



CM Sarma attends Council of Ministers swearing-in ceremony

Guwahati, Jun 5: Assam entered a significant new phase in its governance journey as Chief Minister Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma attended the swearing-in ceremony of the Council of Ministers of the Government of Assam at Jyoti-Bishnu Antarjatik Kala Mandir, marking an important cabinet expansion that reflects the government's proactive approach towards strengthening administration, improving service delivery and accelerating development across the state. The induction of experienced legislators and senior political leaders into the Council of Ministers underscores the administration's commitment to building a robust people of Assam. By bringing together



expected to further strengthen policy implementation and governance outcomes. The ceremony carried symbolic significance as it highlighted the state's progress while showcasing the government's commitment to preserving Assam's rich cultural heritage alongside modern development initiatives. The expansion of the Council of Ministers represents a strategic effort to enhance administrative capacity and ensure that the government's developmental agenda reaches every corner of the state with greater efficiency and effectiveness. With the latest expansion, Chief Minister Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma's cabinet will have 17 ministers, while two berths have been kept vacant and are likely to be filled over the next year, providing flexibility for future political and administrative requirements. Among the prominent leaders who took oath was Keshab Mahanta, a senior Asom Gana Parishad leader and long-serving representative from Kaliabor. Mahanta brings with him decades of experience in public life and governance. Having served as a Member of the Legislative Assembly since 2006 and previously as a Member of Parliament in the Lok Sabha, he possesses extensive administrative experience across a range of important sectors. During his political career, he has handled significant portfolios including Water Resources, Health, Information Technology, Science and Technology, Transport, Excise, and Revenue and Disaster Management. His re-induction into the cabinet provides valuable continuity and institutional knowledge, which is expected to contribute significantly to the government's efforts in strengthening public services and implementing development programmes effectively. Dr. Ranaj Pegu also took oath as a Cabinet Minister, adding considerable strength to the government's focus on education and tribal welfare. The Bharatiya Janata Party legislator from the Dhemaji Scheduled Tribe constituency has built a strong reputation through his work in public service and administration. A senior BJP leader from the Mising tribal community, Dr. Pegu has served as an MLA since 2017 and previously held the position of Chief Executive Member of the Mising Autonomous Council. His earlier tenure as Cabinet Minister overseeing School Education, Higher Education and Welfare of Plain Tribes and Backward Classes earned recognition for initiatives aimed at

Governor plants saplings on World Environment Day

Guwahati, Jun 5: Joining the nationwide observance of World Environment Day, Assam Governor Shri Lakshman Prasad Acharya planted saplings at Jyoti Bishnu Antarjatik Kala Mandir in Guwahati today, reflecting his commitment to environmental conservation and sustainable development.



On the occasion, Governor Shri Acharya urged citizens to actively contribute to increasing green cover and protecting the environment for the well-being of present and future generations. Referring to this year's theme, "Inspired by Nature for Climate, for Future," he emphasized that safeguarding nature is essential for addressing climate challenges and ensuring a sustainable future.

Shri Acharya called upon people from all walks of life to adopt environmentally

leaders with extensive experience in governance, public service, administration, education, social welfare, infrastructure, disaster management and economic development, the government has reinforced its vision of creating an efficient, responsive and people-centric administration capable of addressing the evolving needs of both urban and rural communities. The cabinet expansion comes at a time when Assam is witnessing rapid transformation across multiple sectors, and the inclusion of seasoned leaders is

kept vacant and are likely to be filled over the next year, providing flexibility for future political and administrative requirements. Among the prominent leaders who took oath was Keshab Mahanta, a senior Asom Gana Parishad leader and long-serving representative from Kaliabor. Mahanta brings with him decades of experience in public life and governance. Having served as a Member of the Legislative Assembly since 2006 and previously as a Member

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World Environment Day celebrated under the joint initiative of Jorhat District Administration and Jorhat Civil Defence Department

Jorhat, June 5: Along with the rest of the nation, World Environment Day was celebrated today in Jorhat district with various programs. As part of this, the officials and employees of the Jorhat District Administration took a green initiative.



A sapling plantation program was successfully implemented in the premises of the Jorhat District

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Nagaon Marks World Environment Day with Massive Tree Plantation and Awareness Drives



Safiqur Rahman, Staff Reporter, Nagaon, June 5: World Environment Day was observed across Nagaon district with extensive plantation drives, awareness programmes, seminars, and community

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DC Darrang visits Model Residential School

Paban Kumar Kalita, Correspondent from Sipajhar, Jun 5: The District Commissioner Darrang Ayushi Jain IAS visited the Model Residential School at Barampur under the Sipajhar Legislative Assembly Constituency along with the MLA, Sipajhar Legislative Assembly Constituency Dr Paramananda Rajbanshi, Co-District Commissioner,



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Cachar observes World Environment Day with district-wide plantation drive

District Administration, ASRLM and various government departments join hands to strengthen environmental conservation efforts across the district

Silchar, Jun 5: In a concerted effort to promote environmental sustainability and strengthen green cover across the district, Cachar observed World Environment Day 2026 on 5th June, Friday through a series of plantation drives and awareness initiatives organized by various government departments and institutions under the

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District Level Bal Vaigyanik Pradarshani 2026

Barpeta, Jun 5: The District Level Bal Vaigyanik Pradarshani for Barpeta and Bajali districts concluded successfully on 5 June 2026



after two days of innovation, creativity, and learning at DIET Barpeta, Howly.

Organized on 4 and 5 June 2026 in alignment with state and national initiatives, the exhibition aimed to foster a scientific temperament and promote innovative thinking

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On World Environment Day, former state minister and MP Parimal Suklabaidya, Rajya Sabha MP Karnad Purkayastha, MLA Rupak Sharma, MLA Shashi Kanta Das, and Commissioner & Special Secretary of the Public Works Road Department Sanjeev Shyam along with others, during a special moment of tree plantation and public awareness at their respective locations. Photo collection: David Das



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World Environment Day Observed at Rabindranath Thakur Vishwavidyalaya University, Hojai

Hojai, June 5: Rabindranath Thakur Vishwavidyalaya (RTV), Hojai, observed World Environment Day 2026 with a series of



tree plantation and environmental awareness programmes aimed at promoting ecological responsibility among students and the local community. As part of the celebrations, various valuable and environmentally significant saplings were planted across the university campus by members of the university administration, faculty, students, and invited dignitaries. Among those who participated in the plantation drive were Dr. Sandip Ratna, Registrar (i/c) of Rabindranath Thakur Vishwavidyalaya and Shri Nayanjyoti Rajbangshi, AFS, Divisional Forest Officer (DFO), Nagaon South (Territorial) Division, Hojai.

Extending the initiative beyond the university premises, the RTV family also carried out a plantation programme in and around East Golaghatia Basti Primary School, where several saplings were planted to enhance the green cover of the area. To foster environmental consciousness among young learners, the university organized various competitions for the school students, encouraging them to understand the importance of environmental protection and sustainable living. The programme witnessed the active participation of the university administration, teachers, students, as well as members associated with the Internal Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC), National Cadet Corps (NCC), and National Service Scheme (NSS). Their collective efforts contributed to the successful observance of World Environment Day.

Speaking to the media, noted columnist Gautam Sarmah, on behalf of the Rabindranath Thakur Vishwavidyalaya family, stated that the objective of the programme was not only to increase green cover through tree plantation but also to cultivate environmental awareness and a sense of responsibility among the younger generation. The observance reflected the university's commitment to environmental conservation and sustainable development, aligning with the global message of protecting nature for a greener and healthier future.

BSF Mizoram & Cachar Frontier observes World Environment Day With Massive Tree Plantation Drive

Seema Praharis of Mizoram & Cachar Frontier BSF observed World Environment Day on 05 June 2026 with great enthusiasm by organizing tree plantation drives across their area of responsibility, reaffirming the Force's commitment towards environmental conservation and sustainable development.

2. The plantation programmes were organized at Frontier Headquarters Mizoram & Cachar, Silchar (Assam), as well as at all Sector Headquarters, Battalions and Border Out Posts located in the remote and border areas in the state of Assam, Mizoram, Manipur and Nagaland. BSF personnel along with their families participated wholeheartedly in the campaign and planted a large number of saplings of various indigenous species. They were actively supported by eminent local personalities and school children at several locations.

3. At the Frontier Headquarters, Masimpur (Assam), the plantation drive was led by Shri Ravi Kant, IPS, Inspector General, Mizoram & Cachar Frontier BSF. Officers and Bordermen along with their families including children actively participated in the programme, demonstrating their collective resolve towards protecting and preserving the environment.

4. Addressing the gathering, Shri Ravi Kant, IPS, highlighted the importance of environmental protection and emphasized that every tree planted today is an investment towards a healthier and more sustainable future. He urged all ranks to continue contributing towards environmental preservation through regular plantation drives and responsible environmental practices.

5. The plantation drive was conducted with the objective of increasing green cover, promoting ecological balance and spreading awareness about the importance of environmental conservation. This initiative reflects BSF's enduring commitment to environmental stewardship and its dedication to fostering a greener, cleaner and healthier future for generations to come.

6. Besides safeguarding the nation's borders, BSF remains committed to various social and environmental initiatives. The enthusiastic participation of Seema Praharis across the Frontier on World Environment Day once again showcased the Force's dedication towards nation-building and environmental sustainability.

8. The related photographs are attached herewith for publishing in your esteemed daily digital and print media.

Children's science exhibition held

Achyut KR Nath, Correspondent, Morigaon, Jun 5: A district level children's science exhibition was organized by Morigaon District Institute of Education and Training (DIET) at the premises of DIET on 2nd and 3rd June, 2026. The theme of the exhibition was on 'STEM for a Developed and Self-Reliant India' with the aim of realizing the dream of building a developed and self-reliant India. The students from various schools participated in the exhibition by preparing models on Sustainable Agriculture, Green Energy, Waste Management and Alternatives to Plastics, Water Conservation, Hygiene, Emerging Technologies and Recreational Mathematical.

The exhibition was inaugurated by the Principal of Morigaon District Institute of Education and Training (DIET) Kishore Kumar Das. He explained the purpose of the exhibition and wished all the contestants well for the exhibition. The judges were 4 experienced persons involved in science education in Morigaon district namely Diptimani Sharma, Nirrod Bora, Uddipta Barthakur, Sandeep Dutta. The four judges encouraged all the students to pursue science with their inspiring speeches. The exhibition was attended by 32 projects from 28 schools in four education blocks of Morigaon district namely Kapili, Mayang, Bhurbandha and



Lahrihat respectively. The teachers who guided the students in preparing the models also collaborated with each project. In the second day, Mrinal Hazarika, General Secretary of Assam Science Society delivered a valuable speech in the programme. In the programme all participants were awarded with certificates at the end of the exhibition. The judges selected a total of 5 projects for the state level science exhibition organized by the State Council for Education, Research and Training (SCERT), Assam. These five teams are Khyati Daimari and Aradhya Mahanti (Jagiroad Central School), Mrigank Shekhar Shivam (St. Theresa School), Biratjyoti Deka and Sumit Basumatary (Gerua Girls Higher Secondary School), Trishna Devi, Barnita Deka (Shaheed Surya Bora Secondary School) and Sabeya Begum (Rangadaria Higher Secondary School). The exhibition was moderated by lecturer and District Coordinator of Children's Scientific Exhibition Subhalakshmi Konwar. Mir Bahar Uddin, Lecturer, DIET delivered the vote of thanks. The Children's Science Exhibition was successfully held at the Morigaon District level with the active cooperation of all the senior lecturers, lecturers and non-academic staff of the District Institute of Education Training (DIET).

Sanjeeb Shyam Calls for a Mass Movement on World Environment Day

Staff Reporter, Guwahati, June 5: In a poignant reminder that environmental conservation requires sustained action rather than annual tokenism, Sanjeeb Shyam, Special Commissioner and Secretary of the Public Works Department (PWD) Roads, today urged citizens to elevate tree plantation into a robust mass movement.

Inaugurating a mega green drive organized by the Guwahati Regional Division of PWD (Roads) at its Narengi VIP Road complex to mark World Environment Day, Shyam delivered a compelling narrative on community ownership.

"We must look beyond the mere formality of ceremonial plantation. True ecological transformation will only manifest when every individual adopts this



cause and inspires ten others to do the same. This cascading effect is imperative if we are to secure a future rich in pure, breathable oxygen," Shyam articulated.

In a proactive step towards nurturing green spaces in institutional environments, the Special Commissioner also pledged a dedicated supply of saplings to government schools equipped with secure campuses, ensuring the safe growth of the young trees.

Top Brass Rallies for the Green Cause The flagship event at Narengi witnessed a strong mobilization of the department's top leadership, engineers, and civil society members, reaffirming their commitment to a greener metropo-

lis. The gathering included: Hemanta Deuri Bharali, Chief Engineer, PWD (Roads) Awani Sarma, Abhijit Choudhury, and Nilotpal Kalita, Superintending Engineers Altaf Uddin Ahmed, Assistant Chief Engineer Bhaskar Mishra Bhagawati, Executive Engineer (New Guwahati Regional Division) Kaushik Mohan Sarma and Lakshyajyoti Bora, Assistant Executive Engineers Bijoy Sarkar and Tapas Paul, noted social activists

Decentralized Green Footprint Across Guwahati

Reflecting a coordinated department-wide push, synchronized plantation campaigns were executed simultaneously across various strategic locations in the city:

Riverfront Revitalization: A dedicated drive was carried out along the critical Birubari-Bharalumukh riparian zones, spearheaded by Pranjal Bhattacharya, Executive Engineer of the Guwahati Central Territorial Road Division, aimed at restoring the city's urban waterfronts.

Fatasil Ambari Drive: Concurrently, another major institutional plantation drive was executed at Fatasil Ambari under the direct supervision of Jewel Timung, Chief Engineer (EAP), and Gyandeep Choudhury, Superintending Engineer

World Environment Day Observed in Sivasagar

Khairuddin Ahmed, Staff Reporter Sivasagar, June 5: World Environment Day was observed today at the premises of the Sivasagar Press Club under the initiative of the club. The environmental awareness program was conducted by the Acting Secretary of the Sivasagar Press Club, Himangshu Neog.

Speaking on the occasion, Jehiruddin Khan, Coordinator of Nature's Beacon, said that rapid industrialization and urbanization since the 1970s have led to large-scale destruction of forests across the world, pushing human civilization towards a dangerous future. He warned that the continued destruction of nature, not only in India but across the globe, could ultimately threaten the existence of the entire world.

Senior journalist Monirul Islam Bora stated that World Environment Day has been observed every year on June 5 since 1973, following the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment held in Stockholm, Sweden, on June 5, 1972. He emphasized that forests are the lungs of the Earth and that preserving forests is essential for the survival of the planet. He noted that despite widespread awareness campaigns promoting tree plantation, deforestation continues across the country, resulting in abnormal increases in temperature in India. He further remarked that at least one-third of the Earth's land area should remain under forest cover to maintain environ-

mental balance. According to him, the oxygen produced by a single tree is worth approximately 73 lakh, and it is this oxygen that sustains human life. To protect India's environment, he stressed the need for a nationwide campaign to plant at least 500 crore saplings.



Addressing the gathering, Sarat Hazarika, General Secretary of the Assam Unnati Sabha, said that to protect future generations from severe pollution and rising temperatures, schools should introduce special lessons on the importance of tree plantation and environmental conservation. He also suggested creating awareness among students about the devastating consequences of environmental destruction and encouraging every student to plant at least ten

saplings annually.

During the program, more than one hundred valuable saplings were distributed among local residents. Prominent attendees included senior journalists Ratu Kumar Das, Khairuddin Ahmed, Mustakur Rahman, Pranjal Rajguru, Umesh

Baldeva, Shariful Ahmed, Ankush Dutta, social worker Debaranjan Chutia, Pintu Pathak, and several other environmentally conscious citizens.

Meanwhile, on the occasion of World Environment Day, voluntary organization Anubhuti, Asomiya Yuva Mancha, and the Sivasagar District Committee of ACRACHU (Upper and Central Assam) also distributed saplings among the public in Sivasagar town.

Mitsubishi Electric opens exclusive 'cooling planet' showroom in Guwahati

Guwahati: Mitsubishi Electric, one of the world's leading air conditioning manufacturers, has strengthened its presence in North-east India with the launch of its exclusive showroom, Cooling Planet, in Guwahati,

large infrastructure requirements. The showroom was inaugurated in the presence of Mr. Neeraj Gupta, Vice President & Head- Business Operations, Air Conditioning Division; Mr. Anoop Gautam, National Sales Head; Mr.



Assam. The new showroom is located at Global Climate Technologies, Nandeshwar Sarma Complex, First Floor, Lokhra Road, Sawkuchi. The exclusive showroom spans 1,400 sq. ft. and showcases Mitsubishi Electric's complete range of advanced air conditioning solutions, including Split Air Conditioners, Ductable Air Conditioners, City Multi VRF (Variable Refrigerant Flow) Systems, and Cassette Air Conditioners, catering to residential, commercial, and

Kaustav De, Regional Sales Head- East; and Mr. Vikas Kumar, Team Leader- West Bengal & Northeast, Mitsubishi Electric India, along with Mr. Bibekananda Roy, Managing Director, Global Climate Technologies, the authorised dealer. Speaking on the occasion, Mr. Neeraj Gupta, Vice President & Head- Business Operations, Air Conditioning Division, Mitsubishi Electric India, said, "Mitsubishi Electric is globally recognised for

its superior quality and advanced technology. The launch of our exclusive Cooling Planet showroom in Guwahati marks an important step in strengthening our presence in the Northeast and offering customers an immersive brand experience." Adding to this, Mr. Anoop Gautam, National Sales Head, Mitsubishi Electric India, said, "The North-east region holds strong growth potential for us. Through this showroom, customers can explore our full portfolio of energy-efficient and reliable air conditioning solutions, supported by expert product consultation." Commenting on the partnership, Mr. Bibekananda Roy, Managing Director, Global Climate Technologies, said, "We are pleased to partner with Mitsubishi Electric to bring the Cooling Planet showroom to Guwahati. This exclusive space allows customers to experience premium air conditioning products under one roof and make informed purchase decisions." With the launch of the Cooling Planet showroom in Guwahati, Mitsubishi Electric India continues to expand its retail footprint, reinforcing its commitment to delivering world-class, energy-efficient air conditioning solutions across key regional markets in India. Mitsubishi Electric India is a subsidiary of Mitsubishi Electric Corporation, Japan, and offers a comprehensive range of advanced air conditioning and automation solutions. The company is known for its focus on innovation, energy efficiency, and long-term reliability, serving customers across residential, commercial, and industrial segments nationwide.

Kriti Sanon joins Shahid Kapoor as the Face of Vogue Eyewear

Guwahati: Kriti Sanon joins Vogue Eyewear as its new female Brand Ambassador, alongside talent powerhouse Shahid Kapoor, who continues his longstanding association with the brand. Strengthening its connection with a new generation that values individuality, confidence, and self-expression, the brand unveils its latest campaign, 'Vogue Eyewear Journeys' - fashionable, relatable, and thoughtful. A National Award-winning actor with pan-India appeal, Kriti Sanon brings a contemporary perspective to Vogue Eyewear. Known for her inimitable personal style and strong connection with a young, fashion-conscious audience, she reflects the brand's spirit of playfulness with authenticity. Rooted in the idea that fashion isn't static; instead, is an evolving journey that mirrors self-discovery, the campaign brings this philosophy to life through a visually engaging narrative, where the protagonists encounter different versions of themselves across moments in time and is emphasized poetically with apt voice over - "when you meet you, you find you". The campaign also transitions seamlessly between these parallel selves, through windows that also allude to one's perspective, capturing the fluid and deeply personal nature self-discovery and expression through style. "Vogue Eyewear is on trend, versatile and resonates perfectly with my personal style. I'm excited to join them with their latest campaign that explores constant reinvention, as we explore new aspects of our own personality. The campaign beautifully captures this journey of self-discovery and how style play a key role in self-

expression" says Kriti Sanon. "What I've always appreciated about my journey with Vogue Eyewear is how naturally it aligns with my own sense of style... unforced, evolving, and personal. This campaign captures that spirit. Having Kriti join the brand adds a fresh dynamic; she has a strong, individual point of view that

and reinforcing its role in everyday fashion. Conceptualised by Network Advertising, the campaign is directed by Emmy Nominated - Suraj Wanvari and captured by ace photographer- Prasad Naik. It has been launched through an integrated rollout across digital, social media, print, and OOH platforms, reaching audi-



complements it beautifully," says Shahid Kapoor. Each frame in the campaign positions eyewear as an integral accessory, seamlessly complementing the transitions of various selves

ences nationwide. Vogue Eyewear collection is available in all leading stores and online platforms within an accessible price range of INR 3,000 to 10,000.

