: Gulveer Singh became the first Indian to win a Commonwealth Games medal in the men's 10,000m event, producing a remarkably assured performance on a rain-soaked track to clinch a silver here.

The national record holder's medal was India's second silver in athletics at the Games after Sarvesh Kushare's podium finish in the men's high jump event.

The Indian clocked 27:49.78 seconds to claim silver, finishing behind Australia's Ky Robinson, who won gold with a timing of 27:48.93 secondson Tuesday.

Running in difficult conditions amid a heavy downpour at the Scotstoun Stadium here, the 28-year-old Gulveer stayed with the leading pack throughout before unleashing a brilliant finish in the final few laps.

"It always feels good to win a medal. The race was good, there was rain but when you win a medal it hardly matters if there is rain, sunshine, heat or anything else," the reigning Asian champion told PTI.

"I had left everything on God.



Before the race I told almighty, dekh lena (please watch over me)," he added.

The soft-spoken Army man from Uttar Pradesh's Atruli laughed when asked if he had spoken to his family after the historic feat, revealing that he hadn't even told them about the race as yet.

"My family must be sleeping. I don't tell them on race days, I will tell them tomorrow. I don't disturb them, they can watch later.

Right now the focus is now on the 5k run. Let's hope the almighty remains kind towards me," he said.

Training under Scott Simmons in the United States, Gulveer executed a near-perfect tactical race in a strong field featuring multiple African runners, including 2023 World Championships medallist from Kenya Daniel Ebenyo, who boasted a personal best of 26:57.80.

Despite persistent rain, he

stayed with the lead pack, and moved into medal contention in the closing stages, producing a powerful final kick to edge past Isle of Man's David Mullarkey for silver.

Mullarkey took the bronze medal in 27:50.28 seconds.

Gulveer's silver marked the first time since the 1986 Commonwealth Games that no African athlete finished on the podium in the men's 10,000m.

The feat was reminiscent of Avinash Sable's historic silver medal in the 3000m steeplechase at the 2022 Birmingham Games, where he had ended Kenya's dominance.

Heartbreak for Pooja

However, there was disappointment in store in women's high jump where Asian champion Pooja Singh bowed out after failing to clear 1.82m.

Making her CWG debut, the 19-year-old's event was disrupted by heavy rain before play resumed.

Pooja could not clear the bar in her third and final attempt at 1.82m, bringing an end to her campaign. (PTI)

Gill reclaims No 1 spot among ODI batters

Sooryavanshi takes big strides in T20I rankings

DUBAI, July 29: India captain Shubman Gill on Wednesday reclaimed the No. 1 spot in ICC rankings for batters in ODI cricket while young batting sensation Vaibhav Sooryavanshi moved up a whopping 230 places to 48th in T20Is after his recent exploits against Zimbabwe.

Gill has replaced New Zealand batting mainstay Daryl Mitchell at the top spot in the ODI chart. Mitchell had held the top spot since January this year.

"There was some change at the top of the latest ODI rankings following the completion of the recent series between the West Indies and New Zealand as the absence of Black Caps' right-hander Daryl Mitchell saw Shubman Gill move back to become the No.1 ranked batter in 50-over cricket," the ICC said.

"Mitchell had held the top billing since January this year," it added.

Sooryavanshi, who smacked two half-centuries in the recently-concluded India's tour of Zimbabwe for three T20Is, scored 151 runs at 50.33 in his side's 3-0 victory.

The 15-year-old batter rose as many as 230 spots to reach 48th in the list of T20I batters, which is led by compatriot Ishan Kishan with 910 rating points.

Kishan had recorded the third highest batting rating of all time behind Abhishek Sharma (931) and Dawid Malan (919) when he reached 916 points after the end of the second T20I against Zimbabwe.

Despite losing some rating points, Kishan maintains a healthy lead over the second-ranked Sahibzada Farhan (848).

"Sooryavanshi's rating of 536 points is well adrift of his more experienced teammates, but Kishan can now boast of having a better career batter rating than more accomplished Indian players like Suryakumar Yadav (912) and Virat Kohli (909)," the ICC said.

Meanwhile, Tilak Varma moved up two positions



to reach sixth while T20I skipper Shreyas Iyer jumped seven places to 24th.

Leg-spinner Ravi Bishnoi gained 31 positions to move to 41st in the list of T20I bowlers but Varun Chakravarthy, who missed the Zimbabwe tour due to an injury, dropped three places but remained in the top 10 rankings.

Zimbabwe's Ryan Burl rose six positions to reach 85th in rankings for batters while Blessing Muzarabani jumped 10 spots to reach 26th among bowlers.

West Indies' Justin Greaves was also rewarded for his impressive showing against Pakistan in the first Test. Greaves recorded five consecutive wicket-maidens in Tarouba as the West Indies beat Pakistan by 90 runs to take an unassailable 1-0 lead in the series.

