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Brief Post

Special Lok Adalat

Silchar, July 21: The Special Lok Adalat for cases under the Negotiable Instruments Act, 1881 was organised by the District Legal Services Authority, Cachar, Silchar on 18/07/2026 in Cachar District. A total of 03 Lok Adalat Benches were constituted for disposal of pending cases under the Negotiable Instruments Act.

On the said day, from the pending cases taken up, a total of 31 cases were disposed of through the Special Lok Adalat.

The press was received by the Secretary, District Legal Services Authority. Legal Services AEON Silchar Cachar.

Justice Day Call

New Delhi: Marking International Justice Day, Union Minister for Law and Justice Arjun Ram Meghwal extended greetings to citizens across the country and urged people to renew their commitment to the ideals of fairness, equality and human dignity, emphasizing that the creation of a just and compassionate society is a collective responsibility shared by every individual and institution. In his message issued on the occasion, the Minister highlighted that justice is not merely a constitutional promise but a living principle that must guide governance, public life and social relationships. He stressed that every citizen should have equal opportunities to succeed.

Minister Pijush Hazarika Distributes MMUA Cheques to Over 45,000 Women in Rupahihat and Samaguri

Staff Reporter, Nagaon, July



21: Assam's Minister for Agriculture, Irrigation and Parli-

mentary Affairs, Pijush



participated in two large public

meetings held in the minority-dominated Rupahihat and Samaguri Assembly constituencies of Nagaon district, where he ceremonially distributed 10,000 cheques under the Chief Minister's Mahila Udyamita Abhiyan (MMUA) to 19,840 women beneficiaries in Rupahihat and 25,658 beneficiaries in Samaguri.

Addressing the gatherings, the Minister said

Contd to Pg 11.

RPF of NFR Ensures Prompt Medical Care for Passengers across Railway Network

Maligaon, July 21: The Railway Protection Force (RPF) of Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR) continues to uphold its commitment towards passenger safety and welfare by providing timely medical assistance to passengers who fall ill during their journey. Through coordinated efforts with railway authorities and local medical facilities, RPF personnel ensure that passengers receive immediate attention whenever medical emergencies arise.

On 17th July 2026, RPF personnel

Contd to Pg 11.



President Droupadi Murmu holds bilateral talks with Moldovan President

New Delhi, July 21: President Droupadi Murmu began a landmark state visit to the Republic of Moldova, marking the first time an Indian President has travelled to the East European nation since the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries. The historic visit represents another important milestone in India's expanding engagement with Europe and reflects New Delhi's sustained efforts to deepen partnerships with countries across the region through diplomacy, economic cooperation, cultural exchanges and people-centric initiatives. Upon her arrival in Moldova's capital city, Chisinau, President Murmu was accorded a ceremonial Guard of

Honour at the Presidential Pal-



ace, symbolising the warmth and respect shared between the two friendly nations. The cer-

emonial reception underscored



the significance attached by both governments to the visit, which is expected to provide

fresh momentum to bilateral relations and create new opportunities for cooperation across multiple sectors. Following the formal welcome, President Murmu held extensive bilateral discussions with Moldovan President Maia Sandu. The two leaders first engaged in a private one-on-one meeting before leading their respective delegations in comprehensive talks covering a broad spectrum of issues aimed at enhancing political dialogue, strengthening institutional cooperation and

identifying new areas for mutually beneficial partnerships. The delegation-level discussions reflected the shared commitment of India and Moldova to expand engagement in trade, investment, agriculture, digital technologies, education, healthcare, renewable energy, innovation, culture and capacity building. Both sides reviewed the existing state of bilateral relations while exploring practical measures to unlock the untapped potential of co-operation

Contd to Pg 11.

Swift and Heroic Action by NDRF and DDMA Jorhat: 5 Precious Lives Miraculously Saved in Teok's Flood-Affected Region

Jorhat, July 21: Based on urgent information



provided by the District Disaster Management

Authority (DDMA), Jorhat under the Jorhat District Administration, a team from the 1st Battalion NDRF (I-P)—under the direct supervision of Deputy Commandant Shri N. K. Tiwari and led by Inspector K. V. Nath—was immediately deployed on July 19 for rescue operations to the flood-hit Selenghat area near Seleng Tea Estate under the Teok Revenue Circle of Jorhat district.

Upon reaching the spot and assessing the flood situation, the rescue team observed that the

Contd to Pg 11.

M Hashim Ali, Correspondent, Dibrugarh, July 21: Assam Leg-

islative Assembly Speaker Ranjit Kumar Das in-

spected the site at Khanikar in Dibrugarh where the second cam-

pus of the Assam Legislative Assembly is proposed to be established and took stock of the detailed plans for the project. During the inspection, the

Speaker held detailed discussions with officials of the Dibrugarh Division of the PWD (Buildings and National Highways) and the consultancy firms associated with the construction project. He

also reviewed the facilities and

Contd to Pg 11.



3 Flood Relief Camps Set Up in Kaliabor; DC Reviews Rescue and Relief Operations

Safiqur Rahman, Staff Reporter, Nagaon, July 21: Following incessant rainfall in the Karbi Hills over the past few days, the swollen waters of the Diju River, a tributary of the Brahmaputra, have inundated several areas under the Kaliabor Revenue Circle in Kaliabor Sub-Di-



vision of Nagaon district. The worst-affected

Contd to Pg 11.

Dhekiajuli road-naming row: Organisations depose before magistrate

Tapan Sen Gupta, Correspondent, Dhekiajuli, July 21: The controversy over the naming of a road in Dhekiajuli continued on Tuesday as representatives of various organisations, institutions and members of the public appeared before the magistrate at the office of the Dhekiajuli Co-District Commissioner to record their statements.

Minister Ashok Singhal had earlier announced a magistrate-level inquiry into the controversy. The administration fixed July 18 and July 21 for recording statements and had invited organisations, institutions and members of the public to submit their views on the issue.

Several persons had deposed before the magistrate on July 18. On Tuesday, representatives of the Asom Jatiyatabadi Yuba Chatra Parishad (AJYCP), All Assam Students' Contd to Pg 11.

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Assam leads sustainable development in Northeast India

Guwahati: Assam is making remarkable strides toward sustainable development under the visionary leadership of Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, embracing a comprehensive approach to minimize its carbon footprint while aligning with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 13 on climate action through its "Assam 2030 Initiative," launched in 2016. This initiative outlines a well-defined strategy aimed at sustainable development, focusing on critical areas such as climate change mitigation, sustainable consumption, innovation, and environmental conservation. A significant step taken by the state government is the establishment of the Centre for Sustainable Development Goals, which acts as a key institution providing research, technical support, and strategic advice for the successful implementation of SDG-related initiatives. Additionally, Assam has implemented an institutional framework that ensures a systematic approach to SDG implementation, concentrating on capacity building through specialized training workshops while creating robust monitoring and evaluation systems to assess progress effectively. These efforts are supported by SDG-based outcome budgets, ensuring that public funds are allocated efficiently toward sustainability efforts, thereby maximizing the impact of investments made in this crucial area. Conclaves and conferences are regularly held to finalize strategy papers and action plans, reflecting Assam's steadfast commitment to achieving its ambitious sustainability goals. The state's dedication to sustainable development transcends mere policy frameworks, as evidenced by its active participation in various national and international forums. These platforms allow Assam to showcase its progress in achieving SDGs and share success stories with other regions, further enhancing its reputation as a leader in sustainable practices. Among the notable achievements under the Assam 2030 Initiative is the launch of the "Assam Climate Change Management and Adaptation Programme," which focuses on preparing the state for the challenges posed by climate change through comprehensive planning and community engagement. This program emphasizes the importance of local adaptation strategies, which are crucial for enhancing the resilience of vulnerable communities in the face of climate-related impacts. Furthermore, Assam has made significant strides in promoting renewable energy, particularly through the establishment of solar power plants across the state, which are pivotal in reducing dependence on fossil fuels and increasing the share of renewable energy in its overall energy mix. This initiative aligns with the state's goal of achieving energy security while reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Eco-friendly transportation is another critical area where Assam is making considerable advancements, with the state government introducing various initiatives aimed at reducing vehicular emissions. This includes promoting electric vehicles (EVs) and constructing supporting infrastructure such as EV charging stations, which are essential for encouraging the adoption of cleaner transportation alternatives. The push for eco-friendly transportation is not only aimed at reducing carbon emissions but also at ensuring a sustainable urban environment, thereby improving air quality and public health. Moreover, the state has been actively promoting sustainable agricultural practices, encouraging farmers to adopt methods that are environmentally friendly and resource-efficient. This approach not only aids in preserving the state's rich biodiversity but also ensures food security and livelihood sustainability for Assam's rural population, thereby addressing socio-economic disparities. Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma has consistently been a vocal proponent of sustainable development, reiterating the necessity of striking a balance between economic growth and environmental conservation. "Our goal is to create a harmonious balance between economic growth and environmental stewardship," he stated during one of the state's sustainability conclaves, emphasizing the integral role of sustainable practices in the state's developmental narrative. Assam's success in sustainable development has been bolstered by its strategic partnerships with national and international organizations,

facilitating knowledge sharing, capacity building, and resource mobilization. These collaborations have yielded impressive results, including a 45% increase in forest cover, a 30% reduction in carbon emissions, a 25% growth in the state's renewable energy sector, and a 20% increase in the adoption of sustainable agricultural practices, all standing as a testament to Assam's unwavering commitment to its sustainability goals. As Assam continues its journey toward a sustainable future, the state serves as a model for other regions to emulate. Its approach, which prioritizes both environmental conservation and economic development, demonstrates that sustainable growth is not only possible but essential for the long-term prosperity of its citizens. Assam's commitment to sustainability, backed by strong leadership and collaborative efforts, positions the state as a beacon for environmentally conscious development, inspiring other regions to pursue similar paths toward a thriving and sustainable tomorrow. This journey toward sustainability is not without its challenges; however, Assam is tackling them head-on by fostering a culture of innovation and resilience. The government is keenly aware that the effects of climate change and environmental degradation are multifaceted issues that require comprehensive solutions involving all sectors of society. To this end, Assam is engaging local communities in sustainability efforts, ensuring that they have a voice in decision-making processes that affect their livelihoods and environment. By empowering citizens through education and awareness programs, the state is fostering a sense of ownership and responsibility towards sustainable practices, enabling communities to play an active role in achieving SDG objectives. Educational institutions, NGOs, and local organizations are pivotal in disseminating information and promoting sustainable practices among the populace, thereby creating a more informed and engaged citizenry. Furthermore, Assam is leveraging technology to enhance its sustainability initiatives, utilizing data-driven approaches to monitor environmental changes and the effectiveness of various programs. This technological integration facilitates timely interventions and policy adjustments, ensuring that sustainability efforts remain responsive to emerging challenges and opportunities. The Assam 2030 Initiative is not merely a governmental agenda but a comprehensive framework that involves active participation from all stakeholders, including businesses, civil society, and academia. By creating an inclusive platform for dialogue and collaboration, Assam is ensuring that diverse perspectives are considered in its sustainability strategies, enhancing the effectiveness of interventions while fostering social cohesion. As the state moves forward, it remains committed to building resilient infrastructure, promoting sustainable urban planning, and ensuring the conservation of natural resources for future generations. The integration of sustainable practices into all sectors of the economy is essential for ensuring long-term viability and prosperity, and Assam is leading by example in demonstrating how proactive measures can yield substantial benefits for both the environment and the economy. The state's holistic approach encompasses a range of initiatives, from waste management and pollution control to biodiversity conservation and climate adaptation, all of which are interconnected and critical for achieving comprehensive sustainable development. In addition to these efforts, Assam is prioritizing the enhancement of water management systems to address the challenges posed by floods and droughts, which are increasingly becoming common due to climate variability. Initiatives aimed at improving irrigation practices and promoting rainwater harvesting are integral to safeguarding water resources and ensuring the agricultural sector's resilience against climate-induced stresses. By investing in smart water management technologies and infrastructure, Assam aims to create a sustainable framework for managing its water resources effectively, thereby contributing to both food security and ecological balance. The state's efforts also extend to community-led conservation initiatives that empower local populations to take charge of preserving

their natural environments. These grassroots movements not only enhance biodiversity conservation but also foster a sense of stewardship and responsibility towards the environment among community members. The role of indigenous knowledge in environmental management is being recognized and integrated into mainstream practices, ensuring that traditional ecological practices are preserved and promoted. In promoting sustainable tourism, Assam is also capitalizing on its rich cultural heritage and natural beauty, developing eco-tourism initiatives that generate employment while conserving the environment. This approach not only attracts tourists but also raises awareness about the importance of protecting natural ecosystems among visitors and locals alike. The Assam Tourism Development Corporation is actively working to create sustainable tourism models that align with the state's broader sustainability goals, showcasing the rich biodiversity and cultural diversity of the region while ensuring minimal environmental impact. The integration of sustainability into educational curricula at all levels is another critical aspect of Assam's development strategy. By incorporating environmental education into school programs, the state is instilling a sense of responsibility and awareness in young minds, preparing the next generation to be proactive stewards of the environment. This educational focus is complemented by community outreach programs that encourage active participation in sustainability initiatives, fostering a culture of environmental consciousness among all age groups. Moreover, the state government is committed to creating a legal framework that supports sustainable development initiatives, ensuring that policies and regulations are conducive to achieving long-term sustainability goals. This involves not only enacting laws that promote environmental protection but also ensuring that these laws are effectively enforced and implemented at all levels of governance. The establishment of environmental courts to expedite the resolution of cases related to environmental violations is a significant step in this direction, reinforcing the government's commitment to upholding environmental standards and ensuring accountability. As Assam continues to advance its sustainability agenda, it is also keeping an eye on the global commitments under international agreements like the Paris Agreement, aiming to fulfill its obligations while showcasing its efforts in combating climate change. The state is actively participating in global dialogues on sustainability, contributing its experiences and learning from other regions to refine its approaches. This engagement not only enhances Assam's visibility on the global stage but also facilitates knowledge exchange and collaboration on sustainability initiatives. Looking ahead, Assam envisions a future where sustainable development is woven into the fabric of everyday life, transcending beyond government initiatives to become a shared responsibility among all stakeholders. By fostering a culture of sustainability that encourages innovation, collaboration, and community engagement, Assam aims to build a resilient and sustainable society capable of navigating the challenges of the future. This holistic vision for sustainable development positions Assam as a trailblazer in the Northeast, showcasing how strategic planning, community involvement, and innovation can work in tandem to create a sustainable future. The state's commitment to environmental stewardship, social equity, and economic viability reflects a growing recognition that sustainable development is not just an option but a necessity for ensuring the long-term well-being of its citizens and the planet. As these initiatives unfold, Assam's story serves as an inspiring example for other regions to emulate, proving that with the right strategies, partnerships, and dedication, a sustainable future is not only achievable but within reach for all. The collective efforts of government, civil society, and the private sector in Assam demonstrate that sustainability can drive progress, create economic opportunities, and improve the quality of life for all, marking the state as a leader in the sustainable development movement.

Skill-Based Education to Empower Students for Better Futures

Guwahati: Skill-Based Education to Empower Students for Better Futures has received a significant boost in Assam as Governor Lakshman Prasad Acharya passionately advocated for its implementation, emphasizing the transformative impact it can have on students' employability and entrepreneurial abilities. This initiative aligns closely with the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, which emphasizes the urgent need for vocational training, industry-specific skills, and holistic development, thus preparing students to thrive in an increasingly competitive and rapidly changing job market. The key highlights of this initiative include the vocationalization of school education, the establishment of skill hubs specifically aimed at addressing the needs of dropouts and students who have fallen out of the education system, and the introduction of impactful programs such as the Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY) and the Employability Enhancement Training Programme. These programs aim to equip young people with the necessary skills to succeed in various sectors, ensuring that they are well-prepared for the demands of the workforce. During the 11th convocation of Assam Down Town University, held at its Panikhaith campus, Governor Acharya reiterated the importance of skill-based education as he addressed a gathering of graduates, faculty, and dignitaries. He urged universities to evolve into pivotal centers for developing students' intellectual and practical abilities, ultimately transforming them into job creators rather than mere job seekers. In his address, the Governor articulated the critical role of higher education institutions, stressing that their responsibilities extend beyond merely making students employable; they should strive to cultivate an environment where graduates emerge as innovators and entrepreneurs who can contribute significantly to the economy and society at large. As the Visitor of Assam Down Town University, he underscored that the landscape of employment is undergoing significant changes, and institutions like Assam Down Town University should take the lead in equipping their students with a comprehensive skill set—intellectual, cognitive, and physical—to meet these new challenges effectively. He remarked that education should not only focus on material upliftment but should also aim to enhance moral and intellectual growth, thereby fostering a generation capable of navigating the complexities of modern society. Drawing attention to the graduates, Governor Acharya highlighted education's crucial role in driving societal progress, encouraging students to recognize that knowledge is not merely a tool for personal success but also a potent instrument for community upliftment and transformation. He acknowledged the visionary leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, attributing significant advancements in the academic sector to his initiatives aimed at revitalizing India's educational framework, which have paved the way for a more skilled and capable workforce. Referring to India's illustrious educational heritage, Governor Acharya pointed to the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 as a transformative blueprint with the potential to invigorate the nation's academic vigor. He made it clear that the NEP is the first educational policy of the 21st century, encompassing a comprehensive approach to enhance educational quality and accessibility across India. Furthermore, he reminded the audience of India's rich historical legacy in education, citing ancient universities like Takshashila and Nalanda as exemplars of the country's longstanding

commitment to learning and knowledge dissemination, which attracted scholars from all over the world. He expressed delight in the university's diversity, noting that students from various states and countries are pursuing their education at Assam Down Town University, which reflects both the cultural richness of the region and its educational strengths. In this context, the Governor also urged the graduating students to honor the contributions of their communities and work towards social betterment, underscoring the importance of giving back to society and addressing the needs of underprivileged populations. This call to action resonated strongly during the convocation, echoed by Minister of Tourism Jayanta Mallabaruah, who urged the graduates to leverage their skills for the betterment of Assam and its people. The convocation ceremony also witnessed the conferring of honorary degrees, including a D.Litt awarded to Prof. Achyuta Samanta, the founder Chancellor of KIIT and KISS, recognizing his immense contributions to education and social service. A total of 1,610 students received degrees during the ceremony, including 1,202 undergraduates, 382 post-graduates, and 26 PhDs among the recipients. The event not only celebrated academic achievements but also marked a significant milestone in the lives of the students as they prepare to enter the workforce or pursue further studies, reinforcing the essential role of education in shaping future leaders. In summary, the 11th convocation of Assam Down Town University served as a vital platform for promoting the essential role of skill-based education in contemporary society. Governor Acharya's insights underscored the need for educational institutions to adapt to the evolving job market while fostering a sense of responsibility among graduates to contribute positively to their communities. The celebration of the students' achievements reflects a broader commitment to enhancing educational standards and promoting inclusive growth within Assam and beyond, laying the foundation for a generation of skilled professionals poised to meet the challenges of tomorrow. The emphasis on community engagement and social responsibility aligns seamlessly with the overarching goals of national development, ensuring that education remains a driving force for progress and empowerment in India. As these graduates embark on their respective journeys, they carry with them the knowledge, skills, and values necessary to effect meaningful change, embodying the spirit of service and commitment to societal upliftment that Governor Acharya passionately advocated during the convocation. The event underscored the transformative power of education and its capacity to inspire individuals to become catalysts for change within their communities. The vision articulated by the Governor, along with the call for skill-based learning, is integral to building a brighter future for Assam and India as a whole, ensuring that the next generation of leaders is equipped not only with knowledge but also with the empathy and dedication needed to uplift society as a whole.

democratic learning, thereby enhancing their employability prospects upon graduation. Furthermore, collaboration with organizations such as the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) is crucial for effective governance and maximizing the benefits of skill-based education. This partnership is expected to facilitate the sharing of best practices,

AFFIDAVIT

I, Sabikun Nihar date of birth-16-03-2006, D/O. Jakir Hussain, R/O. Vill-Brahma Beel, P. O. Mowamari, P.S. Samaguri, in the District of Nagaon (Assam)

That, I am a permanent resident of the aforesaid address and an Indian citizen by birth. This is true.

That, my actual & correct name is "Sabikun Nihar" which has been recorded in all official and non official documents including in my Birth Certificate issued by Samaguri BPHC, Nagaon (Assam) Vide Regd. No-B202618002520001076 but my name has been recorded in my Aadhaar Card Vide Aadhaar No-4377-7905-5942 as "Sabina Begam" instead of "Sabikun Nihar". This is true.

That, as a matter of fact "Sabikun Nihar" and "Sabina Begam" the names of same and single person i.e. myself. This is true.

That, as a matter of fact I declare an affidavit Nagaon Executive Magistrate on 17/07/2026 "Sabikun Nihar" and "Sabina Begum" is the name of same and one person. This is true.

