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DIPHU, KARBI ANGLONG, THURSDAY, JULY 23, 2026

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PRICE ₹ 8

Himanta visits several flood-affected areas of Upper Assam ● IMD issues 'yellow' alert for state

Toll touches 31, ₹ 4 lakh ex-gratia announced

GUWAHATI, July 22: Twenty-one more people lost their lives and nearly 5.65 lakh were affected by floods in Assam with incessant rain across several districts deteriorating the overall situation on Wednesday, officials said.

With these fatalities, the total number of deaths in this year's floods has increased to 31.

Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma visited several flood-affected areas in Upper Assam districts and interacted with the victims, and announced an ex gratia of ₹ 4 lakh to the relatives of each deceased.

"There has been extensive damage caused by the floods. I have assured the affected families that they are not alone in this crisis. Our government is standing with them in every step of rehabilitation and rebuilding of livelihoods," he told reporters in Sivasagar.

On complaints of not receiving relief items by a large section of the affected people, Sarma said that there have been difficulties in providing relief materials in villages which are under water.

"There is no road or any mode of communication to reach out to those people who are still in their homes.



The administration accepts that. We have not been able to reach many places. As and when floodwaters recede, we will be able to reach such localities. We also cannot airdrop relief items now. We are trying our best to reduce the people's difficulties," the chief minister said.

The CM, however, said that for all those who have managed to reach the relief camps, there is no shortage or issue in distributing relief items.

"The issue is not about fund. Whatever expenditure is incurred on flood relief and erosion management is almost entirely reimbursed by the

Central government. We only have to spend the money and submit the required details," the chief minister said. He explained that funds for relief operations are provided in advance by the Centre under established disaster management mechanisms and that the state can

seek additional allocations if the existing provisions prove inadequate.

"If an extraordinary situation arises that goes beyond the existing guidelines, we can approach the Central government for additional assistance. If necessary, we can even seek support directly from the Prime Minister. There will be no shortage of funds for helping the affected people," Sarma said.

He assured that the government would compensate losses to the extent possible, including damage to houses, educational certificates, cattle and other essential assets destroyed in the floods.

"We will immediately give a relief of ₹ 4 lakh to the relatives or families of every deceased. I will also try to help them in future."

According to the Assam State Disaster Management Authority (ASDMA), 21 people have lost their lives in the deluge during the last 24 hours.

Thirteen people, including four women and two children, drowned in floodwaters in the Sivasagar district, followed by five, including two children, in Charaideo, two in Goalpara, and one woman in Jorhat, it added. (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Unprecedented floods in 60 years: House told

GUWAHATI, July 22: The devastating floods in eastern parts of Assam caught the state administrative machinery off guard as those areas had not witnessed such a deluge in over 60 years, a minister told the assembly on Wednesday.

Speaking in the House on behalf of the government during a brief discussion on the flood situation, Parliamentary Affairs Minister Pijush Hazarika said the government was doing its best to ensure relief and rescue operations.

"Following the cloudburst in Nagaland three days ago, waters gushed down from there and the places in Sivasagar, Charaideo and Jorhat, which had never seen such floods, were inundated. It is not merely a natural flood, but is of the scale of a natural calamity," the minister said in the assembly.

The incessant rain for the last few days aggravated the flood situation in the state, he said. The administration was caught off guard as the worst affected areas in the eastern part of the state had not witnessed such a deluge in over six decades, he said.

"Three-four embankments of the Water Resource Department have been breached, but most other embankments in the worst-affected areas have been



overtopped with water flowing 3-4 metres above such structures." "No one was ready for such a situation as these circumstances had not arisen in 60 years," he added.

The minister said the state had witnessed a similar devastation in Goalpara more than a decade ago following a cloudburst in neighbouring Meghalaya. He asserted that the government was reaching out to all stranded people.

The chief minister is visiting the worst-hit areas, while guardian ministers of the affected districts, local MLAs and top officials are already on the ground to coordinate all efforts, Hazarika said. "Many people are still missing, and we should not indulge in politics in such a situation," the minister added. (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

SCBA president writes to Modi, Shah

NEW DELHI, July 22: Supreme Court Bar Association (SCBA) president Vikas Singh on Wednesday wrote to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah seeking a judicial inquiry into the police action on students and lawyers during the July 20 protests in Jantar Mantar.

In his representation, the senior advocate alleged that police resorted to an "unprovoked and disproportionate" lathi-charge on peaceful protesters, resulting in injuries to students, lawyers, journalists and medical personnel.

"I address this representation with profound concern over a dual administrative collapse that strikes at the core of our constitutional democracy: the unlawful and disproportionate police violence inflicted upon peaceful student assemblies, and the failure of state machinery in conducting (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Many villages completely cut off, thousands stranded, says Himanta

Staff Reporter

GUWAHATI, July 22: Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Wednesday said the flood situation in the state is far more severe than official assessments indicate, with many villages still completely cut off, fresh bodies continuing to be recovered and thousands of people stranded without relief due to inundation.

Speaking to reporters at Sonari in Charaideo district, the chief minister said while a large number of people have taken shelter in relief camps, many others continue to remain in marooned villages that are yet to be reached by rescue and relief teams.

"Entire villages remain submerged and there are places where neither the government nor relief agencies have been able to reach. New bodies are still being recovered and the extent of the damage is much greater than what has been officially documented so far," he said.

Sarma said he would personally visit the affected areas and assured that the Army, National Disaster Response Force (NDRF), State Disaster Response Force (SDRF) and the state administration were working together to rescue stranded residents.

He acknowledged the immense hardship faced by flood victims, saying many families had lost their homes,



livestock, educational certificates and other essential belongings in the deluge.

"There is no limit to the suffering. We will stand with the people and extend every possible assistance," he said.

The chief minister also admitted that several people remain trapped in inaccessible locations.

He cited an instance where a patient could not be evacuated and had to be kept on a battery-operated rickshaw due to the lack of access. Sarma said rescue teams had even attempted aerial operations using helicopters but weather and terrain conditions had limited access to several areas. (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

GUWAHATI, July 22: Nearly 2,100 illegal foreigners have been deported, expelled or sent back from Assam to various countries in the last 10 years from Assam, and 2,023 of them were from Bangladesh, the assembly was informed on Wednesday.

Besides Bangladesh, the other major countries to which illegal foreigners were sent back are Myanmar and Nigeria, Assam Accord Implementation Minister Atul Bora said.

Replying to a question by Congress MLA Abdul Rahim Ahmed, the minister said a total of 2,089 illegal foreigners have been deported, sent back or expelled from the state from 2016 till June 30, 2026.

Of them, 2,023 were returned to Bangladesh, 39 to Myanmar and 18 to Nigeria. Two each were sent back to Afghanistan, Ukraine and Russia, while one each to Pakistan, Kenya

and Uganda.

The highest number of deportations or expulsions within the period was made in 2025, when 1,811 were sent back, with all the illegal foreigners being from Bangladesh, barring one who was from Nigeria. Till June 30 in the current year, 263 infiltrators have been sent back — the second highest number in 10 years.

Of them, 261 are from Bangladesh and two from Russia.

Asked about the definition of who is an 'Assamese' person, the minister said, "It is a very important and sensitive matter. Discussions are on with various nationalist organisations and other stakeholders."

The government will take its decision at the appropriate time, taking into consideration the opinion of all sections, recommendations of Justice (retd) Biplob Kumar Sharma committee report and legal aspects,

he said.

The Committee was set up by the Ministry of Home Affairs in 2019 to recommend the implementation of Clause 6 of the Assam Accord, signed in 1985 after a violent anti-foreigner movement which claimed the lives of thousands.

The clause provides constitutional, legislative, and administrative safeguards to protect the indigenous Assamese population's cultural, social, and linguistic identity.

Bora added that the government has already initiated steps for implementing the recommendations of the report submitted by the retired judge.

Responding to a question by Rajor Dal legislator Akhil Gogoi, the minister said that as per information available, out of 1,72,673 identified foreigners in the state till May 31, 2026, 1,11,414 were Muslims, 61,189 (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Will end fast if Centre assures no action against protesters: Wangchuk writes to Nadda, Singh

NEW DELHI, July 22: Activist Sonam Wangchuk on Wednesday said he would end his indefinite hunger strike if the Centre gives an unequivocal assurance that no punitive or retaliatory action would be taken against students and youth who participated in the protest against alleged examination irregularities.

He also said that Union ministers J P Nadda and Jitendra Singh had already assured him that the government would positively consider his two other key demands.

In a letter addressed to the two ministers, Wangchuk said that Nadda and Singh, who visited him at the Medanta Hospital on Tuesday night,

assured him that the government would positively consider providing adequate compensation to the families of students who died by suicide following the NEET paper 'leak', and holding a meaningful discussion in Parliament to ensure accountability for exam 'irregularities', including considering the resignation of Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan.

"Therefore, I respectfully request an unequivocal assurance from the government that none of the young protesters will face any punitive or retaliatory legal action for participating in this movement. Their only 'offence' has (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Assam flood: Gaurav Gogoi urges govt to speed up relief measures

GUWAHATI, July 22: Assam Congress President Gaurav Gogoi on Wednesday appealed to the government to ramp up rescue and relief operations in the flood-affected districts of the northeastern state.

Gogoi also visited flood-hit areas in his Jorhat Lok Sabha constituency and distributed relief materials among the affected.

"The flood situation across Assam, including several parts of Jorhat, remains deeply concerning. Families have been displaced, homes and livelihoods have been affected, and precious lives have been lost," he said in a post on X. The flood has impacted nearly 5.65 lakh people in 12 districts, and 31 people have died in the deluge so far.



The Deputy Leader of the Congress in Lok Sabha said he has visited flood-affected areas across the constituency to meet residents, understand their immediate needs and

assess the situation on the ground.

"I also interacted with officials and local volunteers engaged in the relief efforts. At this difficult time, ensuring (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Assam govt introduces amendment bill to ease land acquisition

GUWAHATI, July 22: The Assam government on Wednesday introduced an amendment bill in the Assembly to exempt acquisition of land for specified purposes from certain provisions of the existing principal Act.

'The Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement (Assam Amendment) Bill, 2026' was introduced in the House by Parliamentary Affairs Minister Pijush Hazarika, on behalf of Revenue and Disaster Management Minister Keshab Mahanta.

The bill seeks to amend section 10A of the existing Act and exempt acquisition of land for specified purposes from application of chapter II and III of the principal Act, which broadly deals with social impact as-

essment and safeguarding land meant for agricultural purposes.

Land required for projects related to national security or defence, rural infrastructure projects including electrification, health and education, and affordable housing and housing for the poor has sought to be exempted.

Moreover, land for industrial area or estate set up by the state government and its undertakings, industrial corridors set up by the state government and its undertakings, and infrastructure projects including under PPP mode where ownership of land vests with the state and planned urban development projects in and around airports will also be exempted. The state government will ensure that (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Recommends curbs on junk food marketing, front-of-pack labels and healthier school food environments

ICMR-led consortium urges stronger policies for healthier school food

NEW DELHI, July 22: An ICMR-linked consortium has recommended healthier school food environment, stricter regulation of marketing of unhealthy food and front-of-pack nutrition labelling to tackle the rising burden of obesity and diet-related non-communicable diseases.

The recommendations by the 'Let's Fix Our Food' (LFOF) Consortium, a multi-institutional platform led by the ICMR-National Institute of Nutrition (NIN), also include taxation of high-fat, sugar and salt (HFSS) foods.

The recommendations are the outcome of nearly three years of multi-disciplinary research, stakeholder consultations and policy dialogues undertaken by the consortium.

The policy document, "Priority Policy Actions to Promote Healthier Diets and Food Environments for Children and Adolescents in India" was launched by NITI Aayog Member (Health) M Srinivas during the



LFOF dissemination and consultation workshop held here.

The document outlines a roadmap for creating healthier food environments and improving dietary behaviours among children and adolescents. Its priorities spans healthy school food environments, nutrition literacy, front-of-pack nu-

trition labelling, regulation of marketing of HFSS foods to children, taxation of HFSS foods, salt reduction, promotion of healthier dietary fats, low-sodium salt substitutes, behaviour change communication, youth engagement and fiscal measures to encourage healthier diets.

Launching the document, Dr

Srinivas said evidence-based, multi-sectoral policy action was essential to create healthier food environments for children and adolescents.

"Collaborative initiatives such as the Let's Fix Our Food Consortium are important for addressing the growing burden of overweight, obesity and diet-related non-communicable diseases in India," he said.

The ICMR-NIN Director Dr Bharati Kulkarni said the institute remained committed to generating high-quality evidence and fostering partnerships that translate research into public health action.

"The policy recommendations reflect the collective efforts of researchers, policymakers, development partners and young people working towards healthier food environments for India's future generations," she said. Public Health Foundation of India Founder-President Dr K Srinath Reddy stressed the need for (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

CM assures resumption of Autonomous State talks from August: ASDC

HT Bureau

DIPHU, July 22: The Autonomous State Demand Committee (ASDC) on Wednesday claimed that Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma has assured the resumption of official talks on the long-pending demand for an Autonomous State under Article 244(A) of the Constitution from August this year.

Addressing a press conference at the ASDC Central Committee office in Diphu, ASDC president Sonasing Terang said the assurance was given during a meeting between an ASDC-led delegation and the chief minister at Dispur on July 14.

Terang said the ASDC, along with its allied organisations—the Karbi Students' Association (KSA), Karbi Nimso Chingthur Asong (KNCA) and the Forum for Hills Autonomous State Movement (FHASM)—had been engaged in official discussions with the Assam government on the Autonomous State issue since July

11, 2025.

According to him, several rounds of talks had yielded positive progress before the process was suspended in March 2026 due to the Assam Assembly elections.

He said the July 14 meeting was held to urge the State government to resume discussions and facilitate a tripartite dialogue involving the ASDC, the Assam government and the Central government.

Terang alleged that despite the conclusion of the Assembly elections, the State government had not informed the organisation about progress in arranging the proposed tripartite talks with the Centre.

He also said the ASDC had intensified its movement by staging a sit-in demonstration in Diphu on June 18 and submitting a memorandum to Union home minister Amit Shah seeking early steps towards the creation of an Autonomous State.

According to Terang, the delega-

tion, led by FHASM convenor James Hanse and comprising representatives of the KSA and KNCA, met the chief minister at the Assam Legislative Assembly premises, where Sarma expressed a positive outlook towards restarting the official dialogue process from August.

The delegation also urged the chief minister to facilitate the adoption of a resolution in the Assam Legislative Assembly expressing the consent of legislators for the creation of an Autonomous State under Article 244(A).

Expressing optimism, Terang said he hoped a tripartite dialogue would soon be convened to address the longstanding demand of the people of Karbi Anglong, West Karbi Anglong and Dima Hasao districts.

ASDC general secretary and former Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC) chief executive member Jotson Bey said the organisation had (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Markets decline for 3rd day on higher oil prices, selling in bank stocks

MUMBAI, July 22: Benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty tumbled nearly 1 per cent on Wednesday, taking losses to the third consecutive day, following a sharp spike in crude oil prices and selling in bank stocks.

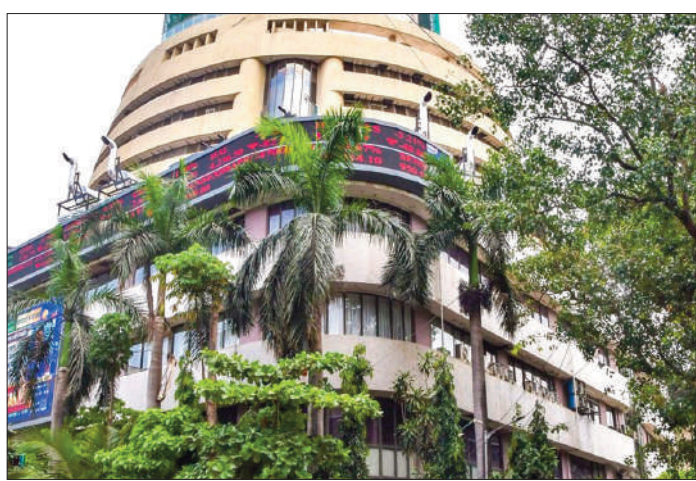
The 30-share BSE Sensex tanked 715.06 points, or 0.92 per cent, to settle at 76,755.05. During the day, it slumped 828.92 points, or 1 per cent, to 76,641.19.

The 50-share NSE Nifty declined 191.45 points, or 0.79 per cent, to end at 23,996.25.

The BSE MidCap Select index tumbled 1.33 per cent and Small-Cap Select index declined 1.16 per cent.

"Indian equities ended lower as the ongoing US-Iran standoff and Houthi-led disruptions to key global shipping routes heightened concerns over potential oil supply disruptions, driving crude prices higher and weakening the rupee," Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Investments Ltd, said.

From the Sensex pack, Inter-Globe Aviation, Infosys, State Bank of India, UltraTech Cement, ICICI Bank, and Axis Bank were



among the major laggards. Hindustan Unilever, NTPC, Power Grid, and Titan were among the winners.

Among sectors, realty tanked 2.62 per cent, services (1.97 per cent), PSU bank (1.83 per cent), focused IT (1.73 per cent), Mid-Small private banks quality tilt (1.63 per cent), IT (1.47 per cent) and private banks index (1.42 per cent). FMCG emerged as the only winner. A total of 2,780 stocks de-

clined, while 1,458 advanced and 180 remained unchanged on the BSE.

Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, jumped 4.68 per cent to USD 95.27 per barrel.

"Indian equities closed lower as a sharp rise in crude oil prices and persistent geopolitical tensions in the Middle East kept investors firmly in risk-off mode.

"The benchmark indices faced sustained selling pressure through-

out the session, with broad-based declines across most sectors overshadowing an otherwise encouraging start to the first-quarter earnings season," Ponnudi R, CEO of Enrich Money, an online trading and wealth tech firm, said.

Investor attention remained firmly on the macro backdrop as higher crude oil prices and renewed concerns over potential US tariffs on pharmaceutical imports weighed on sentiment, he added.

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

Markets in Europe were trading higher. US markets ended higher on Tuesday.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) turned buyers on Tuesday. They bought equities worth ₹ 1,650.16 crore in the previous trade, according to exchange data.

On Tuesday, Sensex declined 238.41 points, or 0.31 per cent, to settle at 77,470.11. The Nifty edged lower by 50.80 points, or 0.21 per cent, to end at 24,187.70. (PTI)

Asian shares edge higher after Wall Street climb

TOKYO, July 22: Asian shares were mostly higher Wednesday following a rally on Wall Street, despite concerns about higher oil prices and inflation.

