



Glorious 16<sup>th</sup> Year

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## Brief Post

### Forest official injured

**Tapan Sen Gupta, Correspondent, Oran, July 18:** A forest official was injured after four rounds were accidentally discharged from his service firearm at Orang National Park on Saturday.

The injured official has been identified as Bipin Chandra Deka (50), a resident of Prafulla Nagar, Mangaldai.

According to sources, Deka had returned to his residential quarters after completing a routine night patrol inside the national park when the firearm reportedly went off accidentally. Four bullets passed through his right arm, leaving him injured.

He was immediately rushed to Mangaldai Civil Hospital and was later referred to Gauhati Medical College and Hospital (GMCH) for advanced treatment.

Deka is stated to be out of danger.

Meanwhile, wildlife officials under the Mangaldai Forest Division refrained from commenting on the incident.

### BRICS back Women

**New Delhi:** A new chapter in international cooperation on women-led development has been written with the successful conclusion of the BRICS Women Ministers' Meeting, where member countries adopted the first-ever joint statement under the Women Ministers' Track.

# India Marks New Space Era With Private Rocket Orbit Success

PM Modi, CM Sarma hail India's private space launch milestone

**New Delhi, July 18:** India scripted a defining chapter in its space journey as Hyderabad-based Skyroot Aerospace successfully placed its maiden privately developed orbital launch vehicle, Vikram-1 Test Flight-1, into a nearly 450-kilometre orbit, making the country the third in the world to achieve private orbital launch capability. The mission represents a major breakthrough for India's rapidly expanding commercial space sector and reflects the growing role of private enterprise in a domain that was once exclusively driven by national space agencies. Vikram-1 completed all four stages of its mission with precision before injecting its payloads into the planned orbit, validating years of indigenous research, engineering and innovation by the startup founded by former ISRO scientists. The successful

launch marks not only a technological achievement but also a turning point in India's ambition to emerge as a leading global space economy, where government institutions and private companies work together to build advanced capabilities for scientific, commercial and strategic purposes. The milestone comes after a series of reforms introduced over recent years that opened India's space sector to private participation, enabling startups to design, manufacture and

launch rockets while benefiting from technical guidance, testing

strates how policy reforms encourage innovation, entrepreneurship and technology development are transforming India's space ecosystem into one of the world's fastest-growing aerospace sectors.

Vikram-1, an all-carbon composite four-stage launch vehicle equipped with a 3D-printed engine, has been designed to provide rapid, reliable and on-demand launch services for small satellites, addressing the growing global demand for affordable access to space. The mission also tested several advanced technologies aimed at improving launch efficiency while contributing to long-term sustainability in space operations, including systems associated with reducing orbital debris and enhancing mission reliability. The successful orbital insertion validates these technologies and positions Skyroot Aerospace among a select group of private companies worldwide capable of independently delivering payloads into orbit. Prime Minister Narendra Modi congratulated the Skyroot Aerospace team on the successful launch, describing it as a historic milestone in India's space journey and stating that the mission opens a new dimension for the country's space ambitions. He highlighted that Vikram-1 reflects India's growing strengths in innovation, technology and entrepreneurship while showcasing the ingenuity and determination of the nation's youth. Before the launch, the Prime Minister had encouraged citizens, particularly young people, to witness the mission and support Team Skyroot, saying the four-stage rocket symbolised the new opportunities emerging from reforms in India's space sector. Following the successful orbital mission, he extended heartfelt congratulations to the engineers, scientists and professionals behind Vikram-1, expressing confidence that the achievement would inspire an entirely new generation of innovators and entrepreneurs across the country. The Prime Minister's remarks underscored the government's continued emphasis on creating a robust ecosystem where startups,



VIKRAM-1  
TEST FLIGHT-1  
MISSION ARGAMAN

facilities and launch infrastructure made available through the Indian Space Research Organisation and the Indian National Space Promotion and Authorisation Centre (IN-SPACe). The launch demon-

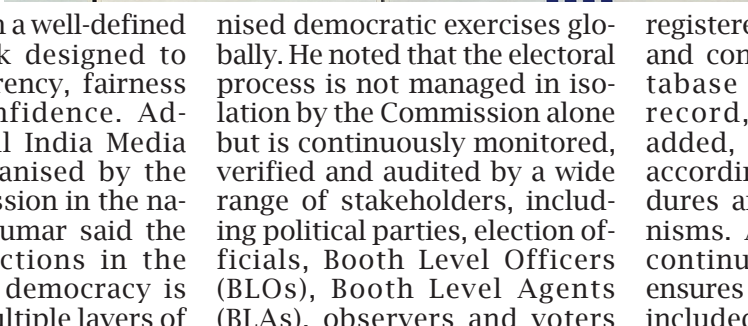
strates how policy reforms encourage innovation, entrepreneurship and technology development are transforming India's space ecosystem into one of the world's fastest-growing aerospace sectors.

## India's Electoral rolls living documents evolving with time: CEC

**New Delhi, July 18:** Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar has underlined that the electoral process in India is firmly anchored in the Constitution, the Representation of the People Acts, relevant electoral laws, and the instructions issued by the Election Commission of India (ECI), asserting that every stage of an election is conducted within a well-defined legal framework designed to uphold transparency, fairness and public confidence. Addressing the All India Media Conference organised by the Election Commission in the national capital, Kumar said the world's largest democracy is supported by multiple layers of

checks and balances, making it one of the most closely scruti-

themselves. Stressing the importance of credibility in elections, Kumar said India's electoral system has evolved over decades through legal reforms, technological advancements and institutional safeguards, enabling it to efficiently manage elections involving hundreds of millions of voters across diverse geographical, linguistic and cultural regions. He explained that the electoral roll, which currently includes nearly 95 crore registered electors, is a dynamic and continuously updated database rather than a static record, with names being added, corrected or removed according to statutory procedures and verification mechanisms. According to him, the continuous revision process ensures that eligible citizens are included



nised democratic exercises globally. He noted that the electoral process is not managed in isolation by the Commission alone but is continuously monitored, verified and audited by a wide range of stakeholders, including political parties, election officials, Booth Level Officers (BLOs), Booth Level Agents (BLAs), observers and voters

## Kanpur Central-Guwahati-Kanpur Central Weekly Special

Train Services Extended for Eight Additional Trips Over NFR

**Maligaon, July 18:** To facilitate the travel requirements and to clear the extra rush of passengers during the ongoing travel season, it has been decided to extend the services of Train No. 04127/04128 (Kanpur Central-Guwahati-Kanpur Central Weekly) Special train. The additional services will run on the existing timings, route and stoppages, ensuring greater travel convenience for passengers travelling between Assam, West Bengal, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and other intermediate stations.



## 9<sup>th</sup> Annual Function of Batadrava Art School, Honours Eminent Contributors to Society and Culture

**Safiqur Rahman, Nagaon, July 18:** The 9th Annual Function of Batadrava Art School was celebrated with great enthusiasm and cultural splendour at the open stage of the Srimanta Sankardeva Research Institute, Batadrava, on Saturday. The day-long programme brought together artists, educationists, students, parents and distinguished guests, reflecting the institution's commitment to pro-



moting art and culture among the younger generation.

The celebration began with the ceremonial lighting of the lamp by Indramohan Baruah, General Secretary of the Srimanta Sankardeva Research Institute, followed by

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# BJP's Development Agenda Wins Hearts in Assam: CM

**Guwahati:** NDA has pledged continued development for Assam constituencies, highlighting its commitment to transforming the region through comprehensive infrastructure upgrades, improved healthcare, and education. Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma emphasized the NDA’s unwavering dedication to creating jobs, fostering economic growth, and ensuring security, urging voters to support the alliance’s progress-focused agenda. Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma intensified his campaign efforts for BJP candidates in Samaguri and Bihali Legislative Assembly Constituencies (LACs), ahead of the upcoming bye-elections, appealing to the people’s support to secure a strong showing for the party. Addressing a rally in Samaguri, Sarma strongly criticized the Congress party, accusing its leadership of exploiting the region for personal political gains and asserting that the BJP, under his leadership, is dedicated to serving the people of the constituency with integrity and a focus on development. Sarma, who has held the Chief Minister’s office since May 2021, highlighted the contrast between his party’s approach to governance and the alleged history of Congress leadership in the region, emphasizing that under the BJP’s rule, Assam has witnessed a new era of development and good governance. He reassured the gathering that the BJP’s agenda is centered on tangible progress, rather than self-interest, and urged the people of Samaguri and Bihali to vote for BJP candidates, promising a brighter future for the constituencies. Reflecting on his own political journey, Sarma reminded the audience of his transition from being a long-time member of the Indian National Congress to joining the BJP and subsequently leading the party to victory in Assam. A seasoned and influential figure in Assamese politics, Sarma has effectively connected with the public by championing development and good governance, while also serving as the convenor of the North-East Democratic Alliance (NEDA). The rally underscored several core themes of the BJP’s campaign, which Sarma elaborated on for the crowd. He stressed that Congress leaders have historically exploited the people of Samaguri for their own political benefit, pledging that the BJP would serve the constituency’s needs with sincerity and dedication. Sarma went on to highlight the BJP’s recent achievements in Assam, including the launch of Mission Basundhara in 2021, which aims to address land-related issues for residents. This initiative, according to Sarma, has resonated with many people, especially those from marginalized sections, and stands as an example of the BJP’s commitment to resolving long-neglected community concerns. The Chief Minister urged the people of both Samaguri and Bihali LACs to support BJP candidates in the upcoming elections, expressing confidence that the party’s focus on development and good governance would bring about positive change for these constituencies. In addition to his election-centered messaging, Sarma’s rally also reflected his broader governance priorities and accomplishments. Since assuming office, Sarma has introduced a series of significant initiatives aimed at land reforms, anti-encroachment drives, and educational reforms, such as the conversion of state-funded madrasas into regular schools. These initiatives are part of his administration’s larger vision to transform Assam by addressing both the educational and social needs of the people. Sarma also highlighted his firm stance on security issues, particularly counter-terrorism efforts and extrajudicial measures, which have garnered both praise and controversy. His headline approach to maintaining law and order has drawn mixed reactions, with some praising him for restoring peace in volatile regions, while others have criticized his methods as heavy-handed. Nonetheless, Sarma’s influence within the state remains strong, and his campaign in Samaguri and Bihali represents a critical moment for the BJP, as the party seeks to solidify its

control across Assam. The upcoming bye-elections are seen as a significant test of the BJP’s support in the region, and Sarma’s outreach to voters emphasizes his vision for an Assam governed by the BJP’s principles of progress, security, and welfare. His speech concluded with a call to action, urging voters to turn out in large numbers and choose the BJP candidates, positioning the party as the only viable option for those who want a government focused on the welfare and prosperity of Assam. The Chief Minister’s dynamic campaign is expected to play a key role in consolidating BJP’s influence in the region, as the party strives to fulfill its promises of development and growth for the people of Assam. As the bye-elections draw nearer, the people of Samaguri and Bihali will decide whether Sarma’s vision for the state and his promises of progress will resonate with their aspirations. Sarma’s leadership has been marked by both achievements and controversies, and it is clear that his influence will remain pivotal in shaping the political landscape of Assam in the years to come. The outcome of the upcoming bye-elections will not only be crucial for BJP’s hold in Samaguri and Bihali but will also serve as a barometer for the party’s future prospects in Assam, where Sarma’s role as Chief Minister and his leadership within the BJP will continue to play a defining part in the region’s development. Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma has ramped up his campaign for the upcoming bye-elections in Samaguri and Bihali Legislative Assembly Constituencies (LACs), urging the people to vote for the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) candidates to ensure continued development and governance centered around the welfare of the region. At a rally held in Samaguri, Sarma took the opportunity to sharply criticize the Congress party, accusing it and its leadership of exploiting the people of the region for their personal and political gain. He painted a stark contrast between the BJP’s approach to governance and that of Congress, asserting that under the leadership of the BJP, Assam has entered a new phase of development, growth, and governance that places the needs of the people at the forefront. Sarma’s message was clear: the BJP’s commitment to progress is unwavering, and they are dedicated to serving the people with honesty and integrity, focusing on tangible results, rather than the political games played by previous administrations. During his address, Sarma reminded the crowd of his long political journey, from being a prominent member of the Indian National Congress to eventually joining the BJP. His transition to the BJP marked a significant turning point in Assam’s political landscape, as it led to the formation of a stable government in the state, characterized by focused leadership and a commitment to solving long-standing issues. Sarma, who has established himself as a key figure in Assamese politics, emphasized that his political evolution was driven by his desire to bring about real change, which he believes can only be achieved through a party like the BJP that truly understands the needs of the people. His position as the convenor of the North-East Democratic Alliance (NEDA) further underscores his importance in regional politics and his deep connection with the aspirations of the people of Assam and the larger Northeast. Sarma’s rally in Samaguri also focused heavily on BJP’s achievements and the numerous welfare programs that the party has implemented during his tenure as Chief Minister. One of the key initiatives highlighted by Sarma was Mission Basundhara, a scheme launched in 2021 with the objective of addressing land-related issues for residents across the state. This program has proven particularly impactful in Samaguri and other constituencies, as it seeks to streamline land documentation and resolve disputes that have long hindered the region’s progress. Sarma emphasized that this initiative is just one of many that demonstrate BJP’s com-

mitment to addressing the problems that have been neglected by previous governments. The Mission Basundhara program, according to Sarma, has resonated deeply with the people, as it has provided them with a sense of empowerment and ownership over their land, which has been a long-standing issue in rural areas. Sarma’s speech also underscored the broader goals of the BJP in terms of infrastructure development, education, healthcare, and security. He pointed to his government’s efforts to strengthen Assam’s infrastructure through road construction and bridge repairs, which are aimed at improving connectivity and providing better access to essential services. These projects are expected to boost economic activity and facilitate trade and commerce within Assam and beyond, ultimately leading to a more prosperous state. Sarma also mentioned the educational reforms under his leadership, including the conversion of state-funded madrasas into regular schools, a move that aims to modernize education in the state and provide better opportunities for the youth. The healthcare sector also received significant attention during Sarma’s address, as he discussed the expansion of medical services, particularly in rural areas. He cited the development of new medical facilities and the recruitment of more healthcare professionals as part of the government’s plan to improve access to quality healthcare for all residents. Sarma also emphasized his commitment to security and law and order in Assam, where he has taken strong measures against insurgent groups and organized crime. His tough stance on terrorism and security-related issues has garnered both support and criticism, with some praising him for restoring stability to the region, while others argue that his methods can be too aggressive. The Chief Minister’s remarks during the rally in Samaguri resonated deeply with the crowd, particularly his call for voters in both Samaguri and Bihali to back the BJP candidates in the bye-elections. Sarma expressed his confidence that the party’s developmental agenda and governance model would result in substantial improvements for these constituencies, urging the electorate to make their voices heard by voting for BJP. He concluded his speech by calling on the people to recognize the importance of these bye-elections, which will play a crucial role in determining the future direction of Assam and solidifying the BJP’s presence in the state. Sarma’s campaign in Samaguri and Bihali marks a critical moment in the BJP’s political journey in Assam, as the party seeks to expand its influence and deepen its roots across the region. The bye-elections in these constituencies are being closely watched as a litmus test for the BJP’s support base in Assam, and Sarma’s leadership will undoubtedly play a pivotal role in shaping the outcomes. His government’s initiatives have sparked both praise and controversy, and as the elections approach, the Chief Minister’s outreach to voters will continue to be a key factor in BJP’s strategy to secure victories in these constituencies. As Sarma looks to the future, he remains focused on his vision of an Assam that thrives under the principles of development, governance, and welfare. His leadership has been characterized by a mix of bold initiatives and firm policies, and while not everyone agrees with his approach, it is clear that Sarma’s influence remains strong. The outcome of the Samaguri and Bihali bye-elections will have a lasting impact on the state’s political landscape, as it will determine whether the electorate believes in the BJP’s promise of growth and prosperity, or whether the opposition’s claims of exploitation and neglect will resonate more strongly with the voters. The coming weeks will be crucial for Sarma and the BJP as they continue to fight for the people’s mandate and work toward building a better Assam.

## Assam's Skill Development Program Gets Major Boost

**Guwahati:** In a remarkable achievement for Assam’s youth, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma proudly announced that 47 candidates from Assam's ITI Tinsukia have been selected by Maruti Suzuki Motors in Ahmedabad, Gujarat, for apprenticeship and Fixed Term Contract (FTC) roles out of a pool of 59 candidates who underwent rigorous screening, marking a significant milestone for skill development in the region. Sarma, extending congratulations to the young achievers and their mentors, emphasized that this success reflected not only the students' dedication but also the high standard of training offered by ITI Tinsukia, underscoring the quality of Assam's vocational training institutions. The Chief Minister highlighted how this achievement aligns with the state's broader vision of empowering its youth through vocational education, pointing out that the government has been keen to develop a skilled workforce capable of competing in domestic and international job markets. Under the leadership of Sarma, the Assam government has made significant strides in enhancing vocational training, with a multi-layered approach that includes strengthening Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs), establishing Centers of Excellence, and developing the Assam Skill University, all aimed at preparing young people for the modern job market. As part of this strategic initiative, the government is making substantial investments in upgrading training facilities, providing industry-standard equipment, and aligning curriculum with the needs of emerging sectors, thereby ensuring that Assam’s youth are equipped with the technical expertise required in high-demand industries like automotive engineering, healthcare, and information technology. The success of the ITI Tinsukia candidates is an important testament to this forward-thinking strategy and showcases how investments in education and training are beginning to bear fruit in the form of tangible job opportunities, such as the collaboration with Maruti Suzuki. Maruti Suzuki’s selection of Assam’s ITI candidates for its roles highlights the growing recognition of the state’s ITIs, which have been modernized with cutting-edge tools and machinery to provide hands-on experience, ensuring that graduates are job-ready and prepared to meet industry demands. Sarma emphasized that these developments are part of Assam’s long-term strategy to create sustainable employment opportunities for its youth, reduce outmigration, and contribute to local and regional economic growth. With the establishment of institutions like the Assam Skill University, which will provide advanced technical education in fields critical to Assam’s future growth, the state is positioning itself as a hub for skill development and youth empowerment. The university is expected to become a leading center for vocational educa-

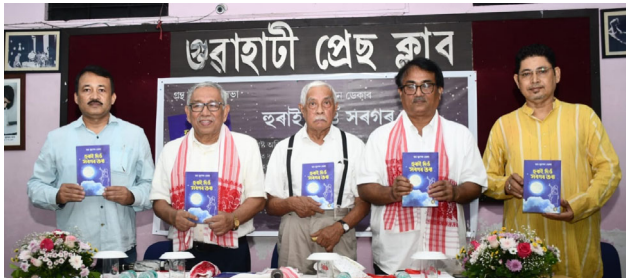
tion in the region, offering courses designed to meet the needs of industries and enhance the employability of Assam’s workforce. This is further complemented by the creation of Centers of Excellence, which are aimed at promoting specialized skills that will not only benefit the local economy but also help build a strong and self-sufficient workforce capable of driving innovation and economic progress. The selection of 47 students from ITI Tinsukia by Maruti Suzuki, one of India’s largest and most successful automotive manufacturers, demonstrates the success of these initiatives, as it provides young professionals with the opportunity to work with a globally recognized company, setting a benchmark for the potential of skill-based training in Assam. These candidates, many of whom come from rural backgrounds, have now been offered a platform to display the power of vocational education, and their success serves as an inspiration for other young people in the state. The ITI Tinsukia students' achievement in securing positions with Maruti Suzuki also underscores the alignment between Assam’s skill development initiatives and the needs of the corporate world, which is increasingly looking for candidates with specialized skills that can directly contribute to their business growth. The state government’s focus on strengthening the link between education and industry has created a pipeline of skilled workers who are ready to meet the demands of leading companies in sectors ranging from automotive engineering to information technology, thereby increasing employment prospects and bolstering the local economy. The selected candidates from ITI Tinsukia expressed their excitement and gratitude for the opportunity to work with Maruti Suzuki, noting that it would provide them with invaluable experience and help them build a career in the automotive industry. For many of these young professionals, the opportunity to work with such a prestigious company marks a major milestone in their careers, and they are eager to bring back their newfound skills to their communities, further enriching the local development ecosystem. This achievement is a clear reflection of the Assam government’s commitment to curbing unemployment, reducing outmigration, and ensuring that young people from all corners of the state have access to quality education and job opportunities. By focusing on skill development and ensuring that training programs are aligned with the needs of the industry, Assam is creating a future where its youth are equipped with the skills necessary to secure stable, well-paying jobs that will help them lead fulfilling lives and contribute to the state’s economic progress. Chief Minister Sarma, in his address, reiterated his government’s ongoing efforts to foster a skilled and resilient youth workforce, stating that the success of the ITI Tinsukia students was a direct result of the government’s multi-layer strategy to enhance vocational training across Assam. He expressed confidence that this initiative would continue to pave the way for more such success stories in the future, creating a steady stream of skilled professionals who can drive the state’s economic growth. As part of his vision, Sarma assured that the government would continue to invest in improving the state’s educational infrastructure, modernizing training facilities, and creating job opportunities for young people. With a focus on reducing unemployment, curbing outmigration, and developing a self-reliant workforce, the Assam government’s approach to skill development is positioning the state as a leader in shaping India’s skilled labor force. This milestone, which saw 47 candidates from ITI Tinsukia secure positions with Maruti Suzuki, is just one example of the transformative power of vocational education and training, and it signals a bright future for Assam’s youth. By aligning educational institutions with industry needs, providing cutting-edge training, and creating strategic partnerships with leading companies, the state is helping its young people thrive and succeed in a rapidly changing global economy. The government’s

efforts to empower youth through education and skill development are laying the foundation for a prosperous future for Assam, where its young professionals can play an instrumental role in driving economic growth and development across the region. The success of the ITI Tinsukia students is just the beginning, and as more young people from Assam take part in these skill development programs, the state is set to become a beacon of progress, innovation, and self-reliance. Through strategic investments in education and training, the Assam government is steadily creating an environment where youth are equipped with the tools, resources, and opportunities needed to build successful careers and contribute to the state’s growth, making the vision of a skilled and resilient workforce a reality. This accomplishment highlights the effectiveness of Assam’s skill-development vision, which emphasizes both technical proficiency and practical job-readiness, fostering an environment where young people can pursue stable careers and economic security. The selected candidates from ITI Tinsukia expressed excitement about joining Maruti Suzuki, grateful for the opportunity to work in one of the country’s leading companies, and many, hailing from rural backgrounds, now have an inspiring platform to demonstrate the power of vocational education. This milestone also signals a bright future for Assam’s skill development initiatives, as the state’s increasing alignment with industry needs presents a pathway for young professionals to thrive and even bring these learned skills back to their communities, enhancing local development. The support for skilled professionals from the Assam government further underscores its commitment to curbing unemployment, reducing outmigration, and creating a self-reliant workforce, ultimately setting a strong example of regional economic advancement. Through investments in education and strategic partnerships, the Assam government’s vision of a skilled and resilient youth workforce is steadily becoming a reality, and the success of the ITI Tinsukia candidates is a promising indication of the state’s growing role in shaping India’s skilled labor force. As more young people from Assam are equipped with the skills demanded by the modern job market, the state is building a robust workforce ready to tackle the challenges of the 21st century. By providing vocational education and creating direct links between institutions and industries, the Assam government is not only ensuring that its youth have access to job opportunities but is also promoting a culture of entrepreneurship and self-reliance, where young professionals can innovate and drive

change within their communities and beyond. The Maruti Suzuki selection marks a watershed moment in the state’s skill development efforts, setting a precedent for future initiatives that will allow Assam to continue making strides toward becoming a hub for skilled labor and talent, benefiting both the local and national economies. Furthermore, these efforts reflect the government’s broader goal of reducing unemployment and outmigration, as well as fostering an environment where young professionals can achieve upward mobility, contributing to both personal and community-wide prosperity. With continued support for skill-based education, the Assam government is ensuring that its young people are not only job-ready but also equipped to shape the future of their state and nation, making significant strides toward an economically secure and self-reliant Assam.