Sabikun Nihar Vill=Brahman Beel, Samaguri, Nagaon Assam

AFFIDAVIT

I, Hafij Uddin, date of birth -04-01-1987, S/O. Rahmat Ali, vill - 1 No. Bhatiakhali, P.O. Kathpara, Mouza. Lawkhowa, P.S. Rupahi hat, in the District of Nagaon (Assam)

That, I am a permanent resident of the aforesaid address and an Indian citizen by birth. This is true.

That me and my father's actual name is "Hafij Uddin. S/O. Rahmat Ali" which is recorded in all official and non official documents including in my Aadhaar card vide no -8139-9310-6883 and in my PAN Card vide PAN No and also in my PNB Bank passbook vide A/C No -0780010199575 but me and my father's name has been recorded in my Reliance Life Insurance policy vide policy No -82079631 as "Mr Hafij Uddin, S/O. Md. Rahmat Ali" instead of "Hafij Uddin. S/O. Rahmat Ali". This is true.

That, as a matter of fact "Hafij Uddin. S/O. Rahmat Ali" and "Mr. Hafij Uddin, S/O. Md. Rahmat Ali" are the names of same and single person i.e. me and my father. This is true.

That, as a matter of fact I declare an affidavit Nagaon Executive Magistrate on 15/07/2026 "Hafij Uddin" and "Mr Hafij Uddin" is the name of same and one person. This is true.

Hafij Uddin vill = 1 No. Bhatiakhali, Rupahi hat, Nagaon (Assam)

India Club elects new executive committee at 89th AGM

Guwahati: The 89th annual general meeting of India Club, Guwahati, one of the state's premier tennis and social organisations, was held at the club premises with president Bijan Kumar Choudhury in the chair. General Secretary and Treasurer presented the club's annual report and the audited statement of accounts for 2025-26. The members adopted both after detailed discussions. The meeting also deliberated on various issues

related to the development and welfare of the organisation. Members emphasised the need to work towards realising the club's long-term vision. The meeting elected a new executive committee for the 2026-28 term. Dwip Baruah was elected as the President while Anirban Das and Sattyakee D'com Bhuyan were elected Vice-Presidents. Biswadeep Bora was elected General Secretary. Rajiv Dutta was elected Joint Secretary (Club Ser-

vices), Samarjit Durga Neog as Joint Secretary (Sports), and Anshuman Dutta as Joint Secretary (Tennis). Krishnananda Das was elected as Treasurer respectively. The Executive Committee members elected were Niren Majumdar, Bhaskar Hazarika, Manash Kumar Das, Kaushik Talukdar and Ankush Dutta.

Škoda Auto expands The Slavia Monte Carlo’s colour palette

Guwahati: Škoda Auto India has expanded its Slavia range with the Slavia Monte Carlo receiving two new exclusive colour options – Shimla Green and Steel Grey. They are both offered in a distinctive dual-tone finish. Exclu-



sive to just 200 units, these limited colour editions of the Slavia Monte Carlo combine the sedan's dynamic design and engaging driving experience with the brand's Rallye Monte Carlo heritage. The addition lends an even stronger visual presence and is aimed at customers seeking a more distinctive and exclusive ownership

experience. Commenting on the introduction, Ashish Gupta, Brand Director, Škoda Auto India,said,“The Slavia Monte Carlo has been well received by customers for its distinctive design, premium appeal, engaging driving dynamics and strong connection to our motorsport heritage. We are further enhancing the individuality and desirability of the Monte Carlo range, offering customers greater choice and exclusivity. The Slavia Monte Carlo continues to embody the perfect blend of style, performance, and modernity. We will continue to strengthen our sedan portfolio, in line with the evolving aspirations of our customers.”

The limited Monte Carlo
Apart from the new exclusive colour options, the Slavia Monte Carlo continues to distinguish itself with its blacked-out exterior design cues, signature Monte Carlo styling elements, premium black and red interior theme, and feature-rich cabin. The new Shimla Green and Steel Grey dual-tone finishesfurther amplifchoice for customers seeking one of the most desirable variants in the Slavia range. The Slavia Monte Carlo continues to be offered with Škoda Auto India's proven TSI engines, combined with the brand's array of real automatics, delivering a blend of performance, efficiency and driving pleasure. Customers can

choose between the 1.0-litre TSI engine paired with a 6-speed torque converter automatic transmission or the 1.5-litre TSI engine paired with the 7-speed DSG. The 1.0 TSI is a three-cylinder turbocharged petrol that makes85 kW (115 PS) and 178 Nm of torque, while the larger 1.5 TSI four-cylinder turbocharged petrol generates 110 kW (150 PS) and 250 Nm of torque. Moreover, the 1.5 TSI continues to be the only engine in its segment offering Active Cylinder Technology, where two cylinders shut down under light loads, saving fuel, along with Plasma-Coated Cylinder Liners for better heat management and thermal efficiency.

Škoda Auto’s racing DNA
Motorsport has been an integral part of Škoda Auto for over a century. The Monte Carlo trim specifically pays homage to the company’s association with Rallye Monte Carlo since 1912 and its various victories and podium finishes since then. The brand’s complete fleet of cars,from the Slavia Monte Carlo and Kushaq Monte Carlo to the Kylaq, Kodiaq and the limited-volume Octavia RS,set an India and Asia Book of Recordsfor ‘The Fastest Multi-Car Relay of a Single Manufacturer on a Circuit’. All five cars, including driver change-over times, set a lap time of 12:30.97 in total at the CoASTT track in Coimbatore. With this, the brand also set in motion its ‘Greatest On A Track is a Škoda On A Track’ campaign, showcasing its engineering and dynamic prowess that is consistent across its product portfolio.

Turkish Airlines Signs Multi-Year Agreement with CAE

Istanbul: Turkish Airlines, the airline that flies to more countries than any other airline, has signed a contract with CAE, a global leader in aviation training technologies, at the Farnborough Airshow for the delivery of five full-flight simulators (FFS), two flight training devices (FTD) with an option for two additional FFSs. The agreement further supports Turkish Airlines’ strategy to expand pilot training capacity and strengthen its training infrastructure with the latest technologies, in line with the airline’s fleet growth under its 10-year flight training investment plan. It will also contribute to the airline’s new, state-of-the-art Flight Training Center, which broke ground this past January. The new facility’s simulator hangars are scheduled to become operational in 2027, with the full center set to be completed and fully operational in 2028. Commenting on the agreement, Turkish Airlines Chairman of the Board and the Executive Committee Prof. Murat Seker said: "As we continue to expand our fleet and global network, further strengthening our pilot training infrastructure is essential to supporting our long-term growth strategy. Building on our long-standing collaboration with CAE, the addition of these advanced training devices will enhance our ability to prepare pilots across multiple fleet types with the highest levels of safety, consistency, and operational excellence. This agreement will help ensure we continue meeting the growing training demands of our expanding operations while maintaining the

world-class standards our passengers expect from Turkish Airlines." Matthew Bromberg, President and Chief Executive Officer at CAE added: “This agreement is a testament to our longstanding relationship with Turkish Airlines and to the trust it continues to place in CAE as a strategic partner in advancing its pilot training capabilities. For more than 20 years, we have worked together to support the airline's growth and evolving training needs. Through this comprehensive fleet of Airbus and Boeing training devices, we will continue to deliver advanced, high-fidelity simulation solutions that help Turkish Airlines build pilot capacity, maintain the highest safety standards, and support its long-term ambitions.” Under the contract, CAE will deliver the following devices to Turkish Airlines across Airbus and Boeing aircraft types: Two A321neo Full Flight Simulators (FFS), Two B787 Full Flight Simulators (FFS), One A350 Full Flight Simulator (FFS), Two A350 Level-I Flight Training Devices (FTD), One A350 Full Flight Simulator (FFS)—optional, One B787Full Flight Simula-

tor (FFS)-optional. These next-generation simulators and training devices will expand Turkish Airlines’ pilot training capacity across both



narrowbody and widebody aircraft types, offering a long-term solution to the airline’s growing operational needs on a global scale. With this new agreement, Turkish Airlines reinforces its long-standing collaboration with CAE, continuing to embrace a technology-driven, sustainable, and scalable approach to pilot training.

Star Health expands virtual consultations and home healthcare support in Assam during monsoon

Guwahati: As Assam enters the monsoon season, when dengue, malaria, fever and other infectious diseases typically rise, Star Health and Allied Insurance Company Limited (NSE: STARHEALTH; BSE: 543412), one of India’s leading standalone health insurance companies, is stepping up its monsoon healthcare outreach across the state. Star Health’s FY25-26 Assam datashows sixteen-foldincreasein Home Healthcare utilisation for fever and infectious diseases.Alongside this growth, the company has seen exceptional demand for its recently launched Virtual OPD service across the country, with a growing number of customers choosing it as their first point of medical consultation. The outreach focuses on early intervention by connecting policyholders to Talk to Star and Home Healthcare support, while enabling the general public to access free 24/7 Virtual OPD consultations through the Star Health Customer app. For policyholders, Talk to Star at 7200 222 333remains the guided access point: press 1 for Home Healthcare and press 2 for planned hospitalisation. Commenting on the initiative, Mr. Amitabh Chatterjee, Business Head,Northeast, Star Health Insurance, said: “Behind every monsoon infection is a family managing uncertainty,disrupted routines and concern for a loved one. The sixteen-fold rise in Home Health Care utilisation in Assam during FY26 shows the growing need for timely support that is easier to access, particularly for children, senior citizens and patients who may find hospital visits difficult. Our responsibility goes beyond arranging treatment. We want patients and caregivers to feel informed, supported and confident about the next step in their care. Policyholders can call ‘Talk to Star’ at 7200 222

333to receive guidance on Home Health Care or planned hospitalisation, while the public can access free 24/7 Virtual Doctor Consultations through the Star Health Customer app. Our focus this monsoon is to help people seek advice early, receive appropriate care and recover with less stress and disruption.”
Lower costs and rain-ready care: the case for home healthcare
Data from the National Statistical Office’s 80th round survey on household health expenditure, released in 2026, highlights the financial burden of illness and hospitalisation on households. Private hospitalisation costs an average of ₹52,766 in rural Assam and ₹79,406 in urban Assam, healthcare expenses across the board remain high, leaving most individuals and families to cover these expenses out of pocket. Star Health’s monsoon support protocol addresses this gap by creating two clear access routes: Talk to Star for policyholders and free Virtual OPD through the Star Health Customer app for the general public. Together, these services give families an earlier, lower-friction way to seek medical advice before symptoms worsen or hospital visits become unavoidable. The initiative brings together three timely service interventions for the monsoon season:
• Unlimited teleconsultations for policyholders: Policyholders can access unlimited teleconsultations during the policy period, encouraging timely medical advice at the first sign of fever or infection.
• Talk to Star for policyholders: Policyholders can call 7200 222 333for guided support. Press 1 for Home Healthcare and press 2 for planned hospitalisation. The service helps customers understand care pathways, cashless processes, network hospital options

and documents to keep ready.
• Cashless Home Healthcare: For eligible policyholders whose conditions can be managed at home under medical supervision, Star Health covers doctor-prescribed home treatment. This may include professional nursing care, routine blood tests and monitoring, IV fluids and injections delivered at the patient’s home.
Free Virtual OPD for the general public:
For non-policyholders and members of the general public, access is through the Star Health Customer app, where users can book a free 24/7 Virtual OPD consultation for common monsoon symptoms. To access the service, users can:
1. Download the Star Health Customer app on a smartphone.
2. Sign up with basic details, including name, email ID and date of birth, to access available health benefits.
3. Open the menu and select ‘‘Telemedicine’’ within the app.
4. Book a free online consultation with experienced doctors across relevant specialties.
5. As part of the outreach, Star Health is encouraging households across the region, especially those with school-going children and senior citizens, to follow a monsoon-first health protocol: do not ignore persistent fever, seek early medical advice and choose the right access route. Policyholders can call Talk to Star at 7200 222 333, while non-policyholders can book a free 24/7 Virtual OPD consultation through the Star Health Customer app. The takeaway for the state’s households this monsoon is clear: persistent fever should not be ignored, and early doctor access — by phone for policyholders or through free 24/7 Virtual OPD for the wider public — can help families act before symptoms escalate.

Samsung rolls out back-to-school offers on Galaxy AI devices for students

Guwahati: Samsung India today announced its ‘Back to School’ offers across the Galaxy ecosystem, enabling students to access the latest Galaxy AI-powered devices designed to support learning, creativity and productivity throughout the academic year. Under the campaign, ‘Start School. Stand Out. Grow Further with Samsung AI’, Samsung is offering exclusive student benefits through the Samsung Student+ Programme, including discounts of up to 10% on select products, attractive bank offers, no-cost EMI options and upgrade benefits across Samsung’s latest range of smartphones, tablets, laptops, monitors and wearables.

Smarter Learning with Galaxy AI
Samsung’s latest Galaxy devices are powered by Galaxy AI, bringing intelligent experiences that help students communicate, collaborate and access information more effectively. Features such as Live Translate, Chat Assist and Circle to Search with Google enable students to overcome language barriers, improve productivity and find information instantly, making learning more intuitive and efficient.

Galaxy Book6 Pro: Built for Productivity Students can avail benefits of up to INR 5,000 on HDFC Bank Debit and Credit Cards on Galaxy Book6 Pro, bringing the effective price to INR 1,73,990, along with an additional student discount of up to 10%. Powered by the latest Intel® Core™ Ultra processor with an advanced NPU, Galaxy Book6 Pro delivers AI-enhanced performance, immersive visuals and seamless multitasking for assignments, presentations and creative projects.

Galaxy Tab S11 Ultra: Learn, Create and Collaborate

Students can avail benefits of up to INR 5,000 on HDFC Bank Debit and Credit Cards on Galaxy Tab S11 Ultra, bringing the effective price to INR 1,17,999, along with student discounts of up to 10%. Featuring a Dynamic AMOLED 2X display, enhanced S Pen experience and Galaxy AI capabilities, Galaxy Tab S11 Ultra enables students to take notes, sketch ideas, organise coursework and collaborate effortlessly.

Smart Monitor M8: A Complete Study Setup

To create a more productive learning environment, students can avail benefits of up to INR 3,000 on select bank cards on Smart Monitor M8, bringing the effective price to INR 46,699, along with student discounts of up to 10%. The Smart Monitor M8 combines a premium display experience with smart connectivity features, enabling students to transition seamlessly between learning, entertainment and productivity. It also hosts a built-in SlimFit Camera, that lets students stay connected to their friends, classmates and family seamlessly.

Retire your way with ICICI Pru Gold Pension Savings for life

Guwahati: India is undergoing a significant demographic shift. While we celebrate being a young nation, we are rapidly transitioning into a society with a rapidly aging population. By 2036, one in every seven Indians will be a senior citizen and the number is projected to surge to 230 million, according to the National Commission on Population. As life expectancy rises and the traditional social security of relying solely on next-generation support is changing, retirement planning has become a necessity rather than a choice. To address this, ICICI Prudential Life Insurance has designed ICICI Pru Gold Pension Savings, a bonus-linked pension plan built on the pillars of safety and flexibility. This pension product offers the best of both worlds, allowing customers to accumulate corpus for pension with safety of capital invested and, partial withdrawal to meet liquidity needs in case of major life events or illnesses, ensuring that a family’s financial future remains secure. Mr. Vikas Gupta, Chief Product Officer, ICICI Prudential Life Insurance Company Limited, said, "At ICICI Prudential Life, we believe retirement should be a milestone of celebration, not financial stress. ICICI Pru Gold Pension Savings has been designed to offer certainty, growth through bonuses and the flexibility to access funds to meet life’s uncertainties in case of major life events or illnesses. By providing up to 25% emergency withdrawal feature

Axis Max Life crosses Rs.2 lakh crore AUM milestone with steady growth

Guwahati: Axis Max Life Insurance Company Ltd. ("Axis Max Life" / "Company"),has scaled a significant business milestone by achieving Rs. 2 Lakh crores of Assets Under Management (AUM) as on 30th June, 2026, registering over 8% growth rate year-on-year. The milestone reflects the Company's disciplined investment philosophy, customer-first approach, and sustained business growth momentum. The Company's AUM growth has been driven by a strong focus on customer-centric solutions, diversified distribution, product innovation, and a technol-

Galaxy Ecosystem: Connected Experiences Across Devices

Samsung’s connected ecosystem allows Galaxy smartphones, tablets and laptops to work together seamlessly. Features such as Quick Share make transferring large files fast and effortless, while Multi Control allows students to drag and drop content, copy and paste text and images, and manage projects across multiple Galaxy devices with ease.

Galaxy S26 Series: Flagship AI for Students

Students can avail savings of up to 50% on the Galaxy S26 Series through the Galaxy Forever programme, with Galaxy S26 starting at INR 3,917 per month and Galaxy S26 Ultra starting at INR 5,958 per month. Eligible students can avail a 7% student discount on the price. Powered by Galaxy AI, the Galaxy S26 Series delivers intelligent features that help students stay organised, communicate effectively and unlock new levels of creativity. Galaxy Forever is a flagship ownership programme that lets customers own a Galaxy S26 Ultra or Galaxy S26 Plus by paying just 50% of the device price over 12 no-cost EMIs through a credit card or Samsung Finance+. After one year, customers can either upgrade to Samsung’s next Galaxy flagship smartphone by returning their device under an assured 50% buyback programme, or pay the remaining 50% in the 13th month to keep their device. The programme also includes Samsung Care+ worth INR 13,999 for 13 months, offering Accidental and Liquid Damage Protection with zero deductibles. This enables Samsung’s no-questions-asked return policy, giving customers added peace of mind throughout their ownership journey.

Complete the Experience with Galaxy Watch8 and Galaxy Buds4 Series

Samsung is also offering attractive benefits on Galaxy Watch8, Galaxy Buds4 Series and a range of Galaxy accessories. Galaxy Watch8 helps students manage academics, extracurricular activities and wellbeing through advanced health tracking. AI-powered Bedtime Guidance and quick access to Google Gemini. Meanwhile, Galaxy Buds4 Series features Adaptive Active Noise Cancellation and enhanced call clarity, helping students stay focused during online classes, study sessions and daily commutes.

How Can Students Access These Offers

Students can unlock these exclusive benefits through the Samsung Student+ Programme by registering with their institution-issued email ID or verifying their student status through UNiDAYS, a global student verification platform. To explore offers and register, visit the Samsung Student Store Samsung.com/in/offer/student-discount/

and a corpus for retirement, this plan empowers our customers to transition from 'active earning' to 'retirement income' without compromising their dignity or aspirations. What makes the plan even more relevant to retirement planners is that it also provides health management and wellbeing services in the form of complimentary health check-ups." Let’s understand how this product works, consider Prateek, a 40-year-old professional. By saving Rs. 1.5 lakh annually for 10 years, he was able to build a retirement corpus of Rs. 44 lakh by the age of 60, assuming an 8% per annum rate of return or Rs. 25 lakh assuming a 4% per annum rate of return. The plan allows him to take up to 60% of this corpus as a tax-free lump sum to settle immediate goals like travel or a home renovation. He can receive guaranteed regular life-long income with the balance amount by purchasing an annuity product, ensuring he remains financially independent in his golden years. In essence, ICICI Pru Gold Pension Savings redefines retirement by combining capital protection, bonus-driven growth, and emergency liquidity feature (up to 25% withdrawal). By including complimentary health check-ups and offering a tax-free withdrawal at maturity, the plan offers a holistic, disciplined and secure path that empowers customers to achieve financial independence and peace of mind during their golden years.

ogy-led operating model. Over the years, Axis Max Life has built a resilient investment portfolio by combining prudent risk management with disciplined asset allocation across Government Securities, Corporate Bonds, Equities, Commercial Real Estate, Alternate Investment Funds (AIFs), Infrastructure Investment Trusts (InvITs), and Real Estate Investment Trusts (REITs). Notably, over 95% of its debt portfolio continues to be invested in sovereign and AAA-rated securities, underscoring its commitment to capital preservation and long-term value creation.

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.

