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THE HILLS TIMES

www.thehillstimes.in

Voice of the hills people

PUBLISHED SIMULTANEOUSLY FROM GUWAHATI & DIPHU

Vol .No. III Issue No. 118 RNI-ASSENG/2023/86488 GUWAHATI, SUNDAY, JULY 5, 2026 PAGES 12 PRICE ₹ 8

Protest enters 15th day • Sonam Wangchuk on 7th day of indefinite fast

Break 'silence' over our protest, CJP writes to PM

NEW DELHI, July 4: The Cockroach Janta Party on Saturday released an open letter addressed to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, urging him to break his "resounding silence" over its protest at the Jantar Mantar and hold Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan accountable for alleged exam paper leaks and student suicides.

In the two-page letter titled "A Question of Humanity: How Long Will You Ignore Jantar Mantar?", the CJP said its protest had entered its 15th day while activist Sonam Wangchuk was on the seventh day of his indefinite fast.

The letter, signed by Cockroach Janta Party (CJP) founder Abhijeet Dipke and spokespersons Saurav Das, Ashutosh Ranka, Vaishnavi Gaur, Aafreen Nawaz, Deepak Baliyan, Ratna Singh and Vijeta Dahiya, also questioned why the prime minister had not responded despite their prolonged agitation, which began at the Jantar Mantar on June 20.

"We have been sitting in protest at the Jantar Mantar for the past 15 days, and



today marks the seventh day of educationist Sonam Wangchuk's indefinite hunger strike. How long will your government choose to ignore our voices, sir?" the CJP said in the letter.

"A hunger strike in a civil society is meant to bring moral pressure upon the powers that be. The underlying principle is simple: when someone like Sonam Wangchuk, a man who has dedicated his entire life, mind and soul to this country and to the cause of education, refuses to consume food, it is supposed to elicit a conscious response, whether moral or political, from the government of the day.

"Yet, you have not spoken a single word," it said.

The CJP said the protest was launched against repeated exam paper leaks, the education minister's refusal to accept "moral responsibility" and resign, and the government's "failure" to provide justice and relief to the families of students who died by suicide.

"We are sitting here because your government has repeatedly failed to

stop exam paper leaks that have shattered the faith and future of crores of young Indians," it said.

The CJP claimed that the number of such deaths had risen from 11 before the protest began on June 20 to 29.

"No government is above questioning. No minister is above responsibility. And no administration can silence citizens for demanding answers," the letter said. This protest is "not just a political exercise but also a desperate cry to save the lives of our youth", it said.

"Instead of an empathetic dialogue, your minister Dharmendra Pradhan has labeled us terrorists, and your party president has called us names, threatening that the youth of India will be 'taught a lesson' for daring to raise our voices against this broken, corrupt system and these preventable deaths," the CJP said.

Accusing the prime minister of maintaining a "resounding silence", the CJP alleged that the Centre had responded to peaceful protesters with contempt rather than dialogue.

"Your resounding silence makes us ask - do you truly believe we are just 'cockroaches'?" the CJP asked in the letter. "If you, as the prime minister, refuse to respond to the Cockroach Janta Party's peaceful hunger strike, your silence stands as a tacit admission that you view the youth of this country as nothing more than pests to be ignored," it said.

The youth movement also claimed that Delhi Police personnel assaulted students at the protest site and threw books onto muddy roads. It demanded immediate suspension of two Delhi Police officers, (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Assam records 15 pc growth in GST collection in June



GUWAHATI, July 4: Assam witnessed a 15 per cent growth in GST collection in June compared to the corresponding period a year ago, Finance Minister Jayanta Malla Baruah said on Saturday.

The GST collection in June stood at ₹1,437 crore as against ₹1,255 crore in the same month last year.

"June 2026, witnessed 15 per cent GST growth compared to June 2025, well above the national average of 9 per cent, placing Assam among the country's top performing major states.

"Focused efforts to improve compliance, plug leakages, strengthen digital tax administration and widen the tax base are delivering encouraging results," Baruah said in a post on X.

The GST collected in the first quarter from April to June was ₹4,467 crore compared to ₹3,026 crore during the corresponding period in 2025.

Assam outperformed several larger states, including Maharashtra, Karnataka, Delhi, Haryana and West Bengal, officials said.

"We remain committed to transparent governance, robust revenue mobilisation and building a stronger Assam," Baruah said.

Assam continues to strengthen its fiscal foundations under the leadership of Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, Baruah asserted. (PTI)

Adani case: US judge urged to drop charges permanently

NEW YORK, July 4: The US Department of Justice has forcefully defended its decision to abandon the criminal case against Indian billionaire Gautam Adani and seven others, telling a federal judge the prosecution was legally flawed, diplomatically counterproductive and inconsistent with the Trump administration's enforcement priorities.

In a sharply worded 10-page filing, the DOJ said the case "should have been dropped a year ago -- or never brought in the first place," arguing that the court had only a limited role in reviewing its decision to dismiss charges with prejudice.

The filing came after US District Judge Nicholas Garaufis asked the department to explain why it was seeking to permanently dismiss the indictment, calling its earlier motion "terse, bland, and conclusory".

DOJ had in 2024 under the Biden administration indicted Adani and others for allegedly being involved in a scheme to

People of Manipur desire end to prolonged crisis: CM

IMPHAL, July 4: Manipur Chief Minister Y Khemchand Singh on Saturday said people desire an end to the prolonged crisis in the state.

Speaking at an event here, Singh said he was encouraged to see that Churachandpur district was no longer affected by the disruptions witnessed during the height of the crisis.

"Dialogue is the only way forward to restore lasting peace in the state," he said.

Stressing that development cannot take place without peace, Singh said the people of Manipur desire an end to the prolonged crisis and wish to move forward together.

He, however, observed that a few individuals continue to benefit from the prevailing chaotic situation and therefore do not want peace to return.

Singh urged people not to allow people with such vested interests to derail the collective efforts towards restoring peace and ensuring the state's progress and asserted that those disrupting peace will be identified and action taken against them.

The chief minister said the crisis has hit hard the state's economy and government's revenue collection. He added that younger generations and poor people were the ones who suffered the most during the crisis and that students also faced a lot of hardship due to the unrest in the state.

Earlier in the day, the CM visited Churachandpur and attended the last rites of BJP MLA Vungzagin Valte, who died earlier this year after sustaining serious injuries in a mob attack in Imphal in 2023.

More than 260 people have been killed and thousands rendered homeless in ethnic violence between Imphal Valley-based Meiteis and adjoining hills-based Kukis in Manipur since May 2023. (PTI)

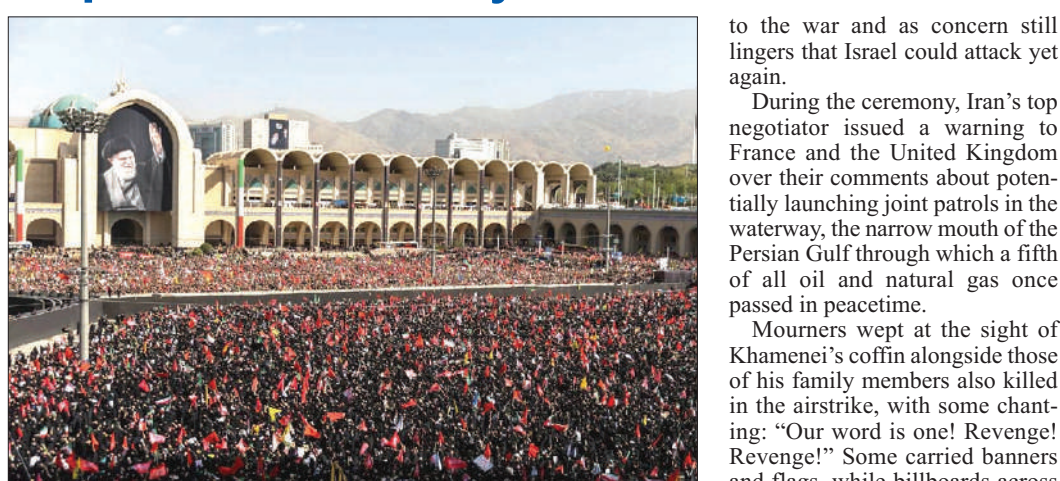
RS MP Jogen Mohan donates first month's salary to CM Relief Fund

GUWAHATI, July 4: Assam's Rajya Sabha MP Jogen Mohan on Saturday handed over his first month's salary as a contribution to the Chief Minister's Relief Fund.

Mohan, a minister in the previous state government, handed over the cheque to Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma at his office here.

"In a generous gesture towards community welfare, Hon'ble MP

Iran begins dayslong funeral for late Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei



TEHRAN, July 4: Hundreds of thousands of mourners began a days-long funeral Saturday for Iran's late Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, beating their chests in sorrow before the glass case containing his flag-draped coffin in Tehran and calling for revenge against Israel and the United States.

The funeral for Khamenei, who ruled Iran for decades before being killed at age 86 in a Feb. 28 airstrike in the opening moments of the Iran war, could provide a boost for the country's theocracy and its new supreme leader, his son Ayatollah Mojtaba Khamenei.

That is particularly important as Iran tries to leverage its hold on the Strait of Hormuz in negotiations with the US over a permanent end

MLA visits disputed border, seeks early resolution



HT Bureau

BAITHALANGSO, July 4: In a major push to resolve a long-pending inter-district boundary dispute, Borhompur MLA Jitu Goswami on Saturday initiated efforts to find a permanent solution to the boundary issue between Nagaon and West Karbi Anglong districts.

The legislator visited several sensitive border locations, including the Barpani forest area and Borpathar panchayat, to assess the ground situation firsthand.

Speaking to reporters during the visit, Goswami said his intervention came in response to requests from local residents who have long faced uncertainty due to overlapping administrative claims by the two districts.

Recognising the urgency of the issue, the MLA announced a timeline for preliminary administrative action. "Since this is an inter-district issue affecting the local population, a clear solution needs to be chalked (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Retired officer Sabrasi Timung's book released in Diphu



HT Bureau

DIPHU, July 4: A book titled 'Nekai Aloti - My Life Journey', authored by retired government officer and writer Sabrasi Timung, was released at a function held at Hempti Hotel in Birla, Diphu on Saturday.

The book was unveiled by Karbi Lammet Amei (KLA) president Khorsing Engti in the presence of several prominent figures, including KLA general secretary On Teron, former KLA general secretary Joysing Tokbi, Hemphu Mukrang Adorbar president and Karbi Cultural Society (KCS) founding general secretary Lunshe Timung, former Karbi Students' Association (KSA) president and social activist Robindra Rongpi, former MAC Kangiang Terang and other distinguished guests.

The 183-page book comprises 41 self-composed poems and 10 articles focusing on Karbi social customs, geo-political issues, traditional beliefs and practices, and notable figures in Karbi literature. It also documents the author's family history, personal experiences, and the legendary account explaining why members of the Singnar Pator, a sub-clan of the Timung

'When the crisis began, India was importing energy from about 25-26 countries' India navigated one of the biggest energy crises with little burden on citizens: Modi

clan, do not perform the traditional Karbi marriage ceremony.

Nekai Aloti is a compilation of Timung's literary works and personal recollections compiled over the years, reflecting his desire to preserve his thoughts, memories and contributions to Karbi literature for future generations.

Born on October 29, 1964, at Kehai Teron Gaon near Dokmoka to Lang-et Timung and Kache Hansepi, Sabrasi Timung joined the Government of Assam in 1991 as a Research Assistant in the then Planning and Development Department, now called the Transformation and Development Department. After serving for more than three decades, he retired in 2024 as Joint Director of the Transformation and Development Department in Karbi Anglong district.

Despite his demanding professional career, Timung continued pursuing his passion for writing, producing numerous poems, articles and literary works, many of which remained unpublished until now.

Speaking at the function, KLA president Khorsing Engti lauded Timung's dedication in compiling the book (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)



JAIPUR, July 4: India successfully navigated one of the biggest global energy crises through proactive policies, diversified fuel sourcing, and strong diplomatic ties, with minimal burden on citizens, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Saturday.

The prime minister was addressing a gathering after inaugurating a refinery in Pachpadra of Balotra district. He also laid the foundation stone of multiple development projects.

Modi said India expanded its energy imports significantly during the West Asia crisis.

"When the crisis began, India was importing energy from about 25-26 countries. During the crisis, we increased this to more than 40 countries," he said, attributing the turnaround to India's diplomacy.

He said oil companies incurred losses of over ₹75,000 crore between April and June due to rising global prices, but the government absorbed the burden.

"We reduced excise duty by ₹10 per litre and ensured that the burden on citizens did not increase significantly," he said.

Rumours were spread, and people were incited, but those with malicious intentions did not succeed, Modi said.

"Those who wished to see India

ment's long-term policies with overcoming global disruptions in fuel and fertiliser supply caused by the war between Iran and the US-Israeli combine.

On a different note, Modi said self-respect of an individual or a nation can remain high only when they are self-reliant.

He said the BJP governments do not simply lay foundation stones for projects and leave them.

"We work day and night to ensure their completion," he said.

Modi on Saturday inaugurated the country's first greenfield integrated refinery-cum-petrochemical complex in Pachpadra.

The refinery is also Rajasthan's first of any kind.

Modi inaugurated the project by pressing a remote button after touring the refinery complex.

The prime minister said the work on the refinery remained virtually at standstill when Congress was in power in Rajasthan from 2018 to 2023. (PTI)

India-Peru FTA not happening anytime soon: Goyal



NEW DELHI, July 4: Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal on Saturday said negotiations for a proposed India-Peru free trade agreement (FTA) are unlikely to conclude anytime soon, citing concerns over market access in certain products.

"There are certain concerns. There are many products where we cannot offer them market access. I do not see Peru FTA happening very soon," he told reporters here on the sidelines of the 17th Toy Biz International B2B Exhibition.

Negotiations for the proposed India-Peru FTA started in 2017.

The bilateral trade between the two countries jumped 67.5 per cent to USD 10 billion (exports USD 1.4 billion, imports USD 8.87 billion) in 2025-26 from USD 5.98 billion in 2024-25.

India had a trade deficit of USD 7.47 billion in the last fiscal year.

Key Indian exports to Peru include motor vehicles/cars, cotton yarn and pharmaceuticals, while imported items include gold, copper ores and concentrates.

According to experts, duty concessions on gold, which account for about 90 per cent of India's imports from Peru, could be the most challenging issue for New Delhi under the proposed FTA with the South American nation.

In 2025-26, India's gold imports from Peru increased 78.45 per cent to USD 7.9 billion from USD 4.43 billion in 2024-25.

INDIA-CANADA TRADE PACT

The minister said a team of Indian officials will be visiting Canada for the next round of negotiations.

"The Canada FTA is progressing well... our team is going on Monday

India-Israel bilateral investment pact comes into effect

NEW DELHI, July 4: The India-Israel Bilateral Investment Agreement (BIA), which will ensure a secure and predictable investment climate between the two countries, came into force from Saturday, the finance ministry said.

The pact, which will provide protection to the two-way investments, is expected to contribute to increased cross-border investment activity, it said.

The two countries inked the treaty on September 8 last year.

"The BIA between the Government of the Republic of India and the Government of the State of Israel... enters into force with effect from today, 04 July 2026," the ministry said.

Under the pact, India has cut down the local remedies exhaustion period for Israeli investors to three years.

Local remedies exhaustion means that investors must first try to resolve their disputes using the legal system of the host country before they can take the matter to international arbitration. Normally, India keeps a five-year period for this.

The India-Israel BIA also includes portfolio investments in a deviation from such treaties in the past. Israel is the first OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) member with which India has inked this agreement.

The agreement is expected to pave the way for increased bilateral investments between the two countries. During April 2020 and March 2026, India received USD 371.35 million foreign direct investment (FDI) from

little slow. Let us hope that we can fast-track it after the peace process is over," he said.

On February 24, India and Israel started the first round of negotiations for a free trade agreement (FTA) here with the aim to further boost commercial ties and promote investments, an official had said.

INDIA-EU TTC

Goyal also informed that on July 13, he will be travelling with External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar and Union Minister for Railways, Information and Broadcasting, and Electronics and IT, Ashwini Vaishnaw to Brussels for the India-EU Trade and Technology Council (TTC) meeting.

"Our effort is that it becomes a supplement to the FTA which we have finalised and will help us to smoothen the edges and make it easier to implement the FTA going forward," he said.

India and the 27-nation bloc EU has announced conclusion of negotiations for the trade pact. Both sides are finishing the legal scrubbing exercise of the pact text.

It is likely to be signed by the end of this year and may be implemented in 2027.

The second meeting of the India-EU TTC took place here on February 28, 2025. It was co-chaired on the Indian side by these three ministers.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen had established the India-EU TTC in April 2022 as a key bilateral platform to address challenges at the confluence of trade, trusted technology and security.

The TTC reflects a shared acknowledgement between the EU and India of the increasingly critical links between trade and technology, the potential of cooperation on these issues to enhance the economies of both partners, and the need to work together on the related security challenges.

The first meeting of the India-EU TTC was held in Brussels on May 16, 2023. Subsequently on November 24, 2023, a stock-taking meeting in virtual mode reviewed the progress made by the three TTC working groups on Strategic Technologies, Digital Governance, and Digital Connectivity; Clean and Green Technologies; and Trade, Investment and Resilient Value Chains. (PTI)

INDIA-ISRAEL FTA

Goyal said negotiations are going slow due to the ongoing West Asia crisis.

"Israel, as you are aware, is currently having the West Asia crisis. Even then, our negotiations, our discussions are going on, albeit a

Flipkart launches third edition of GOAT sale

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, July 4: Flipkart has announced the third edition of its GOAT Sale, offering customers across India a wide range of discounts on smartphones, electronics, appliances, fashion, beauty products, furniture and other categories from Saturday.

The sale will open early on July 3 for Flipkart Plus and Black members, while all other customers can gain access from Saturday.

Inspired by the popular phrase "GOAT" (Greatest of All Time), the campaign combines entertainment with shopping through humorous advertisements featuring the platform's GOAT mascot and a new character, Don the Buffalo.

Speaking about the campaign, Flipkart Vice President (Growth and Marketing) Pratik Shetty said the GOAT Sale has evolved into one of the company's signature shopping events by combining value, humour and popular culture to engage digitally connected consumers.

The sale will feature offers across major categories with participation from leading brands.

Customers will also have access to affordability options, including no-cost EMI facilities, instant loan approvals of up to ₹10 lakh, welcome vouchers for Flipkart Axis Bank Credit Card users and additional benefits for Flipkart SBI Credit Card holders.

FDA grants modified risk status to 20 ZYN nicotine pouch products

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, July 4: Philip Morris International (PMI) has announced that the United States Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has granted Modified Risk Tobacco Product (MRTP) orders for 20 variants of its ZYN nicotine pouch products, allowing the company to market them with an FDA-authorised reduced-risk claim for adult smokers who switch completely from cigarettes. The authorisation permits PMI to state that, "Using ZYN instead of cigarettes puts you at a lower risk of mouth cancer, heart disease, lung cancer, stroke, emphysema, and chronic bronchitis," for the approved products. PMI US Chief Executive Officer Stacey Kennedy described the decision as a significant milestone, saying it provides adult nicotine consumers with access to

science-based information demonstrating that switching completely from cigarettes to ZYN can reduce the risk of smoking-related diseases. The FDA's decision follows the agency's scientific review of evidence submitted under the Modified Risk Tobacco Product application process.

According to the regulator, the authorised products satisfy statutory requirements by significantly reducing harm and the risk of tobacco-related disease for individual tobacco users while benefiting overall public health.

The approval covers 20 ZYN nicotine pouch variants across multiple flavours and nicotine strengths, including Cool Mint, Peppermint, Spearmint, Wintergreen, Citrus, Coffee, Cinnamon, Smooth, Chill and Menthol in both 3 mg and 6 mg formulations.

Laser Power & Infra's ₹ 742cr IPO to open on July 9

KOLKATA, July 4: Kolkata-based Laser Power & Infra Ltd (LPIL), an integrated manufacturer of power cables, conductors and specialised products for the power transmission and distribution industry, will launch its ₹ 742 crore initial public offering (IPO) on July 9.

The issue will close on July 13, according to its red herring prospectus. The IPO comprises a fresh issue of equity shares worth ₹ 542 crore and an offer for sale (OFS) of shares aggregating up to ₹ 200 crore by promoter selling shareholders, according to filings.

Net proceeds from the fresh issue will be utilised towards repayment or prepayment of borrowings amounting to ₹490 crore and for general corporate purposes.

LPIL operates three manufacturing units in West Bengal with a combined installed capacity of 85,448 MT. The company reported revenue of ₹ 2,326 crore and net profit of ₹ 151 crore in FY26. Its order book stood at ₹ 3,243 crore as of March 31, 2026.

The firm, which also has an EPC division, is a licensed stranding partner of US-based TS Conductor, enabling it to locally manufacture advanced high-capacity conductors that are lighter, stronger and more energy-efficient than conventional ACSR or CFCC conductors. Its clientele includes Indian Railways, multiple Odisha distribution companies and private EPC players such as Montecarlo Ltd and KRYFS Power Components Ltd. (PTI)

Contd. from Page 1...

Break 'silence' over our protest

alleging that books on Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj, B R Ambedkar and Bhagat Singh had been desecrated during the incident. The letter said the alleged police action reflected a "disdain for knowledge itself", and questioned why students protesting for educational reforms could not maintain a small library at the protest site.

"Break your silence, listen to the voice of India's future before it is completely lost, and hold your minister Dharmendra Pradhan accountable," the CJP said.

The protest has drawn support from several political leaders and civil society members, including CPI(M)'s M A Baby, Brinda Karat, CPI's D Raja and Annie Raja, CPI(ML) Liberation's Dipankar Bhattacharya, social activist Yogendra Yadav, Supreme Court lawyer Prashant Bhushan, transparency activist Anjali Bhardwaj, RTI activist Nikhil Dey and Trinamool Congress MPs Sagarika Ghose and Mahua Moitra. (PTI)

Adani case: US judge urged

the charges after months of meetings with defence lawyers, reviewing hundreds of pages of submissions and conducting his own legal analysis. "The decision to seek dismissal was not a close call," he wrote.

The department cited six overarching reasons for dropping all charges, including that the alleged conduct was overwhelmingly centred in India, Indian authorities had investigated the allegations and found no actionable misconduct, investors suffered no financial losses, key evidence and witnesses were located abroad, the defendants were unlikely to ever appear before a US court, and the prosecution faced significant evidentiary hurdles. "This is a foreign case," McCotter wrote.

The indictment is about "several Indians (with maybe a European or two) allegedly trying to bridge other Indians by paying the Indian government via complex Indian rebate programs to get Indian contracts to provide Indian electricity to Indians in India."

"The United States pretending to be the world police can cause diplomatic strife and also wastes resources better spent on domestic concerns. India can better manage its internal systems than can prosecutors in Brooklyn and Washington," McCotter wrote.

The filing also argued the criminal securities fraud charges against Gautam Adani, Sagar Adani, and Cyril Cabanes lacked a sound legal basis because the alleged misconduct occurred almost entirely outside the United States and the securities transactions did not satisfy US jurisdictional requirements.

The DOJ said investors had not lost money because the notes at issue had either been fully repaid or continued to be serviced. It also questioned whether statements cited in the indictment amounted to criminal fraud, describing them as largely corporate "platitudes" and "puffery" that sophisticated institutional investors were unlikely to have relied upon. "The securities charges should never have been brought," McCotter wrote, adding that at most the allegations warranted civil, rather than criminal, resolution.

The department also said the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act charges no longer aligned with DOJ policy under Deputy Attorney General Todd Blanche's June 2025 memorandum directing prosecutors to focus on cases involving US national security, transnational criminal organisations, serious misconduct or harm to US companies.

"The alleged conduct did not involve criminal organizations, did not have any effect on US companies, did not in any way implicate national security, was not egregious, and has been the subject of investigations in India," the filing said. "Under the Blanche Memorandum, the FCPA charges should have been dismissed a year ago," McCotter also rejected media reports suggesting the DOJ sought dismissal in exchange for promises of US investment by the Adani Group, calling such claims "false".

"I would have sought dismissal of the securities charges regardless of any mentions of investments," he wrote. "The mention of potential investments could not have played any role." The department urged the judge to promptly dismiss the case, arguing continued judicial scrutiny only prolonged uncertainty for defendants facing charges the government itself no longer believed should proceed.

"In short, there was absolutely nothing improper with the Department's as-filed dismissal motion," McCotter wrote. "The defendants have been held in limbo on charges that should have been dropped a year ago -- or never brought in the first place." (PTI)

Iran begins dayslong funeral

set up at the Grand Mosalla resembled the stage where Khamenei once gave his speeches at a Husseiniyah at his compound in downtown Tehran. A chair like the one he once sat in while giving his sermons, complete with a microphone on a stand and a small table next to it. Just above it hung an image of the late Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, who died in 1989.

Khomeini's funeral saw chaotic scenes as millions thronged his mourning ceremony and trip to the cemetery. Khamenei's death, only the second time Iran has lost a supreme leader since the 1979 Islamic Revolution, came months earlier and gave authorities more time to prepare.

