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Assam flood shows some improvement ● Water levels recede, 6.5 lakh still affected ● Death toll mounts 66

Modi dials Sarba, enquires about situation

GUWAHATI, July 26: The flood situation in Assam improved on Sunday as water levels were receding in most of the affected areas with those places not receiving overnight rainfall, even as over 6.5 lakh people remained hit in six districts and 66 people lost their lives in this year's deluge, officials said.

An official of the Assam State Disaster Management Authority (ASDMA) said that water levels were receding in most of the flood-hit areas of Upper Assam, especially Charaideo, Sivasagar and Jorhat districts.

"We hope the situation would improve further during the day. This would help us provide relief in a better way," he added.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi called up Union Minister Sarbananda Sonowal on Sunday to enquire about the flood situation in Assam, a day after the former chief minister reviewed aid efforts at relief camps in deluge-hit areas of the state.

This was Modi's second call in two days



to take stock of the natural calamity ravaging the northeastern state. He dialled Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Saturday and offered full support to the state government in dealing with the deluge.

Sonowal, in a post on X, said he received

a call from the prime minister, who took stock of the flood situation in Assam.

According to the authority's daily flood report issued at midnight, more than 6,54,800 people have been affected in Charaideo, Dibrugarh, Golaghat, Jorhat,

Nagaon and Sivasagar districts.

Sivasagar was the worst-hit district with nearly 2.9 lakh people affected, followed by Charaideo (1.9 lakh) and Jorhat (1.3 lakh). The flood situation has improved marginally since Friday, when more than 7.05 lakh people were affected across nine districts.

The ASDMA's midnight bulletin said that four more people lost their lives in the deluge in the last 24 hours, taking the toll in this year's floods to 66. Three deaths were reported in Sivasagar and one in Charaideo.

Sarbananda Sonowal reviewed the relief measures at camps in flood-affected areas and directed officials concerned to ensure uninterrupted access to healthcare, food, drinking water and other essential services.

Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said the situation has slightly improved and the administration has been able to reach out to almost all the affected areas. Addressing a press conference (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Oppn to corner govt in Parliament on 'police brutality' against students

NEW DELHI, July 26: The Congress-led opposition is set to keep the pressure on the government in Parliament over the alleged police brutality against protesting students, demanding action against those responsible for the assault and an apology from Prime Minister Narendra Modi, sources said on Sunday.

However, the opposition's floor strategy and its stand on the bill to amend the two-year-old anti-paper leak law will be finalised at the INDIA bloc meeting in Leader of the Opposition in the Rajya Sabha Mallikarjun Kharge's chamber in Parliament on Monday morning, they said.

Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi has written to Union Home Minister Amit Shah, seeking accountability for the "barbaric assault" on peacefully protesting students and asking whether he approved the use of "lethal force", including pellet guns.

In his letter, Gandhi said peaceful protest is crucial to any democracy, and it is the



government's responsibility to protect protestors and resolve their grievances through dialogue.

"Such brutal violence destroys every norm, and has outraged the country. Youth and students, the future of our country, are demanding answers and accountability. Their voice will be heard," the former Congress chief said.

Sharing the letter, Congress general secretary, in-charge of communications, Jairam Ramesh said Gandhi had posed two questions to Shah: "As the Home Minister, did you authorise the use of lethal force, including pellet guns, against students? If not, who granted (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Himanta pays homage to war heroes on Kargil Vijay Diwas

GUWAHATI, July 26: Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Sunday offered homage to war heroes on the 27th anniversary of Kargil Vijay Diwas, which marks India's victory over Pakistan in the 1999 conflict.

"Some victories are measured in territory reclaimed. Kargil was measured in courage, sacrifice and love for the nation," Sarma said in a post on X.

"As India marks 27 years of #KargilVijayDiwas, we bow to the brave soldiers who faced impossible odds, defended Maa Bharti's honour and made (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

India observes Kargil Vijay Diwas, Rajnath slams Pak for making terrorism 'state policy'



DRAS/NEW DELHI, July 26: India on Sunday recalled the valour of the armed forces in the 1999 Kargil war with Defence Minister

Rajnath Singh criticising the Pakistan for making terrorism a "part of its state policy", saying there will be no talks with the country other than

on PoK.

President Droupadi Murmu, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, chief ministers and leaders across the political spectrum paid tributes to the soldiers who laid down their lives during the war.

Events were organised across states and at the Kargil War Memorial in Dras, Ladakh to mark the 27th Kargil Vijay Diwas.

President Murmu paid tribute to the valiant warriors and said the nation shall forever remain indebted to them. "Their unparalleled valour, unwavering resolve, and unparalleled patriotism stand as exemplary models of our (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Mizoram launches church-government narcotics awareness campaign

AIZAWL, July 26: The Mizoram government on Sunday joined hands with churches to launch a narcotics awareness campaign to strengthen community-led action against drug abuse and expand community-based rehabilitation efforts.

The campaign was launched jointly by the Social Welfare department and Mizoram Presbyterian church at the Chamari local Presbyterian church in Aizawl.

Social Welfare Minister Lalrinpui inaugurated the campaign and said that although the state government's 'Hulhiap' (detoxification centre) initiative has achieved significant success, it is continuing to explore additional measures to support people affected by drug addiction and strengthen rehabilitation and after-care services for people recovering from substance abuse.

The minister stressed the need for an effective yet affordable support system, underscoring the role of Narcotics Anonymous (NA) in helping recovering drug users

reintegrate into society.

She said the government is also formulating an after-care skill training programme in collaboration with the Mizoram Presbyterian Church (Synod), the Baptist Church of Mizoram (BCM), the Evangelical Church of Maraland (ECM), the Lai Independent Baptist Church of Mizoram (LIKBK), and various non-governmental organisations. As part of the initiative, NA awareness programmes will be held in 27 churches across Aizawl and its surrounding areas, officials said.

Resource persons and counsellors from the Mizoram State Drug Demand Reduction Board (MSD&RB) under the Social Welfare department and the Mizoram Drugs User Forum (MDUF) will conduct awareness and counselling sessions, they said. Apart from people affected by substance abuse, the campaign will also involve their family members through dedicated family sensitisation programmes, (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Students outline priorities for Pradhan's successor



NEW DELHI, July 26: With Dharma Pradhan no longer heading the Education ministry, several students part of the CJP protests on Saturday said they now hope the new incumbent will bring about concrete changes to the system.

Among many demands, three repeatedly emerged: transparency in the exam system, affordable and quality education, and strengthening of government schools and primary education.

Raj Yadav from Ghaziabad, who has been part of the sit-in since the protest began nearly a month ago, said that the government must implement sweeping changes in the education system.

"I demand that the new minister

focus on the education system. He should bring about changes across the entire system, address its flaws, and ensure it operates effectively," he said. Students maintain that the change of the minister is merely the beginning.

Srishti, a resident of Laxmi Nagar in Delhi, said the high cost of education has turned studying into a struggle for many students. She said she has to work to fund her own education and if a paper leak occurs, its consequence is far-reaching.

Srishti urged the new minister to ensure adequate teachers are appointed in all schools, education becomes affordable, and emphasis is on skill development for children in government (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

4 workers killed in cylinder blast at factory in Assam's Cachar

SILCHAR, July 26: At least four workers were killed in a suspected cylinder explosion at an iron casting unit in Cachar district of Assam on Sunday, police said.

The incident took place in the afternoon at a shared compound of Kade Global Infrastructure LLP and IRID Casting Works LLP in Pangram under Udharbond police station limits, a senior officer said.

"A sudden explosion shattered the factory and several people suffered injuries. They were taken to Silchar Medical College and Hospital, where four people were declared dead," he said.

According to preliminary investigation, the explosion was caused by an LPG cylinder engaged in casting work, the officer said. Assam Housing and Urban Affairs minister Kaushik Rai went to the spot and reviewed the situation.

He said that ₹ 5 lakh each to the next of kin of the deceased has been sanctioned by the chief minister. "Multiple probes will be carried (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Assam: Three police personnel arrested for assisting escape of prisoners

GOLAGHAT, July 26: Three police personnel were arrested for their alleged involvement in assisting the escape of three inmates of Golaghat District Jail in Assam, an official said on Sunday.

According to Golaghat senior superintendent of Police Rajen Singh, three dreaded criminals escaped from Swahid Kushal Konwar Civil Hospital on Saturday while they were undergoing treatment.

"In our investigation, we found that three personnel assisted in their escape. We immediately arrested the three police personnel for their involvement in the escape," he added.

Singh said that police have launched a manhunt to nab the three culprits who have escaped from captivity. (PTI)

'More than 75 per cent of the materials used in it are indigenous'

India scaling new heights in defence production: PM Modi

NEW DELHI, July 26: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday asserted that India is continuously scaling new heights in defence production, military exports and also in the field of political cooperation with friendly nations.

Addressing his monthly radio broadcast 'Mann Ki Baat', he also paid tributes to those who sacrificed their lives during the Kargil war in 1999.

The prime minister, however, did not refer to the Cockroach Janta Party (CJP)-led protests on the NEET paper leak issue which concluded on Saturday after the resignation of Dharma Pradhan as Education Minister and acceptance of the protesters' other demands by the government.

Recording of the Mann Ki Baat is normally done two to three days ahead of the sched-



uled broadcast.

Referring to the 'Kargil Vijay Diwas', the prime minister said there are certain days in people's lives that do not require a calendar to be remembered.

"Today, the 26th of July, is one such date. Today is 'Kargil Vijay Diwas'. This day fills us with pride. This day reminds us of the extraordinary courage of our brave soldiers. "Towering

peaks of Kargil, harsh weather, the challenge posed by the enemy - our soldiers faced every such circumstance, yet their spirit was greater than every challenge," he said.

Modi said India of today not only remembers her heroes but also conveys their saga to the new generation and, with this very sentiment, a special 'Shaurya Vijay Yatra' has been organ-

ised this year.

The prime minister said alongside the courage of the soldiers, India is also continuously strengthening its technological capabilities. He said a few days ago, INS Mahendragiri was inducted into the Indian Navy and this modern warship has been designed and built in India itself. "More than 75 per cent of the materials used in it are indigenous. It is a symbol of the growing strength of an 'Atmanirbhar Bharat'," he said.

Modi said the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) also successfully tested the Pinaka Long-Range Guided Rocket this month and behind this success lies the collective perseverance of the scientists and engineers. Only two-three days ago, the DRDO also successfully tested the Kusha missile, (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

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FM Sitharaman directs Income Tax dept to work for benefit of common people

MUMBAI, July 26: Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Sunday urged the Income Tax department to work for the benefit of common people without making them run from pillar to post.

She also went public with her disappointment at the "laidback" nature of government departments, which leads to illegal occupation or encroachments on government lands and underlined the need for integrity in conduct from all officials. Citing the challenges faced by the department in getting permissions to construct a building in the Nariman Point business district, Sitharaman said these experiences, despite serving in the Indian Revenue Service (IRS), would have given them an idea of what the common man goes through.

An IRS officer has the name of the Income Tax department behind him, a "powerful force to frighten people", Sitharaman reminded, adding that despite this, the officials had to run from pillar to post to get clearances from authorities to proceed with work on the 13-floor building.

"Can this (experience) incentivise you to understand the position of a common citizen when he ap-



proaches you? Don't make them run from pillar to post where your authority is required; do the work for them," the FM said.

The minister was quick to say that she is not asking the officials to break the rules or do something out of the way for the common citizens but rued that it takes a lot of effort in this country for people to get their rightful claims.

The land parcel on which Aaykar Sindhu, the 1.13 lakh sq ft building, is built, had been with the I-T department since 1973, Sitharaman

said, adding that despite this, illegal occupations had sprouted up on the land.

"The fact that you led it to have occupations, illegal occupation, shows somewhere in our governance, we are too laid back. It is somebody's job to take care of our assets, and when it is encroached, we say, oh, we have the land, but we can't build it," she said.

Sitharaman also promised to look into the issue of many of the I-T officials not staying in official accommodations in Mumbai and Navi

Mumbai areas, hinting that half of them do not enjoy such a facility and also travel for long to get to workplaces.

Stating that she would prefer government-to-government transfer of lands for the purpose, Sitharaman assured that she will facilitate the quick transfer of lands and other aspects like getting the permissions, building, dealing with CPWD (Central Public Works Department), assigning contracts and tenders will be the job I-T officials will have to perform.

"Get it all done at the earliest so that we do not get into the second half of the 21st century with scattered office spaces, rental accommodation in a city, which is fast growing and expect to pay rents or lease rental at phenomenal rates," she said.

She particularly mentioned state-run BSNL, asking officials to get the telco's land and promised to speak with her counterpart minister.

Meanwhile, she also used the opportunity to underline the importance of integrity in the discharge of a critical work like tax collection for the country.

"Integrity is the one and only principle I will advocate to each one of you," she said. (PTI)

Airtel Payments Bank, CSC partner to expand digital banking in rural India

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, July 26: Airtel Payments Bank has entered into a partnership with CSC e-Governance Services India Limited to expand digital banking and financial inclusion by making banking and payment services available through more than 5.6 lakh Common Service Centres (CSCs) across the country.

The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed during the 17th Foundation Day celebrations of CSC in Kolkata.

Under the partnership, citizens visiting CSC outlets will be able to open Airtel Payments Bank savings accounts, link their accounts to receive eligible government benefits and make utility and other bill payments.

The initiative aims to strengthen access to formal banking services, particularly in rural and underserved areas.

CSC e-Governance Services, established under the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY), operates a nationwide network of Common Service Centres that deliver a range of Government-to-Citizen (G2C) services.

Krishna Kumar Singh, Senior Vice-President of CSC e-Governance Services India Limited, said the partnership would strengthen efforts to provide secure, convenient and accessible banking and payment services to people in remote regions.

He said the collaboration would help accelerate financial inclusion, simplify digital payments and encourage greater participation in the country's digital economy.

Pranav Kaushal, Chief Sales and Distribution Officer of Airtel Payments Bank, said the partnership represented an important step towards making formal banking services accessible to every citizen, irrespective of location.

He said the integration of CSC's extensive grassroots network with Airtel Payments Bank's digital banking platform would help extend banking and digital bill payment services to millions of people while promoting financial empowerment.

According to the two organisations, the collaboration is expected to strengthen India's digital public infrastructure by combining CSC's citizen service network with Airtel Payments Bank's digital banking capabilities, enabling easier access to banking services, seamless delivery of government benefits and greater financial inclusion across the country.

Secretary, Ministry of New and Renewable Energy, Santosh Kumar Sarangi, said India's renewable energy growth had been built on policy stability, market creation, ecosystem development and transmission infrastructure.

He said the next phase of the energy transition would focus on hybrid renewable energy projects, battery energy storage systems, floating solar, agrivoltaics and the National Green Hydrogen Mission.

The curtain raiser was attended by senior officials of the Ministry along with national and international delegates.

Contd. from Page 1...

Modi dials Sarba, enquires

after a late-evening cabinet meeting, he said that a central team has arrived in the state to assess the damage caused by the flood in Upper Assam. ASDMA said the administration has been operating 274 relief camps and distribution centres in six districts, taking care of 18,902 displaced people at present.

Multiple agencies such as the Army, NDRF, SDRF, Fire & Emergency Services, police and civil agencies have rescued many people from different parts of Upper Assam, it added.

The authority has distributed 1,668.68 quintals of rice, 286.99 quintals of dal, 83.75 quintals of salt and 7,995.01 litres of mustard oil among the flood victims of the state in the last 24 hours.

At present, 810 villages are under water and 34,970.8 hectares of crop areas have been damaged across Assam, the ASDMA said. Embankments, roads, bridges and other infrastructure have been damaged by floodwaters in different districts of the state. At present, Dikhow River at Sivasagar and Dhansiri at Numaligarh are flowing above the danger level. (PTI)

Oppn to corner govt in Parl

this authorisation? Are the individuals seen raining blows on students while dressed in plain clothes, police personnel or volunteers? Who authorised their deployment?"

The home minister must answer these crucial questions in Parliament tomorrow. The prime minister should apologise to the students," Ramesh said in his post in Hindi.

The Congress has described education minister Dharmendra Pradhan's resignation as a victory for students but asserted that the prime minister must also apologise to the students.

Kharage has said it was now Modi's turn to apologise and take strict action against all those who used lathis, batons and pellet guns against the agitating students.

After Pradhan's resignation, Gandhi had also urged the prime minister to apologise to the students out of respect for the future of the country and for the "atrocities" committed on them during the agitation.

Gandhi said Pradhan's resignation was a huge step towards rebuilding the education system, asserting that it was a "symbolic step because he was a symbol, but it is still a big step".