The road beyond Hormuz: Time for India to revive IMEC

The dust has settled from US President Donald Trump’s meeting with his Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping. That the summit failed should be no surprise. Trump’s goal was neither a grand bargain nor even strategic; rather, he sought a diversion. In Washington, criticism mounts from the Epstein files and his mishandling of the Iran war. Trump likes pomp and ceremony. In Beijing, he could have both without dealing with the democratic press. While American critics of Trump and proponents of Taiwan feared Trump might bargain away the island’s rights and US defence commitments, Trump did not come prepared to bargain on anything so grand. Xi, meanwhile, also fumbled the summit. While he likes to command a position of strength, his recent purge of People’s Liberation Army generals conveys the opposite: his own growing paranoia and unease in Chinese society. China’s population is rapidly ageing and now declines due to the legacy of the now-defunct one-child policy. As China’s population shrinks, its economy might also teeter. Xi might still have stage-managed a show, empty as it might have been, but the foibles of autocracy – trampling an American journalist and a standoff with a US Secret Service member accompanying the president – stole the headlines. For most Americans, Indians, and residents of other industrialised societies, the main issue that mattered—energy security—re-

mained unresolved. The Islamic Republic’s efforts to toll international shipping remain in force. Even as word spreads about a possible deal, the details suggest Iran’s continued insistence on controlling shipping. Nour News, an outlet close to the regime’s Supreme National Security Council, reports that Tehran’s position first requires the return of \$11 billion frozen in Qatar. Iranian officials then say they will set a quota for trips to transit the Strait of Hormuz, implying the continuation of their toll scheme. The Iran war has already changed global shipping routes. Countries now abandon the Bab el-Mandeb and Red Sea for the long route around the Cape of Good Hope in South Africa. This is not necessarily a safe remedy; however, with piracy again surging off the coast of Somalia, the failure by India, the United States, and other countries to recognise the independence of Somaliland and use it to consolidate maritime security comes at a huge cost. Still, there is a way forward with the revitalisation of the India-Middle East Economic Corridor, first unveiled on 9 September 2023 by Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the G20 summit in New Delhi. The Hamas invasion of southern Israel and the slaughter of 1,200 civilians created a crisis in the region that derailed work on the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC) and ultimately culminated in the current US-Israel war with Iran. With both the

International North-South Transit Corridor channelling trade from India through Iran to Russia unlikely in the near and medium term due to war damage at Chabahar and uncertainty in the future of both Iranian and Russian politics, and the route around Africa increasingly vulnerable to piracy off the coast of Somalia and also in the Gulf of Guinea, IMEC becomes the most logical path forward. Here, India, as the soon-to-be world’s third-largest economy, can play an outside role. Prime Minister Narendra Modi and United Arab Emirates President Mohamed bin Zayed are not only allies but also increasingly strategic partners and friends. The Emiratis and the Saudis both seek to channel their trade away from Persian Gulf vulnerabilities. The Jordanian truckers union remains a problem as they resist rail schemes, but New Delhi, Abu Dhabi, and Riyadh all have the diplomatic and economic capital to force King Abdullah II to make difficult and unpopular choices in Jordan that he has so far resisted. The Trump-Xi summit was the last gasp for the status quo; its failure buries any hope that the international community can return to the status quo ante. It is now up to PM Modi to shape the future of regional trade. For too long, traditional Indian diplomatic culture has led India to punch far below its potential weight; that must change.

Michael Rubin

Power, protest and resignation: Nepal’s struggle for credible governance continues

The political turmoil of Nepal, the Himalayan nation perched between India and China, deepens as ministers resign following criticism and misuse of power and the suspension of parliamentary sessions. But the recent political disruptions of Nepal reflect a deeper recalibration of democratic accountability. Institutions are being tasted. The resignation of ministers also conveyed a strong message that the leadership should be accountable and public life should be clean. Nepal’s President Ramchandra Paudel recently suspended the session of both houses of Parliament that was scheduled for April 30, citing “special reasons” on the recommendation of the Nepal government. The session was suspended a day after Nepal’s Home Minister Sudan Gurung resigned, less than a month after his appointment, following criticisms over his alleged investment and share transactions with a controversial businessman. Gurung came into the spotlight after Nepal’s former prime minister KP Sharma Oli and former home minister Ramesh were arrested over their alleged role in the deaths of dozens of people during the Gen Z protests. The arrests came less than 24 hours after the new government was sworn into office. After the arrest, Gurung had posted on social media that no one is above the law. After his resignation, the Home Ministry is under Prime

Minister Balendra Shah. He posted his resignation on social media. He wrote on social media that ethics are greater than position for him and there is no power greater than public trust. He also clarified that he resigned from his post to ensure impartial investigations into the matters related to him. He is the second minister to withdraw from the government which was formed after the deadly Gen-Z protest. On April 9, minister for labour, employment and social security Dip Kumar Sah was sacked from his post on the recommendation of the ruling Rastriya Swatantra Party (RSP). Shah had misused his position to get his wife appointed as a member of the board of directors of the Nepal Health Insurance Board. Nepal’s democratic institutions have struggled to build credibility. Nepal has struggled with political instability for decades. Since 2008, the country has seen 14 different governments, not one of which has completed a full five-year term. The power of the parliament lies not just in numbers but also in the quality of debates. But parliamentary debates in Nepal often focused heavily on power dynamics rather than public concerns. The suspension of parliamentary sessions also signals that the legislative forum is no longer a passive arena. Disruptions are often framed as obstruction, but they are also a form of politi-

cal signalling. People are exhausted by constant political drama and power dynamics without clear results. The institutions need to respond with clarity, transparency and consistency. Resignations should not be a symbolic gesture. It must be followed by transparent investigations with timelines. Accountability loses meaning if it does not produce conclusions. Strengthening investigative bodies and ensuring their transparency and independence is essential. Parliament must reclaim its role as a space for resolution and quality debates that address the public concerns. Procedural reforms can be helpful. Setting minimum debate hours, enforcing attendance, and creating mechanisms for fast-tracking urgent issues could make the institution more effective. Communication needs to improve. One reason public frustration escalates is the lack of timely and credible information. Regular briefings, open data practices, and proactive engagement can reduce uncertainty. There must be a deliberate effort to rebuild trust at the local level. Federalism has given Nepal an opportunity to bring governance closer to people. Local governments should deliver tangible results. Investing in local accountability mechanisms, such as public hearings and citizen audits, can create a more immediate connection between state and society.

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 con-

cerns 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 frameworks 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. Such arrangements may increasingly define the future of global governance. In a fragmented international order marked by weakening multilateral institutions and intensifying great-power competition, middle powers are seeking pragmatic and adaptable partnerships. India’s engagement with the Nordic region fits squarely within this evolving diplomatic logic. Ultimately, Modi’s Nordic outreach should be understood not as a peripheral diplomatic exercise but as part of India’s larger attempt to navigate a rapidly changing international system. The central contests of the coming decades over climate governance, digital regulation, Arctic access and strategic alignment will be fought as much through legal norms and regulatory institutions as through military or economic power. For India, the challenge is no longer simply securing a seat at the table. It is helping shape the rules themselves. That is why the Nordic connection matters. From a legal standpoint, India’s approach to Nordic engagement is grounded in principles firmly embedded in international law. India has consistently upheld the sanctity of state sovereignty, non-interference in internal affairs, and the peaceful resolution of disputes, all of which are foundational pillars of the United Nations Charter.

Beyond pyramids: Cairo is more than the land of Pharaohs

It was 11:11 on the morning of October 26 when I first stood before the Pyramids of Giza. The sand was stirred by tour groups assembling, the distant braying of camels, and vendors arranging their wares. I had built this moment in my mind for years, piecing it together from documentaries and history books. Yet, that sense of recalibration only deepened when Maged Elsadek, Visitation and Tourism Director at Orascom Pyramids Entertainment (a public-private partnership with the Egyptian government to manage and develop the Giza Plateau’s tourism experience), mentioned, “Post pandemic, we reopened on the 8th of April this year,” as we walked through the reimagined visitor experience at the Giza Plateau. Revamping the visitor experience at this iconic site is a monumental task. “It’s a vast site. The topography is not easy, and the demand is not unified,” Elsadek explained. The old experience was, by most accounts, difficult — sweltering metal toilet cubicles, the stench of animals that once roamed the site, and infrastructure that fell far short of the pyramids’ grandeur. “Some people who have waited twenty-thirty years to visit,” Elsadek noted. “Ask me, is this what I’ve been dreaming of, for decades?” The solution is to focus on ecological sensitivity. “The entire project is eco-friendly to protect the pyramids and transform the visitor experience,” said Elsadek. New stations, clean, air-conditioned toilets, ATMs, and international-standard coffee and snacks now span the plateau. The mobility system is 100 per cent electric, Nestlé runs hydration stations, and the new panorama station aligned with all three pyramids is the largest addition. But it was Ashraf Mohie El-Din who truly opened the pyramids for me. An Egyptologist/archaeologist, Ashraf has appeared in forty documentaries across NatGeo, History Channel, Discovery Channel, and Netflix. “I always say, if you can build a pyramid, you can do anything,” he announced as

we began our exploration. “Even a brain surgery.” In 1990, an American tourist’s horse broke through the desert floor, revealing the workers’ tombs — the builders of the pyramids themselves. “We found their names and their titles,” Ashraf noted with barely contained excitement. “And we discovered between the workers’ tombs a 4600-year-old tomb for a doctor. This doctor did a brain surgery. We found the skull of the worker with a hole in it, and his son completed his father’s tomb and mentioned that his father lived three years after the surgery.” These weren’t alien constructions or slave-built monuments. They were the work of skilled labourers, with doctors, entertainers, and specialised craftspeople among them. He described finding tombs for dwarfs — both Egyptian and Nubian — who served as entertainers and master jewellers. Ten minutes from the pyramids, I made my way to the Amon Papyrus Museum on Al Haram Road. Rahma, my guide, split the papyrus stalks into thin strips, smiled and said, “This is a 5,000-year-old method. The Egyptians invented the first paper in the world to make knowledge last. And look, when we cut the papyrus stick, it looks like a pyramid.” Watching her arrange the strips in a crisscross pattern and press them under weight felt alchemical. “The sap is the glue,” Rahma explained, rolling the damp sheet with a wooden mallet. “We don’t add chemicals. Everything you see, the strength, the colour, it’s all natural, exactly as the ancients did it.” The Museum of Islamic Art in Cairo came next with a 340 EGP ticket. Among the 25 galleries, the oldest copies of the Qur’an in the world drew me in most deeply. It is written in Kufic script, and there’s another one from the Mamluk period (AD 1438-53). But perhaps most surprising to me were the pieces that hinted at India’s imprint on this vast borderless world of Islamic art. The collection contains artefacts “from India, Iran, Arabia, Syria, Egypt, and North Africa.”

Genius Plan vs Brain Drain: Why China is leading the tech war while India is falling behind

“Catch them young” seems to be the mantra in China for nurturing technical talent, as a recent Financial Times report reveals how the country is running a massive ‘Genius Plan’ to power its ambitions in emerging technology sectors such as AI, robotics, advanced manufacturing and semiconductors. As part of this, more than one lakh talented teenagers are selected through an extremely competitive exam and placed into accelerated modules focused on STEM disciplines. Here, they are not only trained to crack various Olympiads, but the programme also serves as a direct pipeline to China’s elite universities. Although the programme has existed for decades, it has gained global attention only recently. Originally launched after the Cultural Revolution in China—a communist attempt that misfired and ruined an entire generation of scientists and engineers—this programme has today become a laboratory for preparing future engineers, scientists and even founders. In fact, many Chinese start-up founders and CEOs, including Zhang Yiming, the founder of ByteDance (TikTok fame), robotaxi start-up founder Lou Tiancheng, Dai Wenyuan, founder of Fourth Paradigm, an AI software company, and the founders of Cambricon, a leading Chinese AI chip company and rival to Nvidia, were part of this programme. Along with this, much of the top talent behind DeepSeek, a Chinese low-cost alternative giving tough competition to global AI giants, has also come from the Genius Plan. Now contrast this with what is happening in India, an equally talented country that is also home to one of the youngest populations in the world. If the Financial Times report on China is a toast to what the country is getting right in nurturing its STEM talent, then India’s AI talent is also making headlines. As per reports, India is fast emerging as the top source country for global AI recruitment, with many companies viewing Indian engineers as a low-cost alternative for entry-level and mid-level skilled jobs. Indian AI talent costs just 15-20 per cent of what someone in the US would cost companies, thus providing fresh impetus to the offshoring of these jobs to India. This does not mean that Indians are not talented enough to play a greater role in the AI story, because many top contributors and researchers in frontier AI labs incidentally come from an Indian background. However, to claim their achievements as “Indian” would be misplaced, as they were nurtured and trained for frontier-level work within Western university systems. Thus, top AI talent of Indian origin such as Ashish Vaswani of Essential AI, Trapti Bansal of Meta, or Niki Parmar of Google’s AI research team—who is interestingly a self-taught AI engineer who moved to the US to pursue a Master’s degree, but destiny had other plans—are essentially products of the American ecosystem that thrives on innovation and research. Despite

all the claims of India becoming an AI leader, the country’s start-up ecosystem is not yet able to compete with the world’s cut-throat AI research environment. Among the many problems that plague our ambitions, the talent flow opting for US labs is certainly one of them. After the Financial Times report on China’s Genius Plan, many are asking why India cannot do something similar. But this is actually the wrong question to ask. India already has something known as the IIT-JEE examination, for which teenage STEM talent often takes a break from everything else, including regular schooling, just to prepare for and crack it in order to land a seat at the prestigious IITs. However, from there onwards, the story takes a very different turn compared to their Chinese counterparts. Speaking to friends at IITs over the years, I am informed that the curriculum at these institutions actively discourages innovation. After graduating from the IITs, the best students leave the country to pursue Master’s degrees or PhDs in STEM disciplines abroad—and never return. What we are then left with is a large pool of engineers who once had the fire to innovate but, due to the lack of a supportive ecosystem, fall back into mediocre engineering jobs, diversify into non-STEM pursuits such as management, or, in the worst-case scenario, become part of the IT sector’s coding sweatshops. In complete contrast, China created a thriving ecosystem for its young STEM talent as early as the 1980s, the rewards of which are now becoming visible. Beyond identifying and nurturing young STEM talent, China also executed the famous Project 211 and Project 985 in the 1990s, transforming Chinese universities into world-class institutions through generous funding and the adoption of international best practices. In comparison, India does not have a single university in the top 100—forget the top ten—in this year’s rankings. India’s university system continues to operate in isolation from global best practices, with the UGC pursuing priorities that diverge sharply from international counterparts. Even in non-STEM disciplines that do not require heavy laboratory investment, India still operates under the NAAC rating system, which has no global equivalent but nonetheless forces PhD scholars into administrative tasks instead of meaningful research. Then there is the question of research and development as a national priority. Unlike China, which spends around 2.5 per cent of its annual GDP through a mix of central government, local government and corporate funding, India still does not spend even 1 per cent of its GDP on R&D. Chinese leaders, unlike their Indian counterparts of the past, displayed foresight. In addition to programmes such as the Genius Plan and Projects 211 and 985, they invested heavily in building a home-grown technology ecosystem to compete with the West by consistently increasing R&D com-

I am not here to debate the political angles of the infamous Epstein Files, nor to moralise. What is shocking is the public perception: many seem genuinely stunned by what occurred on Epstein Island and within his network. The Epstein Files (like Watergate, Wikileaks, Cablegate, and the Steele Dossier) may appear sensational, but they reveal a grim truth: the concentration of wealth and power enables behaviour that can be intolerable—and criminal—for most. Politicians and the ultra-rich often operate with impunity. F Scott Fitzgerald describes how extreme wealth fosters a sense of superiority, cynicism, carelessness with consequences, and emotional insulation: all qualities that make the rich operate by different rules, often viewing themselves as exempt from ordinary accountability. Extreme wealth provides insurance, or insulation, against consequences. We were warned with graphic images in cinema: “Eyes Wide Shut” by Stanley Kubrick was a revelation. It fits strikingly into the context of Fitzgerald’s “the rich are different” and the Epstein files, a cinematic bridge between literary critique and real-world revelations of predatory privilege. In Kubrick’s world of orgies where masked super-elites play, the victims are from lower strata (they are treated as disposable), while the elite retreat into impunity. The film was prescient about how money, secrecy, and impunity create inevitable nexuses of abuse. There was a dramatic and possibly relevant video of a young Mexican model, distraught, screaming, “They are eating babies!”, after attending one of the Epstein parties. She was, it is said, arrested, and ‘disappeared’, and was never seen again. Yet, it is “Salo: The 120 Days of Sodom” that I am most reminded of. This is quite possibly the most disturbing film ever made, at least among those that I have seen. Only “In the Realm of the Senses”, by Nagisa Oshima, a staggering tale of sexual obsession, comes close in shock value. A couple are caught up in a vortex or vicious cycle of increasingly dangerous sexual behaviour. The unsimulated, explicit sex scenes, in fact, produce not prurience, but horror in the viewer. The film’s intensity peaks with its violent conclusion, where the female protagonist strangles her lover to death during erotic asphyxiation and then castrates his corpse, carrying the severed penis

with her, blending extreme eroticism with graphic mutilation and murder in a way that challenged societal taboos on sex, obsession,

aren’t just wealthier; they’re philosophically and emotionally severed from humanity, viewing others as means to gratification without conse-



and violence. Tellingly, it is based on a real-life story, but then it is a private tale, not one that involved powerful, public men. “Salo”, by Pier Paolo Pasolini, is a loose adaptation of the Marquis de Sade’s 1785 novel “The 120 Days of Sodom”, relocated to the final days of Mussolini’s fascist Republic of Salo (1943–1945) in northern Italy. Four powerful libertines — a Duke (nobility), Bishop (church), Magistrate (law/state), and President (finance/capital) — are the protagonists. They kidnap 18 young victims (mostly teenagers) and subject them to escalating cycles of sexual torture, degradation, humiliation, and murder in a remote villa. I remember the horrifying close-up of a young man’s eye being plucked out. This isn’t mere shock exploitation; Pasolini uses Sade’s framework as a scorching allegory for: ? Absolute power corrupting absolutely, where the elite treat bodies (especially vulnerable young ones) as disposable objects for consumption and control. ? Fascism as the ultimate expression of capitalist/consumerist nihilism. The libertines embody the “anarchy of power” in a permissive, totalitarian system where rules exist only to protect the perpetrators. ? Moral detachment and cynicism: the rich

quence. Do these examples reflect how all powerful men act? Possibly not. But the Epstein Files illustrate a disturbing reality: concentrated power, secrecy, and wealth can enable systemic abuse. Confirmed reports show:

- Recruitment and grooming of underage girls
- Sexual assault on minors
- Distribution of child sexual abuse material
- Trafficking across state and international borders

Is this how powerful men are? Is this how those with absolute power, especially men, have always acted? Or is it culture-specific? That’s a good question. But are elites generally debauched, depraved, and dissolute? Not all, but indeed some. Several elite individuals—royalty, political figures, industry leaders—were implicated. Some lost privileges or faced consequences, but many remained shielded. Epstein’s network functioned like an exclusive, predatory system, hidden from public scrutiny. This is a reminder: wealth and power can shield perpetrators from justice. It’s sad but true.

Rajeev Srinivasan

Why Chabahar is a strategic test India should not walk away from

India’s zero allocation for Iran’s Chabahar port in this year’s Budget has raised debate on the fate of this strategically important project. Several experts, however, believe it is more of a pause rather than an exit — until the sanctions’ environment becomes more predictable. The reduction comes at a time when US President Donald Trump has intensified sanctions and military pressure on the Ayatollah regime. On 12 January 2026, Trump announced that any country doing business with Iran would face a 25 per cent tariff on all trade with the US. This raises the stakes beyond traditional sanctions. It signals a move towards wider trade punishment. It also forces partners to treat Iran-related activity as a whole-of-economy risk. The tightening began earlier. In September 2025, Washington moved to end the 2018 sanctions waiver linked to Chabahar. This step exposed entities involved in port operations to potential penalties under the Iran Freedom and Counter-Proliferation Act (IFCA), a US law that authorises sanctions on foreign entities that do significant business with Iran, especially in Iran’s shipping, shipbuilding and energy sectors, as well as port operators. India then sought limited operational space while avoiding escalation. On 30 October 2025, the Ministry of External Affairs announced a six-month extension of the US waiver for India. This extension was reportedly secured after India shared a wind-down plan. The exemption was time-bound and conditional. It was effective until 26 April 2026. India’s Chabahar plan now carries a sanctions risk. That risk depends on how India set up the deal. On 13 May 2024, India Ports Global Limited (IPGL) signed a 10-year contract with Iran’s Ports and Maritime Organisation to operate the Shahid Beheshti terminal at Chabahar. India also sent the agreed money to Iran in advance. Indian officials say it has already paid what it promised. But payment is only one part. The bigger issue now is whether the port can keep running smoothly. US sanctions, tariffs and strict compliance rules can still make operations difficult. This can blunt the strategic value India has attached to Chabahar.

Why Chabahar is important for India

First, Chabahar remains India’s only workable gateway to Afghanistan that bypasses Pakistan. Geography leaves India with limited options to reach Afghanistan and Central Asia. Pakistan’s refusal to provide transit space blocks the most direct land route. That makes Iran the practical alternative. India has also already transferred the committed funds to Iran, which means it cannot easily pause the project without paying a strategic cost for an investment it has effectively already made.

This matters even more as India recalibrates its engagement with Kabul and focuses on trade-and-transit outcomes. Second, Chabahar anchors India’s credibility on connectivity. The 10-year contract signed was meant to end a cycle of short renewals and uncertainty. India’s advance fund transfer further underlines that this was designed as a durable arrangement, not a symbolic one. If India retreats now, it does not only lose operational access. It also signals that even paid-up commitments can be disrupted by external pressure. That weakens India’s standing when it pitches other corridor projects such as the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC). Third, Chabahar is not formally positioned as an anti-China project, but it reduces India’s dependence on routes and nodes where China, or China-Pakistan, can shape outcomes during crises. If India steps back after already paying into the arrangement, it creates space for competitors to expand influence around a key maritime-continental junction on India’s western flank. Over time, commercial infrastructure can translate into political leverage. India should not make that handover easier. Fourth, Chabahar is not just commercial. It has enabled humanitarian shipments and supported regional stability, especially for Afghanistan. This is why the US previously accommodated limited Chabahar-related activity. That logic still holds, even if US politics on Iran has hardened. India should make a clear, practical case to Washington. India has already met its financial commitments, so the immediate issue is not new funding. It is operational continuity. If the US constrains Chabahar too aggressively, it could narrow safe channels for Afghan trade.