Lions Club of Gauhati launches first-ever free kids helmet distribution drive

Guwahati: In a pioneering road safety initiative, the Lions Club of Gauhati launched the first-ever Free Kids Helmet Distribution Drive in the history of Lionism in Northeast India. The campaign, centered around the message "Bachon Ki Suraksha, Bhavishya Ki Raksha" (Protecting Children, Securing the Future), aims to promote road safety awareness among parents and children alike. The inaugural distribution program was held at Hindustani Kendriya Vidyalaya, Bhangagarh, where around 100 children's helmets were distributed free of cost to students. Speaking on the occasion, Lions Club of Gauhati President Rajesh Hansaria described the initiative as his dream project. He said that during his morning walks, he often noticed parents wearing helmets while riding two-wheelers but failing to provide the same protection to their children. "This project was born out of a simple yet important observation. While parents are increasingly aware of their own safety, many children continue to travel without helmets. We want to change this mindset and ensure that every child is protected on the road," he said. The primary objective of the campaign is to create greater awareness about road safety among citizens and encourage responsible riding practices throughout the community. Project Chairman and donor Sarvan Saraogi shared that the club plans to distribute approximately 1000 children's helmets across various schools in

Guwahati in the coming months. He emphasized that the initiative is intended to send a strong and positive message to parents, schools, and society about the importance of road safety and child protection. "Through this project, we hope to inspire parents to make children's safety a priority and foster a culture of responsible road behavior," Saraogi said. The drive was formally inaugurated today and will continue in the coming days through various programs and events organized by the club. A large number of Lions Club members actively participated in the launch event and pledged their support to the cause. The Lions Club of Gauhati remains committed to serving the community through meaningful initiatives that promote safety, awareness, and social responsibility. During the initiative Deepak Mittal, Dilip Saraf, Naresh Agarwal, Bharat Choudhary, Shrawan Sarawgi, Anand Saraf, Rajesh Hansaria along with other Lions Club of Gauhati members were present.



HMSI reports 5.18 lakh units sold in May 2026

Gurugram: Honda Motorcycle & Scooter India Pvt. Ltd. (HMSI) recorded total sales of 5.18 Lakh units in May 2026, registering a 12% year-on-year growth compared to 4.65 Lakh units sold in May 2025. In May 2026, Domestic sales stood at 4.59 Lakh units, registering a 10% growth over 4.17 Lakh units sold in the corresponding month last year. Exports stood at 0.59 Lakh units in May 2026, recording a 24% growth compared to 0.47 Lakh units exported in May 2025. The two-wheeler market witnessed

steady demand during the month. Backed by its diverse product portfolio and extensive network of over 7,000 touchpoints across the country, HMSI continues to strengthen customer accessibility and expand its reach across markets. Honda Motorcycle & Scooter India Pvt. Ltd. (HMSI) is a wholly owned subsidiary of Honda Motor Co., Ltd., Japan. Founded in 1948, Honda Motor is a global leader in two-wheelers with a diverse portfolio spanning automobiles, motor-

cycles, power products, marine, and aviation, with a strong presence across continents. Rooted in Honda's philosophy of delivering the joy of mobility, HMSI brings world-class engineering and innovation to India. The company manufactures motorcycles and scooters for domestic and export markets. It operates four plants in Manesar, Tapukara, Narsapura, and Vithalapur, and serves more than 76 million customers through a network of over 7,000 touchpoints.

Gagan Gupta's African EV platform Spiro raises \$215M

Guwahati: Spiro announces a \$215 million investment round to accelerate the deployment of its electric mobility and battery-swapping infrastructure across Africa. Building on the support of long-standing institutional partners such as FEDA, Spiro's latest equity round draws global capital from Europe and Africa, confirming growing global confidence in scalable infrastructure-led business models across emerging markets. Following years of optimization across its product portfolio, technology and energy ecosystem, Spiro has moved past the proof-of-concept phase and stands ready to execute its next chapter of pan-African expansion. The investment will support the expansion of Spiro's battery-swapping network, strengthen its industrial and assembly footprint, accelerate technology development and support the company's entry into new high-growth African markets, fully anchored by the technological and engineering innovation coming out of its Global Technology and Engineering Center in Pune, India. Founded by visionary Indian entrepreneur Gagan Gupta (under the Equitane Group), Spiro has grown exponentially to become the largest e-mobility player in Africa. The company currently operates over 100,000 electric motorcycles and a massive network of 2,500 automated battery-swapping stations across seven key markets including Kenya, Rwanda, Uganda, Togo, Benin, Nigeria and Cameroon.

Global investors back Africa's fast-growing mobility and energy transition: As Africa's urban population and mobility needs continue to surge, electric vehicles and battery-swapping ecosystems are rapidly emerging as one of the continent's most promising infrastructure and energy investment opportunities. Reducing dependence on imported fuel, strengthening energy and industrial sovereignty and modernizing urban transport systems are becoming strategic priorities across the continent, positioning EV infrastructure as a key pillar of Africa's economic resilience and industrial development. Driven by rising fuel costs, increasing demand for affordable transportation and growing policy support for clean energy solutions, investors are increasingly backing scalable EV platforms capable of supporting Africa's next phase of urban and industrial growth. For riders, the economic impact is immediate: operating a Spiro

electric vehicle can reduce daily mobility costs by up to 40%, generating savings of up to \$2 per day compared to fossil-fuel motorcycles. With operations across 7 African markets (Kenya, Rwanda, Uganda, Togo, Benin, Nigeria, Cameroon) and further plans to expand local production and enter new markets such as DRC and Ethiopia, Spiro is building one of Africa's most advanced EV and battery-swapping ecosystems. Spiro's industrial footprint includes flagship manufacturing plants in Kenya, Rwanda and Uganda, alongside a state-of-the-art battery recycling facility in Nigeria. Combining locally adapted vehicle design, affordable battery-swapping infrastructure and integrated maintenance ecosystems, Spiro is making electric mobility commercially viable at scale for African riders. Spiro's technology platform is supported by its Global Technology and Innovation Center in India's Pune city, 150+ engineers and 30+ proprietary patents. The company is actively expanding beyond urban transport into a distributed clean-energy utility network that supports national renewable energy goals while reducing dependence on imported fossil fuels. Its innovations include IoT-enabled, solar-powered swap stations, alongside secondary-life battery applications designed for stationary renewable energy storage. Investor quotes: "This past year marked a defining strategic milestone for Spiro. Across seven active markets, our deployment of 100,000 electric vehicles and 2,500 smart-swap stations has turned sustainable mobility into an affordable, everyday reality. Spiro has become a major driver of local industrialization, value creation and manufacturing across African markets with 6,000 sustainable direct and indirect jobs. Supported by our global pool of investors, we are entering our next growth chapter to deliver clean, cost-effective energy and transport alternatives to millions of riders across the continent", stated Gagan Gupta, Founder of Spiro and Chairman of Equitane. "We are investing in Spiro and bringing Danish pension capital into one of Africa's most promising growth markets because we see potential for significant commercial growth in Spiro and electric mobility across Africa, as well as measurable climate impact. That is exactly the type of investment we want to make," says Lars Bo Bertram, CEO of Impact Fund Denmark.

Himalaya BabyCare launch golden baby gift pack and chance to win gold

Guwahati: Himalaya BabyCare, one of India's most trusted baby care brands, loved by babies, has announced the launch of the Himalaya Baby Golden Baby Gift Pack, a thoughtfully curated essentials pack designed to celebrate auspicious new beginnings while making baby care gifting more meaningful, accessible, and engaging. In India, gifting for newborns is deeply rooted in emotion and tradition, with gold symbolizing purity, blessings, and prosperity. Building on this cultural insight, Himalaya BabyCare introduces the Golden Baby Gift Pack as a modern interpretation of this tradition, bringing together trusted baby care essentials in a distinctive gold-themed pack that reflects both care and auspiciousness. Priced at Rs. 501, the Golden Baby Gift Pack has been thoughtfully designed as a premium yet accessible gifting option for friends and family celebrating the arrival of a newborn. Curated with gentle baby care essentials in an elegantly presented pack, it offers a special gifting experience for modern parents while practically supporting their everyday baby care needs. Adding an interactive and engaging layer to the launch, the brand has introduced the Himalaya Golden Moments Program, an initiative that encourages parents to celebrate and share their baby's special milestones. Parents can participate by uploading a cherished memory of their baby along with a short story and stand a chance to win a gold voucher worth Rs. 1,00,000 or a silver voucher worth Rs. 10,000. Every valid participant will also receive an assured Himalaya BabyCare "My Baby & Me" e-book worth Rs. 500.

Commenting on the launch, Chakravarthi N. V., Director - BabyCare, Himalaya Wellness Company, said, "At Himalaya BabyCare, we understand that the journey of early parenthood is filled with moments that are deeply personal and worth celebrating. Gifting during this phase is not just about products, but about expressing care, blessings, good wishes, and trust. With the Golden Baby Gift Pack, we aimed to create a thoughtful offering that combines our trusted baby care range in a way that feels special and relevant for such occasions. Through our Himalaya Golden Moments Program, we are also creating a platform for parents to celebrate and share their baby's precious memories, while strengthening our connection with them through moments that truly matter. The Golden Baby Gift Pack includes Gentle Baby Soap (125g), Baby Lotion (100ml), Baby Powder (100g), Baby Massage Oil (50ml), and Gentle Baby Shampoo (50ml), along with a soft cotton towel. Each product is specifically formulated for delicate infant skin, reinforcing the brand's commitment to gentle, safe, and effective baby care. With this launch, Himalaya BabyCare continues to strengthen its presence in the baby gifting segment by combining trusted care with culturally relevant storytelling and meaningful consumer engagement. The golden moments program will be amplified across retail and digital touchpoints, with a seamless participation journey enabled through QR codes leading to a microsite and WhatsApp integration, ensuring a seamless participation experience for parents.

Vi, Meta partner to roll out seamless mobile verification for users

Guwahati: Vodafone Idea (Vi) and Meta have partnered to introduce Silent Mobile Verification (SMV) for Vi subscribers using WhatsApp, Facebook and Instagram, aiming to make user authentication faster, safer and more seamless. The network-based authentication technology allows users to verify their mobile numbers in the background without manually entering verification codes, switching between applications or waiting for SMS-based authentication

messages. Under the new system, verification requests are validated directly through Vi's telecom network when users access Meta platforms on the Vi mobile network. According to the companies, the service will support a range of user journeys, including new registrations, mobile number verification, login and re-login, account recovery and security checks. The move is expected to simplify onboarding processes while strengthening protection against phishing attempts and digital identity fraud.

Editorial



AI Healthcare Leap

The National Health Authority, under the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, in collaboration with the IndiaAI Mission and the Indian Institute of Science, will organize the grand finale and showcase of the AB PM-JAY Auto-Adjudication Hackathon at the AV Rama Rao Auditorium of IISc Bengaluru, bringing together policymakers, technologists, researchers, startups, and healthcare experts in a landmark event that reflects India's growing focus on leveraging artificial intelligence to transform public healthcare delivery systems, and the initiative is closely aligned with the objectives of Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana, which continues to expand its digital and technological capabilities to ensure faster, more transparent, and efficient claims settlement processes for millions of beneficiaries across the country, and the event is expected to serve as a dynamic platform for showcasing cutting-edge innovations shaping the next phase of health claims management, with finalist teams presenting advanced AI and machine learning-based solutions designed to address critical challenges such as clinical document classification, compliance with Standard Treatment Guidelines, radiological image-based verification, and detection of forged or AI-generated medical documents, all of which have significant implications for improving the accuracy, speed, and reliability of claims adjudication, and according to officials, the nationwide hackathon has received an overwhelming response, with over 3,500 participants registering through the official portal before the registration process ended on April 13, 2026, demonstrating the strong interest among innovators and researchers in contributing to India's healthcare transformation through technology-driven solutions, and the grand finale will feature an inaugural session with keynote addresses by senior government leaders including S. Krishnan, Secretary, Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology, Dr. Sunil Kumar Barnwal, Chief Executive Officer of the National Health Authority, and Ritwik Ranjanam Pandey, Principal Secretary, Government of Karnataka, who are expected to outline the strategic importance of integrating artificial intelligence into healthcare governance frameworks while emphasizing the need for scalability, transparency, and accountability in public systems, and the two-day event will also host structured panel discussions bringing together experts from government, industry, academia, and the startup ecosystem to deliberate on key themes such as scaling up AI in healthcare and building a transparent, data-driven claims system, with a dedicated session titled "Building AI for Indian Healthcare" focusing on strategies for implementing AI innovations across the healthcare system by leveraging the robust digital public infrastructure established under the Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission, which has already laid the foundation for interoperable health data systems and digital health records across the country, and another panel discussion titled "The Future of Claims Settlement" will explore how AB PM-JAY can enable faster, more transparent, and accountable claims systems through the integration of artificial intelligence, automation, interoperable digital platforms, and data-driven governance frameworks, highlighting the transformative potential of technology in reducing delays, minimizing errors, and enhancing trust among stakeholders, and in addition to these discussions, a special session on "Fraud, Waste and Abuse in the Age of AI - Challenges and Opportunities" will examine the responsible use of artificial intelligence in fraud detection while addressing critical concerns related to transparency, accountability, and data privacy, which remain central to the adoption of AI in sensitive sectors such as healthcare, and officials have emphasized that AB PM-JAY is already leading in AI-based claims management, with nearly 40,000 daily claims being processed across more than 1,900 treatment packages, making it one of the largest publicly funded health insurance schemes globally and a pioneer in adopting automated decision-making systems, and the Hackathon Showcase represents a significant milestone in the National Health Authority's efforts to scale up these capabilities, enabling the system to handle increasing volumes of claims with greater efficiency while maintaining high standards of accuracy and compliance, and the event will also highlight the role of digital public infrastructure in supporting healthcare innovation, demonstrating how platforms developed under national initiatives can be leveraged to create scalable, interoperable, and secure solutions that benefit both beneficiaries and providers, and participants at the event will have the opportunity to interact directly with experts and decision-makers, gaining insights into industry trends, policy directions, and technological advancements that are shaping the future of healthcare in India, and the recognition of winning teams at the conclusion of the event will further reinforce the importance of innovation in driving systemic improvements, as solutions with strong potential for real-world implementation will be identified and supported for further development and deployment, and through this initiative, the National Health Authority is reaffirming its commitment to using responsible artificial intelligence and digital technologies to improve access to healthcare, enhance service delivery, and achieve better health outcomes, particularly for underserved populations who rely on public health insurance schemes for critical medical support, and the collaboration with IndiaAI Mission and IISc Bengaluru underscores the importance of partnerships between government.



DR. DIPANKAR DEBNATH
(dipankar.debnath20@gmail.com)

The recent transformation of Bengal's political landscape represents far more than the electoral defeat of one political party and the ascent of another. It may be understood as a significant crisis in the postmodern political narrative that has shaped much of contemporary democratic politics. The party that governed the state for an extended period did not rely solely on conventional ideological foundations or structural developmental achievements. Instead, its political strength increasingly came to rest upon a carefully constructed symbolic universe produced through the combined influence of modern communication technologies, social media networks, corporate political consultancy, and sophisticated public-relations strategies. The manner in which the realities of everyday life eventually challenged and disrupted this symbolic order deserves careful examination from sociological, philosophical, and political perspectives.

At one stage, the Trinamool Congress emerged as the principal political vehicle of popular resentment against the long-standing Left Front government. It successfully channelled widespread public aspirations for political change, administrative responsiveness, and democratic renewal. However, after consolidating power, particularly with the increasing involvement of professional political consulting agencies such as I-PAC, the party's mode of political communication underwent a significant transformation. What emerged was a process that can be understood through Jean Baudrillard's concept of "simulation." Baudrillard argued that in contemporary society representations increasingly replace reality itself, creating a condition he termed "hyperreality." In such a condition, images, symbols, and representations become more influential than the realities they supposedly reflect. The political project of the ruling party gradually evolved into a highly sophisticated political brand. The Chief Minister's simple cotton saree, hawai slippers, and carefully cultivated image of personal austerity became powerful political symbols — what Baudrillard would describe as simulacra.

The party's legitimacy increasingly rested not upon a coherent ideological framework but upon an elaborate symbolic system. Programmes such as "Didir Doot" and "Sarasori Mukhyamantri" projected an image of direct citizen engagement that often appeared to function as a substitute for

deeper institutional reform. In Baudrillard's terms, "the map precedes the territory"; representation comes to dominate reality itself. The digital image of accessibility and responsiveness often overshadowed the actual performance of institutions on the ground. As a result, the political leadership increasingly became captive to its own narrative. Surrounded by favourable surveys, carefully curated social-media campaigns, and professionally managed messaging, it became difficult to perceive the growing dissatisfaction accumulating at the grassroots level. The attempt to construct a personality-centred political order around the image of an incorruptible leader also produced a paradox. While the symbolic narrative emphasized integrity and moral leadership, public discourse increasingly became dominated by allegations of corruption, patronage, and ethical decline. This contradiction gradually eroded the credibility of the political image that had been so carefully cultivated.

It is equally important to recognize that the party contained many capable local leaders and dedicated grassroots workers who enjoyed genuine public acceptance. Yet within a highly centralized and image-driven political structure, many such individuals found limited opportunities to develop independent political identities. The tensions that became visible after electoral setbacks may therefore be interpreted not merely as struggles for power but also as the release of frustrations accumulated within an excessively centralized political system. Guy Debord's concept of the "spectacle" offers another valuable lens through which to understand this phenomenon. In his influential work *The Society of the Spectacle*, Debord argued that modern capitalist societies increasingly replace authentic social relations with images and performances. Public life becomes dominated by spectacles that captivate attention while diverting focus from deeper structural issues.

Many aspects of contemporary political culture in Bengal reflected this tendency. Large-scale festivals, carnivals, cultural programmes, public celebrations, televised events, and highly choreographed political performances contributed to the creation of a continuous political spectacle. The extensive involvement of celebrities and entertainment figures further blurred the distinction between governance and performance. While such spectacles generated visibility and emotional engagement, they could not permanently address concerns relating to employment, industrial growth, educational opportunities, or economic mobility.

Debord warned that spectacles possess the power to enchant, but not the capacity to re-

solve material contradictions. When ordinary citizens observed that grand celebrations and symbolic performances could not secure stable employment for their children or improve their long-term economic prospects, the limits of spectacle became increasingly apparent. Disillusionment followed. The gap between image and lived reality gradually widened until it could no longer be concealed. Louis Althusser's theory of the Ideological State Apparatus (ISA) provides yet another framework for understanding this development. Althusser distinguished between the Repressive State Apparatus, which includes institutions such as the police and bureaucracy, and the Ideological State Apparatus, which encompasses culture, education, media, religion, and other mechanisms that shape public consciousness.