"This is not the end. We still await the prime minister's apology to our students," Ramesh said, reiterating the demand for accountability for those responsible for the alleged excesses. A fiery debate on the paper leak issue is on the cards if the government and opposition break the ongoing deadlock in both Houses of Parliament.

The Public Examinations (Prevention of Unfair Means) Amendment Bill, 2026, has been circulated to the Lok Sabha members ahead of its introduction.

The bill says that individuals involved in paper leaks or unfair means in exams will get jail terms for a minimum of 5 years and a maximum of 10 years, and a fine of up to ₹ 50 lakh. For organised crimes, the bill proposes a minimum sentence of seven years and a fine of up to ₹ 10 crore. The existing law has provisions for a minimum of three to five years of imprisonment to curb cheating, while those involved in organised crimes of cheating face five to 10 years of imprisonment and a minimum fine of ₹ 1 crore.

The bill has been listed for introduction, consideration and passage in the Lok Sabha on Monday. Bills are usually not listed for introduction and passage on the same day.

The government announced it was bringing in the proposed legislation after student protests led by the Cockroach Janta Party (CJP) over the NEET paper leak issue gained momentum in recent days. Protests by opposition parties over the NEET issue led to a washout of proceedings in the first week of the Parliament session.

The opposition's stand on the new bill remains unclear.

Asked whether the Congress would support the proposed legislation, Gandhi had on Saturday said the party alone cannot take a call on it and the decision would be based on opposition consensus. "The Congress party has a central principle. We will decide this during a meeting of opposition parties and a decision will be based on opposition consensus. In Parliament, that is our discipline, and that is our way of functioning," he said.

The 2024 law was brought in when the government faced raging paper leak controversies. Before this legislation, there was no specific substantive law to deal with unfair means adopted or offences committed by various entities involved in the conduct of public examinations by the central government and its agencies.

In the wake of student protests, Modi had promised a law to deal with cases like the NEET-UG paper leak. He also said that cases of accused in such cases will be tried in fast-track courts. The CJP on Saturday called off its 36-day agitation after the education minister resigned and the government accepted its other demands. (PTI)

Himanta pays homage to war

the ultimate sacrifice so that the Tricolour would always fly high," he added. The occasion marks the victory in 1999 when Indian soldiers, braving snow-clad peaks and relentless firing by Pakistani troops, reclaimed the heights of Kargil. Operation Vijay was the name given to India's limited war after the neighbouring country's infiltration. Kargil Vijay Diwas commemorates the culmination of Operation Vijay on July 26, 1999. (PTI)

India observes Kargil Vijay

army's glorious traditions," she said in a post on X in Hindi. Prime Minister Modi said the valour of India's brave soldiers in the face of most formidable conditions will forever remain a source of national pride.

"Their valour in the face of the most formidable conditions will forever remain a source of national pride. Their unwavering patriotism and devotion to duty will continue to inspire generations," he said in a post on X. The prime minister said there are certain days in people's lives that do not require a calendar to be remembered.

"Today, the 26th of July, is one such date. Today is 'Kargil Vijay Diwas'. This day fills us with pride. This day reminds us of the extraordinary courage of our brave soldiers," he said while addressing his monthly radio broadcast 'Mann Ki Baat'. Paying glowing tributes to the fallen soldiers, Union Home Minister Amit Shah said Kargil Vijay Diwas is a symbol of the indomitable valour and extraordinary heroism of the Indian Army.

"In 1999, despite the harsh conditions and the enemy's positions on high-altitude fronts on the formidable snowy peaks of the Himalayas, our brave soldiers brought the enemy to its knees through 'Operation Vijay'," he said in a post in Hindi on X. Defence Minister Singh slammed Pakistan and said there will be no talks with the country other than on Pakistan-occupied Kashmir, which is a "part of India illegally occupied" by it.

In his address at the Kargil War Memorial in Dras, he also said that Operation Sindoor clearly demonstrated what will be the fate of those who attempt to threaten India with terrorism, asserting that the country can respond to any misadventure by Pakistan in a manner "beyond their imagination".

Singh described India's victory in the Kargil war as "a diamond studded in the crown of Bharat Mata".

Recalling the Operation Sindoor conducted in May 2025 in response to the Pahalgam terror attack, he said, "Any evil step towards the sovereignty and integrity of India will meet with the same fate." Sharpening his attack on the neighbouring country, Singh said at a time when India is designing ships, Pakistan is busy engaging in terror design. Kargil Vijay Diwas commemorates the culmination of Operation Vijay, the name given to India's military operation to reclaim the heights of Kargil after Pakistan's infiltration, which culminated on this day in 1999.

Earlier, Singh, Army Chief General Dhiraj Seth, Ladakh Lieutenant Governor V K Saxena, and the General Officer Commanding-in-Chief, Northern Command, Lt Gen Pratik Sharma, paid tribute at the Kargil War Memorial, offering homage to the fallen heroes. Governors and chief ministers of various states also paid tributes to the fallen soldiers on the occasion. In a post on X, Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath said, "Heartiest greetings to everyone on Kargil Vijay Diwas. This day is an immortal symbol of the valour, sacrifice and patriotism of our brave soldiers."

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma offered homage to war heroes. "Some victories are measured in territory reclaimed. Kargil was measured in courage, sacrifice and love for the nation," Sarma said on X. Rajasthan Governor Haribhau Bagde said Kargil Vijay Diwas is not merely a reminder of a military victory but a symbol of the nation's pride, unity and the supreme sacrifice of soldiers.

Addressing a programme in Jodhpur, Bagde said the 1999 conflict showcased the unmatched courage and commitment of Indian soldiers. In Kerala, Governor Rajendra Vishwanath Arlekar, Congress leaders K C Venugopal and Ramesh Chennithala, and BJP state chief Rajeev Chandrasekhar paid tribute to the soldiers who died in the war.

Arlekar, in a Facebook post, said he salutes India's armed forces on Kargil Vijay Diwas, "the historic day which fills every Indian with pride". (PTI)

Mizoram launches church

recognising the critical role of families in recovery, they said.

Lalrinpui appealed to churches, voluntary organisations and local communities to actively encourage those struggling with drug addiction to participate in the programmes and access the support available, officials added. (PTI)

4 workers killed in cylinder blast

out by various agencies to ascertain the exact cause of the blast. If any lapse is found, action will be taken against the culprit," Rai said. The civil administration, police and the Labour Commissioner will conduct separate investigations into the incident, he added. (PTI)

Students outline priorities

schools. Vikram Chaudhary from Rajasthan, who has been participating in the protest for at least a fortnight, demanded that reforms begin at the primary school level.

He emphasised the need to improve the quality of education in government schools, an increase in the education budget, and better facilities for preparing for competitive exams like UPSC, NEET, and JEE. "Education has become very expensive in this country. The government needs to address this seriously," Chaudhary said.

Shaurya, a class 11 student preparing for NEET, said Pradhan's resignation has given him hope that not all is lost. "I am happy that our voices have been heard. I am confident that the new Education minister will not allow incidents like paper leaks to happen again," he said.

Gaurav Tomar, a resident of Baghpur, Uttar Pradesh, who has been a part of the protest since July 20, demanded the strengthening of primary education, the promotion of skill development in government schools, and curbs on the rising cost of education. "Education is not a business; it is every child's right, and they must receive it," he said.

Shravan Kumar, a resident of Jaisalmer, Rajasthan, said students should not be forced to take re-exams repeatedly and that issues such as the allocation of exam centers in remote areas need to be resolved. (PTI)

India scaling new heights in

he said. "Whether it is defence production, defence exports, or political cooperation with friendly nations, India is continuously scaling new heights," he said.

The prime minister said when he was in Indonesia early this month, a major agreement regarding BrahMos and Astra missiles was concluded, and this reflected that global confidence in India's defence equipment and technology is growing.

Referring to India's first rocket developed by the private sector, he said every Indian is filled with pride following the successful launch of 'Vikram-1' last Sunday.

"All of us Indians were witnesses to this historic moment for India's space sector. Our young innovators achieved something that was once difficult to even imagine - they displayed remarkable skill, passion and patience," he said.

Modi said for a long time the Indian space sector remained closed to the private sector, denying many interested young people the opportunity to showcase their talent. "Keeping the interests of the youth in mind, we opened up the space sector to private enterprise, and today, the world is witnessing the results," he said.

Talking about the campaign 'Catch The Rain' for the conservation of rainwater, he said the message is very simple: conserve the water right where and when the rain falls. (PTI)

FSSAI suspends licence of Westend Agro Products for altering expiry dates, other violations

NEW DELHI, July 26: Food regulator FSSAI on Sunday said it has suspended the licence of Westend Agro Products Pvt Ltd, for serious violation of laws including alteration of manufacturing and expiry dates on many products.

In a social media post, the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) informed that it has suspended the licence of Westend Agro Products "following serious violations observed during inspection at the food business premises".

The regulator received a complaint regarding the alteration of manufacturing dates, packing dates, fraudulent re-labelling and sale of misbranded food products at the premises.

During the inspection, it was found that Westend Agro Products, and Westend Corporation were operating from the same premises.

"Several food products were found with altered manufacturing dates, expiry dates, batch numbers and misleading label declarations," FSSAI said.

That apart, the regulator found printing machinery, stamps, solvents and other materials which were allegedly used for altering mandatory food label information.

FSSAI recovered packaging materials, labels and printed wrappers bearing misleading declarations, including "organic" claims.

"Deliberate forgery and alteration of mandatory labelling information and sale of food with false or misleading labels pose a direct threat to consumer and public health. The food products are, therefore, prima facie considered



unsafe," FSSAI observed.

As a result, the State FSSAI Licence of Westend Agro Products Pvt Ltd has been suspended with immediate effect, the regulator said.

On Saturday, FSSAI imposed penalty against Sopan Restaurant for sale of sub-standard food in a pantry car of Chandigarh and Dibrugarh Express.

An "adjudication order" has been passed against Sopan Restaurant for sale of sub-standard food.

The order was passed following "analysis of Nova Flavoured Double Toned Milk sample collected from Pantry Car No. 15904 (Chandigarh - Dibrugarh Express) operated by Sopan Restaurant", it added.

Earlier this week, FSSAI suspended the licence of Punjab-based Rehaan Healthcare after it found serious violation of rules in the company's health supplements and

nutraceuticals manufacturing unit. Rehaan Healthcare, which manufactures digestive syrup, multi-vitamin syrup and other syrup-based food products, has been asked to stop producing till it corrects all deficiencies and the rectification gets verified by competent authority.

In the last few months, FSSAI has cracked down on many energy drink and alcoholic beverage companies for misleading claims and labellings. It has also issued notices to many e-commerce platforms.

These actions are based on consumer complaints, suo-motto cognizance and also regular enforcement activities of food safety officers.

Interestingly, FSSAI is posting these enforcement actions against the food business operators and e-commerce companies on social media platforms, including Instagram. (PTI)

Ashok Leyland opens new 3S dealership in Bongaigaon

HT Correspondent

BONGAIGAON, July 26: Commercial vehicle manufacturer Ashok Leyland has expanded its presence in the Northeast with the inauguration of a new integrated 3S (Sales, Service and Spares) dealership in Bongaigaon in partnership with Bimal Auto Commercial Pvt Ltd.

Spread over 42,000 sq ft, the dealership has been equipped with 10 service bays and offers a full range of sales, servicing and genuine spare parts under one roof.

The facility is expected to cater to customers in Bongaigaon, Kokrajhar, Chirang, Barpeta, Nalbari, Goalpara, Dhubri and Kamrup, strengthening the company's service network in western Assam. The dealership features modern workshop infrastructure, including advanced diagnostic systems, wheel alignment facilities, accident repair services, pneumatic tools and mobile service support to improve maintenance efficiency and minimise vehicle downtime.

Speaking at the inauguration, Madhavi Deshmukh, National Sales Head of Ashok Leyland, said the company

continued to invest in expanding its service footprint across key markets. She said the new dealership reflected Ashok Leyland's commitment to enhancing customer convenience and delivering reliable after-sales support in collaboration with Bimal Auto Commercial Pvt Ltd.

Amit Sarawgi, Director of Bimal Auto Commercial Pvt Ltd, described the opening as another milestone in the company's long-standing association with Ashok Leyland.

He said the dealership's modern infrastructure, experienced workforce and customer-focused approach would enable it to provide prompt service and dependable mobility solutions to transporters and businesses across the region.

The new outlet will offer Ashok Leyland's complete range of commercial vehicles, including intermediate commercial vehicles, haulage trucks, tractor-trailers, tipper, staff buses, school buses and route buses, supported by an integrated after-sales service and spare parts network.

country would soon cross 300 GW of installed non-fossil fuel capacity.

He also said the "PM Surya Ghar: Muft Bijli Yojana" was expected to benefit more than 50 lakh households in the coming weeks.

Describing the summit as a significant milestone in India's engagement with the global renewable energy community, Joshi said it would promote international collaboration, attract investments, encourage innovation and strengthen partnerships in the clean energy sector.

He invited governments, industry leaders, researchers, entrepreneurs and development partners from across the world to participate in the event.

During the programme, the minister unveiled the official logo of the summit, 'URJHA Chakra', and launched its digital portal and mobile application.

Minister of State for Power and New and Renewable Energy Shripad

BRE Summit & Expo 2026 to be held in New Delhi from November 2

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, July 26: The Bharat Renewable Energy Summit & Expo (BRE Summit & Expo) 2026 will be held at Bharat Mandapam in New Delhi from November 2 to 5, Union Minister for New and Renewable Energy Pralhad Joshi announced while unveiling the event here on Sunday.

Addressing the curtain raiser of the summit, Joshi said the event would, for the first time, bring together three major international renewable energy platforms under one roof — the BRE Summit & Expo 2026, the 9th Session of the International Solar Alliance (ISA) Assembly, and the 4th International Conference on Green Hydrogen (ICGH).

He said Prime Minister Narendra Modi had agreed to inaugurate the summit, adding that his participation reflected India's commitment to renewable energy as a key pillar of the vision of Viksit Bharat and its contribution to global sustainable develop-



ment.

Joshi said the summit would bring together renewable energy developers, technology companies, manufacturers, battery storage firms, green hydrogen stakeholders, financial institutions, international organisations and investors, representing the entire renewable energy value chain.

Invitations have been extended to 34 countries for the summit, while the International Solar Alliance has invited representatives from 128 countries to attend its Assembly.

Highlighting India's progress in clean energy, the minister said the

Governor pays tribute to Kargil martyrs on Vijay Diwas

Lakshman Prasad Acharya calls Kargil victory a symbol of India's courage and sacrifice

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, July 26: Governor Lakshman Prasad Acharya on Sunday paid floral tributes to the martyrs of the 1999 Kargil War at the State War Memorial at Dighalipukhuri on the occasion of Kargil Vijay Diwas.

Paying homage to the fallen soldiers, the Governor described Kargil Vijay Diwas as an enduring symbol of the unparalleled courage, sacrifice and indomitable spirit of the Indian Armed Forces.

He said the soldiers displayed exceptional valour and determination in defending the country's sovereignty and territorial integrity despite facing extreme hardships.

Acharya said the sacrifices of the martyrs also reflected the resilience and strength of their families, who equally deserve the nation's gratitude.

He noted that while citizens pursue progress in various fields, the Armed Forces continue to safeguard the country's borders under the most challenging conditions, upholding the highest ideals of patriotism and service.



Referring to the vision of Viksit Bharat by 2047, the Governor said the goal could be achieved only if every citizen discharged his or her responsibilities with the same discipline, commitment and sense of national service demonstrated by

the Armed Forces. He also highlighted the 'Panch Pran' outlined by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, which include building a developed India, taking pride in the country's heritage, shedding the colonial mindset, strengthening national unity and fulfilling citizens' duties.

He said the heroes of Kargil embodied these ideals through their courage and selfless sacrifice.

Urging young people to draw inspiration from Param Vir Chakra awardee Captain Vikram Batra and Assam's Captain Jintu Gogoi, Acharya said their lives should motivate future generations to dedicate themselves to the service and progress of the nation.

The Governor also appreciated the Directorate of Sainik Welfare for its work towards the welfare of ex-servicemen, Veer Naris and the families of soldiers and said it is the collective responsibility of the nation to ensure they receive the respect, security and support they deserve.

Among those present on the occasion were Commissioner and Secretary to the Governor S S Meenakshi Sundaram, Assam Baibhav Lt Gen RP Kalita, General Officer Commanding 51 Sub Area Maj Gen AK Sharma, VSM, Director of Sainik Welfare Brig Polash Choudhury, SM (Retd) and other dignitaries.

RPF rescues vulnerable children across railway network

Seven minors rescued in three days; 430 people saved across NFR network this year

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, July 26: The Railway Protection Force (RPF) of the Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR) has continued its child protection and passenger safety initiatives, rescuing several minors from railway stations and trains across its network between July 18 and 20.