A litmus test of India-US alignment

The Trump Administration seems less willing to view Chabahar mainly as an Afghanistan-related exception. It increasingly looks like a test of how far India is willing to keep its distance from Iran. President Trump’s tariff warning adds to this pressure. It signals an economy-wide tool that can discourage even limited or technically permitted engagement. In this situation, India should not react in panic or retreat quietly. Chabahar is not just a business project. It is strategic infrastructure that protects India’s access and options for regional connectivity. The real problem is that sanctions pressure often works through over-compliance. Even if there is no direct ban, banks may refuse transactions, insurers may step back and companies may avoid contracts. Operations can stall simply because private actors do not want the risk. At the political level, any change in India’s activity at Chabahar can be read in Washington as a signal.

Namita Barthwal

Monsoon Session of Parliament begins; 25-day session will hold 19 sittings

New Delhi: The Monsoon Session of Parliament opened with customary tributes, fresh oaths in the Rajya Sabha and renewed expectations of meaningful legislative business, but the proceedings in both Houses were repeat-



edly disrupted as opposition parties raised the issue of the alleged NEET examination paper leak, leading to a series of adjournments that prevented normal parliamentary work from progressing. The session, which began on Monday, marks the start of one of the most significant phases in India's annual legislative calendar and is scheduled to continue until August 13 with 19 sittings over 25 days. During this period, Parliament is expected to deliberate on several important Bills, review government policies, examine national issues and provide a platform for elected representatives to discuss matters affecting citizens across the country. However, the opening day's proceedings highlighted the continuing challenge of balancing political disagreements with legislative responsibilities, as repeated protests overshadowed the scheduled business in both the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha. The Lok Sabha assembled at 11 a.m. with Speaker Om Birla presiding over the first sitting of the session. The House began by paying homage to six former Members of Parliament who passed away recently, remembering their contributions to public life and democratic governance. Members observed tributes to Nadendra Bhaskara Rao, Omwati Devi, Sudhangshu Seal, Major General Bhuwan Chandra Khanduri (Retired), K. P. Dhanapalan and Pyare Lal Sankhwar. The House also paid tribute to Father Amir of Qatar Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani, with the Speaker acknowledging his role in strengthening India-Qatar relations and laying the foundation for the modern development of Qatar during his years as the country's ruler. The solemn opening reflected Parliament's long-standing tradition of honouring distinguished personalities before commencing legislative business. Soon after the obituary references concluded, the Speaker attempted to begin the Question Hour, one of Parliament's most important accountability mechanisms through which Members seek answers from ministers regarding government policies, programmes and administrative decisions. However, opposition members, including representatives of the Congress and the Samajwadi Party, entered the Well of the House and began raising slogans over the alleged NEET examination paper leak, demanding discussion on the matter. Despite repeated appeals from Speaker Om Birla urging members to return to their seats, maintain decorum and allow the House to function, the protests continued, forcing the Chair to adjourn proceedings till noon. When the House reassembled after the first adjournment, the protests resumed immediately. Opposition members persisted with their demands, leaving little scope for the Chair to conduct business. Amid the continuing disruptions, the House was adjourned once again until 12:30 p.m. When members reconvened after the second adjournment, the atmosphere remained unchanged, with protesting members continuing to raise slogans over the NEET issue. Presiding Officer Dilip Saikia attempted to commence the Zero Hour, another important parliamentary mechanism that enables members to raise urgent matters of public importance without prior notice. Addressing the protesting members, he emphasised that Parliament exists for healthy debate and constructive discussion and reminded legislators that people had elected them to raise important public issues through democratic procedures rather than disruption. Despite his appeal, the protests continued unabated, leaving the Chair with little option but to adjourn the House once again until 1 p.m. The repeated interruptions prevented the Lok Sabha from taking up its scheduled legislative agenda on the opening day, illustrating the increasingly confrontational nature of parliamentary proceedings when contentious political issues dominate the national discourse. Similar scenes unfolded in the Rajya Sabha, where proceedings began with the oath-taking ceremony for newly elected and re-elected members. Dr Mukeshbhai Rathwa, Mahesh Kewat, Dr

Satish Poonia, Prakash Chik Baraik, Sushmita Dev, Sukhendu Sekhar Ray, Pawan Khera, James Sangma and K. Lalitluangkima took the oath as members of the Upper House, marking an important constitutional process that

formally inducted them into parliamentary responsibilities. The Rajya Sabha then observed obituary references to former members Balbir K. Punj, Swapan Sadhan Bose, Rangasayee Ramakrishna and H. Hanumanthappa, acknowledging their contributions to public life and the democratic process. However, shortly afterwards, the Leader of the Opposition Mallikarjun Kharge sought to raise the issue of the alleged NEET examination paper leak, triggering uproar in the House. As protests intensified, Chairman C. P. Radhakrishnan adjourned the Rajya Sabha till noon. When the House resumed, opposition members again resorted to sloganeering on the same issue, prompting another adjournment until 12:30 p.m. The repeated disruptions in both Houses reflected the sharp political divide over the examination controversy and demonstrated how contentious issues can significantly influence the functioning of Parliament during the early days of a session. Despite the turbulent start, the Monsoon Session is expected to remain one of the most important legislative exercises of the year. The government has indicated that it intends to introduce and consider several key Bills covering judicial reforms, taxation, business development, public administration and institutional strengthening. Among the measures expected to receive parliamentary attention are the Supreme Court (Number of Judges) Amendment Bill, 2026, the Prevention of Insults to National Honour (Amendment) Bill, the Registration of Births and Deaths (Amendment) Bill, the Income Tax (Amendment) Bill and the Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises Development (Amendment) Bill, 2026. These legislative proposals are aimed at improving judicial efficiency, strengthening governance, modernising public administration, refining tax systems and enhancing support for India's MSME sector, which plays a vital role in employment generation

and economic growth. Ahead of the commencement of the session, the government convened an all-party meeting chaired by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh to build consensus and encourage cooperation among political parties for the smooth functioning of Parliament. Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju appealed to leaders across party lines to participate constructively in debates and assured them that the government was prepared to discuss every important national issue in accordance with parliamentary rules and procedures. Representatives from numerous political parties attended the meeting, where they presented their concerns and legislative priorities while expressing their commitment to democratic dialogue. The consultations reflected an effort to create a productive atmosphere for the session despite political differences. The Lok Sabha Business Advisory Committee, chaired by Speaker Om Birla before the session, also reviewed the legislative agenda and discussed the allocation of time for debates, underlining the importance of meaningful participation and adherence to parliamentary traditions. Parliament remains the cornerstone of India's democratic system, providing elected representatives with the opportunity to scrutinise government policies, debate legislation and articulate the concerns of citizens from every region of the country. Question Hour, Zero Hour, debates, committee proceedings and legislative scrutiny are integral to ensuring transparency, accountability and effective governance. Although the opening day witnessed repeated adjournments due to protests, the coming weeks are expected to feature detailed discussions on judicial reforms, taxation, digital governance, business development, public administration and other issues of national importance. The progress of major Bills will be closely watched by industry, legal experts, civil society organisations, state governments and citizens, as many of the proposed measures have the potential to influence governance, economic activity and institutional functioning. The opening day's developments underscore both the vibrancy and the challenges of parliamentary democracy, where political disagreements often compete with legislative priorities. As the Monsoon Session progresses, attention will remain focused on whether the government and opposition can find common ground to ensure productive debates while allowing Parliament to fulfil its constitutional responsibility of law-making, oversight and representation. The repeated appeals by the presiding officers for orderly conduct and healthy discussion serve as reminders that democratic institutions function most effectively when robust debate is accompanied by mutual respect, procedural discipline and a shared commitment to serving the public interest. The coming sittings will therefore be crucial in determining whether Parliament can move beyond disruption and deliver substantive legislative outcomes that address the nation's governance, economic and developmental priorities while upholding the dignity and traditions of India's highest democratic institution.

PM Modi calls for a productive Monsoon Session

New Delhi: Prime Minister Narendra Modi called for a productive and purposeful Monsoon Session of Parliament, urging lawmakers to transform debate into development and deliberation into national progress as the new session commenced amid an atmosphere of economic optimism, technological advancement and growing international recognition for India. Addressing the media before the start of the session, the Prime Minister drew a symbolic comparison between the annual monsoon and Parliament's Monsoon Session, saying that just as timely rains bring prosperity to farmers and sustain life, a constructive parliamentary session can generate ideas, policies and legislation that strengthen the nation and improve the lives of millions. He expressed confidence that the ongoing monsoon would benefit agriculture across the country while also hoping that the parliamentary proceedings would remain focused on public welfare, economic development and national priorities. According to the Prime Minister, when both nature and governance function positively and productively, they contribute to the well-being of every citizen and create conditions for sustained national growth. He underlined that Parliament is not merely a legislative institution but also a platform where the aspirations of the people find expression through meaningful discussion, responsible debate and collective decision-making. Stressing the importance of cooperation among all political parties, he appealed for constructive participation throughout the session so that important legislation, policy initiatives and discussions on national issues could proceed smoothly. Mr Modi said the country currently stands at an important stage in its development journey, with India receiving unprecedented recognition on the global stage for its economic resilience, technological innovation and youthful energy. He observed that the confidence displayed by Indian youth in pursuing ambitious goals reflects the transformation taking place across sectors and demonstrates the country's growing capabilities in science, technology, entrepreneurship and innovation. Referring to achievements recorded over the past month, the Prime Minister remarked that the nation had witnessed a series of milestones that had filled citizens with pride and reinforced India's image as an emerging global leader. He noted that these accomplishments were not confined to one field but extended across domestic development, international engagement and frontier technologies,

reflecting the broad-based nature of India's progress. Highlighting the country's expanding presence in the space sector, Mr Modi said India's achievements now extend beyond Earth and into space, symbolising the limitless ambitions of a new generation determined to explore new frontiers. He recalled that around the period preceding the previous Monsoon Session, an Indian citizen had reached the International Space Station, marking an inspiring moment in the country's scientific journey. More recently, he said, an Indian startup had achieved a significant breakthrough in space technology, demonstrating that the private sector and young innovators are now becoming active partners in India's expanding space programme. The Prime Minister described this as a remarkable milestone because only a limited number of nations have developed strong private participation in advanced space technologies. He said the success of Indian startups in this domain sends a powerful message to the world that India's young innovators possess the confidence, technical expertise and entrepreneurial spirit to compete globally. He added that the achievements of these young enterprises represent not merely commercial success but also a symbol of India's growing technological self-reliance and innovation ecosystem. Mr Modi said such progress reflects years of policy reforms aimed at encouraging startups, simplifying regulations and creating opportunities for innovators to pursue bold ideas. According to him, India's youth are no longer content with conventional ambitions but are now entering sectors once considered inaccessible, including advanced manufacturing, artificial intelligence, semiconductor production and space exploration. He remarked that the confidence displayed by young entrepreneurs represents the emergence of a new India that believes in innovation-driven growth and seeks leadership in technologies of the future. Turning to the international situation, the Prime Minister observed that the world continues to face multiple uncertainties arising from prolonged conflicts and geopolitical tensions in different regions. He particularly referred to developments in West Asia, noting that the region's instability has created significant challenges for countries dependent on imported energy resources. He explained that disruptions caused by conflict have affected the availability and pricing of petroleum products, diesel, liquefied petroleum gas, fertilisers and industrial chemicals, creating pressure on global supply chains and increas-

El Niño conditions

New Delhi: India has achieved another major milestone in agriculture by recording an estimated production of 376 million tonnes of food grains and 377 million tonnes of horticultural produce during the current agricultural year, reflecting the resilience of the country's farming sector despite increasing challenges posed by climate change, erratic weather patterns, and changing global conditions. The achievement underlines the growing strength of India's agricultural ecosystem, driven by scientific innovation, improved crop varieties, stronger farmer outreach programmes, and sustained policy support aimed at enhancing productivity while ensuring environmental sustainability. Union Agriculture and Farmers Welfare Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan highlighted these achievements while outlining the government's broader vision for transforming Indian agriculture into a technology-driven, climate-resilient and farmer-centric sector capable of meeting future food security needs. He noted that the encouraging production figures have been achieved despite climatic uncertainties, including the impact of El Niño conditions that often influence rainfall distribution and crop productivity across several regions of the country. The Minister credited the combined efforts of farmers, agricultural scientists, extension workers, state governments and research institutions for maintaining high levels of production under difficult circumstances. Stressing the importance of scientific intervention in farming, he said agricultural research is no longer confined to laboratories and research centres, as scientists are now working directly with farmers in their fields to identify local challenges, recommend practical solutions and encourage the adoption of modern agricultural practices. This approach has strengthened the connection between research and farming, ensuring that innovations developed through scientific studies are translated into real benefits at the grassroots level. One of the key initiatives contributing to this effort has been the Khet Bachao Abhiyan, under which 1,657 scientific teams were mobilised to visit 728 districts identified as vulnerable to climatic stress and the possible effects of El Niño. These teams interacted with nearly one crore farmers, offering technical guidance on crop management, water conservation, pest control, disease prevention, soil health improvement and climate adaptation strategies. The campaign demonstrated how coordinated action between scientists and farmers can help minimise crop losses and improve resilience against adverse weather conditions. Experts provided location-specific recommendations that enabled farmers to make informed decisions regarding crop selection, irrigation scheduling, nutrient management and risk mitigation. Such direct engagement has helped improve confidence among farming communities while promoting scientific agriculture as a practical solution to emerging challenges. Looking towards the future, the government has an-

nounced the launch of the 100 Young Scientists Gram Challenge under Mission ICAR-100, a new initiative designed to encourage young agricultural researchers to develop innovative solutions for the next generation of farming. The programme aims to create healthy competition among young scientists at the national level, focusing on future-oriented fields including artificial intelligence, robotics, precision agriculture, digital technologies and climate-smart farming systems. By integrating advanced technologies with traditional agricultural knowledge, the initiative seeks to improve productivity, reduce input costs, optimise resource use and strengthen resilience against climate-related risks. Artificial intelligence can support better crop forecasting, pest detection and farm advisory services, while robotics has the potential to reduce labour shortages and improve operational efficiency. Precision agriculture enables farmers to use water, fertilisers and pesticides more efficiently through data-driven decision-making, helping increase yields while reducing environmental impact. Climate-smart agriculture focuses on sustainable farming methods that improve productivity while conserving natural resources and reducing greenhouse gas emissions. The government believes that encouraging innovation among young scientists will create practical solutions capable of addressing the evolving needs of Indian agriculture in the coming decades. Another significant initiative announced by the Ministry is the development of 100 climate-smart villages across the country. These villages will serve as demonstration models showcasing sustainable agricultural practices, efficient water management, renewable energy applications, improved soil health, diversified cropping systems, climate-resilient technologies and modern farm management techniques. The objective is to create practical examples that can be replicated in neighbouring regions, enabling farmers to witness successful implementation before adopting similar practices themselves. Climate-smart villages are expected to promote integrated farming systems, efficient irrigation methods, improved seed technologies, weather-based advisory services and community participation in natural resource management. Such model villages will also encourage greater use of digital agriculture platforms, precision farming tools and environmentally friendly production methods that ensure long-term sustainability while maintaining profitability for farmers. Agricultural research continues to remain the backbone of India's farming transformation. During the past year, the Indian Council of Agricultural Research developed 386 improved crop varieties covering 44 different crops, representing a significant contribution towards strengthening food and nutritional security. Remarkably, around 94 per cent of these newly developed varieties are climate resilient, capable of withstanding drought, floods, heat stress, changing rainfall patterns and other climatic challenges.

Things to do in Nice, France: Where to eat, shop and wander beyond the beach

In the shadow of its flashier Cote D’Azur neighbours like Cannes and Monaco – and the more scenic Menton – Nice often ends up as a cursory stop on road trips in southern France. But the laidback charm of France’s fifth largest

300g wagyu steak. LOCAL CONNECTIONS Much more memorable were the city tours that can be booked through the hotel. Sprightly 70-year-old Monique Amey was our guide on one



city is something that draws you in slowly but surely. Here, small restaurants take pride in local produce, people are friendly and traditional craftsmanship evolve with time to stay fresh and relevant. INTERNATIONAL SHINE This is the tourism appeal that luxury hospitality brands are banking on. The Anantara Plaza Nice Hotel opened in December 2022, taking over the renovated 1848 Belle Epoque building that had housed Hotel de France, a favourite of high-society vacationers from Europe. The interiors blend neoclassical architectural elements with gold accents and textures in the common spaces, while neutral hues, marine aesthetics and marble-clad bathrooms make cosy havens out of the 151 elegant rooms and suites. Shop and swim to your heart’s content: its location is next to luxury boutiques along Avenue de Verdun and a mere five-minute walk to the Promenade des Anglais’ pebbly beach (slippers are highly advised). Then get the relaxing Absolute Calm treatment at Anantara Spa and spend the afternoon in blissful slumber. The hotel’s sixth-floor, rooftop restaurant Seen offers gorgeous sunset and plane-spotting views (Nice Cote d’Azur Airport is only 15 minutes away by car). But prepare to pay a pretty penny: dishes start from •14 (US\$17; S\$21) for a plate of steamed edamame in truffle oil and goes up to •26 for two pieces of toro sushi and •64 for a

of them. She used to head Nice’s Convention Bureau for 25 years and has called the city home for the past four decades. “Nice is a city of contrasts: You’ve the shade and the sun, you’ve tradition and modernity and you feel it,” said Amey philosophically, as my cousin and I tottered about town with her. It was fascinating to see how Nice’s craftsmen have held their own over time. Perfume maker Molinard has been run by five generations and now offers classes, gift sets, scented candles and tote bags. Maison Nicolas Alziari, which had been milling olives the traditional way since 1868, had many flavourful samples in its Old Town store, which was like a wonderland of olives and olive oils. Many of the products carry the “appellation d’origine protegee” (Protected Designation of Origin) label for the house’s production methods and primary use of local Cailletier olives. We also took touristy but gorgeously panoramic shots at the #ILoveNice sign on Quai Rauba Capeu and bought chocolates and candied fruit at the 105-year-old Confiserie Florian – a favourite of Amey’s and an institution well-known for its fruit and flower-flecked confections. The open-air Cours Saleya market in the Old Town was a smorgasbord of scents and sounds as we browsed stalls selling everything from fruits and flowers to spices and vintage thrift finds. And of course, we had to try the famous Nicoise street snack socca, a thin,

crispy chickpea pancake that was first introduced to the city by Italian dockworkers in the late 1700s. Anantara also works with La Cavaleta, which offers city tours on the electric pedi-cabs. Its owner Christophe Leon started this service in 2012 to provide eco-friendly tours, especially to the Old Town where cabs cannot access easily. During our one-hour tour with Christophe, we trundled down the city’s main street Promenade des Anglais, a lovely warm sea breeze in our faces, and wove through the Old Town’s narrow streets. FARMER’S MARKETS AND NEIGHBOURHOOD BISTROS At Hotel du Couvent, rustic rhythms rule. The restored 17th century convent opened in June 2024 with 88 rooms, exuding monastic chic in its pared down accommodation that looked like they had leapt off the pages of Kinfolk magazine. Among terraced gardens are vegetable and herb plots, an open-air bistro and a 20m lap pool that entailed walking through gravel and sand paths. One Saturday a month, a farmers’ market of local harvest, fresh bakes and local ceramics materialises in the lemon tree-lined central square. A bistro-bar on the ground floor opens to the side streets, the merry chatter, clinking of wine glasses and clatter of cutlery making it feel like a neighbourhood hangout. Our dinner at the main restaurant consisted of dory fish filleted tableside, fried dumplings and an intriguingly refreshing dessert of peach skin soup. Every morning, the warm aroma of croissants, pain au chocolat and breads waft out of the bakery, which continues the convent’s tradition of milling its own flour using ancient wheat varieties from the region. We learnt to knead and fold multigrain dough from the very patient head baker Geffrey Marx, and brought back loaves of our own, each carefully wrapped to last the 17-hour journey to Singapore. The hotel was just steps away from the Old Town, so we had plenty of time to explore all the small streets we had passed by days earlier with Amey and Leon. Hearty dishes were never far away. One fabulous find was Le Panier (from •45 for a four-course lunch), which had no menu, only a list of ingredients. Out came the likes of local trout with trout eggs and raspberry dressing, Lebanese cheese infused with basil and white Mediterranean fish with mussels, sweet corn and mariniere sauce. Our favourite was Le Petit Lascaris, where we sat elbow-to-elbow with the table beside us along a small cobbled lane. Over two meals, including our last dinner in Nice, we covered almost everything on the menu, including a hilariously named but juicy “roasted quail stuffed a**hole with clove of garlic, aioli sauce” and a tiramisu that brought sighs of contentment. My fondest memories of Nice are now of laughing with strangers over good food, great wine and warm service on a balmy summer night.