Japan's benchmark Nikkei 225 rose 1.9% to 67,511.12, after the government reported that both imports and exports rose last month from a year earlier, as the weakening yen raised the value of both when converted from dollars to yen. Australia's S&P/ASX 200 added 0.4% to 8,830.60. South Korea's Kospi surged 4.6% to 7,061.36. The Hang Seng dipped 0.7% to 24,947.30, while the Shanghai Composite gained nearly 0.5% to 3,882.95.

More gains for makers of computer chips and other companies benefiting from the artificial-intelligence boom carried Wall Street higher. The S&P 500 climbed 0.9%. The Dow Jones Industrial Average added 385 points, or 0.7%, and the Nasdaq composite rose 1.3%.

AI stocks once again were at the center of the action, and they rose for a second straight day after tumbling the week before.

After rocketing higher because of the boom in investment in AI chips and data centers, they've come under pressure in recent weeks on worries that they shot too high. Micron Technology jumped 12.2% and added to its 1.9% gain from the day before, coming off its 13.3% drop from last week. Nvidia added 2%, and they were the two strongest forces lifting the S&P 500.

The gains came despite more climbs for oil prices, which followed continued attacks between the United States and Iran.

In energy trading early Wednesday, benchmark U.S. crude added 85 cents to \$85.19 a barrel. Brent crude, the international standard, rose \$1.04 to \$92.05 a barrel.

"Oil makes the situation more difficult because Japan imports most of its energy. A weaker yen and higher crude prices arrive together like two waves hitting the same sea-wall," said analyst Stephen Innes, a former trader. (PTI)

Contd. from Page 1...

Toll touches 31, ₹ 4 lakh

According to the authority's daily flood report issued at midnight on Tuesday, more than 5,64,600 people have been affected in Biswanath, Charaideo, Dhemaji, Dibrugarh, Golaghat, Jorhat, Kamrup, Kamrup Metropolitan, Karbi Anglong, Nagaon, Sivasagar and Tinsukia districts. Sivasagar is the worst-hit district with nearly 3.6 lakh people affected, followed by Jorhat with almost 88,000 and Charaideo with more than 72,500 reeling under floodwaters.

The India Meteorological Department has issued a 'yellow alert' for Assam and predicted thunderstorms and heavy rains at isolated places over the next four days.

The 'yellow alert' of the IMD stands for watch and be updated.

IMD's Regional Meteorological Centre (RMC) in Guwahati said that the upper air cyclonic circulation over Central Assam and adjoining Nagaland between 1.5 and 3.1 km above mean sea level has become less marked.

Sarma said he interacted with the people at one of the relief camps set up in Charaideo to take stock of their situation and assured them that people with serious illness or who are immobile will be shifted to hospitals.

"Medical teams and all essential services are in place. I assured every family that we will stand by them through relief, rehabilitation and recovery," he added.

Sarma also assured the public that the government will take necessary steps to provide all documents lost in the flood. The flood situation has worsened significantly since Monday night, when nearly 3.63 lakh people were affected across 15 districts. The ASDMA said that the administration has been operating 273 relief camps and relief distribution centres in 10 districts, taking care of 12,284 displaced people at present.

Multiple agencies, like the Army, NDRF, SDRF, Fire & Emergency Service, police and civil agencies, have rescued more than 6,000 people from different parts of Charaideo, Golaghat, Jorhat and Sivasagar, it added.

The authority has distributed 5,011.07 quintals of rice, 956.53 quintals of dal, 265.18 quintals of salt and 20,115.42 litres of mustard oil among the flood victims of the state during the last 24 hours.

At present, 872 villages are under water, and 24,210.35 hectares of crop areas have been damaged across Assam, the ASDMA said. Embankments, roads, bridges and other infrastructure have been damaged by floodwaters in various districts of the state.

At present, the Brahmaputra river is flowing above the danger mark at Neamatighat, while its tributaries Buridihing at Khowang, and Dhansiri at Golaghat and Numaligarh are also flowing above the danger level.

On the other hand, the Dikhou river at Sivasagar and the Disang river at Nanglamuraghat are flowing above the highest flood level, the ASDMA said. On account of widespread flooding, 1,85,029 domestic animals and poultry are affected across the state. (PTI)

Unprecedented floods in 60

At least 31 people have died in the deluge this year so far, while nearly 5.65 lakh people in 12 districts have been affected. The Congress had sought to bring an adjournment motion to discuss the flood situation after the Question Hour.

Leader of Opposition Wazed Ali Choudhury said that he had written to Speaker Ranjeet Kumar Dass regarding the prevailing situation, where people were forced to take shelter atop trees and houses completely submerged by floodwaters. Following the letter, the party wrote to Dass seeking permission to bring the adjournment motion, the Congress leader added.

Dass, disallowing the motion, said the flood situation was extremely worrying, but proceedings cannot be adjourned when voting on supplementary demands is scheduled.

With the parliamentary affairs minister requesting Dass to allow the Congress MLAs to raise their concerns in brief, the Speaker asked the opposition legislators to put forth their issues.

Deputy leader of the Congress legislature party Joy Prakash Dass sought to know the relief operations being carried out by the government.

He said the Congress had asked for suspension of assembly sitting for two days in view of the situation. Das maintained that an assembly committee should visit the affected areas to oversee the rescue and relief activities. He demanded that the prime minister and union ministers must visit to get a first-hand understanding of the situation.

Another Congress MLA Jakir Hussain Sikdar said no one was against the government in this hour of crisis, and stressed that a detailed discussion on the flood issue was necessary in the House. (PTI)

SCBA president writes to

various national examinations fairly," he said. Citing media reports and eyewitness accounts, Singh alleged that police personnel struck protesters on the head, used excessive force, deployed tear gas indiscriminately, dismantled a hunger strike, and assaulted journalists and doctors attending to the injured.

He also claimed several police personnel were operating without mandatory name badges and questioned the official version regarding injuries to police personnel. "Reports published verify that male police officers lathi-charged female protesters and minors, including a 16-year-old student who sustained injuries," he said in the letter.

The SCBA chief said the alleged police action violated Articles 19 and 21 of the Constitution, provisions of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS), and judicial directions requiring minimum use of force while dispersing assemblies. (PTI)

Many villages completely cut

Referring to the cloudburst in neighbouring Nagaland, he said the Assam government had been informed by the Nagaland administration immediately after the incident, but the sudden nature of the disaster left little scope for preventive action.

He added that the government would continue issuing regular flood bulletins but cautioned that the actual damage on the ground was significantly higher than the figures reflected in official reports.

Over 2,000 B'deshis among

were Hindus and the rest were Christians or followers of other religions. Bora further said "sending back" of illegal Bangladeshis was being done as per the guidelines set in a May 2, 2025, letter from the Ministry of Home Affairs.

"Expulsion" of infiltrators to the bordering country was being done according to provisions of the Immigrants (Expulsion from Assam) Act, 1950, he added. "Sending back and expulsion", both are being carried out in line with existing laws of the country," the minister said. (PTI)

Will end fast if Centre

been to raise their voice for a fair and accountable education system," Wangchuk wrote.

"If such an assurance is given, I shall end my fast with faith that the government has heard not only my appeal but also the aspirations of lakhs of young Indians. In the absence of such an assurance, I will be forced to continue my fast indefinitely," he wrote.

Sharing the letter on X, Wangchuk said, "An appeal to the government regarding breaking my fast... Once the assurance from the government comes, I will also appeal to the peacefully protesting students to halt the movement for now and enter into dialogue with the government."

Referring to the July 20 'Chalo Sansad' march, Wangchuk said it "remained very peaceful despite the atrocities and disproportionate use of force by the police".

"The entire nation and the world witnessed their patience and commitment to democratic protest. I sincerely hope that this faith in democratic institutions is not further undermined by any legal cases, harassment or vindictive action against those who participated," he said.

Around 65 MPs from different political parties had written to him, while several met him personally and urged him to end his fast, Wangchuk said. (PTI)

Assam flood: Gaurav Gogoi

timely relief, safe shelter, healthcare, and rehabilitation for every affected family must remain the highest priority.

"I urge the government to strengthen relief operations, provide adequate compensation to the families who have lost their loved ones, and expedite measures to restore normalcy," he said.

The senior Congress leader said the party will continue to monitor the situation closely, and raise every concern at the appropriate forums.

Meanwhile, the India Meteorological Department has issued an alert for Assam, forecasting thunderstorms, lightning and heavy rain at isolated places over the next four days. (PTI)

Assam govt introduces amendment

the bare minimum land required for the projects will be notified for exemption from the provisions of the principal Act, as per the proposed amendment bill. (PTI)

ICMR-led consortium urges

comprehensive policy interventions addressing the commercial, social and environmental determinants of unhealthy diets and called for sustained measures to protect children and adolescents from obesogenic food environments. The consortium comprises ICMR-NIN, Resolve to Save Lives India, UNICEF India, the Public Health Foundation of India, the World Health Organization, the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI), the Institute of Economic Growth, the World Food Programme, Lady Irwin College, IFPRI, Deakin University and several other national and international partners.

According to the consortium, its work focuses on generating research, policy analysis and advocacy to support India's efforts to prevent diet-related NCDs by transforming food environments, particularly for children and adolescents. The workshop also saw the launch of several knowledge products developed under the initiative, including the LPOF website, the Nutrition Environment Assessment Toolkit for Schools (NEAT-S) and its report, an e-learning module on understanding food labels and educational resources on fats, sugars and salt aimed at strengthening nutrition literacy among children and adolescents.

UNICEF India Chief of Nutrition Marie-Claude Desilets said malnutrition was no longer limited to undernutrition, with rising obesity emerging as a major challenge to healthy growth among children and adolescents.

"The release of these ten policy briefs and the Nutrition Environment Assessment Toolkit for Schools marks a step towards creating policies for healthier school food environments. Every child has the right to grow up in a food environment that enables them to thrive, learn and achieve their full potential," she said. (PTI)

CM assures resumption of

initially decided not to disclose details of the July 14 meeting but chose to do so in response to discussions on social media. Bey said the delegation had reminded the chief minister of the State government's earlier written assurance that official talks would resume after the Assembly elections.

He added that the ASDC had supported BJP candidates in all six Assembly constituencies of Karbi Anglong, West Karbi Anglong and Dima Hasao during the recent elections in the hope of advancing the Autonomous State demand, and urged the government to honour its commitment by expediting arrangements for tripartite talks.

Bey further said that if a resolution on the issue could not be adopted during the ongoing Budget Session, the State government should introduce a "no-objection" resolution in the next Assembly session.

He also claimed that the chief minister had asked the delegation to prepare and submit a detailed proposal outlining the structure and framework of the proposed Autonomous State.

Four Axis Bank-IIS judokas qualify for 2026 Commonwealth Games

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, July 22: Four women judokas supported under the Axis Bank Judo Development Programme, implemented in partnership with the Inspire Institute of Sport (IIS), have qualified for India's squad for the 2026 Commonwealth Games in Glasgow.

The qualifiers are Takhellambam Inunganbi (70kg) from Manipur, Yamini Mourya (57kg) from Madhya Pradesh, Unnati Sharma (63kg) from Uttarakhand and Ishroop Narang (78kg) from Punjab.

Axis Bank said the achievement reflects the programme's focus on long-term athlete development through world-class coaching, sports science, nutrition, strength and conditioning, mental wellness support and international exposure.

The programme has supported more than 500 athletes through grassroots and elite training pathways.

It has also contributed to the success of Linthoi Chanambam of Manipur, who became India's first World Junior Championship medalist in judo after winning bronze at the 2025 World Junior Championships in Peru.

According to Axis Bank, the initiative has nurtured 471 young judokas and 53 elite female athletes, whose combined performances have yielded more than 140 medals at state, national and international competi-

tions.

The athletes have also participated in 11 international training camps in countries including Japan, Georgia and Uzbekistan.

In Manipur and the North-East, the programme works with local stakeholders, including the Manipur Judo Association, and receives mentorship from Olympian Sushila Devi to identify and develop promising talent.

The initiative also seeks to provide athletes from underserved and conflict-affected regions with access to structured training facilities.

Vijay Mulbagal, Group Head – Wholesale Bank Coverage, Corporate Salary, Sustainability and CSR at Axis Bank, said the partnership with IIS is aimed at helping talented athletes access high-quality coaching and scientific training needed to compete at the highest level.

Manisha Malhotra, President of the Inspire Institute of Sport, said the programme was designed to support athletes throughout their development journey while promoting greater participation of women and creating sustainable sporting ecosystems. Axis Bank said it plans to further expand the programme's grassroots footprint in the North-East while continuing to support athletes competing on the international stage and strengthening India's judo ecosystem.

Hyd cyber fraud cases: Google says only one app available on Play Store

NEW DELHI, July 22: Google on Wednesday said it has initiated an immediate investigation after being alerted about alleged cyber fraud cases involving investment apps and found that only one of them was available on the Play Store and complies with its financial services policy.

The comment from the tech giant assumes significance as Hyderabad Cyber Crime Police has named the "Head of Google in India" as a co-accused in three cyber fraud cases in which the complainants alleged that fraudsters cheated them in the name of high returns to their investments by making them download "fake" apps from Google Play Store.

"Google Play strictly prohibits all forms of deception. We investigated this issue as soon as we were alerted, and confirmed that only one app was available on the Play Store. Our reviews reveal that the app complies with Play's financial services policy," a Google spokesperson said in response to a PTI email.

The spokesperson further said Google reviews valid legal removal requests when notified through the correct legal processes "and, where appropriate, we restrict or remove apps in keeping with local laws".

In the Hyderabad cases, complainants have alleged that they downloaded the fraudulent trading applications, believing them to be genuine and trustworthy because they were available in the Google Play Store.

Based on the three separate complaints, police registered cases under relevant sections of the IT Act and BNS against the fraudsters and the Google India Head. A senior police official had told PTI that they are in the process of issuing a notice to Google India seeking information about such apps.

The complainant stated that the accused, through the fraudulent investment platform, whose app is available on the Play Store, dishonestly induced him to transfer huge sums of money on the false promise of high investment returns and then refused to release his funds. (PTI)

Experts call for ICMR-led review of global nicotine research

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, July 22: Public health experts have called for the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) to undertake an independent scientific review of emerging global evidence on non-combustible nicotine products following the United States Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) decision to authorise modified-risk claims for certain such products.

The experts stressed that India should neither adopt international regulatory models wholesale nor dismiss emerging scientific evidence without examination.

Instead, they advocated a comprehensive assessment tailored to India's own public health priorities and regulatory framework.

Referring to experiences in countries such as Sweden, the United Kingdom, Japan, Norway and the United States, they noted that several jurisdictions have reported declines in cigarette smoking alongside the adoption of regulated non-combustible nicotine alternatives.

They, however, maintained that any policy consideration in India

should be based on independent domestic scientific evaluation.

Dr Mohsin Wali, Senior Consultant at Sir Ganga Ram Hospital and a Padma Shri awardee, said India has consistently adapted international scientific evidence to suit national requirements in areas such as COVID-19 diagnostics, gene therapy and clinical research.

He said a similar evidence-based evaluation of international tobacco control strategies could help determine their relevance to India's unique public health landscape.

The experts pointed out that India has an estimated 267 million tobacco users, with tobacco consumption remaining a leading cause of cancer, cardiovascular disease and respiratory illnesses.

While emphasising that preventing tobacco initiation and promoting complete cessation must remain the cornerstone of tobacco control, they said there is also a need to examine evidence relating to adult users who are unable to quit despite repeated attempts.

Dr Chandrakant S Pandav, former Professor and Head of the Centre for Community Medicine at AIIMS,

LOST

I, Sanghita Chowdhury, D/O: Late Lalmoan Chowdhury, R/O: Gobindapally, P.O. Hojai, Dist: Hojai, PIN: 782435 have lost my HSLC certificate, marksheet & admit card issued by SEBA bearing Admit card No:98473 and Roll:119 No:373 of session: 1984.

NAME CHANGE

I Mohammed Abad Uddin, S/o- Abdul Hoque, Vill- Nahorgaon, P.S- Doboka, Dist- Hojai (Assam) do hereby declare that my father name has been wrongly recorded as Mohammed Abdul Hoque in my Passport Vide No- P3678531. My father correct name is Abdul Hoque. I have corrected my father name by executing a Notarial Affidavit at Srimanta Sankardev Nagar, Hojai, (Assam).

AFFIDAVIT

I, Prachi Ajitsaria, daughter of Late Mahesh Kumar Ajitsaria, residing at SMS Road, Haibargaon, Nagaon (Assam), hereby declare that the name of my late father is mentioned as Mahesh Ajitsaria in my HSLC Marksheet [SL NO- 382279] whereas in all his other official documents and my other records, his name is mentioned as Mahesh Kumar Ajitsaria.

I hereby declare that Mahesh Ajitsaria and Mahesh Kumar Ajitsaria refer to one and the same person, who was my late father.

Prachi Ajitsaria
D/O- Late Mahesh Kumar Ajitsaria.
Haibargaon, Nagaon

Augmentation of Sports Lighting infrastructure at Eco Park & Railway Institute Field, Aminiagan

Tender Notice No. DYCEE-PS-MLG-HQ-08-26-27, Date: 20-07-2026.
E-tender are invited by the undersigned for the following work. **Tender No. DYCEE-PS-MLG-HQ-08-26-27. Name of Work:** Augmentation of Sports Lighting infrastructure through Provision of Flood Lighting and Electrical Works at Eco Park & Railway Institute Field, Aminiagan. **Advertised Value:** ₹1,78,45,799.40. **Earnest Money:** ₹3,56,900.00. **E-tenders will be closed at 15:00 hrs. on 07-08-2026.** The complete information with the tender document of above e-tender will be available in www.treps.gov.in

Dy.CEE/PS/Maligaon/HQ
NORTH EAST FRONTIER RAILWAY
SERVING EXCELLENCE WITH A SMILE

EKADC BJP hails Assam Budget, highlights boost for hill districts

Party says ₹2,575-crore allocation will accelerate development in Karbi Anglong, Dima Hasao

HT Bureau

DIPHU, July 22: The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), East Karbi Anglong District Committee (EKADC) has welcomed the Assam Budget 2026-27, describing it as a roadmap for inclusive development and a step towards achieving the vision of Viksit Bharat 2047.

Addressing a press conference at the party's Atal Bihari Vajpayee Bhawan office in Diphu on Wednesday, BJP-EKADC Media Department Convener Bidyasing Rongpi said the budget, presented by Finance Minister Jayanta Malla Baruah during the ongoing Budget Session of the Assam Legislative Assembly, reflects the state government's commitment to balanced growth and welfare.

