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Brief Post

Green Duty Call

New Delhi: Calling upon the next generation of Indian Forest Service (IFS) officers to become guardians of the nation's ecological future, President Droupadi Murmu underscored the growing significance of environmental stewardship in an era marked by climate change, biodiversity decline and increasing developmental pressures. Addressing two batches of Indian Forest Service officer trainees at the Rashtrapati Bhavan Cultural Centre, the President said the responsibility entrusted to forest officers extends far beyond administrative duties, placing them at the forefront of safeguarding India's invaluable natural heritage while contributing to global efforts for environmental sustainability. Her address highlighted the need for a balanced approach that harmonises conservation with development, protects the interests of forest-dependent communities, and strengthens public participation in ecological restoration. The interaction reflected the country's broader commitment to sustainable development and reaffirmed the critical role of the Indian Forest Service in shaping a greener future as India advances toward its long-term vision of becoming a developed nation by 2047.

CM Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma Visits Flood-affected areas in Sivasagar and Charaideo

Khairuddin Ahmed, Staff Reporter, Sivasagar, July 22: Assam Chief Minister Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma today visited the flood-affected districts of Sivasagar and Charaideo to assess the severe flood situation firsthand. He landed at temporary helipads set up at Santak Tea Estate and the Boarding Playground in Sivasagar town before interacting with flood-hit residents and expressing concern over their hardships.

Later in the afternoon, the Chief Minister visited the temporary relief camp established at Phukan Nagar Primary School No. 398

in Sivasagar, where he met dis-



placed families and enquired about their condition. Speaking to the media, Dr. Sarma said,

"We stand with the people and

people of Charaideo, Nazira, and Sivasagar. I have already held discussions with the concerned officials. If there are any shortcomings, we will address them immediately. I will also discuss the situation with the Deputy Commissioner of Sivasagar."

He added that MLA Akhil Gogoi had informed him about the need for additional SDRF and NDRF personnel, and the government had al-

ready made arrangements to deploy them.

The Chief Minister further stated, "The Assam Government has sufficient funds available. We have not yet exhausted the existing allocation. Once the expenditure is assessed, we will know whether additional funds are required. If necessary, we will seek assistance from the Central Government." Referring to reports of a cloudburst in Nagaland, Dr. Sarma said that the Nagaland Government had informed Assam about the incident and that the matter would be discussed with the neighbouring state after the immediate crisis subsides. On reports

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ALA discussed Flood in Assam, Embankment

Staff Reporter, Guwahati, July 22: The present flood havoc mainly in Upper Assam and breaking of embankment were discussed in the House during the Budget Session of the 16th Assam Legislative Assembly (ALA) on 22nd of July. The Opposition Leader Waged Ali Choudhury, Congress MLAs Baby Begum, Jakir Hussain Sikdar, Jubeir Anam, BJP MLAs Bijoy Kr Gupta and Bhupen Rai etc raised the questions about

the flood havoc in Assam and discussed the critical conditions of the present flood havoc. The Congress MLA Dr. Jaiprakash Das requested the Speaker to allow the team of MLAs for visiting the flood effected areas and to take proper measurements for the flood effected areas, people and concern others. Ministers of Assam Pijush Hajarika, Atul Bora etc answered the questions put by the MLAs.

The reports of departmentally related standing committees were also presented in the House of ALA. Rupak Sarmah, Chairperson presented the reports of the departments under the standing committee on development (A) in respect of Grant Nos. 55, 62, 12, 21, 56, 57, 31, 32, 44, 73, 63 and 81.

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Nagaon DC Visit Entrepreneurship Development Training Programme at Nagaon Girls' College

Safiqur Rahman, Staff Reporter, Nagaon, July 22: Nagaon District Commissioner Devashish Sharma on Wednesday visited the Entrepreneurship Development Programme (EDP) being conducted at Nagaon Girls' College under the Chief Minister's Atmanirbhar Asom Abhiyan



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First Board of Management of AVFU

Guwahati, July 22: The first Board of Management (BoM) of



Assam Veterinary and Fishery University (AVFU) was held on 22th July, 2026 at the university headquarter, Khanapara, under the Chairmanship of Prof. Niranjana Kalita, Hon'ble Vice Chancellor, AVFU. On behalf of the university,

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Cachar gears up for grand 80th Independence Day celebrations, DSA Ground to host main event

Silchar, July 22: Cachar has



begun preparations for the 80th Independence Day celebrations, with the district administration drawing up a detailed programme covering ceremo-

nial events, security arrange-

ments, cultural performances and community outreach programmes across the district. The preparatory meeting was chaired by Cachar District

Commissioner Rahul Kumar Gupta, IAS on Tuesday at the new conference hall of DC's office here on Tuesday. The meeting was attended by elected representatives, senior civil and police officials, heads of government departments, representatives of the armed forces, educational institutions, business organisations, NGOs and other stakeholders.

At the outset, the District Commissioner reviewed last year's programme and invited suggestions from the participants before finalising this year's schedule. Additional District Commissioner Dhrubajyoti Pathak, ACS presented the proceedings

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Restoration Work of the Flood Effected Sections Going on in Full Swing

Maligaon, July 22: Owing to heavy rainfall in the upstream catchment areas, overflowing water of theDikhow River flooded in theSimaluguri town station and surrounding areas in Sibsagar district under the Tinsukia Division of Northeast Frontier Railway. The overflow of water has affected parts of the Simaluguri station yard,



railway colony and has also overtopped the railway track in the affected sections.

'Ankurita Asom' Initiative Launched to Revive Indigenous Rice Heritage

Guwahati, July 22: The 'Ankurita Asom' initiative has been launched with a focused mission to preserve, promote, and add value to the indigenous rice varieties of Assam.

Launched today (22 July 2026) by 'Ankurita Asom', the initiative seeks to conserve traditional paddy varieties, strengthen farmers' capacities, and ensure the sustainable use of this rich agricultural heritage for future generations. It also aims to unlock the commercial



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Assam’s Fishermen Population Highlights Regional Disparities and Needs

Guwahati: India's fishermen population, as reported by the Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry, and Dairying, stands at a robust 2,80,63,538, with Assam contributing significantly to this national tally, boasting a fishermen population of 25,24,106. This figure, revealed by Minister Rajiv Ranjan Singh alias Lalan Singh in a written reply in the Rajya Sabha on December 11, 2024, sheds light on the prominent role Assam plays in the nation’s fisheries sector, despite being landlocked. The data compiled in consultation with States and Union Territories (UTs) outlines the state-wise distribution of fishermen, showing that Assam's fishermen population is the result of its extensive river systems and reliance on inland fishing, a notable contrast to the coastal regions, where marine fishing plays a dominant role. The detailed state-wise breakdown indicates that the largest fishermen populations are found in Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, and West Bengal, with Bihar alone reporting 60,27,375, while Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal follow with 39,00,005 and 32,36,261, respectively. In comparison, coastal states like Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Maharashtra, and Andhra Pradesh contribute substantial figures, with Tamil Nadu accounting for 12,83,751 and Andhra Pradesh 14,96,688. However, despite Assam being geographically distant from the coast, it stands as a significant contributor to the nation's fishing community, thanks to its rivers and vast inland water bodies, such as the Brahmaputra, which provide the ideal environment for the state's flourishing fishing industry. The report also highlights the Marine Fishing Regulation Acts (MFRAs) that coastal states and UTs have enforced to regulate fishing activities within their territorial waters up to 12 nautical miles, ensuring that mechanized fishing vessels are kept out of zones reserved for traditional fishermen using non-motorized and motorized boats. For instance, Gujarat has set aside zones up to nine nautical miles, while Goa restricts mechanized fishing to 2.7 nautical miles, with similar regulations in place across other coastal states such as Tamil Nadu and Odisha. While Assam, due to its lack of a coastline, does not face such marine-based regulations, it does rely heavily on riverine fishing regulations, which are tailored to protect the interests of traditional inland fishermen who form the backbone of the state's fishing industry. These regulations are designed to maintain balance in local ecosystems, prevent overfishing, and ensure the sustainability of fish stocks for future generations. Assam’s inland fishing sector is distinct, yet equally vital in terms of its contributions to the state's economy, food security, and cultural heritage. While the state’s fishermen population may not rival the coastal giants in sheer numbers, the fishing industry in Assam is an essential part of the state's agrarian-based economy, offering livelihoods to a large segment of the rural population. Furthermore, the state’s river systems are particularly important to the livelihoods of fishermen in regions like Barpeta, Kamrup, and Dhemaji, where the fertile floodplains of the Brahmaputra provide abundant fish resources. The inclusion of Assam’s fishermen population in the national tally highlights the need for region-specific policies that cater to the unique challenges faced by inland fishermen. These challenges include restricted access to modern fishing technologies, dependence on traditional fishing methods, and vulnerability to environmental changes such as floods, erosion, and pollution. For Assam’s fishing communities, these factors mean that targeted interventions—such as increased access to sustainable fishing gear, improved market linkages, and community-based conservation efforts—are crucial for ensuring long-term sustainability and resilience. In terms of national policy, the government has been making strides to promote inclusive growth within the fisheries sector, with programs such as the Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana (PMMSY) playing a key role in modernizing the fishing industry while ensuring inclusivity. These initiatives are designed to empower fishermen in Assam and other states, particularly through subsidies for modernizing equipment, training in sustainable fishing practices, and providing access to better infrastructure and markets. Despite these advancements, challenges remain, particularly in addressing the problem of overfishing and the depletion of fish stocks in Assam’s rivers. As Assam is largely dependent on freshwater fish, conservation of aquatic biodiversity is critical. The state has seen instances of environmental degradation due to unregulated fishing practices, pollu-

tion, and encroachments on water bodies. The government must therefore implement more stringent monitoring and enforcement mechanisms to safeguard Assam’s natural resources. Additionally, the role of women in Assam’s fisheries sector is noteworthy, as women are deeply involved in processing, marketing, and managing inland fishing operations. Policies aimed at empowering women in these areas will be crucial for promoting gender equality and ensuring that women’s contributions to the sector are fully recognized. While the state’s fishing communities face a range of challenges, they also present numerous opportunities for innovation and growth. For instance, Assam has the potential to expand its aquaculture industry, which could provide a sustainable alternative to wild-caught fish. This shift would not only contribute to the state’s food security but also reduce the pressure on wild fish stocks. Similarly, the promotion of eco-friendly fishing gear, the diversification of income sources for fishermen, and the development of value-added products such as smoked fish or fish-based snacks could open new markets and strengthen Assam’s position in the national fisheries industry. The state’s proximity to the North-East region also offers opportunities for cross-border trade, particularly with neighboring countries such as Bangladesh and Myanmar. To fully capitalize on these opportunities, the state needs to improve its connectivity and infrastructure for fisheries exports, including cold storage and transportation facilities, which would enhance the quality and shelf life of its fish products. Furthermore, the recognition of Assam’s fishermen population in the larger context of India’s fisheries sector provides an important opportunity for stakeholders to reflect on the unique characteristics of inland fishing and the pressing need for policies that reflect these realities. Ensuring the welfare of Assam’s fishermen requires collaboration between the central and state governments, local bodies, and civil society organizations. With appropriate investments, regulatory measures, and community-driven initiatives, Assam’s fishing communities can thrive in a rapidly changing world. In conclusion, while the challenges facing Assam’s fishermen are distinct from those of coastal states, the government’s commitment to sustainable fishing practices, the protection of traditional livelihoods, and the empowerment of local communities is critical in shaping the future of Assam’s fisheries sector. By addressing the specific needs of inland fishermen, promoting eco-friendly practices, and enhancing market access, Assam can continue to develop as a sustainable and resilient fisheries hub in the country. The growing recognition of the state's fishermen population not only highlights the importance of inland fishing but also reflects the government’s broader goals of promoting inclusive growth, poverty reduction, and environmental stewardship across the nation. This comprehensive approach will ensure that Assam’s fisheries sector remains a vital contributor to the state’s economy and the welfare of its people. Moreover, the government’s focus on regional disparities within the fisheries sector, as evidenced by the population data of fishermen, calls for an even more localized and tailored approach to development. For Assam, this means creating policies that cater to the distinctive needs of inland fishing, as opposed to the more widely recognized coastal fishing practices. The state’s inland water bodies, including the mighty Brahmaputra River, its tributaries, and wetlands, support a thriving fishery ecosystem, yet face increasing pressure from over-exploitation, pollution, and invasive species. Strengthening management practices and investing in the conservation of these freshwater ecosystems will be essential for maintaining the delicate balance between economic growth and ecological sustainability. Assam’s fishermen population is integral not only to the state’s economy but also to its rich cultural heritage. The tradition of fishing in Assam, rooted in the indigenous knowledge of the rivers and wetlands, is more than just a livelihood—it's a way of life. As such, policies that prioritize the preservation of traditional fishing methods while promoting modern and sustainable practices will go a long way in protecting the state’s unique cultural identity. The role of traditional fishing practices, which often use non-mechanized boats and eco-friendly techniques, aligns with the government's broader vision for sustainable fisheries management. These methods not only ensure the sustainability of fish stocks but also uphold the

