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Wangchuk whisked away to hospital

CJP founder Dipke starts hunger strike; Oppn slams govt
Hospital authorities say activist refusing treatment

NEW DELHI, July 18: Citing medical advice and Delhi High Court directions, police whisked away activist Sonam Wangchuk to Safdarjung Hospital on Saturday morning on the 21st day of his hunger strike at the Jantar Mantar here, drawing sharp condemnation from opposition parties which accused the government of curbing dissent.

Ignoring police's call to leave the protest site, the Cockroach Janta Party (CJP) escalated its agitation over the NEET paper leak issue with its founder Abhijeet Dipke announcing an indefinite hunger strike soon after the "crack-down".

The outfit, which has been pressing for education minister Dharmendra Pradhan's removal, demanded Prime Minister Narendra Modi's resignation and vowed



to press ahead with its planned march to Parliament on July 20.

Hospital authorities issued a bulletin at 3.30 pm, saying Wangchuk, 59, has refused intravenous fluids,

oral rehydration solution and other medications despite signs of dehydration and metabolic abnormalities. He is being continuously monitored (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

Woman hurls ink at Dipke

NEW DELHI, July 18: A woman hurled blue ink at Cockroach Janta Party (CJP) founder Abhijeet Dipke as he announced his indefinite hunger strike at Jantar Mantar on Saturday, but he remained unfazed, saying, "Blue is my colour, Jai Bhim," while appealing to his supporters to remain calm.

The incident occurred while Dipke was addressing supporters and announcing the start of his indefinite hunger strike, hours after activist Sonam Wangchuk was taken forcibly to Safdarjung Hospital by the Delhi Police on the 21st day of his hunger (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

Orders declaring 5 women as foreigners challenged SC seeks Assam's response in 2-week time

NEW DELHI, July 18: The Supreme Court has granted two weeks to the Assam government to file its responses on pleas challenging orders declaring five women as foreigners who allegedly entered the state illegally.

A bench of Justices Vikram Nath and Sandeep Mehta passed the order after the counsel appearing for the Assam government sought time to file counter-affidavits in the five petitions.

"As prayed, two weeks' time is granted to the counsel for the respondent - State of Assam to file vakalatnama and counter affidavit(s) in all the cases. List after two weeks," the bench said in its July 16 order.

On June 5, the top court had ordered status quo on the deportation of the petitioners while agreeing to hear their pleas challenging separate orders of the Gauhati High Court.

During the hearing on Thursday, an advocate appearing for one of the petitioners referred to a July 13 ver-



dict of the apex court, which held that the determination of citizenship status must be made through a fair, lawful and reasoned process.

Another advocate appearing for some petitioners said two of the women were in detention and the top court had stayed their deportation by ordering status quo in the matter.

The counsel appearing for the

Assam government sought two weeks to file replies, which was granted by the bench.

The Gauhati High Court had earlier rejected the pleas filed by the petitioners seeking quashing of the orders passed by the Foreigners Tribunals declaring them foreigners or illegal migrants who had illegally entered into India from Bangladesh. In its (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

Mizoram, Assam pledge to strengthen partnership in tourism sector

AIZAWL, July 18: Mizoram and Assam have agreed to strengthen cooperation in the tourism sector, with the two neighbouring states seeking closer coordination to boost footfalls and promote the northeast as a premier travel destination, officials said.

The discussions took place during a meeting between Mizoram Tourism minister Lalnghinglova Hmar and his Assam counterpart Ajanta Neog at the latter's official residence in Guwahati on Saturday.

Highlighting Mizoram's growing tourism potential, Hmar said the state has witnessed a significant rise in tourist arrivals since being connected to the railway network in September last year.

He said that a majority of visitors to Mizoram came from Assam, making closer collaboration between the two states essential for the growth of the tourism

industry.

"Most tourists visiting Mizoram come from Assam. This underscores the need for stronger cooperation between our states in tourism-related activities, and I am confident that our partnership will continue to grow," Hmar was quoted as saying in an official release.

Neog said that the Assam government was keen to deepen tourism ties with Mizoram, describing such cooperation as mutually beneficial for both states.

The two ministers agreed that their respective tourism departments should work in a more structured and coordinated manner, it said.

They also stressed that sustained collaboration among all the northeastern states would be crucial to positioning the region as one of the country's most attractive tourism destinations, the release stated. (PTI)

India's first pvt rocket Vikram-1 succeeds in maiden orbital launch



SRIHARIKOTA, July 18: In a defining milestone, Skyroot Aerospace on Saturday launched the country's first private orbital rocket and successfully placed multiple technology-demonstration payloads into the desired orbit, making India the third country with private orbital launch capabilities after the US and China.

The four-stage, seven-storey-tall Vikram-1 rocket lifted off majestically at 12.05 pm amid cloudy skies from the first launch pad of ISRO's Satish Dhawan Space Centre here, leaving behind plumes of orange smoke and marking a new era in the country's space missions.

The Hyderabad-based company, which carries the slogan - "Redefining access to space. Your fast track to the orbit. On-demand launch vehicle for rapid, precise, and

customizable small satellite deployments"- on its website, described Saturday's mission 'Aagaman' (arrival) as a "grand success".

The rocket, named after Vikram Sarabhai, the father of India's space programme, also carried payloads that had postcards, including from Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who called the mission a "defining moment" in the country's space journey. The postcards, loaded into specialised "payload lockers", were placed into Low Earth orbit (LEO).

It also carried two symbolic payloads - Cosmic Bloom, an "artistic lab-grown diamond" in the shape of a lotus, and a tiny gold rocket with micro-sculptures of three of India's best-known space scientists - Vikram Sarabhai, Sir CV Raman and former President APJ Abdul Kalam.

According to the company, the engineering data collected during this test flight will be analysed to validate guidance and navigation systems and to guide future refinements for commercial satellite missions.

This historic milestone is also expected to strengthen India's position in the fast-growing global small satellite launch market, expanding the country's presence in space alongside ISRO.

A "planned hold" due to apparent navigation issues forced a revised launch time of 12.05 pm, as against the originally planned 11.30 am.

After its ascent, the primary payloads - technology demonstrators from Grahaa (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

Book on Khasi-Jaintia, Karbi historical ties released in Diphu



HT Bureau

DIPHU, July 18: A book exploring the historical relationship between the Khasi-Jaintia and Karbi communities was released at the Karbi Hemntun (Karbi Anglong Guest House) Conference Hall here on Friday.

Titled Khasi-Jaintia and Karbis: From Symbiotic History to an Ongoing False Dispute - Karbi Youth Festival as the Confluence of Two Communities, the book was unveiled during a programme in the presence of

representatives from Diphu and Shillong.

The event was attended by chief guest Paem Laborious Manik S Syiem and guest of honour retired bureaucrat Jones Ingti Kathar.

Special guests included Deivica Dkhar, a PhD scholar in Physics at Assam University, Silchar, and president of the Khasi Students' Union's Assam University unit, and John Engti Kathar, president of the Karbi Students' (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

One held with heroin in Dibrugarh

GUWAHATI, July 18: One person has been held with over 1 kg of heroin and ₹ 14 lakh in cash in Assam's Dibrugarh district, officials said on Saturday.

The operation was carried out in Naharkatia, during which two vehicles were also seized.

"Another major blow to the drug network in Naharkatia. An anti-narcotics operation by @dibrugarhpolic under Tingkhong Police Station led to the seizure of 1.35 kg heroin, ₹ 14.06 lakh in cash and two vehicles," the Chief Minister's Office (CMO) said in a post on X.

It said one accused has also been apprehended.

"HCM Dr @himantabiswa has reaffirmed that Assam's war against drugs will continue relentlessly," the CMO added. (PTI)

Two youths painting Wangchuk's picture on public wall nabbed in Guwahati

GUWAHATI, July 18: Two youths have been apprehended here for "damaging" a public wall by painting a picture of activist Sonam Wangchuk, a police official said on Saturday.

Another picture of Wangchuk was drawn on a pillar of the Basistha flyover in the city two days ago, and police are trying to identify those responsible for it, he said.

"Last night, our patrol party found two youths trying to damage a public wall on the road leading to the Jyoti-Bishnu International Auditorium. They had smeared colours on the wall and admitted that they were painting a picture of Sonam Wangchuk, which was partially completed," the official said.

The duo were apprehended and brought to Dispur police station, where a case has been registered. "They will be allowed to go after a



notice is served," the official said.

He said another case has been registered at the Basistha police station against unknown people for painting a picture of Wangchuk on a pillar of the flyover in the area.

The official said "damaging the beauty of flyovers and public infra-

structure by painting at will" has become a trend.

"No one should damage, tamper with or destroy public property. We will be forced to act tougher in the future and won't deter from sending such offenders to jail," he added. (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

Himanta lauds Vikram-1 launch as testimony of India's space industry

GUWAHATI, July 18: Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Saturday said the successful launch of India's first privately developed orbital rocket, Vikram-1, was a "new pinnacle for India's space industry and the limits of entrepreneurial possibilities".

Congratulating the team of Skyroot Aerospace, which was behind the development of the rocket, he said for "New India's" innovators, investors and entrepreneurs, "sky is not the limit, deep space is".

In its maiden voyage, the four-stage, seven-storey-tall Vikram-1 deployed its primary payloads - technology demonstrators from Grahaa Space, CosmoServe, DCubed, and Skyroot's SCOPE - into a 450 km Low Earth Orbit.

It also successfully deployed a micro-art payload, an 18-karat gold rocket and a handwritten postcard from Prime Minister Narendra Modi bearing the message "Vande Mataram", along with postcards from engineers, scientists, and Indian astronauts.

In his congratulatory message on X, Sarma said, "The launch of Vikram-1 represents a new pinnacle both for India's space industry and the limits of entre-

preneurial possibilities. My compliments to the entire @SkyrootA team as they launch India's first private orbital launch vehicle."

The achievement reaffirms that in a "New India and under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi Ji, the sky is not the limit, deep space is for our innovators, investors and entrepreneurs", the Assam chief minister said. He said the launch was significant for several reasons, including being the country's first all-carbon composite orbital rocket, powered by a 3D-printed engine and is a fitting tribute to the pioneers in the field.

Stressing that Vikram-1 is significant for many reasons, the CM said it is India's first all-carbon composite orbital rocket, powered by a 3D-printed engine.

"Beyond enabling commercially viable satellite launches by the private sector, the mission is also testing technologies that could contribute to tackling the challenge of space debris," he said.

Pointing out that the launch happened exactly 46 years after the launch of India's pioneering SLV-3, Sarma said it makes a fitting tribute to the generations of scientists and engineers. (PTI)

Juiphool brings national honour to Assamese cinema

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, July 18: Assamese cinema received national recognition as Juiphool, directed and produced by Jadumoni Dutta, won the Best Assamese Film award at the 72nd National Film Awards announced on Saturday.

The film earned the prestigious Rajat Kamal, with producer Jadumoni Dutta and the director sharing a cash prize of ₹ 2 lakh each.

The winners of the 72nd National Film Awards for the year 2024 were announced by the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, honouring excellence in feature films, non-feature films and writings on cinema.

Among the top honours, Article 370 won the Best Feature Film award, while Bhaangar was named Best Non-Feature Film and Ram-Nami received the Best Documentary award.

Yami Gautam was named Best Actress in a Leading Role for Article 370, while Mammootty for Bramayugam and Kartik Aaryan for Chandu Champion shared the Best Actor in a Leading Role award. Randeep Hooda won the Best Debut Director award for Swatantrya Veer Savarkar.

Several commercially successful films, in-



cluding Kalki 2898 AD, Amaran, Pushpa: The Rule Part-02, Bhool Bhulaiyaa 3 and Street 2, also figured among the major award winners.

The awards were announced by Feature Film Jury Chairperson Jayaraj, Non-Feature Film Jury Chairperson Aseem Sinha and Best Writing on Cinema Jury Chairperson A Chandrasekhar in the presence of Dr Ajay Nagabhushan M N, Joint Secretary (Films), and Dharendra Ojha, principal director General of the Press Information Bureau.

Stakeholders urged to submit their recommendations within the next 10 days

Assam forest minister deliberates with Kaziranga stakeholders for sustainable tourism

GUWAHATI, July 18: Assam Forest Minister Jayanta Malla Baruah on Saturday discussed with stakeholders associated with the tourism sector in Kaziranga National Park, inhabited by the world's largest population of one-horned rhinoceroses, to chart a sustainable conservation and tourism roadmap.

The participants at the meeting also deliberated on preparations for the next wildlife tourism season, an official statement said.

The meeting was attended by representatives from the tourism industry, local stakeholders and officials of the Forest Department.

The discussed measures aimed at improving visitor facilities, strengthening wildlife conservation and enhancing coordination among all agencies involved in the management



of Kaziranga, an official statement said.

Addressing the media after the meeting, the minister said the objec-

tive of the consultation was to prepare well in advance for the next tourism season by incorporating practical suggestions from all stakeholders.

He requested the stakeholders to submit their recommendations in writing to his department within the next 10 days so that they could be examined and incorporated into the action plan.

"I will return to Kaziranga to review the recommendations and finalise our roadmap for the coming tourism season," he said.

Baruah said that his previous experience as the state's tourism minister has given him a close understanding of Kaziranga's strengths as well as the challenges faced by the tourism sector.

He said the Forest Department would work in close consultation with stakeholders to identify priority interventions for conservation, visitor management and tourism development.