On Saturday, volunteers sprayed cooling water on crowds in the summertime heat as stands outside offered food and drink. Men and women congregated separately inside the Grand Mosque after being checked by metal detectors and body searches. Police armed with assault rifles stood guard on surrounding streets. Many stayed outside in the street, lounging under the shade of trees, because the city had shut down.

The caskets of his dead family members sat beneath Khamenei's, which had his black turban atop it, identifying him as a direct descendant of the Prophet Muhammad. The dead included the wife of Mojtaba Khamenei, whose possible appearance at the funeral remained unclear. He reportedly was wounded in the attack that killed his father.

"We attended the funeral to show that we are all committed to defending our country and religion," said Ali Kazemi, who came from the northwestern city of Tabriz, some 530 kilometres (330 miles) away from Tehran. Iran chose July 4, the 250th anniversary of the creation of the US, to begin the funeral. While authorities did not acknowledge the timing, crowds at the ceremony in Tehran chanted: "Death to America!" The refrain has been common in Iran since the 1979 Islamic Revolution, the US Embassy takeover and hostage crisis. They also cried: "Death to Israel!"

"We knocked the hell out of Iran," US President Donald Trump said in a speech at the same time in South Dakota in front of Mount Rushmore. "They want to settle so badly. We gave them a week off for a funeral." The American president was not forgotten in Tehran. In the crowd in the Grand Mosque, several mourners held a large flag that read: "#KillTrump."

As the ceremony went on, Iran's chief negotiator Kazem Gharibabadi criticised a joint statement overnight from British Prime Minister Keir Starmer and French President Emmanuel Macron, which suggested their militaries stood ready to patrol the Strait of Hormuz.

Control of the strait has been a major point of leverage for Iran, which has suggested it wants to charge vessels passing through it, upending decades of the world considering it an international waterway. "The security of Hormuz lies with the coastal states — the crisis-makers will be held accountable for the consequences of their adventurism," Gharibabadi wrote on X. "This is a serious warning."

Khamenei's body will be transported to cities in both Iran and neighbouring Iraq. Authorities have shut down streets, airspace and daily life for the mourning, which will end Thursday as he's buried at the Imam Reza shrine in Mashhad, Khamenei's place of birth.

Authorities offered no immediate attendance count for the event Saturday, which saw the crowds cycle in and out of the Grand Mosque and the surrounding streets. Other cities across Iran also held mourning ceremonies. On Sunday, a prayer for the dead is planned at the Grand Mosque. On Monday, his body and those of his family will be taken through the streets of Tehran, which likely will draw large crowds.

"I am here to say goodbye to my beloved leader Ali Khamenei," said a weeping Hananeh Mousavi, 27, who attended the funeral alongside her mother. "I never expected to see such a day. I wish I had died before this tragedy." (AP)

MLA visits disputed border

out swiftly. I have urged the administrations of both districts, along with their respective revenue departments, to submit a comprehensive joint report within one week," Goswami added.

The MLA emphasised that establishing a clear and undisputed boundary is crucial for maintaining peace and promoting development in the region.

He further said that after receiving the reports from the district administrations and revenue departments, he would personally brief Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on the ground realities.

"I would urge the state government to expedite the installation of official boundary demarcation posts along the disputed stretches to prevent future friction between the neighbouring districts," Goswami said. Local residents welcomed the MLA's assurance and expressed hope that decisive government intervention would finally bring a permanent solution to the long-pending boundary dispute.

Retired officer Sabrasi

after years of research and documentation. He described the publication as a valuable contribution to the enrichment of Karbi language and literature and encouraged readers to explore the work. Engti also urged the author to continue writing and publishing more books.

Sharing his experiences, Timung recalled his childhood in his ancestral village near Dokmoka, where he was the youngest of his siblings. While his elder brothers stayed in a hostel in Nagaon to pursue their studies, he remained at home and helped his family with agricultural work, including ploughing paddy fields, often reaching school late because of household responsibilities. However, he said these hardships never discouraged him from pursuing his education.

Timung also revealed that he spent his leisure hours in the office writing poems, articles and accounts of Karbi folklore. He expressed gratitude to Sarklim Taro and Sansing Engti for their support in bringing the book to publication.

Among those present were the author's wife, Larsi'im Terangpi; their children, Rupjilika Timungpi, Vemiro Timungpi and Borlongti Timung; his elder brother, Longki Timung; nephew Honsing Timung; family members, friends and well-wishers. The programme was anchored by retired All India Radio Diphu broadcaster Joanish Rongphar.

ASSOCIATE S&T WORKS IN LUMDING DIVISION

E-Tender No.: SNT-19-LMG-2026-27; **Dated:** 02-07-2026; E-Tender are invited by the undersigned for the following work: **Name of work :** Associate S&T works for shifting of S&T cables in connection with proposed RUB at ST-41. **Tender Value:** ₹18,99,268.80/-; **Bid Security:** ₹38,000/-; **Date & time of closing of tender at 15:30 hours on 24-07-2026.** Complete information alongwith the tender document of above e-tender will be available in the website www.ireps.gov.in

DSTE, Lumding
NORTHEAST FRONTIER RAILWAY
Serving Customers With A Smile

NAME CORRECTION

I am Rane Goyari, W/o No. 4343996H Ex NK (Late) Paresh, resident of Village: Dhentaghat, Vill.-2, Bini Engti, Dentahtag, Dist.-Karbi Anglong, Assam. My name has been incorrectly recorded as "Rone Bala Goyari" in the Family Pension Book instead of "Rane Goyari". And, for all intent and purposes the names "Rone Bala Goyari" and "Rane Goyari" belong to the same and single person, i.e., me.

NAME CORRECTION

I am Nang Prabina Mantaw (35), D/o Sri Chow Manik Mantaw, resident of Krishnapur, Namsai, Arunachal Pradesh- 792105. In my Aadhar Card bearing No. 828514073436 my name was incorrectly recorded as "Prabina Mantaw" instead of "Nang Prabina Mantaw" and my father's name as "Manik Mantaw" instead of "Chow Manik Mantaw". Therefore, the names "Prabina Mantaw" and "Nang Prabina Mantaw" belong to the same and single person, i.e., me and the names "Manik Mantaw" and "Chow Manik Mantaw" are both the names of my one and same father.

AFFIDAVIT

I, HUDROM SHYAMCHAND SINGH, S/o. HUDROM KERANI SINGH, resident of Langmeidong, P.O. Langmeidong, P.S.- Waikhong, district Kakching, Manipur through an affidavit before the Notary Public, Judicial Court, Diphu on 4th July, 2026 that my actual residential address is Langmeidong, P.O. Langmeidong, P.S.- Waikhong, district Kakching, Manipur as recorded in my Aadhaar No. 8952 1979 6330. But in my Aadhaar No. 8952 1979 6330 issued earlier where my address has been recorded as Langmeidong, P.O. Kakching, dist. Thoubal, Manipur.

Both the address Langmeidong, P.O. Langmeidong, P.S.- Waikhong, Dist. Kakching, Manipur and Langmeidong, P.O. Kakching, district Thoubal, Manipur are meant for same place, but my correct address is Langmeidong, P.O. Langmeidong, P.S.- Waikhong, district Kakching, Manipur. This affidavit is required as a piece of evidence to produce before the concerning authority declaring the facts stated above are true to the best of my knowledge, information and belief and it will be authenticated before the eye of law.

AFFIDAVIT

I, HUDROM SHYAMCHAND SINGH, S/o. HUDROM KERANI SINGH, resident of Langmeidong, P.O. Langmeidong, P.S. Waikhong, district Kakching, Manipur through an affidavit before the Notary Public, Judicial Court, Diphu on 4th July, 2026, that the actual name of my daughter is "HUDROM KELLINA DEVI" which is recorded in her Aadhaar and all other her documents, but in my service record her name has been as "HUDROM KELLINA DEVI" in place of her correct name "HUDROM KELLINA DEVI".

The names "HUDROM KELLINA DEVI" and "HUDROM KELLINA DEVI" is one and same person, but known by two different names but not different individuals.

An affidavit has been required to declare the actual name of my daughter "HUDROM KELLINA DEVI" and to keep record of her this correct name in all her documents including my Service Record.

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PUBLIC NOTICE

This is to inform the general public of area of MAILOO, BELBARI-1, BELBARI-2, WATIZUR NO.1, WATIZUR EKRAHOLA, WATIZUR BENGALI BASTI, DIKHELEM MAJ GAON, WASHAIKONG-1, WASHAIKONG-2, BOROWASHILING, MONBU NEPALI BASTI, JANGPHANGLANGSO NEPALI BASTI, DISMAO-1, CHOTOWASHILING-1 that the newly constructed 21.00 Km, 33kV overhead line from 33kV at Mailoo 33/11kV Sub-Station, West Karbi Anglong district to the newly constructed 33/11kV Block Bazar Sub-Station, Dima Hasao district, Assam under the ADSELR Scheme funded by AIB is ready and proposed to be charged and energized on Dtd. 06-07-2026 at 9:00 AM or onwards at any time.

Therefore, all concerned, and the general public are hereby cautioned not to approach, touch, climb or interfere with the said line and its associated equipment and keep safe distance from the 33kV line.

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If any eventuality caused due to violation of this notice, APDCL will not be responsible under any circumstances.

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Young Indians Parliament 2026 concludes with grand valedictory session

Assam Assembly Speaker lauds initiative as 25 students qualify for regional round

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, July 4: The two-day Young Indians Parliament (YIP) 2026 concluded on Saturday with a valedictory session presided over by Assam Legislative Assembly Speaker Ranjit Kumar Dass, who lauded the initiative for fostering democratic values and leadership among young students.

The programme, jointly organised by the Young Indians (YI), Guwahati Chapter, and the Assam State School Education Board (ASSEB), brought together more than 160 students who participated in a simulated parliamentary exercise designed to provide first-hand exposure to the functioning of India's democratic institutions.

Addressing the gathering, Dass said it was encouraging to witness the enthusiasm and commitment displayed by the participants.

Describing democracy as "a government of the people, by the people and for the people," he said such initiatives help students understand the true spirit of democratic governance while inspiring future legislators, parliamentarians and public leaders. He congratulated Young Indians for organising the programme and encouraged it to continue creating platforms that strengthen civic awareness among



the youth.

The concluding day's proceedings began with a Question Hour session during which student Members of Parliament questioned student ministers and the student Prime Minister on issues of national importance.

The session replicated parliamentary procedures through supplementary questions, ministerial responses and structured debates conducted under the supervision of the Speaker.

Participants deliberated on subjects including the impact of artificial intelligence on education and employment, the Make in India initiative, infrastructure develop-

ment and connectivity in the Northeast, regional development projects, internal security and external affairs.

The programme also featured a Zero Hour session, where participants raised matters of urgent public importance without prior notice.

Student ministers responded to the issues, followed by discussions involving both the Treasury and Opposition benches while adhering to parliamentary procedures.

ASSEB Vice Chairman Rukma Gohain Boruah congratulated Young Indians for successfully organising the event and said such programmes play a vital role in

nurturing leadership, confidence and responsible citizenship among students.

He also expressed the board's commitment to future collaborations.

Young Indians Guwahati Chapter Chair Dr Anubhuti Jain Deorah praised the participants for their maturity and thoughtful engagement during the programme and reaffirmed the organisation's commitment to promoting leadership, civic responsibility and informed citizenship among young people.

At the conclusion of the event, 25 participants were selected to represent the programme in the regional round.

Among the award winners, Rupal Jain received the Most Valuable Participant award, Keshab Kumar was named Best Parliamentarian, Himank Nazary won the Best Speaker Award, Lakshay Sethia received the Leadership Excellence Award, while Jai Ajmera and Bhavya Bharum were adjudged the Best Members from the ruling and opposition benches respectively.

Other awards recognised excellence in debating, research, parliamentary decorum, policy advocacy, innovation and community engagement.

Cachar administration issues alert after formalin leak into Jatinga river

Public advised against using river water as authorities monitor water quality and regulate fish sale

HT Correspondent

SILCHAR, July 4: The Cachar district administration has initiated a coordinated response after a tanker carrying formalin reportedly met with an accident on National Highway 27 between Jatinga and Lampu in neighbouring Dima Hasao district, resulting in the leakage of the chemical into the Jatinga River.

Acting on an advisory issued by the District Disaster Management Authority (DDMA), Dima Hasao, the DDMA, Cachar, has directed all concerned departments to implement immediate precautionary measures to safeguard public health and minimise environmental impact.

According to an official communication issued by the Additional District Commissioner and Chief Executive Officer of DDMA, Cachar, all departments have been instructed to coordinate closely with local authorities and submit Action Taken Reports to the office of the District Commissioner at the earliest.

The administration has directed officials to launch awareness campaigns in villages located along the river, informing residents about the potential health risks associated with contaminated river water.

Authorities have also been instructed to arrange immediate testing and continuous monitoring of the river's water quality through competent agencies.

Special emphasis has been placed on Public Water Supply Schemes drawing water from the Jatinga River.

Officials have been asked to closely monitor intake points and adopt necessary precautionary measures to ensure the safety of drinking water supplied to consumers.

The district administration has further directed local authorities to prevent livestock from entering or drinking water from the affected stretch of the river in coordination with village authorities.

Strict surveillance has also been ordered on the catching, transportation and sale of fish from the Jatinga River until the competent authority declares the water safe.

Departments have also been authorised to take any additional emergency measures required to protect public health, livestock, wildlife and the environment.

Meanwhile, the DDMA, Dima Hasao, has issued a public advisory asking residents living along the Jatinga River and downstream areas not to use

river water for drinking, cooking, bathing, washing or any other domestic purpose until further notice.

The advisory also urges people not to consume fish or other aquatic organisms collected from the affected stretch of the river.

Residents have been advised to avoid swimming, fishing or entering the river, while farmers have been requested not to use river water for irrigation until further assessment is completed.

Livestock owners have also been asked to ensure that animals and pets do not drink water from the river.

The advisory further states that anyone who develops symptoms such as eye or skin irritation, breathing difficulties, nausea, dizziness or vomiting after coming into contact with the contaminated water should immediately seek medical attention.

Appealing for public cooperation, the DDMA authorities of Cachar and Dima Hasao urged residents to remain calm, refrain from spreading rumours and rely only on official information issued by the district administration and emergency response agencies.

The advisory has come into force with immediate effect.

Tezpur youths build successful scientific goat meat venture

HT Correspondent

TEZPUR, July 4: Three educated youths from Assam have turned a business idea born during the COVID-19 pandemic into a successful enterprise, introducing scientifically processed, health-compliant goat meat under the brand Assam Hill Fresh and encouraging greater participation of local youth in entrepreneurship.

Based at Barua Doloni village in Puthimari near Tezpur, the venture was founded in 2021 by Satya Sundar Barua and Pranjal Barhakur of Tezpur along with Nomal Buragohain of Jorhat.

The entrepreneurs established a scientific goat farm and have since expanded into the sale of processed goat meat prepared in accordance with health and animal welfare standards.

Referring to the Assamese saying "Banijye Basati Lak-



shmi" popularised by Sahityarathi Lakshminath Bezbaroa, the founders said the enterprise reflects a changing mindset among educated Assamese youth, many of whom are increasingly exploring business and agriculture instead of relying solely on government employment.

According to the entrepreneurs, the goat meat is processed following scientific methods and in compliance with guidelines issued by the

Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) and the provisions of the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act.

Before being released for sale, the meat undergoes veterinary inspection by officials of the Animal Husbandry Department and is scientifically refrigerated to ensure hygiene and food safety.

Satya Sundar Barua said meat sold in open markets often remains exposed for extended periods, increasing the

risk of bacterial growth and compromising its quality.

In contrast, he said, scientifically processed and refrigerated meat retains its freshness and meets higher health standards, making it a safer option for consumers.

The processed goat meat is now available at several retail outlets in Tezpur and has received encouraging responses from health-conscious consumers.

The founders said appreciation from veterinary experts, doctors and officials of the Animal Husbandry Department has further strengthened confidence in the venture.

The success of Assam Hill Fresh is being seen as an example of how educated youth can create sustainable livelihoods through scientific farming, value addition and entrepreneurship while promoting safer food practices in the region.

Woman found murdered at Bokajan, crime branch takes over probe

HT Correspondent

BOKAJAN, July 4: A 30-year-old woman was found murdered under mysterious circumstances at Hatigarh under Bokajan Police Station in Karbi Anglong district on Saturday, prompting the Assam Police Crime Branch to take over the investigation.

The deceased has been identified as Barsha Kakati, whose body was found inside her residence after neighbours became concerned when she was not seen throughout the day and informed her relatives.

According to police sources, family members who entered the house found the woman dead with multiple injuries, including deep wounds on her neck believed to have been inflicted with a sharp weapon. The body was also found unclothed. Police are investigating all possible angles, including allegations of sexual assault, though officials said the

exact circumstances surrounding the crime would be established only after the investigation and post-mortem examination.

The incident has shocked residents of the area, particularly as it comes months after another tragedy in the victim's family.

According to local sources, Barsha's father is currently in judicial custody after allegedly murdering her mother earlier this year.

Following information about the incident, Bokajan Police reached the spot, secured the crime scene and initiated a preliminary investigation.

Given the gravity of the case, the investigation has been handed over to the Crime Branch of the Assam Police to ensure a comprehensive probe and identify those responsible for the crime.

Police said investigations are underway and no arrests had been made at the time of filing this report.

BTC constitutes CEM's Vigilance Cell to tackle corruption

HT Correspondent

KOKRAJHAR, July 4: The Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) Government has decided to constitute a Chief Executive Member's Vigilance Cell to investigate complaints related to corruption, malpractices and disproportionate assets involving officials of the council administration.

Announcing the decision on Saturday, BTC Chief Executive Member Hagrama Mohilary said the vigilance cell would be established to strengthen transparency and accountability in the functioning of the council government.

According to the BTC administration, the newly constituted vigilance cell will investigate sensitive complaints involving alleged corruption, administrative malpractices and cases of assets disproportionate to known sources of income among officials.

The cell will also monitor corruption-related cases reported from different parts of the Bodoland Territorial Region and initiate appropriate action in accordance with established procedures.

Officials said the initiative is aimed at reinforcing good governance and ensuring greater accountability within the BTC administration by facilitating prompt investigation of corruption-related complaints.

Hagrama Mohilary reviews development projects in Tamulpur

HT Correspondent

KOKRAJHAR, July 4: Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) Chief Executive Member Hagrama Mohilary recently chaired a district-level review meeting in Tamulpur to assess the physical and financial progress of ongoing infrastructure and development projects, stressing the need for timely implementation and optimum utilisation of funds.

The meeting, held at the conference hall of the District Commissioner's office in Tamulpur, was attended by Assam Handloom and Textiles Minister Biswajit Daimary, who joined the review of various developmental works being executed across the district.

Officials reviewed projects being implemented by the Public Works Department (Roads and Buildings), Panchayat and Rural Development Department and the Municipal Administration under schemes funded by the BTC, the State Government and the Central Government.

These included the State Own Priority Development (SOPD) Programme, State

Development Programme (SDP), Goodwill Fund, Infrastructure Development Fund (IDF), Assam Mala and the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY).

The meeting also examined the progress of works financed under the 15th Finance Commission and the 6th Assam State Finance Commission for Rural Local Bodies and Urban Local Bodies during the 2024-25 and 2025-26 financial years. Mohilary identified key bottlenecks affecting the timely execution of projects and directed departmental heads to take immediate corrective measures to eliminate delays.

He emphasised the need for effective physical and financial convergence across all schemes and cautioned against lapses that could lead to underutilisation of funds or compromise the quality of infrastructure.

He also stressed the importance of regular field-level monitoring and asked officials and executing agencies to remain accountable in ensuring the timely completion of projects.

Sujit Das takes Assam's manuscript art to global stage

HT Correspondent

NAGAON, July 4: Traditional Assamese manuscript painting, or Puthichitra, is gaining national and international recognition through the efforts of noted artist Sujit Das, whose hand-painted works have been presented to several eminent personalities in India and abroad.

Das has been using the centuries-old art form to honour distinguished individuals while simultaneously showcasing Assam's rich cultural heritage, artistic traditions and aesthetic legacy on the global stage.

Among the notable recipients of his Sattriya Puthichitra paintings are Prince William and Catherine, Princess of Wales (Kate Middleton) of the United Kingdom, as well as the 14th Dalai Lama, to whom the traditional artworks were presented as commemorative gifts.

His paintings have also been presented to several prominent Indian leaders, including Union Minister Sarbananda Sonowal, Union Minister of

State Pabitra Margherita, Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman and Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma.

Under an initiative of Nagaon University, Das's Puthichitra artworks have further been presented to Assam Education Minister Ranaj Pegu, Minister Keshab Mahanta, MLAs Rupak Sharma and Diptu Ranjan, acclaimed filmmaker Jahnu Barua, as well as several political leaders, writers, artists, researchers and other distinguished personalities from India and abroad.

Art and cultural experts believe that these presentations have significantly enhanced the visibility of Assam's traditional manuscript painting, giving the art form a renewed identity and wider recognition beyond the State.

They said Sujit Das's sustained efforts have made an important contribution to the conservation, revival and promotion of Puthichitra, helping preserve the centuries-old artistic tradition while introducing it to audiences across the country and around the world.

NEGTA opens 49th buyers & sellers meet in Guwahati

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, July 4: The North Eastern Garments Traders Association (NEGTA) on Saturday inaugurated the 49th edition of its Buyers & Sellers Meet, a three-day trade exhibition aimed at strengthening small garment businesses across Assam and enhancing the retail ecosystem in the Northeast.

The exhibition opened with the ceremonial lighting of the lamp before Lord Ganesha by members of the association.

NEGTA President Shekhar Agarwal said the Buyers & Sellers Meet, organised twice annually, has evolved into one of the country's prominent garment trade platforms. He said the event enables small and medium garment retailers from Assam and the Northeast to connect directly with leading manufacturers, brands, designers and suppliers, allowing them to source quality products at competitive prices.

General Secretary Varun Roongta said the exhibition has been curated for the upcoming festive season and features the latest Autumn-Winter 2026 collections. The main venue is Hotel Daayco, with Hotel Atithi, Hotel Vishwaratna, Hotel Rajmahal and Shree Mahavir Dharmasthal serving as associate venues.

More than 200 exhibitors representing over

600 national and international brands are participating in the exhibition, showcasing men's, women's and children's apparel, footwear and fashion accessories. Organisers expect over 650 retailers and traders from Assam and other Northeastern states to attend the event for sourcing, business networking and advance bookings.

According to the organisers, the exhibition has been designed to address the evolving needs of garment retailers by providing access to the latest products, competitive pricing and new business opportunities. Public Relations Officer Rajeev Ajitaria said NEGTA remains committed to promoting trade and commerce while also undertaking social welfare initiatives.

The event is being coordinated by the association's office-bearers and executive committee members, including Vice President Anil Kochar, Treasurer Shailesh Goenka, Executive Committee members Chandan Sethia, Chandan Pareek, Ajay Baradia, Dinesh Pareek, Ravinder Jain, Deepak Agarwal, Sanjay Agarwal, Raj Kumar Chaudhary and Sanjit Jain, with support from other members of the association.

The three-day Autumn-Winter Collection 2026 exhibition will conclude on July 6.

BTC releases booklet showcasing Bodoland's butterfly diversity

Publication highlights over 346 species and promotes conservation, research and eco-tourism

HT Correspondent

KOKRAJHAR, July 4: Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) Chief Executive Member Hagrama Mohilary on Saturday released a special booklet documenting the rich butterfly diversity of the Bodoland forest landscape, reaffirming the council's commitment to biodiversity conservation and sustainable eco-tourism.

The booklet, published by the BTC Forest Department, was released at a programme held at the BTC Secretariat Conference Hall at Bodofo Nwgrw in Kokrajhar.

It contains a checklist and photographs of common butterfly species recorded in the region, highlighting the area's remarkable ecological significance.

Spread across 3,653 sq km, the Bodoland forest landscape comprises tropical evergreen, semi-evergreen, moist mixed-deciduous forests and alluvial grasslands situated at the confluence of the

Indo-Malayan and Indo-Gangetic biogeographic zones.

The region supports more than 346 recorded butterfly species, including several rare, endemic and threatened species, making it one of the richest butterfly habitats in Northeast India.

According to butterfly experts associated with the North East Butterfly Meet Network, while Assam is home to around 620 butterfly species, more than half have been recorded from the Bodoland forest landscape alone.

They believe the region has the potential to support over 400 species due to its unique geographical location, which serves as an ecological corridor connecting the Eastern Himalayas, the Indo-Malayan region and the Indo-Gangetic plains.

The publication highlights several rare species found in the Ultapani-Manas landscape, including the endemic Yellow-



crested Spangle and Swinhoe's Flat, along with Eastern Himalayan butterflies such as the Great Windmill, Moore's Cupid, Mussoorie Bush Bob and Green Awlet. Indo-Malayan species such as the Witch, as well as the rarely recorded In-

dian Cupid and White-line Bushbrown, further underline the ecological importance of the region.

The booklet also documents the spectacular seasonal mud-puddling congregations witnessed during the monsoon in areas such as Ultapani and Raimona, where hundreds of butterflies gather to obtain essential minerals.