Do energy drinks offer benefits beyond caffeine? What you need to know

A growing number of Americans, especially younger ones, are reaching for energy drinks in order to stay up late or level up their workout. About two-thirds of teens report drinking them at least occasionally, and most who drink one a day are under 35. These beverages can have 100mg to 300mg of caffeine per serving, usually more than a cup of black coffee. There’s no question that high doses of caffeine can boost your energy. But energy drinks often include other healthy-sounding ingredients, such as B vitamins and plant extracts, which brands claim can boost focus and stamina or reduce fatigue. “I generally greet that with a healthy dose of skepticism,” said Joe Zagorski, a toxicologist and assistant professor at Michigan State University. He added that there was very little scientific evidence showing any health benefit from the additives and vitamins in energy drinks. Most likely, Dr Zagorski said, “the vast majority of the effects you’ll get from an energy drink are because of the caffeine.”

WHAT’S IN ENERGY DRINKS? It can be difficult to know for sure. That’s because some products are marketed as beverages, while others are marketed as supplements, meaning they are regulated differently. Beverages are generally required to list ingredients, though not the exact amounts, Dr Zagorski said. But those marketed as supplements may not be required to list individual ingredients at all. Some use vague terms, like “focus blend” or “energy blend” to describe their ingredients. Exactly what’s in an energy drink varies by brand, but here are a few common ingredients.

PLANT-DERIVED CHEMICALS Energy drinks typically contain plant-based ingredients or extracts, including guarana, yerba mate and green tea, said Dr John Higgins, a cardiologist at the University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston who researches energy drinks. Some of these botanicals act like stimulants, but others simply contain additional caffeine, which isn’t always included in the amount listed on the label. This means regular drinkers may exceed 400mg of caffeine a day, the safe upper limit for most people, Dr Higgins said. Energy drinks can also contain ginseng and ginkgo biloba, which are not technically stimulants but can increase blood flow. Combined with caffeine, some such ingredients can lead to adverse effects, like heart palpitations or increased blood pressure, said Dr Anna Svatikova, a cardiologist at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota, who’s done research on energy drinks and heart health.

B VITAMINS B vitamins are essential for helping your body convert food into energy, and they’re commonly found in energy drinks, said Richard Bloomer, a professor and director of the Center for Nutraceutical and Dietary Supplement Research at the University of Memphis. But some of the beverages contain amounts of Vitamin B2 (riboflavin), B3 (niacin), B6 (pyridoxine) and B12 (cobalamin) that exceed the recommended daily value, Dr Higgins said. Long-term, high doses of B vitamins could lead to low blood pressure, liver damage and neuropathy in some instances. Most people get all the Vitamin B they need from a balanced diet, Dr Bloomer said, and they’ll excrete the excess in their urine. There’s a lack of clinical evidence that consuming more than you need will increase your energy or focus, Dr Svatikova added. Vitamin B deficiency is more common in older adults, people with gastrointestinal issues and vegans or those on other restricted diets. A blood test is needed to determine if you’re Vitamin B deficient, but if you are, you’re better off taking a supplement than consuming an energy drink, Dr Bloomer said.

AMINO ACIDS Energy drinks often include small amounts of amino acids like taurine, which is found in protein-rich foods, like meat and fish; and your body produces it naturally, Dr Svatikova said. There is some limited evidence that taurine combined with caffeine can enhance performance and exercise capacity, she said. Taurine can have side effects, though. It may interact with antidepressants and other medications. Research in animals has shown a connection between caffeine, taurine and heart arrhythmias. Some energy drinks also contain L-theanine, an amino acid found in tea leaves. Older, small studies have shown that when paired with caffeine, it may improve mood, cognition, focus and alertness. But larger, longer-term studies are needed to confirm this, Dr Svatikova said. More research is also needed to better understand the long-term health impact of consuming taurine and L-theanine individually or together, Dr Svatikova said.

ADDED SUGAR Energy drinks can contain significant amounts of added sugar, sometimes up to 60g per serving, said Dr Bloomer, who called the beverages “a can of sugar water with added caffeine.” The US Department of Agriculture now recommends limiting added sugars to no more than 10g per meal and suggests avoiding “sugar-sweetened beverages,” including energy drinks.

How landscape architect Cathy Hang is shaping Singapore’s most loved public spaces

It was probably not the best idea to take a walk in a Singapore park at 11am in January, but when landscape architect Cathy Hang reassured me that the weather would cooperate, it felt safe to go along. Hang is no ordinary designer. At the end of 2025, she was recognised as Young Landscape Architect of the Year by the Singapore Institute of Landscape Architects (SILA). A lead designer and team head at Henning Larsen, she has practised in the city-state since 2015, after moving from Hong Kong. “It was very encouraging to receive the award. But my deepest reaction is that I am who I am because I’ve met many people who put a lot of ‘fertiliser’ into me. So, of course I’m happy, but I also regard the award as a collective one,” said Hang, who turns 34 this year. Her aversion to taking all the glory was a consistent refrain. With a humility that would make Confucius proud, she repeatedly credited mentors – especially Ryan Shubin and Melle van Dijk, whom she met early in her career – and spoke about her work with a sense of wonder and gratitude.

BACK TO HER ROOTS While she has worked on the National Orchid Garden and Rifle Range Nature Park, her pet project is Jurong Lake Gardens – the setting for our late-morning walk and interview. True to her prediction of “rain most likely in the afternoon”, a short, intense downpour quickly gave way to sunshine. “Jurong Lake Gardens was the first development that I followed through from the early stages to completion. Because I saw how things have changed, it’s very close to my heart,” she explained, strolling along with an umbrella in hand. Originally a neighbourhood park with a golf club, it was redeveloped into Singapore’s third national garden, including the restoration of a freshwater swamp that once existed here. Hang’s contributions included working with colleagues on planting designs across different habitats, protecting mature trees on site, designing several landscape structures and features, and coordinating construction for the entire 53-hectare development. “We were not just thinking about the plants, but how people would perceive the space. It was about marrying everything, like the ground, the surfaces and how we positioned all the different elements. I was super fortunate that I could start and complete this – because you don’t really get to do the same scale or type of project all the time,” she mused. Conversation came to a halt as she neared the Grasslands, a section in the southern end of the Gardens that is her favourite. It was easy to see why. A runway-straight gravel path cuts through it, flanked by undulating hills planted with Chinese fountain grass and mission grass, beneath a wide expanse of open sky. Mimicking a savanna, it has since attracted flocks of munias, storks and eagles, among other wildlife. At the centre stands what looks like a tree devoid of leaves. It turns out to be a sculpture meant to anchor the three-hectare expanse. Made from rebars repurposed from the site – including the demolished car park and pathways – it is knotted and twisted in ways that resemble bark and branches. While it looks like a commissioned artwork, Hang revealed that it was crafted by contractor supervisor Lao Gao. “He had the ability, eye and hands to create what we envisioned, even though he had no previous experience doing something like that,” she said. “In being close to nature, he was able to be inspired by it.” Features aside, it is the Grasslands’ significance to the community that has become precious to Hang. On her visits, she has seen students taking graduation photos. Many a marriage proposal has happened here, and it is a hot spot for wedding shoots. “What is surprising is

it actually became more than what we thought – a moment for people as well. It is crazy to think that what I did has become the physical space that something important happens.”

SEEDED BY CREATIVITY No surprise then that Hang has remained committed to landscape architecture for the past decade, bucking the trend of job-hopping that is common among those of her “zillennial” generation. Her decision to study it at the University of Hong Kong was fuelled by a desire to do something more open-ended and creative – work that allowed for freedom of expression, with “no absolute answers”. This was coupled with a love for nature – one she spent plenty of time in while growing up in Hong Kong. “My parents brought my brother and me to the beach every weekend, and I used to walk a lot. If I need to choose between indoor and outdoor, my preference is to get out. That was probably the unconscious link to landscape architecture,” she explained. After graduating, a university professor introduced Hang to a job opportunity at Atelier Dreiseitl in Singapore. Without giving it much thought, she went through the interview process and landed the position. Since then, she has stayed with the firm, through its integration



with Henning Larsen in 2022. Along the way, exposure to different mentors, passionate teammates and varied projects has kept her in situ. “They gave me the energy to think about what I can do – not just what I can contribute, but what I can absorb as a human being. Each one opened up different inspirations and reflections, so I felt I could try something new and still explore. Just like this, time passed.” Naturally, her appreciation of landscape architecture has deepened, too. Through her practice, she has come to see the necessity of different disciplines working together – architects, engineers, wildlife specialists and gardeners among them. “My understanding has definitely become more complex,” she added. “I am always thinking about the impact that we make, and how we can make people’s daily life a better experience, while maintaining a balance with the environment.”

MAINTAINING A STASIS This idea of balance sits at the core of her approach to landscape architecture. Pausing at a lookout point in Jurong Lake Gardens, she gestured towards Alstonia Island on the edge of a freshwater swamp off-limits to visitors – even as a monitor lizard swam serenely by and a baby heron flitted among the foliage. The spot is something of a secret, stumbled upon by joggers or those looking for an isolated corner to meditate. This land-water interface is designed to let people and wildlife share the same place, while keeping them apart. “I think the nice thing is you can’t reach the actual island, yet you can watch the animals walking or nesting around the shore or trees, so there is a closeness,” she explained. The swamp too was planned such that it has a self-sustaining ecological cycle, while also educating visitors about the Gardens. Its introduction was a reinstatement of the area’s natural heritage, before Jurong was industrialised. To ensure authenticity, native trees – including Alstonia – were sourced and acclimatised before being planted on site. “We needed to train them to remember that they are a wet-tolerant species, probably because they were not cultivated in that environment. This was done by gradually increasing the depth of the water they were growing in. It’s a cute process of trying to remind them of their own heritage.” In other projects, Hang has grappled with which parts of the land should have built structures and which should be kept wild. She has encountered this many times, such as when a tree is beloved by a community, because they enjoy picnicking beneath it, and appeal against cutting it down. In the Gardens, a stream was diverted in a particular way to avoid the removal of a mango tree that produced the sweeter fruit. “Balance is really about the relationships between things. For me, it’s a stable state where different parts can keep thriving together – the built and nature, people and wildlife, and even our relationships with each other.”

IN FULL BLOOM The year began with the wrapping up of work on the North-South Corridor (NSC). Henning Larsen is the master plan consultant, after winning the tender in 2024 with a proposal for a people-centred, inclusive approach that prioritises walking, cycling and public transport. She explained: “Traditionally, infrastructure is about moving cars as efficiently as possible. With the NSC, we’re trying to treat the surface not just as a road, but as continuous movement and a green corridor – returning some of that space to people and to nature, while still keeping the city moving.” From Bugis and Novena to Bishan, Ang Mo Kio and Woodlands, the team is studying how to introduce shade, planting and sidewalks so that walking and cycling feel intuitive and comfortable in the heat. Given the diversity of land uses along the NSC – from residential to commercial and industrial – Hang and the multidisciplinary team are looking for ways to shape the corridor into something more human-scale. Also on her plate is raising awareness of landscape architecture, especially among the young. When possible, she accepts invitations to speak in schools and lead tours of projects she has worked on – such as Jurong Lake Gardens. Her message centres on building on Singapore’s “city in a garden” vision, and fostering knowledge-sharing between disciplines and collaborators. Hang’s win at the SILA awards has put her in a prime position to amplify her message. “I don’t know what made me win, but perhaps the judges thought I had the potential to influence the young and share the everyday magic of nature with them.”

Europe looks beyond regulation in bid for tech leadership

Brussels: A new European social media platform is betting that privacy, identity verification and genuine human interaction can help it compete with American tech giants such as X and Bluesky. W Social, which unveiled its platform at the World Economic Forum in Davos earlier this year, launched its public beta in Brussels last month. The company says it wants to bring the "social" back to social media by prioritising interactions between people rather than chatbots. It also plans to host all user data on European servers under European Union privacy laws, while adopting strict age and identity verification requirements. Its launch comes as the EU seeks to regain greater control over its digital infrastructure and support home-grown innovation.

NOT ONLY A REGULATORY FOCUS

For years, the EU has been known for setting global standards for digital regulation, from data privacy to online competition. But there have been growing concerns that Europe is losing ground to the United States and China in advanced technologies. Now, policymakers want Europe to become a tech leader in its own right. W Social says Europe will need to do more if it wants to achieve that ambition. "The EU has been lagging behind; it also needs to help companies to succeed, it can't only regulate them," the platform's co-founder and chairman Ingmar Rentzhog told CNA. "If we don't step up, all our innovations are going outside to other places."

REDUCING DIGITAL DEPENDENCE

Europe remains heavily reliant on foreign technology. According to the European Commission, the EU relies on countries outside the bloc for more than 80 per cent of its key digital products, services, infrastructure and intellectual property. Recent tensions with Washington over digital regulation and economic security, and with Beijing over export controls and critical raw materials, have reinforced these concerns.

The European Commission last month adopted a Tech Sovereignty Package, a series of measures aimed at strengthening Europe's digital capabilities. The plans include expanding artificial intelligence infrastructure, increasing cloud computing capacity, boosting semiconductor production and diversifying digital supply chains. For some European lawmakers, the issue is no longer just economic but strategic. "IT solutions can be used as a tool, if not a weapon ... to show your power, your superiority and that you can do much more than the others," said Michal Kobosko, a Member of the European Parliament from the Renew Europe group. Experts say tech sovereignty is not about isolating Europe from the rest of the world. "The future for the EU is going to be finding other partners, which is why the package defines tech sovereignty not as isolation and protectionism but as openness to others who share similar standards," said Sabine Muscat, a senior digital policy fellow at the Brussels Institute for Geopolitics, a European policy think-tank.

BALANCING GLOBAL RELATIONSHIPS

The EU's push for greater technological self-reliance will require careful diplomacy. One priority is reducing dependence on Chinese technology in sensitive sectors, a move that risks straining one of the world's largest trade relationships. Beijing has warned of possible retaliation, although talks between both sides continue. Kobosko said the bloc also remains heavily dependent on Chinese exports of rare earth materials that are essential for many advanced technologies. "We need to have access, we need to make sure that we have this access today and this access will be kept tomorrow, and China will not be introducing other forms of bans on the export of these critical materials," he added. At the same time, the EU must also navigate its relationship with the White House.

Iran tells Houthis to close Red Sea gateway if US hits power network

Dubai: Iran has asked Yemen's Houthi movement to stand ready to close the Red Sea oil route if the United States strikes Iranian power infrastructure, three sources told Reuters on Thursday (Jul 16), posing a potent new threat to global energy supplies. The idea has been discussed within the Islamic Republic's leadership, and the message has been conveyed to Iran's Houthi allies, two senior Iranian sources and a regional source familiar with the matter said, speaking on condition of anonymity. The sources said the Houthis had been informed recently of Tehran's request, which has not been previously reported. They did not give further details on how it had been conveyed or whether it was after US President Donald Trump's threat to attack Iranian power infrastructure on Tuesday. Iran's foreign ministry and a spokesperson for the Houthi group were not immediately available to respond to Reuters' request.

HOUTHIS DEPLOY DRONES NEAR BAB EL-MANDEB

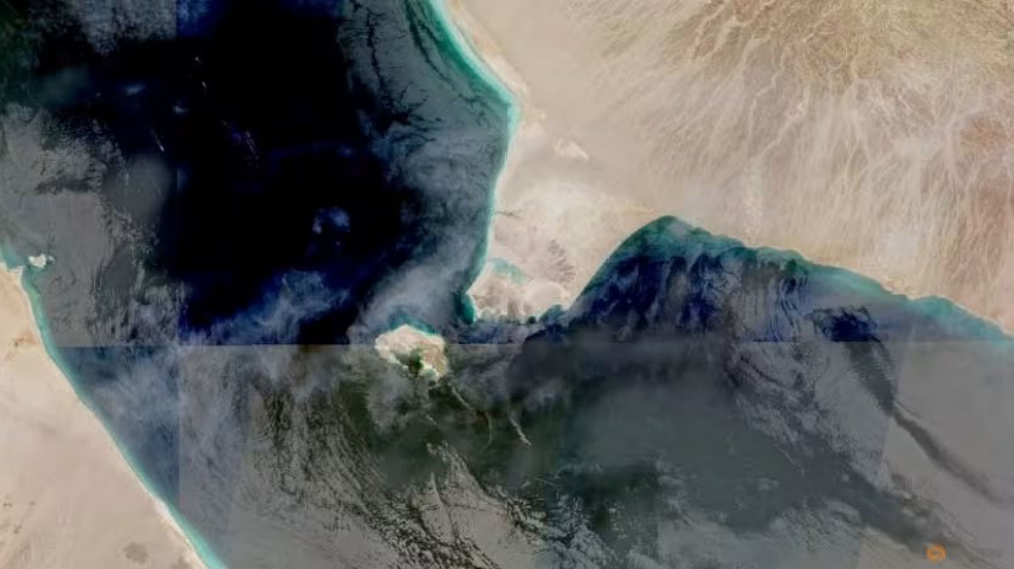
A source close to the Houthis said the group had completed preparations to attack shipping by deploying missiles and drones near Bab el-Mandeb strait, the gateway to the Red Sea, in Yemen's highlands overlooking Hodeidah and the Gulf of Aden and was awaiting the order to begin. Any threat to the Red Sea and its Bab el-Mandeb gateway risks hugely exacerbating the global energy crisis triggered by Iran's closure of the Strait of Hormuz and underscores the explosive risks stemming from a new round of warfare. With the Hormuz strait already shut, any Houthi attacks on vessels or ports in the Red Sea would leave the Middle East's two main oil export routes disrupted simultaneously, opening a new front in both the energy crisis and Iran's wider conflict with the United States. Representatives of Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) who are already in Yemen will control the decision on when to close the Bab el-Mandeb strait, said the source close to the Houthis. In a sign of escalating tensions in the region, the Houthis fired missiles at Saudi Arabia after accusing the kingdom of bombing an airport under their control on Monday, breaking a four-year truce

in the conflict between the kingdom and the group. Torbjorn Solvedt, principal Middle East analyst with risk intelligence company Verisk Maplecroft, said the flare-up between the Houthis and Saudi Arabia had come at a bad time. "If fighting intensifies and spills over into Red Sea export infrastructure and shipping, it will threaten the only major alternative route for oil exports from the region," he said. Two regional sources close to Riyadh said the kingdom was taking threats from Iran and the Houthis very seriously, adding that Riyadh was aware the Yemeni group was now closely coordinating with Iran over the Red Sea. The conflict began on Feb 28, when Israel and the United States attacked Iran, leading Tehran to shut the Strait of Hormuz, the main route before the war for around a fifth of global energy supplies. Tensions have mounted since a fragile June truce between Tehran and Washington collapsed, reviving fears of full-scale war and disrupting energy flows through the Strait.

RED SEA CLOSURE WOULD NOT BE DIFFICULT

A significant amount of Gulf oil has since been diverted to the Red Sea through a Saudi pipeline, and the waterway now carries around 7 per cent of global energy supplies. When the Houthis attacked shipping during the Gaza

war, major shipping companies diverted their cargoes to the much longer, more expensive route around Africa. With Saudi Arabia having itself diverted 70 per cent of its energy exports through its Red Sea port of Yanbu, any direct attacks there would also be a big problem for oil markets. One of the regional sources said Iran's clerical rulers were seeking to pressure the United States by raising the potential cost to the global economy, threatening Red Sea shipping and the flow of Saudi oil exports through the waterway, in what the source described as part of "Iranian thinking." Closing down the strait would not be difficult, the source said, adding: "Anybody with a firing rifle can interrupt the shipping. You don't have to have sophisticated missiles to interrupt the shipping." Iran views the Houthis as part of its regional "Axis of Resistance", an alliance that also includes Lebanon's Hezbollah and Iraqi Shi'ite armed groups that have already joined the regional conflict between Tehran and Washington. But the Houthi rebels have not formally entered the fray. The United States says Iran has provided the Houthis with weapons, funding and training, including support channelled through Hezbollah. Tehran has denied the accusation.



Thai band mourns loss of 4 members as Bangkok bar fire death toll hits 33

Bangkok: Victims of this week's flash fire at a Bangkok music bar that took more than 30 lives included four of the six core members of the band playing when the blaze broke out. The fate of the Totsakan band has been a key focus in Thailand's coverage of the blaze, and as residents expressed their sadness, confusion, outrage and demands for compensation on Wednesday (Jul 15), the sister of the group's late keyboard player struck a particular note of grace. "If I can be his representative, I think he would say he doesn't want to see everyone sad and cry," said Chanyanuch Pudmon, the sister of keyboard player Preuthipong Pudmon, as she and other family members retrieved his body from Bangkok's Institute of Forensic Science. "He would not want everyone to see him as he is now, but please remember his smile on stage, playing music that he loves." The fire that broke out Sunday night killed at least 33 people and injured dozens, with 17 hospitalised in critical condition, Erawan emergency services said. Wiroon Supasingsiripreecha, chief of the forensic institute, told reporters on Wednesday that most of the victims died from smoke inhalation, while a few died from burn injuries. What set off the blaze at the Rong Beer Na Ladprao bar in northern Bangkok and why it caused so many casualties is under investigation. Authorities are looking at whether the venue's ceiling had especially flammable sound-proofing foam, whether its exits were accessible and unlocked and whether the venue was legally registered.