Rongpi said the budget earmarks ₹2,575 crore for the development of the hill districts of Karbi Anglong, West Karbi Anglong and Dima



Hasao, which he said would strengthen infrastructure and socio-economic development in the region.

Highlighting the government's implementation record, he said

around 85 per cent of the schemes announced in the previous year's budget had been executed, expressing confidence that the performance would improve further during the current financial year.

He also welcomed the enhancement of the MLA Local Area Development (LAD) Fund from ₹1 crore to ₹1.5 crore, stating that 10 per cent of the allocation would be utilised for urgent community welfare needs while the remaining 90 per cent would support local infrastructure development and initiatives aimed at achieving self-sufficiency in fish, milk, meat and egg production.

Rongpi credited Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision for transforming Assam into a key growth engine of the Northeast and an important pillar of India's Act East Policy.

He said the budget includes provisions for creating two lakh additional jobs, expanding welfare schemes for youth, women and economically weaker sections, and strengthening social security initiatives, including widow pensions.

Goalpara DC warns of action against Census duty defaulters



HT Correspondent

GOALPARA, July 22: Goalpara District Commissioner and Principal Census Officer Proddip Timung has directed all Heads of Departments to ensure the active participation of officers and employees assigned to Census 2027 duties and warned of legal action against those failing to discharge their responsibilities.

In an official directive issued

on Wednesday, the District Commissioner stated that every official entrusted with census-related work must perform the assigned duties without fail.

He warned that any officer or employee refusing to cooperate, neglecting assigned responsibilities or disobeying lawful instructions issued under the Census Act, 1948, would face legal action.

The order stated that violations under Sections 11(1)(a) and 11(1)(b) of the Census Act are punishable with a fine of up to ₹1,000, imprisonment for up to three years, or both, depending on the nature of the offence.

To ensure the timely implementation of the House Listing Operation (HLO), the first phase of Census 2027, the District Commissioner also imposed restrictions on granting leave to personnel engaged in census work.

Heads of Departments have been instructed not to sanction Casual Leave (CL), Earned Leave (EL), Child Care Leave (CCL) or any other category of leave to Master Trainers, Field Trainers, Enumerators, Supervisors and Reserve Personnel without obtaining prior approval from the District Commissioner.

The order further cautioned that any lapse in implementing the instructions would be viewed seriously and appropriate action would be initiated under the provisions of the Census Act, 1948, and other applicable rules.

NFR intensifies restoration work on flood-hit railway sections



HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, July 22: Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR) has intensified restoration work on railway tracks and infrastructure affected by flooding in the Simaluguri area of Assam's Sivasagar district, following heavy rainfall in the upstream catchment areas of the Dikhow River.

According to NFR, overflowing river water inundated the Simaluguri railway station yard, adjoining railway colony and nearby areas under the Tinsukia Division, with floodwaters overtopping sections of the railway track and disrupting normal train operations.

Railway authorities said restoration work is being carried out round the clock under the supervision of senior divisional officials to restore

services at the earliest.

Engineering teams have been deployed on a war footing to repair the affected infrastructure and ensure the safe resumption of train movement.

More than 200 workers, along with railway engineers and supervisors, are currently engaged in restoration work in the Selenghat-Amguri section.

The teams are undertaking track repairs, strengthening railway infrastructure and conducting continuous inspections of the affected stretches.

Significant restoration activities were also carried out in the Sivasagar Town-Simaluguri section, with railway personnel continuing repair work despite adverse weather conditions.

Senior officials of the Northeast Frontier Railway are closely monitoring the operations, while various departments are working in coordination to minimise disruption to train services.

NFR stated that passenger safety remains its top priority and assured that every effort is being made to complete the restoration work efficiently and restore normal rail services at the earliest.

BTC chief reviews functioning of Kokrajhar Medical College and Hospital

Governing Body discusses infrastructure, staffing and student accommodation

HT Correspondent

KOKRAJHAR, July 22: Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) Chief and Chairman of the Governing Body of Kokrajhar Medical College and Hospital (KMCH), Hagrama Mohilary, chaired the Governing Body meeting of the institution recently to review its overall functioning and discuss measures to strengthen healthcare services and infrastructure.

The meeting, the first of the Governing Body this year, was attended by MLAs, Executive Members, MCLAs, the District Commissioner of Kokrajhar, members of the Governing Body and senior officials.

The Governing Body reviewed several proposals aimed at improving facilities at the medical college and hospital.

Among the issues discussed was the establishment of an ATM within the campus for the convenience of patients, attendants and staff.



Measures to ensure uninterrupted power supply, including the setting up of electrical substations, and the construction of boundary walls around the residential campus to enhance security were also taken up.

The meeting also reviewed the existing system of garbage disposal and biomedical waste management to ensure scientific and efficient handling of waste generated by the institution.

To address the immediate accommodation needs of newly admitted MBBS students, the Governing Body approved the temporary conversion of the Mother and Child Health (MCH) Building into a boys' hostel for one

year.

It also directed the authorities to expedite the construction of the permanent students' hostel.

The Governing Body further reviewed vacancies in Grade II, Grade III and Grade IV posts and discussed the requirement for additional personnel, including electricians, plumbers, security staff and housekeeping workers, to ensure the smooth functioning of the institution.

Regular funding and timely payment of salaries to support staff also figured in the discussions. Addressing the meeting, Mohilary emphasised the need for coordinated efforts to resolve the issues facing the institution and directed the concerned departments to take prompt action.

He reiterated the BTC's commitment to developing Kokrajhar Medical College and Hospital into a fully functional healthcare institution capable of delivering quality medical services to the people of the region.

Seemanta Chetana Mancha Purvottar to hold State convention at NIT Silchar

HT Correspondent

SILCHAR, July 22: The Assam State Annual Convention 2026 of Seemanta Chetana Mancha Purvottar will be held on July 25 and 26 at the National Institute of Technology (NIT), Silchar, bringing together representatives from Assam's international border districts to deliberate on issues concerning border communities.

The organisers said the convention, being held in the Barak Valley for the first time since the organisation's inception, is expected to be attended by nearly 200 delegates, office-bearers and representatives from the nine international border districts of Assam adjoining the Indo-Bhutan and Indo-Bangladesh borders.

Seemanta Chetana Mancha Purvottar is a socio-cultural, non-political organisation working to promote national integration, social harmony, patriotism and sustainable development in the international border regions of Northeast India.

Over the years, it has undertaken programmes aimed at fostering national consciousness, youth empowerment and community participation in border areas.

The convention will be attended by

Assam Cabinet Minister Kaushik Rai, NIT Silchar Director Dr Dilip Kumar Baidya and Guru Charan University Vice-Chancellor Prof Niranjan Roy.

A Gopalkrishnan, Akhil Bharatiya Samrakshak of Seema Jagaran Manch and Pradeepan, Akhil Bharatiya Saha-Samyojak (National Co-Coordinator) of the organisation, will also participate in the event.

During the two-day convention, delegates will deliberate on issues relating to regional development, national integration, youth empowerment, infrastructure, education, social welfare and the challenges faced by people living in Assam's international border areas.

Representatives from the border districts will also exchange ideas and formulate strategies for strengthening the socio-economic and cultural development of these strategically important regions.

The organisers expressed confidence that the convention would further strengthen cooperation among border communities while promoting the values of unity, service and national integration.

They have also invited members of the print, electronic and digital media to cover the event.

Waterlogging disrupts normal life in Jagiroad

HT Correspondent

MORIGAON, July 22: Widespread waterlogging triggered by incessant rainfall has disrupted normal life in the satellite town of Jagiroad in Morigaon district, with several residential areas remaining inundated since Monday. Residents described the situation as an artificial flood, alleging that poor drainage aggravated the flooding following continuous rainfall.

Several localities, including Natungaon, Markangkushi, Kishor Club, Syampalli, Nakhulagaon, Jyotikushi and Paschim Nagaon, were submerged, forcing residents to wade through water and causing damage to household property. The floodwater also damaged the boundary wall of a school while the dry fish market and the Jagiroad Railway Station, located in the heart of the town were inundated, affecting normal activities.

Residents have urged the authorities to take immediate measures to improve drainage and clear the accumulated water to prevent further damage and restore normalcy.

Fleming Rupsi elected Deputy Chairman of NCHAC

HT Correspondent

HAFLONG, July 22: Fleming Rupsi, Member of the Autonomous Council (MAC) from Jatinga, was unanimously elected as the Deputy Chairman of the 13th North Cachar Hills Autonomous Council (NCHAC) during the Council's 8th (253rd) session held at the Assembly Hall in Haflong on Wednesday.

Rupsi was elected unopposed after fellow MAC Ramgalunge Jeme withdrew his nomination.

Following the announcement of the result, members of the House and others felicitated the newly elected Deputy Chairman by presenting him with the traditional Risa.

Rupsi was elected to the 13th NCHAC from the Jatinga constituency in the 2024 Council elections, securing his third consecutive term as a Member of the Au-

tonomous Council. He has also previously served as an Executive Member of the Council.

Expressing gratitude after assuming office, Rupsi said he was honoured to have been elected unanimously and hoped the district would witness further development in the coming years.

While describing the election as a matter of great satisfaction, he said it also carried significant responsibility and stressed the need to work with unity and integrity for the overall development of the district.

During the session, the Council also passed the 49th Amendment Bill, 2023 (Oath Taking Bill), marking what members described as an important milestone in the legislative functioning of the North Cachar Hills Autonomous Council.

Dhing College marks 62nd Foundation Day

HT Correspondent

NAGAON, July 22: Dhing College celebrated its 62nd Foundation Day with a solemn programme recently, paying tribute to its former student and noted music artiste Samsuddin Ahmed.

District Commissioner Devashish Sharma, who attended the function as the chief guest, encouraged students to pursue academic excellence with dedication and to contribute meaningfully to society through art, culture and other creative pursuits.

He also spoke on the role of youth in nation-building and emphasised the importance of responsibility and civic duty.

As part of the celebration, the District Commissioner inaugurated "Projonmo," an art exhibition featuring works created by students of the college. He appreciated the creativity and originality of the exhibits and wished the students success in their future endeavours.

Five rescued from floodwaters in Jorhat

Teenage girl, three women and man brought to safety during night-long operation

HT Correspondent

JORHAT, July 22: Five people, including three women, a teenage girl and a man, were rescued from floodwaters in Assam's Jorhat district during a joint operation carried out by the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) and the Jorhat District Disaster Management Authority (DDMA).

According to district administration officials, the rescue operation was launched on July 19 after the DDMA received an emergency alert from the flood-hit Selenghat area near Seleng Tea Estate under the Teok Revenue Circle.

A rescue team from the 1st Battalion of the NDRF, led by Inspector KV Nath under the supervision of Deputy Commandant NK Tiwari, was immediately deployed to the affected area.

On reaching the site, the team found several residents stranded on elevated structures as floodwaters continued to rise.

At around 7.35 pm, rescuers began an intensive search operation and located a teenage girl trapped beneath the roof of a submerged house.

She was found clinging to a bamboo support

with floodwater reaching her neck. The team successfully brought her to safety.

During the operation, rescuers also spotted a man being swept away by the strong current while holding onto a banana tree and managed to rescue him.

The rescued girl informed the team that three women were stranded nearby, clinging to banana trees amid the fast-flowing water.

The NDRF personnel subsequently located and rescued all three women.

One elderly woman, who had remained in the cold floodwater for a prolonged period, was suffering from severe hypothermia.

She was administered first aid before being shifted, along with the other rescued persons, to a designated relief camp for medical care and rehabilitation.

The district administration said the timely response and coordinated efforts of the NDRF and DDMA helped avert a major tragedy and commended the rescue personnel for their courage and professionalism during the operation.

Kokrajhar hosts awareness programme on Handloom Act, GI products

Stakeholders urged to promote authentic handloom products and protect weavers' livelihoods

HT Correspondent

KOKRAJHAR, July 22: An awareness programme on the Handloom (Reservation of Articles for Production) Act, 1985, and the promotion of Geographical Indication (GI)-registered handloom products of Assam and Bodoland was organised at the Conference Hall of the Office of the District Commissioner, Kokrajhar, ahead of the National Handloom Day celebrations on August 7.

The programme was jointly organised by the Handloom and Textiles Department, Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) and the District Administration, Kokrajhar.

It was chaired by District Commissioner Pankaj Chakravarty and attended by assistant commissioners, officials of the Handloom and Textiles Department, traders, retailers, shopkeepers, manufacturers and other stakeholders.

Addressing the gathering, Chakravarty stressed the importance



of preserving the region's rich handloom heritage through effective implementation of the Handloom (Reservation of Articles for Production) Act, 1985, promotion of authentic GI-tagged products and stronger cooperation among all stakeholders.

He urged traders, retailers, manufacturers and consumers to support genuine handloom products, adopt ethical trade practices and safeguard the interests and livelihoods of local weavers.

The participants were sensitised to the provisions of the Handloom Act, the significance of GI-tagged handloom products and the need to prevent the sale of non-handloom products under the guise of authentic handloom items.

A collective pledge was also administered, reaffirming their commitment to uphold the provisions of the Act and promote genuine handloom products.

The programme also marked the launch of a joint initiative by the Handloom and Textiles Department, BTC, and the District Administration, Kokrajhar, to strengthen linkages between local weavers and traders, retailers, shopkeepers and manufacturers.

The initiative aims to develop a sustainable handloom production and marketing ecosystem in line with the provisions of the Handloom Act and the Geographical Indications (GI) framework.

'Ankurita Asom' launched



HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, July 22: A new initiative, 'Ankurita Asom', was launched on Wednesday with the objective of conserving Assam's indigenous rice varieties while promoting their sustainable cultivation and commercial value.

The initiative seeks to preserve traditional paddy varieties, strengthen farmers' capacities and encourage the sustainable use of the state's rich agricultural heritage for future generations.

It also aims to create market opportunities for indigenous rice through value addition and improved marketing strategies.

Speaking at the launch, agricultural expert and Technical Advisor to the programme, Dr Arunima Deb Chowdhury, stressed the importance of conserving indigenous rice diversity, saying such efforts are essential for sustainable agricultural development in Assam.

The launch programme was attended by Ankurita Asom President Naser Hussain, General Secretary Ramesh Pandey Chetri, Assistant Secretary Nilufa Rahman, office-bearers of the organisation, farmers and local residents. A ceremonial paddy seedling plantation marked the inauguration of the initiative, with participants pledging to work collectively towards preserving Assam's traditional rice varieties and ensuring the long-term success of the programme.

Census 2027 training for enumerators begins in Margherita

HT Correspondent

MARGHERITA, July 21: The first phase of the Census 2027 Enumerators and Supervisors Training Programme commenced on Wednesday at Margherita College under the supervision of the Office of the Circle Officer, Margherita Revenue Circle.

The training was conducted by a team of field trainers comprising Pradip Ch Das, Dr Kanai Das, Suraj Hajong, Dr Abhijit Mahanta, Dr Binod Chettry, Dr Koustab Moni Nath, Noble Kishore Buragohain, Latumoni Gogoi, Prabirjyoti Borah and Mridul Dohutia.

The sessions focused on familiarising enumerators and supervisors with census concepts, field procedures, data collection methodologies and the use of digital tools to ensure accurate, comprehensive and high-quality data collection.

Participants were also briefed on their roles and responsibilities, ethical standards and the importance of maintaining confidentiality throughout the census process.

The training programme will continue from July 22 to August 4, 2026, with the objective of equipping enumerators and supervisors with the skills and knowledge required for the smooth and effective conduct of Census 2027.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

It is never too late to be what you might have been.
- George Eliot

Sharad Pawar's dilemma

As the Monsoon session of Parliament began on July 20, Sharad Pawar, the leader of the NCP, is facing internal conflicts within his party. There could be political changes first in Maharashtra, and then the merged NCP could ally with the BJP. Pawar is known as a political survivor because he has often saved his party from disappearing. He is skilled at forming unexpected alliances, such as the 2019 Maha Vikas Aghadi alliance with Shiv Sena and Congress. He also has a strong grassroots network in Maharashtra. Even after the tragic loss of his nephew, Ajit Pawar, in a plane crash, and ongoing power struggles within his faction of the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP), he still has significant influence in both national and regional politics. In July 2023, the political climate in Maharashtra worsened when Ajit Pawar left the NCP to join the BJP-Shiv Sena government. Soon after, the Election Commission recognised Ajit Pawar's group as the official NCP. In response, Sharad Pawar started a new party called the Nationalist Congress Party (Sharadchand Pawar). Now, Maharashtra has two rival parties, both claiming the same political legacy. This session arrives at a critical point, where upcoming legislation on parliamentary representation could reshape governance, inspiring hope for change despite controversy.

Pawar's involvement in the legislative process is especially important given the upcoming bill to amend provisions related to parliamentary representation in India, which could significantly alter Maharashtra's influence by increasing Lok Sabha seats from 543 to 850 and shifting census-based delimitation powers. This bill is an important step in the ongoing conversation about how we represent people in Parliament. It is especially relevant for Maharashtra and the southern states, where people are concerned about getting fair representation and sharing resources. The bill proposes increasing the number of parliamentary seats from 543 to 850 and introducing new rules for reporting census data. These changes could greatly impact the political landscape in these regions.

As a pivotal figure in Maharashtra politics, Pawar has demonstrated resilience amid internal divisions within his Nationalist Congress Party (NCP). Following the tragic loss of his nephew, Ajit Pawar, in a plane crash in January 2026, the party has the chance to address succession challenges, with Ajit's widow, Sunetra Pawar, stepping into the roles of Deputy Chief Minister and state party chief. Despite facing these challenges and ongoing factional issues, Sharad Pawar retains significant influence over the NCP. This situation presents a critical juncture for the party to regroup and develop innovative strategies to succeed in future assembly elections. Pawar faces pressure to merge with the NDA-aligned NC faction. However, his search for a solution raises hope for stability while also highlighting concerns about ongoing faction conflicts.

Global cement growth focus shifts to Africa, Middle East in 2026

By: Kunal Bose

Global cement demand for the current year once again presents a kaleidoscopic picture of healthy rates of growth in uses of the binding agent in the Middle East, Africa and India but a fairly long unbroken period of demand compression in China. Europe, though not in its best economic health, is to see moderate demand recovery for cement, propelled by new house starts and infrastructure renovation. The World Cement Association (WCA) has forecast cement demand stability in the US, which incidentally has conceded the rank of the world's third largest producer of the material to Vietnam.