## Assamese story book "hurai diu saragar tora" by dr. Bhupen deka " released

**Guwahati :** A meeting held in the premises of Guwahati Press Club on July 18, 2026 for the release of



Assamese story Book " Hurai Diu Saragar Tora" by Dr. Bhupen Deka, a retired Professor and Head of the Department of Plastic Surgery, Gauhati Medical College. The book was released by noted educationist and writer Dr. Maheswar Kalita and Mr. Debabrata Das, Sahitya Acad-

emy Award winner are present in the meeting as Guests-of-Honour in presence of august gathering. Both of them highly spoke about the book. It was doctor Deka's sixth book. His earlier books were- "Amar Sahitya Sanskriti Charai Chirikatir Katha", " The Relevance of Assam and the North-East in the Mahabharata"(Bi-lingual), 'Jonak Nisar Gaan", "Plastic Surgeryr Katha", and "Light and Shade". The event was conducted by Jayanta Sarma. At close, Ujjal Bora of Progya Mediahype, the publisher of the book offered the vote of thanks.

# HCMCT Manipal Hospital launches special cancer OPD addressing rising cancer burden

**Guwahati:** With cancer cases on the rise across India, HCMCT Manipal Hospital, Dwarka, has launched a Special Oncology OPD in Guwahati

According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), the cancer cases in India is expected to get double by 2050, with gastrointestinal can-



to bring expert cancer consultations closer to patients, improving timely access to specialized care while reducing the need to travel for advanced treatment. The OPD will be held every second Sunday, from 10:00 AM to 12:00 PM at UHS, Vista Super Specialty Clinic, Lachit Nagar, Guwahati, with consultations by Dr. Bikram Kumar Deka, Consultant – Surgical Oncology, HCMCT Manipal Hospital, Dwarka.

cers, breast cancer, lung cancer, oral cancer, and cervical cancer among the most commonly diagnosed cancers in the country. As the cancer burden continues to grow, timely screening, early diagnosis, and access to specialist care remain critical to improving treatment outcomes and survival rates. Speaking on the launch, Dr. Bikram Kumar Deka, Consultant-Surgical Oncology, HCMCT Manipal Hospital,

Dwarka, New Delhi said, “We are seeing a steady rise in the number of patients with suspected or diagnosed cancers, highlighting the growing need for regular screening and timely access to specialist care. Through this dedicated Oncology OPD in Guwahati, we aim to bring expert cancer consultations closer to patients, enabling early diagnosis and timely treatment. While many cancers can be effectively managed when detected early, patients with more advanced or complex cancers today can benefit from minimally invasive and robotic-assisted surgeries, which offer greater precision, faster recovery, and improved clinical outcomes.” HCMCT Manipal Hospital, Delhi, remains committed to expanding access to advanced oncology expertise and specialised healthcare services closer to patients across the country. Through this specialised Oncology OPD in Guwahati, the hospital aims to ensure patients receive seamless, high-quality oncology care throughout their treatment journey. As a pioneer in healthcare, Manipal Hospitals is among the top healthcare providers in India serving over 8 million patients annually, with a focus on providing affordable, high-quality healthcare services. Manipal’s integrated network today has a pan-India footprint of 49 hospitals across 24 cities with over 12,600 licensed beds, and a talented pool of 11,000+ doctors and an employee strength of over 34000. Manipal Hospitals provides comprehensive curative and preventive care for a multitude of patients from around the globe. Manipal Hospitals is AAHRPP accredited and most of the hospitals in its network are NABH, NABL, ER, Blood Bank accredited and recognized for Nursing Excellence.

# Tata AIA registers 21 MDRT-qualified advisors in Assam, retains top India ranking

**Guwahati:** Tata AIA Life Insurance Co. Ltd. (Tata AIA), one of India's leading life insurance companies, is proud to announce that it has registered 21 Million Dollar Round Table (MDRT) qualified Advisors in Assam, underscoring its commitment to excellence in financial advisory services. According to the 2026 Global MDRT Ranking, the Company registered 4 Advisors from Kamrup Metropolitan, along with 4 Advisors from Kokrajhar and 2 Advisors from Cachar, for the coveted MDRT title. The milestone underscores the scale, quality and consistency of Tata AIA's advisor network. Notably, 695 of the qualifiers nearly half are women. That is a structural signal about who is building a career at the front line of Indian financial advice, and it reflects Tata AIA's commitment to a genuinely inclusive advisor ecosystem. The ranking highlights Tata AIA's focus on full-time, professional advisors who guide consumers in protecting their dreams and on building an advisor community defined by consumer understanding, professional conduct and expertise. Key MDRT Highlights: 1,397 MDRT-qualified advisors across Tata AIA's network 695 women MDRT members, representing nearly 50% of the qualifiers No. 13 globally based on count of MDRT members No. 1 in India for advisors with five to nine years of MDRT qualification, with 207 advisors in this category MDRT: A Global Benchmark for Financial Advice: Million Dollar Round Table, or MDRT, is widely recognised as a global benchmark of excellence in the life insurance and financial services profession. MDRT-qualified advisors are known for their professional knowledge, ethical conduct, productivity and commitment to high standards of customer service. Whether consumers are securing the future of their loved ones, planning for a child's education, preparing for retirement or building long-term wealth,

Tata AIA's MDRT-qualified advisors help them evaluate their needs and make confident financial decisions. Tata AIA remains committed to creating full-time career opportunities for individuals who aspire to achieve professional success while making a positive difference in people's lives. Powered by Tata AIA Aura platform, its advisors are nurtured into high-potential talent through structured learning, mentorship, continuous capability development and digital enablement. This equips advisors with the knowledge and tools required to deliver quality financial guidance while building sustainable, full-time careers in financial services. With women making up nearly half of its MDRT qualifiers, Tata AIA is helping redefine who succeeds at the top of the profession evidence that a full-time career in financial advice is now genuinely open to everyone and that women are increasingly building respected, rewarding careers as financial advisors. Rakesh Sharma, Chief Distribution Officer – Proprietary Business, Tata AIA Life Insurance, said, “We are humbled to be ranked No. 1 in terms of MDRT qualifiers in India for four consecutive years. This accolade reflects the quality, consistency and commitment of our advisors. The recognition for retained MDRT members and advisors with five to nine years of qualification is especially encouraging, as it demonstrates sustained excellence. We will continue to develop a future-ready advisor community that is dedicated full time to this noble profession and delivers trusted, needs-based financial guidance across India.” MDRT-qualified advisors play an important role in strengthening consumer relationships by recommending suitable solutions and providing continued support throughout the policy lifecycle. In FY26, Tata AIA ranked No. #1 in four of five persistency cohorts for FY26, a direct measure of how many customers keep their policies in force. Persistency is an impor-

tant indicator of policy continuation, consumer retention and long-term trust. Together, Tata AIA's MDRT leadership and persistency performance demonstrate its commitment to combining professional financial guidance with enduring value for consumers. Founded in 1927, MDRT (Million Dollar Round Table), The Premier Association of Financial Professionals®, is a global, independent association of the world's leading life insurance and financial services professionals from more than 80 nations and territories and nearly 700 companies. MDRT members demonstrate exceptional professional knowledge, strict ethical conduct and outstanding client service. MDRT membership is recognized internationally as the standard of excellence in the life insurance and financial services business As on 31st March 2026, the company has a total Assets Under Management (AUM) of Rs. 145,589 Crore Individual Death Claim Settlement Ratio for FY 2025 -2026 is 99.45% as per the latest annual audited figures 98,01,699 families protected till 18th May 2026. Tata AIA Life Insurance Company Limited (Tata AIA) is a joint venture Company formed by Tata Sons Pvt. Ltd. and AIA Group Ltd. (AIA). Tata AIA Life combines NATA's pre-eminent leadership position in India and AIA's presence as the largest, independent listed pan-Asian life insurance group in the world, spanning 18 markets in the Asia Pacific region. Tata AIA reported a total Premium Income of INR 38,164 crore for FY26, up 21% from FY25. The Company continues to rank among the Top 3 Private Insurers in Individual Weighted New Business Premium (IWNBP) with an IWNBP income of INR 10,018 crore. The Company also achieved industry-leading Persistency performance (based on both premiums and number of policies), ranking #1 in four out of five cohorts.

# Kotak Mahindra Bank announces results

**Mumbai:** The Board of Directors of Kotak Mahindra Bank (“the Bank”) approved the unaudited standalone and consolidated results for the quarter ended June 30, 2026, at the Board meeting held in Mumbai, today. The Bank's PAT for Q1FY27 increased to Rs. 4,123 crore, up 26% YoY from Rs. 3,282 crore in Q1FY26 (up 2% QoQ from Rs. 4,027 crore in Q4FY26). Net Interest Income (NII) for Q1FY27 increased to Rs. 7,928 crore, up 9% YoY from Rs. 7,259 crore in Q1FY26 (up 1% QoQ from Rs. 7,876 crore in Q4FY26). Net Interest Margin (NIM) was 4.53% for Q1FY27 (4.65% for Q1FY26 and 4.67% for Q4FY26). Cost of funds was 4.46% for Q1FY27 (5.01% for Q1FY26 and 4.45% for Q4FY26). Fees and services for Q1FY27 increased to Rs. 2,500 crore, up 11% YoY from Rs. 2,249 crore in Q1FY26 (Rs. 2,767 crore in Q4FY26). Operating expenses for Q1FY27 stood at Rs. 5,135 crore, up 8% YoY from Rs. 4,775 crore in Q1FY26 (flat QoQ from Rs. 5,137 crore in Q4FY26). Cost to assets improved to 2.66% for Q1FY27 (2.83% for Q1FY26 and 2.73% for Q4FY26). Operating profit for Q1FY27 increased to Rs. 6,131 crore, up 10% YoY from Rs. 5,564 crore in Q1FY26 (up 5% QoQ from Rs. 5,855 crore in Q4FY26). Provisions for Q1FY27 decreased to Rs. 668 crore, down 45% YoY from Rs. 1,208 crore in Q1FY26 (Rs. 516 crore in Q4FY26). Credit cost (annualised) for Q1FY27 stood at 0.46% (0.93% for Q1FY26 and 0.39% for Q4FY26). Net Ad-

vances increased 15% YoY to Rs. 512,249 crore as at June 30, 2026 from Rs. 444,823 crore as at June 30, 2025. Customer Assets which comprise Advances (incl. IBPC & BRDS) and Credit Substitutes grew to Rs. 570,901 crore as at June 30, 2026, up 16% YoY from Rs. 492,972 crore as at June 30, 2025. Total period-end Deposits grew to Rs. 572,820 crore for Q1FY27, up 12% YoY from Rs. 512,838 crore for Q1FY26. Average Total Deposits grew to Rs. 558,891 crore for Q1FY27, up 14% YoY from Rs. 491,998 crore for Q1FY26. Average Current Deposits grew to Rs. 78,107 crore for Q1FY27, up 15% YoY from Rs. 67,808 crore for Q1FY26. Average Fixed rate Savings Deposits grew to Rs. 125,061 crore for Q1FY27, up 16% YoY from Rs. 107,450 crore for Q1FY26. Average Term

## HDFC bank Q1 results announced; net profit rises 5.0% YOY

**Guwahati:** HDFC Bank Limited announced Q1 results for the quarter ended June 30, 2026, on Saturday, July 18, 2026. The Bank earned Rs. 251.1 billion. Profit after tax (PAT) for the quarter was at Rs. 190.6 billion, a growth of 5.0% over the quarter ended June 30, 2025. Total balance sheet size as of June 30, 2026 was Rs. 43,975 billion as against Rs. 39,541 billion as of June 30, 2025. The Bank's average deposits were Rs. 30,115 billion for the June 2026 quarter, a growth of 13.3% over Rs. 26,576 billion for the June 2025 quarter, and 5.6% over Rs.

Deposits grew to Rs. 341,992 crore for Q1FY27, up 14% YoY from Rs. 300,003 crore for Q1FY26. CASA ratio as at June 30, 2026 stood at 40.3% (40.9% as at June 30, 2025). Credit to Deposit ratio as at June 30, 2026 stood at 89.4% (86.7% as at June 30, 2025). Customers as on June 30, 2026 were 5.0 crore. Slippages for Q1FY27 decreased to Rs. 1,321 crore, down 27% YoY from Rs. 1,812 crore in Q1FY26. As at June 30, 2026, GNPA was 1.18% & NNPA was 0.27% (GNPA was 1.48% & NNPA was 0.34% as at June 30, 2025). As at June 30, 2026, Provision Coverage Ratio stood at 78% (77% as at June 30, 2025). Standalone Return on Assets (ROA) for Q1FY27 (annualised) was 2.14%. Return on Equity (ROE) for Q1FY27 (annualised) was 11.98%.

28,511 billion for the March 2026 quarter. The Bank's net revenue was Rs. 463.6 billion for the quarter ended June 30, 2026, as against Rs. 531.7 billion (which included transaction gains of Rs. 91.3 billion from a partial divestment through an offer for sale in the IPO of its subsidiary HDB Financial Services Ltd.) for the quarter ended June 30, 2025. Net interest income (interest earned less interest expended) for the quarter ended June 30, 2026 grew by 6.7% to Rs. 335.3 billion from Rs. 314.4 billion for the quarter ended June 30, 2025.

# Tata Motors and UCO Bank partner to strengthen commercial vehicle financing ecosystem

**Mumbai:** Tata Motors, India's largest commercial vehicle manufacturer, has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with UCO Bank, one of India's leading public sector banks with a strong nationwide presence and extensive branch network, to provide customers across the country with access to organised financing solutions for commercial vehicles. The partnership brings together UCO Bank's deep financial outreach and Tata Motors' unparalleled commercial vehicle portfolio, with the shared goal of making vehicle ownership more accessible and financially rewarding for customers and businesses nationwide. Under this collaboration, customers will have access to attractive interest rates designed to minimise the cost of ownership, along with quick loan approvals and fast-tracked processing that ensure rapid vehicle delivery. The partnership also brings simplified, customer-friendly documentation for a seamless buying experience, high loan-to-value funding options that lower upfront capital requirements for businesses, and flexible, structured repayment tenures tailored to the cash flow needs of fleet operators. Both organisations will work in close alignment across branches, dealerships, and market outreach to ensure that this competitive financing reaches customers wherever they are, particularly in underserved urban and rural markets. Speaking on this occasion, Mr. Shashikant Kumar, General Manager & Zonal Head – Mumbai, UCO Bank, said, “The signing of this Memorandum of Understanding with Tata Motors Limited marks another significant milestone in UCO Bank's commitment to de-

livering innovative and customer centric financing solutions. Through this strategic partnership, we aim to provide seamless, competitive and timely financing for TATA motors commercial vehicles, enabling entrepreneurs, fleet operators and businesses to expand with confidence.” Commenting on the initiative, Mr. Rajesh Kaul, Vice President & Business Head – Trucks, Tata Motors Ltd., said, “We are pleased to partner with UCO Bank to further strengthen the financing ecosystem for our commercial vehicle customers. Access to organised and competitive financing is a key enabler for our customers' growth, and UCO Bank's strong nationwide presence makes them an ideal partner in this endeavour. This MoU reinforces our commitment to delivering end-to-end solutions, from world-class vehicles to organised financing that empower our customers to grow their businesses with greater confidence and convenience.” Tata Motors offers the widest commercial vehicle portfolio spanning from sub-1-tonne to 55-tonne cargo vehicles and 10-seater to 51-seater mass mobility solutions. These robustly engineered vehicles are complemented by a range of value-added services for comprehensive vehicle lifecycle management through its Sampoorana Seva 2.0 initiative. Fleet Edge, Tata Motors' connected vehicle platform for optimal fleet management enabling operators to maximise uptime and reduce total cost of ownership, and 24x7 support from a nationwide network of over 4,500 sales and service touchpoints, Tata Motors continues to set new benchmarks in end-to-end transportation solutions.

# Alife strengthens personal care play with revamped bathing soap portfolio

**Guwahati:** Alife, the personal care brand from AWL Agri Business Ltd. (formerly Adani Wilmar Limited), has relaunched its bathing soap portfolio with four new variants featuring upgraded formulations, thoughtfully selected ingredients and contemporary packaging under its new brand promise, 'KhubsuratiKuchh Khaas'. The new range was officially launched on 15 July 2026 at the company's Mundra manufacturing facility in the presence of 50 of Alife's top distributors from across the country, marking an important milestone in the brand's growth journey and strengthening its partnership with the trade. The relaunched range is designed to elevate the everyday bathing experience by combining trusted care with skincare-inspired ingredients, signature fragrances and a modern visual identity that reflects the evolving needs of today's consumers. As part of the relaunch, Alife introduces four refreshed variants—Active Nimboo, Haldi Chandan, Rozy Glow and Fresh Lily—each thoughtfully crafted with carefully selected ingredients and enhanced formulations to deliver an enriching bathing experience. Inspired by popular skincare ingredients and paired with signature fragrances, every variant offers a unique combination of cleansing, care and sensorial appeal. The new packaging further enhances shelf visibility while clearly communicating the distinctive benefits of each variant. The relaunch is anchored in

Alife's new brand proposition, 'KhubsuratiKuchh Khaas', which reflects the brand's evolution from offering everyday personal care to creating more meaningful bathing experiences through upgraded formulations, special ingredients and a contemporary visual identity. The refreshed identity reinforces Alife's commitment to making everyday beauty routines more enjoyable and rewarding for consumers. Speaking about the relaunch, Mr. Mukesh Mishra, Joint President, Sales & Marketing, AWL Agri Business Ltd., said: "At AWL, we believe everyday personal care should be both effective and enjoyable. The relaunch of Alife's bathing soap range reflects our commitment to continuously evolve with consumer preferences by introducing new variants with enhanced formulations, thoughtfully selected ingredients and contemporary packaging. With our new brand proposition, 'KhubsuratiKuchh Khaas', we aim to offer consumers a richer bathing experience that combines trusted care with skincare-inspired benefits, making every bath feel a little more special." The relaunched Alife bathing soap range will be available across retail outlets and leading distribution channels nationwide, offering consumers a refreshed portfolio that blends upgraded formulations, skincare-inspired ingredients, signature fragrances and contemporary packaging to meet today's evolving personal care needs.

# Ather to Unveil Its First Mass-Market EL Platform Scooter at Community Day 2026

**Bengaluru:** Ather Energy Limited, one of India's leading electric two-wheeler manufacturers, today announced that the fourth edition of its flagship community event, Ather Community Day, will be held on 29 August 2026 in Bengaluru. The theme for this year's event is "A New Dawn of Magic", where Ather will unveil the first scooter from its new EL platform, marking its entry into the mass-market scooter segment. Alongside the new scooter, Ather will introduce a range of innovations across technology, charging, and the ecosystem that will make the ownership experience more seamless and connected. The EL platform is Ather's next-generation vehicle architecture and the company's first all-new vehicle platform since the 450. Engineered from the ground up for greater versatility, scalability, and manufacturing efficiency, it will underpin Ather's future product portfolio across segments. The first scooter built on this platform marks a significant milestone for Ather, enabling the company to address the mass-market through the Rs. 1 lakh to Rs. 1.25 lakh price segment while expanding its total addressable market and opening the next chapter of growth. The Ather Community Day 2026 will bring together thousands of Ather owners, automotive and technology enthusiasts, and partners for a first look at the products, technologies, and experiences that

Ather has been building. Over the last three years, Ather Community Day has evolved into one of India's most anticipated automotive and technology events. More than a product showcase, it has become Ather's platform for sharing its vision for the future, introducing new technologies, and bringing its community closer to the company's products and ideas. The 2025 edition, held on 30 August 2025, welcomed more than 4,000 attendees and saw the unveiling of the EL platform, the introduction of the Redux concept vehicle, Ather's next-generation fast-charging technology, and AtherStack 7.0, setting the foundation for the company's next phase of innovation. More details on Ather Community Day 2026 will be announced in the coming weeks. About Ather Energy Limited Ather Energy Limited (ATHERENERG | 544397 | INE0LEZ01016) is a pioneer in the Indian electric two-wheeler (“E2W”) market (CRISIL Report). Founded in 2013 by Tarun Mehta and Swapnil Jain, Ather designs and manufactures high-performance electric scooters. Ather launched its first electric scooter in 2018. Its current E2W portfolio consists of two distinct product lines: the Ather 450 series, focused on performance-oriented customers, and the Ather Rizta, a convenience-first family scooter line launched in 2024. Together, these product lines offer a total of 9 variants.