Other behaviours such as hill-topping, territorial patrolling, nectar feeding and host plant-based egg laying are also highlighted as indicators of healthy forest ecosystems.

Officials said butterflies play a crucial role as pollinators, indicators of ecosystem health and an integral part of the forest food chain, making their conservation essential for maintaining ecological balance.

The publication is the result of several years of scientific documentation carried out by researchers from Bodoland University in collaboration with the North East

Butterfly Meet Network and other regional experts.

Besides serving as a scientific reference for researchers and students, it has also been developed as an educational resource for indigenous Bodo communities and frontline forest personnel while promoting responsible nature tourism.

The Forest Department appealed to citizens and visitors to support butterfly conservation by protecting native host plants, preserving mud-puddling habitats, avoiding disturbance to butterflies, driving cautiously on forest roads and discouraging the illegal collection and trade of butterflies and other wildlife.

Officials said the publication reflects the BTC Forest Department's continued efforts towards biodiversity conservation, scientific research, environmental education and the promotion of Bodoland's unique natural and cultural heritage through sustainable eco-tourism.



By: Himangshu Ranjan Bhuyan

The evolution of Assamese identity is incomplete without acknowledging the towering presence of Srimanta Sankardeva, whose life and work in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries not only gave Assam a religious awakening but also provided it with a cultural and social foundation that continues to define the community's sense of self. Sankardeva was more than a saint; he was a poet, playwright, musician, social reformer, philosopher, and cultural architect. His contributions went far beyond devotional spirituality, touching

every aspect of Assamese life, from language and literature to art, music, theatre, and community organisation. Through his remarkable vision and creativity, Sankardeva forged a cohesive and inclusive framework that bound together diverse communities of Assam, thereby shaping an identity that was distinctly Assamese while being simultaneously rooted in broader Indic civilisational values.

Born in 1449 at Bordowa in Nagaon district, Sankardeva lived during a time of turbulence and transition. Assam was a mosaic of tribes, castes, and communities, each with its own customs, rituals,

and faith systems. The society was marked by hierarchical divisions, ritual orthodoxy, and frequent conflicts. Into this fragmented world entered Sankardeva, whose central mission was to unify people through a spiritual and cultural philosophy based on devotion to a single deity—Lord Krishna. This philosophy, known as Ekasarana Dharma or Neo-Vaishnavism, emphasised direct devotion without the mediation of elaborate rituals, animal sacrifices, or rigid priestly control. It promoted bhakti through chanting, singing, and collective worship, making spirituality accessible to all, irrespective of caste, creed, or social background. This egalitarian approach resonated deeply with the common people and slowly became a unifying thread across Assamese society.

The institutionalisation of this philosophy was achieved through the creation of Naamghars and Sattras. Naamghars, or prayer halls, were not just spaces of worship but also became centres of community life, where social and cultural issues were discussed, and collective decisions were taken. This practice democratized religion and created a sense of participatory identity. The Sattras, monastic institutions established by Sankardeva and his disciples, further strengthened this system by acting as repositories of art, literature, music, dance, and religious learning. They nurtured a unique cultural tradition that not only ensured the continuity of Sankardeva's teachings but also transmitted them across generations. Even today, Naamghars and Sattras remain vital pillars of Assamese society, symbols of unity and moral anchorage.

Sankardeva's vision extended to literature and language, where his contributions shaped the linguistic and literary identity of Assam. He composed devotional songs known as Borgeets, rich in lyrical beauty and spiritual fervour. These songs, written in the lyrical Brajavali language, are still sung in every Naamghar, creating an unbroken continuity of tradition. His Kirtan Ghoxa remains one of the most influential religious texts of Assam, providing philosophical clarity to the principles of Neo-Vaishnavism. Through his translations and adaptations of Sanskrit scriptures into the local idiom, Sankardeva made religious knowledge accessible to ordinary people, empowering them through a shared cul-

tural vocabulary. In doing so, he elevated the Assamese language into a literary medium capable of expressing profound spiritual and artistic ideas, thereby consolidating linguistic identity.

Another groundbreaking contribution of Sankardeva was his invention of the Ankiya Naat and the theatrical tradition of Bhaona. These one-act plays, performed with music, dance, masks, and costumes, brought to life episodes from the life of Krishna and other mythological narratives. More than entertainment, Bhaona served as a didactic medium, conveying religious and moral messages to a largely non-literate society. The performances were community events, bringing together villagers of all backgrounds, thus reinforcing the shared cultural experience that transcended social divisions. This integration of literature, performance, and spirituality made Sankardeva not only a religious leader but also the father of Assamese theatre.

His genius further manifested in the creation of the dance form Sattriya, originally conceived as a devotional performance art within the Sattras. Over time, it evolved into a classical dance tradition of India, recognised nationally and globally. Sattriya, with its intricate gestures, storytelling techniques, and deep spiritual resonance, embodies Sankardeva's vision of art as a medium of devotion and cultural preservation. Alongside music, literature, and theatre, Sattriya dance continues to be a marker of Assamese identity, linking the people of the state to a legacy that is both sacred and artistic.

Sankardeva also had a remarkable eye for visual culture. He encouraged the weaving of the Vrindavani Vastra, a grand textile tapestry depicting episodes from Krishna's life. This work of art, created under his guidance, stands as a testimony to Assam's artistic and devotional excellence. He inspired the craft of mask-



making, particularly used in Bhaona performances, which has today developed

into a distinctive cultural tradition still practised in Sattras like Samaguri Satra. These artistic innovations enriched the cultural life of Assam and provided the community with tangible symbols of its identity. What set Sankardeva apart was his inclusiveness. Unlike many religious reformers of his time who focused on narrow sectarian goals, Sankardeva envisioned a society that embraced diversity. His writings explicitly mention tribes such as the Bodo, Karbi, Miri, Khasi, and Garo, acknowledging them as integral to the Assamese fold. By extending spiritual equality to all, he broke down rigid caste barriers and tribal divisions, weaving an identity that celebrated pluralism. This inclusive ethos resonates strongly in modern Assam, where multiple ethnicities coexist within the broader Assamese cultural framework. Sankardeva's philosophy remains a reminder that Assamese identity is not monolithic but a shared creation of many voices, bound by a common cultural fabric. The significance of Sankardeva's legacy did not remain confined to his own era. Over centuries, his ideas provided Assamese society with resilience against external influences and cultural homogenisation. During colonial times, when Assam was subjected to economic exploitation and cultural marginalisation, the Sattras-Namghar tradition kept alive the distinct cultural identity of the people. In the modern period, institutions like the Srimanta Sankardeva Kalakshetra in Guwahati testify to the enduring relevance of his vision. This cultural complex preserves and promotes the rich traditions initiated by the saint, ensuring that his ideals continue to inspire new generations.

At the same time, Sankardeva's philosophy has not remained untouched by critique. Scholars and cultural observers have noted that while Neo-Vaishnavism offered inclusivity, over time some of its institutions developed their own hierarchies and orthodoxy. Certain tribal rituals and indigenous practices were marginalised as the Neo-Vaishnavite framework consolidated itself. These tensions reflect the dynamic and contested nature of cultural identity, reminding us that legacies must continually adapt to remain true to their original spirit of openness and inclusivity. Yet, these critiques do not diminish Sankardeva's immense contribution; rather, they underscore the

need to re-engage with his vision in ways that respond to contemporary challenges of pluralism and cultural negotiation.

Today, Sankardeva's presence in Assam is not merely historical memory but a living influence. His songs echo in Naamghars, his plays are performed in villages and cities alike, his dance form graces national stages, and his inclusive philosophy informs social and political discourse. Leaders across the spectrum invoke his legacy to emphasise harmony, unity, and cultural pride. Awards in his name celebrate individuals contributing to literature, art, and social life, extending his vision into modern times. More than five centuries after his birth, Sankardeva continues to serve as the cultural conscience of Assam, a figure who embodies its deepest values while inspiring its future directions. The shaping of Assamese identity through Sankardeva's work can be understood as a multidimensional achievement. Spiritually, he provided a simple, egalitarian path of devotion that appealed to the masses. Culturally, he enriched the Assamese language, literature, music, theatre, dance, and visual arts, creating a comprehensive artistic tradition that distinguished Assam from its neighbours. Socially, he broke down hierarchies and created institutions that fostered community life, participation, and inclusivity. Politically, though indirectly, he gave Assam a cohesive identity that helped it survive the challenges of colonialism, migration, and modernisation. His influence thus extends from the intimate rhythms of daily prayer to the broad contours of Assamese self-definition.

As Assam navigates the complexities of the twenty-first century—issues of ethnic assertion, migration, linguistic preservation, and globalisation—Sankardeva's legacy remains deeply relevant. His insistence on inclusiveness amidst diversity, his faith in community-based institutions, and his vision of culture as a unifying force offer valuable lessons. If Assamese identity today stands as a blend of multiplicity and unity, it is because Sankardeva, centuries ago, laid down the foundations of a society that could embrace difference while affirming a common cultural spirit. He was not merely a saint of his time but the soul force of a people, shaping a legacy that continues to sustain Assam's sense of self in an ever-changing world.

Nature, Birds and human culture: The silent pulse of civilization



By: Dr Ashok Kumar Laskar

Even before the gentle light of the morning descends upon the earth, the chirping of birds from distant tree branches catches our ears. Sometimes it is the long melody of the cuckoo (Kuli), sometimes the soft cooing of the dove (Kapau), and at other times, the chatter of the bulbul that enlivens the entire surroundings. These sounds are not just noises; they are the silent language of nature. Through generations, humans have grown up listening to this language, feeling the change of seasons, and understanding the simple beauty of life. That is why the relationship of nature and birds with human life, literature, songs, festivals, and culture is deeply profound and intimate.

Birds build the forests, and the forests cover the earth

Though these lines sound simple, they contain a deep truth about life and nature. Forests are not just places filled with trees; they are the very foundation of life for countless living beings. Birds build nests on tree branches, look for food in the wilderness, and live their lives safely. The existence of countless animals like deer, elephants, tigers, rhinos, and monkeys depends entirely on forest lands. The destruction of forests means destroying the shelter of these animals. That is why it is said—“Only if forests exist, will living beings survive; otherwise, the earth will turn into a desert.”

The relationship between humans and nature is as ancient as time, and the bond between humans and birds is just as deep. Through the ages, humans have gathered education, feelings, and experiences from the movements, voices, and behaviors of birds. That is why many metaphors, proverbs, and folk beliefs centered around birds have developed in the Assamese language, literature, culture, songs, and social life.

Assam is not only a land filled with natural beauty; it is a wonderful meeting place of nature and culture. The mighty Brahmaputra, green fields, tea gardens, dense forests, and the presence of colorful birds have given Assam a unique form. With the change of seasons, the nature of Assam also takes on new forms. Especially during the time of Rongali Bihu, the air and sky of rural areas seem to come alive with new energy. The cooing of the dove, the melody of the cuckoo, the sound of the dhol and pepa, and the gentle spring breeze fill the entire surroundings with joy.

The intimate relationship between humans and nature is also clearly seen in the Assamese “Kati Bihu” or “Kongali Bihu”. Lamps are lit in the paddy fields to pray for the well-being of the crops. In “Magh Bihu” or “Bhogali Bihu”, the agrarian society expresses its gratitude for the gifts of nature. All these festivals show that in Assamese society, nature is not just a means of survival; it is an inseparable part of culture and faith.

The deep influence of birds is also seen in the culture of various indigenous communities of Assam. The use of bird feathers is especially noticeable in the traditional dance of the Naga community. They perform dances by wearing colorful feathers on their heads. These feathers are symbols of courage, pride, and tribal heritage. The beak of the hornbill bird (Dhanesh) or ornaments shaped like it are matters of pride for many indigenous communities. The mention of nature and birds is also prominently seen in the songs, music, and dance culture of the Mising, Bodo, Karbi, and Dimas communities.

The place of birds is also very important in religious and folk theatre culture. In Assamese Bhaona, the artists performing the roles of demons (Asuras) or warriors wear bird feathers on their heads. These feathers express heroism, power, and a fierce look. These elements of folk culture show that through the ages, humans have

respected birds not just as creatures of nature, but also as a part of their culture and heritage.

Every single creature has a special role in nature. The vulture (Xagun), which humans often consider as inauspicious, is actually a highly beneficial bird for nature. By eating the carcasses of dead animals, it keeps the environment clean and prevents the spread of diseases. That is why the vulture is also called the “cleaner of nature” (Prakritir Jamadar). But it is a matter of sorrow that today's new generation rarely gets to see vultures flying in the sky. Due to the use of toxic chemicals in forests and agricultural lands, and environmental pollution, this useful bird is on the verge of extinction.

Similarly, the greater adjutant stork (Hargila) needs tall trees and a safe environment to survive. But due to the destruction of trees, woodlands, and habitats, its numbers are also gradually decreasing. Many birds today are seen only in pictures or in books. This situation portrays a deep crisis looming over biodiversity.

In earlier times, humans thought of nature as a part of their own family. They were afraid to cut down trees and hesitated to harm animals and birds. They viewed nature as God and worshipped it. Humans knew—if nature survives, only then will humans survive. But in the race of modern civilization, humans have gradually started to forget that feeling. In the name of development, hills are being blasted and cut down, rivers are being polluted, and forest lands are being destroyed. As a result, the natural balance of the earth is being ruined. Wild animals are coming into human settlements due to lack of food and causing damage. Temperatures are rising, the natural cycle of seasons is changing, and dangers like floods, droughts, landslides, and epidemics are continuously increasing. Food crises are being created, and forest-based medicinal plants are becoming extinct.

Although humans have advanced a long way today through science and technology, humans are still helpless before nature. Humans can build buildings and invent machines, but they cannot create a forest. Humans can change the course of a river, but they cannot decide whether it will rain or not. That is why thinking about conquering nature is a false pride that can vanish in a moment.

Nature is never an enemy to humans. It silently gives shelter, clean air, and food to humans, and keeps them alive. But when humans destroy nature for their own selfishness, nature also silently shows its consequences. When forests are destroyed, the patterns of rain change, rivers dry up, and the soil loses its fertility. When the habitats of animals and birds are destroyed, the natural balance of nature breaks down. As a result, various diseases, epidemics, and natural disasters disrupt human life.

The sky that was once filled with the chirping of birds, and the forest that was once alive with the pulse of life, are gradually becoming silent because of human greed. This silence is not just the silence of nature; it is also a dangerous warning sign (Ashani Sanket) for the future of humanity.

Therefore, protecting nature, animals, birds, and the environment in today's time is a great responsibility. Planting trees, stopping forest de-

struction, protecting rivers and hills, giving safety to animals and birds, and loving nature—the future of a beautiful world lies within these actions.

“The house sparrow goes to teach the swan how to walk, and later forgets its own walk and ends up hopping around”—

This proverb expresses a deep truth about human nature and behavior. If one blindly imitates others without understanding their own limits and uniqueness, they lose their own identity in the end. Similarly, people who show a lack of practical knowledge or judgment are called “Pet Kuli” (selfish/secretive cuckoo) or “Chaku Muda Kuli” (blinded cuckoo) in society. From this, it can be understood that humans observed the behavior of birds very closely and made that experience a part of social life.



The beauty of a bird is described in a folk saying as—“Kam chorai's red mark on the forehead, with a spot of vermilion put on it.”

The place of birds in Assamese folk culture and Bihu songs is highly respectful. The names of birds like the dove (Kapau), cuckoo (Kuli), peacock (Mora), bulbul, myna (Salika), and hill myna (Moina) are uttered with deep affection in Assamese songs. Especially, the dove (Kapau) is a symbol of love, spring (Bohag), and youth in Assamese culture. That is why it is said in a Bihu song—

“The dove chirps from forest to forest, Bohag arrives with dance and music.”

In these lines of the song, the joy of Bohag's arrival and the lively form of nature are beautifully expressed through the voice of the dove. The voice of the cuckoo is considered the message of spring's arrival. The melody of the bulbul is imagined as a symbol of a sweet voice.

“Oh myna bird, your sweet voice”—in this song, affectionate and intimate feelings are expressed through the sweet voice and restless nature of the myna bird.

“Woke up in the morning and saw a pair of myna birds (Salika), playing in the dust”—

In these lines, the Salika bird is presented as a symbol of good luck and happiness. In Assamese folk belief, seeing a pair of Salika birds is consid-

ered auspicious. Seeing two Salika birds playing in the gentle environment of the morning awakens a feeling of hope and joy in the human mind.

The relationship of birds with Assamese agricultural life is also deep. The sight of birds coming to eat grain in the paddy fields is a very familiar picture of public life. That is why it is said in a folk song—

“Shoo, shoo, oh wind, bird do not eat my paddy,

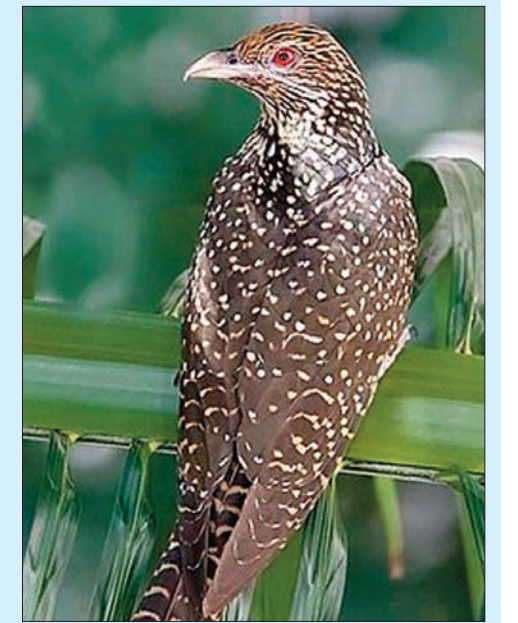
I will give you fried grain (Kurai) to peck.”

In these lines, the simple and earthy relationship between the farmer and the bird is beautifully brought out. Even though the words may sound like anger, a feeling of closeness with nature is hidden within them.

Owls (Phecha) and kingfishers (Machroka) also play an important role in maintaining the balance of nature. The owl is a nocturnal bird that usually searches for food at night and helps agricultural life by eating rats, insects, and pests. Although the voice of the owl is often considered auspicious or inauspicious in society, it is actually a highly beneficial bird for the environment. On the other hand, the kingfisher catches fish from the water with its long beak and sharp vision to sustain its life. Seen near rivers, wetlands, and ponds, the bright colors and fast speed of this bird greatly enhance the beauty of nature. Both these birds show that every single creature has its own role and special significance in nature.

Humans must understand—it is not possible to conquer nature; nature can only be respected and loved. Coexistence, not conflict with nature, is the only way of life. The earth will remain alive only if the chirping of birds, green forests, the flow of rivers, and the spring breeze survive.

Because in the end, there is only one truth—if nature survives, only then will humans survive. And if nature gets angry, no civilization, no power, and no human can escape from its punishment. There are many examples in history where the furious form of nature destroyed entire nations in a moment.



250-year celebration of American Independence

By: Dr Ratan Bhattacharjee

The year 2026 marks one of the most remarkable milestones in modern history as the United States of America celebrates the 250th anniversary of its Independence. Popularly known as the Semiquincentennial, this historic occasion is much more than a birthday celebration. It is a moment of national reflection, democratic renewal, historical remembrance, and collective aspiration. Two hundred and fifty years ago, on July 4, 1776, the thirteen American colonies adopted the Declaration of Independence, proclaiming that all people are created equal and are endowed with certain inalienable rights including life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. Those revolutionary words transformed not only North America but also inspired freedom movements across the world. The journey of the United States from a small collection of colonies along the Atlantic coast to one of the world's most influential nations is a story of extraordinary courage, innovation, resilience, and continual reinvention. The American experiment in democracy has witnessed triumphs and failures, civil wars and civil rights movements, economic booms and devastating recessions, scientific breakthroughs and social transformations. Yet through every challenge, the Constitution, democratic institutions, and the enduring belief in liberty have remained central to the nation's identity.

I never imagined I would be in America on July 4 this year at the 250-year Semiquincentennial celebration of its Independence in Virginia and would have the rare privilege of witnessing the magnificent fireworks, patriotic parades, historical exhibitions, concerts, and community festivities planned for this extraordinary occasion. In Virginia, the celebrations assume an even more special significance. As one of the original thirteen colonies and the birthplace of several Founding Fathers, Virginia occupies a unique place in the story of American independence. Every historic town, monument, and public square seems to echo the voices of those who dreamed of a free nation two and a half centuries ago. During my earlier visit to the United States as an International Visiting Professor at American universities, I was fortunate enough to experience the dazzling Fourth of July celebrations. I still remember the brilliant fireworks illuminating the night sky like showers of countless stars, while families gathered in parks wrapped in the colours of the American flag. Music, laughter, children's excitement, and the spirit of togetherness transformed every street into a celebration of freedom. Those memories have remained vivid in my mind.

This year, however, the experience promises to be far more memorable. A nation celebrates its Independence every year, but a 250th anniversary

comes only once in history. It is not merely a festive occasion; it is a celebration of democracy, resilience, and the enduring ideals of liberty and equality. Across Virginia, historic landmarks, museums, riversides, and public parks are expected to become vibrant centres of patriotic celebrations. As an observer from India, the world's largest democracy, I feel privileged to witness this historic milestone firsthand. Beyond the spectacular fireworks and colourful festivities, I hope to experience the deeper emotions that unite generations of Americans in honouring their remarkable journey from revolution to global leadership. It is a rare opportunity to watch history being celebrated where so much of that history was first written.

The 250th anniversary invites Americans to look back upon the sacrifices of the founding generation. Visionaries such as George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Franklin, John Adams, Alexander Hamilton, and countless unnamed soldiers, farmers, artisans, women, and indigenous participants shaped the earliest chapters of American history. The Revolutionary War was not merely a military struggle against British colonial rule. It represented a profound philosophical assertion that governments derive their powers from the consent of the governed. This revolutionary principle later influenced democratic constitutions and independence movements throughout Europe, Latin America, Asia, and Africa.

However, the American story has never been simple. The ideals expressed in the Declaration of Independence were not fully realized for all people in 1776. Enslaved Africans remained in bondage. Native American communities faced displacement and violence. Women lacked political rights. Therefore, the history of the United States has also been a long journey toward making its founding promises more inclusive. The abolition of slavery after the Civil War, the Reconstruction Amendments, the women's suffrage movement, the Civil Rights Movement led by Martin Luther King Jr., and continuing struggles for equality all demonstrate that democracy is a living process requiring constant effort and vigilance.

The celebration of 250 years therefore becomes an opportunity not merely to commemorate victories but also to acknowledge historical injustices with honesty. Mature democracies strengthen themselves not by ignoring uncomfortable truths but by confronting them with courage. Historical reflection allows new generations to appreciate how freedom has expanded over time through activism, constitutional reforms, and civic participation. Economically, the United States has experienced an astonishing transformation. During the eighteenth century it was largely an agricultural society dependent on farming and maritime trade. The nineteenth century witnessed

rapid industrialization, railroad expansion, westward migration, and technological innovation. The twentieth century established America as an industrial and scientific superpower. From automobiles and aviation to computers and the internet, American inventions reshaped global civilization. The twenty-first century has further consolidated the nation's leadership in artificial intelligence, biotechnology, renewable energy research, aerospace engineering, and digital entrepreneurship.

The story of American innovation is inseparable from its universities and research institutions. Higher education has played a decisive role in nurturing creativity, scientific inquiry, and technological advancement. Universities have attracted talented students and scholars from every continent, making the United States one of the world's foremost centers of knowledge production. Nobel Prize winners, groundbreaking scientists, visionary entrepreneurs, and influential artists have all contributed to America's intellectual landscape. The nation's openness to diverse ideas has often been one of its greatest strengths.

Immigration has similarly shaped the American identity. Throughout two and a half centuries, millions of immigrants arrived seeking opportunity, freedom, and security. People from Europe, Asia, Africa, Latin America, and the Middle East brought their languages, cuisines, music, literature, traditions, and entrepreneurial spirit. The phrase "nation of immigrants" reflects this continuous enrichment of American society. While debates over immigration policy have remained part of political discourse, the contributions of immigrant communities to science, medicine, business, education, and culture are undeniable. Their stories are woven into the broader narrative of the American dream. The concept of the American dream itself has evolved over generations. Originally associated with political freedom and economic opportunity, it now encompasses education, innovation, entrepreneurship, artistic creativity, and social mobility. Although economic inequality and rising living costs present serious challenges, the dream continues to inspire people worldwide. The belief that talent, determination, and hard work can create new opportunities remains a powerful element of the nation's identity.

The celebration of America's 250th anniversary also highlights the country's remarkable cultural diversity. American literature, music, cinema, theatre, architecture, and visual arts have influenced global culture in profound ways. Writers such as Walt Whitman, Mark Twain, Ernest Hemingway, Toni Morrison, Maya Angelou, and countless others expanded literary horizons. Jazz, blues, country, rock and roll, hip-hop, and contemporary popular music emerged from uniquely American experiences while becoming global cultural lan-

guages. Hollywood transformed storytelling into an international industry, while American museums, libraries, orchestras, and cultural institutions continue to preserve and promote artistic excellence. Scientific exploration represents another defining chapter in the American story. The Apollo Moon landing remains one of humanity's greatest achievements. American space exploration continues through advanced lunar missions, Mars exploration, and international collaboration in space science. The country's investment in research has produced medical breakthroughs, satellite communications, climate science, and countless innovations that benefit people worldwide.

