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'We will be ruthless in this fight against drugs -- that's a promise and warning'

CM launches drive to destroy ₹ 472 cr seized drugs in 10 days



NALBARI, July 12: Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Sunday launched a drive to destroy ₹ 472 crore worth of seized drugs across the state in the next 10 days.

Launching the exercise in Nalbari district, he said that the state will be "ruthless" in handling narcotics cases in order to make Assam drug-free.

"At the launch of Assam's state-wide narcotics destruction drive at the 14th APBN campus, Daulashal, Nalbari, HCM Dr @himantabiswa announced that drugs worth over ₹ 472.51 crore seized by Assam Police will be destroyed over the next 10 days," the Chief Minister's Office said in a post on X.

Sarma said that the state government is going a step ahead with the Centre's help as it looks to dismantle the inter-state

drugs cartel in the coming period.

"This Centre-state joint approach will help us track illicit substances movement, identify history sheeters, catch them at the borders before they enter Assam and prepare a strong case to prosecute them. We will be ruthless in this fight against drugs -- that's a promise and warning," he added. The chief minister reiterated that border fencing alone is not helpful in this regard and therefore, it is necessary to try to eradicate the rackets involved in drugs.

"The Government of Assam will take stern action against drugs in the next five years and international cooperation will be sought in this regard," he added.

Sarma said that over the last five years, different agencies in Assam have seized over ₹ 3,000 crore of drugs, arrested over 26,000 involved and (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Chinese geologists raise safety concerns over Brahmaputra mega-dam

BEIJING, July 12: A study by Chinese geologists has found that an active fault line beneath the world's largest hydropower project on the Brahmaputra River in Tibet could affect its structural stability, raising questions over Beijing's repeated claims that it would help prevent disasters in the region.

The project is close to the Indian border in Arunachal Pradesh. The scientists said a fracture in the Earth's crust in the eastern Himalayan region could significantly affect the structural integrity of the massive hydropower project's infrastructure, the Hong Kong-based South China Morning Post reported on Thursday.

In a paper published last month in the Chinese-language journal Sedimentary Geology and Tethyan Geology, the researchers said the Paizhen Fault, which has been highly active since the Pleistocene, or Ice Age, "will have a major impact on the structural stability and construction of nearby structures, including



dams, roads, bridges and tunnels, as well as the reservoir area." The study was supervised by the state-owned China Geological Survey.

According to the researchers, prolonged fault activity has fractured and weakened the surrounding rock formations, making the foundations and structural (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Justice delivery system must evolve with changing nature of litigation: CJI

GURUGRAM, July 12: Chief Justice of India Surya Kant on Sunday inaugurated the 'Tower of Justice' judicial complex in Gurugram, emphasising that the justice delivery system must evolve with the changing nature of litigation.

According to an official statement, the event was attended by Haryana chief minister Manohar Lal Khattar, Union power minister Manohar Lal Khattar, and Union law minister Arjun Ram Meghwal.

The CJI also advocated establishing integrated district court complexes across Haryana on the lines of Uttar Pradesh, saying that more courts will enhance judicial capacity, particularly in commercial disputes and cases under the Negotiable Instruments Act.

The new facility houses 55 modern courtrooms compared to 45 in the earlier one, and the complex has been equipped with facilities such as video-conferencing and a judicial record room with a proposed International Arbitration Centre, functioning under the supervision of the high court, the statement said.

Justice Kant said that the construction of the 'Tower of Justice' creates an environment for the administration of justice.

At the same event, he also virtually laid the foundation stone of the Tauru and Punhana Judicial Complexes in Nuh district.

He also recalled his privilege of performing the groundbreaking ceremony of this judicial complex while serving as a Judge of the Punjab and Haryana High Court in January 2017.

The courts in Gurugram city, which has regional offices of more than half of the Fortune 500 companies, are dealing with more than 24,000 civil disputes, nearly 1,000 commercial disputes and over one lakh cases under the Negotiable Instruments Act.

He expressed confidence that the Tower of Justice, built on seven acres of land, would emerge as a symbol of (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

India condemns attack on merchant vessel off Oman coast

NEW DELHI, July 12: India on Sunday condemned an attack on a Cyprus-flagged commercial vessel off the coast of Oman that left one of its 11 Indian crew members missing.

As West Asia witnessed fresh hostilities between Iran and the US, India reiterated its call for immediate de-escalation of tension and said the targeting of commercial shipping and civilian infrastructure in the region must end.

The US Central Command said the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) "blatantly attacked" container ship GFS Galaxy when it was transiting the Strait of Hormuz.

"A civilian crew member is missing and the vessel is unable to continue the journey due to an onboard fire and significant engine room damage," it said.

The UK Maritime Trade Operations (UKMTO) said GFS Galaxy was targeted early on Sunday, which triggered a fire on board the vessel. The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said 10 Indian crew members of the vessel have been rescued.

"We condemn the attack on the commercial vessel GFS Galaxy off the coast of Oman, earlier

today. Of the 11 Indian nationals on board, 10 have been rescued so far, while 1 Indian National is reportedly missing," it said in a statement.

The MEA said the Indian embassy in Oman is closely monitoring the situation and proactively coordinating with Omani authorities in the ongoing search and rescue operation. "We thank the Omani authorities for their support."

It said the continuing incidents of attacks on commercial shipping in the region are "deeply worrisome". "We reiterate our call for immediate de-escalation of tensions, and the conclusion of ongoing negotiations for a diplomatic solution so that peace and stability can return to the region," the MEA said.

"The targeting of commercial shipping and civilian infrastructure in the region must end, and free and unimpeded navigation and commerce through the international waterways in the region, in keeping with international law, must be restored at the earliest," it said.

The US Central Command said Washington is imposing a "heavy cost" on Iran by continuing to degrade its ability to attack civilian mariners and commercial ships (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

India's Russian crude imports hit record in June even as Moscow's oil revenues slip



NEW DELHI, July 12: India's imports of Russian crude oil surged to a record high in June, rising 34 per cent from the previous month despite a decline in Russia's overall oil export revenues, according to a report by the Centre for Research on Energy and Clean Air (CREA).

India bought Russian crude worth EUR 4.5 billion in June, accounting for 83 per cent of its total Russian fossil fuel imports of EUR 5.5 billion, making it the second-largest buyer of Russian hydrocarbons after China, the report said. The sharp increase came as India's overall crude imports rose 5.4 per cent month-on-month, with Russian

supplies to key refineries posting steep gains. Deliveries to Reliance Industries' Jamnagar refinery jumped 150 per cent from May, while imports at Indian Oil Corp's Paradip refinery rose 126 per cent. BPCL's Kochi refinery and Nayara Energy's Vadinar refinery recorded increases of 83 per cent and 45 per cent, respectively, CREA said.

The surge in Indian purchases helped lift Russia's crude export volumes by 14 per cent in June, even as its crude oil export revenues fell 8 per cent month-on-month to EUR 348 million a day due to lower prices. Overall, Russian fossil fuel export revenues declined 1 per cent to EUR 734 million per day despite a 7 per cent rise in export volumes, the report added.

"India was the second-largest buyer of Russian fossil fuels in June 2026, importing a total of EUR 5.5 billion of Russian hydrocarbons. Crude oil constituted 83 per cent of India's purchases, totalling EUR 4.5 billion. Oil products (EUR 488 million) and coal (EUR 444 million) constituted the remainder of their monthly Russian imports," CREA said. India continued to play a key role in global trade flows of refined fuels produced from Russian crude. Refineries in India, Türkiye, Brunei and Georgia exported oil products worth EUR 814 million to countries that have imposed sanctions on Russia in June, including the European Union, Australia and (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

New voters have to also submit parents' SIR details for inclusion in electoral rolls

NEW DELHI, July 12: It's not only existing voters not covered in previous Special Intensive Revision (SIR) who have to submit their parents' SIR details to remain on the electoral rolls, but also the new applicants seeking inclusion in the voter list, according to EC officials.

By issuing instructions, the Election Commission (EC) has made it mandatory to attach SIR details of parents for new voters filling Form 6 for inclusion in the electoral rolls.

The declaration was added in the Bihar SIR rolled out in June last year. New voters were made to file the declaration along with Form 6.

"Daily SIR bulletins of Bihar showed the form filled along with declarations," an EC functionary said. The functionary underlined that the declaration was added through instructions and Form 6 has not been amended.

"It helps in mapping electors and reduces the documents new



voters need to submit along with the application," the official added.

If a person fills Form 6 online, he or she cannot proceed further till the declaration is filled.

Separately, the poll authority has defended the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls, rejecting concerns raised by UN rapporteurs and asserting that the process is transparent, constitutional and endorsed by the

Supreme Court.

EC officials said the SIR aims to include all eligible Indian citizens while removing duplicate, deceased, shifted, absent and foreign voters from electoral rolls.

Responding to allegations of large-scale deletion of minority voters, including in Nandigram, West Bengal, EC officials said voters had adequate opportunities to challenge (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

16 Indian tourists who survived Vietnam boat accident returning home, 1 in hospital

HANOI, July 12: Sixteen Indian tourists who survived a boat accident off Vietnam's Phu Quoc Island that claimed 15 lives have been discharged from hospital and are on their way back home, the Indian mission said on Sunday.

One surviving tourist is still in the hospital.

Fifteen Indian tourists were killed when a speedboat they were travelling in capsized near Hon May Rut Ngoai off Phu Quoc Island on Saturday.

The speedboat had 36 people on board -- 32 Indian tourists and four local crew members.

Twenty-one people -- 17 tourists and the four crew members -- were rescued. Two of the rescued tourists were in critical condition.

"After obtaining medical treatment, 15 survivors of yesterday's tragic boat accident have been discharged from hospital and are travelling back to India," the Indian Embassy in Hanoi said in a post on X on Sunday.

"Of the two patients in critical care, one has been discharged and is travelling back to India. The other is undergoing treatment at a hospital in Phu Quoc," it said.

It added that teams from the embassy and consulate are at Phu Quoc for any assistance.

Phu Quoc, Vietnam's largest island, is a major tourist destination, known for its white-sand beaches, coral reefs and island-hopping excursions. In this case, the tourists were reportedly returning from an island



visit. Of the 15 victims, 10 were from Tamil Nadu, three from Andhra Pradesh and two from Kerala. Two of the deceased were women, according to a list shared by the embassy.

The bodies of all the deceased tourists have been recovered. The exact cause of the incident is yet to be ascertained.

Vietnamese Prime Minister Le Minh Hung has ordered an investigation into the cause of the accident and directed authorities to hold those responsible accountable, local media reported. (PTI)

ISRO successfully carries out tests of Gaganyaan crew module systems

NEW DELHI, July 12: The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) on Sunday said it had successfully carried out three major tests of the Gaganyaan crew module systems.

The first test pertained to ensuring an upright position for the crew module after splashdown in the sea, considered one of the most important crew safety requirements. To do this, a stored cold-gas-based uprighting system was developed and tested.

"A system-level qualification test setup consisting of all the elements of CMUS (crew module uprighting system) was realised and successfully conducted inflation tests for the primary inflation module wherein stored gas in the high-pressure gas bottle was made to inflate the floatation by operating the control valves," the ISRO said.

The second test involved examining the separation of the umbilical

mechanism that serves as a link between the crew module, where astronauts live, and the service module, which provides power and propulsion. The mechanism consists of two parts, each located at the crew module side, called CSU-1, and the service module side, called CSU-2.

During the crew module's Earth re-entry stage, the service module first separates from the crew module after the CSU-1 disconnects. Subsequently, just before re-entry, the CSU-2 is also separated.

"Separation test of CSU-2 from simulated crew module was carried out. The test demonstrated the clean separation of CSU-2 as well as structural stability of the crew module panel and their interfaces," the space agency said.

The third test validated the structural integrity of the crew module during the apex cover separation event. (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

'India needs innovators who can translate research into technology' Head of apex research body urges youth to focus on continued learning

GUWAHATI, July 12: The CEO of Anusandhan National Research Foundation (ANRF), Shivkumar Kalyanaraman, on Sunday said that interdisciplinary collaboration and entrepreneurial mindset would be needed to meet the challenges of the future.

He exhorted youth to continue in the process of learning as deep knowledge, sound judgement and ability to evolve solutions will be key in the age of AI.

Delivering the Convocation address at IIT-Guwahati, Kalyanaraman said, "Congratulations to the graduating students. I wish you a successful career, but I also suggest you to build capabilities for the country. Use your knowledge to create a meaningful impact on society."

Urging the students to continue their learning graph, he added, "In the age of AI, the true differentiator will be deep knowledge, sound judgment, and the ability to define meaningful problems rather than



merely generate answers."

The CEO of the country's apex body established by the Central government to seed, grow and promote research and development across universities, colleges and research laboratories emphasised that the challenges of the future will demand interdisciplinary collaboration and an entrepreneurial

mindset that takes ownership of solving problems that matter.

"India needs innovators who can translate research into technology, build impactful solutions and contribute to national development. Through ANRF, we are strengthening India's research and innovation ecosystem by fostering frontier research and academia-in-

dustry collaboration," Kalyanaraman added.

A total of 2,265 students received their degrees in various disciplines during the 28th Convocation ceremony, which was presided over by Prahlada Rama Rao, acting chairman, Board of Governors, IIT-Guwahati, while Devendra Jalihal, Director of the institution, presented the Convocation report.

Saptarshi Mukherjee, BTech in Data Science and Artificial Intelligence, achieved the top score in the Undergraduate batch and was awarded the President of India Gold Medal.

Atri Chattopadhyay, BTech in Electronics and Electrical Engineering, received the Dr Shankar Dayal Sharma Gold Medal.

Moreover, Praneel Bhat-tacharya, MTech in Chemical Engineering, was awarded the Governor of Assam PG Gold Medal, while Sarthak Kapoor, BTech in Computer Science and

Engineering, was awarded the Governor of Assam UG Gold Medal. The Institute also awarded 18 students with Institute Silver medals for their remarkable academic performance.

During his address, Jalihal said, "As our graduating students embark on diverse career paths, I extend my heartfelt congratulations and best wishes to each one of them. I am confident that with their knowledge, hard work and dedication, they will excel in their chosen professions and make meaningful contributions to society and the nation." He added that with 2,478 research papers published in the past year, IIT-Guwahati has continued to strengthen its position as a leading centre for research and innovation.

"We are actively expanding our campus infrastructure with state-of-the-art research facilities while enhancing our incubation ecosystem. Further, we are advancing on multiple fronts to create a vibrant and (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Mandaviya to inaugurate seven ESI healthcare projects tomorrow

NEW DELHI, July 12: Union Minister Mansukh Mandaviya will on Tuesday inaugurate seven Employees' State Insurance healthcare projects across the nation from ESIC Hospital, Sanathnagar in Telangana.

These medical facilities, worth approximately ₹ 668 crore, will cater to the healthcare needs of around 53 lakh beneficiaries across the country, a labour ministry statement said.

The Union Minister for Labour & Employment and Youth Affairs & Sports will physically inaugurate the new Outpatient Department (OPD) block of Employees' State Insurance Corporation (ESIC) Hospital, Sanathnagar.

He will virtually inaugurate the six projects -- upgraded 200-bedded ESIC Hospital, Beltola, Assam; 100-bedded ESIC hospital, Sriperumbudur, Tamil Nadu; ESIS Hospital, Rajamahendravaram, Andhra Pradesh; ESI Dispensary and Branch Office, Surenranagar, Gujarat; ESI Dispensary and Branch Office, Udyog Nagar, Kota; and ESI Dispensary, Bhawani Mandi, Rajasthan.

Shobha Karandlaje, Union Minister of State for Labour & Employment and Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises, will also attend the event.

As part of the programme, Mandaviya will honour construction workers who contributed to the development of the OPD Block at



ESIC Hospital, Sanathnagar, Telangana, recognising their role in nation-building.

He will also disburse cash benefits to Employees' State Insurance (ESI) beneficiaries, reaffirming the government's commitment to worker welfare.

The new OPD block at ESIC Medical College & Hospital, Sanathnagar, is a landmark healthcare facility that will provide modern, comprehensive outpatient services to 12,30,183 insured persons and beneficiaries across Telangana, covering Hyderabad, Medchal-Malkajgiri, Sangareddy, Ranga Reddy and Mahabubnagar districts.

The inauguration will strengthen the state's expansive ESI healthcare ecosystem, which was first implemented in the twin cities of Hyder-

abad and Secunderabad for the combined states of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana.

The ESIC Hospital in Beltola caters to 47 districts of Assam and Meghalaya, as well as 41 districts across Tripura, Mizoram, Manipur, Nagaland and Arunachal Pradesh. The facility is expected to cover 3.42 lakh insured persons, and a total of about 13.27 lakh beneficiaries.

The hospital in Sriperumbudur, which has emerged as one of India's leading manufacturing and electronics hubs, will offer various facilities such as OPD, Emergency, Labour Room, Operation Theatre, ICU, IPD, X-Ray and lab Pharmacy, among others, making it convenient for the over 5.5 lakh insured persons to get medical facilities from Kanchipuram and Tiruvallur districts.

districts.

The ESIS Hospital at Rajamahendravaram will serve 1,31,190 insured persons, and a total of about 2,52,717 beneficiaries. It has 26 dedicated Outpatient Department rooms to handle high patient volumes and three Modular Operation Theatres, among other facilities.

Approximately 9,192 insured persons are covered under the ESIC scheme in the Surenranagar district. The ESI Dispensary and Branch Office will enable around 35,000 beneficiaries to avail ESIC's medical care and social security benefits. The integrated facility will provide primary healthcare services, medical consultations, essential medicines and other medical benefits under one roof.

The ESI Dispensary and Branch Office, Kota, will cater to a large concentration of insured workers and their dependents residing and working in and around Kota's industrial belt. The facility will serve more than 1,500 employees, and approximately 75,000 insured persons and their 2,91,000 dependents in its catchment area.

This facility has been set up for workers in the industrial cluster of Bhawani Mandi, which is one of the major textile centres of Rajasthan. The establishment of the dispensary will provide healthcare services to approximately 27,715 insured persons and their approximately 1,07,535 dependents residing in the surrounding area. (PTI)

Industry associations hail Bengal CM's land purchase policy, see end to acquisition roadblock

KOLKATA, July 12: Leading business associations in West Bengal on Sunday welcomed Chief Minister Suvenudh Adhikari's announcement that his government would directly purchase land and hand it over to investors, asserting that such an initiative would remove one of the biggest hurdles to investment and instil confidence among industrialists and entrepreneurs.