The ruling establishment demonstrated considerable effectiveness in utilizing elements of the ideological apparatus. Grants to local clubs, state involvement in religious and cultural festivals, public recognition of artists and intellectuals, and extensive cultural patronage contributed to the construction of a powerful cultural consensus. Such initiatives enabled the government to establish a form of cultural hegemony extending beyond conventional electoral politics.

However, Althusser also emphasized that ideological structures cannot indefinitely compensate for weaknesses within the material or economic base. If employment opportunities remain inadequate, industrial growth stagnates, and economic insecurity persists, ideological influence eventually loses its effectiveness. Material realities begin to challenge symbolic narratives. When this occurs, carefully constructed ideological frameworks can unravel with surprising speed. Michel Foucault's concept of biopolitics adds another dimension to this analysis. Foucault argued that modern states increasingly exercise power not merely through laws and coercion but through the management of life itself. Welfare programmes, healthcare systems, demographic policies, and social-security measures become mechanisms through which states shape and regulate populations. Schemes such as Lakshmir Bhandar, Swasthya Sathi, and free-ration programmes can be interpreted through this framework. These initiatives undoubtedly provided significant relief to large sections of the population and addressed immediate social needs. Yet critics have argued that welfare alone cannot substitute for sustainable economic empowerment. Citizens aspire not merely to survive but to flourish. They seek employment, dignity, autonomy, and opportunities for self-realization.

Foucault's analysis reminds us that wherever power exists, resistance also emerges. Welfare measures may generate support, but they do not eliminate aspirations for economic independence and social mobility. Over time, many citizens began to ask whether temporary assistance could replace long-term structural transformation. The grow-

ing prominence of this question contributed to the erosion of political legitimacy. Some scholars have also drawn attention to what later theorists describe as "thanatopolitics" — the politics surrounding violence, exclusion, and the state's capacity to determine who is protected and who remains vulnerable. Allegations of political violence, intimidation, and electoral conflict have periodically surfaced in Bengal's political discourse. Whether real, exaggerated, or contested, such perceptions can significantly damage the moral authority of a government. When citizens begin to associate power with fear rather than legitimacy, the foundations of democratic consent become increasingly fragile.

Ultimately, this political reversal demonstrates the enduring relevance of certain fundamental realities that transcend postmodern scepticism. Although postmodern theorists have often questioned the existence of universal truths and grand narratives, democratic politics continues to revolve around issues that remain stubbornly real: employment, livelihood, economic security, institutional integrity, public accountability, and human dignity. Media images, political branding, and sophisticated public-relations campaigns can influence public perception for significant periods. They can shape narratives, manage crises, and mobilize support. Yet they cannot permanently replace genuine engagement with the everyday concerns of citizens. Electoral strategy can assist political success, but it cannot substitute for authentic social connection and effective governance.

The experience of Bengal therefore offers a broader lesson for contemporary democracies across the world. Political systems increasingly operate within environments saturated by digital media, algorithmic communication, and image management. In such circumstances, the temptation to privilege symbolism over substance becomes particularly strong. Yet history repeatedly demonstrates that when symbols become detached from reality, reality eventually reasserts itself. The collapse of a political simulation is therefore not merely the defeat of a party. It is a reminder that democratic legitimacy ultimately rests upon lived experience rather than constructed images. When representation seeks to consume reality, reality eventually returns with transformative force. Citizens may tolerate illusion for a time, but they ultimately judge governments through the tangible conditions of their lives. In that sense, the political developments in Bengal represent not simply an electoral event but a profound lesson in the limits of hyperreality and the enduring power of social reality itself.

The writer is a Faculty Member of Bengali at Rabindranath Thakur Vishwavidyalaya, Hojai.

The mirage of Pax Sinica and Pax Americana: How India's strategic autonomy paves the way for a multipolar world

The strategic rivalry between the United States and China is often framed as a contest between Pax Americana and a potential Pax Sinica. Yet, both concepts are misleading. Despite accretion in China's economic and geopolitical influence, China is as yet neither capable nor willing to underwrite a global order of the type sustained until recently by the United States (US) post World War II. The US today retains the capacity but has lost its commitment to shoulder the burden of leadership in the global order that it once curated.

Myth of Pax Sinica

Pax Sinica is a chimaera. Beijing is still a rising power, not quite the equal of the US. But it has enough power to deny the US the satisfaction of creating a unipolar world. China is a global economic power now but still far from being a global military power. Its military power is concentrated on its periphery, where it seeks to deter or limit the extent of US presence and power. China frames its national vision in the terminology of the global developmental agenda, including the UN SDGs and even the UN Charter, to burnish its claims to equality and peaceful co-existence. Yet, it is not willing to take on the enormous economic and military burden that

goes with a leadership role. China seeks selective leadership without universal obligations. China is not an evangelical power. It prioritises its national interests over wider principles.

China attempts to run with the hare and hunt with the hound. China is both a status quo power as well as an anti-status quo power. It is status quo to the extent that it has no desire to genuinely reform the UN Security Council, of which it is a privileged veto-wielding member. It is anti-status quo to the extent that it resents the agenda setting by the Anglo-Saxon powers. It, therefore, endeavours to create parallel global structures and institutions that are more in tune with China-centric objectives.

Limits of Pax Americana

The US has contributed to the weakening of several multilateral institutions. China is simply filling the vacuum. This kind of opportunism is to be expected from a rising hegemon. All rising hegemonies are opportunistic in accordance with the theory of structural realism. Established powers like the US are also opportunistic and seek exceptionalism. In fact, the stronger the power, the less the resistance to its opportunistic actions outside the four corners of the normative rules-based international order (RBIO).

Political contradictions in the West, between the liberals and conservatives, between the leftists and rightists, between the internationalists and isolationists and between governments and NGOs, all these have provided Beijing with new space to advance its interests. These have allowed China to claim the mantle of championing free trade, climate action, connectivity and infrastructure.

China's narrative of responsible stewardship finds resonance in the Global South because it speaks the language of the masses even as it pursues its own distinctly national interests. It uses economic and soft power alongside military coercion when necessary to elicit appropriate responses from others, including on maintaining the "One China" policy.

The US has never learnt this art of couching its national objectives in acceptable language. If it did, the world could genuinely benefit more from a democratic America than from a communist China. Right now, this is not a popular view.

Beijing generally approaches policy with long-term strategic planning. It has a political design — that of making China and its way of development and governance the symbol of a rules-based international order.

Could Usha Vance, a practising Hindu, be next US First Lady?

United States Vice President JD Vance is widely regarded as the heir apparent to US President Donald Trump. Vance has few rivals in the MAGA (Make America Great Again) universe. Cuban-origin Secretary of State Marco Rubio doesn't have Vance's appeal in the deep red states where the next US presidential elections will be won or lost. Rubio's central role in the US attack on Venezuela has not endeared him to America's large Hispanic, Spanish-speaking population. Congressional mid-term elections in 2026 will show which way the political wind is blowing. Trump has often hinted that Vance could be his successor to lead the Republican party into the 2028 presidential election. He has reluctantly abandoned his own bid for a third term which the US Constitution expressly prohibits. Trump knows time is running out on his presidency. The US Supreme Court will soon deliver its verdict on whether Washington's trade tariffs are lawful. A defeat for Trump in America's highest court could tar the remaining three years of his term. By January 2027, attention will anyway swing away from 80-year-old Trump to the 2028 presidential primaries. Vance is likely to be the Republican nominee but a Vance win is not guaranteed. Recent opinion polls show the Republican party could lose the House of Representatives to the Democrats in 2026. The Senate is likely to stay with the Republicans, albeit with a reduced majority. Vance himself is not popular with the mainstream Republican party. His background as a southern hillbilly jars with many Americans. Though the US has always had a racist core, that core has been mainstreamed by Trump and his White supremacist followers. Vance belongs to this demographic but he is also married to Indian-origin Usha Chilukuri, whose family migrated to the US from Andhra Pradesh in the 1980s. Usha has a bachelor's degree in history from Yale University, a master's degree in philosophy from Cambridge University and a doctorate from Yale Law School. She had a stellar legal practice till 2024 when she resigned to, as she said, "care for our family". Usha is a practising Hindu but her three mixed-race children are being brought up as Christians. They attend church regularly. Usha herself has resisted pressure to convert to Christianity. Vance was an evangelical before converting to Catholicism. Social media abuse directed at Usha has peaked ever since it became clear that she could be America's next First Lady if Vance succeeds Trump as president in the 2028 presidential election. It is a measure of rising animosity against Indians in MAGA-led America that the country was comfortable with a Black First Lady in Michelle Obama but not a Hindu First Lady. This is a consequence of the Christian nationalism that has fuelled the MAGA movement. Charlie Kirk, who was assassinated last year, led the movement. Nick Fuentes has taken

over his mantle but has even more incendiary views. He is anti-Jew and anti-Islam and a vocal admirer of Adolf Hitler. American politics is now a MAGA snake-pit with hate and abuse proliferating on social media, from X and Instagram to YouTube and podcasts. If he wins the Republican primaries as the party's presidential nominee in 2028, Vance's politics will come under intense scrutiny. Vance has frequently decried growing Islamic influence in Western Europe. Like Trump, Vance is splenetically anti-immigration. But unlike Trump and other members of the Trump cabinet, he does not vent his spleen against legal migrants. He reserves that for unchecked immigration into Europe. At his landmark address at the 2025 Munich Security Conference in February 2025, Vance warned an audience of top European political and military leaders: "Free speech, I fear, is in retreat." Vance was referring to censorship of conservative and religious speech across Western Europe but especially in Britain. Like Trump too, Vance has been strongly critical of London Mayor Sadiq Khan whom he blames for allowing Islamists free rein in the British capital.

Dr. Meernanda barthakur honoured with top grade of prasar bharati

Guwahati : Eminent Sattriya danseuse, Dr.



Meernanda Barthakur, is honored with the highest acknowledgement (Top grade) of Prasar Bharati. From being the recipient of the prestigious "Ustad Bismillah Khan" award for the year 2008-2009, she has received numerous accolades over the years for her excellence in the field. She continues to offer her service to the upliftment of Sattriya and generally Indian 'Nriya-Natya' through her establishment "Muktimgal".

INSV Kaundinya: India's push towards maritime decolonisation, reclaiming civilisational legacy

Indian Navy flagged off the maiden overseas voyage of INSV Kaundinya from Porbandar on India's western coast along the Arabian Sea. The expedition was formally flagged off by Vice Admiral Krishna Swaminathan in the presence of senior naval officials and the Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to India, Issa Saleh Alshibani. Built entirely using ancient Indian stitched-plank shipbuilding techniques and natural materials, Kaundinya is the Indian Navy's first vessel constructed through indigenous methods believed to have been used centuries ago. Kaundinya's journey from India's western coast to Oman is far more than a naval expedition. It is a conscious effort to reclaim India's maritime past from the silences and distortions of colonial historiography and to restore confidence in indigenous knowledge systems that once sustained transoceanic connectivity across the Indian Ocean, demonstrating that India's maritime history is not derivative, as colonial narratives suggest, but possesses its own agency and technological sophistication. This voyage also affirms that India was never "sea-blind"; centuries of shipbuilding, navigation, and oceanic trade attest to a civilisation deeply connected with the maritime world.

Reconnecting with India's Maritime Legacy

Described by defence officials as a "living ocean voyage", the expedition reconnects contemporary India with historic sea routes that linked the subcontinent with the Arabian Peninsula long before European colonisation. In doing so, it challenges the colonial portrayal of India as a land-bound civilisation lacking maritime vision, technological capability, and strategic engagement with the seas. By employing stitched-plank construction, coconut coir ropes, non-metal fastening techniques, and monsoon-based navigation, the voyage validates indigenous maritime knowledge through performance. It collapses the colonial binary between the "modern" and the "primitive" and demonstrates continuity rather than rupture in India's technological traditions. Sailing an ancient-style vessel across open seas restores confidence in non-Western technological capabilities and challenges the assumption that maritime modernity is exclusively a Western achievement. Its voyage represents decolonisation not just as a theoretical critique but as a lived and operational prac-

tice, actively overcoming the mental slavery imposed by centuries of colonial domination. Sanjeev Sanyal, a member of the Economic Advisory Council to the Prime Minister, remarked: "Beyond the technical experiment, the Kaundinya project carries a broader historical objective. Indian history has often been portrayed as passive, overlooking centuries of maritime activity, trade, and exploration. Indians were not sitting around waiting for conquerors to give them civilisation. We had adventurers, mercenaries, traders, and sailors. Long before the Phoenicians, Indians were sailing across the Indian Ocean." The choice of Oman as the destination is historically and politically significant. India's maritime engagement with Oman reflects centuries of trade, cultural exchange, and civilisational interaction that were fundamentally non-colonial in character. Unlike European naval voyages designed for conquest and extraction, Indian maritime activity historically emphasised exchange, reciprocity, and coexistence. The presence of senior Indian naval officials and the Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman at the flag-off ceremony underscores the enduring relevance of this shared maritime heritage. In this sense, the voyage aligns with post-colonial international relations by privileging recognition and mutual respect over coercion.

Decolonisation in Motion

Decolonisation, however, cannot be achieved solely through rewriting history or critiquing Eurocentric knowledge frameworks. It must not be limited to epistemology and ontology alone; it must also involve the revival of practices that colonial rule marginalised or erased. The Kaundinya voyage marks a shift from intellectual critique to embodied action. Unlike museums or symbolic commemorations, this project sails real waters, confronts real risks, and relies on historically grounded navigational practices. Global maritime history has long been framed through a Eurocentric lens that centres the European "Age of Discovery", portrays naval power as a Western monopoly, and presents Indian Ocean history as beginning with Portuguese arrival. Such narratives systematically marginalised Asian maritime agency and reduced India's seafaring past to a derivative role. INSV Kaundinya directly disrupts this epistemic hierarchy. Measuring approximately

65 feet in length and constructed entirely without metal nails using ancient Indian stitched-plank shipbuilding techniques, the vessel draws inspiration from historical depictions of Indian ships found in texts and archaeological records, blending traditional craftsmanship with contemporary naval expertise. Prime Minister Narendra Modi, on X, lauded the voyage, noting, "Wonderful to see that INSV Kaundinya is embarking on her maiden voyage from Porbandar to Muscat, Oman. Built using the ancient Indian stitched-ship technique, this ship highlights India's rich maritime tradition." With a crew of eighteen sailors, the vessel is expected to cover approximately 1,400 kilometres over fifteen days, retracing maritime corridors that once enabled sustained civilisational contact between India and the Arab world. Colonial historiography consistently portrayed India as maritime-blind, lacking shipbuilding capacity, navigational expertise, and seafaring confidence. This narrative obscured the reality that long before European colonial expansion, India was deeply embedded in maritime networks linking West Asia, East Africa, Southeast Asia, and East Asia. These connections were commercial, cultural, religious, and technological, forming the interconnected Indian Ocean world. The Kaundinya voyage challenges the assumption that India's maritime engagement depended on Western technology and demonstrates that India's historical interactions with other regions were civilisational rather than imperial. Kaundinya represents a fundamentally different maritime ethic rooted in connectivity, exchange, and mutual recognition. It reconnects past and present, heritage and strategy, memory and motion, rejecting the colonial rupture that framed India's past as obsolete. The voyage also reinforces India's identity as a cultural civilisational state whose historical engagement with the world was inclusive rather than coercive. From the Arab world to Southeast and East Asia, India's outreach was based on cultural interaction rather than political domination, a distinction that continues to enhance India's soft power and global appeal. This non-domination approach has earned India admiration worldwide, particularly in East Asia.

Green Meadows Tennis Academy inaugurated at Baghorbori

Guwahati : Green Meadows Tennis Academy was inaugurated at Green Meadows School, Baghorbori, Guwahati on June 4, 2026 with a colourful opening ceremony.

The academy was inaugurated by former state tennis champion and president of the Guwahati Tennis Association, Kalyan Kumar Das, in the pres-



ence of an august gathering. Speaking on the occasion, Das appreciated the initiative taken by the school authority to promote tennis among young players. He said it was encouraging to see more tennis academies being estab-

lished in Guwahati and expressed hope that the new facility would help nurture emerging talent in the sport.

Among those present were Green Meadows School director Farida Alam, principal Mridusmita Talukdar and vice principal Zaki Tanveer Alam.

The academy is expected to provide aspiring tennis players under the supervision of Sahidul Alam and Rijuwana Begum with an opportunity to receive training and develop their skills in a structured environment.

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were civilisational rather than imperial. Kaundinya represents a fundamentally different maritime ethic rooted in connectivity, exchange, and mutual recognition. It reconnects past and present, heritage and strategy, memory and motion, rejecting the colonial rupture that framed India's past as obsolete. The voyage also reinforces India's identity as a cultural civilisational state whose historical engagement with the world was inclusive rather than coercive. From the Arab world to Southeast and East Asia, India's outreach was based on cultural interaction rather than political domination, a distinction that continues to enhance India's soft power and global appeal. This non-domination approach has earned India admiration worldwide, particularly in East Asia. While India may not have the deep financial resources of countries like China, it wields a unique civilisational influence that stems from culture, shared values, historical engagement, and people-to-people connections. Unlike China, whose "civilisational state" is primarily political, India's identity as a cultural civilisational state emphasises non-domination, cooperation, and enduring civilisational linkages.

Restoring Civilisational Maritime Agency

The revival of ancient maritime connectivity should not be dismissed as nostalgia. Initiatives such as the Kaundinya voyage represent decolonisation in practice, where history is reclaimed through action, indigenous knowledge is validated through experience, and civilisational memory is embedded into contemporary diplomacy. While ship voyages alone cannot restore lost networks, they serve as powerful reminders that Indian Ocean connectivity is not a colonial inheritance but a shared historical legacy that predates European colonisation and intervention. Ultimately, the voyage of INSV Kaundinya represents decolonisation in motion, where history is not merely rewritten but re-sailed. By reclaiming indigenous maritime knowledge, restoring historical continuity, and re-centring India's agency in the Indian Ocean world, the voyage transforms decolonisation from an abstract critique into a lived navigational practice. Every nautical mile covered by Kaundinya contributes to dismantling colonial historiography. Yet meaningful decolonisation also requires sustained civilisational re-engagement. While India is a sovereign and independent nation, reviving the civilisational soul of Bharat demands deeper engagement with the regions that historically shaped its maritime consciousness—West Asia, East Africa, Southeast Asia, and East Asia. It is in these spaces that India historically expressed itself through trade, culture, and navigation, long before Western domination disrupted organic networks of exchange. Reviving India's maritime linkages with West Asia, Southeast Asia, and East Asia is essential not only for historical justice but also for redefining India's civilisational role in the contemporary Indo-Pacific. Such engagement is therefore not only a strategic imperative for preserving India's strategic autonomy and a civilisational necessity that allows India to rediscover its maritime self and engage the Indo-Pacific on its own historical and cultural terms but also a crucial driver in India's development journey towards becoming a fully developed economy.