America's democratic institutions have likewise evolved through constitutional interpretation, judicial review, electoral reforms, and peaceful transfers of power. Although political polarization has intensified in recent years, the resilience of democratic institutions continues to attract global attention. The 250th anniversary encourages citizens to renew their commitment to civic engagement, respectful dialogue, constitutional values, and democratic participation. Democracy flourishes only when citizens actively protect it through informed voting, public service, and constructive debate. The military has also played a significant role in American history. From the Revolutionary War to global peacekeeping missions, generations of service members have defended the nation's security and constitutional principles. Memorials across the country honor those who sacrificed their lives during conflicts including the Civil War, the World Wars, Korea, Vietnam, Iraq, Afghanistan, and numerous humanitarian missions. During the Semiquincentennial, veterans and active-duty personnel receive special recognition for their contributions to national service.

The year-long commemorations include historical exhibitions, educational programs, museum initiatives, public lectures, cultural festivals, concerts, community service projects, and nationwide celebrations. Schools encourage students to study local history and understand the contributions of diverse communities. Libraries digitize historical archives, while museums curate exhibitions highlighting the evolution of American democracy, science, technology, arts, and civil rights. Communities large and small participate in parades, reenactments, public performances, and civic discussions that connect local histories to the national narrative. Environmental stewardship has emerged as an important theme during the nation's 250th anniversary. Americans increasingly recognize the importance of protecting national parks, forests, rivers, wildlife, and natural resources for future generations. Conservation efforts initiated over the past century continue to evolve alongside new commitments to sustainability, renewable energy, and climate resilience. Preserving America's

extraordinary natural landscapes reflects another dimension of patriotism and responsibility.

The global significance of the United States cannot be separated from its partnerships with democratic nations around the world. Through diplomacy, scientific cooperation, humanitarian assistance, educational exchanges, and economic collaboration, America has contributed to international development and global stability. While foreign policy has often generated debate both domestically and internationally, the nation's commitment to shape global affairs. The relationship between India and the United States provides an excellent example of evolving international friendship. Shared democratic traditions, educational partnerships, technological cooperation, cultural exchanges, and expanding economic ties have strengthened bilateral relations. Indian-American communities have become among the most successful immigrant groups in the country, making remarkable contributions to medicine, engineering, academia, entrepreneurship, public service, and scientific research. Their achievements symbolize the opportunities available within an open and diverse society.

For younger generations, the Semiquincentennial serves as an educational milestone rather than merely a historical celebration. Students are encouraged to think critically about the nation's past, appreciate its achievements, understand its shortcomings, and imagine its future. Civic education emphasizes constitutional literacy, community engagement, volunteerism, and responsible citizenship. The anniversary reminds young Americans that democracy is inherited but never guaranteed; each generation must strengthen and preserve it. Technology is transforming the ways history is experienced. Virtual reality, digital archives, interactive museums, artificial intelligence, and immersive storytelling enable millions of people to explore historical events with unprecedented accessibility. The 250th anniversary therefore bridges the eighteenth century and the digital age, connecting revolutionary ideals with twenty-first-century innovation.

As fireworks illuminate the skies across cities and towns on Independence Day 2026, they symbolize far more than patriotic festivities. They represent the enduring light of democratic ideals first articulated in Philadelphia two and a half centuries ago. They honor generations who built the nation through sacrifice, labor, creativity, and hope. They acknowledge both remarkable achievements and unfinished responsibilities. Above all, they remind the world that democracy is not a destination but an ongoing journey. The United States at 250 stands as a nation shaped by revolution, strengthened through diversity, challenged by change, and inspired by possibility.

Saleha's Bakery

By: Meenakshi Gogoi

The appealing maroon-and-yellow-painted Saleha's bakery, located at the heart of Gaurisagar's main market area, had established a name and niche of its own. The round colourful tubs hanging from its walls, filled with blossoming petunias and pansies for months of the year, were a true delight for visitors, distinguishing the bakery from other shops. At birthday parties, weddings, prize ceremonies, dinner parties, special occasions, Christmas, holidays, or on fine Sunday mornings, the fresh, aromatic baked goods at Saleha's bakery were always in high demand. They were extraordinarily delicious and tempting, which enabled the bakery to withstand its competitors over the years.

Every year, new perfectly baked recipes made by Rabiya, Saleha's grand-daughter, were no less than a food innovation. The baked items with varieties of shapes and fragrance, use of organic food colour made from fruits and vegetables, different types of croissants with delicious stuffings made from cashew-almond, green pistachio mix with chopped dry dates, mouthwatering cupcakes made from fruity flavours, garnished with a big

dollop of whipped cream and red cherries on top to brighten the look, always did wonders for the taste buds. The cravings for the softest, fluffiest, sweet buttery loaves and nutty brownies at Saleha's bakery were the additional majestic strokes to win people's love for baked food and appetite. Rabiya's hand-made croissants were the best among food lovers and gained much popularity. Her love and hobby for baking later became her source of earning. The seeds of baking were sown in her heart and mind by her beloved grandmother, Saleha, who founded the bakery years ago and was a famous baker of her time. Rabiya remembered eating Saleha's hand-made buttery-soft, crispy Naankhatayi and other aromatic, salty and sweet baked biscuits during her childhood days. The ajwain and jeera added salty biscuits and dry fruit mixed sweet biscuits in round and square shapes made by Saleha were immensely popular among the buyers of all ages in Rabiya's hometown. Rabiya once asked, "Grandma, from where did you learn making bakery food items?" Saleha smiled and replied, "I have learnt baking from my neighbour, Auntie Suzzi, in Tezpur. I was very fond of eating her baked biscuits. So, I

learnt the skill and creativity of baking from her during my college days."

Saleha's father-in-law used to run his ancestral sweet shop in the heart of Gaurisagar town. After marriage in her 20's, Saleha was interested in doing something of her own. She had impressed her in-laws with her culinary skills and baked food. Her father-in-law used to take her to the sweet shop to check on the sweets and assess their quality. She liked doing sweets inspections and convinced her father-in-law to sell her baked goods there. Her baked biscuits were an instant hit among the buyers. Her husband and in-laws were glad to see the good revenue coming in from the sale of her baked goods. Saleha's decent gestures and loving nature had won over everybody at home, and her father-in-law had no problem with transforming a part of his shop into a bakery run by Saleha. Before his death, he permitted Saleha to turn the sweet shop into a full-time bakery, and it happened. But Saleha continued selling the shop's best-quality sweets, such as the famous juicy, lengthy, and soft Lengechas, fragrant Gulab Jamuns, and Imarti with kesar-rabri, at their bakery in memory of her respectful and loving father-in-law. And to keep the family's legacy alive in making the choicest sweets.

Rabiya, in her adolescent days, was just like her grand-mother, Saleha, making perfect baked goods and selling them, keeping the bakery's legacy after her death. Rabiya would accompany her grand-mother to the bakery on holidays when she was alive. She found her to be an empath who could feel the very needs of helpless people. Rabiya observed several times when her grand-mother would send buttery-sweet loaves to poor beggars on the roadside and to homeless people taking shelter on the stairs of the Durga temple near the market area. Her grand-mother would donate to an orphanage in her hometown to support homeless children. When asked about the free charities, Saleha would say, "Sharing is caring. Good deeds bring barakaat, and one reaches close to Allah." Those kind words from Saleha stayed with Rabiya, who grew up to be an empath like her. Rabiya would send baked goods to a young girl who sat with her vegetable-seller mother after school near the bakery. Rabiya ran into her one day while buying potatoes from her

mother to make potato-cheese-stuffed croissants. She liked the dedication of that young girl doing homework after school while sitting with her mother, who was selling vegetables in the market. From the following day, Rabiya would send her baked food and anything new made in the bakery. It was out of love and kindness for the young girl. Sometimes, Rabiya would help her financially to buy the things she needed.

As every year, it was festive time for Christmas, and Saleha had baked the perfect Christmas plum cake for the orphanage children, where her grand-mother used to donate. Rabiya had also associated herself with the orphanage in conducting yearly charity programmes to raise funds. She believed in doing righteous things for people in need and was wholeheartedly committed to doing that. The children at the orphanage had waited for the grand Christmas party Rabiya would throw for them. The large plum cake, sweet breads, chocolate brownies, the bakery's famous hot Gulab Jamuns and Imarti, varieties of soft and fluffy croissants, juices and chocolates, were enough to treat the mouthwatering taste buds with different aromatic flavours. The caregivers at the orphanage loved Rabiya's kindness and appreciated her many efforts to bring smiles to the orphans' faces. She was an honest soul who could spread happiness around unconditionally.

The Senior warden at the orphanage, Gita, said, "Rabiya, the children are blessed to have you in their lives. We are all so grateful to you. You are a true replica of your grand-mother." Rabiya smiled and said, "Gita di, I love to work for the needy and want to bring happiness in their lives in whatever little way I can help them. I want to make my grand-mother's soul happy wherever she is today with my righteous work." The Senior warden nodded, feeling the humanity very much alive in a young woman of her age, which was unlikely to be seen otherwise. The atmosphere at the orphanage turned joyful and fun-filled, with the children singing carols and praying, making good wishes, eating well, and taking selfies with Rabiya, the caregivers, and the staff. Rabiya felt content and closer to Allah, bringing happiness to young souls, as her grand-mother, Saleha, believed the same and performed righteous deeds.

Monsoons Beauty



By: Shahnaz Husain

Monsoons are here. Are you one of those who enjoy when the rains come?

After the dreaded season of sunburn and tan, the rainy season brings a refreshing change in the weather, but it also poses challenges for maintaining a flawless makeup look. Change of season affects your skin more than you think. As the weather changes, a drastic increase in humidity can pose significant challenges for your skin.

Our skin can suffer damage from humidity, moisture, and repeated exposure to rainwater, which can cause several issues such as breakouts, blackheads, whiteheads, and excessive oiliness.

However, with a few essential tips and tricks, you can master the art of creating a flawless rainy-season makeup look.

Always remember, the basic rule is to cleanse, tone, and moisturise your skin during monsoon season.

Cleansing:

Increased humidity causes an increase in sebum secretion, which attracts dust and pollution particles that cause clogged pores and breakouts. To prevent clogged pores and breakouts, opt for a gentle cleanser that removes dirt, pollutants, and excess oil without stripping away your skin's natural moisture. Cleanse your face at least twice a day using a mild, chemical-free cleanser, which will help remove excess oil, dirt, and impurities from your skin. Natural ingredients like seaweed extracts in your face wash help maintain the skin's pH balance and ensure it stays nourished despite the changing weather.

Choose lightweight and waterproof products: The skin may feel sticky during the monsoon season due to high humidity. Heavy makeup can clog pores and lead to breakouts. Opt for oil-free formulas for foundation, concealer, and powder.

Look for waterproof makeup products that will last throughout the rainy and humid days. You can use a waterproof setting spray instead of powder to set the makeup. Choose lightweight formulas like tinted moisturisers or BB creams. Finding the right moisturiser for the monsoon is essential, especially for acne-prone skin. A lightweight, waterproof or oil-free

moisturiser can keep your skin oil and grease-free, which can prevent acne and keep the skin hydrated.

Include Vitamin C in the Diet:

Vitamin C is an antioxidant that keeps the skin healthy during the monsoon season.

Citrus fruits like lemons, oranges, and grapefruits are excellent sources of vitamin C. Kiwis, bell peppers, and broccoli are also rich in this essential nutrient. Vitamin C helps in the production of white blood cells, which are crucial for fighting off infections and boosting your body's defences.

Vitamin C serum can maintain the skin's glow. It eliminates microorganisms, prevents the onset of age-related changes, and lessens scars and blemishes to give you clear, flawless skin.

Exfoliating Regularly

Choose a gentle scrub to exfoliate at least 2-3 times every week to deeply cleanse the stubborn dirt deposit and remove any excess oil. Exfoliation removes dead skin cells from the top, making your skin brighter and lighter.

Exfoliate regularly to keep your skin glowing and soft. This will prevent clogged pores during the monsoon season and help you avoid breakouts.

It improves skin radiance and helps get rid of dead skin cells. It removes dead skin cells from the top and lets brighter and fresher skin appear. Additionally, it prevents the clogging of pores with dirt and sweat. Thus, you can also avoid blackheads.

Clay Mask

When your skin appears flaky, dull, uneven, or even dry or oily, clay face masks have medicinal and cosmetic properties beneficial for any skin type. Use a face mask at least twice a week to draw out impurities, absorb excess sebum, and tighten your pores in addition to following a standard skincare regimen. Selecting the right clay mask depends on your skin type. If you have oily skin, opt for a bentonite clay mask as it excels at absorbing oil. Those with dry or sensitive skin may find kaolin clay to be gentler and more suitable. Acne-prone individuals can benefit from a turmeric clay mask, which works wonders for all skin types. In addition, the clay mask also aids in acne and balances sebum production. Regular use of clay masks will leave your skin refreshed, balanced, and less prone to breakouts.



Fireworks, heat and politics! America celebrates its 250th birthday

WASHINGTON, July 4: The 250th anniversary of American independence is colliding with a country gripped by political polarisation and a heat wave bearing down on millions of people across multiple states as celebrations get underway across the United States on Saturday.

The signing of the Declaration of Independence, one of history's most celebrated articulations of democratic ambitions, is being marked in myriad ways. President Donald Trump, set to take a central role in festivities, plans to speak on the National Mall in Washington ahead of what's being billed as a historically enormous fireworks show that will rain down over the nation's capital. The president was in South Dakota at Mount Rushmore on Friday, where he delivered a dark speech about the threat of communism in the US as the chiselled images of four of his most prominent predecessors loomed behind him.

Elsewhere, fireworks are scheduled to be set off Saturday over Navy Pier in Chicago and against the skyline of New York City, which also hosted a ball drop at midnight to usher in the holiday with the same fanfare as New Year's Eve. Bristol, Rhode Island, describes itself as the home of the nation's oldest Independence Day celebrations, dating to 1785. In Los Angeles, Queen Latifah will host a concert featuring performances by The Smashing Pumpkins and Chris



Stapleton. Chaka Khan is billed as a special guest.

Anticipation for the milestone holiday has been building for much of the year, serving as an opportunity for Americans to reflect on their complicated history as one-time colonists of an empire who became a superpower of their own. Celebrations months in the making had to adjust or cancel activities entirely as much of the East Coast sweltered under heat that approached and in many cases surpassed triple digits.

Heat is defining the big week-end in many places

In Washington, the Great American State Fair was closed for several hours Friday afternoon during the worst of the heat. The city's In-

dependence Day parade scheduled for Saturday was cancelled.

To the chagrin of many on the East Coast, the weather was downright pleasant on the other side of the country. The Pacific Northwest enjoyed temperatures in the 60s on Friday with a few light showers.

In the Seattle suburb of Issaquah, Megan Kurowski, 31, brought her two dogs to the dog park so they could get some exercise before she went to work. Kurowski said she was feeling positive about America's 250th anniversary and was planning a possible paddleboard to watch the fireworks.

"Everyone's just, from what it seems, been pretty excited about celebrating 250 years," she said. Other American pastimes overlap-

with the holiday.

More than a dozen Major League Baseball games are on the schedule for Saturday. The World Cup, being hosted in the US for the first time in 32 years, will have matches in Houston and Philadelphia on Saturday, following a nail-biter overtime win by Argentina over Cape Verde on Friday outside Miami. Pop culture enthusiasts can obsess over Taylor Swift's Friday wedding to football player Travis Kelce at New York City's Madison Square Garden. And Madonna released her 15th studio album, a collection of dance tracks.

An uneasy nation gets ready to celebrate

The celebrations are unfolding against the backdrop of a deep divide that has been expanding for years, visible in everything from political expression to cultural norms to age-old questions over race, class and immigration.

At Mount Rushmore on Friday, Trump spoke of communism as a "mortal threat to American liberty."

"It is the greatest threat to our country, including World War I, World War II, Pearl Harbour, or even 9/11," the Republican president said.

Without naming Trump, New York City Mayor Zohran Mamdani, a Democrat who is also a democratic socialist and recently backed several successful congressional candidates in their primaries, appeared to reference Trump during a

speech on Friday.

"Those ideals upon which our nation was built — they are strong enough to endure any authoritarian regime, but only if we reach for them," he said.

To former Democratic President Bill Clinton, this anniversary milestone comes at a time of "renewed questions about America's future and role in the world, and serious threats to our own institutions and to our democracy itself." While critical of "the people in charge," he said in a statement that "there is still nothing wrong with America that cannot be cured by what's right with America."

Ahead of the holiday, auto technician Joe Fuqua-Bejarano in Topeka, Kansas, sized up "what makes us awesome" as a people. It is clearly not the politics, in his view, but rather resilience.

"We've just got to find unity somewhere, whether that's in laughter or perseverance, and keep everybody cool," he said from the fireworks stand where he is doing a booming business as a side hustle.

Jerry Chin of Newcastle, Washington, said he wasn't aware that the US was celebrating its 250th anniversary and planned to stay low-key around the holiday. He and his wife generally skip the fireworks and instead stay home with their fearful dogs to keep them calm.

"America's a great place," he said, "but there are some concerns." (AP)

Mali government reports rebel attacks targeting northern towns



BAMAKO (MALI), July 4: The Malian army said Saturday that several northern towns, including Gao and Sevare, were targeted by rebels. The statement came as a rebel group announced a new offensive to capture a northern town. Mohamed Elmaouloud Ramadane, a spokesperson for the Azawad Liberation Front (FLA), said in a Facebook post that the town of Anefis was being targeted by the separatists.

Mohamed Cisse, a resident of Gao, told The Associated Press that the army is going door to door searching for attackers who are still in the city.

"For the moment, the calm has returned. But I learned that the attackers are still in a part of the city, so I stayed inside the house with the family," said Ousmane Maiga, another resident.

In a later statement, the Malian army claimed that "the situation is completely under control." It added that in Sevare, "20 terrorists on motorcycles and equipped vehicles were neutralised."

But Rawani Ahmed Bouya, a member of the FLA and head of the National Office of the Azawad diaspora, told the AP that Anefis was under FLA control and that the fighting was almost over. His claim could not be independently verified.

In late April, a coordinated attack by the FLA and the regional al-Qaida affiliate JNIM killed the defence minister in his home and

took control of several key towns in the north of the country.

Ibrahim Yahaya Ibrahim, deputy project director for the International Crisis Group think tank, said that while the latest attacks are "nothing comparable" to those in April, reports of attacks across the border in Burkina Faso as well as across Mali could indicate an attempt to divert the attention of the army to secure more limited gains in northern Mali.

Wassim Nasr, a senior research fellow at the Soufan Centre, said the targeting of Anefis was strategic because any Malian attempt to reverse the territorial gains from April would have been staged in Anefis.

Mali has previously faced insurgencies by militants affiliated with al-Qaida and the Islamic State group, as well as a separatist rebellion in the country's north. The separatists have been fighting for years to create an independent state in northern Mali.

Along with Mali, neighbouring Niger and Burkina Faso have also been battling al-Qaida and IS affiliates.

Following military coups, the juntas in the three countries turned from Western allies to Russia for help in combating Islamic militants. But the security situation has worsened with a record number of militant attacks. Government forces have also been accused of killing civilians they suspect of collaborating with militants. (AP)

China's military promotes 2 new generals

BEIJING, July 4: China's military has named two new generals in what may be a precursor to a reorganisation at the top following the removal of several of its leaders in a long-running anti-corruption drive.

The shake-up is believed to be in part an effort to ensure the military's loyalty to China's ruling Communist Party and its leader, Xi Jinping.

Xi, who is also head of the military, presented orders promoting Zhang Shuguang and air force commander Wang Gang to generals at a ceremony Friday. Zhang was also named the head of the division investigating corruption at the Central Military Commission, the military's top body.

The promotions could put them in line to fill vacancies on the seven-member commission, which has been reduced to two by the corruption investigations.

The commission is chaired by Xi. Its only other current member is Vice Chair Zhang Shengmin.

Two former vice chairs, including the military's top general, have been removed.

A new commission is expected to be announced in the fall of next year, at the end of the current commission's five-year term. (AP)

Indian envoy pitches greater pharma exports, Chinese investment to deepen ties

BEIJING, July 4: China opening its market to Indian products, especially pharmaceuticals, coupled with investments in New Delhi, will be "good for the larger country-to-country relationship", envoy Vikram Doraiswami said on Saturday.

"Obviously, we would like to be able to export more to China. There is nothing unreasonable about suggesting that, particularly in areas where we believe we have a competitive advantage such as pharmaceuticals," the Indian ambassador said.

The envoy made these remarks during a panel discussion on Protectionism and Global Economic Governance at the World Peace Forum organised by China's Tsinghua University here.

"For instance, we're one of the world's biggest exporters of pharmaceuticals to advanced markets," he said, answering a question on India, China trade and investment ties.

Trade and commerce constitute an important component of India-China relations.

China has overtaken the US to emerge as India's largest trading partner in 2025-26, with bilateral trade reaching USD 151.1 billion. However, the country's trade deficit with Beijing widened to an all-time high of USD 112.16 billion during the period, according to the Indian Ministry of Commerce data.

India's exports to China rose 36.66 per cent to USD 19.47 billion during the last fiscal year, while imports increased 16 per cent to USD 131.63 billion.

The trade deficit swelled to an all-time high of USD 112.6 billion in 2025-26 as against USD 99.2 billion in 2024-25.

India has long been demanding that China open its IT, pharmaceutical and agriculture sectors, which are the country's strong areas.

Doraiswami recently held talks with Wang Liping, Director General of the Department of Asian Affairs, Ministry of Commerce of China, to discuss initiatives to step up trade ties.

The envoy expressed hope that Chinese

partners will work with India to ensure that firms producing high-quality generic medicines, which are exported to the US and other places, can be exported to the Chinese market as well. "We think there is a balance of advantage for both countries, including value for China and of course, value for the relationship," he said.

Answering a question on a balanced policy between exports and investments, Doraiswami said, Chinese investments are also "good for the larger country-to-country relationship".

The envoy, in an apparent reference to the recent easing of restrictions by the Indian government on Chinese investments, said the relationship between the two countries is moving towards "normalisation".

"India has taken steps to re-establish opportunity for Chinese businesses to invest in the Indian market," he said, adding, "Indeed, the policy environment has been specifically changed in the last few months to facilitate greater Chinese investment." (PTI)

India's P-8i maritime patrol aircraft in Hawaii for RIMPAC exercise

WASHINGTON, July 4: Indian Navy's P-8i maritime patrol aircraft is in Hawaii to participate in the Rim of the Pacific Exercise — the world's largest naval exercise hosted by the US Pacific Fleet.

"Indian Navy's participation reaffirms its commitment to a free, open and inclusive Indo-Pacific by enhancing interoperability, Maritime Domain Awareness and cooperation with partner navies," the Indian embassy in the US said in a post on X.

The theme of the 30th Rim of the Pacific Exercise (RIMPAC 2026) is 'Partners: Integrated and Prepared'. The series of exercises began in 1971.

Thirty nations, over 30 surface ships, five submarines, 15 national land forces, more than 206 aircraft and 30,000 personnel are participating in RIMPAC in and around the Hawaiian Islands from June 24 to

July 31. RIMPAC provides a unique training opportunity while fostering and sustaining cooperative relationships among participants critical to ensuring the safety of sea lanes and security on the world's oceans.

"By training together in complex, realistic scenarios, participating nations improve readiness, sharpen warfighting skills, and strengthen the interoperability required to operate effectively alongside one another whenever and wherever needed," Vice Adm. Jeff Jablon, RIMPAC 2026 Commander, Combined Task Forces (CCTF), said in a statement issued by the US Navy.

RIMPAC 2026 builds on the success of previous exercises by bringing together a coalition of allies and partners to demonstrate the flexibility and capability of maritime forces. (PTI)

Pak senator demands Dy PM Dar's resignation over relative's arrest in gangrape case

LAHORE, July 4: A Pakistani senator, with close links to the country's military establishment, on Saturday demanded the resignation of Deputy Prime Minister Ishaq Dar after a relative of his was arrested in a case concerning the abduction and gangrape of two foreigners here.

Senator Faisal Vawda also accused the federal government and the provincial government in Punjab of protecting the minister's relative in the high-profile case. Two women — one from the Netherlands and the other from Venezuela — were allegedly abducted by a group of men on June 29 and gangraped in Lahore.

The police have arrested four men, while one is absconding. They were sent to five-day police custody by a Lahore court on Friday. One of the arrested men — Muhammad Raza Dar — was identified as the prime suspect in the case.

Police sources said Raza Dar is Ishaq Dar's grandson. During the investigation, police have said, it emerged that Raza Dar met the two women in Singapore last year, and they were partners in a cryptocurrency venture. He arranged business visas for them for their visit to Pakistan.

Vawda on Saturday said Pakistan is being "run like

a family corporation", as he highlighted the gangrape incident and described the prime suspect as "alleged grandson" of Ishaq Dar, who is also the foreign minister.