Being the world's by far the largest producer and consumer of cement, the comprehensive global picture of the demand outlook for 2026 will emerge only when China is factored in. The general consensus among China watchers is, cement demand in the country will fall for six consecutive years in 2026 in the absence of any perk up in house starts and continued low investment in infrastructure. Hugely burdened with overcapacity, China is likely to finish this year using 1.6bn tonnes of cement, a fall of roughly 5% on the 2025 demand of 1.69bn tonnes. SunSirs, the leading provider of Chinese commodity data analysis, says global cement demand, including China will be down 0.2% this year. But excluding China, the world will see a fairly reasonable growth.

As with demand so also with output, global cement volumes declined by an estimated 1.5% in 2025 but were up 3.3% when China is excluded. Last year, the world production was 3.865bn tonnes. Chinese production was approximately 1.69 billion tonnes. On a downward trajectory since 2014 when production peaked at approximately 2.48bn tonnes, the Chinese industry is grappling with overcapacity, intense competition among producers leading to prices leaving low margins.

Even while economic reality surrounding mainly housing sector depression is leading to production fall, the Chinese 2025 cement output was nearly four times that of India's 470m tonnes, showing what a behemoth of a cement industry the world's second largest economy owns. India houses the world's second largest cement industry with capacity close to 700m tonnes. In contrast to the situation obtaining in China, the Indian cement industry is growing capacity at a smart clip. The rating agency ICRA says in a report that India's cement capacity is to expand by 42m tonnes to 44m tonnes during 2026-27 financial year. This will come on top of capacity addition of nearly 45m tonnes in the previous year.

House building boom and leap in infrastructure creation that caused rapid expansion in Chinese cement capacity in the past are now underpinning capacity growth in India. Despite Beijing staying firm to bring cement capacity in alignment with local demand so that unhealthy competition among producers is avoided, the task remains gigantic, not the least due to political resistance to plant closure at the local level. Data emerging from China often lacks authenticity. Research house Global Cement notwithstanding with its ear to the ground in China, therefore, says the country's present cement capacity could be anything between 2.5bn tonnes and 3.5bn tonnes.

Whatever the actual capacity, the industry suffers the pain of low capacity utilisation of 50% to 53% in an environment of producers remaining locked in competition to sell? Price discounting is common. In capacity management, the focus should be more on the core intermediate product clinker from which cement is made after its grinding and mixing with gypsum, fly ash or slag. Moreover, from the point of toxic environmental footprint that the cement sector makes, the real culprit is clinker, for 80% of the sector's air pollution occurs when the intermediate product is made.

China's clinker production capacity was up from 447m tonnes in 2005 to around 2bn tonnes now, with production lines constructed since 2000 accounting for over 90% of prevailing capacity. In contrast, the Indian industry remains on a high-capacity growth phase staying ahead of demand rises. Like China India too is concerned about growing volumes of pollution of the rapidly expanding cement industry. The good thing that has happened with the Indian industry is that nearly the entire cement capacity is now based on dry process technology. This is highly energy efficient in drying the raw mix. (IPA Service)

Assam Floods deserve national priority

Floods have shaped Assam's landscape, economy, and society for centuries, serving as an intrinsic part of the rhythmic pulse of the Brahmaputra valley. This mighty river has historically nourished fertile plains even as it brought destruction. Yet, the catastrophic floods witnessed across the state today are no longer simply seasonal events

recoverable setbacks. These harrowing events were not isolated accidents caused by a few days of heavy rain; rather, they reflected a dangerous convergence of natural climatic processes and long-standing human failures. Climate variability has noticeably increased the frequency and intensity of extreme rainfall events, while widespread deforestation in up-



DEGREE OF THOUGHT

By: Himangshu Ranjan Bhuyan

stream catchments severely accelerates soil erosion and heavy sediment transport into the river systems. Consequently, riverbeds are gradually rising due to continuous silt deposition, drastically reducing the natural capacity of the channels to carry excess monsoon water. Furthermore, encroachment upon natural wetlands, poor urban drainage networks, and unplanned real estate development have severely choked the landscape's natural

ability to absorb excess floodwater. Traditional embankments, once hailed as the ultimate defense against rising waters, have repeatedly failed under extreme pressure. Many have breached after years of chronic neglect and inadequate maintenance, exposing nearby settlements to sudden, violent, and destructive flooding. Even where embankments remain structurally intact, they frequently alter the natural flow of rivers in ways that inadvertently increase flood intensity in downstream or adjacent areas. These harsh realities illustrate that the challenge extends far beyond managing annual rainfall. Effective flood management must transition away from reactive emergency engineering toward a comprehensive understanding of river behavior, holistic watershed management, disciplined land use planning, and robust climate resilience.

Although there is no formal constitutional category that explicitly defines a "national problem" in India's federal structure, there is nothing legally or administratively preventing the Union Government from treating Assam's flood crisis as an issue of exceptional national importance. This distinction is not merely semantic; it carries profound practical weight because it influences political priority, financial commitment, institutional coordination, and long-term planning. For decades, flood management in Assam has remained frustratingly confined to annual relief operations, emergency evacuations, and post-disaster compensation payouts. While these measures save countless lives in moments of acute crisis, they do absolutely nothing to reduce underlying structural vulnerability. Every monsoon exposes the exact same weaknesses, leaving communities trapped in an endless, agonizing cycle of destruction and recovery. The debate, therefore, should no longer revolve around whether floods are inevitable or natural. The real question is whether a country aspiring to become a major global economic powerhouse can continue accepting such recurring, systemic losses in one of its most strategically vital regions. Assam occupies a crucial place in India's northeastern geography, serving as the principal land corridor connecting the rest of the country with the entire region. Any prolonged disruption of transport, communication, agriculture, or trade caused by severe flooding has repercussions that extend far beyond state boundaries, impacting national integration and supply chains alike. Recognition of this wider impact must fundamentally reshape the national approach towards flood management in Assam.

Recent floods across Upper Assam have once again laid bare how deeply vulnerable the region has become to environmental pressures and management gaps. Districts including Sivasagar, Charaideo, and Jorhat have witnessed widespread inundation after continuous rainfall and dangerously rising river levels submerged villages, vast expanses of farmland, roads, and vital public infrastructure. The Brahmaputra and its major tributaries crossed danger marks, while massive volumes of water rushing down from surrounding hill regions intensified the crisis exponentially. Families were forced to abandon their homes overnight, educational institutions suspended normal classes, healthcare delivery ground to a halt, and agricultural activities suffered severe, ir-

reversible damage. The macroeconomic consequences of repeated flooding are equally alarming and demand serious introspection. Agriculture remains the foundational backbone of rural Assam, directly employing a vast share of the population. Every major flood systematically destroys standing crops, damages irrigation networks, buries fertile agricultural topsoil beneath thick sand deposits, and eviscerates farm incomes. Farmers who lose an entire season's hard-earned harvest often struggle endlessly to secure credit and recover before the next monsoon cycle begins, plunging them deeper into debt. Livestock losses further deepen rural economic distress, while damaged roads and compromised local markets severely interrupt the smooth movement of agricultural produce to consumer centers. Simultaneously, the tea industry, which stands as one of Assam's most valuable economic assets globally, faces recurring disruptions. Extended waterlogging threatens tea bushes, delays crucial harvesting operations, wreaks havoc on transportation logistics, and significantly reduces overall productivity. Small tea growers, who have expanded their footprint significantly over the past two decades, are particularly vulnerable because they lack deep financial reserves to absorb such heavy shocks. Tourism, another rapidly growing sector, suffers heavy blows whenever vital transport links are severed or iconic national parks remain inaccessible for months. Private businesses incur massive additional costs due to shattered supply chains and unreliable infrastructure. On the public ledger, government expenditure rises sharply as state authorities are forced to allocate substantial resources away from core developmental priorities toward relief, rehabilitation, and reconstruction every single year. Funds that could otherwise be utilized to strengthen public education, upgrade healthcare infrastructure, or build durable public assets must instead be diverted to repair recurring dam-

ages. This recurring pattern imposes a punishing opportunity cost on the state's overall development. The cumulative economic loss caused by annual flooding extends far beyond immediate physical property damage; it fundamentally depresses employment creation, dampens private investment confidence, stunts industrial expansion, and cripples long-term growth prospects. A challenge producing such extensive and recurring economic consequences deserves treatment as a matter of national economic concern rather than a routine state-level disaster.

Another critical dimension that is frequently overlooked in policy circles is the overarching strategic significance of Assam. The state forms the principal land corridor linking mainland India with the entire North-Eastern region. Roads, railway trunk lines, vital oil pipelines, communication networks, and critical defense logistics all depend heavily upon uninterrupted, seamless connectivity through Assam. Severe floods that fracture transport infrastructure or isolate entire districts for weeks can therefore create vulnerabilities that extend well beyond humanitarian concerns, directly influencing regional commerce, national supply chains, public services, and overall national security. Moreover, the Brahmaputra is not merely a regional or state river; it is a major international transboundary river flowing through China, India, and Bangladesh. Effective management of such a massive international river system inevitably requires high-level cooperation and diplomatic engagement extending far beyond state boundaries. Vital tasks such as hydrological data sharing, upstream monitoring, scientific sediment management, accurate disaster forecasting, and international water diplomacy all require the active, direct participation of the Union Government. Assam alone possesses neither the legal mandate nor the diplomatic standing to negotiate international river agreements or establish cross-border mechanisms for comprehensive river basin management. Nor can the state independently finance large-scale scientific research, advanced technological monitoring systems, or extensive river engineering projects requiring sustained financial commitments over many decades. These heavy responsibilities naturally belong within a broader national framework. Recognizing Assam's floods as an issue of exceptional national importance would foster much stronger institutional coordination among diverse central ministries responsible for water resources, environment, disaster management, transport, agriculture, defense, and external affairs. Such integrated cross-sectoral planning remains absolutely essential because modern flood management is no longer a single-sector challenge.

Relief distribution, although undeniably necessary during an acute crisis, can never serve as a viable substitute for long-term policy and structural prevention. The annual pattern remains painfully familiar: floodwaters rise, mass evacuations begin, relief camps are hurriedly established, financial compensation is announced, and reconstruction follows only after the waters finally recede. Yet, those exact same communities often experience identical hardships the very next year. This repetitive cycle reflects the glaring absence of a comprehensive, scientifically grounded river basin strategy. Scientific management of the Brahmaputra requires continuous, real-time monitoring utilizing cutting-edge satellite technology, advanced hydrological modeling, rigorous sediment analysis, and modern forecasting systems capable of providing accurate early warnings to vulnerable populations. Wetlands, which historically acted as natural flood buffers, require systematic ecological restoration and stringent legal protection against ongoing commercial encroachment. Catchment

areas urgently need large-scale ecological rehabilitation through targeted afforestation and robust soil conservation programs. Urban centers across the state must completely redesign their drainage infrastructure to handle increasingly intense and erratic rainfall events without choking. Riverbank erosion demands durable, permanent engineering solutions supported by thorough scientific evaluation rather than superficial short-term repairs. While selective dredging may contribute meaningfully in specific river stretches where rigorous technical studies demonstrate clear benefits, such interventions must follow strict environmental assessments instead of devolving into politically attractive but ineffective slogans. Equally important is strengthening the institutional capacity of bodies responsible for planning and implementation. The Brahmaputra Board requires vastly greater technical expertise, enhanced financial resources, and operational authority if it is to coordinate basin-wide flood management effectively. Furthermore, close collaboration among premier scientific institutions, state agencies, local grassroots communities, and the Central Government must replace fragmented approaches that frequently duplicate efforts without producing lasting results.

The ongoing debate over formally declaring Assam's floods a national problem must move beyond mere terminology and bureaucratic semantics. Whether or not a formal constitutional designation exists, the underlying principle remains starkly clear: extraordinary and recurring challenges require extraordinary and sustained national commitment. Symbolic declarations alone will never prevent floods, rebuild shattered livelihoods, or restore fragile damaged ecosystems. What matters most is a clear, unambiguous policy framework backed by predictable, long-term funding, deep scientific expertise, robust institutional coordination, and steadfast political determination that extends far beyond short-term electoral cycles. Parliamentarians from Assam, irrespective of partisan affiliations, have a golden opportunity to present a united, cohesive case supported by empirical evidence rather than pure emotion. Reliable data detailing massive economic losses, infrastructure destruction, agricultural decline, ecological degradation, and strategic implications can powerfully strengthen the argument for enhanced national investment. The ultimate objective should not be to seek exceptional treatment for its own sake, but rather to secure a national response that is precisely proportionate to the staggering scale of the challenge. Floods in Assam directly affect millions of Indian citizens, threaten nationally significant infrastructure, disrupt vital economic activity, and demand seamless cooperation across administrative and international boundaries. Those unique characteristics comprehensively justify a policy response extending well beyond conventional disaster relief. India's grand developmental ambitions for the future cannot be divorced from the safety and resilience of its constituent regions. A nation that earnestly seeks sustainable growth must proactively protect communities that are repeatedly exposed to preventable losses. Assam has demonstrated remarkable resilience through generations of living side-by-side with the mighty Brahmaputra. That historic resilience deserves to be matched by an equally determined and comprehensive national action plan. Only through rigorous scientific planning, consistent financial backing, genuine ecological restoration, empowered institutions, and coordinated governance can the tragic annual cycle of destruction gradually give way to a secure future where floods remain a natural seasonal phenomenon without continuing to manifest as an avoidable humanitarian and developmental crisis.

How a six-year policy shift ignited India's commercial Space race

By: Dipak Kurmi

On the morning of July 18, 2026, a seven-storey rocket lifted off from the Satish Dhawan Space Centre in Sriharikota, climbed steadily for roughly fifteen minutes, and successfully placed several payloads into orbit approximately 450 kilometres above the Earth. The launch vehicle was Vikram 1, designed, built, and operated by Skyroot Aerospace, an enterprise that is neither a government agency nor a legacy defense contractor, nor even a decade old. With this historic orbital insertion, India became only the third nation in the world, following the United States and China, in which a privately funded company has independently engineered, constructed, and flown its own multi-stage rocket into Earth orbit. It is essential to pause and reflect on the systemic significance of this accomplishment, because the primary metric of interest is not merely the four payloads deployed or the 450-kilometre altitude achieved, but rather the astonishing timeline of six years. In May 2020, the Government of India announced that the domestic space sector, previously maintained as an exclusive state monopoly, would be opened to private industry and commercial competition. Within just six years of that policy shift, an Indian technology startup achieved a technical milestone that only two other nations have accomplished at the private industrial level, demonstrating an extraordinarily condensed runway from regulatory reform to high-altitude execution.

For the vast majority of independent India's modern history, space exploration and satellite deployment remained constitutionally and administratively restricted to state agencies. The Indian Space Research Organisation designed the launch vehicles, manufactured the scientific satellites, and owned the physical launch facilities, while private industrial firms were restricted to supplying raw components and competing for subcontracts. This state-dominated arrangement was far from unique to space exploration, as key sectors like telecommunications, coal mining, commercial aviation, and banking operated for decades under the assumption that strategic or capital-intensive industries were too vital to trust to private hands. The true long-term costs of such monopolistic frameworks rarely register immediately, manifesting instead as systemic absence—as generations of talented aerospace engineers with only one potential employer, as capital that might have funded diverse technical approaches being funneled into a single mandate, and as vibrant competitive innovation that never finds an open field to test itself. Highly closed sectors do not merely constrain commercial enterprises; they place firm

boundaries on what an entire nation is permitted to imagine and execute.

The technical visionaries behind Skyroot Aerospace understood these institutional dynamics intimately from within the state apparatus. Co-founders Pawan Kumar Chandana and Naga Bharath Doka first met as young research scientists within ISRO, where Chandana contributed to the development of India's heaviest launch vehicle, the GSLV Mark III, while Doka specialized in advanced avionics systems that allow rockets to calculate their spatial positioning and execute real-time mid-flight trajectory corrections. In June 2018, during a period when building a commercial rocket in India remained practically unthinkable, both engineers resigned from secure government appointments to establish Skyroot with a ten-person team and approximately 1.5 million dollars in initial seed funding. Eight years of rigorous engineering and more than 160 million dollars in raised capital later, that audacious bet culminated in a fully operational rocket performing precision orbital insertion.

While it is appealing to frame this breakthrough purely as a dramatic story of individual entrepreneurial daring, viewing Vikram 1 as evidence that private industry succeeded where public administration failed represents a fundamental misreading of the ecosystem. The technical foundation supporting Chandana and Doka was forged directly inside ISRO through decades of public expenditure in research, training, and specialized infrastructure. Furthermore, more than seventy proprietary technologies developed internally by ISRO have been systematically transferred to private domestic firms, allowing enterprises like Skyroot to build upon sophisticated public research rather than engineering every component from scratch. The definitive catalyst in 2020 was not a sudden influx of raw talent, but the granting of regulatory permission alongside the creation of IN-SPACe as an autonomous, single-window regulatory authority, which removed the need for startups to navigate complex internal bureau processes just to test rocket engines. Government investment established the core technical capability, while structural policy reform provided the commercial outlet, making Vikram 1 the direct result of those two forces uniting effectively.

The naming of the rocket serves as a deliberate tribute to this public-private continuity. The vehicle honors Dr. Vikram Sarabhai, the visionary physicist who founded ISRO in 1969 on the firm conviction that a developing nation could not afford to ignore space technology, not to chase international prestige, but because satellite infrastructure was the ultimate tool for ground-level leapfrogging in agricultural tracking,

monsoon prediction, and rural connectivity. Sarabhai built his initial vision strictly within government channels because no other domestic institution possessed the necessary capital or technical capacity at the time. Today, Skyroot has demonstrated that Sarabhai's founding vision can be expanded outside the state apparatus, serving not as a replacement for public sector initiatives, but as a dynamic commercial extension of them.

From an international economic perspective, this operational shift opens massive commercial opportunities for the broader Indian economy. India's space economy is currently valued at approximately 8.4 billion dollars, representing roughly two percent of the global space sector, which remains a modest footprint for a country that educates a large percentage of the world's engineering workforce. Official government projections anticipate this domestic valuation reaching roughly 44 billion dollars by 2033 and expanding to 100 billion dollars by 2040, targets that were entirely unreachable while the sector was legally confined to a single state department. Today, more than three hundred private space startups operate across India, up from a tiny handful five years ago, with the broader ecosystem supporting nearly one hundred thousand skilled technical jobs. A country capable of launching small satellite constellations reliably, rapidly, and cost-effectively—the exact commercial niche Vikram 1 was built to service—is positioned to become the premier launch partner for dozens of developing nations seeking satellite access for telecommunications and climate monitoring without building local launch sites.