Imran Khurshid

PM Modi hold talks with Venezuela Acting President Delcy Rodríguez

To expand Strategic Bilateral Cooperation across a wide range of sectors

New Delhi: Prime Minister Narendra Modi is holding talks with Venezuela's acting President Delcy Rodríguez in New Delhi in a significant diplomatic engagement that reflects the growing importance of India-Venezuela relations and the shared commitment of both countries to deepen cooperation across a wide

range of sectors. The discussions are expected to involve the full spectrum of India-Venezuela relations and explore avenues for further cooperation in areas of energy security, trade and investment, pharmaceuticals, health care, transportation and renewable energy. The high-level meeting comes as both nations seek to build upon their long-standing partnership and identify new opportunities for collaboration in an increasingly interconnected global environment. Delcy Rodríguez arrived in New Delhi on a five-day visit to India and is accompanied by a high-level delegation comprising the Ministers of Foreign Affairs, Economy and Finance, Science and Technology and Transportation. The visit is being viewed as an important step in strengthening bilateral ties and enhancing engagement between the two countries across diverse sectors that are vital for economic growth, technological advancement and sustainable development. The presence of senior ministers in the Venezuelan delegation underlines the importance attached to the visit and demonstrates the intent of both governments to pursue a comprehensive agenda aimed at expanding cooperation in multiple domains. During the talks, special attention is expected to be given to energy security, which has emerged as one of the most significant pillars of India-Venezuela relations. Venezuela possesses some of the world's largest oil reserves and has historically been an important energy partner for India. The two countries have maintained strong cooperation in the energy sector over the years, and discussions are likely to focus on further enhancing collaboration in oil and energy-related projects. India's growing energy requirements and Venezuela's vast hydrocarbon resources create a natural basis for partnership, making energy cooperation a key area of mutual interest. The discussions are expected to review existing projects and explore opportunities for expanding engagement in exploration, production, refining and related sectors. Trade and investment will also feature prominently in the discussions between Prime Minister Modi and acting President Rodríguez. Both countries have expressed interest in increasing bilateral trade and creating new opportunities for businesses and investors. Economic cooperation has the potential to serve as a major driver of bilateral relations, and efforts are likely to focus on facilitating greater market access, encouraging business partnerships and promoting investments in strategic sectors. As emerging economies with complementary strengths, India and Venezuela can benefit from enhanced commercial engagement, contributing to economic growth and prosperity in both countries. The leaders are expected to discuss ways to remove barriers to trade and create a more conducive environment for investment and business collaboration. Pharmaceuticals and health care represent another important area of cooperation that is expected to receive considerable attention during the talks. India has established itself as a global leader in the pharmaceutical sector and is known for producing high-quality and affordable medicines. Venezuela has shown interest in strengthening cooperation in health care and pharmaceuticals, and the discussions may explore opportunities for greater collaboration in the supply of medicines, medical technologies and health care services. Enhanced cooperation in this sector could contribute significantly to improving access to affordable health-care solutions and strengthening public health systems. The exchange of expertise and technology in pharmaceuticals and health care is expected to create mutually beneficial outcomes and further reinforce bilateral relations. Transportation is another sector identified as an area for future cooperation. Efficient transportation systems play a crucial role in supporting economic ac-



and expanding economic ties, India and Venezuela have built a relationship characterized by mutual respect and shared objectives. High-level visits such as that of acting President Rodríguez provide an important platform for reviewing progress, addressing challenges and charting a course for future cooperation. The discussions in New Delhi are expected to contribute to greater understanding and coordination on issues of mutual interest while reinforcing the foundations of a strong and enduring partnership. The visit also highlights the importance of diplomatic engagement in creating new opportunities for collaboration and strengthening people-to-people connections. Bilateral relations are not limited to government-to-government interactions but also encompass exchanges involving businesses, researchers, professionals and institutions. Enhanced cooperation in sectors such as science and technology, health care, education and industry can create lasting benefits and contribute to stronger ties between the people of both countries. The presence of ministers responsible for economy and finance, science and technology, transportation and foreign affairs reflects the comprehensive nature of the agenda and the desire to pursue cooperation across multiple sectors. As Prime Minister Narendra Modi and acting President Delcy Rodríguez hold discussions in New Delhi, expectations are high that the visit will open new avenues for collaboration and provide fresh momentum to India-Venezuela relations. The broad agenda covering energy security, trade and investment, pharmaceuticals, health care, transportation and renewable energy demonstrates the wide scope of cooperation that both countries seek to achieve. The visit is taking place against the backdrop of growing economic engagement and shared aspirations for development and prosperity. By focusing on practical areas of cooperation and exploring opportunities for partnership, the two sides aim to strengthen bilateral ties and create a framework for sustained collaboration in the years ahead. The discussions, delegation visits and sectoral engagements are expected to contribute to deeper understanding, stronger economic links and enhanced cooperation across a range of strategic sectors. With India and Venezuela committed to building on existing achievements and exploring new opportunities, the visit of acting President Delcy Rodríguez is expected to further strengthen bilateral ties and deepen engagement between the two countries across diverse sectors, laying the groundwork for an even more dynamic and mutually beneficial partnership in the future.

nectivity and economic efficiency. The discussions may also examine possibilities for partnerships involving transportation projects and technology transfer, reflecting the growing scope of India-Venezuela engagement. Renewable energy is expected to emerge as a key topic during the bilateral talks as countries around the world accelerate efforts to transition towards cleaner and more sustainable energy sources. India has made significant progress in renewable energy development and has emerged as a global leader in areas such as solar and wind energy. Venezuela's interest in exploring renewable energy opportunities aligns with broader international efforts to promote sustainable development and address climate-related challenges. The discussions are likely to focus on potential cooperation in renewable energy projects, technology sharing and capacity building. Such collaboration could contribute to the diversification of energy sources and support sustainable economic growth in both countries. According to the External Affairs Ministry, the Venezuelan delegation will visit several sites connected with energy, pharmaceuticals and auto sectors to gain insights into India's technological and industrial capabilities and to explore opportunities for collaboration. These visits are expected to provide Venezuelan officials with first-hand exposure to India's achievements in industrial development, innovation and technological advancement. The delegation's interactions with industry representatives and experts are likely to facilitate a deeper understanding of India's capabilities and help identify areas where collaboration can be expanded. Such engagements play an important role in strengthening economic and technological ties by creating opportunities for knowledge exchange and partnership development. The visits to energy-related facilities are expected to showcase India's expertise in the sector and highlight potential areas for cooperation. Similarly, the delegation's engagement with pharmaceutical institutions and companies will offer insights into India's globally recognized pharmaceutical industry and its capacity for innovation and large-scale production. Visits to auto sector facilities are likely to demonstrate India's manufacturing strengths and technological capabilities, creating possibilities for future collaboration in automotive and transportation-related industries. These sector-specific interactions complement the broader political and diplomatic discussions taking place at the highest level and contribute to building a comprehensive framework for cooperation. India has been an important partner of Venezuela in the areas of energy and investment, and this partnership continues to evolve in response to changing economic and strategic realities. Indian public sector undertakings have made significant investments in Venezuela in the energy sector and remain keen to explore opportunities for further enhancing their presence. The investments made by Indian companies reflect confidence in the long-term potential of cooperation between the two countries and underscore the importance of energy as a cornerstone of bilateral relations. Continued engagement in the energy sector is expected to generate economic benefits and strengthen strategic ties. The willingness of Indian public sector enterprises to explore additional opportunities demonstrates the growing depth of economic cooperation and the shared interest in expanding mutually beneficial partnerships. The ongoing dialogue between India and Venezuela reflects a broader commitment to strengthening South-South cooperation and fostering partnerships among developing nations. Both countries share common interests in promoting inclusive growth, sustainable development and international cooperation. Through regular diplomatic engage-

ment and expanding economic ties, India and Venezuela have built a relationship characterized by mutual respect and shared objectives. High-level visits such as that of acting President Rodríguez provide an important platform for reviewing progress, addressing challenges and charting a course for future cooperation. The discussions in New Delhi are expected to contribute to greater understanding and coordination on issues of mutual interest while reinforcing the foundations of a strong and enduring partnership. The visit also highlights the importance of diplomatic engagement in creating new opportunities for collaboration and strengthening people-to-people connections. Bilateral relations are not limited to government-to-government interactions but also encompass exchanges involving businesses, researchers, professionals and institutions. Enhanced cooperation in sectors such as science and technology, health care, education and industry can create lasting benefits and contribute to stronger ties between the people of both countries. The presence of ministers responsible for economy and finance, science and technology, transportation and foreign affairs reflects the comprehensive nature of the agenda and the desire to pursue cooperation across multiple sectors. As Prime Minister Narendra Modi and acting President Delcy Rodríguez hold discussions in New Delhi, expectations are high that the visit will open new avenues for collaboration and provide fresh momentum to India-Venezuela relations. The broad agenda covering energy security, trade and investment, pharmaceuticals, health care, transportation and renewable energy demonstrates the wide scope of cooperation that both countries seek to achieve. The visit is taking place against the backdrop of growing economic engagement and shared aspirations for development and prosperity. By focusing on practical areas of cooperation and exploring opportunities for partnership, the two sides aim to strengthen bilateral ties and create a framework for sustained collaboration in the years ahead. The discussions, delegation visits and sectoral engagements are expected to contribute to deeper understanding, stronger economic links and enhanced cooperation across a range of strategic sectors. With India and Venezuela committed to building on existing achievements and exploring new opportunities, the visit of acting President Delcy Rodríguez is expected to further strengthen bilateral ties and deepen engagement between the two countries across diverse sectors, laying the groundwork for an even more dynamic and mutually beneficial partnership in the future.

New Delhi: The Investor Education and Protection Fund Authority (IEPFA), functioning under the Ministry of Corporate Affairs, in collaboration with the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI), is set to organise a one-day Investor Camp in Bhopal, as part of a nationwide initiative aimed at strengthening investor awareness, financial literacy, and investor protection across the country. Scheduled to be held at Vrindavan Garden, Hoshangabad Road (NH-12), Aryan Wings Colony, Shri Rameshwaram, Bagmugalia, Misrod, Bhopal, the camp is designed to serve as a comprehensive one-stop platform where investors can seek assistance, resolve grievances, and access a range of services related to unclaimed dividends, shares, and investor claims. The initiative reflects the growing emphasis of regulatory authorities on ensuring that investors are able to reclaim their rightful financial assets through a transparent, efficient, and accessible process while enhancing confidence in India's financial and capital markets ecosystem. The Investor Camp is expected to bring together investors, companies, Registrars and Transfer Agents (RTAs), and regulatory representatives under one roof, thereby creating a direct interface between stakeholders and eliminating the need for intermediaries in addressing investor concerns. A major objective of the camp is to facilitate the recovery of unclaimed dividends and shares that have remained unclaimed for six to seven years and are eligible for transfer to the Investor Education and Protection Fund. Many investors across the country remain unaware of their dormant investments, forgotten shareholdings, or pending dividend claims, often due to changes in address, loss of documentation, incomplete Know Your Customer (KYC) records, or lack of awareness regarding claim procedures. Through this initiative, IEPFA seeks to bridge this information gap and provide practical assistance to investors who may otherwise find the claim process difficult or time-consuming. The camp will offer direct support for filing and tracking claims, guidance on documentation requirements, verification procedures, and assistance in resolving issues that may be delaying the settlement of claims. Investors attending the event will also be able to

India-US Trade Talks

New Delhi: India continues to engage with the United States on trade-related issues as negotiations advance on both the proposed Section 301 tariff measures and a broader bilateral framework agreement aimed at strengthening economic ties between the two countries. The latest developments come after the Office of the United States Trade Representative (USTR) completed investigations into import-related measures involving 60 economies, including India, and proposed the imposition of additional tariffs on imports from these economies under Section 301 of the U.S. Trade Act of 1974. The proposed tariffs, which are separate from duties imposed under Section 232 and certain other product-specific measures, are part of a broader effort by the United States to address concerns related to trade practices and market access. The USTR has also proposed a special arrangement for textile and apparel products under which a specified volume of imports from selected economies could enter the United States at reduced tariff rates, providing a measure of flexibility for exporters in sectors that are highly dependent on the American market. However, the proposed tariff measures have not yet been finalized, and the USTR has initiated a consultative process to gather feedback from stakeholders before taking a final decision. Interested parties have been invited to submit requests to participate in a public hearing until June 22, 2026, while written submissions and supporting evidence can be filed until July 6, 2026. A public hearing has been scheduled for July 7, 2026, during which industry representatives, trade experts, business associations, and other stakeholders will have an opportunity to present their views on the likely impact of the proposed tariffs. Following the hearing and review of the evidence received, the USTR will determine the final scope and structure of the measures. For India, the developments are particularly significant because the United States remains one of its largest trading partners and a key destination for exports spanning sectors such as pharmaceuticals, engineering goods, information technology services, textiles, apparel, gems and jewellery, chemicals, and agricultural products. Any changes in tariff structures could therefore have implications for trade flows, competitiveness, and investment decisions across multiple sectors of the Indian economy. Recognizing the importance of maintaining stable and mutually beneficial trade relations, India has continued to engage with the United States under the ongoing

ing Section 301 proceedings, seeking to address concerns through dialogue and consultation. Indian officials have emphasized the importance of predictable and transparent trade policies that support economic growth, supply chain resilience, and market access for businesses in both countries. Alongside discussions related to Section 301, India and the United States are also pursuing parallel negotiations aimed at finalizing a broader framework agreement that could provide a structured roadmap for expanding bilateral economic cooperation. These negotiations follow the announcement made on February 2, 2026, and the subsequent issuance of a Joint Statement on February 7, 2026, which outlined the commitment of both governments to deepen trade and investment engagement. The proposed framework agreement is expected to address a range of issues including market access, tariff and non-tariff barriers, digital trade, supply chain cooperation, investment facilitation, regulatory transparency, and collaboration in emerging sectors. Trade experts view the parallel negotiation process as an important opportunity to address long-standing issues while creating a foundation for future growth in economic relations between the two countries. The ongoing discussions also reflect the increasing strategic significance of India-U.S. economic ties in a rapidly evolving global trade environment characterized by shifting supply chains, technological transformation, and efforts by major economies to diversify sources of production and strengthen economic resilience. Bilateral trade between India and the United States has expanded significantly over the past decade, with both countries benefiting from increased goods and services exchanges, growing investment flows, and deeper collaboration in sectors ranging from technology and manufacturing to energy and healthcare. Policymakers on both sides have repeatedly highlighted the potential for further expansion in trade volumes and investment partnerships, particularly as businesses seek new opportunities in high-growth markets. Industry stakeholders are closely monitoring the outcome of the Section 301 process, as the final tariff decisions could influence export strategies, sourcing patterns, and business planning. At the same time, many businesses view the broader framework agreement negotiations as a positive signal that both governments remain committed to finding constructive solutions and strengthening commercial ties despite ongoing trade policy challenges.

Investor Drive

avail on-the-spot KYC updates and enrolment services, which are increasingly important in ensuring compliance with regulatory requirements and facilitating seamless access to financial services. By enabling immediate correction and updating of investor records, the camp is expected to reduce procedural bottlenecks and help investors maintain active and compliant investment accounts. In addition to claim-related support, special service centres will be established at the venue to address complaints and grievances on priority. These centres will be staffed by officials and representatives equipped to handle a wide range of investor issues, including discrepancies in share ownership records, delays in dividend payments, difficulties in claim submissions, and concerns related to investor services. The presence of multiple stakeholders at a single location will significantly reduce the time and effort required by investors to coordinate with different agencies and institutions. One of the key highlights of the Investor Camp is the active participation of companies that hold substantial unclaimed dividend accounts. These companies, along with their RTAs, will directly interact with investors, helping them identify and resolve pending issues and facilitating the recovery of unclaimed investments. Such direct engagement is expected to improve transparency, accelerate dispute resolution, and strengthen trust between investors and corporate entities. The camp model adopted by IEPFA promotes a proactive and investor-centric approach by taking services closer to the public rather than requiring investors to navigate multiple channels independently. This grassroots-level outreach is particularly significant for senior citizens, small investors, and individuals residing in semi-urban and rural areas who may face challenges in accessing digital platforms or understanding complex financial procedures. By creating an environment where investors can receive personalised assistance and guidance, the initiative seeks to make the financial system more inclusive and accessible. The Bhopal camp forms an important component of IEPFA's broader nationwide investor outreach and awareness programme, which focuses on educating citizens about

their rights and responsibilities as investors while encouraging informed financial decision-making. Financial literacy has emerged as a critical pillar of economic empowerment, particularly in an era marked by increasing participation in capital markets, digital financial services, and investment products. Through educational initiatives, awareness campaigns, workshops, and collaborative programmes, IEPFA has consistently worked to improve public understanding of financial concepts and investor protection mechanisms. The upcoming camp aligns with these efforts by combining awareness generation with practical service delivery, thereby ensuring that investors not only receive information but also obtain tangible support in resolving their concerns. The initiative also supports the broader objective of strengthening transparency and accountability within the financial ecosystem. By simplifying the process of reclaiming unclaimed investments and ensuring that investors have access to efficient grievance redressal mechanisms, the programme contributes to greater confidence in financial institutions and regulatory frameworks. Investors attending the camp will have the opportunity to interact directly with experts and officials who can explain procedures, clarify doubts, and guide them through the necessary steps required for successful claim resolution. This direct engagement is expected to reduce confusion, minimise errors in documentation, and improve overall investor experience. Interested investors have been encouraged to register for the camp through the official IEPFA portal, enabling organisers to facilitate smooth participation and service delivery. The registration process forms part of a broader effort to ensure that eligible investors can benefit from the initiative and receive timely assistance. The Investor Camp also highlights the strong collaboration between IEPFA and SEBI in promoting investor welfare and protection. As India's capital markets continue to expand and attract a growing number of retail investors, regulatory authorities are placing increasing emphasis on ensuring that investor rights remain protected and that support mechanisms are easily accessible.

Warm compress, cold packs, Epsom salt bath: How to do 6 home therapies properly according to physios

If you've just had haemorrhoid surgery or are living with a boba-sized stye on your eyelid, you might have been advised by the doctor to prep a home therapy such as a sitz bath or warm compress. Nothing to it, right? Until you realise you don't have a bathtub at home – or that the only towel you have (other than your bath towel) is a quick-drying sports one. Even those cold gel packs for sprains and hot water bottles for menstrual cramps sound simple enough to execute – until you do. How hot should the water be? How long do you leave it on for? Find out from SingHealth Polyclinics' senior

physiotherapist, Tan Sin Thien, and Allium Healthcare's principal physiotherapist, Marcus Tow, on what to do when you need a home therapy for quick relief.



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1. SITZ BATH

What it's for: Conditions affecting the pelvic or perineal area, such as haemorrhoids, post-surgical recovery or discomfort from prolonged sitting. "It can help promote circulation, ease discomfort and support hygiene," said Tow.

How to prep: Use a bathtub if you have one, or get a plastic basin wide and stable enough to sit comfortably in without feeling cramped, said Tow. "Ideally, the basin should allow the hips and buttocks to be submerged without requiring excessive bending or strain." For seniors or those with mobility issues, he recommended using a toilet-mounted sitz bath instead. A sitz bath uses just warm water (unless advised by the doctor), around 37°C to 40°C, to soothe the area. "Test with your wrist or elbow; the water should feel warm but never hot or uncomfortable," said Tow. "The water only needs to be deep enough to cover the affected area. Generally, 8cm to 10 cm is sufficient."

Duration and frequency: 10 to 15 minutes per session, two or three times a day, or after bowel movements if advised by the doctor.

2. WARM COMPRESS

What it's for: Muscle tightness, joint stiffness, chronic aches or non-acute musculoskeletal pain. "We often use heat to help relax muscles and improve blood circulation, which prepares the joints for movement or stretching," said Tow, but not for fresh injuries, where there are active swelling and inflammation. On styes, a warm compress helps to soften the hardened oil blocking the affected eyelid gland, and encourage the stye to open and drain naturally. The warmth can also reduce the pain and irritation.

How to prep: Submerge a clean towel into a tub of warm water about 40°C to 45°C, wring until damp (not dripping wet) and fold into a size that fits the treatment area. "For broader areas like the lower back, fold the towel flat," suggested Tow. "For joints like the knee or neck, rolling or folding the towel into a strip can help contour around the area better." Tow recommended using a terry towel over a quick-drying one because it retains heat and moisture better to maintain a consistent temperature for longer. "Sports towels can work in a pinch but they tend to lose heat faster and may not hold enough moisture."

