

**6 NATION**  
 ● Ram temple trust meets amid donation theft probe; chairman says 'deeply hurt'  
 ● BJP favoured to win all 3 Rajya Sabha seats in Bengal

**7 NORTHEAST**  
 ● CM Tamang pays tribute to Dalai Lama on 91<sup>st</sup> birthday  
 ● Tripura CM lays foundation stone for 13-foot bronze statue of Syama Prasad Mookerjee

## 'Son of our hills' will discharge his duty with sincerity, hopes CM Habbey Teron new Deputy Speaker of Assembly

**HT Bureau**  
**DIPHU, July 6:** First-time BJP MLA Habbey Teron was unanimously elected as the Deputy Speaker of the 16th Assam Legislative Assembly on Monday during the opening day of the Budget Session.

Assembly Speaker Ranjeet Kumar Dass announced the election after noting that three nominations had been filed in favour of Teron and no other candidate had entered the contest.

"As there is no other nomination, I declare Dr Habbey Teron as the Deputy Speaker of the 16th Assam Legislative Assembly," the Speaker announced on the floor of the House.

Teron is the first elected representative from the newly created Amri (ST) Assembly constituency in West Karbi Anglong, which came into existence following the 2023 delimitation exercise.



In the 2026 Assembly elections, he secured 50,273 votes and defeated Independent candidate Bikram Hense by a margin of 23,910 votes.

A medical doctor by profession, Teron completed his MBBS from Assam Medical College, Dibrugarh, in 2008.

Before entering active politics, he served as Senior Medical and Health Officer at Kheroni Model Hospital in West Karbi Anglong.

Following his election, leaders cutting across party lines, including the BJP, Asom Gana Parishad

(AGP), Bodoland People's Front (BPF), Congress and the Trinamool Congress (TMC), congratulated the new Deputy Speaker and assured him of their full cooperation in conducting the proceedings of the House.

Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma also congratulated Teron, describing him as a "son of our hills" and expressing confidence that he would discharge his responsibilities with sincerity while upholding the finest traditions of the Assembly.

The Chief Minister said Teron, as a medical professional and a representative from the hill districts, embodies the aspirations of Assam's tribal communities.

He added that Teron's elevation to the constitutional post would further strengthen the representation of Karbi Anglong and Dima Hasao in the state's legislative process.

## Assam Assembly: Oppn stages walkout on rejection of three Adjournment Motions

**GUWAHATI, July 6:** The entire opposition bench comprising Congress, AIUDF, Rajior Dal and TMC staged a walkout after three Adjournment Motions on varied topics were rejected by the Speaker in the Assam Assembly on Monday.

On the first day of the Budget Session, Leader of the Opposition Wajed Ali Choudhury of Congress raised an Adjournment Motion on irregular electricity connection.

"In this extreme summer, people are suffering due to frequent power cuts. There is no power supply 24x7 as claimed by the government. This is an urgent situation, requiring a detailed discussion by leaving aside other works," he added.

Rajior Dal MLA Akhil Gogoi drew the House's attention to the dropping enrolment ratio in government schools in the last four years.

"There was a reduction of 25,67,793 students in government and provisional schools in the last four years. This is data mentioned in



a report of the Centre's Education Ministry," he added.

The Centre had repeatedly warned the state Education department about the falling rate and asked them to act, but no corrective measures were taken, Gogoi said.

"Our Education department is in danger. To safeguard the education sector, I request you (Speaker) to stop all other business and discuss this problem," he added.

AIUDF MLA Mazibur Rahman said a lot of people are being pushed back to Bangladesh in recent months, alleging them to be illegally entering the country. "If they are rally (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

## Assam Assembly: Only 54 per cent chargesheet filed since 2016

**GUWAHATI, July 6:** Police have filed chargesheets in only 54 per cent of nearly 10 lakh registered cases in Assam since 2016, when the BJP government came to power for the first time in the state, the Assembly was informed on Monday.

In a written reply to a query by Congress MLA Rekiuddin Ahmed, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said that a total of 9,68,938 different types of cases were registered across police stations since 2016.

"Out of that, chargesheets have been filed in 5,20,782 cases," he added.

In the 10-year period, 2,04,134 cases related to crime against women were registered in Assam, Sarma said in a written response to Congress MLA Baby Begum.

Out of these, 2,961 are related to murder, while 15,397 women were raped, he added.

"A total of 1,33,675 chargesheets have been filed in these cases of crime against women," said the CM, who also holds the Home portfolio.

From 2021, when Sarma took charge as chief minister, 3,78,483 FIRs have been registered, while chargesheets have been filed in 2,54,538 cases, according to a reply to a separate query by Congress MLA Nurul Islam.

"In the last five years, 4,26,502 accused have been arrested in connection with these cases. Out of them, 29,164 have been punished as per the law," he added. (PTI)

## India moots dedicated BRICS group to combat drug trafficking

**GUWAHATI, July 6:** India on Monday proposed a dedicated virtual working group to address evolving trends in narcotics trafficking at a two-day meeting of the heads of anti-drug agencies from BRICS member countries here.

Speaking at the inauguration of the meet, Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) director general Anurag Garg said the emergence of modern trafficking methods has turned drug menace into a global threat.

"Emergence of modern, highly sophisticated methods of trafficking has turned what was once a localised problem into a hyper-connected global threat," he said.

The two-day meeting will focus on three priority areas -- combating synthetic drugs and precursor diversion, strengthening intelligence sharing and operational coordination, and capacity building and institutional cooperation.

Underlining the role of BRICS in addressing the challenge, Garg said, "I propose the establishment of a dedicated BRICS Virtual Working Group to address these rapidly evolving trends."

"This mechanism would serve as a vital platform to meet regularly, exchange real-time intelligence, analyse shifting traffick-

ing patterns, and seamlessly coordinate joint law enforcement operations," he added.

Garg also stressed the need to build the capacity of frontline officers through specialised cross-border training initiatives and continuous sharing of best practices among member agencies.

"Together, as an expanded BRICS family, we possess the collective strength to truly change the world and turn the vision of a drug-free society into a reality," the NCB DG added, as he highlighted the expansion of the bloc to become one of the greatest and most influential collaborations at the global level.

He also thanked the delegations for their contributions during the recent 8th BRICS Anti-Drug Working Group Meeting and said, "The consensus and strategic clarity forged last month have provided us with a robust framework to advance our high-level deliberations over the next two days."

Cautioning that the world today faces an aggressive narcotics landscape, Garg said, "The reality of 21st-century drug trafficking is stark. Criminal networks do not respect borders, they do not recognise sovereignty, and they do not wait for bureaucratic clear-

ances."

To defeat these syndicates, law enforcement agencies must operate with a level of agility, mutual trust and seamless, real-time cooperation that cuts through traditional barriers, he said.

"Enhanced collaboration is no longer just a policy choice; it is an absolute necessity for our collective survival," the NCB chief asserted.

To address emerging threats, specialised sessions targeting the exploitation of Dark-net platforms and digital technologies, the alarming rise of New Psychoactive Substances (NPS) and the critical need to prevent the diversion of precursor chemicals have been planned for the meet, he said.

"Furthermore, we have dedicated a crucial, standalone session to maritime trafficking. We know all too well that illicit drugs produced in source countries are increasingly being moved in massive bulk volumes through global maritime routes, polluting international waters to reach every corner of the globe. This reality demands that we move past localised policing and instead forge a unified, aggressive oceanic strategy to secure our maritime borders," Garg added. (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

## Two Assam Rifles soldiers killed in ambush by militants in Manipur



**IMPHAL/NEW DELHI, July 6:** Two Assam Rifles personnel were killed and several others injured in an ambush by suspected militants in Manipur's Ukhrul district on Monday, police said.

The incident occurred around 1.30 pm in the Nungshang Khong area of the hill district when the suspected militants fired at a convoy of the paramilitary force, a senior officer said.

"The two deceased include a warrant officer and a driver. They died on the spot. The incident occurred in Nungshang Khong area, located some 17 km from the district headquarters, under the Ukhrul Police Station limits, when the convoy was returning to the 40th Assam Rifles battalion headquarters at Sangshak," the officer said.

Following the attack, additional security personnel have been deployed in the area, and an exchange of fire broke out between the central forces and armed (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

## Assam govt to give land 'pattas' to 1.14 lakh tea workers' families

**GUWAHATI, July 6:** The Assam government on Monday announced that 1.14 lakh tea workers' families across 250 gardens will be given land rights in their respective estates as part of the second phase of a scheme.

In a written reply to a query by Congress MLA Asif Mohammad Nazar, Tea Tribes and Adivasi Welfare Minister Rameswar Teli said the government is gradually allotting land 'pattas' to tea garden workers.

"In the first phase, 28,831 'pattas' were distributed in 106 tea gardens. In the second phase, 1.14 lakh families will be considered in 250 tea gardens," he added.

Presently, a survey work is underway in this regard, the minister said. (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

## Meghalaya awaits Assam's border panel update

**SHILLONG, July 6:** Meghalaya Deputy Chief Minister Sniawbhanglang Dhar on Monday said Meghalaya is awaiting official communication from Assam on the reconstitution of its regional committee before the two states can finalise a date to resume border talks.

Dhar, who heads the regional committee for West Jaintia Hills, said he had only received informal information so far.

"We have heard that Assam has reconstituted its regional committee, but we are yet to receive official communication. Once we do, the matter will be discussed by both Chief Ministers to decide when we should meet," he told reporters.

The Deputy Commissioner of West Jaintia Hills is yet to submit the report on villages under Block I to the state government.

"The report is yet to be received from the Deputy Commissioner. It



in the report submitted. We are yet to receive it," he said.

On whether a joint inspection of the disputed villages would be conducted, Dhar said the decision would be taken by the two Chief Ministers after the committees meet.

"We will take a call on whether a joint inspection is required once the committees decide. Let both Chief Ministers decide on that," he said.

He said Meghalaya's report is almost ready and will be submitted to the Chief Minister's Office soon, but stressed that official communication from Assam is required before further steps are taken.

Dhar said the committees would determine how to resolve the remaining areas of difference, whether through retransfer, dialogue or adjustment.

"That will be decided by the committee, (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

## Protest resumes in Diphu over alleged encroachment on grazing reserves

**DIPHU, July 6:** Agitators demanding the eviction of alleged encroachers from Professional Grazing Reserves (PGR), Village Grazing Reserves (VGR) and government land in Karbi Anglong and West Karbi Anglong resumed their agitation on Monday with a two-day sit-in demonstration in front of the Old Khorsing Terang Memorial Park in Diphu.

The protesters, who said they were participating in their individual capacity and not under the banner of any organisation, urged the Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC) to immediately launch eviction drives against illegal settlers occupying PGR/VGR land at Kheroni in West Karbi Anglong, Utorborbil in Karbi Anglong and other government land.

Addressing the gathering, youth leader Angtong Engti Kathar alleged that the KAAC had been misleading the public by citing pending court cases as the reason for delaying eviction.

He claimed that the Gauhati High Court had delivered its final judgment on the Kheroni PGR/VGR land

dispute in February this year, directing the petitioners to submit land documents before the Assistant Revenue Officer (ARO), Dongkamukam, within one month to establish that their land did not fall within the notified grazing reserve.

Kathar alleged that none of the petitioners had submitted the required documents within the stipulated period.

He further claimed that while around 300 families had approached the High Court, nearly 1,600 other families residing on the disputed land were not parties to the case and could therefore be evicted.

Questioning the delay in action, he said the KAAC had failed to act despite what he described as a favourable legal position.

He also alleged that Chief Executive Member (CEM) Tuliram Ronghang had failed to provide a satisfactory explanation during a recent meeting with the agitators and instead reacted angrily to their queries.

Warning of an intensified movement, Kathar said the agitation would be escalated if the KAAC failed to initiate eviction drives (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

## Bibhab Talukdar elected Fellow of Linnean Society of London

**GUWAHATI, July 6:** Renowned conservation biologist Dr Bibhab Kumar Talukdar has been elected as a Fellow of the Linnean Society of London (FLS), one of the highest international recognitions in the field of natural history and biological sciences.

Talukdar, the founder Secretary General and Executive Director of Assam's biodiversity organisation Aaranyak, has been conferred the honour by the world's oldest active biological society, according to a release.

The Linnean Society of London, founded in 1788, is dedicated to the study and dissemination of knowledge on natural history, evolution, and taxonomy.

Fellows (FLS) are elected based on their significant contributions to these fields. Election to its Fellowship is a significant academic and scientific (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

## Thrust on to nab transnational drug trafficking kingpins: NCB DG

**GUWAHATI, July 6:** Intensifying the crackdown on the drug menace, the authorities are focusing on nabbing the kingpins involved in its transnational trafficking network, Director General of Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) Anurag Garg said on Monday.

Some of the major players involved in this illicit trade have been identified, and the process is underway to apprehend them, he added.

"We are aware of the problem (of drugs routed from neighbouring countries through the North East region), and we are addressing it in a multi-phased manner. Myanmar is a source of both methamphetamine and heroin that enter India, and it has been reflected in our annual report," Garg said.

The NCB official was speaking to the media on the sidelines of a two-day meeting of the heads of anti-drug agencies from BRICS member countries.

The DG said thrust is being laid on identifying the kingpins involved in the transnational trafficking and cited the arrest of a key such Myanmar-based trafficker in May from New Delhi.

"Rather than catching the petty couriers who carry it across the border, we are now concentrating on the kingpins. We have identified certain people on both sides, and the process to bring them in to face justice is on," Garg added.

Garg said that as part of the strategy to combat the menace of drugs, the NCB is supporting the states to raise their anti-narcotics task force, as the state-level personnel are the frontline warriors in the fight against drugs.

The NCB is also building its own capacity in the North East region, with zonal and regional offices opened in various locations over the (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

## 'Findings suggest that demanding nature of work in tea estates affects employees regardless of domicile' Tea garden executives need to address mental well-being: Study

**GUWAHATI, July 6:** Tea garden executives suffer from increasing workplace stress and addressing their mental well-being is necessary for the long-term sustainability and effectiveness of the industry, according to a study.

The survey was conducted on several companies under the North East Tea Association (NETA).

The study, conducted by Pransu Raj Kaushik under the supervision of Dibrugarh University's Chairperson of Centre for Management Studies (CMS) Pratim Barua, pointed out that workplace stress among middle- and lower-level executives in the companies under NETA is influenced by both organisational practices and employees' personal backgrounds.

Kaushik, an assistant Professor at the CMS, said that among the groups studied, lower-level executives reported the highest levels of workplace stress.



The study also found that an executive's domicile influences workplace stress, showing a noticeable difference in stress levels between executives domiciled in Assam and those from outside the state.

This difference indicates "that personal and social factors associated with domicile may shape how

employees perceive and respond to workplace challenges," Kaushik said.

He, however, added that this difference is meaningful but not large enough to be considered alarming.

"The findings suggest that the demanding nature of work in tea estates affects employees regardless of their domicile. At the same time, the study found a meaningful difference in stress levels between the two groups, suggesting that an employee's domicile influences the extent to which workplace stress is experienced," Kaushik told PTI.

Kaushik pointed out that a key finding is that executives working in the tea companies under NETA reported workplace stress in a consistent and uniform manner.

He said that one of the primary reasons for the affliction of stress is that lifestyle-related perks previously (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

## Cash transfer schemes for women should be reviewed in light of inflation: PM advisory panel

**NEW DELHI, July 6:** Unconditional cash transfer (UCT) schemes for women, implemented by various state governments, should be reviewed periodically for adequacy in light of inflation and evolving household expenditure patterns, the Economic Advisory Council to the Prime Minister (EAC-PM) said in a working paper on Monday.

The advisory panel further said UCT schemes implemented by Maharashtra and Odisha governments have generated large and broadly consistent improvements in beneficiaries' savings and consumption.

"Transfer amounts of UCT should be reviewed periodically for adequacy in light of inflation and evolving household expenditure patterns, with efficiency gains from improved targeting deployed to fund enhanced benefits and complementary services for beneficiaries," it said.

The paper titled 'Unconditional Women Cash Transfer Programmes in India: Evidence from Maharashtra and Odisha' provides a rigorous empirical evaluation of two large-scale state-level UCT programmes in India; the Mukhyamantri Mahi Ladki Bahin Yojana in Maharashtra (monthly transfer of ₹ 1,500 to eligible women) and the Subhadra Yojana in Odisha (biannual instalments totalling ₹ 10,000 per year), using account-level monthly panel data.