Adhikari's announcement marks a departure from the policy pursued by the previous Mamata Banerjee-led TMC government, which had ruled out forcible land acquisition for private industry in view of the Singur and Nandigram agitations.

Calcutta Chamber of Commerce president Anant Saharia said the direct land purchase mechanism by the government would act as a major catalyst in encouraging both new and existing investors to the state.

"This streamlined approach will accelerate West Bengal's industrial and economic development, generating substantial capital investment and employment," Saharia told PTI. Speaking at the foundation stone-

laying ceremony of a hosiery manufacturing project in Hooghly district on Saturday, Adhikari had said the BJP government did not want any anti-land acquisition movements like the Singur or Nandigram agitation.

"If investors require land, the government will procure it under the direct land purchase policy and hand it over," the CM said, noting that this framework was being used for infrastructure projects, including those for the railways, the BSF and airports.

Merchants' Chamber of Commerce and Industry also hailed the government's decision, saying that it would help prospective investors acquire land for industrial units without navigating the challenges posed by fragmented landholdings.

The chamber said land acquisition had long remained a bottleneck for industrialisation in the state and described the decision as being in contrast to the "hands-off" approach adopted by the previous TMC government on land acquisition for industry.

MCCI said the policy would boost investor confidence and aid

the BJP government's efforts to attract fresh investments and create employment in the state.

Bharat Chamber of Commerce president Naresh Pachisia termed the proposal an "action-oriented approach" that would strengthen confidence among industrialists, noting that land availability, valuation and administrative clearances remain among the most critical factors for large industrial investments.

"The announcement was in line with the state's blueprint for robust economic growth and would help address imperfections in the land market," he told PTI.

Pachisia also said the government's earlier decision to re-examine the Urban Land (Ceiling and Regulation) Act, 1976, announced in the maiden state budget, had already provided a much-needed impetus to investors.

Observing that West Bengal remains the only major state which is still implementing the law, he said revisiting the legislation, along with the proposed direct land purchase mechanism, could help unlock large-scale institutional investments and urban development. (PTI)

Novo Nordisk launches world's first once-weekly basal insulin in India

Awigli aims to simplify diabetes management by reducing injections from 365 to 52 a year

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, July 12: Novo Nordisk India has launched Awigli (insulin icodec), the world's first once-weekly basal insulin for adults with Type 1 and Type 2 diabetes mellitus, marking a significant advancement in diabetes care.

The new therapy reduces the number of insulin injections from one every day to one every week, lowering the annual injection burden from 365 to 52.

According to Novo Nordisk, clinical studies under the ONWARDS-1 programme showed that Awigli achieved superior HbA1c reduction and improved time-in-range compared with once-daily insulin glargine U100.

More patients with Type 2 diabetes attained HbA1c levels below seven per cent without experiencing hypoglycaemia.

The company has priced the insulin at ₹ 261 per week for a 70-unit dose.

It will be available in 1 ml and 3 ml FlexTouch pen variants. The 1 ml pen, containing 700 insulin units, is priced at ₹ 2,611 and can last up to 10 weeks at a weekly dose of 70 units, while the 3 ml pen containing 2,100 units is priced at ₹ 7,833.

Novo Nordisk India Managing Director Vikrant Shrotriya said the launch represents a major milestone in simplifying insulin therapy and reducing the psychological and physical barriers associated with insulin initiation.

Senior Consultant Endocrinologist and Diabetologist at Apollo Centre for Obesity, Diabetes and Endocrinology, New Delhi, Dr SK Wangnoo said innovations such as once-weekly basal insulin could help address delays in insulin initiation and improve treatment adherence among patients. The launch comes amid growing concerns over the diabetes burden in India.

According to the company, more than 101 million people in the country are living with diabetes, while another 136 million have prediabetes.

Novo Nordisk also noted that insulin initiation in India is delayed by an average of seven to nine years because of factors such as fear of injections, treatment complexity and cost concerns.

The company said the once-weekly regimen, supported by the FlexTouch delivery device, is expected to make insulin therapy more convenient and encourage timely adoption among eligible patients.

Assam entrepreneur honoured on National Fish Farmers' Day

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, July 12: Bhargav Kumar Bhagawati, a fisheries entrepreneur from Assam, was felicitated by the ICAR-Central Institute of Freshwater Aquaculture (ICAR-CIFA), Bhubaneswar, on the occasion of the 26th National Fish Farmers' Day in recognition of his contributions to scientific aquaculture and entrepreneurship.

The award was presented during the national celebration held on July 10 at ICAR-CIFA, the country's premier institute for freshwater aquaculture.

Bhargav joined his family's fisheries enterprise in 2013 after leaving a multinational company, with the aim of modernising and expanding the business established by his father, noted fish farmer Biren Bhagawati. Under his leadership, Pabhoi Fish Farm has developed into one of the leading aquaculture training and fish seed production centres in the Northeast. The farm has trained more than 10,000 youths through hands-on training and capacity-building programmes while producing quality Indian Major Carp (IMC) seed and several high-value indigenous fish species, including Pabda, Gulsha and Chital. The farm now supplies fish seed across Assam, the Northeast and several other parts of the country. Bhargav has also collaborated with leading research and academic institutions, including ICAR-CIFA, ICAR-Directorate of Coldwater Fisheries Research, ICAR-Central Institute of Fisheries Education, Krishi Vigyan Kendras, the College of Fisheries at Raha and Tripura, besides several agricultural universities and educational institutions.

Contd. from Page 1...

CM launches drive to destroy

charged them under NDPS to build a strong deterrence. Later speaking to the media, the chief minister said that the Assam government's fight against drugs in the state will be accelerated in the next five years.

"For this, the government will use technology and seek the cooperation of the people so that the guilty can be punished severely under the laws in court," he added. Sarma said the Assam Police have already been directed to take strong action against drug peddlers and urged the people to be aware of such criminals.

"The public should report such information to the police immediately, and technology will be used properly in this regard. Training has been arranged among the police personnel in this regard, as in many cases, the guilty persons escape in court due to lack of sufficient and proper evidence," he added.

Sarma, who also holds the Home portfolio, said that the police should gather evidence against the guilty so that they can be convicted in court. He added that regular meetings have been held with DGPs of all states at the Union Home Minister level to enhance inter-state cooperation.

Sarma said that cooperation has been received from Manipur, Mizoram, Meghalaya and West Bengal to fight against drugs. He further said that rehabilitation is very important in the field of drugs and this time the government has decided to pay more attention to awareness and rehabilitation. (PTI)

Chinese geologists raise safety

stability of nearby engineering projects more vulnerable to damage. "The Paizhen area is located within the reservoir area of the Yarlung Tsangpo downstream hydropower station," the paper said. China refers to the Brahmaputra as the Yarlung Tsangpo.

China formally began construction of the USD 167.8-billion dam on the Brahmaputra in Tibet last July. Expected to generate more than 300 billion kWh of electricity annually, the dam is projected to meet the annual power needs of more than 300 million people. The dam is being built in a massive gorge in the Himalayas where the Brahmaputra makes a sharp U-turn before flowing into Arunachal Pradesh and later Bangladesh.

China went ahead with the project despite enormous engineering challenges as the site lies along a tectonic plate boundary that experiences frequent earthquakes. The Tibetan Plateau, often described as the "roof of the world", is prone to periodic earthquakes because of the movement of tectonic plates beneath it.

The researchers cited the magnitude 6.9 earthquake that struck Milin in Tibet in 2017 near the northern end of the fault as evidence that the fault remains seismically active. "Under regional seismic action, landslides and collapses can easily be induced, threatening the safety of engineering facilities and personnel," they said.

The recent findings add to concerns over the project's structural safety, with the researchers urging engineers to reinforce vulnerable slopes and install retaining structures to reduce the risk of landslides and collapses.

However, China has consistently sought to allay concerns over the safety of the project. Beijing has repeatedly claimed that the project meets the highest industry standards and would help prevent disasters in the region.

An official statement issued in December 2024 said the hydropower project was safe and prioritised ecological protection. "Through extensive geological explorations and technical advancements, a solid foundation has been laid for the science-based, secure, and high-quality development of the project," it said.

In July last year, a Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson said China was highly responsible in developing cross-border rivers and had rich experience in building hydropower projects.

In planning, designing and constructing the hydropower project in the lower reaches of the river, China strictly followed the highest industry standards while protecting the ecological environment in an all-round way, the spokesperson had said. He also maintained that the project would help prevent disasters along the river and would not have a negative impact on downstream regions.

The Brahmaputra flows across the Tibetan Plateau, carving out the world's deepest canyon before entering India. The study was conducted by geologists from the Chengdu University of Technology, the Civil-Military Integration Centre of the China Geological Survey, and the Middle Yarlung Zangbo River Natural Resources Observation and Research Station, according to the South China Morning Post.

The researchers said Pai (also called Paizhen) village in Tibet, where construction is underway, lies in the Himalayan seismic belt, one of the most earthquake-prone regions in China and neighbouring regions, where intense seismic activity has developed along the Yarlung Tsangpo. "Its records of Quaternary tectonic activity provide an important basis for exploring the structural stability of nearby projects," the paper said.

The Paizhen Fault is part of a network of tectonic faults in the eastern Himalayan region created by the collision of the Indian and Eurasian tectonic plates. The researchers said the fault has remained active since the Early Pleistocene and continues to exhibit strong activity during the present Holocene epoch. Dating of ancient lake sediments suggests the fault remained active as recently as 9,500 years ago. (PTI)

India condemns attack on

transiting the Strait of Hormuz. The US has been carrying out strikes inside Iran in the last few days after the IRGC attacked three commercial vessels in the Strait of Hormuz.

In response to the US strikes, Iran targeted Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates. The IRGC Navy said the Strait of Hormuz is "closed until further notice and will remain closed until US intervention in the region comes to an end. No vessel will be permitted to transit the strait". The fresh escalation in tensions has raised questions over the fragile peace deal finalised between the US and Iran in June.

Last week, India voiced deep concern over renewed attacks on commercial shipping in the Strait of Hormuz, a crucial waterway that handles roughly a fifth of global oil and natural gas transit. (PTI)

India's Russian crude imports

the United States. An estimated EUR 369 million of those exports were refined from Russian crude, it added. The report noted that despite the European Union's ban on imports of oil products made from Russian crude, two shipments from Indian refineries using Russian crude were unloaded at EU ports in June. It also said the United Kingdom received its first cargo of jet fuel from Jamnagar after allowing imports of diesel and jet fuel refined from Russian crude under an exemption.

"In June 2026, the UK unloaded its first shipment of jet fuel produced at India's Jamnagar refinery following the UK Government's exemption allowing imports of diesel and jet fuel refined from Russian crude oil. The cargo, valued at approximately EUR 63 million, was unloaded at the ports of Thames Haven and the Isle of Grain," it said. Jamnagar refineries are owned and operated by Reliance Industries Ltd.

"Exports to the US originated at the Jamnagar refinery in India, the SOCAR-owned STAR refinery in Turkiye, and the Tupras Izmit refinery as well. In the prior three months, 60 per cent of the Tupras Izmit refinery's crude oil feedstock and 27 per cent of the Jamnagar refinery's feedstock came from Russia," it said.

China remained Russia's largest fossil fuel customer in June, accounting for EUR 7.3 billion of purchases, while India ranked second with EUR 5.5 billion, CREA said.

The report also highlighted the continued reliance of Russian oil exports on the so-called "shadow fleet", with 54 per cent of Russia's seaborne oil transported by sanctioned shadow tankers in June, while another 43 per cent was carried by G7-insured or owned vessels. (PTI)

Justice delivery system

justice for every citizen. Saini said that the judicial complex is a symbol of the Constitution's dignity and the unwavering faith of citizens in the justice delivery system. "The establishment of a modern judicial complex in such a city will further strengthen and improve the justice delivery system," he said. Coincidentally, he said, the building, whose foundation was laid in 2017 by Kant, who was Judge of the Punjab and Haryana High Court, was inaugurated by him on Sunday.

Referring to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of a Viksit Bharat by 2047, he said that along with ease of doing business, equal importance must be given to ease of justice. He said that this judicial complex, developed in two towers -- on the land of Guru Dronacharya and Mata Sheela Devi -- is among North India's largest judicial complexes.

Saini also announced that a portion of the old judicial complex will be earmarked for the construction of modern chambers for advocates. Khattar said, "With the increasing number of cases in a rapidly developing district like Gurugram, there was a pressing need for a modern judicial complex equipped with world-class facilities." Meghwal called it an important milestone in the collective commitment to making the justice delivery system more accessible, effective and citizen-centric. Referring to the PM's mantra of "Reform, Perform and Transform", he said that a modern, transparent and robust justice system is indispensable for building a developed India.

"The central government is continuously strengthening the infrastructure of subordinate courts to accelerate judicial reforms. Through initiatives such as e-Courts, e-Filing, e-Prosecution, e-Prisons, e-Forensics, e-Seva Kendras, digital payments and national judicial digital systems, the justice delivery process is becoming simpler, safer and faster," he said in the statement. Union Minister of State Rao Inderjit Singh, who was also present during the occasion, said that the PM's vision of Ease of Doing Business and Ease of Living can be realised only when every citizen has access to timely and affordable justice.

According to Singh, since 2014, more than 1,500 obsolete laws have been repealed, and via reforms, including the Jan Vishwas Act, the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, National Judicial Data Grid, e-Filing, AI-based case management, and the expansion of commercial courts are playing a significant role in reducing pendency.

"As Gurugram rapidly emerges as the country's economic capital, the city has now received judicial infrastructure befitting its growing stature and requirements", added Singh.

Acting Chief Justice of the Punjab and Haryana High Court Justice Ashwani Kumar Mishra paid his gratitude to the thousands of construction workers, masons, engineers and support staff for their role in this project. (PTI)

New voters have to also

exclusions and denied any bias. In a recent letter to the government, UN Special Rapporteurs have raised concerns over the SIR, alleging that the process lacks transparency. (PTI)

ISRO successfully carries

The apex cover protects the parachutes and associated subsystems during the mission. It is separated before parachutes are deployed to decelerate the crew module. (PTI)

Head of apex research body

future-ready ecosystem that nurtures talent and innovation," he said. The director further said that the Institute is undertaking a comprehensive review of its undergraduate curriculum with a stronger emphasis on experiential learning and industry engagement. "Additionally, we are strengthening student support systems by improving access to mental health, yoga and well-being facilities, alongside investing in sustainable campus infrastructure to enhance the quality of campus life," he added.

Rama Rao, in his address, highlighted IIT-Guwahati's contributions to research, innovation and nation-building initiatives. The Manekshaw Centre of Excellence for National Security Studies and Research is one such example of the Institute's commitment to developing indigenous solutions for the country's defence and strategic needs, he said.

"The Institute's partnerships with leading Japanese universities is contributing meaningfully to the vision of a Viksit Bharat and position India as a global leader," he added. (PTI)

AFFIDAVIT

Through a notary affidavit I, Monidita Borah, wife of Sudip Kumar Kar, resident of Rubber Bagan, By Lane No 2, Tezpur, Sonitpur (Assam) hereby declare that the correct name of my daughter is Jovita Borah. But her name has been recorded as Jovita Kar in her birth certificate vide registration no 1328/22 instead of Jovita Borah.

Hence, Jovita Borah and Jovita Kar is the name of one and the same person i.e. my daughter.

Monidita Borah,
Rubber Bagan,
Tezpur, Sonitpur (Assam).

AFFIDAVIT

I, Hibjur Rahman, S/O- Abdur Rashid, R/O-Vill- Pholihamari Pathar, P.O.- Falihamari Pathar, P.S. Bhuragaon, Dist-Morigaon(Assam) have corrected my name from Veerendra Kumar to Hibjur Rahman and my address which is wrongly written as Mumbai, P.O-Mumbai G.P.O, Dist--Mumbai City, State-Maharashtra in my Aadhar card bearing No-689656033185 ,through an Executive Magistrate at Morigaon court on 09/07/2026. Hibjur Rahman and Veerendra Kumar is the same and one person.

AFFIDAVIT

I, Rafikul Islam, S/O-Late Ramjan Ali, R/O-Vill-Falihamari Pathar, P.O.- Falihamari Pathar, P.S.- Bhuragaon, have corrected my name from Sunil Verma to Rafikul Islam through an Executive Magistrate at Morigaon court on 09/07/2026. My actual name is Rafikul Islam which is mentioned in my voter Id Card bearing No-CNF8044186 and HDFC Bank Passbook vide A /C No-50100343862710 and in my Aadhar Card-bearing No-3447-4587-6403 ,my name is recorded as Sunil Verma instead of Rafikul Islam. Rafikul Islam and Sunil Verma is the same and one person.

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BJP concludes two-day organisational training camp in Haflong

Leaders urge cadre to strengthen grassroots outreach and ensure welfare schemes reach beneficiaries

HT Correspondent
HAFLONG, July 12: The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), Dima Hasao District Unit, concluded its two-day Pandit Deendayal Upadhyay Prashikshan Maha Abhiyan (District Training Programme) at the DSA Ground in Haflong on Sunday.

Held from July 11 to 12, the programme brought together party office-bearers, elected representatives and grassroots workers for organisational training focused on leadership development and strengthening the party's grassroots network.

Addressing the concluding session, North Cachar Hills Autonomous Council (NCHAC) Chief Executive Member Debolal Gorlosa highlighted various welfare schemes of the Central Government under Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the Assam Government led by Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma.

He also outlined development projects implemented in Dima Hasao during the BJP's tenure and urged party workers to improve grassroots coordination to ensure government benefits reach eligible beneficiaries.

Gorlosa said the BJP-led governments had accelerated development across sectors in the district and alleged that previous governments



had neglected the region's developmental aspirations.

The final day's programme began with a yoga session, followed by training sessions on karyakarta development, leadership, organisational responsibility and Vichar Parivar.

The sessions were conducted by BJP Dima Hasao district president Dhriti Thaosen and senior party leader Sujay Langthasa.

The training programme commenced on Saturday with the hoisting of the BJP flag by Dhriti Thaosen in the presence of Debolal Gorlosa, NCHAC Executive Members, Members of the Autonomous Council (MACs), district office-

bearers, Mandal presidents, Morcha leaders and party workers.

BJP Dima Hasao Saha Prabhari Anup Kumar Deb and Convener Manjoy Langthasa also attended the inaugural session, during which floral tributes were paid to Bharat Mata.