Duration and frequency: Rewarm the towel and apply to the area every 3 to 5 minutes – depending on how quickly the towel cools. Keep this up for 10 to 20 minutes per session.

3. EPSOM SALT BATH

What it's for: Muscle soreness and tension, joint stiffness, minor sprains and bruises, inflammatory conditions like arthritis, ingrown toenails, dry or irritated skin, and for general relaxation, said Tow. Epsom salt is magnesium sulphate, a naturally occurring compound of magnesium, sulphur and oxygen, first identified in the mineral springs of the United Kingdom's Epsom, Surrey, in 1618. When dissolved in warm water, Epsom salt releases magnesium and sulfate ions, which are hypothesised to be transported into the body through the skin. Magnesium and sulfate supposedly help muscles to function, reduce inflammation and aid in joint and tissue healing, said Tow. But take it with a pinch of salt because the science surrounding transdermal absorption is still evolving. "A small University of Birmingham study found that 12-minute daily soaks raised

blood magnesium levels, though no large, randomised controlled trial has yet confirmed clinically meaningful transdermal absorption," said Tow. "Much of the benefits likely comes from the warm water promoting relaxation, improving circulation and easing muscle tension." But certain groups should consult their doctor before dipping into Epsom salt baths, he said, including those with kidney disease, heart failure or severe cardiovascular disease, uncontrolled low blood pressure, open wounds, burns or active skin infection, pregnancy, or diabetes with peripheral neuropathy.

ance," said Tan. "For best results and safety, adjust based on comfort level and any specific advice provided by your healthcare professional."

5. HOT WATER BOTTLE

What it's for: Muscle tension, muscle spasms, joint stiffness, chronic low back pain and menstrual cramps. "It may also be advised during the later stages of injury recovery, once swelling and acute inflammation have subsided," said Tan. Heat helps to relax tightened or overworked muscles, she continued, while increasing blood flow to bring oxygen and nutrients to support muscle recovery. "Together, these effects help reduce muscle spasms, ease cramping sensations and relieve discomfort." How to prep: Use only hot water bottles made from heat resistant materials and designed to safely retain hot water for extended periods, said Tan. No regular water bottles as they may deform, leak or worse, burst when filled with hot water. The hot water bottle should only be filled to about two thirds full, said Tan, to allow the bottle to remain flexible against your body – all while reducing its internal pressure that could cause leaks or seal failure.

The water should be hot but not boiling, Tan advised. Generally, the temperature should be about 60°C but in our climate, a cooler temperature should be used, she said. When heating the water in a kettle, test the steam; if you can quickly sweep your hand over the steam without discomfort, the temperature is usually safe, she said. Wrap the filled hot water bottle in a towel, cloth or fitted cover to create a protective barrier between the bottle and your skin – and distribute heat more evenly, said Tan. Use the bottle in an air conditioned room or at night to make it comfortable and prevent excessive heat exposure. Duration and frequency: When the bottle no longer provides noticeable comfort, it is time to stop the session, said Tan. Or refill it with hot water if you wish to continue using it.

6. HEAT PACK

What it's for: See hot water bottle. Single use heat packs typically use iron powder to generate heat through oxidation, Tan explained. "Reusable heat packs, on the other hand, contain sodium acetate, which releases heat through a process called crystallisation when they are activated." Most medical-grade heat packs are designed to reach temperatures of about 40°C to 55°C. "Heat packs generally provide lower, more controlled temperatures, which helps reduce the risk of burns or skin injury," said Tan, and are preferred over hot water bottles.

How to prep: Two to four layers of clothing or cloth should be placed between the heat pack and skin to reduce the risk of burns or skin irritation, noted Tan. Most self-adhesive heat packs are designed to be stuck on clothing or an inner fabric layer, rather than directly onto bare skin. "This precaution is especially important for people with sensitive skin, impaired sensation, poor circulation or conditions such as diabetes, who may be more vulnerable to heat-related injuries," she said. Duration and frequency: 15 to 20 minutes at a time. "After each session, the skin should be allowed to cool and rest before reapplication to help prevent burns or skin irritation," said Tan.

GLP-1 drugs, including Ozempic, may have a beneficial effect across many types of cancer

A growing body of evidence suggests that popular GLP-1 drugs, widely used for weight loss and diabetes, can provide protection against many types of cancer. More than two dozen studies presented over the past few days at the American Society of Clinical Oncology meeting in Chicago found that patients taking the drugs showed lower risks of developing cancer and disease progression, better survival, and improved responses to some treatments, compared with people who were not taking the GLP-1s. The studies included analyses of clinical records and real-world databases tracking patients taking Novo Nordisk's Wegovy or Ozempic, Eli Lilly's Zepbound or Mounjaro, or older GLP-1 treatments. The studies were not designed to show how or why GLP-1 use might affect cancer treatment. But researchers believe by reducing inflammation, regulating insulin signaling and possibly engaging directly with tumor biology, they may contribute to a protective effect in cancer patients. "Chronic inflammation is a fundamental biological pathway involved in the development and progression of many cancers," said Dr Elizabeth Susan McDonald of the University of Pennsylvania. McDonald on Tuesday (Jun 2) reported on a study of 110,000 women, showing those who took GLP-1 medications were up to 35 per cent less likely to develop breast cancer than those who did not. While obesity itself is a known risk factor for certain cancers, the anti-inflammatory effects of GLP-1s will likely prove to have a role in cancer prevention, McDonald said.

BENEFITS ACROSS CANCER STAGES AND TUMOUR TYPES

GLP-1 drugs include semaglutide, the active ingredient in Wegovy, Ozempic and Rybelsus; tirzepatide, sold as Mounjaro and

Feeling foggy and tired? Your gut health may be affecting your brain

Dr Kyle Staller is a gastroenterologist, so it may be surprising that many of his patients come to him complaining not only about stomach trouble but about their brains, too. Irritable bowel syndrome and other digestive dysfunction can be accompanied by a mental haze. People experiencing constipation and bloating, for example, may describe "a sense of heaviness or being weighed down both physically and mentally," said Dr Staller, who works at Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston. "So many of my patients talk about problems like fatigue, brain fog and feeling sluggish," he added. Scientists are making progress in understanding how the pathway between the brain and the digestive system influences our overall health. They call it the gut-brain axis, and it has been shown to play a big role in immune system support, anxiety, depression, metabolism and disease prevention. It can also affect mental clarity.

We asked scientists and clinicians what to know about the gut and brain fog.

HOW DOES THE GUT-BRAIN AXIS WORK?

There are thousands of fibres running from the brain to the abdomen that are known as the vagus nerve. It is a primary conduit of the gut-brain axis. And as the main nerve of the parasympathetic nervous system, it helps the body rest, digest and deter inflammation. Signals also travel back and forth between the gut and brain via stress hormones and immune cells. Crucially, gut bacteria produce chemical messengers (called neurotransmitters) like serotonin, dopamine and GABA that affect the nervous system. When they enter the bloodstream or stimulate the vagus nerve, they can help improve mood, drive motivation, and calm the nervous system.

This constant communication keeps the body's systems in balance.

HOW ARE DIGESTIVE ISSUE CONNECTED TO BRAIN FOG?

Brain fog is the result of "bad connections" between the gut and the brain, said Gerard Clarke, a professor of neurobehavioural science at University College Cork in Ireland who studies the effects of gut bacteria on the brain and behaviour. Some causes of digestive problems are also associated with brain fog, including poor nutrition, hormonal changes associated with menopause, anxiety and infection. In addition, autonomic nervous system dysfunction, an umbrella term for various disorders that make it difficult for the body to control heart rate, blood pressure and temperature, can cause digestive problems and brain fog, Dr Staller said. It's not entirely clear how digestive dysfunction leads to brain fog. For some people with digestive problems like irritable bowel syndrome, the nerves in the gut become increasingly sensitive. As the gut sends distress signals to the brain, these alerts intensify. It's similar to "a microphone placed too close to a speaker," Dr Staller said. "Small signals get fed back, amplified and

quickly become overwhelming." That can make problems like gas or bloating feel excruciating and ultimately distracting, possibly leading to brain fog, he added. A study published in October found that more than half of the 100 participants experienced brain fog alongside IBS or gastroparesis, a chronic condition where the stomach has difficulty emptying its contents into the small intestine.

WHAT ROLE DOES THE MICROBIOME PLAY?

The gut microbiome is composed of trillions of bacteria, viruses and fungi that inhabit your intestinal tract. A diverse microbiome helps protect us from disease, decrease inflammation and help produce and regulate the neurotransmitters that affect our mood and brain function. Signals from our microbes can affect many of the brain regions associated with foggy, Dr Clarke said. These include the hippocampus, which is responsible for learning and memory; the prefrontal cortex, which is associated with decision making and clarity of thought; and the amygdala, which is the brain's central hub for processing fear and anxiety. Sometimes, the experts said, our microbiome gets out of whack because of problems related to diet, stress, lack of sleep or exercise, medications, menopause, infection or chronic inflammation. One type of imbalance in the gut's microbial community is small intestinal bacterial overgrowth, or SIBO, which can cause bloating and diarrhea. In a small 2018 study of about 40 people, researchers found a connection between brain foggy and SIBO among patients who were taking probiotics. Patients' symptoms improved after they took antibiotics and stopped probiotics. Rather than colonising in the colon, the probiotics instead congregated in the small bowel and produced too much D-lactic acid, which is difficult for humans to metabolise, said Dr Satish Rao, a gastroenterologist and professor of medicine at Augusta University in Georgia who was the lead author of the paper. "When it accumulates you become foggy," he added. Some people assume that taking probiotics is helpful for digestion, especially after a course of antibiotics. While probiotics have been shown to help in certain contexts, there isn't currently enough scientific evidence to support widespread use, the experts said.

WILL IMPROVING GUT HEALTH REDUCE MENTAL FOGGINESS?

Possibly. Scientists haven't uncovered a specific way to target brain fog via the gut, but working to maintain a healthy gut can support a clearer mind. To do this, eat healthy foods that support your gut microbes, Dr Clarke said. Microbes rely on fibre as an important source of nutrients – so try foods that are rich in fibre like vegetables, beans, nuts and whole grains. It also helps to add more fermented foods to your diet, like yogurt, kefir, sauerkraut and kimchi.

LIMITING FACTORS

Researchers cautioned that nearly all of the data presented were from observational studies, raising the risk of confounding factors. Patients prescribed GLP-1 drugs may differ in important ways, including overall health, access to care and concurrent treatments, that could influence outcomes. While the various studies tried to account for those differences, none can prove the drugs improve cancer outcomes. Experts said trials in which GLP-1s are added to standard treatment in some cancer patients but not others are needed to establish clear anti-cancer benefits. Some trials are already being planned. The apparent cancer benefits were not clearly tied to the drugs' weight-loss effects, suggesting that alone does not explain the findings. A seven-year study with nearly 120,000 participants found GLP-1s were associated with lower rates of new prostate cancer diagnoses in high-risk men, compared to drugs such as Merck's Propecia and GSK's Avodart, which are used to shrink enlarged prostate glands. GLP-1 users had a "very small" reduction in body weight at one year, said Dr Colton Jones of the University of Texas San Antonio Mays Cancer Center who presented the study at ASCO.

Anthropic calls for pause of global AI development

New York: Artificial intelligence company Anthropic suggested on Thursday (Jun 4) a global pause on building the most powerful AI systems as the latest models are beginning to show signs they could escape human control. The San Francisco-based company, which makes the Claude family of AI models, said in a report that a worldwide slowdown in cutting-edge AI development would "likely be a good thing" - but warned that if only one company stopped, rivals would simply race ahead. "We believe it would be good for the world to have the option to slow or temporarily pause frontier AI development to enable societal structures and alignment research to keep up with the advance of the technology," it said. Getting a real pause to work would mean multiple major AI companies in multiple countries - most notably the US and China - all agreeing to stop at the same time, under rules everyone could actually verify, Anthropic said. That idea may prove somewhat unpopular with the likes of Elon Musk, as the hotly anticipated stock market debut of his SpaceX company - which owns his AI venture xAI - is expected to make him the world's first trillionaire. "Without a global coordination mechanism, companies and governments will have to make difficult decisions about safety while under competitive and geopolitical pressures," it said. The company has faced pushback from others in the industry - and officials in the White House - who say its focus on worst-case scenarios overstates the risks and amounts to a strategy for slowing rivals under the cover of safety concerns. Still, the White House has acknowledged the power of the company's Mythos model, which has not been made available to the general public due to its cybersecurity capabilities and is currently deployed only to a small number of vetted organisations. The proposal would face an uphill battle in Washington and Sili-

con Valley, where US officials and tech executives have repeatedly argued that any slowdown in AI development risks handing China a decisive strategic edge in what many see as the defining technology race of the century. US President Donald Trump, however, said he discussed the possibility of cooperating with China on AI safety issues during his recent visit to Beijing. Trump also signed an executive order this week that allows the government 30 days to conduct a preliminary review of the most powerful US AI models before their release. "HUMAN ROLE NARROWING" Anthropic compared the problem to nuclear arms control treaties - but said it would be even harder to get a handle on, since AI training is far easier to hide than a missile silo, and the temptation to quietly keep going would be enormous. "You want the option to be able to take your foot off the gas and put your foot on the brake," Anthropic's co-founder Jack Clark told Britain's BBC Newsnight on Thursday. "Right now, it's like the AI industry has a gas pedal, but it doesn't have a brake pedal." The company said it plans to bring together government officials, scientists, advocacy groups and competing AI firms in the coming months to figure out how such a system could work. The call for coordination comes alongside internal data showing that AI is already dramatically speeding up the development of AI itself, Anthropic said. That acceleration creates a feedback loop that Anthropic warned could eventually lead to what researchers call "recursive self-improvement". That's the idea of an AI system that becomes capable of essentially teaching itself to get smarter, without much human help. "We are not there yet, and recursive self-improvement is not inevitable," the report said, while adding that it could arrive sooner than most governments and institutions are ready for.

US Senate approves US\$70 billion for Trump immigration crackdown

Washington: The US Senate on Friday (Jun 5) approved US\$70 billion in funding for Donald Trump's hardline immigration crackdown, but only after a long day of votes on multiple amendments that highlighted Republican infighting over some of the president's other contentious policy proposals. The Bill would fund Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and Border Patrol through the rest of Trump's term, handing the Republican leader a major victory on one of his signature issues after months of bitter fighting over the future of immigration enforcement. It now heads to the House of Representatives, where Republican leaders hope to move it early next week to send it to Trump's desk. The package follows a record partial shutdown of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) earlier this year, when Democrats refused to support new money for immigration enforcement without restrictions on tactics such as raids in sensitive locations and the use of masks by officers. Republicans rejected those demands, instead choosing to fund ICE and Border Patrol through the fast-track "budget reconciliation" process, which allows them to bypass Democratic opposition if they can keep their own members united. The Senate vote came after an hours-long amendment marathon known in Washington as a "vote-a-rama", a chaotic process allowing lawmakers to force votes on politically sensitive issues before final passage. For Trump, the process meant renewed scrutiny of controversies that have alarmed members of his own party, including a proposed "anti-weaponisation" fund for allies who claim they were unfairly targeted by the government and US\$1 billion that had been earmarked for security around his planned White House ballroom. The underlying immigration Bill no longer included the ballroom money, but both issues became symbols of a broader unease among Republicans about defending Trump's priorities ahead of midterm elections expected to be dominated by voter concerns over the cost of living. REBELLION The Bill had been delayed for weeks after sena-

tors rebelled over the Justice Department's proposed US\$1.8 billion "anti-weaponisation" compensation package, which critics attacked as a "slush fund" that could allow people con-

enforcement money toward housing and other affordability concerns, arguing that Republicans were prioritising Trump's deportation agenda over the cost of living. And in what



victed over the 2021 attack on the US Capitol to receive taxpayer money. Acting Attorney General Todd Blanche told lawmakers this week that the administration would not move forward with the fund. But Trump continued to praise it, calling it "beautiful" and saying he would have to "ask the lawyers" whether it was dead or merely paused. That ambiguity pushed some Republicans to try to write the fund's demise into law. "When you're explaining, you're losing. There's no way to explain the US\$1.776 (billion) fund. So the only way you can explain it is explain that you got rid of it," North Carolina Senator Thom Tillis told reporters. The amendment votes did little to derail Trump's agenda but showed the limits of party discipline, with multiple Republicans defecting on measures targeting the anti-weaponisation fund, future ballroom funding and Trump's move to install a loyalist housing official atop US intelligence. Democrats also used the process to try to redirect immigration

was seen as a separate rebuke of Trump policy, several Republicans also backed a Democratic effort to circumvent House leadership with a vote to impose new sanctions on Russia over its invasion of Ukraine and provide US\$8 billion in military financing loans to Kyiv. Republicans countered that the money was needed to restore immigration enforcement funding after the earlier DHS shutdown left the issue unresolved. The earlier stopgap measure funded much of Homeland Security through Sep 30, including the Federal Emergency Management Agency, the Coast Guard, the Transportation Security Administration and the Secret Service. But it excluded ICE and Border Patrol, setting up the separate fight that ended with Friday's vote. The result gives Trump a major legislative win on immigration while underscoring a recurring problem for Republican leaders: even with control of Congress, they must still manage internal resistance to the political baggage attached to some of the president's priorities.

'Unrealistic' for Southeast Asia to meet Hegseth's defence spending demand amid Sino-US rivalry

Kuala Lumpur: It is "completely unrealistic" for Southeast Asian countries to heed the United States' call of boosting defence spending to counter China's growing power, analysts say, as the region prioritises domestic development while balancing ties with the two superpowers. Economic pressures from the Iran war have tightened governments' purse strings, the experts say, adding that Southeast Asian states could instead improve defence cooperation with middle powers and use multilateral platforms like the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) to navigate great power competition in the region. Last Saturday (May 30), US Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth urged Asian allies to ramp up military spending to prevent China's dominance in the region, warning of "rightful alarm" over its rapid military build-up. The US expects its Asian allies and partners to increase defence spending to 3.5 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP), Hegseth said at the Shangri-La Dialogue in Singapore, known as Asia's premier forum for defence leaders, militaries and diplomats. "Less Shangri-La, more ships, more subs," Hegseth said, stressing "that the region needed greater defence capability than conferences. Analysts told CNA that while the US could punish allies that fail to commit to higher defence spending by downgrading defence cooperation or complicating trade negotiations, Washington is unlikely to abandon the region given its need for critical minerals and military access. Consistent US demands on defence spending could also produce an unintended effect of pushing some Southeast Asian states closer to China at a time when US presence in the region is already perceived as waning, the observers warned. But they also said other ASEAN members will be wary of tilting towards Beijing given the latter's military build-up in the South China Sea. China claims most of the strategic South China Sea, overlapping with claims by other ASEAN states including Brunei, Malaysia, the Philippines and Vietnam. Joshua Kurlantzick, senior fellow for Southeast Asia and South Asia at Council on Foreign Relations - a US think tank - said US President Donald Trump's administration has "turned burden-sharing into the defining test of any alliance worth keeping". "Delivering the same demand at the region's most important annual security forum was Washington's way of saying it isn't blinking - Asia is now facing the same issue that the White House is asking of Europe," he told CNA. Trump has a long-standing demand that allies shoulder more defence costs and burden, singling out European and North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) partners as needing to reduce their reliance on Washington. But while some Asian states have

increased defence spending, this is due to their "own desire" to improve defence capabilities in an increasingly contested region, said Kurlantzick, "not because the US is demanding it". WHY 3.5 PER CENT IS UNREALISTIC Among the 11 ASEAN members, Myanmar and Brunei have the largest defence spending proportions of GDP, at 6.6 per cent and 3.65 per cent respectively as of 2024, according to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute. Singapore's defence expenditure was 3.05 per cent of its GDP in 2025. Indonesia, which

pressure on Manila. "While Southeast Asian countries are anxious about US-China rivalry and China's growing military power, what they spend on defence is reflective of their current perceptions of external threats as well as their own priorities at home," Marston said. THE CHINA FACTOR

And when it comes to China, not all Southeast Asian states might believe Beijing is a force that needs to be contained, said Muhammad Faizal Abdul Rahman, a research fellow at Singapore's S Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS). "There is also the question of whether Asian countries fully share the US worldview, in which military spending primarily serves to counter China and maintain a balance of power advantageous to the US," he told CNA.