"Both programmes generate large, statistically significant, and broadly consistent improvements in beneficiaries' savings and consumption. "Month-end account balances increase by approximately 84 per cent (Maharashtra) and 45 per cent (Odisha), representing absolute gains of approximately ₹ 6,884 and ₹ 6,887 per beneficiary respectively," the paper said. According to the paper, monthly consumption spending increases by 46 per cent and 28 per cent respectively, implying marginal propensities to consume of approximately 0.90 value.

The paper suggested that both programmes should be sustained and evolved toward cash-plus architectures that combine the income transfer with voluntary capacity-building, digital literacy, and SHG linkage components.

Remarkably, it noted that both programmes generate positive household spillover effects, improving the financial positions of family members while reducing their expenditure outflows, reminiscent of Friedman's Permanent Income Hypothesis but with independent decision-making.

As per the paper, a 10 per cent increase in beneficiaries' account balances under Subhadra Yojana was associated with a 1.9 per cent reduction in relatives' spending. In Maharashtra, the Ladki Bahin scheme was associated with a 23 per cent increase in relatives' month-end balances and a 49 per cent decline in spending, it added.

Spending basket analysis reveals a qualitative shift toward lifestyle-related, medical, and educational purposes alongside accelerated UPI

adoption for beneficiaries, according to the paper.

Citing an example, the paper noted that in Maharashtra, for Ladki Bahin beneficiaries, ATM-related educational expenditure recorded the largest increase, from 18 per cent to 24 per cent.

In UPI transactions, lifestyle-related expenditure recorded the largest increase, rising from 37 per cent to 42 per cent, while medical expenditure increased from 8 per cent to 10 per cent.

Cash transfer programmes targeted at women have become one of the fastest-growing categories of state-level welfare spending in India. By FY26, more than 15 states had introduced some form of unconditional monthly or annual transfer paid directly into women's bank accounts, at an estimated aggregate cost of roughly ₹ 1.7 lakh crore and reaching close to 12 crore women.

The number of states running such schemes increased more than fivefold between FY23 and FY26, reflecting a convergence of evidence from development economics and political economy; direct income support placed in women's hands is a powerful and cost-effective instrument for improving household welfare, advancing financial inclusion and reducing gender-based economic exclusion. (PTI)

Contd. from Page 1...

## Assam Assembly: Oppn

infiltrators, then it is fine. But in many cases, genuine Indian citizens are pushed and left unattended at no man's land. This is a gross violation of human rights, while international laws are also flouted," he added.

Stating that many inmates have disappeared from the detention camp in Goalpara, Rahman sought urgent discussion on the topic.

After listening to all the three proposals, Speaker Ranjeet Kumar Dass said: "I received two Adjournment Notices from Congress and Rajior Dal. Although these are related to public issues, but they are not of urgent nature."

He said that as the House has assembled for a long Budget Session, the topics can be discussed under any other device.

"The AIUDF notice was received after the stipulated time. Moreover, the same issue has been raised through Rule 54. So, there is no need for the Adjournment Motion on the same topic. Therefore, I reject all the three notices," Dass said.

Protesting this, all the opposition members raised slogans and moved to the Well of the House. They also showed placards.

"UCT cannot show placards and raise slogans inside the House as per Rule 275," the Speaker told the agitating members.

The House Marshals took away the placards from the opposition members. After this, all the opposition members staged a walkout for some time. They returned to the House after a while. (PTI)

## Two Assam Rifles

militants in a nearby locality, he said. The incident spot has been cordoned off, and a forensic team has been sent from Imphal to conduct an inspection there, the officer said.

Locals claimed that several farmers, who were working in nearby paddy fields at the time of the firing, were detained by security forces for interrogation.

In a statement, Chief Minister Y Khemchand Singh strongly condemned the killing of the two Assam Rifles personnel, and conveyed his deepest condolences to the bereaved families.

He asserted that the government would not tolerate such brutal violence and would not remain a mute spectator to these atrocities.

"Culprits responsible for the murder will be arrested and punished as per the law of the land," he added.

State Home Minister Govindas Konthoujam also condemned the attack on the security forces and asserted that such an incident disrupts peace and harmony in the strife-torn Manipur.

In a post on X, the minister said, "I am deeply saddened by the unfortunate ambush on the convoy of the 40 Assam Rifles at Nungshang Kong in Ukhrul."

He exuded confidence that the security forces would take all necessary measures to ensure that those responsible for the attack are dealt with strictly in accordance with the law.

Security forces have been conducting search operations and area domination in the fringe and vulnerable localities across Manipur since ethnic violence broke out three years ago.

More than 260 people have been killed and thousands rendered homeless in the ethnic strife between Meiteis and Kuki-Zo groups since May 2023. (PTI)

## India moots dedicated

On India's fight against drugs, the top official asserted that an unyielding, comprehensive Zero-Tolerance Policy against narcotics has been institutionalised.

For India, 'zero tolerance' means the complete disruption of trafficking networks, financial starvation of drug syndicates through asset forfeiture and the seamless integration of our state, national and international intelligence agencies under a unified Whole-of-Government approach, he said.

Garg also underlined the country's restorative attitude towards victims of drug abuse by rejecting the view that addiction is a simple law-and-order failure.

"In its place, we have established a futuristic model centered on harm reduction and holistic recovery, recognising victims as citizens who must be guided back to a productive life. By anchoring high-tech law enforcement alongside community-based healing, we are not just disrupting the drug trade; we are healing our social fabric and securing the future of our youth," he maintained.

Urging all delegates to "speak freely, share their unique operational insights and propose bold recommendations", Garg added, "I look forward to our collective adoption of a consensus-based joint statement -- a document that will mirror our unified determination to protect our societies and strike a decisive blow against transnational organised crime."

The BRICS, initially comprising Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa, expanded in 2024 to include Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, Saudi Arabia and the UAE, with Indonesia joining in 2025.

The grouping has emerged as an influential bloc, bringing together 11 major emerging economies that account for around 49.5 per cent of the world's population, about 40 per cent of global GDP and nearly 26 per cent of global trade. (PTI)

## Assam govt to

On March 13, Prime Minister Narendra Modi had launched the process of giving land rights to tea garden workers in the housing or labour lines within the estate premises, with 28,241 families receiving the rights in the first phase.

The PM had ceremonially handed over the 'pattas' to three families at the event organised just days before the assembly elections. (PTI)

## Meghalaya awaits Assam's

whether there will be a demand for retransfer, whether dialogue will take place or whether there will be an adjustment," he said.

Responding to the Hynniewtrep Border Dispute Redressal Forum's demand that the 1958 ground demarcation report on Block I should not be ignored, Dhar said all stakeholders want an early resolution to the border issue.

"Everyone is demanding that the border issue be resolved at the earliest," he said.

He added that because of claims and counterclaims in some areas, the government requires a clear report from the district administration before taking a stand.

"These are areas of difference. We hope to receive the report from the district administration and place it before the Chief Minister. Only after both committees meet can we take a call," he said.

Asked whether Block I and the other five pending areas would be difficult to resolve, Dhar acknowledged the long-standing nature of the dispute but expressed optimism.

"The border issue is very complicated. It has existed for more than 50 years, not just the last two weeks. Difficult does not mean impossible. It means we have to work harder, with understanding from both states and in consultation with all stakeholders. We will try to resolve it as both states are involved," he said.

On the situation in Lapangap, Dhar said there was no tension.

"As of now, everything is okay in Lapangap. Everything is normal and people are able to go to their paddy fields as usual," he said. (NNN)

## Protest resumes in

against alleged encroachers on PGR/VGR and other government land in Karbi Anglong and West Karbi Anglong.

Meanwhile, youth leader Litsong Rongphar criticised Barhampur MLA Jitu Goswami over his reported remarks claiming that Baithalangso falls under the jurisdiction of Nagaon district.

Referring to Goswami's recent visit to the Borpani Reserve Forest, Rongphar described the statement as "false and misleading" and asserted that Baithalangso is an integral part of the Hamren region in West Karbi Anglong district.

He alleged that such remarks had created unnecessary confusion among indigenous communities living along the inter-district boundary and urged public representatives to refrain from making statements that could disturb communal harmony.

## Bibhab Talukdar

honour, the release said. Past Fellows include luminaries such as Charles Darwin and Alfred Russel Wallace, the release added.

Talukdar, an Ashoka Fellow (2007) and recipient of the IUCN SSC Harry Messel Award for Conservation Leadership (2024), has dedicated over three decades to biodiversity conservation, with a special focus on Asian rhinos.

He served as the chair of IUCN SSC Asian Rhino Specialist Group from 2007 till end of 2021-2025 IUCN quadrennium and has played a pivotal role in rhino conservation, habitat protection, prevention of wildlife crimes, and community-based conservation in Northeast India's biodiversity hotspots, the release added. (PTI)

## Thrust on to nab

last few years. "This has given a lot of impetus to our fight against drugs. It can be seen in the increase in seizures made in the last one year," Garg said. (PTI)

## Tea garden executives

available to executives in the tea industry are now almost defunct due to several reasons.

Another important finding of the study, for which he was awarded the PhD degree in Business Administration by Dibrugarh University, is that not all stress is harmful, but it can also have a positive effect by motivating employees, improving performance, and encouraging them to meet challenging work demands when the work environment is supportive.

"Overall, the findings highlight the need for companies under NETA to strengthen stress management practices while also creating conditions that promote positive forms of stress, enabling executives to remain motivated, productive, and psychologically healthy," he added.

NETA Advisor Bidyananda Barkakoty told PTI that tea garden executives occupy a pivotal position in the management of tea estates, balancing demanding operational, administrative, and human resource responsibilities.

"Despite the critical nature of their role, workplace stress and mental health among tea garden executives have remained relatively unexplored areas of academic research, but the study addresses an important research gap and provides valuable insights that may help organisations strengthen employee well-being, enhance productivity, and improve human resource practices," he said.

The study is expected to contribute meaningfully to a better understanding of workplace stress in the tea sector and encourage greater attention to the mental well-being of tea garden executives, thereby supporting the industry's long-term sustainability and effectiveness. Barkakoty said. (PTI)

## Tax Bar Association hosts seminar on taxation and investment

HT Bureau

**GUWAHATI, July 6:** The Tax Bar Association, Guwahati, organised a full-day professional seminar on "Taxation and Investment Insights" at Hotel Rajmahal recently, bringing together tax professionals and industry experts to deliberate on emerging issues in taxation and investment.

The programme began with the ceremonial lighting of the lamp, followed by a welcome address from CA Pankaj Khandelia, President of the Tax Bar Association, Guwahati.

He highlighted the association's commitment to promoting professional excellence through continuous learning and informed participants that preparations were underway to celebrate the association's Golden Jubilee next year.

The inaugural session was followed by an address from CA Vikash Surana, Chairman of the Seminar Committee, while Advocate Dharmendra Kumar Jain, Vice-President of the association, introduced the speakers for the technical sessions.

The first technical session featured CA Shubham Khaitea of Kolkata, who delivered a presentation on taxability of real estate transactions, focusing on issues relating to developers and landowners.

This was followed by a session by CA Manoj Nahata, who discussed practical aspects and recent developments concerning Input Tax Credit (ITC) under the Goods and Services Tax (GST) law.

The session concluded with a vote of thanks proposed by the association's Secretary, CS Chandra Shekhar Sharma.

The second technical session commenced with a welcome address by Treasurer CA Rohit Agarwal and was chaired by Vice-President CA Kailash Prasad Sarma.

During the session, CA Ayush Goel of Kolkata delivered an in-depth presentation on the provisions relating to capital gains under the Income-tax Act, 2025.

### NAME CHANGE

I (Md Kowsar Borlaaskar), S/o (Md Samsul Borlaaskar) residing at Harilal Basti, P.O. & P.S., Diphu, Karbi Anglong, Assam, shall henceforth be known as (Kowsar Borlaaskar) S/o (Samsul Haque Borlaaskar) as declared before the Notary Public, Karbi Anglong district, Assam vide affidavit No. 1846 Dated 06/07/2026 (Md Kowsar Borlaaskar) S/o (Md. Samsul Haque Borlaaskar) and (Kowsar Borlaaskar) S/o (Samsul Borlaaskar) both are the same and identical person.

## Stock markets rise for 4<sup>th</sup> day, close at over 2-month high on gains in bank, oil shares

**MUMBAI, July 6:** Stock markets extended the gaining streak to the fourth day on Monday, with the benchmark Sensex rising by 521 points to settle at a more-than-two-month high, driven by buying in blue-chip bank and oil shares and lower crude oil prices.

The 30-share BSE Sensex jumped 521.16 points, or 0.67 per cent, to settle at 78,285.07, a closing level not seen since April 22. During the day, it surged 634.15 points, or 0.81 per cent, to 78,398.06.

The 50-share NSE Nifty climbed 159.50 points, or 0.66 per cent, to end at 24,430.35, the highest closing level since April 21.

In four consecutive trading days, the BSE benchmark has jumped 1,806.4 points, or 2.36 per cent, and the Nifty by 564.6 points, or 2.36 per cent.

Fresh foreign fund inflows aided the optimistic trend in the domestic equity market, analysts said. Foreign institutional investors bought equities worth ₹ 1,355.33 crore on Friday, according to exchange data.

Among the Sensex pack, HDFC Bank climbed the most by 3.59 per cent. Mahindra & Mahindra,

Bharat Electronics, Reliance Industries, ICICI Bank, and Maruti were also among the winners.

Kotak Mahindra Bank, Tata Consultancy Services, Bajaj Finserv, and Power Grid were among the laggards.

Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, declined 0.82 per cent to USD 71.53 per barrel.

"Indian equities traded with a positive bias despite mixed global cues, supported by stable crude prices. Continued softness in crude would support inflation, the current account balance, OMC profitability, and overall macro stability," Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Investments Ltd, said.

Broader markets also advanced as the BSE MidCap Select index climbed 0.71 per cent and Small-Cap Select index went up by 0.47 per cent.

Sectorally, Realty jumped the most by 1.82 per cent, followed by MidSmall Private Banks Quality Tilt (1.40 per cent), Private Banks index (1.50 per cent), Top 10 Banks (1.24 per cent), Capital Goods (1.19 per cent) and Auto (1.14 per cent).

IT, Utilities, PSU Bank, Focused

IT and Services were the laggards.

"Markets maintained their upward bias despite mixed global cues, driven by buying in select banking, auto, capital goods and realty shares. The calmness in the West Asia region and hopes for a relatively steady corporate earnings season kept investor mood optimistic, although overall sentiment remains cautious," Ankur Punj, MD & Business Head at Equirus Wealth, said.

Globally, profit-booking in crowded AI-led trades impacted the global market while India could perform well led by large caps due to improvement in FIIs inflows trend, he added.

In Asian markets, Hong Kong's Hang Seng settled higher, while South Korea's Kospi and Japan's Nikkei 225 and Shanghai's SSE Composite index ended lower.

Markets in Europe were trading on a mixed note.

US markets were closed on Friday due to the country's Independence Day celebrations.

On Friday, the Sensex climbed 261.79 points, or 0.34 per cent, to settle at 77,763.91. The Nifty went up 95.15 points, or 0.39 per cent, to end at 24,270.85. (PTI)

## Indus Towers extends relief to flash flood victims in Arunachal

Company distributes 330 relief kits to affected families in Keyi Panyor under CSR initiative

HT Correspondent

**ITANAGAR, July 6:** Telecom infrastructure company Indus Towers has extended emergency relief assistance to families affected by the recent flash floods and landslides in Arunachal Pradesh by distributing essential relief materials in Yachuli of Keyi Panyor district.

Under its Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiative, 'Pragati', the company is distributing 330 relief kits containing hygiene products, clothing, sanitation items, medicines and other essential supplies to meet the immediate needs of flood-affected families.

The relief effort focuses particularly on women, children, the elderly and displaced persons.

The distribution programme was carried out in the presence of Yachuli MLA Toko Tatung, Keyi Panyor Deputy Commissioner Shweta Nagarkoti Mehta, Superintendent of Police Angad Mehta, Sub-Divisional Officer Taising Padung, Zila Parishad Chairperson Nabam Piju, representatives of Indus Towers and local administration officials.

Speaking on the initiative, Rajender Gurung, Circle

CEO (NESA) of Indus Towers Limited, said the company believed its responsibility extended beyond providing connectivity to supporting communities during times of crisis.

He said the relief initiative aimed to provide immediate assistance, restore dignity to affected families and support their recovery.

Yachuli MLA Toko Tatung appreciated the company's intervention, stating that timely assistance was crucial for families affected by the floods.