Editorial

PMAY-G

A major beneficiaries’ convention under the Pradhan Mantri Gramin Awas Yojana (PMAY-G) along with the state-level award distribution ceremony of the Maha Awas Abhiyan is set to be held in Satara district of Maharashtra, marking another significant step in the Government’s continued push toward rural housing development, infrastructure expansion and welfare-oriented governance aimed at improving the lives of economically weaker sections across rural India. The large-scale programme is expected to witness the presence of several prominent leaders including Union Minister for Rural Development and Agriculture Shivraj Singh Chouhan, Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis, Deputy Chief Minister Eknath Shinde and Sunetra Pawar, with the event being viewed as an important milestone in strengthening rural welfare delivery and accelerating the vision of providing pucca houses and modern infrastructure to every deserving family in villages. During the programme, five lakh newly constructed houses under the Pradhan Mantri Gramin Awas Yojana will be formally handed over to beneficiaries across Maharashtra, symbolising the Government’s commitment to ensuring dignity, security and improved living standards for rural households. Keys of the newly built homes will also be symbolically handed over to six selected beneficiaries during the ceremony, reflecting the transformational impact of the scheme on families that previously lived in kutcha or inadequate housing conditions. The event is also expected to highlight the achievements of the Maha Awas Abhiyan, which has emerged as an important state-level initiative complementing the Centre’s rural housing mission by encouraging faster implementation, improved transparency and greater coordination among local administrative bodies. Officials associated with the programme said the convention would showcase the collective efforts of the Union and Maharashtra governments in strengthening rural development and ensuring that welfare benefits reach eligible citizens in a time-bound and transparent manner. The Pradhan Mantri Gramin Awas Yojana has become one of the flagship rural welfare schemes of the Government, focusing on providing permanent housing equipped with basic amenities to economically disadvantaged families residing in villages and remote regions. Since its launch, the scheme has transformed the rural housing landscape by replacing temporary and unsafe dwellings with durable houses that provide beneficiaries with a sense of ownership, dignity and social empowerment. Government data indicate that nearly three crore houses have already been constructed across the country under the scheme, reflecting the scale and pace of implementation achieved over the years. The housing initiative has also generated employment opportunities in rural areas through construction activities, demand for local building materials and engagement of workers and self-help groups in associated development work. The scheme has further contributed to improving sanitation, access to electricity, drinking water connectivity and overall quality of life in villages, thereby supporting the broader vision of inclusive rural development. The Satara programme is expected to serve not only as a ceremonial distribution event but also as a platform to recognise the contribution of officials, local institutions and stakeholders who have played a role in successfully implementing rural housing and infrastructure projects across Maharashtra. Awards under the Maha Awas Abhiyan are likely to honour districts, local administrative units and officers who have demonstrated outstanding performance in achieving housing targets, maintaining transparency and ensuring timely completion of projects. The event assumes additional significance as Union Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan is scheduled to announce approval of central assistance worth Rs 8,368 crore and 50 lakh for Maharashtra under the Pradhan Mantri Gramin Awas Yojana for the financial year 2026-27, a move expected to further accelerate housing construction in rural areas of the state. The substantial financial assistance is likely to help Maharashtra expand the coverage of the scheme, clear pending targets and strengthen implementation capacity at the grassroots level. Rural development experts believe that sustained financial support from the Centre will play a critical role in ensuring that economically weaker households continue to benefit from secure housing and improved infrastructure facilities. The announcement is also expected to reinforce cooperative federalism by highlighting coordination between the Union and state governments in implementing welfare-oriented programmes aimed at social upliftment and economic empowerment of rural communities. Alongside housing initiatives, the programme will also witness approval for 35 road projects worth Rs 122 crore and 98 lakh under Phase Four of the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana, another flagship rural development programme focused on improving road connectivity in villages and remote habitations. These projects are expected to benefit 35 rural habitations in Maharashtra by improving access to transportation, healthcare services, educational institutions, agricultural markets and employment opportunities. Enhanced road connectivity has long been viewed as a key driver of rural economic growth because it strengthens mobility, facilitates trade and improves delivery of public services. Officials stated that the new projects under the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana would help bridge infrastructure gaps in underserved areas while promoting balanced regional development. Better roads are also expected to support farmers by enabling smoother transportation of agricultural produce to markets and reducing logistical challenges faced by rural communities.

# India and the Nordics: A new axis in international norm-setting

Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s outreach to the Nordic countries is often framed through the familiar language of trade, technology and clean energy cooperation. Yet the larger significance of India’s engagement with Northern Europe lies elsewhere. Beneath the economic agreements and diplomatic symbolism is a deeper story about how international law and global governance are being reshaped in an increasingly fragmented world. The Nordic region, comprising Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden, occupies an outsized role in contemporary international politics. These countries are among the strongest advocates of the rules-based international order, climate governance, maritime regulation, digital rights, and multilateral institutions. India’s growing engagement with them is therefore not merely diplomatic expansion; it is also an attempt to secure a place within the emerging legal and normative architecture of the twenty-first century. One of the most significant dimensions of this engagement concerns the Arctic. Climate change has transformed the Arctic from a remote environmental concern into a strategic geopolitical frontier. Melting ice caps are opening new shipping routes, increasing access to natural resources and intensifying competition among major powers. While India is not an Arctic state, it has steadily expanded its presence in Arctic governance through scientific missions, research stations and participation in the Arctic Council as an observer. The Nordic countries are central stakeholders in Arctic governance. India’s outreach to them reflects an understanding that future debates over maritime access, environmental protection and resource governance will increasingly shape global politics. International law, particularly the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), will become crucial in managing competing interests in the region. By strengthening ties with Nordic countries, India is attempting to position itself as a legitimate stakeholder in these conversations before the Arctic becomes fully

securitised by great-power rivalry. This matters because the Arctic is no longer just an environmental issue. It is becoming a test case for whether international law can regulate emerging geopolitical competition in fragile ecological zones. India’s participation signals that non-Arctic states, too, seek a voice in shaping the norms governing these global commons. Another important dimension of Modi’s Nordic diplomacy concerns climate governance. Nordic countries have long been pioneers in sustainability regulation, renewable energy transitions and environmental standards. As the global economy moves toward carbon-conscious trade frameworks, these regulations will increasingly influence international commerce and industrial policy. For India, this presents both an opportunity and a challenge. The European Union’s Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM), for instance, reflects a growing trend in which climate policy and trade policy are becoming deeply interconnected. Environmental standards are no longer merely domestic regulatory choices; they are evolving into instruments that shape market access and international competitiveness. India’s engagement with Nordic states therefore goes beyond clean energy partnerships. It reflects an effort to understand and influence the legal frameworks that will govern future trade. Whether in green shipping, sustainable infrastructure or carbon accounting, the next phase of globalisation is likely to be regulated through climate-linked legal obligations. Countries that fail to adapt risk exclusion from emerging economic networks. The Nordic outreach also intersects with another major global debate: digital governance. India has increasingly projected itself as a leader in digital public infrastructure through initiatives such as UPI and Aadhaar-linked governance systems. At the same time, Nordic and European states are shaping global conversations around data privacy, artificial intelligence regulation and digital sovereignty. This creates both convergence and tension. Europe’s regulatory approach, reflected in frame-

works such as the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), prioritises privacy protections and institutional oversight. India, meanwhile, seeks a more developmental and state-driven digital model that balances innovation, public service delivery and strategic autonomy. The legal questions emerging from these differing approaches are profound. Who controls cross-border data flows? How should artificial intelligence be regulated? Can digital sovereignty coexist with open digital trade? These are no longer technical policy matters; they are becoming foundational questions of international law and governance. India’s Nordic engagement thus reflects an attempt to shape these debates rather than merely react to them. As digital governance becomes central to economic power and national security, partnerships with technologically advanced democracies gain strategic significance. The geopolitical context of the visit is equally important. The Russia-Ukraine war has fundamentally altered Europe’s security architecture. Traditionally neutral Nordic countries such as Finland and Sweden have moved closer to NATO, reflecting a broader collapse of the post-Cold War assumption that economic interdependence alone could guarantee stability. India’s position in this evolving landscape remains distinctive. New Delhi has sought to preserve strategic autonomy by maintaining relations with both Russia and Western powers. This balancing approach has sometimes generated criticism in Europe, particularly among states that view the Ukraine conflict through the lens of territorial sovereignty and international legality. Yet India’s Nordic outreach suggests that strategic autonomy does not necessarily imply strategic isolation. Instead, India appears to be building flexible partnerships based on issue-specific cooperation rather than alliance politics. This reflects a broader trend in contemporary international relations: the rise of “minilateralism,” where states cooperate through smaller, purpose-driven coalitions instead of rigid geopolitical blocs.

# Climate Change and the Future of Our Planet

Every year, from 1 July to 7 July, Van Mahotsav is celebrated throughout India, and today marks the last day of this year’s observance. This festival is primarily dedicated to tree plantation and environmental conservation. This entire week reminds us of the deep relationship between human life and the environment. At a time when climate change has become a serious global problem, the message of Van Mahotsav has become even more significant than before. Rising temperatures, floods, droughts, and environmental degradation—these are all clear indications that the natural world is facing an intense crisis. Therefore, by promoting tree plantation and environmental awareness, Van Mahotsav encourages us to take responsibility for our green planet. Simultaneously, this special occasion has also generated significant awareness regarding the causes and devastating impacts of climate change, a subject that urgently requires serious discussion across the world today.

Climate change is one of the most serious global challenges facing the world today. It refers to long-term changes in temperature, rainfall, and weather patterns. Although the Earth’s climate has changed naturally over thousands of years, it has now assumed an extremely serious form. Scientists today unanimously agree that the current rapid climate change is primarily the result of human activities. The burning of fossil fuels such as coal, oil, and natural gas has released enormous amounts of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere, creating a serious global problem. According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the global average temperature has already increased by about 1.1°C above pre-industrial levels. If this trend continues, temperatures may rise by 1.5°C or even more within the next two decades, resulting in extremely dangerous consequences worldwide.

One of the clearest signs of climate change is the melting of glaciers and polar ice caps. Recent studies show that Greenland is losing around 280 billion tons of ice every year, while Antarctica is losing about 150 billion tons annually. As a result, global sea levels are rising at an average rate of 3.3 millimeters per year. Although this increase may appear small, it poses a serious threat to millions of people living in coastal regions. Consequently, small island nations such as the Maldives face an increasing risk of submergence in the future. Moreover, rising ocean temperatures have resulted in stronger and more frequent storms, causing extensive damage to human lives, property, and ecosystems. Today, abnormal weather patterns across the world have reached alarming levels. Europe has experienced record-breaking heatwaves, with temperatures exceeding 40°C in several countries. In 2022, heatwaves in Europe caused the deaths of more than 60,000 people. Similarly, the Australian bushfires of 2019–2020 burned more than 18 million hectares of land, destroying numerous homes and causing the death or displacement of nearly 3 billion animals. In the United States, California continues to face massive wildfires due to rising temperatures and dry conditions. On the other hand, countries such as Pakistan, Bangladesh, and India have experienced devastating floods. In 2022, floods in Pakistan affected more than 33 million people and caused economic losses exceeding 30 billion US dollars. Climate change has also brought severe drought conditions to the African continent. In the Horn of Africa, millions of people are facing food shortages due to a significant decline in rainfall. According to United Nations reports, if strong measures are not taken immediately, climate change could push up to 132 million people into extreme poverty by 2030. These global concerns and examples clearly demonstrate that climate change is no longer a distant problem that can be ignored. It has already severely affected human lives and natural systems in many countries across the world.

India is among the countries most vulnerable to climate change. This is because it has one of the world’s

largest populations and is heavily dependent on agriculture. Over the past century, India’s average temperature has increased by approximately 0.7°C. Heatwaves are gradually becoming more frequent and intense. In 2022, temperatures in several parts of North India exceeded 45°C. These extreme conditions have had profound impacts on human health, especially among elderly people and outdoor workers. According to government data, heatwaves have caused thousands of deaths in India over the last decade. Rainfall patterns in the country have also become increasingly unpredictable. The monsoon, which provides about 70% of India’s annual rainfall, has exhibited irregular behavior. Some regions experience excessive rainfall and floods, while others suffer from drought. The Kerala floods of 2018 are a major example, in which more than 400 people died and over one million people were displaced. Urban flooding caused by heavy rainfall and poor drainage systems has become an increasing problem in cities such as Mumbai, Chennai, Bengaluru, and even our own Guwahati. Furthermore, cyclones in the Bay of Bengal and the Arabian Sea have intensified due to rising sea surface temperatures. Cyclone Amphan in 2020 caused damages worth approximately 13 billion US dollars in India and Bangladesh. Similarly, Cyclone Fani in 2019 affected millions of people in Odisha. Scientists have observed that cyclone intensity has increased by around 10–20% in recent decades. Another serious issue is the melting of Himalayan glaciers. The Himalayas are often referred to as the “Water Tower of Asia” because they provide water to major rivers such as the Ganga, Brahmaputra, and Indus. Research indicates that Himalayan glaciers are melting at an alarming rate. If current warming trends continue, up to one-third of these glaciers could disappear by 2100, significantly affecting water availability for millions of people in India.

On the other hand, Assam is one of the Indian states most vulnerable to climate change. The state experiences severe floods and erosion every year, mainly due to the Brahmaputra and its tributaries. According to data from the Assam State Disaster Management Authority, floods affect around 30 to 40 lakh people annually. In severe years, this figure can exceed 50 lakh. These floods destroy crops, homes, roads, and institutions, causing massive economic losses. Riverbank erosion is another serious issue. Since 1950, it is estimated that more than 4 lakh hectares of land along the Brahmaputra have been eroded in Assam. Thousands of families have lost their homes and have been forced to relocate. In particular, Majuli, the world’s largest river island, has been shrinking rapidly due to erosion. Its area has reduced from approximately 1,250 square kilometers in 1901 to less than 500 square kilometers today. This is a clear example of how climate change and river dynamics are affecting human settlements. Climate change has also threatened Assam’s wildlife. Kaziranga National Park, famous for the one-horned rhinoceros, experiences floods every year. During severe floods, many animals die or are displaced, leading to increasing human-animal conflict. Climate change has also significantly affected Assam’s agriculture, including rice, tea, and several other crops. Variations in rainfall and temperature have reduced agricultural productivity. Tea production, a major component of Assam’s economy, has been particularly affected. According to experts, rising temperatures and irregular rainfall have reduced tea yield and quality by around 10–15% in some areas. This has directly affected the livelihoods of thousands of workers.

The primary causes of climate change are closely linked to human activities. The burning of fossil fuels is the largest contributor, accounting for nearly 75% of global greenhouse gas emissions. Deforestation is another major factor. Forests absorb carbon dioxide, but when trees are cut down, this carbon is released into the atmosphere. According to available data, the world loses approximately 10 million hectares of forest every year. In-

dustrial activities, transportation systems, and modern agricultural practices have all significantly contributed to climate change. Today, metropolitan and urban areas, including Guwahati, are facing numerous new challenges. Excessive rainfall combined with inadequate drainage systems has led to frequent urban flooding. The Bharalu River, which flows through Guwahati, has become heavily polluted and is no longer capable of efficiently carrying excess water. As a result, even a short spell of rainfall often causes severe flooding in the city, disrupting the daily lives and economic activities of its residents.

The effects of climate change are not merely environmental; they also have profound economic and social consequences. Rising temperatures and abnormal weather patterns have reduced agricultural production, leading to food shortages and rising prices across the world. Poor communities, which depend directly on natural resources, have been the most severely affected. Climate change has also led to migration, as people move from affected regions in search of better living conditions. Health problems such as heatstroke, respiratory illnesses, and the spread of infectious diseases have also increased due to climate change. Overall, climate change has emerged as one of the most serious problems confronting the contemporary world. It is an issue that requires urgent global attention. We can hope for a solution only if strong and collective measures are taken worldwide. In this regard, countries have united under the Paris Agreement of 2015 to control global warming. The objective is to keep global temperature rise well below 2°C and preferably within 1.5°C. Many countries are now investing heavily in renewable energy sources such as solar and wind power. It is noteworthy that renewable energy accounted for nearly 30% of global electricity generation in 2023.

India has also undertaken several important initiatives in this regard. The country aims to achieve 500 gigawatts of non-fossil fuel energy capacity by 2030. The rapid growth of solar energy has made India one of the world’s leading producers. Programmes such as the National Action Plan on Climate Change focus on sustainable development, energy efficiency, and conservation. Assam has also adopted various measures to address climate-related challenges. Afforestation programmes have been promoted to increase forest cover. Flood management projects, including embankment construction and early warning systems, have been strengthened. Wetland conservation is also extremely important because wetlands function as natural water storage systems and help reduce flood risks. Sustainable agricultural practices, such as the use of climate-resilient crops, can help farmers adapt to changing conditions. Furthermore, to address the impacts of climate change, there is an urgent need to scientifically and sustainably redesign both small and large river embankments in the region.

At the individual level, every person also has an important role to play in combating climate change. Simple measures such as saving electricity, using public transportation, reducing plastic consumption, and planting trees whenever possible can bring about positive change. Awareness and education are also extremely important so that people understand the seriousness of this issue and take responsible actions. Climate change is a global problem, but its impacts are felt locally. No region of the world is safe from its effects. It is not merely an environmental issue; rather, it represents a serious challenge to development, economic stability, and human survival. Therefore, immediate and collective action against climate change is essential to protect the planet for future generations. If we act wisely today, we can significantly reduce the damage and build a more sustainable and secure future.

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# Dealing with China: Why trade and Kailash Yatra should be India’s opening move before LAC settlement

Rumours have been circulating that Delhi and Beijing would like to settle their Line of Actual Control (LAC); it is easier said than done. First, there exist several ‘agreements’ between India and



China mentioning the LAC without ever defining it or showing it on a map; what will happen to these agreements is an issue which will need to be decided upon. To settle the LAC also means to iron out different perceptions (on a map or on the ground) and see how to reconcile the differences. For example, in Ladakh, it is said that there are twelve spots where the perception of the two Asian giant nations differs. The task is not an easy one, especially since the Chinese ‘perceptions’ have never been shown on a map for the Eastern Sector, which includes Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh. As for the Northern sector, maps were exchanged for 20 minutes in 2002 and then withdrawn by the two parties (China objected to the inclusion of Gilgit Baltistan on Indian maps). A first easier step could be to simply reopen the border (LAC or whatever one calls it) as it was in the 1950s, particularly for trade and pilgrimage to the Kailash-Manasarovar, as it was for centuries. Reopening Shipki-la China has recently agreed in principle to reopen the Shipki-la route; the Himachal Government sees it as a boost for trade and tourism. According to The Times of India: “Talks between India and China on reviving traditional border trade have yielded progress, with Beijing agreeing in principle to reopen the Shipki-la pass in Himachal Pradesh’s Kinnaur district. ... The trade route, once an offshoot of the ancient Silk Route, had been suspended in 2020 following the Covid-19 outbreak.” PTI said that External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar informed Chief Minister Sukhvinder Sukhu that New Delhi had started discussions with Beijing for restoring border trade through all three designated points, namely Shipki-la in Himachal Pradesh, Lipulekh in Uttarakhand, and Nathu-la in Sikkim: “The government of China has agreed in principle to the proposal during the recent visit of Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi to India,” the statement said, adding that Simla “is hopeful that these initiatives will not only revive border trade but also open fresh opportunities for tourism, cultural exchange, and economic development in the state.” But reopening passes is not enough.

## When graffiti becomes history: Indian imprints in the land of Pharaohs and beyond

“Bunty loves Pinky. Pierced heart.” “Vikram + Poonam = heart.” Or just plain “ILU (I love you).” Anyone who has visited a heritage site in India would have seen these messages scribbled on the walls. These random graffiti are the most ubiquitous modern imprint on our history and the most wine-inducing as well. But these modern-day vandals are not a species indigenous to India alone. Nor are they a peculiarly 21st-century phenomenon. In fact, the astonishing discovery of 2000-year-old graffiti left behind by ancient Indian travellers and merchants on the tombs of Egyptian pharaohs has hit headlines earlier this week, causing excitement not just among historians and archaeologists but the general public as well. Scribbled onto a number of pharaonic tombs in the Valley of Kings, these 30 inscriptions – of which a majority are in Tamil Brahmi – document not just ancient India’s deep mercantile and maritime relations with Egypt but also the very human need to imprint one’s presence on history. The inscriptions themselves are straightforward enough – one reads “Cikai Korran vara kantan”, or “Cikai Korran was here”. A fellow traveller dittoes the sentiment: “Kopran vara kantan” or Kopran was here. These intrepid Indian seafaring merchants – the same tribe who carried fine Indian goods like the Berenike Buddha or the Pompeii Yakshi/Lakshmi to Egypt and Rome – perhaps felt compelled to leave behind some sign of their presence on a monument which would have been ancient even 2000 years ago. And thank god for that. Because in doing so, they have helped expand the history of ancient India’s connections with the world around it. In fact, Korran and Kopran are not the only ancient Indians who left behind some fingerprints on pharaonic Egypt. Three inscriptions from the Red Sea port of Quseir-al-Qadim, or Leucos Limen, offer tell-tale signs of intrepid seafaring Indians not only trading with Egypt and Rome but also living in



transit trade hubs like Alexandria, Berenike or Leucos Limen. The three inscriptions – two in Tamil Brahmi and one in Prakrit – mention some of these merchants by name. Halaka, Vinhudata or Vishnudatta and Nakada or Nagadatta are selling oil, wine or honey and meat. Another pottery inscription mentions yet another Tamil trader called Cattan or Kannan who left his signature on his goods in Tamil Brahmi. Just as interesting is the inscription in Greek found at the Temple of Seti I at Kanayis, located somewhere between Berenike on the Red Sea and Apollinopolis on the Nile. The inscription is an offering to the Greek god Pan (which many historians have surmised was an offering to Lord Krishna but made in a Greek temple) from an Indian called Subhanu. Some of these scribbles are symbols like the Buddhist wheel and Hindu trishula symbols that popped up in a Ptolemy-era tomb in Dendera, confounding historians about who left those imprints and why. That’s not to say that Indian merchants have only found mention in these assorted graffiti – several contemporary sources like the Oxyrhynchus papyrus, which contains a fragment of a Greek farce, Ptolemy’s Geography and Periplus of the Erythraean Sea, and the Sanskrit inscription at the Isis temple at Berenike by a trader called Vasula all attest to their presence. While ancient Indian graffiti in Egypt may be in the news right now, historical graffiti are not rare either in India or elsewhere in the world. On my first ever trip to the Ajanta complex, the local guide pointed out a name scribbled on a pillar in Cave 10: John Smith. This British official had accidentally discovered the caves in 1819 while chasing a particularly elusive tiger and had felt impelled to leave his signature behind as well, giving the sacred art of ancient India a taste of some good old-fashioned colonial impertinence. Just as deliberate were the Viking/Norse runic scribbles inside the

pects do not look very bright.” To aggravate the situation, constant attempts were made through Chinese middlemen “to raise the prices of Tibetan products and to lower those of Indian goods by denying direct barter dealings between our traders and the Dokpas, who are poisoned to believe that our traders had been exploiting them for centuries.” The entire exercise seemed to be to squeeze out the Indian traders from Tibet, slowly but surely; Bakshi believed that as soon as the Chinese would be able to achieve food self-sufficiency, they would open their own woollen mills. The Fate of the Kailash Pilgrimage According to the ITA report, “due to disturbed conditions in Western Tibet,” after the uprising of March 1959, the Chinese advised the Indian pilgrims to desist from visiting the Kailash and Manasarovar region. As a result, only 25 pilgrims visited Kailash and Manasarovar in 1960; the main party of 13 pilgrims, led by Swami Vidyananda of Nainital, entered Western Tibet via Unta Dhura pass and returned to Garbyang via Lipulekh pass on August 22.” Though the pilgrims did not encounter any difficulty “as they did not have to depend on the local authorities for any facilities like transport,” the problem in the resthouses “remains as acute as before”. On his return journey, the ITA stayed in the only resthouse available, near the Rakshastal lake in the Kailash area; he found it “unfit for human habitation and looked worse than a stable”. Bakshi said that he understood from the pilgrims that “there was a restriction on taking radios and newspapers and that the Chinese did not favour the idea of Kailash Parikrama for security reasons.” When the ITA mentioned these difficulties to the Foreign Bureau at Gartok, “our pilgrims had not been able to visit Holy Kailash and Manasarovar for the last two years in view of the Chinese advice regarding disturbed conditions in Western Tibet,” Bakshi was assured that when the situation in Ngari would become normal, the pilgrims could resume their visit to the holy places. It never happened. What can be done? Shipki-la in Himachal Pradesh and Lipulekh in Uttarakhand were partially reopened in the 1990s, and Nathu-la in 2006, but closed again due to Covid-19 in 2020. A Confidence Building Measure (CBM) and win-win option for Beijing and Delhi could be to reopen trade and pilgrimage as in the past. Further, spiritual corridors through Demchok, Shipki-la, Niti-la or Mana-la should be opened for the Kailash pilgrimage. Let lakhs of Indian yatis visit the holy places in Tibet; China will not mind the good revenue accrued from it. After all, the Kartarpur corridor between India and Pakistan was opened as a mutual gesture of goodwill, despite the tough reality and difficulties between both countries. Both governments agreed to the development of a corridor to enable the smooth passage of pilgrims seeking to visit Guru Nanak’s final resting place. These are certainly fields to explore for the northern border, as trade and pilgrimage always played an important role in India’s relationship with Tibet; it could indeed provide a bridge between both sides of the Himalaya and in the future become a major CBM between China and India; a solution for the LAC could come next.