BAND PLAYED GOOD-TIME MUSIC EVERY SUNDAY

Totsakan was a house band at the bar, and every Sunday they played the kind of good-time roots music that is popular, especially in rural areas where traditional beats are played on modern instruments. The band's members were among the first to spy a spark from a circuit breaker that may have set off the blaze that roared across the ceiling, which experts suspect was covered with highly combustible material. People rushed for the few and narrow exits in what they said was total darkness. The chaos was such that even after the blaze was brought under control by firefighters and the injured taken to hospitals, it was unclear who had survived and who had perished. However, for the band's leader and singer, Atipat Wijan - nickname "Ice" - a big blow came right away. In an interview with Thai TV Channel 3 just hours after the flames were extinguished, he recalled how the band's bass player called him to tell him that Nahatai Sajjalert, the lead female singer nicknamed "Breeze" - who was also his girl-

friend - was undergoing CPR behind the still-smouldering building. Ice said he tried helping the EMS team resuscitate her, but she could not be revived. "She wasn't burned at all. Her body was completely intact. She just looked like she was peacefully asleep," he recalled. Ice said it was originally believed that keyboardist Preuthipong - nickname "Kwang" - had been found and hospitalised, but that was a misunderstanding. He never made it out of the bar. Nattapat Thamnita, or "Biw", the band's drum-

26, was at the beer hall on the night of the fire with four companions. He was sitting near the stage when the fire broke out. He recounted seeing white smoke coming from the stage, which he at first thought was an effect from dry ice before realising it was the start of a fire. "When the fire broke, I just ran, and then all power went out," said Natthaphong, who said that one of his companions, a relative, died in the fire. "It was so hectic." Natthaphong said he escaped through the back door of the bar



near the bathrooms and that there was a security guard there who was using a flashlight to lead people out, contradicting reports from police that the door was not used. He said he did not recall hearing a fire alarm. Bandages covered both of Natthaphong's ears and part of his forehead. Before registering with the police, he said that he plans to seek compensation for his injuries. Kanticha Singkhon, 25, was at the police station to pick up a handbag and other personal belongings of her mother, who died in the fire. With her mother gone, Kanticha said she is now responsible for her younger brother. She said she wanted the bar owners to be the ones who reach out to the victims' families "because they would be going back to their hometowns by now. They won't have time because each victim came from far away", she said. A lawyer representing the bar owners told local media that survivors and family members will initially receive 10,000 baht (US\$300) in compensation. "It's not enough money for a funeral - I had to take a loan to arrange my mom's funeral," Kanticha said. "I have not had any financial arrangements, and no one has contacted me."

mer, was evacuated in critical condition, but also did not survive.

FOURTH BAND MEMBER DIES ON WEDNESDAY

Misery extended to Wednesday when the band announced that its other male singer, Thitiwat Kaewkanha, had died in hospital. He was initially feared dead, but had then turned up hospitalised after a day of frantic searching. According to Thai Rath, Thailand's most popular newspaper, Thitiwat, whose nickname is "Din", had burns over 80 per cent of his body. Other survivors and family members of victims of the fire visited a police station on Wednesday to seek compensation, gather belongings and give their testimony. Natthaphong Lakhorn,

US unveils new 25% tariff on certain imports from Brazil

Washington: The United States on Wednesday (Jul 15) announced a new tariff on various imports from Brazil, after a year-long investigation into the Latin American giant's trade and other policies. The 25 per cent tariff is set to take effect Jul 22, a senior US official told reporters. But a range of products, including beef, coffee and certain aircraft parts, would be exempted, the official added. The exclusions also cover certain goods that the United States does not produce. "Brazil's unfair trading practices have prevented US workers and producers from accessing this important market," US Trade Representative Jamieson Greer said in a statement. "We remain open to continuing negotiations with Brazil to bring about long-needed changes to the problems identified in this investigation," he added. In earlier findings, the US investigation deemed that certain practices by Brazil were "unreasonable or discriminatory and burden or restrict US commerce". The latest move also comes as President Donald

Trump's administration pushes to rebuild his economic agenda after the US Supreme Court in February struck down a swath of his global tariffs. The Brazil tariffs were justified under Section 301 of the Trade Act, and the Trump administration this year initiated other probes using the same authority. Already, in one set of probes, US officials proposed new tariffs targeting dozens of trading partners for their alleged failures to act against forced labour. In the case of Brazil, a senior US official took aim Wednesday at what Washington deemed as adverse actions on digital trade, alongside "unfair" competition linked to state-owned electronic payments system PIX, among other issues. The US official said the door to negotiations remain open, although Washington wishes for its concerns to be resolved. For example, the United States seeks to access preferential tariff treatment Brazil provided to partners like Mexico and India as well. The official, however, rejected criticism that Section 301 probes were being used for politi-

cal purposes. While the Trump administration does not expect retaliation following Wednesday's announcement, it warned that pushback could invite further US countermeasures. For now, the United States has held constructive talks with Brazilian counterparts recently, the official said. At a public hearing held by the USTR's office in Washington this month, Brazilian conservative presidential hopeful Flavio Bolsonaro urged the United States against imposing the new tariffs. The eldest son of Brazil's former right-wing president Jair Bolsonaro argued that new duties would benefit his political rival, President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva. The pair are key rivals in the October presidential ballot. Dozens of other participants testified at the two days of public hearings as well. Last year, the Trump administration hit Brazil with sharp tariffs over the coup trial against Jair Bolsonaro, who is now serving a 27-year sentence. Many of the duties were rolled back after talks between both sides, in a win for Lula.

Every dream needs a plan: Building financial foundation for your child’s future

Every parent dream of giving their child the freedom to explore, learn, and build a future of their choice. But behind every dream is a journey — and that journey often needs preparation, planning, and a strong financial foundation. support. Children are growing up with world of full of possibilities, from global education, specialised careers to entrepreneurship, and opportunities, the choices available to them are expanding. For parents, this means preparing for more than just traditional milestones. Every financial plan is a commitment to stand by a child's ambitions, no matter where life takes them. Papa Hain Na. Start early: Give their plans more time to grow Starting early can give parents the advantage of time. A longer planning horizon allows families to build a stronger financial foundation gradually and prepare better for important milestones. Why it matters: More time to build: Starting early allows parents to take a disciplined approach towards future needs. Better preparedness: Whether it is higher education, specialised courses, or career opportunities, early planning helps families stay ready for important moments. Greater flexibility: As children grow, their interests and goals may change. Starting early gives parents more room to adapt their plans. The earlier parents begin planning, the more time they have to create a financial foundation that supports their child’s future dreams. A child’s future needs a plan, not just savings: Building a child’s future goes beyond setting aside money. It requires understanding goals, timelines, and the financial support needed along the way. A practical approach begins with asking: What are the important milestones? — Education, skill development, career opportunities, or other aspirations. When are these goals likely to arise? — Understanding the timeline helps parents plan with greater clarity. What financial preparation may be required?— Estimating future needs helps create a realistic plan to support

the child’s important milestone. Child-focused financial planning can help parents create a structured approach for their child’s future, combining long-term preparation with the discipline needed to stay focused on important milestones. Key takeaways A secure future is not created through one decision. It is built over time through thoughtful planning. Parents can consider these steps: Start early: Give your financial plans more time to grow and create a stronger foundation for future milestones. • Plan with protection in mind: Life insurance and child-focused insurance solutions can help ensure that a child’s future goals remain supported even when life does not go as planned. • Review regularly: As children grow, their aspirations and financial requirements may change. Reviewing plans helps parents stay aligned with their child’s future. • Build a long-term commitment: Consistent planning helps parents stay focused on the goals they have set for their child rather than short-term financial priorities. Building more than a financial foundation: Financial planning is not only about saving for the future; it is about creating a foundation of security and support for a child’s journey. When savings, protection, and child-focused financial planning come together, parents can be better prepared for important milestones and unexpected situations. Because every parent wants to give their child the freedom to dream. With the right planning today, they can help ensure those dreams continue to have support tomorrow. Financial planning decisions should be based on individual goals, financial circumstances, and suitability. It is advised to evaluate available options carefully and seek professional guidance where required.

Mr. Deepak Nair, Zonal Director – East, SBI Life Insurance

The rise of India’s mass affluent and the evolution of premium banking

Guwahati: The growing middle class in India has fortuitously created a new segment of the population. Over the years, a shift in the economic story from scale to sophistication has led to a sizeable expansion of the mass-affluent population. Positioned between traditional retail customers and ultra-high-net-worth individuals, the mass-affluent segment is increasingly redefining consumption, aspiration and financial engagement. Mass affluent are currently redefining consumption, aspiration and financial engagement. Besides being globally aware and digitally astute, mass affluents have growing spending power and evolving expectations. Mass affluents with a deep consciousness of value, together with this economic shift, have fundamentally altered the approach towards premium banking. Hitendra Jha, Head of Retail Liabilities, TASC and TPP, -Ujjivan Small Finance Bank said, Rising incomes, entrepreneurial growth and increased access to global lifestyles via digital platforms led to the rise of mass affluent in India. However, beyond income levels, this segment is defined by a mindset. Mass affluent individuals build wealth, not inherit it, which makes them highly discerning, selective, time-conscious, and attracted to personalised financial solutions. For them, banking is no longer just about transactions or savings. It is about seamless integration with their broader lifestyle, which includes travel, wellness, entertainment and long-term financial planning. Individual engagement with financial markets has expanded too, as the share of equity and mutual funds in annual household financial savings increased from nearly 2% in FY12 to over 15.2% in FY25, according to India’s Economic Survey 2025-26 released by the Ministry of Finance. This financially aware and investment-oriented consumer base is now looking to build wealth, gain experience and expect more from the financial ecosystem. Interestingly, the elite and mass affluent are inclined towards investment-oriented behavior and long-term wealth building. Holistic Banking Experiences: In response, Indian banks are delivering holistic and experience-driven propositions with the idea to transition from standalone products to integrated ones where financial services are complemented by lifestyle benefits. The modern exclusive banking programme is no longer limited to preferential interest rates or faster service. It brings together personalised relationship management, enhanced transaction limits, lifestyle partnerships across travel, dining, and entertainment, health and wellness integrations, and reward ecosystems that extend beyond traditional cashback. In many ways, the idea of a bank account with lifestyle benefits is becoming central to how this segment evaluates value. A New Approach to Premium Bank-

ing (such as Ivory by Ujjivan): Banks are launching a new generation programme aimed at their mass affluent customers. For example, Ivory by Ujjivan is built around a simpler but more ambitious idea that banking at this level should feel genuinely different rather than showing up as just another financial product with a premium sticker. Ivory is a premium banking proposition that comes with exclusive offerings, from lifestyle privileges to finances and bespoke services. From dedicated relationship



management to global access through a premium metal debit card and from hospitality partnerships to integrated rewards, the programme mirrors the evolving expectations of customers who want their financial relationships to be both efficient and enriching. The elevated experience comes from thoughtfully designed features of the Ivory metal debit card, including accelerated rewards and access to curated lifestyle experiences across dining and leisure. The enhancements of the programme also in-

Godrej Agrovet inaugurates India’s first Integrated Oil Palm Complex

Guwahati: Godrej Agrovet Limited (Godrej Agrovet), one of India’s largest farm-to-protein platforms, today inaugurated India’s first Integrated Oil Palm Complex in Khammam, Telangana. The complex brings together every stage of the oil palm value chain under one roof – seed and genetics, nursery, R&D center, mill and upcoming state-of-the-art refinery in the complex. The company’s cumulative investment will be INR 300 Crore once the entire complex is operational. The complex was inaugurated by Bhatti Vikramarka Mallu Garu, Hon’ble Deputy Chief Minister and Hon’ble Minister for Finance & Planning, Energy, Government of Telangana in the presence of Ponguleti nivas Reddy Garu, Hon’ble Minister for Revenue and Housing, Information & Public Relations, Government of Telangana; Tummala Nageswara Rao Garu, Hon’ble Minister for Agriculture, Marketing, Co-operation, and Handlooms & Textiles, Government of Telangana; D. dhar Babu Garu, Hon’ble Minister for ITE&C, Industries & Commerce, and Legislative Affairs, Government of Telangana and Ramasahayam Raghuram Reddy Garu, Member of Parliament from Khammam. Also present on the occasion were Nadir Godrej, Chairperson, Godrej Industries Group; Burjis Godrej, Chairperson Designate, Godrej Agrovet; Sunil Kataria, MD & CEO, Godrej Agrovet; Sougata Niyogi, CEO – Oil Palm Business, Godrej Agrovet and Rakesh Swami, Group President, Corporate Affairs, Godrej Industries Group. Commenting on the occasion, Bhatti Vikramarka Mallu Garu, Hon’ble Deputy Chief Minister and Hon’ble Minister for Finance & Planning, Energy, Government of Telangana, said, “This complex is a landmark for Telangana’s oil palm mission and for our vision of making the state a leading edible oil producer. Telangana’s oil palm mission is transforming the lives of lakhs of farming households while strengthening the nation’s edible oil security, and Godrej Agrovet’s deep expertise in the oil palm sector has made them the right partner to help us realise that vision. Bringing seed-to-refinery capability to Khammam, this complex reflects the strength of that expertise, and I am confident it will accelerate our mission and bring lasting prosperity to our oil palm farmers.” “None of this would have been possible with-

out the vision and steadfast support of the Government of Telangana. We deeply value the partnership that has brought us to this milestone”, said Burjis Godrej, Chairperson Designate, Godrej Agrovet. He further added, “This complex is more than an investment in infrastructure. It is our contribution to a larger national goal of building a self-reliant edible oil economy. Being India’s first of its kind, it sets a benchmark for what an integrated approach to sustainable oil palm can achieve. As we look ahead, our commitment remains the same. To build capabilities that serve our farmers today and strengthen the nation’s food security for generations to come.” As part of the complex, Godrej Agrovet has set up a seed garden in partnership with leading global companies, bringing their expertise in oil palm genetics to India. This partnership, along with the R&D center at the complex, will support the company’s ongoing efforts to develop hybrid planting material that is tolerant of, and optimised for, Telangana’s local climatic conditions. The mill at the complex, first by a private company in the state, has commenced operations with a capacity of 30 tonnes per hour and has been designed for expansion up to 60

tonnes per hour allowing the company to scale processing capacity in sync with its target of increasing area under plantation in the state from current 10,000 ha to 30,000 by 2030. The com-



plex also houses a Samadhan Centre, the company’s flagship initiative that serves as a one-stop resource for oil palm farmers, offering advisory support and access to farm inputs and other services. “We have approached this complex the same way we approach every high-potential business at Godrej Agrovet – by investing early in the right capabilities, rather than scaling before the fundamentals are in place. With the entire oil palm value chain under one roof, we gain greater control over quality and consistency, and it reflects our confidence in Telangana’s potential to lead the nation’s edible oil security journey while uplifting farming families. We remain committed to building on this foundation and delivering consistent, long-term value to our farmers and stakeholders alike,” said Sunil Kataria, MD & CEO, Godrej Agrovet. The inauguration marks a significant milestone in the company’s oil palm journey. The company remains committed to working closely with the governments and its farmer partners to put India on global sustainable oil palm map.

Assamese film ‘Rador Pakhi’ wins Jury Special Mention at Moscow festival

Guwahati: Assamese feature film ‘Rador Pakhi’ (Morning Sunshine), directed by acclaimed filmmaker Dr Bobby Sarma Baruah, has received the Jury Special Mention – Super Mama Award at the International Film Festival Made by Women in Moscow. The film was officially selected in the Competition Section of the international festival, held in the Russian capital from July 8 to 12, 2026. The recognition marks another important milestone in the film’s journey across national and international film festivals. Directed by Dr Bobby Sarma Baruah, Rador Pakhi (Morning Sunshine) draws inspiration from the real-life journey of writer Sarmistha Pritam. The film revolves around Jyoti, an aspiring writer from Assam who is diagnosed with spinal muscular atrophy at a young age. Despite facing severe physical challenges, her determination to live independently and pursue her dreams forms the emotional core of the film. Expressing her happiness over the recognition, Dr Bobby Sarma Baruah said, “This journey became even more meaningful as our film received the Jury Special Mention – Super Mama Award. Receiving this recognition on an international platform is truly an honour and a proud moment for our entire team.” “This recognition belongs to every member of our incredible cast and crew, whose passion and hard work brought this story to life. My heartfelt thanks also go to our friends, well-wishers, and everyone who believed in us. Your love, prayers, and constant support have made this journey possible,” she added. Before receiving the recognition in Moscow, ‘Rador Pakhi’

had established a strong presence on the film festival circuit. The project was selected for the NFDC Film Bazaar Co-Production Market and later premiered in the Indian Panorama section of the 55th International Film Festival of India in Goa in 2024. It was subsequently selected for the Asian Spectrum section of the 21st Third Eye Asian Film Festival in Mumbai, the 23rd Pune International Film Festival and the Indian Competition section of the 16th Bengaluru International Film Festival in 2025. The film was also selected for the Indian Film Festival of Melbourne, the 20th International Film Festival of Thrissur and the Mosaic International Film Festival in Canada in 2025. Its selection and recognition at the International Film Festival Made by Women in Moscow in 2026 further expanded its international journey. Produced by Basanta Kumar Baruah, Dr Bobby Sarma Baruah, and Sulakhyana Baruah, ‘Rador Pakhi’ (Morning Sunshine) features Sulakhyana Baruah, Kamal Lochan, Arun Nath, and Bina Patangia in key roles. Dr Baruah said the latest honour would encourage the team to continue creating meaningful cinema capable of connecting with viewers across cultures and geographical boundaries. “This honour inspires us to continue telling stories that touch hearts and transcend borders. Thank you from the bottom of my heart,” she said. The Jury Special Mention in Moscow further strengthens the international journey of ‘Rador Pakhi’ while bringing wider recognition to meaningful cinema from Assam and Northeast India.

Pro Health Clinic brings advanced physiotherapy and rehabilitation services to Guwahati

Guwahati: The Deputy General Manager (DGM) of NEDFi, Shri Prashanta Kumar Talukdar, inaugurated the Guwahati branch of Pro Health Physical Therapy and Rehabilitation Clinic, one of Manipur’s leading and trusted physiotherapy and rehabilitation clinics, marking a significant milestone in expanding access to evidence-based physiotherapy and comprehensive rehabilitation services in Assam and the Northeast. With a strong reputation for delivering patient-centric rehabilitation and helping thousands of individuals regain mobility, reduce pain and return to their daily lives, Pro Health aims to support the growing need for quality physiotherapy services in Guwahati. In today’s fast-paced lifestyle, musculoskeletal disorders, sports injuries, post-surgical complications, neurological conditions and chronic pain have become increasingly common. Many individuals continue to live with pain due to delayed treatment, dependence on pain medication, or lack of access to specialised rehabilitation. Pro Health seeks to bridge this gap by providing scientific, personalised and

goal-oriented treatment plans that focus on identifying and treating the root cause of pain rather than merely managing symptoms. The clinic offers specialised rehabilitation for neck and back pain, frozen shoulder, arthritis, sports injuries, ligament and tendon injuries, post-fracture rehabilitation, post-operative recovery following joint replacement and spine surgeries, stroke rehabilitation, neurological disorders, balance and gait training, geriatric rehabilitation, women’s health physiotherapy, and ergonomic consultation. Every treatment programme is tailored to the patient’s condition, lifestyle and recovery goals. Speaking on the occasion, the management of Pro Health Physical Therapy and Rehabilitation Clinic said: “Pain should never become a way of life. Our mission has always been to help people move better, recover faster and live pain-free through evidence-based physiotherapy and compassionate care. With our expansion to Guwahati, we are committed to bringing the same standards of clinical excellence and personalised rehabilitation that have earned the trust of

patients in Manipur. We believe every patient deserves access to quality rehabilitation that restores not just movement, but confidence and independence.” Unlike conventional approaches that often focus solely on temporary pain relief, Pro Health emphasises comprehensive assessment, functional rehabilitation, patient education, movement correction and preventive care. The clinic combines modern rehabilitation techniques with internationally accepted physiotherapy practices to ensure safe, effective and long-term recovery. The launch of the Guwahati clinic reflects Pro Health’s vision of making high-quality rehabilitation services accessible throughout the Northeast while promoting awareness about the importance of early intervention and preventive physiotherapy. Whether recovering from an injury, surgery, neurological condition, or managing chronic pain, patients receive personalised care under the guidance of experienced physiotherapy professionals. Residents of Guwahati and neighbouring areas are invited to visit the clinic for comprehensive physiotherapy assessment and rehabilitation consultation.