He said collaboration between the government, local administration and responsible corporate organisations could significantly strengthen disaster response and recovery efforts. The relief operation was implemented through the North East Affected Area Development Society (NEAIDS), the implementation partner for Indus Towers' CSR initiative.

The company stated that it would continue working with local authorities and stakeholders to support relief and rehabilitation efforts in flood-affected areas of Arunachal Pradesh.

## FSSAI issues notice to Heritage Foods over 'Fresh Paneer' claims

**NEW DELHI, July 6:** Food regulator FSSAI on Monday said it has issued a notice to Heritage Foods Ltd for misleading claims regarding its product 'Fresh Paneer' as part of its efforts to safeguard consumer interest.

FSSAI has asked Heritage Foods to submit an explanation within 7 days as to why action should not be initiated under the provisions of the FSS Act, 2006.

In a social media post, the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) said it has issued a notice to the company over misleading claims on its product Heritage Fresh Paneer.

"The claim 'Fresh Paneer' does not satisfy the conditions stipulated under Schedule V for the use of the term 'Fresh'," the regulator said.

Accordingly, the use of the word 'Fresh' is liable to mislead consumers and is considered misleading, FSSAI said.

The use of the term 'Healthy' in the trademark/name 'Healthy Happiness' is not in conformity with Regulation 8(3) of the Food Safety and Standards (Advertising and Claims) Regulations, 2018, in the social media post mentioned.

"The use of the term 'Healthy' is likely to create the impression that the product inherently promotes or enhances health, thereby rendering the claim misleading," FSSAI said. (PTI)

**ASSAM POWER DISTRIBUTION COMPANY LIMITED**  
(A Govt. of Assam Public Limited Company)

**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, DIKHEM MAJ GAON, WASHAKONG-1, WASHAKONG-2, BORO WASHING, 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.

Any unauthorized contact with the line may result in serious injury, electrocution, or loss of life.

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

This notice is issued in the interest of public safety.

Sd/- Chief Executive Officer  
KANCH Electrical Circle, APDCL (CAR), Diphu

Please pay your energy bill on time and help us to serve you better!

## Malaria cases decline sharply as district strengthens surveillance and inter-departmental coordination Kokrajhar reviews preparedness against vector-borne diseases

### HT Correspondent

**KOKRAJHAR, July 6:** The first meeting of the District Task Force (DTF) on Vector Borne Diseases (VBDs) and the District Surveillance Committee (DSC) for 2026-27 was held at the BTC Secretariat in Kokrajhar on Monday to review the district's preparedness against vector-borne and zoonotic diseases.

The meeting, organised on the occasion of World Zoonoses Day under the National One Health Programme for Prevention and Control of Zoonoses, focused on strengthening inter-departmental coordination for disease surveillance, prevention and control.

The meeting was attended by the Joint Secretary of the Health and Family Welfare Department, BTC, along with representatives from the Education, Forest, Veterinary, National Health Mission



(NHM), Public Health Engineering Department (PHED), municipal boards and other concerned departments.

The District Malaria Officer presented a detailed report on the malaria situation in the district.

As of July 4, 2026, a total of 55,151 malaria tests had been conducted, with 259 positive cases de-

pared to the previous year.

Between January and June 2026, Kokrajhar recorded 255 malaria cases, down from 1,022 cases during the corresponding period in 2025, indicating substantial progress in disease control efforts.

The committee also reviewed the status of Japanese Encephalitis (JE), Acute Encephalitis Syndrome (AES), dog bite and other animal bite cases.

Discussions focused on surveillance measures, vector control strategies, public awareness campaigns and strengthening inter-departmental coordination to ensure timely response to disease outbreaks.

The meeting concluded with participating departments reaffirming their commitment to enhancing coordinated surveillance and preventive measures to safeguard public health across the district.

Addressing a press conference at Baithalangso, leaders of several tribal student bodies alleged that the BJP legislator had entered the area with the intention of creating unrest among local residents.

KSA leader Ram Sing Tokbi said any discussion on the boundary issue must be based on the Assam Gazette Notification of 1975 and criticised Goswami for making comments without adequate knowledge of the historical and legal background.

"It is highly irresponsible to comment on such a sensitive border issue without proper understanding," Tokbi said.

The student organisations have demanded that Goswami immediately withdraw his remarks, warning that they would launch democratic mass agitations across the region if he failed to do so.

## Border row erupts after BJP MLA's remarks in Baithalangso

### HT Correspondent

**HAMREN, July 6:** A major controversy has erupted over the inter-district boundary between West Karbi Anglong and Hojai districts after Barhampur BJP MLA Jitu Goswami allegedly made remarks on the disputed border, triggering protests by Karbi student organisations and local tribal groups.

The protests were led by the Hamren Regional Committee of the Karbi Students' Association (KSA), with its president Prashanta Ingti and leader Provinsion Bey spearheading demonstrations at Dongkamukam.

According to reports, Goswami visited the Karbi Langpi (Barpani) River at Baithalangso on July 3 along with officials of the Kamrup Revenue Circle, forest officials from Nagaon district and police personnel. While standing on the

Baithalangso bridge, he allegedly stated that half of the Barpani River falls under Karbi Anglong and the other half under Nagaon district.

He also claimed that the Karbi Anglong Forest Department had been collecting sand taxes from areas falling within Nagaon's jurisdiction.

The MLA reportedly directed the revenue and police officials accompanying him to resolve the boundary issue within a week.

His visit and remarks have drawn strong opposition from local tribal organisations, which accused him of making unilateral statements on a sensitive issue without consulting the West Karbi Anglong district administration, the local MLA or the Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC).

## Progressive farmer in Bokajan sets example through scientific farming

### A Correspondent

**DIPHU, July 6:** A progressive farmer from Kathalguri village under the Bokajan Agricultural Development Circle has emerged as an example of successful scientific farming by transforming agriculture into a sustainable and profitable source of livelihood.

Jatish Deka has adopted a diversified farming model, cultivating seasonal vegetables on nearly 25 bighas of lowland.

His crops include brinjal, tomato, chilli, taro, cucumber, pumpkin, bitter melon, bottle gourd, beans, okra and cabbage through crop rotation and multi-cropping practices.

Apart from vegetable cultivation, Deka has utilised about one pura of land to grow high-yielding paddy varieties, including Ranjit, Baijuni and Goya, ensuring consistent grain production.

His transition to scientific farming was supported by the Office of the District Agriculture Officer and

the Centrally Sponsored Scheme—Agricultural Technology Management Agency (CSS-ATMA), under which he received technical training and agricultural inputs.

"The training on improved farming practices completely changed how I look at my land," Deka said, adding that the adoption of modern cultivation techniques had significantly improved productivity.

According to agriculture department officials, Deka now earns an annual income of around ₹2 lakh entirely from farming.

His success is also contributing to the local rural economy and demonstrating the potential of agriculture as a viable full-time profession.

Officials said Deka's achievements are encouraging other farmers and young people in Karbi Anglong to adopt scientific farming methods and modern agricultural practices for sustainable income generation and self-reliance.

## Tezpur teen represents India at South African Arts Festival

### HT Correspondent

**TEZPUR, July 6:** Sixteen-year-old Mrigashree Barua of Tezpur has brought laurels to Assam by representing India at the 52nd National Arts Festival held in Makhanda, South Africa, from June 25 to July 5.

The young public speaker and beauty queen, who was recently adjudged the first runner-up at Grand Miss India, attended the international festival as the world's youngest invited special guest.

During the event, Barua interacted with African media representatives and participated in discussions on human welfare, world peace and the role of literature and performing arts in fostering cultural understanding and

global harmony. Speaking at a press interaction, she highlighted the contributions of eminent Assamese cultural icons, including Rupkonwar Jyoti Prasad Agarwala, Kalaguru Bishnurprasad Rabha, Dr Bhupen Hazarika and Zubeen Garg, introducing international audiences to Assam's rich artistic and literary heritage.

She said literature and the performing arts possess the unique ability to build empathy and strengthen bonds among people from diverse cultures.

Addressing a press conference at Rhodes University, she remarked, "Where there is hope, there is life," emphasising the role of hope, spirituality and creativity in uniting humanity.

## Forest department seals illegal sand mining site in Darrang

Action follows Forest Minister's directive amid allegations of decade-long illegal extraction



### HT Correspondent

**DALGON, July 6:** The Forest Department on Monday sealed an alleged illegal sand mining site on the Tangni River in Dalgong area of Darrang district following directives from Forest Minister Jayanta Malla Baruah.

The operation was carried out by a Forest Department team at No 1/2 Baruahar under Dalgong Police Station after complaints were reportedly received regarding illegal sand extraction in the area.

According to local sources, illegal mining had allegedly been continuing at the site for the past 10 to 15 years.

The complaints claimed that repeated attempts by the local police and revenue authorities to stop the activity had failed, with the operators allegedly continuing the business using heavy machinery, including excavators, dumpers and tractors.

The reported complaints were submitted to the Forest Minister by the local unit of the All Assam Minority Students' Union (AAMSU) and residents, prompting the department to launch the enforcement drive.

However, officials reportedly found that mining operations had already been suspended before the

team reached the site, raising allegations that those involved had received prior information about the raid.

The Forest Department, assisted by local residents and AAMSU members, sealed the mining site by erecting barricades and placing warning tape around the area.

Officials appealed to the public to immediately inform the department if any attempt is made to remove the barricades or resume illegal mining activities.

The action has also triggered questions among local residents over the alleged continuation of illegal sand extraction for several years and the absence of earlier legal action against those involved.

The operation marks one of the first major enforcement drives undertaken by the Forest Department following Jayanta Malla Baruah's assumption of charge as Forest Minister.

Authorities have not yet announced whether criminal cases have been registered in connection with the alleged illegal mining.

## Guwahati Commerce College 1985 batch reunites after four decades

### HT Bureau

**GUWAHATI, July 6:** The 1985 batch of Guwahati Commerce College (GCC) came together for a grand reunion at Hotel Ornate in Guwahati, bringing together alumni from the city and different parts of Assam to celebrate more than four decades of friendship and shared memories.

The programme began with participants singing the Assamese song Mayabini in unison as a tribute to the late singer Zubeen Garg, followed by a welcome session and introductions.

Many batchmates met each other for the first time in over 40 years, making the occasion an emotional one.

Participants reminisced about their college days, recalling classroom experiences, cultural programmes, picnics and friendships.

The reunion also featured a series of recreational activities, including a puzzle quiz, Tambola, musical chairs, Bucket Ball and darts, with alumni enthusiastically taking part.

A complimentary lucky draw and prize distribution ceremony added to the festive atmosphere, while winners of various games and competitions were felicitated.

The gathering also observed a minute's silence in memory of departed classmates and resolved to organise similar reunions regularly to strengthen lifelong bonds. Several alumni were honoured for their achievements in different fields.

Manoj Sharma Bardoloi was felicitated for assuming charge as the Regional Executive Director, North Eastern Region, of the Airports Authority of India, be-



coming the first person from Assam to hold the position.

Anil Goenka was honoured for his nomination to the Governing Body of Guwahati Commerce College's autonomous institution, while Dr Homeshwar Kalita and Ajay Navaka were felicitated on being elected President and Working President, respectively, of the Guwahati Commerce College Alumni Association (ALCOM).

The programme was compered by Mahesh Kumar Agarwal of Bongaigaon.

The organisers credited the success of the reunion to the efforts of Ajay Kumar Navaka, Anil Goenka and Brij Kishore Agarwal, along with office assistants Anamika Das, Mohini Majumdar, Sapna Mahato and Nisha Debbarman.

The reunion concluded with the organisers thanking all participants and expressing hope of meeting again at future gatherings, describing the event as a celebration of enduring friendships and cherished memories.

## KAAC launches development projects in Langphor constituency

### HT Bureau

**DIPHU, July 6:** Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC) Executive Member Madhuram Lekthe on Monday laid the foundation stones for a series of development projects in the Langphor MAC Constituency aimed at improving infrastructure, preserving indigenous culture and enhancing public amenities.

The projects include the construction of the Ru Rangsinga Sarpo Statue at Langphor Karbi Jutang Aklam, a paver block road at Eragaon to improve rural connectivity, a boundary wall at Lokhimon Adovan Bahoni Adarsha, and a Rongker Shed at Bongtok Terang Arong for conducting traditional community rituals.

Addressing the gathering, Lekthe said the initiatives reflect the development vision of KAAC Chief Executive Member Tuliram Ronghang, with emphasis on balanced infrastructure growth, preservation of indigenous heritage and public welfare.

"Our priority remains balanced infrastructure development, the preservation of our rich indigenous culture, and the overall welfare of the public," he said, adding that the Council is committed to ensuring that development reaches every part of Karbi Anglong.

The Executive Member said the projects are expected to strengthen public infrastructure, safeguard the region's cultural heritage and improve the quality of life of residents in the Langphor area.

Local residents welcomed the initiatives and expressed hope that the timely completion of the projects would contribute to the overall development of the constituency.

## AJYCP demands national status for Assam flood crisis



### HT Correspondent

**NAGAON, July 6:** The Nagaon district unit of the Asom Jatiyatibadi Yuva-Chatra Parishad (AJYCP) staged a three-hour sit-in demonstration near the office of the District Commissioner on Sunday, demanding that Assam's recurring flood and erosion problems be declared a national issue.

The protest was organised to press for a permanent scientific solution to the State's annual flood and erosion crisis, adequate compensation for people affected by the recent floods and erosion, and waiver of agricultural loans of farmers whose land has been damaged by erosion.

Carrying placards and raising slogans, members of the organisation urged the State and Central governments to take immediate and long-term measures to address the recurring disasters that affect thousands of people across Assam every year.

Among those who participated in the demonstration were Pragyoish Bonia, Assistant General Secretary of the AJYCP Central Committee, Prabal Sarma, President of the Nagaon District Committee, Hemanta Das, General Secretary of the district unit, along with several other leaders and members of the organisation.

Following the protest, the AJYCP submitted a memorandum addressed to the Chief Minister of Assam through the District Commissioner, reiterating its demands, including declaring the State's flood and erosion crisis a national problem and implementing a permanent solution.

## Five-Day Mega Abacus workshop begins at Gossaigaon Press Club

### HT Correspondent

**GOSSAIGAON, July 6:** A five-day Mega Abacus Workshop, organised by Smart Kid Abacus and the Assam Digital Literacy Mission in collaboration with the Gossaigaon Press Club, commenced recently at the press club premises.

The workshop, which will continue until July 10, was inaugurated by Hafizur Rahman, President of the Gossaigaon Press Club, who formally opened the entrance to the venue.

The ceremonial lamp was lit by Dr. Dines Das, author and Registrar of Bongaigaon University, in the presence of Shankar Choudhury, senior journalist and President of the Bodoland Journalists' Association, along with other distinguished guests.

The workshop is being offered free of cost to children between 5 and 14 years of age.

Organisers said the initiative aims to promote mental development, improve concentration, strengthen memory, enhance calculation skills and build self-confidence among children through abacus education.

The five-day programme is expected to provide young participants with practical learning experiences designed to develop analytical and cognitive abilities while encouraging interest in mental arithmetic.

## NFR records nearly 10% rise in freight loading in June

Railway achieves 110% of monthly target as cement, POL and coal traffic register strong growth

### HT Bureau

**GUWAHATI, July 6:** Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR) registered a 9.6 per cent increase in freight loading during June 2026, reflecting improved movement of essential commodities and growing industrial activity across the Northeast.

According to an official statement, NFR loaded 0.968 million tonnes (MT) of freight during the month, achieving 110 per cent of its monthly loading target.

Among the major commodities, cement loading recorded the highest growth of 53.1 per cent, followed by Petroleum Oil and Lubricants (POL) at 41.7 per cent and coal at 37.5 per cent compared to the corresponding period last year.



The "Others" category also registered a 36.2 per cent increase, with stone chips recording an exceptional 275 per cent growth, indicating higher transportation of

construction materials across the region.

During the April-June period of the current financial year, NFR handled 2.931 million

tonnes of freight, registering a 6.2 per cent increase over the corresponding period last year while achieving 109 per cent of the Railway Board's cumulative loading target.

Railway officials said the consistent rise in freight loading reflects expanding economic and industrial activities in the Northeast and adjoining regions.

The growth has strengthened the regional supply chain network while contributing significantly to the railway's freight revenue.

NFR stated that it will continue to focus on technological upgradation, operational efficiency and customer-centric freight services to ensure reliable transportation and sustain growth in freight movement in the coming months.