According to an NFR statement, all rescued children were handed over to the respective Child Welfare Committees (CWCs), Child Help Line and other authorised agencies for care, rehabilitation and further assistance.

Among the operations, RPF personnel rescued a 12-year-old boy at New Bongaigaon Railway Station on July 18 and handed him over to the Child Welfare Committee, Alipurduar.

On July 19, RPF personnel at New Bongaigaon rescued four minor girls travelling on Train No 22504 and produced them before the Child Welfare Committee, Bongaigaon.

On the same day, RPF at Kisanganj rescued a 10-year-old boy from Train No 15910 and handed him over to the Child Help Line.

In separate operations, RPF personnel at Katihar rescued a 14-year-old girl from the railway station and handed her over to



Child Line, Katihar.

Another 14-year-old girl travelling on Train No. 12505 was rescued by the RPF Train Escort Party and placed in the custody of the local police for further legal action.

During the same operation, an 18-year-old youth was reunited with his father.

On July 20, RPF personnel at Goalpara rescued a 13-year-old girl from Train No 75724 and handed her over to the Child Welfare Committee, Goalpara.

At Kamakhya Railway Station, RPF, in coordination with an NGO, rescued a 16-year-old girl

travelling on Train No. 12505 and handed her over to the Railway Child Line in Guwahati.

NFR said that between January and June 2026, the RPF rescued 430 persons, including men, women and children, from railway stations and trains across its network.

The railway authorities said the RPF continues to work closely with Child Welfare Committees, Child Help Line, non-governmental organisations and local authorities to protect vulnerable children and ensure they are reunited with their families whenever possible.

Darrang College celebrates 82nd Foundation Day with honours for achievers



HT Correspondent

TEZPUR, July 26: Darrang College celebrated its 82nd Foundation Day on Sunday alongside the 32nd Foundation Day of its Alumni Association with a series of programmes honouring the institution's legacy, distinguished alumni and outstanding students.

The celebrations began with the hoisting of the college and Alumni Association flags by Principal Palashmani Saikia and Alumni Association Vice-President Nripen Kumar Bora, respectively.

Khageswar Barkakoti, President of the College Managing and Development Committee and a retired professor, lit the ceremonial lamp in memory of the institution's founders, while retired professor Hiranya Bhuyan and former Vice-Principal Swadhinata Mahanta planted two saplings of a rare jackfruit variety on the campus.

The main function was held at the college's NEC Auditorium, where retired professor Minu Devi inaugurated the proceedings by lighting the ceremonial lamp.

Students rendered a portion of the college anthem, "Be a Jewel Among Men" and the gathering observed prayers for those who lost their lives in the recent floods.

Welcoming the gathering, Principal Saikia recalled the vision of the founders of the institution, established on July 26, 1945 and paid tribute to former teachers and staff members.

He also highlighted the college's academic achievements and infrastructural development.

Tezpur MLA Prithviraj Rava and Barchalla MLA Ritu Baran Sharma, both alumni of the college, attended the programme as special guests and

addressed the gathering. Students also presented a Sattriya dance performance.

The highlight of the celebration was the felicitation of Dr Ashok Kumar Bora, Vice-Chancellor of Srimanta Sankaradeva University, Nagaon, and an alumnus of the college, in recognition of his contributions to academics and intellectual life.

He was honoured with a citation, gamosa, cheleng, memento, books and a soral.

Dr Bora later joined the dignitaries in releasing the college newsletter and urged students to remain rooted in the country's culture, heritage, language and literature.

The college also honoured 13 meritorious students with cash awards under various trust schemes.

Awards were presented to the best graduates in the Arts, Science and Commerce streams, Higher Secondary toppers, undergraduate first-class first rank holders and students who excelled in state-level sports competitions.

The Best Graduate Awards for 2025, instituted by the Bagaria Foundation Trust, were conferred on Hiya-moni Baishya (Arts), Mrigakshi Mahanta (Science) and Trishna Mandal (Commerce).

Among other awardees, Rani Chetri received awards for topping Mathematics, while Mrigakshi Mahanta, Ankit Kumar Jha, Rimpi Dutta, Dhanmoni Soren, Lakshyajyoti Barhoi, Gaurav Aditya Nath, Dip Sikha Patowary and Dimpi Bora were honoured with various memorial awards instituted in recognition of academic excellence.

The programme concluded with a folk music performance by students of the college.

New tourism office, ticket counter inaugurated at Umrangso

HT Correspondent

UMRANGSO, July 26: The Dima Hasao Autonomous Council (DHAC) on Sunday inaugurated a new Tourism Management Committee Office and Ticket Counter at the New Tumbung Golf Course in Umrangso as part of efforts to strengthen tourism infrastructure in the hill district.

The facilities were inaugurated by Chief Executive Member (CEM) Debolal Gorlosa in the presence of Executive Members, Members of the Autonomous Council (MACs) and other dignitaries.

Constructed by the Umrangso Tourism Management Committee, the new office and ticket counter are expected to improve visitor services, facilitate tourist management and enhance the overall experience of visitors to the scenic destination.

Addressing the gathering, the dignitaries highlighted the importance of developing tourism infrastructure to harness Umrangso's natural and eco-tourism potential.

They expressed confidence that the new facilities would improve tourist convenience while contributing to the sustainable growth of the local tourism sector.

The inauguration forms part of the district administration's broader initiatives to promote tourism and create livelihood opportunities for local residents.



The organisers also acknowledged the contributions of all those involved in the successful completion of the project.

Known for its picturesque landscapes and tranquil surroundings, Umrangso has been witnessing steady growth as a tourist destination, with the authorities continuing to invest in infrastructure to attract more visitors from within Assam and other parts of the country.

Haflong Municipal Board leads town-wide cleanliness drive

HT Correspondent

HAFLONG, July 26: The Haflong Municipal Board (HMB), in association with the Songpijang Self Help Group, organised a large-scale cleanliness drive across Haflong town on Sunday, with enthusiastic participation from local youth.

The drive commenced from the Council Rotary and covered the Gadain Raji area, with volunteers cleaning roadsides and public spaces to promote a cleaner urban environment.



Bebojeet Hojai participated in the campaign alongside members of the self-help group and volunteers.

The cleanliness initiative attracted more youths as it progressed, with residents joining the campaign to support the effort. Appealing to citizens to maintain cleanliness in and around their homes and public places, Changsan urged people to make proper use of the designated dustbins for the segregation and disposal of dry, wet and plastic waste.

The organisers said the drive was aimed at promoting public awareness on sanitation and encouraging community participation in keeping Haflong clean and environmentally sustainable.

Marwari Mahila Sammelan hosts fashion and lifestyle exhibition in Hojai

HT Correspondent

HOJAI, July 26: The Hojai branch of the All India Marwari Mahila Sammelan organised a Fashion and Lifestyle Exhibition and Sale at the Jugal Kishore Kedia Memorial Hall on Sunday, bringing together women entrepreneurs from across the region to showcase their products.

A total of 16 stalls were set up at the exhibition, featuring participants from Hojai as well as Noida, Kolkata, Guwahati, Nagaon and other places.

The exhibition was inaugurated with a ribbon-cutting ceremony and lighting of the ceremonial lamp by senior community members Geeta Devi Agarwal (Pansari) and Pushpa Devi Kejriwal.

Speaking on the occasion, Priyanka Beriwal, president of the Hojai branch of the All India Marwari Mahila Sammelan, said the organisation regularly conducts such programmes to strengthen

the organisation while promoting women's entrepreneurship and economic empowerment.

She was joined by secretary Rekha More, treasurer Mrudul Agarwal, project coordinator Jyoti Sureka, Pratibha Rathi and other members of the organisation.

The organisers said the exhibition provides women with a platform to market their products, become financially independent and interact with fellow entrepreneurs by sharing experiences and ideas.

Priyanka Beriwal also highlighted the social initiatives being undertaken by the Sammelan and thanked supporters and well-wishers for their continued cooperation in making the event a success.

The organisers felicitated several individuals for their contributions and support towards the successful conduct of the exhibition.

Gaurav Gogoi attacks BJP over flood response at Morigaon rally



HT Correspondent

MORIGAON, July 26: Congress MP Gaurav Gogoi on Sunday launched the party's campaign for the forthcoming by-election in Morigaon, using the occasion to criticise the BJP-led governments at the Centre and in Assam over their handling of the recent floods. Addressing a public rally at Bihutoli Ground, Gogoi alleged that the state government had failed to secure a special relief package for flood-affected people despite the extensive damage caused by the disaster.

He also claimed that the government had not deployed adequate personnel from the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) or sufficient defence teams to carry out timely rescue operations during the floods.

Earlier, Gogoi was accorded a warm reception by leaders and workers of the Morigaon District Congress Committee upon his arrival at the rally venue.

The meeting marked the Congress party's formal campaign for the upcoming by-election, with party leaders expressing confidence of strengthening public support in the constituency.

Pragati Samaj plans year-long Diamond Jubilee celebrations

Arogya Mitra camp trains rural youth in basic healthcare

HT Correspondent

JORHAT, July 26: Pragati Samaj, a socio-cultural organisation based at Cholahdhora in Jorhat, has drawn up an extensive year-long programme to celebrate its Diamond Jubilee, alongside the Platinum Jubilee of its children's wing, Moina Parijat.

A meeting held at the Pragati Samaj auditorium on Sunday finalised the celebrations, which will begin on August 2 with a day-long workshop for children organised by Moina Parijat and conclude with a three-day valedictory programme on June 4, 2027.

A 25-member Celebration Committee was constituted to oversee the observance, with Dr Debajit Bhattacharyya as president, Saumitra Pujari as working president, Bidyut Khatoniar as secretary, Upendra Nath Sharma and Mrudula Baruah as joint secretaries and Ajoy Sharma as treasurer.

The year-long celebrations will feature the publication of a commemorative souvenir, theatrical performances by members of Pragati Samaj and its women's wing, Mahila Sora, art and cultural competitions for children, an interaction programme involving former and present members of Moina Parijat, a district-level group song competition, a gathering of women's organisations and discussions on the origins of the women's movement in Assam.

The concluding programme in June 2027 will include the felicitation of individuals who have contributed to the

development of Cholahdhora, the release of the souvenir, cultural performances and an open session.

Other proposed activities include organising a fete to enable local entrepreneurs to exhibit and sell their products, along with cultural evenings throughout the celebration period. During the meeting, members also proposed undertaking a beautification project for the historic Cholahdhora Pukhuri with support from the local MLA or the district administration.

Several speakers stressed the need to revive Moina Parijat, observing that children's participation had declined over the years because of increasing engagement in academic and extracurricular activities.

Former members shared their experiences and underlined the importance of the institution in fostering social interaction and community bonding among children.

Suggestions were offered by Dipti Sharma, Garima Pujari, Dr Bichitra Borthakur, Dr Prasanta Phukan, Prabir Sharma, Bikash Dutta, Saumitra Pujari and Rudra Majindar Barooah.

Messages of support were received from Jorhat Development Authority Chairman Prasanta Goswami, Teok MLA Bikash Saikia and Jorhat MLA Hitendra Nath Goswami, all of whom assured the organisers of their cooperation for the successful conduct of the jubilee celebrations.

HT Correspondent

HAFLONG, July 26: A four-day Arogya Mitra Training Camp is underway at Gadeian Razi, Keshav Kunj, Keshav Smarak Nyas in Haflong to equip rural youth with essential healthcare knowledge and practical skills for serving communities in remote areas of Dima Hasao.

The camp, being held from July 24 to 27, has brought together young participants, including boys and girls, from Hrangajao, Ditekchera and Miyungkro villages.

The training programme features sessions by medical professionals and healthcare practitioners on various aspects of community health and emergency care.

Among the resource persons are Dr Nomita Nunisa, Senior Medical and Health Officer (Pathologist), Haflong Civil Hospital; Dr Parikshit Barman, Senior Medical and Health Officer and Medical Superintendent; Dr Sandip Nath, Medical Officer (Ayurveda); Nirmal Singh, Primary Health and Wellness Practitioner and District Secretary of the Indian Red



Cross Society, Dima Hasao; Dr Attale Jeme, dental surgeon and pharmacist Ahung Nriame. Addressing the participants, Dr Parikshit Barman highlighted the importance of effective communication and compassionate interaction in patient care.

Dr Nomita Nunisa spoke on blood composition, blood groups and the importance of blood donation, while explaining the role of diagnostic in-

vestigations in disease management.

Dr Sandip Nath discussed the role of Ayurveda in preventive and holistic healthcare, and Dr Attale Jeme stressed the importance of oral hygiene and dental health. Pharmacist Ahung Nriame conducted sessions on the safe dispensing and rational use of medicines.

Nirmal Singh delivered practical training on first aid, primary health-

care, nutrition, sanitation and the management of common illnesses and injuries.

He also demonstrated cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) techniques and encouraged participants to spread awareness about government health schemes, promote immunisation and coordinate with ASHA workers to improve healthcare delivery in their villages.

The programme was attended by organisers Samtulak Jeme, Lunglakambe Jeme, Lallan Sharma, Logebe Nriame, Kamali Mithi and Radha Krishnan, Sangathan Mantri of South Assam Seva Bharti.

The organisers said the initiative aims to develop a network of trained community health volunteers capable of providing basic healthcare support in remote and inaccessible areas.

They added that the programme also supports regular free medical camps, specialist consultations, ambulance services and skill development initiatives to improve access to healthcare across Dima Hasao.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

Always read something that will make you look good if you die in the middle of it.- P. J. O'Rourke

India and BRICS summit

India is hosting the 18th BRICS Summit in New Delhi on September 12 and 13 this year which carries unusual significance in the present changing landscape of the geopolitics in the Indo-Pacific as also in other parts of the world. Most importantly, Chinese President Xi Jinping and the Russian President Vladimir Putin are expected to attend apart from the heads of the other member nations. BRICS originally started with Brazil, Russia, India and China, then South Africa joined. Now BRICS have eleven members. Apart from the big five, other countries include Indonesia, Egypt, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Ethiopia and UAE. Among the members right now, Iran is involved in a war with the USA and Israel while Russia has been at war with Ukraine for more than five years. Though India has put the official theme as Building for Resilience, Innovation, Cooperation and Sustainability, the global affairs including the war in West Asia is certainly going to dominate. On this Gulf war issue, the victim Iran has differences with UAE and Saudi Arabia. India's efforts will contain the outburst of the differences on West Asian war and focus more on the developmental issues including strengthening of local currency trade, AI governance and possibilities of furthering economic collaboration between the member nations.

India as a leading economically strong developing nation is playing a major role in reorienting the nature of financial and technical collaboration between the BRICS members. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) is leading technical coordination for the implementation of BRICS Pay and the interoperability of central bank digital currencies like the e-rupee and digital yuan.. Further, India is championing the cause of digital infrastructure by using platforms like UPI as a model. Indian officials are expected to take important part in discussions on ethical AI governance and knowledge sharing. India is championing Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) by using platforms like India's Unified Payments Interface (UPI) as a model. The bloc is also prioritizing the development of ethical AI governance and knowledge sharing. Energy transition is one key area which India will focus on. Many members of BRICS are big oil producers. So the discussions will have relevance in the context of the current problems being faced by the oil importing nations including India.

While, the economic and energy issues will form the part of the developmental agenda at the BRICS Summit, the members will closely follow the political message which the BRICS Summit hosted by India gives to the other members. Most of the members have misgivings about the pro-US tilt of the Indian Prime Minister after coming to power in 2014. But this was more evident in Trump years, especially after he took over power for the second time on January 20, 2025.

After the Deluge: The unseen crisis of post-flood Assam

While public attention during Assam's annual monsoon typically focuses on swirling waters, inundated villages, dramatic rescue operations, and overcrowded relief camps, the most devastating phase of the disaster often begins quietly after the deluge subsides. The immediate media coverage captures a crucial snapshot of physical destruction, yet it routinely obscures the protracted, silent crisis that unfolds when the floodwaters retreat. Once the rivers return to their channels, thousands of displaced families are left to navigate an environment rendered nearly unlivable. Dwellings remain blanketed under thick layers of silt and toxic mud, traditional drinking water sources are contaminated, agricultural lands lie ruined under heavy sand deposits, key transportation networks stand severed, and local health systems are stretched to the point of structural collapse. In regions like Upper Assam—where districts such as Sivasagar, Charaideo, and Jorhat recently experienced rapid inundation caused by cloudbursts and relentless rainfall in neighboring hill states—rivers like the Dikhow, Disang, Jaji, and Bhogdoi breached embankments within hours. These sudden flash

DEGREE OF THOUGHT

By: Dipak Kurmi

surges reflect a dramatic shift driven by climate change, replacing gradual seasonal flooding with unpredictable, high-velocity deluges. However, natural precipitation alone does not account for this escalating human tragedy. Decades of upstream deforestation, unabated encroachment upon natural wetlands and drainage channels, heavy riverbed siltation, unscientific embankment construction, and unplanned urban expansion have collectively converted seasonal river overflows into recurring, structural humanitarian emergencies.