"He (Raza Dar) was arrested only after the intervention of the relevant foreign embassy. After such serious allegations, how can Ishaq Dar continue to represent Pakistan before the world as Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister?" Vawda said in a post on X.

"If there is any concern for Pakistan and its international image, Ishaq Dar should resign immediately," he said. Vawda, widely seen as a mouthpiece of the Pakistani military establishment, was elected as Senator on the vote of both Pakistan People's Party (PPP) and the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), which are coalition partners in the federal government. He, however, does not represent any political party.

Vawda further said on Saturday, "Attempts are being made to limit the case to extortion rather than rape, while arrangements are underway to send the foreign victims back to their country as quickly as possible."

He also drew the attention of the Pakistani people to how the government and the ruling party politicians have not yet issued any statement condemning the incident. (PTI)

Indian envoy to China rejects comparison with Pakistan on West Asia mediation



BEIJING, July 4: Dismissing any comparison between India and Pakistan on mediating in the West Asia conflict, India's envoy to China Vikram Doraiswami on Saturday said countries should decide for themselves whether doing so serves their interests.

"I think the comparison, if I might be a little direct, with Pakistan, is a little... a little unfair. I think the economy in the two countries will tell you a lot," he said, responding to a question by a Chinese journalist about India's role in global leadership and Islamabad's attempts to mediate in the Iran-US conflict.

Doraiswami was speaking at the World Peace Forum here organised by China Tsinghua University.

"We should look at countries according to what they are and what they are actually doing in

the larger global system," he said, adding that "India's integration with the globe is at a level not matched by most countries".

"This includes the idea of economic integration with European countries, with Asian countries, our willingness to contribute to larger questions of peace and security," he said.

"We're willing to do all of this. The question about mediation that you're talking about, this is one that, you know, it is for individual countries to decide whether that adds value to their larger national position," Doraiswami said.

"We have done our bit of that in the past. I don't see how that, at this point of time and what is already a crowded field, would benefit us in any particular way," he said, as he drew a parallel between the positions taken by India and China on the Iran and Ukraine conflicts.

"As far as I see it, our position in recent crises, both in West Asia or even in East Europe, has been quite similar to that of China," he said.

The envoy said he doesn't see China or India "actually stepping forward to offer mediatory services".

Doraiswami earlier took part in a discussion on Protectionism and Global Governance at the forum. (PTI)

Venezuela FM visits Indian field hospital

Gil expresses gratitude for earthquake relief work

CARACAS, July 4: Venezuela's Foreign Minister Yvan Gil visited the Indian field hospital in Caracas and thanked New Delhi for its earthquake relief work.

The field hospital, set up by the Indian Army at the International La Rinconada Racetrack, provides comprehensive care to those affected by the devastating earthquakes that took place in Venezuela last month, which killed more than 1,700 people.

"On behalf of the Bolivarian (Venezuelan) Government and the people of Venezuela, we express our most sincere gratitude to the Government and the people of India, especially to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, for extending a helping hand to those who have suffered as a result of this calamity," Gil said on Satur-



day in a post on X.

Indian Ambassador PK Ashok Babu accompanied the Foreign Minister during the visit.

"The Foreign Minister, Yvan Gil, visited the field hospital and met with our doctors and the

public. He expressed his gratitude to the Government of India for its relief efforts following the earthquakes that occurred in Venezuela," the Indian Embassy in Caracas said on X.

Under the mission, referred to as "Operacion Amistad" in

Spanish, two Indian Air Force C-17 Globemaster aircraft transported 66 tonnes of aid, including the Indian Army field hospital, over 35 tonnes of relief supplies, medicines and medical equipment, and two BHISHM Cubes. Bharat Health Initiative for Sahyog Hita & Maitri (BHISHM) cubes are mobile hospitals aimed at providing emergency medical care.

Working alongside Venezuelan authorities, Indian rescue and medical teams are providing emergency medical care and conducting search and rescue missions, the Indian embassy said earlier.

The 7.2 and 7.5-magnitude earthquakes were among the strongest in Venezuela in more than a century and were felt throughout the region. (PTI)

No.FDW.131/F-MMDRRF/Tender/2026

Dated, Kokrajhar, 03rd July, 2026

Tender No. Forest/001/MMDRRF/Kokrajhar/2026-27

PRESS NOTICE

The Office of the Addl. Principal Chief Conservator of Forests cum CHD, BTC, Kokrajhar, invites bids for the following works under MMDRRF for the year 2026-27 from the eligible registered firms/contractors of Class-I (A, B, C) & class-II category of Assam and BTC to be executed at different forest divisions of BTC.

Sl. No.	Name of Work	Estimated Cost (In Lakh)	Completion Period	Cost of Bid Document (In Rs.)
1	Improvement/Renovation of Mahal Connecting Road/Patrolling Road (West Side) under Gaurang Range, Bishmuri of Haltugaon Division, Kokrajhar	17.07	90 days	1000.00
2	Improvement/Renovation of Mahal Connecting Road/Patrolling Road (East Side) under Gaurang Range, Bishmuri of Haltugaon Division, Kokrajhar	14.55	90 days	1000.00
3	Construction of Forest Road from Bamba AP Camp connecting road to Hel River under Eastern Range Athiabari by providing GSB under Forest Department, BTC for the year 2026-27	19.99	90 days	1000.00
4	Const of temporary Runikata Forest Barrack Camp at Gwbrki under Chirang Division, Kajaigaon under MMDRRF for the financial year 2026-27	21.10	90 days	1000.00
5	Improvement of road of Bhuatiasang SGB Mahal No.1 road under Nunoi Range, Dhansiri Forest Division, Udalguri	6.00	90 days	1000.00
6	Construction of road with sand gravelling and earth filling from Diyapara village main road to Mora Pagladia mahal	19.99	90 days	1000.00
7	Construction of road with sand gravelling and earth filling from Bongaon Village main road to Panbari village via Dwijima (Kaldia SS mahal) road	19.50	90 days	1000.00

Last Date of Bid Submission :- 23/07/2026

Date of Bid Opening :- 23/07/2026

The detailed Notice Inviting Tender (NIT) including the terms and conditions may be seen in the office of the undersigned during office hours.

The Notice Inviting Tender is issued with the approval of the competent authority.

IPR(BTC)/C/2026-27/750

Sd/-
Chairman of Tender Committee,
O/o the Addl. PCCF cum CHD, BTC

'Peace is the only way Manipur can move forward on the path of development'

Manipur CM attends BJP MLA Valte's last rites, regrets not being by his side during 2023 attack

IMPHAL/CHURACHANDPUR, July 4: Manipur Chief Minister Y Khemchand Singh on Saturday attended the last rites of BJP MLA Vungzagin Valte in Churachandpur district and said his deepest regret was not being able to stand by his side when he was assaulted by a mob in the state capital.

Singh travelled by helicopter to the Kuki-Zomi-majority district amid protests. At least six Kuki organisations boycotted his visit, demanding a permanent resolution to the simmering ethnic conflict in the state.

"Today, I had a (virtual) meeting with the Union home minister (Amit Shah). That's why I didn't come by road," the chief minister said.

Describing Valte as "a very calm person", Singh said, "When I was first elected in 2017 and became the assembly speaker, he was one of my best friends."

Recalling the incident of May 4, 2023, Singh said they had all been together discussing ways to control the violence. He expressed regret that he was not with Valte that evening, saying he believed the attack might not have taken place had he been by his side.

He also said that on the evening of May 3 that year, deputy CM Nemcha Kipgen had wanted to return to Kangpokpi, but he persuaded her to stay back because of mob violence. She was eventually sent with full security at 2 am the following day.

"Today, I came here to pay my last respects to my friend Pu Valte.



Being able to attend his last rites is a huge honour for me. Valte's family is like my family. His friends and loved ones are my friends too, and I will always extend my support to them," he said.

Later, speaking to reporters, Singh said restoring peace was the foremost priority for the government, maintaining that dialogue remained the only viable path to resolving differences and rebuilding normalcy.

"Peace is the only way Manipur can move forward on the path of development and dialogue is the only way to achieve it. Your smile is the way for peace," he said, expressing hope for reconciliation and harmony.

Singh said visiting Churachandpur after nearly three years made him feel good, describing the visit as a positive experience amid ongoing efforts to restore normalcy in

the state. The chief minister was accompanied by MLA Tongbram Robindro during his visit to the district.

Valte, a three-time legislator from Thanlon constituency, was buried at a cemetery in Dorcas Veng village.

The body of the 61-year-old BJP leader from the Zomi community had been kept at the Churachandpur District Hospital since it was brought from Delhi in February.

He had been battling serious injuries sustained in a mob attack in Imphal's Nagamapal area when ethnic violence broke out in May 2023, and had gone to Delhi for medical treatment.

After nearly two years of treatment, Valte returned home to Churachandpur with his wife in April last year.

On February 7, his condition suddenly worsened, and he was

flown to the national capital by air ambulance the next day. He died at a private hospital in Gurugram on February 20.

Following his death, various Zomi organisations formed the Zomi Coordination Committee (ZCC) to oversee matters related to the late legislator, including engagement with the Centre, the state government and other authorities on issues of justice and accountability, resulting in a delay in his burial, sources in the community said.

The ZCC recently resolved to hand over Valte's mortal remains to his family to enable them to perform the final rites, they said.

The committee's demands included a time-bound probe by the NIA or CBI into the attack on the MLA that led to his death, and the grant of Union Territory status with a legislature for the Kuki-Zo majority areas of Manipur, which it viewed as essential for the community's development on par with others, sources said.

Valte had also written to Prime Minister Narendra Modi highlighting the need for a separate administration.

At least 260 people have been killed and thousands rendered homeless since May 2023 in ethnic violence between the valley-based Meiteis and the Kukis, who live in the hill districts. Following continued ethnic clashes and the resignation of chief minister N Biren Singh, the state was placed under President's Rule on February 13, 2025. It was lifted nearly a year later, on February 4. (PTI)

Protest, shutdown call in Manipur's Churachandpur ahead of CM's visit



CHURACHANDPUR, July 4: Ahead of Manipur BJP MLA Vungzagin Valte's last rites, hundreds of Kukis took to the streets of Churachandpur district on Saturday morning protesting Chief Minister Y Khemchand Singh's visit, officials said.

At least six Kuki organisations boycotted the visit of Singh to the Kuki-Zo majority district, demanding a permanent resolution to the simmering ethnic conflict in the state.

Markets remained closed, and vehicles remained off the streets in the district headquarters, following a shutdown call given by an armed group. Dozens of protesters also gathered at the Tedim road near the Kaprang area to block the route from Imphal to Churachandpur.

Around 11 pm on Friday, armed people fired several rounds in the air near the Jalengphai area in Churachandpur district bordering the valley district of Bishnupur.

In a statement, Kuki organisations, including Kuki Students Organisation, Kuki Inpi Churachandpur and Kuki Women Union, under the banner of Kuki Civil Society Organisation, said,

"The KCSOs Churachandpur would like to make it clear that until and unless there is a solution to the ongoing 'Kuki-zo-Meitei Conflict', we would not allow any Meitei individual, officials or group in our district."

The protests and shutdown came in the wake of Singh's visit to attend the final rites of former BJP MLA Vungzagin Valte, who passed away in February this year.

Valte, a three-time legislator from Thanlon constituency, will be buried at a cemetery in Dorcas Veng village in Churachandpur district at around 1.30 pm, according to a Zomi Council statement issued on Friday.

The body of the 61-year-old BJP leader belonging to the Zomi community has been kept in Churachandpur District Hospital since it was brought from Delhi in February.

Valte had been battling serious injuries he had sustained during a mob attack in Imphal's Nagamapal area when ethnic violence broke out in May 2023, and went to Delhi for medical treatment.

After nearly two years of treatment there, Valte returned home to

Churachandpur, accompanied by his wife, in April last year.

On February 7, his health condition suddenly worsened, and he was taken to the national capital the next day via an air ambulance. He died at a private hospital in Gurugram on February 20.

Following his death, Zomi front organisations formed the Zomi Coordination Committee (ZCC) to oversee matters related to the late legislator, including engagement with the Centre, the state government, and other authorities on issues of justice and accountability, causing the delay in the burial, sources in the community said.

The ZCC recently resolved to hand over Valte's mortal remains to his family to enable them to perform his final rites, they said.

The ZCC's demands included a time-bound investigation by the NIA or CBI into the attack on the MLA leading to his death, and the grant of Union Territory status with a legislature for the Kuki-Zo majority areas of Manipur, which he perceived as the only way towards the development of the community on par with others, sources said.

Valte had written to Prime Minister Narendra Modi explaining the importance and the need for a separate administration. At least 260 people have been killed and thousands rendered homeless since May 2023 due to ethnic violence in Manipur between the valley-based Meiteis and the Kukis who live in the hill districts.

Following continued ethnic clashes and the resignation of Chief Minister N. Biren Singh, the state was placed under President's Rule on February 13, 2025. It was lifted nearly a year later, on February 4. (PTI)

Flood situation improves in Arunachal as weather clears

ITANAGAR, July 4: The flood situation in Arunachal Pradesh improved significantly on Saturday as the weather cleared, with no fresh casualties or major damage reported over the past 24 hours, officials said.

According to the State Emergency Operation Centre (SEOC), only one fresh flood incident was reported from Keyi Panyor district during the last 24 hours. No deaths, injuries, or fresh damage to public infrastructure were reported.

Relief camps in Keyi Panyor continued to shelter affected families, while relief operations remained underway.

The cumulative impact of floods, landslides and other rain-related disasters over the past several days, however, remains significant. A total of 305 villages across 222 circles have been affected, impacting an estimated 92,294 people across the state, the SEOC said.

So far, four people have died, 21 have been injured, and two remain missing as heavy rain triggered flash floods and landslides, causing extensive damage to houses, roads, bridges and public infrastructure, officials said.

Two women swept away in a flash flood in Keyi Panyor are still missing despite continued search operations, they said.

One person died in a landslide at Sarti village in Anjaw district on June 28, while the remaining three fatalities occurred in the flash flood that struck Possa in Keyi Panyor district on June 24.

The disasters have also caused extensive damage to residential properties, with 498 houses, including kutchas, pucca and huts - fully, severely or partially damaged, officials said.

Agriculture and horticulture have suffered significant losses, with 330.2 hectares of crop area affected, including 181.7 hectares under horticulture and 143

hectares under agriculture. Around 1,010 hectares of forest area have also been impacted, they said.

The floods have also caused widespread damage to public infrastructure, including 121 roads, 13 bridges, 18 culverts, 184 water supply schemes, 21 power lines, 60 electric poles, 58 government buildings, two hospitals, one school, seven flood protection structures, six retaining walls, 12 fish ponds and four hydel projects, they added.

The Hoj-Potin stretch of NH-13 in Keyi Panyor district remains closed due to extensive damage caused by the June 24 flash flood, with a detailed assessment still underway, officials said.

Relief measures continued in the affected districts. Two relief camps remain operational in Keyi Panyor, where 150 displaced people are being sheltered.

The state civil aviation department on Saturday carried out five helicopter sorties, airlifting 11.5 metric tonnes of rice from Pasighat Advanced Landing Ground to Koyu in Lower Siang district.

Officials said restoration of roads, power supply, drinking water facilities and other essential services was continuing.

Meanwhile, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said weather conditions had improved considerably across the state, with no weather warning issued for Sunday.

However, from July 6 onwards, the IMD has issued a yellow watch for parts of eastern and central Arunachal Pradesh, including Anjaw, Lohit, Changlang, Tirap and Longding districts, forecasting heavy rain accompanied by thunderstorms and lightning at isolated places.

Similar conditions are likely to persist in some districts on July 7 and 8, while most parts of the state are expected to receive scattered rainfall. (PTI)

Khandu pays tributes to Swami Vivekananda, says his ideals continue to guide India

ITANAGAR, July 4: Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister Pema Khandu on Saturday paid tributes to Swami Vivekananda on his death anniversary, describing him as a great son of India, who "rekindled the country's civilisational confidence" and introduced the timeless philosophy of Vedanta to the world. The chief minister said Vivekananda's teachings on the divinity of every soul, and religious harmony and selfless service to humanity continue to inspire generations.

"On the Nirvana Day of Swami Vivekananda, I pay my humble tributes to the great son of Bharat, who rekindled India's civilisational confidence and introduced the timeless philosophy of Vedanta to a global audience," Khandu said in a post on X. The chief minister highlighted Vivekananda's historic address at the World's Parliament of Religions in Chicago, saying it marked a turning point in the way the western world engaged with India's rich spiritual heritage.

"His historic address at the World's Parliament of Religions in Chicago marked a turning point in how many across the West engaged with India's spiritual heritage," Khandu said.

"Through his lectures and writings, he presented Vedanta as a universal philosophy that affirmed the divinity of every soul, the harmony of religions, and selfless service to humanity," the chief minister said.

Deputy Chief Minister Chowna Mein also paid homage to Swami Vivekananda, describing him as one of India's greatest philosophers and spiritual luminaries whose timeless message continues to inspire people across generations. (PTI)

No foreigner in Mizoram's electoral roll, no abnormal growth in voter number: State CEO

AIZAWL, July 4: Mizoram's Chief Electoral Officer Garima Gupta on Saturday dismissed allegations of foreign nationals being included in the state's electoral roll following a voter verification exercise in the state and highlighted that there was no abnormal growth in voter numbers.

The Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls in the northeastern state, which began on May 20, concluded on June 28 with all enumeration forms fully digitised. More than 46,000 voters have been removed from Mizoram's electoral rolls in the exercise.

Mizoram's influential student body, Mizo Zirlai Pawl (MZP), had complained to the chief electoral officer earlier that there has been a 121 per cent surge in voters in Chakma-dominated areas, particularly in the southern part of the state.

It had also demanded the election commission rigorously verify voters in such areas and purge suspected foreigners from the state's voter list. On Saturday, Gupta said complaints of alleged inclusion of foreign nationals in the voter list had been thoroughly verified by district election officials during the SIR exercise.

"We do not see any case of a foreign national being included in the electoral rolls. As per the draft roll, there is no large increase or abnormal growth in voter numbers," she told reporters here.

Gupta said every elector had been physically verified through house-to-house visits, while booth-level agents of political



parties also participated in the exercise to ensure that only eligible voters remained in the rolls.

According to the CEO, a total of 46,163 enumeration forms (5.28 per cent) were uncollected, which means those voters were deleted from the electoral list after the intensive revision. She also said that 8,75,068 enumeration forms were distributed, of which 8,28,906 were collected and digitised, making Mizoram the first among the 16 states undertaking the third phase of SIR to achieve 100 per cent digitisation of collected forms.

Of the uncollected forms, Gupta said 21,295 electors were found to have died, 13,978 had permanently shifted, probably to other states or overseas, 8,333 were untraceable or absent despite repeated visits,

and 2,248 were already enrolled elsewhere.

Additionally, 309 voters, whose names have appeared in the 2025 electoral rolls, refused to be enrolled during the SIR on religious grounds, she said.

The draft electoral roll was prepared with July 1, 2026, as the qualifying date, she said, adding that Aizawl district has the highest number of voters at over 2.72 lakh, followed by the southern districts of Lunglei with 98,808 voters, and Lawngtlai with 90,699 electorates.

Gupta said that the claims and objections will be received from July 4 to August 4, while disposal of claims will continue till September 2. The final electoral rolls will be published on September 6, she said. (PTI)

1st Aadhaar Seva Kendra opened in Nagaland

HT Correspondent
DIMPUR, July 4: Nagaland got its first Aadhaar Seva Kendra in Dimpur on Friday, easing Aadhaar enrolment, update and correction services for the residents.

The centre was inaugurated by adviser to tribal affairs and election H Tovihuo Ayemi at Purana Bazaar, Dimpur, as the special guest.

In his inaugural address, Ayemi said Aadhaar is an essential identity document for every citizen, particularly children, who are required to undergo mandatory biometric updates (MBU) at the ages of five and 15, and indispensable for school admissions, scholarships, entrance examinations and access to various government services.

Calling the opening of the centre a long-awaited milestone for Nagaland, he said it would significantly improve access to Aadhaar-related services across the state.

Ayemi asserted that the state government would extend all necessary support to ensure the centre functions efficiently so as to make Aadhaar enrolment and update services more accessible and convenient for the public.

Urging officials at the centre to guide citizens properly, he said the services must remain transparent, efficient and hassle-free.

He stressed that appointments, whether booked online or offline, should be handled smoothly without unnecessary delays.

Mizoram seeks Centre's support for ginger processing, bamboo industry

AIZAWL, July 4: Mizoram has sought the Centre's support for setting up large-scale ginger and bamboo processing units, an official said on Friday. The request was made by the state's Commerce and Industries Minister F Rodingliana during a meeting in New Delhi, it said.

The meeting was chaired by Union Minister of Commerce and Industry Piyush Goyal and Minister of State for Commerce and Industry Jitin Prasada. Rodingliana urged the Centre to help establish large-scale processing units for ginger and strengthen marketing facilities for the state's flagship crop, asserting that Mizoram has the potential to emerge as the 'Ginger Capital of India' due to its high production, according to an official statement.

He also requested the Centre to look for ways to expand the use of Mizoram's bamboo in the textile and paper industry. (PTI)

Tripura CM flags off Northeast's first MEMU train service between Agartala and Karimganj

AGARTALA, July 4: Tripura Chief Minister Manik Saha on Saturday flagged off the Northeast's first MEMU train service between Agartala and Assam's Karimganj. The MEMU train, which has a seating capacity for 3,600 passengers, will ensure passenger safety and comfort while travelling as it is equipped with CCTV cameras and a GPS tracker, he said.

Addressing the inauguration programme in Agartala, Saha thanked Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Railways Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw for boosting railway connectivity in the frontier state.

"This is the first MEMU service in the Northeast. It will connect the two cities in the region," he said. Saha said the railway network in Tripura has been extended till Sabroom, the southernmost subdivision of the northeastern state.

"Sabroom will serve as a gateway to Bangladesh once the Maitri Setu is made oper-

ational to connect it with Ramgarh in the neighbouring country. The railway connectivity from Agartala to Akhaura (in Bangladesh) will be made operational shortly. People on both sides will be able to travel seamlessly," he said.

Saha said the state government has already proposed laying double tracks between Assam's Chandranathpur and Sabroom.

"For the double line project, the final location survey has been completed for 263 km, while a detailed project report (DPR) is in the final stage. The number of trains to and from Agartala station will be increased once the double line is laid. We also proposed introducing train services to cities such as Jammu, Gaya and Puri," he said.

Transport Minister Sushanta Chowdhury said currently 18 trains, including 13 express trains and five DEMU services, are operational from the northeastern state. (PTI)



BJP chief Nitin Nabin in UP for two-day visit, says confident of party win in assembly polls

LUCKNOW, July 4: BJP chief Nitin Nabin on Saturday lauded Uttar Pradesh's transformation under the party's "double engine" government and said the BJP would win the assembly polls next year.

Nabin arrived in Lucknow on a two-day visit, during which he is expected to hold a series of meetings with senior leaders to streamline the party's strategy for the 2027 assembly polls and "guide the newly formed team of the state BJP".

His visit also comes amid a controversy over the alleged embezzlement of Ram temple's donations, an issue around which the opposition, particularly the Samajwadi Party, has tried to corner the BJP.

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath and top leaders of the party received Nabin, the youngest national BJP chief ever, at the Lucknow airport.

"The way the double-engine government Modi-Yogi duo has transformed Uttar Pradesh into Uttar Pradesh, Lotus will bloom in Uttar Pradesh, which is home to



cities of Kashi Vishwanath, Ayodhya and Mathura," Nabin told PTI Videos.

"Based on the enthusiasm we saw today among the party workers across Lucknow and the entire state, we can say with certainty that the BJP workers are fully prepared for 2027," Nabin said, responding to his party's prospects in the 2027 assembly polls.

UP BJP chief Pankaj Chaudhary, both Deputy Chief Ministers Keshav Prasad Maurya and Brajesh Pathak, and other UP ministers were also present at the airport.

BJP general secretary (organisation) B L Santhosh also arrived in

Lucknow on Saturday who was received by Chaudhary.

The two-day schedule of Nabin includes a dinner meeting with CM Adityanath, separate meetings with UP BJP chief Chaudhary, deputy CMs Maurya and Pathak, some intellectuals, party lawmakers and others.

"In view of the upcoming assembly elections in Uttar Pradesh next year, this visit of the BJP national president is extremely important to sharpen the BJP's strategy and guiding the newly announced UP BJP," the party said.

"Several issues, including plan and strategy for 2027 UP polls,

will come up for discussion," a senior BJP leader said. Nabin is also tipped to meet party functionaries like regional presidents, district unit presidents and heads of various morchas. A meeting with the party's core committee is also likely to take place.

Later, he will meet prominent personalities of Uttar Pradesh at the residence of Padma Shri awardee Dr Vidya Bindu Singh in Lucknow.

This is Nabin's third visit to the state since taking over as the party chief. A visit to the Hanuman Setu temple is also on the cards, party leaders said.

After his arrival at the airport, a grand roadshow to party headquarters began as leaders and workers lined up to welcome the BJP president. Some party workers were also seen standing on a bulldozer from where they showered petals on him.