Claude Arpi

Hagia Sophia in Istanbul. One particularly clear-cut one simply states, “Halfdan was here”. Inscribed in the 9th century, this elite member of the Byzantine Varangian guards was, in effect, vandalising a 300-year-old building when he left his name on its walls. Sometimes, the scribbles are marks of protest too, like the charcoal graffiti left in the cell blocks of Richmond Castle in the UK. These were by men who were refusing to fight in WWI and had been imprisoned as a result. Just as interesting are the many doodles and texts left behind by unfortunate prisoners on the walls of the Tower of London. There is, for example, an entire prayer scribbled in Latin by Philip Howard, Earl of Arundel. Dated 1587, it says, “The more our pain in this world, the more our glory in the hereafter.” Of course, not all graffiti is quite so pure-minded in tone and tenor. Some of the most titillating scribbles can be found on the walls of Pompeii, which included everything from nudge-nudge wink-wink references to the rich and famous, political sloganeering and even salacious gossip about rivals and competitors, all preserved by the lava-spewing fury of Mount Vesuvius. But perhaps the most blush-worthy are those left behind by drunk customers after a visit to the city’s famed red-light quarters. The most famous graffiti in India, though, includes the imprint of three emperors, separated by a millennium each. This is the Prayag Prashasti Pillar in Prayagraj, which bears the names of three emperors. Originally an Ashokan pillar, it carries some of Ashoka’s edicts in Prakrit, written in Brahmi script. Later, it was used to carve the most detailed record of Gupta emperor Samudragupta’s reign by his minister and scribe Harisena. The Prashasti includes details of the emperor’s conquests across both North and South India. Finally, Mughal emperor Jahangir uprooted the pillar and planted it in Allahabad Fort, adding an inscription in Persian. The three sets of inscriptions, spanning 2,000 years, have turned the pillar into a time capsule connecting different parts of India’s past. Sometimes, graffiti can be history too — though not the love-sick variety we now see defacing the walls of heritage sites.

Nandini Sen Gupta

## ICICI Prudential Mutual Fund launches ICICI Prudential Multi-Asset Active FOF

**Mumbai:** ICICI Prudential Mutual Fund announced the launch of the ICICI Prudential Multi-Asset Active FOF, an open ended fund of funds scheme investing predominantly in units of active equity oriented schemes, debt oriented schemes and Gold ETFs/ Silver ETFs. The scheme shall adjust exposure across these asset classes based on prevailing market conditions, valuation signals and macroeconomic trends. Commenting on the launch, Mr. Sankaran Naren, Executive Director and Chief Investment Officer, ICICI Prudential AMC, said: “Different asset classes perform differently across economic and market cycles, making disciplined asset allocation an important component of long-term investing. ICICI Prudential Multi-Asset Active FOF brings together active equity, debt and Gold ETF/Silver ETF within a single portfolio, while using our proprietary valuation and macroeconomic models to actively adjust allocations as market conditions evolve. The objective is to help investors participate in opportunities across asset classes through a structured and research-driven investment process, thereby creating a more consistent invest-

ing experience.” Investment Philosophy: Asset classes perform differently depending on economic cycles, inflation, interest rates and market sentiment. Rather than attempting to predict which asset class will outperform next, the scheme seeks to allocate across equity, debt and Gold ETF/Silver ETF based on their relative attractiveness. The scheme combines three distinct portfolio objectives

- Equity for potential long-term wealth creation
- Debt for relatively stable accrual income
- Gold and Silver for diversification and potential inflation protection

Investment Strategy Framework The portfolio allocation framework comprises:

- 30-80% in units of active equity-oriented schemes.
- 10-60% in units of active debt-oriented schemes.
- 10-30% in Gold ETFs\* and/or Silver ETFs.

The portfolio of the scheme is subject to changes within the

provisions of the Scheme Information document of the Scheme. The asset allocation and investment strategy will be as per the Scheme Information Document. \*The AMC shall evaluate the market situation while taking exposure towards Gold/Silver ETF. Considering the current market conditions, the exposure towards Gold ETF will be restricted at 5% of the AUM and the same shall be reviewed from time to time. Allocation across these asset classes is actively managed based on market conditions and the relative attractiveness of each asset class. Product Details

- Minimum Application Amount: Rs. 1,000.
- Options: ICICI Prudential Multi-Asset Active FOF -Direct Plan & Regular Plan.
- Benchmark: 55% Nifty 200 TRI + 35% NIFTY Composite Debt Index + 7% Domestic Price of Gold + 3% Domestic Price of Silver.
- Fund Manager: Mr. Dharmesh Kakkad, Mr. Manish Banthia, Mr. Akhil Kakkar, Ms. Sharmila D’silva and Mr. Gaurav Chikane.

# PM Modi flags off India’s First Hydrogen Train

**New Delhi:** India marked a major milestone in its journey towards cleaner transportation and modern railway technology as Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the country's first hydrogen-powered passenger train from Jind railway station in Haryana, placing the nation among a small group of countries that have successfully introduced hydrogen-powered rail services. The launch represents a significant advance in India's efforts to reduce carbon emissions while strengthening indigenous technological capabilities in railway engineering. The new train, operating on the Jind-Sonipat section, reflects the government's broader strategy of combining infrastructure development, environmental sustainability and technological innovation to reshape the future of public transport. The inauguration ceremony also featured the dedication and foundation laying of National Highway projects valued at more than Rs 12,470 crore, underlining the Centre's continuing emphasis on expanding world-class transport infrastructure across the country. Among the projects dedicated to the nation was the 157-kilometre Greenfield section of the Delhi-Amritsar-Katra Expressway, a key component of the larger 667-kilometre expressway that is expected to dramatically reduce travel times between major northern cities and improve connectivity for passengers, businesses and pilgrims alike. The expressway is projected to reduce travel time between Delhi and Katra from nearly fourteen hours to about six hours while bringing down the Delhi-Amritsar journey from around eight hours to approximately four hours, providing a major boost to regional economic activity, tourism and logistics. Addressing the gathering, Prime Minister Modi described the hydrogen-powered train as a defining achievement for India's railway system and said the country had entered a new phase of technological transformation. He noted that Indian Railways had witnessed sweeping changes over the past twelve years, with modernisation becoming the central theme of railway development through new stations, advanced trains, improved passenger facilities, electrification and greater emphasis on safety. He said Haryana had experienced rapid progress during the same period and added that the inauguration of India's first hydrogen-powered train had given Jind a permanent place in the country's technological history. The Prime Minister stated that the town had emerged as an important symbol of development and innovation and expressed confidence that hydrogen technology would become an integral part of India's future railway network. He said the railways of the twenty-first century would increasingly rely on cleaner energy sources, and hydrogen-powered mobility would help create an environmentally sustainable transport ecosystem while reducing dependence on fossil fuels. Highlighting the significance of the new service, he pointed out that only a handful of countries currently possess operational hydrogen-powered trains and said India's entry into this exclusive group demonstrated the country's growing engineering capability and commitment to innovation. He further observed that the hydrogen-powered train introduced by Indian Railways ranks among the world's most powerful and longest trains of its kind, equipped with an engine generating nearly 3,200 horsepower. Unlike many hydrogen-powered trains operating internationally with only two or three coaches on short regional routes, the Indian version has been designed as a full-scale ten-coach passenger train capable of accommo-

dating nearly 2,600 passengers, showcasing India's ability to adapt advanced technology for large-capacity public transport requirements. Railway officials explained that the train has been entirely designed, engineered and integrated in India using indigenous technology, reflecting the success of the government's push for self-reliance in advanced manufacturing and transport innovation. The train operates at a service speed of about 75 kilometres per hour on the Jind-Sonipat route while possessing a design speed of 110 kilometres per hour, enabling both efficient and safe operations on the nearly 90-kilometre corridor. Powered by hydrogen fuel cells, the train generates electricity through a chemical reaction between hydrogen and oxygen, producing only water vapour as a by-product, thereby eliminating direct carbon emissions during operation. This clean energy process significantly reduces environmental pollution compared with conventional diesel-powered trains and aligns with India's long-term commitments towards sustainable development and climate action. Railway engineers highlighted that the train incorporates multiple safety mechanisms capable of continuously monitoring hydrogen systems and detecting any leakage, heat, smoke or fire, ensuring safe operation under varying conditions. Dedicated hydrogen production, storage and refuelling infrastructure has also been established at Jind to support reliable and efficient train operations while maintaining stringent safety standards. Union Railways Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw described the inauguration as a historic breakthrough in India's technological progress and said the achievement was the outcome of determined efforts to develop indigenous hydrogen technology suitable for railway operations. He emphasised that the train requires neither diesel nor petrol and represents a completely environment-friendly alternative for passenger transport. According to the minister, the hydrogen train forms part of the wider railway modernisation programme undertaken over the past several years, which includes rapid electrification, station redevelopment, introduction of modern rolling stock, expansion of high-speed corridors and adoption of advanced signalling systems. He also highlighted the substantial increase in railway investment in Haryana, noting that the state's railway allocation had risen from around Rs 315 crore in earlier years to nearly Rs 3,500 crore currently, while railway development projects worth approximately Rs 18,000 crore are presently under implementation across the state. Officials believe these investments will strengthen regional connectivity, improve freight movement and generate new employment opportunities through infrastructure construction and allied industries. Experts say hydrogen-powered trains could play a transformative role in sections where complete electrification remains challenging or where clean alternatives to diesel locomotives are required. Hydrogen fuel cell technology offers the advantage of zero tailpipe emissions while maintaining operational flexibility similar to diesel-powered trains, making it an attractive option for environmentally sensitive routes and heritage railway sections. Indian Railways is already examining the possibility of deploying hydrogen-powered trains on heritage routes, including the famous Kalka-Shimla railway, where such technology could reduce pollution while preserving the scenic character of the UNESCO-recognised mountain railway. The operational experience gained

from the Jind-Sonipat project is expected to guide future expansion of hydrogen technology across selected railway corridors. The launch also reflects India's broader National Green Hydrogen Mission, which seeks to establish the country as a global hub for hydrogen production, innovation and utilisation across multiple sectors including transport, industry and energy. Hydrogen is increasingly viewed worldwide as an important clean fuel capable of supporting decarbonisation efforts in industries that are difficult to electrify directly. By integrating hydrogen technology into its railway system, India aims to encourage domestic research, manufacturing and investment while creating new opportunities for technology development and skilled employment. Industry observers believe the successful deployment of indigenous hydrogen-powered trains could eventually position Indian companies to participate in global markets for clean mobility technologies. Environmental experts welcomed the initiative, noting that rail transport already remains one of the most energy-efficient modes of mass transportation and that replacing diesel-powered operations with hydrogen fuel cell technology could further reduce greenhouse gas emissions and improve air quality. The initiative also complements Indian Railways' ongoing efforts towards achieving net-zero carbon emissions through large-scale electrification, renewable energy adoption, energy-efficient operations and sustainable infrastructure development. Analysts observed that combining cleaner trains with expanding expressway networks reflects a comprehensive approach to transport planning aimed at supporting economic growth while balancing environmental responsibilities. The simultaneous inauguration of major highway projects reinforces the government's emphasis on creating integrated multimodal connectivity linking highways, railways, ports and airports to facilitate faster movement of people and goods across the country. Improved transport networks are expected to reduce logistics costs, encourage industrial investment and strengthen regional development by connecting production centres with domestic and international markets. The Delhi-Amritsar-Katra Expressway is anticipated to become a strategic corridor supporting tourism, trade and pilgrimage while significantly improving travel comfort and safety for millions of commuters each year. For Haryana, the day's announcements represent another phase of expanding transport infrastructure that could stimulate industrial growth, attract investments and enhance employment opportunities. For Indian Railways, the hydrogen-powered train signals the beginning of a new chapter in technological advancement, combining indigenous engineering with global environmental priorities. As the train begins regular operations on the Jind-Sonipat route, it serves not only as a practical transport service but also as a demonstration of India's ambition to build a cleaner, smarter and more self-reliant transport system. With continued investment in research, manufacturing and supporting infrastructure, hydrogen-powered mobility may gradually become an important component of the country's future transport landscape, strengthening India's position among nations pursuing innovative solutions for sustainable development while reinforcing the vision of modern infrastructure driving long-term national progress.

# IVF Rule Scan

**New Delhi:** Seeking to strengthen oversight of India's fast-growing assisted reproductive technology sector, the National Commission for Women (NCW) has constituted a high-level Expert Committee to undertake a comprehensive review of the legal and regulatory framework governing in vitro fertilisation (IVF) clinics, Assisted Reproductive Technology (ART) centres and gamete banks across the country. The initiative comes amid increasing concerns over irregularities, inconsistent standards and reports of unethical practices in the fertility treatment ecosystem. The Commission said the review is intended to ensure that reproductive healthcare services remain firmly rooted in the principles of dignity, informed choice, transparency and accountability while protecting the rights, safety and well-being of women seeking fertility treatment. By bringing together specialists from multiple disciplines, the committee is expected to recommend measures that will strengthen institutional accountability, improve compliance with existing laws and create a more transparent and patient-centric regulatory system for assisted reproductive services in India. The Expert Committee will be chaired by former Delhi High Court Judge Justice Asha Menon and will include experts from the judiciary, medicine, forensic science, law enforcement, gynaecology, public policy and the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare. The Commission believes that the diverse composition of the panel will enable a comprehensive examination of legal, ethical, medical and administrative aspects of the ART sector. Members will analyse existing regulations, identify implementation challenges and recommend reforms that balance technological advancement with patient protection. The committee is expected to engage with stakeholders from both the public and private healthcare sectors while reviewing the functioning of IVF clinics, fertility centres and gamete banks operating under the current legal framework. India has witnessed a remarkable expansion in fertility treatment services over the past decade, driven by advances in reproductive medicine, delayed parenthood, changing lifestyles and growing awareness about assisted reproductive technologies. Thousands of couples and individuals now rely on IVF and other ART procedures to overcome infertility and achieve parenthood. The sector has also attracted significant investment, leading to the establishment of numerous specialised fertility clinics in metropolitan cities as well as smaller urban centres. While this growth has improved access to reproductive healthcare, it has simultaneously raised concerns regarding quality control, ethical standards and the need for consistent regulatory oversight across the country. The National Commission for Women observed that although the Assisted Reproductive Technology (Regulation) Act, 2021, and the Surrogacy (Regulation) Act, 2021, created an important legal framework for regulating fertility services, regulatory compliance alone has not been sufficient to eliminate unethical practices. According to the Commission, reports of procedural inconsistencies, inadequate documentation, questionable consent practices and financial

exploitation indicate that stronger oversight mechanisms may be required. The Commission believes that effective implementation of the law should be supported by uniform operational standards, improved monitoring and enhanced institutional accountability to safeguard women seeking fertility treatment. One of the major concerns identified by the Commission relates to the rapid emergence of medical tourism in India's fertility sector. India has become an attractive destination for reproductive healthcare because of its advanced medical expertise, comparatively affordable treatment costs and expanding network of specialised fertility centres. However, the increasing number of international patients has also created concerns regarding possible attempts to bypass domestic legal safeguards governing assisted reproduction. The Commission noted that careful scrutiny is necessary to ensure that reproductive services provided to domestic and foreign patients remain fully compliant with Indian law and ethical standards, particularly those intended to prevent prohibited practices such as sex selection. The Commission further highlighted that the absence of uniform treatment protocols across different states has resulted in varying standards of care. Differences in clinical procedures, documentation requirements, counselling practices and patient management have contributed to inconsistencies that may affect treatment quality and patient confidence. Experts believe that standardised protocols can improve transparency, reduce unnecessary medical interventions and ensure that women receive consistent care regardless of where treatment is undertaken. Uniform standards may also facilitate better monitoring by regulatory authorities and improve overall compliance with statutory requirements. Women undergoing fertility treatment often face emotional, physical and financial challenges throughout the process. Assisted reproductive procedures involve complex medical interventions, repeated consultations and significant financial commitments. In such circumstances, clear communication, informed consent and ethical clinical practices become essential. The Commission has emphasised that every woman seeking assisted reproductive services must receive complete information regarding treatment options, expected outcomes, possible risks and financial implications before making medical decisions. Ensuring informed consent remains one of the central objectives of the committee's review process. Another important area of examination will be the implementation of safeguards relating to patient privacy and confidentiality. Fertility treatment involves highly sensitive personal, medical and genetic information that requires strict protection. The committee will review existing mechanisms governing data privacy, storage of medical records and access to biological information to determine whether additional safeguards are required. Protecting patient confidentiality is considered essential not only for legal compliance but also for maintaining trust between healthcare providers and patients. The Expert Committee will also examine provisions relating to biological traceability within assisted reproductive procedures.

# Govt to convene All-Party Meeting ahead of Monsoon Session

**New Delhi:** Ahead of the commencement of the Monsoon Session of Parliament, the Union Government has intensified its efforts to build consensus across the political spectrum by convening an all-party meeting with floor leaders on Sunday, underscoring its commitment to ensuring the smooth and productive functioning of both Houses during one of the most significant legislative periods of the year. The meeting is expected to provide an important platform for dialogue between the government and opposition parties, allowing leaders to raise concerns, suggest priorities, and discuss procedural issues before Parliament assembles. Such consultations have become an established parliamentary practice, reflecting the importance of cooperation and mutual understanding in the functioning of India's democratic institutions. The government is expected to appeal to all political parties to contribute constructively to debates, maintain parliamentary decorum, and facilitate meaningful discussions on issues of national importance. The Monsoon Session is scheduled to begin on July 20 and continue until August 13, providing lawmakers with several weeks to deliberate on a wide range of legislative proposals, policy initiatives, financial matters, and issues concerning governance and public welfare. Parliamentary Affairs officials have indicated that the session will include discussions on several important Bills that have been prepared for introduction, consideration, and passage, alongside debates on pressing national developments. The all-party meeting is therefore seen as a crucial opportunity to identify areas of agreement, anticipate contentious issues, and evolve strategies that can help Parliament function efficiently despite political differences. India's Parliament remains the highest legislative institution in the country, where elected representatives debate laws, review government policies, and hold the executive accountable through structured discussions and parliamentary procedures. Every parliamentary session carries significant importance, but the Monsoon Session traditionally assumes added relevance because it often witnesses the introduction of major reform measures, detailed debates on governance, and extensive discussions on matters affecting the economy, agriculture, infrastructure, education, healthcare, national security, social welfare, and international relations. In recent years, the government has repeatedly emphasised that uninterrupted parliamentary proceedings are essential for timely legislative action, implementation of reforms, and effective governance. Ministers have consistently urged all political parties to ensure that debates take place within the framework of parliamentary rules while avoiding disruptions

that reduce the productive time available for legislative business. The upcoming all-party meeting is expected to reinforce this message by encouraging political consensus wherever possible while respecting the democratic right of opposition parties to raise questions and seek accountability from the government. Parliamentary experts note that all-party meetings serve as confidence-building exercises rather than formal decision-making platforms. They enable the government to brief opposition leaders about the proposed agenda and provide an opportunity for political parties to highlight issues they wish to raise during the session. These interactions often help reduce misunderstandings and improve coordination between the Treasury benches and the opposition, even when disagreements remain on policy matters. Such consultations also reflect the spirit of parliamentary democracy, where dialogue precedes debate and consensus is pursued before legislative business begins. The Monsoon Session is expected to witness discussions on several significant legislative proposals across different sectors. While the final list of Bills will be placed before Parliament through the official business agenda, lawmakers are anticipated to deliberate on reforms intended to strengthen governance, improve administrative efficiency, promote economic development, modernise public services, and enhance citizen welfare. Bills that have been pending from previous sessions may also be taken up for consideration depending on the availability of parliamentary time and the progress of discussions between political parties. The government is expected to prioritise legislation that supports long-term economic growth, infrastructure expansion, digital governance, investment promotion, financial stability, social justice, and institutional reforms. Apart from legislative business, Members of Parliament are likely to use the session to raise constituency-specific concerns, seek clarifications from ministers, and discuss matters affecting different regions of the country. Question Hour, Zero Hour, Calling Attention motions, and various parliamentary devices will provide opportunities for legislators to seek accountability and present issues of public importance before the House. Committees attached to Parliament are also expected to continue examining legislative proposals and policy matters, providing detailed scrutiny that complements debates on the floor of the House. Parliamentary committees have increasingly become important forums for detailed examination of Bills, expert consultations, and bipartisan engagement, often contributing significantly to improving legislative quality. The government has repeatedly stressed that

constructive participation by all Members enhances the credibility and effectiveness of Parliament while ensuring that diverse viewpoints are reflected in the legislative process. Political observers believe that the upcoming session could witness extensive debates on economic performance, employment generation, inflation management, agricultural development, social welfare programmes, infrastructure projects, technological innovation, digital transformation, education reforms, healthcare initiatives, environmental sustainability, internal security, foreign policy, and India's expanding role in global affairs. Members from different political parties are expected to present contrasting perspectives on these issues while seeking policy clarifications from the government. Such discussions form an essential feature of parliamentary democracy by allowing multiple viewpoints to be expressed before legislative decisions are taken. The government has consistently maintained that Parliament should remain a forum for informed debate, reasoned arguments, and constructive criticism rather than prolonged disruptions. It has frequently appealed to all parties to utilise the available time effectively so that important Bills, budgetary matters, committee reports, and public interest discussions receive adequate attention. Parliamentary productivity has remained an important benchmark for evaluating the effectiveness of legislative sessions, with successive governments expressing concern whenever repeated adjournments reduce the time available for business. Efficient utilisation of parliamentary hours enables lawmakers to complete legislative work while ensuring sufficient opportunity for debate and scrutiny. Officials involved in parliamentary affairs have highlighted that advance consultations through all-party meetings help identify concerns that may otherwise lead to procedural disagreements after the session begins. These meetings also allow ministers to understand opposition priorities and prepare appropriate responses to issues likely to be raised in Parliament. Parliamentary traditions in India have long recognised the importance of dialogue across party lines, particularly before major legislative sessions, as a means of strengthening democratic functioning. Even when political competition remains intense, procedural cooperation has often enabled Parliament to complete significant legislative business in the national interest. The Monsoon Session is also expected to provide an opportunity for newly introduced policy measures to be explained before Parliament, enabling ministers to present the objectives, expected outcomes, and implementation strategies associated with proposed legislation.