Highlighting the importance of institutional (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

Shyam Steel to invest ₹15,000 crore in West Bengal expansion

Group lays foundation for ₹10,000-crore integrated steel plant, plans 20,000 jobs

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, July 18: Shyam Steel Group has launched a major expansion programme with the foundation stone laying of a 2-million-tonne-per-annum (MTPA) integrated steel plant at Mejia in West Bengal, marking the beginning of a proposed ₹15,000-crore investment across steel manufacturing and other strategic sectors.

The foundation stone for the ₹10,000-crore steel plant was laid on July 17 by West Bengal Chief Minister Suvenudh Adhikari.

The project includes a Direct Reduced Iron (DRI) unit, pellet and beneficiation facilities, a steel melting shop, and a high-speed rolling mill for TMT bars and structural steel. With the expansion, the Kolkata-headquartered group's finished steel production capacity is expected to increase from 1.5 MTPA to 3.5 MTPA.

The company said the project would contribute to the country's target of achieving 300 million



tonnes of steel production by 2029-30 under the National Steel Policy, 2017.

Besides the integrated steel plant, the group plans to invest around ₹5,000 crore in sectors including defence manufacturing, aviation,

real estate, fabrication, paints, infrastructure, construction chemicals and engineering.

According to the company, the combined investment is expected to generate more than 20,000 direct and indirect employment opportu-

nities, while supporting the livelihoods of over 1.25 lakh families, particularly in Bankura and other underdeveloped districts of West Bengal.

Shyam Steel, established in 1953, currently has an annual turnover of over ₹10,000 crore, employs more than 25,000 people, and has a nationwide network of over 5,000 dealer partners.

Speaking on the occasion, Lalit Beriwalla, Director of Shyam Steel Group, said the investment aligns with the national vision of 'Atmanirbhar Bharat' and aims to strengthen West Bengal's industrial base through manufacturing expansion, employment generation and technological advancement.

He said the increased production capacity would enable the company to meet rising demand from infrastructure and government sectors, including highways, railways, defence, airports, oil and gas, and urban development projects across the country.

ICICI Bank Q1 profit jumps 13.8 pc on high loan growth, core income

MUMBAI, July 18: ICICI Bank on Saturday reported a 13.88 per cent jump in June quarter consolidated profit at ₹ 15,440 crore, up from ₹ 13,558 crore in the year-ago period on the back of faster credit growth.

In an exchange filing, the second-largest private sector lender said its standalone net profit grew 15.95 per cent to ₹ 14,804 crore for the April-June quarter on a standalone basis, up 15.95 per cent from ₹ 12,768 crore in the year-ago period.

The net interest income (NII) increased 12.7 per cent on-year to ₹ 24,384 crore in the quarter under review, on the back of a nearly 20 per cent jump in advances and a slight widening in the net interest margin to 4.36 per cent.

Its Executive Director Sandeep Batra said the bank was able to buck a system-wide trend and report an expansion in NIMs courtesy a income tax refund and also repricing of term deposits.

Going forward, channeling-in inflows from the FCNR(B) will be "dilutive" on the NIMs front, he said, but the bank is confident of keeping it "range-bound" for FY27.

Declining to share a target on the FCNR(B) front, Batra said the bank has activated its international network and also looking for partners to ramp up and make the FCNR (B) a success.

The bank did not offer a guidance on its comfort on the maximum leverage that it is planning for, saying that it depends on a number of factors, including the call taken by its local partners as well.

In the quarter under review, the other income excluding treasury income increased by 16 per cent on-year to ₹ 8,425 crore for the reporting quarter and the bank also reported a treasury gain of ₹ 151 crore.

The deposit growth came at 14 per cent for the lender.

From an asset quality perspective, the gross non-performing assets ratio improved to 1.38 per cent from 1.67 per cent a year ago and 1.40 per cent at the end of March this year.

Fresh slippages came at ₹ 5,500 crore, which was down from ₹ 6,200 crore in the year-ago period but higher when compared to the preceding quarter. Bank officials explained that there is seasonality every year, where the first quarter tends to have higher stress primarily because of the Kisan Credit Card (KCC) accounts.

Provisions, excluding money set aside as tax, was ₹ 1,260 crore in Q1, down from ₹ 1,815 crore in Q1FY26. The bank does not see any material impact of the transition to the expected credit loss-based system from April 1, 2027 and has adequate covers in place for the same, he said. (PTI)

Tax Bar Association celebrates 49th Foundation Day

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, July 18: The Tax Bar Association celebrated its 49th Foundation Day with a programme at Hotel The Ornate in Ulubari on Friday, bringing together members, senior professionals, past presidents and distinguished guests under the theme "Celebrating Our Legacy – Inspiring the Future."

Welcoming the gathering, Association president CA Pankaj Khandelia reflected on the organisation's journey over the past 49 years and paid tribute to its founders, former presidents and members for their contributions in establishing it as one of the region's leading professional bodies. He reaffirmed the Association's commitment to professional excellence, ethical practices, continuous learning and service to society as it prepares to enter its Golden Jubilee year. The programme was moderated by CS Narayan Sharma.

NAME CORRECTION

I, Samima Sultana Begum, W/O Abu Baquar Muhammad Shahin, Village Jogajian Road PO/PS/Dist Hojai (Assam) above mentioned address do hereby declare that my actual and correct name is Samima Sultana Begum and my Father's actual and correct name is Iman Ali. But in some documents my name has been wrongly recorded as Samina Sultana Begum and in my passport recorded as Semima Begum instead of Samima Sultana Begum and my Father's name has been wrongly recorded as Md. Iman Ali in place of Iman Ali. Before the Magistrate had done Samkardar Nagar court on 20/04/26

Sd/-

SAMIMA SULTANA BEGUM

DECLARATION

I declare that my changed name is Mamoni Dikhar, by which name, hence forth I will be known for all purposes. Mamoni Ahmed and Mamoni Dikhar is one and same person. Sworn vide affidavit did: 18.07.2026. Mamoni Dikhar, Rukminigaon, Ghy - 22

OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER, P.W.D. (R&B), DIPHU CIRCLE-I, DIPHU

No. DPU/KAAC_(AAP)/03/2025-26/666

Dated 16.07.2026

PRESS NOTICE INVITING BID

The Superintending Engineer, PWD (R&B), Diphu Circle-I, Diphu, on behalf of the Governor of Assam, invites bids for 2 (two) works in Karbi Anglong District for Construction/Improvement of Road under AAP for the year 2025-26, amounting to Rs. 2,70,45,000.00 (Approx.), from approved and eligible contractors registered with PWRD, Assam.

Details may be seen at the website www.assamtenders.gov.in and also in the office of the undersigned during office hours from 18.07.2026 to 07.08.2026. The last date/time for receipt of bids will be up to 2:00 PM on 07.08.2026.

Sd/-

Superintending Engineer, P.W.D. (R&B), Diphu Circle-I, Diphu

IPRD/ KAAC/ 2026-27/96

Delhi world's cheapest for dates, buying properties among major cities; salary among lowest: Report

NEW DELHI, July 18: Delhi is the world's cheapest major city for a romantic date and relatively cheaper to buy properties but salaries of its people are also among the lowest, according to a report tracking the cost of living and quality of life. The report also found that Delhi offered the most inexpensive broadband internet globally, with a monthly connection costing USD 7.3 (around Rs 703), the lowest in the 69-city sample.

Deutsche Bank's 'Mapping the World's Prices 2026' report, which compares cities on parameters of prices, salaries and quality of life, said a "cheap date" in Delhi cost USD 103 (around ₹ 9,920), compared with USD 475 (around ₹ 45,750) in Geneva, the most expensive city on the index.

Delhi did not feature among the top 50 cities in the report's quality-of-life rankings, which consider purchasing power, safety, healthcare, cost of living, housing affordability, commute times, pollution and climate.

The "cheap date" index factors in the cost of a bottle of wine, a pair of jeans, a dress, two coffees, a meal for two, two cinema tickets, two one-way transport tickets and a 5-km taxi ride.

According to the report, property rates in the city centre remains low when compared to international markets, costing an average of USD 2,465 per square metre (around ₹ 2,37,000) and ranking Delhi 65th globally. In comparison to other major cities, the report suggested that property prices in Delhi have declined 9.8 per cent in dollar terms over the last decade but recovered 15.7 per cent since 2019.

Further, the report ranked Delhi 66th out of 69 cities in 2026, with a net monthly salary of USD 538 (around ₹ 51,800) -- equivalent to 10 per cent of New York's level. Historical monthly salary figures for Delhi were USD 633 in 2012, USD 653 in 2016, USD 556 in 2019, USD 607 in 2025 and USD 538 in 2026.

In comparison, Zurich topped the salary rankings with a monthly net pay of USD 8,363 (around Rs 8,05,200), the report said.

Delhi's salaries have fallen 17.7 per cent in dollar terms over the past decade and 3.3 per cent since 2019, according to the report.

The report, authored by Jim Reid and Galina Pozdnyakova of Deutsche Bank's Research Institute and pub-

lished on July 13, draws primarily on crowdsourced data from Numbex, which was crosschecked and cleaned by the bank's research team.

For coffee aficionados, Delhi remains among the cheapest cities tracked, with a regular cappuccino costing USD 2.40 (around Rs 231), placing it among the 10 cheapest cities in the index. A three-bedroom apartment in the city centre rented for about USD 685 (around ₹ 65,970) a month, the report said.

Delhi ranked 52nd among the 69 cities on its "Oasis" index, named after the famed British rock and roll music band, which measures the cost of five beers and two packs of cigarettes. The index cost USD 18.8 (around ₹ 1,800) in the national capital, about 35 per cent of the price in New York.

Delhi's position on the Oasis index improved seven places from 2025 but slipped one place from 2016. The cost of the index rose 36 per cent in dollar terms over the past decade and 13.1 per cent since 2019.

The report also found that petrol prices in Delhi were nearly on par with New York in dollar terms, at USD 1.05 a litre compared with USD 1.08. (PTI)

Contd. from Page 1...

Wangchuk whisked

and counselled to accept treatment in the interest of his health, they said. The BJP later said on X that Wangchuk has "not broken" his hunger strike and he will continue it from hospital.

Dramatic scenes unfolded at around 7 am as a large contingent of police personnel, many in plainclothes, descended at the protest site barely 2-3 kilometres from Parliament House, with paramilitary personnel forming a cordon around the stage where a visibly frail Wangchuk was resting.

Using white sheets as a screen, the police personnel approached Wangchuk as chaos erupted in the background, with some protesters jostling with security personnel to approach the activist, who was lifted and carried to an ambulance.

"It happened so fast that nobody could understand what was going on," said 22-year-old Talha, who had arrived from Patna the previous night after following the protest for days.

"People started running towards the stage. Everyone was trying to stop the police and make videos, but all we could see were the white sheets. Before we could get there, they had already taken him away," Talha told PTI.

According to eyewitnesses, the number of protesters was relatively less in the morning when police arrived and Dipke was not present as he had gone to freshen up.

Deputy Commissioner of Police (New Delhi) Sachin Sharma told PTI that Wangchuk was hospitalised in accordance with the Delhi High Court's directions after his health worsened and was receiving the required medical intervention.

In a statement, Delhi Police said that Wangchuk was shifted for "essential medical care" following expert medical advice and in compliance with the high court's orders. Some protesters tried to obstruct the exercise, leading to a brief commotion, but police personnel exercised maximum restraint and completed the operation successfully, it said.

The police also appealed to the protesters to peacefully vacate the protest site at the earliest.

At the Jantar Mantar site, security was stepped up and gradually protesters started to regroup. Dipke broke down on the stage and his associates consoled him.

While he was addressing a gathering hours later, a woman hurled an ink-like liquid on Dipke and was detained. She was identified by police as men's rights activist Barkha Trehan.

"I have been beaten up and put under detention by Delhi Police," Dipke said in a post on X.

Dipke said he had gone to a friend's house to freshen up and alleged he was beaten by police and detained for some time. He called for protests across the country against the police action.

In a post on X, BJP shared a video of Wangchuk being removed from the protest site in a white sheet.

"A frail old man, after 20 days of a hunger strike, was picked up, wrapped in white sheets and taken away by Delhi Police. This is a national shame," the BJP said.

AISA members Neha, Aameen and Manish, however, continued their hunger strike at the protest site on day 21. According to AISA, protesters formed a human chain around them and stopped the police from forcefully removing the three hunger strikers.

Wangchuk and the three activists from AISA have been on an indefinite hunger strike since June 28 in support of the BJP-led protest over alleged irregularities in the NEET examination and the reported deaths of students linked to the controversy.

Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi said the action against a person on a non-violent hunger strike was wrong and accused the government of relying on "Asatya and Hinsa" (falsehood and violence).

Opposition parties united in condemning the action and accused the government of undermining democratic freedoms, curbing dissent and choosing force over dialogue.

AAP national convener Arvind Kejriwal, who had met

Wangchuk on Thursday, appealed to citizens to join the ongoing protest at Jantar Mantar.

Gandhi said paper leaks, the rising cost of education and student suicides were "critical issues for India's future", adding that "no amount of force can deter India's students, and those of us who love and believe in them, from raising these issues".

NCP(SP) leader Sharad Pawar, Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav, DMK MP Kanimozhi, TMC chief Mamata Banerjee also hit out at the government and said it should engage in dialogue with protesters.

"What a shame! The world watches democracy in India being broken by force, shamelessly," Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Aaditya Thackeray said in a post on X.

CPI(M) leader Brinda Karat alleged that the action was an attempt to "bulldoze democratic and constitutional values" and undermine accountability.