Welcoming the participants, Thaosen described the training programme as an important initiative to develop disciplined and committed party workers.

He urged them to strengthen the organisation while creating awareness about welfare schemes of the Central Government, the Assam Government and the North Cachar Hills Autonomous Council.

The inaugural technical session, chaired by Bhadra Mani Langthasa, featured addresses by NCHAC Executive Member Probata Johori, BJP Saha Prabhari Anup Kumar Deb, BJP Vice-President Liton Chakraborty, former district president Kulendra Daulaguppi and General Secretary Kehungsamyng Riamie. Riamie also delivered a session on the responsible use of social media, artificial intelligence and digital platforms in organisational communication.

A key session was conducted by Kamakhya Prasad Tasa, Member of Parliament from the Kaziranga Lok Sabha constituency, who spoke on the history and ideological foundations of the BJP. He urged party workers to follow the principles of Integral Humanism and Antyodaya propounded by Pandit Deendayal Upadhyay and remain committed to public service.

The Prashikshan Maha Abhiyan is part of the BJP's nationwide organisational initiative to train party workers in leadership, organisational management, booth-level coordination, digital communication and public outreach.

Party leaders expressed confidence that the programme would further strengthen the organisation in Dima Hasao and enhance the capabilities of its grassroots cadre.

₹ 3.49-crore project aims to boost egg production and train poultry farmers

Foundation stone laid for automated layer farm in Tezpur



HT Correspondent
TEZPUR, July 12: Assam Animal Husbandry, Veterinary and Fisheries Minister Nilamoni Devi on Sunday laid the foundation stone for the upgradation of the demonstration layer farm at the Barikachuburi District Duck and Poultry Farm in Tezpur under the Rural Infrastructure Development Fund (RIDF).

The project, estimated at ₹ 3.49 crore, will transform the existing facility into a modern automated layer farm with a capacity of 5,000 egg-laying hens, with the objective of increasing egg production and strengthening poultry farming in the region.

The upgraded facility will comprise a brooder shed, a grower shed, an automated layer shed, a feed and equipment storage warehouse and an office building with training facilities.

Speaking at the programme, the minister said the project is intended to function as a model training and demonstration centre for commercial table egg production using automated cage-based layer rearing systems.

Highlighting the need for the project, she said Sonitpur district currently produces about 2.35 crore eggs annually, whereas the estimated annual requirement, based on Indian Council of Medical Re-

search (ICMR) norms of 180 eggs per person, is over 34.63 crore eggs for the district's population of 19.24 lakh.

The project, she said, would help bridge this gap by increasing local production.

Nilamoni Devi said the farm would be developed as a model biosecure facility by adopting all prescribed Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) to minimise disease outbreaks and improve productivity. It will also serve as a production and supply centre for scientifically reared and fully vaccinated pullets, enabling small and marginal poultry farmers to procure healthy birds ready for commercial egg production.

She added that the farm would provide both classroom and practical training to farmers, entrepreneurs and unemployed youth, equipping them with the technical knowledge required to establish and manage modern poultry farms.

Among those present were Tezpur MLA Prithiraj Rabha, Barachala MLA Ritu Baran Sarma, Sonitpur Deputy Commissioner Ananda Kumar Das, senior officials of the Animal Husbandry and Veterinary and Fisheries Department, and other dignitaries. The speakers expressed confidence that the project would promote scientific poultry farming while creating livelihood opportunities for unemployed youth in the region.

Awareness drive on drug abuse, child protection held in West Karbi Anglong



HT Correspondent
HAMREN, July 12: A community-level awareness programme on drug abuse, child protection and child trafficking prevention was organised at the Umrur Longri Baptist Community Hall in West Karbi Anglong recently.

The programme was jointly organised by the District Legal Services Authority (DLSA) and the District Child Protection Unit (DCPU) with the objective

of promoting a drug-free society, strengthening child protection mechanisms and enhancing community vigilance against child trafficking.

Resource persons from the DLSA and DCPU conducted interactive sessions highlighting the physical, psychological and socio-economic consequences of substance abuse.

They urged young people to adopt healthy lifestyles and stay away from drugs.

The speakers also explained various child protection laws and the rights of children, while outlining the responsibilities of parents, guardians, teachers, educational institutions and community leaders in ensuring children's safety and well-being.

The programme included discussions on child trafficking, child labour and neglect, with officials educating participants on identifying warning signs and reporting suspected cases to the authorities.

Participants were urged to remain vigilant and immediately inform law enforcement agencies or child protection authorities about suspicious activities, instances of child exploitation or abuse.

The awareness programme concluded with local residents, youth groups, women's organisations and community leaders pledging to work collectively towards making Umrur Longri a safe and child-friendly community.

RPF intensifies anti-crime operations across NFR

Ganja, liquor and stolen mobile phones seized; seven children rescued during July 7-8 drives



HT Bureau
GUWAHATI, July 12: The Railway Protection Force (RPF) of Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR) carried out a series of successful anti-crime operations across its jurisdiction on July 7 and 8, leading to the seizure of narcotics, illicit liquor and stolen mobile phones, besides rescuing vulnerable children and assisting ailing passengers.

The operations were conducted in coordination with the Government Railway Police (GRP), Excise Department, Child Welfare authorities and other law enforcement agencies as part of efforts to strengthen passenger security and curb unlawful activities on railway premises.

During the drives, RPF personnel recovered more

than 15 kg of ganja valued at around ₹ 7.60 lakh from different railway stations under NFR.

In separate operations, 185 bottles of illicit liquor worth over ₹ 20,000 were seized from trains and railway premises, and the accused were handed over to the concerned authorities for legal action.

The RPF also intensified its crackdown on theft by apprehending several offenders involved in mobile phone theft.

A total of seven stolen mobile phones, collectively valued at about ₹ 1.04 lakh, were recovered and handed over to the GRP for further investigation.

As part of its humanitarian initiatives, the force rescued seven minor children, including six boys and one girl, from various railway stations and handed them over to the respective Child Welfare Committees and Child Help Desks for care and rehabilitation.

In another incident, RPF personnel provided prompt assistance to an elderly ailing passenger at a railway station.

The passenger was shifted to the Railway Health Unit for first aid before being referred to a higher medical facility by railway ambulance under RPF escort.

The passenger's family members were also informed. Northeast Frontier Railway said the operations reflect its continued commitment to ensuring passenger safety, protecting railway property and maintaining a secure travel environment through sustained surveillance and coordinated enforcement drives.

World Population Day observed in Golaghat

HT Correspondent
GOLAGHAT, July 12: The Health Department observed World Population Day across Golaghat district recently with a series of awareness programmes highlighting the importance of family planning and reproductive health.

The observation focused on this year's theme, "Healthy timing and spacing between pregnancies for the well-being of mother and child and to prevent unintended pregnancy."

Officials conducted discussions and awareness sessions emphasising the importance of informed family planning choices, maternal health and child well-being.

Besides the district-level programme, awareness meetings and interactive sessions were organised at various locations across the district with the participation of eligible couples, beneficiaries, Gaon Pradhans, welfare officers, health assistants, line sardars and other members of the public.

The programmes also highlighted the shared responsibility of families and communities in supporting informed reproductive health decisions, noting that such collective efforts contribute to improved maternal and child health outcomes.

Demow launches 'Amar Demow, Swachh Demow 2026' campaign

HT Correspondent
DEMOW, July 12: State Water Resources and Judicial Department Minister Sushanta Borgohain recently launched the "Amar Demow, Swachh Demow 2026" campaign at the Demow Municipal Board office with the vision of "Every Home Clean, Every Home Healthy." The minister, who is also the MLA of the 95 No Demow Assembly constituency, also inaugurated Demow Drops, a 20-litre packaged drinking water project of the Demow Municipal Board.

Addressing the media after the inauguration, Borgohain said the cleanliness campaign aims to make Demow a cleaner and healthier town through sustained public participation and awareness. He said that while

the use of plastic cannot be eliminated entirely, efforts would be made to promote its responsible use. Awareness programmes on the proper disposal of plastic waste, including the hazards of single-use plastics, will be conducted door-to-door, in shops and educational institutions. The minister expressed confidence that with effective implementation of the awareness campaign and active cooperation from residents, Demow could become a clean town within the next two years.

The programme was attended by Demow Municipal Board Executive Officer Mritunjay Bharali, Chairperson Pollabita Boruah, residents from various wards and other dignitaries.

Preparations begin for 107th Asom Pradeshik Yogi Sanmilan conference

HT Correspondent
MORIGAO, July 12: Preparations have begun for the 107th biennial conference of the Asom Pradeshik Yogi Sanmilan, which will be held at Charaibahi in January 2027. A preparatory meeting was held at Charaibahi Higher Secondary School, where a reception committee was constituted to oversee arrangements for the conference.

Ramen Nath was elected president of the reception committee, while Sanjib Kumar



Nath was chosen as its general secretary.

The meeting also constituted several sub-committees to coordinate different aspects of the event.

Among those present were

Assam Nath Yogi Jatiya Parishad president Kirti Nath, Asom Pradeshik Yogi Sanmilan vice-presidents Hareswar Nath, Bhupen Nath, Rajen Nath and Dr Hiralal Hazarika, Asom Pradeshik Yogi Sanmilan general secretary Gunjit Nath, and Assam Nath Yogi Yuva Parishad president Hiranya Kumar Nath.

The organisers expressed confidence that the conference would be successfully organised with the cooperation of the community and well-wishers.

Baksa principal honoured with honorary doctorate

HT Correspondent
KOKRAJHAR, July 12: Dr Ranish Chandra Ramchiary, Principal of Athiabari Vidyamandir Higher Secondary School in Baksa district, has been conferred an honorary doctorate by Magic and Art University, Faridabad, Haryana, in recognition of his outstanding contributions to education, literature and social service.

The award was presented at a ceremony held at The Castle of Art Theatre (The COAT) in Faridabad, where educationists, artists, sportspersons and social workers from 18 states were honoured for their achievements in various fields. Dr Ramchiary has devoted more than three decades to the teaching profession.

He began his career as an assistant teacher in 1996 and served in that capacity for 22 years before taking over as Principal of Athiabari Vidyamandir Higher Secondary School, a position he has held for more than eight years.

Holding postgraduate and B.Ed. qualifications along with a Praveen certificate in Hindi, Dr Ramchiary is also a noted Bodo writer.

He has authored, translated and edited numerous books, including short story collections, poetry, children's literature, novels and educational publications.

His notable works include Mainao, Sameli Rumbang, Nepalao Dao Aadi, Burkhang, Bwhithi Dwima, Dewan, Gongshe Gwja Alto, Jiuni Sansri, and his latest publications, Okhrangni Bikhayao Okhaphwr and Gwnkhwari Gotho, released this year. Beyond literature, he has played

an active role in several educational and literary organisations, including the All Bodo Students' Union (ABSU), Bodo Sahitya Sabha and Bodo Writers' Academy.

He has also served on the Government of Assam's committee for the implementation of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 in the Bodoland Territorial Region, the Drop Post and Venture School and College Scrutiny Committee in Baksa district, and the Sahitya Akademi Award Selection Board (Bodo) on five occasions.

He currently serves as the Working President of the Baksa District Academic Council and is an Executive Member of the Baksa District Internal Examination Board under ASSEB Divisions I and II.

Over the years, Dr Ramchiary has received several honours, including the Ideal Working Teacher Award (2016), the Assam Government's State Award to Teachers (2023), the Mohindra Mwachary Raosla Bantha (2025), the Sampurnata District Award (2025) and the Shikha Ratna Award (2026).

Expressing gratitude after receiving the honorary doctorate, Dr. Ramchiary dedicated the recognition to his family, colleagues, students and the people of Assam, saying it would inspire him to continue working for the advancement of education, literature and society.

The honour has been widely welcomed by educators, literary figures and students across Assam and the Bodoland Territorial Region, who described it as a fitting recognition of his lifelong service to education and the promotion of Bodo literature.

Bodoland University hosts workshop on qualitative social science research

IIT Gujarat academic highlights research ethics and field-based methodologies

HT Correspondent
KOKRAJHAR, July 12: The National Service Scheme (NSS) Cell of Bodoland University, in collaboration with the Faculty of Social Sciences and the Centre for Wildlife Research and Biodiversity Conservation, organised a one-day workshop on "Qualitative Social Science Research" at the university recently.

The workshop was conducted by Dr Ambika Aiyadurai, Associate Professor at IIT Gujarat, and attended by around 60 research scholars, teachers and alumni from Bodoland University, other universities and Aaranyak, a Government of India-recognised Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation.

The programme was inaugurated by Bodoland University Vice-Chancellor Prof BL Ahuja, who



emphasised the need for research that addresses societal challenges.

He called for updating social science curricula to meet evolving global demands and highlighted the

growing role of digitisation and artificial intelligence in education.

He also encouraged researchers to undertake studies of international significance.

Welcoming the participants, NSS Programme Coordinator and Dean of the Faculty of Science and Technology Prof Hillojyoti Singha outlined the objectives of the workshop, while Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences Prof Sanghamitra Choudhury expressed hope for more such collaborative academic initiatives. Dean of the Faculty of Commerce and Management Prof AI Chanu said the workshop would help researchers understand the importance of qualitative and mixed research methods.

Retired Forest Range Officer Bablu Dey shared his experiences in wildlife conservation and underscored the value of indigenous knowledge in environmental research.

Drawing on her extensive field-

work in Arunachal Pradesh, Dr Aiyadurai spoke on the significance of qualitative research in understanding communities and social issues. She also discussed interviewing techniques, field documentation, data analysis and research ethics.

The workshop featured four technical sessions covering qualitative research methodologies, interview techniques, field note analysis and ethical practices in research, with interactive discussions between the resource person and participants.

The valedictory session was attended by Bodoland University Rector Prof Jatin Sarma, who also chairs the university's Ethics Committee. The programme concluded with a vote of thanks proposed by Prof Hillojyoti Singha.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

Art is the most intense mode of individualism that the world has known. - Oscar Wilde

Monsoon rain and preparedness

Monsoon flooded large part of the country during the first eight days of July with 42 per cent above-normal rainfall causing heavy loss of lives and property. Rain deficit in June was 40 per cent. Northwest, central and western India suffered from the excess rains. The eastern, northeastern and central regions suffered the most from deficit rainfall. The deficient rainfall in June and heavy rainfall in the first week of July have thus created multiple challenges and put the country's preparedness to test. Though the Union Government has announced several measures, the situation remains grim, because of uncertainty in the monsoon pattern. Extreme weather events are expected due to the impact of climate change. Even deficit regions can experience intense and heavy rainfall that may create havoc, which requires much more than our national and state governments are prepared for. Deficient rainfall in large part of the country can also impact India's food security, because farmers are not properly supported to deal with the situation arising out of it. Floods, lightning, cloud-bursts, landslides, waterlogging etc have been reported from many states, and the disruption in normal life and loss of life and property shows that administrations across the states were not prepared for that.

On the other hand, the deficient rainfall has created another set of problems, which included drinking water crisis and delayed sowing of crops. Union Minister for Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare and Rural Development, Shivraj Singh Chouhan said on July 8 that Kharif sowing has so far been completed over 350.85 lakh hectares, which is approximately 91.95 lakh hectares lower than the corresponding period last year. He said that the delayed onset of the monsoon has particularly affected soybean and cotton sowing. However, farmers have been advised to cultivate short-duration and low water-intensive crops such as maize, Bajra, and Moong to minimise the impact of delayed rainfall. Centre is maintaining close monitoring of the situation in Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Karnataka, Bihar, Jharkhand, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Punjab, West Bengal, and Odisha.

Amid uncertainty in the southwest monsoon due to the potential impact of El Niño, he said that the Government of India, is addressing the situation with comprehensive preparedness, a clear strategy, and strong ground-level action. While challenges remain, the entire system has been activated in advance and is working proactively to mitigate their impact. Disaster management system and administration are needed to work harder to protect people with more care and sensitivity. Monsoon has covered entire India by July 9, only a day later than usual, but situation is far from normal demanding intensive monitoring of the situations – both of heavy and deficient rainfall. Providing timely relief and taking appropriate actions will be the real test.

Bhanu Bhakta Acharya: A tribute

By: Anjan Baskota

Bhanu Bhakta Acharya, the adi kabi (pioneering poet) of Nepali literature, was born into an affluent family in the village of Ramgha, in the Tanahun district of our neighboring nation, Nepal. He was born on the 29th of the Hindu month Asar, 1871 Bikram Sambat corresponding to July 13, 1814. His parents were Dhananjay Acharya and Dharmavati Devi respectively. Bhanu Bhakta traveled to Kashi (Varanasi) in India with his grandfather, Krishna Acharya, and the like other Brahmin children, he spent fourteen years studying Sanskrit. While pursuing his education in Kashi, he deeply studied the works of Indian literateurs and poets. During his time in India, Tulsī Dās's Ramcharit Manas captivated his young mind. After returning to Nepal following his education in India, Bhanu Bhakta happened to meet an ordinary grass-cutter (Ghashi). During their conversation, the grass-cutter shared his plan to use the money earned from selling grass to build a well in the village. Bhanu Bhakta was deeply influenced by the grass-cutter's words and, inspired by this, dedicated himself earnestly to the creation of literature.

Nepal's economic condition was not sound during the time of Bhanu Bhakta; the East India Company had first engulfed India through the expansion of trade and subsequently seized political control over the country. The East India Company attempted to invade Nepal several times but failed in these endeavors due to the valour of the Gorkha army. Despite their bravery, the Gorkhas of Nepal were outmaneuvered by the British Company through the Treaty of Sugauli, resulting in one-third of Nepal's territory being incorporated into British-ruled India. Observing the precarious situation of Nepal and its citizens, Bhanu Bhakta began intellectual translation (adhyatma) Valmiki's Ramayana into the Nepali language to instill the virtuous character of Lord Shri Ram in the hearts of the common people. His father, Dhananjay Acharya, passed away shortly after he had translated just one chapter of the Ramayana. His father, the late Acharya was an employee of the royal court and had been imprisoned following allegations of financial embezzlement within the palace. While in prison, Bhanu Bhakta became completely immersed in literary creation; it was during this time that he completed the translation of the Ramayana. Specifically, he translated the Ayodhya Kanda, Aranya Kanda, Kishkindha Kanda, and Sundar Kanda while incarcerated. Later, in 1853, he also translated the Yuddha Kanda and Uttara Kanda, bringing the total to 1,319 verses.