# KhoslaRaghu Capture Love In Its Purest Form With "Bewajah," The Opening Track From AARZU

**National :** Winning hearts with their sincere storytelling and soulful sound, Mumbai-based indie-pop duo



KhoslaRaghu return with the first chapter of their much-awaited five-track album AARZU with the release of “Bewajah”. Gentle, heartfelt and deeply relatable, Bewajah captures the butterflies, sleepless nights and the beautiful chaos that come with the feeling of falling for someone you can’t stop thinking about. It marks the beginning of their album that journeys through many shades of love, from longing and heartbreak to healing and hope. At its heart, ‘Bewajah’ is about the kind of love that quietly takes over your world. Every glance feels overwhelming, every meeting leaves you wanting more and the only way to protect your heart is to jokingly ask the person to stay away because it makes you fall deeper. Blending contemporary pop with subtle rock influences, the track beautifully captures the excitement, nervousness and emotional restlessness that often define the beginning of love. While ‘Bewajah’ introduces listeners to the first page of the story, AARZU un-

folds over five songs - Mile Jo Sukoon, Hausle, Naina Saawan and Teri Aadatein, each exploring a different emotion that accompanies love. The album is a heart-felt collection of stories that many will find a piece of themselves in. With poignant lyricism and a contemporary sound rooted in emotion, AARZU is an intimate musical journey through new beginnings, desire, hope, heartbreak and healing. Speaking about Bewajah and the album, KhoslaRaghu shared, “Bewajah is about loving someone so deeply that they quietly take over all your thoughts. It’s beautiful, but it also carries the ache of knowing that not every love story reaches the ending you hope for. That feeling of longing is what AARZU is built on. Having Sohail from Delhi bring sitar to the track added a whole new layer of emotion and if this song reminds someone of a love they’ll always carry with them, then we’ve said everything we wanted to.” Made up of Rishabh Raghuvanshi and Sanchit Khosla, KhoslaRaghu began their journey with one simple belief - friends first, music later. What started as two friends making music in a basement has organically grown into one of India’s most exciting independent success stories. Building a fiercely loyal audience with hits like ‘Barse More Naina’, ‘Doorriyan’, ‘NaQabil’ and others, they continue to resonate with listeners, establishing KhoslaRaghu as one of the most compelling voices in India’s indie-pop landscape. With Bewajah setting the emotional tone, AARZU promises to be a heartfelt collection of moments, memories and emotions that stay with you long after the music ends. Honest, vulnerable and relatable, it reaffirms KhoslaRaghu’s ability to turn everyday feelings into songs that feel timeless.

# Hooked on wearables: Is all of this self-monitoring making us paranoid?

Sarah Hills was worried about her heart. Her Oura Ring, a wearable device that tracks users’ biometric data, including body temperature, heart rate and blood oxygen levels, was telling her something might be off. The ring provides some of its data in the form of scores, like a “readiness” score that uses “sleep quality, body signals, and activity levels to show how prepared you are to take on the day,” according to Oura. Since receiving the ring as a Christmas gift, Hills had begun to compulsively check her stats. If her scores weren’t good, the 22-year-old said, she would ruminate. When her stats wobbled this year, she tried to see a doctor. When she couldn’t get an appointment soon enough, Hills, a recent graduate of Providence College in Rhode Island, and a friend drove to a pharmacy where she spent US\$50 (S\$64.41) on an at-home blood pressure cuff and monitor to put her mind at ease. “At that point I was, like, ‘Oh my gosh, this thing is literally destroying my mind,’” she said. Eventually, Hills was able to see a doctor who told her she was healthy. The doctor did have one recommendation: Consider ditching the ring. In the eternal human quest to know thyself, it’s tempting to seize on every bit of information we can glean. If you could know, for instance, not just that you slept 6.5 hours last night but also that 12 per cent of those hours were spent in REM sleep and that your overall “sleep efficiency” – time asleep versus time awake – was 85 per cent, as many pieces of wearable tech can tell you, why wouldn’t you? At least that’s the attitude of many people in our age of the quantified self, in which collecting sheaves of data about our bodies every day seems to hold the promise of bringing about a happier, healthier life. But what if all of that data is also heightening our stress? Is there a metric for that? While some Oura users say they enjoy the ring as a screen-free way to keep tabs on their bodies, several Oura owners, including Hills, described feeling increasingly anxious after using their devices. Rather than helping them feel more in control of their wellness, the data only made them fixate on potential – and often nonexistent – problems. You could call it Oura paranoia, though the phenomenon is hardly exclusive to any one product: As wearable health technology, including Apple Watches and Fitbits, have become more popular in recent years, some users have struggled with the unintended psychological side effects of the devices. Hannah Muehl, a physician assistant and dietitian in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, said she found that the quantified knowledge that she wasn’t sleeping well made it even harder for her to get rest. She purchased her ring after having a baby to track her sleepless nights nursing. “It puts action behind things that should be innate, like reminding you to rest, reminding you sleep, all these things that shouldn’t be innate practices,” Muehl said. “Making them things that you’re trying to hit as a goal – which inherently, if you’re working hard toward resting, you’re not actually resting.” “I just felt like I couldn’t do

anything right to make the ring happy,” said Abi Caswell, a bakery owner who lives in New Orleans. She got her ring a little over a year ago to use the device’s temperature-tracking feature for family planning. She liked the idea of

users and how we actually leverage this technology so the technology is serving us not the other way around,” Patel said. He also stressed that users should take care not to compare their biometric data with others’. Some have found



not having “to remember to take out a thermometer every morning,” Caswell, 29, said. She described become disenchanted with the device while opening her second bakery location. It was an intense period for Caswell, and the ring’s regular reminders reinforced what she already knew: “My body was in maximum overdrive,” she said. Seeing that spelled out in data only exacerbated her negative feelings, like giving an upset person the wildly unhelpful advice that he or she should just calm down. “It was stressing me out more thinking about how stressed I was,” Caswell said, “and how I was not able to give my body and my health the attention that it needed.” The proliferation of technology designed to track our biology can also make it easy to forget that human beings are pretty well equipped to do that on our own, said Jacqueline D Wernimont, an associate professor at Dartmouth College in the film and media studies department who specialises in histories of quantification. Wearable technology “takes the authority and knowledge out of the individual and places it in some third party, in a device that then the individual has to consult in order to try to decipher or understand her own body,” said Wernimont, who is the author of Numbered Lives: Life And Death In Quantum Media. “That in and of itself produces a kind of anxiety,” she added. Shyamal Patel, Oura’s senior vice president of science, acknowledged that sometimes having access to so much data can be stressful for some users, including himself. Occasionally, he said, he take breaks from wearing his ring if he is feeling overwhelmed. “I think it’s on us as individuals and

that difficult, particularly as social media has amplified stories of people who they say their wearable tech tipped them off to serious medical conditions. “I knew that I had cancer before I was diagnosed because of my Oura Ring,” Nikki Gooding, a 27-year-old nurse practitioner in Richmond, Virginia, said in a widely shared TikTok in March. Hunter Woodhall, a Paralympic track star, said his Oura Ring “may have saved my life” after it helped him seek treatment for appendicitis. Gooding, who was later diagnosed with lymphoma, explained how the ring’s daily updates alerted her to “major signs of some sort of physical stress.” Her temperature was consistently higher than usual, she said in an interview. “Please don’t let this scare you!!” Gooding later wrote in a comment on her video, acknowledging a number of people who said Gooding’s story was the reason they could never wear an Oura Ring. “I deal with a lot of patients who do have health anxiety, so I understood,” Gooding said. These days, Muehl said, she has taken off her ring for good. She’s back to using an old-school pedometer to track her steps. Caswell is still wearing hers. She said she checks it only twice a day. Hills abandoned the blood pressure monitor at her parents’ house. She still sleeps in her ring a few nights a week. Wernimont said she regularly has classroom discussions with students who are overly reliant on their quantified experience, focusing closely on data and trusting those metrics over their own firsthand experiences and physical sensations. “They’re like, ‘The device said ...’ or ‘The monitor said ...,’ and I’m like, ‘But what did your body say?’”

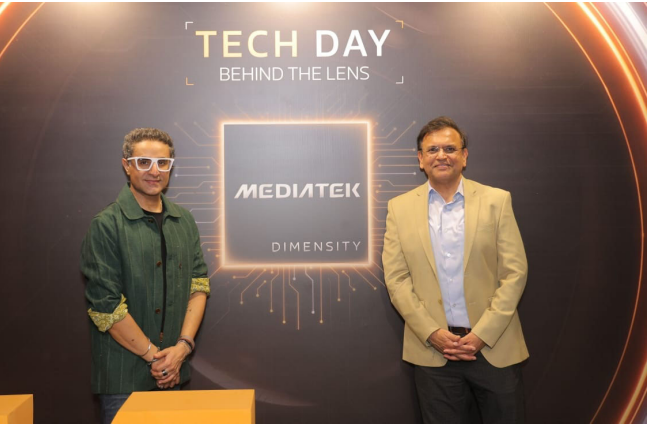
## 8 chic designer crossbody bags for any occasion

In moments that call for both style and function, the crossbody is the ultimate go-to — it offers hands-free ease while keeping your essentials close. Be it a larger, boxy bag with jeans and a tee for a cool off-duty look, or pairing it with a sleek, preppy mini and heels for a night out, crossbody bags are the kind of accessories that are ready for any occasion. From bold statement pieces to timeless classics, here are eight to consider adding to your collection. CELINE SMALL LOUISE BUCKET IN RAFFIA & CALFSKIN For a laid-back yet chic look, reach for Celine’s Small Louise Bucket Bag. Its design effortlessly combines rustic raffia with sleek calfskin, providing an ideal accessory for both casual and refined settings.

Toss your sunglasses, phone, wallet, and sunscreen into this crossbody for a casual brunch or picnic in the park. The gold finishing also lends the bag a touch of elegance, allowing you to take it on a day in the city as well. The adjustable strap ensures comfort while carrying, making it a versatile choice for various outfits and occasions. Whether you’re out on a leisurely day in nature or exploring urban landscapes, this bag keeps your essentials stylishly organised and easily accessible. DIOR MEDIUM BOBBY BAG IN LATTE BOX CALFSKIN The Dior Bobby Bag’s hobo design is understated enough for every day, but the gold accents and signature military-inspired buckle add a touch of sophistication that elevates any outfit.

## MediaTek to Drive Innovation in Smartphone Imaging Ecosystem with Next-Gen Camera Technologies

**New delhi :** – MediaTek, the world’s leading fabless semiconductor company powering nearly 2 billion connected devices a year, reiterated its focus on shaping the future of the Smartphone Imaging and Edge-to-Cloud Ecosystem at its flagship MediaTek Tech Day in New Delhi today. The event “Beyond the Lens,” spotlighted the incredible technologies enabled by MediaTek’s SoCs that make flagship smartphone imaging experiences possible, while reinforcing the One MediaTek vision across automotive, data centers, AI PCs, and other connected technologies beyond smartphones. Key industry voices, including media representatives, tech analysts, professional photographers, KOLs and OEM stakeholders from, Vivo, Motorola and Xiaomi shared their viewpoints at insightful discussions on the next frontier of imaging technology. These conversations also underscored the overarching One MediaTek vision, a unified strategy showcasing the vast scale of the company’s evolving technological ecosystem and seamlessly connecting intelligent solutions from Edge to Cloud. Speaking at the event, Anuj Sidharth, Director, Marketing and Corporate Communications, India and SEA, MediaTek, highlighted breakthrough imaging innovations such as 18EV HDR Fusion for extended dynamic range and 4K120 Super EIS for smooth, cinematic capture. He also outlined the brand update, highlighting MediaTek’s continued momentum and leadership in high-performance computing across India’s fast-evolving multi-device ecosystem. “Beyond the Lens” featured dedicated experience zones that showcased MediaTek’s imaging technologies through devices such as the vivo X300 Pro powered by the MediaTek Dimensity 9500, the OPPO Find X9s powered by the MediaTek Dimensity 9500s, and the Motorola Edge 70 Pro and the Xiaomi 17T powered by the MediaTek Dimensity 8500.



On the sidelines of the event, Anuj Sidharth, Director, Marketing and Corporate Communications, India and SEA, MediaTek said, “Smartphone photography continues to shape consumer expectations and with the MediaTek Dimensity 9500 flagship SoC and the MediaTek Dimensity 8500 Premium SoC, we are meeting that demand head-on. Equipped with next-generation AI-ISP, the chipsets elevate computational photography without compromising on power efficiency. At MediaTek, we believe that truly brilliant technology is about more than just creating products, it’s about delivering incredible experiences that positively impact people’s lives. With our ecosystem partners, we continue to deliver innovations that empower users to capture every moment with greater clarity, creativity, and intelligence.” The event also witnessed an interactive panel discussion, titled ‘Who Really Takes the Photo?’, moderated by Rajiv Makhni. The panel brought together Rahul Jhangiani, professional photographer, Anuj Sidharth, Director, Marketing and Corporate Communications, MediaTek India & SEA, Paigham Danish CTO, Head of Product & GTM, Vivo India, Gautam Batra, Associate Director - Product Marketing, Xiaomi India and Shivam Ranjan, Marketing Director- APAC, Motorola Mobility. Each panelist brought a unique perspective to what

truly makes a great photo – the chip, the camera hardware, or the person behind the lens. Together, the panelists highlighted how human perspective, advanced camera sensors, and the processing power of the ISP work together to deliver the perfect shot. Additionally, the MediaTek TechDay also witnessed insightful conversations around the MediaTek roadmap and its latest technologies:

- Latest Flagship & Premium chipsets: Showcased the MediaTek Dimensity 9500s, Dimensity 9500 and Dimensity 8500 SoCs that delivers leadership in AI, imaging, gaming, connectivity and power efficiency.
- One MediaTek – MediaTek’s expansion beyond smartphones into automotive, data centers, AI PCs and more, streamlined its portfolio as it scales across categories: Dimensity for smartphones, Dimensity AX for automotive, and Dimensity CX for compute platforms.
- Automotive Momentum – 20+ partnerships with leading automakers worldwide and 190+ ongoing projects under the Dimensity AX platform.
- Compute Momentum – Demonstrated MediaTek’s growing focus on AI compute platforms and next-generation computing technologies.
- Discussions on the MediaTek’s broader technology roadmap spanning smartphones, connectivity, Imaging capabilities, AI computing, and intelligent edge devices.

MediaTek remains the No. 1 smartphone chipset brand in India, with a 49% market share in Q2, 2026, a position it has now held for 24 consecutive quarters. The MediaTek Technology Day is an interactive platform to showcase the latest innovations that are reshaping everyday life. ‘Beyond the Lens’ is in tune with MediaTek’s philosophy of making great technology available to help consumers connect seamlessly with the things that shape our daily lives, by enhancing, enriching, and making us smarter and more creative.

**Guwahati :** To mark the nationwide commemoration of Kargil Vijay Diwas 2026, Raksha Mantri Shri Rajnath Singh flagged off the ‘Shaurya Vijay Yatra’ from the National War Memorial, New Delhi, with riders undertaking the 13-day expedition on Jawa and Yezdi motorcycles. With the motto ‘One Ride, One Nation, One Salute’, the 1,900-km expedition will see 28 riders, including serving and retired defence personnel, and the next of kin of fearless martyrs, travel to the Kargil War Memorial in Dras, Ladakh. The expedition will honour the courage, resolve, and supreme sacrifice of the Indian bravehearts who ensured victory in the 1999 Kargil War. The ride will pass through the Chandimandir, Rezang La, and the Leh War Memorials before culminating at the Kargil War Memorial on 26 July 2026. The expedition will carry sacred soil from the National War Memorial to Kargil to symbolise the confluence of generations of war heroes India has witnessed. The riders will also felicitate Veer Naris for their resilience. The flag-off ceremony was graced by Shri Rajnath Singh, Defence Minister of India; General N. S. Raja Subramani, Chief of Defence Staff; and General Dhiraj Seth, Chief of the Army Staff, along with senior military officials, veterans, and invited guests. With the National Cadet Corps in attendance, the occasion conveyed to India’s youth the importance of honouring India’s gallant soldiers in their memories and by upholding the values of duty, honour, and selfless service. Addressing the gathering, Shri Rajnath Singh paid tribute to the In-

dian soldiers whose courage and endurance upheld the honour of the Tricolour in the Kargil War. He described the victory as a symbol of India’s enduring resolve to protect its land and identity, and remembered the contributions of Param Vir Chakra awardees Captain Vikram Batra, Lieutenant Manoj Kumar Pandey, Subedar Major (Honorary Captain) Yogendra Singh Yadav (Retd), and Subedar Major (Honorary Captain) Sanjay Kumar (Retd). Jawa Yezdi Motorcycles initiated this tribute ride in 2021 to bring the motorcycling community closer to the inspiring stories of India’s valiant soldiers and their service to the nation. Over the years, it has evolved into a tradition that honours the spirit of fearlessness, sacrifice, and national pride. This year, the expedition will be accomplished on Jawa 350, 42, 42 FJ, and Yezdi Adventure and Scrambler. Anupam Thareja, Co-founder, Classic Legends, said, “Shaurya Vijay Yatra is our way of helping today’s generation remember the sacrifices of the heroes of Kargil and their families. This expedition is to ride in solidarity with the Indian Armed Forces to introduce new generations to the values of valour, discipline, resolve, and selflessness that makes one a true hero. Alongside the Indian Army, we are honoured to undertake this tribute and pay homage to our bravehearts.” Every kilometre of the Shaurya Vijay Yatra 2026 serves as a reminder that the freedom to ride, travel, and dream is safeguarded by generations of soldiers who chose the nation above themselves.

## Trump fires Election Assistance Commission members ahead of midterms

**Washington:** United States President Donald Trump terminated the last three members of the Election Assistance Commission, the independent, federal commission that assists election administration officials nationwide, according to one person familiar with the decision and two other people briefed on the terminations. The remaining three commissioners of the four-member bipartisan commission were forced out of the commission on Thursday in different ways. The one Republican appointee resigned and the other two Democratic appointees were fired via an email from the White House Presidential Personnel Office, according to two people familiar with the terminations. The fourth commissioner departed the commission in April. The terminations follow the recent Supreme Court decision that granted the president more power to fire members of independent agencies, and a push by Trump for more federal intervention in voting processes, traditionally the purview of the states, as midterm elections approach in November. "On behalf of President Donald J. Trump, I am writing to inform you that your position as Commissioner of the Election Assistance Commission is terminated, effective immediately. Thank you for your service," the email, seen by Reuters, said. The White House confirmed the terminations in a statement to Reuters. "The President, and head of the Executive Branch, reserves the right to remove individuals that may not be totally aligned with the important task of securing America's elections and ensuring every legal vote is counted," a White House official said, citing the Supreme Court decision as precedent. The official added that the Trump administration has been "work-

ing across all agencies and local partners to safeguard elections from fraud and abuse, and investing in a strong infrastructure to sustain that mission especially in the midterm elections". The Election Assistance Commission serves as a "national clearinghouse of information on election administration," accredits its testing laboratories and certifies voting systems, and maintains the national mail voter registration form developed by the National Voter Registration Act of 1993, according to the commission's website. The terminations follow Trump and top administration officials' advocacy to change vote-by-mail requirements ahead of the midterm elections, and investigations into the 2020 presidential election outcome, which Trump lost to Democrat Joe Biden. In his second term, Trump has repeatedly claimed without evidence the 2020 election was rigged.