The transition from emergency rescue to the post-flood period marks the emergence of an acute public health and sanitation crisis that is frequently underestimated by disaster management frameworks. As floodwaters recede, open wells, shallow tube wells, and community ponds become heavily polluted by raw sewage, decomposing animal carcasses, and rotting organic waste. Deprived of alternative water supplies, rural households are routinely forced to consume unsafe water, creating ideal conditions for explosive outbreaks of water-borne pathogens such as cholera, dysentery, typhoid, and various diarrheal illnesses. Vulnerable demographics, particularly young children, pregnant women, and elderly individuals with compromised immunity, bear the heaviest



burden of these infections. Simultaneously, vast stretches of stagnant water left in low-lying depressions become fertile breeding grounds for mosquitoes, triggering sharp surges in vector-borne diseases including malaria,

dengue, and Japanese Encephalitis, all of which historically pose severe public health threats across the Brahmaputra valley. Continuous contact with contaminated sludge also causes widespread fungal skin infections, acute conjunctivitis, and leptospirosis among survivors clearing debris. This health emergency is compounded by the widespread disruption of rural health infrastructure; primary health centers and district hospitals are often submerged, valuable medical equipment is ruined, and road washouts prevent medical personnel and essential pharmaceuticals from reaching isolated hamlets. The collapse of electrical grids further impairs vaccine cold chains and diagnostic services, while damaged sanitation facilities force communities into open defecation, accelerating the cycle of environmental contamination.

The socio-economic repercussions of post-flood inundation extend far beyond immediate physical damage, inflicting deep structural injuries on the rural economy that linger for years after public interest has faded. Agriculture, the primary economic pillar of rural Assam, suffers catastrophic setbacks when standing paddy crops are destroyed and fertile topsoil is covered by thick layers of infertile river sand, rendering agricultural plots unpro-

ductive for multiple cultivation cycles. The simultaneous loss of livestock—including cattle, goats, pigs, and poultry—strips farming households of vital financial buffers and secondary income streams. Rural aquaculture similarly faces severe disruption as commercial fish ponds overflow, allowing stock to escape into open river channels. Small township enterprises, weekly rural markets, and local supply chains founder under the combined weight of road damage and reduced purchasing power. Burdened by outstanding agricultural credit and microfinance obligations, many working-age individuals are forced into distress migration toward urban industrial centers and distant states in search of casual labor. Beyond financial ruin, the social fabric endures profound disruption as schools remain closed for months to serve as temporary relief shelters or undergo extensive structural repairs. The resulting loss of instructional time, combined with the destruction of educational materials and uniforms, increases student dropout rates and interrupts youth development. Furthermore, the psychological toll of watching homes, livestock, and lifelong savings vanish within hours leaves enduring emotional scars, manifesting as chronic anxiety and depression among survivors who face the prospect of rebuilding their lives repeatedly without adequate institutional support.

Addressing the crisis of post-flood recovery in Assam requires moving away from reactive emergency relief toward a permanent, scientifically grounded framework of risk reduction

and climate adaptation. Sustainable flood mitigation cannot be confined to the monsoon months or limited to the physical construction of earthen embankments, which frequently fail under high hydraulic pressure. Instead, state planning must emphasize year-round river management, including ecologically sound river dredging where hydrologically viable, the aggressive restoration of natural wetlands and floodplains to absorb excess discharge, and strict enforcement of zoning regulations to halt encroachment on natural drainage corridors. Forest conservation in upstream catchment areas is equally vital, as healthy mountain ecosystems moderate surface runoff and reduce downstream sediment loads. Concurrently, leveraging advanced satellite imagery, hydrological modeling, and digital communication networks can establish localized early warning systems that provide vulnerable riverside communities with actionable advance notice. Following flood events, state agencies must institutionalize the rapid deployment of mobile medical vans, veterinary relief units, water purification facilities, and targeted sanitation crews to prevent disease outbreaks. Agricultural recovery requires ensuring that affected farmers receive rapid access to flood-resistant seed varieties, subsidized fertilizers, financial credit relief, and direct compensation through transparent administrative mechanisms. Prioritizing the rapid repair of educational institutions and health centers is essential to maintaining basic social stability in affected districts.

Ultimately, while the geographic reality of the Brahmaputra and Barak river basins makes seasonal flooding an inescapable feature of life in Assam, the severe human suffering that characterizes the post-flood phase is not inevitable. The recurring cycle of disease, economic ruin, and social displacement represents a policy challenge that can be mitigated through sustained political willpower, environmental stewardship, and institutional accountability. Rebuilding damaged roads and earthen dikes is necessary, but true disaster resilience requires empowering local communities, restoring natural ecosystems, and ensuring that post-flood rehabilitation receives the same urgency and financial commitment as emergency rescue operations. By transitioning from short-term crisis response to long-term structural adaptation, Assam can protect its vulnerable populations from the devastating secondary impacts of climate-induced disasters. (the writer can be reached at dipakkurmipltd@gmail.com)

Started with NEET, ended with politics!



By: Dr Priyanka Saurabh

The greatest strength of democracy is that the public has the right to question the government. This right keeps democracy alive. When shortcomings are discovered in a government system, when irregularities occur in an examination, when the future of youth is questioned, protest is not only natural but also necessary. But this very power of democracy begins to weaken when the focus of a real issue gradually shifts to political competition, ideological polarization, and power struggles. Then the original question is left behind, and the calculus of political gains and losses takes the forefront.

The alleged paper leak and other irregularities in the NEET exam shocked the entire nation. Millions of students worked hard for years, and families spent beyond their financial means to prepare their children for competitive exams. However, when the fairness of the examination process was questioned, the confidence of students and parents naturally wavered. In such a situation, it is entirely justified to demand answers from the government, demand strict action against the culprits, and demand reforms to the examination system. The primary responsibility of any democratic government is to ensure transparency and accountability in matters concerning the future of its citizens, especially the youth.

It is equally true that any paper leak cannot be dismissed as merely an administrative lapse. This is not merely the theft of a question paper, but a betrayal of millions of dreams. Fair investigations and swift punishment of individuals, gangs, or officials involved in such crimes are essential. If there are shortcomings in the system, it is the government's responsibility to address them. Making the examination system more technologically secure, increasing digital monitoring, establishing accountability, and ensuring timely justice are no longer just options, but a ne-

cessity. But another aspect of this entire incident also emerged. As the protests grew, political debates increasingly overtook the core issue in many places. Various political parties, social organizations, and ideological groups began presenting the issue from their own perspectives. The question of student welfare gradually became a medium for political accusations and counter-accusations. Some platforms criticized government policies, while others questioned the entire democratic structure. At times, even the limits of language were violated. This naturally raises the question: was the movement's goal to secure justice for students or to gain political advantage?

The role of the opposition is crucial in a democracy. The opposition questions the government, reviews policies, and brings the public's voice to Parliament and the streets. Similarly, the ruling party's responsibility is not only to list its achievements but also to answer the public's concerns. Democracy remains healthy when both parties respect their constitutional roles. However, if every issue is weighed solely on the scale of political gains and losses, the common citizen suffers the most.

India's democracy has gone through many difficult periods. After independence, the country witnessed political instability and periods like the Emergency, when civil liberties were severely restricted. That history also taught us that democracy is protected not only by the Constitution but also by informed citizens. Today, the situation is different. Social media has given every citizen a platform to express their views. Governments are criticized more openly than ever before. This is a testament to the strength of democracy. However, it is equally important to maintain the distinction between freedom of expression and indecency. Dissent is a democratic right, but personal insults, hatred, and propaganda weaken any healthy society.

Today, social media has simplified communication as much as it has complicated it. Unverified information, half-baked videos, emotional posts, and political propaganda reach millions of people within minutes. As a result, issues are often decided based more on emotions than facts. During the NEET controversy, a wide variety of information and claims emerged. At such times, the responsibility of citizens, the media, and political parties—all of them—increases to express their views based only on verified facts.

There are varying opinions in the country about Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership. His supporters consider his achievements to include infrastructure expansion, digital governance, India's growing role on international platforms, and numerous welfare schemes. His critics, meanwhile, raise serious questions about unemployment, inflation, social tensions, and some administrative decisions. The maturity of democracy lies in ensuring that both sides have the right to express their views. A leader should be judged not solely by his popularity, but by his decisions, results, and accountability.

It must also be kept in mind that elections are not the final stage of democracy, but rather a crucial one. The public chooses from available options based on their discretion. This does not mean that the elected government is above criticism. Similarly, it is not appropriate to dismiss every government decision without supporting it with facts. The balance of democracy lies in acknowledging achievements while also clearly questioning shortcomings.

The NEET controversy has exposed a deeper problem in the education system. Competitive exams in India are no longer just tests, but have become the foundation of the social and economic aspirations of millions of families. In such a scenario, any irregularity becomes not just an administrative failure but a crisis of social trust.

Therefore, it is essential to transform the examination system into an opportunity for institutional reform rather than making it a permanent subject of political debate.

Political parties should also introspect. If a student movement is led through political platforms, the public will naturally question its impartiality. Similarly, if the government simply dismisses opposition criticism as political, public trust will also diminish. The solution lies not in confrontation, but in dialogue. In a democracy, dialogue is the only means by which even disagreement can be channeled positively.

In a vast democracy like India, it is the responsibility of every citizen to support or oppose any movement based on facts. Spreading hatred against any religion, caste, language, or region is contrary to the spirit of any democratic movement. If a genuine issue is used as a means of social division, it ultimately harms the very purpose for which the movement was started. The need today is not just to fix blame, but to secure the future. The use of modern technology in the examination system, improved standards for question paper security, transparent investigations, timely justice, strict punishment for those guilty, and effective support systems for students' mental health—all these reforms are the need of the hour. If implemented seriously, such incidents can be prevented in the future.

The success of democracy isn't measured solely by changes in power. Its true test is the trust citizens have in their institutions. As important as government accountability is, so too is public responsibility. Protest is necessary, but its purpose should be solutions, not anarchy. Criticism is essential, but it should be based on facts, not prejudice. Support is also essential, but it should be based on rational belief, not blind imitation.

Ultimately, the question isn't just about NEET. It's about the system on which the future of millions of our country's youth depends. It's also about democracy, which gives every citizen the right to express their views. If we succeed in maintaining the dignity of both, that will be the greatest achievement of this entire controversy. Students should get justice, the guilty should be punished, institutions should be strengthened, and political parties should put student interests above party interests—this is the hallmark of any sensitive democracy. Because democracy is strongest when the ultimate goal of every struggle is not power, but the trust of society and the future of the nation. (Dr. Priyanka Saurabh, PhD (Political Science), is a poet and social thinker.)

Assam's Flood crisis: The search for a permanent solution

Floods are not a new phenomenon in the geographical and socio-economic landscape of Assam. However, over the past few decades—particularly in the twenty-first century—their frequency, severity and capacity for destruction have scaled unprecedented heights. What was once predominantly viewed as a natural calamity has increasingly turned into the grim consequence of unplanned human intervention and ecological degradation. Consequently, year after year, Assam's economy, agriculture, connectivity, education and overall public life suffer irreparable damage. The unique geographic positioning of the Brahmaputra and Barak valleys, relentless torrential rainfall in the surrounding hills, global climate change and flawed water resource management in neighboring states have collectively rendered Assam's flood crisis deeply complex and devastating.

This aggravating reality is currently on full display in Upper Assam, where floods have taken a horrific turn. Rivers like the Disang, Dikhow, Jhanji, Bhogdoi, Namdang, Demow and Darika have overflowed, submerging vast swaths of land within moments across Sivasagar, Charaideo, Jorhat and Golaghat districts, as well as the Nazira sub-district. Human lives have been tragically lost, particularly in Sivasagar and Nazira. Countless livestock have perished and vast expanses of agricultural land remain underwater, pushing farmers into acute distress. Numerous families have lost their hard-earned assets overnight, forced to take shelter under tarpaulin sheets along roadsides and embankments in harrowing conditions.

To attribute this catastrophe solely to localised rainfall in Assam would be a distortion of facts. Sudden cloudbursts and heavy downpours in the mountainous terrain of neighboring Nagaland and Arunachal Pradesh, coupled with the unannounced release of massive volumes of water from upstream hydroelectric projects and reservoirs, trigger devas-

tating flash floods downstream in Assam. This clearly demonstrates that inadequate river management and a lack of inter-state coordination contribute far more to the crisis than natural factors alone. This relentless cycle of flooding and riverbank erosion has fractured the state's economic backbone. As an agrarian economy, Assam suffers severe blows when floodwaters destroy standing paddy crops, vegetables and other produce, effectively decimating the rural economy.

Furthermore, bank erosion swallows homes and agricultural land, uprooting thousands of people and turning them into environmental refugees in their own land. Viewed through this lens, the flood crisis is no longer merely a disaster—it has become a primary driver of poverty, unemployment and economic backwardness in Assam.

Addressing this issue requires abandoning piecemeal, temporary fixes in favor of a visionary, long-term and scientifically sound blueprint. To manage Assam's river systems holistically, the Central Government must lead the establishment of a robust River Basin Authority encompassing Assam, Nagaland, Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya and if necessary, Bhutan. Legally binding protocols must be established regarding the release of water from upstream dams. Upstream authorities should be mandated to give a 24-to-48-hour advance notice to the Assam government and local district administrations before discharging water, allowing local authorities to evacuate vulnerable populations in time.

Additionally, decades of silt, sand and boulder accumulation from the hills have severely reduced the water-carrying capacity of Assam's rivers. Regular and scientific dredging of the Brahmaputra and its tributaries—such as the Dikhow, Disang, Namdang, Bhogdoi and Dhanisiri—is imperative. Restoring the natural depth and flow of these rivers will allow them to retain excess water, significantly mitigating flood intensity.

Furthermore, most embankments in Assam were built with soil during the 1960s and 1970s and are now dilapidated and out-

dated. To withstand modern hydraulic pressure, new-age embankments must be constructed using advanced technology, such as geobags, boulder pitching and concrete. These structures should also be widened to double as durable road networks, providing emergency shelter and transport corridors during disasters.

Assam is also home to numerous wetlands, oxbow lakes (beels) and natural water bodies, particularly across districts like Sivasagar, Charaideo, Jorhat and Golaghat. Many of these have shrunk due to siltation or illegal encroachments. Re-excavating and freeing these wetlands from encroachments will allow them to act as natural sponges, absorbing mountain runoff and easing pressure on primary rivers.

Modern technology must also be leveraged. Utilising satellite imagery, Geographic Information Systems (GIS), drone technology and hydrological modeling will enable precise monitoring. AI-driven early warning systems can predict floods days in advance, drastically minimizing the loss of life and property. On the agricultural front, climate-resilient crop varieties must be promoted alongside post-flood farming strategies, aquaculture and poultry farming. In rural housing, traditional elevated stilt houses (chang ghar) should be modernised and popularized through contemporary architectural engineering.

Finally, Assam's flood and erosion problem cannot continue to be treated merely as a localised state issue. Given the immense annual toll it takes on national assets and the economy, it must officially be declared a National Problem. Such a designation would unlock dedicated central funding, international technical expertise and large-scale central infrastructure projects.

The recent devastation in Upper Assam is a stark wake-up call. Floods here are not just natural disasters; they are exacerbated by haphazard urbanization, poor river management and a lack of systemic planning. Providing relief material and rations is an incomplete response. What Assam needs is a scientific roadmap backed by firm political resolve. By fostering inter-state cooperation, scientifically dredging rivers and building modern embankments, Assam can move from reactive relief to proactive prevention—securing the lives of millions and building a resilient future.



DEGREE OF THOUGHT

By: Lalit Nath

India's Nutrition report card: Progress Amid persistent challenges

By: Shoba Suri

India's nutrition journey is one of remarkable progress tempered by persistent and evolving challenges. Over the past decade, sustained investments in maternal and child health, social protection, sanitation, and nutrition-specific interventions have translated into measurable improvements in several key indicators. The release of the Global Nutrition Report (GNR) 2026 alongside the National Family Health Survey (NFHS)-6 (2023-24) provides an opportunity to assess where India stands today. Together, these reports paint a nuanced picture: the country has made significant strides in reducing child undernutrition and improving health service utilisation, yet continues to grapple with poor diet quality, persistent inequities, and a rapidly growing burden of overweight, obesity, and diet-related non-communicable diseases (NCDs). The findings underscore that India has entered a new phase of its nutrition transition, where the challenge is no longer merely ensuring food security but also achieving nutrition security through healthier diets and resilient food systems.