The BJP maintained that authorities acted with empathy, balancing the court's directions with the imperative of protecting life and questioned the "outrage".

Wangchuk was brought to the Sadarjung hospital by Delhi Police and admitted at 7:40 am. He was conscious with a stable pulse, blood pressure and oxygen saturation. Signs of dehydration were seen, the hospital said in its health bulletin.

"Although intravenous fluids were advised, the patient has refused all intravenous fluids, oral rehydration fluid or any other medication. He is being continuously monitored and counselled for treatment in best interest of his health," the statement said.

Sources in the know of the developments also said that doctors are also counselling his family to allow treatment.

Shortly after his hospitalisation, Wangchuk's wife, Gitanjali J Angmo, asked the hospital not to administer any treatment without her consent, alleging a lack of transparency in his medical care.

On Friday, doctors said Wangchuk had lost nearly 9.5 kg since the beginning of the hunger strike. (PTI)

Woman hurls ink

strike. The woman, identified by the police as Barkha Trehan, walked towards Dipke during his address and hurled blue ink at him, briefly disrupting the programme before volunteers and supporters restrained her.

As some supporters rushed towards the stage, Dipke repeatedly appealed to them to remain seated and not get agitated.

"Blue is my colour. Jai Bhim," Dipke said after the incident. Police escorted Trehan away from the venue. As she was being taken away, she alleged that she had been assaulted and raised religious slogans.

Trehan describes herself on X as a men's rights activist and president of "Purush Aayog".

While the motive behind the attack was not immediately clear, she had made allegations against male leaders of the BJP in a social media post on Friday.

Her recent social media activity also shows her participating in protests at Jantar Mantar, including one in support of former BJP MLA Kuldeep Sengar. She had also posted about the Siya Goyal case. In June, she shared photographs from an event marking 12 years of the Modi government, saying she had interacted with several senior BJP leaders.

Police said Trehan has been detained and further investigation is underway.

Hours after the incident and traces of blue ink still visible on his hands, Dipke in a video message on X said that the BJP would continue its protest despite Wangchuk being taken to hospital. (PTI)

SC seeks Assam's

July 13 verdict on a batch of separate appeals arising out of the proceedings before the Foreigners Tribunals in Assam and the erstwhile Illegal Migrants (Determination) Tribunals, the apex court

had set aside the high court judgments which affirmed the orders declaring certain persons as foreigners.

The top court had asked the tribunals concerned to decide the references afresh, uninfluenced by any earlier observation by the high court or by the tribunals.

It had said the State has a legitimate and compelling interest in ensuring that persons who are not legally entitled to claim Indian citizenship do not secure such status by misuse of process, by false claims or by taking advantage of procedural delays.

"At the same time, the determination of such status must be made through a process which is fair, lawful and reasoned," the top court had said. (PTI)

Book on Khasi-Jaintia

Association, Shillong. The book has been authored by Hironobu Rongphar, an assistant professor in the Department of History at Nehru College, Pailapool, Cachar. He is also a PhD scholar in the Department of History at Assam University Diphu Campus, Karbi Anglong.

According to the author, the book examines the historical ties between the Khasi-Jaintia and Karbi communities and presents the Karbi Youth Festival as a platform for cultural convergence. It says that the two communities have shared a long history of coexistence and seek to challenge narratives portraying their relationship as one of conflict.

This version is more neutral and follows a typical newspaper style, reducing promotional language while retaining the key facts.

India's first pvt

Space, CosmoServe, DCubed and Skyroot's SCOPE -- were sequentially deployed into a 450 km LEO.

The launch vehicle also successfully deployed a micro-art payload, an 18-karat gold rocket and a handwritten postcard from Modi bearing the message "Vande Mataram", along with postcards from engineers, scientists, and Indian astronauts.

"Skyroot proudly named its rockets and engines after these icons," the company said.

Prime Minister Modi hailed the successful launch, saying it proved the country's self-reliance push.

Speaking to the CEO and co-founder of Skyroot Aerospace, Pawan Kumar Chandana and co-founder Naga Bharath Daka over the phone, Modi congratulated them and their company for the successful feat achieved on Saturday.

The Prime Minister also told them that today's "Mission Aagam" (arrival) should proceed further. The mission "proves we can be Atmanirbhar" (self-reliant), he said.

On his part, Chandana informed the Prime Minister that the rocket was completely designed and made in India.

Referring to Modi's postcard, Chandana said, "Your card has successfully reached orbit. Vande Mataram is in orbit."

Modi pointed out that the country was celebrating 150 years of the Vande Mataram, adding that the national song inspired many to live and die for the country.

"The growing participation of our private sector is opening new frontiers and accelerating innovation. This achievement will encourage countless youngsters to dream bigger and innovate fearlessly," Modi said on X.

Chandana said, "We are very proud that the government has enabled us and opened up the sector to private players, and now we stand as India's first private company which has launched a rocket to orbit and also created a global milestone. All from India with a fully, fully Indian team, 100 per cent built in India."

Daka said India was the third country, after the US and China, with private sector launch capability.

ISRO chief V Narayanan hailed Modi for opening up the space sector for the startup ecosystem of the country.

"In 2020, the space sector reform was announced. Today, within six years, a startup company has successfully placed a satellite in the first attempt in the orbit. It is really a great, satisfying mo-

ment," he said.

He also lauded the young team of Skyroot Aerospace, saying "it was said the average age is 28 years."

"When the space sector reform was announced by the Prime Minister, we had only one startup company. Today, we have got 400-plus startup companies working in multiple areas. But you know, the launch vehicle development is a very tricky game, and I am really extremely happy that in the first attempt we have succeeded," he added.

With its Saturday mission, Skyroot successfully demonstrated its orbital launch capability, moving beyond the suborbital flight achieved by its Vikram-S mission in 2022.

The successful flight validated the performance of the rocket's all-carbon composite structure and 3D-printed engines in a real flight environment, features claimed by the company as "first".

Both founders, Chandana and Daka, are former ISRO scientists and were present at the space agency's Mission Control Centre (MCC), along with its chief, Narayanan. Former ISRO chiefs, astronaut Shubhanshu Shukla and Andhra Pradesh minister Nara Lokesh were among those who witnessed the launch from the MCC.

Several chief ministers and leaders across political spectrum congratulated the private company on its achievement.

The payloads that piggybacked on Vikram-1 include CosmoServe Space's Embrace (mission name), an in-orbit demonstration of robotic arms capable of removing space debris, and Solaras by Grahya Space, which is a compact satellite mission developed to demonstrate new capabilities in LEO. German test payload uD3PP and mD3RN by Deubed also reached space on Saturday.

According to the company, the Scope satellite by Skyroot Aerospace is an in-house experimental payload developed to test space technologies in future missions. (PTI)

Two youths painting

Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma had said on July 10 that no paintings will be allowed on flyovers and such public infrastructure without permission and authorities have been asked to initiate action against any offenders.

His remarks had come against the backdrop of a controversy over erasing a mural of deceased singer Zubeen Garg under Ganeshguri flyover during a Guwahati beautification drive by the authorities, with the CM asserting that the government had issued no such directive. (PTI)

Assam forest minister

coordination, Baruah said the Forest and Tourism departments would work together to ensure balanced development while safeguarding the ecological integrity of KNP.

Referring to experiences from other wildlife destinations in the country, he said there is considerable scope to increase tourism revenue through better facilities, including quality accommodation for different categories of visitors, without compromising environmental safeguards.

The minister added that increased revenue generated through responsible tourism would directly support wildlife conservation, habitat management and other developmental works within protected areas.

On the issue of year-round tourism, Baruah said that tourism activities inside the core area of KNP cannot continue throughout the year due to ecological requirements, including the annual flood cycle that sustains the Park's unique biodiversity.

However, the department would explore options for promoting tourism-related activities during the off-season so that local stakeholders, including hotels and tourism service providers, could sustain their livelihoods throughout the year without affecting wildlife conservation, the minister added.

The park is not just about one-horned rhinos and tigers but is also home to elephants, wild water buffalo, and several bird species. Ganges River Dolphins are also found in the rivers that crisscross the park. (PTI)

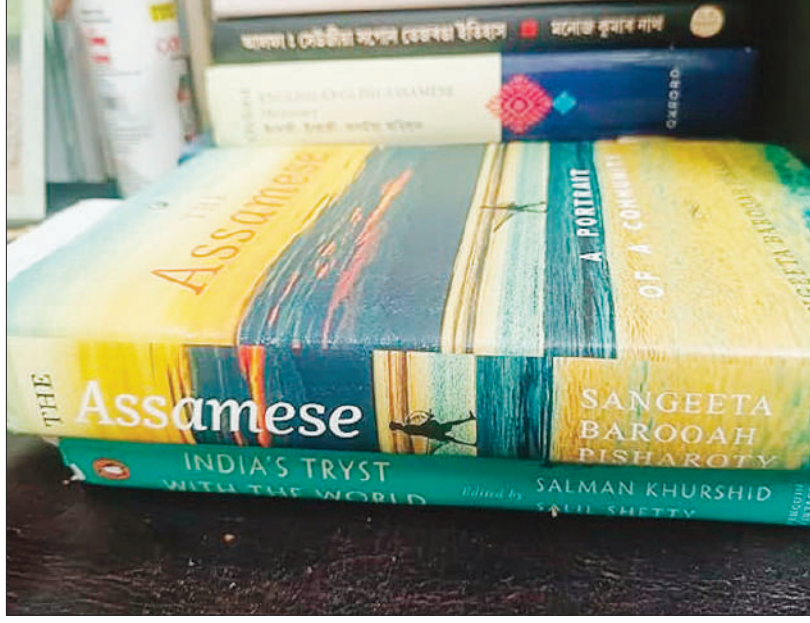
Future of Assamese Book Publishing Industry

By: Himangshu Ranjan Bhuyan

The future of the Assamese book publishing industry stands at a decisive moment where long-established traditions are meeting the realities of a rapidly changing world. For decades, printed books have served as the foundation of Assam's literary culture, preserving history, language, folklore, social thought, and creative expression for successive generations. Every major literary movement in Assam has depended upon a vibrant publishing ecosystem consisting of writers, editors, publishers, printers, booksellers, libraries, and readers. Together, they created an intellectual environment that nurtured new ideas while safeguarding the state's cultural identity. That ecosystem, however, is experiencing one of the most difficult transitions in its history. The challenges confronting the industry are no longer confined to rising production costs or fluctuating book sales. They now extend to changing reading habits, digital technology, online retailing, shifting consumer preferences, limited investment, inadequate distribution networks, and growing competition for people's time and attention. Traditional bookstores across Assam no longer witness the steady flow of readers that once defined literary life. Many publishers hesitate before investing in new manuscripts because the commercial risks have increased significantly. Writers frequently struggle to find publishers willing to support original works, while independent authors often finance their own publications without any assurance of meaningful distribution or financial recovery. At the same time, the cost of paper, printing, binding, transportation, and marketing has risen steadily, making book production substantially more expensive than it was only a decade ago. These developments have undoubtedly created uncertainty, but they should not be interpreted as evidence that the publishing industry has reached its end. Instead, they indicate that Assamese publishing has entered a period of structural transformation in which survival will depend less on preserving old business models

and more on embracing innovation, professional management, technological adaptation, and closer engagement with readers. Every major publishing industry across the world has experienced similar transitions during the digital revolution. Many have emerged stronger by expanding beyond conventional publishing into electronic books, audiobooks, online sales, digital subscriptions, educational publishing, and multimedia content. Assam now faces the same opportunity. The future of Assamese publishing will ultimately depend upon its willingness to evolve while continuing to preserve the linguistic and cultural values that distinguish Assamese literature from every other literary tradition.

One of the defining features of this transformation is the changing relationship between readers and books. Younger generations consume information in ways that differ fundamentally from those of previous decades. Smartphones, tablets, social media platforms, podcasts, video streaming services, and artificial intelligence have altered the manner in which knowledge is discovered, shared, and remembered. Readers increasingly expect instant access, searchable content, interactive experiences, and flexible reading formats that fit into demanding daily schedules. This does not necessarily imply that printed books have become irrelevant. Rather, it suggests that printed books now compete with numerous alternative sources of information and entertainment that were unavailable to earlier generations. The challenge before Assamese publishers is therefore not simply to protect printed books but to redefine their value in an increasingly digital society. Printed books continue to offer intellectual depth, sustained concentration, emotional engagement, and cultural permanence that short digital content rarely provides. Research across many countries has consistently shown that long-form reading improves comprehension, analytical thinking, vocabulary development, and memory retention. These strengths should become central to the future identity of Assamese publishing. Simultaneously, publishers must invest



in professionally designed electronic books, high-quality audiobooks, accessible digital archives, and mobile-friendly reading platforms capable of reaching readers living both within Assam and across the global Assamese diaspora.

Digital publishing should not be viewed as a competitor to printed books but as an extension of the publishing ecosystem. Many readers may first encounter an author through digital platforms before eventually purchasing printed editions. Social media can become an effective promotional tool when used strategically to introduce new titles, organize author interactions, and build long-term reading communities. Print-on-demand technology also offers practical advantages by reducing warehouse expenses and minimizing financial risks associated with unsold inventory. Instead of printing thousands of copies without certainty regarding demand, publishers can produce books according to confirmed orders while maintaining continuous availability. Such approaches enable smaller publishers to remain financially sustainable without compromising literary quality. Equally important is the need to im-

prove editorial standards, book design, typography, translation quality, and production values so that Assamese books remain competitive alongside publications produced in larger publishing markets.