The BJP president travelled on a specially designed motorised chariot, which covered a distance of almost 18 km, and was welcomed at around 40 places by party workers. His motorcade virtually crawled as

TMC's Chandrima Bhattacharya resigns as party's Bengal chief a month after appointment

KOLKATA, July 4: In yet another setback for the Mamata Banerjee faction of the Trinamool Congress, the party's West Bengal state president Chandrima Bhattacharya stepped down from her position on Saturday, barely a month after she was entrusted with the crucial organisational responsibility in the aftermath of the party's assembly election debacle.

In a letter addressed to the Trinamool Congress chairperson, Bhattacharya also relinquished responsibilities from all other posts she held in the party, triggering speculations on whether she had severed her ties with the Mamata Banerjee-led wing of the party for all practical purposes.

Bhattacharya was named state president at the party's national working committee meeting held at Mamata Banerjee's Kalighat residence on June 3, replacing senior leader Subrata Bakshi. She also withdrew herself as the authorised signatory of the accounts of the TMC and its associate organisations maintained in various banks and as Mamata Banerjee's authorised point person to handle the party's affairs before the Election



Commission.

A former minister in the erstwhile Mamata Banerjee government in charge of key departments like Finance and Health as Minister of State, and a prominent leader of the party who led its women's wing - Bhattacharya had remained one of the closest aides of the TMC supreme and her long-term associate.

"At the end I would like to state that I have the highest regards for you and will remain ever respectful to you," she stated in her resignation letter. Talking to reporters, Bhat-

tacharya later clarified that her decision was triggered by Banerjee's over-the-phone admonishment, blaming her for "allowing the Ritabrata Banerjee-led rebel faction of the party to take control of the party's Trinamool Bhavan operational headquarters" in Kolkata.

Bhattacharya was present at her office when the Ritabrata-led rebel faction had walked into the Trinamool Bhavan on Friday but had left the building shortly after.

The rebel faction leaders held a meeting at the premises before changing the locks of the main gate and

CM Abdullah welcomes Srinagar airport relief, urges freer movement for Amarnath pilgrims

SRINAGAR, July 4: Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Saturday welcomed the Airports Authority of India (AAI) decision to withdraw the proposed NOTAM for the full closure of Srinagar International Airport's runway for maintenance, describing the move as a huge relief.

"This Monday-Tuesday thing was hitting us very hard. Just yesterday, I spoke to some people from the tourism sector, and many of their (intending tourist) groups had started cancelling," Abdullah told reporters.

The chief minister said he had consistently taken up the issue with the Centre and his efforts had yielded results.

"Ever since this news came out, I have been continuously making efforts. Within the Central government, I spoke with Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, Civil Aviation Minister K Ram Mohan Naidu, and even when I met the Prime Minister, I raised the issue with him. If the outcome of this is that the Monday-Tuesday schedule will remain normal for now, it is a huge relief for us," he said.

He, however, said if the airport has to be closed in October for maintenance, alternative flight operations should be arranged at Awantipora Air Force base. Later, in a post on X, Abdullah thanked the Defence and Civil Aviation Ministers.

"Grateful to the Defence Minister Rajnath Singh Sb & Civil Aviation Minister K Ram Mohan Naidu for acceding to our request and suspending the airport closure order. This closure had created a lot of difficulties for regular travellers & forced tour groups/tourists to cancel planned visits," he wrote.

The chief minister also welcomed Prime Minister Narendra Modi's appeal urging Amarnath pilgrims to spend at least 10 per cent of their travel budget on local products.

"It is a very good thing. If they do, it benefits us," he said. Abdullah, however, said the pilgrims should be allowed to explore other places as well and not confined to the yatra alone.

"They should also get permission to step out of their vehicles and move around somewhere, otherwise, what will they spend? They have been kept confined to their vehicles like prisoners. They are not allowed to go left or right. Let them move around a little so that they can also spend their 10 per cent budget here, which will benefit our people a bit," he added. Expressing hope that the devotees would turn up in large numbers for the Amarnath yatra, Abdullah urged them to pray for peace and brotherhood in Jammu and Kashmir.

"We hope that pilgrims come in large numbers, perform the darshan properly, and return from here safe and sound. Whatever arrangements could be made on behalf of the elected government, we have done those. The remaining arrangements about security, law and order, and those to be done by the Shrine Board are being looked after through the Lok Bhavan.

We would only request them that when they come and pray, they should also pray for Jammu and Kashmir, and especially for brotherhood and peace here," he said.

Asked about a letter signed by 61 Indians and 55 Pakistanis, including his father Ferooz Abdullah, seeking India-Pakistan dialogue and lasting peace, the chief minister urged the media not to create unnecessary controversy.

"Why do you people make so much news out of Ferooz's signatures and my statements? When RSS leaders say similar things, neither any agency, nor any channel, not anyone else highlights it. When Ferooz signs a letter, or I speak about it, everyone starts asking BJP leaders for a reaction," he said. He reiterated that relations between India and Pakistan should improve. (PTI)

Change certain in Uttarakhand after 2027 assembly polls: Godiyal



DEHRADUN, July 4: Uttarakhand Congress president Ganesh Godiyal on Saturday said a change of government is inevitable in the state after the 2027 Assembly elections, while calling for opposition unity to take on the BJP, which he accused of using "unfair means" to win elections.

With the Assembly elections due in early 2027, the Congress has been conducting the 'Parivartan

Sankalp Yatra' across Uttarakhand's 10 hill districts since June 29, holding public meetings at various locations. Apart from Godiyal, the campaign is being led by Chakrata MLA and Chairman of the State Election Campaign Committee Pritam Singh, former state Congress president Karan

Mahara, and Chairman of the State Election Management Committee Harak Singh Rawat.

Speaking to PTI during the yatra in the Kumaon region, Godiyal said the campaign has been receiving an overwhelming response across the state and that people's enthusiasm indicates that political change is certain in the state this time.

"People in the state are fed up with unemployment, inflation, high-handedness, authoritarianism, and the government's lies and attempts to hoodwink them. People are distressed by the current government; they want change," he claimed.

Godiyal said people were looking to the Congress as the solution to their problems and viewed it as the only viable alternative to the BJP.

He said the current phase of the yatra would continue till July 8, after which the schedule for the next phase, covering the plains districts -- Dehradun, Udham Singh Nagar and Haridwar -- would be finalised. (PTI)

Will Cong leadership have courage to act against rebels in Punjab: BJP

CHANDIGARH, July 4: The Punjab unit of BJP on Saturday challenged the Congress leadership to act against its party leaders who have "publicly rebelled" following the appointment of Amrinder Singh Raja Warring as the state Congress president.

Factions emerged within Punjab Congress on Friday with several sitting and former MLAs throwing their weight behind former chief minister Charanjit Singh Channi to be reconsidered for the post of state unit chief.

They gathered at Channi's residence in Punjab's Rupnagar district in a show of strength for the ex-CM. The announcement to retain Warring came on Wednesday, alongside the unveiling of the party's various committees for the 2027 assembly polls.

On Saturday, senior spokesperson of Punjab BJP Pritpal Singh Baliawal took on the Congress over these developments. (PTI)

Monsoon session of Parliament from July 20 to August 13

NEW DELHI, July 4: The Monsoon session of Parliament will be held from July 20 to August 13, Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren said on Saturday.

The 25-day session with 19 sittings comes after the ruling BJP's victories in West Bengal, Assam and Puducherry assembly polls.

The aftermath of the rebellion in the Trinamool Congress (TMC) and Shiv Sena (UBT) will also play out in the forthcoming session.

A decision by Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla on the demands of 20 TMC and six Shiv Sena (UBT) MPs seeking recognition as separate groups is awaited.

In the Rajya Sabha, after newly elected and re-elected MPs took oath, the political numbers further tilted in favour of the ruling NDA.

Three rebel TMC MPs from the Upper House have quit and bypolls will help the BJP gather more strength in the Rajya Sabha.

In a post on X, Rijiju said on the recommendation of the govern-



ment, President Draupadi Murmu has summoned both the Houses of Parliament for the Monsoon Session 2026.

"The Session will commence on 20 July, 2026 and continue till 13 August, 2026 for meaningful debate, discussion and decisions on issues of national importance," he said. The last session ended in dis-

appointment for the BJP-led NDA government as a Constitution

amendment bill to implement reservation for women in legislatures in 2029 and increase the number of seats in the Lok Sabha was defeated in the Lower House.

The government is now redrafting the bill to possibly increase Lok Sabha seats of all states uniformly by 50 per cent. The population-linked increase in seats has been a major concern for southern parties. (PTI)

'Historic day', says Gehlot ahead of Rajasthan refinery opening

JAIPUR, July 4: Congress leader Ashok Gehlot termed the imminent commissioning of the state's first petrochemical refinery on Saturday a "historic day" and said the project was conceived and initiated during the Congress regime.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi is scheduled to inaugurate the refinery in Pachpadra, Balotra later in the day. Gehlot said serious efforts to set up a refinery in Rajasthan began after the Congress came to power in the state in 2008.

He credited former UPA chairperson Sonia Gandhi and former prime minister Manmohan Singh for extending support to the project, and petroleum ministers Murli Deora and Veerappa Moily for helping secure the refinery.

The former Rajasthan chief minister said the refinery was inaugurated in 2013 by Sonia Gandhi and Moily and alleged that work was stalled for five years due to political reasons, leading to an escalation in project costs. (PTI)

Indian scientists recreate key functions of human Placenta on chip

NEW DELHI, July 4: Before a baby's first breath, life depends on an extraordinary organ that most people rarely think about — the placenta.

Acting as the baby's first life-support system, the placenta delivers oxygen and nutrients, removes waste products, protects the developing fetus and produces hormones essential for sustaining pregnancy.

Yet, despite its critical role in human development, it remains one of the least understood human organs because it is difficult to study directly during pregnancy. But that mystery may somewhat be unravelled now.

Researchers from the ICMR-National Institute for Research on Women's Health (formerly ICMR-NIRRH), Mumbai, in collaboration with IIT Bombay, have developed an indigenous lab-grown "placenta-on-chip" platform that recreates key functions of the human placental barrier.

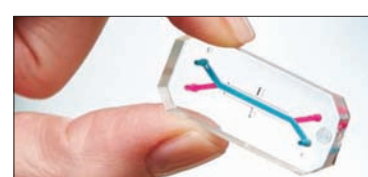
Published in the journal Biofabrication, the study describes a microphys-

iological system that mimics the interface between the mother and fetus.

The device reproduces several essential functions of the human placenta, including hormone production, nutrient transfer, waste exchange and selective barrier function -- some of the most important biological processes that sustain pregnancy.

The researchers said that the platform produces pregnancy hormones, transports glucose from the maternal to fetal side, removes waste products such as urea and responds to hyperglycaemic conditions resembling gestational diabetes.

These capabilities make it a promising platform for studying placental biology, understanding pregnancy complications, evaluating how medicines cross the placental barrier and supporting the development of more predictive human-relevant research models. Unlike many existing placenta-on-chip systems that require sophisticated microfluidic equipment and continuous perfusion systems, the



Indian platform has been designed to be simple, scalable and compatible with conventional laboratory workflows, potentially enabling wider adoption by research laboratories, authors claimed.

"Every one of us depended on a placenta for survival before birth, yet it remains one of the least understood human organs," said Professor Deepak Modi, Scientist G at ICMR-National Institute for Research on Women's Health (ICMR-NIRRH) and co-corresponding author of the study.

"The placenta is the gatekeeper between mother and baby. By recreating key functions of this remarkable organ on a chip, we hope to provide researchers with a practical human-based platform to better understand

pregnancy, improve maternal and fetal health and, wherever scientifically appropriate, reduce dependence on animal experimentation," he said.

The work was led by Anshul Bhide, who carried out much of the biological validation of the system.

"Studying the human placenta in real time is extremely challenging," Bhide said.

"This platform gives us the ability to observe how nutrients, hormones and other molecules move across the maternal-fetal interface under controlled conditions. It opens new opportunities to investigate pregnancy complications and understand how the placental barrier responds to health and disease in pregnancy.

"For example, we were able to model hyperglycaemic conditions resembling gestational diabetes and observe changes in placental transport, demonstrating the platform's potential for studying pregnancy-associated disorders," Bhide stated. The engineering design and fabri-

cation of the platform were developed at IIT Bombay under the guidance of Professor Abhijit Majumder, co-corresponding author of the paper.

"Organ-on-chip technologies are transforming biomedical research worldwide because they allow us to recreate human physiology in the laboratory," Majumder said.

"Our objective was to develop a robust and scalable platform that combines engineering simplicity with biological relevance. By making the system compatible with standard laboratory infrastructure, we hope to accelerate its adoption for pregnancy and reproductive health research," he added.

The study also highlights the importance of interdisciplinary collaboration between engineers and biomedical scientists. According to co-author Dr. Sourav Mukherjee, the project brought together expertise from reproductive biology, micro-engineering, cell biology and translational research. (PTI)

Delhi CM orders rollback of WFH, staggered office timings

NEW DELHI, July 4: With geopolitical situation normalising, Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta on Saturday ordered rollback of a work from home (WFH) measure and staggered timings she had earlier announced for government offices.

In May, Gupta had ordered work from home for twice a week for government offices, days after Prime Minister Narendra Modi's austerity push to conserve energy amid the war in Iran which affected oil flows through Strait of Hormuz.

"Now that the geopolitical situation has practically normalised, Chief Minister Rekha Gupta has approved withdrawal of Work from Home on Wednesdays and Saturday," her office said. The government has also revised the office timings for its employees to 10 am-6.30 pm, which was earlier from 10.30 am-7 pm.

The fuel-cutting measures were announced when the war in West Asia was in its full swing, under a government's 90-day 'Mera Bharat, Mera Yogdan' campaign. Private companies and institutions were also advised to adopt a similar arrangement wherever feasible.

To support implementation, the labour department had set up a single window help desk and call centre to address operational issues. A formal order is expected detailing the changes in the WFH policy. (PTI)



MHA designates 23 individuals based in Pak as 'terrorists' under UAPA



NEW DELHI, July 4: The Union home ministry on Saturday designated 23 Pakistan-based individuals, including close associates of Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) founder Hafiz Muhammad Saeed, linked to Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM) and LeT, as "terrorists" under the anti-terror law UAPA.

The designated terrorists were involved in high-profile attacks on security forces, drone-based weapon smuggling, and indoctrination and recruitment of youth through social media, a government order said.

On Saturday, 23 Pakistan-based terrorists, including those involved in attacks on security forces in Jammu and Kashmir, were added to the list under schedule, taking the total number to 80.

In a message posted on 'X', Union Home Minister Amit Shah said the designated terrorists were involved in anti-India activities, carrying out terror attacks, inciting terror, trafficking arms, infiltrating through the border, facilitating terrorist organisations, raising funds and recruiting terrorists.

"Pursuing Modi Ji's vision of zero tolerance against terror, the MHA today declared 23 dreaded terror functionaries as terrorists under the provisions of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act..."

"Out of the 23 terrorists announced today, 17 are Pakistani nationals and 6 are Indian nationals. However, all of them at present operate terrorist activities from Pakistan and Pakistan-occupied Jammu and Kashmir. The Modi govt is determined to rip apart every terror module to shield India and its people," he said.

The Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) empowers the central government to designate

an individual as a terrorist if it believes the individual is involved in terrorism.

Inclusion in the fourth Schedule is for designating individuals, while the first Schedule lists and designates terrorist organisations, such as JeM and LeT.

Including the names of terrorists in the list will allow the National Investigation Agency (NIA) to block their finances, embargo arms sales, and seize their assets.

Associates of LeT founder Saeed, already a designated terrorist, 52-year-old Abdul Rauf, who operates under Saeed's direct command in Lahore, and 54-year-old Rana Ifkhar, a close associate who motivates youth for Jihad activities, have been designated as terrorists under the UAPA.

Hafiz Khalid Waleed, Maulana Saifullah Khalid, and Molana Yousef Taibi, associated with Saeed's Jamaat-ud-Dawa (JuD) network, have also been included in the list. Ashfaq Ahmad (52) was designated to provide "technical assistance" and collect funds for JeM operations from his base in Bahawalpur.

The notifications, issued by Joint Secretary Rakesh Rathi on Saturday, designated 52-year-old Mufti Muhammad Asghar Khan, identified as a JeM launching commander based in Abbaspur, considered one of the masterminds behind the attack on the Indian Army Camp in Nagrota, Jammu, on November 29, 2016.

Two other JeM operatives also linked to the Nagrota attack -- 56-year-old Hafiz Abdul Shakoor from Kotli, and 47-year-old Abdullah Jehadi, who facilitates the infiltration of cadres from the Neelum district -- were also included in the list, the order said.

JeM terrorists -- 41-year old Masood Ilyas Kashmiri from Poonch in Pakistan-occupied Jammu and Kashmir, and 38-year-old Mohamad Mussadiq from Shakargarh, district Narowal in Pakistan, who was involved in the attack on the security forces at Sunjwan, Jammu, on April 22, 2022 -- also figure in the list of designated terrorists.

Mussadiq is also accused of using a team of "cyber players" to recruit youth across various social media platforms, and a "main handler" for JeM infiltration was also included in the list.

A resident of Bangalore now holed up in Rawalpindi, 40-year-old Mohammed Shaheed Faisal, affiliated with LeT, JeM, Al-Qaeda, and ISIS modules, is included in the list for recruiting youth via social media, arranging for weapons training in Pakistan, and raising funds for terrorist activities. Faisal has remained involved in imparting training in the use of data encryption and fake identities to evade law enforcement agencies, the order said.

"With the intent of carrying out terrorist activities in the country, he has remained involved in the delivery of weapons and ammunition and conspiracies related to several terrorist incidents," the order notified on Saturday morning said.

Amir of several factions of JeM, Imdad Ullah Makki, who is the co-ordinator of several terrorist activities, has also been designated as a terrorist, according to the order.

Nazir Ahmed Gujjar from Islaamabad and Waseem Noor Jaf from Jhang in Punjab are included for supplying arms and ammunition using drones from across the border into Jammu and Kashmir, and indoctrination of youth.

In 2019, the UAPA was amended to include individual terrorists in the list, as before the amendment, only groups could be listed as terrorist organisations.

LeT terrorists Firdous Ahmad Bhat, Haroon Rashid Ganai, Bilal Ahmad Mir, Abid Quyoum Lone, Nazir Ahmed Gujjar, Abdul Rauf, Ashfaq Ahmad, Hafiz Khalid Waleed, Maulana Saifullah Khalid, Mohammad Yaqoob, Molana Yousef Taibi, Owais Farooz, Qari Yaqub Sheikh, and Rana Ifkhar have also been added to the list. (PTI)

Fearmongers wallowing in depths of despair after India successfully navigated energy crisis: PM Modi

PACHPADRA (RAJASTHAN), July 4: India successfully navigated one of the biggest global energy crises of the century through proactive policies, diversified fuel sourcing and strong diplomatic ties, with "minimal burden" on citizens, while major countries struggled, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Saturday.

Some forces were busy spreading fear in public and political games were played, but "they must be wallowing in the depths of despair today," Modi said at a public meeting, asserting that the country's handling of the situation would be remembered as an "unprecedented" chapter in history.

"The war in West Asia created the biggest energy crisis of the 21st century. Many powerful nations struggled with fuel shortages. India overcame this challenge because it took the right decisions at the right time, assessed the situation correctly, used its resources in a balanced manner and utilised its diplomatic strength positively," he said.

Prime Minister Modi, who dedicated the country's first greenfield integrated refinery-cum-petrochemical complex to the nation in Rajasthan's Balotra area, lauded authorities for working tirelessly over the last two months to repair the project, where a major fire had occurred on April 20, forcing the postponement of its scheduled inauguration by the PM the next day.

On Friday, strong winds accompanied by rains damaged banners and hoardings at the refinery site ahead of the prime minister's visit and workers were engaged since Saturday morning for the repairs.



The prime minister said India has substantially expanded its refining capacity while several developed regions have failed to do so.

"The United States has not built a new refinery in the last 50 years. Europe's refining capacity has continuously declined. India has now become the world's fourth-largest country in refining capacity and this capacity will continue to grow," he said.

The prime minister spoke about how LPG production was maximised, PNG connections increased and energy imports were sourced from more than 40 coun-

tries to overcome the crisis and shield citizens in India from the worst impact of the crisis.

He said oil companies incurred losses of over ₹ 75,000 crore between April and June due to rising global prices, but the government absorbed the burden.

"In several countries, diesel and petrol prices rose by 40 to 50 per cent and fuel was distributed through quotas. India did not witness such a situation even for a single day.

"Rumours were spread, people were frightened and political games were played, but those with wrong intentions did not succeed," he said, apparently attacking the Congress and other opposition parties.

He noted the government was working round the clock at the policy and diplomatic levels to tackle the crisis. Every sensitive decision taken during that period will one day become part of history. What India achieved during this crisis is unprecedented, he said. (PTI)

Man shot dead in Bihar's Muzaffarpur

MUZAFFARPUR, July 4: A man was shot dead by unidentified miscreants in Bihar's Muzaffarpur district on Saturday morning, police said. The incident took place near a temple in the Siwaipatti police station area of the district. The deceased was identified as Shyam Sundar Kushwaha, local grocery dealer.

"Kushwaha had gone to the temple early in the morning to offer prayers when three accused arrived on a motorcycle and allegedly opened fire on him. He was taken to Sri Krishna Medical College and Hospital (SKMCH) for treatment, where doctors declared him dead," Muzaffarpur SP (Rural) Prabhakar Singh told reporters.

The complaint of the deceased's family members, naming several suspects, has been recorded, he said.

"An FSL team has reached the spot and is collecting evidence. Some shell casings have also been recovered from the crime scene," Singh said. He said that post-mortem examination was underway, and the exact number of bullets received by the deceased will be ascertained only after reports arrive.

"The family members have said in the complaint that there was an old dispute, and cases were lodged earlier as well. We are examining whether this incident was carried out as a continuation of that chain of events," the SP said. (PTI)

Operative behind recce of Ram temple and RSS HQ, Hafiz Saeed's relative in designated terrorist list

NEW DELHI, July 4: A JeM operative who was involved in the reconnaissance of Ram temple and RSS headquarters, and LeT founder Hafiz Saeed's son-in-law were among 23 individuals based in Pakistan and Pakistan-occupied Jammu and Kashmir (PoJK) who were designated terrorists by the home ministry on Saturday.

Six of them are Indian nationals, now based in Pakistan or PoJK. The move is aimed at hitting at the entrenched ecosystem of operatives spanning senior leaders, associates of Lashkar-e-Taiba founder Hafiz Hafiz Muhammad Saeed and Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) founder Maulana Masood Azhar, as well as launching commanders, recruiters and financial coordinators associated primarily with JeM and LeT.

All 23 of them were designated as terrorist under fourth schedule of the anti-terror law Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) for involvement in infiltration, recruitment, logistics, financing and operational planning to target India.

Among them is Mohammad Musaddiq, a Pakistani JeM operative known by aliases including Doctor and Abdul Mannan, who was instrumental in reconnaissance of Ram Janmabhoomi complex in Ayodhya, the RSS headquarters in

Nagpur and the IOCL refinery in Panipat.

He is also serving as the launching commander for the Lasiyakot sector and facilitates infiltration through tunnels, sending arms and ammunition into India using drones.

Masood Ilyas Kashmiri, a Pakistani national known by several aliases including Mufti Masood Ilyas and Abu Mohammad, is a close associate of Masood Azhar and the organisation's key coordinator for infiltration into Kashmir.

The home ministry said he is accused of recruiting youths through social media, raising funds for terrorism and orchestrating the April 2022 attack on a police checkpoint near the PDP office in Sunjwan, Jammu.

Mufti Mohammad Asghar Khan, also known as Abu Saad or Saad Jimiki, has been identified as JeM's Amir and head of its military wing in PoJK.

The ministry said he was a key conspirator in the attack on the Indian Army camp in Nagrota and that he runs training camps in Muzaffarabad providing jihadist and military instruction.

Hafiz Abdul Shakoor, alias Qari Jarrar, affiliated with JeM and Harkat-ul-Mujahideen, is accused of facilitating the infiltration of three Pakistani terrorists through the Samba-Kathua sector for the Nagrota Army camp attack. (PTI)

Incessant rains disrupt normal life in Mumbai; schools, colleges shut after IMD's red alert



MUMBAI, July 4: Incessant and heavy rains threw life out of gear in Mumbai and its metropolitan region on Saturday, triggering incidents of road cave-in, tree fall and house collapse, and disrupting road and rail traffic.

The continuous downpour, coupled with the

India Meteorological Department (IMD)'s extremely heavy rainfall alert, forced the civic body to declare a holiday for schools and colleges in the afternoon. The showers led to water-logging in several low-lying areas of the metropolis, including Andheri, Kurla, Sakinaka, Chembur, Santacruz, Goregaon and Powai, and crippled the services of the public transport utility as well posed difficulties for the users of private vehicles.

Water stagnated on tracks, especially between Nalasopara and Virar stations on the Western Railway line, affected the train services. While the railway administration said trains on the route were running 15 to 20 minutes behind the schedule, passengers complained that the operations came to a standstill. Train traffic on other routes - Main and Harbour lines - were also affected.

Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnis urged people in the Mumbai Metropolitan Region (MMR) and Pune-Nashik belt to strictly follow official weather advisories and avoid unnecessary travel in view of the warning of heavy rainfall and storms till July 6.

Despite the late arrival of monsoon, the country's financial capital has been witnessing heavy rainfall since the beginning of this week.

Several parts of the city recorded over 100 mm in the 24 hours period ending 8 am on Saturday, civic officials said. (PTI)

50 Bangladeshi nationals sent to West Bengal by train for deportation



SALEM (TAMIL NADU), July 4: A group of 50 Bangladeshi nationals were deported and sent to West Bengal by train to facilitate their repatriation, police said on Saturday.

The deportees, comprising 44 men and six women, were previously lodged at the special detention camp located within the Attur taluk office complex in Salem district. Following official deportation orders, the group was transported by road in three vans to Tiruchirappalli on July 3, amid tight security.

Upon reaching Tiruchirappalli, the individuals boarded a specially designated coach on the Howrah Express. They are being escorted on the train journey by a 40-member armed police team led by Salem Armed Reserve Deputy Superintendent of Police Sakthivel.

Officials stated that the Tamil Nadu police will formally hand over the nationals to the Border Security Force (BSF) at the Hari-daspur land border in West Bengal. The BSF will then process their final handover to the Bangladeshi authorities. (PTI)

Heavy rains continue to batter Kerala; Yellow alert in 11 districts

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, July 4: Heavy rains accompanied by gusty winds lashed several parts of Kerala on Saturday, leading to a rise in water levels in rivers and dams, inundation in low-lying areas and damage to property, prompting authorities to issue alerts and precautionary measures across the state.

In Palakkad district, compound walls of two houses collapsed following heavy rainfall, while northern parts of Kozhikode, particularly the high ranges, witnessed intense downpours. In Idukki district, authorities opened the shutters of the Pambala dam as a precaution after heavy rainfall in the catchment areas led to a rise in the reservoir's water level, officials said.

Residents living along both banks of the Periyar river were advised to remain vigilant, while officials were directed to take all necessary safety measures.

Meanwhile, the India Meteorological Department on Saturday issued a Yellow Alert for Pathanamthitta, Kottayam, Idukki, Ernakulam, Thrissur, Palakkad, Malappuram, Kozhikode, Wayanad, Kannur and Kasaragod districts, forecasting isolated heavy rainfall accompanied by thunderstorms.

According to the IMD, isolated heavy rainfall refers to precipitation ranging between 64.5 mm and 115.5 mm within a 24-hour period.



The Indian National Centre for Ocean Information Services (INCOIS) also issued a high wave and sea erosion warning for coastal stretches in Kozhikode, Kannur and Kasaragod districts till 11.30 pm on Sunday.

The agency said waves ranging between 2.9 metres and 3.5 metres were likely to hit the coast and advised fishermen and coastal residents to exercise extreme caution.

Authorities asked people to move away from vulnerable coastal areas if instructed, avoid launching small boats into the sea, refrain from beach visits and sea-based recreational activities, and ensure fishing vessels are securely moored in harbours until the warning is withdrawn.

The Kerala State Disaster Management Au-

thority (KSDMA) cautioned that heavy rain could result in waterlogging on major roads, poor visibility affecting traffic, flooding in low-lying areas and riverbanks, uprooting of trees leading to power disruptions, partial damage to houses and huts, and an increased risk of landslides and landslips.

The authority also warned that rough weather could adversely affect people, livestock and unsecured structures along the coast. The KSDMA urged people living in landslide-prone areas to shift to safer places as directed by local authorities. Those residing along riverbanks and downstream of dams were also advised to remain alert and move to relief camps if instructed. (PTI)

After Op Sindoor, trust in 'made-in-India' defence platforms got enhanced: Rajnath

NEW DELHI, July 4: Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Saturday said that after Operation Sindoor, the trust in "made-in-India" defence platforms has received a boost. In his address at an event here, he also reiterated that "today, our defence production has reached over ₹ 1.78 lakh crore, and about 8-9 years ago, it stood at approximately ₹ 46,000 crore".

The Union minister asserted that after Operation Sindoor, "trust in made-in-India defence platforms has got enhanced". Operation Sindoor was India's decisive military action conducted in May 2025 in response to the Pahalgam terror attack.

Several defence platforms built in India had played a key role in it.

Singh said, "Defence exports too have reached a record over ₹ 38,000 crore, and in 2013-14, it stood at just ₹ 686 crore, and it has grown today 57 times. And, I have not sought the full report,

but, currently it should be hovering around ₹ 40,000 crore, is my estimate."

In his address, he also spoke of India's journey in various sectors in the last 12 years, the advancement of artificial intelligence (AI) and the importance of human sensitivity in the age of AI, including in the field of journalism.

The event was hosted in Delhi to mark 80 years of the national Hindi daily Navbharat Times.

"India's journey over the last 12 years has been a progression from shortages to self-reliance, from self-reliance to self-confidence, and from self-confidence towards building a Viksit Bharat," Singh said. He said India lays emphasis on both technological development and celebrating its traditions, and this confluence of "tradition and technology" is the "biggest strength of the country in the 21st century".

Underlining that AI has touched



nearly all aspects of human existence today, he cautioned that while AI can read and analyse data, it "cannot feel the pulse" of the people, which is where the human sensitivity comes into picture.

Singh pointed out that journalism too has been impacted by technological advancements such as AI, but they won't be able to sur-

pass human creativity and intellect.

"The future success of journalism will depend on how well it establishes the balance and synergy between the capabilities of AI and human empathy. While AI will make journalism faster and more precise, emotional intelligence will ensure that it remains humane and credible," he said. The Union min-

ister also emphasised maintaining credibility in journalism in the era of fake news and misinformation.

Termining the media's role in the present era of, what he described as "communicative abundance", as more crucial than ever, the defence minister said the challenge today is not lack of information, but its accuracy and reliability. Misinformation severely impacts society and the morale of defence forces, he said, adding that while being the first to report may be important in journalism, disseminating correct news is even more crucial.

"Especially when the subject concerns the defence forces, national security, or the honour of those who make the supreme sacrifice in the service of the nation, every word becomes a matter of national responsibility. The media must always uphold the values of accuracy, objectivity, and impartiality," Singh said. (PTI)

Bengal CM lauds rescue efforts after warehouse collapse

KOLKATA, July 4: West Bengal Chief Minister Suwendu Adhikari on Saturday lauded the coordinated efforts of various agencies in saving lives after the Taratala warehouse collapse, and stated that stricter monitoring of construction of structures was being undertaken following the tragedy. At least 16 people died and 17 others were injured when the warehouse under construction in Taratala area here collapsed on June 24.

Adhikari was speaking at a felicitation programme organised by the Kolkata Police to honour personnel involved in the rescue operation at the collapse site. The CM hailed the coordinated efforts of various wings of the Kolkata Police, the Army, the Fire and Emergency Services, the Railways, doctors and nurses, the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF), among others.

"We must ensure that such incidents do not happen again. Following the Taratala tragedy, a special audit of buildings and construction-related issues is underway, and we have already initiated a series of measures. Every department has been asked to remain vigilant," he said.

He also emphasised the importance of coordination among various agencies during emergencies, noting that the rescue operation demonstrated how different organisations could work together to save lives. "I salute all the rescuers. You worked in complete coordination and succeeded in saving 17 lives. I thank the Army and the NDRF for their support. This spirit of cooperation between all agencies must continue in the future because protecting every life is our collective responsibility," Adhikari said. The chief minister also acknowledged the role played by locals, who were among the first to respond after the collapse.

"The people of Taratala, especially the local youths, deserve special appreciation. They were the first to begin rescue efforts before the arrival of the emergency services. I will try to visit Taratala and personally thank them for their courage and selfless efforts," he said. (PTI)

Director Ahmed Khan says the decision to move ahead with "Welcome to the Jungle" without iconic characters played by Nana Patekar and Anil Kapoor was driven by logistical constraints rather than creative reasons.

Anil and Nana essayed the fan-favourite gangsters Uday Shetty and Majnu Bhai in the franchise's first part "Welcome" in 2007, alongside Akshay Kumar, Katrina Kaif and Paresh Rawal, and later returned for the second installment, "Welcome Again" in 2015.

The franchise's third installment, "Welcome To The Jungle", which released in theatres last month, featured a new ensemble cast led by Akshay Kumar but did not include either Anil or Nana.

"Nana was supposed to be a part of the film. I met Anil and he was (also) supposed to be a part of the film. Anil was very busy with his other stuff. Since



we, have so many characters (referring to actors) so date manoeuvring was a big issue with everybody.

"So, we thought, if we have to go ahead, let's go ahead with new characters, and it connected us," Khan, who has directed movies like "Baaghi 2", "Heropanti 2", told PTI in an interview.

"Welcome To The Jungle" re-

volves around a group of gangsters, criminals and quirky characters whose paths cross in a border-area jungle. What begins as a film-shoot-like operation turns into a series of absurd misadventures involving crime, confusion and action-packed situations.

It stars Akshay Kumar leading a cast that includes 34 actors, including Sunil Shetty, Paresh

Rawal, Raveena Tandon, Arshad Warsi, Lara Dutta, Farida Jalal, Kiran Kumar, Jackie Shroff, and others.

Released on June 26, the movie has earned over ₹ 144 crore at the global box office but got mixed reviews from critics.

Khan said comedy films may not always receive the same level of critical recognition as other genres, but they continue

to earn audiences' love, which he considers the biggest reward.

"Like, in the house, if somebody is making you laugh, you will enjoy meeting that uncle or aunt, but when the father or grandfather walks in a stern way, they will get respect and the uncle or aunt will get love. So, those who will make you laugh will never get respect but they will get the love," he said.

"I think comedy films will never get the respect but they will get the love, action films will never get the love but will get respect because he is saving the nation, wife, mother, family, and he is standing up tall," the director said.

Khan described "Welcome to the Jungle" as a "comedy of errors" that is built on a layered narrative involving multiple

characters and situations.

"The biggest thing that always works in comedy is comedy of errors, this film is full of comedy of errors," he said, crediting the film's writing to the late writer-actor Neeraj Vora's original idea, which was further developed by Farhad Samji and producer Firoz Nadiadwala.

Khan lauded Kumar's contribution and his familiarity with the franchise's humour style. "...Then to top it all came Akshay, who is known for this kind of poker face humour. He's done all Firoz bhai's films including 'Hera Pheri', 'Awara Pagal Deewana'. 'Welcome', they knew each other.

"Then I came in, and what I got in was, I do action films (added action bit in 'Welcome to the Jungle'). Then we treated comedy film with action so that it looks like a serious film in which comedy is happening."

The director also said "Welcome to the Jungle" reflects real aspects of the film industry, including untalented actors, ego issues, negotiations with producers, paparazzi culture, among other things, but in a toned-down manner.

"We've (barely) shown 20 per cent of things, (rather) more than 80 per cent things happen (in the industry)," he said.

Of the film's 34 characters, Khan said the most difficult to write was the antagonist Zatar, portrayed by Jackie Shroff.

"When you make a humorous film, in that one seems to look down upon on the villain, they can beat him, pull his hair, or throw stones at him. The idea was when he (villain) enters will he be able to create that threat? So, it was difficult to conceive him," he said, adding that the character was given a menacing look without slipping into parody.

"Welcome to the Jungle" is produced by Star Studio 18, Base Industries Group, Cape of Good Films and Seeta Films. (PTI)

Anne Hathaway, Ewan McGregor's 'The End of Oak Street' to release in India on Aug 14

Warner Bros. India on Friday announced that mystery thriller "The End of Oak Street", starring Anne Hathaway and Ewan McGregor, will be released in theatres across the country on August 14.

The studio unveiled five new character posters for the film, which will be released in cinemas and IMAX in English, Hindi, Tamil and Telugu.

The newly released posters feature Hathaway as Denise Platt, McGregor as Greg Platt, Maisy Stella as Audrey Platt, Christian Convery as Brian Platt and Starbuck, teasing a story centred on a family navigating strange happenings around them.

Written and directed by David Robert Mitchell, "The End of Oak Street" follows the Platt family after a mysterious cosmic event transports their suburban neighbourhood to an unknown world, forcing them to rely on one another to survive as they navigate their strange and dangerous new surroundings.

The film is produced by J.J. Abrams, Hannah Minghella, Jon Cohen, Mitchell, Matt Jackson and Tommy Harper. Chris Bender, Jake Weiner, Joanne Lee and Leeann Stonebreaker serve as executive producers.

The film is backed by Warner Bros. Pictures in association with Bad Robot and Jackson Pictures. (PTI)



Samantha Ruth Prabhu teases collaboration with Sony LIV Tamil for new project

Actor Samantha Ruth Prabhu on Saturday announced a collaboration with Sony LIV Tamil, teasing an upcoming project with the streaming platform.

In a statement, the OTT platform said the collaboration marks the beginning of a new association with the actor and that more information will be announced at a later date.

Samantha, known for films such as "Ye Maaya Chesave", "Eega", "Mersal", "Super Deluxe", "Majili" and "Kushi", said she is looking forward to revealing the project soon.

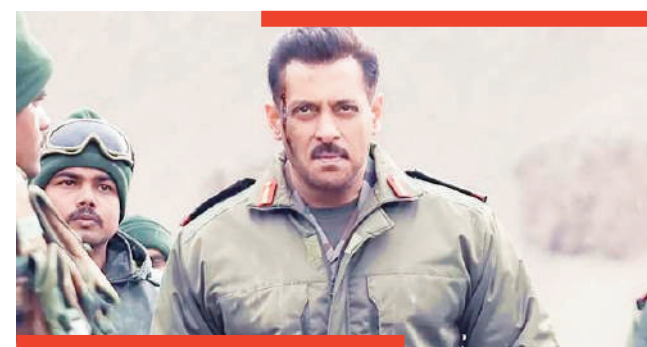
"This year has reminded me to embrace change, trust the journey and welcome new beginnings. I'm so happy to be starting this new chapter with Sony LIV Tamil. We've been working on something really exciting, and I'm looking forward to sharing it with all of you very soon," the actor said.



Samantha was most recently seen in "Maa Inti Bangaaram", an action drama from filmmaker Nandini Reddy. The movie, which released in June last week, has received unanimous praise from the critics and earned over Rs 85 crores at the global box office. Last month, the actor announced

that she is expecting her first child with filmmaker-husband Raj Nidimoru and will soon take a "maternity break".

Samantha's upcoming projects include the fantasy action series "Rakt Brahmam: The Bloody Kingdom", created by Raj & DK for Netflix. (PTI)



Salman Khan Films denies reports of 'Maatrubhumi' delay: 'Film not yet submitted to CBFC'

The makers of Salman Khan-starrer "Maatrubhumi: May War Rest in Peace" on Saturday dismissed reports claiming that the film has been delayed due to certification issues, saying the movie has not yet been submitted to the Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC).

In a statement, the actor's production banner, Salman Khan Films, said reports suggesting that the film's certification had been put on hold as "false" and "entirely baseless".

"Any claims suggesting that 'Maatrubhumi: May War Rest in Peace' has encountered issues with the CBFC or that its certification has been put on hold are false. The film has not yet been submitted to the CBFC for certification. Therefore, such reports are entirely baseless," the banner said on Instagram.

Salman Khan Films also urged media organisations and individuals not to circulate unverified information.

"Any official updates regarding the film will be shared by Salman Khan Films through its official channels only," it added.

Earlier this week, there were reports claiming that the movie will likely miss its August release as the film is still under process at the censor board.

Directed by Apoorva Lakhia, "Maatrubhumi: May War Rest in Peace" stars Salman Khan as Colonel Bikkumalla Santosh Babu, who laid down his life along with 19 other soldiers of the 16 Bihar Regiment during the 2020 Galwan Valley clash between Indian and Chinese troops.

The film was earlier slated for a theatrical release on April 17 under the title "Battle of Galwan" before being rechristened "Maatrubhumi: May War Rest in Peace". The makers are yet to announce a fresh release date.

"Maatrubhumi" also stars Chitrangada Singh. (PTI)

Hyundai India Couture Week to open in Hyderabad for first time with Anamika Khanna show

Hyundai India Couture Week 2026 will travel beyond the national capital for the first time with designer Anamika Khanna set to present the inaugural showcase in Hyderabad on July 23, organisers announced on Friday.

The annual fashion event, organised by the Fashion Design Council of India (FDCI) in association with Nexxus New York, has traditionally been held in New Delhi.

According to the organisers, this year's edition will open with a special showcase by Khanna at the historic Falaknuma Palace, marking the first time the couture platform is being launched outside Delhi.

Khanna's collection will feature both womenswear and menswear and draw inspiration from a reimagined lost civilisation, exploring themes of memory, craftsmanship and identity through handcrafted silhouettes and embellishments, the organisers said.

FDCI chairman Sunil Sethi said taking Hyundai India Couture Week beyond Delhi marks a significant milestone for the platform.

"Anamika Khanna's work is deeply rooted in craft while constantly pushing creative boundaries, making her the perfect choice for this landmark presentation. We are delighted to begin this new chapter with an out-of-state fashion show," Sethi said in a statement. Khanna said opening this year's couture week is both "an honour and a responsibility".

"It offers an opportunity to celebrate the extraordinary craftsmanship that defines Indian couture while exploring new ways of expressing it. I am continually interested in how craft can remain deeply rooted yet feel entirely contemporary," the designer said.

Hyundai Motor India Managing Director and CEO Tarun Garg said the company's continued association with the event reflects its focus on design and innovation. (PTI)



Superstar Aamir Khan has said his wedding with partner Gauri Spratt will be held at his residence here on July 5 and he hopes that they have a good life together.

Aamir on Thursday evening attended the screening of the upcoming show "Pritam and Pedro", which marks the series debut of Rajkumar Hirani, who worked with the superstar on movies "3 Idiots" and "PK".

Talking to reporters, the 61-year-old actor said the wedding will be an intimate affair that will be attended by close family and friends.

"I'm getting married on July 5, and the wedding will take place at home with close family and friends. We seek every-

Aamir Khan says his wedding with partner Gauri Spratt will be intimate affair with family and friends



one's blessings and hope that we have a happy journey together," said Aamir, who was accompanied by son Junaid Khan at the event.

This will be the third marriage for Aamir, who first married film producer Reena Dutta from 1986 to 2002. They share two children - Junaid and Ira Khan. In 2005, he married director

Kiran Rao and the couple separated in 2021. They continue to co-parent their son, Azad.

Aamir had introduced Gauri Spratt to the media during an event in 2025 when he was promoting his film "Sitaare Zameen Par".

At the time, the actor said they had been together for over a year.

"I thought it would be a nice occasion for you all to meet her, besides we won't have to keep hiding. She met Shah Rukh Khan and Salman Khan last night.

"She is from Bangalore, and we knew each other for 25 years. But we connected a year-and-a-half ago. She happened to be in Mumbai and we met accidentally, we kept in touch, and then it all happened organically," Aamir said last year.

Spratt, who has a son from an earlier marriage, works in the wellness and beauty space. (PTI)

Netflix launches NextGen India Writers' Program to mentor emerging storytellers

Streaming service Netflix on Friday announced the launch of the NextGen India Writers' Program, a talent development initiative aimed at identifying and mentoring emerging screenwriters in the country.

The programme, being introduced in India for the first time, is open to writers with up to three years of professional writing experience.

India is the third country after France and the Netherlands to host the initiative, the streamer said in a statement.

Selected participants will undergo a two-month hybrid programme featuring mentorship, workshops and guidance from industry experts to develop original series ideas into professionally structured series bibles.

Monika Shergill, vice president of content at Netflix India, said the initiative is aimed at discovering and nurturing new storytelling talent.

"Every great story begins with a writer. In a country as creatively rich and diverse as India, we know there are countless people with extraordinary stories to tell who simply haven't had the opportunity yet.

"The Netflix NextGen India Writers' Program is our way of discovering those voices early, investing in their potential, and giving them the space to develop their craft and bring their stories to life," Shergill said.

She said Netflix believes the next phase of Indian entertainment will be driven by storytellers with fresh perspectives and distinctive voices.

According to the streamer, the programme will help participants understand the process of developing an original idea into a long-form series for the screen.

Netflix said the initiative builds on its efforts to support emerging creative talent in India through projects such as "The Railway Men", "The Ba*ds of Bollywood" and the upcoming series "Operation Safed Sagar", which are led by relatively new creative voices. (PTI)

Is Sooryavanshi's style sustainable for long time? Youngsters copying him should ponder: Hayden

NEW DELHI, July 4: Vaibhav Sooryavanshi's 'devil may care' approach towards batting looks magical but other teenagers trying to ape the boy wonder should ponder if that template is sustainable, Australian legend Matthew Hayden cautioned.

The 15-year-old Sooryavanshi, whose much-awaited international debut has become a national discussion, has galloped into the collective consciousness of the cricketing universe with his attack at all costs style which has already created a new order in T20 cricket.

When Hayden, who very recently saw Sooryavanshi perform in the IPL while sitting in the Gujarat Titans dug-out, was asked whether Shubman Gill's classical batsmanship and the Bihar lad's pyrotechnics can co-exist in T20s, he gave an interesting take.

"We are talking about two very unique personalities. Can both (Gill and Sooryavanshi) styles exist? Absolutely. They already do. The challenge for any youngster watching someone like Vaibhav Sooryavanshi is whether that style can be sustained over a long period."

Hayden, owner of 15,000-plus international runs and 40 centuries, told PTI in an exclusive interaction.

For Hayden, Gill has already shown that his style of batting certainly has had the recipe for success at the international level.

"Shubman Gill has already shown that it can be done with consistency at the international level, and for me, international cricket remains the premium standard."

"Just as we see footballers like Lionel Messi represent both club and country successfully, there is room for different approaches in cricket," Hayden explained.

Hayden, who has been a coach and a respected cricket commentator, said each and every player should search within to find a way to go about their job in their own individual style.

"I strongly believe in helping players find their own inner warrior. Sooryavanshi and Shubman Gill are completely different personalities with different backgrounds and different journeys."

"That's the beauty of cricket. It's a



skill-based game, and every player arrives with unique technical strengths and experiences," Hayden summed it up succinctly.

Hayden then cited an example of his playing days. As a southpaw, he admired his contemporary Brian Lara but knew that there was no point in trying to copy the Trinidadian's style.

"I grew up admiring Brian Lara, but I wasn't Brian Lara. I wasn't West Indian either. I grew up in regional Queensland where sport was central to everyday life."

"I developed my own game based on my instincts, and that eventually allowed me to become one of the best players in the world."

For Hayden, it is important for every player to find his own identity, making them unique.

"Sport is full of unique personalities. There will never be another Jonah Lomu (rugby great), another Lionel Messi or another Kelly Slater (surfer)."

"As coaches, our job is to discover those players, nurture their individuality and make sure their development is sustainable," Hayden put it aptly.

Bilateral ODIs are losing a bit of content save marquee events

Hayden, who is now co-owner of franchisee Glasgow Cosmics in European T20 Premier League (ETPL), doesn't hesitate that 50-over cricket is suffering from existential crisis amid the advent of franchise based T20 leagues across the cricketing globe.

"One-day cricket is probably the format facing the biggest questions at the moment. Bilateral cricket has also become increasingly difficult outside the marquee series like India versus Australia or Australia versus England," Hayden echoed sentiments of India great Ravichandran Ashwin.

"It's a very interesting thought, and there is certainly an air of inevitability about it when you look at how other professional sports have evolved."

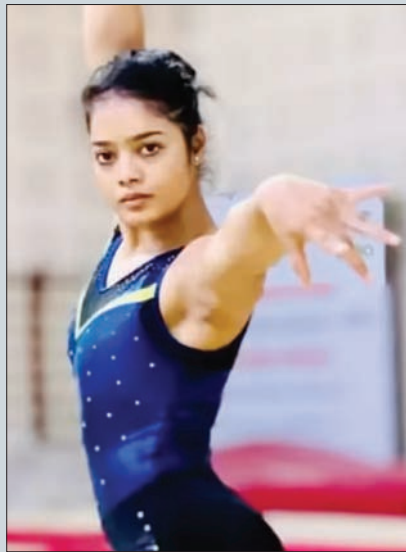
"Cricket is unique because it's fundamentally an international game governed by the ICC. The ICC has some very important questions to answer regarding the future structure of the sport and the balance between franchise and international cricket," he added.

Hayden also pointed out a practical problem about the viability of 50-over cricket.

"Countries such as the West Indies, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka — great cricketing nations — often find themselves feeling insecure and isolated within the current international structure."

"From my perspective today, though, I'm proud to be helping develop a franchise system in Scotland, one that can grow participation among boys and girls, provide opportunities for local players and compete for attention alongside sports like football and rugby," he added. (PTI)

India's artistic gymnastics squad will head to Glasgow after London training camp



NEW DELHI, July 4: India's artistic gymnastics squad will head to Glasgow on July 20 after completing a three-week training camp in London as part of its preparations for the upcoming Commonwealth Games.

The camp, which began on June 29, was funded by the Sports Authority of India under the Target Asian Games Group and TOPS scheme.

The women's squad for the Commonwealth Games comprises Olympian Pranati Nayak, Nishka Agarwal, Eshita Rewale and Protistha Samanta.