cultural integrity of Assam’s fishing communities. Furthermore, the state's fishermen face significant challenges related to market access, infrastructure, and post-harvest losses. Poor storage facilities, inadequate transportation networks, and limited access to markets restrict the full potential of Assam’s fishing sector. The state’s fisheries industry requires urgent attention in terms of infrastructure development, including modernizing fish markets, building cold storage facilities, and enhancing transportation systems to connect rural fishermen to urban markets more efficiently. The government’s initiatives, such as the PMMSY, are poised to address these issues by providing financial support for infrastructure improvements, facilitating access to new markets, and incentivizing the adoption of new technologies. Additionally, there is an urgent need for skill development programs that equip Assam’s fishermen with the necessary knowledge and expertise to tackle modern challenges. This includes training in sustainable fishing techniques, advanced aquaculture practices, and business skills for marketing and selling fish products. Educating the next generation of fishermen in Assam about the importance of conservation, biodiversity, and sustainable practices will be key to ensuring the future of the sector. As climate change accelerates, affecting water levels, fish habitats, and biodiversity, it will be crucial for Assam's fishermen to adapt to these changes. This requires not only training and education but also a robust system of support from the government and local agencies. In terms of women’s empowerment, it is essential to recognize the critical role women play in Assam’s fisheries sector, especially in post-harvest activities such as fish processing, marketing, and retail. Women in Assam are also key players in maintaining the local fishing culture, passing down knowledge about traditional practices and fish species. Ensuring that women have equal access to resources, training, and decision-making processes within the fishing sector will promote gender equality and drive the state’s fisheries industry forward. Gender-responsive policies, such as financial support for women-led fishing enterprises and the provision of platforms for women to engage in policy discussions, will go a long way in fostering a more inclusive and equitable fishing community in Assam. Looking ahead, Assam’s fisheries sector holds immense potential for growth, but this potential can only be realized through the careful integration of environmental, economic, and social considerations. As the state’s population of fishermen continues to grow, there is an increasing need for sustainable practices, improved infrastructure, and better policy coordination. The government must focus on strengthening community-based fisheries management systems, encouraging the adoption of best practices in aquaculture, and expanding market opportunities for Assam’s fishermen. Moreover, it is essential for Assam to adopt a holistic approach to fisheries management that encompasses both conservation and economic development. While the protection of fish stocks and aquatic ecosystems is crucial, so too is the need to create economic opportunities for local communities that depend on these resources for their livelihoods. Through a combination of regulatory frameworks, community-based conservation efforts, and innovative solutions such as aquaponics, integrated farming, and fish processing industries, Assam can not only secure the livelihoods of its fishermen but also boost its economy and food security. Assam’s fishermen population, though smaller in comparison to the coastal states, plays an indispensable role in the state’s economy and cultural fabric. The state’s reliance on riverine fishing, coupled with the government’s efforts to regulate and modernize the fisheries sector, presents both challenges and opportunities. By focusing on sustainable practices, infrastructure development, skill enhancement, and gender equality, Assam can develop a thriving and resilient fisheries sector that benefits not just its fishermen, but the wider community. With the implementation of policies like the Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana and the growing recognition of the unique challenges faced by inland fishermen, Assam has the potential to emerge as a leader in sustainable fisheries management in India. The future of Assam’s fisheries sector lies in striking a balance between tradition and innovation, ensuring that the state’s fishing communities are not only supported but empowered to thrive in an ever-changing world.

PMMSY scheme transforms Assam's Fisheries Sector

Guwahati: In a significant boost to the fisheries sector in Assam, the Department of Fisheries, under the Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying, has approved substantial development projects as part of the ambitious Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana (PMMSY). With a total outlay of Rs. 20,050 crore for a five-year period from FY 2020-21 to FY 2024-25, the PMMSY scheme aims to revolutionize the sector by improving fish production, reducing post-harvest losses, boosting exports, and creating millions of employment opportunities. As of FY 2024-25, proposals worth Rs. 20,864.29 crore have been approved across various states and Union Territories, including Assam, with a central share of Rs. 8,871.45 crore, according to the Annual Action Plans submitted by the states. Assam, which is among the key beneficiaries, has seen an allocation of Rs. 11,021.90 lakh in FY 2020-21, with Rs. 8,346.61 lakh sanctioned for the current financial year (2024-25). These funds are set to strengthen Assam's fisheries infrastructure, bolster aquaculture productivity, and provide sustainable livelihood opportunities to local communities, especially along the state's extensive riverine coastline. One of the prominent initiatives under the PMMSY is the identification of 100 coastal fishermen villages nationwide as Climate Resilient Coastal Fishermen Villages (CRCFVs), a move that holds particular importance for Assam's vulnerable coastal areas. This initiative focuses on building resilient infrastructure such as fish drying platforms, ice plants, cold storage units, and fish markets to ensure smooth post-harvest activities and mitigate the impacts of climate change. Assam’s fishery sector is set to benefit from these projects, which will diversify livelihood options for local fishermen, with seaweed farming, ornamental fish farming, and other sustainable aquaculture activities being incorporated into the development plan. The PMMSY scheme also targets significant increases in fish production, with a goal to raise output by 70 lakh metric tonnes by 2024-25, increase aquaculture productivity from the national average of 3 tonnes per hectare to 5 tonnes per hectare, and reduce post-harvest losses from 25% to around 10%. The expected outcomes of the PMMSY include the generation of approximately 55 lakh direct and indirect employment opportunities across India, which will be crucial in regions like Assam, where the fishing community plays a vital role in the local economy. The PMMSY scheme is also focused on raising per capita fish consumption, aiming to increase the national average from 5-6 kg to 12 kg by 2024-25. With the record fish production of 175.45 lakh tonnes in FY 2022-23, up from 141.64 lakh tonnes in FY 2019-20, and a significant increase in fisheries exports, which grew from Rs. 46,662.85 crore in FY 2019-20 to Rs. 60,524.89 crore in FY 2023-24, the sector is on an upward trajectory, which is expected to have positive spillover effects for Assam’s fisheries economy. The state is also contributing to the national growth in aquaculture productivity, which has risen to 4.7 tonnes per hectare, while post-harvest losses have been cut to 10-15%. As part of its commitment to promoting sustainable practices, the Ministry of Fisheries has made considerable investments in capacity building, with training programs designed to equip local fishers in Assam and other states with the necessary skills to adopt modern fishing techniques, sustainable aquaculture practices, and climate-resilient technologies. The PMMSY initiative is also stimulating private sector participation, encouraging entrepreneurial ventures in the fisheries sector, and contributing to the economic empowerment of the local fishing community. In Assam, the focus has been on improving the socio-economic conditions of fishers, ensuring they have access to modern resources, infrastructure, and technology, which will directly improve their standard of living. A particular emphasis has been placed on enhancing fisheries-related infrastructure, which will reduce the costs and inefficiencies traditionally associated with fishing operations. With better cold storage facilities, ice plants, and improved fishing markets, the state’s fishers will benefit from an improved value chain, resulting in higher profit-

ability. The government is closely monitoring the progress of the PMMSY, working in collaboration with states and Union Territories to ensure that the funds are utilized effectively for the development of fisheries-related infrastructure, technology, and sustainable livelihood projects. Assam, which has a long history of traditional fishing, is now on the verge of modernizing its fisheries sector through these transformative initiatives. The identification of CRCFVs, which includes regions affected by climate change, will go a long way in boosting the resilience of Assam's coastal villages. The vulnerability of these areas to extreme weather events, including floods and rising sea levels, has necessitated these targeted interventions. By building climate-resilient infrastructure and diversifying income sources, the PMMSY will enhance the long-term sustainability of the fishing industry in Assam. A key part of the PMMSY’s success lies in the multifaceted approach that includes strengthening the infrastructure, promoting sustainable aquaculture practices, and diversifying livelihoods through skill-building and entrepreneurial ventures. With continued investment, technological advancements, and a focus on climate-resilience, the fisheries sector in Assam is poised for significant growth. As the PMMSY continues to make strides toward its goals, the people of Assam can expect a more robust, sustainable, and resilient fishing industry, offering enhanced employment opportunities and contributing to the state's economic growth. The state’s fisheries sector will not only witness improved productivity and sustainability but will also become a crucial player in India’s broader vision of becoming a global leader in fisheries production and exports. The allocation of funds, the identification of CRCFVs, and the promotion of private investments in the sector are all part of a long-term strategy to transform Assam’s fisheries landscape. In the coming years, Assam is expected to see further improvements in its fisheries infrastructure, with modern facilities and technologies making the industry more profitable and sustainable. With the PMMSY scheme, Assam is moving toward a future where its fisheries sector is thriving, resilient to climate change, and providing stable livelihoods for generations to come. The positive outcomes of the Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana (PMMSY) in Assam will also contribute to broader national goals, such as enhancing food security, increasing rural incomes, and fostering economic growth in coastal and rural communities. The emphasis on reducing post-harvest losses is particularly crucial for Assam, where fish preservation and transportation challenges have historically hindered profitability. The creation of cold storage units, ice plants, and fish drying platforms, all part of the PMMSY initiatives, will significantly reduce spoilage and improve the quality of fish products, enabling Assam's fishers to access new markets and increase their income. In addition to the infrastructural improvements, the focus on sustainability is transforming the way aquaculture is practiced in the state. By promoting sustainable practices such as seaweed farming and ornamental fish farming, the PMMSY is diversifying the income streams of fishers, offering them alternatives to traditional fishing and reducing pressure on aquatic resources. These initiatives are especially vital in a state like Assam, which is home to a large number of rivers, wetlands, and other aquatic ecosystems that support fish farming. The adoption of climate-resilient aquaculture practices, such as the use of eco-friendly feeds and low-impact technologies, is expected to mitigate the effects of climate change, ensuring the long-term health of Assam’s

transportation, logistics, and retail, further boosting the state’s economic outlook. With the ongoing implementation of PMMSY, the Department of Fisheries is also closely monitoring the progress of various initiatives to ensure they

AFFIDAVIT

I,Sabikun Nihar date of birth-16-03-2006, D/ O. Jakir Hussain, R/ O.Vill-Brahma Beel, P. O. M o w a m a r i , 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, 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

meet the targets outlined in the scheme.

AFFIDAVIT

I, Hafiz 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 “Hafiz 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 Habij Uddin, S/O. Md. Rahmat Ali" instead of “Hafiz Uddin. S/O. RahmatAli”. This is true.

That,as a matter of fact “Hafiz Uddin. S/O. Rahmat Ali”and “Mr. Hafiz 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 “Hafiz Uddin”and “Mr Habij Uddin”is the name of same and one person.This is true.

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

Thums Up Accelerates India's Biking Culture with the Return of ThunderWheels®, Featuring Jasprit Bumrah

Guwahati: Thums Up, Coca-Cola India's iconic billion-dollar homegrown brand, is revving up India's biking culture with the return of



ThunderWheels®, its flagship biking platform. Fronted by cricketing icon Jasprit Bumrah, the campaign marks a renewed commitment to champion biking culture in India, inviting the next generation of riders to embrace the thrill, and freedom that defines the open road. Driving the campaign is an action-packed brand film featuring Bumrah, bringing alive the

toofani world of ThunderWheels, challenging every aspiring rider to chase experiences that are bold, thrilling and unapologetically

Toofani. More than a campaign, ThunderWheels is a gateway into the world of biking, designed to bring together enthusiasts, creators and aspiring riders through immersive experiences, community engagement and opportunities that celebrate India's growing biking culture. As part of the campaign, specially marked Thums Up packs be-

come the gateway to unlock the Toofani biking experience. Consumers can scan the pack to enter the world of ThunderWheels and stand a chance to win exclusive biking rewards, including the coveted ThunderWheels bike through a lucky draw, making every pack an invitation to step into the world of biking. Sumeli Chatterjee, Category Head – Sparkling Flavours, Coca-Cola India and South-West Asia, said: "At Thums Up, our signature strong taste and high fizz represent a bold, adventurous spirit that has defined the brand for generations. Biking is more than a passion point for us; it's a natural expression of the Toofani spirit that drives everything we do. In its third year, ThunderWheels 3.0 brings riders closer to unforgettable experiences, stronger communities, and the thrill of the riding. We hope it inspires a new generation of young Indians to discover the joy of riding and live the Toofani spirit with every ride." Beyond the film, ThunderWheels will spark conversations across digital and social platforms by encouraging biking enthusiasts from across the country to share their own riding stories, adventures and passion, building one of India's largest celebrations of biking culture. Through ThunderWheels, Thums Up continues to build on its Toofani legacy, celebrate and experience the exhilarating world of biking, one ride at a time.