The future of the industry will also depend upon strengthening every institution that supports reading beyond commercial publishing itself. Libraries, educational institutions, literary organizations, universities, community reading groups, and government agencies all possess responsibilities that extend beyond the publication of individual books. Reading habits cannot develop automatically in an environment dominated by constant digital distraction. They require deliberate encouragement from early childhood through adulthood. Schools should introduce students to contemporary Assamese literature alongside classical works while encouraging independent reading rather than limiting literary engagement to examination requirements. Public libraries require modernization through improved collections, digital catalogues, comfortable reading environments, internet connectivity, and regular literary events capable of attracting young readers. Dis-

tribut-level book festivals, author interactions, translation workshops, creative writing programmes, children's literature festivals, and community reading campaigns can collectively strengthen the culture of reading throughout Assam. Government support also remains significant. Transparent book procurement policies for libraries, financial assistance for translation projects, grants for research publications, incentives for digitization, and support for regional publishers can strengthen an industry that contributes directly to linguistic preservation and cultural continuity. Universities and research institutions should collaborate more actively with publishers to produce scholarly works, reference books, and academic publications in Assamese, thereby expanding the intellectual scope of regional publishing. Translation deserves particular attention because it enables Assamese literature to reach national and international audiences while simultaneously bringing important global works into Assamese. Such exchanges enrich literary culture and expand commercial opportunities for publishers. Copyright awareness, fair royalty agreements, transparent contracts, and professional editorial practices will also help rebuild trust between authors and publishers, creating an environment in which creative talent receives appropriate recognition and financial respect.

Looking ahead, the Assamese book publishing industry possesses far greater potential than current circumstances might suggest. Assam has a rich literary heritage shaped by centuries of cultural evolution, beginning with the contributions of Srimanta Sankardev and Madhavdev and continuing through successive generations of poets, novelists, historians, dramatists, scholars, journalists, and social thinkers. That intellectual inheritance remains one of the state's greatest strengths. The challenge today is to connect this heritage with twenty-first-century publishing practices capable of serving both traditional readers and digitally connected audiences. Publishers must increasingly view themselves not merely as producers of printed books but as creators of

knowledge across multiple formats. Authors must engage more actively with readers through public discussions, educational programmes, digital platforms, and literary festivals. Booksellers can transform their establishments into cultural spaces where conversations, workshops, exhibitions, and book launches encourage regular public participation. Private investment in publishing technology, professional editing, digital marketing, metadata management, and online distribution can significantly improve commercial competitiveness. Collaboration rather than competition among publishers, booksellers, educational institutions, technology companies, and literary organizations will become essential for building a resilient publishing ecosystem. Most importantly, society itself must recognize that books are not ordinary commercial products. They preserve collective memory, strengthen language, encourage critical thinking, and shape informed citizenship. Every thriving civilization has invested in its publishing institutions because books record knowledge that outlives generations. Assamese publishing therefore carries responsibilities extending far beyond commercial success. Its future will be determined by the collective choices of writers who continue creating meaningful literature, publishers who invest in quality despite uncertainty, governments that recognize cultural industries as public assets, educational institutions that nurture lifelong readers, and citizens who choose books despite the endless distractions of the digital age. The present challenges are undoubtedly serious, but they also provide an opportunity to rebuild the industry on stronger, more innovative, and more sustainable foundations.

If Assamese publishing successfully combines literary excellence with technological adaptation, professional standards, reader engagement, and institutional support, it will not merely survive the coming decades but emerge as a dynamic force capable of preserving Assam's cultural identity while expanding its intellectual presence far beyond regional boundaries.

The Need for Wall Climbing Infrastructure in Guwahati: An Assam Perspective

By: Mowsam Hazarika

Guwahati, often described as the gateway to Northeast India, is undergoing a rapid urban transformation. With expanding infrastructure, rising aspirations, and increasing youth participation in sports and fitness, the city stands at a critical juncture in redefining its sporting identity. While Assam has made notable strides in athletics, football, boxing, and traditional games, adventure sports—particularly wall climbing—remain an underdeveloped frontier. Developing structured wall climbing infrastructure in Guwahati is not merely an addition to the city's recreational landscape; it is a strategic investment in youth development, tourism diversification, and a modern sporting ecosystem for Assam.

The global rise of sport climbing, especially after its inclusion in the Olympic Games, has brought renewed attention to this dynamic discipline. Combining strength, endurance, mental focus, and problem-solving, wall climbing is uniquely positioned to engage today's youth. For Assam—a state known for its resilient people and diverse terrain—this sport aligns naturally with both geography and spirit.

A Natural Fit for Assam's Landscape

Guwahati is surrounded by hill systems such as Nilachal Hill, Narakasur Hill, and the foothills extending towards the Khasi ranges. These natural formations provide an ideal backdrop for developing a climbing culture. However, natural rock faces are often inaccessible, weather-dependent, and potentially unsafe for beginners. In this context, artificial climbing walls—both indoor and outdoor—become essential. They offer a controlled, safe, and scalable environment where beginners can learn, and professionals can train systematically.

Assam's climatic conditions, marked by heavy monsoons, further strengthen the case for indoor climbing facilities. A well-designed indoor climbing gym can ensure year-round training opportunities, unaffected by seasonal disruptions.

Engaging Youth Beyond the Digital Sphere

One of the most pressing challenges today is the growing disconnect of young people from physical activity due to excessive screen time. Wall climbing offers an exciting alternative—blending adventure with discipline. It encourages problem-solving, builds confidence, and enhances physical fitness. More importantly, it fosters resilience, a quality deeply rooted in Assam's cultural ethos. Establishing climbing walls in schools, colleges, and community spaces can create structured engagement platforms. Institutions in Guwahati can integrate climbing into extracurricular programmes, thereby promoting holistic development among students.

Boosting Assam's Sporting Potential

Despite having immense talent, Assam



often faces infrastructural gaps in emerging sports. The absence of standard climbing facilities limits exposure and professional training for aspiring climbers. With proper infrastructure, coaching support, and alignment with bodies such as the Indian Mountaineering Foundation, Guwahati can nurture athletes capable of competing at national and international levels.

The development of climbing centres at Sarusajai Sports Complex or other key venues in Guwahati could serve as a starting point. Hosting regional competitions, training camps, and certification programmes would not only elevate Assam's presence in the sport but also inspire a new generation of athletes.

A New Avenue for Tourism in Assam

Tourism in Guwahati has traditionally revolved around religious and cultural landmarks such as Kamakhya Temple and the Brahmaputra riverfront. While these remain central attractions, there is a growing need to diversify the tourism portfolio. Adventure tourism is one such emerging sector with significant potential.

A modern climbing park—strategically located near the Brahmaputra waterfront or within eco-tourism zones like Amchang Wildlife Sanctuary foothills—could become a unique attraction. Such initiatives can complement Assam's broader tourism vision by offering experiential activities to visitors, especially younger travellers and international tourists seeking adventure.

Economic and Community Benefits

The development of wall climbing infrastructure can generate a ripple effect across the local economy. It can create employment opportunities for trained instructors, facility managers, and event coordinators. Ancillary sectors such as sports equipment retail, hospitality, and local transport can also benefit from increased activity.

Beyond economics, climbing centres can serve as inclusive community spaces.

The sport is accessible across age groups and genders, making it a valuable tool for social engagement. It can also be integrated into fitness programmes, corporate team-building activities, and even therapeutic rehabilitation.

The Way Forward: Policy and Partnership

Realising this vision requires a coordinated effort. The Government of Assam, through its Department of Sports & Youth Welfare, can play a catalytic role by incorporating adventure sports into its policy framework. Schemes under Khelo India and state-level youth programmes can be leveraged to fund and promote such initiatives.

Public-private partnerships (PPP models) can ensure sustainability and professional management. Educational institutions, private investors, and sports organisations must collaborate to design, build, and operate climbing facilities that meet international safety standards.

Equally important is awareness. Introductory workshops, school outreach programmes, and public demonstrations can help popularise the sport. Training and certification of instructors, along with strict adherence to safety protocols, will be essential in building trust and participation.

Conclusion

The case for wall climbing infrastructure in Guwahati is compelling and timely. It aligns with Assam's aspirations for a healthier, more dynamic youth population and a diversified economy. More than just a sport, wall climbing represents a mindset—of perseverance, courage, and continuous growth.

As Guwahati evolves into a modern urban centre, embracing such forward-looking initiatives will ensure that its development is not only infrastructural but also human-centric. The time has come for Assam to look beyond conventional boundaries and create spaces where its youth can quite literally climb higher—towards new horizons of possibility.

Road accidents: Not individual negligence, but a challenge to public health and good governance

By: Dr Satyavan Saurabh

India is among the world's most affected countries by road accidents. According to the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways, approximately 177,000 people died in road accidents in 2024. This number is no less than that of any natural disaster or epidemic. Every day, hundreds of families lose a loved one, thousands are permanently disabled, and the country suffers a loss of productive human resources and billions of rupees in economic losses. Therefore, limiting road accidents solely to driver negligence, speeding, or traffic violations is tantamount to a complete failure of public health, road infrastructure, law enforcement, emergency medical services, and administrative coordination.

The issue of road safety is directly linked to citizens' right to life, guaranteed by Article 21 of the Indian Constitution. If a citizen cannot even walk safely on the road, it not only reflects their individual negligence but also questions the state's responsibility and the effectiveness of governance. The Supreme Court has also directed governments in numerous cases to ensure safe road infrastructure, scientific road construction, and effective monitoring.

Poor road engineering is a major cause of most accidents in India. Black spots, inadequate signage, broken roads, unsurfaced curves, lack of lighting, and a lack of safe pedestrian access on many national and state highways contribute to accidents. Encroachment on sidewalks, illegal parking, and unplanned traffic management in cities also increase the risk of accidents. Neglecting quality and safety standards during road construction ultimately costs citizens their lives.

Another important reason is the lack of effective enforcement of laws. Despite the Motor Vehicles Act's stringent penalties, problems such as speeding, drunk driving, not using helmets and seat belts, and overloading persist. In many places, enforcement of traffic rules is limited only by the presence of police. If monitoring systems are technology-based and transparent, compliance with rules may increase automatically.

Road accidents are also considered a public health crisis because the lack of timely medical care after an accident results in a large number of deaths. Many lives can be saved if victims receive proper medical attention during the Golden Hour, but in rural and remote areas, the situation becomes critical due to a lack of ambulance services, a lack of trauma centers, and delays in reaching hospitals. Lack of coordination between the police and health departments often impacts relief efforts.

Even at the administrative level, road safety is a subject of fragmented responsibility among multiple depart-

ments. Road construction is handled by one department, traffic control by the police, health services are under another department, and local bodies have their own roles. This fragmented system prevents the development of a coordinated strategy for accident prevention. Consequently, accountability remains unclear.

To ensure road safety, it is essential to ensure scientific and safe road engineering. Safety audits should be mandatory for every road project, and accident-prone areas should be identified and remediated promptly. The needs of pedestrians, cyclists, and the disabled should also be integral to road design.

Technology-based monitoring systems should be expanded to ensure traffic law enforcement. Automated speed cameras, CCTV networks, artificial intelligence-based traffic management, and e-challan systems will reduce corruption and promote compliance. Repeat offenders need to be suspended for licenses and strict penalties imposed.

Strengthening emergency medical services is also crucial. Modern trauma centers should be established at regular intervals along national and state highways, ambulance services should be expanded, and all hospitals should be mandated to provide immediate treatment to accident victims. Effective implementation of "Good Samaritan" guidelines is also essential, so that citizens who assist an injured person are not deterred by fear of legal consequences.

Road safety is not just a matter of law, but also a question of social behavior. Road safety education should be included in the curriculum, from

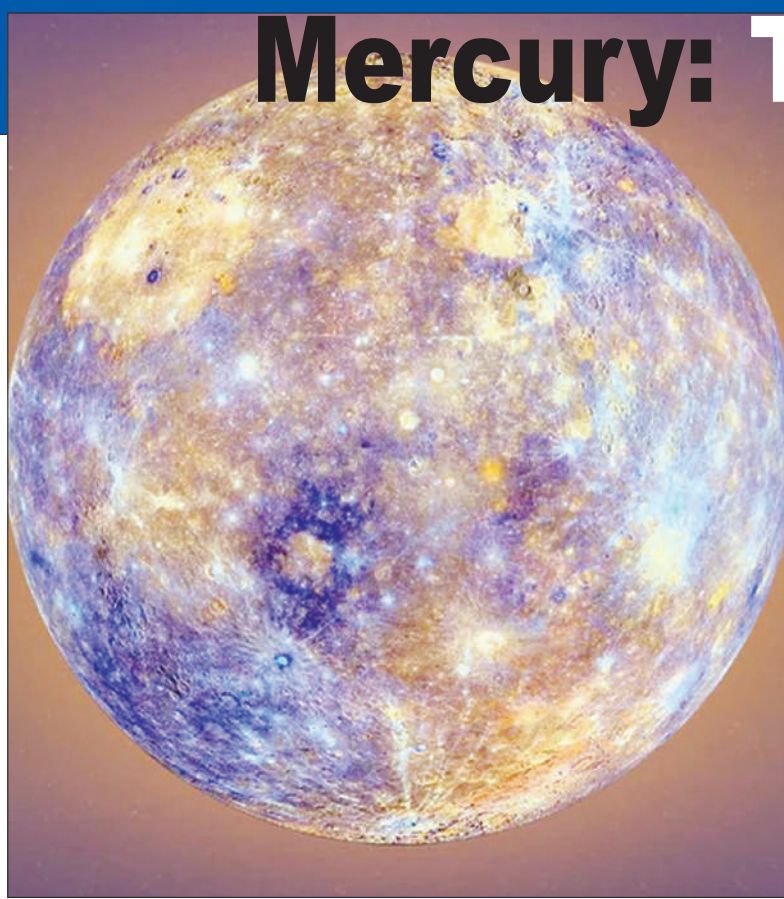
schools to universities. A culture of responsible driving should be developed among citizens through public awareness campaigns. Active participation of parents, teachers, the media, and civil society can play a vital role in this direction.