After challenging Japan training camp, Gavin Lee's Lions face ASEAN football championship test

Singapore: A two-week Japan training camp that pushed the Lions to their limits has helped them prepare for their next major test, the 2026 ASEAN Hyundai Cup, said head coach Gavin Lee. Speaking to CNA on Tuesday (Jul 21), Lee said that matches during the Okinawa trip were designed to overload players going through their pre-seasons, as they learnt to deal with the tempo of better opposition for the full 90 minutes. "That was something that we knew and we expected, and it was necessary for the boys to suffer," he said. "Our reference is the ASEAN Football Federation (championship). Everything we do is to prepare us for the AFF. And so hopefully what we went through, the suffering we went through, would bear fruit when we arrive at the (tournament)." During their Jul 6 to Jul 17 training camp, the Lions lost 0-2 to third-tier side FC Ryukyu and 2-3 to fourth-tier team Okinawa SV. They also played J2 League side Albirex Niigata in a closed-door friendly. "We didn't go to Okinawa for 'easy' – if we wanted easy, we would have stayed at home and played internal games or potentially regional games. We wanted things to be difficult," said Lee. "We wanted them to be exposed a little bit, to be uncomfortable, disappointed, frustrated ... If we can expose them (to these experiences) and if we can adapt to that, when we come back, life should be a bit easier going into the competition." At the biennial regional tournament that kicks

off later this week, the Lions have been grouped with Cambodia, Timor-Leste, Indonesia and Vietnam. They have a packed start to the tournament with three matches in eight days. "When it comes to tournament football, every game is a final," said Lee. "Like it or not, it's really one game at a time. It's no point talking about where you want to end up, but you don't get the job done now." Lee's men open their campaign away to Cambodia on Friday, before a Jul 27 home game at Jalan Besar Stadium against Timor-Leste. Singapore will then travel to Hanoi to face defending champions Vietnam on Jul 31, before their final group game with Indonesia on Aug 7. The 2026 ASEAN Hyundai Cup – the 16th edition of the ASEAN Championship – will run from Jul 24 to Aug 26, with group stage matches to be played on a home-or-away single round-robin basis. The tournament's other group, Group B, comprises Thailand, Malaysia, the Philippines, Myanmar and Laos. **AIMING FOR PROGRESS** This year marks the 30th anniversary of the ASEAN Championship. Thailand are the most successful nation in the history of the competition, having been crowned champions of Southeast Asia seven times. The Lions have won the ASEAN Championship four times – in 1998, 2004, 2007 and 2012. It is a tournament which holds many memories for local football fans, including Lee, who grew up watching some of these games.

Kiss inherits Wallabies side with familiar problems

Melbourne : Joe Schmidt would have liked to hand over a fully rebuilt Wallabies side to Les Kiss but instead the incoming coach will find a similar set of problems to the ones that greeted the New Zealander two years ago. Schmidt took over a demoralised outfit in the wake of the 2023 World Cup in France where the Wallabies crashed to their first exit from the pool phase under the chaotic tenure of Eddie Jones. Despite some notable wins, including the upset of world champions South Africa at Ellis Park last year, Schmidt departs with a record of 19 losses from 31 tests, the second-worst winning ratio among Wallabies coaches with 30 tests in charge. After losing two of the three Nations Championship (NC) tests, the Wallabies are languishing at eighth in the world rankings, only one better than their low point after France 2023. They signed off from the championship's Southern Hemisphere leg over the weekend with a 57-10 win over Italy in Perth to farewell Schmidt in style. But beating the 12th-ranked Italians, who were exhausted after a long tour and without their head coach due to a World Rugby ban, was small consolation following the home defeats by Ireland and France. After the Wallabies conceded 30 unanswered points against the French in Brisbane, captain Harry Wilson spoke for many when he said the team had failed to deliver for their fans. "We're definitely bothered by it; we're here to win and no team can sit there and say we're happy with being close and improving," he said. The Wallabies played superb rugby in phases during all three matches but despite Schmidt's efforts to blood new players, a lack of depth continues to restrict them. With erstwhile number 10 Noah Lolesio unselected while playing in Japan's second division, Joe Schmidt used debutant Declan Meredith as

his starting flyhalf against France following injuries to Carter Gordon and Ben Donaldson against the Irish.

tralia hosting the World Cup. But the results — and the Wallabies' failure to hold onto leads against Ireland and France — showed the



CONSTANT CHANGE When Meredith struggled as the French raised the pressure, the Wallabies' attack fell apart and his replacement Jock Campbell, a specialist fullback, was exposed. Constant change in the 9-10 positions was a hallmark of Schmidt's tenure and an impediment to the Wallabies' development, according to former captain Stirling Mortlock. "Having consistent combinations and building up rapport and increasing cohesion at a Wallaby level is just critical," he told local media. Injuries to props saw 37-year-old James Slipper answer a Schmidt SOS to come out of retirement and put on the gold jersey again. Schmidt has been credited by some pundits for bringing self-belief back to the squad and giving Kiss a platform to work with 15 months out from Aus-

team's confidence tends to fade quickly under pressure. It will take time and consistent wins to remedy that, and Kiss may be fortunate that his first matches in charge are a two-test series against Japan. With the first match starting in Osaka on August 8, he has little time to make major changes and will likely retain much of Schmidt's playbook. Having worked closely with Schmidt during the handover process, Kiss will be encouraged by the development of some of the New Zealander's project players, including scrumhalf Ryan Loneragan and lock Josh Canham, both stand-outs during the July tests. He will hope more players can emerge from the fringes to stake their claims to address the depth problem and for a kinder injury toll all-round.

Charismatic Keegan wore his heart on his sleeve, on and off the pitch

London : Kevin Keegan wore his heart on his sleeve as both a player and manager, and the fans loved him for it. The former England forward, who has died of cancer at 75, combined charisma and impulsive passion with an ability to score the goals that mattered while never losing sight of where he had come from and what the game meant to so many. "The fans made me," former club Liverpool recalled their 'Mighty Mouse' as saying once. "When they started singing my name... what am I, five foot seven with Cuban-heeled boots? But (because of them) I was six foot six." **A SAVIOUR FOR NEWCASTLE'S TOON ARMY** Known also as 'King Kev', Keegan was hailed as a saviour on Tyneside when he returned to his old club as manager in 1992 to stave off relegation to the third tier and take the Magpies back to the top flight with the likes of Andy Cole, David Ginola and Peter Beardsley. Keegan's father Joe had been a miner in a South Yorkshire colliery and was a Newcastle fan. In the 1995-96 season Newcastle had soared 12 points clear in the title race with their attacking approach, only to be caught and overtaken by Alex Ferguson's Manchester United. The pressure took its toll on Keegan and he showed his vulnerability, and impulsiveness, with a finger-jabbing television rant after beating Leeds United 1-0 that has gone down in Premier League lore and is oft-repeated: "I would love it if we beat them. Love it." Manchester United won the title and Keegan left Newcastle in 1997, telling the fans: "I feel I have taken the club as far as I can." He re-

turned for a second brief and unsuccessful stint in 2008. Appointed England manager in 1999, the former captain's ill-fated reign was a rollercoaster that veered from a feelgood 3-1 win over Poland in his first game at Wembley to the final 1-0 defeat to Germany in the last international played at the old Empire Stadium in October 2000. Keegan resigned after the match, explaining his reasoning to the Football Association's acting Chief Executive David Davies in a toilet cubicle inside the bowels of the stadium.



"I can't motivate the players. I can't get the extra bit out of these players that I need," he said. **DEMONSTRABLY WORLD CLASS AS A PLAYER** As a player, with a 1970s trademark perm hairstyle, Keegan was demonstrably world class with a talent that was also the product of dedication and sheer hard work. Keegan began his career as an apprentice at lowly Scunthorpe United, after being rejected elsewhere for being too small, before being signed by Liverpool manager Bill Shankly and joining as a 20-year-old in 1971. He

scored on his debut and went on to make 323 appearances and score 100 goals for Liverpool across six seasons, winning three league titles, one FA Cup, two UEFA Cups and then the European Cup in his last game for the club. Moving to Hamburg, a surprise choice with bigger European clubs interested, Keegan was twice European Footballer of the Year (1978 and 1979) and the only British player to win the Ballon d'Or twice. He was capped 63 times for England, 31 as captain. Keegan returned home from Germany to play for Southampton in 1980, taking them to the giddy heights of sixth in the old first division, and then Newcastle from 1982 before retiring in May 1984 at the age of 33. He left St James' Park by helicopter from the centre circle, still dressed in his black and white strip, and moved to Spain to play golf, assuring everyone that management was not his thing. Eight years later he was back, an eloquent and wholesome hero with evident passion for the game. Former Newcastle and England striker Alan Shearer, who had watched his idol as a youngster, is now one of many calling for a statue to be erected outside the ground. "Kevin ranks as one of the biggest modern Newcastle legends we have ever had," he told the Chronicle website earlier this year. "He went so close to winning the league with Newcastle and as a player, it was unbelievable. For him to come and play at Newcastle and do what he did, he was like the Pied Piper. "He had hundreds of kids chasing after him and I was one of those kids trying to get his autograph."

Australia welcome Cummins, Hazlewood, Lyon back for Bangladesh tests

Melbourne : Australia captain Pat Cummins, fellow fast bowler Josh Hazlewood and veteran spinner Nathan Lyon have returned from injury to be included in a 13-man squad for next month's two-test home series against

Bailey was frank about the competition Hazlewood faces from the Victoria quick. "Scotty would never say it, but yeah, I think he's mounting a strong case that when you use the words of big three (fast bowlers), that he could



be one of those," said Bailey. Hazlewood's recall means no place for Michael Neser despite the paceman's fine Ashes campaign. The squad is the first following opener Usman Khawaja's retirement, potentially creating opportunity at the top of the order. South Australia

Bangladesh. The trio were named on Tuesday for matches in Darwin (Aug. 13-17) and Mackay (Aug. 22-26), which form part of the World Test Championship cycle, after playing only three tests between them during the Ashes in the last home summer. Australia's "big four" of Cummins, Hazlewood, Mitchell Starc and Lyon have not bowled together since the West Indies tour a year ago due to various injuries but chief selector George Bailey said it was too early to confirm whether they would all turn out against Bangladesh, despite being fit. "We won't be locking in an 11 this far out," Bailey told reporters in a video call on Tuesday. "We do know that across this two-test series, the depth is there." With 295 test wickets at an average of 24.21, 35-year-old Hazlewood has been one of Australia's most devastating bowlers but injuries have limited his output in recent years, including forcing him to miss the entire Ashes series with hamstring and Achilles problems. In his absence, 37-year-old seamer Scott Boland took 20 wickets in an excellent series in the 4-1 defeat of England, and

lia opener Jake Weatherald has been retained despite struggling during his debut test series in the Ashes when he averaged 22.33 across the five matches. The pocket-sized lefthander has yet to convince but Bailey said selectors saw positives in the opening combination with Travis Head during the Ashes. "Hopefully we do see some growth out of that (Ashes) and some understanding of what it takes for success at test level," he said. Cameron Green has also held onto his spot after a disappointing Ashes with bat and ball, and is one of two all-rounders in the squad with Beau Webster. Josh Inglis was retained as a potential middle order batting option. Australia sit top of the World Test Championship table midway through the cycle and will look to cement their place with a series win over fourth-placed Bangladesh ahead of a tough tour of South Africa in October. Australia squad: Pat Cummins (captain), Scott Boland, Alex Carey, Cameron Green, Josh Hazlewood, Travis Head, Josh Inglis, Marnus Labuschagne, Nathan Lyon, Steve Smith, Mitchell Starc, Jake Weatherald, Beau Webster.

Scores celebrate Spain's 'Kings of the World' win in exhilarated Madrid

Madrid: Dancing and chanting on an open-top bus that read 'Kings of the World' and showed two large stars, Spain's national football team celebrated the country's second World Cup win on Monday along Madrid's streets packed with exhilarated fans. Close to two million people, many dressed in the country's jerseys and waving red and gold flags, gathered in the Spanish capital to see the players and celebrate Spain's 1-0 win over Argentina on Sunday's final in New Jersey, according to government estimates. "We're full of enthusiasm for (fulfilling) the dream of becoming world champions," said Fran Carratala, 34, who had travelled from the northeastern region of Catalonia to witness the players' parade in Madrid. Spanish national Daniel Gaona, 44, travelled from Estonia where he lives to watch Sunday's final in Madrid. "Everybody was crazy. It was a very good

mood. People were very happy. There were no problems, just a lot of happiness," he said as he prepared to see the players' parade. "It's something you have to come here to live it here". The Spanish players, wearing t-shirts that read "We are champions" except a few who were topless, constantly waved at the crowds and threw some footballs at them. Some players, like forward Borja Iglesias, played music on a DJ set on top of the bus that had a banner on one side and back that read:

"Stars shine together". Before the parade, the players were greeted by Spanish King Felipe and Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez. Both had attended Sunday's final. "I would like to give immense thanks to the staff and the players for your playing (style), effort and victory," Sanchez told the players. He added that he was dreaming about the possibility that Spain could win its third male World Cup in the next tournament in 2030 which will be hosted by Spain, Portugal and Morocco.

Begay named recipient of PGA Tour's Payne Stewart Award

July 20 : Notah Begay III, a four-time winner on the PGA Tour whose foundation supports Native American youth and their communities, was named the 2026 recipient of the Payne Stewart Award on Monday. The honour is given annually to a player sharing the late Stewart's values of character, charity and sportsmanship. "Payne Stewart represented the very best

of our game, not only in how he competed, but in how he lived his life and gave back to others. To be associated with his legacy is truly special," Begay, the only full-blooded Native American to play on the PGA Tour, said in a press release. "Golf has given me a platform to serve, and I've always believed it's our responsibility to use that platform to uplift others, espe-

cially the next generation. This recognition allows me to make a meaningful impact in the communities I've had the privilege to represent." Begay, who has transitioned into broadcasting and is an analyst for Golf Channel, has used his platform to mentor Native American youth and expand access to golf within their communities.

Vaughters says night controls could have stopped blood-doping era

July 20 : Former professional cyclist and Cannondale-EF team boss Jonathan Vaughters weighed in on the row over pre-dawn doping tests at the Tour de France, saying they could have exposed cycling's blood-doping era decades earlier had they existed at the time. Riders including race leader Tadej Pogacar and Jonas Vingegaard were woken in the early hours of Sunday for unannounced doping checks ahead of the 15th stage, prompting complaints that the disruption to sleep was unfair and potentially dangerous. Vaughters, who rode professionally through the late 1990s and early 2000s, defended the practice. "2 a.m. testing is one of the very effective ways to prevent peptide (EPO, hGH) and testosterone micro dosing," Vaughters wrote on social media. "If UCI had tested us in 2001 at 2 a.m.? We'd all have been suspended and saved the sport 25 years

of drama." **DOPING HISTORY** His comments carry particular weight given his own history with doping. Vaughters was a teammate of Lance Armstrong on the U.S. Postal Service team and later admitted using performance-enhancing drugs, including EPO, during his career. He subsequently testified in the U.S. Anti-Doping Agency's investigation into Armstrong, who was stripped of his seven Tour titles in 2012 after USADA concluded he ran what it called the most sophisticated doping program the sport had seen. Vaughters went on to found the team now known as Cannondale-EF, positioning it as an advocate for clean racing. **RIDERS' UNION RAISES CONCERNS** His remarks come as riders pushed back on the timing of Sunday's tests. Vingegaard, tested at 2 a.m., said the visit cost him roughly 40 minutes of sleep before a mountain stage on which he later crashed and broke his collarbone. Pogacar, tested at 5 a.m., said he managed only four hours of sleep. Stage winner Remco Evenepoel called the practice "inhuman." The International Testing Agency, which oversees doping controls for the UCI, said it was "conscious that night-time testing may be disruptive to riders' rest and recovery". However, it added, effective testing must, "in limited and justified circumstances," occur outside daytime hours.

Allegations of Illegal Money Collection at Srirampur Gate: UPPL Submits Memorandum to CM

Mizanur Rahman, Correspondent, Gossaigaon, July 21: Alleging that illegal money has been collected for a long time at the Srirampur Inter-State Check Gate, the United People's Party Liberal (UPPL) Central Committee on Monday submitted a memorandum to the Chief Minister of Assam through the Sub-Divisional Officer (Civil), Gossaigaon, demanding immediate action against the alleged practice. Separate memoranda were also submitted to the District Commissioner of Kokrajhar and the Superintendent of Police, Kokrajhar. According to the memorandum, the alleged il-

legal collection of money from goods-laden trucks entering Assam and the North-eastern states through the Srirampur Check Gate has reportedly been continuing since the tenure of the Bodoland Peoples' Front (BPF) government in the Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC). The party alleged that the illegal collection has increased transportation costs, ultimately leading to higher prices of essential commodities and placing an additional financial burden on consumers. The UPPL therefore demanded the immediate suspension of the alleged illegal collection at the Srirampur

Check Gate and called for strict legal action against those responsible. A delegation led by UPPL Central General Secretary (Administration) Raju Narzary submitted the memorandum to the Sub-Divisional Officer (Civil), Gossaigaon. Among those present during the programme were Wilson Hasda, MCLA of the Srirampur Territorial Constituency; Madhab Chandra Chetry, UPPL Central General Secretary (Organisation) and former MCLA; Aninda Basumatary, President of UPPL Gossaigaon District Committee; along with several other party leaders.

Contd. From Page 1 - - - - - President Droupadi Murmu...

between the two countries. The visit assumes special significance as India continues to strengthen its outreach to European nations through balanced and inclusive diplomacy based on mutual respect, shared democratic values and common aspirations for sustainable development and global peace. Moldova, strategically located between Romania and Ukraine, has emerged as an important partner in Eastern Europe, and India's engagement with the country reflects its broader vision of cultivating enduring friendships across diverse regions. During the high-level talks, the two Presidents discussed avenues to encourage greater business interaction, facilitate investment opportunities, promote technological collaboration and expand institutional exchanges between academic, scientific and research organisations. The leaders also exchanged views on regional and international developments of mutual concern, reaffirming their commitment to the principles of international law, peaceful dialogue, respect for sovereignty and multilateral cooperation. President Murmu's visit highlights India's willingness to work closely with friendly countries in addressing global challenges while contributing positively to international stability and development. The discussions also focused on increasing cooperation in innovation-driven sectors where India has achieved considerable progress, including digital public infrastructure, information technology, startup ecosystems, digital governance and skill development. India's globally recognised experience in digital transformation, financial inclusion and public service delivery offers significant opportunities for collaboration with Moldova as it pursues its own development priorities. Agriculture and food processing also figured prominently during the bilateral exchanges, with both countries recognising the importance of sharing best practices in modern farming techniques, irrigation, agricultural research, food security and sustainable rural development. Healthcare cooperation, including pharmaceutical collaboration, medical education and public health initiatives, was also identified as an area with promising prospects. India has consistently emerged as a trusted partner for affordable medicines and quality healthcare solutions, making this sector an important pillar of future bilateral engagement. Education and cultural exchanges received considerable attention during the discussions as both nations acknowledged the importance of strengthening people-to-people connections. Expanded academic partnerships, scholarships, student mobility programmes and exchanges between educational institutions are expected to contribute significantly to building long-term goodwill and mutual understanding between the citizens of India and Moldova. Cultural diplomacy remains another important dimension of India's international engagement, and the visit provides an opportunity to showcase India's rich civilisational heritage while promoting deeper appreciation of Moldovan history, traditions and culture. Following the bilateral and delegation-level meetings, President Murmu and President Maia Sandu are scheduled to address a joint press statement outlining the key outcomes of their discussions and reaffirming their commitment to elevating bilateral relations to a higher level. Such joint statements serve as an important diplomatic instrument, reflecting the shared vision and common priorities of the two governments while signalling future directions for cooperation. During her engagements in Chisinau, President Murmu will also pay homage at the iconic Țefan cel Mare Ți Sfânt Monument, one of Moldova's most revered national landmarks dedicated to the legendary medieval ruler Stephen the Great, who occupies a central place in the country's history and national identity. By laying a wreath at the monument, the President will honour Moldova's historical legacy and demonstrate India's respect for the country's cultural heritage and national traditions. Such symbolic gestures form an integral part of state visits and contribute to strengthening mutual respect and understanding between nations. The visit also reflects India's broader diplomatic philosophy of engaging partners of all sizes with equal respect while promoting inclusive global cooperation based on dialogue and shared interests. Under President Murmu's leadership, India's diplomatic engagements have continued to emphasise friendship, trust, development partnerships and cultural understanding, reinforcing the country's image as a responsible global partner committed to peaceful cooperation. India's relations with European countries have witnessed significant expansion in recent years, encompassing political dialogue, economic partnerships, technology cooperation, education, climate action, innovation and connectivity. The Moldova visit complements these wider efforts by bringing renewed attention to a relationship that holds substantial potential despite its relatively modest scale. Both countries have maintained cordial diplomatic ties characterised by mutual goodwill, support in international forums and growing cooperation in various sectors. President Murmu's visit is expected to encourage closer interaction between government agencies, business communities, educational institutions and civil society organisations, thereby laying the foundation for a more comprehensive and dynamic bilateral partnership. Enhanced trade and investment links are likely to emerge as an important focus area as businesses from both countries explore opportunities in sectors such as agriculture, pharmaceuticals, information technology, engineering, manufacturing, renewable energy and services. India's rapidly growing economy and technological capabilities complement Moldova's aspirations for economic modernisation and innovation-led growth, creating favourable conditions for deeper commercial engagement.