Now, a question arises here: why is Bhanu Bhakta universally acknowledged as the Adi Kabi (pioneering poet) of Nepali language and literature? Were there no poets or literary figures in the Nepali literary world before him? That is that there were indeed poets and writers in Nepali literature prior to Bhanu Bhakta. The figures such as Sarvananda Das, Udayananda Arjel, Raghunath Bhattarai, Basanta Luitel, and Bidiyanya Keshari were there prior to Bhanu Bhakta Acharya. However, these writers primarily engaged in literary discourse in Sanskrit, a language beyond the comprehension of the common Nepali citizen. Another factor was the prevalence of various dialects in Nepal during Bhanu Bhakta's time; he established a standard form for the Nepali language, created literature in it, and united the people of Nepal through this shared medium. Thus, much like the great figure of Assamese literature, Mahapurush Srimanta Sankardeva, Bhanu Bhakta stands as the pioneering poet of Nepali language and literature.

Bhanu Bhakta's works emphasized fundamental themes such as rural superstitions, regressive social customs, the lack of education, and issues concerning women. The common people held his literature close to their hearts. The Adhyatma Ramayana, translated by Bhanu Bhakta, is on the lips of every Nepali citizen. Other works authored by Acharya include Ramayana, Prashnottari, Badhu Shiksha, Bhakta Mala, Ram Geeta, and various poems. He was a feminist writer; women's education and women's emancipation were the primary themes of his works. Ram Geeta was the final literary work of his life. Bhanu Bhakta Acharya hailed as the Adi Kabi (pioneer poet) of Nepali literature. He passed away at the age of 52 in 1925 BS (1868 AD). Heartfelt tributes to the Adi Kabi on the occasion of his 213rd birth anniversary on July 13th.

Act east policy and Assam's economic renaissance

Assam's geographical and geopolitical position as the gateway to the eastern frontier of India is not only of strategic importance for the country but also for the whole of South and Southeast Asia. A look into history reveals that Assam was an important part of the ancient Silk Route, which served as a vibrant medium of commercial and cultural exchange between China, Myanmar, and undivided India. However, the strategy of colonial rule and the artificial boundaries created as a consequence of the partition of the country obstructed the natural course of progress in this region. As the once flourishing trade routes were closed, Assam gradually became geographically isolated, and this had a direct adverse impact on the economic foundation of the state. Correcting this historical anomaly and keeping pace with the current wave of globalization, the Government of India adopted the 'Act East Policy' or the 'Policy of Acting East', which is not merely a diplomatic initiative for Assam; it is a grand blueprint for the economic resurgence of the state. Through this policy, the vision of transforming Assam once again into the commercial hub of Southeast Asia, if realized, will undoubtedly bring about a fundamental transformation in the state's agriculture, industry, trade, and social life.



DEGREE OF THOUGHT
By: Himangshu Ranjan Bhuyan

The philosophy of the Act East Policy is not confined merely to establishing foreign relations; its primary objective is to integrate the northeastern region into the mainstream of national development and remove its economic isolation. One of the principal reasons behind the slow pace or stagnation of Assam's economy over the decades has been the lack of markets and inadequate transportation facilities. Excessive dependence on the narrow Siliguri Corridor, or the 'Chicken's Neck', which connects Assam with mainland India, has significantly increased transportation costs, making it difficult for products manufactured in Assam to compete in markets outside the state. Once direct land and waterway connectivity is established with neighboring countries such as Myanmar, Thailand, Laos, and Vietnam under this policy, a vast international market will open up for Assam. This geographical proximity will not only reduce transportation costs but also save valuable time. It will become more profitable for producers in Assam to use ports in neighboring countries or sell their products directly in those markets rather than transporting goods to ports in Kolkata or Mumbai. This policy possesses the potential to transform Assam from a 'peripheral state' of India into a 'connecting state' of Asia.

Infrastructure development forms the backbone of this policy. The foremost prerequisite for any economic development is an efficient communication network. The massive initiative to build international-standard highways under the Act East Policy has the potential to transform Assam's economic landscape. Once travel by bus or private vehicle from Guwahati to Bangkok or Yangon becomes possible through the Asian Highway project, not only will tourist exchanges increase, but the movement of commercial goods will also accelerate. Parallel to the development of road connectivity, great emphasis is also being placed on inland waterways. If the Brahmaputra River is developed as a National Waterway and connected to the sea through Bangladesh, Assam's industrial sector will benefit immensely. Transportation of goods through waterways is considerably cheaper than road transport, thereby reducing production costs and making products manufactured in Assam more competitive in the global market. Furthermore, efforts to develop Guwahati as an international aviation hub will open new horizons for business travel and the export of high-value commodities.

The history of industrial development in Assam has not been particularly encouraging. Despite the abundance of raw materials, complexities in transportation and the distance from major markets have discouraged large investors from investing in the state. However, the Act East Policy indicates a change in this environment. Once a vast regional market encompassing Myanmar, Bangladesh, Bhutan, and Nepal is developed with Assam at its center, Assam will become one of the most attractive investment destinations. Industries based on petroleum, natural gas, and coal will gain new momentum. Plastic, polymer, and fertilizer industries may also expand significantly. Furthermore, Assam's bamboo and cane industry, which currently operates on a very small scale, will gain access to global markets. Increased utilization of bamboo in the production of paper, furniture, and construction materials can make it suitable for export. Assam also holds enormous potential for pharmaceutical industries because of its rich diversity of medicinal plants. If easier trade policies are introduced with neighboring countries, not only large industries but also micro, small, and medium enterprises will receive opportunities for growth. Assam's tea industry, which has historically been one of the main pillars of the state's economy, is currently facing several challenges. Declining demand in traditional markets and rising production costs have reduced the profitability of tea gardens. The Act East Policy offers new markets for the tea industry. Many Asian countries have a long tradition of tea consumption and demand high-quality specialty teas. Assam's orthodox and specialty teas can establish strong markets in China, Japan, and Southeast Asian countries. Achieving this will require effective marketing strategies and branding. If the Guwahati Tea Auction Centre is upgraded to international standards and connected directly with buyers across the world through digital platforms, the dominance of intermediaries will decline, enabling producers to earn greater profits.

Nature has blessed Assam with extraordinary beauty rarely found elsewhere in the world. National parks such as Kaziranga and Manas, the sacred shrine of Kamakhya, and the heritage of Sattriya culture possess immense potential to attract tourists. Once the Act East Policy is successfully implemented

modities.

The Act East Policy has brought forth the possibility of revolutionary changes in the agricultural sector, which forms the lifeline of Assam's economy. The diverse crops, vegetables, and fruits cultivated in the fertile soil of Assam are of a quality that can compete with produce from any part of the world. Unfortunately, due to inadequate storage facilities and the absence of profitable markets, a substantial quantity of agricultural produce rots in the fields every year. The food habits of the people of Southeast Asian countries closely resemble those of the people of Assam,

creating immense potential demand for Assam's agricultural products in those countries. In particular, Assam's aromatic rice, Bhut Jolokia, lemons, ginger, and turmeric have the potential to fetch premium prices in international markets. Cold storage facilities and rapid transportation systems developed under this policy will help deliver perishable commodities to consumers within a short period. Moreover, if the plan to develop the Northeast as a hub of organic farming progresses in alignment with this policy, farmers will be able to receive fair prices for their produce. Establishing agro-based industries and exporting value-added products derived from raw materials will increase the flow of income into the rural economy and generate new employment opportunities.

The development of human resources and enhancement of skills are indispensable for the success of any economic policy. The younger generation must be prepared to seize the new opportunities that will emerge under the Act East Policy. As international trade and industries expand, there will be increasing demand for skilled managers, engineers, technical experts, and linguists. Educational institutions in Assam should design curricula keeping these future requirements in mind. Establishing centers for the study of Southeast Asian languages and cultures will enable students to enter the job markets of those countries more easily. The skills of Assamese youth in healthcare and hospitality have already gained recognition. By further refining these skills to international standards, the export of human resources can become a significant source of income for Assam. Remittances earned by people working abroad constitute one of the major pillars of many developing economies, and Assam can also benefit from this opportunity.

The Act East Policy also creates the possibility of developing Guwahati into a medical hub for the entire Southeast Asian region. Several advanced hospitals and cancer research centers have already been established in Guwahati. As the cost of treatment is comparatively lower while maintaining high standards of healthcare, many patients from Myanmar, Bhutan, and Bangladesh already travel to Assam for medical treatment. If this trend of medical tourism is systematically organized and promoted, it can generate substantial revenue for the state's economy. Simultaneously, pharmaceutical industries and medical equipment manufacturing units will also witness significant growth. Nevertheless, alongside these promising prospects, the Act East Policy also involves several challenges and concerns that cannot be overlooked. Opening the borders may increase security-related problems such as illegal immigration, drug trafficking, and the smuggling of arms and ammunition. Given Myanmar's unstable political situation and the proximity of the Northeast to the Golden Triangle, there remains a possibility that the region could be used as a route for drug trafficking. Therefore, while borders may be opened for economic development, security arrangements must be made extremely stringent and technologically advanced. Moreover, the government should adopt protective policies to ensure that unrestricted trade does not adversely affect local small industries and indigenous culture. It is equally important to remain vigilant so that multinational corporations do not deprive local communities of their rightful ownership over indigenous resources.

Environmental conservation is another aspect that deserves serious consideration in the implementation of the Act East Policy. Development activities carried out in the name of infrastructure expansion, such as cutting hills, destroying forests, or altering river courses, may lead to severe natural disasters in the future. Assam is an ecologically sensitive state blessed with extraordinary biodiversity. Therefore, the concept of green development should be given priority while carrying out developmental activities. Joint initiatives should be undertaken with neighboring countries for the management of transboundary rivers and the conservation of forests. Only sustainable development can ensure long-term economic benefits. The use of cultural diplomacy or soft power is another indispensable component for the success of this policy. The historical and ethnological ties between Assam and South-east Asia must be revitalized to foster mutual trust and goodwill. Similarities in Bihu, cuisine, traditional attire, and lifestyle can help strengthen people-to-people connections. As interpersonal relationships become stronger, commercial relations will naturally become more robust. Alongside government-level dialogues, greater exchanges among civil society, writers, artists, and journalists will enhance the acceptance and effectiveness of the Act East Policy.

To conclude, the Act East Policy is not merely a scheme for constructing roads or buildings in Assam; it represents a golden opportunity to restore the state's lost glory and secure its rightful place in the global economy. It has shown a pathway toward the proper utilization of our resources, expansion of markets, and acquisition of new technologies. However, transforming this opportunity into reality will require the firm political will of the government, the efficiency of the administrative machinery, and the active cooperation of the people. We must transform our mindset and prepare ourselves to establish our identity as global citizens. The dream of economic self-reliance and self-sufficiency can only be realized if we properly understand the immense potential of this policy and move forward in a planned and systematic manner. Challenges will undoubtedly exist, but overcoming them and transforming Assam into the economic heart of Southeast Asia must remain our ultimate objective. The successful implementation of the Act East Policy will bring a new era to Assam's economy and society, leaving behind a prosperous legacy for future generations.



and transportation becomes seamless, Assam can emerge as a sacred destination for Buddhist pilgrims from Southeast Asia. Connecting Assam with the Buddhist Circuit will encourage greater tourist arrivals from countries such as Thailand, Myanmar, and Cambodia. This will revitalize not only the tourism sector but also hotels, restaurants, transportation services, and handicraft markets. The promotion of rural tourism and river tourism will bring economic prosperity to rural communities. Cultural exchanges will introduce Assam's art and culture to the global stage, thereby indirectly strengthening the tourism industry.

The development of human resources and enhancement of skills are indispensable for the success of any economic policy. The younger generation must be prepared to seize the new opportunities that will emerge under the Act East Policy. As international trade and industries expand, there will be increasing demand for skilled managers, engineers, technical experts, and linguists. Educational institutions in Assam should design curricula keeping these future requirements in mind. Establishing centers for the study of Southeast Asian languages and cultures will enable students to enter the job markets of those countries more easily. The skills of Assamese youth in healthcare and hospitality have already gained recognition. By further refining these skills to international standards, the export of human resources can become a significant source of income for Assam. Remittances earned by people working abroad constitute one of the major pillars of many developing economies, and Assam can also benefit from this opportunity.

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Demography is destiny: Why India's population trends matter

By: MR Lahu

Demography is destiny." The French philosopher Auguste Comte made this self-revealing and convincingly memorable statement on demography centuries ago. You will rarely find a statement that so clearly defines and meticulously attributes significance to the human population, taking it beyond a merely numerical count of people. It consciously maintains its position on what population means for humanity and for countries that have faced disproportionate demographic trends and their resultant elimination of cultural ancestry and civilizational heritage.

Country after country has experienced this dangerous trend of demographic transition, ultimately affecting political representation, national security, cultural continuity, and economic orientation and progress. These slipping sand dunes of demographic trends in a country like India, with its 1.4 billion people, are a subject of serious study.

And that is how the Government of India's recently constituted High-Level Committee on Demographic Changes brings a wake-up call for each one of us. The committee, headed by Justice Prakash Prabhakar Naolekar, a retired Supreme Court judge, is to examine demographic changes in India, which has already surpassed China in population.

The Government's announcement has triggered criticism on multiple platforms, with selected possible angles being curiously examined with unnatural suspicion. Though Hindus constitute the majority of India's population, their shrinking representation in numbers is considered a huge concern. Mostly driven by aspirational families with one or two children, Hindus have thus been forced to compete with Muslims, who are religiously permitted to have larger families. The birth rates among the religious communities in India show that Muslims are consistently maintaining an upward trend. This trend and the reasons behind it are being calculatedly justified as a consequence of higher fertility rates.

Does demography really mean destiny? Population transitions in various parts of the world staggeringly substantiate this theory. Demography can easily be altered by various means. The history of Islam and Christianity across the world testifies to this unquestionably.

Before the Arab conquest, the overwhelming majority of Egypt's population was Christian. Its demography was deliberately altered by the religious expansion of Islam over the passage of time. Syria, once one of the earliest centers of Christianity, saw its demography altered following the Arab conquests in the seventh century. Ancient Mesopotamia bore

great civilizational imprints and was predominantly Christian, but Iraq, as it is known today, is largely Muslim.

To name a few more, similar was the case with countries such as Jordan, Lebanon, Tunisia, Libya, and Turkey. A combination of conquest, conversion, and many other factors might have contributed to these Christian lands adopting Islam. Wherever Islam grew in power, forcefully dismantling the ancestral practices of other religions such as Christianity and Judaism, the latter, having been reduced to minorities, had to pay a special tax called jizya.

These examples are enough to establish the fact that demography alters the destiny of countries and societies. Of course, the entire process of this religious transition to Islam in these countries must have taken centuries for its ultimate dominance to take shape, mostly as it is alleged, through barbarian conquests, forced conversions, or persecution.

This is how religious with exuberant audacity continued to outnumber the native inhabitants, while their intolerant interventions ensured the complete eradication of cultures that had survived for generations.

What was it like in India before, and how is it catching up today at a competing pace?

Centuries of Islamic invasions and the subsequent British cultural conquest had a devastating impact on India, especially on its Hindu population and other Indic traditions. It was, again, the same demography that gave rise to the "Two-Nation Theory" propounded by its proponents, ultimately leading to India's bifurcation.

The Muslim League, under its leader Muhammad Ali Jinnah, adopted the Lahore Resolution in 1940, demanding independent states in the Muslim-majority areas. It had inherited this provocative theory from Dr. Muhammad Iqbal, who articulated it in his presidential address at the Annual Muslim League session held at Allahabad in 1930. The land, they thought, would be named with the best of Islamic sobriquets - "Pakistan," meaning "the Land of the Pure."

The land in which Muslims had lived for generations, and where their Hindu ancestors had been converted to Islam centuries ago, had, for them, turned into an impure space. It was the same demography, and the communal arrogance it stimulated, that ultimately catapulted the Muslim League into surgically separating a civilizational landscape called Bharat into two nations.

The demographic might of Muslims drove the non-Muslim population out of their so-called "Land of the Pure" through a campaign of pillage, murder, and indisputable callousness. Indeed, demography matters when your neighbor turns a sharp

weapon against your neck, forcing you to abandon your homeland, farmland, and everything that once belonged to you. The exodus of Kashmiri Hindus from the Valley in 1989-90, following targeted killings, intimidation, and militant violence, remains one of independent India's most significant instances of forced displacement.

At present, with the constitution of the High-Level Committee on Demographic Changes, the government's intention is to examine the reasons behind the significant growth of certain religions in some parts of India, which, according to its terms of reference, have witnessed demographic changes requiring detailed study. The Committee will examine demographic changes and study the factors contributing to them, including migration, urbanization, proselytization, and illegal immigration. It is also expected to assess the implications of these demographic changes for national security.

Countries across Europe, Asia, and the United States have remained vigilant about international migration resulting from wars and strategic conflicts in different parts of the world, which have led to large-scale refugee movements. India has likewise faced the persistent challenge of illegal infiltration from neighboring countries for decades. With nearly 15,000 kilometres of land borders shared with its neighbors, and what I view as politically motivated encouragement of huge influx by parties such as the Congress in Assam and the Trinamool Congress (TMC) in West Bengal, India has compelling reasons to exercise caution.

According to the 1941 Census of British India, the population was approximately 389 million. Hindus constituted about 70 percent of the population, while Muslims accounted for roughly 25 percent. The remaining population comprised various religious minorities. A high concentration of Muslims in Punjab, Bengal, Sindh, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and Baluchistan ultimately lent strength to the Muslim League's Two-Nation Theory.

This demand, closely linked to demographic distribution, not only partitioned India but also divided its resources and collective prosperity. According to this interpretation, religious intolerance was reinforced by the dominance of Muslim-majority regions. The Modi Government deserves appreciation for not relying on simplistic conclusions, and its initiative to undertake a detailed study of demographic changes may not be well received by its detractors.

History once again reinforces Auguste Comte's famous observation that "Demography is Destiny." For India, this is more than a mere aphorism; it is a reality - a truth written in red letters.

Air Pollution: The poison we refuse to call poison

By: Manreet kaur

There is a simple question that reveals how irrationally we treat one of the most essential elements of life. If someone handed you a glass of dirty water, would you drink it? Almost certainly not. Yet every day, millions of Indians inhale air that is far more contaminated than the water they would refuse to consume. We have learned to distrust polluted water. We install purifiers, boil it, or buy bottled water. We wash fruits and vegetables before eating them. We seek medical care when we fall ill. But the one substance we consume more than anything else, air, has become an afterthought. A person can survive weeks without food and days without water, but only minutes without air. And unlike food or water, breathing is not a choice.