Institutional reforms are also essential for long-term solutions. A coordinated road safety framework should be developed between the central and state governments, with clear policymaking, funding, monitoring, and accountability. District-level road safety committees should be given greater authority and resources. Accident data from the police, transport, and health departments should be integrated to create a reliable national database, enabling evidence-based policymaking.

If India is to progress towards becoming a developed nation, safe roads are a primary prerequisite. Road accidents are not a matter of fate or coincidence, but in most cases, are preventable. The need is to view them not as mere individual errors, but as a challenge to public health and good governance. Only through safe road infrastructure, strict and transparent law enforcement, modern emergency health services, public awareness, and effective administrative coordination can accidents be significantly reduced. Until the government makes road safety a core development agenda, millions of families will continue to suffer and the country will suffer irreparable losses every year. Safe roads are not just a convenience, but a constitutional and human right of every citizen.

(Dr. Satyavan Saurabh, PhD (Political Science), is a poet and social thinker.)





By: Jonathan O'Callaghan

At a cursory glance, Mercury might well be the Solar System's dullest planet. Its barren surface has few notable features, there is no evidence of water in its past and the planet's wispy atmosphere is tenuous at best. The likelihood of life being found amidst its scotched craters is non-existent. Yet, look closer and Mercury is a fascinating, improbable world that is shrouded in mystery.

Planetary scientists remain flummoxed by the very existence of the closest planet to our Sun. This peculiar planet is tiny, 20 times less massive than Earth and barely wider than Australia. Yet Mercury is the second densest planet in our Solar System after Earth due to a large, metallic core that accounts for the majority of its mass.

Mercury's orbit – hugging close to our Sun – is also in a weird location that astronomers can't quite explain. All this ties together into one crucial point – we have no idea how Mercury formed. As far as we can tell, the planet simply shouldn't exist.

"It's kind of embarrassing," says Sean Raymond, an expert in planetary formation and dynamics at the University of Bordeaux in France. "There's some key subtlety that we're missing."

The mystery of where Mercury came from, how it formed and why it looks like it does today is one of the grandest mysteries in the Solar System.

Some answers, however, might be on the horizon. A joint European and Japanese mission called BepiColombo launched in 2018 and is currently on its way to Mercury. The probe will be our first visitor to the planet in more than a decade. When it enters orbit in November 2026, after a thruster problem delayed its journey, one of its key goals is to try and work exactly where Mercury came from.

Working out how Mercury formed is not just important for understanding more about the origins of our own Solar System, but also for studying planets around other stars – exoplanets – too.

"Mercury is probably the closest planet that we have to an exoplanet", due to its unusual formation, says Saverio Cambioni, a planetary scientist at the Massachusetts Institute of Tech-

nology in the US. "It's a fascinating world."

Astronomers first realised something was wrong with Mercury after Nasa's Mariner 10 spacecraft flew past the planet three times in 1974 and 1975, which were humanity's first visits to the Solar System's innermost world. Those flybys provided initial gravity measurements of the planet, providing a glimpse inside Mercury for the first time and revealing its bizarre innards.

Earth, Venus and Mars all have iron-rich cores that make up about half of their radius. On Earth, this is separated into a solid inner core and liquid outer core, which churns to produce our world's protective magnetic field. Above is the mantle and then the crust, where we live.

Mercury is completely different. Here the planet's core makes up about 85% of its radius, with only a thin rocky mantle and crust on top. This is what lies behind the planet's incredible density, but why its structure ended up like this isn't entirely clear. "The formation of Mercury is a major problem," says Nicola Tosi, a planetary scientist at the German Aerospace Centre in Berlin. "It's still unclear why Mercury looks like it does."

A later mission to Mercury, Nasa's Messenger mission that orbited the world between 2011 and 2015, only raised more questions. Orbiting just 36 million miles (60 million km) from the Sun, temperatures during the day on Mercury can reach highs of up to 430C (800F) while at night they can plunge as low as -180C (-290F).

Yet despite these extreme temperatures, Messenger found that Mercury had volatile elements such as potassium and radioactive thorium on its surface, which should have been boiled away by the Sun's radiation long ago. Complex molecules such as chlorine and even water ice trapped in the planet's shadowed polar craters, were also revealed to be hiding on the planet's surface.

Discoveries like this have added to the idea that Mercury does not truly belong in its current home around the Sun. Astronomers have long puzzled over Mercury's position in the Solar System, in a region where we don't think a planet like Mercury could easily form.

We know that solar systems like ours begin as a disk of dust and gas around stars. Slowly, planets carve out gaps in this disk, growing in stature as they sweep up more material. But Mercury is too far away from Venus for this to make sense, based on models of how the planets formed. No matter what parameters dynamists tweak, they just can't make Mercury as we see it today work out. "It's a pain in the ass," says Raymond. "You get zero Mercuries."

Astronomers have spent years refining models and testing ideas for how Mercury might have formed, and there are a few leading scenarios. One of the most discussed is the idea that Mercury was once much bigger, perhaps twice its current bulk and nearly the size of Mars. It may also have been orbiting farther away from the Sun.

This is supported by the potassium and thorium levels detected on Mercury, which are much more similar to those on Mars, a planet that formed further from the Sun.

The theory is that at some point in its first 10 million years of existence, this proto-Mercury was hit by a massive object, perhaps another Mars-sized planet. The collision stripped the planet of its outer layers – the crust and mantle – leaving just the dense iron-rich core that forms most of the world we see today.

This explanation is perhaps the one most strongly favoured by astronomers at present, says Alessandro Morbidelli, a planetary dynamist at the Côte d'Azur Observatory in Nice, France. "The general interpretation is that Mercury suffered a giant impact that removed most of the mantle," he says.

It would have needed to be a grazing impact, so as not to destroy Mercury completely. However, while impacts were common in the early Solar System, stripping so much material from Mercury would require a violent smash-up at speeds of more than 224,000mph (100km/s) says Cambioni, a scenario that is thought to be unlikely because most objects would have been moving around the Sun in similar directions with similar speeds relative to each other, like cars on a roundabout.

Such an impact should also have stripped Mercury of its volatile elements, including thorium, making Messenger's detection of them equally puzzling. How would they have survived such an explosive event?

Even without an impact, it's not clear how these elements could still be on Mercury. "Something that close to the Sun shouldn't be rich in volatiles," says David Rothery, a planetary geoscientist at The Open University in the UK who co-leads BepiColombo's Mercury Imaging X-ray Spectrometer (MIXS) instrument that will study the planet's volatiles. "So did Mercury begin farther out, or did the things which aggregated to form Mercury begin farther out?"

Maybe Mercury didn't suffer an impact, but was the impactor itself, crashing into another world – like Venus – before ending up in its current position. It's a promising idea because it might be easier to strip off Mercury's mantle in such a hit-and-run collision. "It's easier to explain Mercury if it was the impactor and not the impacted," says Olivier Namur, a planetary geologist at the Catholic University of Leuven in Belgium.

It wouldn't have been the only planet-sized cannonball rocketing around the early Solar System. Our own Moon is thought to have formed

Far smaller and closer to the Sun than it should be, Mercury has long baffled astronomers because it defies much of what we know about planet formation. A new space mission arriving in 2026 might solve the mystery

when a Mars-sized object called Theia collided with the early Earth, carving off a huge chunk.

In any of the impact scenarios for Mercury, it's not clear why the rocky debris thrown into space wouldn't have fallen back onto the planet or created its own moons (Mercury has no moons).

One possibility might be a process called collisional grinding, where the ejected material from Mercury was broken down to dust that was then blown away by the barrage of the solar wind. "Collisional grinding is the debris itself grinding down into smaller and smaller chunks," says Jennifer Scora, a planetary formation expert at the University of Toronto in Canada. "You end up with a Mercury that is smaller and also more dense." But the rate of grinding required is high for this to work, perhaps more than we expect to happen, she says.

Another scenario is that there was no giant impact at all, but instead Mercury really did form from material nearer the Sun that was more iron-rich. In this situation, favoured by Anders Johansen, a planet formation expert at both the University of Copenhagen in Denmark and Lund University in Sweden, Mercury formed in a region of the Solar System that was much hotter than the other planets, with outbursts from the young Sun essentially evaporating most of the lighter dust at Mercury's position and leaving only heavier iron-rich material to coalesce together. "Then you could form an iron-rich planet," says Johansen.

Again there are problems. If this were true, why would Mercury have stopped growing at its present size, rather than continuing to accumulate iron-rich material? "There will be lots of material around," says Johansen, so it's unsure why we would have been left with the small planet we see today.

Around other stars we do see evidence for larger versions of Mercury, known as Super Mercuries, iron-rich dense planets more massive and bigger than Earth but still with a large iron core. The reason we haven't yet discovered any planets the size of Mercury is because they are simply too small to spot against the glare and gravitational heft of their host star.

Observations of other stars suggest Super Mercuries might be quite common in our galaxy, says Cambioni, accounting for perhaps 10 to 20% of all planets out there. That's a bit of a problem because, like Mercury, we don't know how they form – they are too big to form via any collision scenario, for example. "They are uncomfortably common," says Cambioni.

There is another theory for how Mercury came to be – one where the inner planets didn't form where they are now, but instead moved around a bit. In one model of the Solar System, the inner planets of Mercury, Venus, Earth and Mars might have formed in two distinct rings of material around the Sun. Earth and Venus formed alongside Mercury in the inner ring, before they "migrated

away and left Mercury behind", says Raymond, because of its lower mass.

Modelling by Matt Clement, a planetary dynamist at the University of Oxford in the UK, suggests the rocky planets could have all formed much closer to the Sun, within Mercury's current orbit, before moving outwards. "Mercury gets kicked out of the action and runs out of material," he says. The idea doesn't quite solve why Mercury would have such a large core, unless it moved into a region of the Solar System that was richer in iron, but it does solve why the planet is the size it is and its distance from Venus. "I think you need migration," says Clement.

There are some more unusual ideas too. What if Mercury isn't a rocky planet per se, but the naked core of a gas giant planet like Jupiter that had its atmosphere ripped away? While such an idea has been touted, Cambioni thinks it is unlikely. "It is very hard to remove the atmosphere of a Jupiter-sized planet," he says, due to their immense gravity.

All of this provides astronomers with many clues but no consensus as to how Mercury formed.

When the mission – it is in fact two spacecraft operated by the European Space Agency (Esa) and Japanese Space Agency (Jaxa) joined together – enters orbit around Mercury, the two vessels will separate. They will then use their instruments to map the composition of Mercury's surface while also studying the planet's gravity and weak magnetic field, among other observations.

"BepiColombo will perform additional measurements that can tell us about the origin of the planet," says Tosi. Of particular interest will be deciphering what the surface and the subsurface of the planet are made of. "Knowing that composition places constraints on the formation of the planet," says Tosi.

If Mercury was once much larger but was then stripped away, it should have created a temporarily molten mantle, a vast ocean of magma that we could see evidence of today. "This solidifies in a certain way," says Tosi, evidence of which BepiColombo can look for.

Early images beamed back by the spacecraft as it made a flyby of Mercury earlier this year have yet to reveal evidence of this ancient magma ocean. But they have shown a planet surface scarred with impact craters and streaked from ancient lava flows. The remnants of a lava flood from a bout 3.7 billion years ago could also be seen, where it had hardened into large expanses of "smooth" surface and filled in older craters. Although much more recent than the magma ocean that might have existed, distinctive wrinkles in the smooth surface indicate that the planet has since been contracting dramatically as it has cooled down over billions of years.

The spacecraft's gravity measurements, tracking how much the planet deforms in response to the Sun's grav-

ity by bouncing a laser off its surface, should also give scientists a better understanding of the structure of the core, another important piece in the planet's history. "Knowing the composition of the core will also help to reconstruct where Mercury comes from," says Tosi.

BepiColombo should also reveal more about the volatile elements on Mercury, which remain confusing. "We know Mercury is rich in volatiles but we don't know what all the volatiles are," says Rothery.

It could also help to solve other mysteries about mercury – such as why its crater-spattered surface is so dark. The planet only reflects around two-thirds as much light as the Earth's Moon, suggesting there may be a layer of dark material such as graphite blanketing the surface.

To truly understand the origin of Mercury, however, scientists dream of one day landing on the planet – something that was originally part of the BepiColombo proposal but scrapped early-on due to cost and complexity – and maybe even returning samples to Earth. "What we really want is a sample of Mercury," says Rothery, which would allow us to pick apart exactly what the planet is made of.

No such mission is planned for the foreseeable future but there have been some proposals. In lieu of a lander, "our best hope is to find a meteorite that originated from Mercury," says Rothery, something that is not beyond the realms of possibility. Hundreds of meteorites from Mars have been found on Earth, but none definitively from Mercury (or Venus, for that matter).