## QUOTE OF THE DAY

Goodness is the only investment that never fails.  
-Henry David Thoreau

## Move to rename a university

The recent proposal to rename Bhopal's Barkatullah University as Vagdevi Bhopal University has triggered an intense debate across Madhya Pradesh. The proposal, approved by the University's Executive Council, drew strong opposition not only in Bhopal but also in several other parts of the state. Teachers, students, historians, civil society organisations and political parties argued that changing the name would undermine the legacy of a distinguished freedom fighter and educationist. Opposition to the proposal continued to gather momentum. Meanwhile, the University also became embroiled in other administrative controversies. The Vice-Chancellor later resigned. Responding to persistent questions over the renaming proposal, the Registrar stated that the initiative had been taken by the former Vice-Chancellor and that it was no longer being pursued after his resignation. He also said that the Higher Education Department had not supported the proposal. However, this was merely the Registrar's statement. The Executive Council has neither formally withdrawn its resolution nor issued any public notification to that effect. Although the issue has now been pushed into cold storage and public protests have largely subsided, it would be premature to consider the controversy settled until the proposal is formally withdrawn.

The larger question is why such a proposal was considered necessary in the first place. Should one great historical figure be honoured by erasing the public identity of another? Those opposing the move argued that if the state wished to honour Raja Bhoj or Goddess Vagdevi through a university, it should establish a new institution instead. Renaming a university that has carried the name of a distinguished freedom fighter for decades does little justice to history. Maulana Barkatullah Bhopali was not merely a prominent son of Bhopal; he was among the leading international faces of India's freedom movement. Born on 7 July 1854, he was an eminent educationist, polyglot and revolutionary nationalist. He taught in several countries, including Japan, and worked tirelessly to build international support for India's struggle against British colonial rule. During the First World War, he collaborated with Indian revolutionaries abroad to mobilise resistance against British rule. On 1 December 1915, he became the Prime Minister of the Provisional Government of India established in exile in Kabul, with Raja Mahendra Pratap serving as its President.

It was one of the earliest organised political efforts to secure India's independence from foreign soil. Although he did not live to see an independent India, his contribution to the freedom movement remains an enduring part of the nation's history. Throughout the controversy, another question repeatedly surfaced: was Barkatullah's name being targeted simply because he was a Muslim? Neither the government nor the University has attributed the proposal to any such consideration. Yet the most effective way to dispel this perception would be to formally withdraw the renaming proposal. Otherwise, the controversy is likely to resurface from time to time.

## India remains in lower middle income group since 2007, GNI per capita is \$2760

By: Dr Gyan Pathak

The latest data updated by the World Bank shows that India did not improve in income classification since 2007, and remains in lower middle income group. In 2025, according to the data, India's GNI per capita was \$2760. In 2007, India's income classification was upgraded from low income group to lower middle income group. Number of countries in low income group were 25 in 2025, while lower middle income countries were 47, upper middle income group were 59, and high income group countries were 87. The data clearly shows the deceptive nature of the economic data claimed by the ruling establishment during its political campaign that India is fourth largest economy of the world in nominal terms, with GDP of approximately \$4.18 trillion.

This year, none of the countries assessed moved down. Five moved from lower-middle to upper-middle income: Jordan, Micronesia, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, and Viet Nam. However, India could not move up from the lower-middle income group. One moved from low to lower-middle income: Togo. They reached the same thresholds through very different paths.

In South Asia, only Sri Lanka is a story of recovery. Just three years after a severe economic crisis brought the country to the brink of collapse in 2022, real GDP grew by 5% in 2025, driven by a rebound across industries and growth in financial and tourism services. The reclassification is a marker of resilience, though the country only narrowly crossed the threshold.

According to the July 1, 2026 classification for the FY27, the countries having less than \$1,175 per capita income are classified as low income group, \$1176-\$4635 as lower middle income group, \$4636-\$14,375 as upper middle income group, and \$14,375 and above as high income group. The incomes are increased compared to July 1, 2025 for all groups for FY26, when low income threshold was less than \$1135, lower middle income was \$1136-\$4495, upper middle income was \$4496-\$13935 and high income \$13935 and above.

Countries are classified each year on July 1, based on the estimate of their GNI per capita for the previous calendar year. Income groups remain fixed for the entire World Bank fiscal year (i.e., until July 1 of the following year), even if GNI per capita estimates are revised in the meantime. The World Bank classifies economies for analytical purposes into four income groups: low, lower-middle, upper-middle, and high income. For this purpose it uses gross national income (GNI) per capita data in U.S. dollars, converted from local currency using the World Bank Atlas method, which is applied to smooth exchange rate fluctuations. This year's edition covers 218 countries, and the results will serve as a global reference until the end of June 2027.

Since 1987, the global income classification landscape has changed significantly, with the share of economies classified as low-income declining from 30% to 11%. These shifts have not been evenly distributed, however, with some countries moving across income groups much faster than others. This year's update to the World Bank Group Country Income Classifications shows six countries moved to a higher income category, but each has a different story to tell: a country emerging from economic crisis, an export powerhouse outpacing its peers, and an economy that turned out to be 10% larger than previously thought are just three of them. The update matters because the classifications inform which countries can access concessional loans and development assistance, and help governments, researchers and a wide range of international organizations track economic progress worldwide.

Estimates of GNI are obtained from economists in World Bank country units who rely primarily on official data published by the countries; the size of the population is estimated by World Bank demographers from a variety of sources, including the UN's biennial World Population Prospects. (IPA Service)

# Assam's infrastructure development: Opportunities and Hurdles

Assam, the gateway to India's Northeast, has long held a unique position in the country's geography and economy. Blessed with rich natural resources, fertile lands, and a vibrant cultural heritage, Assam possesses immense potential for growth and development. However, the state's infrastructure has often been seen as a bottleneck that restricts progress. In recent years, renewed focus and investment have been placed on improving Assam's infrastructure, aiming to transform it into a hub of economic activity and connectivity. Yet, the path to robust infrastructure development is fraught with both opportunities and challenges that require careful navigation.



### DEGREE OF THOUGHT

By: Himangshu Ranjan Bhuyan

The importance of infrastructure development in Assam cannot be overstated. Infrastructure forms the backbone of any region's economic progress by enabling the smooth movement of goods, people, and services. For Assam, improving roads, railways, airports, power supply, and digital connectivity is essential not only for local economic upliftment but also for integrating the Northeast region with the rest of India and global markets. The strategic location of Assam, bordering several countries including Bhutan, Bangladesh, and China, adds a layer of geopolitical significance to its infrastructure development.

One of the most promising opportunities for Assam lies in its connectivity projects. The state has witnessed major investments in road and rail networks in recent years. The development of national highways and expressways has improved access to remote areas and facilitated trade routes. Projects like the Dhola-Sadiya bridge, the longest bridge over water in India, have significantly reduced travel time and opened new avenues for commerce and tourism. This bridge not only connects Assam internally but also acts as a critical link to Arunachal Pradesh, boosting defense preparedness and fostering regional integration.

Rail connectivity has also been a focus area, with expansions and upgrades enhancing the mobility of people and goods. The Northeast Frontier Railway has been instrumental in linking Assam with other northeastern states and the rest of the country. This connectivity fosters economic activities such as agriculture, tea production, and handicrafts by enabling easier access to markets.

Urban infrastructure development in Assam's cities and towns is also gaining momentum. Guwahati, as the largest urban center, is witnessing projects aimed at improving road networks, drainage systems, public transport, and sanitation. These initiatives are crucial to cope with rapid urbanization and to make cities more livable and attractive for investments. Smart city projects, with a

focus on sustainable urban planning, are being introduced to manage resources efficiently and provide better civic amenities.

Assam's integration into the national railway network also supports tourism, which has the potential to become a major economic driver given the state's natural beauty and cultural heritage. Air connectivity is another vital area where Assam is making strides. The state capital Guwahati's Lokpriya Gopinath Bordoloi International Airport serves as the primary gateway to the Northeast. Recent expansions and modernization efforts aim to increase passenger capacity and improve facilities, thereby attracting more tourists and business travelers.

Additionally, the development of smaller airports and airstrips across the state will enhance regional connectivity and help bring remote areas into the mainstream economy.

Alongside transport infrastructure, Assam's power and energy sector presents significant opportunities. Reliable electricity supply is crucial for industrial growth and improving quality of life. Assam has considerable potential for hydroelectric power generation, thanks to its numerous rivers and favorable terrain. Harnessing this renewable energy can reduce dependence on fossil fuels and support sustainable development. The state government, in collaboration with central authorities, is working on various hydropower projects and grid modernization to ensure consistent power supply.

Digital infrastructure is increasingly recognized as a key enabler of economic progress. Assam is gradually expanding its broadband network and promoting digital literacy, which are essential for education, healthcare, governance, and business. Improved digital connectivity can bridge the rural-urban divide, provide access to online services, and encourage entrepreneurship. The push towards digital infrastructure is timely, considering the growing importance of the digital economy and e-governance.

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focus on sustainable urban planning, are being introduced to manage resources efficiently and provide better civic amenities.

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# Drying land, rising thirst: India heading towards water bankruptcy

By: Dr Satyavan Saurabh

Water is not just a natural resource, but the foundation of life, civilization, economic development, food security, and environmental balance. Most of the great civilizations in human history developed along rivers, as water has been the fundamental source of life and prosperity. However, in the twenty-first century, increasing pressure on water resources has created a serious crisis for many countries around the world. India is emerging as a prime example of this crisis. While bearing approximately 18 percent of the world's population, India possesses only approximately 4 percent of the world's freshwater resources. Rising population, rapid urbanization, industrialization, excessive water exploitation in agriculture, water pollution, climate change, and structural deficiencies in water management have pushed the country into a situation where merely talking about a water crisis is no longer sufficient. Many experts believe that if current trends continue, India could go beyond a water crisis to a state of water bankruptcy. Water insolvency is a condition when available water resources are exhausted due to over-exploitation beyond the capacity of natural recharge, the quality of water deteriorates so much that its use becomes difficult and it becomes impossible to meet the needs of society, agriculture, industry and ecology.

India's annual per capita water availability, which was over five thousand cubic meters in the early years of independence, has steadily declined, reaching the water stress threshold. Many metropolitan cities have periodically faced drinking water crises. Groundwater levels in rural areas are steadily declining. Pollution is turning many rivers from life-giving sources into pollutants. Rainfall uncertainty and climate change have further complicated the situation. This crisis is not solely caused by natural causes, but is also the result of long-term weaknesses in water management, policy imbalances, and social behaviors.

India's biggest problem is its excessive dependence on groundwater. The country is the world's largest user of groundwater. Millions of tube wells operate for irrigation, drinking water, and industrial use. Free or highly subsidized electricity in many states has further encouraged groundwater exploitation. Groundwater levels are rapidly declining due to significantly lower recharge than withdrawals. In many areas, wells and hand pumps have dried up, forcing farmers to drill deeper. This is increasing energy costs and pushing small farmers into financial crisis. In many places, public health is also being affected by increased levels of fluoride, arsenic, and nitrate in groundwater.

Another major weakness in water management is the lack of proper rainwater harvesting. Most of India's rainfall occurs over a few months, but a significant portion of it flows into the ocean through rivers. Scientifically harvesting and recharging this water could significantly mitigate the groundwater crisis. Unfortunately, traditional water structures such as ponds, stepwells, johads, wells, and lakes have fallen victim to neglect, encroachment, and pollution. While rainwater harvesting has been made legally mandatory in urban areas, its effective implementation remains limited.

Water pollution is also a major factor driving the water crisis towards water bankruptcy. Most of the country's rivers are affected by domestic sewage, industrial waste, plastic waste, and agricultural chemicals. Large quantities of untreated sewage are discharged into rivers every day. Many industries do not comply with environmental standards. As a result, the quality of available water is continuously deteriorating. No matter how much



water is available, if it is not usable, the actual water availability automatically decreases. This situation poses a serious threat to health, agriculture, fisheries, and biodiversity.

Excessive and inefficient water use in agriculture is also a significant cause of the current crisis. Nearly 80 percent of India's freshwater is used for agriculture, but irrigation efficiency remains low. Most areas employ traditional flood irrigation, which wastes large amounts of water. Minimum support prices and government procurement policies have encouraged the cultivation of water-intensive crops like paddy and sugarcane in many states, even though water availability in those areas is not conducive. This puts additional pressure on groundwater and impacts long-term agricultural sustainability.

Urban water management also suffers from serious deficiencies. Rapidly growing cities experience significant water loss through pipelines. Non-revenue water is excessive in many cities. Treated wastewater is rarely reused. Encroachment on lakes and ponds is destroying the natural storage of rainwater. Ironically, while cities face waterlogging during the monsoon season, they face water shortages during the summer. This demonstrates that our water management system has not evolved in accordance with the natural water cycle.

Another structural weakness in water management is institutional fragmentation. Water-related functions are divided among numerous ministries, departments, and agencies. Irrigation, drinking water, groundwater, river conservation, urban water supply, and environmental protection are under separate institutions. Lack of coordination among these agencies hinders the formulation and effective implementation of an integrated water policy. Water management is conducted based on administrative boundaries rather than river basin-based planning, which prevents scientific use of resources.

Climate change has exacerbated this crisis. Monsoon vagaries, short periods of excessive rainfall, long dry spells, melting Himalayan glaciers, and rising temperatures have all impacted the water cycle, increasing the frequency and in-

tensity of both floods and droughts. Planning water resources based on past climate patterns will not be able to meet future needs.

Due to all these challenges, the water crisis is no longer just a resource issue, but has become a broader question involving food security, energy security, public health, economic development, social stability, and national security. Water scarcity will impact agricultural production, adversely affecting food security. Industrial productivity may decline. The spread of waterborne diseases may increase. Water disputes between states and regions may intensify. The possibility of large-scale migration from rural areas may also increase. Therefore, making water security a central priority of national development is the need of the hour.

This challenge cannot be addressed simply by building new dams or extracting more groundwater. This requires a complete transformation of water management thinking. First, water must be recognized as a limited and valuable natural resource. Water resources should be managed using an integrated river basin-based approach, simultaneously considering surface water, groundwater, rainwater, and ecological needs. Scientific water budgets should be developed for each river basin, and water use planning should be done accordingly.

Groundwater conservation should be given top priority. Scientific assessments of groundwater withdrawals and recharge should be conducted in every region. Groundwater governance should be developed based on aquifer mapping, digital monitoring, and community participation. Where groundwater levels have fallen significantly, effective controls on withdrawals should be implemented and artificial recharge schemes should be widely implemented.

Rainwater harvesting should be made a national mass movement. Rainwater harvesting systems should be effectively implemented in every building, school, industry, and government institution. Village ponds, johads, stepwells, and other traditional water sources should be revived. Local communities should be given the responsibility for their conservation and maintenance so that water

pressure on clean water. Water savings can also be achieved by reducing pipeline leakage, adopting smart metering, and modernizing water distribution systems.

River conservation should not be limited to cleanup campaigns, but should encompass the protection of the entire river ecosystem. Strict controls should be put in place on the flow of untreated sewage and industrial waste. Wetlands, floodplains, and natural drainage channels should be protected, as these are key sources of water recharge and biodiversity.

Technological innovations should also be widely utilized. Developing water monitoring systems based on remote sensing, geospatial information systems, artificial intelligence, the Internet of Things, and smart sensors can enable real-time monitoring of water use. Water accounting, water audits, and data-driven policymaking will enable more scientific resource use.

Additionally, it is essential to link water conservation with public participation. Active participation of schools, universities, panchayats, voluntary organizations, religious institutions, and local communities can transform water conservation into a social movement. Citizens must develop a sense of responsibility to future generations by conserving every drop of water.

The water crisis facing India is truly a test of the development model. If the shortcomings of current water management are not addressed, the water crisis could soon turn into water bankruptcy, with widespread and long-term consequences. However, if scientific planning, effective governance, technological innovation, traditional knowledge, community participation, and a culture of water conservation are integrated, India can turn this crisis into an opportunity. Water security is not just the government's responsibility, but a shared responsibility of every citizen, farmer, industry, local bodies, and policymakers. The future of sustainable development belongs to a society that considers water not merely a commodity for consumption but a shared natural heritage and conserves it judiciously. This approach can lead



Wastewater treatment and recycling should be made mandatory in urban areas. Treated water should be used in industries, construction, gardens, and other non-potable uses to reduce the

India out of the water crisis and towards long-term water security and inclusive development. (Dr Satyavan Saurabh, PhD (Political Science) is a poet and social thinker.)