India’s auto sector likely to see operating revenue growth of 8 pc in FY27: Report

New Delhi: India’s auto and auto ancillaries sector is expected to see operating revenue to grow by around 8 per cent in FY27, a report said on Wednesday. The report from Brickwork Ratings said the sector is entering a new investment cycle with Rs 703 billion of projects scheduled for commissioning between FY27 and FY29. The investments are supported by a pipeline of 184 projects worth Rs 4.76 trillion and 70 projects already under implementation. The investment momentum is backed by Production Linked Incentive schemes, FAME III incentives and sustained capacity expansion by original equipment manufacturers and Tier I suppliers. The ratings agency expects the sector to maintain a stable credit outlook through FY27. Strong domestic demand, rising exports

and prudent balance-sheet management continue to underpin the industry’s resilience, the report said. It forecasted EBITDA margins to improve slightly to about 14 per cent in FY27 from roughly 13 per cent in FY26. “The sector’s leverage profile is expected to improve further, supported by internal accrual-led funding. Debt servicing is also expected to remain strong, reinforcing the sector’s stable credit outlook despite ongoing investments in capacity expansion and electrification,” it said. "India's auto and auto ancillaries industry is transitioning from a volume-driven market to a technology-led manufacturing ecosystem. Policy incentives, localisation initiatives and expanding export opportunities are encouraging long-term investments despite elevated

capex requirements for electrification," said Niraj Rathi, Senior Director – Ratings, Brickwork Ratings. Healthy balance sheets and strong internal accruals should enable most organised players to navigate this transition while maintaining stable credit profiles, Rathi added. India is estimated to have recorded 30.2 million domestic vehicle sales and 7.1 million vehicle exports in FY26, while EV penetration is estimated to have reached 8.6 per cent in FY26, up sharply from 0.8 per cent in FY20. The country’s expanding supplier ecosystem, comprising over 40,000 component manufacturers, continues to benefit from strong SUV demand, accelerating EV adoption and improving export competitiveness across passenger vehicles and two-wheelers.

Maruti Suzuki India to hike car prices by up to Rs 30,000

New Delhi: Maruti Suzuki India on Tuesday announced that it will increase the prices of its passenger vehicles by up to Rs 30,000 from August 2026, citing a sustained rise in input costs and persistent inflationary pressures. In a regulatory filing with the BSE, the country's largest carmaker said the price revision has become necessary due to the continuous sustained increase in input costs, despite the company's efforts to offset higher expenses through cost-reduction initiatives. “In view of the continuous sustained increase in input costs, the company has decided to increase the prices of its models across its portfolio by up to Rs 30,000. This increase in prices would come into effect in August 2026,” the carmaker noted. Maruti Suzuki India said it had been taking measures over the past several months to absorb the impact of rising costs. However, with inflationary pressures remaining elevated and the overall cost environment continuing to be

unfavourable, the company has decided to pass on a part of the increased costs to customers. The automaker said it remains committed to keeping the impact on customers to the minimum possible extent, even as it implements the price revision. “For the past few months, the company has been making continuous efforts to mitigate the cost impact to the extent possible through cost reduction measures. However, with inflationary burdens now at elevated levels and the adverse cost environment continuing, the company is constrained to pass on a portion of the increased costs to the market, while continuing to ensure that the impact on customers is kept to the minimum extent possible,” it added in its filing. While announcing the increase of up to Rs 30,000, Maruti Suzuki did not specify

the revised prices for individual models. It



said the quantum of the hike will vary depending on the model. “The exact quantum of change will vary from model to model,” Maruti Suzuki India explained.

Indian Railways records sharp decline in accidents, safety budget hiked 3-fold

New Delhi : There has been a sharp decline in train accidents in the country over the last 12 years as a result of the high priority being accorded to safety on Indian Railways. The annual budgetary allocation for safety has shot up more than three-fold from Rs 39,200 crore in 2013-14 to Rs 1,20,389 crore in 2026-27, the Centre told the Parliament on Wednesday. The number of "consequential accidents" came down from 135 in 2014-15 to 16 in 2025-26 and only two accidents have been reported in 2026-27 till June this year, Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said in a written reply to a query in the Lok Sabha. "The causes of the accidents that took place over Indian Railways broadly include track defects, locomotive or coach defects, equipment failures, human errors, etc. Rail safety has now been strengthened through modern technology, infrastructure and enhanced maintenance. As many as 6,671 stations have been equipped with electronic interlocking and complete track circuiting while 10,395 level crossing gates have also been brought under the interlocking system to minimise human errors," Union Minister Vaishnaw noted. Complete track circuiting of these railway stations has been undertaken to enhance safety by verification of track occupancy by electrical means. Detailed instructions on issues related with safety of signalling, for example, mandatory correspondence check, alteration work protocol, preparation of completion drawing, etc. have been issued. The Indian Railways has added 36,429 track kilometres during 2014–26,

which is more than 2.5 times higher than 2004–14 which has enhanced track safety. Modernisation of rolling stock and maintenance practices strengthens safety, with LHB coach production rising more than 21 times to 49,366 during 2014–26 and weld failures reduced by 93 per cent. The indigenously developed Kavach 4.0 safety system has been successfully commissioned on 2,490 route kilometres covering the high-density Delhi–Mumbai and Delhi–Howrah routes. Kavach implementation work is also under progress on 21,937 route kilometres, with installation being taken up on 7,435 locomotives and 1,200 EMU/MEMU trains. The amount utilised for Kavach works so far up to June 2026 is Rs 3874.9 crore. The allocation of funds during the year 2026-27 is Rs 2066.24 crore. Requisite funds are made available as per the progress of works. In reply to another query, Union Minister Vaishnaw said that at present, recruitment against 1,61,889 vacancies of non-gazetted personnel has been taken up on Indian Railways as per annual calendar 2024, 2025 and 2026. During January to December 2024, ten Centralised Employment Notifications for 92,116 vacancies were notified for filling up of posts of Assistant Loco Pilots, technicians, Sub-Inspectors, Constables in Railway Protection Force (RPF), Junior Engineers, Depot Material Superintendent, Chemical and Metallurgical Assistant, Paramedical Categories, Non-Technical Popular Categories (Graduate), Non-Technical Popular Categories (Under-Graduate),

Ministerial and Isolated Categories and Level-1 categories such as Assistants, Track Maintainers and Pointsman. First stage/Single stage Computer Based Tests for 92,116 posts have been completed. "During 2026-2027 (up to June 30, 2026) panels for more than 3,300 candidates for various posts, including the posts of Technicians, Junior Engineers, Paramedical Categories, Ministerial and Isolated categories and Assistant Loco Pilots have been finalised. Majority of them are in safety categories," Union Minister added.

Home Credit India to acquire Varthana Finance Private Limited

Guwahati: Home Credit India, part of TVS VENU, has agreed to acquire a 100% stake in Varthana Finance Private Limited through an all-cash transaction, subject to receipt of applicable regulatory approvals, including approval from the Reserve Bank of India, and fulfilment of customary closing conditions. The proposed acquisition marks another step in TVS VENU’s long-term approach to build and scale high-quality financial services businesses that serve India’s evolving credit needs across customer segments. With the addition of Varthana’s specialised education-finance franchise to its growing financial services platform, the Group will expand its presence into a complementary secured and longer-tenure lending segment. The transaction will strengthen TVS VENU’s position in India’s financial services sector and create opportunities to sup-

Smart RISE strengthens Axis Max Life’s retirement portfolio with market-linked annuity

Guwahati: Axis Max Life Insurance Ltd. {formerly known as Max Life Insurance Company Ltd.} ("Axis Max Life"/"Company"), has launched Axis Max Life Smart Retirement Income with Sustained Earnings Plan [Smart RISE] (UIN: 104N160V01), a retirement product that combines guaranteed annuity component with a benchmark-linked component tied to the NIFTY 50 Index, allowing customers to secure stable retirement income while leveraging growth potential. The plan allows policyholder to customize their retirement timeline by selecting a deferment period, during which no annuity is payable. Upon the completion of this deferment phase, the annuitant begins receiving regular payouts. The payouts comprise of the following components:

- Guaranteed Annuity: A fixed, dependable income stream that remains constant throughout the entire policy term, ensuring foundational financial certainty.
- Variable Annuity: An Index-linked income stream tied directly to the perfor-

mance of the NIFTY 50 Index, offering policyholders a reliable mechanism to gain from the market upside. Vaibhav Kumar, Head - Products, Ecommerce and Enterprise COE said, “The introduction of a Variable Annuity product marks a major milestone for Axis Max Life as we continue to expand our comprehensive retirement portfolio. By launching an index-linked variable annuity option, we are positioned to address emerging customer needs and enhance our presence in the retirement space. This offering also addresses a modern retiree's evolving expectations for strong financial protection, flexibility, and a reliable pension, reinforcing our commitment to securing their long-term financial freedom.” Smart RISE also embeds a critical legacy-planning benefit. In the event of the annuitant’s demise, the option provides a Return of Purchase Price to the designated nominees (subject to policy terms and conditions), ensuring long-term generational financial protection.

Doctors take steps towards better patient health; Positive results observed

Kolkata: The role of doctors in building a healthy India has always been unparalleled. Respect, gratitude, and appreciation were expressed towards doctors and health experts for their dedicated efforts and significant contributions to public health, welfare, and awareness. In today's world, healthcare is no longer limited to medication alone; a balanced lifestyle, regular exercise, and yoga have become crucial pillars of good health. Yoga not only improves physical health but also fosters mental balance, self-confidence, and positive thinking. While expressing respect and gratitude towards all physicians, Dr. Mriganka Baruah ,Physician / Diabetologist, stated that doctors play a vital role in creating a healthy society through their knowledge, dedication, and spirit of service. They do not merely treat

illnesses but also guide people toward leading better, healthier lives. Beyond treating diseases, their role is crucial in raising health awareness, promoting preventive healthcare measures, and inspiring people to adopt a healthy lifestyle. The importance of health and yoga was also highlighted across the country on the occasion of International Yoga Day. Experts emphasized that by making yoga a part of daily life, one can prevent various health issues and lead a healthy, active, and energetic life, even with advancing age. An experienced yoga expert was invited to the event, providing detailed information to the attending patients and their families about various yoga asanas (postures), pranayama (breathing exercises), and the importance of a healthy lifestyle.

Ather to unveil mass-market EL platform scooter at Community Day 2026

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

product showcase, it has become Ather's platform for sharing its vision for the future, introducing new technologies, and bringing its community closer to the company's products and ideas. The 2025 edition, held on 30 August 2025, welcomed more than 4,000 attendees and saw the unveiling of the EL platform, the introduction of the Redux concept vehicle, Ather's next-generation fast-charging technology, and AtherStack 7.0, setting the foundation for the company's next phase of innovation. Ather Energy Limited (ATHERENERG | 544397 | INE0LEZ01016) is a pioneer in the Indian electric two-wheeler ("E2W") market (CRISIL Report). Founded in 2013 by Tarun Mehta and Swapnil Jain, Ather designs and manufactures high-performance electric scooters. Ather launched its first electric scooter in 2018. Its current E2W portfolio consists of two distinct product lines: the Ather 450 series, focused on performance-oriented customers, and the Ather Rizta, a convenience-first family scooter line launched in 2024. Together, these product lines offer a total of 9 variants. Ather was the first two-wheeler OEM in India to establish a dedicated fast charging network, the Ather Grid, which is designed and built in India. Today, Ather operates the widest 2W fast charging network in the country. As of March 31, 2026, with a strong emphasis on R&D and innovation, Ather holds 326 registered trademarks, 271 registered designs, and 52 registered patents, along with pending applications for 120 trademarks, 40 designs, and 591 patents globally.

port Varthana’s next phase of growth. Sudarshan Venu, Chairman, TVS Motor Company, said, "India’s financial services sector continues to offer significant opportunities for long-term

growth, driven by rising formalisation, expanding credit access and the increasing need for specialised lending solutions. As we continue to build and scale our financial services platform.

No. DPRD/BTC/(15th FC)Ut.IX/Chi-13/2026/8Dated Kokrajhar the22nd July,2026

PRESS NOTICE

The Director, P&RD Department, BTC, Kokrajhar invites through e-Tendering process for an amount not exceeding to **Rs.50,00,000.00 (Rupees fifty lakh)** only for implantation work of “Const. of Road Duturi Bihari Basti Village Road (Agency Code-128643497).” under the Award of 15th Finance Commission (Untied Grant) for the year 2025-26 during 2025-26 from Register Contractor from APWD (Roads/Building/ Firm, Class, A,B, BTC, etc.