That is precisely why clean air is unlike any other resource. It cannot be purchased individually or protected in isolation. An air purifier may clean the air inside a room, but it cannot follow a child to school, a farmer to the fields, a worker to a construction site, or a commuter through traffic.

Clean air is the one necessity that can only be secured collectively. This is what makes air pollution fundamentally different from many other environmental problems. One person's emissions quickly become everyone else's exposure. Pollutants do not recognise municipal boundaries. State borders or economic status. Vehicle emissions, industrial smoke, construction dust and biomass burning mix into a shared atmosphere that no one can opt out of.

The consequences are devastating. According to the World Health Organization, air pollution causes approximately 6.7 million premature deaths globally every year. It contributes to respiratory diseases, cardiovascular illnesses, stroke, lung cancer and adverse pregnancy outcomes. Children, older persons and those with existing illnesses bear the greatest burden.

Behind these statistics are lives interrupted long before their time. Children



develop asthma before they understand what air pollution means. Older people struggle to breathe during routine activities. Families spend savings on illnesses that could have been prevented. Hospitals routinely report surges in respiratory emergencies whenever air quality deteriorates. The costs extend beyond health, reducing agricultural productivity, damaging ecosystems and imposing enormous economic losses through lower productivity and rising healthcare expenditure. For India, the crisis is particularly acute. The IQAir World Air Quality Report 2024 found that 13 of the world's 20 most polluted cities are in India. According to the Air Quality Life Index (AQLI) of the University of Chicago, the average Indian loses about 5.2 years of life expectancy because of long-term exposure to air pollution. In

2021 alone, more than 2.1 million deaths in India were linked to ambient and household air pollution—roughly 5,700 deaths every day. If a natural disaster claimed many lives daily, it would dominate public discourse. Air pollution rarely does because its damage is dispersed, cumulative and largely invisible. It kills quietly, one breath at a time.

What makes this tragedy especially difficult to justify is that its causes are neither mysterious nor inevitable. They are well understood. Vehicular emissions, industrial pollution, construction dust, waste burning, coal dependence and seasonal crop-residue burning have all been studied extensively. India does not lack scientific knowledge or technological solutions. What it lacks is sustained political urgency and societal resolve.

Perhaps nothing illustrates the gravity

of India's air pollution crisis more starkly than what is now unfolding in doctors' clinics. In several of the country's most polluted cities, physicians are increasingly advising vulnerable patients to leave—not for a holiday or temporary respite, but permanently. When doctors begin prescribing geography instead of medicine, something has gone fundamentally wrong.

A senior colleague of mine, after years of recurring health problems, was recently advised by her doctors to leave Ludhiana because the city's air had itself become part of the illness. Her experience is not an isolated one. It reflects a growing reality across many Indian cities, where healthcare can manage the symptoms of polluted air through inhalers, medicines and hospital care, but cannot remove the pollution itself.

For the overwhelming majority of Indians, however, migration is not an option. Jobs, schools, farms, businesses and family responsibilities keep people rooted where they are. When the only effective prescription for cleaner air is to leave one's hometown, the crisis has moved far beyond individual health. It is a public health emergency that demands collective action, not individual escape. This is also why technological fixes alone will never be enough. Air purifiers are useful, but they are not a substitute for clean outdoor air. They protect only those who can afford them and only within enclosed spaces. A society cannot purify its way out of polluted skies. The solution lies in recognising clean air as a shared public good requiring shared responsibility. We need to strengthen monitoring systems, enforce emission

standards and invest in cleaner transport and urban planning. Industries must adopt cleaner technologies beyond minimum compliance. Farmers need affordable alternatives that reduce pollution without threatening livelihoods. Cities must expand public transport, green spaces and dust-control measures. Schools should treat environmental literacy as a civic responsibility rather than an optional topic.

Citizens, too, have responsibilities that extend beyond demanding government action. Every unnecessary fire, every poorly maintained vehicle, every instance of waste burning and every disregard for public transport contributes incrementally to a problem that ultimately affects everyone. As environmentalist Wangari Maathai observed, "It's the little things citizens do. That's what will make the difference." Public policy can regulate behaviour, but lasting change depends on public participation.

India's air pollution crisis also suffers from a dangerous form of seasonal amnesia. Every winter, schools close, outdoor activities decline, hospitals fill with respiratory patients and cities disappear beneath a blanket of smog. Then, as the haze lifts, so does public attention. The pollution, however, does not disappear. It merely becomes less visible while continuing to damage lungs, hearts and lives throughout the year.

A nation cannot claim to be progressing while millions lose years of life because the air has become hazardous to breathe. Economic growth that comes at the cost of public health is ultimately self-defeating.

Unlike unsafe water, polluted air cannot be avoided. Unlike contaminated food, it cannot be refused. Every Indian inhales roughly 20,000 breaths each day. The quality of those breaths should not depend on income, geography or luck. Clean air is not a luxury, nor merely an environmental aspiration. It is the most fundamental public good on which every other aspect of human development depends. The question is no longer whether India can afford to act. It is whether it can afford not to. (Youth Ki Awaaz)

Menstrual Health: A fundamental right to life and dignity

By: Er Prabhat Kishore

On 30th January 2026, the Honourable Supreme Court has ruled in the case of *Jaya Thakur vs Government of India* that the right to dignified menstrual health is an integral facet of Article 21 of the Constitution. Successful Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM) is essential to ensure the right to education and equal opportunities for adolescent girls. Under the SC's ruling every school in Bharatvarsha—whether Government or Private—is legally required to provide the following facilities:-

- (1) Free Sanitary Pads – Every girl student receives free oxo-biodegradable sanitary napkins at school.
- (2) Functional and Separate Toilets – Gender-segregated toilets with running water, privacy, soap, and accessibility.
- (3) MHM Corners – A dedicated space stocked with pads, spare uniforms, disposable bags, and health information.
- (4) Menstrual Health Education – Age appropriate health content in the curriculum, with trained and sensitised teachers.
- (5) Safe Disposable Systems – Lidded waste bins in every toilet and Eco-friendly disposal.
- (6) Inclusive Access – All infrastructure accessible to every student, including those with disabilities.

As per NITI Aayog Report on "School Education System in India" published in May 2026, 98,592 schools in the country still lack functional girls' toilets, and 61,540 schools have no usable toilets. According to U-DISE+ Report 2025-26, only 13,947,23 schools out of 14,56,083 schools of all managements have functional girls' toilet. Ensuring universal access is critical not only for hygiene and dignity, but also for sustaining attendance and retention, especially in rural and underserved areas. The fact that one in every twenty three schools still lack such facilities signals the need for continued efforts to achieve full coverage, universal provision of safe and functional toilets for girls. It remains essential not only for health and dignity but also for improving attendance, retention, and transition rates, especially at the upper primary and secondary level. The Central Government should keep monitoring and guiding all the States regarding effective compliance of all the directions of Hon. Supreme Court. The Court has declared Ministry of Education, Government of Bharat as the Nodal Ministry and pointed out that the Central Government shall furnish a fresh status report of further progress every three months.

In compliance with the directions of the Honourable Supreme Court regarding MHM in schools, significant efforts have been made by the concerned stakeholders, all States/UTs and Ministries towards insuring that complete adherence and progress towards substantial compliances to the directions of the Hon. SC order within a short period of time.

The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare has strengthened its implementation through the National Menstrual Hygiene Policy for school-going girls (2024), the Menstrual Hygiene Scheme (MHS), and the School Health and Wellness Programme (SHWP). The Ministry of Education and NCERT have initiated curriculum integration, teacher training modules and digital learning resources on menstrual health and related issues. The Department of Pharmaceuticals has expanded awareness and accessibility of Jan Aushadhi Suvidha sanitary

napkins, and the department of Drinking water & sanitation has supported sanitation and disposal-related interventions through Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM) initiatives. The National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR), and the State Commission for Protection of Child Rights (SCPCRs) have undertaken monitoring and co-ordination efforts for its implementation and oversight. Their digital monitoring framework shows diligence to the directives of the Hon. SC.

The Line Ministries based on their respective mandates along with the States/UTs have undertaken a series of measures to ensure availability of separate toilets for girls, provision of sanitary napkins, establishment of disposal mechanisms, awareness generation, and integration of menstrual hygiene education within the school system. Additionally, other covered areas such as anonymous student feedback systems, accessibility for children with disabilities, and structured monitoring mechanisms are under progressive implementation in the States/UTs. States/UTs have gone beyond the standard menstrual hygiene measures and have adopted several innovative local contextual interventions. These include MHM corners with Care & Comfort Rooms (where emergency essentials, menstrual absorbents, spare cloths, first-aid kits, and other emergency support materials are available), Pink Toilets, Garima Peti, Soap Banks, MY PAD ATM initiatives, Gauri Diwas, Purna Diwas and Kishori Melas, BAHINI Scheme, Kishori Suchita Abhiyaan, and integration of menstrual health education under the School Health and Wellness Programme (SHWP) in States/UTs. Digital IEC platforms and educational interventions included the use of MYTHRI films for menstrual hygiene awareness, T-SAT live sessions, YouTube streams and multimedia IEC campaigns for implementation of the Adolescent Safety and Empowerment Programme (ASEP); smart classrooms, WhatsApp groups, and virtual sessions; GARIMA and KAVACH modules are supported.

Status of Directive-wise compliance:-

Direction 1: Availability of Functional Toilets, Water Connectivity and Handwashing Facilities in Schools. – States/UTs have reported that schools have separate toilets for girls with usable water connectivity. Repair and maintenance mechanisms are being strengthened through Samagra Shiksha and local bodies, while infrastructure strengthening in remote, tribal and geographically difficult areas are ongoing towards completion. The requirements of privacy and accessibility, and reported progressive development of ramps, accessible toilets and child-friendly facilities under inclusive education interventions are also being duly enabled. In all States/UTs, there is provision of handwashing facilities with soap and water integrated within WASH (Water, Sanitation And Hygiene) initiatives, and School Health and Wellness Programmes (SHWP), and monitoring mechanisms are being strengthened at district level to ensure uninterrupted supply of consumables.

Direction 2: Availability and Access to Sanitary products – Multiple mechanisms have been implemented across states to ensure access to sanitary napkins through schools, health facilities, RKSK platforms, ASHAs, vending machines, Jan Aushadhi Kendras and community-based distribution systems. Sanitary napkin vending machines or designated sanitary napkin distribution points are avail-

able/being installed in schools and institutional settings, their availability and installation are being further improved. There is provision of sanitary napkins free of cost to adolescent girls in schools through various school-based and community distribution mechanism in Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Goa, Gujarat, Ladakh, Lakshadweep, Manipur, Puducherry, Telangana, Tripura, Uttarakhand, Delhi, Punjab, Tamilnadu, Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Arunachal Pradesh, Chandigarh, Haryana, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Rajasthan, Sikkim, DNH-DD and Uttar Pradesh. Their availability is also ensured through the active participation of field level workers like ASHA to enable widespread coverage.

Direction 3: Safe and Environmentally Compliant Disposal Systems – Schools use incinerators, covered bins, deep burial pits and other waste disposal systems for menstrual waste management. Work is underway to instal additional incinerators and strengthen environmentally friendly disposal practices. Availability of covered waste bins in girls' toilets along with regular cleaning and disposal arrangements, indicates that schools are taking substantial steps in this direction.

Direction 4: IEC Activities, Awareness Generation and Teacher sensitisation – Significant progress has been made with regard to curriculum integration, teacher sensitisation and awareness generation. There is integration of menstrual hygiene-related topics through SCERT/NCERT curriculum, School Health & Wellness Programme (SHWP), Rashtriya Kishor Swasthya Karyakram (RKSK) platforms and adolescent education programme. Topics covered include menstruation, puberty, PCOS/PCOD, All States hygiene practices and stigma reduction. To create supportive school environments, both male and female teachers are being trained and sensitised through SHWP, SCERT, DIET and RKSK platforms.

Extensive IEC activities, classroom sessions, community mobilisation campaigns and dissemination workshops are being undertaken through schools, SHWP, RKSK and media platforms. Menstrual Hygiene Day is celebrated across the country on 28th May in co-ordination with stakeholders like Line Ministries and States/UTS. Efforts to create awareness and remove stigma towards menstruation is supported by use of customised flipbooks and simple easily comprehensive brochures by the Field Level Workers (FLWs). Efforts are being undertaken to disseminate information regarding Jan Aushadhi sanitary napkins and child helpline services through multiple awareness platforms.

Menstrual Health and Hygiene Management is a multidimensional and an inter-ministerial issue, requiring coordinated action by multiple Ministries/Departments and States/UTs in accordance with their respective mandates, statutory responsibilities, institutional mechanisms and programme frameworks. The implementation of various measures relating to menstrual health, hygiene, awareness generation, education, access, institutional support systems and welfare interventions is undertaken by different stakeholder Ministries/Departments/States under their respective schemes and policy mandates. All efforts are being undertaken to strengthen continuum of care and inclusive support to adolescent girls to flourish with dignity and care during their menstrual hygiene period across the country. (Author is an Engineer and Educationist), Patna.

Ultra-processed foods may be as addictive as smoking, study says

By: Tony Hicks

A recent study Trusted Source published in The BMJ is reporting that ultra-processed foods can be as addictive as smoking.

In their report, researchers say humans compulsively consume foods high in refined carbohydrates and added fats, which people find highly rewarding and appealing in ways similar to how they experience addictive substances such as nicotine.

The researchers said some people eating these foods consume compulsively and that consumption may meet the criteria for diagnosis of substance use disorder in some people.

Addiction and ultra processed foods

The study authors looked at an analysis of two systematic reviews that included 281 studies from 36 countries. From this data, the researchers reported that by the standards of the Yale Food Addiction Scale ultra-processed food addiction is estimated to occur in 14% of adults and 12% of children.

For comparison, the study authors pointed out levels of addiction in other legal substances in adults are 14% for alcohol and 18% for tobacco. The level of 12 percent for children is "unprecedented," the researchers noted.

The Yale Food Addiction Scale assesses 11 symptomatic criteria for substance use disorder, including diminished control over intake, cravings, withdrawal, and continued use despite negative outcomes.

The study authors also said ultra-processed foods are associated with "biopsychological mechanisms of addiction and clinically significant problems."

Among people with defined clinical diagnoses, the Yale Food Addiction Scale identified prevalence of food addiction reaches 32% in people with obesity who have bariatric surgery and more than 50% in those with binge eating disorder.

Food addiction based on the Yale scale is also associated with core mechanisms of addiction, such as reward-related neural dysfunction, impulsivity, and emotion dysregulation, as well as poorer physical and mental health and lower quality of life.

Why some foods can be addictive

While pointing out that not all food has addictive potential, the study authors identified types of food that can be addictive according to the Yale scale.

These included foods with high levels of refined carbohydrates or added fats, such as sweets and salty snacks. Those are identified as food "most strongly implicated" as behavioral indicators of addiction, such as excessive intake, loss of control over consumption, intense cravings, and continued use despite negative consequences.

Refined carbohydrates or fats evoked "similar levels of extracellular dopamine in the brain striatum to those seen with addictive substances such as nicotine and alcohol," the researchers reported.

Addictive qualities of ultra-processed foods

The study authors said ultra-processed foods — industrially produced foods containing ingredients typically not available in home kitchens — are the main source of refined carbohydrates and added fats in the modern food supply.

The combination of these refined carbohydrates and fats seems to have a supra-addictive effect on brain reward systems, the study authors noted. The speed at which ultra-processed foods deliver carbohydrates and fats to the gut may also reflect their addictive potential. Drugs and routes of administration that affect the brain more quickly have a higher addictive potential, the research team said. Which is why a cigarette, which rapidly delivers nicotine to the brain, is more addictive than a slow-release nicotine patch.

According to the study, additives may also contribute to the addictiveness of ultra processed foods, many of which have flavor additives increasing sweet and savory tastes. Additives meant to improve flavor

include those found in cigarettes, sugar, cocoa, menthol, and alkaline salt.

The authors acknowledged there are still unanswered questions. They also say specific ingredients found in cigarettes, such as tobacco, haven't been found in possibly addictive food and refined carbohydrates and fats don't act on reward systems directly, though "they seem to activate neural reward systems to a similar magnitude as nicotine and ethanol."

The health impacts of ultra-processed foods

Dr Sue Inonog, an internal and primary care physician for Harbor Health in Austin, Texas, told Medical News Today the study is an "illuminating call to action given the alarming and growing rates of obesity around the world." Inonog said it's especially pertinent given disparities in obesity rates for certain ethnic and/or disadvantaged groups that don't have as much access to healthy food.

"Ultra-processed foods are the main source of refined carbohydrates and fats in the modern food supply," Inonog said. "The authors further describe research noting the impact of refined carbohydrates and fats on the brain pathways that are involved in addiction. It is paramount to understand how and which elements of [ultra-processed foods] impact our neural circuitry akin to how certain substances/situations impact the brain pathways that lead to substance use disorders." Inonog said she's treated people "who frequently consumed [ultra-processed foods], as they were often the most affordable, accessible, and calorically dense option." "While I worried about the impact of [ultra-processed foods] on developing obesity and/or obesity complications, I now also worry if they additionally have unintentionally placed themselves at increased risk for a food addiction," she said. "If we understand what elements harm our health, including the role of [ultra-processed foods], then we can work through comprehensive channels to address the culprit(s) in our society."

Combining carbohydrates and fats

Carlos Frago, a registered dietitian with a private practice in New York City, told Medical News Today it's no coincidence there are few naturally occurring or minimally processed foods that contain both carbohydrates and fats, but ultra-processed foods associated with addiction are high in both.

"From an evolutionary perspective, it makes sense that our bodies would crave the foods that have tremendous amounts of added refined carbohydrates and fats — it means more fat storage for survival with less effort," Frago said. "Survival is, after all, our bodies' top priority." Frago said the companies producing these foods know what they're doing.

"For these food companies, the more addictive the food, the greater the profit," Frago said. "Food companies who manufacture these [ultra-processed foods] are gaslighting consumers by trying to deny that these foods are anything other than addictive." "The comparison of [ultra-processed foods] to nicotine or alcohol is not far from reality," he said. "Though nicotine and alcohol are addictive chemicals, the high refined carbohydrate and fat content of [ultra-processed foods] act as addictive chemicals to our bodies."