## Primary health intersects wellness and digitization

By: Dr Priyanka Saurabh

India's healthcare system has been undergoing unprecedented transformation over the past decade. The rapid expansion of digital technologies, artificial intelligence, telemedicine, electronic health records, health data management, and integrated digital platforms have begun to transform healthcare delivery. Medical science, meanwhile, is shifting from just treating diseases to placing greater emphasis on "wellness," i.e., holistic health, disease prevention, mental health, nutrition, yoga, and a healthy lifestyle. The Government of India's initiatives such as the Ayushman Bharat Health and Wellness Centers (AB-HWC), Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission (ABDM), e-Sanjeevani, ABHA Digital Health ID, and the National Digital Health Ecosystem symbolize this transformation. These initiatives have certainly provided new opportunities for modernizing healthcare, but a fundamental question remains relevant—can digital transformation and wellness-focused approaches replace strong primary healthcare institutions?

The answer to this question is negative. Technology can make healthcare more efficient, transparent, and accessible, but it cannot replace doctors, nurses, medicines, laboratories, ambulances, and robust primary health care institutions. Healthcare is ultimately a human service, built on a strong institutional framework, trained human resources, and community outreach. If the primary health care system is weak, even the most advanced digital platforms will not be able to provide quality healthcare to citizens.

The foundation of India's public health system is Sub-Health Cen-

ters (SCs), Primary Health Centers (PHCs), and Community Health Centers (CHCs). These institutions are the first point of contact for essential services such as maternal and child health, immunization, nutrition, family planning, infectious disease control, early detection of non-communicable diseases, and primary treatment. Unfortunately, in many rural, tribal, and remote areas of the country, these institutions have been struggling for years with a shortage of doctors, nurses, medicines, equipment, and infrastructure. Many Primary Health Centers lack regular electricity, clean drinking water, internet, laboratory facilities, and even ambulances. Therefore, simply developing digital platforms will not automatically improve the quality of health services.

The establishment of Ayushman Bharat Health and Wellness Centers was intended to expand primary healthcare services. These services included maternal and child health, as well as services such as diabetes, hypertension, early cancer screening, mental health, geriatric health, and yoga. This concept is consistent with modern public health approaches, as most diseases today are also lifestyle-related. However, in many places, health and wellness centers have been limited to mere name changes. The buildings remain the same, the equipment remains the same, the human resources remain scarce, and in many places, essential medicines are not regularly available. Without a parallel investment in institutional capacity, "health and wellness" will remain merely a policy term.

The Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission is an ambitious reform in

the health sector. Through the ABHAID, efforts are underway to create digital health records for every citizen, digitally register hospitals and health professionals, and integrate treatment information. This will preserve patients' treatment history, reduce unnecessary tests, ensure continuity of health services, and provide reliable data to policymakers. This is a need for the future. However, it is equally true that digital health records cannot replace a doctor in a village, nor can they solve the problem of unavailability of medicines or poor health infrastructure. If primary health centers themselves are not efficient, the digital health system will be limited to information management.

A major challenge facing digital health is the digital divide. Even today, millions of citizens in India lack smartphones, quality internet access, and digital literacy. Ensuring equitable access to digital services for those in rural areas, tribal areas, mountainous regions, the elderly, and economically weaker sections is not easy. If health services are heavily digital-based, the very segments of society that need them most will be most disadvantaged. Therefore, the goal of digitalization should be inclusion, not exclusion.

A wellness-focused approach is an important component of modern health policy. A healthy diet, yoga, regular exercise, stress management, mental health, and a drug-free lifestyle certainly play a significant role in disease prevention. However, it would be unfair to consider health solely as a result of individual lifestyle. A person's health is deeply intertwined with their social, economic, and environmental environment. Poverty, malnutrition, lack of access to

clean drinking water, poor sanitation, pollution, unsafe housing, and lack of education are social determinants of health that cannot be addressed solely through wellness campaigns. If a family lacks access to nutritious food, simply advising on a balanced diet will not lead to the desired improvement in health. If a pregnant woman has to travel several kilometers to reach the nearest health center, a digital health app will not solve her problem. In a vast and diverse country like India, a strong primary health care system can be the key foundation for the success of healthcare services. The COVID-19 pandemic has made it clear that local health institutions, ASHA workers, ANMs, Anganwadi workers, and primary health centers play a crucial role in addressing any health crisis. While door-to-door surveys, vaccinations, contact tracing, public awareness, and community monitoring have certainly been improved with the help of digital technology, their actual implementation is carried out by grassroots health workers. This demonstrates that technology is a support, not a substitute.

The World Health Organization has long recognized primary health care as the cornerstone of universal health coverage. Both the 1978 Alma-Ata Declaration and the 2018 Astana Declaration emphasized that without a strong primary health care system, no country can provide equitable, accessible, and quality health services. The situation in India also confirms this principle. True democratization of health services is possible only when every citizen has access to quality primary health care near them. (Dr Priyanka Saurabh, PhD (Political Science), is a poet and social thinker.)

## Sinking roads, deep-rooted corruption: When development collapses at its foundations

By: Lalit Garg

The Delhi-Dehradun Economic Corridor was projected as a symbol of modern India's fast, safe, and world-class infrastructure. Yet, barely two and a half months after its inauguration, a section of the newly built highway caved in during the very first spell of monsoon rains. Several vehicles met with accidents as the road suddenly subsided. Fortunately, no lives were lost, but the incident once again exposed the uncomfortable reality hidden behind the glittering narrative of development. The obvious question is: How could a highway built at the cost of hundreds of crores fail to withstand its very first monsoon? Was construction quality compromised? Were drainage systems inadequately designed? Or is this another manifestation of corruption, negligence, and the absence of accountability?

Unfortunately, this is not an isolated incident. In recent years, India has witnessed a disturbing series of collapses involving newly constructed roads, bridges, flyovers, and public buildings across several states. Bihar witnessed the collapse of nearly a dozen bridges within a fortnight, including five bridge failures in a single day—an event that shocked the nation. These were not merely engineering failures but glaring examples of systemic corruption in public infrastructure. The tragic collapse of the Morbi suspension bridge in Gujarat claimed 135 lives. The Vivekananda Flyover disaster in Kolkata devastated numerous families. The collapse of the roof at Terminal-1 of Delhi's Indira Gandhi International Airport and the fatal hoarding collapse in Mumbai's Ghatkopar further highlighted the alarming decline in the quality and safety of public infrastructure.

Such incidents cannot simply be dismissed as consequences of heavy rainfall or natural calamities. When a road caves in after the first rain, bridges collapse prematurely, or airport roofs fall apart, the failure is not nature's—it is entirely man-made. In an era of advanced engineering and cutting-edge technology, such incidents are unacceptable. They represent not development but a betrayal of public trust in the name of development. Roads and bridges are the arteries of a nation's economy. They connect villages to cities, enable trade, help farmers transport their produce to markets, and ensure safe mobility for millions of citizens. When these lifelines collapse prematurely, it is not merely concrete and steel that break apart—the public's faith in governance also crumbles.

Following the Delhi-Dehradun corridor incident, the National Highways Authority of India suspended the project manager and team leader while issuing a

show-cause notice to the construction company. However, one must ask: Is suspension alone an adequate response? Experience suggests otherwise. Suspended officials often return to service after a brief period or are quietly transferred elsewhere. Construction firms blacklisted today frequently reappear tomorrow under different names and continue securing government contracts. As a result, the vicious cycle of corruption remains uninterrupted. The real crisis lies in the absence of personal accountability. Responsibility for every stage of a project—from design and material selection to technical testing and quality control—is rarely fixed on specific individuals. When those responsible escape meaningful punishment, corruption receives indirect protection. Consequently, every monsoon brings the same familiar headlines: roads washed away, bridges developing dangerous cracks, and expensive public projects failing long before their intended lifespan.

A significant portion of India's public infrastructure spending continues to be undermined by bribery and commission-based corruption. From awarding contracts to processing payments, corrupt practices infiltrate multiple stages of project execution. When a substantial share of project funds is siphoned off through illegal transactions, compromised quality becomes almost inevitable. Inferior materials, violations of engineering standards, and pressure to meet unrealistic deadlines together produce structures that fail at the very first test.

Equally disturbing is the predictable aftermath of every disaster. Inquiry committees are formed, reports are prepared, compensation is announced, and public outrage gradually fades away. Yet, the system remains fundamentally unchanged. Legal proceedings against negligent officials and contractors drag on for years, allowing the same cycle to repeat itself with the next tragedy. Developed nations also experience infrastructure failures. The crucial difference is that every accident leads to institutional reforms, stricter regulations, and improved safety standards. In India, however, cosmetic damage control often replaces genuine systemic reform. The time has come for a comprehensive transformation of India's public infrastructure governance. Every public project should undergo mandatory independent third-party quality audits. Construction materials must be digitally tracked, each stage should be technically verified, and modern technologies such as drones, sensors, and real-time monitoring systems should become integral to quality assurance. Moreover, infrastructure should not merely be inaugurated—it should be scientifically evaluated over a defined performance period after completion.

## Ram temple trust meets amid donation theft probe; chairman says 'deeply hurt'

AYODHYA, July 6: The Ram temple trust met here on Monday to decide on the resignations of its general secretary Champat Rai and member Anil Mishra in the wake of allegations of embezzlement of donations.

Discussion were underway and the Shri Ram Jannabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust is likely to accept the resignations, sources said.

The meeting of the Trust started at 3.15 pm at the guest house inside the Ram Jannabhoomi complex, with seven of the nine permanent members, including Trust chairman Nriya Gopal Das, being present. Rai and Mishra did not attend the meeting, the sources said.

It is likely to review the SIT probe into the alleged donation theft, deliberate on the stepping down of Rai and Mishra, and discuss appointments to key positions in the trust if the resignations are accepted, Trust sources said.

Though speculation was rife that the resignations have been accepted, there was no official word.

In a statement issued on Monday ahead of the meeting, Das said he was "deeply pained" by the alleged theft of donations from the Ram Lalla temple and called for the strictest punishment for those responsible.

Expressing confidence in Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, he said every person linked to the alleged offence would be brought to justice and asserted that no one should seek political mileage from an issue connected to the faith of millions of Hindus.

Elaborate security arrangements were put in place, with additional police personnel deployed on roads leading to the Ram temple complex. The venue was shifted from Mani Ram Das Chhawani to the temple complex, citing security reasons.

Access for private vehicles, including those of media personnel, has been restricted near the



temple complex.

Union government secretary Prashant Lokhande and Uttar Pradesh Additional Chief Secretary (Home) Sanjay Prasad were expected to join the meeting virtually, sources said.

Residents and seers in Ayodhya said they were awaiting the outcome of the trust meeting with the hope that those responsible for the alleged theft of temple donations would be brought to justice.

"Everyone in Ayodhya is hurt by this theft in the temple of Lord Ram. Our only wish is that all those behind it must be identified and punished," said Reema Devi, who sells prayer items on the Ram Path.

The Ram Path leading to the temple wore a deserted look under a cloudy sky on Monday, with only small groups of devotees walking towards the shrine as police personnel maintained a strict vigil along the route amid heightened security arrangements.

Meanwhile, sources said a separate closed-door meeting was held at the residence of trust treasurer Govind Dev Giri, where several senior leaders of the Vishva Hindu Parishad (VHP) were present.

Trust member Krishna Mohan, VHP general secretary Bajrang Bagra and Central Advisory Committee member Dinesh Kumar also attended the deliberations at Vaidehi Bhavan. The participants did not respond to questions from the media.

The VHP on Monday said it will respect whatever decision the Trust takes on the resignations of Champat Rai and Anil Mishra, who belong to the outfit.

The RSS affiliate also said that the ongoing probe into the alleged embezzlement of donations at the Ram temple should be allowed to reach its conclusion.

Ahead of the temple trust's meeting, Govind Dev Giri declined to comment on the allegations surrounding the alleged embezzlement of temple donations. He said that he would address all queries only after the trust meeting concluded.

"I will not say anything now. I am here for four days. I will see you after the meeting and tell you everything," he told reporters.

Govind Dev Giri had on Sunday said he had no role in the daily collection or counting of offerings at the temple. He asserted that local trustees supervised the process and the trust's audit records were intact.

An SIT constituted on June 13 to probe the alleged theft of Ram Temple donations had submitted its preliminary report to the state government on June 23, which formed the basis for an FIR and the arrest of eight named people.

Investigators have also recovered deleted CCTV footage that allegedly shows the accused concealing currency notes while taking them out of the temple premises.

While no FIR has been registered against Rai, Mishra, and special invitee Gopal Rao, the Ayodhya lawyers of Faizabad Bar Association have submitted a written police complaint seeking registration of a case against them. (PTI)

## BJP favoured to win all 3 Rajya Sabha seats in Bengal

KOLKATA, July 6: The EC's announcement of by-polls to three Rajya Sabha seats from West Bengal has set the stage for what could become another marker of the state's shifting political landscape, with the BJP emerging as the clear favourite to win all three seats and the divided TMC facing the prospect of a further reduction in its parliamentary presence.

The bypolls, scheduled for July 24, were necessitated by the resignations of former TMC Rajya Sabha members Sukhendu Sekhar Roy, Sushmita Dev and Prakash Chik Baraik, who quit both the Upper House and the party in June after questioning the leadership following the TMC's defeat in the assembly elections.

The terms of Roy and Baraik were due to run till September 2029, while Dev's tenure was to continue till April 2030.

The TMC's present strength in Rajya Sabha is nine. With the BJP holding 208 seats in the 294-member assembly, the numbers overwhelmingly favour the saffron camp. If it fields three candidates and its legislators vote along party lines, the party can comfortably secure around 70, 69 and 69 votes for its nominees respectively, making victory in all three contests a distinct possibility.

Under the Rajya Sabha electoral system, a candidate in the three-seat bypoll would require around 70 first-preference votes to secure election.

The BJP's current strength in the assembly places it in a position to meet that threshold for three candidates without depending on support from other parties.

The arithmetic also illustrates the challenge before the principal opposition TMC.

Any rival candidate would require at least 70 votes to defeat a BJP nominee. While the combined strength of legislators elected on the TMC ticket still stands at around 80, the party's legislative wing is now split between the camp led by Mamata Banerjee and the dissident faction headed by Leader of Opposition Ritabrata Banerjee.

In theory, a united TMC could have attempted to consolidate support behind a common candidate and remain in contention for one seat. In practice, however, the deepening organisational battle has made such an understanding increasingly unlikely, according to political observers.

The significance of the bypolls, therefore, extends beyond arithmetic.

The elections are taking place at a time when the TMC is embroiled in an unprecedented battle for control of the party, with rival factions simultaneously staking claim to its name, symbol and organisational structure before the Election Commission.

The Mamata Banerjee camp sought to play down the significance of the possible Rajya Sabha setback, arguing that the vacancies were a consequence of "betrayal" by leaders who deserted the party during crisis.

"These seats belonged to the TMC and were won on the strength of the party in the last assembly election. A few individuals chose to desert the party after



the results. The people of Bengal are watching who stood with them and who abandoned them at a difficult moment," a senior leader aligned with the Mamata Banerjee faction said.

The rebel camp, however, maintained that the resignations reflected a broader crisis of confidence in the party's leadership.

"The resignations are not isolated incidents. They are part of a larger political message. The leadership ignored repeated warnings from within the organisation, and the consequences became evident in the assembly election. The real issue is not the Rajya Sabha seats but why so many elected representatives no longer have faith in the present leadership," a rebel faction leader said.

The dissidents first demonstrated their strength when 58 of the TMC's 80 MLAs backed Banerjee's claim to the post of Leader of the Opposition, rejecting the nominee supported by the party leadership. The faction now claims the support of around 65 legislators and has projected itself as the legitimate inheritor of the party's political legacy.

The BJP, meanwhile, said the bypolls reflected the broader political changes underway in the state.

"The outcome appears largely determined by the current arithmetic in the assembly. The TMC is fighting itself while the BJP is focused on governance and organisation. An increase in our Rajya Sabha strength will reflect the mandate that Bengal has given us," a senior state BJP leader said.

The Rajya Sabha contest is unfolding alongside proceedings before the Election Commission, which has asked both TMC factions to submit documentary evidence of support and organisational records as part of their competing claims over the party's identity.

A BJP victory in all three seats would strengthen the party's representation in the Rajya Sabha while further reducing the TMC's strength in the Upper House. More significantly, it would underline the political consequences of the split within the opposition party at a time when the battle for control of the TMC itself remains unresolved.