Significant operational challenges naturally remain as Skyroot Aerospace moves from its inaugural success to sustained commercial viability. The company must now demonstrate that it can execute repeatable launch schedules rather than isolated demonstration flights, maintain strict cost competitiveness against established global launch providers, and secure the confidence of international commercial clients and aerospace insurers carrying high-value payloads. Skyroot leadership has remained transparent regarding these upcoming operational hurdles and the rigorous testing required to address them. Nevertheless, the underlying structural sequence remains unquestioned: an industry long closed to private capital was formally opened, and within six years, a young enterprise without state ownership placed a rocket into Earth orbit. The overarching takeaway of July 18 is not merely that India operates in space, a milestone established decades ago, but that the nation has developed the institutional agility to remove its own regulatory barriers and accelerate commercial technological progress. (The writer can be reached at dipakkurmipld@gmail.com)

How do they manage to let people live in landfills?

By: Angad Singh

My mind filled with confusion as I tried to figure out the geological possibility of a humongous mountain between two cities. I remember I was travelling from Delhi to Udaipur when I encountered this unusual structure. I strained my ciliary muscles as much as not to cry, in full determination to get a clearer understanding of the giant.

The car moved nearer and nearer, my eyes still stuck at it. ALAS, though it was giant and still peculiar, it was terrifying, something that couldn't possibly come to my 10-year-old imagination. It was a large pile of trash; yes, literal trash. But neither the scraps nor the horribly abominable smell was the thing that caught my attention to the fullest. What did, were the children running on it- it was as strange as if they had found a trek spot from the bottom of their list of hangout places. Though we drove past, I couldn't possibly forget the sight of those children.

A few days later, back at home, I was having lunch and a lightning struck my brain: a sense of familiarity with what was being displayed on the news. It was the same giant of trash, but the reporter was referring to it by the word "landfills," probably because the trash was filling up the land like a dentist does a cavity.

I looked it up instantly on my laptop, and I found out that the same phenomenon harnessed an entire ecosystem of calamity.

Now the name of the "landfill" I saw that day, to my knowledge, could most probably be Okhla landfill. But it turns out Delhi has not one, but a hub of them-

the Okhla, as said; others are Ghazipur, Bhalswa, and Narela-Bawana.

My next spontaneous question was how do these landfills even work? I mean, how do they come up and become these terrible, terrifying giants?

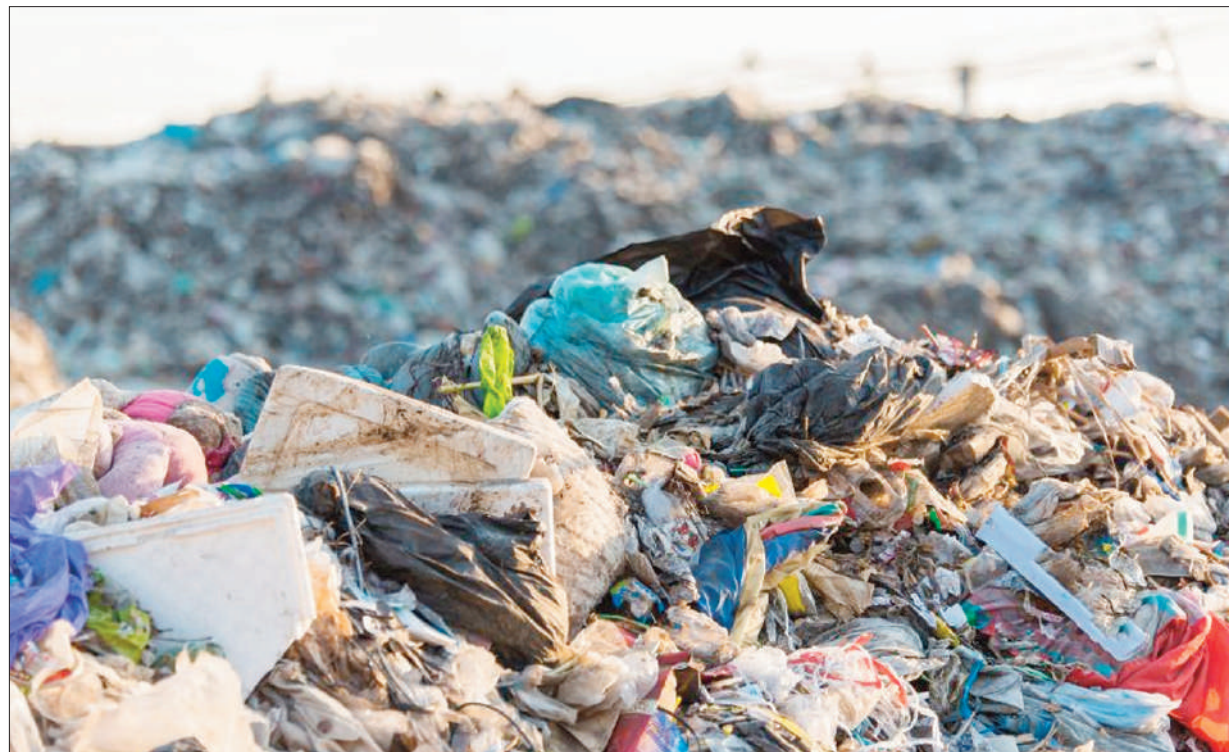
I was enlightened by the fact that these were legally commissioned!

According to the Delhi Pollution Control Committee (DPCC) the Baswa landfill in 1994, Ghazipur's in 1984 and the Okhla one in 1996 were commissioned as sites to deposit MSW, i.e Municipal Solid Waste.

But the catch is that they should've been capped long ago, in the early 2000s, for reaching their maximum waste-holding capacity, but have been in active use despite exceeding their lifespan, and the result is that the Ghazipur Landfill is creeping up to the height of the Qutub Minar! These sites are already declared illegal by both the Supreme Court and the National Green Tribunal, as the DPCC has declared them not adhering to Schedule 3 of the MSW Rules, introduced in the 2000s. Analysis of this situation highlights two frames: the environmental hazards, and second, the socio-economic poor-living environment of the children living around it.

The damage encompasses all spheres of environmental degradation, from Air quality deterioration and biodiversity declines to nearby water bodies becoming polluted, and fertile soil gradually losing its productivity.

These landfills are an epitome of poor waste management, with the dumping of unsegregated waste, including inorganic, organic and heavy metals from leachate



of unsegregated solid waste in these landfills, which have contributed to a long-term threat to groundwater.

One keyword we'll hear while studying this domain is leachate, the highly toxic liquid formed by the percolation of rainwater through layers of unsegregated waste. Laden with heavy metals, pathogens and hazardous chemicals, this leachate seeps into the surrounding soil and groundwater, contaminating ecosys-

tems long after the waste itself has decomposed.

The effects of these landfills are only coming back to us. Methane emitted from decomposing waste contributes significantly to climate change, far more potent than carbon dioxide over twenty years. The gas has the feature of self-ignition, causing unexpected fires that can smoulder for days or even weeks, blanketing entire neighbourhoods in toxic

smoke. In nearby communities, doctors report an increase in respiratory diseases, skin disorders, and even cancer.

Animals scavenge waste into surrounding areas, and microplastics and other persistent pollutants keep circulating in the environment. What seems to be one mountain of garbage is in fact the centre of an expanding ecological crisis whose effects are far beyond what the eye can see.

But the most disturbing truth is not the smoke rising from the mountains of garbage—it is the people living under it.

The children I had seen that day were not there because they liked to climb a mountain of refuse, but because the garbage was a part of their livelihood.

Every morning, hundreds of waste pickers, many of them children, go through tonnes of waste like plastic, metal, glass and paper to find things they can recycle and sell for some money. The landfills have developed into an unorganised economy themselves; tragically, it is the only income source for families on the margins of society. And the same mountain that pollutes the air they breathe and the water they drink also brings bread to them, a paradox often overlooked.

Upon reflection, I now understand that when I was younger, I was posing the wrong question. Once, I would ask how they managed to create such large landfills. Today, I ask how they manage to let people live in them.

Such large structures are not only an indication of waste disposal but also indicate that the policies are not working, that our cities are badly managed. We need to realise that when we assume that waste will disappear after we dispose of it, it ends up in someone else's neighbourhood, someone who has made peace with it, helpless in the discrimination and the ignorance of the state; they live with it, their children dying of undrinkable water and lack of education, with no scope of making a difference the way their younger ones spend their childhood, than their own. (Courtesy: Youth Ki Awaaz)



By: Sandy Ong

On a Sunday afternoon in April, the main minibus terminal in Sukabumi, Indonesia, looked sleepy from the outside. But in an open space round the back, hundreds of men were gathered. Amid chatter and cigarette smoke, the air buzzed with excitement, for one of the region's biggest bird-singing competitions was set to begin, and a motorbike was among the prizes.

As the day progressed, dozens of songbirds were brought out for their 10-minute rounds, from tiny garden sunbirds and grey-cheeked bulbuls to larger oriental magpie-robins and orange-headed thrushes. Then the emcee announced the main event – the singing contest among the highly popular, strikingly handsome white-rumped shamas – and a hush fell over the crowd.

The shamas' owners murmured final words of encouragement and stepped away from their cages. Judges swept in with clipboards, assessing each bird for its song, ability to hold a steady tune, volume and showmanship. Soon it was down to a final two birds and then "Baby White" was crowned the winner amid cheers from the crowd.

Indonesians have a long-standing culture of keeping birds as pets, and songbirds are especially popular, prized by collectors for their melodious singing and colorful plumage. "I keep songbirds as a hobby, to relieve stress and also gain a bit of money," explained Harry Gunawan, a 78-year-old businessman and owner of 39 shamas, including the multiple prizewinning Baby White, while waiting for his new motorbike.

Gunawan's shamas are among an estimated 66 million to 84 million caged birds that are kept across Java, the island where 56% of Indonesia's population lives and one in three households owns birds. These include more than 3 million white-rumped shamas and 2 million oriental magpie-robins. Wild birds are believed to be better songsters; hence, many are trapped in forests then crammed into tiny crates, drainpipes and even plastic bottles, destined for pet markets in Jakarta, Surabaya and other big cities. Birds that survive the journey – estimates of mortality rates range from 30-80% – will spend the rest of their lives confined to cages.

The illegal bird trade is thriving elsewhere in South-east Asia, including Vietnam, Thailand, Malaysia and

Singapore. But "Indonesia's songbird trade is one of the world's most prolific," says Chris Shepherd, a wildlife trade expert at the Centre for Biological Diversity in Canada. "It's terrifying."

This birdkeeping hobby, paired with the growing popularity of singing competitions, has already driven some species to extinction and many species – also threatened with habitat loss – are on the brink, a phenomenon dubbed "the Asian songbird crisis."

Birds in demand

The fondness of Indonesians for caged birds stems from a centuries-old belief among the Javanese, the country's largest ethnic group, that a man is considered successful if he possesses five elements: a wife, a house, a vehicle, a ceremonial dagger and a bird. The bird symbolises that he is in touch with his softer side, and can indulge in both work and leisure. In a 2025 study, researchers found that a bird's singing ability was the biggest driver of demand – after that, people preferred rare, endemic or unusual birds that flaunt one's status.

The biodiversity-rich nation is home to about 1,800 bird species, more than double the number found in the United States. Of those, one in five have been spotted in pet markets, including protected, endangered and endemic species (ones found nowhere else). These include the endangered black-winged myna and the Javan green magpie, of which fewer than 250 and 100 wild individuals, respectively, remain.

Estimates suggest that up to 30% of Indonesia's population, some 90 million people, keeps between 164 million and 187 million wild-caught songbirds.

"There may be more birds behind bars than left in the wild," wrote Lees in an overview of the songbird crisis in Current Biology.

Singing competitions emerged in the 1970s as another reason to keep songbirds. These local or regional events are typically held monthly or weekly, involving up to 1,000 birds.

"The owners go home with, at the very least, tons of prestige, but more often lots of prize money, sometimes up to 10 years' salary," says acoustic biologist Benjamin Mirin, founder of the Creative Conservation Lab with Cornell University. Competitors also stand to win exclusive trophies, goats, motorcycles and even cars.

Mirin, who has been studying the songbird trade since 2018, says the events can be life-changing.

"They're so popular and financially beneficial that they're accelerating the poaching of birds to the point where now the forests are falling silent," they said.

Unfortunately, wild-caught birds are perceived to have better song quality and a wider singing repertoire than their captive-bred counterparts. As a result, competitions "have been driving the demand in certain species," says Serene Chng, a wildlife trade researcher at Trade Records Analysis of Flora and Fauna in Commerce (TRAFFIC), a non-profit focused on reducing harmful and illegal trafficking of plants and animals. An expert group formed by the International Union for Conservation of Nature has identified 52 species that are most impacted by trade in Asia. These include the

straw-headed bulbul (known for its lovely duets) and the Bali starling (with its stark white plumage and electric-blue eye ring). Although Indonesian law forbids the capture and trade of more than 500 bird species, many of them songbirds, enforcement is weak, thanks to poor resources, corruption and other factors. Consequently, several



Government agencies have had some success in tracking down wild-captured birds but are reluctant to confiscate them because they lack a place to house them. This dilemma in West Kalimantan province, a hotspot for illegal bird trade activity, led to the establishment of the Wak Gatak sanctuary by the nonprofit group Planet Indonesia.

How Bird-Singing competitions in South Asia are pushing species to extinction

species, including the Javan pied starling, are now locally extinct.

Experts warn that action must be taken quickly, or the consequences may be dire and irreversible. If nothing is done and populations can't recuperate, says Alexander Lees, a conservation biologist at Manchester Metropolitan University in the United Kingdom, we may experience an "empty forest syndrome," whereby forests appear intact and lush but are devoid of animals.

"The silent forest is really happening," says Agung Nur Haq, who is in charge of conservation at the Wak Gatak Songbird Rescue and Rehabilitation Center near Pontianak, West Kalimantan.

It's hard to predict what will happen to ecosystems if songbird species are wiped out en masse in Indonesia. Birds play important ecological roles: pollinating plants, dispersing seeds and helping with insect control. The Pacific island of Guam offers a cautionary tale: It lost nearly all of its songbirds after the brown tree snake, which preyed on the birds and their eggs, was accidentally introduced after World War II. Guam's forests shifted to what Lees has described as "a nightmarish alternative state as a spider-dominated ecosystem." It was, he says, "pretty catastrophic."

Indonesia is much larger and far less isolated, so "your starting conditions are not as bad," says Lees. "But if we don't recuperate some of those populations, then we can expect maybe similar sorts of downstream impacts."

A sanctuary

One of its key aims is to provide suitable facilities to encourage more frequent confiscations and rescues by authorities with Indonesia's natural resources and conservation agency, BKSDA, while ensuring the welfare of confiscated songbirds, says Abrar Ahmad, a technical advisor for terrestrial conservation at Wak Gatak.

The centre, which sits on a leafy plot near the city of Pontianak, is worlds apart from the dark, cramped

closures are much more luxurious: bathroom-size, dotted with green plants, with generous views of the surroundings and sky.

Here, stimulation is key, as is getting the birds comfortable with flying again. "The aviaries have different perches and plants for the birds to hop around or to hide in the bush," says Ferdiansyah. "We also do food enrichment like giving them live insects or putting the food in different places."



conditions birds endure when smuggled aboard a truck or ship. On a morning in April, visitors turn off a sleepy road and drive past the gates down a short muddy track. Dragonflies flit lazily through tall grass, and a smattering of coconut, banana and durian trees sway in the distance. The facilities are modest: a small office block with light-filled aviaries.

Animals often arrive at Wak Gatak in an alarming state: Malnourished, with missing feathers, many appear fatigued or withdrawn, says Happy Ferdiansyah, Wak Gatak's head veterinarian. Some birds have wounds on their upper beaks from gnawing on cage bars, while others – especially if they're more territorial – suffer leg fractures from fighting with other birds in close quarters.

"A lot of them, 70-80%, die within the first two weeks. Their condition is very poor," says Ferdiansyah. To avoid causing the birds further stress, his team conducts only a visual inspection of the new arrivals. Those that are obviously ill are transferred to the on-site clinic for treatment. The rest are transferred to cages in quarantine.

The birds receive vitamins, nourishment (an assortment of fruits, insects, sugar syrup and so on), in addition to enjoying more space, one or two individuals typically share an oven-size cage. They remain in quarantine for at least 14 days, a critical time period when diseases such as avian influenza and Newcastle disease tend to manifest, says conservation director Haq. To test for these and other issues, Ferdiansyah and his fellow vets analyze blood and stool samples, in addition to carrying out rapid antigen tests.

Once their health has been given the all-clear, the birds are moved to rehabilitation aviaries on the opposite side of the premises. These en-

Only some birds are fit for release.

Those that appear habituated to people are not good candidates; they may continue to approach humans and might teach non-natural calls to wild birds or just fail to communicate with them. The centre, for example, currently houses four locally endangered and protected common hill mynas – glossy black starlings with heavy orange bills that are renowned for their intelligence and mimicry. When I visited, the birds happily wolf-whistled, chuckled and offered the traditional Islamic greeting "As-salamu alaykum," among smatterings of Indonesian chatter. These mynas have been at Wak Gatak for nearly a year and will remain there for the foreseeable future.

But for birds that are suitable to release, the center works with BKSDA to identify possible sites. Ideally, these would be forest lands in good condition, with abundant food and water, minimal human activity and few natural predators like civets and snakes, says Ferdiansyah. A local community that's supportive of conservation is a plus, increasing positive outcomes, such as survival and reproduction, by 10%, according to a 2023 study that analyzed 305 wildlife restoration projects in 80 countries.

Once a site is determined and permits are secured, Ferdiansyah and his team transport the birds, as they did at the end of April, taking 130 birds to a nature reserve seven hours north of Pontianak. At such sites, the team carries out what's known as a soft release, placing the birds in a large makeshift cage that allows them to acclimate to their new surroundings. After four to 10 days, the team opens the cage, allowing the birds to fly away when ready. Team members stay on for up to two weeks, tracking the birds to make sure they're settling in problem-free.

bilated and released.

Nearly 3,000 birds from 45 species have passed through the center's doors since it opened in 2022. It's proof that such a rehabilitation facility, the only one in Indonesia for the foreseeable future, can make an impact. But given how many songbirds are in peril, its work is a drop in the ocean.