Kelsey Costa, a registered dietitian and nutrition consultant for the National Coalition on Healthcare, told Medical News Today that comprehensive policy reforms are necessary to make healthier alternatives more affordable.

"The social, economic, and structural factors contributing to the pervasive consumption of [ultra-processed foods] and their addictive potential remain significant challenges to public health," Costa said. "The growing prevalence of [ultra-processed food] addiction also raises the need for it to be recognized officially as a diagnosis, stimulating further research into its clinical management and potentially leading to reclassifying [ultra-processed foods] as addictive substances, prompting stricter regulatory measures." (Courtesy: MNT)

US attacks Iran over ship being hit in Hormuz Tehran lashes out again at Gulf Arab states



DUBAI, July 12: The US attacked Iran early Sunday morning over an Iranian strike on a vessel in the Strait of Hormuz that set the container ship ablaze and forced its crew to abandon it.

Iran responded with attacks targeting several countries in the Gulf, including Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar and Oman. The outburst of fighting raised new questions about efforts to reach a permanent end to a war that began on Feb 28.

The strait, a key transit route for oil and natural gas, has become the key sticking point in negotiations, and repeated fighting over the past week has left negotiations in danger of collapse.

The US military's Central Command said it hit some 140 targets in Sunday's strikes, far more than in the two previous rounds of attacks, and went after missile and drone launch sites, ammunition dumps, communication equipment and other sites. It said the attacks would weaken Iran's ability to threaten civilian shipping.

"Iran made a poor choice. Now they pay," US Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth wrote online.

The US has launched three rounds of airstrikes targeting Iran in the last week over Iranian attacks on ships heading through the strait using a route seeking to avoid the Islamic Republic's terri-

torial waters.

Iran retaliated by attacking nations in the region hosting US military forces, while insisting it alone must control the strait and potentially charge vessels for travelling through it.

"The era of one-sided deals is OVER," Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf, the speaker of Iran's parliament and a main negotiator, wrote Sunday. "We told you: keep your word or pay the price. Reality is knocking."

About a fifth of all traded oil and natural gas passed through the strait before the war began. Iran's grip on it during the war led to a global energy crisis, though oil prices have sharply dropped since wartime highs of USD 120 a barrel. Missile alerts sounded across several Gulf Arab nations early Sunday morning.

Qatar's military said it intercepted incoming Iranian fire, with explosions heard in the neighbouring United Arab Emirates. Three people, including a child, were wounded as a result of falling shrapnel from the interception of Iranian attacks, Qatar's Interior Ministry said, giving no further details on their conditions.

Meanwhile, missile alerts sounded for the third time on Sunday in Bahrain, an island kingdom in the Persian Gulf home to the US Navy's 5th Fleet. Kuwait's military also said it was intercepting incoming fire.

The Omani state news agency said drones struck sites in north-eastern Oman, in the area that sits on the Strait of Hormuz. Iran had previously claimed attacks on Oman. The attack came after the two countries held talks on Saturday.

Sirens also sounded in the United Arab Emirates, but the government said missiles did not cross into UAE borders. The UAE so far hasn't been targeted in the most recent round of Iranian attacks.

The last attack on the Emirates, home to Abu Dhabi and Dubai, came in May when a drone sparked a fire on the edge of the country's sole nuclear power plant.

Iran also made a series of claims about attacks elsewhere that were not immediately confirmed.

In the Strait of Hormuz attack, a Cyprus-flagged container ship was hit by Iran and suffered "significant engine room damage" and a civilian crew member was missing, US Central Command said early Sunday morning.

All of the crew, including the missing member, were Indian nationals, according to India's Ministry of External Affairs. (AP)

Bangladesh reports rivers over danger level

44 die due to floods; capital Dhaka deluged

DHAKA, July 12: At least 44 people have died in flood and landslide incidents in a week, officials said Sunday even as rivers remained above danger level leading to displacement of over 2.5 lakh families across Bangladesh.

Overnight torrential rains — 76 mm from 12 midnight till 6 am — inundated several areas and paralysed life in capital Dhaka even as the government deployed army troops alongside navy and air force personnel to carry out relief operations in seven worst-hit districts along with local humanitarian agencies.

"Since July 5, officially 44 flood related deaths were recorded until Saturday evening. We estimate that some 2,67,000 families have been affected so far," a Disaster Management Ministry spokesman said here. Several of the casualties were caused by landslides while most others either drowned or were washed away due to floods and overflowing rivers, the spokesperson said.

Nearly 44,457 deluge displaced people took refuge at over 1,100 makeshift flood shelters in affected areas, mostly in northeastern and southeastern regions. "The deluge marooned members of an estimated 2,67,918 families in the affected areas," the official said. Bangladesh has divided the lower riparian deltaic country, criss-crossed by 1,415



rivers, in four major basins. The onrush of waters from the upstream coupled with heavy monsoon rains until Saturday inflated rivers in northeastern Meghna Basin and southeastern Hill Basin.

On Sunday, the state-run Flood Forecasting and Warning Centre (FFWC) said larger parts of several north and north-western districts in the major Brahmaputra Basin are likely to be exposed to floods while the situation in the northeastern and northwestern region could deteriorate further. As of Sunday, seven out of the 45 river monitoring stations operated by FFWC in greater Meghna and South Eastern hill basins reported the river waters exceeded their danger levels.

The Centre feared several more stations are likely to witness their danger marks to be crossed resulting in further flooding in low-lying

areas of the regions.

"During the next 24 to 48 hours, heavy to very heavy rainfall is forecast over the (north-eastern) Sylhet, (north-western) Rangpur and (northern) Mymensingh divisions of Bangladesh and the adjoining Indian states of Meghalaya, Assam, and West Bengal," the FFWC bulletin at 9 am on Sunday said. Earlier in the week, seven Rohingya children and one of their teachers died on July 8 in the worst single incident of landslides this year in the world's largest refugee camp in southeastern Cox's Bazar.

Since Friday, the government has called out the army, navy and air force to carry out relief operations in seven worst-hit districts. Local NGOs too are pitching in with help as flood-displaced people found it difficult to operate kitchens in inundated homesteads. (PTI)

14 nations, EU reaffirm 2016 ruling invalidating China's claims in South China Sea



MANILA, July 12: The US, the UK and a dozen other Western and Asian countries reasserted on Sunday that China's expansive claims in the South China Sea are illegal based on a 2016 arbitration ruling.

A joint statement issued by the 14 nations said they rejected "destabilising" actions in the disputed waters that threaten regional stability. The 27-nation European Union released a separate statement, reaffirming the ruling as a "landmark decision in the peaceful settlement of disputes".

The statements commemorated a July 12, 2016, arbitration ruling by a tribunal established in The Hague under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, saying the landmark decision is "is final and legally binding".

China reiterated Sunday that the ruling was "null and void and has no binding force" and Beijing "neither accepts nor recognises it".

China refused to join the arbitration initiated by the Philippines in 2013 after a tense standoff in the contested waters a year earlier that ended with Beijing effectively seizing a disputed shoal.

Beijing rejected the 2016 ruling and continues to defend its claims to virtually the entire sea passage, a key global trade route that has long been feared as one of Asia's most active flashpoints.

The areas have been the scene of repeated territorial standoffs involving China and the Philippines, Vietnam, Malaysia, Brunei and Taiwan.

"We reaffirm the Arbitral Tribunal's decision that there is no legal basis for China's expansive maritime claims in the South China Sea, including those based on 'historic rights'," the US-led statement said.

The arbitration tribunal largely decided in favour of the Philippines, ruling then that under the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, "there was no legal basis for China to claim historic rights to resources" in the South China Sea outside of its regular territorial areas recognised under the convention.

The convention, largely regarded as the treaty governing the world's oceans and seas, took effect in 1994 and has been ratified by more than 170 countries and parties, including China and the Philippines.

In addition to the US and Britain, the other countries listed in Sunday's statement were the Philippines, Japan, Australia, New Zealand, Canada, Germany, Italy, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania and Slovenia.

"We reiterate our strong opposition to any destabilizing or unilateral actions including by force or coercion that threaten peace and stability in the region," they said.

The nations stressed "our strong opposition to the use of coast guard, military and maritime militia forces to harass, obstruct, intimidate lawful operations by other states at sea or in the air and in so doing endanger the safety of personnel and fishermen and seriously degrade regional peace and security".

"Freedom of navigation and overflight as well as other internationally lawful uses of the sea as reflected in UNCLOS" must be upheld, the countries said, adding that the territorial disputes should be resolved peacefully based on the 1982 UN convention.

In Beijing, China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs said the arbitration tribunal and its ruling "seriously contravene the general practice of international arbitration" and "gravely infringe upon China's legitimate rights as a sovereign state and state party to UNCLOS and are unjust and unlawful". (AP)

Qatar's former ruler Al Thani dies at 74

DUBAI, July 12: Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani, who as ruler of Qatar transformed the tiny Persian Gulf nation into a global player in diplomacy, media and investment, and then shattered tradition by voluntarily turning over power to his son, has died, state media reported. He was 74.

The state-run Qatar News Agency reported his death. It offered no cause.

Sheikh Hamad, who stepped down in June 2013 after 18 years as emir, was the architect of energy-rich Qatar's stunning ambitions that turned it from a backwater into an international crossroads in less than a generation.

Qatar owns the Harrod's department store in London and founded the powerful Al Jazeera satellite news network.

Qatar's political reach today stretches from North Africa to Afghanistan and it hosted the 2022 FIFA World Cup, the world's most-watched soccer event. Sheikh Hamad, though long out of power, received thunderous applause from Qataris attending its opening match.

But Qatar's rise under Sheikh Hamad also ruffled regional and Western allies with its independent-minded policymaking, including its close ties to Shiite powerhouse Iran, the Palestinian militant Hamas group and Egypt's outlawed Muslim Brotherhood. (AP)

Bodies of 15 Indian tourists killed in Vietnam boat accident to be sent home soon

HANOI, July 12: The bodies of the 15 Indian tourists who were killed in a boat accident off Vietnam's Phu Quoc Island have been sent to Ho Chi Minh City from where they will be transported to India, the Indian mission said on Sunday.

The Indian Embassy in Hanoi also said that 16 of the 17 rescued Indian tourists are on their way back home. One, who is in critical condition, is hospitalised in Phu Quoc.

The 15 were killed when a speedboat carrying 32 tourists from India and four local crew members capsized near Hon May Rut Ngaoi off Phu Quoc Island on Saturday. All others were rescued.

"The mortal remains of the 15 Indian nationals who tragically passed away in yesterday's boat accident are being transported to Ho Chi Minh City and will reach there by this evening," the embassy said in a post on X.

"After completion of formalities at Ho Chi Minh the mortal remains would be transported to



India at the earliest," it said.

The embassy further said its teams were closely coordinating with the Vietnamese authorities, who have assured all assistance for the earliest transportation of the mortal remains to India.

Of the 15 victims, 10 were from Tamil Nadu, three from Andhra Pradesh and two were from Kerala. Two of the deceased were women, according to a list shared by the embassy.

According to the list, the deceased from Tamil Nadu were identified as Senthil Kumar

Jayavel, Muruga Prabhu Arumugam, Sridhar Sundararajan,

Shaik Abdullah Abdul Majeed, Balaji Natesan, Vinaya Kumar Chithirapuram Bhaskara, Ravisankar Sugumaran, Santosh Kumar Shantilal Jain, Babu Kuppuswamy and Alagurajan Sivasamy.

The deceased from Andhra Pradesh were identified as Nallapeta Adisheshaiah Raviteja, Sreedhar Mudiam and Jaya Lakshmi Gelli, while those from Kerala were identified as Avicot Cherian Thomas and Loveni

Thomas.

The governments in the three southern states have issued helpline numbers to assist relatives of the affected persons.

Earlier on Sunday, the embassy said 16 of the 17 surviving tourists were discharged from the hospital and were on their way to India.

"After obtaining medical treatment, 15 survivors of yesterday's tragic boat accident have been discharged from hospital and are travelling back to India," the embassy said in a separate post on X.

"Of the two patients in critical care, one has been discharged and is travelling back to India. The other is undergoing treatment at a hospital in Phu Quoc," it said.

It added that teams from the embassy and consulate are at Phu Quoc for any assistance.

Phu Quoc, Vietnam's largest island, is a major tourist destination, known for its white-sand beaches, coral reefs and island-hopping excursions. (PTI)

Trump, Iran's supreme leader trade threats as fate of Hormuz challenges talks



DUBAI, July 12: US and Iranian leaders traded threats on Saturday as the interim deal to end the war buckled under crossfire in the Middle East, and efforts continued to keep talks going. President Donald Trump, overnight on social media, threatened further missile attacks against Iran, after the funeral of Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei saw open calls for the US leader's killing.

Later, Iranian Supreme Leader Mojtaba Khamenei vowed that Iranians would continue to avenge his

father's death. Such revenge "is the will of our nation and must certainly be carried out," he said in remarks carried by state television. He still has not been seen publicly since the war began on February 28 with strikes that killed his father. The exchange of threats followed days of US airstrikes targeting Iran, sparked by Iran's attacks on three ships in the strait, and Iranian retaliatory fire targeting Arab nations in the region.

Tehran has insisted that the strait remain under its control and that it

be allowed to charge ships moving through it, a stance it took after the war began. Senior US officials have demanded that Iran make a public statement saying the Strait of Hormuz is open and ships won't be attacked.

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi on Saturday said he met with his counterpart in Oman, located on the other side of the strait, to discuss the waterway and "appropriate mechanisms for ensuring the safe passage of ships." Oman said it and Iran agreed to keep talking "at the technical and political levels."

Trump has declared the ceasefire over but said the US would continue negotiations. Trump says he responded to threats to kill him

A thousand "missiles are Locked and Loaded and aimed at the Islamic Republic of Iran, with thousands more to immediately follow, should the Iranian Government act on its threat," Trump wrote on his website. (AP)

109 terrorists killed in anti-terror onslaught in Pak's Balochistan

ISLAMABAD, July 12: Over 105 terrorists have been killed in a week in the restive Balochistan province of Pakistan, 71 of them since July 7 when Operation Shaban was launched, defence officials said on Sunday.

Balochistan, which has been facing unrest for about two decades, has in recent months seen an uptick in the violence by the ethnic Baloch rebels and Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan militants who target the security forces in the region.

Official sources said that 109 terrorists have been killed since July 5, including 71 killed in Operation Shaban, jointly carried out by the Pakistan Army, Frontier Corps (FC) and Balochistan Police.

Codenamed Operation Shaban, the onslaught was unleashed on July 7 after attacks by terrorists killed several security personnel at the beginning of the week.

This operation was targeting the terrorists in the Shaban areas of the Quetta district, where 27 police officials were killed on July 5 during an attack on a police post at Mangi dam pumping station that supplies water to Balochistan capital Quetta and surrounding areas.

At least seven more terrorists were killed in the last 24 hours in the ongoing operation, taking the tally of killed rebels to 71, defence officials said on Sunday.

Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi lauded the security forces, the FC and police following the killing of the seven terrorists.

"The action by the Pakistan Army, FC and police is reflective of the protection of national security. There is no place for terrorist elements in Pakistan," he was quoted as saying by his ministry.

He added that the nation was standing with the security forces and action against terrorists would continue. (PTI)

Diaspora group plans to build India museum in Washington DC

WASHINGTON, July 12: From the Indus Valley Civilisation to a nation on the rise, the India story may soon come alive at a museum here -- a first-of-its-kind project aimed at the younger generations of the Indian diaspora.

The India Heritage Centre is scouting for a suitable location in the American capital to house the brick-and-mortar museum that would use immersive technology, virtual reality, interactive exhibits and multimedia displays to present India's contributions over the years to a global audience.

"The aim is to propagate awareness on India's age-old rich civilisational strength, educating the diaspora, especially younger generations, instilling pride, dispelling ignorance and perhaps sensitising the global multiethnic community," Indian-American educationist Amitabh Sharma told PTI.

Sharma has approached the Indian Embassy here for the use of a building purchased by it in 2013 in the heart of the American capital to set up the museum. This museum is envisioned as a

global centre for Indian civilisation, history and heritage, a powerful educational resource for future generations and multiethnic communities, a cultural bridge fostering greater understanding and awareness, and a permanent legacy for the diaspora and supporters worldwide.

"At a time when narratives shape global perception, future generations require authentic institutions that preserve, present, and celebrate India's extraordinary contributions to humanity," Sharma said, adding a similar museum is also planned in Atlanta, Georgia and in other locations.

The museum is proposed to have 10 galleries mapping the Indus Valley Civilisation, the Vedic Foundation, contributions of Indian innovations, spiritual prowess, Bharat's valiant protectors, India's cultural finesse, colonial invasions and resistance, Independence icons, India's inclusive economic growth story, and futuristic global leadership vision.

Over the past eight years, Sharma has consulted indologists, historians and ar-



chaeologists to validate the content for the museum.

A well-appointed auditorium for intellectual discourse will complement the historic presentations, Sharma said, adding that the India Heritage Centre was prepared to purchase land in the American capital if the proposed arrangement with the Embassy does not bear fruit.

The museum will also serve other eth-

nic immigrants in the US, who may have limited knowledge of India's greatness, inclusiveness, contributions, and unity in diversity.

The India Heritage Centre estimates the total project cost to be between USD 12 million and USD 14 million and it looks forward to raising funds through high-net-worth individuals, corporate sponsorships, grants, crowdfunding and community support. (PTI)

Ukrainian PM to step down as Zelenskyy announces government reshuffle

KYIV, July 12: Ukrainian Prime Minister Yulia Svyrydenko stepped down on Sunday as President Volodymyr Zelenskyy announced fresh changes to Ukraine's government. In a statement on social media, Svyrydenko said she was "proud to have had the honor of leading the government during one of the most difficult periods in Ukraine's modern history." She also said she had discussed "next steps" with Zelenskyy, but did not provide further details.

"I remain ready to serve the Ukrainian state and carry out every task aimed at strengthening Ukraine's position, defending our national interests and bringing a just peace closer," she said. Svyrydenko, Ukraine's former economy minister, was named prime minister in July 2025 at the age of 39 after playing a lead role in securing a mineral agreement between Ukraine and the US, seen as an important way of tying U.S. interests to Ukraine's security.

Zelenskyy announced her resignation in a post saying that Ukraine was "changing its political strategy."