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The GNR 2026 reiterates India's centrality to the global nutrition agenda. Home to nearly one-sixth of the world's population, India's nutrition outcomes significantly influence global progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the World Health Assembly nutrition targets. The report recognises that India is on course to achieve the global target for reducing stunting and has made commendable progress in exclusive breastfeeding. However, it also cautions that the absolute

burden of malnutrition remains among the largest globally because of India's population size.

Assessing India's Nutrition Progress

The NFHS-6 findings validate this progress. Child stunting has declined substantially from 35.5 percent in NFHS-5 to 29.3 percent, reflecting improvements in maternal nutrition, antenatal care, institutional deliveries, immunisation coverage, sanitation, and social welfare programmes. Wasting has also declined modestly, while institutional deliveries now exceed 90 percent nationally and health insurance coverage has expanded considerably. These improvements reflect the cumulative impact of flagship initiatives such as POSHAN Abhiyaan, Mission Poshan 2.0, Ayushman Bharat, the Swachh Bharat Mission, and the strengthening of primary health-care services.

Nearly one in three Indian children remains stunted, and wasting continues to hover at around 19 percent, among the highest levels globally. Child underweight also remains widespread, signalling that improvements in health services alone are insufficient to eliminate chronic undernutrition. The persistence of these indicators reflects deep-rooted structural determinants, including poverty, food insecurity, inadequate maternal nutrition, poor sanitation in vulnerable communities, and unequal access to quality healthcare.

Beyond Calories: Improving Diet Quality

Perhaps the most concerning message emerging from NFHS-6 is the poor quality of children's diets. Only about 15 percent of children aged 6-23 months receive a minimum acceptable diet, indicating that complementary feeding practices remain grossly inadequate during the critical first 1,000 days of life. This has profound implications for cognitive development, immunity, school readiness, and future productivity. India's nutrition challenge has therefore

shifted from one of calorie insufficiency to one of dietary quality. While cereal availability has improved through food security programmes, consumption of fruits, vegetables, pulses, dairy, eggs, and other nutrient-rich foods remains inadequate for large sections of the population.

The GNR 2026 echoes this concern by highlighting that healthy diets remain unaffordable for billions globally and that improving diet quality must become the cornerstone of nutrition policy. For India, this means moving beyond a food security paradigm that prioritises staple grains towards a nutrition-sensitive food system capable of delivering diverse, safe and affordable diets. Evidence suggests the need for nutrition-sensitive agricultural diversification that increases the production, availability, and consumption of pulses, millets, fruits, vegetables, and quality protein sources, alongside targeted behaviour change communication to promote healthier diets.

India's Evolving Nutrition Challenge

At the same time, India is confronting a rapidly expanding burden of overweight, obesity, and diet-related NCDs. The nutrition transition is becoming increasingly evident as urbanisation, changing lifestyles, greater availability of ultra-processed foods, and declining physical activity reshape dietary patterns. NFHS-6 records a rising prevalence of overweight and obesity among adults, accompanied by increasing rates of hypertension and diabetes. This coexistence of persistent undernutrition with rising obesity represents the country's growing double burden of malnutrition, placing unprecedented pressure on the healthcare system.

The GNR argues that obesity should no longer be viewed as a problem of affluent societies. Instead, it has become a defining feature of low- and middle-income countries experiencing rapid di-



etary and epidemiological transitions. There is coexistence of undernutrition and overnutrition in Indian households, a manifestation of poor diet quality rather than food abundance. Addressing this challenge will require regulatory measures that improve food environments, including front-of-pack labelling, restrictions on marketing unhealthy foods to children, fiscal policies that encourage healthier diets, and greater promotion of physical activity. This coexistence of persistent undernutrition with rising obesity represents the country's growing double burden of malnutrition, placing unprecedented pressure on the healthcare system.

These disparities reinforce the importance of adopting a life-course and equity-focused approach that addresses the social determinants of health, including women's education, income security, sanitation, gender equality and access to quality public services.

An emerging dimension of India's nutrition challenge is the growing influence of climate change on food systems. The GNR 2026 places considerable emphasis on the interlinkages between climate resilience, agriculture, and nutrition. Rising temperatures, erratic rainfall, water scarcity and extreme weather events threaten agricultural productivity and increase the prices of nutrient-rich foods such as fruits, vegetables and pulses. These climate-induced shocks disproportionately affect poor households, reducing dietary diversity and increasing nutrition insecurity. Nutrition policy can therefore no longer be designed independently of agriculture, climate adaptation and environmental sustainability. Building climate-re-

silient food systems will be essential for protecting nutrition gains over the coming decades.

Towards Nutrition Security

India's policy response must therefore evolve to match this changing nutrition landscape. While programmes targeting maternal and child undernutrition remain indispensable, equal attention must now be directed towards improving diet quality, preventing obesity, strengthening nutrition-sensitive agriculture, promoting healthy food environments, and integrating nutrition objectives across health, agriculture, education, and social protection sectors. Investments in robust nutrition surveillance, digital monitoring systems, and district-level data will enable more targeted interventions, while stronger convergence across ministries can maximise impact.

For India, the path ahead lies in shifting decisively from food security to nutrition security to ensure that every individual has access not only to sufficient food, but also to diverse, safe, affordable, and sustainable diets that support healthy lives across the life course.

India's nutrition report card is therefore one of cautious optimism. The country has demonstrated that sustained political commitment and programme implementation can improve maternal and child nutrition outcomes. Yet the persistence of child undernutrition, widespread poor-quality diets, growing obesity, and widening food-system challenges indicate that the next generation of nutrition policy must be more integrated, equitable, and forward-looking. As the GNR 2026 aptly argues, achieving healthy diets for all requires transforming food systems rather than merely expanding food production. For India, the path ahead lies in shifting decisively from food security to nutrition security to ensure that every individual has access not only to sufficient food, but also to diverse, safe, affordable, and sustainable diets that support healthy lives across the life course. (Courtesy: ORF)

Advancing Brain health: How technology is transforming brain tumor treatment

By: Dr Aditya Gupta

World Brain Day, is an important occasion dedicated to raising awareness about neurological disorders and promoting brain health across all age groups. The day serves as a reminder that the brain is the command centre of the human body, influencing everything from movement and memory to emotions and decision-making. While significant progress has been made in understanding and treating neurological diseases, conditions such as brain tumors continue to pose serious health challenges, often affecting patients physically, emotionally, and socially.

Among the many disorders that impact brain health, brain tumors remain one of the most complex conditions requiring timely diagnosis and specialized treatment. Fortunately, rapid advancements in medical technology are transforming the way these tumors are managed, making treatment safer, more precise, and less invasive than ever before.

Understanding Brain Tumors

Brain tumors are abnormal growths of cells that develop within the brain or its surrounding tissues. They may be benign (non-cancerous) or malignant (cancerous). Regardless of their nature, brain tumors can significantly affect an individual's health depending on their size, location, and growth rate. Common symptoms include persistent headaches, seizures, memory problems, balance disturbances, vision changes, and alterations in behaviour or personality.

Because the brain controls virtually every function of the body, the presence of a tumor can have a profound impact on both physical and cognitive well-being.

The Impact of Brain Tumors

Brain tumors can affect a person's quality of life in multiple ways. They may impair memory, concentration, speech, mobility, and other neurological functions while also causing considerable emotional and psychological distress. As a tumor grows, it can exert pressure on surrounding brain tissue, disrupting normal brain activity and potentially causing irreversible damage.

If left untreated, brain tumors may lead to severe neurological



deficits and long-term disability, limiting an individual's ability to perform everyday activities and maintain independence.

The Evolution of Brain Tumor Treatment

For decades, conventional open surgery has been the cornerstone of brain tumor treatment. These procedures involve creating an opening in the skull to access and remove the tumor. While highly effective in many situations, open surgery is associated with certain risks, including infection, bleeding, damage to healthy brain tissue, and prolonged recovery periods that may require extensive rehabilitation.

Today, remarkable advancements in medical technology have transformed the way brain tumors are diagnosed and treated. Innovations such as endoscopic neurosurgery, navigation-guided surgery, and non-invasive CyberKnife radiosurgery are helping neurosurgeons achieve better precision while reducing treatment-related complications.

Endoscopic Brain Tumor Surgery

Endoscopic brain surgery is a minimally invasive technique that enables neurosurgeons to access and treat tumors located deep within the brain, often through small openings or natural pathways such as the nasal cavity.

The procedure utilizes a thin instrument known as an endoscope, equipped with a miniature camera that provides highly detailed visualisation of the surgical field. Through one or two small incisions in the skull—or, in selected cases, through the nose—the endo-

scope transmits real-time images that guide the surgeon throughout the procedure.

The primary objective is to remove the tumor while preserving healthy brain tissue. The exceptional visual clarity offered by endoscopic systems has significantly enhanced the accuracy and safety of brain tumor surgery.

Endoscopic approaches are particularly useful in the management of pituitary tumors, skull-base tumors, and selected deep-seated lesions. In cases where complete tumor removal is not feasible, endoscopic surgery can be combined with robotic CyberKnife radiosurgery to treat residual disease and improve outcomes.

Navigation-Guided Neurosurgery

Navigation-guided surgery has revolutionized modern neurosurgery by bringing GPS-like precision into the operating room.

Using advanced imaging scans and specialized tracking technology, surgeons can create a highly detailed three-dimensional virtual model of the patient's anatomy. This digital roadmap allows real-time guidance during surgery, helping neurosurgeons navigate complex structures with exceptional accuracy.

Much like GPS transformed geographic navigation, image-guided technology has fundamentally changed the practice of neurosurgery by enhancing precision, improving safety, and reducing the risk of injury to critical neurological structures.

Non-Invasive CyberKnife Radiosurgery

Among the most significant

technological advances in brain tumor treatment is the CyberKnife System, a non-invasive robotic radiosurgery platform that offers an alternative to conventional open surgery for selected patients.

CyberKnife combines advanced robotics, sophisticated imaging technology, and computer-controlled radiation delivery to precisely target tumors with high-dose radiation while minimizing exposure to surrounding healthy tissue.

Advantages of CyberKnife Treatment

Non-Invasive Approach: CyberKnife treatment does not require surgical incisions or general anesthesia, significantly reducing many of the risks associated with traditional surgery.

Exceptional Precision: The system continuously tracks tumor movement through real-time imaging and automatically adjusts radiation delivery. This pinpoint accuracy helps protect healthy brain tissue and enhances treatment effectiveness.

Faster Recovery: Most patients experience minimal interruption to their daily routine and can return to normal activities within a short period, unlike the extended recovery often associated with open surgery.

Versatility: CyberKnife can be used to treat both benign and malignant brain tumors, as well as tumors located in other parts of the body, making it an important component of modern cancer care.

A Future Driven by Innovation

On World Brain Day, it is important to recognize that protecting brain health requires not only awareness and early diagnosis but also access to advanced treatment options. Brain tumors remain a significant challenge, but technological innovations are changing the outlook for patients across the world.

From endoscopic and navigation-guided neurosurgery to highly precise CyberKnife radiosurgery, modern treatment approaches are enabling doctors to treat complex brain tumors with greater accuracy and fewer complications. As we mark World Brain Day 2026, let us reaffirm our commitment to advancing brain health through innovation, education, and equitable access to care, ensuring that patients receive the best possible chance at a healthier and more fulfilling life.

World IVF Day 2026: Fertility cannot wait- Why timely action matters more than ever

By: Dr Mannan Gupta

For millions of young Indians today, life follows a familiar trajectory—higher education, career growth, financial stability, and then starting a family. While this shift reflects changing aspirations and greater opportunities, our biology has not evolved at the same pace. Fertility remains governed by age, and delaying parenthood without understanding its biological implications is becoming one of the biggest reproductive health challenges of our time.

As we observe World IVF Day on July 25, the conversation around fertility must move beyond celebrating medical breakthroughs to encouraging awareness, early intervention, and informed choices. IVF has undoubtedly transformed reproductive medicine, but the larger message is that couples should not wait until IVF becomes their only option.

According to global estimates, nearly one in six couples experience infertility during their reproductive years. India is witnessing a steady rise in fertility-related concerns, driven by delayed marriages, sedentary lifestyles, obesity, diabetes, stress, environmental factors, polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS), endometriosis, and declining reproductive health. Despite this growing burden, infertility continues to be viewed through the lens of stigma rather than science.

One of the most common misconceptions is that infertility is primarily a woman's problem. Medical evidence tells a different story. Male factors contribute to nearly half of all infertility cases, either independently or in combination with female factors. Yet, in many households, women continue to shoulder the emotional burden, often undergoing repeated investigations while the male partner delays even a basic fertility assessment. Fertility is a shared responsibility, and evaluation should always involve both partners from the outset.

Another widespread myth is that IVF is recommended to every couple struggling to conceive. In reality, IVF is only one of several evidence-based fertility treatments. Many couples conceive successfully with lifestyle changes, medications, ovulation induction, treatment of hormonal disorders, minimally invasive surgeries, or intrauterine insemination (IUI). IVF is advised only after a com-



prehensive clinical evaluation, taking into account the woman's age, ovarian reserve, sperm quality, duration of infertility, and previous treatment history.

The most important factor that couples often underestimate is time. Female fertility begins to decline gradually after the age of 30 and more rapidly after 35, primarily because both the number and quality of eggs reduce with age. While advances in reproductive medicine have significantly improved success rates, medical science cannot completely reverse the natural ageing process of the ovaries. This is why women over the age of 35 should seek fertility evaluation after six months of unsuccessful attempts to conceive, while younger couples should consult a specialist after one year.

The good news is that fertility care today is more advanced than ever before. Modern IVF is no longer the physically demanding and uncertain treatment it was decades ago. Innovations such as advanced embryo culture systems, time-lapse embryo monitoring, highly efficient embryo freezing techniques, improved laboratory conditions, minimally invasive egg retrieval procedures, and genetic testing in selected medical situations have made treatment safer and more effective. Importantly, fertility treatment is increasingly personalised, ensuring that each couple receives a protocol tailored to their unique medical profile rather than a one-size-fits-all approach.

Equally significant is the growing role of fertility preservation. Many women today choose to delay pregnancy due to education, career aspirations, or personal circumstances. Others may require cancer treatment or have medical conditions that threaten future fertility. Egg and embryo freezing now offer scientifically validated options that provide greater repro-

ductive flexibility, although these decisions should always be made after detailed medical counselling.

However, successful fertility treatment is not just about technology. Emotional wellbeing is an equally important pillar of care. Couples undergoing fertility treatment often experience anxiety, self-doubt, financial stress, and emotional exhaustion. Compassionate counselling, psychological support, and open communication between clinicians and patients are essential to improving not only treatment outcomes but also the overall patient experience.

As clinicians, we also have a responsibility to promote fertility awareness before infertility develops. Simple lifestyle measures—including maintaining a healthy weight, exercising regularly, managing chronic illnesses, avoiding tobacco and excessive alcohol consumption, reducing stress, and seeking timely medical advice for menstrual irregularities or reproductive health concerns—can positively influence fertility and improve pregnancy outcomes.

World IVF Day is not merely a celebration of scientific innovation. It is a reminder that infertility is a medical condition—not a personal failure, a social taboo, or a reason for shame. Couples deserve empathy instead of judgment, scientific guidance instead of myths, and timely medical care instead of delayed reassurance.

The dream of parenthood has become achievable for millions because of advances in reproductive medicine. But the greatest success of fertility care will not be measured only by the number of IVF pregnancies. It will be measured by how effectively we educate people to understand their fertility, seek help without hesitation, and make informed reproductive choices before time becomes the biggest obstacle.

10 killed after Typhoon Noul makes landfall in southern China



BEIJING, July 26: Ten people were killed in rain-triggered floods in China as Typhoon Noul made landfall early Sunday in the southern province of Guangdong.

Noul, the 12th and the strongest typhoon to hit China so far this year, made landfall at Huizhou city in Guangdong around 3:50 am, bringing gale-force winds and heavy rain to large parts of the region.

Rain-triggered flash floods

killed 10 in China's Gansu scenic area, state-run Xinhua news agency reported.

China's National Commission for Disaster Prevention, Reduction and Relief activated a Level-IV national disaster relief emergency response for Guangdong.

Level-IV is the least severe tier in the four-tier emergency response system. Level I is the most critical/severe.

High-speed rail services and

flights across Guangdong province were cancelled on Sunday after Typhoon Noul made landfall in the province, bringing heavy rainfall to large parts of southern China.