Greaves rose 21 spots to move to the 48th position among Test bowlers, and ninth in the list of all-rounders in the longest format.

Jayden Seales moved up to the 24th position while Pakistan's Mohammad Abbas, who also recorded a five-for, jumped to the 17th spot.

Babar Azam reached 15th after his unbeaten fifty in the second innings. (PTI)

Vivek relying on mentor Ashok's advice to break Hockey WC medal drought



NEW DELHI, July 29: Two-time Olympic medallist hockey midfielder Vivek Sagar Prasad is drawing inspiration from his mentor, Ashok Kumar to break India's 51-year medal drought in the World Cup.

India's last World Cup medal -- a lone gold -- came in 1975, when Ashok's decisive goal sealed a memorable 2-1 victory over Pakistan in the final, and Vivek is relying on his mentor's advice to "create goals" in the quadrennial showpiece to be co-hosted by the Netherlands and Belgium from August 15 to 30.

"He (Ashok) simply told me that creating goals is more important than scoring goals," Vivek told PTI in an interview.

"Since I play in midfield, he asked me to focus on building attacks and becoming the architect of goals. He also said that in a World Cup you have to anticipate situations, study your opponents' positioning and plan your moves accordingly."

Ashok, who was also part of India's bronze-winning team in 1971 and silver-medal side in 1973, spotted a young Vivek during a local tournament in Akola in 2013 and brought him to his academy in Bhopal.

"I learnt every nuance of the game from him. Whether it was practice, fitness or handling pressure, he guided me throughout. He never allowed me to lose focus," said the 26-year-old, who has scored 22 goals in 194 international appearances.

Vivek understands the importance of breaking the World Cup medal jinx, and said the current generation of players are determined to script a new chapter in Indian hockey in the upcoming edition.

"We have been hearing stories about the 1975 World Cup winners since childhood. Whenever I speak to senior players, they say lifting the World Cup trophy is a feeling unlike any other," he said.

"Our target is a podium finish. Over the last few years we have broken many barriers -- winning an Olympic medal after 41 years, defeating top teams consistently and proving that we belong among the best. We carry that belief into this World Cup."

Vivek said the team has tried to build a winning mindset rather than merely aiming for respectable performances.

"Before the Tokyo Olympics, the senior players told us not to think about the 41-year medal drought.

We went there with only one objective - to win a medal, not just become Olympians," he said.

"Now it is our responsibility to pass on those experiences to the younger players. We haven't won a World Cup medal for 50 years, but we see that as responsibility, not pressure."

The midfielder believes India has the quality to challenge any side but said no they can't take any opponent lightly in a competition of this stature.

"History belongs to the past. If we perform well now, we can create our own history. We will prepare match by match, analyse every opponent and, above all, play to our strengths because there are no weak teams in the World Cup."

Vivek also dismissed concerns over the demanding schedule, with just three weeks separating the World Cup and the Asian Games, which is an Olympic qualifying tournament.

"Our fitness levels are among the best. We have prepared well and are confident of sustaining our performance in both the tournaments. We have won back-to-back tournaments before," he said.

"The Yo-Yo test benchmark was 21 and the entire team achieved it. We also recorded excellent scores in the 16-lap baseline test, which reflects the work everyone has put into fitness."

Looking back, Vivek admitted that a serious shoulder injury before the 2016 Junior World Cup had been one of the toughest phases of his career.

"I was only 16 when I missed the Junior World Cup because of the injury. Being out for six months made me worry about my future."

"But with time I realised that setbacks are also part of a sportsman's journey. They teach you valuable lessons," he said. (PTI)

ASEAN Cup has Southeast Asia teams ramping up early 2030 World Cup preparations



SEOUL (SOUTH KOREA), July 29: Preparations for the next men's World Cup have already begun for teams in Southeast Asia, just weeks after Spain clinched the 2026 title.

The ASEAN Cup has kicked off in Phnom Penh, and host Cambodia has already lost its opening games 2-1 to Singapore and 5-1 to Indonesia in Group A.

The biennial tournament features 10 national teams from the region of 650 million, and there's more on the minds of coaches and players than the trophy on offer in late August.

With Asian qualification for the 2030 World Cup starting next year, Southeast Asia's soccer powerhouses such as Indonesia -- the only team from the region to appear on the global stage, when it competed as the Dutch East Indies in 1938 -- Thailand and Vietnam, have an opportunity to start preparations early.

ASEAN Football Federation president Khiev Sameth said getting another team from the region into the World Cup is within reach.

"I firmly believe that our shared dream of seeing a Southeast Asian nation qualify for the FIFA World Cup is becoming increasingly attainable," he said. "I have every

confidence that Southeast Asia will earn its place on football's greatest stage. When that moment arrives, it will be a proud achievement shared by our entire ASEAN football family."