**COMMISSION'S FUTURE UNCLEAR** The election commission was established by Congress in 2002 through the Help America Vote Act. The four commissioners are appointed by the president, are required to be evenly split with two Democrats and two Republicans, and ultimately need to be confirmed by the US Senate. The three remaining commissioners who were forced out, Thomas Hicks, Benjamin Hovland, and Christy McCormick, were all unanimously confirmed by the Senate. The 2002 law states the president can appoint replacements to the commission, but it is unclear how Trump will move ahead with the commission. Senator Mark Warner, a Virginia Democrat, said in a Thursday social media post the terminations should "concern every American, regardless of party".

**Geneva:** The United Nations warned on Friday (Jul 10) that at least one million women and girls had lost access to vital support due to dramatic cuts to foreign aid spending since January 2025. The UN Women agency decried a collapse of women's organisations at a time when needs are soaring. US President Donald Trump slashed foreign aid after taking office last year, while other key donor countries have also tightened their belts. As a result, "at least one million women and girls affected by conflict and crisis have lost access to critical services and support", Sofia Calltorp, UN Women's head of humanitarian action, told reporters in Geneva. "We know that this number ... is just the tip of the iceberg," she said, describing the findings in a new report as "deeply disturbing". Speaking from Stockholm, she highlighted that the women's organisations at risk of being shut down "work on the frontlines of the world's most complex and dangerous crises", in places like Afghanistan, Gaza, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Sudan and Yemen. "Every dollar withdrawn from women's organisations is a dollar withdrawn from survivors of conflict-related sexual violence, displaced mothers, girls forced from school, and communities struggling to survive," she said.

**120 MILLION NEED ASSISTANCE** With armed conflicts at their highest levels since World War II, around 120 million women and girls require humanitarian assistance and protection, UN Women said. Its report, based on responses from 855 women-led and women's rights organisations across 52 crisis-affected countries, found that 84 per cent of the groups had seen demand for their services increase since January 2025. "Nearly nine in 10 say they can no longer meet current levels of need," the agency said, while "two in five organisations surveyed expect to shut down, temporarily or permanently, within the next year". To keep the

organisations afloat, it said leaders and employees were paying with their own labour and well-being. Sixty-five per cent of women-led organisations reported staff working without

crippling the humanitarian response. "The dismantling of women's organisations is not happening in a vacuum but against a global backlash on the rights of women and girls,"



pay to keep services running, while nearly half reported rising staff burnout. Calltorp warned that "cases of conflict-related sexual violence doubled in 2025", just as the systems designed to protect survivors were collapsing. UN Women found that 86 per cent of the women's organisations questioned reported an increase in gender-based violence in the communities they serve.

**RIGHTS BACKLASH** The consequences can be devastating. "A woman seeking refuge from violence might show up at the door of a shelter that has shut down; a pregnant woman may have to walk for hours to reach a health clinic; or a mother may be denied food for her children," UN Women pointed out. And the agency emphasised that the impacts extend beyond

it said. It pointed out that one in five organisations had already suspended work advancing women's leadership and gender equality, while over half reported witnessing declining participation of women in community leadership and local decision-making. Combined with the cuts to women's organisations, the erosion of women's rights is taking a dire societal toll, Calltorp said. Around 90 per cent of the women's organisations questioned for Friday's report noted increased poverty among the women they serve. Eight in 10 meanwhile saw growing numbers of girls dropping out of school, while around 70 per cent saw increases in forced marriages. "Funding shortfalls deepen inequality and division, both of which comes with an incredibly costly price tag," she said.

## Netanyahu races to keep promises to allies ahead of election

**Jerusalem:** With the Israeli parliament set to dissolve in the coming days, just four months before national elections, the government of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is racing to pass a series of bills, drawing fierce criticism from the opposition. Seven pieces of legislation are currently on the agenda of the Knesset, Israel's 120-seat parliament, each a priority for one or more parties in Netanyahu's ruling coalition. By striking these political bargains, Netanyahu hopes to shore up his alliances and head into the late October election from a position of strength, despite opinion polls suggest-

ing he might struggle to return to office. The veteran prime minister, who has held office for nearly two decades across multiple terms, is facing public anger over a series of failures - particularly those that led to Hamas's unprecedented Oct 7, 2023 attack, which triggered the war in Gaza. "While they're busy with their coalition's survival, we're fighting for the country and for the interests of Israel's citizens," opposition leader Yair Lapid wrote on X. The bill that has generated the most controversy concerns exemptions from military service for students engaged in religious studies - a longstanding demand of the ultra-Orthodox parties, which have repeatedly threatened in the past to bring down the government if their constituents were not granted such exemptions. The bill, approved in a preliminary reading in June, states that "the State of Israel shall recognise individuals who commit themselves to long-term Torah study as performing meaningful service for the benefit of the State and the Jewish people". For months, the proposed Basic Law: Torah Study has brought thousands of Israelis onto the streets and inflamed debate

on political television programmes. "The government is exploiting the final days of the Knesset's session to pass laws against the army," Gadi Eisenkot, a former military chief who has emerged as Netanyahu's main rival in the upcoming election, wrote on X. He argued that only his newly formed party, Yashar (Straight) party, would be capable of forming the next government.

**LEGISLATIVE "MARATHON"** According to Eisenkot, the legislative "marathon" is aimed solely at passing laws that would no longer be possible once he comes to power.



In exchange for supporting the military exemption bill, lawmakers from the two ultra-Orthodox parties are expected to back legislation proposed by Netanyahu's Likud party, including a reform of the broadcasting sector aimed at overhauling the entire regulatory framework governing television, radio and streaming platforms. Presented by its supporters as a measure designed to open the market to competition, the reform has been condemned by critics as an attempt to exert political control over the media, undermine the independence of news organisations and provide economic benefits to outlets considered close to the

government. Another bill under consideration aims to reform the status of the state attorney general, who currently also serves as the government's legal adviser. Netanyahu's Likud party seeks to weaken the position, currently held by his vocal critic Gali Baharav-Miara, by stipulating that the legal adviser's opinions would no longer be binding on the government. Here too, the opposition accuses the government of trying to eliminate an independent check on its power and to politicise criminal prosecutions. Finally, at the urging of the religious parties, the government is seeking

to repeal a reform introduced by the previous administration that ended the religious authority's monopoly over issuing kosher certification by opening the sector to competition. Once again, critics say the bill appears tailored to the demands of the ultra-Orthodox parties, particularly Shas, which has pushed for it in order to protect the religious institution's interests at the expense of consumers. The original kosher reform was expected to reduce costs for restaurant owners. Additional bills are still being debated in parliamentary committees, but heated disagreements - including within the governing coalition itself - make it difficult for all of the measures to pass before the end of the legislative term. The Knesset is due to dissolve automatically on Jul 15, marking the end of its summer session, with parliamentary elections scheduled for no later than Oct 27. However, in order to complete ongoing legislative proceedings, lawmakers can extend the session by up to 12 days, giving Netanyahu and his allies additional time to secure passage of the bills.

## Spain wildfire roars through village leaving 11 dead and 19 missing

**Madrid:** Eleven people were killed including four suspected to be British, and 19 were missing after a wildfire tore through a rugged area of southern Spain, authorities said. Authorities said many of the victims may be foreign tourists visiting Bedar, a small whitewashed village in Los Gallardos district, but that they were still confirming their identities. They described victims trying to flee the fast-moving blaze through difficult, forested terrain, in one of Spain's deadliest wildfires in recent years. Located about 15km from Spain's Mediterranean coast, Bedar is popular with foreign residents and tourists seeking a quieter alternative to the nearby beach resorts. The head of the regional government of Andalusia, Juan Manuel Moreno Bonilla, said four of the people who died were travelling in a right-hand drive car. "They appear to have been British nationals and were burned to death inside the car," he told Spanish radio, adding at least 19 people were still unaccounted for. Bedar mayor Angel Francisco Collado said he urged some residents to flee their homes, "even those who did not want to leave". However, seven people died while trying to escape on foot and two others were taken to hospital, he added. Scientists agree that climate change caused by humans burning fossil fuels is making extreme weather events such as heatwaves more likely and more intense.

**WINDS FAN FLAMES** About 500 firefighters and troops battled the inferno northeast of Almeria in the southern Andalusia region, which witnesses said may have been started by a power line that fell and set scrubland on fire. It erupted as temperatures across heat-battered Spain and France were predicted to hit 40°C on Friday, with forest fires blazing in both countries. "At the

moment, we have confirmed that 11 people have lost their lives in the Los Gallardos fire; there are no words for such grief," Antonio Sanz, the Andalusia region's minister for emergencies, said in a video posted on X. "Everything indicates that the deceased are, mostly or entirely, foreign nationals," Sanz added, with authorities still confirming their identities. He described the fire as a "very complex, very fast-moving" outbreak in a region with many ravines where it is difficult to use heavy machines and homes in forested areas. Strong winds helped spread the blaze overnight but had calmed in the morning, although forecasters predict they will pick up and change direction later in the day, Sanz said. The Andalusia regional government said emergency services were submerged by more than 150 calls from people reporting the fire and that flames could be seen on a main highway passing near the village. Sanz also said eight people had been injured, four seriously, and that about 3,150ha of forest and farmland had been scorched. Around 800 people were evacuated, including nearly 200 who were being accommodated in shelters, he added. **"DEEPLY SADDENED"**

Witnesses told authorities the blaze may have started after a power line fell, igniting dry vegetation before spreading rapidly through surrounding woodland, the regional government said. Authorities have not confirmed the cause of the fire. Roads were closed, and residents evacuated as the inferno spread, with about 150 people housed in a cultural centre. Spain's Military Emergency Unit (UME) was sent to join the firefighters. Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez wrote on X that he was "deeply saddened and devastated by the terrible consequences of the wildfire".

## H5 bird flu detected in Australian seabird for first time

**Sydney:** Scientists have detected the highly contagious H5 bird flu in an Australian seabird for the first time, the government said on Friday (Jul 10). Australia was, for years, the only continental land-mass free of the H5 strain, which has caused severe disease and high death rates in poultry and wild birds worldwide. A total of 12 cases of H5 bird flu have been confirmed in Australia since June, but all of them were in migratory seabirds, not local wildlife. Laboratory testing confirmed the disease had infected a greater crested tern in the town of Robe, South Australia. "While this, of course, is a concerning development, it is not unexpected," Agriculture Minister Julie Collins said. "I do want to reiterate, though, that at this time there is still no evidence of any mass mortality due to the H5 bird flu," she told a news conference in Hobart, capital of the island state of Tasmania. There was no sign the virus had spread to other animal populations, poultry or agriculture systems, "and there remains a low risk to human health", the minister said. Scientists were seeking to establish the potential pathways for the virus's spread to the Australian bird, Collins added.

**"ENHANCED SURVEILLANCE"** "What we do know is that this is a coastal seabird that has an overlapping coastal range with migratory sea birds that have previously tested positive for H5." The South Australian state government had implemented "enhanced surveillance" in the area where the bird was found, she said. There has been concern that the deadly disease could add to the extinction risks faced by Australian fauna, many of which are unique to the vast continent. Almost half of Australia's wild bird species, and 83 per cent of its mammals, are found nowhere else. The wild birds most affected by the H5 strain include waterfowl, shorebirds, seabirds and birds of prey. Marine mammals have also been affected, with some detections in other animals such as cats, goats, alpacas and pigs. Officials have previously said they are investigating if the disease arrived in Australia via birds migrating from the sub-Antarctic. Scientists said in June the H5 bird flu strain had killed more than 13,000 elephant seal pups after infecting a breeding colony on the remote Heard and McDonald Islands, one of Australia's external territories in the sub-Antarctic.

## Philippines rejects Chinese academics' sovereignty claims

**Manila:** The Philippines rejected on Friday (Jul 10) a statement from a group of Chinese academics that the country's northernmost islands rightfully belonged to Beijing. The Batanes Islands are located less than 200km from self-ruled Taiwan - which China considers part of its territory - and have hosted joint Philippine-US military drills as recently as April. At the end of June, a university in southern China's Guangdong said it had held a symposium of over 10 "scholars and experts", which had determined the Batanes were geographically an extension of Taiwan. The statement from Jinan University, picked up by some news outlets this week, also disputed Manila's historical claim to the islands, which is home to fewer than 20,000 people. Asked whether this reflected China's official position, Beijing's Ministry of Foreign Affairs responded that it did not "comment on the views of the academic community". But Philippine National Security Adviser Eduardo Oban said on Friday while the Batanes claim had "no merit", the country viewed the issue with concern and could not "ignore how false narratives can be repeated to manufacture ambiguity where none exists". Rear Admi-

ral Roy Vincent Trinidad, the military's spokesman for the South China Sea, labelled the symposium's conclusions a form of "salami slicing," a term used to refer to China's alleged attempts to enlarge its territory through small, calculated steps. Manila's sovereignty over the Batanes was "settled and not up for debate", the country's Department of Foreign Affairs added. The Jinan University statement appeared to have been taken down on Friday. When AFP accessed it on Thursday, it said the Jun 30 symposium in the city of Guangzhou was called in response to plans by Manila and Tokyo to begin talks over sea boundaries in waters east of Taiwan, a move that angered Beijing. President Ferdinand Marcos warned in August last year any war over Taiwan would "drag the Philippines, kicking and screaming into the conflict". The Philippines and China have in recent years regularly dealt with flare-ups in tensions over the disputed South China Sea. Beijing claims the strategic waterway nearly in its entirety, despite an international ruling that said its assertions are baseless. The anniversary of that decision at the Permanent Court of Arbitration will be on Jul 12.

# PW celebrates student performance in NEET 2026

**Guwahati:** Education company PhysicsWallah (PW) has announced its NEET 2026 results, with multiple students securing spots in the top NEET All India Rank (AIR). Ravikant Diwakar (AIR 55), Shivansh Anand (AIR 152), Divyansh Jaiswal (AIR 173), and Sakshi Kumari (AIR 192) were some of the high-performing students, to name a few. These achievements are a testament to the flexibility of the learning ecosystem that PW tries to provide, with students securing high scores through either online courses or offline, tech-enabled PW Vidyapeeth centres, depending on their individual preferences and learning styles. Additionally, an event was held in Guwahati, celebrating the strong performance of students. Aayyng Pegu (AIR 2180) and Emran Hussain Choudhury (AIR 3999), amongst others, were some of the high-performing students of PhysicsWallah in the city. "I am so happy to see my hard work pay off," said Ravikant Diwakar. "PW's batches completely cleared up all my confusion. The teachers explained the concepts so well that I actually understood the logic behind the formulas instead of just memorising them. Whenever I got stuck on a tough problem, the video explanations showed me the right steps instantly, which saved me a lot of time." "Getting this score feels amazing, and I'm glad all my effort worked out," said Shivansh Anand. "The biggest help for me was the daily practice papers. Taking those regular tests taught me exactly how to pace myself and manage my time without panicking. The teachers also helped clear my doubts and showed me where I was making mistakes, which helped me fix them before the real exam." Alakh Pandey, Founder and CEO of PhysicsWallah (PW), said, "Congratulations to every NEET 2026



aspirant who poured their hard work, discipline, and heart into this journey. Your dedication is truly commendable. To those celebrating their results today, your success is well-earned. And to those who fell short of their goals, remember that this exam is just a single milestone, not the measure of your worth or your future. Your potential is vast, and this is merely one chapter in a long, successful journey ahead." PhysicsWallah's (PW) approach to NEET coaching is built on offering accessible, affordable, and high-quality learning. The platform integrates tech-led solutions such as daily practice questions, mock tests with video solutions, 24x7 doubt resolution, and AI-personalised revision journeys, ensuring that students stay on track, regardless of their location or background. This year, approximately 20 lakh students appeared for NEET (UG) 2026, with 11.21 lakh candidates qualifying for admission to various undergraduate medical programmes. PhysicsWallah Limited (PW), an education platform, was founded in 2020 by Alakh Pandey and Prateek Maheshwari. Headquartered in Noida, Uttar Pradesh, PW aims to facilitate education through online, offline, and hybrid platforms. Initially launched as a YouTube channel in 2014, PW now offers education to students through its native app, tech-enabled offline and hybrid centres, and YouTube channels. PW's offerings span various educational segments, including test preparation, a skilling vertical, coaching for higher education, and facilitating education abroad, with programs available in multiple vernacular languages. PhysicsWallah Limited was listed on the National Stock Exchange of India Limited (NSE) and the BSE.

# India launches new skilling initiatives on World Youth Skills Day

**Guwahati:** "The future belongs to those who continue to learn, adapt and innovate. India's youth must be prepared not only for today's jobs, but also for tomorrow's opportunities," said Shri Jayant Chaudhary, Hon'ble Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Skill Development and Entrepreneurship and Minister of State for Education, Government of India, at the World Youth Skills Day 2026 celebrations organised by the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE) at Kaushal Bhawan, New Delhi. Emphasising that skilling must be viewed as a lifelong journey, the Minister said, "Through IndiaSkills, Centres of Excellence, apprenticeships and stronger industry partnerships, we are creating pathways that connect young people with opportunities in India and across the world. We must also encourage more women to enter non-traditional sectors and enable every young Indian to challenge the status quo, embrace change and contribute to Viksit Bharat." During the event, the Minister unveiled the IndiaSkills Competition 2026-27 Guidelines, outlining the roadmap for India's flagship skill competition across 63 industry-relevant skill categories. Registrations are now open on the Skill India Digital Hub for aspiring competitors from across the country. The WorldSkills India Champions Club was also launched to bring together IndiaSkills and WorldSkills champions as mentors and ambassadors. The initiative will enable past champions to inspire aspiring competitors, promote excellence in vocational skills and support the next generation of skilled talent. India's medal winners from the Global Skills Challenge Australia 2026 and the Taipei Capital Cup 2026 were felicitated for securing a combined tally of three Gold Medals, three Silver Medals, one Bronze Medal and three Merit Awards, reinforcing India's growing competitiveness on the global skills stage. The Ministry also unveiled the Guidelines for the Creation of Centres of Excellence under Skill India. These guidelines aim to support the development of world-class, industry-aligned training facilities equipped with modern infrastructure, advanced technologies and strong industry partnerships. A major highlight was the introduction of the Training Programme for Multi-Skilled Caregivers under PMKVY, in line with the Union Budget 2026-27 announcement to skill 1.5 lakh caregiving professionals. Of these, 1.3 lakh candidates will be trained through the MSDE ecosystem, creating a professionally trained workforce for healthcare, geriatric and home-based care while opening new employment opportunities, particularly for women and youth. The event also marked the extension of the Pilot Project for Apprenticeship Engagement under NAPS in the North Eastern Region, aimed at expanding access to workplace-based learning and strengthening industry participation across the region. Speaking on the occasion, Ms. Debashree Mukherjee, Secretary, MSDE, said, "Over the past 11 years, Skill India has evolved into a con-

nected national ecosystem built through partnerships with States, industry and training institutions, empowering more than six crore youth. As we enter the next phase, our focus must move from scale to quality, relevance and outcomes. The theme 'Skills for a Shared Future' also reminds us that women and girls must remain central to India's growth story." MSDE also announced the constitution of a Committee on Gender Mainstreaming to advance women-led development across the skilling ecosystem. Bringing together Ministry divisions, partner institutions and concerned Ministries, the Committee will work in mission mode to address barriers across the skilling-to-employment pathway, including outreach, mobility, training, apprenticeships, placements, retention and career progression. The Ministry will also invite entries for a Best Practices Compendium on Skilling and Employment for Women, documenting evidence-based models that have improved women's access to skills, employment, entrepreneurship and inclusive workplaces. Entries will open on July 20, 2026, for participation by government departments, States and Union Territories, industry, training institutions, CSR organisations and civil society. Another major initiative announced was the proposed Skills Outcomes Fund, an outcomes-based financing platform of approximately Rs. 530 crore that will combine Government funding, CSR contributions and philanthropic capital to support more than two lakh young people with industry-aligned skilling, employment and livelihood opportunities. An MoU was first exchanged between MSDE and NSDC for establishing the Fund within NSDC under the aegis

# ALLEN celebrates outstanding NEET (UG) 2026 Results; Shubh becomes Assam Topper with AIR 133

**Guwahati:** ALLEN Guwahati has once again reaffirmed its position as one of the leading coaching institutes in the North-east by delivering an exceptional performance in NEET (UG) 2026. Leading the success story is Shubh Prasad, who secured All India Rank (AIR) 133 with an outstanding 690 out of 720 marks, emerging as the Assam Topper. Along with this remarkable achievement, the institute produced several top-ranking students, including Leeyon Talukdar (AIR 243), Borneel B. Borah (AIR 554), Subhanga Baruah (AIR 708), Anubhav Pegoo (AIR 1077), and Kaustav Medhi (AIR 1357), among many others. The institute's overall performance has been equally impressive, with 4 students securing ranks within the Top 1000 AIR, 18 students in the Top 10,000 AIR, and 25 students in the Top 25,000 AIR. These results reflect the dedication of the students, the unwavering

support of their parents, and the consistent academic excellence, disciplined learning environment, and expert mentorship offered by ALLEN Guwahati. Expressing his happiness over the results, Mr. Brajesh Kumar Yadav, Zonal Head, ALLEN Guwahati, said, "With the blessings of Maa Kamakhya, ALLEN Guwahati has been consistently producing the Northeast's top performers since its inception. This year's outstanding NEET (UG) 2026 results are yet another testament to the hard work of our students, the commitment of our faculty members, and the trust that parents have placed in us. Our focus has always been on nurturing every student through systematic classroom learning, regular assessments, doubt-solving sessions, and personalized mentoring. We congratulate all our successful students and wish them the very best as they embark on their journey towards becoming dedicated medical professionals."