Details may be seen at <http://assamtenders.gov.in> and also at the office of the undersigned during office hours

Sd/- Director,
Panchayat & Rural Development,
BTC, Kokrajhar

Editorial

WHO-ICHI

The Ministry of Ayush, Government of India, organised a high-level review meeting and consultative discussions on the development of the International Classification of Health Interventions (ICHI) and National Health Intervention Codes (NHIC) for Ayurveda, Siddha and Unani systems of medicine during a two-day online programme held on May 25 and 26, 2026, marking another important step towards integrating India's traditional medicine systems with globally accepted health informatics standards and strengthening the role of traditional medicine within international healthcare frameworks. The initiative follows the landmark Memorandum of Understanding and Donor Agreement signed between the Ministry of Ayush and the World Health Organization and seeks to create a globally standardized and scientifically robust coding vocabulary for Ayurveda, Siddha and Unani clinical interventions under the WHO-ICHI framework, enabling cross-border data exchange, strengthening clinical research, improving healthcare documentation and supporting interoperability in digital health ecosystems, including future insurance integration for traditional medicine systems. The meeting brought together senior officials of the Ministry of Ayush, technical experts from the World Health Organization, scientists from various research councils, and faculty members from national institutes to deliberate on the roadmap for aligning India's traditional healthcare systems with modern international classification mechanisms used for healthcare data collection and analysis worldwide. The deliberations focused on building a comprehensive coding system capable of systematically documenting interventions in Ayurveda, Siddha and Unani systems in a structured and universally understandable format, which experts believe would significantly improve the visibility, acceptability and scientific validation of Indian systems of medicine across global healthcare institutions. The meeting was chaired by Vaidya Rajesh Kotecha, Secretary, Ministry of Ayush, who underlined the strategic importance of internationally aligned intervention classifications and stated that the initiative would contribute significantly towards integrating traditional medicine into global health systems while simultaneously strengthening documentation practices and enhancing interoperability in digital health ecosystems. He highlighted that the development of internationally recognised coding standards for Ayurveda, Siddha and Unani interventions would help establish a stronger scientific foundation for traditional medicine and support the creation of more evidence-based approaches for treatment documentation, healthcare analytics and patient care systems. According to officials participating in the discussions, the coding framework is expected to provide a common language for healthcare practitioners, researchers, policymakers and insurance systems while facilitating improved international collaboration and comparative research studies involving traditional medicine practices. The inaugural session of the meeting began with welcome remarks by Dr. N. Srikanth, Deputy Director General of the Central Council for Research in Ayurvedic Sciences, who welcomed participants and emphasized the significance of collaborative efforts in developing standardized classifications for traditional medicine interventions. In her introductory remarks, Dr. Kavita Jain, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Ayush, highlighted the importance of standardized intervention terminology in strengthening evidence-based traditional medicine systems and promoting greater consistency in documentation and reporting practices across healthcare institutions and research organisations working in the field of Ayurveda, Siddha and Unani medicine. She noted that creating uniform terminology and coding systems was essential for improving research quality, enhancing digital integration and enabling the systematic collection of clinical evidence related to traditional healthcare interventions. Representatives from the World Health Organization also addressed the gathering and discussed the importance of harmonising traditional medicine classifications with global health informatics systems. Dr. Pawan Godatwar, Technical Officer at the WHO South-East Asia Regional Office, and Dr. Geetha Krishnan, Unit Head at GTMC Jamnagar, spoke about the importance of international collaboration in building globally relevant health intervention classifications and strengthening the role of traditional medicine within modern public health systems. The discussions reflected growing international interest in traditional medicine systems and the need for globally compatible mechanisms that can facilitate better data exchange, research collaboration and healthcare integration. During the technical sessions, detailed presentations on the four-level hierarchical coding directories were delivered by the respective research councils responsible for Ayurveda, Siddha and Unani systems. The Ayurveda component, referred to as NHICA, was presented by Prof. Vaidya Rabinarayan Acharya, Director General of the Central Council for Research in Ayurvedic Sciences, who elaborated on the framework developed for categorising and documenting Ayurvedic interventions under the proposed classification structure. The Siddha intervention classification system, known as NHICS, was presented by Prof. Dr. N. J. Muthukumar, Director General of the Central Council for Research in Siddha, who discussed the methods adopted for standardising Siddha treatment terminology and intervention coding. Similarly, the Unani classification framework, referred to as NHICUM, was presented by Dr. N. Zaheer Ahmed, Director General of the Central Council for Research in Unani Medicine, who outlined the proposed intervention classification model designed for Unani systems of medicine.

Assam's unnatural floods call for greater preparedness as government strengthens response

By Amal Narayan Patowary

Assam's latest flood has reinforced the need for stronger preparedness against increasingly unpredictable disasters, even as the state government continues to intensify rescue, relief and long-term flood management measures.

The floods have claimed 31 lives, affected more than 5.6 lakh people across 16 districts, submerged 872 villages and damaged nearly 24,210 hectares of agricultural land. While the immediate focus remains on relief and rehabilitation, discussions in the Assembly this week reflected a broader concern: Assam must prepare for disasters that no longer follow traditional flood patterns.

Agriculture, Irrigation and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Pijush Hazarika told the Assembly that this year's inundation was "not a normal flood" but a "natural calamity". According to him, floodwaters entered Sivasagar, Charaideo, Jorhat and Nazira from unexpected directions instead of following the Brahmaputra's usual course. Water levels also rose four to five metres above several embankments, overwhelming infrastructure that had otherwise largely remained intact.

The minister's assessment points to a significant shift like flooding. Unlike the state's recurring annual floods, this year's disaster was shaped by unusual water movement, highlighting the need to strengthen preparedness for extreme weather events that are becoming increasingly difficult to predict.

The situation also carries an important regional dimension. Floods and heavy rainfall in neighbouring Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland and Meghalaya have a direct bearing on river systems flowing into Assam. Such upstream developments can rapidly alter water levels and flow patterns downstream, making continuous monitoring, timely forecasting and inter-state coordination critical for disaster preparedness in the days ahead.

The Assembly debate also highlighted the government's ongoing response. Under Operation Jal Rahat, the Army has rescued more than 200 stranded civilians, while the Indian Air Force has remained on standby. Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma has deputed four Cabinet ministers — Ajanta Neog, Bimal Bora, Keshab Mahanta and Sushanta Borgohain — to oversee relief operations in the affected districts. The Department of Telecommunications has also activated emergency inter-network roaming facilities in the three worst-affected districts to maintain communication during the crisis.

Alongside relief operations, the government has maintained that financial resources will not constrain recovery efforts. Responding to concerns raised by Congress MP Gaurav Gogoi over the release of National Disaster Response Fund (NDRF) assistance, Chief Minister Sarma said almost all financial assistance for flood relief and erosion management comes from the Central government.

The discussion also turned to the state's flood-control infrastructure. Hazarika noted that embankments built by the Water Resources Department largely withstood the flood. However, water levels exceeded their design capacity by four to five metres and approached from directions the system was not designed to handle.

The Assembly has also been informed separately that more than 60 per cent of Assam's embankment network now requires repair or reconstruction, while extensive strengthening work has been undertaken over the past five years. The government's continuing investment in embankment improvement reflects an effort to enhance flood resilience, even as changing hydrological conditions pose new challenges.

Recent weather patterns have added another layer of complexity. Even as Assam faced severe flooding, the state recorded a 28 per cent rainfall deficit in June, with periods of heavy rainfall alternating with prolonged dry spells. The Assembly has also discussed concerns over emerging drought conditions in parts of Upper Assam. These contrasting weather events point to increasing rainfall variability, requiring greater emphasis on scientific planning, drainage management and adaptive infrastructure.

Environmental concerns also surfaced during the debate. AIUDF MLA Badruddin Ajmal alleged that sand mining may be contributing to river-course changes, erosion and unpredictable water flow. The issue draws attention to the importance of monitoring river systems alongside engineering and disaster management measures.

Taken together, this week's Assembly discussions indicate that Assam is confronting a different kind of flood challenge. The government's rescue and relief operations have been mobilised on a large scale, while the nature of this year's flooding has reinforced the importance of strengthening early-warning systems, upgrading flood-control infrastructure and improving coordination with neighbouring states.

With heavy rainfall continuing in Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland and Meghalaya, Assam's disaster management agencies will need to remain alert to changing upstream conditions that can quickly influence rivers across the state. The experience of this year's floods demonstrates that preparedness, real-time monitoring and coordinated response will remain central to reducing the impact of such disasters in the future.

(The writer is the president of Writers Forum, Assam.)

India's Act East policy is now armed and operational: Decoding Rajnath Singh's Vietnam visit

Two not-so-unrelated things are happening today. Defence Minister Rajnath Singh is on a two-day visit to Hanoi. He just met his Vietnamese counterpart, General Phan Van Giang, to discuss, among other things, whether Vietnam would become the second country in Southeast Asia to acquire a BrahMos missile system. SoAnd in Umroi, a field training node on the outskirts of Shillong in Meghalaya, the Indian Army has just opened Exercise Pragati-I, a multinational military exercise. It involves 15 nations, all from the ASEAN region. The exposition running alongside it, organised by FICCI with Eastern Command and the Army Design Bureau, will showcase Indian defence hardware to the procurement heads and defence attachés of all those countries. India has spent 30 years talking about its Act East Policy. It is now living it.

Vietnam and Korea

Vietnam and South Korea are joined by two proximities. They are geographically proximate, almost neighbours in the broader sweep of East Asia, and the other, more consequential proximity is to a China that has become more powerful and more comfortable showing it. Both states have territorial disputes with Beijing that it pursues with persistent pressure, and both have concluded, with varying degrees of explicitness, that they need to diversify their security sources. Vietnam does not do alliances; its history has taught it well. A country occupied and ravaged by China, France, Japan and the United States in living memory tends to develop strong views on entanglement. Hanoi wants options and the ability to price them against each other. India is an option that makes a particular kind of sense. No colonial footprint in the region. No territorial ambitions. Its own unresolved disputes with Beijing lend it a certain bonhomie. When Vietnamese President To Lam flew to New Delhi earlier this month, the two countries upgraded their partnership and set a \$25 billion trade target for 2030. The leaders also confirmed that BrahMos missile talks had entered an advanced stage. Along with that, there is further engagement through Defence Lines of Credit and an Army Software Park being built at the Telecommunications University in Vietnam with Indian support. The whole of it has been part of the Joint Vision Statement on India-Vietnam Defence Partnership towards 2030, signed during Singh's last visit to Hanoi in June 2022. South Korea wants something adjacent but distinct. Seoul's anxieties run through the peninsula, not the sea, and what it seeks is industrial partnership and a reliable presence in a region where American commitment is subject to revision. Singh will chair a defence business roundtable in Seoul and meet the head of the Defence Acquisition Programme Administration. India's Act East Policy and South Korea's Indo-Pacific Strategy share overlapping values, and both countries have acknowledged the alignment.

The Missile That Started It All

The most persuasive argument in any negotiation is the one that travels at Mach 2.8. The

BrahMos has become India's single most eloquent contribution to regional diplomacy. The Philippines understood this first. Manila signed a \$375 million deal in 2022 for three shore-based batteries, a decision driven, fairly explicitly, by what China has been doing in the South China Sea. The first battery arrived on an Indian Air Force C-17 in April 2024. The second was shipped by sea last year. When Philippine Army chief General Romeo Brawner came to Delhi earlier this year, he had one word for how the system had performed: exemplary. Then he asked about helicopters, fighter aircraft, and submarines. Manila wants more. They are negotiating for more, and they are telling their friends about it. And the friends are listening. Indonesia sent a formal letter to the Indian Embassy in Jakarta regarding a \$450 million deal. Vietnam, Malaysia, the UAE, Chile, and South Africa have all expressed interest. In Hanoi, this is one of the topics on the table. The Vietnamese President all but confirmed it during his visit to New Delhi. India's defence exports rose from ₹686 crore in 2014 to over ₹21,000 crore in FY2024. There is a reason behind that. India has gone from being the world's largest arms importer to a nation that has finally understood that selling weapons is not merely commerce, but also important to building relationships forged in steel and jet fuel.

Lines of Credit, Training Teams and A Real Partnership

But anyone can sell a weapon. The truly sophisticated operator sells the ecosystem that surrounds it: the training, the maintenance contracts. When you sell a weapon, you sell a way of thinking about war. Defence Lines of Credit to Vietnam have quietly contributed to strengthening Hanoi's capabilities for years, and have been welcomed by both governments. They call it foundational to the broader relationship. Indian training teams operate at Vietnam's Telecommunications University, Naval Academy, and Air Force College, and India has supported the establishment of an Army Software Park in Nha Trang. Twenty-one Philippine Navy officers received instruction in India in early 2023, trained specifically to operate and maintain the BrahMos. A Vietnamese admiral who trained at an Indian institution. A Philippine officer whose entire professional vocabulary around missile systems is Indian. A Memorandum on submarine rescue, a Mutual Logistics Support Agreement, and a joint hydrographic survey completed in May 2025 off the Vietnamese coast. They are the capillaries of influence, invisible until you need them, indispensable when you do. India is building its own ecosystem, a structural dependency. Not an alliance, because the term demands too much.

Exercise Pragati and the Point It Makes

Which brings us back to Umroi.

Exercise Pragati-I is a joint military exercise, straightforwardly enough. Fifteen nations, almost all in ASEAN, are converging on a field training node in Meghalaya for a fortnight of joint operations. Bangladesh, Cambodia, Indonesia, the Philippines, Vietnam, and a full roster of

countries. Fifteen flags in the hills of Meghalaya. Meghalaya sits at India's northeastern shoulder, its gateway to Southeast Asia, the hinge between the subcontinent and the ASEAN world. To host a fifteen-nation military exercise there is to announce that this is where India's strategic attention lies. Running alongside the military exercise on 30-31 May is a defence industry exposition, organised by FICCI in collaboration with HQ Eastern Command and the Army Design Bureau, designed to allow Indian defence manufacturers to showcase their capabilities to the procurement heads and senior military leadership of the fifteen participating nations. The product range spans drones, counter-drone systems, surveillance equipment, communications hardware, autonomous maritime systems, precision ammunition, and more, with hands-on demonstration opportunities for foreign military personnel. The structure of this event tells you everything about how militaries build bonds. Not through brochures. The Philippines did not want more BrahMos batteries simply because the hardware is good. It wanted more because India proved it could deliver on time, with training and follow-through. That is what you build by sharing a command post, a meal, a map. The exposition is how you convert that trust into procurement. That Rajnath Singh is currently in Hanoi, negotiating the next BrahMos deal, is proof enough that the model works.