The National Meteorological Centre issued its first red alert for a typhoon this year on Saturday evening. The alert was downgraded to orange and later to yellow on Sunday as Typhoon Noul weakened. Red is the highest alert in China's four-tier, colour-coded warning system, in which blue is the lowest level.

The typhoon packed winds of up to 162 kilometres per hour, slightly stronger than Typhoon Bavi, which struck eastern and northeastern China about two weeks ago, the Hong Kong-based South China Morning Post reported.

A working team has been dispatched to the affected areas to assess the situation and assist local authorities in relocating and resettling residents, besides ensuring their basic living needs. (AP)

Appalled and horrified that Nirav Modi still in UK, says shadow minister Priti Patel

'I had a hell of a challenge getting them (India) to sign off on receiving failed asylum seekers'

LONDON, July 26: Priti Patel, the British Indian minister who signed off on Nirav Modi's extradition order to India as home secretary in April 2021 after a prima facie case was established in court, has said she is "appalled and horrified" that he is still in the UK.

Patel, shadow foreign secretary on the Conservative Opposition benches, told 'The Daily Telegraph' podcast in an episode to be released next week that the Indian authorities were "hugely angry" over Britain's failure to extradite the jeweller wanted for one of the country's biggest banking frauds. 'The Diamond King' four-part podcast series traces the newspaper's discovery of the fugitive diamond merchant hiding out in a luxury London flat leading to his eventual arrest by Scotland Yard in March 2019. "If our system were judicious



and doing the right thing, rather than tying itself up in process and excuses, he should not be in this country," Patel is quoted as saying. "I'm actually pretty appalled and horrified that he's still here, and I have to say, I suspect that really makes the India government feel quite demoralised about even working with us," she said.

The 55-year-old jeweller remains in a London prison in connection

with a USD 2 billion Punjab National Bank (PNB) fraud and money laundering case. He exhausted his legal options in the UK and reportedly has also lost a last-ditch plea at the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) in France, with his extradition seen as imminent.

Patel said that as home secretary, during the Tory-led government between 2019 and 2022, the case complicated matters for her as

India "would really push back" on taking visa overstayers.

"I had a hell of a challenge getting them [India] to sign off on receiving failed asylum seekers... and I'm convinced it's because we had this high-profile case [of Nirav Modi] and we had another high-profile case at the time and until they [India] saw action and movement on those, guess what, they had some leverage over us, which was terribly frustrating," she said.

Nirav Modi is wanted in connection with three sets of criminal proceedings in India – the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) case of PNB fraud, the Enforcement Directorate (ED) case relating to the alleged laundering of the proceeds of that fraud and a third set of criminal proceedings involving alleged interference with evidence and witnesses in the CBI proceedings. (AP)

German police hunt suspect in Berlin Pride van-ramming attack



BERLIN, July 26: German authorities on Sunday issued a wanted notice for a fugitive suspect in the van ramming near Berlin's Pride festival that left one person dead and injured at least 16 others.

Police and prosecutors asked for help in finding the 21-year-old suspect, whom they identified as Abdul B. They said he is believed to have injured several people with a moving vehicle late Saturday evening, and that one or more people apparently then left that vehicle. Several people were also apparently stabbed, they added.

Sunday's notice warned the public to avoid "direct contact" with

the suspect, saying that he may be armed and dangerous.

Police had said earlier that they had identified a suspect who has ties to Islamic groups in the German capital.

"The suspect is known to police. He is known to us as a member of Islamic circles here in Berlin, and our search for this person is proceeding at full speed," police spokesperson Florian Nath said.

Nath added that investigators had no information on "his specific motives."

Police conducted operations in the city as they searched for the suspect. Those included a search at an apartment in Berlin's Schöneberg district in the early hours of Sunday, but police said they found no one there.

Julian Miethig, who had attended the Pride festival nearby, said he wanted to go to an after-party when he heard from a friend that "something bad happened there and there are a lot of fire trucks, a lot of emergency vehicles, ambulances."

"It's a dark day for the community," he said. (AP)

Maldives president says prepared to help facilitate revival of SAARC

MALE, July 26: Maldives is prepared to facilitate the resumption of the meetings of the SAARC stalled for last nine years, President Mohamed Muizzu said on Sunday. The South Asian Association of Regional Cooperation (SAARC) comprises India, Bangladesh, Bhutan, the Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, and Afghanistan.

Speaking at the Maldives' 61st Independence Day ceremony on Sunday, Muizzu described SAARC as an important regional organisation, according to the state-run Public Service Media (PSM News).

However, he noted that the Association has remained inactive for the past nine years. The last SAARC Summit (18th Summit) was held in Nepal's capital Kathmandu on November 26–27, 2014.

The 19th SAARC Summit, scheduled to be hosted by Pakistan in 2016, did not take place and Summit-level engagement within SAARC has remained stalled due to the prevailing lack of consensus among member states and concerns relating to cross-border terrorism, according to the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA).

The Maldives has consistently advocated the peaceful resolution of disputes and is prepared to take a leading role in promoting dialogue, he said and stressed that reviving SAARC and restarting meetings among its member states are essential for maintaining peace and stability in the region.

"The Maldives calls on all parties with differing views to come together around the table, prioritise regional development and peace, and work in a spirit of cooperation. (PTT)

Wildfires in France drive 250,000 people from their homes

LEGE-CAP-FERRET (FRANCE), July 26: A raging wildfire in southwest France forced the evacuation of 55,000 people overnight Sunday, bringing the total forced out of their homes to 220,000 in one region alone, as flames crept ever closer to the wine region city of Bordeaux.

Neighbouring Spain oversaw its own evacuation orders on the country's east coast.

Authorities in the Gironde region, where Bordeaux is located, issued overnight evacuation orders for five more localities southwest of the historic city, as shifting, gusting winds and arid conditions complicated the massive effort to limit the fire's spread.

Interior Minister Laurent Nunez said that after a "difficult" night for fire crews, "the situation remains very unfavourable".

In southwest France, gusting winds fed the flames overnight Sunday, accelerating the spread of the monster blaze that has burned out of control since midweek, the Gironde prefecture said.

"The fire again became extremely virulent again and unpredictable, generating its own winds and advancing erratically toward the Bordeaux metropolitan area,"



Nunez, the interior minister, posted on X. "It became calmer by the end of the night," he added.

The area that has burned, much of it pine forests and scrubland made tinder-dry by successive heat waves this year, has grown inexorably, expanding by Sunday morning to an estimated 42,000 hectares (162 square miles), the Gironde prefecture said. That is seven times the area of Manhattan island and four times the size of Paris.

Firefighters are battling to slow the flames' progression toward Bordeaux, both on the ground and in the air, with planes dropping water and retardants.

Soldiers have been called in to reinforce fire crews' exhausting round-the-clock efforts.

Bordeaux Mayor Thomas Cazenave described the fire as being "at the gates of the metropolitan area," having advanced to about 15 km (9 miles) from the city at its closest point.

The Gironde prefect ordered the partial closure of a major highway heading in and out of the city. A second fire burning farther south in the Landes region has also forced the evacuation of 30,000 people this week, taking the total driven out of their homes in the southwest to more than 250,000. (AP)

Brazil's government denies visas to US officials over upcoming elections

SAO PAULO, July 26: Brazil's Foreign Ministry said on Saturday it denied visas to two US State Department officials that sought to travel to the South American nation next week, in the latest political barb between the two countries.

The move became public after The Washington Post reported the Brazilian government saying the officials, Riley M Barnes, an assistant secretary, and Samuel Samson, a deputy assistant, wanted to cast doubt on the upcoming October elections in Brazil.

A spokesperson for Brazil's foreign office said Barnes and Samson requested visas on July 20 and they were denied Friday. He did not disclose the reasons behind the decision.

Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva will bid for reelection against Sen. Flávio Bolsonaro, whose family has many ties with the Trump administration.

Sen Bolsonaro and his brother, Eduardo, visited US officials in Washington, including US President Donald Trump, in late May. Shortly afterward, the Trump administration classified Brazil's biggest drug-trafficking groups — First Command Capital and Red Command — as foreign terrorist organizations, a move Lula opposes.

The Trump administration also imposed an up to 37.5 per cent tariff hike on thousands of Brazilian exports, which came into force Friday. The US government claims the South American nation has unfair competition practices and fails to stop forced labour practices — both accusations rejected by the Lula administration as an attempt to sway the election to Sen. Bolsonaro. (AP)

Iran-backed Houthis fire missiles at Saudi Arabia in response to airstrikes in Yemen

CAIRO, July 26: Yemen's Iran-backed Houthi rebels said Saturday that they fired missiles and drones at Saudi Arabia in response to Saudi airstrikes on the strategic Red Sea city of Hodeida, in an escalation over vital shipping routes in the Middle East while the United States and Iran vie for control of the Strait of Hormuz.

Brig Gen Yahya Saree, the Houthis' military spokesperson, said in a pre-recorded statement that the attack targeted facilities in the Red Sea cities of Yanbu and Jizan that belong to Aramco, the world's largest oil company.

Saudi Arabia's civil defence said alerts sounded multiple times early Saturday in both cities, but the kingdom didn't comment further.

There were no reported strikes overnight in Iran, in an apparent break from nearly two weeks of consecutive nights of US attacks.

The Houthis have said they would close the Bab el-Mandeb Strait to Saudi-linked shipping in retaliation for the kingdom's blockade on Yemen and a recent attack on the international airport in Yemen's rebel-held capital, Sanaa.

"Nothing short of ending the aggres-



sion and lifting the blockade, otherwise, it's all illusion and mirage," Mahdi al-Mashat, head of the Houthi-led Supreme Political Council governing rebel-controlled territories in Yemen, said of what it would take for the Houthis to not blockade the Bab-El-Mandeb.

That strait, at the southern tip of the Arabian Peninsula, is a vital shipping chokepoint connecting the Red Sea to the Gulf of Aden. Around 12 per cent of the world's trade, including a quarter of its container traffic, passes through the narrows.

The Houthis targeted two Saudi oil tankers in the Red Sea this week. In response, Saudi Arabia struck Hodeida, the Saudi-led coalition opposing the rebels said Saturday. The strikes late Friday hit the port and the state-run telecommunications corporation, injuring two people, said Anees al-Asbahi, a spokesperson for the Houthi-run health ministry.

The Saudi-led coalition said it didn't hit the port but struck "legitimate military targets" in Hodeida province that "were linked to threats to commercial vessels in the Red Sea." (AP)

Intern arrested in Belgium on suspicion of spying inside NATO military headquarters

BRUSSELS, July 26: A Canadian woman was arrested and accused of espionage while working as an intern in the operational headquarters of the NATO military alliance, Belgian authorities said Saturday.

Belgium's Federal Prosecutor's Office said it launched an espionage investigation after NATO's security services tipped off Belgium's military intelligence. Authorities then detained "a Canadian citizen of Chinese origin" on Friday, a day after raiding the suspect's home and workplace inside NATO's vast command centre.

"She is suspected of spying on behalf of a third country and of being a member of a criminal organisation," the prosecutors said in a statement.

The strategic headquarters of the Allied Powers, known as SHAPE, is located in the southern Belgian city of Mons near the French border. Military officials at SHAPE plan and command joint strategy, tactics and operations.

The alliance's political headquarters is in Brussels, where ambassadors from member nations meet to discuss defense spending, drone incursions and cyber threats. NATO's Cyber Security Centre is based at SHAPE.

"At this time, there is no indication that NATO or SHAPE operational readiness, command and control arrangements, or ongoing tasks have been adversely affected. SHAPE continues to fulfil its responsibilities without interruption," said Col Martin L O'Donnell, a spokesperson for SHAPE.

Both Canada and Belgium are members of the 32-nation military alliance that in 2021 labelled China a "security challenge" alongside active threats in Russia and the Middle East.

NATO leaders have said China is working to undermine global order, develop its military opacity, and run destabilising disinformation campaigns. They said that Beijing's goals and "assertive behaviour present systemic challenges to the rules-based international order and to areas relevant to alliance security".

The Chinese government denounced the statement and said its military buildup was defensive. (AP)

China starts deployment of 24/7 commercial space debris monitoring constellation

The constellation is planned in three phases, with full deployment targeted before 2030

BEIJING, July 26: China has begun deploying its first commercial satellite network aimed at monitoring space debris and conducting round-the-clock all-orbit target detection.

Space debris refers to any defunct, human-made object orbiting Earth that no longer serves a functional purpose. As the number of rocket launches, planetary missions and satellite deployments continues to rise, so does the amount of space debris.

The first of the 120-satellite Gande Constellation, equipped with an on-board artificial intelligence-assisted computer, was launched on Friday aboard a Lijian-1 commercial rocket from northwest China, in a move expected to enhance the country's space traffic management capabilities, state-run Xinhua news agency reported.

The launch comes as several countries and private companies, including the US-based SpaceX with its Starlink network and US space surveillance programmes, are expanding orbital



monitoring and satellite constellations, while China seeks to emerge as a leading global space power by 2035.

China's constellation of satellites is expected to improve collision avoidance, safeguard its expanding commercial satellite fleets, strengthen its independent space situational awareness and provide commercial services.

They also aim to enhance the country's civil and military capabilities in an increasingly congested and contested space environment.

Friday's launch filled a gap in China's commercial space-based debris monitoring capability and marks "a key step in space traffic management", Fan Wei, chief engineer of the constellation, was quoted as saying by Xinhua.

The constellation is planned in three phases, with full deployment targeted before 2030.

The first phase, designated LX630, will comprise 14 satellites. They are designed to support comprehensive monitoring and cataloguing of objects

across low-Earth orbit, Xinhua reported.

According to the developers, the on-board AI-assisted computer will enable the satellites to carry out routine surveillance, emergency response and rapid tracking missions with minimal ground intervention.

The satellites will also have orbital transfer capability, allowing close-range observation and other advanced in-orbit operations, they said.

Analysts say the commercial space debris monitoring constellation is more than a safety initiative.

Last year, China's Shenzhou-20 crewed spacecraft experienced an extended stay at the Tiangong space station after the viewpoint window of its return capsule was struck by space debris during the mission.

In 2024, the Shenzhou-17 crew carried out two spacewalks to repair the space station's core module solar arrays, which had also been damaged by orbital debris. (AP)

2 dead in Ukraine from Russian attacks, 4 more in Russian-held area hit by Ukrainian drones

KYIV, July 26: Russian ballistic missiles struck Kyiv early on Sunday, setting off fires and wounding at least three civilians, while attacks on other parts of Ukraine later killed at least two people, local officials reported.

The strikes came as Ukraine's successful drone attacks have stalled the Russian army's advances in an expanded campaign inside Russia that has been causing fuel shortages and piling pressure on Russian leader Vladimir Putin.

In Russian-occupied eastern Ukraine, Kremlin-installed authorities said a Ukrainian drone strike had killed four civilians in the city of Horlivka. According to Ivan Prikhodko, the city's Russian-appointed mayor, the city had been under fire since the early hours of Sunday.

According to Russia's defence ministry, Russian forces overnight struck down 133 Ukrainian drones over Russia, the Black Sea and Crimea, the peninsula that Moscow forcibly annexed from Ukraine in 2014. Bombs rocked Kyiv in the early hours of Sunday, with falling debris sparking a blaze in a tower block near the historic centre, according to mayor Vitali Klitschko.

Elsewhere in the capital, falling debris set fire to buildings, cars and car parks, Klitschko added. He said three people had

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

Russia's defence ministry claimed on Sunday that its latest attack on Kyiv had struck sites linked to drone production.

Also Sunday, a drone strike on Kharkiv — Ukraine's second-largest city in the east — killed one person and wounded at least six others, including two children, mayor Igor Terekhov reported.

In the southern city of Zaporizhzhia, a Russian glide bomb killed one man and wounded at least six other people, according to mayor Ivan Fedorov.

Both Kharkiv and Zaporizhzhia have been frequent targets for Russian attacks, with Zaporizhzhia — just over 20 kilometres from the front line — suffering heavy bombardment in recent months.

On Friday, a major Russian strike near Kyiv killed at least 10 people and wounded around 100 others, part of a cycle of tit-for-tat attacks that dims the potential of reaching a diplomatic end to Russia's more than 4-year-old invasion of its neighbour. (AP)

'Any evil step towards the sovereignty and integrity of India will meet with the same fate'

'Talks with Pakistan only on PoK': Rajnath slams Pak for making terrorism 'state policy'

DRAS, July 26: Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Sunday slammed Pakistan for making terrorism a "part of its state policy", and said there will be no talks with the country other than on Pakistan-Occupied-Kashmir, which is a "part of India illegally occupied" by it.