To slow the crisis, experts say it must be fought on multiple fronts, but above all, at its root: demand. It requires "thinking about how we can shift attitudes and behaviours to reduce pressure on wild populations," says Lees, who explores such measures in a look at the state of the world's birds in the 2022 Annual Review of Environment and Resources. In 2023, the Wak Gatak team carried out a campaign across some of the city's billboards, discouraging people from joining songbird competitions. And in the coming months, they'll host a series of behaviour-change workshops in two towns close to forests where birds are commonly poached, and competitions are growing in number.

Shifting the needle will not be easy. Indonesia's songbird hobbyist groups are powerful – in 2018, they successfully petitioned to have five species down listed from the national list of protected birds. Plus, government officials often take part in competitions themselves. In 2018, for example, then-president Joko Widodo presided over the President's Cup, one of Indonesia's most prestigious songbird competitions, even entering his own white-rumped shama.

Yet change is possible: Ferdiansyah himself kept four songbirds as a kid because they "sounded very nice" and he thought he could make them happy. But when he entered veterinary college, he realised the error of his ways and set the birds free. (Courtesy: The Wire)

'Opposition spreading false narrative on exams' Govt remained open to dialogue with CJP: BJP

NEW DELHI, July 22: The BJP on Wednesday defended the Centre's handling of the Cockroach Janta Party-led agitation, saying the government remained "sensitive" to what has been projected as a student movement and was always open to dialogue.

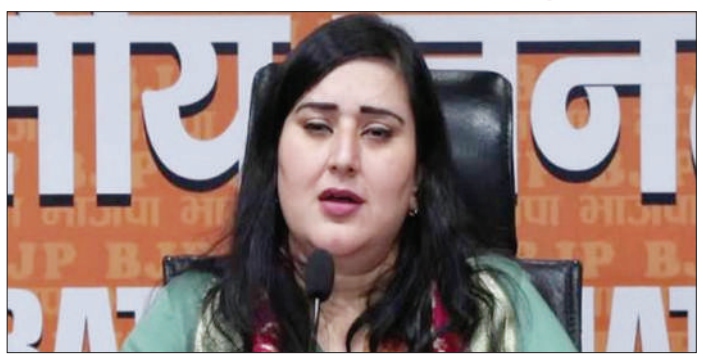
The ruling party also accused the opposition of spreading a false narrative that India's examination system has collapsed.

It also alleged that Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi and other opposition parties are trying to derive political mileage from the protests.

Addressing a press conference, BJP MP Bansuri Swaraj said the movement launched by the Cockroach Janta Party (CJP) was projected as a student movement and the government's approach towards it has remained sensitive.

She said when CJP founder Abhijeet Dipke returned from the United States on June 6, the Delhi Police allowed him to proceed from the airport and did not object to the protest till 5 pm.

"As the protest remained peaceful, police did not create any ob-



struction of any kind," she said. Swaraj alleged that an attempt was made to "gherao Parliament" on July 20 without permission.

"On July 20, an attempt was made to surround Parliament. It is a sign of anarchy. Even when an attempt was made to surround Parliament without any permission, the government remained ready for dialogue," she said.

She claimed that between June 6 and 20, there was no request or message from the protesters seeking talks with the government.

"From June 6 until July 20, there had been no request or message seeking dialogue. However, as

soon as they sent a message, the government immediately invited them to meet and hold discussions with J P Nadda ji," she claimed.

Swaraj alleged that after meeting Nadda, the protesters assured the government they would not continue the agitation but failed to keep their word.

"They were again requested not to continue the protest. They assured us that they would not, but they went back on their word. When the protest began, they started spreading not one or two but countless false narratives. They tried to spread different kinds of fake news," she alleged.

She claimed that social media posts alleging that Sonam Wangchuk's wife Geetanjali Angmo was manhandled, that Dipke had been arrested, that a 12-year-old girl had suffered a head injury and that the protest stage had been removed were "false".

"Fact-checking showed these claims were false. It appeared to be a deliberate attempt to spread a false narrative on social media and incite the protesters," she alleged.

Targeting Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, the BJP MP alleged that he chose protest over parliamentary debate.

"Yesterday, Rahul Gandhi did not go to Jantar Mantar. Instead, he sat outside the prime minister's residence. Everyone knows the prime minister's residence is a high-security zone. Rahul Gandhi himself should know this because he spent his childhood there," she said.

"He had the forum of Parliament to raise the issue. But the opposition does not want to play the role of a responsible opposition; it only wants to create disruption," Swaraj alleged. (PTI)

Rajya Sabha adjourned for the day as govt accuses Oppn of not allowing NEET debate

NEW DELHI, July 22: The Rajya Sabha was adjourned for the day on Wednesday after the government accused the Opposition led by the Congress of bringing in new conditions to not allow a discussion on the NEET paper leak issue.

Soon after the Upper House met at 3 pm following multiple adjournments during the day, Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju said, "I want to tell the Congress party through you (the Chair), that you (Congress) are giving the wrong message outside that you want a discussion. When the government is itself saying that it wants a discussion, they (Congress) are imposing conditions to not allow a discussion to take place by again and again coming up with excuses."

Rijiju said the government is ready to discuss all issues, but the Chairman will decide under which rule a debate can happen.

Both DMK's Tiruchi Siva and Leader of Opposition Mallikarjun Kharge appealed to Harivansh, who was in the Chair, to allow a discussion on the NEET paper leak issue to take place under Rule 267,



citing the current situation as "rarest of rare".

Amid the uproar, Harivansh adjourned the House for the day.

The House saw multiple adjournments for the third consecutive day as Opposition parties led by the Congress disrupted proceedings, protesting against Monday's police action on students demonstrating over the alleged NEET examination paper leak.

Even though the government agreed to discuss the issue in Parliament, the Opposition wanted the discussion to be held under Rule 267, and also laid down the condition of Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan's resignation

before such a debate is taken up.

Citing past rulings, Deputy Chairman Harivansh said, in the last four decades, Rule 267 has been invoked in the House on the "rarest of the rare occasions".

Rule 267 of the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in the Rajya Sabha enables a member, with the Chairman's consent, to seek suspension of a listed business of the House to take up a matter of urgent public importance.

Earlier, leader of the House J P Nadda slammed the Opposition parties, saying, "INDI Alliance has irresponsible behaviour, they are destroying the dignity of Parliament." (PTI)

Oppn MPs give adjournment notices in RS; seek discussion on police action against students

NEW DELHI, July 22: Congress MPs Renuka Chowdhury and Syed Nasser Hussain on Wednesday gave an adjournment notice in the Rajya Sabha to discuss police "atrocities" against protesting students and the "crisis" in India's examination system, citing issues like the NEET paper leak and alleged irregularities in the on-screen marking system in CBSE exams.

They submitted the notice under Rule 267 seeking suspension of the day's business for a discussion on the issues. AAP MP Sanjay Singh also moved a notice under Rule 267 in the Rajya Sabha seeking a discussion on alleged police atrocities on students during their protest march to Parliament on Monday, exam reforms and the health of fasting activist Sonam Wangchuk.

In her notice, Chowdhury said reports of "excessive" police action against students and parents who were protesting peacefully needed to be discussed. "... this House ... (should) suspend Zero Hour and relevant rules relating to Question Hour and other businesses of the day for an immediate discussion on the systemic crisis in India's examination system, particularly in light of: the cancellation of NEET-UG 2026 after allegations of a large-scale

paper leak, affecting over 22 lakh aspirants; repeated paper leaks in at least 65 recruitment examinations, undermining the faith of young people in merit-based selection and 'irregularities' in the CBSE On-Screen Marking system leading to concerns regarding evaluation accuracy, fairness and transparency," Chowdhury said in her notice. She also pointed out that a severe academic, financial and psychological burden has been imposed on students and their families, with at least 93 NEET-linked student suicides reported in the last five years. The Congress leader said there is an urgent need for a comprehensive national framework to secure the integrity, fairness and transparency of examination and recruitment processes.

"In view of these pressing concerns, the matter requires urgent consideration and discussion by the House," Chowdhury said.

Hussain said the notice is to discuss the use of "excessive" force by police against students and their parents, including instances of lathi-charge and use of tear gas and water cannons. Protesters suffered injuries, including reported fractures and broken ribs, further aggravating the physical and psychological trauma of affected candidates and their families. (PTI)

Delhi protests: 20 additional CRPF companies rushed in from West Bengal

NEW DELHI, July 22: The Centre has ordered deployment of 20 additional companies of the CRPF in Delhi to strengthen security measures in view of the CJP protests and demonstrations by various political parties, officials said on Wednesday.

The forces, all drawn from the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF), are being airlifted from West Bengal after the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) ordered their immediate deployment in the national capital on Tuesday night.

A total of 20 CRPF companies are being airlifted from Kolkata to be deployed in Delhi to strengthen the law and order in view of the CJP protests, demonstrations by various political parties and the ongoing Parliament session, official sources in the security establishment told PTI.

Multiple instances of violent clashes during the latest protests have necessitated this immediate deployment, they said.

They said these companies were deployed in West Bengal for the conduct of assembly elections held there a few months back and were asked to stay put on the request of the state government, they said.

A CRPF company has a strength of about 100 personnel.

About 30 companies of the CRPF and its specialised anti-riots unit Rapid Action Force (RAF) have been provided by the Centre to the Delhi Police to beef up security measures in view of the Cockroach Janta Party's (CJP) protest and the Monsoon session of the Parliament that began on July 20, according to the officials. (PTI)

Opposition leaders question closure of 16 metro stations, use of force on protesters in Delhi

NEW DELHI, July 22: Opposition leaders on Wednesday criticised the closure of 16 Delhi Metro stations and police action against protesters amid the ongoing CJP-led agitation, alleging excessive use of force.

Aam Aadmi Party national convener Arvind Kejriwal questioned why force was used against those who were not carrying weapons.

"Can you show me a single protester who was armed; what kind of responsible government rains down blows on unarmed youths?" Kejriwal said at a press conference.

Closing metro stations was wrong, and attempts by the government to stop students and protesters would only strengthen the movement, he said.

"Even if you close all the metro stations, they will walk. These are young people. It will be good for the government to listen to these young protesters," he said, accusing the Centre of trying to suppress the student movement instead of addressing their demands.

Tharoor said, while speaking to mediapersons, that the government should have engaged with the students instead of allowing the situation to escalate.

"That was really a bad idea. It was really very badly done. Wallowing students like this in the middle of the street... This is just shocking. And honestly, I just don't understand the government's atti-



tude to all of this," he said.

Tharoor attacked the government for letting the matter get out of hand.

"There ought to be some opportunity to reach out to them. I'm really surprised that the government has allowed matters to get out of hand like this and greeted the students with violence and lathis," he said.

On the proposed discussions with the protesters, the Congress leader said, "Now, they're saying they're willing for a discussion, but a discussion would depend on the kind of rule, the duration, the number of speakers, and so on, so that everyone can have an opportunity to properly ventilate their concerns."

Recalling his visit to the protest site, he said, "A young man who was distributing water to the protesters was beaten

up with lathis under the eye, on the head. A young girl was talking about being manhandled by male policemen. And these are very painful things.

"And many of them saw some fellows in plain clothes with sticks that had nails or screws. And this was quite shocking for them as well. So, I'm really, really very perturbed about all of this."

Congress MP Priyanka Gandhi Vadra also criticised the restrictions after being asked about the closure of metro stations.

"Is this what the world's largest democracy looks like?" she said. The Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC) on Wednesday morning closed 16 metro stations, including Rajiv Chowk, Central Secretariat, Mandi House, ITO and Khan Market, citing "security reasons" amid the ongoing protest. (PTI)

Rahul Gandhi misused LoP privileges, protest outside PM's residence childish: BJP

NEW DELHI, July 22: The BJP on Wednesday accused Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi of misusing the privileges associated with his constitutional post by staging a protest outside PM Narendra Modi's residence and alleged that the Congress leader wants to come to power by dividing the country.

The party also accused Gandhi of being "hand in glove with anti-national elements" and described his action as an example of "directionless" and "childish" politics.

Congress leaders, led by Rahul Gandhi and party president Mallikarjun Kharge, had staged a dharna outside the prime minister's residence on Tuesday, demanding Modi's resignation over the police action against students protesting the alleged NEET paper leak issue.

Congress MPs Rahul Gandhi, Priyanka Gandhi Vadra and Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav and other opposition leaders were



later detained by the police.

BJP MP Nishikant Dubey alleged that the Gandhi family is "hand in glove with anti-national elements" and demanded an investigation into Gandhi's foreign visits.

"Rahul Gandhi's foreign visits should be investigated. The government should examine whom he met abroad, which officials from Islamic countries he met, which people working to break India he met, which Chinese officials he met, and whether the Soros Foun-

dation is funding him," he told reporters in the Parliament House complex. Referring to Tuesday's protest, Dubey claimed his son reached his examination centre late because of the demonstration.

"My son reached his examination centre late because of the protest. Is being a leader's son a crime? Is he not a student? Is he not an examinee?" he said.

Alleging that Rahul Gandhi is trying to control the media, Dubey said the LoP wants to divide the country for political gains.

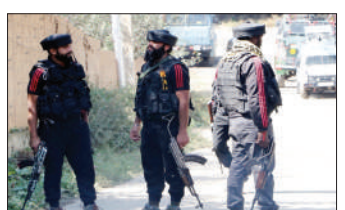
"Rahul Gandhi is trying to do today what Indira Gandhi did during the Emergency by deciding what the media should publish and say. He wants to come to power by dividing the country.

"He is carrying out these agitations with money from the Soros Foundation and Islamic countries and wants to silence the media," the BJP MP alleged.

BJP MP and Rajasthan unit president Madan Rathore alleged that Rahul Gandhi has misused the special privileges available to him as the Leader of the Opposition (LoP) and said his protest reflected "frustration", "desperation" and "childish politics".

"As the LoP, he has certain special privileges. He misused those privileges. What was the point of staging a protest outside the prime minister's residence? It reflects the height of frustration and desperation. It was directionless and childish politics," Rathore told reporters. (PTI)

Cop killed in terror attack in J&K



SRINAGAR, July 22: A policeman was killed in an attack by terrorists in Anantnag town of Jammu and Kashmir on Wednesday, officials said here.

The firing took place around 12.30 pm on Wednesday at Lal Chowk in Anantnag.

They said one head constable, Ashiq Hussain, posted on Amarnath yatra security duty was injured in the attack and rushed to the Government Medical College hospital at Anantnag.

Hussain was declared dead on arrival by the doctors, the officials said.

Security forces have cordoned off the area and launched an operation to track down the assailants, they said. (PTI)

Omar interacts with shop owners affected by Budgam flash flood

SRINAGAR, July 22: Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Wednesday visited Beerwah town in Jammu and Kashmir's Budgam district where a shopping complex was washed away in flash floods a day ago. Abdullah interacted with affected shopkeepers and promised adequate compensation to those who had permitted commercial establishments in the complex.

Massive flash floods triggered by torrential rainfall struck Beerwah on Tuesday afternoon, causing widespread devastation, washing away a shopping complex and around two dozen shops, and damaging public infrastructure.

During his visit, Abdullah said he has asked owners and tenants of the shops to bring relevant documents to the deputy commissioner's office so that their compensation application can be processed. "Those who were operating shops here with valid permissions will be provided compensation and every assistance

from the government."

Abdullah said the shopkeepers have demanded temporary relocation of their shops and permission to rebuild their establishments.

"I have told them that in this regard, we will first need to conduct an inspection through the R&B (roads and buildings) department to determine whether there is any danger, as these shops are situated on the riverbank. If the R&B department declares these shops safe, we can assure something for the shopkeepers. They would also need permission to rebuild their shops here, and we will take action on that too," he said.

Regarding the terror attack in Anantnag, the chief minister said a brave police officer sacrificed his life for the country in the attack. "We deeply regret this. We are not seeing such cowardly attacks for the first time, but we will not be weakened by these attacks, nor will those who carry out the attacks succeed in their intentions." (PTI)

Delhi govt plans to complete city's first double-decker flyover by Dec: CM

NEW DELHI, July 22: The Delhi government aims to complete the city's first double-decker flyover in northeast Delhi by December 2026, Chief Minister Rekha Gupta said on Wednesday.

Heading the Expenditure Finance Committee (EFC) meeting Gupta also approved the revised project estimate of ₹ 291 crore from the earlier ₹ 220.10 crore. A double-decker flyover is designed to carry both, vehicles and Metro on the same road.

"This is Delhi's first integrated double-decker structure, where both the flyover and the Metro corridor are being developed as a single integrated project. The 1.40 km long structure is being built between Yamuna Vihar and Bhajanpura Metro stations," Gupta said.

The project also includes an elevated corridor, new roads, footpaths, road signage, electrical works, drainage, rainwater harvesting and other essential support-

ing infrastructure, she added.

"At the fifth EFC meeting, chaired by Chief Minister Gupta, the revised project estimate of ₹ 291 crore was approved. The government aims to complete the project by December 2026," a statement said.

"The Delhi Government is continuously working to strengthen the capital's road network and improve traffic flow, as part of this effort, construction of the joint PWD-DMRC double-decker flyover project at Karawal Nagar, Ghonda and Brijpuri Junction-Mangal Pandey Marg in northeast Delhi is progressing at a fast pace," it said.

The entire project is being executed by the Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC). A Memorandum of Understanding between the Public Works Department (PWD) and DMRC was signed on February 24, 2021. The project was originally approved at a cost of ₹ 220.10 crore. (PTI)

'India needs you, not in suffering, but in service': Opp'n MPs urge Wangchuk to end fast

NEW DELHI, July 22: Assuring Sonam Wangchuk that his message had resonated across the country and would now be raised in Parliament, a delegation of opposition MPs urged the activist to end his indefinite hunger strike that entered its 25th day on Wednesday over alleged examination irregularities.

The delegation, which included Congress MP Vivek Tankha, TMC MP Sagarika Ghose and CPI(M) MP John Brittas, met Wangchuk and his wife Gitanjali J Angmo at Medanta Hospital in Gurugram.

They appealed to the activist to withdraw his indefinite fast, saying the struggle for a fair and transparent examination system had become a national cause.

Wangchuk has been on an indefinite hunger strike for the last 25 days in support of students demanding accountability over al-

leged examination irregularities.

"The nation, especially its youth, needs your wisdom and guidance far more than your sacrifice... Just as the Union Territory of Ladakh needs Sonam Wangchuk, India needs you too... not in suffering, but in service, serving those causes that will benefit generations to come. The country needs you," the MPs said in a letter handed over to the activist.