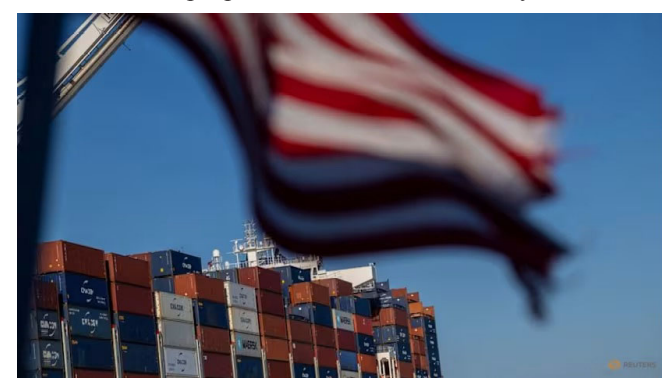
"This also relates to the predictability of the US as an ally, China's intentions, and how Asian countries that are neutral seek to maintain their neutrality." At the Shangri-La Dialogue, Hegseth insisted that the US military was not "turning our backs" on Asia while handling "global obligations" such as the Iran war. "We can do two things at one time," he said, adding the US was working with allies on a "substantive, serious approach" to the Pacific while ensuring that "Iran doesn't get a nuclear weapon". Hegseth said the US understood that its allies in Asia "do not seek constant escalation" and instead wanted a balance of power "in which no state, including China, can impose its hegemony". Kurlantzick from the Council of Foreign Relations said that different ASEAN countries see China differently and their relations are "not in a straightforward way". Beijing's actions in the South China Sea have "genuinely alarmed the Philippines and Vietnam, giving those governments domestic cover for higher defence spending", he said. "But for most of ASEAN, China is not simply a threat to deter - it is the region's largest trading partner, a major source of investment, and a neighbour that will still be there long after any given US administration has come and gone."

HOW US MIGHT FORCE ASEAN'S HAND Still, Kurlantzick pointed out that Washington was clear in how it could deal with allies who were seen as defence "freeloaders", as alluded to by Hegseth, whose designation in the US is known as secretary of war. "Allies who refuse to step up and carry their own weight for our collective defence will face a clear shift in how we do business," Hegseth said. Kurlantzick said Washington could downgrade defence cooperation, slow arms transfers, reduce intelligence sharing, or make trade talks harder for governments that do not show sufficient commitment to military spending.

Trump's latest tariff salvo no fix for global issue of forced labour

London: President Donald Trump's threat to slap new tariffs on trade partners the United States accuses of failing to crack down on forced labour will do little to fight modern slavery - and could even make things worse, experts, business groups and some human rights groups say. In its latest trade salvo, the Trump administration proposed additional du-

10 countries with the largest number of people living in modern slavery, Walk Free said. International Chamber of Commerce Deputy Secretary-General Andrew Wilson said the "arbitrary nature" of the tariffs was a cause for concern. "It doesn't make sense if the object of this is to enhance controls on modern slavery," he said, adding that the planned



EU measures, once implemented, would eventually be broader than US ones. "The EU regime may ultimately have broader market reach because it covers imports, products sold in the EU, and exports from the EU," Sebastian Ruenz, ESG and supply chain specialist at law firm Tay-

lor Wessing, agreed the EU's framework was not as weak as Washington implied. The EU ban covers products made with forced labour worldwide, regardless of the country of origin. "It will be structurally far more comprehensive than the US law," he said, noting that Germany, with the Supply Chain Due Diligence Act, and France, with a similar law, have already established national standards regarding forced labour. TARIFFS AS A TOOL: POTENTIALLY COUNTERPRODUCTIVE Businesses, struggling to navigate Trump's volatile trade war, which has piled on costs and upended supply chains over the past year, were still digesting the latest threat of levies. Rick Woldenberg, CEO of educational toy maker Learning Resources, disputed the premise of the investigation, which linked efforts to tackle modern slavery with US commercial interests. "The reason that ... countries have signed up in opposition to forced labour is not because of competitive reasons, it's because it's immoral," he told Reuters. Even those who broadly support import bans as a weapon against modern slavery doubted whether tariffs like those threatened by Trump, calibrated to trade volumes rather than to the severity of exploitation, could achieve meaningful change. The most extreme forms of forced labour - state-imposed systems in China's Xinjiang region, Turkmenistan's cotton sector, and North Korea - are not the primary targets of the tariffs, which are instead shaped by trade volumes and geopolitical considerations, said Hélène de Rengerve, senior advocate for corporate accountability at Human Rights Watch. "It is also not clear how will this be an incentive to actually improve the situation," she said. "It might even create more political resistance in some countries. I fear it might be counterproductive to the objective of fighting forced labour."

The US case against the European Union, one of its largest trading partners, has drawn particular scrutiny. The USTR report criticised the EU's Forced Labour Regulation, which starts to apply in December 2027. It sets a higher bar for proof of violations than US rules and requires authorities to establish a substantiated concern before acting. The European Commission said the tariffs were unjustified, reiterating its commitment to the trade deal sealed with Washington last year that capped the US tariff rate on most EU goods at 15 per cent. International human rights group Walk Free said no G20 country is doing enough to combat forced labour relative to its wealth. The US is among the top



PNB strengthens sustainable housing drive through Harit Niwas Home Loans

Guwahati/New Delhi: Reinforcing its commitment to sustainable finance and environmentally responsible banking, Punjab National Bank (PNB), one of India's leading public sector banks, has strengthened its PNB Harit Niwas Green Home Loan Scheme. The initiative aims to promote sustainable housing and encourage homebuyers and homeowners to embrace greener and more environmentally responsible living solutions. PNB Harit Niwas is designed to support a wide spectrum of customers including salaried individuals, professionals, self-employed persons, pensioners, businesspersons and farmers. The scheme covers ready-built green homes, under-construction properties in approved projects, self-construction on owned plots as well as renovation and retrofitting of existing homes to meet green building standards. Through PNB Harit Niwas, the Bank supports customers seeking to purchase, construct or upgrade environmentally sustainable homes by offering financing benefits for residential properties certified under recognized green building frameworks. PNB Harit Niwas is a specially designed green home loan scheme that offers a range of customer-centric benefits to encourage sustainable and energy-efficient housing. Under the scheme, borrowers can avail a concessional interest rate that is 0.10 percent lower than the applicable rate under regular home loan schemes, along with nil processing fees and nil documentation charges, making home financing more affordable. The loan can be used for the purchase, construction, renovation, or takeover of green homes, providing flexibility to meet diverse housing

needs. Customers are also eligible for up to 5 percent enhanced repayment eligibility, enabling them to access higher loan amounts based on their repayment capacity. The scheme is available for properties that have received green building certifications from recognized agencies such as the Indian Green Building Council (IGBC), Green Rating for Integrated Habitat Assessment (GRIHA), and Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED). In addition, PNB Harit Niwas takes into account the financial savings generated through energy-efficient housing solutions, such as reduced electricity and utility expenses, thereby enhancing repayment eligibility and making sustainable homeownership more accessible. By combining financial incentives with support for environmentally responsible housing, the scheme aims to promote green living while helping customers invest in homes that are energy-efficient, cost-effective, and environmentally sustainable. The scheme is available to salaried individuals, pensioners, professionals, self-employed individuals, businesspersons and farmers with a regular source of income, thereby widening access to sustainable housing finance across customer segments. Speaking on the occasion, Subodh Kumar, GM, Retail Asset Business Division, PNB, said: "At Punjab National Bank, sustainability is an integral part of our growth strategy. Through PNB Harit Niwas, we are making environmentally responsible housing more affordable and accessible for customers across the country.

Samsung honours 30 innovation campus toppers with Rs. 1 lakh awards

Guwahati: Samsung India felicitated 30 outstanding students from across the country under the Samsung Innovation Campus (SIC) programme, awarding each topper Rs. 1 lakh for exceptional performance in each of the four courses — Artificial Intelligence (AI), Coding & Programming, Internet of Things (IoT) and Big Data. The awardees included four national toppers, along with 26 state-level toppers and one social media champion, selected from 20,000 students trained through Samsung Innovation Campus, the company's flagship CSR programme. The students selected from the 2025 cohort represent 10 states, reflecting the growing spread of technology talent beyond India's traditional innovation hubs. The toppers were felicitated at Samsung India's headquarters in Gurugram in the presence of JB Park, President and CEO, Samsung Southwest Asia. "When I look at all of you, I do not just see students. I see future engineers, creators, entrepreneurs, researchers and perhaps future CEOs. AI, coding and data are no longer skills of tomorrow; they are skills of today. Innovation requires curiosity, resilience and the courage to learn from failure. Keep learning, keep adapting and keep moving forward," said JB Park, President and CEO, Samsung Southwest Asia, at the event. Aligned with the Government of India's Skill India and Digital India missions, Samsung Innovation Campus is Samsung's flagship CSR initiative focused on building future-ready technology skills among the youth. As a partner in India's growth story, Samsung continues to invest in talent, strengthen local ecosystems, and work closely with education and skilling institutions to create a digitally empowered and innovation-led Aatmanirbhar Bharat. The stories behind the

toppers reflected how technology education can unlock new possibilities. Aishwarya Sanjay from Karnataka, pursuing a Master's degree in Agricultural Extension Education, used her learning from the programme to develop an AI-driven model aimed at improving market access for farmers through community-supported agriculture. Shivam Singh from Uttar Pradesh ex-

plored IoT, cybersecurity and automation technologies through the programme, building projects ranging from home automation systems to cybersecurity models, experiences that helped him secure an internship with National Institute of Electronics & Information Technology, Ministry of Electronics & Information Technology, Government of India. Similarly, Dev Uppal from Delhi and Vanshika Raghav from Haryana credited Samsung Innovation Campus with helping them apply classroom learning to real-world challenges while strengthening their confidence, analytical thinking and technical capabilities. Besides the award ceremony at the Samsung Head Office, the students also had the opportunity to explore Samsung's innovation ecosystem through visits to Samsung R&D Institute Noida, Samsung R&D Institute Delhi and



ing & Programming, IoT and Big Data, the programme equips students with industry-relevant skills while fostering innovation, critical thinking and digital leadership. As India accelerates its digital transformation, Samsung Innovation Campus continues to create pathways for young talent to access technology education, mentorship and opportunities, helping build the next generation of innovators and problem-solvers. The event also included Madhvendra Singh, CEO, Electronics Sector Skills Council of India (ESSCI) and Lt Gen Kulbhushan H Gawas, CEO, Telecom Sector Skill Council (TSSC). SIC is implemented in collaboration with the ESSCI and TSSC, two sector skill councils, responsible for defining industry skill standards, certifications and workforce development under the country's Skill India ecosystem.

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"Ziraya" makes history: Assam's first animated fashion muse styled by designer Dipankar Kashyap

Guwahati: Rhythmic Threads has launched its signature animated brand muse "Ziraya" in association with renowned Assamese fashion designer Dipankar Kashyap recently, creating a first-of-its-kind moment in Assam's fashion history. Ziraya becomes the first animated character to wear original creations designed by an iconic Assamese designer. The initiative blends fashion, storytelling, music, heritage, and digital creativity to promote the rich cultural identity of Northeast India globally. Owned by Mumbai-based photographer and filmmaker Somsuhro Sarkar and powered by ARVAT JAYA, Rhythmic Threads aims to connect younger audiences with the region's handloom, art, and traditions through innovative visual narratives and collaborations. Dipankar Kashyap is a prominent fashion designer, choreographer, filmmaker, entrepreneur, and cultural ambassador from Assam who has played a significant role in promoting the art, fashion, and cultural heritage of Northeast India on national and international platforms. Beginning his career in the fashion industry during the 1990s, he quickly gained recognition for his innovative designs that blended traditional Assamese textiles, motifs, and craftsmanship with contemporary fashion trends. His work has consistently highlighted the richness of indigenous cultures, handloom traditions, and ethnic aesthetics of the Northeast, helping bring regional fashion into the mainstream Indian fashion landscape. Over the years,

Dipankar Kashyap has organized and choreographed numerous fashion shows,



beauty pageants, and cultural events, pro-

viding opportunities for aspiring models and artists from the region to showcase their talents. As the founder of the Dipankar Kashyap Agency, he has contributed to the grooming and professional development of many young talents in the fields of fashion, modeling, and entertainment. Beyond fashion, he has established himself as a filmmaker and creative professional, directing and producing projects that reflect the social, cultural, and artistic realities of Assam and the Northeast. His Assamese film *Bukuwe Bisare* received attention for its storytelling and cultural relevance, further strengthening his reputation as a multifaceted creative personality. Dipankar Kashyap has also been actively involved in promoting Assamese handloom products, traditional attire, and local craftsmanship through exhibitions, retail initiatives, and awareness campaigns. His efforts have helped create wider appreciation for the region's unique cultural identity and have supported local artisans and weavers. Through decades of work spanning fashion, cinema, choreography, talent management, and entrepreneurship, he has emerged as one of the most recognizable figures in Assam's creative industry. His dedication to preserving cultural traditions while embracing modern innovation continues to inspire aspiring designers, artists, and entrepreneurs, making him an influential contributor to the growth and recognition of Northeast India's cultural and creative sectors.

Dr. Bijumoni Gogoi awarded B-High Grade in Sattriya Dance

Guwahati: Sivasagar's Dr. Bijumoni Gogoi has been empanelled as a B-High Grade Artist in Sattriya Dance by Prasar Bharati, Doordarshan Kendra, Guwahati. Hailing from Majumeliya Gaon, Phulpanichiga, she recently earned her Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) in Performing Arts from Mahapurusha Srimanta Sankaradeva Viswavidyalaya, Guwahati Campus, under the guidance of Professor Dr. Jagadish Patgiri. Her research focused on a comparative study of Sattriya and Kuchipudi dance forms. Dr. Gogoi is currently serving as a Lecturer in Performing Arts at the Government College of Teacher Education, Tezpur. She is the daughter of Ajit Gogoi and Nabajyoti Gogoi and the wife of theatre and craft artist Mintu Bora. Sattriya Dance is one of the eight recognized classical dance forms of India and originates from the state of Assam. It was introduced in the 15th century by the revered Vaishnavite saint, scholar, and social reformer Srimanta Sankaradeva as a medium to propagate the teachings of Neo-Vaishnavism and to spread spiritual and cultural values among the people. The dance derives its name from the "Sattri," the Vaishnavite monasteries established by Sankaradeva across Assam, where it was traditionally performed by male monks known as bhokots as part of religious rituals and

devotional worship. Over time, Sattriya evolved from a monastic tradition into a vibrant stage art that is now performed by both men and women across India and the world. The dance combines elements of drama, music, expressive storytelling, and intricate footwork, making it a unique blend of devotion and artistic excellence. Performances often depict episodes from the life of Lord Krishna and stories from Hindu scriptures, particularly the Bhagavata Purana. Sattriya is characterized by graceful movements, rhythmic patterns, expressive hand gestures known as mudras, and precise body postures that convey a wide range of emotions and narratives. Traditional costumes are crafted from Assam's famous silk fabrics, especially muga and pat silk, featuring elegant designs and ornaments that enhance the visual appeal of the performance. The accompanying music includes cymbals, drums such as the khol, and devotional songs known as Borgeets, composed by Sankaradeva and his disciple Madhavdeva. The dance form received national recognition when the Sangeet Natak Akademi officially recognized it as a classical dance of India in 2000. Today, Sattriya stands as a symbol of Assam's rich cultural heritage, preserving centuries-old traditions while continuing to inspire audiences with its spiritual depth, artistic sophistication, and timeless beauty.

Binbag organises awareness programs across state, collects over 5 tons e-waste materials

Guwahati: Reinforcing its commitment to environmental sustainability and responsible waste management, Binbag

(NRL) to organise an E-Waste Collection Drive at the NRL Township. The programme featured interactive awareness ses-

son from Environment cell, Numaligarh Refinery Limited. In collaboration with the Tihu College Science Forum (TCSF), Binbag supported World Environment Day observances through a range of activities including a 1-Minute Reel Competition, Drawing Competition, Street Play Competition, and interactive discussions on environmental conservation and climate action. "The response from our students has been truly heartening. Initiatives like these go a long way in instilling a sense of environmental responsibility among the youth, and we look forward to deepening our collaboration with Binbag in the days ahead," said Dr Suresh Bharali, Principal Tihu College. Further extending its outreach, Binbag joined hands with Dream India Network for an Environmental Awareness Programme at Natun Fatasil Town High School, where students participated in sessions on waste management, e-waste disposal, and environmental conservation, and took a pledge to adopt sustainable practices in their daily lives.



marked World Environment Day 2026 through a series of collaborative initiatives across Assam, reaching students, communities, and institutions with awareness programmes focused on environmental conservation and e-waste management. Binbag collected more than 5 tons of e-waste materials over last seven days as a part of the drive. As part of the celebrations, Binbag partnered with Numaligarh Refinery Limited

and student engagement activities aimed at educating participants on the importance of proper electronic waste disposal. "NRL is proud to be part of this meaningful initiative on World Environment Day. Responsible e-waste management is integral to our commitment to environmental stewardship, and we are glad to see such enthusiastic participation from our township community," said a spokesper-

HDFC Bank promotes sustainability through "The Green Pledge" campaign

Guwahati: On the occasion of World Environment Day 2026, HDFC Bank's North Eastern Branches conducted "The Green Pledge" campaign to encourage citizens to eliminate the use of single-use plastics and spread awareness about plastic pollution. As part of the initiative, Mr. Premjit Konwar - Sr Vice President & Zonal Head, North East Zone of HDFC Bank inaugurated the - The Green Pledge Campaign where community leaders, institutions, and customers were invited to take a pledge to adopt eco-friendly practices and inspire others to reduce plastic waste. The campaign aligns with the spirit of World Environment Day 2026, reinforcing the importance of collective action for a cleaner, greener, and more sustainable future. HDFC Bank remains committed to driving positive environmental change through community-led awareness initiatives and responsible banking practices. The Green Pledge Campaign is an environmental awareness and sustainability initiative aimed at encouraging individuals, communities, institutions, and organizations to adopt eco-friendly practices and take responsibility for protecting the environment. The campaign seeks to inspire people to make a formal commitment, or "green pledge," toward reducing their environmental footprint through simple yet impactful actions such as conserving water and energy, reducing waste, minimizing the use of single-use plastics, planting trees, promoting recycling, and supporting sustainable lifestyles. By fostering a sense of environmental stewardship, the campaign emphasizes that collective action at the individual and community levels can contribute significantly to address-

ing global challenges such as climate change, biodiversity loss, pollution, and resource depletion. Educational institutions, government agencies, corporate organizations, and civil society groups often participate in the campaign through awareness drives, workshops, plantation programs, cleanliness initiatives, and sustainability-focused events that encourage public engagement. The Green Pledge Campaign also highlights the importance of responsible consumption and production, urging citizens to make environmentally conscious choices in their daily lives. Through digital platforms, outreach programs, and community activities, the initiative promotes environmental education and encourages participants to become advocates for sustainable development within their families, workplaces, and local communities. The campaign aligns with broader national and global efforts to achieve environmental conservation goals and supports the principles of sustainable development by balancing economic growth, social well-being, and ecological protection. By motivating people to commit to measurable actions and long-term behavioral change, the Green Pledge Campaign helps create greater awareness about the need to preserve natural resources for future generations. Its core message is that every individual has a role to play in building a cleaner, greener, and more sustainable world, and that small actions taken consistently by millions of people can collectively lead to meaningful environmental progress. Through participation and commitment, the campaign encourages citizens to become active partners in safeguarding the planet and creating a healthier environment for present and future generations.