He also said he had offered Svyrydenko the opportunity to lead "a new,

important area" in Ukraine's relations with a key international partner.

"Each priority area of foreign policy will be assigned to a specific person with substantial experience who is capable of implementing what we agree on at the leaders' level and what the Ukrainian people expect," Zelenskyy said, describing the impending reshuffle. The Ukrainian leader also said there would be changes among the top ranks of Ukraine's law enforcement agencies. Ukraine continues strikes against Russian oil sites Elsewhere, a Ukrainian attack in southwest Russia killed one person and wounded three more, local officials said Sunday, as Kyiv's forces continued to bombard Russia's oil facilities.

The head of Russia's Samara region, Gov. Vyacheslav Fedorishchev, said that a child was among the injured. He also said that residential homes and apartment buildings were damaged in the strike, as well as an unspecified "industrial site."

Russian media outlets reported that the attack's target was the region's Syzran Oil Refinery, with many sharing images that appeared to show plumes of black smoke rising over the site. (AP)

'The prime minister returned having brought victory to the nation' PM Modi returned with diplomatic gains, Rahul Gandhi 'conspiring' abroad: BJP

NEW DELHI, July 12: The BJP on Sunday presented a 'report card' on the outcomes of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's recent foreign tours and attacked Rahul Gandhi, saying the prime minister returned having secured a victory for the country, while the Congress leader, who is abroad, must be "conspiring" behind closed doors.

Addressing a press conference at the BJP headquarters here, party spokesperson Sambit Patra cited Indonesian President Prabowo Subianto's remarks that he adopted many of Modi's policies, and took a dig at Gandhi, saying if the Congress leader had emulated Modi "even a little bit", he would not have lost 99 elections.

Patra also took on the Congress



and other opposition parties, citing New Zealand Prime Minister Christopher Luxon's remarks acknowledging the transformation in India under Modi's leadership.

"Just think what New Zealand Prime Minister Christopher Luxon

said. And the Congress party in India refuses to accept it. I think our opposition should also learn something," he said. Patra highlighted various achievements of Modi's three-nation tour of Indonesia, Australia and New Zealand and said, "The prime minis-

ter went on a (foreign) tour and Rahul Gandhi too. The prime minister returned having brought victory to the nation, while Rahul Gandhi is surely conspiring behind closed doors."

Gandhi is likely "plotting" how to disrupt the good work being done under Prime Minister Modi's leadership, Patra charged further.

"You must be wondering where 'Rahul Baba' is. Go ahead, try to find out. A programme scheduled for him in Prayagraj on July 10 was postponed. There was an event in Patna as well; that too was postponed. There seem to be stamps on his passport from places like London, Iceland, and Germany, who knows? He is off on a tour," the BJP MP added. (PTI)

Veteran TMC leader Rabindranath Ghosh joins Ritabrata camp

COOCH BEHAR, July 12: Veteran TMC leader and former North Bengal Development Minister Rabindranath Ghosh on Sunday claimed that most dissident leaders who joined the Ritabrata Banerjee-led rebel faction would return to Mamata Banerjee if she succeeded in sidelining her nephew, Abhishek Banerjee, from active politics.

Ghosh emerged as the latest entrant to the rebel Trinamool Congress faction led by Leader of Opposition Ritabrata Banerjee and sever ties with the Mamata Banerjee-led camp, marking a significant political shift in Cooch Behar and further deepening the embattled party's rift.

The development comes less than 24 hours of the rebel camp stepping up its bid for control of the party and unveiling its parallel state and district committees,



drawing several of Mamata Banerjee's longtime loyalists – including former Birbhum strongman Anubrata Mondal – into its fold in a decisive shift from political rebellion to institution-building.

Ghosh, who is likely to be named the party's Cooch Behar district president by the rebels, expressed strong criticism of Abhishek Banerjee and political consultancy firm I-PAC, stating

that the TMC's setback in the assembly polls was largely the result of their influence.

"From what I have figured after speaking to many party leaders is that Mamata Banerjee needs to remove Abhishek from the domain of active politics, at least for the time being. I believe that would make the dissident leaders and workers return to her."

"There's no denying that Abhishek's whims and fancies... over 80 sitting MLAs and ministers were denied poll tickets and many others removed from their organisational positions, had a severe impact on the party," Ghosh told reporters.

A former TMC district president for over two decades and a longtime associate of Mamata Banerjee, Ghosh questioned whether the party supremo retained effective control over it. (PTI)

Former Sena (UBT) MP, kin booked after daughter-in-law accuses them of torture

THANE/MUMBAI, July 12: Former Shiv Sena (UBT) Lok Sabha member Vinayak Raut, his son and five others were booked for allegedly physically, mentally and financially torturing his daughter-in-law and also subjecting her to black magic, a police official said on Sunday.

The FIR was registered on June 10 at Kapurbawdi police station here by Girija Raut (38), the estranged wife of Raut's son Jitesh, also referred to as Gitesh, the official said.

"The case was registered under Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) and Maharashtra Prevention and Eradication of Human Sacrifice and other Inhuman, Evil and Aghori Practices and Black Magic Act for physical, mental, and financial torture and also subjecting her to occult rituals," he said.

As per the complainant, her marriage was arranged with Gitesh in December 2017 despite the Raut family knowing that he was unable to maintain physical relations, the official said.

"The victim has alleged that throughout their travels to countries like Australia, New Zealand, Kenya, and Thailand, she was con-

stantly abused and beaten when she questioned the lack of a physical relationship. Instead, she was told that an 'external obstacle' was blocking their path," the official said citing the complaint.

She has also said several persons, including two self-proclaimed godmen, performed various indecent acts under the guise of removing the 'obstacle'.

"The victim has claimed her mother-in-law forced her to consume pills to suppress her menstruation, severely affecting her health. The victim also claimed she was subjected to medical negligence when specialists allegedly refused her proper treatment, instead suggesting home insemination," the official said citing the complaint.

Denying all the allegations, former MP Vinayak Raut said divorce proceedings are already on between the Gitesh and Girija.

He said during the negotiations between the lawyers of the two parties, Girija Raut had demanded a three BHK flat with terrace, an automatic car, maintenance of ₹ 2 lakh per month and ₹ 5 crore as settlement amount.

"We did not accept any of the demands," Vinayak Raut said. (PTI)

Parliament panel proposes suspension, not removal, of jailed ministers

NEW DELHI, July 12: Amid concerns raised by the opposition parties, a parliamentary panel has recommended that the prime minister, Union ministers and chief ministers be suspended and not permanently removed from their posts, if they are detained for 30 straight days on charges of serious offences.

It also proposed an automatic reversal clause if such persons are acquitted or the prosecution does not proceed within a specified period. The joint committee of Parliament examining the 130th Constitution Amendment Bill made two specific and three general recommendations.

Introduced last August, the Bill seeks to automatically remove the prime minister, ministers or chief ministers on the 31st day of their detention if they don't step down on their own. The opposition had dubbed the Bill a tool to destabilise governments run by them.

Most opposition parties had opted out of the joint committee examining the Bill.

In its report likely to be adopted this week, the panel has proposed that the term "removal" be replaced with "suspension", i.e., "ministers facing specified criminal



charges should be suspended, not permanently removed, pending the outcome of legal proceedings".

It also defined "serious criminal offences", saying the term should refer to offences punishable with imprisonment of up to five years or more. Proposing the introduction of a sunset or automatic reversal clause, it said the suspension should automatically end if the minister is acquitted or the prosecution does not proceed within a specified period.

The panel said the safeguard ensures reappointment and that the suspension does not become permanent for those found not guilty by courts. The joint committee also recommended that cases involving

high-level constitutional functionaries should be tried in fast-track or special courts, in line with the Supreme Court's directions.

The proposed law should include a separate schedule listing offences punishable with imprisonment of up to five years or more to clearly identify the offences that would entail suspension, the panel said. The Bill was introduced with an aim to ensure that governments are not run from jail.

If the recommendations are accepted, the Ministry of Home Affairs will approach the Union Cabinet with the proposed amendments and later bring official amendments in the Lok Sabha. (PTI)

NCP (SP) leader Khadse admits Delhi visit, but says will remain with Sharad Pawar

MUMBAI, July 12: NCP (SP) leader Eknath Khadse has acknowledged that he had travelled to Delhi, but asserted he was no longer interested in rejoining the BJP and would remain with Sharad Pawar till the end.

Khadse, a former BJP leader, is currently a member of the legislative council (MLC) from the Sharad Pawar-led Nationalist Congress Party (SP). Recently, it was reported that BJP general secretary Vinod Tawde had called on former state minister Khadse at his residence, fueling speculation about the veteran leader's return to the saffron party.

During the 2024 Lok Sabha election campaign, reports of Khadse's possible return to the BJP had gained traction after photographs of his meetings with senior party leaders in New Delhi surfaced. However, the move did not materialise.

"Yes, I had gone to Delhi. Amit Shah had called me and asked me to join the BJP. But senior BJP leaders told me that if I was inducted into the party, local leaders would not work. They even said they would ensure the party lose the Lok Sabha seat if I was taken back," Khadse

claimed in a video released on Saturday.

"The seniors then told me to continue working for them in the Lok Sabha elections and that they would see later. So who exactly is opposing my entry?" he asked.

Khadse did not specify which seat he was referring to. His daughter-in-law Raksha Khadse is a BJP MP from Raver Lok Sabha seat in Maharashtra's Jalgaon district and is currently a Union minister.

Clarifying speculation triggered by his recent meeting with Tawde in Mumbai, Eknath Khadse said it was only a courtesy call.

"He enquired about my health and there was no political discussion. I invited him to my birthday function. I have also invited Nitin Gadkari, and he has told me he will attend," the MLC said.

"I want to make it clear that I have no interest in joining the BJP now. I am with Sharad Pawar and will remain with him till the end. My workers may be interested in joining the BJP, but I am not," he asserted.

Meanwhile, state minister Girish Mahajan dismissed reports claiming that he stalled Eknath Khadse's return to the BJP. (PTI)

CJP protest day 23: Wangchuk's health worsens as fast enters 15th day



NEW DELHI, July 12: Educator and climate activist Sonam Wangchuk's health deteriorated further on Sunday as his indefinite hunger strike entered the 15th day, with doctors reporting a further drop in his blood pressure and a total weight loss of 7.8 kg since the fast began.

The Cockroach Janta Party's (CJP) protest at Jantar Mantar in Delhi over alleged examination irregularities entered its 23rd day on Sunday.

According to a health update shared by the organisation, Wangchuk's blood pressure dropped to 104/66 mm Hg, while his total weight loss since the beginning of the hunger strike reached 7.8 kg.

Additionally, the CJP stated that several political leaders and public intellectuals were scheduled to visit the protest site during the day to express solidarity with the agitation.

According to the outfit, former Kerala ministers K K Shylaja, K N Balagopal and P Rajeev are scheduled to interact with the protesters, while Samajwadi Party MP Pushpendra Saroj is expected to address the gathering on Sunday.

The day's programme will conclude with a public lecture by economist Jayati Ghosh on 'The Economics of Unemployment', focusing on the employment crisis and its impact on young people, the CJP

said.

Members of the CPI(ML) Liberation-affiliated All India Students' Association (AISA) -- Neha, Manish, Deepak Kumar Verma and Aameen -- continued their indefinite hunger strike on a separate stage at the protest site.

On Saturday, Wangchuk urged people not to look for heroes in others, saying he was "just an ordinary citizen", not a "modern Gandhi" or a hero.

"Please don't look for a hero in someone else. Be the hero of your own life. Fulfil your responsibilities as a citizen," he had said in a video posted on X.

He also appealed to people to join the proposed march to Parliament on July 20, saying citizens should come together to urge MPs to address issues related to alleged examination irregularities.

The CJP has been demanding Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan's resignation and Rs 1 crore compensation for the families of students who died by suicide over alleged examination irregularities.

The outfit has also announced a peaceful march to Parliament on July 20, the opening day of the Monsoon Session.

The CJP protest began on June 20, while Wangchuk joined the agitation on June 28 and has been on an indefinite hunger strike since then. (PTI)

PM Modi condoles demise of ex-ruler of Qatar

NEW DELHI, July 12: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday expressed grief over the passing away of former ruler of Qatar, Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani, and described him as a visionary leader who led the Gulf country to great levels of development and prosperity.

Modi said India remembers the late leader as a "true friend". The former ruler of Qatar died at the age of 74, the state media reported.

"We deeply mourn the passing of Father Amir of State of Qatar, HH Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani. A visionary leader who led Qatar to great levels of development and prosperity, we remember him also as a true friend whom I had the honour of meeting during my last visit to Qatar in February 2024," Modi said in a post on X.

The prime minister conveyed his sincere condolences to the Amir of Qatar, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani and the entire royal family and people of Qatar for the demise of the former ruler of Qatar.

"May the departed soul rest in eternal peace," he said. (PTI)

Omar defends invite to Mirwaiz for Delhi protest

JAMMU, July 12: Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Sunday defended the National Conference's decision to invite moderate Hurriyat Conference leader Mirwaiz Umar Farooq to a proposed protest in Delhi next week, and accused the BJP and sections of the media of deliberately creating a controversy to divert attention from the party's campaign for the restoration of statehood to J&K.

Addressing a 'Delhi Chalo!' rally here ahead of the proposed protest in the capital on July 20, Abdullah alleged that the controversy surrounding the invitation had been manufactured to undermine the National Conference's political programme.

"We invited more than 50 people. Out of all those names, they picked just one – a religious leader from Kashmir. Their favourite television channels turned that single invitation into a prime-time controversy, claiming that the National Conference invited a separatist leader to Delhi," Abdullah said. He also questioned what he described as contradictory claims by the BJP and sections of the media.

"For years, I have heard the home minister (Amit Shah) repeatedly say that there are no separatists left in Kashmir. BJP leaders also claim that separatist thinking has been eliminated under Prime Minister Narendra Modi," Abdullah said, arguing that if those claims were true, it was contradictory to simultaneously portray the in-



videe (the Mirwaiz) as a separatist.

"If separatist ideology has indeed been eliminated, the person we invited cannot possibly be a separatist. And if he is a separatist, you are effectively saying that the prime minister and the home minister misled the country. Both cannot be true at the same time," Abdullah, who is also the vice-president of National Conference, said.

The entire controversy had been manufactured solely to shift public attention away from the National Conference's demand for the restoration of Jammu and Kashmir's statehood, he added. He also said that the large turnout at the rally in Jammu demonstrated that people across J&K remained firmly committed to the demand for statehood, despite attempts to divert the public discourse.

"The Centre should understand from today's gathering that the people of Jammu and Kashmir are not silent on the issue of restoring statehood," he said. (PTI)

Kejriwal announces nationwide signature campaign over Ram temple donation 'theft'



NEW DELHI, July 12: The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) on Sunday launched a nationwide signature campaign demanding strict punishment for those allegedly involved in the donation theft at the Ram temple in Ayodhya, following which a Sundarkand recitation programme was organised by the party at the Japanese Park in Ro-

hini. AAP national convenor Arvind Kejriwal said the campaign was being launched with the blessings of Lord Hanuman and appealed to people to participate by signing letters addressed to Prime Minister Narendra Modi seeking strict action against those responsible for what the party termed "chanda-chori" at the temple.

As part of the campaign, Kejriwal appealed to people to organise Hanuman Chalisa recitations and Hanuman Aarti at their homes, residential societies and other localities, gather devotees and encourage them to sign the letter addressed to the prime minister.

He noted that the signature campaign would be carried out across the country and was not limited to AAP workers.

He also said Ram devotees and people who were hurt by the alleged developments would participate in the campaign, with signed letters later being sent to the prime minister.

Addressing a press conference,

Kejriwal accused those responsible for the alleged misconduct related to the Ram temple of being shielded from accountability and called for strict punishment for them.

Meanwhile, the Delhi BJP criticised the AAP's move, with Delhi BJP president Harsh Malhotra alleging that organising Sundarkand recitations was a "political gimmick" aimed at reviving Kejriwal's political fortunes.

He accused Kejriwal of using religious programs for political advantage and questioned why the Sundarkand recitation initiatives announced by the AAP government in 2024 had not been continued.

He also alleged that the initiative was aimed at influencing voters in states where elections are due.

The BJP leader further accused Kejriwal of displaying "hypocritical devotion" in the name of Lord Hanuman and the Sundarkand Paath, while referring to his earlier remarks on the Ram temple issue. (PTI)

Drive in Indore to plant 21 lakh saplings, install 51,000 rainwater harvesting units

'There is no better means than trees to maintain ecological balance'

INDORE, July 12: Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Mohan Yadav launched a campaign in Indore on Sunday to plant 21 lakh saplings and install 51,000 rainwater harvesting units during the monsoon as part of efforts to tackle climate change and water scarcity.

Addressing a gathering at the function here, Yadav said Prime Minister Narendra Modi's 'Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam' campaign has evolved into a mass movement across the country.

Climate change posed growing challenges and discussions were underway on the possible impact of El Nino on this year's monsoon, he noted.

"Plantation is the most effective way to address these challenges. There is no better means than trees to maintain ecological balance," the chief minister said.

Yadav said nearly 2.75 lakh water conservation works valued at around ₹ 10,000 crore have been



undertaken this year under the state government's 'Jal Ganga Samvardhan Abhiyan'.

State Urban Development and Housing Minister Kailash Vijayvargiya, who is spearheading the plantation drive in Indore, said locations had already been identified for planting 22.5 lakh saplings in the city during the current monsoon against the target of 21 lakh

plantations.

The campaign also marked the launch of a drive to install 51,000 rainwater harvesting units across the city.

Vijayvargiya said Indore faced a severe water crisis this summer as nearly 80 per cent of its borewells had dried up. "If we harvest rainwater, next summer will be much better for us," he said.

Indore, the country's cleanest city with a population of over 35 lakh, depends largely on the Narmada river for its drinking water needs. Water is pumped from Jalud in neighbouring Khargone district through an about 80-km pipeline and supplied to households on alternate days.

During the function, Yadav also felicitated Border Security Force (BSF) constables Ravi Chauhan and Ramendra Singh and announced a reward of ₹ 2 lakh each from the state government. The two personnel had displayed exemplary courage despite suffering serious injuries in an improvised explosive device (IED) blast during an anti-Naxal operation in Chhattisgarh last year, according to officials.

State BJP president Hemant Khandelwal and Panchayat and Rural Development Minister Prahlad Singh Patel were also present at the event. (PTI)

Argentina scores past Switzerland 3-1

KANSAS CITY (US), July 12: Perhaps it is in Argentina's character that the reigning World Cup champion always finds a way to win.