There has been a suggestion that a rare class of meteorites on Earth, called aubrites, are pieces of the supposed proto-Mercury, the larger initial planet that was hit by another body. The idea remains "wild speculation" says Morbidelli, but alluring nonetheless because of their similar chemistry and mineralogy to what we think proto-Mercury would have looked like.

Camille Cartier, a petrologist at the University of Lorraine in France, is leading a study of aubrites to investigate this possibility over the next couple of years. "We have a super collection" of aubrite meteorites, she says, with her team collecting samples from about 20 different aubrites. Now they will study them in a laboratory to investigate whether they truly are pieces of Mercury.

"We should have strong evidence in favour or not of this hypothesis," says Cartier.

At stake for understanding Mercury's formation is getting to grips with planet formation itself. Was the planet just a complete fluke, the result of a chance high-speed collision in our Solar System, or something more ubiquitous? "Maybe Mercury is not such a rare object and is a natural result of planet formation," says Tosi.

For now the puzzle of Mercury's origin endures. Why do we have this weirdly small and super-metallic planet in our Solar System, and do other stars have Mercuries too?

On its surface Mercury might be a pockmarked grey world devoid of obvious interest, but deep down this enigmatic world might just be one of the most fascinating places in the Solar System.

"It's possible Mercury is just an unlikely planet," says Scora, one that in most timelines simply shouldn't exist – but in ours it does. (Courtesy: BBC)

Why science and engineering need to remind students of forgotten lessons from history

By: Muhammad H. Zaman

Lately, there has been a lot of discussion highlighting the need for incorporating social sciences in STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) disciplines in order to foster creativity, increase empathy and create a better understanding of the human condition among scientists.

Unfortunately, however, all this talk hasn't changed the reality on the ground.

As a researcher and teacher in biomedical engineering, looking at the fundamental functions of the human body, I feel that we in engineering (as well as other sciences) have done a disservice to our students. We have failed to connect them to the history of science through stories of scientists.

Our students, these days, have little knowledge about the giants on whose

shoulders we all stand.

And yet there is strong evidence that students are more likely to develop an interest in science and pursue science education when engaged through narratives that tell a story.

Research also shows that such stories enable students in STEM disciplines to better understand and apply their classroom knowledge in real-world settings.

Missing piece in science learning
In one of my engineering classes, I discuss how fluids, such as air and blood, flow in the human body. These processes are critical to our health and well-being.

As I do that, I also discuss the associated discoveries made by many leading scientists. The seminal work of scientists such as Joseph Fourier, Daniel Bernoulli and Isaac Newton has transformed our world and tremendously improved our quality of life.

However, beyond the most famous anecdote about the falling apple leading to the discovery of gravity, I find that students in my class know little about Newton's contributions. While students in my class may have a rich understanding of the Fourier transform (a fundamental mathematical relationship that forms the basis of modern electrical engineering), they literally know nothing about who Fourier was.

Research suggests that context and history play a strong role in connecting science and engineering theory with practice.

But despite studies highlighting the importance of storytelling and historical case study approaches, impersonal PowerPoint presentations dominate classrooms. Historical perspectives and rich stories are missing in such presentations.

Why it matters

As educators, we face tremendous pressures to pack technical materials into our courses. So why should we include history in our lesson plans?

First, history provides a compelling perspective on the process of scientific discovery. We have known through research that historical references can help students clear up common misconceptions about scientific topics, ranging from planetary motion to evolution.

Looking at the story of science over centuries enables students to understand that research and discovery are continuous processes. They can then see that the laws and the equations that they use to solve problems were discovered through long and sometimes painful processes.



The findings they arrive at today, in other words, are the fruits of the hard work of real people who lived in real societies and had complex lives, just like the rest of us.

Second, a sense of history teaches students the all-important value of failure in science. It also highlights the persistence of the scientists who continued to push against the odds.

Recent research suggests that by discussing the struggles and failures of scientists, teachers are able to motivate students. Indeed, the discussion of struggles, obstacles, failures and persistence can lead to significant academic improvement of students, particularly for those who may be facing personal or financial difficulties or feeling discour-

aged by previous instructors and mentors.

Learning from history

This dose of inspiration is particularly valuable for STEM students who face barriers in their academic work, either due to lack of financial resources or due to their gender or race.

The stories of past scientists are a reminder to them that history is an opportunity. Not all great discoveries were made by people who were at the very top of the socioeconomic pyramid.

Connected to the process of discovery and innovation is the fundamental notion of the multidisciplinary approach.

Students need to understand that this approach is not a creation of the 21st

century. People have used the multidisciplinary tools of their time for hundreds of years. Johannes Gutenberg, for example, combined the flexibility of a coin punch with the mechanical strength of the wine press to invent the printing press, which created a profound global impact in disseminating knowledge.

Finally, a fundamental goal of modern engineering education is to create socially conscious engineering practitioners who have a strong sense of ethics.

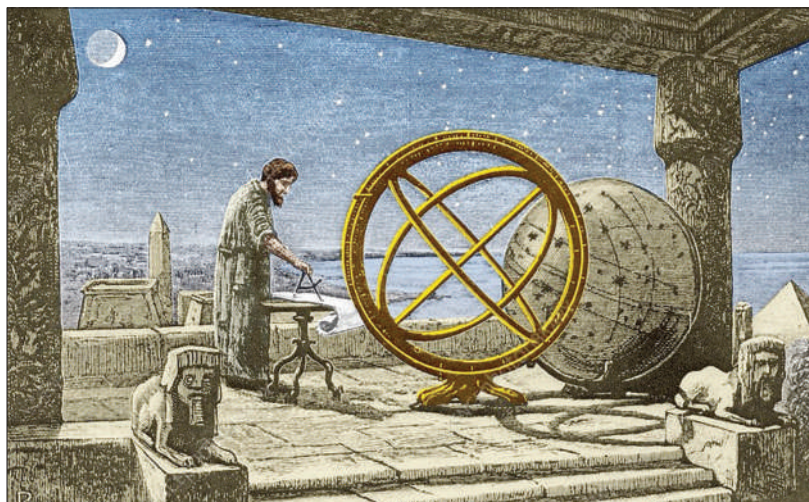
Following an engineering education, individuals could go on to develop medical technology for resource-constrained settings, or work on stem cells or genetic engineering. The importance of ethics in any of these areas cannot be underestimated.

Case studies and history could be immensely valuable in teaching ethics. History provides strong evidence of how the environment around scientists was equally important in shaping their lives and discoveries. Lessons from history could provide insights into how to make ethical choices related to technology or engineering principles.

History, heritage and a holistic view of learning

The goal, in the end, is not to compromise on the rigor, or to focus exclusively on history and personalities, but to make the material more accessible through story-telling and connection with our common heritage.

By making students realize that they are part of a grand tradition of learning, success and failure, we might find that the goals of retention, inspiration, access and rich engagement with the material are closer than we realize. (Courtesy: The Conversation)



MVA leaders slam Centre over handling of Wangchuk's protest; call it suppression of dissent

'The Centre didn't handle the situation carefully, and it impacted the future of several students'

MUMBAI, July 18: NCP (SP) chief Sharad Pawar, Shiv Sena (UBT) president Uddhav Thackeray and other opposition Maha Vikas Aghadi leaders on Saturday criticised the Centre over its "irresponsible" and "shameful" handling of activist Sonam Wangchuk's agitation, saying the action amounted to suppression of democratic dissent.

Wangchuk had been on an indefinite hunger strike in Delhi since June 28 in support of the Cockroach Janta Party (CJP)-led protest over alleged irregularities in the NEET examination and the alleged deaths of students linked to the controversy.

Delhi Police on Saturday shifted Wangchuk to Safdarjung Hospital from the Jantar Mantar protest site after his health deteriorated on the 21st day of his indefinite hunger strike, citing medical advice and directions of the Delhi High Court.

MVA allies Congress, NCP (SP) and Shiv Sena (UBT) slammed the Union government over the action.

Speaking to reporters in Bara-



mati, NCP (SP) chief Sharad Pawar asserted that while the government moved to hospitalise Wangchuk as the situation became "uncontrollable", the protest would continue regardless of the action against the activist.

"The Centre didn't handle the situation carefully, and it impacted the future of several students. The government remained a bystander as other political parties came to support him (Wangchuk). Leaders from Congress, NCP (SP), including Supriya Sule and many others, paid a visit there (Jantar Mantar)

and raised a common demand," the veteran politician said.

Pawar said the demand was genuine and was for the betterment of the students, but none of the leaders from the government, despite being in Delhi, visited the protest site.

"It means that the government is irresponsible. This issue will not end here, as the Parliament session is scheduled to begin, it will be discussed there too," he said, adding that the protest will continue despite action against Wangchuk.

Talking to reporters in Nagpur ahead of his party's 'Ram Raksha'

programme, Uddhav Thackeray said the government does not value the life of citizens, and urged the Centre to talk to the protesting youth.

"It is shameful how Wangchuk was removed from Jantar Mantar. Wangchuk is on the verge of sacrificing his life and several youth are on hunger strike but the BJP government does not care about the lives of citizens or the youth," he said. The government, which cannot conduct exams like NEET properly, must say how many youths have to sacrifice their lives before Union education minister Dharmendra Pradhan resigns, the former Maharashtra chief minister added.

On the police citing medical advice and directions of the Delhi High Court to remove Wangchuk, the Shiv Sena (UBT) chief said police should show these orders.

In a post on X, Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Aaditya Thackeray said, "What a shame! The world watches democracy in India being broken by force, shamelessly." (PTI)

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'Babua wakes up at noon, hits gym in evening, no time for people': Adityanath's swipe at Akhilesh

BULANDSHAHR (UP), July 18: Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Saturday took an apparent jibe at Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav without naming him, questioning his daily routine when he was the chief minister of the state.

He also said that Akhilesh never had the time to meet the people and think about them, claiming that the SP chief lacked a vision for youths and farmers.

Adityanath made these remarks while addressing a gathering in Bulandshahr, where he inaugurated and laid foundation stones of 57 development projects worth over ₹ 574 crore.

"The entire nation is benefiting from the guidance and leadership of Narendra Modi ji. Under his guidance and leadership, we are moving forward on this journey that embraces both heritage and development. However, the situation was quite different before 2017," he said.

"Back then, 'Babua' would wake up at noon and would get ready by 2 pm. By 5 pm, it was time for the gym, and after that he would settle into his own social gatherings," Adityanath said while



apparently referring to Akhilesh Yadav.

The BJP leader further said that Akhilesh rarely gave time to the people and claimed that he has been losing elections because "Lord Ram has ensured he remains out of power".

"Where was the time for the public? Where was the time to meet the people? He had no vision for the youth, the poor, women, the farmers who feed the nation, or the traders and entrepreneurs. He did nothing in the past, and Lord Ram has ensured that he is no longer in a position to do anything in the future either," he said.

Adityanath said that the previ-

ous SP government had failed to providing free ration and LPG connections to the people, which the BJP government was doing.

"But they did not provide it. The benefits of the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana or the Mukhya Mantri Awas Yojana, which the poor are receiving now, could have been provided earlier, yet they were not. The health insurance coverage worth lakhs of rupees which young people and poor families should have received under Ayushman Bharat or the Mukhya Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana could have been provided prior to 2017, but the Samajwadi Party or the Congress never did so," he said. (PTI)

Govt has right to reconstitute Waqf Board in accordance with law: Minister Samsudheen

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, July 18: Kerala General Education Minister N Samsudheen on Saturday said that the new UDF government has the right to reconstitute the State Waqf Board appointed by the previous LDF administration and the same will be done in due course in accordance with law.

Speaking to reporters, Samsudheen claimed that there are "irregularities" in the appointments made to the State Waqf Board by the previous Left government.

With regard to the state's stand in the Kerala High Court on the matter, the minister said that the Advocate General sought dismissal of the four petitions that were challenging the constitution of the Board for various reasons.

Samsudheen, a senior member of the Indian Union Muslim League (IUML) said that the government's stand has been that it will make changes to the Board if the court directs.

Once the court's decision comes, the government will act accordingly, he



said.

The minister also made it clear that the government did not say anything in the High Court about including non-Muslims in the Board.

He also said that if religious leaders, scholars or organisations have any concerns on the issue, the government's stand will be conveyed to them.

Senior IUML leader P M A Salam had on Friday claimed that the UDF government did not inform the High Court that it will include non-Muslims in the state

Waqf Board and made it clear that his party was not in favour of any such move.

He had also said that people of one religion should not interfere in the religious matters of another community.

"Muslims cannot be appointed in the Devasswom Boards, people of other religions cannot be included in church administration and just like that inclusion of non-Muslims in the Waqf Board is not right. That has been and continues to be the stand of the IUML," he had contended.

The remarks come in the wake of a Kerala High Court interim order of July 15 restraining the State Waqf Board from taking any major decision without its permission.

The High Court had observed that section 14 of the United Waqf Management, Empowerment, Efficiency and Development Act, which mandates the inclusion of non-Muslim members on the Board, has not been stayed by the Supreme Court. (PTI)

Adityanath meets slain Dalit student's family, assures strict action

GHAZIABAD (UP), July 18: Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Saturday met the family of Dalit student Lalita Gautam, who was murdered in Meerut, and assured them of government support and strict action against the culprits.

Meeting the family at the PWD Guest House in Ghaziabad, Adityanath expressed grief over the incident and said no effort would be spared to ensure justice, according to a government statement.

He directed that strict legal action be taken against every person involved in the crime and ordered action against any officer or personnel found negligent at any stage of the investigation.

The chief minister also instructed police officials to pursue the case effectively to ensure the strictest punishment for the accused.