So, What Does It All Add Up To?

What New Delhi is constructing across Southeast Asia is more durable than, let's say, an alliance, which comes with its own headaches and obligations. It is building a lattice of structural dependence, built from missile deliveries, training programmes, credit lines, shared exercises, hydrographic surveys, and software parks in Nha Trang. And once a nation's officers have trained alongside yours, operated your equipment, maintained it with your spare parts, and shared your frequencies, the bond is made. It will persist through changes of government, shifts in alignment, and the ordinary turbulence of regional politics. China has understood and applied this logic for decades. India is now applying it in its own neighbourhood, with a clarity that has historically been absent. The difference is that India can offer something Beijing cannot: the credible appearance of a partner that wants nothing from you except the relationship itself. That is, of course, not entirely true. India wants influence, markets, and a regional order that constrains the country with which it shares a long and disputed border. But those are interests that align rather than conflict with what Vietnam, the Philippines, South Korea, and their neighbours actually need. And the best deals are the ones where everyone believes they got the better end. Rajnath Singh's flights to Hanoi and Seoul are, in isolation, unremarkable. A minister travels. Meetings are held. Statements are issued. But context is everything. India is no longer positioning itself as a regional power. It is behaving like one.

Sohil Sinha

Assam Budget 2026-27: Enriched with the Developmental Garland of Eighteen Pearls



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A government’s budget is more than just numbers; it is an essential blueprint that shapes the economic, social, and educational progress of a state or nation for the coming financial year. When a budget is grounded in reality, it acts as a powerful catalyst for overall growth. Look no further than Assam: from 2016–17 right up to 2025–26, the state government’s budgets have consistently driven meaningful, comprehensive development for the people of Assam. For instance, the per capita income of the state has increased from Rs. 60,817 in the year 2015–16 to Rs.1,85,429 in the year 2025–26. Similarly, the amount of Assam’s own tax revenue has risen from Rs. 12,848 crores in the year 2015–16 to Rs. 39,294 crores in the year 2025–26. On the other hand, regarding capital expenditure, it has increased by nearly 12 times from Rs. 2,951 crores in the year 2015–16 to reach Rs. 26,531 crores in the year 2025–26. Parallel to economic development, public welfare is created. A structural framework is formed that creates a stable environment in social life as well.

Highlights of the 2026-27 Budget: In the 7th clause of the budget proposal speech, the Finance Minister declared that our target is ‘Creating employment-oriented, all-inclusive, and knowledge-based Assam. On the other hand, in the 15th clause, the visionary perspective of the Prime Minister’s historic announcement of ‘Vision 2047 towards a developed India’ has been declared as the ‘guiding path’ for the state. Therefore, it is natural that the budget is full of proposals to make the state strong.

The nature of Capital Expenditure and Revenue Expenditure: If a farmer buys a bigha of agricultural land and a tractor, his income will increase by about ten to fifteen times compared to before. This is called capital expenditure. That means the more capital expenditure increases, the greater the potential for the state’s progress is created. The opportunities for employment generation for the young men and women of the new generation increase. The standard of living of the public improves. On the other hand, the expenses incurred by the farmer on buying mustard oil, pulses, soap, sugar, tea leaves, clothes, or diesel and petrol for the tractor to maintain his daily life are called revenue expenditure (or frequently recurring expenditure). The lower the revenue expenditure of a family or a state, the better it is. Similarly, if the farmer has to take a bank loan while buying the bigha of land and the tractor, his decision is still praised as courageous and far-sighted. Because, by increasing his own income, he will not only be able to repay the bank loan but will also be capable of improving his own standard of living. On the contrary, if the farmer takes a bank loan to wear expensive clothes or to eat fish and meat, then it will only be called a self-destructive decision. This is because such an act will ruin the family.

Very Short-Term, Short-Term or Medium-Term, and Long-Term Expenditure: Those proposed expenditures in the budget that benefit the public immediately upon being incurred are called very short-term expenditures.

For example, as soon as the prices of mustard oil, pulses, rice, potatoes, gas cylinders, etc., decrease, the cost of a daily meal drops immediately. On the other hand, if the government subsidy is increased per maund of paddy produced and sold by a farmer, the farmer does not benefit immediately. The farmer receives the benefit only after four to five months when the paddy is harvested and sold. This is called short-term or medium-term expenditure. Similarly, after dismantling an old wooden bridge over a river, if a strong concrete bridge is to be constructed there, the cost will increase manifold. Constructing the bridge might also take four to five years. But once completed, the public can use it for 70 to 80 years. This is called long-term expenditure or capital expenditure.

Developmental Garland of Eighteen Pearls (Ashtadash Mukutar Unnayani Mala): In clause twenty-six (26) of the introduction, the budget proposals have been referred to as the ‘Developmental Garland of Eighteen Pearls’. That means expenditure proposals have been made separately for 18 different sectors in the budget. For example:

1. Target of 2 lakh additional employments.
 2. Beneficiary schemes including providing financial assistance of Rs. 2,500 per month to 48,336 unemployed graduates.
 3. Infrastructure development, self-reliance in energy, etc.
- Finance Minister Jayanta Malla Baruah also expressed hope that the 18 flagship schemes mentioned in the said 26th clause will guide the state towards building a secure, prosperous, and developed Assam.

Positive Aspects of the Budget

(1) Creation of New Employment: The very first scheme of the budget is the announcement of 2 lakh employments within the next five years. Meaning, an average recruitment of 40,000 young men and women annually. Even critics admit that since the formation of the BJP-led government in 2016, there has been transparency in the recruitment sector, and corruption has become almost non-existent.

In the past five years, instead of the promise of 1 lakh recruitments made by Chief Minister Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma, nearly 1.64 lakh people were given government jobs, because of which the people of Assam deeply believe that this time’s announcement of 2 lakh recruitments is not a false election promise. The state has been plagued by various types of terrorist activities for a long time. Furthermore, the constant negativity spewed by a section of arrogant, boastful, and negatively-minded self-proclaimed intellectual giants has kept the simple and innocent youth of the state misled and directionless. Creating new employment opportunities for 40,000 to 50,000 young men and women annually will certainly inspire these youth to build a bright Assam filled with hope.

(2) Infrastructure Development: In the 3rd and 4th announcements of the ‘Garland of Eighteen Pearls’ (Ashtadash Mala), the most crucial proposals for the long-term development of the state have been laid out. The 3rd announcement speaks about robust infrastructure development, while the 4th proposal mentions a ‘Himalayan-like’ (massive) investment for the development of the power sector. For a race, a state, or a nation to progress rapidly on the path of development, the two factors that play the most vital roles are a transport-communication system and a 24 hour uninterrupted power supply. Over the past 10 years, roads, highways, and bridges have been rapidly constructed across every corner of Assam. Several new bridges have been built over the mighty Brahmaputra River, and construction work on a few more is currently underway. Many such important schemes have also been adopted for the next five years. Even though the Central Government has an 80 percent or 90 percent partnership in some of these schemes, the public has been praising the promptness, capability, and determination of the State Government in executing the projects on time. Notable among these are—

(A) Construction of 800 km of high-quality roads within the next five years at an expenditure of Rs. 10,000 crores.

(B) In collaboration with the Central Government, notable projects include the Guwahati Ring Road worth Rs. 4,954 crores, the Greenfield Silchar High-Speed Corridor worth Rs. 22,864 crores, the Kaziranga Elevated Corridor worth Rs. 6,957 crores, and projects involving an expenditure of Rs. 18,662 crores for Gohpur Numaligarh Brahmaputra tunnel.

On the other hand, the budget also mentions important projects under consideration in collaboration with the Government of India. Those are—

§ A project of Rs. 13,812 crores for the construction of a four-lane road from Baihata Chariali to Tezpur Mission Chariali.

§ An elevated corridor construction project from Jalukbari to Guwahati Airport at an expenditure of Rs. 3,423 crores.

§ A proposal to construct a new bridge over the Brahmaputra connecting Morigaon and Darrang.

Development of the Power Sector:

During the summer season, the daily electricity requirement of Assam ranges from 2,800 megawatts to 3,000 megawatts. In contrast, the state’s own daily electricity production is only about 700 megawatts. This means nearly 2,200 megawatts of electricity has to be purchased daily from external sources. Without a guaranteed and continuous power supply, the development of trade, commerce, and industrial sectors in the state is impossible. The government will provide employment to 2 lakh people in five years. However, if the development of trade, commerce, and industry accelerates, about 2 to 3 lakh jobs will be created annually in the state. The State Government will also be able to strengthen its treasury by collecting taxes from these sources. It is a matter of great satisfaction for the state that a massive investment proposal of Rs. 77,353 crores has been put forward with a target to produce 8,457 megawatts of electricity under 6 different initiatives by the State Government. Such far-sighted schemes were not adopted in the past. Of course, in the case of such large investments, capital will be raised through the Central Government, externally aided projects, and Public-Private Partnerships (PPP) in addition to the State Government’s own resources.

Agriculture Sector and Irrigation:

For the development of Assam’s agriculture sector, a proposal has been made this time to modernize the irrigation system. Instead of the traditional open canals used previously, a proposal has been put forward for agricultural irrigation through ‘high-pressure pipelines’. It has been announced that an estimated expenditure of Rs. 3,000 crores to Rs. 4,000 crores will be incurred for this purpose. On the other hand, to distribute financial assistance to farmers against their produced crops, a decision has been made to increase the number of Farmer Producer Organizations (FPO/FPC) from the previous 254 to 354. Financial assistance of Rs. 3 lakhs will be provided to each of these FPOs/FPCs.

Education and Medical Department:

Adequate funds have been allocated for the education department, which is the most crucial pillar in building a strong national life. A few particularly notable aspects in this regard are two modern integrated educational campuses will be constructed during the year. In addition to a university, these campuses will host a medical college, an engineering college, and an IIT. Each of the 7 newly established universities will be given Rs. 100 crores. Furthermore, Rs. 2 crores each will be given to 27 autonomous colleges. In addition to this, a proposal has been made to give Rs. 50 crores each to 8 state universities and Rs. 100 crores to Gauhati University. Four new medical colleges will also be established.

Beneficiary Schemes:

In addition to the previously announced schemes for students, alongside the ongoing Orunodoi scheme, women empowerment

schemes, and schemes for tea garden laborers, financial assistance of Rs. 15,000 will be provided to pregnant women in tea gardens. A state subsidy of Rs. 5 per liter of milk will be provided to milk producers just like before.

Sectors Neglected by the Budget

(1) National Security:

To resist the threats posed to the existence of the Assamese community, the BJP alliance government has done a lot of work over the past 10 years. Nearly 1 lakh 46 thousand bighas of land have been reclaimed from the encroachment of suspected citizens. Measures have been taken to prevent child marriage. Primarily because of working for development and national security, the people who love the community voted in large numbers to make the BJP alone win 82 seats, and the alliance as a whole win a total of 102 seats with a massive mandate. Therefore, work for national security must be carried out with even greater courage and determination than before. Even now, about 28 lakh 50 thousand bighas of land in Assam remain under the occupation of suspected foreign citizens. Standard police administration is not enough to reclaim such a vast amount of land, monitor it, and conserve it. For this purpose, there is a need for a new battalion enriched with around 20 thousand indigenous youths equipped with all kinds of modern equipment and weapons. This battalion should be assigned this responsibility by setting up permanent camps divided across a total of 6 zones on both banks of the Brahmaputra in Upper, Central, and Lower Assam.

Farmer–Monkey Conflict:

At present, thousands of villages in Assam are under the terror of the monkey menace. Already, due to squirrels, the production of coconut and betel nut in these villages has ceased. Now, due to the monkey menace, people in these villages have stopped cultivating vegetables (such as ridge gourd, cucumber, cabbage/cauliflower, potato, etc.) and fruits. As a result, the income of the farmers has decreased. No one from the agriculture department, news media, or the government has taken this matter seriously. This time’s budget has also ignored the issue.

Negative Aspect of the Budget:

There is ample ground to call this year’s budget an excellent budget. The fiscal deficit for the year is only Rs. 419.26 crores. Out of a total expenditure proposal of Rs. 1,56,714.88 crores, a proposal has been made for Rs. 1,18,562.23 crores as revenue expenditure and Rs. 38,152.65 crores as capital expenditure. Since capital expenditure has increased significantly compared to before, it can certainly be said that the future economic infrastructure of the state will become powerful. The issue that stands opposite to all these positive aspects is government debt. At present, the amount of debt of the Assam government has reached nearly Rs. 1 lakh 85 thousand crores. Moreover, a debt proposal of another Rs. 30 thousand crores has been made for this year. It is precisely because the current condition of Assam has improved significantly that the capacity to take loans has increased. However, relying solely on that will not suffice. The Assam government should take measures to gradually reduce the amount of debt every year.