In his address at the Kargil War Memorial here, the defence minister also said that Operation Sindoor clearly demonstrated what will be the fate of those who attempt to threaten India with terrorism, "beyond their imagination".

The occasion was the 27th anniversary of Kargil Vijay Diwas, with Singh describing India's victory in the Kargil war in 1999 as "a diamond studded in the crown of Bharat Mata".

Recalling the Operation Sindoor conducted in May 2025 in response to the Pahalgam terror attack, he said the Indian armed forces dealt a severe blow to the backers and supporters of terror-



ism. "Operation Sindoor made it clear what the fate will be of those who attempt to threaten India with terrorism," Rajnath said.

Asserting that India and its armed forces have the capacity to respond to any misadventure by Pakistan in a manner "beyond their imagination", he said, "Any evil step towards the sovereignty and integrity of India will meet with the same fate."

"There will be no talks with Pakistan other than on Pakistan-Occupied-Kashmir (PoK), a part

of India which it occupied illegally," the defence minister said. Sharpening his attack on the neighbouring country, Singh said at a time when India is designing ships, Pakistan is busy engaging in terror design.

"While we are finding new ways of innovation, Pakistan is seeking new ways of infiltration. Today, India is making data centres but Pakistan is busy creating radical centres," the defence minister said.

Kargil Vijay Diwas commemorates the culmination of Operation

Vijay, the name given to India's military operation to reclaim the heights of Kargil after Pakistan's infiltration, which culminated on this day in 1999.

"The victory in Kargil wasn't just a military or diplomatic success; our soldiers exhibited indomitable courage and valour. I salute our bravehearts and their valour on 27th Kargil Vijay Diwas," Singh said.

Earlier, Singh, Army Chief General Dhiraj Seth, Ladakh Lieutenant Governor V K Saxena, and the GOC-in-C, Northern Command, Lt Gen Pratik Sharma, paid tribute at the Kargil War Memorial here, offering homage to the fallen heroes.

Three helicopters in arrowhead formation, led by an advanced light helicopter and followed by two Cheetals, showered floral petals on the memorial from the air to mark the occasion.

The defence minister, who arrived here on Saturday, was the chief guest at the 'Shradhanjali Samaroh'. (PTI)

NC seeks apology for Mehbooba's Jantar Mantar remark

SRINAGAR, July 26: PDP president Mehbooba Mufti has landed at the centre of a fresh political storm after drawing a parallel between Gen Z protesters at New Delhi's Jantar Mantar and agitators in Kashmir, asserting that force was justified in the Valley under the guise of fighting militancy.

Her comments, made during her Jantar Mantar appearance earlier this week, in which she attempted to defend past crackdowns on local demonstrators, drew swift, sharp backlash from the rival political parties, who revived her infamous 2016 "milk and toffee" quote to accuse the former chief minister of blatant hypocrisy.

At the Jantar Mantar, the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) chief appeared to defend past usage of pellet guns in the Valley, saying it was different in Kashmir as the security forces were fighting militancy, while simultaneously opposing police action against student protesters in the national capital.

Reacting sharply to the statement, the National Conference (NC) posted on its official X handle: "If you happen to be a Kashmiri who is protesting for his/her



rights, 'aap pe force use karna to banta hai' (it is justified to use force against you). Wow."

NC spokesperson Imran Nabi Dar accused the PDP chief of unabashedly defending the use of brutal force against local youth and children.

"I am appalled beyond words. @MehboobaMufti unabashedly and casually brands every Kashmiri protester a 'militant'. The kids, the little girls... just everyone was a militant, she says," Dar posted on X.

"Even shame must be ashamed today. Her hypocrisy is uglier than what I believed."

Demand for an apology came from NC leader and Zadibal MLA

Tanvir Sadiq, who questioned whether everyday civil demonstrations were now being labelled as armed resistance.

"Are those who protest against reservation militants? Are those who protest for basic amenities also militants? This is shameful coming from a former chief minister of Jammu and Kashmir," Sadiq said, adding that Mehbooba owes an immediate apology to the people of J-K.

Apni Party president Altaf Bukhari said he was "neither shocked nor surprised" by the PDP chief's remarks, citing her controversial record during her tenure as chief minister during the 2016 summer unrest in the Valley. (PTI)

Cong should introspect over loss of public trust before questioning BJP: Sai



RAIPUR, July 26: Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai on Sunday hit back at the Congress, demanding that the opposition party must introspect on its dwindling public trust instead of questioning the BJP on accountability.

Speaking to reporters here, Sai said Dharmendra Pradhan's resignation as the Union education minister was a reflection of the ruling party's commitment to accountability and democratic values.

The BJP believes that national interest comes first. Ethics, transparency and accountability are integral to our political culture, he said.

"Dharmendra Pradhan served the nation with dedication and honesty for

many years. By accepting accountability in public life, he has demonstrated our commitment to democratic values," Sai said. He claimed that the BJP's decisions were based on principles and accountability, while the Congress has a history of misuse of power, corruption and disregard for ethical values.

Asked about Congress leader Rahul Gandhi's demand for an apology from Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah for using force against students during the NEET paper leak protest in Delhi, Sai said the Opposition party should first examine its own record.

"The Congress must introspect. It has been losing the people's trust because

of the gap between what it says and what it does. It should reflect on why the public is distancing itself from the party," he said.

Targeting the previous Bhupesh Baghel-led Congress government in the state, Sai alleged that the future of youth was compromised through irregularities in the Chhattisgarh Public Service Commission (CGPSC) recruitment process.

"There was massive corruption in the CGPSC recruitment process. During the assembly elections (2023), PM Modi had promised that if the BJP formed the government, the matter would be investigated," he said.

Sai said the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) has been probing the case, and action is being taken against then CGPSC chairman Taman Singh Sonwani and other accused.

"If anyone commits a crime in any field, strict action will be taken against the guilty," he said.

The chief minister reiterated the BJP government's commitment to zero tolerance against corruption, saying that no one is above the law.

"Our government is fully committed to protecting the future of the youth, ensuring transparent recruitment and delivering good governance," he added. (PTI)

Every drop of water saved is asset for future generations: PM Narendra Modi

NEW DELHI, July 26: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday urged people to conserve rainwater, saying every drop of water saved today serves as the greatest asset for future generations and lauded public participation in the Jal Shakti Ministry's 'Catch the Rain' campaign.

Addressing the 136th episode of the 'Mann Ki Baat' programme, Modi said he is delighted to see overwhelming participation by people from villages, cities, panchayats and social organisations in the campaign, which has been underway since July 4.

Modi recalled that in the previous episode of 'Mann Ki Baat', he had spoken about the 'Catch the Rain' campaign and appealed to the people to turn it into a mass movement.

"The message of 'Catch The Rain' is very simple: conserve the water right where and when the rain falls... Under this initiative, fresh momentum is being given to rainwater harvesting, groundwater recharge, the rejuvenation of old water bodies, and tree plantation. I am delighted to see overwhelming participation from people everywhere -- be it villages or cities, panchayats or social organisations," Modi said.

Highlighting the steps being undertaken across the country, the prime minister said in some places, silt is being removed from old ponds, while in others, wells and stepwells are being revived. Borewells no longer in use now serve as channels for groundwater recharge.

He also spoke about steps taken in parts of Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and Odisha. "Around 1,500 ponds have been constructed in the Sidhi district of Madhya Pradesh. 'Amrit Sarovars' have been restored in Narsinghpur, while significant water storage capacity has been developed in Nashik, Maharashtra," he said. (PTI)

Mainpuri residents faced 'identity crisis' before 2017: Adityanath



MAINPURI (UP), July 26: Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Sunday hit out at Samajwadi Party in its traditional stronghold stating that people of the district had to face "identity crisis" before 2017.

His remarks came while addressing a public function where he launched and laid the foundation stones of 111 development projects worth about Rs 682 crore for the Mainpuri and Karhal Assembly constituencies.

Mainpuri, represented in the Lok Sabha by Samajwadi Party (SP) chief Akhilesh Yadav's wife Dimple Yadav, is considered a bastion of the Samajwadi Party and has long been regarded as one of the party's political strongholds.

Claiming that the BJP government has transformed the image of the district, he alleged that Mainpuri had once suffered because of the policies of previous governments.

"There was a time when people used to get frightened by the name of Mainpuri. Youth from Mainpuri would not get rooms in hotels, they were not allowed to stay in dharamshalas, and even an honest person found it difficult to get a rented house in other cities simply because he was from Mainpuri. Today, if a youth, a farmer or a trader from Mainpuri introduces himself anywhere in the country, people are eager to show him respect," he said.

Without naming the SP initially, Adityanath alleged that previous governments had created an "identity crisis" for Mainpuri and Uttar Pradesh by depriving youths of jobs, farmers of prosperity, traders of security and artisans of employment.

The chief minister alleged that recruitment under previous governments was influenced by money and recommendations.

"There was a time when jobs were advertised, but they did not go to deserving youth. Faces were looked at, money was looked at. A poor young person who could not pay would not get the job. Today, under the BJP's double-engine government, vacancies are filled fairly. Youth from Mainpuri and Etawah also receive appointment letters with pride and contribute to building a new Uttar Pradesh and a new India," he said.

Adityanath claimed that Uttar Pradesh has moved from being a "BIMARU" state to a "revenue surplus" state and emerged as one of the country's top three state economies.

"Today, Uttar Pradesh is no longer a BIMARU state. It is a revenue-surplus state and has emerged as the growth engine of India's economy," he said, adding that there was no shortage of funds for stadiums, museums, auditoriums, roads, bypasses or other infrastructure projects.

Referring to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's remarks, Adityanath said, "Modi ji has said that there are only four castes in the country -- the poor, the farmers, the women and the youth. If we work for the welfare of these four, India will become a developed nation."

The chief minister also hit out at SP over law and order, alleging that traders were once afraid to invest, and families were forced to send their daughters outside the state for education due to the lack of security.

Claiming that law and order had improved, Adityanath said Uttar Pradesh has become an "Utsav Pradesh" (state of festivals).

"Today, our state is no longer a disturbance-prone state; it has become a state of festivals. There are no curfews, no riots. Everything is well in Uttar Pradesh," he said.

He claimed that around nine lakh youths had received government jobs under his government, traditional industries had been revived, benefiting over 3.25 crore people, and improved law and order had attracted investment proposals worth Rs 50 lakh crore. (PTI)

Calm returns to Jantar Mantar after 36-day NEET protest ends; Dipke, Wangchuk recuperate



NEW DELHI, July 26: The chants fell silent and calm descended on Jantar Mantar on Sunday, a day after the 36-day agitation over irregularities in exams and the NEET paper leak ended with the resignation of Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan. While CJP founder Abhijeet Dipke recovered from typhoid at home, environmentalist Sonam Wangchuk recuperated in a hospital.

The sprawling protest site in the heart of the national capital, which had echoed with slogans, speeches and fervent activity for more than

a month, wore a deserted look as the makeshift tents had disappeared, and the volunteers and supporters had dispersed, leaving behind little trace of the agitation.

The Cockroach Janta Party (CJP), which organised the protest, shared a photograph of Dipke receiving intravenous fluids and a video message in which he said he had finally slept peacefully after more than a month of relentless campaigning and uncertainty.

"It feels really good. Today, finally, I could go to sleep and wake up in the bedroom without thinking about what to do next or what will happen till evening. There is no panic," Dipke said.

The protest, which began on June 20, intensified following police action against demonstrators on July 20 and later drew support from several student organisations and activists, including Wangchuk, who undertook a prolonged hunger strike in solidarity with the movement. (PTI)

TMC's Abhishek urges youths to reassess support to icons silent on issues of public concerns



KOLKATA, July 26: Trinamool Congress leader Abhishek Banerjee on Sunday appealed to youths to be more discerning in supporting celebrities, influencers and sports icons, saying those who remain silent on issues of public concern should not be celebrated uncritically.

In a post on his official WhatsApp channel, the Diamond Harbour MP said recent events demonstrated the power of young people to challenge even the most powerful governments, asserting that the strength of a democracy

ultimately rests with its citizens.

Banerjee further said that remaining silent in times of crisis amounted to taking a position.

"When history calls for courage, silence is never neutral -- it is a choice," he said. "Because if you cannot stand with us when it matters most, why should we continue to stand behind them?"

His remarks came against the backdrop of Dharmendra Pradhan's resignation as Union education minister over irregularities in the exam system and the NEET paper leak, which galvanised thou-

sands of students in an unprecedented protest spearheaded by the Cockroach Janta Party.

"We have seen how a determined generation of young people can bring even the most powerful governments to their knees. It is a reminder that the real strength of any democracy lies in the power of its people," Banerjee said. Without naming any individual, he criticised celebrities, influencers, sportspersons and film personalities for being silent about the students' protest against exam irregularities.

"Many celebrities, influencers, sports icons and movie stars chose to remain silent instead of standing with the youth and students of this country. Whether out of fear, caution, or self-interest, their silence spoke volumes," Banerjee said.

Calling on young people to make conscious choices, the MP said youths should evaluate whether public personalities uphold the values they claim to represent. (PTI)

Kerala minister hails youth, oppn parties in NEET protest, urges INDIA bloc unity for polls



THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, July 26: Kerala Health Minister K Muraliedharan on Sunday credited the unity of opposition parties along with youngsters for the success of the NEET exam paper leak protest and urged the INDIA bloc to remain united ahead of the next Lok Sabha elections.

Speaking to reporters here, Muraliedharan said youth-led movements have historically played an important role in bringing about

political change, but added that such agitations achieve results only when backed by political parties.

Referring to the protest by Cockroach Janta Party (CJP) that led to the resignation of the Union education minister Dharmendra Pradhan, he said Gen Z protesters may have driven the movement on the streets, but its impact inside Parliament was created by the united stand of the INDIA bloc,

which prevented the government from conducting normal legislative business.

"For the first time, a cockroach fell into Narendra Modi's porridge," he remarked, referring to the resignation of Pradhan.

He said the BJP government, which had claimed after assuming office in 2014 that there would be no resignations, had now witnessed its ministerial resignation.

Muraliedharan said history showed that student and youth agitations succeeded when supported by political organisations, citing movements against the EMS government in Kerala during the late 1960s and the Anna Hazare-led anti-corruption agitation when the UPA government was in power at the Centre.

He said the INDIA bloc had collectively decided to intensify its campaign through protests over the NEET paper leak, under the leadership of Rahul Gandhi. (PTI)

'Around 3,700 fishermen families are expected to benefit from the scheme'

Himachal govt launches Mukhyamantri Machhuara Samman Nidhi Yojana



SHIMLA, July 26: Himachal Pradesh Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu on Sunday announced the launch of Mukhyamantri Machhuara Samman Nidhi Yojana to provide financial assistance and social security to fishermen engaged in reservoir fisheries across the state.

Every year, during fishing ban, a large number of fishermen experience a temporary loss of income, causing financial distress to their families. To address this challenge, the state government will provide financial assistance of ₹ 3,500 annually to each eligible beneficiary during the fishing ban period, CM Sukhu said in a statement issued here.

"The scheme will be applicable to eligible active fishermen engaged in reservoir fisheries



through registered fisheries cooperative societies and possessing valid fishing licences. It has been designed to provide financial relief during the closed fishing season, promote sustainable fisheries management and support genuine fishermen who make a significant contribution to the fisheries sector," he said.

"Eligible fishermen will be required to submit applications through their respective fisheries

cooperative societies along with the prescribed documents, including a valid fishing licence, Aadhaar card, Parivar Register details, a valid NFDP registration number and a society membership certificate," the statement said.

The financial assistance will be transferred directly to the beneficiaries' bank accounts through the Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) mechanism. The Directorate of Fisheries will monitor the imple-

mentation of the scheme, maintain beneficiary records and conduct random verification to ensure transparency, it said.

"Around 3,700 fishermen families associated with the Gobind Sagar, Pong Dam, Kol Dam, Chamera and Ranjit Sagar reservoirs are expected to benefit from the scheme every year," CM Sukhu said.

He further said that the government will incur an annual expenditure of approximately ₹ 1.20 crore for its implementation.

The CM said that fishermen play a vital role in strengthening the rural economy and this scheme will provide much-needed financial relief to families dependent on reservoir fisheries and help them meet their essential needs during the period when fishing activities remain suspended. (PTI)

Hodge's 83 leads West Indies to 194-3 against Pakistan on rainy day 1 of test series

TAROUBA (TRINIDAD), July 26: Kavem Hodge's unbeaten 83 carried West Indies to 194-3 against Pakistan at stumps on the rain-affected first day of the first test on Saturday.

Only 67 overs were bowled in the day before stumps was called early because of bad light.