# IESA welcomes launch of SEMICON 2.0

**Bengaluru :** The India Electronics and Semiconductor Association (IESA) welcomes today's Union Cabinet decisions, which together commit an outlay of Rs. 2,19,353 crore across infrastructure and electronics manufacturing, including two significant announcements for India's semiconductor and electronics industry - Semicon 2.0, approved at an outlay of Rs. 1,27,500 crore, and the new Mobile Phone Manufacturing Scheme (MPMS), approved at an outlay of Rs. 62,500 crore over five years. Building on the strong foundation and momentum laid under Phase 1 of India Semiconductor Mission, the programme marks government's commitment on long-term policy support and India's transition from establishing semiconductor manufacturing to building a comprehensive and globally competitive ecosystem spanning fabs, advanced packaging, design, R&D, talent, machines (equipment), materials and supply chains. Phase 1 has established India's credibility by attracting over US\$20 billion in announced semiconductor investments and enabling multiple Fab and ATMP/OSAT projects. With several OSAT projects already under implementation and entering production, Phase 2 rightly places greater emphasis on semiconductor fabs, while continuing strong support for advanced packaging, thereby creating a balanced and future-ready semiconductor ecosystem. Ashok Chandak, President, IESA and SEMI India, said: "SEMICON 2.0 marks decisive step in India's journey from policy intent to execution at scale. Phase 1 established India's credibility; Phase 2 builds long-term capability. By strengthening fabs, advanced packaging, design, R&D, talent and the semiconductor supply chain, the Government is creating the foundation for a globally competitive ecosystem that will attract sustained investments, create high-value employment and significantly enhance domestic value addition. SEMICON India 2.0 comes at an opportune moment as the global semiconductor industry enters an unprecedented investment cycle. With worldwide semiconductor manufacturing equipment spending expected to grow to nearly US\$230 billion by 2028, the policy positions India to capture the next wave of global investments in semiconductor manufacturing, advanced packaging, equipment and materials, Chandak added." "Equally significant is the approval of the Mobile Phone

Manufacturing Scheme (MPMS) that is designed to take mobile manufacturing to its next phase, with an ambition to nearly double cumulative production to about Rs. 39 lakh crore and cumulative exports to about Rs. 15 lakh crore, while creating 60,000 additional direct jobs. Given that India has already manufactured approximately 125 crore mobile phones emerging as world's second-largest mobile manufacturing ecosystem place, and now meets 99.2 percent of domestic demand through 'Made in India' devices, this scheme provides the continuity and ambition needed to sustain that momentum, while its incentives for domestic sourcing and for design and R&D by Indian brands will help deepen value addition and build genuine Indian intellectual property.", Chandak added. "These decisions also validate the broader emphasise on Design and R&D. The enhanced focus on indigenous product development, industry-led R&D and innovation will help transform India from a design powerhouse into a complete design-to-manufacturing destination. Together with complementary initiatives, Semicon India 2.0 will strengthen technological self-reliance and establish India as one of the world's most trusted semiconductor and electronics manufacturing destinations, commented Mr. Navin Bishnoi, Chairperson, IESA. The programme is expected to catalyse another US\$40-50 billion in investments, create 2-3 lakh high-skilled jobs, significantly enhance domestic value addition and strengthen India's position as a trusted global semiconductor partner. Together with complementary initiatives such as the Electronics Components Manufacturing Scheme (ECMS), Production Linked Incentive (PLI), Electronics Manufacturing Clusters (EMC 2.0) and state programmes, SEMICON 2.0 has the potential to accelerate India's journey towards nearly 40% domestic value addition in electronics manufacturing, bringing the nation significantly closer to the vision of a truly Atmanirbhar Bharat. The India Electronics and Semiconductor Association (IESA) has welcomed the launch of SEMICON India 2.0, describing it as a landmark initiative that will strengthen India's position as a trusted global semiconductor hub. Congratulating the Government of India, the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) and the India Semiconductor Mission (ISM), IESA

said the programme lays the foundation for a comprehensive semiconductor ecosystem spanning research, design, manufacturing, packaging, equipment, materials and talent development. The initiative places a strong emphasis on expanding semiconductor fabrication facilities to reduce strategic import dependence, attract global investments and complete the country's semiconductor value chain. Continued support for Outsourced Semiconductor Assembly and Test (OSAT) and advanced packaging is expected to create high-value manufacturing jobs while positioning India as a preferred destination for chiplets and heterogeneous integration technologies critical for the AI era. SEMICON India 2.0 also prioritises talent development through specialised education, industry-academia collaboration and skill-building programmes aimed at creating more than two lakh skilled professionals to meet the projected global demand for nearly one million semiconductor professionals by 2030. Enhanced support under the Design Linked Incentive (DLI) Scheme is expected to accelerate indigenous chip design, intellectual property creation and semiconductor product innovation, enabling Indian startups to undertake advanced chip development programmes. The initiative further highlights the importance of industry-driven, market-oriented research and development to commercialise indigenous technologies and strengthen India's design-to-manufacturing capabilities. In addition, a dedicated focus on semiconductor equipment, specialty chemicals, gases, materials, consumables and precision engineering will deepen domestic value addition, create opportunities for MSMEs and reinforce India's role in global semiconductor supply chains. Welcoming the initiative, IESA Vice Chairperson Pradeep Vajram said the association looks forward to working closely with MeitY, the India Semiconductor Mission, state governments, industry, academia and global partners to ensure the successful implementation of SEMICON India 2.0. He said IESA will continue supporting workforce development, startup growth, industry-led R&D, policy advocacy and international collaborations to build a resilient, innovation-driven and globally competitive semiconductor ecosystem aligned with India's vision of technological leadership and Atmanirbhar Bharat.

# Centre expands PM-NAPS intervention to support 30,000 apprentices in NE

**Guwahati:** Reinforcing its commitment to expanding quality apprenticeship opportunities and strengthening youth employability in the North-Eastern Region (NER), the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE) launched the Extension of the Special Intervention for Promotion of Apprenticeship in the North-Eastern Region (NER) under the Prime Minister's National Apprenticeship Promotion Scheme (PM-NAPS) for FY 2026-27, to be implemented by the Indian Institute of Entrepreneurship (IIE), Guwahati. Building on the success of the pilot initiative launched in May 2025, the extended intervention aims to deepen apprenticeship penetration across all eight North-Eastern States, enhance participation of industry and government establishments, and create sustainable livelihood pathways for the region's youth under the Skill India Mission. The Ministry has expanded the scope of the intervention for FY 2026-27 with a higher target of 30,000 apprentices, an increase of around 15 per cent over the pilot phase. Of these, 15,000 apprentices will be supported for opportunities outside the North-East, including Government Departments and Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs), while another 15,000 apprentices will be engaged within the region, including within their domicile States. The Government has earmarked a financial outlay of Rs. 57.58 crore for the initiative during FY 2026-27. The allocation will be met through the North-Eastern Region component of PM-NAPS. Jayant Chaudhary, Hon'ble Minister of State (I/C) for Skill Development and Entrepreneurship and Minister of State for Education, Government of India, said, "The North-Eastern Region is one of India's greatest strengths, with a young, talented and aspirational population ready to contribute to the nation's growth story. The remarkable success of the pilot initiative demonstrates that with the right opportunities and support, our youth can unlock their full potential. By extending this intervention under PM-NAPS, we are expanding

access to quality apprenticeship opportunities, strengthening local ecosystems, encouraging industry participation, and enabling young people from the region to gain valuable workplace experience both within the North-East and across the country." The extended intervention also broadens the coverage of the additional financial incentive of Rs. 1,500 per month, over and above the support available under PM-NAPS. While the pilot primarily supported apprentices moving outside their domicile State, the revised initiative will now include apprentices engaged within their home States in the North-East. In addition to financial assistance, the initiative will continue to focus on strengthening the apprenticeship ecosystem through workshops, awareness campaigns, employer engagement programmes and collaboration with educational institutions and industry stakeholders across the region. The pilot initiative has delivered encouraging results within its first year. Against a target of 26,000 apprentices, the programme facilitated the engagement of 23,470 apprentices, achieving over 90 per cent of its target. Apprenticeship engagement in the region grew by 51 per cent, increasing from 15,562 in FY 2024-25 to 23,470 in FY 2025-26. The initiative also successfully promoted mobility, with 13,673 apprentices securing opportunities outside their domicile State while 9,797 apprentices were engaged within the North-East. The pilot intervention witnessed encouraging growth in apprenticeship participation across the North-Eastern Region, with Meghalaya recording the highest increase of 95 percent. Women emerged as key beneficiaries, with a notable rise in female apprenticeship engagement. Employer participation also expanded significantly, with apprenticeship engagement through Government establishments doubling and private sector participation witnessing substantial growth. By expanding access to industry-relevant training and employment opportunities, the initiative reaffirms the Government's commitment to empowering the youth of the North-Eastern Region and accelerating inclusive growth through the Skill India Mission.

## Jorhat Register Convincing 113-Run Win Over Naharkatia

**Staff Reporter, Nagaon, July 18:** Jorhat recorded a comprehensive 113-run victory over Naharkatia in the Group-I Upper Assam Zone match of the R.G. Baruah U-16 Inter-District Cricket Tournament, organised under the Assam Cricket Association and hosted by the Nowgong Sports Association at Nurul Amin Stadium.

Resuming their first innings at 19/4, Naharkatia were bundled out for just 27 runs, with Gurshwan Singh claiming an outstanding 7 wickets and Rishabh Sharma taking two.

Jorhat then declared their second innings at 96/6, powered by Anshunav Baruah's unbeaten 20, Bhavarnav's 19, Priyam Sarkar's 18, and Gurshwan Singh's 17.

Chasing a target, Naharkatia collapsed for 37 runs in their second innings. Ishwan Ranjan Dutta and Gurshwan Singh shared the bowling honours with five wickets each. Gurshwan Singh was adjudged the Player of the Match for his all-round bowling performance.

The next Group-I fixture will see Tinsukia take on Nazira at the same venue.

## France punish Japan 42-15 in scrappy Tokyo try-fest

**Tokyo :** France ran in six tries against a ragged Japan at the National Stadium in Tokyo on Saturday with hooker Maxime Lamothe and fullback Matthieu Jalibert each grabbing a brace as Les Bleus rounded off their first leg of the inaugural Nations Championship with a 42-15 win. The Six Nations champions took advantage of the high-tempo, unstructured match with No. 8 Alexandre Roumat and scrumhalf Maxime Lucu also dotting down, and Lucu and Romain Ntamack converting all the scores. "We loved playing these matches because they were played at a very high level, with a lot of ball-in-play time and a great intensity," captain Lucu told a post-match news

conference. France bounced back from a narrow 34-32 loss away to New Zealand with an emphatic 42-26 win in Australia in their other opening matches. The tournament will resume in November before a finals weekend in London. While Japan showed flashes of attacking brilliance, it was a disappointing end to a strong run that saw them beat Italy 27-10 and front up to Ireland in a 20-36 loss in Australia. JAPAN STRUGGLE TO STOP FRENCH MAUL France punished Japan's defence less than two minutes after kickoff with Lamothe powering over from a lineout maul, an area the hosts struggled to deal with throughout.

## If you bill it, they will come: FIFA wins battle for fans' wallets in pricey World Cup

**New york :** Sunday's final caps a World Cup where fans were willing to shell out more than ever for a seat at the quadrennial showpiece, as ticket buyers confounded even the greatest cynics in the face of sky-high prices. In the match at New York New Jersey Stadium - widely billed as the single most expensive sporting event ever played in the United States - Lionel Messi's Argentina face Spain and their teenage superstar Lamine Yamal. It is a fitting end to a tournament that has tested the limits of what fans will spend, with FIFA's gamble paying off after concerns over visa restrictions and domestic unrest in the United States. "What FIFA did a very good job of was determining what demand would be because people (were) paying these absurd prices for just about all the 104 matches," said Scott Friedman, a ticketing expert who previously worked for the Cleveland Cavaliers. "A year ago, we didn't think people would be traveling with Trump's ICE stuff and all this other conspiracy stuff. But it's the most popular tournament in the world by far globally and FIFA, to their credit, they set the prices high and people ended up paying them." A Reuters analysis of FIFA attendance data found that more than half the 72 group matches were attended to capacity, with most others only a few hundred fans short of a full house. Around 99.7 per cent of available seats were filled during the preliminary stage matches, FIFA said. The data erased early concerns that FIFA's infamously steep prices would put off fans, after swathes of empty seats were seen around the Guadalajara Stadium for the June 11 match between South Korea and the Czech Republic. FIFA reported an attendance of 44,985 at the nearly 46,000-seat stadium but empty seats seen by a Reuters witness around the arena seemed to justify critics' biggest fears.

**HIGHER PRICES, HIGHER DEMAND** As the tournament expanded to its largest-ever field, however, with 48 teams involved, so too did interest among fans. Prices were set initially at \$575 a ticket for group games - more than double the most expensive group ticket available during the 2022 tournament - but FIFA's dynamic pricing system meant that many ticketholders paid far more. Hundreds of tickets were still available for the final on Wednesday, priced at little more than \$7,000 on FIFA's platform, a surprise fact that prompted speculation over whether FIFA had finally gone too far with its prices. But the batch of seats available was likely the result of a process known as "slow ticketing", Friedman explained, a common practice in mega-events in which organisers restrict inventory to motivate buyers. "They can act like they already sold their seats and kind of just dribble them in accordingly to obviously increase market demand," said Friedman, who runs the 'Ticket Talk Network', dedicated to exploring how seats for sports mega-events are bought and sold. "Like 'Oh, there's only so-and-so amount of tickets left available in the section, I better buy now'." By Friday, nearly all tickets appeared to be sold, with a few listed on FIFA's sales platform at around \$32,000

apiece. 'NO ONE REALLY KNOWS HOW THIS WORKS'

An opaque "dynamic pricing" process has also proven a boon for FIFA, as the sport continues its uneasy evolution from a working-class game to a pastime of the wealthy. FIFA introduced dynamic pricing for the first time at this tournament, allowing ticket prices to fluctuate based on real-time demand and other factors. "One reason for the frustration over the last few months is that no one really knows how this works," said Adam Elmachtoub, an associate professor of industrial engineering and operations research at Columbia Univer-

sity. "People are willing to accept dynamic pricing - we deal with it for airfare, we deal with it even (for) buying clothes - but I think when it's such a high-profile event, transparency will help a lot." FIFA introduced a small number of lower-cost tickets in response to backlash over prices, as politicians including New York City Mayor Zohran Mamdani lobbied for local residents to have access to affordable seats. A high-quality tournament also spurred demand, with the four top-ranked nations in the semi-finals for the first time since rankings were introduced, and Sunday's final will feature the 39-year-old Messi in probably his final World Cup match. "The notion of what is fair pricing here is



knockouts." **WORLD CUP FOR 'A HAPPY FEW'** Human rights experts warned, however, that the tournament remained out of reach for far too many fans. At what FIFA President Gianni Infantino had promised would be the most inclusive World Cup, supporters from multiple countries were unable to obtain visas, according to the Sport & Rights Alliance. "It's been a World Cup for a happy few," Ronan Evain, executive director of Football Supporters Europe, told reporters. "Those in Europe, Norwegians, Scottish, who have enough purchasing power to travel to the U.S., don't need a visa to enter the country and can afford the extortionate ticket prices."

## Barca fingerprints and Messi magic all over Spain-Argentina final, say Xavi and Mascherano

**New york :** Sunday's World Cup final between Spain and Argentina may be dressed in national colours but Barcelona greats Xavi Hernandez and Javier Mascherano see their old club's shadows everywhere. From Spain's La Masia-bred youngsters to Lionel Messi, the Barca academy's most dazzling export still bending matches to his will at 39, the influence of the club is clear to see. Xavi was a pillar of Spain's side whose tiki-taka possession game won the country's first World Cup in South Africa in 2010, while Mascherano was Messi's former team mate with Barcelona and Argentina and his coach at Inter Miami until early this year. They spoke to Reuters in front of the giant LEGO World Cup trophy replica at the Rockefeller Center in New York ahead of a final layered with personal history. Spain arrive with a squad sprinkled with Barca influence, including Lamine Yamal and Pau Cubarsi, two players handed their professional debuts as teenagers by Xavi during his spell as the club's manager. Argentina arrive with Messi, who won his first World Cup in Qatar four years ago and has dragged time, defenders and probability for a ride to a second consecutive final. Mascherano said nothing Messi does should still surprise anyone - except, of course, that it does. "He is a special one, you know? You cannot compare (him)

with anyone. He's different, totally different," the 42-year-old Mascherano said. "Always when we see him, always it's a surprise because he's doing a lot of things that we will never, never see in another player. So, I think in the future, it will be difficult to find a player like him. I think it's impossible." Xavi, who shared years of midfield sorcery with Messi at Barcelona, said he watched Argentina's 2-1 win over England with Mascherano and could barely process what he was seeing. "We were together watching the game, and he told me, '39 years (old), and what's he doing?' It's amazing," Xavi said. "In my opinion, he's the best in history. And he's still making a difference on the pitch. And his ambition, his attitude, he's a warrior. He's absolutely the best." Mascherano went further, saying Messi still appeared to hold the remote control to football's grandest stage. "I think he is still showing that he is the owner of the game," he said. "He has the ball, and he makes the decisions sometimes that he is going to win the game and he can do that."

### CHARACTER AND PASSION

For 46-year-old Xavi, pride in Sunday's final stretches beyond Messi. He said watching forward Lamine and defender Cubarsi mature into World Cup finalists had been especially satisfying after seeing their convic-

tion up close as teenagers. "I feel, of course, very proud because I saw them when they were 15, Lamine; 16, Pau Cubarsi," Xavi said. "They had the character and the passion. I remember them telling me: 'Don't worry, coach, I'm ready. No worries,' because I was a bit afraid that at 15, 16, maybe they were not, that they would feel the pressure. Absolutely not." Xavi said Barca's footballing idea runs through both final-ists, even if Mascherano was quick to point out Ar-gentina do not have many current Barcelona players. "We have to be proud with this philosophy, with this idea," Xavi said. "It's one idea, and still the idea is going on. We are in the final with this system, even Argentina." Mascherano added: "We don't have too many players from Barca but the way to play is much like that. "For me, they're the best two teams in the tournament. Teams that play in a similar way. They like to play with the ball, and they don't feel comfortable if they don't have the ball. "Maybe the team that has possession of the ball will take the tempo of the game. For me, it's the best final that we could have." As for predicting a winner, neither was certain. "You never know," Mascherano said. "So difficult to have a prediction," Xavi added. "I think only God knows what is going to happen," Mascherano said. "Because it's just one game."

after semi-final losses in 1990 and 2018. Tuchel said he would be making changes for Saturday's game against France, which he viewed as an opportunity for England to

## England manager Tuchel has no regrets over semi-final decisions



okay, you can do that. But I have the right to not engage in that." Asked about one comment that his substitutions were "cowardice", Tuchel refused to engage. "I don't read praise and I don't believe in comments like this," he said. "If we win the game tomorrow, we have the best results of a World Cup in 60 years. That's the perspective to it." England won the World Cup in 1966 but have lost both previous third-place playoff matches

show they had closed the gap on the world's best teams. "Nobody wants to be in this game tomorrow," he said. "All of these four teams wanted to be in New York, but it is an official World Cup game. "It is a big game against one of the very best teams in the world. It's a moment to show that we are actually made of what we showed through the whole tournament. There is no doubt about that."

## Australia thrash Italy for first Nations Championship win

**July 18 :** Australia lock Josh Canham scored a hat-trick of tries in a rampant 57-10 victory over Italy on Saturday for their first Nations Championship success and a fitting farewell to coach Joe Schmidt. Australia ended a run of six successive defeats, including their first two matches in the new competition at home to Ireland and France over the last fortnight, with Tom Wright, Brandon Paenga-Amosa, Angus Bell, Len Ikitau, Billy Pollard and Ben Donaldson also scoring in a feast of nine tries. Ryan Loneragan added five conversions and Donaldson one more while captain Michele Lamaro and Australia-born Monty Ioane scored tries for the Italians. Australia raced to a convincing 38-5 half-time lead as they laid the platform for their first test win since beating Japan in Tokyo last October. **SCHMIDT BOWS OUT WITH KISS TO TAKE CHARGE**

It was the last game in charge for coach Schmidt, who is retiring and departs the Wallabies with a record of 12 wins and 19 defeats, including losing last year's British & Irish Lions series, and hands over to Les Kiss with 15 months before Australia hosts the 2027 Rugby World Cup. The Wallabies went through multiple phases of attack in the opening three minutes before lock Canham crossed for their first try and they had two more scores before the 20-minute mark in a blitzing start to the contest as Wright and Paenga-Amosa also went over. Canham's

second try came in the 27th minute after Lamaro had put Italy on the board and by half-time Bell and Ikitau had all but secured success. The Wallabies were also ahead at halftime in their previous two games against the Irish and French, but any fears of a second half slip after Ioane powered over for Italy soon after the re-start were dispelled minutes later as Canham completed his hat-trick. "Because of how well the forward pack went tonight, I didn't have to do too much," said Canham. "We've put in a lot of hard work in the past three weeks. It's been frustrating to not get the results over the last couple of weeks, but it's good tonight with more of a full performance."

### ITALY COACH BARRED FROM MATCH VENUE

Italy's coach Gonzalo Quesada was barred from the match venue and from having any contact with the team after being banned for comments made following last week's 47-17 loss to New Zealand. He was the first to fall foul of new sanctions for criticism of match officials, but an initial two-game ban was downgraded to a single match after an appeal. There was also a rare red card for Italian replacement Marco Riccioni, who despite not being involved in the game got sent to the stands for rushing into a sideline scuffle between the two teams. Italy have lost all three of their Nations Championship games with defeats to Japan and New Zealand in their earlier games this month.

## Antonelli fastest, Hamilton crashes in final Belgian GP practice

**Spa-francorchamps :** Formula One leader Kimi Antonelli lapped fastest for Mercedes in final practice for the Belgian Grand Prix on Saturday, while Lewis Hamilton crashed his Ferrari in the dying seconds of the session at Spa-Francorchamps. Italian Antonelli, 19, clocked a best time of one minute 45.990 seconds, 0.139 quicker than McLaren's

reigning world champion Lando Norris. Red Bull's Max Verstappen was third on the timesheets with Antonelli's teammate and closest title rival George Russell fourth. Hamilton was fifth fastest but left his mechanics with a race against time to repair the car after he went off into the gravel at Fagnes and clouted the tyre wall.

# 2 Bol Bam Pilgrimages Flagged Off on Consecutive Days

*Spreading the Message of Religious Harmony and Spirituality in Baksa*

NKMajhi, Correspondent, Manas (BTC), July 18: On the auspicious occasion of the holy month of Shravan, the annual Bol Bam pilgrimage has commenced in Baksa district along with the rest of the country. Over two consecutive days, Bol Bam yatras were flagged off from two



different locations in the district by BTC Executive Member Begum Akhtara Ahmed, who conveyed a strong message of religious harmony, social unity, and brotherhood. She inaugurated the pilgrimages by waving the ceremonial flag and extended her best wishes to all devotees

for a safe, peaceful, and successful journey. The pilgrims have set out for several revered religious destinations, including Sultanganj, Baba Baidyanath Dham (Deoghar), Basukinath, Gaya, Jagannath Temple, Dakshineswar, and Mayapur.