Translator’s Note

The original article, authored by Dr. Homeswar Kalita, former Principal, Gauhati Commerce College, Guwahati, Assam, was published in the editorial page of the Assamese daily newspaper “Niyomiya Barta” on 15 July 2026. The present work is an English translation of the original Assamese article, translated by Mr. Guptaajit Pathak, Assistant Professor, Department of History, Geetanagar College, Geetanagar, Guwahati-781021, Assam, India, whose contact details are as follows: E-mail: pathakguptajit19@gmail.com; Mobile: +91 90850 84275.

Dance into death

It came again. The soft sound of feet outside her room. Her heart thrummed in her chest, her fingers went cold as she stood in the gloom of her room. Outside, as it always did, those feet proceeded along the corridor, down the staircase—the night dragged—past the hallway—not even an owl hooted—and dispersed into the darkness. It had occurred to her that those feet were dancing. They had a rhythm, a synchronization that Minah was certain she had heard before. The following afternoon as her fingers frolicked over the piano the rhythm of the feet around her house formed around her. It had eerie strains, notes catching and dropping, impassioned and discomforting. She relinquished the keys and dashed into the hallway only to be startled by a rush of cold breeze as though someone had passed by her. It was nothing, the hallway was empty.

“It must be one of the housemaids.” Her husband insisted whenever she brought up the ghostly feet.

“Every night? Even on holidays when there’s none of them in?”

Her husband shook his head. Persisted she must have been having recurring dreams. Did she? How could dreams be so vivid that they left her gulping for air and drenched in cold sweat?

Minah felt her way around the house. It was a beauti-

ful house. It had been cared for she could tell. She knew houses carried stories from the time they are conjured though try as she must she couldn’t find any story about this particular house. It harrowed her, rankled her.

Her fingers writhe upon the walls, hissing on the banister, skimming the windowsill, eyes on the painting, sparkling, burning, slowly giving away to exhaustion. The books in the small library sat dead and untouched, it was like a perpetual mourning there, the maids never let her into the kitchen. The garden bloomed in spring morning light and wailed in the chill of the night, everything

about the house screamed to be let out, but how? What freedom could she give them? She herself felt shackled.

“You just need a good cup of tea madam and you shall be fine as morning dew.” One of the housemaids said, whilst making her bed.

The tea didn’t work. Nothing did.

“Should I see a doctor? Could I be hallucinating?” she asked her husband one morning at breakfast.

He scowled at her. “Don’t be ridiculous, you are perfectly fine.” Then after a moment, “If it might provide you some ease then alright, I’ll fix you an appointment.”

“And why do you suppose you might be dreaming?”

The therapist asked. Minah answered a bunch of questions. Everybody seemed to be asking and suggesting things.

“Madam, some tea?” “What kind of sound is it?”

“Why don’t you sleep early?” “Have you been reading horrors?” “Fresh air. And a good walk.” “Go shopping.”

“Do you think it’s a man?” “Have tea with me.”

And nobody wants to listen.

And one night as the moon slithered into her room through the window she felt a stirring inside her and opened the door at the stroke of the clock. In the empty corridor, something darker than an apparition danced, and moved gracefully leaving a trail of bloody footmarks. Minah followed her, in a daze, consumed by the figure. As she followed the it into the nooks and crannies of the house, lives and people awakened before her. Children laughing and dying, a woman on the piano, a man pushing a woman down the staircase, them dancing in the kitchen, voices murmuring, love expressed, the man hanging himself from the chandelier. Images susurrated around her, carried in the chilly breeze, they burned her and devoured her and dispersed in the darkness, this time taking Minah along.

By SANDHYA KUMAR

President Droupadi Murmu holds bilateral talks with Moldovan President

New Delhi: 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

cussions as both nations acknowledged the importance of strengthening people-to-people connections. Expanded academic partnerships, scholarships, student mobility programmes



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 Palace, symbolising the warmth and respect shared between the two friendly nations. The ceremonial 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 cooperation 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 dis-

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 'tefan 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. The visit also sends a positive message about India's commitment to expanding diplomatic engagement throughout Europe while strengthening partnerships based on mutual trust and shared development objectives. As the global geopolitical landscape continues to evolve, constructive bilateral relationships rooted in dialogue, cooperation and mutual benefit have become increasingly important. India and Moldova share common interests in promoting sustainable development, strengthening democratic institutions, encouraging innovation, supporting education and improving the quality of life for their citizens. President Murmu's historic journey provides an opportunity to translate these shared aspirations into practical cooperation through institutional mechanisms, policy dialogue and collaborative initiatives. The significance of the visit extends beyond ceremonial diplomacy, as it demonstrates India's continued focus on nurturing meaningful international partnerships that contribute to regional stability, economic progress and people-centric development. By becoming the first Indian President to visit Moldova, President Murmu has opened a new chapter in bilateral relations that is expected to inspire greater political engagement, expanded economic cooperation and stronger cultural exchanges in the years ahead. The visit stands as a reflection of India's forward-looking foreign policy, which seeks to build enduring partnerships across continents while fostering peace, prosperity and sustainable development through dialogue, mutual respect and shared commitment to a rules-based international order. As President Murmu continues the first leg of her three-nation tour, the outcomes of her engagements in Moldova are expected to further reinforce India's growing diplomatic footprint in Europe and create fresh momentum for a partnership founded on friendship, trust, cooperation and a common vision for a more connected and prosperous future.

Over 8 Crore Manuscripts Digitised under Gyan Bharatam Mission: Dr Mandaviya

New Delhi: India has taken another significant step towards preserving its vast civilisational heritage with the rapid progress of the Gyan Bharatam Mission, a nationwide initiative aimed at safeguarding priceless manuscripts through modern digital technology. Replying to supplementaries in the Lok Sabha, Union Minister Dr. Mansukh Mandaviya informed the House that more than eight crore manuscript pages have already been digitised under the mission, marking one of the country's largest knowledge preservation efforts. He said the initiative reflects the government's commitment to protecting India's rich literary, philosophical, scientific and cultural traditions while making these invaluable records easily available for researchers, students and the general public. According to the Minister, the mission has already completed a nationwide survey covering more than one crore manuscripts, creating a comprehensive database of manuscripts preserved in libraries, temples, monasteries, educational institutions, museums, private collections and other repositories spread across the country. He further stated that more than three lakh seventy-four thousand manuscripts have already been uploaded onto digital platforms, enabling wider access and ensuring that fragile historical documents are preserved for future generations. The Gyan Bharatam Mission has emerged as an ambitious national effort to bridge India's ancient knowledge systems with modern technology by converting delicate handwritten manuscripts into secure digital records. For centuries, millions of manuscripts written on palm leaves, birch bark, handmade paper, cloth and other traditional materials have remained scattered across different regions of India, many of them vulnerable to decay because of age, humidity, insects, natural disasters and inadequate preservation facilities. The mission seeks to address these challenges through scientific conservation, high-quality digitisation and systematic documentation. India possesses one of the world's richest manuscript traditions, covering subjects ranging from philosophy, spirituality and religion to mathematics, astronomy, medicine, agriculture, architecture, music, literature, grammar, law and governance. Many of these manuscripts exist in Sanskrit, Pali, Prakrit, Tamil, Telugu, Kannada, Malayalam, Bengali, Assamese, Odia, Persian, Arabic and several other languages, reflecting the country's

linguistic and cultural diversity across centuries. Historians believe that these manuscripts preserve not only literary and religious works but also valuable records of scientific discoveries, local traditions, medicinal practices, administrative systems and social history that continue to hold relevance even today. By digitising these collections, the government aims to ensure that this intellectual wealth remains protected from physical deterioration while becoming accessible to scholars across India and around the world. The digitisation process involves identifying manuscripts through extensive surveys, assessing their condition, carrying out conservation wherever necessary, creating high-resolution digital images, recording detailed metadata and storing the digital copies in secure archival systems. Experts in conservation, linguistics, history, archaeology and information technology work together to ensure that the manuscripts are handled carefully and accurately documented. Digital preservation also reduces the need for repeated physical handling of original manuscripts, thereby extending their lifespan and protecting them from accidental damage. The uploaded manuscripts provide researchers with opportunities to examine rare texts without travelling long distances or exposing delicate originals to frequent use. The mission also supports cataloguing efforts that make it easier to search manuscripts by language, subject, script, author, period or geographical location. Such systematic indexing significantly improves academic research and encourages interdisciplinary studies involving history, literature, philosophy, science and culture. The government's focus on digital preservation aligns with India's broader Digital India vision, which seeks to use technology to improve governance, education, public services and knowledge sharing. Through the Gyan Bharatam Mission, digital infrastructure is being used not only for administrative efficiency but also for cultural preservation, ensuring that historical treasures become part of the country's digital knowledge ecosystem. The availability of digitised manuscripts is expected to encourage universities, research institutions and independent scholars to undertake new studies on India's intellectual traditions while also facilitating international academic collaborations. Students pursuing higher education in fields such as archaeology, linguistics, history, classical studies and

NEET results out

New Delhi: The National Testing Agency (NTA) has declared the results of the National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test Undergraduate (NEET-UG) 2026 re-examination, bringing relief to nearly 20 lakh aspirants and setting the stage for the country's largest medical admission process. The announcement marks a significant milestone in the annual academic calendar, ensuring that admissions to undergraduate medical, dental, AYUSH, veterinary, nursing and other allied health science programmes proceed without delay. According to the NTA, more than 11 lakh candidates have qualified for admission this year, reflecting the intense competition for a limited number of seats across government and private institutions. Candidates can now access their scorecards through the official NEET portal using their application credentials. The testing agency emphasized that the results have been released within the planned schedule to maintain the counselling timeline and facilitate timely admissions across medical institutions. The declaration of results concludes one of the most closely watched entrance examinations in the country, with students, parents, educational institutions and policymakers closely monitoring every stage of the process. This year's re-examination witnessed participation from approximately 20 lakh candidates, who appeared at 5,440 examination centres spread across 551 cities in India and 14 international cities, highlighting the enormous logistical exercise undertaken to conduct the examination smoothly and securely. The extensive network of centres reflected the nationwide reach of NEET and the growing demand for medical education among Indian students. NTA officials reiterated that elaborate security measures, digital monitoring systems and strict examination protocols were implemented to ensure transparency, fairness and integrity during the re-examination process. The agency coordinated with state administrations, district authorities, educational institutions and law enforcement agencies to provide a secure testing environment and prevent any irregularities. Following the announcement of results, the focus now shifts to the counselling process, which will determine admissions to MBBS, BDS, BAMS, BHMS, BUMS, BSMS, veterinary science, nursing and several allied health science courses offered by institutions across the country. The Medical Counselling Committee (MCC) is expected to conduct counselling for the All India Quota seats, while respective state authorities will oversee admissions under state quotas. Candidates who have qualified will be required to participate in multiple rounds of counselling, exercise their preferences for colleges and courses, verify their documents and complete admission formalities within prescribed timelines. The counselling process plays a crucial role in matching candidates with institutions based on merit, reservation policies and seat availability. Medical colleges across India eagerly await the commencement of admissions, as the academic session depends on the timely completion of counselling. Experts

believe that maintaining the admission calendar helps institutions begin classes on schedule, minimizing disruptions to academic activities and clinical training. For students, the release of results marks the culmination of months of preparation, hard work and determination. Many aspirants dedicate several years to preparing for NEET, often balancing school education with intensive coaching and self-study. The examination has become one of the most competitive entrance tests in the country, attracting candidates from every state and diverse educational backgrounds. Each year, lakhs of students compete for a comparatively limited number of undergraduate medical seats, making merit and performance critical determinants of success. The increasing popularity of medical education reflects the growing aspiration among young Indians to pursue careers in healthcare, clinical research, public health and allied medical professions. Beyond traditional MBBS programmes, NEET scores are now widely accepted for admissions to dental, AYUSH and several allied healthcare courses, providing candidates with multiple career pathways. Government initiatives aimed at expanding medical education have also contributed to rising opportunities. In recent years, the number of medical colleges and MBBS seats has steadily increased across the country through the establishment of new government medical colleges and expansion of existing institutions. These measures are intended to address the growing demand for qualified healthcare professionals while strengthening the nation's healthcare infrastructure. The expansion has also improved regional access to medical education, allowing students from smaller towns and rural areas greater opportunities to pursue professional courses closer to home. Nevertheless, competition remains intense due to the large number of applicants each year. The NTA has consistently stressed its commitment to conducting examinations in a transparent, technology-driven and candidate-friendly manner. The agency has introduced multiple measures over the years to strengthen examination security, including biometric verification, enhanced surveillance, digital attendance systems, secure transportation of question papers and close coordination with local authorities. Such initiatives are designed to preserve the credibility of one of India's most important entrance examinations. The successful conduct of this year's re-examination demonstrates the administrative capacity required to manage an examination involving millions of candidates across hundreds of cities simultaneously. Educational experts note that NEET has emerged as a unified national gateway for undergraduate medical education, replacing multiple entrance examinations and creating a standardized merit-based admission process across the country. This uniform system has simplified admissions while ensuring equal opportunities for students irrespective of their geographical location or educational board.