Hodge batted in all three sessions, including the truncated first session in which only 14.1 overs were bowled and 23 runs scored. He came to the crease in the ninth over when Mohammad Abbas bowled Brandon King (12) on his way to figures of 1-8 from seven overs in the morning session.

When the players returned from lunch, Hodge faced a pitch that had been enlivened by the rain, and stood firm as West Indies added 104 runs for the loss of two wickets in 28.5 overs.

Hodge then added 67 runs in 24 overs in the shortened final session during which he survived a confident appeal for lbw. He was struck above the knee roll on the back pad by a ball from Abbas which jagged back from outside off stump.

Pakistan's appeal was upheld by the on-field umpire but overturned by the television officials when replays showed the ball was bouncing over the stumps.



Hodge went on to share an unbroken 88-run partnership for the fourth wicket with Shai Hope who was 39 not out at close of play.

Abbas finished the day with 2-44 from 19 overs as the best of the Pakistan bowlers. Left-arm spinner Usman Ali made his test debut at 33 and managed to find sharp turn at times.

West Indies win toss

West Indies captain Roston Chase made the decision to bat after winning the toss. It seemed questionable as runs came at a snail's pace in the first session for the loss of King's wicket in the ninth over when the total was 13.

Tagenarine Chandepaul and Amir Jangoo both made 21 before

falling in the second session. Chandepaul fell to Aamer Jamal, who returned to the Pakistan test side after an 18-month absence and Jangoo was trapped lbw by Abbas.

Hodge remained resolute, reaching his fourth half-century in tests from 86 balls with eight fours. Hope provided solid support and faced 91 balls by stumps.

Babar Azam has returned to lead Pakistan after the captaincy was stripped from Shan Masood, who lost 12 out of 16 tests. Pakistan hasn't won an away test since beating Sri Lanka in 2023 under Babar.

Opening batter Abdullah Fazal was ruled out of the series, and the upcoming three test series in England, after injuring his lower back on Thursday. Imam-ul-Haq, who missed the last series against Bangladesh, has returned to open with Azeem Khan.

West Indies has gone in with three fast bowlers — Kemar Roach, Shamar Joseph and Jayden Seales — after Alzarri Joseph made himself unavailable for the series. Jomel Warrican is the specialist spinner.

The teams are at the bottom of the World Test Championship with one win apiece.

Garfield Sobers remembered West Indies players and match officials wore black armbands in memory of legendary allrounder Garfield Sobers, who died at the age of 89 this month.

Players of both teams and match officials observed a minute of silence before the start of play at the Brian Lara Cricket Academy, which became the 13th test venue in the Caribbean. (AP)

Chopra seeks 2nd gold, India target more medals than last edition

GLASGOW, July 26: Neeraj Chopra will be up against reigning Olympic champion Arshad Nadeem of Pakistan and Ramesh Tharanga Pathiraja of Sri Lanka in a marquee men's javelin clash as India seek to better last edition's medal haul in Commonwealth Games athletics events, beginning here Monday.

Besides Chopra, other Indian gold medal contenders are long jumper Murali Shreshankar, a silver medalist at the 2022 CWG in Birmingham, and high jumper Sarvesh Kushare who recently set the national record of 2.31m.

The Indian team management is hoping for two medals each in men's javelin, long jump, high jump and triple jump, besides podium finishes in men's 10,000m, decathlon and women's 10,000m race walk.

The men's 100m hurdles and shot put as well as women's 3000m steeplechase may also fetch India medals, which could take the haul past the eight (1 gold, 4 silver, 3 bronze) won last time in Birmingham.

But there is no certainty of gold medal count as most of the athletics events have world class fields.

A lower back injury has been troubling Chopra since September 2025 and he made a delayed start to the season at Doha Diamond League on June 19. He finished fourth with a throw of 85.69m — a modest one by his high standards.

With another round of rehabilitation and training for a month at his training base in Bienne in Switzerland, the 28-year-old two-time Olympic medalist Indian superstar would be looking to repeat his gold-winning performance at 2018 Gold Coast CWG. He reached here on Friday from Switzerland.

Chopra had won gold in Gold Coast with a throw of 86.47m. He missed the 2022 Games due to an injury.

Indian athletics head coach Radhakrishnan Nair, who is expecting the 32-member team to better last edition's eight-medal haul, said Chopra is in "perfect physical shape".

It will, however, be a tough fight for the gold for Chopra in a star-studded field. The men's javelin qualifying round will be on July 30 and the final the next day.

Glasgow men's javelin field as good as Olympics/World C'ships Except for the likes of Curtis Thompson of USA and Julian Weber of Germany, all the global javelin top stars will be in action in Glasgow.

Besides Chopra, Nadeem and Pathiraja, the other competitors include reigning world champion Keshorn Walcott of Trinidad and Tobago, 2022 CWG silver winner Anderson Peters of Grenada and Julius Yego of Kenya.

In the mix will be India's Rohit Yadav, who, in fact, is in the second spot among Commonwealth season leaders with his 87.05m last month. He is also a medal contender. Yashvir Singh is the third Indian in the fray.

Pathiraja will start as favourite for gold as he is the lone 90m-plus thrower in the world this season with his 92.62m while winning Rome Diamond League title. The 23-year-old has another three 88m-plus throws and won two DL titles this season.

Nadeem, though, has been struggling for some time, and he is entering the Games with an extremely poor 78.47m effort at Luzern, Switzerland, on July 16. Peters has a season's best of 86.38m. He won the Rabat DL title in May with 86.08m. The 33-year-old Walcott is yet to hit peak form as his season's best is 83.45m.

Second CWG medal in sight for Shreshankar, Tejaswin

Shreshankar, with his 8.38m effort last month, leads the season's chart among Commonwealth long jumpers in the absence of Wayne Pinnock (8.39m) of Jamaica which has decided to send Tajay Gayle (8.37m). The 27-year-old would be looking for his second CWG medal — a rare feat in Indian athletics — after the silver in 2022 Birmingham Games. Compatriot Lokesh Sathyanathan could also be in medal contention with his season's best of 8.21m. (PTI)

Indian women's team concludes Youth Hockey5s Asian C'ship with silver medal



NEW DELHI, July 26: Indian women's hockey team finished runner-up in the Youth Hockey5s Asian Championship in Muscat, going down 2-4 against China in the summit clash. India had booked their place in the final with a massive 8-1 victory over Kazakhstan in semifinal.

China took lead in the final through Tongtong Lu in the opening

minute and Kexin Tang doubled their advantage in the fifth minute before Jiaxin Guo made it 3-0 a minute later.

India responded after the break as Nousheen Naz found the back of the net in the 13th minute to reduce the deficit. However, Chen Ge restored China's three-goal lead in the 19th minute. Pushpa Manjhi scored in the 20th to give India some hope, but

China held on to register a dominant victory and lift the title.

Earlier in the semifinal, Sandeepa Kumari opened the scoring in the fifth minute before Pushpa Manjhi struck in the sixth, and added two more goals in the eighth to put India firmly in control. Kazakhstan pulled one back via Ayanat Mazhim in the 10th minute, but India continued to dictate the game.

Skipper Diya scored twice in the 13th and 16th minutes, while Shruti Kumari also found the net in the 16th minute. Nousheen Naz completed the scoring in the 20th minute as India sealed an emphatic 8-1 victory to make the final.

Hockey India announced a cash prize of ₹1 lakh each for the players and ₹50,000 for the support staff members. India have also secured qualification for the FIH Youth Hockey5s World Cup with their strong performance. (PTI)

KAMSFC step up preparations for Durand Cup campaign

Karbi Anglong club eyes knockout berth in second appearance at India's oldest football tournament

HT Bureau

DIPHU, July 26: Karbi Anglong Morning Star FC (KAMSFC) has intensified its preparations for the 135th Indian Oil Durand Cup, with the club aiming to advance beyond the group stage in its second appearance in Asia's oldest football tournament.

The 24-team competition will be held from July 25 to August 23 across Kolkata, Guwahati, Shillong, Imphal and Ranchi under the aegis of the Durand Football Tournament Society in association with the All India Football Federation (AIFF).

KAMSFC have been placed in Group F alongside NorthEast United FC, Bodoland FC and FC I Guwahati.

The Karbi Anglong side will open its campaign against FC I Guwahati on August 3.

The team is currently undergoing intensive morning and evening training sessions at the Karbi Anglong Sports Association (KASA) Stadium under the supervision of club manager Waisong Bey and head coach Dr Cornelius Aldrin Laldinsang Pudaite.



Speaking during a training session, Bey said the players were highly motivated ahead of the tournament.

"This is our second appearance in the Durand Cup and the boys are working hard. We are hopeful of qualifying for the knockout stage this year," he said.

Coach Pudaite said the squad was making the best use of the available preparation time despite a short training window.

"Our preparation period has been limited, but the players are responding well and we expect

them to be ready by the time the tournament begins," he said.

He added that strengthening the attacking department had been a priority and that the club had recruited experienced Indian and foreign players to improve the team's competitiveness.

The squad retains several local players, including Harbamon Timung, Jirjar Terang, Komolson Rongphar and Malongkiri Tisso, while new domestic signings include goalkeeper Jaspreet Singh from Bengaluru FC, Joseph from Hyderabad FC, Vikash from Jamshedpur FC, Yohendra Meitei from Kerala Blasters and Fabian, the Golden Boot winner of the Arunachal Pradesh Football League.

The overseas contingent features Luis of Mozambique and Cameroonian players Stephane, Samir D.B. Binong, Junior and Victor Kamah.

With just over a week remaining before their opening fixture, KAMSFC are focusing on improving fitness, team combinations and match readiness as they seek to register a stronger showing in this year's Durand Cup.

Fitness ahead of SL Tests

Washington remains doubtful, focus on Saransh Jain



NEW DELHI, July 26: Indian selectors face a selection headache ahead of the two-Test series against Sri Lanka, with Washington Sundar unlikely to recover in time for the opening match in Galle, leaving the reserve spinner's slot up for grabs.

The Indian squad for the Sri Lanka Tests will be announced on Tuesday and the Ajit Agarkar-led selection panel is dealing with a plethora of fitness issues plaguing the national team at the moment.

Senior speedster Jasprit Bumrah, who had missed the final ODI against England at Lord's due to an impact injury, is also expected to appear for a fitness Test.

It is understood that the Centre of Excellence in Bengaluru has released the fitness updates as per which both Harshit Rana and Nitish Kumar Reddy are not in selection contention for the red ball series. They sustained hamstring injuries at different times and are currently in the middle of intense rehabilitation programme.

"Washington will only be fit by the second Test and it is there to be seen if selectors pick him for one game subject to fitness. Else, they will have to look for a fourth option beyond Ravindra Jadeja, Manav Suthar and Kuldeep Yadav. If they pick Harsh Dubey, it will be three bowlers with identical skill sets," a BCCI source privy to selection matters told PTI on conditions of anonymity.

The options available are off-spinner Saransh Jain, who is also a handy lower middle-order batter. Saransh did pretty well against Sri Lanka A where he took six wickets in two games and scored a 70 not out. Knowing Gambhir's propensity to have a handy batter till No. 8, Saransh won't be a bad option. The other options are wrist spinners Zeeshan Ansari and Vipraj Nigam but men who matter

believe that Nigam's game is more suited to white ball format. He bowls fast leg breaks and can hit the ball a long way as one has seen in IPL where he plays for Delhi Capitals.

In case of Bumrah, if he is not available then the pace attack will comprise Mohammed Siraj, Gurnoor Brar and Prasidh Krishna. Akash Deep, who played a stellar role in 2025 England away series is still recuperating from stress fracture and has just about started his 'Return To Play' protocols.

"Akash is bowling around 12-15 balls a day as per instructions. He is still some time away from attaining his full fitness," the source added.

The opening Test is scheduled to be held in Galle from August 15 while the second Test will begin on August 23 in Colombo.

Pandya to be available from August

Meanwhile, senior all-rounder Hardik Pandya is back to full fitness and will be available for India's white-ball assignment from the month of August after completing the mandatory 'Return to Play' protocols by the end of July. BCCI sources informed on Sunday, India's No. 1 pace bowling all-rounder was supposed to play the three-match ODI series against Afghanistan in June after being cleared to play post his quadriceps strain.

"Hardik is ready to play both forms of white ball cricket. He is expected to get fitness certificate by the end of this month. If India's proposed white ball tour of Bangladesh happens, Hardik can be expected to be picked. He has been training two sessions at the COE. The morning is primarily for fitness work and evening is purely skill-based (batting and bowling)," the source added. (PTI)

Charaideo lift Dewkon Memorial inter-dist school football title

HT Correspondent

MORIGAON, July 26: Charaideo emerged champions of the Dewkon Memorial Inter-District School Football Tournament, defeating Kamrup 1-0 after extra time in the final played at Manipur Mini Stadium on Sunday.

After a goalless regulation period, Tek Bahadur Limbu scored the decisive goal in the 64th minute of extra time to hand Charaideo the title.

Both teams created scoring opportunities during the match, but neither side could break the deadlock in normal time before Limbu struck the winner to secure victory for Charaideo.

The hard-fought final drew enthusiastic support from football enthusiasts, with Charaideo lifting the Dewkon Memorial trophy following their narrow win over Kamrup.

Winning World Junior Squash C'ship means the world: Anahat Singh

NEW DELHI, July 26: The newly-crowned World Junior Squash champion Anahat Singh said the title triumph meant "the world" to her that she still feels to be in a "dream."

India No. 1 Anahat became the first Indian to bag the coveted title, beating Ruqayya Salem from Egypt 11-3, 11-7, 11-9 in the women's final in Ontario on Saturday.

"It means the world. I still feel like I'm dreaming," the world No. 20 Anahat said after her title win.

"I've been losing in the semis and quarters over the last four years. I've always said, if anyone's asked, 'This tournament's a curse,' and I've never been able to play well in the event," the 18-year-old Delhi girl said.

The triumph is even more special as this was her last year on the junior circuit.

"This is my last year (as a junior)



and my only chance to win it. It means the world," Anahat added.

Anahat said she wanted to enjoy the experience of playing in the tournament's final. "I knew if I'm stressed, I play terribly, so I just came out on court and hit my lines well... I wanted to enjoy every moment of getting to play in a world

championship final," she said.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi took to social media to congratulate the young star.

"A historic feat at the 2026 World Junior Squash Championship," Modi wrote.

"Proud of Anahat Singh for winning the Gold Medal and becoming

the first Indian squash player ever to win the World Junior Championship title. This accomplishment will further popularise squash among the youth," he added.

Cyrus Poncha, the secretary-general of the Squash Rackets Federation of India said Anahat's victory was a 'historic moment' for the sport in the country.

"It's a historic moment for Indian squash. Anahat has the potential to reach great heights," Poncha said.

"(The late) Mr N Ramachandran, SRFI patron and visionary of Indian Squash Academy, always said it was his dream that India produce a world champion in individual events," Mr Poncha continued.

"We achieved it in doubles, but to replicate that success in singles, it is really a dream come true. A lot of hard work and effort by Anahat, of course, but we've had the entire nation behind her and her successes over the last few years." (PTI)

Umrangso ACA Stadium gets floodlighting system



HT Correspondent

UMRANGSO, July 26: The newly installed floodlighting system at the Assam Cricket Association (ACA) Stadium at Umrangso in Dima Hasao district was formally inaugurated on Saturday by Dima Hasao Autonomous Council Chief Executive Member (CEM) Debola Gorlosa.

The inaugural programme was attended by BCCI Honorary Secretary Devajit Saikia, Executive Members of the Dima Hasao Autonomous Council, including Sam Sing Ingti, Members of the Council, officials of the Assam Cricket Association and other dignitaries.

Speaking on the occasion, Gorlosa said the Assam Government, under the leadership of Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, has made significant contributions towards strengthening sports infrastructure in Dima Hasao, creat-

ing better opportunities for young sportspersons in the hill district.

To commemorate the inauguration of the floodlighting system, an exhibition cricket match was organised between the CEM XI and the Secretary XI as part of the second edition of the Chengia Tularam Trophy 2026.

Officials of the district sports department supervised the smooth conduct of the match.

Cultural performances featuring Dimas, Karbi and Nepali traditional dances were also presented during the programme.

Addressing the gathering, Devajit Saikia said the government has taken several initiatives to encourage youth participation in sports by developing modern infrastructure and providing improved facilities.

He added that the Assam Cricket Association would continue to promote cricket in the region and extend training and other support to aspiring players in Umrangso.

On the sidelines of the event, Gorlosa also inaugurated a newly constructed counter set up by the Umrangso Tourism Management Committee.

Later, the CEM attended the two-day Ethnic Festival, organised to showcase the rich cultural traditions of the region's indigenous communities.

The programme was attended by Executive Members, Members of the Council, local public representatives and prominent citizens.