Power meets guile as Andreeva faces fairytale qualifier Chwalinska

Paris : If the French Open women's final appears on paper to be a mismatch between a teenage prodigy and an unheralded qualifier, Poland's Maja Chwalinska has spent the past fortnight proving appearances can be deceiving. Russian eighth seed Mirra Andreeva arrives at Saturday's showpiece as the overwhelming favourite after bulldozing her



way through the draw, dropping only 12 games in her last three matches and looking every inch a future Grand Slam champion. Yet across the net will stand a player whose improbable run has become one of the stories of the tournament. Chwalinska travelled to Paris ranked 114th in the world and had to win three qualifying matches to reach the main draw. Nine victories later, the 24-year-old finds herself one win away from one of the most unlikely Grand Slam titles of the Open Era. Andreeva, who reached the Roland Garros semi-finals as a 17-year-old two years ago, believes her growing maturity has helped transform her from a precocious talent into a genuine title contender. "I'm getting closer, I'm getting older, a little bit more mature every match I play, a little bit more experienced," Andreeva told reporters. "So I think that now I'm able to approach every match differently and try to really focus on the opponent that I'm going to play against and the game plan that I'm going to have to use on the court." The Russian's relentless baseline power and ability to dictate rallies have over-

whelmed opponents throughout the tournament and she has looked increasingly comfortable with the expectations that accompany her rapid rise. But Chwalinska offers a completely different challenge.

CHWALINSKA CAPTIVATES SPECTATORS

In an era dominated by power hitters, the left-handed Pole has captivated spectators with a game built on variety, touch and tactical intelligence. Against Russian Diana Shnaider in the semi-finals, Chwalinska struck 33 winners while committing only 17 unforced errors in more than two hours on court. She repeatedly disrupted the rhythm of the match with drop shots, mixed heavy spin with precise angles and ventured to the net whenever opportunities arose. Her performances have earned rave reviews from some of the sport's biggest names. "What fascinates me about Chwalinska's game is her creativity, her joy for playing, her feel for the ball," six-times Grand Slam champion Boris Becker said after her semi-final victory. "Tennis can still be played, not just worked at. Nobody demonstrated that better than Chwalinska today." The German great believes the Pole deserves her place on the biggest stage. "Nothing against Shnaider, who also had a great tournament, but I think the right player is in the final." Former world number one and three-times French Open champion Mats Wilander has been equally impressed. "She played so intelligently. It's very refreshing to see someone with this style of play," the Swede said. "Most players rely primarily on power, but Chwalinska uses spin, drop shots and understands the game incredibly well." Only one qualifier had previously reached a Grand Slam final in the Open Era - Emma Raducanu at the 2021 U.S. Open, a tournament the Briton went on to win.

With World Cup, Atlanta seeks to show how it has moved on from 1990s notoriety

Atlanta : When Atlanta hosted the 1996 Olympics, police were accused of arresting homeless people by the thousands. The crackdown resulted in a welter of lawsuits and news stories that caused long-term damage to the city's reputation. Now the Georgia state capital is looking to show the world that it has moved on, as it hosts World Cup games this summer. The event is expected to draw 500,000 visitors and have an economic impact ranging from \$500 million to over \$1 billion, according to a study commissioned by the Metro Atlanta Chamber of Commerce. Atlanta has ordered new train cars for its transit system, brightened downtown with new murals, and spruced up the Mercedes-Benz Stadium for eight World Cup matches, including a semi-final. Democratic Mayor Andre Dickens has made addressing homelessness a priority. A \$60 million program was launched two years ago, the largest effort in Atlanta's history. In May the program neared the goal of building 500 tiny apartments that can be transitional or permanent for people who have been homeless. The homeless population is around 3,000 in a city of half a million, according to federal government figures, a relatively low rate compared to many other U.S. metro areas. But there is still too much of an emphasis on moving on homeless people without giving them the support they need, homelessness advocates say. Donald Whitehead, executive director of the National Coalition for the Homeless, said Atlanta had improved how it works with homeless people since the 1990s, but that the city was clearing camps without offering enough effective services or housing. Michael Nolan, a counselor who has worked with homeless people in Atlanta for many years, had a similar view. "Today, the city talks about outreach, safety, shelter referrals, and housing placements," he said. "Some of that may be real... The endgame is the same: move the poor and homeless out of sight."

ANOTHER BLACK EYE?

In 1996, police made 9,000 arrests of homeless people for loitering, panhandling and other minor offenses in and around the Olympics, according to the Brookings Institution. "What happened in the Olympics stands as one of the most egregious series of events to happen to the homeless in America," White-

He said police officers had recently told him and fellow homeless people three times to move from downtown, where the games will be played. "It's all about the World Cup," said Brown, who works as a contractor and also sells loose cigarettes. "They didn't offer us help or gift cards or nothing. We just had to move."



head said. "People got arrested, sent to jail for minor offenses, given one-way bus tickets," he said. "It was a blueprint of what not to do." Atlanta still periodically carries out sweeps of homeless camps. In the last two years, city workers in Atlanta have torn down numerous camps in and around downtown, including 10 near the Mercedes-Benz Stadium, according to the Atlanta Journal-Constitution. A city bulldozer ran over and killed a man sleeping in his tent last year. The city then convened a task force that recommended repeated outreach and tent-checks, and giving encampment residents notice of sweeps and the option to relocate to a shelter, or, when possible, permanent housing. Some homeless people say they believe the coming World Cup has led to more attention. Benjamin Brown, 54, has been living on the streets since 2017.

Reuters found him and 25 other people, including children, living in tents in Mechanicsville, a neighborhood about two miles (3 km) from downtown. In a statement to Reuters, Atlanta police said the department "remains committed to ensuring a safe, orderly, and compassionate environment for everyone in our city, including individuals experiencing homelessness." Mayor Dickens, who did respond to Reuters interview requests, has said that encampments are unsafe. Atlanta City Council member Kelsea Bond said that according to city officials recent sweeps were unrelated to the World Cup, but cautioned that the world's gaze would again be on Atlanta. "We could get another black eye, it depends on how the city reacts," Bond said. "I'm worried that police will start arresting more people downtown. This is a moment to watch."

In Bay Area, World Cup is set to boost fast-growing grassroots soccer

San Francisco : For years, Jorge Bejarano has been one of the San Francisco Bay Area's most passionate soccer fans, banging a drum for the second-tier Oakland Roots. With the World Cup coming to the U.S., he and others are counting on their cheers for local soccer to resonate across the nation.

Soccer fans are a minority among sports supporters in the United States. Despite its strength as a youth sport, soccer still lags other major sports in viewership, especially American football. Interest is also low compared to global averages. According to the latest Ipsos poll, around 36 per cent of Americans plan to watch the World Cup. But fans are betting that the tournament will lift the relevance of soccer and its importance for the community. In California's Bay Area, Santa Clara will host six games. "Now that we get the World Cup here in the Bay Area, we definitely do see interests of tourists and soccer fans around the world just digging into what other teams are there around that same area," said Bejarano, who leads the official Los Roots supporter group. "What I hope people take is just how diverse Oakland is, how special, how fun and how welcoming."

The Roots were founded less than a decade ago, and quickly filled a gap for local sports fans, as Oakland's major American football, baseball and basketball teams relocated to other areas. Attendance skyrocketed when the Roots took over the empty Coliseum stadium for home games. Previously a longtime season ticket holder for the NFL's Oakland Raiders, Bejarano went all in for the Roots. "Having a team here that dedicates their passion and their love for the city - I can only respect something like that," he said.

WORLD CUP BOOSTS LOCAL INTEREST For Roots head coach Ryan Martin, the World Cup games being held at Santa Clara's Levi's Stadium are a huge statement about the interest in soccer in the Bay Area. He hopes that the attention during the World Cup will bring out more people to watch Roots games as well. Beyond organizing community watch parties for World Cup games, the Roots will be hosting the Australian national soccer team at their training facilities. They are also partnering with local restaurants to bring Australian-inspired items to menus. The Bay Area is home to diverse soccer leagues and teams: the Roots play in the lower-tier USL Championship league, while San Jose in the south is home to Major League Soccer's Earthquakes and the National Women's Soccer League's Bay FC. The latter broke the single-game record for NWSL attendance, with over 40,000 people watching at San Francisco's Oracle Park.

Semi-professional and amateur teams also abound. "We have so much grassroots soccer that happens here," said Aaron Mansfield, a volunteer who oversees membership organization for the San Francisco City soccer club. The semi-professional team has a member-

ship to show how they do things locally. "General interest in soccer culture is good because we get to explain what we do differently and why that matters in the context of both local, national, and global football," he said. Shelley and Josh Estelle have been fans and members of SF City for three years.

They attended a recent game, together with their daughter, on an unusually sunny day at historic Kezar Stadium, where there is a view of San Francisco's landmark Sutro Tower. "I really like the community-supported club here," said Josh Estelle. "It's not corporate and it feels like just the people in my neighborhood watching soccer together." While they plan to watch broadcasts of World Cup games as a family, they didn't get tickets to see a game at Levi's Stadium. "It's very expensive," said Shelley Estelle. "We can watch much more affordable soccer right here at Kezar."

Chwalinska's childhood dream and discipline drive fairytale French Open run

Paris : Maja Chwalinska's incredible run as the first qualifier to reach a French Open final in the professional era marks the fulfilment of an ambition the Polish 24-year-old has chased with relentless passion and discipline for over a decade. Chwalinska beat Diana Shnaider in Thursday's semi-final and will take on a Russian opponent for the third consecutive round when she meets eighth seed Mirra Andreeva in Saturday's decider. She has fought her way through nine matches at Roland Garros, dropping just one set, and old videos of a young Chwalinska have dominated Poland's social media in recent days. A Polish player in the Paris final is no surprise in itself - Iga Swiatek is a four-times winner - but now the country is getting to know a less familiar name, and discovering how she made it this far. "To play this sport professionally, I think you need qualities like perseverance," a 13-year-old Chwalinska said in an

archived TVP Katowice video. "You have to keep working on yourself all the time and not give up." In the same TV interview, her parents spoke about the sacrifices the young Chwalinska had to make. "She has her entire day planned out from 6 a.m. to 8 p.m.," her father, Tomasz, said, "organising everything around doing her homework at school so she doesn't have to miss training." "Maja is still a child, but right now she has no time for childhood," added Marcela, her mother. "And she certainly won't have it in the future." Even then, Chwalinska appeared well aware of the difficulties involved in making a career as an athlete. "It might not work out, but in my adult life I would definitely like to do something connected with sports, with tennis," Chwalinska said in another video from 2014. "And if becoming a tennis player doesn't work out, then I could be some kind of coach or maybe a commentator."

Belgium coach seeks to temper Lukaku fever

Brussels : Belgium coach Rudi Garcia is looking to temper any expectations about a possible return to form for Romelu Lukaku, who netted a 90th goal for his country this week. Lukaku did not start a game for Napoli this season, scored only one goal and spent long periods out with a hamstring injury, and his selection by Garcia for the World Cup looked to be a gamble. But Belgium's leading scorer came on for his first national team outing in 12 months on Tuesday and promptly scored as they beat

Croatia 2-0 in Rijeka. Garcia, however, warned against pushing the 33-year-old too quickly as he continues his recovery. "We must keep our feet on the ground," the coach told a press conference on Friday, ahead of the friendly against Tunisia in Brussels on Saturday. "We must not rush anything. I was very happy with Romelu's goal against Croatia, just like the rest of the squad. That's very important because Romelu lives for scoring goals. Mentally, that was therefore very positive. "But the big danger now is

that you - the media and the supporters - will start thinking that he is completely ready again. He has come a long way and still has some distance to go. Thinking that he will start against Egypt is still far too premature." Belgium's opening game in World Cup Group G is against Egypt in Seattle on June 15. "He has barely played this season and has hardly even trained with the group. So more time will be needed to get him ready to play more than half an hour. Especially if we want to keep him fit.

Belgian Trossard raring to get started at World Cup

Brussels : Fresh from Premier League title success, Arsenal's Leandro Trossard now wants to play a significant role for Belgium at the World Cup. "I really can't wait to get started," he told a press conference on Friday, a day after belatedly joining up with his compatriots following last week's Champions League final. "Everyone is starting the World Cup campaign full of enthusiasm, which is very positive. I've only been able to take part in one training session so far, so not much has stood out to me yet but I can see that everyone is focused and ready to begin the World Cup." Asked whether he was in his best form ever, Trossard added: "That's always difficult to answer. But I'm certainly in very good form, and I hope to carry that into the World Cup." Winning the League title is also a positive for Belgium's hopes, he added. "It's very good when players arrive here having won titles, but that doesn't change

your status. Not mine either but I will try to bring that experience into the national team. "We've had a very good season with Arsenal. Of course, it's disappointing how the Champions League ended. Penalty shootouts are a lottery, and it was stressful to experience it from the sidelines. But we've still had a fantastic season and we're very proud of winning the English title. "The title celebrations and the parade were fantastic. We were able to celebrate properly with the squad." As for his club future, Trossard gave nothing away. "At the moment, I am still an Arsenal player. We'll see what happens in the summer," he told reporters. Belgium have a friendly against Tunisia in Brussels on Saturday before Monday's departure to the World Cup in Canada, Mexico and the United States, where they begin their Group G campaign in Seattle on June 15 against Egypt.

Football: Singapore edged out by China in friendly match

Singapore : Singapore stretched China in an international friendly on Friday (Jun 5) but fell to a 1-2 home defeat. At the Jalan Besar stadium, first half goals from Sai Erjinniao and Zhang Yuning were enough to give the away side the victory despite a 76th-minute Ilhan Fandi strike. China are 94th in the FIFA world rankings, while the Lions are 149th. This was the second of two friendlies for Lions as part of preparations for next month's Asean Championship and the 2027 Asian Cup, where China will also feature. Gavin Lee's men beat Mongolia 4-0 on Sunday and they started the game looking assured in possession. But it was their opponents who looked much more clinical and they almost took the lead in the 13th minute, only for Wei Shihao's header to rebound off the post. Minutes later, they got their reward as the Brazilian-born naturalised midfielder Sai powered a header past a stranded Izwan Mahbud. Singapore's first clear-cut chance came in the 21 minutes as a brilliant switch from Shah Shahiran started a flowing move, but Ryhan Stewart skied over. And the Lions came even closer about ten minutes later as a China defender headed past his on-

rushing keeper Li Hao with Shawal Anuar pressing hard. However, Li recovered well to grab the ball on the line with the nippy attacker pressing. China doubled their lead with five minutes left to play in the half after Rustam Lutfullin adjudged that Singapore skipper Hariss Harun handled in the box. Up stepped Zhang to smash home. The Lions dominated possession in the early exchanges of the second half and almost got their reward in the 57th minute. Excellent work from Ryhan saw him turn past his man and fire a shot, which was turned away. The resultant rebound from Glenn Kweh was then bravely blocked by a defender. China, however, were not without threat as a dinked ball over the top in the 65th minute found Lin Liangming but he lashed over. Lee's men got their goal soon after as Ilhan pounced on a poor clearance to drill home. Shao Jiayi's side have registered good results in recent times, most recently beating World Cup-bound Curaçao 2-0 in March. Prior to Friday, the Lions last faced China in a 2024 World Cup qualifier, registering a come-from-behind 2-2 draw at the National Stadium, before losing 1-4 away.

Jorhat District Steps into a Cleaner Future with the Inauguration of a State-of-the-Art Plastic Waste Management Unit on World Environment Day

Jorhat, June 5: Today on June 5th, 2026, in conjunction with



World Environment Day, a historic step was successfully implemented in the 65 No. Baghchung Gaon Panchayat of Jorhat district with the aim of disposing of plastic waste. Under the initiative of Swachh Bharat Mission (Gramin), Assam, and with the joint courtesy of Titabor Development Block and Central Jorhat Development Block, a state-of-the-art "Plastic Waste Management Unit (PWMU)" was officially dedicated to the public today. This long-term project has been undertaken with the goal of

making Jorhat district free from plastic waste and building a clean and green environment.

This important scheme was formally inaugurated by the honorable District Commissioner of Jorhat district, Shri Jay Shivani (IAS). The Plastic Waste Management Unit, successfully opened today, will play a groundbreaking role in the coming days in disposing of and recycling the plastic waste of the entire region's rural and urban areas in a scientifically sound manner. On this auspicious occasion of World Environment Day, the district administration has appealed to all citizens to stop using plastic and to keep their environment clean.

The event was attended by the Chief Executive Officer of Jorhat Zilla Parishad, Shri Manoj Kumar Baruah, President of Jorhat Zilla Parishad, Shri Surajit Saikia, President of Titabor Anchalik Panchayat, Shri Mandeep Tungkhungia, President of Central Jorhat Anchalik Panchayat, Shrimati Jinamoni Neog Bora, Block Development Officers, several distinguished and prominent personalities, officials and employees of the Block Development and Gaon Panchayat offices, along with the local public.

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District Level Bal Vaigyanik....

among school students. A total of 60 exhibits were presented across two categories: Middle Level (Classes VI-VIII) and Secondary Level (Classes IX-XII). Young innovators from various schools representing all educational blocks of Barpeta and Bajali districts enthusiastically showcased their scientific models and creative ideas.

The participants received valuable guidance, encouragement, and constructive feedback from the judges, Prof. Prabhat Choudhury and Prof. Pranjal Bora of B. H. College, Howly.

The event was inaugurated by Mrinal Choudhury, Principal of DIET Barpeta, Howly. The Additional District Commissioner (Education) and District Mission Coordinator (DMC), Barpeta, attended the programme as the Chief Guest and appreciated the efforts of the students and organizers in promoting scientific inquiry and innovation.

To encourage holistic creativity and artistic expression, a vibrant Art Competition was also organized alongside the exhibition.

The District Level Bal Vaigyanik Pradarshani 2026 provided an excellent platform for students to demonstrate their talents, exchange ideas, and develop a spirit of scientific exploration, making the event a grand success.

Cachar observes World Environment...

guidance of the District Administration.

The district joined the State-wide plantation campaign envisioned by the Hon'ble Chief Minister of Assam, Dr Himanta Biswa Sarma, which aims to plant one crore saplings through 35 lakh Women Self-Help Group (SHG) members across the State. As part of the initiative, 1,49,365 SHG members under the Assam State Rural Livelihoods Mission (ASRLM) in Cachar have pledged to plant 2,97,263 saplings.

A plantation programme was conducted at the Silchar Medical College and Hospital (SMCH) project site in the presence of representatives from AHIMDS, the Public Works Department (PWD) and the Project Management Consultant (PMC).

The Sericulture Department Cachar also organized plantation drives at Darmikhal Government Eri Seed Grainage, Pailapool Government Seri Farm and Harinagar Government Eri Seed Grainage, contributing to the district-wide afforestation initiative.

Observance of World Environment Day was also held in the offices of the Executive Engineer, PWRD, Silchar and Udharbond Territorial Road Division, as well as the PWRD Dholai and Sonai Territorial Road Divisions, where officers and staff members participated in sapling plantation activities and renewed their commitment towards environmental protection.

The Office of the Assistant Labour Commissioner, Silchar, marked the occasion through plantation and awareness activities.