Indology are likely to benefit from easier access to authenticated source material. The initiative also has the potential to promote translations of rare manuscripts into modern Indian and foreign languages, thereby expanding public understanding of India's knowledge traditions beyond specialised academic circles. Experts believe that many undiscovered texts preserved in manuscript form may contain valuable insights into ancient scientific methods, environmental knowledge, traditional medicine, water management, metallurgy, mathematics and astronomy, making systematic digitisation an important investment in future research. The nationwide survey conducted under the mission represents another major achievement, as locating manuscripts spread across diverse institutions and private collections has historically been a challenging task. Many families, temples and monasteries have safeguarded manuscripts for generations without formal cataloguing or preservation support. By documenting these collections, the mission creates an inventory that can guide future conservation efforts while encouraging owners to participate voluntarily in preserving their heritage. Public awareness campaigns and institutional partnerships are expected to play an important role in expanding the mission's reach, ensuring that more hidden collections are identified and protected before irreversible damage occurs. Digitisation also supports disaster preparedness by creating secure digital backups that can survive fires, floods, earthquakes or other unforeseen events that may destroy original documents. The government's emphasis on preserving manuscripts reflects the recognition that knowledge heritage is as valuable as monuments, archaeological sites and cultural artefacts. While historical buildings preserve architectural achievements, manuscripts preserve the ideas, discoveries and intellectual contributions that shaped Indian civilisation over thousands of years. The mission therefore complements wider efforts to conserve museums, archives, libraries and cultural institutions across the country. The digitised collections are also expected to contribute to educational content, exhibitions, digital museums and public outreach programmes that introduce younger generations to India's literary and scientific legacy. Technology enables manuscripts to be viewed in high resolution.

Does holding your pee really harm your bladder? What can go wrong?

You know the feeling when you just have to go. But in the busy, fast-paced life that you’re living, that’ll sometimes have to wait as you commute to work, reply an email, or you just can’t find a clean bathroom. So, you grit your teeth, cross your legs a little tighter, and try not to think of the Jewel Rain Vortex. But as you get a little older and a little more incontinent



(pregnant women and male seniors with prostate issues would know), you might wonder: Is holding off the urge to urinate making you pay back now? What harm have you done to your bladder over all those years of delaying your loo visits? We find out from urologists.

HOW MUCH URINE CAN A BLADDER HOLD ON AVERAGE?

It varies but a normal, functioning adult bladder can comfortably hold about 300ml to 500ml (about 1 to 2 cups) of urine, according to Adjunct Assistant Professor Karthik Thandapani, a consultant urologist at Ng Teng Fong General Hospital. That is also typically the amount of urine that triggers a strong urge to head for the bathroom, said Dr Chong Weiliang, a specialist urologist at Advanced Urology Associates – although other urologists such as Dr Lee Yee Mun from Nexus Surgical said the initial urge could start at about 200ml to 300ml; the “got to go” feeling comes at about 300ml to 400ml, he said. In other individuals, their bladder capacity may even go up to 600ml to 800ml. “Beyond this, significant discomfort usually develops,” said Adj Asst Prof Thandapani. Do men have bigger bladders than women and so, they don’t have to visit the bathroom as often? “Men may have slightly larger average bladder capacities due to body size differences, though individual variation is more important than sex differences,” said Dr Chong. Dr Lee added another perspective. “It is believed that men have greater bladder outlet resistance due to a longer urethra and a prostate (the muscles in this gland help to start and stop urine flow) that may contribute to the differences in bladder capacity,” he said.

HOW LONG DOES YOUR BODY TAKE TO PRODUCE URINE?

It takes about 15 to 30 minutes after drinking water for it to appear as urine in a healthy, well-hydrated person, said Adj Asst Prof Thandapani. Water can reach the bladder surprisingly quickly as the body is continuously filtering blood through the kidneys, he explained. “Urine production is an ongoing process rather than a simple drink-to-bladder pathway.” The process could also take as long as 30 minutes to 2 hours, said Dr Lee – especially if you’re dehydrated. “In a dehydrated situation, the body works to conserve water, which is needed to replenish the cells and tissues; thus, urine production will be slower.”

Here’s a look at some of the activities that can influence how soon you need the bathroom: Sipping versus gulping: “Gulping may result in a sharp drop in sodium concentration in the blood, which triggers diuresis or increased urine production and excretion by the kidneys,” said Dr Lee.

Consuming certain drinks: Diuretics such as caffeine and alcohol inhibit an antidiuretic hormone (ADH) in the body known as vasopressin, said Dr Lee. “This hormone regulates how much the kidneys re-absorb water that has been filtered out from blood plasma. When its action is inhibited, more urine production is the outcome.” Generally, said Adj Asst Prof Thandapani, plain water, caffeinated drinks and alcohol are the quickest to convert into urine. On the other hand, milk-based drinks, high-protein shakes, very sugary beverages, and fluids consumed together with large meals take the longest.

Sitting a lot: “Sedentary behaviour, and prolonged sitting or standing may result in fluid pooling in the legs and feet – which is why our ankles appear swollen by evening,” said Dr Lee. “When we lie down in the evening, this pooled fluid moves back into blood stream circulation and results in increased blood volume, which stimulates the kidneys to increase urine production.”

On the plane: The cabin’s cold temperature

and low humidity may make you want to visit the loo more often. That’s because “cooler temperatures decrease ADH, while warmer environments increase ADH levels”, explained Dr Lee. However, it is not well understood how cabin pressure affects urine production, he said. Another reason could be the dry cabin air, which can lead to mild dehydration. If you recall read-

ing earlier, dehydration can indeed slow down urine production – initially, explained Adj Asst Prof Thandapani. “But concentrated urine can irritate the bladder and create a sensation of urgency.”

WHAT HARM CAN HOLDING YOUR PEE CAUSE? CAN YOUR BLADDER RUPTURE?

If you habitually delay urination over long periods, you may end up stretching the bladder beyond its usual capacity known as overdistention, cautioned Dr Chong. When overdistention occurs, your bladder muscle is weakened and unable to completely empty itself of urine. That spells bad news as stagnant urine may increase the risk of urinary tract infections or UTIs, warned Adj Asst Prof Thandapani. Overdistention may also cause you to lose sensitivity to bladder fullness and not recognise the urge to urinate early enough, he said. As for the bladder rupturing, all the urologists agreed that it is rare. “(Bladder rupturing) is uncommon and usually occurs in the context of severe trauma, intoxication, obstruction or major urinary retention, rather than ordinary, day-to-day ‘holding it in’ situations,” said Adj Asst Prof Thandapani. Other specific circumstances that may rupture the bladder, added Dr Lee, include psychiatric disorders that impair the sensation of bladder fullness. Also, “prior surgery or radiation weakens the bladder wall, and/or cause dysfunction of the nerves resulting in decreased bladder sensation.”

BUT ISN’T THE BLADDER A MUSCLE? WOULDN’T HOLDING YOUR PEE HELP TO STRENGTHEN IT?

No, it doesn’t work that way with your bladder. Resistance training, such as lifting weights, can strengthen skeletal muscles, explained Dr Lee. But your bladder muscle is different. “The bladder’s detrusor muscle is a smooth muscle (a type of involuntary muscle tissue found in

the walls of hollow organs such as the bladder) that is designed to contract and empty – and not strengthen through prolonged stretching,” he said. “Chronically overstretched bladder muscle becomes damaged and dysfunctional, not stronger.”

HOW SOON SHOULD YOU VISIT THE BATHROOM THEN?

A typical healthy urination frequency is about four to eight times per day, according to Dr Chong. “Many adults void approximately every three to four hours while awake. But regularly waking more than once nightly to urinate (aka nocturia) may warrant medical review if it’s bothersome.” As for how long you can safely put off visiting the bathroom, Dr Lee said that “there is no scientific basis to recommend a time limit”. “The recommendation is to respond to the urge rather than routinely or repeatedly delaying it.” Dr Chong added that “most healthy adults can safely delay urination occasionally for a few hours”.

In fact, Adj Asst Prof Thandapani advocated cultivating healthy urination habits, including:

- Emptying the bladder after waking up.
- Not delaying urination for excessively long periods.
- Urinating before long journeys or bed-time.
- Maintaining adequate hydration throughout the day.
- “What is most important is consistency and listening to your body’s natural signals rather than following a rigid schedule,” he said.

“A healthy bladder is one that can comfortably store urine and empty fully without urgency, leakage, pain or significant disruption to daily life.” This means that the other extreme of urinating too frequently is just as bad. “Going ‘just in case’ too frequently may reduce functional bladder capacity over time,” he said.

WHEN SHOULD YOU SEE A DOCTOR?

- The presence of blood in your urine, urinary retention (inability to pass urine), or recurrent UTIs are signs that you need the doctor’s attention, said Dr Lee. These signs could point to stones or malignancy of the kidney, bladder or prostate; kidney failure; bladder distention; or underlying structural abnormality or obstruction.
- “Importantly, blood in the urine – even if painless and occurring only once – should always be evaluated by a doctor, especially in older adults or smokers,” said Adj Asst Prof Thandapani. “Persistent urinary symptoms should not simply be dismissed as ‘normal ageing’, as many bladder and urinary conditions are treatable when identified early.”

In addition, he said, you should seek medical attention if you experience:

- Pain or burning during urination
- Blood in the urine
- Frequent urinary tract infections
- Sudden changes in urinary habits
- Difficulty holding urine or leakage
- Difficulty passing urine
- Weak urine stream
- A sensation of incomplete emptying
- Needing to urinate very frequently without obvious cause
- Waking multiple times at night to urinate
- Lower abdominal pain or bladder distention
- Fever associated with urinary symptoms

Do you need cardio if you already strength train? What your heart is missing if you don’t

You enjoy strength training and do it a few times a week. You’re also active in your daily life. But you don’t do cardio workouts. Does it matter?

Strength training has surged in popularity in recent years, and for good reason: A growing body of research suggests that maintaining muscle is vital to healthy ageing. This buzz has led some people to prioritise strength training over aerobic exercise, said Dr Julia Iafate, a sports medicine physician at NYU Langone Health. There’s been a “pendulum swing” toward muscle-building workouts, she said, in part because strength training can be more time-efficient and can lead to more visible results than cardio, she said. While major health organisations recommend two sessions of strength training and 150 minutes of moderate aerobic activity per week, many people struggle to carve out the time to exercise at all. We asked exercise and sports medicine experts to explain what you might be missing if you focus exclusively on strength training.

STRENGTH TRAINING ALONE BRINGS MANY HEALTH BENEFITS

Strength training helps you maintain strong muscles, which increases your chances of staying ac-

tive and independent as you age. It can also protect against osteoporosis and lower your risk of falls. Regular muscle-strengthening exercise can improve other key health markers, too, including your cardiovascular health, said Dr Christopher Tanayan, a sports cardiologist at Northwell Health in New York. It can lower your blood pressure and improve your cholesterol, and lower your risk of diabetes, heart attack, stroke and some cancers. On its own, strength training can lower your risk of death from any cause by about 15 per cent. “That’s not nothing,” Dr Iafate said.

CARDIO BUILDS THE ENGINE THAT WILL KEEP YOU GOING

To maximise your chances of living a long and healthy life, you need aerobic exercise, Dr Tanayan said. By only strength training, he added, “you’re leaving something on the table, in terms of longevity.” Moderate to vigorous aerobic exercise – where you can still talk, but have to catch your breath between sentences – stresses your heart in ways that help it become more efficient. It also keeps your blood vessels healthy and can help you grow new blood vessels throughout your body. Over time, your cardiovascular system is better able to deliver oxygen to your muscles and

organs, which helps nearly every body system function more optimally. Without regular aerobic exercise, your heart becomes less efficient and your blood vessels shrink and deteriorate, Dr Tanayan said. Kate Baird, a clinical exercise physiologist at the Hospital for Special Surgery in New York, suggested thinking of your body like a car. It can look great on the outside, she said, but “you can’t forget that there’s an engine inside that also needs to be able to drive it down the street at the speed that you’d like.” In other words, she said, regardless of how strong and resilient your muscles, bones and joints are, if your cardiovascular system is suffering, “eventually, you’re going to have to slow down.” Regularly elevating your heart rate can also make everyday activities – like climbing stairs, walking uphill or running for a bus – feel easier. A large body of evidence has found that aerobic exercise protects against cardiovascular disease, which is the leading cause of death for both men and women. (Some research suggests that strength training offers similar protection, though this connection hasn’t been studied as extensively.) Aerobic exercise also protects against many types of cancer. But

the most effective workout routine combines strength training with cardio. When you do both, your risk of dying from any cause drops by at least 40 per cent compared with doing no exercise. That’s “astronomical,” Dr Iafate said. “No peptide is going to get that for you. No biohacking is going to get that for you.”