Perhaps it is simply its ability to suffer.

Whether it was tiny Cape Verde taking them to extra time, or Egypt burying them in a two-goal hole late in their match, Lionel Messi and La Albiceleste have always been able to survive. And that was the case once more on Saturday night, when Julián Alvarez's long-range strike in the 112th minute and Lautaro Martínez's finish later in extra time sent them back to the semifinals with a thrilling 3-1 victory over Switzerland at raucous Arrowhead Stadium.

"We're among the best four," Alvarez said, "so we're meeting our objectives, and we knew it wasn't going to be easy. The whole match was hard, and we would have loved to have the win earlier, but we tried to get the win however we could."

"It seems like if there's no suffering, it doesn't count," Argentina's Leandro Paredes added, "but as long as the results come through."

Alexis Mac Allister had the other goal off a corner kick from Messi for La Albiceleste, helping to send them into a showdown with England on Wednesday in Atlanta. The Three Lions beat Norway 2-1 earlier in the day.

Messi's nine-game World Cup scoring streak ended, but his pursuit



of a second World Cup title continues. With Argentina and England joining France and Spain in the semifinals, it's the first time the top four teams in the FIFA rankings have advanced that far.

"A match is coming up," Paredes said, "that every kid dreams of playing."

The game against Switzerland swung on a call sure to rile up those who think Argentina has been favored by World Cup officials.

The Swiss had just tied the game on Dan Ndoye's goal in the 67th minute when Paredes was shown a yellow card for a tackle on Breel Embolo. But video showed the Swiss player falling before the Argentina midfielder made contact with him, and since Embolo received a yellow card earlier in the

match, he was sent off and Switzerland was left to defend with 10 players.

It was the second time a yellow card has been overturned using the "mistaken identity" protocol at the World Cup.

The rule allows the video assistant referee to intervene when an incorrect player is shown a yellow or red card.

"We were punished because of a rule that in my opinion is completely unacceptable," Switzerland coach Murat Yakin said. "I don't understand. It's very painful that we were eliminated that way. I don't think we deserve that today, in my opinion."

It was a maddening end to the Swiss' first World Cup quarterfinal appearance since 1954. They still

have never made a semifinal, nor have they beaten Argentina in eight meetings — three of those in the tournament that matters the most.

"It was just a disaster," Switzerland's Remo Freuler said of the red card.

Argentina has made its base for the past month in Kansas City, training at the home of Major League Soccer club Sporting Kansas City while winning over thousands of new fans. And on Saturday night, they filled Arrowhead Stadium for the second time this tournament, hoping to see Messi make more magic after his hat trick against Algeria in the same building a few weeks ago.

It was brutally hot and humid throughout the day, but the temperatures began to fall with the setting sun, producing a picturesque setting for the 100th match of an expanded World Cup, and the final match of the quarterfinal round.

The defensive-minded Swiss had only conceded three goals in five games, and they dominated the ball in the opening minutes.

But leave it to Messi, whose eight goals in the tournament are tied for the most with France's Kylian Mbappé, to send a jolt through that heavily pro-Argentina crowd which included Chiefs quarterback Patrick Mahomes.

He helped to earn an early corner kick with some nifty footwork, then delivered the ball that Mac Allister turned into a 1-0 lead.

For most of the match, the Swiss struggled to break down an Argentina back line that had conceded two goals apiece in its last two games. And it didn't help their cause that they were playing without Johan Manzabi, one of their best goal-scorers, who remained out with a knee injury after missing their round of 16 penalty shootout win over Colombia.

But after forcing Argentina goalkeeper Emiliano Martínez into making a couple of tough second-half saves, the Swiss broke through when Ricardo Rodríguez slipped a tidy pass to Ndoye and he easily found the back of the net.

Whatever momentum the equalizer gave the Swiss disappeared with Embolo's red card a few minutes later.

Argentina turned up the pressure with Mac Allister missing wide with a header in the 89th minute, and Messi creating an opportunity in front of the goal that he sent just wide in the second minute of stoppage time, leaving the game tied into extra time.

There, just as they have all tournament, La Albiceleste found a way to keep their quest for back-to-back championships alive.

"We knew this could happen," Argentina midfielder Thiago Almada said. "They have top players, very good position, they were trying to find people inside. We knew how to hold up and we made it through." (AP)

Norway's World Cup run ends

Erling Haaland neutralised by England and subbed off late



MIAMI GARDENS (US), July 12: Erling Haaland's day ended earlier than many expected. About 15 minutes later, Norway's run in the World Cup ended as well.

The Vikings' biggest star didn't shine Saturday.

Haaland was a nonfactor for much of his team's quarterfinal against England and — at least in part because of the strain of dealing with hot and humid conditions in South Florida — was taken out with Norway's hopes hanging in the balance going into the final 15 minutes of extra time.

The final score: England 2, Norway 1.

Haaland was kept off the scoresheet for the first time in this World Cup; he had scored seven times in his four appearances going into Saturday, but barely had a chance to add to that total Saturday.

"This has been an insane journey," Haaland said.

Haaland acknowledged afterward that his energy was gone as the game, which was played with a heat index topping 100 degrees Fahrenheit (38 Celsius), wore along.

"It was not a tough decision to take him out," Norway coach Ståle Solbakken said. "He was finished. Maybe I should have taken him out 10 minutes before. ... He also got a dead leg in the second half, so that combined with the fatigue. He did everything he could."

The Manchester City striker was, without question, one of the stars of the tournament — but England silenced him. And his former Borussia Dortmund

teammate, Jude Bellingham, wound up stealing the show by scoring both goals.

Haaland and Bellingham shared an embrace when the game ended, before the Norwegian striker made the long, slow walk from the field to the locker room for the final time in this World Cup.

He was already a star within the sport coming into the tournament — but his larger-than-most-in-soccer frame and larger-than-life personality, combined with his long blond hair and unique mannerisms, turned Haaland into a soccer folk hero.

"I think this has changed my life, to be honest," Haaland said.

England's plan — forged in part by his Manchester City teammates and others who have played with and against him at the club level — was clear: Do not let Haaland get the ball. It was largely successful.

Haaland had two shot attempts in the game, one on goal, and was virtually silenced after the first half. There was a 2-on-1 chance late in the first half where a pass didn't go his way; if it had, that may have been his best scoring opportunity.

There wasn't much for him to get excited about the rest of the way. He stayed on the field for a few minutes after the final whistle, saluting Norway's fans after the team's best World Cup run ever. When the 2030 tournament rolls around, it won't be a surprise if Norway makes another deep run — and that's clearly going to be the goal.

"I think we put Norway on the map," he said. (AP)

Pujara flags poor fielding, lack of all-round depth after England defeat

NEW DELHI, July 12: Former India batter Cheteshwar Pujara has blamed India's lack of middle-order depth, shortage of quality all-rounders and poor fielding for the team's forgettable T20I tour of England.

India suffered their first-ever bilateral T20I series defeat to England after Harry Brook and Co. won the fifth and final match in Southampton by 56 runs, sealing a historic 4-0 series victory. India also lost the preceding series against Ireland 0-2 for the first time.

"England had batters at numbers five, six, seven and eight who contributed. When it comes to India, you had Tilak (Varma) at number five and Shivam Dube at number six, but they haven't contributed as much as England's middle order," Pujara said on JioHotstar's 'Match Centre Live'.

"Yes, there is a failure at the top of the order, but India also doesn't have enough depth when it comes to their all-rounders, and that is a huge concern. The fielding has also been very poor."

"You can accept that a young side doesn't perform well with the bat and the ball, but not fielding well is unacceptable. In the shorter format, fielding wins you games. You do make errors sometimes, but throughout the series, India has been very poor in the field, and that's a big concern."

Former India assistant coach Abhishek Nayar said it a good wake-up call for the Indian batters as they consistently failed to deal with the short balls during the tour.

"This series has been an eye-opener for them. Even when they played in Ireland and now in England, very rarely do you remember in a T20 format where teams have constantly targeted you with short balls. Almost every batter has been targeted with that," he said.

"It just tells you that England were better prepared than the Indian team and most importantly, India failed to adapt. I think Australian conditions will be different. India has predominantly done well in Australia because

the ball actually comes on. There is not a lot of spongy bounce like they've felt in England.

"It's a good wake-up call. It's a good reflection of what this team needs to do to win abroad. But I think come the World Cup, you'll find a more equipped team. And there'll be a lot of batters who'll go back and start working on the short ball immediately."

Harsh to say that Iyer's future is in jeopardy as a captain

Nayar also backed new captain Shreyas Iyer, saying he deserves time and ownership. "When you give someone the mantle of taking over from a champion side, you also want to give him the liberty of picking his side. The first time you become captain, you don't get the liberty of saying, 'This is where I want to take the team,'" he said.

"You first handle the team and then see what you need to do with it. Post these two series, he'll have time to reflect, understand what he requires from this team, how he needs them to play and what he needs from the support staff. So, it will be harsh to say that Shreyas Iyer's future is in jeopardy as a captain."

Nayar, who is also the head coach of the Kolkata Knight Riders in IPL, said Iyer needs the liberty to decide the course of the T20I side.

"It's been a really hard series, and you can point fingers at Shreyas Iyer, but the more rational thing is to understand what he requires from this team. 'Give him the ownership of feeling like this is his team, like Harry Brook does right now, Ben Stokes did with the England Test team, or Rohit Sharma did for India when he was the captain, or Virat Kohli did, especially with the Test team."

"Then it's a better place to judge him. Even Shubman Gill, when he first became the ODI captain, didn't win a few series first up. As you get into your own, you build confidence and the team you envision. It's still early days, there's no panic button, but there needs to be clarity as to where this team is going." (PTI)

Look beyond 'IPL make-up' while picking T20 side: Manjrekar



NEW DELHI, July 12: Former India batter Sanjay Manjrekar said instead of blaming the players for the T20I debacle, attention should be on addressing issues in the IPL, while selectors should pick players without the "IPL make-up" as India will play a lot of cricket overseas. The defending champions endured a forgettable tour, losing 0-2 to Ireland before suffering a 0-4 drubbing at the hands of England in the five-match T20I series, with the opening match being washed out. It was India's first T20I series or tournament defeat in three years.

"The easy thing would be to hold players responsible for this overseas T20 setback. The right thing would be to hold those responsible who have made IPL such,

that it puts a heavy make up on Indian batters," Manjrekar wrote on 'X'.

"Challenge is for the selectors to imagine Indian batters without the heavy IPL make up on & pick only those for India. A lot of T20 cricket will be overseas now. The home fun run is over."

Following the T20 series, India will play three ODIs in England, followed by the Zimbabwe tour for a three-match T20I series starting from July 23. The defending champions will also tour New Zealand in October-November for a series, comprising five T20s and five ODIs besides two Tests.

The IPL has often been criticised for offering batting-friendly pitches with limited assistance for bowlers, encouraging power-hitting over traditional stroke-making. Critics have also argued that smaller boundaries and batting-friendly conditions encourage a power-hitting approach at the expense of building an innings, particularly when the ball moves in overseas conditions.

The impact player rule has also been criticised for hindering the growth of quality allrounders as teams routinely substitute a specialist batter for a specialist bowler.

Former wicketkeeper batter Parthiv Patel also recently blamed the IPL's "Impact Player" rule for the all-rounder crisis. (PTI)

Rising table tennis star Abhinandh PB sets sights on bigger targets

PANAJI, July 12: Beating the likes of Isaac Quek and Lilian Bardet and winning a host of national and international events have only been part of the journey for India's rising table tennis talent Abhinandh PB, whose steady rise has raised expectations around him.

Abhinandh defeated Quek to make waves last year in the Ultimate Table Tennis, and this year, playing for the Dempo Goa Challengers, he began with a 3-0 hammering of world No. 42 Bardet from France.

For the 18-year-old Abhinandh, who has won the gold medal in WTT Youth Star Contender (Doha) and a bronze in the Asian Youth Championships this year, the task is to remain focussed on his ultimate goal of winning the Olympics gold.

"... but it does make me hungry for more," Abhinandh told PTI in an exclusive interview on the side-

lines of UTT season 7 when asked about his famous wins in limited appearances. "... because what I keep in my head is that (the 23-year-old Tomokazu) Harimoto has done so many things in this young age and even I am crossing that age barrier. I will have to compete with him; that's what I have in my mind. "After any win, big or small, my usual thing is that I will be focused on the next match. Sometimes I might take it into my head, which impacts me in other ways. But I am still learning. I want to improve. I am always hungry for more and that is what my coach has taught me," he added.

Abhinandh said having the right mindset in the season opener to get the better of Bardet was pleasing for him.

"This year, I am glad I started really well. I had a good mindset and also facing my ex-teammate Lilian Bardet, he is like a big brother to

me," he said.

"I have learnt so many things from UTT, for example, which serve I have to put at the starting of the game, middle, and as well as the last of the game and also, which serve I have to expect from the opponent," he added.

Abhinandh said while his ultimate goal is the Olympics goal, the immediate target is to achieve No. 1 ranking in the youth circuit.

"My bigger goal is to win an Olympic medal for India. The gold one, I would say. That is my ultimate goal. If you ask for this year, I am currently No. 11, but I want to get into the top six and also eventually No. 1 by the end of next year," Abhinandh said.

"Next year is my last in youth category. I will have to get into the No.1 spot and as well as to transform into a senior player. After completing 19 years (of age) I want to get into top 100 of the senior

rankings," he added.

The Chennai boy, who won the men's doubles gold with Preyesh Suresh Raj at last year's Senior National Table Tennis Championships, counts some of the biggest names in world sport among his idols.

"Kobe Bryant, because his work ethic was unbelievable. The amount of work he put in the amount of determination that he had towards the sport just inspired me," he said.

"... and MS Dhoni for his calm. I want to follow it because even in mad pressure situations, he'll be so calm. Even in the toughest situations I have to be as calm as him."

"In table tennis, my idol is Fan Zhendong who's a grand slam champion in table tennis. He's not playing in the WTT series now. He's playing in the German League. I enjoy watching him play," Abhinandh said. (PTI)

Nagaon's Aranya Dutta wins gold at nat'l taekwondo c'ship

HT Correspondent
NAGAON, July 12: Aranya Dutta, a Class VI student of National Academy, Nagaon, brought laurels to Assam by winning a gold and a bronze medal at the 5th India Taekwondo National Championship 2026 held in Pune, Maharashtra.

Aranya clinched the gold medal in the Cadet Pair Poomsae category and secured a bronze medal in the Cadet Male Recognised Individual Poomsae category. His performance has been hailed as a reflection of his hard work, discipline and dedication, earning recognition for both Nagaon and Assam at the national level.

The Department of Sports and Youth Welfare congratulated Aranya Dutta on his achievement and wished him continued success in his sporting career.

Failure to adapt cost us: Iyer vows to learn from the debacle

SOUTHAMPTON, July 12: India failed to adapt to English conditions and were outplayed in all departments by England and Ireland, new skipper Shreyas Iyer said, adding that the experience would only make him a better leader.

Iyer endured a disastrous start to his captaincy after taking over from Suryakumar Yadav following India's T20 World Cup triumph, as the team suffered a 0-2 defeat to Ireland before losing the T20I series 0-4 to England after the opening game was washed out.

"It's not hard, honestly," said Iyer when asked how he dealt with the expectations during the post-match press conference.

"I feel it's a privilege for me to take over the captaincy. Every individual dreams of captaining for the Indian team and taking on from high. Definitely, I love pressure."

"So, for me to thrive under pressure, to learn from these moments is definitely going to make me better going forward. And that's my mindset right now. Not thinking much about how people are going to think about this particular series because good and bad is part and parcel of

this game."

Iyer said maintaining a positive mindset is going to be the key.

"Going forward, I need to be extremely positive enough in how I'm going to basically nurture everyone who is playing around me and especially in overseas conditions," he said.

"We know we are going to play in Australia and many other cities before that. So, the best camaraderie to fit in these conditions is our goal and going forward, that is going to be our plan."

India suffered a 56-run loss against England in the fifth and final T20 at The Rose Bowl on Saturday and Iyer admitted they just couldn't adapt to the conditions quickly during the tour.

"... we kept on going from one venue to another and we kept on facing challenges especially in terms of the dimensions, the grounds, the conditions."

"Just to adapt to it as quickly as we could have anticipated that didn't happen, that was one challenge and the other one is definitely they outplayed us in all departments I would say. So, I think combinations of all these points definitely led to



this result," Iyer said.

The six-match losing streak saw India slip from the No. 1 ranking in T20Is.

"It definitely hurts. But I feel that it's a great learning for me as a captain and also for other players who have played here for the first time. It's all about how you turn

up for the tournament," the Mumbaikar said.

"You can't just have that mindset that you will come to England and you will win the series. You need to work hard, you need to be focused which we were as a team."

"But I personally feel that they played exceptional cricket throughout in all three departments. So, probably the results also went in their favour because they were comprehensive in all three departments."

On the significance of the world No. 1 ranking, Iyer said: "It matters to everyone. If you're number one, I feel you've been doing something great for the team and also personally. And thinking about the World Cup, it's two years from now."

"Everything that's happening around right now is a preparation to the World Cup. So, the earlier and the quicker we learn, it's beneficial for the team environment and also for the players who are coming in here."

Iyer also singled out fielding as an area where India needs to improve to prosper as a team.

"See, majority of us we have played together in the IPL. We know our strengths and weaknesses. Just in terms of the fielding, I think it plays a key role especially building that momentum and energy around the team environment..." he said.

"I think we were definitely dominated by them in that aspect and why I feel field-

ing is very important is because it basically creates a rhythm in the team in all the matches."

"So, especially in T20 where your fitness demands, you need to be agile, you need to be aware about how the conditions are going to be and especially different outfields and different wickets. So, that's one department if we are probably the best, if we basically dream to be the best team-wise, we will definitely prosper." Asked why Vaibhav Sooryavanshi was dropped, Iyer said the team wanted a right-hander and therefore brought back the experienced Sanju Samson.

"We needed to try the best combination that would be perfect on these conditions. And we also wanted a right-hander to go on with Abhishek (Sharma). So, that was one of the major reasons," he said.

"I was the only one out of all the left-handers who was a right-hander. We wanted to try a different combination which would be suitable for this particular game."

"And he's a gun batsman. He has won so many series for us in the past. So, yeah, one of those reasons." (PTI)