Against this backdrop, the July 24 bypolls are being viewed as more than a routine electoral exercise. Their outcome is likely to be closely watched not only for its impact on parliamentary numbers but also for what it may reveal about the evolving balance of power in West Bengal politics. (PTI)

## Himachal: Tibetan community celebrates Dalai Lama's 91st birthday with devotion

DHARAMSHALA/SHIMLA, July 6: The 91st birthday of the 14th Dalai Lama was celebrated with devotion and enthusiasm, featuring traditional performances and special prayers, across Himachal Pradesh by the Tibetan community on Monday. The Dalai Lama was born on July 6, 1935, to a Tibetan farming family in the small village of Taktser, located in Amdo in Tibet.

Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu also extended birthday greetings to the Dalai Lama and said he is a global symbol of compassion, non-violence, and universal human values.

While the principal birthday ceremony was held at the Shewatsel Teaching Ground in Leh, Ladakh, where the Dalai Lama is currently on a visit, celebrations also took place at the Tsuglagkhang Monastery in McLeod Ganj near Dharamshala in Kangra district, the headquarters of the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA).

In McLeod Ganj, the CTA organised a programme at the Tsuglagkhang Monastery complex. Kangra Deputy Commissioner Hem Raj Bairwa attended the event as the chief guest and was joined by thousands of Tibetans, locals, and international supporters, a statement said.

The programme commenced with the Tibetan and Indian national anthems, followed by a ceremonial cake-cutting.

Tibetan artists presented traditional cultural performances, while senior leaders of the Tibetan exile community addressed the gathering and highlighted the Dalai Lama's lifelong commitment to peace, compassion, and non-violence. (PTI)

## Nitin Nabin abandoned Bankipur at first opportunity: Prashant Kishor

PATNA, July 6: Jan Suraj Party founder Prashant Kishor, who is contesting the bypoll to the Bankipur assembly seat in Bihar, on Monday charged BJP national president Nitin Nabin with having "abandoned" the constituency "at the first opportunity to enter Parliament".

Kishor, who seeks to wrest the seat that had elected Nabin five times on the trot, the last occasion being last year's assembly polls, pointed out that Union Home Minister Amit Shah had not given up his seat in Gujarat Vidhan Sabha upon becoming the BJP chief.

"Yes, I know that the BJP considers Bankipur as its stronghold. Voters here have repeatedly reposed their trust in Nitin Nabin. But Nitin Nabin took no time in forgetting them. He abandoned the seat at the first opportunity to enter Parliament", the former poll strategist told PTI video.

Kishor rejected the BJP's claim that after being elected to the top party post, Nabin's continuance as a member of a state assembly had become untenable, a reason why he got elected to the Rajya Sabha in April. (PTI)

## HC seeks Centre's stand on plea of Gymkhana members against show-cause notice for eviction

NEW DELHI, July 6: No effective hearing is likely to happen on Tuesday before the Centre's Estate Office dealing with the issue of eviction of Delhi Gymkhana Club from its premises on Safdarjung Road here, with the Delhi High Court deciding to hear the matter on July 28.

Justice Avneesh Jhingan on Monday sought the stand of the Centre on pleas by Delhi Gymkhana Club members and staff against the show-cause notice for eviction from the 27.3-acre facility and asked Solicitor General Tushar Mehta to ensure that the July 7 hearing before the Estate Officer is adjourned to a day after the next date of hearing.

Justice Jhingan issued notice to the central government on applications seeking a stay on the operation of the show-cause notice, and granted it time to file its reply. SG Mehta said the Centre would file its response to the applications.

Noting that a hearing before the Estate Officer was scheduled for July 7, the senior law officer added, "They can seek an adjournment there." Senior advocate Abhishek Singhvi, appearing for the plaintiff, urged the court to give a short date in the matter.

"Mr Mehta, we are keeping this for the date already fixed (in the main case). Just see it (Estate Officer's hearing) is adjourned beyond that date," Justice Jhingan said.

The pleas by Vijay Khurana and Delhi Gymkhana Club Ltd Staff Welfare Association form part of their pending lawsuit following the Land and Development



Office's (L&DO) May 22 order terminating the perpetual lease deed and asking the colonial-era club to return its land by June 5 on grounds of "strengthening and securing defence infrastructure".

On June 29, the L&DO under the Union Housing and Urban Affairs Ministry issued the show-cause notice to the club, asking it to explain why an eviction order should not be passed against it under the Public Premises (Eviction of Unauthorised Occupants) Act, 1971.

The notice, issued by Estate Officer Bipin Kumar Singh, directed the club and all persons concerned occupying the premises to submit their response by July 7 and appear for a personal hearing on the same day at 2.30 pm.

The move came more than a month after the Centre told the Delhi High Court on May 26 that it would not take forceful possession of the 27.3-acre premises by June 5. (PTI)

## NDA leaders allege 'mass irregularities' in K'taka SIR

BENGALURU, July 6: A delegation of NDA leaders on Monday submitted a formal complaint to Karnataka Chief Electoral Officer V Anbukumar, alleging "massive irregularities" in the ongoing SIR of electoral rolls in the state and demanded an immediate inquiry and mandatory door-to-door re-verification of all enumeration forms.

They also sought strict legal action against all officials and political functionaries found responsible for these "irregularities".

The delegation comprising Union Minister and JD(S) leader H D Kumaraswamy, central Minis-

ters from BJP Pralhad Joshi and Shobha Karandlaje, Leaders of Opposition in Karnataka Assembly and Council R Ashoka and Chalavadi Narayanaswamy, senior leaders from both parties, met CEO Anbukumar and submitted the complaint.

"We write to express serious concern over the massive irregularities in the ongoing Special Intensive Revision (SIR) exercise of the electoral rolls in the state of Karnataka. The officials who are supposed to conduct the SIR are showing zero regard for the approved process, thereby undermining the very spirit of democracy," the leaders said in the letter.

Noting that Booth Level Officers (BLOs), under the directions of the District Election Officer (DEO/DC), are required to conduct mandatory door-to-door verification and personally verify the identity of members of each household as per SIR guidelines, they claimed that this was not being followed on the ground, evidence of which has been shared on social media, while mainstream media has also carried it.

Multiple complaints are being received from several other parts of the state, they added. (PTI)

## EL Nino to hit India's energy system harder than anywhere else in world: CREA report

NEW DELHI, July 6: This year's El Nino will hit India's energy system harder than anywhere else, according to a new analysis by the Centre for Research on Energy and Clean Air (CREA).

El Nino is the recurrent weather pattern that drives up global temperatures.

India faces a dual challenge -- not only will the falling winds and rainfall associated with El Nino cut the country's power generation from turbines and hydropower but the warmer temperatures will also drive up demand for power-hungry air conditioning.

The report said additional cooling demand could total 10 TWh within a year -- the equivalent of a quarter of Delhi's annual electricity use.

The analysis models the impact of the forecast transition from La Nina to El Nino on India's power sector from July 2026 to June 2027.

La Nina is the cold phase of El



Nino. "Combine the lost output from renewables and the increased demand for power, and India could face a generation gap of nearly 18 TWh (terrawatt hour). Currently, the most likely outcome is a surge in coal-fired power, which would release an estimated 17 million tonnes of CO2.

"In the most severe scenario, the extra coal generation reaches 24 TWh, roughly half of India's total

increase in coal burn last year," the analysis said.

The 2026 El Nino is a forerunner of extreme weather events that are becoming more common in a warming world. With El Nino occurring on a two-to-seven-year cycle, the extent to which India can meet or exceed its solar and storage deployment targets is the key metric for grid resilience.

"India has just endured a deadly heatwave and one of its hottest

summers on record, pushing power demand to an all-time high of 270 GW. A super El Nino will raise the stakes again -- putting even more strain on the grid while worsening water shortages and pressure on farming," the report said.

It said India must stay on track for its target of 500 GW of non-fossil power by 2030 but also move much faster on batteries and grid upgrades, so that clean energy can meet future surges in power demand reliably and affordably.

Record demand peaks like the 270 GW set in May are routinely cited to argue the case for new coal capacity. But India's coal-fired power plants are facing serious challenges in keeping up with the energy demand curve and operating with the flexibility the grid requires throughout the day.

As a result of this inflexibility, grid operators curtailed around 2.1 TWh of solar and wind last year just to keep coal plants running. (PTI)

## Amid prohibitory orders, Mamata-loyalist TMC team visits kin of raped-murdered girl

KOLKATA, July 6: A team of leaders owing allegiance to the Mamata Banerjee faction of the Trinamool Congress on Monday visited the family of the 11-year-old girl who was allegedly raped and killed in Baruipur in West Bengal's South 24 Parganas district, amid prohibitory orders clamped in the region.

The team, comprising former assembly speaker and local MLA Biman Banerjee, Rajya Sabha MP Dola Sen and Joyngar MP Pratima Mondal, among others, met the victim's father and mother separately and assured them of legal and other forms of assistance by the party.

"We came here as representatives of Mamata Banerjee and met the victim's father at his Baruipur residence and her mother and other family members at their ancestral village house a little further away. We have assured them that Mamata Banerjee stands firmly with the family and will extend all assistance the family requires," Sen told reporters after the visit.

The team held a meeting at Banerjee's Kalighat residence in southern Kolkata after leaving for Baruipur, around 25 km from the city.

On Sunday night, the TMC alleged that barricades were erected and there was heavy police deployment outside the former chief minister's residence to prevent her from visiting the victim's family.

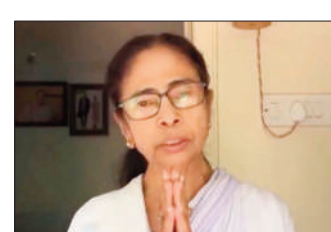
TMC's Baruipur Dakshin MLA Biman Banerjee said, "Police should have been proactive in tracing the criminals. The locals had no choice but to resort to protests, and it was spontaneous."

It was unfortunate that Mamata Banerjee was stopped from visiting the victim's family, he said and termed it an attempt to throttle people's voice.

"Our visit to the victim's family wasn't without hurdles. The police stopped us at multiple locations and searched our cars to determine whether Mamata Banerjee was travelling with us," he alleged.

Baruipur remained tense on Monday, a day after locals held a protest demanding the arrest of the accused. The demonstration had escalated to brickbattling, during which a major road was blocked, tyres were burnt and police vehicles vandalised.

The body of the girl, stuffed in a sack, was fished out from a pond on Sunday, following which a mob lynched a man for his alleged involvement in her rape and murder. Police clamped prohibitory or-



ders under Section 163 of the BNSS in Baruipur and its adjacent Narendrapur and Sonarpur police station areas in the aftermath of Sunday's violence and deployed heavy security.

The state government has constituted a six-member Special Investigation Team (SIT), headed by the local additional superintendent of police, to probe the crime.

While two suspects were arrested following overnight search operations and three others detained for questioning, the prime accused in the case -- Ananda Sardar -- was held on Monday, police said.

Chief Minister Suwendu Adhikari said in Kolkata that his government will ensure the girl's family gets justice and the perpetrators of the brutal crime are hanged.

"It's a crime of unspeakable horror. I have spoken to the parents of the victim, and the government is doing everything that the family has asked for. They will get justice, and the criminals will get capital punishment. I am happy that the family has reposed its trust in the government," he said.

Adhikari added that besides the main crime, three cases have also been lodged in connection with the violence that followed.

"There was an incident of mob lynching with a communal angle to it. Railway tracks were damaged, bringing back memories of the 2019 anti-CAA protests and the more recent anti-Waqf Act protest. Apart from these, two CRPF jawans were assaulted, and a police vehicle was torched," the CM said.

"We will surely provide justice to the family. But we will also make those frustrated souls, who locked themselves up in their rooms after getting defeated in the elections and who orchestrated the violence, suffer beyond their imagination," he warned, obliquely referring to local TMC leaders suspected of taking part in Sunday's unrest.

Rejecting the CM's claims, delegation member Pratima Mondal alleged that deliberate attempts were being made by the ruling dispensation to malign the TMC and asserted that the party indulged in no communal provocation during the protests. (PTI)

## Sikkim CM inaugurates Tibetan community centre

# CM Tamang pays tribute to Dalai Lama on 91<sup>st</sup> birthday

**GANGTOK, July 6:** Sikkim Chief Minister Prem Singh Tamang on Monday inaugurated the newly constructed Tibetan Community Centre here on the occasion of Tibetan spiritual leader the Dalai Lama's 91st birthday.

In his address, the chief minister offered prayers for the Dalai Lama's good health, long life and continued guidance, describing his teachings as a source of inspiration for millions across the world.

"His Holiness reminds us that true happiness comes from within. He teaches us to practise compassion, reduce selfish desires, respect others, and live with tolerance and humility," the chief minister said, adding that "May His Holiness continue to bless humanity with his wisdom and inspire the world with his timeless teachings."

Highlighting the significance of the newly inaugurated facility, Tamang said the Tibetan Community Centre symbolises the friendship, mutual respect and solidarity shared between the people of Sikkim and the Tibetan community. He expressed confidence that the centre would emerge as a vibrant hub for religious, cultural and social activities while helping preserve Tibet's rich cultural heritage and strengthening communal harmony.

The event also featured the formal handover of the community centre, cultural performances, readings of messages from the Kashag (Cabinet) and the Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile, and an address by Palden



Dhondup, Home Minister of the Central Tibetan Administration, before concluding with a community luncheon and afternoon cultural performances.

Former chief minister and Sikkim Democratic Front (SDF) president Pawan Kumar Chamling also extended his heartfelt greetings to His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama on the occasion of his 91st birthday, praying

for his good health, long life and continued guidance to humanity.

In a message, Chamling described the Tibetan spiritual leader as a global moral force whose teachings of compassion, justice and peaceful dialogue continue to inspire millions across the world.

"For the people of Sikkim, as indeed for millions across the world, His Holiness has

been far more than a revered spiritual leader. He has been a moral compass, reminding us that compassion is not a sign of weakness but the highest expression of strength, and that dialogue, dignity, and justice must always prevail over hatred and violence," Chamling said.

Recalling the Dalai Lama's deep association with Sikkim, the former CM said the Himalayan state remains profoundly grateful for his enduring blessings and spiritual guidance.

He noted that His Holiness laid the foundation stone of the Samdrupstse statue on October 22, 1997, and later consecrated Buddha Park (Tathagata Tsal) at Ravangla on March 25, 2013, describing both occasions as historic milestones that continue to inspire the people of Sikkim.

"We in Sikkim are especially grateful for His Holiness's enduring blessings and his longstanding association with our State. These moments remain a source of immense pride and spiritual inspiration for the Sikkimese people. Sikkim is truly blessed to have received his guidance and blessings," Chamling stated.

Extending his prayers on the occasion, the SDF supreme wished the Dalai Lama continued good health and a long life.

"May his wisdom, compassion, and blessings continue to illuminate the path of humanity for many years to come," he added while conveying birthday wishes to the revered Buddhist leader. (PTI)

## Tripura CM lays foundation stone for 13-foot bronze statue of Syama Prasad Mookerjee



**AGARTALA, July 6:** Tripura Chief Minister Manik Saha on Monday laid the foundation stone for a 13-foot bronze statue of Bharatiya Jana Sangh (BJS) founder Syama Prasad Mookerjee here to honour his sacrifices.

Speaking at the programme at Dr Syama Prasad Mookerjee Hall (formerly known as Town Hall) here, he alleged that before 2014, there had been a deliberate attempt to overlook Mookerjee's contributions, but the scenario changed after Narendra Modi became the prime minister of the country.

"When the Agartala Municipal Corporation (AMC) decided to rename the Town Hall after Dr Mookerjee, the opposition flagged its deep concern but our government boldly decided to rename Town Hall after the person who sacrificed his life for India," he said.

Saha said Modi has been fulfilling Mookerjee's dreams from scrapping Article 370 and 35A from Jammu and Kashmir to the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) and 'atmanirbharta' (self-reliance).

"Many of us had apprehended

that there would be bloodshed in the country if Article 370 and 35A were abrogated, but nothing happened. It was Dr Mookerjee who pushed the concept but could not succeed in its implementation," he said.

Praising the far-reaching ideals of the BJS founder, the chief minister said he had expressed apprehension over the safety and security of minorities in East Pakistan and West Pakistan after Partition.

"The CAA was modelled and executed into an Act to address Dr Mookerjee's concern about the safety and security of minorities residing in our two neighbours. Modiji has also fulfilled Dr Mookerjee's dream," he said.

The mission for attaining self-reliance was actually called for by Dr Mookerjee to reduce dependence on other countries, he said, adding that the country under Modi's leadership has achieved many things under the slogan of 'Atmanirbhar Bharat'.