From the region, Indonesia went closest to qualifying the 2026 World Cup. It has never won the ASEAN Cup in 15 previous editions despite reaching the final six times.

In January, Indonesia appointed John Herdman, the English tactician who led Canada to the 2022 World Cup for its first World Cup appearance in 36 years, to guide the national men's team.

After the big opening win over Cambodia, Indonesia faces Timor Leste on Friday, followed next week by games against Vietnam and Singapore.

"Every day I wake up, everything I'll be thinking about is qualifying this team for a World Cup," Herdman said ahead of the tournament. "This is the place to be. I want to be here when this country takes that step."

Indonesia has embarked on an intensive program of naturalizing players from overseas who are eligible to represent the national team. Just in July, Mitch Baker and Luke Vickery, both Australian-born play-

ers, attended separate ceremonies in Jakarta to become Indonesian citizens.

Erick Thohir, Minister of Youth and Sports was in attendance with the 19-year-old Baker, who scored a hat-trick and was voted player of the match in his debut at the ASEAN Cup.

"We have ambitious targets for the SEA Games, Asian Games, Olympics, and even the World Cup," Thohir, who is also the head of Indonesia's soccer federation, said. "Through this collaboration, we will continue to improve Indonesian sports and welcome everyone who can proudly raise the red and white flag."

Kim Sang-sik, head coach of defending champion Vietnam, also has the World Cup in his sights.

"Watching the World Cup, we witnessed so many exciting matches and were truly impressed," Kim, who represented South Korea at the 2006 World Cup, said. "The players and I watched the tournament together, and we all dreamed of competing right here someday."

Thailand has the best record in the ASEAN tournament with seven titles. The Thai team is in Group B with Malaysia, Laos, Philippines and Myanmar.

"There's pressure for a reason and the reason is we have a very good group of players, a great fan base," Anthony Hudson, who was appointed head coach last year, said. "I believe in the players and I think the fans deserve success because they've been crying out for it."

The top two teams in each group will progress to the semifinals. The winning finalists will play off in two-game final series on Aug. 22 and 26.

After that, the teams from Indonesia, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam will turn their attention to the 2027 Asian Cup, which kicks off Jan. 7 in Saudi Arabia. (AP)

Veteran sports personality Bipul Arandhara passes away

HT Correspondent

SIVASAGAR, July 29: Veteran sports personality, amateur arm wrestling instructor and distinguished member of the Sivasagar Sports Association, Bipul Arandhara, passed away at his Banmukh residence on Tuesday night following prolonged kidney-related ailments. He was 57. A bachelor, Arandhara devoted his life to the promotion of sports and social welfare activities in Sivasagar.

Widely respected for his dedication to nurturing sporting talent, he remained actively associated with various sports and community initiatives throughout his life.

His demise has been widely mourned by the Assam Olympic Association, Assam Arm Wrestling Association, Sivasagar Sports Association, Rangpur Jyoti Club, Assam State Journalists' Union, Sivasagar District Taekwondo Association, Nityananda Than Parichalana Samity, Banmukh Udayan Boxing Club, and several other social and sporting organisations.

Condolence messages poured in from members of the sporting community, who remembered Arandhara for his lifelong commitment to the development of sports and his contribution to the social life of Sivasagar.

Mangaldai A-Division Football League final

HT Correspondent

MANGALDAI, July 29: Hazarika Regional Sports Association booked a place in the final of the Kumar Jyotindra Narayan Dev and Babul Sharma-Rani Devi Memorial Mangaldai A-Division Football League with a commanding 5-1 victory over Deomorni Regional Sports Association on Wednesday.

Biswa Deka starred for Hazarika para with a superb hat-trick, while Abinash Saharia and Animesh Saharia added a goal each to complete the emphatic win.

Boxers Sakshi, Arundhati assure India of medals at CWG

GLASGOW, July 29: Sakshi Chaudhary and Arundhati Choudhary continued India's impressive run in the boxing ring, storming into the their respective semifinals with a contrasting victories at the Commonwealth Games here on Wednesday.

While Sakshi (51kg) defeated Northern Ireland's Caitlin Fryers 5-0, Arundhati had to work hard for her 3-1 win against New Zealand's Morgan Henderson to assure themselves of at least a bronze medal.

The unanimous decision win made Sakshi the fourth Indian boxer to secure a podium finish at the Games after Lovlina Borgohain (75kg) Priya Ghanghas (60kg), Preeti Pawar (54kg) and Jadumani Singh (55kg).

Making full use of her height and reach advantage, the Indian, who has moved down from the 54kg weight-class, dictated the contest from the opening bell, keeping Fryers at bay with crisp, accurate jabs and well-timed straight punches.