As immediate relief, Adityanath announced financial assistance of Rs 5 lakh from the Chief Minister's Discretionary Fund.

He also directed officials to provide a house for the victim's father and another eligible family member under the Mukhyamantri Awas Yojana.

The chief minister further instructed officials to extend benefits under all eligible government welfare schemes, including the Ayushman Bharat Yojana and the ration card system on a priority basis. (PTI)

Parliament gears up for turbulent Monsoon session



NEW DELHI, July 18: The government and the opposition are gearing up for another stormy session of Parliament from Monday with several crucial bills likely to be taken up, including the earlier-defeated Constitution Amendment Bill on delimitation though it is not yet listed in the legislative agenda.

The new session, with changed political equations following fractures in the opposition ranks, will open in the shadow of several raging issues like the planned march to Parliament by the Cockroach Janta Party (CJP) on Monday and the row over the alleged embezzlement of donations at the Ram temple in Ayodhya.

Both issues have been used by the opposition to target the government, which, according to sources, is also likely to be in a "combative mode" and its "priority" would be the passage of bills during the Monsoon Session.

The CJP, which has been holding a sit-in at Jantar Mantar, barely 2-3 km from the Parliament House, on Saturday escalated its protest for the resignation of Union education minister Dharmendra Pradhan over the alleged NEET paper leak after police interrupted activist Sonam Wangchuk's 21-day hunger strike and shifted him to a hospital.

The stage for confrontation on the delimitation-women reservation agenda was set this week after Congress chief Mallikarjun Kharge wrote to Prime Minister Narendra Modi for an all-party meeting.

With BJP-led NDA strategists actively working to shore up a two-thirds majority required to pass the Constitution Amendment Bill to implement women's reservation and delimitation of constituencies, the principal opposition Congress is planning to mount a counter-offensive.

Although the Congress is confident that INDIA-bloc parties will continue to oppose the bill, several opposition parties, including NCP-SP and Shiv Sena (UBT), have already indicated they are open to the government move should adequate safeguards for states be incorporated in the draft law.

Even the DMK, which strongly opposed the Constitution 131st amendment bill defeated in the special session in April, has said that it will react to the new draft after reviewing it. The party has parted ways with the Congress and has sought a separate seating arrangement.

There are, however, other changes in the political dynamics, especially after the rout of INDIA bloc's regional anchors in the last round of assembly polls.

The government is determined to make one more bid at piloting and passing the Constitution 131st Amendment Bill 2026, convinced that the opposition is in disarray. Its strength is bolstered by 20 TMC Lok Sabha MPs and 6 SSS-UBT MPs breaking away from their parent parties to support the NDA in Lok Sabha.

The bill, which was defeated in the last session, seeks to reserve 33 per cent seats for women in Lok Sabha and state assemblies by the 2029 general elections by conducting a delimitation of Lok Sabha seats and raising the house's strength to accommodate more women.

All eyes are also on Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla, who has to decide on the issue of 20 TMC MPs merging with the Nationalist Citizens Party of India and forming a separate bloc from the Mamata Banerjee-led party in the lower house. (PTI)

Complaints on quality of seeds, fertilisers and pesticides to be probed: Bharane



MUMBAI, July 18: Maharashtra Agriculture Minister Dattatraya Bharane on Saturday said complaints related to the quality of seeds, fertilisers and pesticides will now be investigated and resolved within seven days as the state government has revamped taluka-level grievance redressal committees to ensure faster and transparent action.

A Government Resolution (GR) issued by the Agriculture Department has reconstituted the committees, making it mandatory for them to conduct field inspections within

a week of receiving a complaint and submit a final report.

"Ensuring the availability of quality agricultural inputs to farmers is the state's top priority and the revised mechanism is aimed at providing quick justice to farmers during the ongoing Kharif season. Complaints are often received regarding poor seed germination and the quality of fertilisers and pesticides," Bharane said.

Under the revised structure, the committee will be headed by the Taluka Agriculture Officer and include representatives from an agricultural university, agricultural research centre or Krishi Vigyan Kendra, Mahabees, and other agriculture department officials to ensure technically sound and objective inspections.

Bharane said representatives of the concerned company and the retailer will be required to remain present during the inspection. Purchase receipts submitted by farmers will be verified, a panchama prepared in the prescribed format, and samples from the concerned seed lot will be sent to a notified laboratory for testing. (PTI)

Will join NC protest if Article 370 restoration, lifting ban on Jamaat added to agenda: PDP

SRINAGAR, July 18: Laying down its condition to join the protest scheduled by the National Conference in Delhi on July 20 seeking restoration of statehood to Jammu and Kashmir, the Peoples Democratic Party on Saturday said restoration of Article 370, release of political prisoners and lifting the ban on Jamaat-e-Islami should also be included in the agenda.

PDP president Mehbooba Mufti said that after discussing the issue, the party does not seem it fit to join the protest exclusively for the demand of statehood.

"After careful consideration and deliberations with my senior colleagues, I have come to the conclusion that it would not be fit for us to participate in a protest whose raison d'être is solely and exclusively the demand for statehood," she said.

The PDP will join the Jantar Mantar protest only if the restoration of Article 370, the release of political prisoners, and the lifting of the ban on Jamaat are central to its agenda, Mehbooba said in a letter to National Conference president Farooq Abdullah.



"Protesting in unison solely for statehood would only legitimise and sanitise the illegal act of revoking Jammu and Kashmir's special status and could be viewed as a direct endorsement of August 5, the darkest day in our collective history," Mehbooba wrote in the two-page letter.

Abdullah has invited leaders from across Jammu and Kashmir's political spectrum to join the National Conference-led protest at Jantar Mantar on the first day of the Monsoon session of Parliament to press for its demand for statehood restoration.

Mehbooba said it would be "a grave injustice, a disservice, and a sheer betrayal" to reduce the aspirations of the people of Jammu and

Kashmir to the "petty, myopic, short-sighted, and detrimental demand for statehood alone".

"Demanding anything short of it (special status) would amount to a shameful surrender of our rights and dignity, an unforgivable footnote that will condemn each one of us in the annals of Jammu and Kashmir's history," she said.

The PDP chief said this "half-hearted" demand echoes and legitimises the BJP's "odious narrative of relegating Article 370 to the back burner".

She said the overwhelming mandate given by people to the National Conference was not merely to help restore statehood.

"Had that been the case, the BJP and its proxies would have enjoyed far greater electoral success," she added.

Mehbooba said that although there has been no response to her earlier initiative for an all-party front on the lines of the Ladakh movement, she reiterates her request to Farooq Abdullah and Chief Minister Omar Abdullah take the lead in this regard. (PTI)

'New India' won't accept colonial mindset, learn to respect India's traditions: UP CM

SAMBHAL (UP), July 18: Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath said on Saturday that "New India" would neither live with nor accept a "colonial mindset," asserting that those living in the country must respect India's traditions and culture.

Addressing a public event in western Uttar Pradesh's Sambhal district after inaugurating and laying the foundation stones for development projects worth around Rs 550 crore, Adityanath said, "Those who belong to India must rise above caste, creed and religion. The New India will neither live with nor accept a colonial mindset. If you want to live in India, learn to respect India's traditions and culture."

He said those who tamper with the country's faith and heritage will pay the price, and the Bharatiya Janata Party government will never accept such actions.

Referring to Sambhal's historical and religious significance, the chief minister said the district was the



"sacred land of Lord Vishnu" and alleged that invaders not only looted wealth but also attacked India's religion and culture.

"The sins committed 500 years ago forced some people to leave their homes, many were killed, and pilgrimage sites were desecrated," he said.

Claiming that the BJP government was restoring the region's heritage, Adityanath said work had begun to revive ancient pilgrimage sites and that funds had been sanctioned for the 24-Kosi Parikrama.

"No one will now be able to tamper with this heritage. We have

sanctioned funds and taken forward the work related to the 24-Kosi Parikrama," he said.

The chief minister said the government will establish a Provincial Armed Constabulary (PAC) battalion and an integrated city headquarters in Sambhal, in addition to improving road connectivity, including links with the Ganga Expressway.

Targeting previous governments, Adityanath alleged that the Congress and the Samajwadi Party had ignored the poor and allowed corruption to flourish.

He said the BJP governments ensured that welfare benefits reached beneficiaries directly without discrimination.

"Has anyone ever been denied the benefits of government schemes because they did not vote for the BJP? Never. Everyone has received them because our mantra is 'Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas'," he said. The chief minister claimed that law and order had improved significantly in Uttar Pradesh. (PTI)

The corridor is wedged between three international borders

Amit Shah reviews border security at BSF post near Siliguri

SILIGURI (WB), July 18: Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Saturday reviewed security arrangements along the border fencing in the sensitive national boundaries in north Bengal and inaugurated development projects valued at ₹ 77.06 crore for the BSF.

Shah had reached the Seema Chowki or the base of the BSF's 18th Battalion in the Jumagachh area of Fulbari border outpost in the fringes of the north Bengal town of Siliguri where he interacted with the paramilitary personnel, visited a watch tower next to the fences and planted a sapling, according to an official statement.

The Union minister, who arrived on Friday evening in Bagdogra on a three-day visit to the state -- his second in the current month -- attended the Prahari Sammelan of the BSF. He was

accompanied at the base by chief minister Suvenud Adhikari.

Senior bureaucrats and police officials, including chief secretary Manoj Kumar Agarwal, home secretary Sanghamitra Ghosh, BSF DG Praveen Kumar, NIA DG Rakesh Agarwal, and state DGP Siddh Nath Gupta were present at the base.

Shah's visit assumed added significance in the wake of increased focus on security provisions at the 'chicken's neck', formally known as the Siliguri Corridor, a vital 17-22 kilometre wide land strip which serves as the only terrestrial link between mainland India and its eight eastern states and is of critical importance to border security.

The corridor is wedged between three international borders -- Nepal to the north, Bangladesh to the south, and Bhutan to the northeast.



Recently, the newly-elected

Suvenud Adhikari government in the state transferred 120 acres of land to the BSF for border fencing in the region and handed over the management of seven crucial highways in this area, previously managed under the National Highways wing of the state's Public Works Department (PWD), to the Centre.

Shah is scheduled to chair a host of meetings on border management and other administrative issues, including the implementation of the new criminal laws in the state and birth and death registration later in the day at Utkalya, the North Bengal branch of the state secretariat.

He is scheduled to reach Kolkata on Saturday evening and will attend multiple programmes the next day, besides chairing a high-level meeting over the law and order situation in the state. (PTI)

Transparent recruitment has restored youth's faith in govt: Mizoram CM



AIZAWL, July 18: Mizoram Chief Minister Lalduhoma on Saturday said transparent and merit-based recruitment has restored the confidence of the state's youth in the government, asserting that public service should be entrusted only to deserving candidates.

Addressing the passing-out parade of the 70th batch of police constables at the Police Training School (PTS) in Thenzawl in Serchhip district, he said all 275 recruits had secured their appointments solely on merit through a fair and competitive recruitment process, without political influence or favouritism.

"The government's recruitment policy is guided by the principle of 'Equality for All'. We expect qualified personnel to deliver quality service to the people, and the government will fearlessly reject unqualified candidates," Lalduhoma said.

He said the performance of serving personnel would also be regularly reviewed to ensure efficiency and accountability.

Emphasising the role of the police in maintaining peace and public confidence, the CM said an efficient and professional police force is essential for a peaceful society.

"The conduct and quality of service of police personnel enhance the image of the state, reassure the public and strengthen people's trust in the government," he said.

Lalduhoma urged the newly inducted constables to uphold justice impartially, enforce the law without bias and maintain the highest standards of integrity, saying the government's guiding principle is the establishment of justice and the rule of law.

He also cautioned the recruits against alcohol abuse, recalling that the police department had lost personnel in the past due to alcoholism. He said the government would continue modernising the police force to deal with emerging forms of crime.

Home Minister K Sapdanga, DGP Sharad Agarwal and other senior police officials attended the ceremony.

The graduating batch comprised 275 constables, including 26 women. Of them, 198 were inducted into the Armed Branch, 51 into the Unarmed Branch, eight into the Mechanical Branch, while 18 were recruited on compassionate grounds. (PTI)

Fresh floods, landslides hit two Arunachal districts

IMD warns of heavy rain today

ITANAGAR, July 18: Fresh floods and landslides have been reported from East Siang and Kamle districts of Arunachal Pradesh, with the IMD forecasting heavy to very heavy rainfall on Sunday in parts of the state, officials said.

According to the State Disaster Management Department's daily report on Saturday evening, East Siang and Kamle witnessed fresh rain-triggered floods and landslides during the past 24 hours.

In Lower Dibang Valley district, some workers were reportedly stranded at Diphu Nallah under Koronu circle on Saturday, after the water level rose, it said.

Rescue teams from the district police and the SDRF attempted to reach them, but were forced to suspend the operation due to strong currents. The rescue operation is scheduled to resume on Sunday, the report said.

The ongoing spell of floods and landslides has so far claimed seven lives in the northeastern state, injured 29 people and affected 1,49,257 others, officials said.



A total of 26 districts, 328 circles and 576 villages have been affected by the monsoon fury, they said.

In East Siang district, flash floods affected five circles, covering 25 villages in the last 24 hours, while in Kamle, floods and landslides lashed Raga and Dollungmukh circles, impacting five villages, according to the report.