The atmosphere turned deeply devotional with the resounding chants of “Bol Bam,” reflecting the unwavering faith, enthusiasm, and spiritual fervour of the devotees.

The presence of public representatives at the event further boosted the morale of the pilgrims, while the administration assured full cooperation and security for the smooth conduct of the pilgrimage. Such religious events also play an important role in strengthening communal harmony, mutual respect, and social cohesion among different communities.

Besides their religious significance, large-scale pilgrimages of this nature are expected to have a positive economic impact by benefiting local transport services, small businesses, and marketplaces.

Overall, the inauguration of the two Bol Bam pilgrimages on consecutive days has created an atmosphere of spirituality, celebration, and communal harmony across Baksa district.

## Contd. From Page 1 - - - - -

### India Marks New Space Era...

research institutions and established organisations collaborate to accelerate technological advancement and national development. Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma also welcomed the successful launch, calling it a landmark moment for India’s space industry and private entrepreneurship. He noted that Vikram-1’s advanced design, including its extensive use of carbon composite materials and 3D-printed propulsion technology, represents a significant leap in indigenous aerospace engineering. Sarma linked the achievement to the historic SLV-3 mission launched 46 years earlier, observing that India’s journey from its first satellite launch vehicle to privately developed orbital rockets reflects remarkable scientific progress and sustained national investment in research and innovation. He further stated that the emergence of private launch providers demonstrates the country’s expanding technological capabilities and its growing confidence in nurturing high-technology enterprises capable of competing internationally. Skyroot Aerospace expressed gratitude to the Assam Chief Minister for his encouragement and support, saying that recognition from national and state leadership reflects the broader confidence being placed in India’s emerging private space industry. The company described Vikram-1 as a mission representing years of dedication, technical excellence and collaborative effort by hundreds of engineers, scientists and manufacturing partners. It also reiterated its commitment to developing affordable launch services that can serve domestic and international customers while supporting India’s long-term space objectives. Founded by former ISRO engineers with the vision of democratising access to space, Skyroot has steadily advanced through a series of technology demonstrations before achieving this full orbital success. The company has consistently focused on indigenous manufacturing, rapid production techniques and reusable engineering principles to reduce launch costs while maintaining high reliability standards. Its success reflects the broader transformation occurring across India’s startup ecosystem, where advanced manufacturing, artificial intelligence, robotics and aerospace engineering are increasingly driving innovation-led economic growth. The opening of the space sector has encouraged numerous startups to develop launch vehicles, satellite technologies, propulsion systems, communication platforms and Earth observation solutions, creating a vibrant ecosystem supported by government initiatives, academic institutions and private investment. The reforms enabling this growth include regulatory simplification, infrastructure sharing, technology transfer mechanisms and increased collaboration between ISRO and industry partners. Access to launch facilities, testing infrastructure and technical expertise has significantly reduced barriers for emerging companies, allowing them to accelerate product development and commercialisation. As global demand for satellite deployment continues to increase, India is positioning itself as a competitive destination for cost-effective launch services, satellite manufacturing and downstream applications. The success of Vikram-1 is expected to strengthen investor confidence in India’s commercial space sector while attracting international customers seeking reliable launch solutions. Commercial satellite launches are projected to become a major contributor to the country’s space economy, supporting applications across telecommunications, navigation, weather forecasting, agriculture, disaster management, environmental monitoring, logistics, financial services and national security. Increased launch frequency through private providers will also complement ISRO’s scientific missions by expanding the nation’s overall launch capacity and operational flexibility. The achievement reinforces the vision of Atmanirbhar Bharat by demonstrating that advanced aerospace technologies can be developed, manufactured and operated within India using domestic talent and industrial capabilities. Indigenous production of critical components not only enhances technological self-reliance but also creates opportunities for exports, international partnerships and participation in global supply chains. The aerospace sector is expected to generate high-skilled employment across engineering, software development, advanced materials, precision manufacturing and research while encouraging universities and technical institutions to strengthen programmes related to space science and technology. Beyond economic benefits, the success of private launch vehicles carries important strategic significance by expanding national capabilities in satellite deployment and strengthening resilience across communication, navigation and Earth observation networks. The mission also highlights India’s commitment to sustainable space operations through the development of technologies that support responsible orbital activities and debris mitigation. As the number of satellites in orbit continues to rise globally, innovations in launch efficiency and environmental responsibility are becoming increasingly important. Vikram-1’s successful mission therefore represents not only a commercial milestone but also a contribution to the future evolution of safe and sustainable space exploration. Industry experts believe the launch could accelerate the growth of India’s private aerospace sector by encouraging additional investment, fostering research collaborations and inspiring more entrepreneurs to pursue high-technology ventures. The achievement demonstrates that Indian startups are capable of developing globally competitive products in one of the world’s most technologically demanding industries. It also strengthens India’s reputation as an innovation-driven economy prepared to contribute meaningfully to international space exploration and commercial launch services. Looking ahead, private launch providers are expected to play an increasingly significant role in supporting satellite constellations, scientific experiments, technology demonstrations and future deep-space missions while working alongside national agencies. The successful orbital mission of Vikram-1 therefore stands as a defining milestone that symbolises the maturity of India’s evolving space ecosystem, where visionary public policy, scientific excellence and entrepreneurial ambition have combined to create a new era of opportunity. As India advances towards its long-term development goals and expands its presence in the global space economy, the historic success of Vikram-1 is likely to be remembered as the moment when private Indian enterprise firmly established its place among the world’s leading spacefaring innovators, opening the door to a future of greater technological achievement, international collaboration and economic growth driven by the limitless possibilities of space.

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### India’s Electoral rolls living...

while maintaining the integrity and accuracy of voter lists through regular field verification and public participation. Kumar highlighted that more than 12 lakh Booth Level Officers serve as the backbone of voter list management at the grassroots level, carrying out door-to-door verification, assisting citizens in enrolment and ensuring that electoral records remain current and authentic. Complementing their work are over 15 lakh Booth Level Agents appointed by recognised political parties, who participate in the process by examining draft electoral rolls, submitting claims and objections wherever necessary and acting as concurrent auditors of the system. He said this collaborative arrangement ensures transparency because representatives of political parties have continuous opportunities to verify electoral records and raise concerns during every stage of the revision process. Referring to the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) exercise, the Chief Election Commissioner expressed gratitude to voters across the country for their active participation, describing citizen engagement as the cornerstone of a healthy democratic process. He observed that the success of any revision programme depends not only on election officials but also on the willingness of citizens to verify their details, submit required documents where applicable and cooperate with field officials. Kumar emphasised that a clean and accurate electoral roll is essential for conducting free and fair elections, as it forms the foundation upon which the entire electoral process rests. He added that the Commission remains committed to ensuring that every eligible citizen has an opportunity to register as a voter while preventing duplication and maintaining the integrity of electoral databases. The Chief Election Commissioner also highlighted the significant role played by the media in strengthening democratic institutions, describing journalists and media organisations as an important bridge between election authorities and citizens. He said accurate, timely and responsible reporting contributes to informed participation by voters, helps counter misinformation and promotes awareness about electoral rights, procedures and responsibilities. Kumar urged media professionals to continue disseminating factual information regarding voter registration, polling procedures, electoral reforms and the functioning of the Election Commission so that citizens can make informed choices based on verified information. He noted that in an era of rapidly expanding digital communication, responsible journalism has become even more important in preventing the spread of misleading narratives that could affect public confidence in democratic institutions. Speaking on the theme of the conference, “Connecting Stakeholders, Strengthening Democracy: Role of Media in Elections,” Kumar said democratic institutions become stronger when election authorities, political parties, media organisations, civil society groups and citizens work together in a spirit of transparency and accountability. He observed that regular dialogue with stakeholders helps improve electoral management, encourages constructive feedback and strengthens trust in the democratic process. The conference brought together more than 380 media professionals representing States and Union Territories from across the country, providing a platform for discussions on election management, voter awareness, responsible reporting and the evolving information landscape surrounding elections. Participants exchanged views on the responsibilities of the media during electoral periods, including the importance of balanced reporting, ethical journalism and combating misinformation. Election officials also shared insights into various initiatives undertaken by the Commission to enhance accessibility, transparency and voter participation through technological innovations, digital services and extensive voter education campaigns. Kumar reiterated that India’s electoral system continues to evolve in response to changing societal needs while remaining firmly rooted in constitutional values. He observed that technological improvements have enhanced efficiency without compromising transparency, enabling the Commission to manage elections involving millions of polling personnel, security forces and election officials across urban centres, remote villages, mountainous regions, islands and forest areas. He said the Commission remains committed to conducting elections that are inclusive, accessible and credible, ensuring that every eligible voter can exercise the democratic right to vote without discrimination. Highlighting the role of field-level election machinery, Kumar praised the dedication of election officials who work under challenging conditions to ensure that polling stations are established even in the most remote locations, reflecting the Commission’s commitment to universal franchise. He also acknowledged the contribution of political parties and their authorised representatives in strengthening electoral oversight through active participation in statutory processes such as electoral roll verification and polling arrangements. According to Kumar, continuous engagement with stakeholders helps identify operational challenges and supports timely improvements in election administration. He said the Commission places great importance on transparency, consultation and accountability while implementing reforms and administrative measures. Stressing the significance of public trust, Kumar remarked that confidence in electoral institutions is built through consistent adherence to legal provisions, impartial administration and open communication with all stakeholders. He reiterated that every election conducted by the Election Commission follows established procedures laid down in law, with opportunities for scrutiny and participation at multiple levels. He encouraged citizens to remain actively engaged not only during polling but also throughout the electoral cycle by updating voter details, participating in awareness programmes and cooperating with election officials. Kumar concluded by reaffirming the Election Commission’s commitment to preserving the integrity of India’s democratic process through transparent electoral management, continuous voter roll improvement, stakeholder participation and constructive engagement with the media, stating that a strong partnership among institutions, journalists and citizens remains essential for safeguarding the democratic values that underpin the world’s largest electoral exercise.

### Kanpur Central-Guwahati-Kanpur...

Accordingly, Train No. 04127 (Kanpur Central-Guwahati) Weekly Special, will depart from Kanpur Central at 08:00 hrs, every Thursday, from 16<sup>th</sup> July to 3<sup>rd</sup> September, 2026, while Train No. 04128 (Guwahati-Kanpur Central) will depart from Guwahati at 22:00 hrs, every Friday, from 17<sup>th</sup> July to 4<sup>th</sup> September, 2026. Both the train services have been extended for additional 08 trips from their respective destinations.

The operation of these additional trips is expected to provide significant relief to passengers, particularly those travelling to and from Guwahati during the high-demand period. Passengers are advised to check the detailed schedule, timings and halts through the NTES or other official Railway enquiry channels before commencing their journey. NFR remains committed towards enhancing passenger convenience by introducing additional train services whenever required to cater to the growing travel demand, informed by CPRO of NFR Kapinjal Kishore Sharma.

### 9<sup>th</sup> Annual Function of Bataadrava...

a graceful Sattriya dance performance by Kshemashree Mahanta. The programme was conducted by School Management Committee President Mohan Baruah and Principal Dhruvajyoti Sharma Baruah.

A major attraction of the event was the felicitation of several eminent personalities for their remarkable contributions to society, culture and education. Among those honoured were renowned Sattriya artistes Ranjit Mahanta and Upen Bayan, Yogen Kalita Namlogowa, Pradip Dev Goswami, Ranjit Bora, Navajyoti Pathak, and Senior journalist and quiz personality Dibyajyoti Baruah. They were presented with traditional gamosas, citations, portraits and mementoes in recognition of their achievements.

Addressing the gathering as the chief guest, Nagaon District Commissioner Devashish Sharma praised the hidden talents and artistic excellence of the students. He described painting as a unique medium for expressing human emotions and spreading positive messages in society. Appreciating the efforts of Bataadrava Art School in nurturing art and culture at the sacred birthplace of Srimanta Sankardeva, he encouraged the institution to continue its inspiring journey with greater success in the years ahead.

The students also presented several beautiful paintings created by them to the Deputy Commissioner, who expressed his admiration for their creativity and wished them a bright future.

The colourful celebration featured Borgeet, Sattriya dance, modern songs and dances, poetry recitation, an Assamese traditional attire competition, and a prize distribution ceremony. An exhibition showcasing the students’ artworks attracted appreciation from visitors, while artist Rajib Mahanta distributed storybooks and art books among the participating students.

The function was attended by a large gathering of dignitaries, including academicians, social workers, journalists, cultural personalities, parents and art lovers, making the event a memorable celebration of creativity, culture and community spirit.

# Gossaigaon Rejoices Over NEET Success: MLA Ashraful Islam Felicitates NEET Qualifier

**Mizanur Rahman, Correspondent, Gossaigaon, July 18:** A wave of joy has swept across Gossaigaon Sub-division following the announcement of the National Eligibility cum Entrance Test (NEET-UG) results, with several students from the region achieving remarkable success. Sheikh Sahir Alam, son of Akbar Ali Sheikh of No. 1 Shimultapu village under the Parbatjhora Assembly Constituency, secured 557 marks in the NEET examination, bringing pride to the constituency. To honour his achievement, Parbatjhora MLA Ashraful Islam Sheikh visited Sk. Sahir Alam's residence on Saturday and felicitated him along with his parents. The programme was attended by Srirampur Block Congress Committee President Hafijur Rahman Sheikh, Vice President Mohan Besra, General Secretary Suniram Hembrom, and several party workers. Another outstanding performer, Sheikh Sahil Tanvir, a resident of Sapkata and the eldest son of

Roham Ali Sheikh, Principal of Rabiha

ter of Gossaigaon Sub-Divisional Police

Manturam Borah, achieved 540 marks,

feather to the subdivision's cap. Sharbajit Saha, son of Sapkata based teacher Sukumar Saha, secured 534 marks. Yuhana Parbin, daughter of Md. Insan Ali Sheikh and Majida Khatun of Padmabil village, also scored 534 marks, bringing further pride to the region. The outstanding performances of these students have created an atmosphere of celebration across Gossaigaon Sub-division. People from different sections of society have extended their congratulations to the successful candidates and wished them a bright future.



Senior Secondary School, and Assistant Teacher Kamrun Nahar, secured 636 marks in the NEET examination. Sahil had previously scored 92 percent in the Higher Secondary Examination and pursued his NEET preparation at Ajmal Super 40, Hojai. Rubai Al Mowabbas, son of advocate Mokbul Hussain and teacher Afroza Begum of Oxiguri village, secured 554 marks in the examination. Riya Bora, daugh-

Officer, APS adding another

## Mobile Medical Units extend healthcare services to remote areas of Udalguri

**Tapan Sen Gupta, Correspondent, Orang, July 18:** Mobile Medical Units (MMUs) functioning under the National Health Mission, Assam, have been extending essential healthcare services to people living in remote villages, forest-fringe areas and tea garden belts of Udalguri district. At present, two MMUs are operational in the district, with each unit conducting 25 health camps every month. Altogether, around 50 camps are organised at different locations as per a fixed schedule, enabling residents of far-flung areas to access healthcare facilities closer to their homes. The units provide free medical consultation, blood and urine tests, ECG facilities and essential medicines. Each MMU is manned by an MBBS doctor, pharmacist, laboratory technician, GNM and an ophthalmic assistant. Besides providing treatment and diagnostic services, the teams also conduct health awareness programmes among local residents. The MMUs have also been extending support during tuberculosis-related health camps in different parts of the district.



## Historic Hazrat Ajan Pir Dargah at Saraguri Chapori Faces Threat from Brahmaputra Erosion

*District Commissioner Visits Flood and Erosion-Affected Area*



Dargah and the surrounding region at great risk. For more than two years, heavy monsoon floods have triggered extensive erosion along the Brahmaputra, destroying hundreds of bighas of agricultural land. The alarming situation has left residents of Saraguri, Gotonga, Maml, Garbhaga, and nearby villages deeply concerned. Many local people have even begun offering prayers and performing religious rituals, seeking divine protection from the worsening natural disaster. Historical records state that during the Ahom era, Swargadeo Gadadhar Singha, impressed by the spiritual influence of Hazrat Ajan Pir, built a monastery (Math) for the revered Sufi saint at Saraguri Chapori, situated at the confluence of the Dikhow, Disang, and Brahmaputra rivers. For more than 400 years, the Dargah remained unharmed by the Brahmaputra. However, the recent floods and increasing erosion have now placed this historic religious site, along with thousands of farming families in the region, under serious threat. To assess the situation, Sivasagar District Commissioner Mridul Yadav, accompanied by Additional District Commissioner Minakshi Parme and Circle Officer Mitrabrinda Gogoi, visited the flood-affected areas on Friday. The officials interacted with local residents and reviewed the extent of the damage and the challenges faced by the people. Later, Circle Officer Mitrabrinda Gogoi visited the Hazrat Ajan Pir Dargah and held discussions with Dargah Committee President Alhaj Harunur Rashid and Vice-President Khairuddin Ahmed regarding the urgent need to protect the historic shrine from the advancing erosion. Meanwhile, with the support of local residents, the Dargah Management Committee organized special dua (prayers) according to Islamic traditions, seeking the blessings of Almighty Allah for protection from the devastating floods and the safety of the Dargah and the surrounding villages.

## Leading social activist Nageswar Saharia passes away

**Paban Kumar Kalita, Correspondent from Sipajhar, July 18:** Leading social activist and former president of Bordoulguri Sahitya Sabha Nageshwar Saharia passed away at Assam Medical College Hospital, Dibrugarh on July 18. He was one of ex President and secretary of Phutkitali Yuva Kalyan Sangha, ex Vice - president of Undivided Darrang Zila Kalita Jana Gosthi Sanmilan, ex President of the School Management and Development Committee of Bordoulguri High School and president of Bihubhanga Siva Mandir management committee and member of Mangaldai district Karmachari Parishad and several other social organisations of Darrang district. He was retired as superintendent of Udalguri Treasury of Government of Assam. His death has been widely mourned in the greater Sipajhar area in Darrang district. MLA, Sipajhar Legislative Assembly Constituency Dr Paramananda Rajbanshi and several social organisations have expressed their condolences on his death. He leaves behind his wife, one son, one daughter - in-law and two daughters.



## Immense loss to Assam's Medical Fraternity: Eminent Physician and AMC Professor Dr. Girindra Nath Gogoi Passes Away-Widespread Condolences

**M Hashim Ali, Correspondent, Dibrugarh, July 18:** Assam's medical fraternity has suffered an irreparable loss with the passing of eminent physician, retired Professor of the Deptt of Medicine at Assam Medical College (AMC), and highly respected teacher Dr. Girindra Nath Gogoi, who passed away yesterday evening at the age of 78. He had been undergoing treatment at his own institution, McWinns Hospital, after suffering from prolonged illness and kidney-related complications. Born on April 4, 1948, in Ramu Gaon of Simoluguri, Sivasagar district, Dr. Gogoi had an outstanding academic career from an early age. A brilliant student, he secured a place among the top rank holders in Assam in both the High School and Higher Secondary examinations. In 1967, he stood second in the MBBS examination and later earned his MD degree with distinction. Dr. Gogoi was not only an accomplished physician but also an exceptional medical educator, guide, and mentor. After graduating with distinction in both MBBS and MD, he began his professional career as a physician in Silchar. Within a short period, his remarkable diagnostic abilities, clinical expertise, and compassionate approach earned him recognition as one of the most respected physicians in both the Barak and Brahmaputra Valleys. In 1996, he joined Assam Medical College, Dibrugarh, as an Associate Professor. Over the following years, he made invaluable contributions to medical education and healthcare. Under his guidance, numerous physicians specializing in internal medicine received their education and training and went on to establish distinguished careers in the medical profession. His wife, Inuma Gogoi, said that many of his former students are today serving in prestigious positions across India and abroad. She recalled that during their recent visit to Australia, one of Dr. Gogoi's former students met him there and sought his blessings, reflecting the deep respect and affection he commanded among his students. Widely known for his humility, kindness, and gentle nature, Dr. Gogoi's demise has left the entire medical fraternity in deep mourning. As a mark of the immense respect he enjoyed among fellow doctors, seven physicians from places including Gujarat and Bengaluru travelled to Dibrugarh a day before his passing to personally examine him and monitor his health. It is noteworthy that on July 1, on the occasion of National Doctors' Day, the Dibrugarh branch of the Indian Medical Association (IMA) honoured him with the "Best Doctor" Lifetime Achievement Award in recognition of his outstanding lifelong contributions to the field of medicine. Remembered as a deeply religious, simple, and compassionate individual, Dr. Girindra Nath Gogoi's passing has drawn heartfelt tributes from across society. Those who expressed profound grief and extended condolences to the bereaved family include Dr. Gouri Shankar Borgohain, President of the Dibrugarh branch of the Indian Medical Association (IMA); Dr. Mriganka Barua, Secretary of the branch; senior physician Dr. Narayan Upadhyay; Dr. Sanjeev Kakoti, Principal of Assam Medical College; Prasanta Phukan, MLA of Dibrugarh; Rituporna Barua, Chairman of the Assam Tourism Development Corporation; Sarbananda Sonowal, Union Minister and Member of Parliament from Dibrugarh; Manjit Bora, President of the Greater Dibrugarh Press Club; Ratul Burhagohain, its Secretary; along with numerous other organizations and institutions. Many have remarked that Dr. Gogoi's immense contributions to Assam's medical profession will remain memorable for generations to come. He is survived by his wife, son, daughter, daughter-in-law, son-in-law, three granddaughters, two grandsons, one younger sister, and many other relatives. His last rites were performed today in the presence of a large number of admirers, colleagues, students, and well-wishers who gathered to pay their final respects.

## Nagaon District Inter-School Volleyball Championship Begins

**Safiqur Rahman, Nagaon, July 18:** The first-ever Nagaon District Inter-School Volleyball Championship, organised by the Nowgong Sports Association (NSA), got underway on Saturday at the association's volleyball ground. The two-day tournament, featuring both boys' and girls' categories, was formally inaugurated by former national volleyball player Manjula Laskar as the chief guest. Former players Jesmin Akhtar and Anima Kalita attended

the inaugural ceremony as guests of honour. Among others present were NSA GS Tapan Kumar Das, Joint Secretary Ujjal Baruah, Volleyball Secretary Prashanta Kumar Das, and Football Secretary Prantar Kumar Bhattacharya. A total of six teams are competing in the boys' category, while three teams are participating in the girls' division of the championship.