"Now, India exports arms and other defence equipment to other nations and shares technologies with friendly countries for the benefit of mankind," he added. (PTI)

## Arunachal CM, DyCM wish Dalai Lama on his 91<sup>st</sup> birthday

**ITANAGAR, July 6:** Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister Pema Khandu and his deputy Chowna Mein on Monday wished the 14th Dalai Lama on the occasion of his 91st birthday.

"Warm birthday greetings to His Holiness the Dalai Lama. May His Holiness be blessed with good health, long life and continued strength to guide the world with his timeless message of peace, compassion and harmony," Khandu wrote in a social media post.

Deputy Chief Minister Chowna Mein also greeted the Dalai Lama. "My heartfelt greetings to His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama on his birthday. A global symbol of peace, compassion, wisdom, and harmony, His Holiness has inspired generations with his message of kindness, non-violence, and human values. May he be blessed with good health, long life, and continued strength to guide humanity towards peace and mutual understanding," Mein said.

Arunachal Pradesh Panchayati Raj and Rural Development Minister Ojing Tasing also wished the Dalai Lama.

"With profound reverence, I extend my heartfelt greetings to His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama on the joyous occasion of his 91st Birthday," Tasing said.

A global beacon of compassion, wisdom, and peace, His Holiness has inspired generations through his unwavering message of love, non-violence, and universal brotherhood. May he be blessed with a long, healthy, and fulfilling life, and may his enlightened teachings continue to guide humanity towards peace, harmony, and compassion, he added. (PTI)

## 8-year-old girl among two injured in firing

**IMPHAL, July 6:** Two persons, including an eight-year-old girl, have been injured in a firing by armed groups in Manipur's Kangpokpi district, police said on Monday. The incident took place in Thingkhongjang village on Sunday evening, and the injured, Nengneichong Kipgen (56) and Lamneingah Kipgen (8), were brought to Imphal for treatment late in the night, they said.

The injured were initially provided first aid at an Assam Rifles camp and later brought to the Regional Institute of Medical Sciences (RIMS) in Imphal for further treatment. Security has been tightened around the RIMS campus.

In June, protests erupted when three Kuki youths, injured in an exchange of fire in Kangpokpi district, were admitted to RIMS for treatment. Claiming the injured were armed men, the protesters had attempted to storm the hospital building. Following Sunday's firing incident, Kuki Inpi Manipur (KIM), the apex body of the Kuki tribe in the state, expressed outrage over the attack and alleged the NSCN (IM) and ZUF (Kamson) to be behind the firing.

"The deliberate targeting of an unarmed civilian settlement is nothing less than an act of terror against innocent people and represents a grave assault on human dignity and the rule of law."

"The Central and Manipur governments must understand that the continued failure to protect innocent civilians gravely undermines public confidence in the institutions of the state," it said. (PTI)

## Manipur CM hands over ₹ 1 lakh

**IMPHAL, July 6:** Manipur Chief Minister Y Khemchand Singh on Monday handed over financial assistance of ₹ 1 lakh each for medical treatment to 26 Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) suffering from chronic diseases, an official statement said. Singh handed over the assistance while attending a programme on distribution of medical assistance to seriously ill IDPs at the Manipur Trade Expo Centre Relief Camp, Lamboikhongnangkhang in Imphal West district.

"Special financial support is being provided to IDPs suffering from chronic diseases," he added. He further said today's disbursement of financial assistance is not the end of the government's support to IDPs and assured that every possible assistance will be extended to those suffering from chronic diseases in future. (PTI)

## Ziro Tourism initiative draws visitors despite monsoon challenges

First tourist information centre and digital directory launched during Dree Festival to boost sustainable tourism

**HT Correspondent**

**ZIRO, July 6:** The Ziro Tourism Organisation (ZTO) successfully launched its first Tourist Information Centre during the annual Dree Festival, marking a significant step towards promoting sustainable tourism in Ziro Valley despite disruptions caused by heavy monsoon rains.

The information centre operated throughout the five-day festival, held from July 1 to July 5 at Hanoko Dree Ground in Hong village, providing visitors with travel assistance, local information and safety guidance.

The initiative was implemented jointly by the Ziro Tourism Organisation, the District Tourism Office, the District Information and Public Relations Department and the Hapoli Forest Division to improve visitor services and enhance the festival experience for domestic and international tourists.

A major highlight of the festival was the release of the Ziro Tourism Digital Directory by Rajya Sabha Member of Parliament Tai Tagak, who attended the 37th



Hong Dree Festival as the chief guest.

The digital directory provides information on local homestays, hotels, tourist guides, transport services and major attractions, enabling visitors to plan their trips more conveniently while encouraging direct engagement with the local Apantani community.

The initiative faced an early challenge after heavy monsoon rains triggered flash floods that disrupted traffic along the Potin-Poosa road, one of the main routes

to Ziro Valley. Despite the adverse weather conditions, more than 100 individual and group travellers registered at the newly established Tourist Information Centre during the festival.

Organisers said the response demonstrated the growing popularity of Ziro as a tourism destination and reflected increasing interest in the region's unique cultural heritage.

The Ziro Tourism Organisation stated that while the Dree Festival remains a traditional agricultural celebration of the Apantani community, efforts are being made to promote it responsibly to a wider audience through improved visitor facilities and digital resources.

According to the organisers, the introduction of the Tourist Information Centre and the digital directory is intended to strengthen community-based tourism, generate livelihood opportunities for local residents and promote tourism while preserving the ecological and cultural heritage of Ziro Valley.

## Cooperative Week concludes in North Garo Hills



**HT Correspondent**

**RESUBELPARA, July 6:** The week-long Cooperative Week celebrations concluded on Monday at the Mendipathar Multipurpose Cooperative Society Hall in North Garo Hills, with officials highlighting the role of cooperatives in rural development, financial inclusion and livelihood generation.

Organised by the Office of the Assistant Registrar of Cooperative Societies (ARCS), East Garo Hills, under the theme "Cooperatives Build a Better Future for All," the programme marked the fifth Foundation Day of the Union Ministry of Cooperation as part of a nationwide campaign to promote the cooperative movement.

Addressing the gathering as the chief guest, Donald Sangma, District Development Manager, NABARD, outlined the institution's role in strengthening the cooperative sector through financial assistance to State Cooperative Banks, Rural Cooperative Banks, self-help groups and cooperative societies.

He noted that India has over 8.5 lakh registered cooperative societies and stressed the need for effective implementation of cooperative initiatives to achieve the vision of Viksit Bharat.

He also highlighted the introduction of new Model Bye-laws for the formation of Multipurpose Primary Agricultural Cooperative Societies (MPACS) and in-

formed that Multipurpose Dairy Cooperative Societies and Multipurpose Fisheries Cooperative Societies would soon become operational in North Garo Hills. He urged members to actively strengthen and expand their cooperative institutions.

Welcoming the participants, RM Mawlong, Assistant Registrar of Cooperative Societies, East Garo Hills, reviewed the activities conducted during the week across East and North Garo Hills.

These included programmes on cooperative transformation, digital cooperatives, financial literacy, farmer welfare, dairy and fisheries cooperatives, grain storage, technology-enabled services, green growth, and the participation of youth and women in the cooperative sector. JN. Sangma, Senior Registrar of Cooperative Societies, East Garo Hills, highlighted the importance of maintaining proper records, books of accounts, financial statements and statutory audits to ensure effective governance and smooth functioning of cooperative societies.

Branch Manager of the Meghalaya Cooperative Apex Bank (MCAB), Mendipathar Branch, B.Ch. Momin, spoke about the bank's initiatives, including the implementation of the Kisan Credit Card (KCC) scheme, Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) services and financial support for storage infrastructure, while reaffirming the bank's commitment to strengthening cooperative institutions. District Programme Manager of the Meghalaya Basin Development Authority (MBDA), North Garo Hills, Chingme Momin, appreciated the government's efforts to promote the cooperative movement and encouraged members to work collectively for the growth of their organisations.

Founder of the Mendipathar Multipurpose Cooperative Society, Sister Rose Kayathinkara, shared the society's journey and highlighted its contribution to livelihood generation and community development.

Senior Cooperative Officer TG Momin and Junior Cooperative Officer JTR Sangma also addressed the programme.

No.DPRD/BTC/15<sup>th</sup> FC/Bak-51/2025-26/1015

Dated Kokrajhar the 6<sup>th</sup> July 2026

### NOTICE INVITING TENDER

Sealed tenders with a validity period of 90 (ninety) days from the date of receipt in prescribed form affixing non-refundable court fee stamps of Rs. 8.25 (Rupees eight and paise twenty five) only subsequently to be drawn up in printed F-2 form are hereby invited from the Govt. registered PWD (Roads/Building), P&RD, Irrigation/ Water Resources / PHE others Govt. Contractor's under Class-I (A, B, C), Class-II and Class-III category from approved firm according to tender limit of eligibility for the following works under the award of 15<sup>th</sup> FC (RLBs) United Basic Grant for the Financial year 2024-25 (1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> Inst.) during 2025-26 and will be received in the office of the undersigned up to 2.00 pm on 28/07/2026 and will be opened on the same date and place at 2.15 pm in the presence of willing contractors or their authorised agents.

Sl. No.	Name of Dev. Block	Name of Scheme	A/A amount (Rs. In Lakh)	Tender Amount (Rs.)	Earnest Money (ST, SC, OBC-1% & Gen-2%)	Cost of Tender in Rs.	Time for completion in days	Pre-Bid meeting date & time
1	Tamulpur	Installation of 9 mtr. Solar High Mast light at Batiarni VCDC	8.50	Rs.8,41,668/-	ST,SC,OBC-1%& Gen-2%	Rs.252/-	3 Months	13/07/26
2	Tamulpur	Installation of 9 mtr. Solar High Mast light at Dongpar VCDC	8.50	Rs.8,41,668/-	ST,SC,OBC-1%& Gen-2%	Rs.252/-	3 Months	13/07/26
3	Tamulpur	Installation of 9 mtr. Solar High Mast light at Durakuchi VCDC	8.50	Rs.8,41,668/-	ST,SC,OBC-1%& Gen-2%	Rs.252/-	3 Months	13/07/26
4	Tamulpur	Installation of 9 mtr. Solar High Mast light at Kalakuchi VCDC	8.50	Rs.8,41,668/-	ST,SC,OBC-1%& Gen-2%	Rs.252/-	3 Months	13/07/26
5	Tamulpur	Installation of 9 mtr. Solar High Mast light at Tamulpur VCDC	8.50	Rs.8,41,668/-	ST,SC,OBC-1%& Gen-2%	Rs.252/-	3 Months	13/07/26
6	Tamulpur	Installation of 9 mtr. Solar High Mast light at Ulubari VCDC	8.50	Rs.8,41,668/-	ST,SC,OBC-1%& Gen-2%	Rs.252/-	3 Months	13/07/26
7	Nagrijuji	Installation of 9 mtr. Solar High Mast light at Panbari VCDC	8.50	Rs.8,41,668/-	ST,SC,OBC-1%& Gen-2%	Rs.252/-	3 Months	13/07/26
8	Nagrijuji	Installation of 9 mtr. Solar High Mast light at Mazgari VCDC	8.50	Rs.8,41,668/-	ST,SC,OBC-1%& Gen-2%	Rs.252/-	3 Months	13/07/26
9	Nagrijuji	Installation of 9 mtr. Solar High Mast light at Nagrijuji VCDC	8.50	Rs.8,41,668/-	ST,SC,OBC-1%& Gen-2%	Rs.252/-	3 Months	13/07/26
10	Nagrijuji	Installation of 9 mtr. Solar High Mast light at No. 1 Paschim Dafelli VCDC	8.50	Rs.8,41,668/-	ST,SC,OBC-1%& Gen-2%	Rs.252/-	3 Months	13/07/26
11	Nagrijuji	Installation of 9 mtr. Solar High Mast light at No. 3 Paschim Dafelli VCDC	8.50	Rs.8,41,668/-	ST,SC,OBC-1%& Gen-2%	Rs.252/-	3 Months	13/07/26
12	Nagrijuji	Installation of 9 mtr. Solar High Mast light at Ulubari VCDC	8.50	Rs.8,41,668/-	ST,SC,OBC-1%& Gen-2%	Rs.252/-	3 Months	13/07/26
13	Nagrijuji	Installation of 9 mtr. Solar High Mast light at Gandhibari VCDC	8.50	Rs.8,41,668/-	ST,SC,OBC-1%& Gen-2%	Rs.252/-	3 Months	13/07/26
14	Nagrijuji	Installation of 9 mtr. Solar High Mast light at Niz Dafelli VCDC	8.50	Rs.8,41,668/-	ST,SC,OBC-1%& Gen-2%	Rs.252/-	3 Months	13/07/26
15	Nagrijuji	Installation of 9 mtr. Solar High Mast light at Khatarbari VCDC	8.50	Rs.8,41,668/-	ST,SC,OBC-1%& Gen-2%	Rs.252/-	3 Months	13/07/26

Details NIT may be seen in all working days in the office of the undersigned. Tender paper will be issued to the Contractors or their authorized agent up to 12.00 Noon on all working days from 7/07/26 to 28/07/26 in the office of the undersigned on payment of in the form of Banker cheque/ Demand draft of any nationalized Bank (Preferable SBI) duly pledged to the Director, P&RD, BTC, Kokrajhar. The Cost of tender (Non-Refundable) must be in the form of Demand Draft/ Banker Cheque of a Nationalized Bank drawn in favour of the Principal Secretary, BTC, Kokrajhar and payable at SBI, Kokrajhar to be deposited 0.03%.

Sd/-Director,  
Panchayat & Rural Development,  
BTC, Kokrajhar

IPR(BTC)/C/2026-27/60

# Cristiano Ronaldo says it again: His 6<sup>th</sup> World Cup with Portugal will be his last

ARLINGTON (US), July 6: Cristiano Ronaldo's sometimes playful banter in a rare World Cup news conference ended in an exchange between Portugal's superstar and a reporter from Argentina.

Ronaldo took the moment on the eve of a round of 16 clash with border rival Spain to repeat something he has said at least once before.

This sixth World Cup for the former Manchester United and Real Madrid star will be his last.

"What remains with me is the people — the people who love you. I share hotels with the staff, Latino people, and those are spectacular memories. Yesterday on the flight, there was an Argentine flight attendant. And knew she was Argentine by the way she looked at me: I knew you were Argentine by the way you looked at me. If you look away quickly, it means you don't like Cristiano."

Ronaldo said in translated remarks Sunday, breaking into a smile.

"I want to enjoy what will be my last World Cup to the fullest," Ronaldo continued. "Hopefully, tomorrow won't be my last match. That way, you can keep bashing me some more."

Ronaldo, the career leader in international goals with 146, made similar comments in a television interview late last year, a few months after Portugal won the UEFA Nations League title with a riveting victory over Spain in a penalty shootout.

Many of the questions for the 41-year-old during a 25-minute session at the home of the NFL's Dallas Cowboys referred to what everybody in the packed room was assuming: This was it for Ronaldo.

Before the end, he joked with reporters that they were pushing him out the door.

Just about every time he did, though, he would turn philosophical.

"There's nothing missing," Ronaldo said. "God was so generous toward me. He gave me everything I never expected to win, especially at the national team. And personally, the same thing. So it's enjoying every moment. I'm not going to be more Cristiano or less Cristiano because I win the World Cup. Of course, we all have hopes, myself especially, and we all want all the conditions to win. But we know that only one is going to win."

Ronaldo's finale on soccer's biggest stage — whenever that happens — will come eight years after he was the oldest to record a World Cup hat trick at 33. That was in a 3-3 draw with Spain in a group stage opener considered one of the World Cup's best matches, although both powers didn't reach the knockout stage.



"Not to say that we have to do man-to-man marking, but in certain areas of the field you've got to be aware that he's there," Spain coach Luis de la Fuente said in translated remarks. "He's got the talent, he's got the class, and he's got the quality, and at any moment he can be decisive for the game. He can be the best.

So we're well aware of this."

Portugal is trying for a second consecutive trip to the quarterfinals. The only other time Portugal went deeper in the Ronaldo era was a semifinal run in his World Cup debut in 2006.

Ronaldo had the tying goal in Portugal's 2-1 win over Croatia in the round of 32. Three of his 11 World Cup goals have come in this tournament. It was a matchup of 40-somethings against Croatia's Luka Modric, his former Real Madrid teammate who was in his fifth World Cup at 40.

"What I have done throughout my career is to adjust to the nuances of age, knowing that I'm not the player I used to be," Ronaldo said. "But one thing I can understand very clearly is nothing has changed because I can still score a goal. I hope I do that tomorrow, and if I don't, I hope others on the team do."