Upper Siang continues to be the worst-affected district with 49,523 people impacted so far, followed by East Siang (35,500), Siang

(25,365), Kra Daadi (13,731), Upper Subansiri (9,550), East Kameng (6,786), Namsai (2,657) and Anjaw (1,011), it said.

Around 806 houses have been damaged across the state in the ongoing monsoon deluge, the officials said.

The cumulative loss to agriculture and horticulture has risen to 733.36 hectares, comprising 312.86 hectares of agricultural land and 420.5 hectares of horticulture plantations, they said.

Impact to infrastructure also remained extensive, with 192 roads,

32 bridges, 30 culverts, 265 water supply facilities, 156 power lines and 224 electric poles damaged.

Government buildings, schools, hostels, hospitals, retaining walls, flood protection structures, drainage systems and other public assets have also suffered damage, the report added.

Meanwhile, the IMD forecast heavy to very heavy rainfall accompanied by thunderstorms and lightning at isolated places across Arunachal Pradesh on Sunday.

An alert has been issued for Papum Pare and East Kameng districts, where very heavy rainfall of 12-20 cm is likely at some places, while Anjaw is expected to receive heavy rainfall of 6-11 cm.

The weather office has warned that the continuing rain may trigger localised flooding, waterlogging, landslides, traffic disruptions and damage to vulnerable infrastructure. It also cautioned against overflowing rivers and streams, inundation of agricultural fields, and accidents caused by slippery roads and submerged stretches. (PTI)

NIA arrests 2 more accused in connection with killing of six Naga civilians



IMPHAL, July 18: A team of security officials led by the National Investigation Agency (NIA) on Saturday arrested two more persons for their alleged involvement in the killing of six Naga civilians in Manipur's Kangpokpi district, a police statement said.

Following investigation in the abduction and killing of six Naga individuals, a joint team of NIA, Manipur Police and CRPF arrested the two accused, it said.

The arrested persons have been identified as Lungoulai Vaiphei, a resident of Leilon Vaiphei village and Lunminthang Sithou alias Jack, a resident of Molhoi Village in the Kuki-majority Kangpokpi district, police said. Further efforts are on to arrest other individuals connected with the case, it said.

The six Naga civilians were abducted by armed men on May 13 from Leilon Vaiphei in Kangpokpi district. Their bodies were recovered from the vicinity of Leilon Vaiphei village on June 10, triggering protests by Naga and Meitei communities demanding arrests of the perpetrators.

Following the recovery of the bodies, Naga groups launched an economic blockade on all routes to Kangpokpi district, leading to a surge in the prices of essential commodities in the Kuki Zo majority district. (PTI)

Nagaland Police announces reward for information on IED blast

KOHIAMA, July 18: Nagaland Police has announced a cash reward of ₹ 50,000 for credible information leading to the identification and arrest of those responsible for the July 13 IED blast in Chumoukedima district.

An Assam Rifles jawan was killed, and five others -- four security personnel and a civilian -- were injured in a suspected improvised explosive device (IED) blast along Chumoukedima (A) village-Shokhuvi road in Nagaland's Chumoukedima district on July 13.

A public notice issued by Commissioner of Police Dimapur, Aotula T Imchen, said the Dimapur Police Commissionerate is carrying out an intensive investigation to identify and apprehend all persons involved in planning, facilitating, executing or aiding what it described as a "heinous terrorist act."



The reward would be granted for credible information leading to: identification or arrest of the perpetrators or their associates; identification of persons involved in planning, financing, harbouring, transporting or facilitating the offence; recovery of explosives, explosive components, weapons, communication devices, vehicles or any other incriminating material

connected with the case; and discovery of any hideout, safe house or logistical support network linked to the offenders.

Police have appealed to members of the public to share any information related to the case, however, insignificant it may appear, by contacting 7085055003 or 7085055011, both of which are also available on WhatsApp. (PTI)

Adolescent labourer rescued from road construction site in Dibang Valley

HT Correspondent

ANINI, July 18: An adolescent labourer was rescued from a road construction site along NH-313 at Etalin in Arunachal Pradesh's Dibang Valley district during a joint operation by the authorities on Saturday.

The rescued boy, aged 15, is a resident of Dajo village in Unakoti district of Tripura.

Officials said he was found working at the construction site of the VVP PMGSY Road project in violation of the Child and Adolescent Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, 1986, as amended.

According to the authorities, the child had allegedly been employed by Anil Basumatary, who was working under a subcontractor engaged in the execution of the project.

Following the rescue, the

minor was produced before the Child Welfare Committee (CWC), Dibang Valley, for care, protection and rehabilitation under the provisions of the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015.

Officials said legal proceedings have been initiated against the employer in accordance with the relevant provisions of law.

The district administration reiterated its commitment to eliminating child labour and appealed to contractors, employers and members of the public to strictly comply with child protection laws.

It also urged citizens to report instances of child labour or exploitation to the authorities to facilitate timely intervention and safeguard children's rights.

Tripura govt committed to building technology-driven, people-friendly police force: CM

AGARTALA, July 18: Tripura Chief Minister Manik Saha on Saturday said his government is committed to transforming the state police into a technology-driven, efficient and people-friendly force. Addressing the passing-out parade of 469 constables and one Tripura State Rifles (TSR) jawan at the Police Training Academy in RK Nagar, Saha urged the new recruits to serve with sincerity, honesty and dedication, saying these values earn respect and recognition in society.

"The government is continuously working to modernise the police force by strengthening its technological capabilities, improving efficiency and making it more citizen-centric," he said.

The CM said the erstwhile rulers of Tripura had established an organised administrative and policing system as early as the 13th century, while the present structure of the Tripura Police came into existence in 1965. Saha said the Tripura Police was awarded the President's Colour for its role in successfully containing three decades of insurgency, reflecting its dedication, professionalism and sensitivity towards society. Announcing fresh recruitment, he said the state government would soon begin the process of appointing 218 sub-inspectors and 916 constables to further strengthen the police force.

Saha said the government follows a transparent recruitment process at all levels and noted that the newly inducted personnel were selected after meeting all prescribed criteria and completing a year-long training programme. (PTI)

Khandu hails India's first private orbital rocket launch



ITANAGAR, July 18: Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister Pema Khandu on Saturday hailed the successful launch of Vikram-1 Test Flight-1, India's first privately developed orbital rocket, saying the landmark achievement marks the dawn of a new era for the country's space sector and reflects the growing strength of Indian science, technology and entrepreneurship.

In a social media post, Khandu said that with the landmark mission, India becomes only the third nation to achieve a successful private orbital launch capability.

"Vikram-1 Test Flight-1, the country's first privately developed orbital rocket, has successfully reached orbit and deployed its payloads into a 450 km orbit," the chief minister said in a post on X. Describing the mission as a defining moment for the country's space

programme, he said the achievement showcased India's rapidly expanding capabilities in advanced technology and innovation.

"A proud milestone for Indian science, technology, and entrepreneurship. The future of India's space sector has truly lifted off," Khandu added.

The Vikram-1 rocket, developed by Hyderabad-based private space startup Skyroot Aerospace, lifted off from the Satish Dhawan Space Centre at Sriharikota under its maiden orbital mission, Mission Aagamam, and successfully placed multiple payloads into a 450-km low-Earth orbit, marking India's first successful privately developed orbital launch.

The mission is being seen as a major milestone for India's commercial space programme, made possible by reforms that opened the country's space sector to private participation. The successful launch is expected to strengthen India's position in the global commercial launch market and accelerate the growth of the country's private space ecosystem, which has expanded rapidly following policy reforms in recent years. (PTI)

Two Kohima municipal councillors join NPF from NPP



KOHIAMA, July 18: Two councillors of the Kohima Municipal Council (KMC) have joined the Naga People's Front (NPF) after resigning from the National People's Party (NPP), in a move the regional party described as a boost to its organisation.

The two councillors—Medoviu Martin Suohu of Ward No. 19 and Viozkoto George Kirha of Ward No. 14—formally joined the NPF along with their supporters at a programme held in Kohima recently.

Welcoming the new entrants, NPF secretary-general Achumbemo Kikon said the party, since its formation in 1963, has remained committed to the peaceful resolution of issues, particularly the Naga political issue.

He said the growing support for the party reflected the people's belief in the need for a strong regional political force to safeguard the rights and identity of the Nagas.

Kikon described the induction of the two

councillors as a significant addition to the party, especially in the Kohima Municipal Council, and urged them to uphold party discipline, stating that the NPF is a grassroots-based and disciplined organisation.

Minister for Women Resource Development and Horticulture Salhoutuonuo Kruse, who is also the legislator-in-charge of Kohima Division, welcomed the new members and termed their decision to join the NPF a positive development for the party.

She appealed to all KMC councillors to work together for the welfare of the people and the overall development of Kohima.

MLA and Adviser for School Education Dr Kekkrie Yhome, Kohima Division president Dr Neiphezo Keditu, and NPF vice-president (COB) Menuovile Kesiezie also congratulated the two councillors and expressed confidence that their induction would further strengthen the party. (NNN)

Myanmar national among two held with opium in Mizoram

AIZAWL, July 18: A Myanmar national was among two suspected drug traffickers arrested after 6.87 kg of opium was seized in Mizoram's Siahia district, a statement said on Saturday.

The seizure was made in a joint operation on Friday by the Excise and Narcotics Department and volunteers of Mara and Lai community organisations at Niawhtlang village near the India-Myanmar border, it said.

The arrested accused were identified as Lesa (40), a resident of Zesaw village in Myanmar's Chin state and Chungnu-amthanga (41), a resident of Niawhtlang.

According to the statement, the opium had been smuggled into Mizoram from Mindat in Myanmar's Chin state and was allegedly being transported for distribution in Lawngtlai district and adjoining areas.

The two accused have been booked under relevant provisions of the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act. (PTI)

Ziro, Nagaland tourism bodies push for mandatory local tourist guides

Organisations stress community-based tourism



HT Correspondent

ZIRO, July 18: The Ziro Tourism Organisation (ZTO) and the Nagaland Tourism Association (NTA) have jointly advocated for the mandatory engagement of certified local tourist guides to promote sustainable tourism and generate employment opportunities for local youth across the Northeast.

The proposal was discussed dur-

ing an interaction held at Suchusi Homestay in Ziro, where an NTA delegation, currently on a Familiarisation (FAM) Tour of Arunachal Pradesh, met members of the ZTO.

The delegation has already visited Namsai and Pasighat as part of its initiative to explore the region's tourism potential and strengthen inter-state cooperation.

During the meeting, both organisations emphasised the vital role played by local tourist guides in enriching visitors' experiences by introducing them to the region's history, culture and natural heritage. They noted that trained guides help visitors better understand and respect local traditions while ensuring safer and more meaningful travel experiences.

ZTO Chairman Hibu Tatu, along with NTA Chairman Vimeto Vakha and Secretary Aseba Kezo, said making certified local guides mandatory would help preserve cultural authenticity, enhance visitor safety and create sustainable livelihood opportunities for local communities.

The two organisations also reaffirmed their commitment to working together to promote responsible, community-based tourism that protects the Northeast's cultural and natural heritage while contributing to long-term economic growth.

Army distributes computers, cultural kits to schools in Arunachal's Tawang

ITANAGAR, July 18: The Indian Army on Saturday distributed computer sets and traditional dance costumes to schools and NGOs in Tawang district of Arunachal Pradesh under its civic action programme, officials said.

The items were handed over by General Officer Commanding (GOC) of 5 Mountain Division, Major General Amit Nautiyal, during a function held at the Major Bob Khathing memorial museum.

Addressing the occasion, Maj Gen Nautiyal said the Army's role in border areas extends beyond protecting the country's frontiers, and includes supporting the education, cultural preservation and overall welfare of local communities.

The computer sets are expected to improve digital learning facilities in schools, while the traditional dance costumes will help educational institutions and cultural groups preserve and promote the rich cultural heritage of the Monpa community, according to an official release.

The initiative reflects the Army's continued efforts to support the holistic development of border areas, while fostering closer ties with the people of Tawang, it said. (PTI)

Nagaland advisor stresses promotion of indigenous languages

KOHIAMA, July 18: Nagaland Advisor for School Education Dr Kekkrielhoulie Yhome has underscored the importance of preserving and promoting indigenous languages, saying accurate translation, institutional support and mother-tongue education are vital for safeguarding the state's linguistic heritage.

Speaking at the Association of Nagaland Literature Boards (ANLB) general session-congress body meeting at Platinum Hall, NBCC Complex, Bayavu Hill, recently, Dr Yhome said Bible translations and the use of indigenous languages in Christian religious practices have played a significant role in preserving many Naga languages.

He stressed the need for accurate and scientific translation through collaboration with linguists and scholars.

Highlighting the importance of teaching indigenous languages from the foundational level, Dr Yhome said the implementation of mother-tongue ed-



ucation faces challenges due to a shortage of trained language teachers.

He emphasised the need to retain teachers within their respective linguistic areas and said language development requires continuous enrichment of vocabulary to keep pace with changing times. He also advocated translating literary works, developing textbooks, encouraging research and recognising literary contributions to strengthen indigenous languages.

Stressing the need for institutional leadership in language development, he said Nagaland's multilingual environment is an

asset that enhances cognitive abilities, strengthens cultural identity and broadens global opportunities for students.

Dr Yhome noted that the State Curriculum Framework seeks to promote tribal languages and called for sustained institutional support, active community participation and an open-minded approach that recognises language as dynamic and evolving.

Addressing the gathering, Additional Director of School Education Deenabandhu Panda said the National Education Policy (NEP) supports the preservation of indigenous languages and cultural diversity. (PTI)