"Her strategy was to fight from close range and she kept clinching. Mine was to box from long range which is my forte," Sakshi told PTI after the bout. (PTI)

Prannoy, Unnati progress in Taipei Open

TAIPEI CITY, July 29: Seasoned shuttler HS Prannoy and Unnati Hooda, the spearheads of India's campaign, advanced to the second round of their respective singles events at the Taipei Open Super 300 here on Wednesday.

Seeded seventh, Prannoy defeated Minoru Koga of Japan 21-11 21-14 in his opening round men's singles match that lasted just 35 minutes. He will next take on Hong Kong's Jason Guanwan, who beat another Indian Mithun Manjunath 21-18 21-14 in another first round tie.

Among other Indian men's singles players to progress to the second round were Kiran George and Tharun Manneppalli.

While George defeated Wang Po-Wei of Chinese Taipei 21-10 21-15, Manneppalli stunned eighth seed Jeon Hyeok Jin of Korea 21-12 21-15. George and Manneppalli will play each other in the next round.

But it was curtains for the likes of rising Rounak Chauhan, who progressed through men's singles qualifiers, as he was shown the door by Richie Duta Richardo of Indonesia 14-21 16-21.

Third seed Unnati started her women's singles campaign on a positive note by registering a 21- 12 21-18 win Pei Yu Wang of Chinese Taipei. The Indian will next play compatriot Tanya Hemanth, who defeated another Taipei shuttler Wen Chi Hsu 21-16 14-21 21-16 in a tough three-game opener. Young Devika Sihag, seeded eighth here, Tanvi Sharma and Anmol Kharb also progressed to the next round of women's singles.

While Devika beat Korea's Ga Eun Park 14-21 21-7 21-15, Tanvi got the better of compatriot Tasnim Mir 21-16 22-20 and Anmol defeated Ishika Jaiswal of USA 21-15 11-21 21-19.

Devika will next face Indonesia's Ni Kadok Dhinda Amartya Pratiwi, who beat India's Rakshitree Sree Santhosh Ramraj 21-10 20-22 21-14.

Tanvi will next take on Indonesia's Thalita Ramadhani Wiryanan, while Anmol will up against second seed Hsiang Ti Lin of Chinese Taipei. Lin defeated India's Ashmita Chaliha 16-21 21-14 21-15 in another opening round match. (PTI)

RCB 1st cricket team to cross USD 300 million brand value: Study

NEW DELHI, July 29: Royal Challengers Bengaluru has become the world's first cricket team with a brand value of over USD 300 million while IPL's business enterprise value has climbed to a whopping USD 20.6 billion, according to study released by global investment bank Houlihan Lokey.

The bank's 2026 Brand Valuation Report said the IPL's value as a business grew 11.4 per cent year-on-year to USD 20.6 billion, marking a second successive year of double-digit growth.

The league's stand-alone brand value also rose by 10.3 per cent to USD 4.3 billion. Since 2023, the IPL has added more than USD 1.1 billion in brand value.

RCB retained the No. 1 spot among IPL franchises with a value of USD 312 million, a 16 per cent jump from USD 269 million in 2025, becoming the first cricket team to breach the USD 300 million milestone.

Mumbai Indians remained second with a brand value of USD 264 million, followed by Kolkata



Knight Riders (USD 245 million) and Chennai Super Kings (USD 244 million).

The study noted that landmark ownership transactions during the year further strengthened the league's commercial appeal.

RCB was acquired by a consortium comprising Blackstone, Bolt Ventures, Aditya Birla Group and Times of India Group at a reported valuation of USD 1.78 billion while Rajasthan Royals changed hands at a reported valuation of

USD 1.65 billion, establishing new benchmarks.

The study also highlighted the IPL's growing digital footprint. According to official broadcaster JioStar's data, which has been cited in the study, the 2026 season reached 1.06 billion screens, with overall viewership increasing seven per cent year-on-year.

"I always believed the IPL would become one of the biggest sporting leagues in the world. I just didn't think it would happen

this quickly," said Punjab Kings co-owner Ness Wadia, whose franchise's valuation has grown from USD 76 million in 2008 to USD 158 million in 2026.

"Today, when you see institutional investors looking at franchises and global capital entering the space, it validates the conviction we had back in 2008," he added. Connected TV emerged as the fastest-growing platform with a 26 per cent rise in reach, even as linear television ratings declined by 18.8 per cent.

The digital-led growth, coupled with premium partnerships and media rights, helped push the league's total revenues beyond USD 1.8 billion during the season, further reinforcing the IPL's position as one of the fastest-growing sports leagues globally.

"The IPL has changed the way sport is viewed in India. It's created careers, inspired investment, encouraged other leagues and built sporting brands that millions of people genuinely care about," said Wadia. (PTI)