Barring a replay of his hat trick from 2018 in Russia, Ronaldo is unlikely to challenge the Golden Boot co-lead of seven shared by Lionel Messi of Argentina and France's Kylian Mbappé, who also has a substantial edge on the career World Cup goals list.

Messi set the record in this tournament and now has 20, while Mbappé is up to 19. Ronaldo sometimes bristles about where he stands among his rivals. But not on a day he reiterated his inevitable World Cup end.

"Besides some different opinions that you may have, I'm not doing so bad, right?" Ronaldo said. "You know, I scored three goals. Well, there are others that scored more, because they are doing incredibly well, but I'm not doing so bad. And I need to continue onward."

For at least one more World Cup game. (AP)

## Norway enters World Cup quarterfinals for 1<sup>st</sup> time

EAST RUTHERFORD, July 6: Erling Haaland scored, and Andreas Schjelderup jumped on his teammate's back. Haaland scored again, and Schjelderup leapt up again.

Heading in the go-ahead goal in the 79th minute and scoring again before the end of regulation time, Haaland put Norway on his back and carried it into the World Cup quarterfinals for the first time with a 2-1 defeat of Brazil on Sunday that showcased the towering striker on soccer's biggest stage.

"Maybe this will write history in Norway," Haaland said. "Everyone just need to enjoy themselves. This is just an insane day. It's one of the most insane days in Norwegian history. Just enjoy it, embrace it and enjoy the moment."

After being a nonfactor for much of the afternoon and having limited touches, Haaland spoke at the second-half hydration break with coach Ståle Solbakken, who told him to drain his energy and go for it.

Haaland turned it on when it mattered most, getting the right side of his head on the ball after a perfect setup by Andreas Schjelderup, who entered at halftime. Haaland scored a little over minutes later for his seventh of the tournament, through Danilo's legs to tie Argentina's Lionel Messi and Kylian Mbappé of France in the race for the Golden Boot.

"It felt it was a gift from God that it actu-



Erling Haaland scores twice to beat Brazil

ally went into the net," Haaland said after scoring in a 14th consecutive competitive match internationally. He has 27 in that stretch and 62 in 54 with Norway.

At the other end, goalkeeper Ørjan Nyland was stellar. He made a crucial stop early, diving to his left to deny Bruno Guimarães' penalty kick in the 14th minute, then got his left hand on a shot by Endrick late when Norway was hanging on to a one-

goal lead. The only goal Nyland allowed was to Neymar on a penalty kick late in stoppage time, which changed just the final score. Neymar, who is 34, said this was his final game playing for Brazil's national team.

Nyland, who at 35 is his team's oldest player, was a huge factor in a historic victory that ranks among the most significant in the country's history — at least on the men's side. Norway's women's team won the World Cup in 1995, but the men have only

qualified four times and not since 1998. They had not gone further than the round of 16.

"I think that all Norwegian citizens are experiencing the night of a lifetime," Solbakken said. "Some people say that we have changed Norway forever. Probably, they will party for a week or so."

Norway next faces England on Saturday in Miami Gardens, Florida. Solbakken said he had more than a dozen friends already book travel to South Florida.

Guimarães became the first Brazil player not to score on a World Cup penalty kick since Zico in 1986. The decision to have him take it instead of star Vinicius Júnior brought immediate second-guessing and may be questioned and criticized for quite some time.

Coach Carlo Ancelotti said he and his staff did a yearlong statistical study that determined, with Neymar not on the field and Raphinha injured, Guimarães was the right choice.

There were plenty of other missed opportunities, including Casemiro missing Neymar on a crossing attempt on what could have been the tying goal.

"We really fell short in the opportunities that we did create," captain Marquinhos said. "We had a penalty kick, we had some other chances as well, but here's the World Cup for you. Those that make the least mistakes are able to move forward to the next round, and to be victorious." (AP)

## US faces Belgium for spot in World Cup quarterfinals, hoping for first back-to-back knockout wins



SEATTLE (US), July 6: After a successful card trick that made Folarin Balogun's suspension disappear, the United States will try to win back-to-back World Cup knockout games for the first time and reach its first quarterfinal since 2002.

Coach Mauricio Pochettino figures to have his top-choice lineup available Monday when the Americans — ranked 17th in the world ahead of the tournament — face No. 9 Belgium in a rematch of the 2014 round of 16 game in Brazil, won 2-1 by the Red Devils in extra time.

"They have a lot of players that can hurt you, and we have to be ready," Christian Pulisic, the top American star, said Sunday. "We have to clinical in a lot ways."

At stake is a quarterfinal berth against Spain or Portugal and the chance to play France or Morocco in a semifinal.

Belgium overcame a two-goal, 86th-minute deficit to defeat Senegal 3-2 over extra time in the round of 32. The Red Devils beat the U.S. 12 years ago on goals by Kevin De Bruyne and Romelu Lukaku, and again 5-2 in a March friendly at Atlanta.

"We're two very different teams now than we were in March," U.S. captain Tim Ream said.

Belgium isn't giving much weight to this year's earlier meeting.

"That 2-5 against the U.S. in March gives a distorted picture," defender Maxim De Cuyper said. "It could have ended differently."

A sellout crowd of 66,000-plus is expected at Lumen Field, where the asking price Sunday for seats in the Hawks Nest triangle above the northern end ranged from \$1,840 to \$8,050 on FIFA's resale site.

A huge, red-white-and-blue-clad, pro-American crowd serenaded the team with John

Denver's "Take Me Home, Country Roads" after the 2-0 group stage win over Australia on June 19. The fan base is known for supporters' pregame march down Occidental Avenue to the stadium before Seattle Sounders games.

"The 12th men, how is called here," Pochettino said.

After losing their group stage final to Turkey 3-2 on a stoppage-time goal, the Americans entered the knockout rounds with a 10-game, four-year losing streak to European opponents. The U.S. beat Bosnia-Herzegovina 2-0 on goals by Balogun and Malik Tillman for just its second World Cup knockout stage win.

Balogun is eligible to play after FIFA suspended his suspension for a red card against Bosnia — a decision that followed a phone call from U.S. President Donald Trump to FIFA president Gianni Infantino.

Reaching the quarterfinals would be a great leap for this group of players trying to boost a sport that lags in U.S. popularity compared to its supreme status in the rest of the world.

"We want to kind of leave our mark on the game and a legacy behind. I want it to be more than just what this moment has created and the hype around it," midfielder Tyler Adams, the 2022 captain, said Friday. "We know the further that we go, the more success we're going to have and the growth of the game is going to go."

Belgium qualified for the 2014 World Cup after a 12-year absence and headed to the tournament with a roster that included goalkeeper Thibaut Courtois, De Bruyne and Eden Hazard in the midfield, and Lukaku and Divock Origi in the attack. The Red Devils were first in the FIFA rankings from November 2015 through March 2016 and again from September 2018 through February 2022 but were knocked out in the quarterfinals in 2014, the semifinals in 2018 and the group stage in 2022.

Four players remain from the 2014 roster: Courtois, De Bruyne, Lukaku and midfielder Axel Witsel.

"This is a new era for us. It's true that there are some players from the golden era, as some would like to say," Courtois said through a translator. "Now we have another generation with younger people, new people willing to do great things and writing a history page for Belgium." (AP)

## Neymar says after WC elimination he is done playing for Brazil

EAST RUTHERFORD, July 6: Neymar said Sunday he is done playing for Brazil's national team, making the announcement after he and his teammates were knocked out of the World Cup with a 2-1 loss to Norway in the round of 16.

"I tried," Neymar said. "It started here at MetLife Stadium, and I finished here. It is now over."

Neymar, 34, played his first game for Brazil on August 9, 2010 — a friendly against the US at the stadium in the Meadowlands in northern New Jersey. Against Norway, he scored on a penalty kick in the final minutes after subbing in off the bench. Because of a nagging right calf injury, Neymar appeared in only two of Brazil's five games in the tournament. He also was on the field for 15 minutes against Scotland in group play.

Brazil's best player for more than a decade had been slowed by injuries in recent years that limited his impact. The country is now entering a period of transition, with the next generation taking over.

"We ask that people will have the patience with the new generation and support them from the get-go," captain Marquinhos said. (AP)

## Cousins faces stern test as India aim to revive compound fortunes at Archery WC ahead of Asian Games

MADRID, July 6: Indian compound archers, shepherded by new head coach Dave Cousins, will have to lift themselves from recent lows, while the recurve squad will be eager to build on its new-found momentum ahead of the Asian Games in the fourth and last World Cup stage beginning here on Tuesday.

The tournament assumes significance for Indian archers, as it is their last international outing before the Asian Games in Japan — September 19-October 4.

For Cousins, one of the most decorated compound archers in history, it will also mark his first international assignment with India since taking charge around three months before the continental showpiece.

The American inherits an inconsistent side, which once was the world's most feared compound unit. The 49-year-old replaces Italian Sergio Pagni, under whom India enjoyed an unprecedented golden era, sweeping all five compound gold medals besides adding a silver and a bronze at Hangzhou.

Pagni's contract ended after the Hangzhou Games and his departure has coincided with a sharp decline in India's fortunes.

**Numbers don't lie**

From three World Cup stages this season, India have managed just one gold and a bronze. Their lowest point came at Antalya last month when the compound contingent returned empty-handed.

Contrastingly, in 2023, during the build-up to the Hangzhou Games, India amassed seven gold, one silver and four bronze medals across four World Cup stages.

Despite reduced focus on compound event because it was not a part of the Paris Games in 2024, India collected six gold and three silver medals from three World Cups.

The decline became more evident in 2025, when India settled for three gold, three silver and five bronze medals from four stages.

Now, the slide has hit the rock-bottom this year.

After opening the season with the women's team gold in Puebla, India managed only one bronze medal — through Sahil Jadhav — in Shanghai before drawing a blank in Antalya. Alarming, none of the Asian Games-bound compound archers reached the podium.

The transition has also been accelerated by the absence of several leading lights.

Ojas Deotale, the reigning Asian Games champion and triple gold medalist at Hangzhou, world champion Aditi Swami and Hangzhou team gold medalist Parmet Kaur failed to make the Asian Games squad.

The Archery Association of India made repeated attempts to bring back Pagni before finally appointing Cousins, whose stellar CV includes world titles across outdoor, indoor, field, 3D and World Games disciplines.

**Cousins challenge and Jyothi's decline**

While Cousins' credentials as an archer are beyond question, his biggest challenge lies in translating that excellence into coaching.

His international coaching experience is limited, but India have entrusted him with a long-term vision, handing him a contract through the Los Angeles Games, where compound archery will make its Olympic debut in the mixed team event.

He has already overseen two national camps — first at the high-altitude centre in Siluru, Himachal Pradesh, and later in Sonipat — before arriving in Madrid.

His immediate task is to ensure a smooth transition after the exit of veteran Abhishek Verma and revive the fortunes of India's women's spearhead Jyothi Surekha Vennam. Jyothi has endured a prolonged drop in form. She has not won an individual World Cup gold since Shanghai in 2024, while her last international individual title came at the Madrid World Cup in 2025.

As a seasoned pro, Jyothi will have to handle more responsibility in a youthful women's quartet featuring Chikitha Taniparthi and Prithika Pradeep, alongside Parmet.

The men's side faces bigger challenges.

With Indian stalwart Verma no longer in the squad, Sahil Jadhav, Kushal Dalal and Thirumuru Ganesh Mani Ratnam have shown flashes of promise but are yet to consistently challenge the elite. (PTI)

## Bahutule should have rectified Bishnoi's peculiar run-up: L Sivaramakrishnan

NEW DELHI, July 6: Former India leg-spinner Laxman Sivaramakrishnan has questioned Team India's spin bowling coach Sairaj Bahutule for failing to correct Ravi Bishnoi's increasingly wide run-up, which resulted in repeated back-foot no-balls during India's four-wicket defeat to England in the second T20I.



Bishnoi conceded 60 runs in four overs and cut the return crease three times, including twice in the 17th over that yielded 29 runs and swung the game decisively in England's favour.

"A spinner should not be bowling a no-ball. It's a crime. And for him to bowl a back-foot no-ball, cutting the return crease, is something that should have been noticed in the nets. Sairaj (Bahutule) should have first noticed his run-up and looked at whether he was overstepping or cutting the return crease. First thing you look at is bowling a legal delivery, and then bowling a legally good delivery," Sivaramakrishnan told PTI.

The former India leg-spinner said a spinner committing no-balls at the international level reflected a lack of proper guidance.

"One of the first things you notice for a bowler is avoiding no-balls, especially for a spinner. Bowling a no-ball is a huge crime. And to commit it in crucial overs shows a lack of proper guidance and observation from the bowling and spin bowling coaches," he said.

Sivaramakrishnan also felt modern leg-spinners had become overly defensive, unlike greats such as Bhagwath Chandrasekhar and Anil Kumble. (PTI)

## Djokovic breaks another Federer record at Wimbledon despite 'meltdowns' on Centre Court

LONDON, July 6: After all the records Novak Djokovic has broken, the latest one left him rather unimpressed — even though he surpassed his great rival Roger Federer.

Djokovic set a men's record for most match wins at Wimbledon after overcoming a surprisingly tough challenge from 132nd-ranked qualifier Roman Safiullin on Sunday to reach the quarterfinals.

The seven-time Wimbledon champion screamed out his frustrations at times — later referring to the outbursts as "meltdowns" — before winning 7-6 (6), 6-3, 3-6, 6-3 for his 106th match victory at the All England Club. That puts him one ahead of Federer atop the all-time list for men, although he still trails Martina Navratilova's 120 match wins.

That's clearly not the record he's after at Wimbledon, though. Not when he's also trying to match Federer's eight titles and become the first man or woman to win 25 major trophies.

"Not on my priority list," Djokovic said. "Didn't even know about it until after the last match win... That's really quite insignificant to me at the moment."

The win also put him into the Wimbledon quarterfinals for the 17th time — one behind Federer's record. But the Serb acknowledged that he will have to raise his game in



order to go further.

"Survive to thrive, that's how I feel," Djokovic said when asked to sum up his first week of the championships. "So hopefully the thriving part is coming."

The 39-year-old Djokovic has never lost a Grand Slam match against a player ranked as low as Safiullin, or to a qualifier, but he looked in danger at times on Centre Court.

Djokovic had to save two set points when trailing 5-2 in the first set and was warned for apparently yelling out an obscenity in Serbian on Centre Court when he was broken early in the third. He then drew brows from the crowd when he hit the ball away in

frustration after losing that set.

In his on-court interview, he apologized for what he called "the outbursts, the meltdowns."

"I had a few of those today," he said.

Djokovic, who is renowned for his mastery of baseline tennis, also said he opted to play more at the net than usual after repeatedly being outplayed in long rallies by Safiullin.

"I don't get to feel inferior from the back of court with too many players, to be honest, throughout my career," Djokovic said. "Today it was one of those days where I didn't want to stay in the rally for too long. So I had to mix things up. And it worked."

He quickly seized control in the fourth set by jumping out to a 3-0 lead, and then served out the match at love.

**Auger-Aliassime comes through five-setter**

Djokovic will next face third-seeded Felix Auger-Aliassime, who came through a five-setter against No. 22 Alejandro Davidovich Fokina on No. 1 Court that featured one of the best points of the tournament.

Auger-Aliassime won 6-7 (4), 7-6 (6), 6-3, 6-7 (2), 6-1 in a meeting between the only two men's players who had yet to drop a set in the tournament. Auger-Aliassime had not even lost a service game until he was serving

for the match at 5-4 in the fourth set, when his Spanish opponent managed to break back despite hurting his ankle and needing medical treatment.

"I played a few roller-coaster matches over the course of my career, but this is for sure the top of the charts," the Canadian said. "It was a crazy match."

One point in particular had the crowd on its feet and even had Auger-Aliassime laughing in disbelief, even though he lost it.

At 3-1 in the fourth set, Davidovich Fokina made it 40-0 after chasing down a drop shot, running back to the baseline to retrieve the next ball by hitting a lob, then returning an overhead from Auger-Aliassime, chasing down a second drop shot and finally diving at full stretch to return a passing shot with a backhand volley.

As the crowd's screams grew louder throughout the point, Auger-Aliassime started laughing even as he chased down that last diving volley, and sent his backhand into the net when the whole court was gaping and Davidovich Fokina was still on the ground. "I'm actually laughing as I'm running to the ball, I think that's a first," he said. "The crowd was on their feet as the point was still going on. In my head I was thinking, 'This is too good.' And then I missed the open shot." (AP)