After the meeting, Ghose said the delegation had appealed to Wangchuk to end his fast while extending complete support to the students' movement.

"...while wholeheartedly supporting the cause of the students, we fervently urged Sonam Wangchuk ji to give up his fast in the interests of the nation and the students," Ghose said in a post on X.



In their letter, the MPs said Wangchuk's "selfless commitment to the cause of India's youth" and his advocacy of "a fair, transparent and accountable examination system" had inspired millions across the country.

"We, as Members of Parliament, request you to kindly withdraw your fast, while we take forward in Parliament the national mission

and debate on educational reforms and the future of India's youth, so passionately espoused by you," they said. The parliamentarians also assured Wangchuk that they would seek protection for the protesters and urge the government not to initiate any coercive action against those associated with the movement.

"We will also demand from the

government... that no coercive action, whether by way of registration of any FIR or through any other administrative measure, be initiated or pursued against the protesters in connection with the peaceful democratic movement," the letter read.

The letter was signed by Congress MP Vivek Tankha, CPI(M) MPs John Brittas, A A Rahim and V Sivadasan, DMK MP Tiruchi Siva, Congress MP Shashi Tharoor, Samajwadi Party MP Ram Gopal Yadav, National Conference MP Sajjad Ahmad Kichloo, TMC MP Sagarika Ghose, Independent MP Kapil Sibal and CPI MP Sandosh Kumar, among others.

Earlier, Wangchuk said he would end his fast if Members of Parliament assured him that issues relating to accountability in the education sector would be taken up during the Monsoon Session. (PTI)

Arunachal Congress holds protest, terms Rahul, Priyanka's detention 'arbitrary, illegal'



ITANAGAR, July 22: The Arunachal Pradesh Congress condemned the detention of senior party leaders, including Rahul Gandhi, during their sit-in outside Prime Minister Narendra Modi's residence in New Delhi, terming the action "arbitrary and illegal" and an "assault" on democracy.

The party also staged a massive demonstration in front of Lok Bhavan here on Tuesday night to protest the detention of Congress leaders in the national capital.

Led by Arunachal Pradesh Con-

gress Committee president Bosiram Siram, party workers gathered outside the Lok Bhavan premises here, raising slogans against the BJP-led central government and accusing it of using state machinery to "suppress democratic dissent and stifle students' voices".

Rahul Gandhi, Priyanka Gandhi and leaders of other opposition parties held a surprise sit-in outside the prime minister's residence on Tuesday, demanding his resignation. Minister of State in the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) Jitendra

Singh, along with Union Home Secretary Govind Mohan, went to the site to persuade them to vacate the sensitive area.

Rahul Gandhi's discussion with the minister lasted a few minutes, after which Singh and the home secretary left as the talks remained inconclusive.

Soon after Singh left the protest site, the police forcibly removed and detained Rahul, Priyanka and other leaders in the evening.

Condemning the police action, Siram said it reflected the BJP-led Union government's "dictatorial mindset".

"The detention of the leader of the opposition in the Lok Sabha and senior Congress leaders is not merely an attack on the party, but a direct assault on India's parliamentary democracy, the Constitution, the rule of law, and fundamental rights," Siram said in the statement.

Fearing peaceful protests, the government has exposed its "intolerance and insecurity", he said. (PTI)

Manipur Cong holds protest over detention of Rahul, other party leaders in Delhi

IMPHAL, July 22: The Congress in Manipur held a protest here on Wednesday over the detention of senior party leaders, including Rahul Gandhi, during their sit-in outside Prime Minister Narendra Modi's residence in New Delhi a day ago. Led by state Congress president O Ibobi Singh, party workers marched towards the Lok Bhavan in Imphal, raising slogans against the central government for the police action.

During the rally, they held placards aloft with messages - 'save students, save Manipur', 'we condemn detention of Rahul Gandhi' and 'stop paper leaks' - written on them.

"The way Rahul Gandhi was unlawfully detained is highly condemnable. The NEET paper leak has affected thousands of innocent students. Prime Minister Narendra Modi remained silent on the issue. In a democratic country, protests and dharna for right reasons should not be suppressed," Singh said.



Congress MPs Rahul Gandhi, Priyanka Gandhi and leaders of other opposition parties held a surprise sit-in outside the prime minister's residence on Tuesday, demanding his resignation.

Minister of State in the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) Jitendra Singh, along with Union Home Secretary Govind Mohan, went to the site to persuade them to vacate the sensitive area.

Rahul Gandhi's discussion with the minister lasted a few minutes,

after which Singh and the home secretary left as the talks remained inconclusive.

Soon after Singh left the protest site, the police forcibly removed and detained Rahul, Priyanka and other leaders on Tuesday evening.

Rahul Gandhi was taken to the Chhatrasal stadium in Model Town after his detention, but was released a few hours later. Priyanka Gandhi and some other MPs were taken to the Mandir Marg police station, where Congress Parlia-

mentary Party chairperson Sonia Gandhi visited them. They were released after a few hours.

On Monday, thousands of young and angry people converged near Parliament on the first day of the Monsoon session to push for the resignation of Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan over the NEET exam paper leaks. They clashed with the police personnel. More than 50 police personnel and protesters were injured during clashes, while about 100 people were detained.

The Manipur Congress chief said a memorandum, addressed to Governor Ajay Kumar Bhalla, was submitted, demanding "a full discussion in Parliament on examination irregularities and failure of the government to safeguard the future of the students, withdrawal of all FIRs against innocent students during the Delhi incidents".

The Manipur Congress also demanded the resignation of Pradhan. (PTI)

Tripura Cong to block Agartala-Kamapur NH today over poor road condition



AGARTALA, July 22: Tripura's Congress unit will stage a two-hour blockade of the Agartala-Kamapur national highway at four locations on July 23 in protest against the alleged poor condition of the road and the hardships faced by commuters, a senior party leader said on Wednesday.

The Agartala-Kamapur via Khawai national highway (NH-108B), connecting West Tripura, Khawai and Dhalai districts, has turned into a "death trap" following heavy rainfall, severely disrupting traffic, senior Congress MLA Sudip Roy Barman told reporters.

"The Pradesh Congress Committee has decided to block the Agartala-Kamapur via Khawai national highway from noon to 2

pm on Thursday at four locations in protest against people's sufferings due to the deplorable road condition," he said.

"There was a demand to extend the duration of the blockade, but the party decided against it. People from Khawai, Kamapur and other areas are still using the national highway. It will be troublesome for them if the road remains blocked for long hours," he said.

Roy Barman alleged that the agencies executing the highway's upgrade work had compromised on quality, resulting in its poor condition.

The state government has already written to Union Road Transport and Highways Minister Nitin Gadkari, seeking repair of the national highway. (PTI)

Students hold protest in Aizawl over NEET paper leaks

AIZAWL, July 22: Hundreds of students from various institutions and schools in Mizoram staged a demonstration here on Wednesday to express solidarity with those who have been protesting in New Delhi over NEET paper leaks.

During the protest in front of Vanapa Hall in the state capital, the agitators raised slogans - 'Modi ko hatao, Desh Bachao', 'We want freedom from poverty, we want freedom from unemployment', demanding the resignation of Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan over paper leaks in the medical entrance test.

On Monday, thousands of people converged near Parliament in the national capital on the first day of the Monsoon session to push for the resignation of Pradhan over the NEET paper leaks. They clashed with the police personnel.

The protesters in Aizawl also demanded stringent punishment for wrongdoers and sought justice and compensation for students who had been victimised by the paper leaks.

While extending solidarity to activist Sonam Wangchuk in his fight for student rights, the protestors blamed the BJP-led NDA govern-



ment for allegedly infringing on their rights and jeopardising their career.

Apart from indigenous Mizo students, several non-Mizo students also took part in the protest.

Opposition Mizo National Front (MNF) extended support to the students, saying the demonstration was a "courageous effort to safeguard students' rights and demand accountability".

The party said the students were justified in opposing any attempt to undermine their rightful opportunities through abuse of power.

Sikkim Assembly passes three amendment bills, adopts water Act resolution

GANGTOK, July 22: Sikkim Assembly on Wednesday passed three amendment bills, adopted a government resolution and approved the demands for grants of several departments on the penultimate day of the Budget session.

The House passed the Sikkim Private Universities (Establishment and Regulation) (Amendment) Bill, 2026, the Board of Open Schooling and Skill Education, Sikkim (Amendment) Bill, 2026, and the Sikkim Fire and Emergency Services (Amendment) Bill, 2026 by voice vote. All the three bills were introduced on the opening day of budget session on July 20.

The Assembly also adopted a government resolution moved by Forest and Environment Minister Pintso Namgyal Lepcha and seconded by MLA Sonam Tshering Venchunga, seeking adoption of the Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Amendment Act, 2024 in the state under Article 252 of the Constitution.

The resolution said the amendment Act, notified on February 15, 2024, is applicable in Himachal Pradesh, Rajasthan and Union Territories, and can be adopted by other states through resolutions passed by their respective legislatures.



The adoption of the resolution is aimed at decriminalising certain provisions of the Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1974, facilitating ease of doing business and streamlining the process of appointing chairpersons of state pollution control boards.

During the financial business, presided over by Deputy Speaker Raj Kumari Thapa, the House also passed the demands for grants for the Buildings and Housing and Labour; Urban Development and Food & Civil Supplies; Health & Family Welfare, Culture and Ayush Departments, Agriculture, Horticulture, Animal Husbandry & Veterinary Services and Fisheries Development; Forest and Environment, Mines & Geology and Science & Technology Departments for the fiscal year 2026-27. (PTI)

Prolonged crisis causing financial, mental hardships to common people: Manipur CM

IMPHAL, July 22: Manipur Chief Minister Y Khechamand Singh on Wednesday said the prolonged crisis in the state has caused financial and mental hardships to the people, as his government distributed welfare benefits worth over ₹ 91.66 crore to more than 2.4 lakh beneficiaries.

Speaking at a programme organised by the Social Welfare Department, Singh said the state had gone through difficult times over the past three years, disrupting the lives of its people.

"The prolonged crisis has caused financial and mental hardships to the common people to a great extent," he said.

The chief minister said the government had taken several initiatives to address the financial difficulties faced by the people.

"This has been done under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and under the guidance of Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman," he said.

Expressing confidence, Singh said he hoped that the distribution of these benefits would provide some relief to the people.

He urged people from all communities to con-

sider themselves as Manipuris and contribute towards building a better state.

Chief Secretary Puneet Kumar Goel said many families had faced immense hardship in recent years.

"Women, children, senior citizens, persons with disabilities, widows and internally displaced persons (IDPs) have faced the greatest burden," he said.

He further said it is the shared responsibility of all to ensure that they receive the care, protection, support, and opportunities they deserve and that today's event reflects the government's strong commitment to inclusive development, social justice, and the welfare of every section of society. During the programme, benefits were distributed to nearly 2,40,758 beneficiaries with a total fund outlay of ₹ 91,66,50,772.

The beneficiaries received assistance under 17 different schemes of the Social Welfare Department.

Singh also formally launched the Integrated Monthly Pension Processing System to ensure faster, transparent, and more efficient pension services. (PTI)

Rescuers resume operation to recover remaining bodies from NHPC tunnel

NAMCHI, July 22: Search and rescue operations at the under-construction NHPC Teesta Stage VI Hydropower Project tunnel in Sikkim's Namchi district resumed on Wednesday after being temporarily suspended due to the accumulation of mud and water inside the tunnel, officials said.

The National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) and the Asansol rescue team resumed operations early in the day, with efforts focused on pumping water out of the tunnel, they said. At least 20 workers were killed after the tunnel under construction collapsed following an explosion of suspected methane gas.

Officials said that 12 bodies have so far been retrieved from the tunnel. The recovery of the remaining bodies will begin once the accumulated water is drained and the site is declared safe for further operations, they said. (PTI)

Tripura DGP death: Police to conduct forensic analysis of top cop's electronic gadgets

AGARTALA, July 22: The Tripura Police will conduct a forensic analysis of all electronic gadgets used by DGP Anurag Dhankar in connection with his investigation into the police officer's death, an official said on Wednesday.

Dhankar, an IPS officer of the 1994 batch, was found hanging in the washroom of his chamber at the state police headquarters here on Monday.

"A case of unnatural death was registered, and we have already begun investigation. As part of the probe, all electronic gadgets, including mobile phone, laptop and personal computer, of the DGP were seized and will be sent to State Forensic Science Laboratory (SFSL), Narsingarh (in West Tripura) for analysis," Investigating Officer Subhrajit Deb told PTI.

He said forensic analysis of the electronic gadgets will take at least one and a half months.

"If the post-mortem report confirms that the DGP had died by suicide, we



have to shift focus on finding the reasons why he took the extreme step", the investigation officer said.

In a complaint, Assistant Inspector General of Police (AIGP) at headquarters, Prabir Majumder, said that he had waited for a considerable time to meet the DGP on Monday but could not. "The DGP had asked the staffers not

to allow any visitor to his room till 11 am on Monday. When Majumder wanted to meet the DGP on that day, the staffers did not allow him.

"When the DGP did not return to his chair after a considerable time, the staffers entered his room and found the washroom locked from inside. They broke open the door and found the DGP hanging from the ventilator," another officer said, citing the complaint.

Leader of Opposition (LoP) in the assembly, Jitendra Chaudhury, on Tuesday reiterated the demand for a judicial probe into the alleged suicide of the DGP.

"It is unbelievable that the top police officer, who had navigated many challenging situations in his professional career, has committed suicide without any major cause. I knew the DGP was mentally stressed. Once again I urge the government to order a judicial probe to unearth the truth," the CPI(M) leader said in a video. (PTI)

Lalduhoma calls for more Mizo content online, wider translation of Mizo literature

AIZAWL, July 22: Mizoram Chief Minister Lalduhoma on Wednesday stressed the urgent need to increase Mizo language content on the internet and translate Mizo literature into as many languages as possible to preserve and promote the language in the digital age.

Speaking at the release of 'Zawhawzo Val', a Festschrift on the works and life of renowned Mizo scholar Prof Lalitluangliana Khiantge, and two other books, in Aizawl, the chief minister said that Mizo literary works should be translated into English, Hindi, Bengali and other major world languages and made widely accessible online.

He said such translations would not only help showcase Mizoram and the Mizo people to a wider audience, but will also play a vital role in safeguarding the Mizo language for future generations.

Lalduhoma further highlighted the importance of expanding Mizo language content on the internet, noting that the availability of Mizo words and their English and Hindi equivalents would strengthen AI-based work in the language and enable speakers of other languages to translate Mizo more effectively.

Referring to Mizo's inclusion in Google Translate in 2022, the chief minister said the language can now be used across Google and other language-based AI plat-



forms, making digital preservation and development of the language an increasingly important task.

The event also marked the release of 'Lalzika and Vanthangi' written in English by Prof Lalitluangliana Khiantge, and Khiantge's co-authored book 'Teaching of Mizo Language in Secondary School'.

Mizoram University (MZU) Vice Chancellor Prof Dibakar Chandra Deka also released 'Pasaltha Khuangchera' (the story of Mizo legendary warrior Khuangchera) written in Bengali.

Lalduhoma praised Prof Khiantge as a distinguished scholar and playwright, urging him to continue producing quality literary works.

Deka also said that Prof Khiantge has represented Mizoram in many places across India where few other Mizo scholars have had the opportunity to go, and has also travelled abroad extensively.

He has widely promoted Mizo culture, language, literature, and social issues in various languages, thereby bringing honour and recognition to the Zo people, the vice chancellor said.

Prof Khiantge is a Mizo scholar, playwright and poet of Mizo literature. He retired as senior professor from MZU's Mizo department in June.

Prof Khiantge was awarded the Padma Shri, the country's fourth highest civilian honour, in 2006 for his contribution to literature.

He is also the recipient of Pu Buanga Award, the highest literary award of the Mizo Academy of Letters (MAL).

As pointed out in Zawhawzo Val, 20 of Prof Khiantge's 40 plays have been translated into Hindi and 10 into English.

Around 20 of his plays, 20 prose works and 10 poems have been included in the curricula of several universities across India, with many of them translated into different languages. (PTI)

No. BDB/BTR/Tender/46/2023-24/7410

Dtd.21/07/2026

SHORT NOTICE INVITING TENDER

Sealed tender affixing a non-refundable Court fee stamp of Rs.8.25(Rupees eight & twenty five paise) only with a validity period of 180 days which will subsequently be converted and drawn up in the printed of F-2 form are invited from the registered contractors of class-I (A,B & C), Class-II & Class III category of Assam PWD (Roads & Building) and BTC according to their eligibility for submitting tenders for the works under the award of 15th FC (Untied Grant) for the FY. 2025-26 to be implemented during 2026-27 of BTR as stated below. The tenders will be received by the undersigned up to 2.00PM on 17/08/26 and will be opened on the next date (as on 18/08/26) & place at 2.30 PM.

Sl.no.	Name of activity.	Estd. Value (in Lakhs)	EMD/Bid Security. (in Rs.)	Cost of Tender paper (in Rs.)	Time of completion of Work.
1	"Const. of RCC Slab Culvert at Khasiachuba near Mini PHE road (Activity Code - 128448130)".	4,84,255/-	(for,4,843 S/T,S/C) 9,685/- (for General/Ent	150	3 month
2	"Const. of Foot bridge at Budura (Activity Code - 128448105)".	4,84,255/-	(for,4,843 S/T,S/C) 9,685/- (for General/Ent	150	3 month
3	"Const. of RCC Culvert at Dimakuchi near Debonath Community Hall road (Activity Code -128448122)".	4,84,255/-	(for,4,843 S/T,S/C) 9,685/- (for General/Ent	150	3 month
4	"Const. of RCC Slab Culvert Bathabari village (Activity Code -128448138)".	4,84,255/-	(for,4,843 S/T,S/C) 9,685/- (for General/Ent	150	3 month
5	"Const. of RCC Slab Culvert at Attareekhat Dhubi Line near Gobinda house (Activity Code -128448399)".	4,84,255/-	(for,4,843 S/T,S/C) 9,685/- (for General/Ent	150	3 month
6	"Const. of Slab culvert at Dimakuchi near Jams Benga field (Activity Code- 128448227)".	4,84,255/-	(for,4,843 S/T,S/C) 9,685/- (forGeneral/Ent	150	3 month

Pre-bid Date and Time:- 27/07/2026

Last date & time of bid submission:- 17/08/2026

Date & Time of bid opening:- 18/08/2026

Detail N.I.T. may be seen in all working days during office hours in the office of the undersigned. Tender papers will be issued to the contractors or their authorized agents from 27/06/26 to 18/08/26 up to 1.30 PM. In the office of the undersigned on payment in the form of demand draft/bankers cheque from any Nationalized Bank, duly pledged in favour of the Principal Secretary ,BTC Kokrajhar payable at Kokrajhar.