RPF of NFR Ensures Prompt...

at New Jalpaiguri Railway Station rendered immediate medical assistance to an ailing female passenger travelling by Train No. 15607 (Thiruvananthapuram Central - Silchar)Aronai Express. She was promptly shifted to the Railway Hospital at New Jalpaiguri by ambulance and was subsequently referred to a higher medical facility for specialized treatment. On the same day, RPF personnel at New Jalpaiguri Railway Station also extended medical assistance to another passenger travelling by Train No. 13174 (Sabroom - Sealdah) Kanchanjungha Express. The passenger was shifted to the Railway Hospital at New Jalpaiguri for further medical treatment after receiving immediate assistance at the station As part of these efforts, 12 passengers were provided medical assistance across NFR during the month of June 2026. Continuing this humanitarian service, 7 more passengers have been provided timely medical assistance during July 2026 (till date), reflecting the prompt response and dedication of RPF personnel in safeguarding passengers' well-being. Northeast Frontier Railway remains committed to ensuring a safe, secure and passenger-friendly travel experience. The RPF, in coordination with railway medical authorities and other departments, continues to respond swiftly to medical emergencies, reinforcing Indian Railways' commitment to passenger care and humanitarian service, informed by CPRO of NFR Kapinjal Kishore Sharma.

Contd. From Page 1 - - - - - Minister Pijush Hazarika...

the landmark scheme, envisioned by Chief Minister Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma, is aimed at empowering women from economically weaker and underprivileged sections of society by enabling them to build sustainable livelihoods and contribute actively to the economic development of Assam. He stated that welfare schemes such as the Mukhyamantri Mahila Udyamita Abhiyan (MMUA), Nijut Moina, and Orunodoi are transforming the lives of women by providing free educational support, seed capital for establishing small businesses, and direct financial assistance, thereby ensuring them a life of dignity, financial security, and self-reliance. Reiterating the State Government's commitment to inclusive development, Hazarika said that every section of society, irrespective of religion, caste or community, is being covered under various welfare initiatives without discrimination. He emphasised the importance of utilising the initial financial assistance of Rs 10,000 wisely so that beneficiaries can establish viable income-generating activities. The Minister urged all women beneficiaries to make effective use of the financial assistance for developing their own enterprises, enabling them to qualify for the subsequent phases of the scheme, under which they will receive additional financial assistance of Rs 25,000 and Rs 50,000. Highlighting the need for accelerating development in the Nagaon Parliamentary Constituency, Hazarika appealed to the people to continue supporting the present Central and State Governments so that rapid and comprehensive development can be achieved in infrastructure, education, healthcare and women empowerment. He also urged citizens to remain vigilant while electing their public representatives to ensure that the benefits of government initiatives reach the people effectively. It may be noted that the Nagaon Parliamentary Constituency became vacant after its former Congress Member of Parliament Pradyut Bordoloi resigned from the Congress, joined the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), and was elected from the Dispur Assembly Constituency in the last Assembly election. As a result, a by-election to the Nagaon Parliamentary seat has become inevitable. Political observers believe that the ruling party has intensified its efforts to wrest the minority-dominated Nagaon Parliamentary Constituency from the Congress in the forthcoming by-election. As part of this outreach, Minister Pijush Hazarika had also organised a similar mega programme in the minority-dominated Dhing Assembly Constituency on the previous day, where financial assistance under the Chief Minister's Mahila Udyamita Abhiyan (MMUA) was distributed to a large number of women beneficiaries. Both programmes held on Monday were attended by Barhampur MLA Jitu Goswami, Nagaon District Commissioner Devashish Sharma, along with several other distinguished dignitaries, senior government officials and public representatives.

Assam Legislative Assembly...

management arrangements proposed for each building. During the visit, Dibrugarh Capital Complex Development Authority Chairman and Dibrugarh Legislative Assembly constituency MLA Prasanta Phukan, Dibrugarh District Commissioner Bikram Kairi, Assam Legislative Assembly Secretary Rajiv Bhattacharya, along with senior officials of the PWD, were present. Later, speaking to local journalists at the proposed site of the Legislative Assembly campus, the Speaker said that the Assam Govt has already decided to establish Dibrugarh as the second capital of Assam. At the request of CM Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma, he visited the proposed site for the construction of the Legislative Assembly in the second capital and reviewed the project estimate, construction plans and other aspects of the project, besides overseeing the proposed development. He further stated that some additions have been suggested, keeping in mind the increased requirements that may arise in the future. He said that the C M who also holds the PWD portfolio, Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma, would take the final decision in this regard. He also said that due importance would be given to ensuring that the Legislative Assembly complex reflects the unique characteristics of Dibrugarh and that, when the Assembly is not in session, the complex can emerge as a major tourist attraction. He expressed hope that once the construction work is completed, a session of the current Sixteenth Assam Legislative Assembly could be held at the new campus.

Swift and Heroic Action by NDRF...

rising rapidly, leaving several locals stranded on higher ground. Realizing the gravity of the situation, the NDRF team launched a search and rescue operation at around 7:35 PM on July 19. During the rescue operation, the team heard desperate cries for help coming from a submerged house. Rushing to the spot, they found a young girl hanging precariously from a bamboo support under the roof. The floodwater had reached up to her neck, and her head was touching the ceiling. Displaying exceptional courage, quick decision-making, and professional skill, the team successfully rescued the girl safely. Simultaneously, the NDRF personnel spotted a man being swept away by the strong current, desperately holding onto a banana stem. Without wasting a moment, the rescue team pulled him out of the water alive. Following her rescue, the young girl informed the team that three other women were also trapped nearby, clinging to a banana tree in the strong current. Acting swiftly on this information, the team conducted a search in the designated area and successfully rescued all three women. One elderly woman among them was in a highly critical condition, suffering from hypothermia after being submerged in cold water for a prolonged period. The team rendered immediate first aid to everyone and safely transferred them to a designated relief camp for further medical care and shelter. Through timely information sharing, boundless courage, dedication to duty, and high professional competence, the NDRF team managed to save 5 precious lives from the devastating floods. This prompt and effective response by the Jorhat DDMA under the Jorhat District Administration and the NDRF prevented a major tragedy, once again proving the glorious legacy of the National Disaster Response Force.

3 Flood Relief Camps Set Up...

areas include Kalapani, Diju Valley Tea Estate and Lengteng Tea Estate, with around 732 people affected by the floods. Taking stock of the situation, Nagaon District Commissioner Devashish Sharma visited the flood-hit areas on Monday night and personally supervised the ongoing rescue and relief operations. During his visit, he assessed the extent of the damage, monitored the evacuation of affected residents and reviewed the relief measures being provided at the temporary shelter camps. The DC was accompanied by Kaliabor Sub-Divisional Commissioner Raj Baruah, the Circle Officer of Kaliabor Revenue Circle and several senior officials of the district administration. Acting on the DC's directions, a joint rescue operation was launched by teams of the State Disaster Response Force (SDRF) from both Nagaon and Kaliabor, along with personnel from the Fire and Emergency Services. The teams safely evacuated all affected residents and shifted them to designated relief camps. To accommodate the displaced families, the district administration has established three flood relief camps at Shalna Bapuji Primary School, 23 No. Diju Valley Primary School and Amguri Primary School. According to the District Information and Public Relations Officer, Bikash Sharma, all inmates of the relief camps are being provided with essential food supplies, drinking water, medical assistance and other necessary relief materials. Meanwhile, the District Disaster Management Authority (DDMA) has set up a 24-hour Control Room to monitor the flood situation and assist the public. Citizens requiring emergency assistance or wishing to report flood-related incidents may contact the toll-free helpline 1077 or the numbers 03672-238000, 236827 and 230177. The DDMA has also provided a WhatsApp helpline: 8720963477 for reporting emergencies and seeking assistance.

Dhekiajuli road-naming row...

Union (AASU), Bodo Sahitya Sabha and local citizens appeared before the magistrate. AJYCP central committee chief adviser Rana Pratap Barua, after recording his statement, said that a single road could not be named after two persons. He said the organisation would not accept any move that, according to it, undermined the honour of a martyr of the 1942 movement. Barua further said that if the road continued to be named after Dr Syama Prasad Mookerjee by disregarding the existing association with the martyr, nationalist organisations would launch a democratic movement with public support. Sonitpur district AASU general secretary Sankar Das said the organisation opposed any move to change the name of the road dedicated to martyr Ratan Kachari. He said AASU did not support the forcible imposition of another name on the road and warned that the organisation would resort to a democratic and non-violent agitation if the martyr's name was removed. A delegation of the Sonitpur District Bodo Sahitya Sabha also appeared before the magistrate and expressed concern over the controversy. The delegation urged the government and the administration to retain the road in the name of martyr Ratan Kachari. The issue has continued to generate reactions from various organisations in Dhekiajuli, with several groups demanding that the historical association of the road with the 1942 martyr be preserved.

Sivasagar District Poets' Association holds Lifetime Members' Ceremony Magazine "Kabya Gunjan" and Poetry Collection "Anubhavar Dalicha" Released

Khairuddin Ahmed, Staff Reporter
Sivasagar, July 21: The Sivasagar District Poets' Association organized the Lifetime Members' Ceremony of the Sivasagar district unit of the All Assam Poets' Association at Sivasagar Commerce College. The programme began with the lighting of the ceremonial lamp before the portrait of the association's founder, the "Poet of the Masses" Ram Gogoi, by noted



poet Bichitra Bora Bhuyan. The meeting was presided over by the association's Vice-President, Biju Borthakur, while the inaugural address was delivered by Haren Gogoi, former Central General Secretary and former Vice-President of the All Assam Poets' Association. In his speech, Haren Gogoi said that alongside writing poetry, building and sustaining a literary organization is a challenging responsibility. He noted that this difficult task had been initiated by Ram Gogoi. He emphasized that merely writing poetry is not enough; meaningful poetry requires extensive reading, study, and continuous practice. Referring to renowned poet Nilamani Phookan, he mentioned that the celebrated poet had once expressed regret over not being able to write what he considered a truly great poem. He also urged the younger generation to become familiar not only with the traditions and heritage of Assamese poetry but also with the works of international poets.

The programme, compered by the association's Secretary Pranjal Abir, who also explained the objectives of the event, featured poetry recitations by Punjan Barua, Ashrumoni Dutta Ghosh, Ruli Borgohain Gogoi, Sikha Burhagohain, Rupa Saikia, Puja Barua, Anamika Das, Bichitra Bora Bhuyan, Manju Gharphaliya Bora, Ditimoni Burhagohain, and Hareza Begum. Poet and singer Kalpana Gohain Gogoi also presented a musical performance. During the event, the district association's literary magazine "Kabya Gunjan" was officially released. The release programme was conducted by its editor, Haren Chandra Nath, and the magazine was unveiled by Brajen Das, former President of the Sivasagar District Poets' Association. On the same occasion, the poetry collection "Anubhavar Dalicha" by noted poet Hareza Begum was released by Mukul Nath, former President of the Sivasagar District Poets' Association. Meanwhile, several lifetime members expressed dissatisfaction over the reported dissolution of the Sivasagar District Poets' Association by what they described as an illegally constituted committee of the All Assam Poets' Association. Lifetime members Haren Chandra Nath, Haren Gogoi, Mukul Nath, Brajen Das, Ashrumoni Dutta Ghosh, Rupa Saikia, and others voiced deep concern over the formation of a parallel district committee based on only one branch. They stated that such actions had emotionally hurt those associated with the organization, which was founded on the ideals of Ram Gogoi. All lifetime members present at the ceremony were felicitated with special honours.

BITS Pilani Receives USD 1 Million Endowment from Alumna Revathi Advaiti and Jeevan Mulgund

Rajib Borgohain PILANI, 21st July 2026: Birla Institute of Technology and Science, Pilani, announced a landmark contribution of USD 1 million from its distinguished alumna, Revathi Advaiti, Chief Executive Officer of Flex, and her husband, Jeevan Mulgund, to establish a permanent scholarship endowment for deserving women students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds. A member of the BITS Pilani Class of 1990, Ms. Advaiti is an accomplished Fortune 500 business leader, and her husband, Jeevan Mulgund, is a manufacturing technology leader and investor. Through this endowment, the family seeks to ensure that financial circumstances do not prevent a talented young woman from receiving a BITS Pilani education.

Ms. Advaiti made the announcement while addressing the graduating class as the Chief Guest at Convocation 2026 at the Pilani campus. During her Convocation address, Ms. Advaiti spoke about her own journey to BITS Pilani. Through insights and episodes of her personal life and journey, she pointed out to the audience that being ready isn't a stage you achieve; one rather needs to decide that they are ready enough- to try, to finish and start again at the face of all odds. Speaking about the USD 1 Million Endowment, Revathi Advaiti and Jeevan Mulgund said, "We are naming this scholarship after our mothers, Visalam Swamy and Sucheta Mulgund, because everything we have been able to do began with them. Neither had an easy path, and both understood that educating a daughter changes the trajectory of an entire family. BITS Pilani gave one of us that chance, and we want to pass it on. Our hope is that every young woman who receives this scholarship knows that someone believed in her before she ever walked through the gates — and that she, in turn, will one

day open that same door for someone else."

Ms. Advaiti graduated with a bachelor's degree in Mechanical Engineering and was the only woman in her

tions of talented young women will benefit from her generosity. This strengthens our commitment to admitting the finest students, irrespective of their financial circumstances, and sets



Mechanical Engineering class. She has served as the Chief Executive Officer of Flex since 2019, leading the global manufacturing and supply chain solutions company across nearly 30 countries. She has been recognised several times in Fortune's Most Powerful Women in Business list and is a prominent advocate for the advancement of women across every field. She remains one of BITS Pilani's most celebrated alumnae. Speaking about how this endowment fund will inspire and support young female talent, Prof. V. Ramgopal Rao, Vice Chancellor, BITS Pilani, said, "Revathi Advaiti embodies everything that a BITS Pilani education seeks to nurture: ambition, resilience and a deep desire to create opportunities for others. By endowing scholarships in perpetuity, she is ensuring that genera-

a powerful example as we build an endowment worthy of the aspirations of our alumni and the institution."

Prof. Sudhir Kumar Barai, Director, BITS Pilani, Pilani Campus, said, "An endowed scholarship is among the most enduring gifts an alumna can make to her institution. It continues well beyond our lifetimes and quietly transforms one life after another. We are deeply grateful to Revathi for her generosity and for the inspiring example she has set for the entire BITS Pilani community."

Prof. Arya Kumar, Dean, Alumni Relations, BITS Pilani, said, "Contributions of this nature are catalytic. They strengthen the growing culture of giving among BITS Pilani alumni across the world and transform gratitude towards one's alma mater into permanent opportunities for future generations."

3 Day Summer Workshop Inaugurated at Sankardev Shishukunj

Guwahati, July 21: A three-day Summer Workshop covering music, acting, dance, drawing and other creative activities was inaugurated at Sankardev Shishukunj, Ambikagiri Nagar, an institution under Shishu Shiksha Samiti, Assam, affiliated with Vidya Bharati.



The workshop was formally inaugurated with the ceremonial lighting of the lamp by. Swapna Devi, Regional Coordinator of Vidya Bharati Alumni, Councillor, and an alumnus of Sankardev Shishukunj. In her inaugural address, she highlighted the importance of such workshops in nurturing the creativity and overall personality development of children.

According to Mukuteswar Goswami, Publicity Coordinator of Shishu Shiksha Samiti, Assam, the objectives of the workshop were explained by the Principal of Sankardev Shishukunj, Kamala Goswami. The programme was compered by Acharya Anamika Deka.

On the opening day, noted musician and Acharya of Sankardev Shishu Niketan, Maligaon, Mr. Mrinal Das, conducted the music session. Through his engaging and child-friendly teaching style, he introduced children between the ages of 3 and 8 years to a variety of children's songs. The enthusiastic participation of the young learners created a joyful and lively atmosphere throughout the campus. On the occasion, five Anganwadi Assistant Teachers from the local Anganwadi Centre were felicitated. More than 50 students along with their parents attended the programme.

The first day's activities of the Summer Workshop, organised under the initiative of Acharya Bharati, concluded successfully.

Social activist Mathura Mohan Deka dies

Paban Kumar Kalita, Correspondent from Sipajhar, July 21: Prominent social activist Mathura Mohan Deka breathed his last at his Debananda village residence on July 21. He was 82 and left behind three son, three daughter - in - law, one daughter and a host of grand child. Deka had retired from Forest Department of Government of Assam in 2002. Apart from being the vice president of Purnananda Memorial Rural Musium he was the former president of Doulguri Vishnu Mandir management committee, Doulguri Jnan Uday Puthibharal and Jnanjyoti Sangha, School Management and Development Committee of Doulguri LP School, Doulguri Anchalik Bhagavat Santha , Hazarikapara branch of Undivided Darrang Zila Kalita Jana Gosthi Sanmilan, former secretary of Doulguri Anchalik Senior Citizens Association and member of Hazarikapara branch of Assam Sahitya Sabha and advisor of pre centinary celebration committee of Swatmadar Yuvak Sangha. His death has been widely mourned in the entire locality. M.L.A, Sipajhar Legislative Assembly Constituency Dr Paramananda Rajbanshi have expressed profound grief over his demise and also expressed heartfelt condolences to the bereaved family.



Flood affected villagers dry their belongs at Jorhat District of Assam on July 21, 2026 . Photo by - Rupjyoti Sarmah

Melody Web Music Academy of Dibrugarh Organizes Captivating Cultural Programme as Part of Modern and Old Assamese Songs Workshop: Late Artists Remembered

M Hashim Ali correspondent
Dibrugarh, July 21: 'Melody Web Music Academy', one of the prominent music education institutions located at Kacharibari in Dibrugarh, organized a special

Bhawan auditorium. At the beginning of the programme, ceremonial lamps were lit before the portraits of the late artists Bhupen Hazarika, Zubeen Garg, Syed Sadulla, flautist Upen

Sangha, singer Arun Hazarika, and well-wishers Asha Shah, Rajashree Pal and Manoj Sonowal were also present. The wives of the late artists who donated prizes for the modern



music workshop on Borgeet as well as songs by some of Assam's renowned musicians and composers, namely Rituparna Sarma, Dr. Birendra Nath Dutta and lyricist Parbati Prasad Barua. The workshop, which was attended by more than 30 students from different parts of the state, commenced on its first day with the lighting of the ceremonial lamp by noted composer and lyricist Hiren Gogoi. The trainers at the workshop were radio artist Santana Barua, who conducted training on the songs of Parbati Prasad Barua; Gopa Konwar, who trained the participants in Borgeet and Dolly Gogoi Barua, who conducted training on the songs of Dr. Birendra Nath Dutta and Rituparna Sarma. Along with a modern Assamese song competition, an award distribution ceremony and a cultural programme were also organized in the evening. The programme, jointly managed by the academy's president Nijara Deka and Meenakshi Duwara, was held at the Lakhminath Bezbaroa

Phangchu, instrumentalist Bhabesh Goswami, Utpal Deuri and singer Bipul Phukan as a mark of remembrance and tribute. The distinguished guests present on the occasion included noted musician Prashanta Bordoloi, singer and cultural activist Suresh Hatimuria, Chandan Pathak, social worker and retired professor Aradhana Dutta, and singer Syeda Juri Rahman. Thereafter, noted musician Prashanta Bordoloi formally inaugurated the programme and delivered his greetings. Retired professor Aradhana Dutta, Senior journalist Ratan Hazarika, singer Syeda Juri Rahman, well-wisher Pranali Phukan and several other dignitaries also extended their best wishes. Trainers Dolly Gogoi Barua and Suresh Hatimuria, along with Bhuban Gogoi, also performed individual songs. In the captivating programme, besides the aforementioned guests, cultural activist Bakul Das, dancer Ruby Gogoi Handique, Manoj Barua, president of the Jeuti Moral

song competition Lina Gogoi Goswami, wife of late Bhabesh Goswami; Binapani Phangchu, wife of late Upen Phangchu; Banti Deuri, wife of late Utpal Deuri and Pranali Phukan, wife of the late Bipul Phukan—were felicitated with traditional Assamese gamosas. Furthermore, each of the trainers was felicitated with a certificate of appreciation and a gamosa. The organization's chief adviser, Suresh Hatimuria, was also offered a token of appreciation. Subsequently, the trained students enthralled the audience by performing several selected evergreen songs by Zubeen Garg, Birendra Nath Dutta and Rituparna Sharma as a group. Meanwhile, the young-generation artists Jon Das, Elisha Changmai and Mansmita Borpatra Gohain each performed a modern Assamese song, adding vibrancy to the evening. During the programme, the winners of the music competition were presented with their prizes by the distinguished guests present on the occasion.