The men's squad has Tapan Mohanty, Tapeshwar Das, Swatish KP and Yogeshwar Singh.

Rakesh Patra is the men's coach, while Payal Bhattacharjee and Ashok Kumar Mishra serve as women's coaches.

Pranati, who won a silver medal in the vault event in Tashkent at FIG World Challenge Cup early this year, is currently training in Odisha under Mishra and will head directly to Scotland for the quadrennial event.

The overseas camp was aimed at fine-tuning the team's preparations ahead of the Commonwealth Games, with the contingent scheduled to travel directly from London to Glasgow after its conclusion.

"The camp has been very productive so far. The athletes are training well and the exposure has been beneficial ahead of a major event like the Commonwealth Games. We will travel directly to Glasgow from London on July 20," Patra told PTI.

Indian gymnasts have won a total of 3 medals (1 silver and 2 bronze) in the history of the Commonwealth Games.

While Ashish Kumar claimed a silver and bronze in floor exercise and vault respectively in 2010 Delhi edition, Dipa Karmakar won a bronze in women's vault in 2014 Glasgow. (PTI)

Scored runs in trials but never got selected for Delhi: Samson

NEW DELHI, July 4: The Delhi & District Cricket Association has long carried the reputation of "crushing dreams" of deserving talents and they almost did that with Sanju Samson before his father, an erstwhile cop with Delhi Police decided to shift base to his home state Kerala.

The exceptionally gifted Samson by sheer weight of his white ball runs made it to the Indian T20 team and earlier this year was the biggest hero of the T20 World Cup triumph.

However Samson mentioned how the heartbreak in Delhi became a turning point for him and his family.

"Back in school, I used to see friends wear the DDCA jacket and talk about playing for the state cricket team of Delhi. That motivated me," Samson told 'JioStar'.

"I wanted to represent Delhi too. I went for trials, attended state camps, and scored runs. Two or three times I made it to the camp but never got a breakthrough into the state team. The competition was tough."

However his father Viswanath took a split-second decision that proved to be life-changing for the Samson household.

"Then one day, the team list was



announced after my trials had ended. My name was not there. We returned home in silence. As soon as we reached home, my father told my mother, 'We will have to move to Kerala. We are shifting,'" he recalled.

"My mother said, 'The kids are only in 6th standard. Let them complete 10th.' My father said, 'No, we have to go now. Pack

your things. I am booking tickets in three days.' He took that decision instantly."

"I remember, we all boarded the train. Then we reached Kerala and I started playing for Kerala. That is how my cricket journey for the Kerala State Team began," said the man, who made his Ranji Trophy debut weeks before his 17th birthday. (PTI)

Grand Chess Tour: Praggnanandhaa ends rapid section as joint leader

ZAGREB (CROATIA), July 4: Indian Grandmaster R Praggnanandhaa won three matches in a row on the final day tie for the first place with Firozja Alireza of France on 12 points as the rapid section of the Croatian leg of the Grand Chess Tour ended here.

Having fallen a little behind after the second day, Praggnanandhaa reserved his best for the last three rounds and defeated Ivan Saric of Croatia, Deac Bogdan-Daniel of Romania and Anish Giri of the Netherlands to finally catch up with Alireza. The other Frenchman Maxime Vachier-Lagrave and Nodirbek Abdusattorov of Uzbekistan remained within striking distance of the two leaders with a fine finish in the rapid section to reach 11 points while world champion D Gukesh of India and Vincent Keymer of Germany are right on their toes with 10 points each.

With 18 rounds in the blitz section still to played, Giri is on eight points and is a full point ahead of Deac and Jordan van Foreest of the Netherlands while Saric stands last with just two points in his bag.

For Praggnanandhaa, things started moving right after the opening against Saric who has been struggling in the event. The Caro Kann defense gave the Indian an active position right from the beginning and though it took a long time to convert, Praggnanandhaa was always in command. In the second game, Praggnanandhaa crashed through the defenses of Deac out of a Petroff defense and by move 15, the writing was already on the wall. The Romanian lost a piece soon and never recovered.

In the final game of the day, Praggnanandhaa was on fire against generally dependable Anish Giri as he won a pawn out of a Catalan opening and then ended the game efficiently with fine tactical manoeuvres. The game ended in a mere 34 moves.

For Gukesh, this turned out to be a contrasting day compared to Praggnanandhaa as the youngest ever world champion could only draw all the three games to fall behind a little. Abdusattorov, Keymer and Alireza all split points with Gukesh. (PTI)

India women's deaf cricket team to tour Sri Lanka in maiden Int'l tour

NEW DELHI, July 4: The Indian deaf women's cricket team will embark on its first-ever international T20 tour for a five-match series in Sri Lanka from July 7-13. The 15-member squad will be captained by Kajal Dhawan who is also the wicketkeeper of the side. Needa Zabi Shaikh has been made the vice-captain, according to a press release issued on Saturday. The matches will be held at the De Soysa Park International Cricket Stadium in Moratuwa.

The Indian Deaf Cricket Association also announced a T20I Tri-Series in India in March next year also featuring Sri Lanka, and Trinidad & Tobago and the DICC Women's T20 World Cup in Delhi in February 2028. Commenting about the landmark moment, former Indian women's team captain Diana Edulji said: "It is a significant milestone for India that our hearing-impaired girls have got their first international call-up. Cricket belongs to everyone! (PTI)

Diksha stays in contention as all four Indians make cut in Belgium

HULENCOURT (BELGIUM), July 4: Diksha Dagar remained firmly in the title race despite a late stumble as all four Indian golfers made the cut at the Hulencourt Women's Open here.

Diksha, who shared the overnight lead after an opening bogey-free 68, carded an even-par 72 to slip into a tie for third at four-under for the tournament.

She looked set for another strong round before two late bogeys halted her momentum, but she stayed within striking distance heading into the final 36 holes.

The left-hander mixed three birdies with three bogeys in an otherwise steady performance and is part of a five-way tie for third place, keeping alive hopes of adding a third Ladies European Tour title to her resume. India also had another player inside the top 10 with Aditi Ashok making an impressive return to the Ladies European Tour.

The experienced Indian followed her opening 70 with a composed one-under 71 to move to three-under overall and into a share of eighth place.

Aditi's round was a model of consistency. She made just one birdie while avoiding mistakes for the rest of the day, carding 17 pars to remain well placed heading into the weekend.

Avani Prashanth also ensured a productive second round despite a difficult start. Beginning on the 10th tee, Avani found herself two-over through her opening 11 holes including a costly double bogey on the par-four 16th. (PTI)

Kimi Antonelli beats Lewis Hamilton

SILVERSTONE, July 4: Kimi Antonelli returned to winning ways on Saturday by denying Lewis Hamilton a crowd-pleasing home victory in the sprint race ahead of the British Grand Prix.

Hamilton started on pole and held off Antonelli until lap eight of 17, when the Italian swept past with the help of electrical power.

"Let's go! Let's go!" Antonelli told the team over the radio after taking the win.

"It was a very fun first 10 laps with Lewis, we were both pushing very hard," Antonelli added later. "Obviously the momentum is there and we are doing a great job together with the team."

Hamilton was back fighting for a win again after a breakthrough victory last month at the Barcelona-Catalunya Grand Prix, his first since moving to Ferrari last year. "I was pushing as hard as I could, I gave it absolutely everything," Hamilton said. "We've got a bit of work to do to try and close that gap." (AP)

A final splash at glory: Swimmer Sajan Prakash eyes CWG podium

NEW DELHI, July 4: Competing in his final season, ace Indian swimmer Sajan Prakash has a simple goal for his last hurrah at the Commonwealth Games -- a podium finish and a personal best performance.

After taking a break post the Paris Olympics due to a "burnout", Sajan returned to swimming last year. He qualified for the Commonwealth Games, starting from July 23 in Glasgow and the Aichi-Nagoya Asian Games in September, breaching the qualification time in the men's 200m butterfly set by the Swimming Federation of India earlier this year.

"A medal will be nice, swimming a personal best time will be nice, I've put in all the work. I'm aiming for a 1:56 or a 1:55s," the soft-spoken butterfly specialist told PTI.

For Sajan, though, success in Glasgow will not be measured solely by the colour of the medal.

"But giving my best effort is the most important thing here I just want to do the process right and give my best effort now. What people will see the time, or the medal. But for me to be happy inside, I need to know I gave it my absolute best effort."

It's been five years since Sajan clocked his personal best of 1:56.38 at the Sette Colli Trophy in Rome in 2021 that made him the first Indian swimmer to achieve the Olympic 'A' qualifying standard.

While the podium remains his target, Sajan, who clocked 1:57.09 at the Singapore National Age Group Swimming Championships in March, knows the challenge will be formidable.

"To make the podium is the goal, but it is going to be very difficult because the Australians and the British swimmers are going to be extremely fast in this event."

Sajan is currently in Edinburgh for three-week speed-training camp, where he hopes to fine-tune himself for the CWG.

"The idea is to get acclimatised to the weather and the conditions, and we are much more prepared for the Games. So, with that 1:57s, I've put in all the work. I'm aiming for a 1:56s or a 1:55s," he added.

If the two-time Olympian manages to dip below 1:56s, he could well find himself in medal contention.

At the Birmingham CWG in 2022,



Lewis Clareburt won gold in 1:55.60, Chad le Clos took silver in 1:55.89 and James Guy claimed bronze in 1:56.77.

Before heading to Edinburgh, Sajan spent three weeks in Sierra Nevada in Spain for high altitude training.

"Coming to a higher altitude, there is less oxygen in the air and it's very dry, so recovery gets much slower here and it's hard to train," he explained the need for

high altitude training.

"We build up that aerobic capacity to train in tougher situations. When we go back down to sea level, the recovery is much better and metabolism works at 2x. So the performance will also get better."

Sajan's comeback has also brought an unexpected coaching partnership with former India swimmer and Asian Games medallist Sandeep Sejwal donning the

coach's cap. Sejwal is also the last Indian swimmer to stand on top of a podium at a multi-sport event.

"I never in my life thought Sandeep would become my coach. But having a person who has swam for India for so long, and being a friend and a teammate, I think the understanding is much better."

"Outside the pool, we are messing around, but in the pool, I still trust him. He has been in that zone for so long, so he understands and cooperates with whatever I say. We probably have a better understanding in terms of training and recovery."

Recovery has become the cornerstone of Sajan's preparation. Age has also forced the 32-year-old to rethink his methods.

"Focusing on recovery is the priority now, rather than just training hard like I did 10 years ago. The hard work is all done. Now we focus on maintaining and doing the aerobic conditioning, but building in more power is the primary focus."

"With more experience, you acknowledge and understand your body better. Having a longer recovery session, proper nutrition, giving priority to sleep, and breath work these are all the important tasks I am focusing on," he added. (PTI)

Lionel Messi scores 20th World Cup goal, extends streak to 8 games and takes Golden Boot lead

MIAMI GARDENS, July 4: Lionel Messi's goal-scoring streak lived on, and he made it look easy.

His hopes of a second consecutive World Cup title also lived on — and that accomplishment was anything but easy.

Messi's goal in the 29th minute was the 20th of his World Cup career, extending his record and moving him two ahead of France's Kylian Mbappé on the all-time list. It was the opener of what became a wild night, with Argentina escaping with a 3-2 win over Cape Verde in extra time against a huge underdog.

Messi was pictured later at his media conference with a large bump on his head after apparently being hit with a knee during a collision with a Cape Verde player.

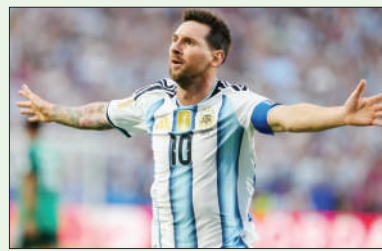
"It hurts a little but I'm good," he was quoted in comments translated from Spanish about the goose-egg over his right eye.

Messi — who now has goals in a record eight consecutive World Cup games going back to Argentina's run to the 2022 title — seemed relieved after the match, and lauded Cape Verde's defense for giving his club fits.

"We did good things," Messi said in his native Spanish, "and we have to correct the bad things."

Messi has seven goals in this World Cup — one more than Mbappé in the race for the Golden Boot as the top scorer of the tournament — and has scored 12 times during his eight-game World Cup streak. He has been great, and Argentina has needed him to be great.

"For me, it represents a lot to be friends with him," said Rodrigo De Paul, Messi's teammate with Argentina and Inter Miami. "For me, friendship is one of the most important things that we all have and I consider myself fortunate to be there, to share these moments with



him."

And there has been no shortage of moments.

Messi had the game's first good chance Friday, his all-world left foot sending a shot skidding across the goal mouth but outside of the right post in the 15th minute. After getting taken down, he had a 25-yard free kick three minutes later that was easily gobbled up by Cape Verde goalkeeper Vozinha.

But the momentum was shifting, and before long, Messi broke through for a

1-0 lead. He timed his run perfectly on a ball played into the box by defender Lisandro Martinez to stay onside, controlled the pass and then lifted a shot over Vozinha's left shoulder from close range for his 124th international goal. Only Portugal's Cristiano Ronaldo, with 146, has more.

Messi stretched his arms and pointed to Martinez, saluting the pass, before teammates mobbed him in celebration.

Argentina was a huge favorite — some sportsbooks had the defending champions at minus-3500 to win, meaning bettors would have to wager \$3,500 to profit \$100 — and the Messi goal probably had some thinking the scoring dam was about to break.

It wasn't. Cape Verde scored to knot the game at 1-1 and 2-2, and Messi set up the eventual winner with a corner kick that bounced off some heads and into the net

midway through the second half of extra time.

"As this team has demonstrated many times, and as I've said many times, it competes," Messi said. "And we competed to the end."

The Golden Boot race may go down to the end as well, with the four leaders now all safely into the Round of 16.

Messi and Mbappé are far from the only contenders in the Golden Boot race: Norway's Erling Haaland and England's Harry Kane each had five goals entering Friday, while four players — France's Ousmane Dembele, Spain's Mikel Oyarzabal, Brazil's Vinicius Junior and Senegal's Ismaila Sarr — had four. Sarr is out of the running since Senegal has been eliminated.

Norway, England and France have advanced to the Round of 16; Argentina and Messi, the Inter Miami star who is widely considered the greatest player

ever, now join them — barely. "Our team did everything we could to win the game," Cape Verde goalie Vozinha said.

Messi has never won the Golden Boot. He finished second with seven goals — one behind Mbappé — while leading Argentina to the 2022 World Cup title, and he tied for third with four goals in 2014.

If there's a tie atop the goal list when the tournament ends, FIFA will use assists as the first tiebreaker and fewest minutes played as the second tiebreaker. Entering Friday, that meant Mbappé would have had the edge over Messi based on his 2-0 lead in assists.

But for now, Messi leads the scoring race. Most important, he's still in the race for another World Cup title.

"I hope you now realize, there is no easy opponent," Argentina coach Lionel Scaloni said. (AP)

Colombia beats Ghana 1-0 to reach the World Cup Round of 16

KANSAS CITY, July 4: The plan for Colombia against Ghana probably did not involve making a substitution just minutes into the match.

That plan also went by the wayside when Jhon Córdoba appeared to hurt his groin.

Forced into making a rare early move, Colombia coach Néstor Lorenzo sent Luis Suárez onto the field, and he promptly delivered a sharp cross that Jhon Arias flicked into the net, resulting in the only goal on a sweltering Friday night at Arrowhead Stadium and sending Los Cafeteros into the Round of 16 at the World Cup with a 1-0 victory over the Black Stars.

"I think football is a team sport," Lorenzo said. "Ultimately you do have little groups in certain areas, but you have to have a unit — a whole — and I think our squad has been working on that from the very onset. That was the goal from the very beginning."

The early goal was a good omen: Colombia has won 11 consecutive World Cup matches when scoring first. Now, it will play



Switzerland on Tuesday in Vancouver, British Columbia, for a spot in the quarterfinals.

"We have won absolutely nothing," Colombia star Luis Díaz said. "These games are very difficult. Every game we've seen has been tight. The good thing and the positive thing is that we're playing very well, we feel comfortable, we are being a family, we are working as a team, and that will work for what is coming."

Los Cafeteros thought they had doubled their lead in the 56th

minute, when Díaz found the back of the net only to see the offside flag raised, and the fleet-footed Colombia forward had a point-blank shot saved by Lawrence Ati Zigi a few minutes later.

Zigi wound up making seven saves to keep Ghana in the game. "Sometimes it happens in football," Ghana defender Jerome Opoku said, "that it doesn't go your way."

It was 88 degrees Fahrenheit (31.1 Celsius) with a heat index of 96 when the game kicked off

at 8:30 p.m. local time, the late start intentional due to the expected heat of Midwestern summers. The hydration breaks that have been controversial in so many matches suddenly became a blessing as players from both sides fought through dehydration and cramps.

Ghana was one of a record nine teams from Africa to escape the group stage of the World Cup. And while many gave fits to some of the tournament favorites — hello, Cape Verde against Argentina — only Morocco and Egypt were able to reach the Round of 16.

"It's always great to get out of your group," Opoku said. "Obviously we wanted to go further."

Colombia had breezed through the group stage, conceding only a single goal in wins over Uzbekistan and Congo and a draw with Portugal. In fact, Los Cafeteros had been so impressive that Spain coach Luis de la Fuente — whose own team is considered among the tournament favorites — tapped them as "a candidate to win the World Cup." (AP)

Egypt wins in World Cup knockout round debut 4-2 penalty shootout edge over Australia

ARLINGTON, July 4: Hossam Abdelmaguid scored the deciding goal in a shootout, and Egypt won its debut in the World Cup knockout round by beating Australia 4-2 on penalty kicks after a 1-1 draw Friday.

Australia goalkeeper Mathew Ryan didn't stop any of Egypt's four shots after replacing starter Patrick Beach late in extra time.

The victory comes in Egypt's fourth World Cup. Australia is now 0-3 in the knockout round.

Egypt will next face either defending champion Argentina or Cape Verde in the round of 16 on Tuesday in Atlanta.

Harry Souttar opened the shootout by missing high for Australia, and 18-year-old Lucas Herrington hit the crossbar with the fourth attempt to set up Abdelmaguid's clincher. Egypt's other penalty shootout scorers were Mahmoud Saber, Ramy Rabia and Mohamed Salah, the former Liverpool star who started despite a hamstring injury sustained in the team's group finale.

Jackson Irvine and Awer Mabil scored in the shootout for Australia. Emam Ashour gave Egypt



the lead in regulation by scoring in the 13th minute with a header that beat Beach just inside the near post. Australia evened the match in the 55th when Egypt defender Mohamed Hany became the first player to score two own-goals in the same World Cup.

The own-goal came when Aiden O'Neill took a free kick from left of the penalty area and Hany headed the ball past goalkeeper Mostafa Shoubir for a spot in World Cup infamy. His other own-goal came in a 1-1 draw with Belgium in the group stage.

Less than 10 minutes earlier, Hany was down near the same spot after colliding with Connor Metcalfe on the Australia midfielder's header attempt. Medical personnel tended to Hany with a stretcher waiting nearby, but he was helped up and stayed on after what appeared to be a concussion check.

Australia's only scoring in World Cup knockout rounds has been two own-goals. The Socceros lost to Italy 1-0 in 2006 and lost to Argentina 2-1 four years ago in Qatar. The goal against Argentina was an own-goal. (PTI)

Harry Kane has been World Cup's best player so far: Bhaichung

NEW DELHI, July 4: England captain Harry Kane has been the most outstanding player of the FIFA World Cup so far and he has done more heavy lifting of his team than Argentine wizard Lionel Messi and French superstar Kylian Mbappe, says former India captain Bhaichung Bhutia.



(seven) and Mbappe (six).

"So far for me, Harry Kane has been the most impressive because he has really carried England and delivered when it really counted. They've had some big, tough matches and Kane is one player who delivers in tough situations," Bhutia told PTI in an interview on Saturday.

"Obviously, France, in terms of Mbappe, has also been very good, he's delivered, as has Messi. But when it comes to one person really lifting the team, carrying the team on his shoulders, it has been Kane." (PTI)

Anush Agarwalla secures silver at CDI Hagen

NEW DELHI, July 4: Indian equestrian exponent Anush Agarwalla delivered another impressive performance, securing second place in the CDI Prix St. Georges at the Cavalliere Dressage Days in Hagen, Germany. Riding 'Straight Horse Floriana', Anush earned a score of 70.147%, finishing second among 22 competitors in a highly competitive field.

His polished test and strong partnership with Floriana helped him cross the coveted 70% mark, underlining the pair's consistency on the international circuit.

He finished just behind Germany's Charlott-Maria Schürmann, who won the event with a score of 72.304%. The result comes at a time when Anush is embroiled in a selection controversy after being left out of the four-member Indian dressage team for the 2026 Asian Games and named only as the first reserve rider.

Despite being India's highest-ranked dressage rider and the country's only Asian Games individual medalist in the discipline, Anush was omitted from the main squad by the Equestrian Federation of India's ad hoc selection committee, prompting him to move the Delhi High Court. (PTI)

We can beat any team if we stick to our game plan: Coach Fulton

NEW DELHI, July 4: India can beat any country in the world if the team sticks to its game plan, asserted the national men's hockey side head coach Craig Fulton after a strong performance in the last leg of its otherwise overall poor campaign in the FIH Pro League.



India registered confidence-boosting victories over the reigning world champions Germany and 2024 Olympics gold medalists Netherlands, while taking the fight against world No. 3 England down to the wire during the European leg of the Pro League.

India, however, finished at the eighth spot out of nine teams with 19 points from 16 matches, one rung above Pakistan (zero point from 16 matches).

"One of the biggest takeaways from this Pro League run has been watching the team's confidence grow. Wins over Germany and the Netherlands, plus a strong showing against England, prove that when we stick to our game plan, we're capable of matching and beating anyone in the world," Fulton said.

"It's a solid stepping stone heading into the World Cup and Asian Games, but we are still focused on tightening up our performance and staying consistent from quarter to quarter."

Fulton was particularly impressed with the team's composure and hunger to do well.

"Even more encouraging is how much this group has matured. We've stayed calm under pressure, adjusted to different playing styles and pulled out wins in tight games. That kind of experience is exactly what we'll need."

"The World Cup and Asian Games will test our resilience and belief, and I think we're building the right foundation for it," said the coach in a Hockey India release.

India endured a difficult start to the Pro League during the home leg in Rourkela, where they suffered defeats against Belgium and Argentina.

Signs of improvement emerged during the Hobart leg. After opening with a 0-2 defeat to Spain, India bounced back to hold hosts Australia to a 2-2 draw. That followed a 1-1 draw against Spain.

However, the shootout in both those matches went in the favour of the opposition teams. The squad regrouped well in the concluding fixture, winning the shootout 3-1 after a fiercely-contested 1-1 draw against Australia.

The biggest takeaway from Hobart was the improvement in defence. India conceded just six goals across four matches -

three from penalty corners and three field goals — while continuing to show improvement in attack with two field goals and two penalty-corner conversions.

By the time the Pro League reached Europe in June, the upward curve was evident.

In Rotterdam, India produced two of their finest results of the campaign, defeating Germany 3-1 and the Netherlands 3-2. Against two of the strongest defensive units in international hockey, India scored nine goals across four matches, with five coming from field play and four from penalty corners.

The momentum continued in London, where India remained unbeaten in regulation time in all four matches against Pakistan and England.

Harmanpreet Singh, who came back to lead the side after skipping the Hobart leg, also spoke about the return of confidence.

"Beating top-ranked sides is always special, but more importantly, it shows that the hard work we're putting in as a team is paying off. We'll take these positives forward as we prepare for the World Cup and the Asian Games," he said.

He said one of the biggest positives from the is Pro League campaign has been the contribution from every department.

"Our defence has stayed compact, the midfield has controlled the game well and our forwards have created good opportunities inside the circle and scored many field goals. Having all bases covered gives us confidence, but we also know there are areas where we can continue to improve before the World Cup and the Asian Games." (PTI)

Protect and Prevent

Continue the fight against Japanese Encephalitis

Remember, immediate medical treatment can save a life

Symptoms of J.E.

- High Fever
- Severe Headache
- Irrelevant talk & Confusion
- Unconsciousness
- Convulsion
- Unable to speak properly

JE transmission cycle

Breeding habitats for mosquitoes

- Paddy fields
- Blocked drains
- Irrigation canals
- Ponds

Protect yourself from mosquito bites

- Avoid going to areas where water is accumulated (example rice fields) during dusk and dawn as the mosquitoes are most active at those times
- Wear light coloured, long sleeve clothing and trousers
- Use mosquito net while sleeping
- Use insecticide or coil to repel mosquitoes
- Keep the drains around the house clean and do not allow water to accumulate in empty containers
- Pig rearing should be done at least 100 meters away from human settlements
- Use pig nets or mosquito nets for pig sty farms
- Vaccinate pigs against common diseases at regular intervals

Hosts

- Birds (herons and egrets) are reservoirs for J.E. virus
- Pigs act as amplifiers of the virus and produce a high viral load that infects mosquitoes

Call 104

for any Fever cases

Call 108 for Ambulance Services

(NHM/D/2026-27/07)