Sd/-

Block Dev. officer Block Development Block, Bhergaon

IPR(BTC)/C/2026-27/868

West Indies beats New Zealand by 2 wickets in the 5th ODI

BRIDGETOWN (BARBADOS), July 22: Shimron Hetmyer held his nerve late in the run chase to make an unbeaten 69 and steer West Indies to a two-wicket win over New Zealand Tuesday in the fifth and final one-day cricket international.

New Zealand took the series 3-2, clinching it in Game 4 after winning Game 2 by five wickets and Game 3 by six wickets in a comeback following West Indies' seven-wicket victory in the opening game.

Hetmyer's fifth ODI half-century and his partnership of 95 with Sherfane Rutherford (61) allowed the West Indies to reach 269-8 in reply to New Zealand's 268-9 with 15 balls remaining. All five matches in the series were won by the team batting second.

When Hetmyer and Rutherford were together in a fifth-wicket partnership that built on the foundation set by Shai Hope (39) and Keacy Carty (20) — who put on 59 for the third wicket — West Indies looked like winning by ease.

Swinging momentum

But the match was a seesawing encounter. Rutherford was out when West Indies was 218-5, needing 41 to win with almost 10 overs remaining, and then Gudakesh Motie fell at 239-6.

When Jacob Duffy dismissed Matthew Forde and Alzarri Joseph with consecutive deliveries in the 45th over, and with 21 runs



New Zealand takes the series 3-2

still needed for a West Indies win, the complexion of the match changed again.

New Zealand captain Mitchell Santner made the unusual decision to take left-arm spinner Jayden Lennox out of the attack after he had taken 3-35 from nine overs. Hetmyer hit two sixes off Duffy in the 47th over and West Indies got home with more than two overs to spare.

Lennox took 14 wickets at an average of

13.6 and was voted player of the series.

"I wasn't really thinking about getting a half-century to be honest, I was just thinking about how ... I can make sure the team crosses the line," Hetmyer said. "Every time a new batter came out I was just like make sure you're there at the end." I'm just happy that I could be there to make sure we crossed the line."

New Zealand appeared to be heading for

a much bigger total than it was 181-3 in the 35th over and 230-5 with five overs to go. Will Young made 56, Tom Latham made 69 and Nick Kelly scored 64 to drive the innings. But the finish was missing against tight bowling, especially from Alzarri Joseph, who took 2-38 from his 10 overs.

Run chase starts quickly

West Indies' innings began at more than eight runs per over through the first five overs.

Then, in a double setback, it lost openers Ackeem Auguste and Justin Greaves in the space of five deliveries. Still, the home team was scoring at more than seven runs per over after 10 overs as Hope and Carty kept up the pace.

New Zealand began to apply pressure through the spinners, Carty faced a series of dot balls and after reaching 118-2, both he and Hope fell inside three overs.

Hope fell to a poor ball from Lennox which he tried to hoist over the leg side field but pulled to Kristian Clarke coming off the fence at midwicket. Keacy was frustrated to be pinned down and finally slashed across the line at a straight ball from Lennox which hit middle stump.

Rutherford stepped up from first to revive the innings and found a like-minded partner in Hetmyer, who was determined to be in at the finish. (AP)

India look for partial redemption against spirited Zimbabwe



HARARE, July 22: Shreyas Iyer would be eager for his first win as India captain while his young team eyes course correction against a spunky Zimbabwe that is expected to fight hard during the short three-match T20I series starting here on Thursday.

Having lost six out of his first seven T20I games as skipper in series defeats to minnows Ireland and a seasoned England side, the rubber against Zimbabwe gives Iyer and company a chance to get the house in order.

A series win against Zimbabwe would be the expected outcome but a defeat could unnerve the dressing room that also features a 15-year-old Vaibhav Sooryavanshi.

For this tour, India will have a stop-gap head coach in VVS Laxman, whose personality is diametrically opposite to the combative regular gaffer Gautam Gambhir.

It is not that Laxman wouldn't want to win the series but his propensity to experiment with playing eleven is far less compared to Gambhir.

The spotlight will once again chase 'Boy Wonder' Sooryavanshi, who is set to open in all three games alongside Abhishek Sharma as Sanju Samson hasn't even been selected.

The Harare Sports Club ground brings back fond memories for both Abhishek and Sooryavanshi. The Punjab opener made his debut and then scored his first T20I ton here in his second appearance.

For Sooryavanshi, this is the ground where earlier this year, on February 6, he hammered a hapless England U-19s with a big hundred in the junior World Cup final.

But this series will have a different context. It was supposed to be an opportunity to experiment for a new-look bowling attack, but has turned into a must-win affair due to recent debacles.

The afternoon games at the Harare Sports Club's tracks, which always have a bit of juice and carry, can pose problems for most of the Indian batters save skipper Iyer as they don't tend to use their feet.

Blessing Muzarabani and Richard Ngarava, two tall and potent fast bowlers have the ability to cause chaos if Indians become over-confident.

Laxman's strategy, therefore, would be interesting to watch.

With vice-captain Tilak Varma not looking comfortable at No. 5,

how would the stand-in head coach manoeuvre with that position? Tilak, in T20Is, is best suited at No. 3 but Ishan Kishan, a senior member in this set-up, has been given that role.

At No. 5, Rinku Singh is a better bet with his street smart style of batting but it will not be easy to drop a designated vice captain.

India's real struggle will be selecting two among Harsh Dube, Shivam Dube and Suryansh Shedge. None of the three are pure all-rounders. As a safe bet, they might be compelled to pick all three.

In case of Dube, he has struggled as a batter in conditions that aid seam and swing bowling. However, he has the experience having been part of two T20 World Cup triumphs (albeit in favourable conditions in the Caribbean and India).

Between Shedge and Harsh, there is not much to choose as the former's bowling isn't up to the mark and the latter's batting doesn't have that kind of flamboyance that one would expect at No. 8.

While Gambhir has had a fascination for all-rounders, Laxman's preferences are different.

He can't afford to have a long tail as neither among the rookie pace quartet of Mayank Yadav, Ashok Sharma, Prince Yadav and Yash Thakur can bat.

Prince, who has been playing a few games for India, will certainly start with injury-prone Mayank Yadav, who had turned up in a few T20Is against Bangladesh back in 2024.

The choice for the third pacer will be between tearaway quick Ashok, who can bowl mid 150s or the steady Yash, who bowls late 130s but has variety.

Squads:

India: Shreyas Iyer (captain), Vaibhav Sooryavanshi, Abhishek Sharma, Ishan Kishan (wk), Tilak Varma, Shivam Dube, Harsh Dube, Suryansh Shedge, Yash Thakur, Prince Yadav, Mayank Yadav, Ashok Sharma, Ravi Bishnoi, Prabhsimran Singh, Rinku Singh.

Zimbabwe squad: Sikandar Raza (captain), Brian Bennett, Ryan Burl, Tanaka Chivanga, Ben Curran, Brad Evans, Wesley Madhevere, Tadiwanashe Marumani, Wellington Masakadza, Blessing Muzarabani, Dion Myers, Richard Ngarava, Newman Nyamhuri, Milton Shumba, Tafadzwa Tsiga.

Match Starts: 4:30 pm IST. (PTI)

Indian boys beat Pakistan, Oman in Youth Hockey5s Asian Cup

MUSCAT, July 22: The Indian sub-junior boys' team maintained its winning run, outplaying Pakistan and Oman in the Elite Pool of the FIH Youth Hockey5s Asian Championship here.

Led by Ketan Kushwaha, India first registered an emphatic 14-0 win over Oman, with the skipper scoring four goals (6', 11', 15', 20'). Ashish Tani Puri (1', 16', 19') struck a hat-trick, while Rahul Yadav (2', 12') and Shahrul Ali (3', 13') scored braces. Prahalad Rajbhar (9'), Karan Gautam (15') and Romit Pal (18') also found the back of the net.

Against Pakistan, India prevailed 7-4, with Karan Gautam (5', 9', 19') completing a hat-trick. Rahul Yadav (3'), Prahalad Rajbhar (10'), captain Kushwaha (11') and Romit Pal (11') were the other scorers for India. Aslam Muhammad Farhan (6'), Adeel (8') and Usman Muhammad (10', 16') scored for Pakistan.

The Indian sub-junior girls, meanwhile, were held to a 2-2 draw by China before thrashing Uzbekistan 16-0 in another Elite Pool match. (PTI)

India bank on boxing, athletics and weightlifting to extend top-five CWG run

GLASGOW, July 22: India will bank on its boxing, weightlifting and athletics contingents to preserve a two-decade-long run of top-five finishes at the Commonwealth Games, while organisers face the daunting task of proving that a scaled-down edition can still capture the essence of the multi-sport spectacle when the event opens here on Thursday.

The opening ceremony at the OVO Hydro will formally launch what is set to be the leanest Commonwealth Games in more than three decades, with around 3,000 athletes from across the Commonwealth's 74 nations competing in just 10 sports spread across four venues.

Six of those sports will simultaneously host para events, reinforcing the organisers' vision of an inclusive Games.

After the Australian state of Victoria pulled out as host in 2023 because of spiralling costs, throwing the future of the Commonwealth itself into uncertainty, Glasgow stepped in to rescue the Games.

Having successfully staged the 2014 edition, the Scottish city has once again opened its doors, this time delivering the event on a budget of around 160 million pounds, nearly 60 per cent lower than Birmingham 2022, by relying entirely on existing venues and infrastructure.

While Glasgow's challenge has been to prove that the Games can survive in a leaner avatar, India's task has been made difficult by the



pruned schedule.

The country has finished inside the top five of the medals table at every Commonwealth Games since Manchester 2002, establishing itself as one of the event's strongest performers despite not being a traditional sporting powerhouse across disciplines at the world level.

Replicating that feat, however, will not be easy this time.

The absence of wrestling, badminton, table

tennis and shooting has significantly altered India's medal prospects.

Those four disciplines alone accounted for 25 of the 61 medals India won in Birmingham four years ago, making this perhaps the country's toughest Commonwealth campaign in recent memory.

The responsibility of filling that void will largely rest on athletics, boxing and weightlifting. (PTI)

Rahmat Shah takes over Afghanistan ODI and Test captaincy from Shahidi

KABUL, July 22: The Afghanistan Cricket Board on Wednesday appointed middle-order batter Rahmat Shah as the national team's new Test and ODI captain, following Hashmatullah Shahidi's resignation from the role. Rahmat has served consistently as Afghanistan's vice-captain in both the Test and ODI formats since 2021.

"The ACB is confident that his experience, leadership, and understanding of the team will help Afghanistan achieve further significant success," said the ACB in a statement. Alongside Rahmat, Rahmanullah Gurbaz will serve as vice-captain in both formats. The two will assume their new responsibilities during Afghanistan's upcoming series against Ireland. Shahidi was appointed captain in May 2021 and began his tenure with a series victory over the Netherlands in January 2022. During his successful tenure as captain, Afghanistan achieved several significant victories and milestones while making notable progress in the international rankings. Shahidi led Afghanistan to 27 victories in 55 ODIs during his captaincy. He also guided the team to four memorable victories at the 2023 World Cup, where Afghanistan defeated England, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, and the Netherlands, resulting in Afghanistan finishing sixth in the tournament. (PTI)

Sindhu battles past Hooda, Shetty upsets world No 11 Farhan

CHANGZHOU, July 22: Double Olympic medalist PV Sindhu overcame a spirited challenge from teenage compatriot Unnati Hooda to progress to the second round, while Ayush Shetty produced a stunning upset by knocking out world No. 11 Alwi Farhan in the opening round of the China Open here on Wednesday.

Sindhu, who ended a two-year title drought by winning the Japan Open last week, had to dig deep before overcoming 18-year-old compatriot Unnati 21-14, 9-21, 21-10 in a hard-fought 56-minute women's singles opening-round clash.

The former world champion was tested early as Unnati matched her point for point until 7-7 in the opening game.

Sindhu then found her rhythm, reeling off five consecutive points to open

up a 12-8 lead before comfortably taking the game 21-14.

The second game belonged entirely to the youngster.

After the scores were level at 2-2, Unnati surged to a 6-3 lead and then rattled off six straight points to race to 12-4.

Sindhu struggled to find her range as Unnati maintained complete control to force a decider with a dominant 21-9 win.

Sindhu, however, responded like a champion in the deciding game as she gradually pulled away after a close start, stretching her advantage from 6-3 to 10-5 and then 15-8 before sealing victory 21-10 to advance in the BWF Super 1000 tournament.

In the round of 16, the Indian will face fourth seed and local favourite Chen Yufei, whom she defeated in

straight games in the Japan Open semifinals last week.

Chen holds a narrow 8-7 head-to-head advantage over Sindhu.

In the men's singles, Ayush Shetty pulled off one of the biggest upsets of the opening round by defeating Indonesia's world No. 11 and former world junior champion Alwi Farhan 17-21, 21-5, 21-17 in a 57-minute contest.

After dropping the opening game, Shetty bounced back emphatically, dominating the second game before maintaining his composure in the decider to complete a memorable victory.

In the men's doubles, Hariharan Amsakuran and M.R. Arjun were outclassed by China's Liang Wei Keng and Wang Chang, losing 16-21, 7-21 in under 30 minutes. (PTI)

Vijender plans boxing academy in native village Kaluwas

NEW DELHI, July 22: India's trail-blazing boxing hero Vijender Singh wants to foray into coaching now by building a training academy in his ancestral village in Haryana and has sought the Sports Ministry's support for the project.

In an exclusive interview to PTI, the former Olympic and World Championships bronze-winner said his proposal is with the ministry which is taking its time in scrutinising it before deciding on offering support through the National Sports development Fund.

"Yes, I'm planning to open my boxing academy. I request Sports Minister Mansukh Mandaviya ji (to have a look at my proposal). I submitted it almost two years ago. I hope they can release some funds," he said.

The land that Vijender has in mind is at his village Kaluwas, which is in Bhiwani, long considered the cradle of Indian boxing for producing stalwarts like him, two-time Asian Games gold-winning legend the late Hawa Singh, Commonwealth Games gold-medallist Akhil Kumar and world championship bronze-winner Vikas Krishan among others.

"I am waiting for a revert from them because I have my own land. I told them that I want to open my own boxing academy. So hoping for the best," the 40-year-old said.



A Ministry source said that projects of such scale are cleared after a lengthy process and his proposal too is currently under consideration. The Ministry, in the past, has financially supported boxing academies by sporting heroes, the most prominent of them being Pulella Gopichand and Rohan Bopanna.

All roads led to Kaluwas in 2008 when Vijender burst into national consciousness with his epoch-making bronze at the Beijing Olympics.

The road leading up to his house was repaired to welcome him at that time and reporters had made a dash to the tiny hamlet, hoping to capture every aspect of his formative journey.

If Vijender's ambition becomes a reality, it would mark the beginning of a new phase in his storied career during which he ruled the amateur circuit in the middle-weight (75kg) division by rising to world number one at the peak of his prowess. (PTI)

Fencers Taniksha, Prachi qualify for main table at senior World C'ships

HONG KONG, July 22: Indian fencers Taniksha Khatri and Prachi Lohan scripted history by becoming the first-ever Indian women's epee players to qualify for the main table of 64 at the Senior World Fencing Championships here on Wednesday.

Competing on the opening day of the nine-day championship at the AsiaWorld-Expo, Khatri and Lohan advanced through the round-robin pool stage and preliminary elimination rounds to secure places in the direct elimination draw, marking a significant milestone for Indian fencing.

The duo will now compete in the main table of 64 on July 25, where they will aim to progress to the last 32.

In the men's individual foil event, Sachin was the best-placed Indian, finishing 107th, followed by Aditya (137th), Sanasam Hemash Singh (143rd) and Tejas Manoj Patil (149th). None of the Indian fencers advanced to the main draw.

The championships will continue on Thursday with the men's individual epee and women's individual sabre qualification events featuring Indian participants. (PTI)



NEW DELHI, July 22: Former skipper Anjum Chopra doesn't think that removing Harmanpreet Kaur from captaincy is a solution as the Indian women's team do not have quality back-up options in any of the departments.

While another legendary former skipper Mithali Raj has urged the selectors to look at the bigger picture and groom young captain like Shafali Verma for WT20Is, Chopra doesn't find it a feasible course correction.

We don't have much options in any department: Former skipper Anjum Chopra

"Why are we even talking about a change (in captaincy)? You can make anybody the captain. That doesn't mean that the rest of the 10 players will start performing differently. And if that has to happen, then I think we're in a very bad zone or a wrong place," Chopra told PTI in an interview.

"I'm not saying that nobody can become a captain. It's not a permanent position for anyone. And if change of captaincy is the solution, then I think in every series, we should keep changing captains if that is the way that we are going to get results," the stylish southpaw of yesteryears said.

The 49-year-old all-rounder believes that there aren't many strong options beyond the current core whether it is top order, middle-order, pace or spin.

"We're obviously lacking in the pace department. We are lacking options in the spin department. Presently, there is Sneh Rana, there is Deepti Sharma and there is Shree Chaurani. On the fringes is Radha Yadav.

"We are also lacking (in quality) in the middle order. We are lacking in batting options in the top order. So there are a lot of areas that we are a very much a work-in-progress team," she observed.

Chopra also questioned the preparation of the team and the lack of faith in reserve players beyond the core 12.

"Let's just go back to the 2025 ODI World Cup. We didn't have a 13th player in this In-

dian team. We had to get Shafali Verma, who was playing domestic cricket in Surat, and she had to come in and walk straight into the playing 11.

"So we didn't even have a 13th player on this team who could step in and replace an injured Pratika Rawal. We had to get a player from outside," she made some harsh observations.

She stressed the need for more options in the team to achieve optimal results.

"Yes, we have good players, but we are looking at players, if you're wanting to win World Cups or you're wanting to win championships, we have to have options.

"One player gets injured, we are looking for options and we have to wait for somebody to come from outside. So let's start strengthening the bases first."

She cited Australia as an example of a team with many options for every position.

"Australia, I always feel that they have more than one player in that line-up. Because when they select a team, they select options. They don't just select players, they select options. That's how Australia dominates.

"And you see their team, they will always have more than one option for that one slot in that 9-11. For us to get into that kind of a space, it will take time because our assembly line also has to be in that same vein as to see to get the end result," she signed off. (PTI)