At the Udharbond Revenue Circle Office, a plantation drive was organized within the office premises. The programme was attended by the Circle Officer, SDM and Head of Office, Block Development Officer, Block Elementary Education Officer, Field Officer (Disaster Management), NDRF Inspector, officials and staff members of the Circle Office, along with members of the District Disaster Response Force (DDRF), Circle Quick Response Team (CQRT) and Aapda Mitra volunteers. During the programme, speakers highlighted the importance of environmental conservation, sustainable development and the collective responsibility of safeguarding natural resources for future generations. More than fifty saplings were planted during the drive as a symbol of commitment towards enhancing the district's green cover.

The Dholai Co-District Office also observed World Environment Day through a plantation programme involving officers and staff members.

The district-wide observance witnessed enthusiastic participation from government departments, SHG members, volunteers and local stakeholders. Plantation drives were undertaken across the district as part of the observance.

Meanwhile, the District Administration, Cachar has also appealed to all citizens to actively participate in environmental conservation efforts by planting, protecting and nurturing saplings, thereby contributing towards a cleaner, greener and more sustainable future.

This was stated in a press release issued by the Regional Office of Information and Public Relations, Barak Valley Zone, Silchar, Assam.

Nagaon Marks World Environment...

participation, reaffirming the collective commitment towards environmental conservation and sustainable living.

Leading the district-level celebrations, Nagaon District Commissioner Debashis Sharma participated in a plantation programme at Pubthoria village under Kaliabor Development Block and urged citizens to remain vigilant in protecting nature. He highlighted that saplings were planted in every development block of the district and stressed the importance of nurturing them for a greener future. He also called upon people to avoid single-use plastics and maintain cleanliness to safeguard the environment.

In Nagaon town, a large-scale plantation drive was launched at Milanpur by the Nagaon Municipal Board in collaboration with the Forest Department. MLA Rupak Sharma inaugurated the programme and emphasized that protecting nature through tree plantation is a collective responsibility.

The Nagaon Electronic Media Association observed both its Foundation Day and World Environment Day with tree plantation activities and a special lecture on "People, Environment and Nature of Assam." Renowned environmentalist and artist Prashanta Kumar Bordoloi highlighted emerging scientific research on plastic-degrading fungi and stressed the need for stronger environmental protection measures.

Several educational institutions, social organizations, senior citizens' groups, government departments, and cultural bodies also organized plantation drives, cleanliness campaigns, awareness meetings, and environmental pledges throughout the district. Notably, more than 800 saplings were planted at the permanent campus of Mahapurusha Srimanta Sankaradeva University at Raidongia.

The district-wide observance echoed the spirit of World Environment Day 2026, which focuses on climate action and environmental sustainability, inspiring citizens to work collectively for a greener and healthier future.

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CM Sarma attends Council of ...

improving educational infrastructure and expanding opportunities for students. He is widely expected to continue playing a leading role in the education sector. Another important inclusion in the cabinet is Pijush Hazarika, a BJP MLA from the Jagiroad constituency, who has represented the constituency since 2011. Hazarika has previously served as a Cabinet Minister and handled important portfolios including Water Resources, Parliamentary Affairs and Social Justice. A close associate of Chief Minister Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma, he is expected to receive a significant portfolio in the new cabinet. His administrative experience and understanding of governance processes make him an important addition to the expanded ministry. Over the years, Hazarika has established himself as a leader with extensive grassroots engagement, and his experience is expected to support the government's efforts in addressing social and developmental challenges. Bimal Borah, the MLA from Tingkhong Legislative Assembly Constituency, also took oath as a Cabinet Minister. Since becoming an MLA in 2016, Borah has served in various ministerial capacities and handled portfolios including Cultural Affairs, Tourism, Sports and Youth Welfare, Power, Public Enterprises and Industries and Commerce. Considered a loyalist of former Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal, Borah had smoothly integrated into the Sarma cabinet and earned appreciation for his role as Cultural Affairs Minister. His experience across these sectors positions him as an important contributor to the government's development agenda. Biswajit Daimary was sworn in as a minister, bringing considerable legislative and administrative experience to the Council of Ministers. The BJP MLA from Tamulpur Legislative Assembly Constituency has previously served as Speaker of the Assam Legislative Assembly and as a Member of Parliament in the Rajya Sabha. A senior Bodo leader, Daimary's long public service career includes leadership roles in parliamentary affairs and legislative administration. His induction reflects the government's emphasis on incorporating experienced leaders who possess a deep understanding of governance and policymaking. The cabinet expansion also included several other notable legislators whose induction reflects the government's commitment to balanced representation and inclusive governance. Among them are Ashwini Ray Sarkar, Ashok Singhal, Jayanta Malla Baruah, Kaushik Rai, Krishnendu Paul, Nilima Devi and Sushanta Borgohain. Together, these leaders bring diverse experiences and perspectives that are expected to enhance the government's ability to address a broad spectrum of developmental priorities. Ashwini Ray Sarkar, MLA from Golakganj in Dhubri district, holds particular significance as the only Hindu candidate elected from a Muslim-majority constituency. Sushanta Borgohain, MLA from Demow in Sivasagar district, has emerged as a prominent Ahom face for the BJP. Nilima Devi, representing Mangaldai in Darrang district, was elected to the Assembly for the first time and her induction is being viewed as a significant step towards strengthening women's representation in governance. The Chief Minister's Office highlighted her commitment to serving Assam with vision and dedication. Another significant addition is Jayanta Malla Baruah, a prominent political figure from Lower Assam. Baruah has served as MLA from Nalbari and previously handled important portfolios including Public Health Engineering, Tourism, Skill Development and Housing and Urban Affairs. His experience in urban development, tourism promotion and employment generation is expected to provide continuity to ongoing development initiatives. Ashok Singhal, who hails from Sonitpur district, has also emerged as a significant figure in the state leadership. He played an important role during the delimitation process and is known for his ideological association with the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh. Kaushik Rai and Krishnendu Paul represent two major linguistic communities in Barak Valley, with one being a Bengali-speaking leader and the other a Hindi-speaking leader. Their inclusion is viewed as recognition of the support extended by both communities and reflects the government's effort to maintain broad-based representation. While Ashwini Ray Sarkar, Sushanta Borgohain, Nilima Devi and Biswajit Daimary are among the first-time ministers, the remaining inductees have previously served in ministerial roles and bring valuable administrative experience to the cabinet. The expansion also reinforces coalition cooperation within the National Democratic Alliance framework. Two ministers, Keshab Mahanta and Atul Bora, represent the Asom Gana Parishad, highlighting the continued strength of the alliance and its collaborative approach towards governance. Including leaders who had already been sworn in earlier, such as Rameswar Teli, Ajanta Neog, Chandan Boro and Atul Bora, the cabinet now comprises 17 ministers. The expanded Council of Ministers reflects Chief Minister Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma's broader vision of building a government capable of responding effectively to emerging challenges while maintaining a strong focus on development and public welfare. Under his leadership, Assam has witnessed notable progress in infrastructure development, healthcare expansion, educational reforms, investment promotion and social welfare initiatives. The Chief Minister has consistently emphasized efficient governance, accountability and results-oriented administration. The expanded ministry is expected to enhance the government's capacity to implement policies more effectively and ensure that development benefits reach all sections of society. Health and education remain among the government's top priorities, and the inclusion of experienced leaders in these sectors is expected to provide renewed momentum to ongoing reforms. Efforts aimed at strengthening healthcare services, modernising hospitals, improving school infrastructure, enhancing higher education opportunities and promoting skill development are expected to continue with greater focus. Infrastructure development remains a cornerstone of Assam's growth strategy. Significant investments in roads, bridges, railways, waterways, urban development and rural connectivity have transformed the state's development landscape in recent years. The government remains committed to enhancing transportation networks, improving logistics infrastructure and promoting regional connectivity. Such initiatives are expected to boost trade, facilitate investment and create employment opportunities. Tourism and cultural promotion are also expected to receive continued attention under the leadership of ministers with experience in these sectors. Assam's rich cultural heritage, natural beauty, wildlife reserves and historical sites offer immense potential for tourism development. The government's efforts to position Assam as a leading tourism destination have already yielded encouraging results, and the expanded ministry is expected to further strengthen initiatives aimed at attracting visitors, improving tourism infrastructure and promoting local economic development. Economic growth and investment promotion remain central to the government's agenda. The BJP-led NDA government continues to focus on improving the ease of doing business, attracting domestic and international investment, supporting entrepreneurship and creating employment opportunities. Assam's strategic location as the gateway to Northeast India places it in a unique position to benefit from regional trade and connectivity initiatives. As the expanded Council of Ministers assumes its responsibilities, expectations are high that the government will continue to deliver on its commitments to the people of Assam. The administration's emphasis on transparency, accountability, inclusive development and efficient governance has helped build public confidence and support. The cabinet expansion represents more than a routine administrative exercise; it signals the government's determination to accelerate development, strengthen governance and build a stronger future for Assam. By combining experienced leadership with a clear developmental vision, the administration aims to address contemporary challenges while creating new opportunities for growth and prosperity. With dedicated ministers working under the leadership of Chief Minister Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma and with two cabinet berths remaining vacant for future expansion, Assam stands poised to achieve new milestones in governance, development and inclusive growth, reinforcing its position as one of the most dynamic and progressive states in the country.

World Environment Day...

Commissioner's Office under the joint initiative of the District Administration and the Jorhat District Civil Defence Department. Various indigenous species of fruit-bearing and shade-providing saplings were planted on the office campus. Officials and employees of the district administration, as well as officers and volunteers of the Civil Defence force, actively participated in this program.

The officials and employees not only planted the saplings but also took a pledge to ensure their proper care and protection. At a time of serious issues like current global warming and climate change, every small step taken by such government offices sends a positive message to society. This effort of the district administration will not only make the office campus green but will also inspire the public to become conscious of environmental protection.

Governor plants saplings on...

responsible practices and participate in afforestation initiatives, noting that every sapling planted today is an investment for a healthier and greener tomorrow.

First Lady of Assam, Smt. Kumud Devi, also planted a sapling on the occasion.

DC Darrang visits Model...

Sipajhar, Circle Officer, Patharughat Revenue Circle and Executive Engineer, Lok Nirman (Building) department. The District Commissioner inspected the school infrastructure and reviewed the progress of the construction works. It is observed that the project in nearing completion and is expected to become operational soon. The District Administration remains committed to strengthening educational infrastructure and ensuring quality education for all specially in rural areas.

Assam Skill University observed World Environment Day with a large-scale Plantation Drive

Bhabesh Kalita, (NGO), Road and can contribute mean- The University re- small action can make



Mangaldai, Jun 5: Assam Skill University, Mangaldai, observed World Environment Day 2026 with great enthusiasm and commitment towards environmental sustainability through a plantation drive held at its campus. The event was organized in line with this year's theme, "Inspired by Nature, For Climate, For Our Future."

The programme was attended by Hon'ble Vice Chancellor of Assam Skill University, Shri Subhash Chandra Das (IAS Retd.), Registrar Shri Hanif Noorani, ACS, Prof. (Dr.) Manoj Kumar Deka, Dean (Academics), Heads of Departments, university officials and staff, representatives from IAS Colony Tennis Club, We Care for Nature

Naikhatra Foundation (NGO), Mangaldai, guest faculty members from Häme University of Applied Sciences, Finland, namely Dr. Ulla Maija Knuutti, Dr. Marja Laurikainen and Dr. Virve Kallioniemi, along with valued sponsors Pawan Communications Private Limited, Brahmaputra Infrastructure Limited and Maverick Technologies.

Addressing the gathering, Hon'ble Vice Chancellor Shri Subhash Chandra Das emphasized that environmental responsibility should extend beyond ceremonial observances. He highlighted that planting saplings is only the first step and stressed the importance of nurturing and protecting them throughout their growth so that they

ingfully to a sustainable future.

Speaking on the occasion, Registrar Shri. Hanif Noorani underscored the urgent need for afforestation in the face of rising temperatures and global climate challenges. He urged everyone to adopt responsible environmental practices and emphasized that for every tree cut down, several more should be planted. He called upon all present to pledge their commitment towards preserving nature and ensuring a greener future for coming generations.

As part of the celebration, all dignitaries, guests, faculty members, officials and staff participated in a plantation drive and planted more than 150 saplings across the university campus.

affirmed its commitment to transforming the campus into a thriving green ecosystem and pledged to continue undertaking initiatives that promote environmental conservation, afforestation and sustainable development. Through such efforts, Assam Skill University aims to contribute meaningfully towards building environmental awareness and fostering a culture of ecological responsibility among students and the wider community.

The vote of thanks was delivered by Dr. Jagadish Nath, Deputy Registrar, Assam Skill University.

The programme concluded with a collective pledge to work towards a cleaner, greener and more sustainable future, reaffirming that every

Preparations Underway in Nagaon for Sri Sri Jagannath Mahaprabhu's Rath Yatra

Staff Reporter, Nagaon, June 5: Preparations are in full swing for the grand celebration of Sri Sri Jagannath Mahaprabhu's Rath Yatra in Nagaon. The festival will be organized by the Sri Sri Jagannath Mandir Nyas Samiti, located in the heart of Nagaon town, continuing its long-standing tradition of celebrating the sacred occasion with devotion and enthusiasm.

A meeting held at the Jagannath Temple auditorium on Wednesday evening under the chairmanship of Nyas Samiti president Kanu Bezbaruah discussed various aspects of the upcoming festival and finalized arrangements for its successful conduct.

An organizing committee was constituted unanimously with Ranjit Kumar Tamuli Phukan as President, Kanul Saha as Secretary, Deuram Baruah as Treasurer and Jatin Chandra Sharma as Auditor.

The office-bearers of the Nyas Samiti, including President Kanu Bezbaruah, Secretary Balin Chandra Mahanta and Treasurer Paran Kumar Mahanta, have appealed to devotees and the public to extend their wholehearted cooperation and participation in the festival.

The Rath Yatra festival will be observed on July 16, attracting devotees from across the region.

WED celebrated at Sankartila



Uttam Ch. Nath, City Correspondent, Guwahati, Jun 5: The World Environment Day was also celebrated at the premises of Krishnanagar Community Naamghar, Sankartila, Krishnanagar, Japorigog here on 5th of June. On the occasion, the MLA of New Guwahati LAC Diplu Ranjan Sarma, Chairman of ASTC Pranabjyoti Lahkar, GMC Councillor of Ward No. 50 Utpal Mahanta, BJP Bahini Mandal leader Saramgan Bordoloi and other dignitaries planted the saplings at Krishnanagar Naamghar field before 10-30 a.m. Previously a brief meeting was held on the occasion and the meeting was presided over by Satyen Talukdar (ACS Retired). All the programmes were anchored and welcome address was delivered by one of the advisers of Krishnanagar Community Naamghar Committee Pramod Ch Kakoti. MLA Diplu Ranjan Sarma and Pranabjyoti Lahkar delivered the brief speeches on the occasion, All the executive members of Krishnanagar Community Naamghar Committee and most of the other committees members of the locality including women were present to grace the occasion. MLA Diplu Ranjan Sarma and associates celebrated the World Environment Day at Sankartila in Japorigog-Hengrabari area.

Tree Plantation Drive by 'Drishyapat Sivasagar' on World Environment Day

Sivasagar, June 5: Like in previous years, Mrinanka Saikia, Amanga Mohan Sharma, Dr.



'Drishyapat Sivasagar,' one of the leading cultural and social voluntary organizations of Sivasagar, undertook a commendable initiative on the auspicious occasion of World Environment Day this year as well. Keeping in mind the threats of climate change and rising global temperatures, the members of the organization planted a large number of saplings across various parts of Sivasagar town to spread the message of environmental protection.

As part of the day's program, members planted various species of fruit-bearing and shade-providing trees at the premises of the historic Amolapatty Hindu Dharmasabha Namghar and the Shani Mandir, pledging to build a greener earth. The plantation drive was not limited to these religious premises but extended to various other public places in the town as well.

It is noteworthy that 'Drishyapat Sivasagar' has always played a pioneering role not only in cultural pursuits but also in socially relevant activities. Through initiatives like voluntary blood donation, drama performances, helping the needy, and regular tree plantation programs for nature conservation, the organization has been successful in creating a positive impact on the intellectual and social environment of the town.

The program saw the participation of several prominent members, including the organization's President Dr. Moni Pathak, Working President Anjan Kumar Baruah,

Pawan Baruah, Arabinda Baruah, Swapnali Sarma Bhattacharyya, Anjima Pathak, Pinky Sarma, Munu Sarma Pathak, Bina Goswami, Bandana Goswami Borthakur, Shyamal Rajguru, and Debasish Bora. Along with planting saplings, all the members urged everyone to remain conscious and ensure the proper care and maintenance of the planted trees. The Secretary of the organization, Abhinav Dev Kashyap, informed that the program was completed successfully.

Colorful Programmes held at Sivasagar University on World Environment Day

"Every Day Should Be Environment Day" – Vice-Chancellor Mahadev Patgiri

Sabir Ahmed, Sivasagar, June 5: On the occasion of World Environment Day, Sivasagar University organized a series of colorful and meaningful programmes aimed at promoting environmental conservation and sustainable living. The events were jointly organized by the university's Institution's Innovation Council (IIC) and Internal Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC), with active participation from students, creating an atmosphere of environmental awareness and responsibility across the campus.

The programme began with students of the Department of Botany taking an environmental protection pledge, followed by a tree plantation drive within the university campus. The Department of Chemistry organized a theme-based photography competition and a "One Minute Green Thought" contest, which showcased the creativity and environmental consciousness of the students. Volunteers of the Na-

tional Service Scheme (NSS) conducted a cleanliness drive and awareness campaign, while cadets of the National Cadet Corps (NCC) organized a "Green Signature Campaign," collecting signatures from participants in support of environmental conservation and climate change mitigation.

Addressing an open meeting held on the occasion, Vice-Chancellor Professor Mahadev Patgiri emphasized that environmental conservation should not be confined to June 5 alone but must become an integral part of everyday life. He stated, "Protecting the environment should be a daily practice rather than an activity limited to World Environment Day." Dr. Utpal Dutta, Dean of the Faculty of Science, highlighted the importance of implementing Prime Minister Narendra Modi's "Mission LiFE" (Lifestyle for Environment) initiative in everyday life.

Other distinguished speakers at the event in-

cluded Academic Registrar Dr. Tridib Mahanta, Dean of Students' Welfare Diganta Bora, and Professor Pradip Goswami, who delivered inspiring speeches on the importance of environmental protection and sustainability. Earlier, Dr. Nandita Goswami, Director of the Institution's Innovation Council (IIC), welcomed the participants and explained the significance of World Environment Day while appreciating the enthusiastic involvement of students in the programmes. In addition, the Sivasagar Branch of the Assam Science Society organized a tree plantation programme under the supervision of its President Dr. Swapnil Hazarika and Secretary Dr. Paramartha Gogoi.

The day-long activities conveyed a positive message about environmental conservation to people from all sections of society and encouraged collective efforts toward building a greener, healthier, and more sustainable future.

World Environment Day Observed at B.K. Nityananda-Wahed Ali High School, Pakabetbari

NKMajhi, Gobardhana, June 5: correspondent- Along with the rest of the world, World Environment Day was observed today at B.K. Nityananda-Wahed Ali High School, located in Pakabetbari village under the 69 No. Sundaridia Gaon Panchayat in Barpeta district.

The programme was organized by the school's Eco and Youth Club. On the occasion, valuable saplings were planted on the school campus. Following government directives, the students, teachers, and staff were also administered the World Environment Day pledge by the school's Headmaster, Humayun Kabir.

Addressing the gathering, the Headmaster elaborately explained the significance and importance of World Environment Day and shared informative insights on environmental conservation.

The programme was conducted by Academic Supervisor Liton Saha. Among those present were Shikha Dutta, Coordinator of the Pakabetbari Cluster Resource Centre; Abdur Rahim, Teacher-in-Charge of the Eco and Youth Club; journalists Pradip Kumar Sarkar and Rahmat Ali; along with the school's teachers, staff members, and students.