SNEAK CARDIO INTO YOUR STRENGTH ROUTINE

If getting 150 minutes of aero-

A few studies have indicated that antipsychotics are associated with an increased risk of dementia. There is also research linking the drugs to cognitive impairment in middle-aged users. And people with dementia prescribed antipsychotics to help manage psychiatric symptoms have an increased risk of

death. Taken together, these findings suggest the drugs may have a direct negative impact on the brain. If people are prescribed these drugs for a condition like schizophrenia, then they should certainly take them, since the immediate need for treatment outweighs the potential long-term risk, said David Llewellyn, a professor of clinical epidemiology and digital health at the University of Exeter Medical

School in England. But he said there’s been “a big push to reduce the prescription of antipsychotics in order to manage behavior” in people with dementia. **BENZODIAZEPINES**

These mental health medications, which work on a specific neurotransmitter to suppress brain activity, have also been linked to dementia. The American Geriatrics Society recommends older adults avoid benzodiazepines because they can increase the risk of cognitive impairment, delirium and falls. However, sleep issues and anxiety – two of the most common reasons for a benzodiazepine prescription – can both increase the risk of cognitive impairment or be early signs of dementia. Indeed, a few recent studies suggest it may be these underlying health issues, not the medication, that’s behind the association. To try to disentangle the cause and effect, Geoffrey Joyce, a professor of pharmaceutical and health economics at the University of Southern California, ran an analysis where he only looked at people who were prescribed benzodiazepines for back pain, which is not associated with dementia. He found no relationship between prescriptions for the medication and dementia diagnoses. Dr Joyce said that doesn’t definitively prove that benzodiazepines don’t increase dementia risk, but “it stemmed the tide” of concern. “All we would conclude is: We don’t see that. It needs further study,” he added.

PROTON PUMP INHIBITORS

Conflicting evidence has also been reported about proton pump inhibitors, which are often used to treat acid reflux. Some studies found they increased the risk of dementia, while other research did not. It’s unclear why drugs that act on stomach acid would affect the brain. One theory is that they can cause a deficiency in Vitamin B12, which is linked to cognitive impairment. It’s also possible that the connection is an artefact of incomplete data. Some proton pump inhibitors, like Prilosec, are purchased over the counter, so their use can be more difficult to track and analyse than prescription medications.

Seamless, But

The Brahmaputra keeps its own time, slow and stubborn

it seems seamless but tells a long story

carrying boats, monsoon floods, and whispers from villages it passed

flood cross paths with scream of pupil

and in the water's mirror, a schoolbag floats like a question mark

but hands reach anyway, muddy and certain

still it continues to flow leaving what it is, it is

By SUSMITA LAHKAR

Gaza civil defence says Israeli strikes kill 12, including family of six

Gaza city: Gaza's civil defence agency and witnesses said Israeli strikes killed 12 people, including a family of six, in the Palestinian territory on Tuesday (Jul 21). A fragile ceasefire remains in place be-



tween Israel and Palestinian militant group Hamas, but it has not halted the violence in the Gaza Strip, and efforts to secure a lasting agreement to end the war have stalled. One airstrike hit a house belonging to the Al-Masri family in central Gaza City in the north, according to the territory's civil defence agency, which operates as a rescue service under Hamas. Witnesses said six members of the family were killed, including four children. Gaza's Al-Shifa hospital said it had received the bodies and the wounded. An Israeli military source told AFP that a strike had targeted "a Hamas terrorist" in the area, without elaborating. At the site, AFP journalists observed extensive damage to the charred multi-storey house, whose roof had almost completely collapsed. Relatives gathered at the hospital. Some wept as the body of a girl was placed in a white plastic bag and laid alongside the other bodies wrapped in thick blankets. The "attack took us by surprise", said Ahmed al-Masri, who identified himself to AFP as a survivor of the strike. "I could hear the children crying out for help, yet I was

unable to save them," he added. "My brother's entire family was wiped from the civil registry: him, his wife and their four children." He said he had helped his children escape through a window, while flames devoured the building. Another witness, Youssef al-Masri, said the strike took place around 2am. "While we were asleep, we heard the sound of a massive explosion and found that the house had been shelled, destroyed and engulfed in flames," he said. The civil defence agency said six other people were killed on Tuesday in another Israeli strike in Gaza. The Israeli military said it carried out an airstrike against "several armed terrorists transferring weapons in a vehicle" in southern Gaza. The United Nations said on Tuesday that Israeli attacks had killed at least 57 Palestinians from Jul 13 to 20. "The Israeli military has intensified its attacks in Gaza in recent days," UN rights office spokesman Thameen Al-Kheetan told reporters in Geneva. "Nowhere is safe for Palestinians in Gaza." The Israeli army has in recent days announced a series of strikes in the territory targeting Hamas and Islamic Jihad members who it said were involved in the Oct 7, 2023 attack on Israel that set off the war, or in holding hostages after. At least 1,168 Palestinians have been killed since the truce took effect last October, according to Gaza's health ministry, which operates under Hamas authority and whose figures are considered reliable by the United Nations. The Israeli military says it has lost five soldiers in Gaza over the same period, as well as one civilian contractor. Restrictions imposed on media outlets and limited access in Gaza prevent AFP from independently verifying tolls or freely covering the violence there.

US readies new tariffs as Trump's 10% global levy to expire

Washington: The United States is set to impose new tariffs that could hit dozens of countries soon, trade envoy Jamieson Greer signalled on Tuesday (Jul 21), with President Donald Trump's temporary global levies due to expire this week. The Trump administration has prepared fresh tariffs targeting 60 trading partners over their alleged failures to act against forced labour, as officials push to rebuild the US leader's trade agenda after legal setbacks. "We expect to see some action soon," Greer told CNBC when asked if new duties were incoming. He did not specify a timeline. Trump imposed a 10 per cent global duty this year after a swath of his tariffs were struck down by the Supreme Court in February, but this levy expires on Friday. Analysts expect that new tariffs over forced labour concerns - set between 10 per cent and 12.5 per cent - would replace these temporary duties. They come as Trump makes a renewed push to use tariffs as leverage against US trading partners, sparking fears of retaliation and diplomatic tensions. Washington announced a fresh 25 per cent duty on certain Brazilian goods last week, and on Monday unveiled a 50 per cent levy on many Canadian products to take effect in 30 days. Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney said Tuesday that he was looking at "all options", adding that he and Trump had agreed to "intensify discussions" in the coming weeks on a possible deal. On Tuesday, Trump announced a new 100 per cent sector-specific tariff on imported generic drugs to take effect from August 2028, with that level rising to 200 per cent in 2029. For now, the US leader said the tariff on generic drugs would be cut to zero from August 2026, in an effort to build a window for the onshoring of such pharmaceutical production to the United States.

FORCED LABOUR CONCERNS

Greer said Tuesday that new action on forced labour will cover the majority of US trade, with the moves likely to reignite trade tensions. A 10 per cent tariff rate would hit US imports from partners including Canada, the European Union, Mexico, Taiwan and the United Kingdom. They were found to have taken steps against forced labour. Goods from over 40 other major economies like China, India and Japan face a 12.5 per cent levy. The EU previously said that it considers tariffs imposed on these grounds "un-

justified".

CANADA PRESSURE

Washington's planned 50 per cent tariff on Canada also comes as US-Mexico talks over a North American free trade pact intensify. Wash-

ington recently declined to extend the accord in its current form. Greer is set to travel to Mexico from Wednesday to Friday for discussions linked to a joint review of the US-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA). But negotiations with Canada have proceeded at a slower pace. Carney on Tuesday did not suggest that he would head to Washington for talks. Some lawyers see Trump's use of an untested legal provision - Section 338 of the Tariff Act of 1930 - as a means to gain leverage over Canada in USMCA negotiations. Trade lawyer Dave Townsend of Dorsey & Whitney added that higher tariffs "appear to be aimed at encouraging an agreement between Canada and the United States, or in retaliation for the failure to reach such agreement, or both.". The question, he said, is whether both sides will start a "cycle of escalation



threats over wildfire smoke that descended into the United States.

BRAZIL TENSIONS

US plans for a 25 per cent tariff on Brazilian goods over accusations of unfair trade practices have separately drawn a sharp rebuke from the Latin American giant. The levy is due to take effect Wednesday, while shaping up as a major campaign flashpoint just months before Brazil's presidential election. A range of products like beef, coffee and certain aircraft parts will be exempted, as will some goods that the United States does not produce. Still, the American Chamber of Commerce for Brazil recently warned that Washington's measure places Brazil among countries "facing the most restrictive conditions for access to the US market", affecting more than US\$11 billion in exports.

Hegseth estimates Iran war has cost US\$37.5 billion as he defends funding request at fiery hearing

Washington: US Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth faced fiery questions and protests Tuesday (Jul 21) over the war with Iran, which he estimated has cost US\$37.5 billion so far, as Republicans prepare a US\$95 billion package to fund the military, along with other White House priorities. Hegseth provided the new estimate, up from earlier assessments, during a combative Senate Appropriations Committee hearing, which came days after the Pentagon announced that three more American service members have died in the conflict, bringing the death toll to 17, and that more than 100 have been injured since early July. Several times protesters interrupted his opening remarks. Hegseth said the supplemental war funding is an "urgent, necessary" injection of money, and with President Donald Trump's proposed US\$1.5 trillion defence budget, a generational investment in the military. "Without these funds, we face critical shortfalls," Hegseth testified. But Senator Patty Murray, the top Democrat on the panel, warned of "another forever war". "This war is now spiralling out of control again," Murray said. President Donald Trump has said repeatedly that "a deal is near, and the war will be over soon". she said. "But now, he's asking for US\$70 billion more - and for us to just trust him it'll all work out fine". General Dan Caine, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and Agriculture Secretary Brooke Rollins were also testifying before the panel. The proposed budget package includes US\$60 billion and US\$12 billion for other national security needs, along with US\$10 billion for farm aid and US\$10 billion for voting law changes. Before the hearing, the White House issued a statement urging support of the budget resolution, "without modification - immediately".

WAR FUNDS MAKE UP THE BULK OF THE GOP BUDGET PLAN

War funding makes up the bulk of the GOP's new budget proposal, one last priority package the Republicans hope to launch before lawmakers recess to campaign for the mid-term elections. The package aims to help farmers struggling under Trump's tariffs and to pay for voter law changes, none of it paid for with offsets. Most Americans continue to disapprove of how Trump is handling Iran, according to an AP-NORC poll.

Gas prices have spiked as Iran works to control oil shipments through the Strait of Hormuz, US munitions are running low from the onslaught of American missile strikes and Trump has shifted away from his own campaign promise not to draw the US into prolonged military conflicts. Nevertheless, Trump has shown no signs of backing off the war, and the Republicans have largely refused to confront his strategy or use Congress' power of the purse and war powers authority to halt the conflict. "The commander in chief and the whole Department of War are working very hard to bring this



to a resolution," said House Speaker Mike Johnson at his weekly press conference on Tuesday. **QUESTIONS OVER THE WAR AND HEGSETH'S LEADERSHIP**

Hegseth appeared before the panel facing a torrent of questions about not only the war, but his own leadership of the department. Senator Susan Collins, the Republican chair of the committee, opened the hearing saying it's "deeply troubling" that the Pentagon has blocked or denied promotions to various officers, particularly women and minorities. Democratic Sen. Jeanne Shaheen of New Hampshire questioned why Hegseth is asking for more money when the department has not yet spent about half the US\$150 billion Republicans provided the Pentagon in last year's big budget bill. "Why are you asking the American people to absorb the cost of a war they don't support?" asked Shaheen. When Hegseth started describing the "historic nature" of Trump's military strategy, she cut him off. Hegseth later explained that the rest of last year's budget package would be spent by September. When GOP Senator Mike Rounds wanted to know if this funding request would be enough to

"get the job done", the general demurred. "I can't answer the question on what it will cost, because the enemy has a vote," Caine said.

TENSIONS FLARED DURING HOURS-LONG HEARING

Republican Senator John Kennedy of Louisiana was among several senators demanding answers over the situation in the Strait of Hormuz, asking if Iran will impose tolls on what historically has been an open waterway vital to the flow of oil. Caine said: "That's a hypothetical question, and I don't know the answer to that." But Kennedy retorted: "Guys, we need straight answers." Tensions exploded toward the end of the more than three-hour hearing. Senator Kirsten Gillibrand, D-NY, told Hegseth flatly that his war claims don't add up. Has the US obliterated Iran's nuclear capabilities or not? she demanded to know. "We're staying laser-focused on the objective," Hegseth responded, "and you're trying to make campaign commercials." Senator Jon Ossoff, D-Ga probed Hegseth's past assessments of the war, including the secretary's claims of Iran's surrender. When Democratic Sen. Gary Peters of Michigan said the administration's war strategy has been a complete "failure," Hegseth erupted. "Shame on you and others who call this a quagmire and a failure," Hegseth said. Peters told the secretary: "You, sir, are the failure." The senator said it's not the US troops who are failing, but their leaders. "You don't have a strategy," Peters said. "You don't have a long-term plan to actually win this war." Hegseth said Democrats have "Trump Derangement syndrome" and won't give him the money he needs. Peters said it's not about money, "but a question of leadership". This week, the Senate will consider another war powers resolution, having voted nearly a dozen times to try to halt the conflict.

REPUBLICANS WORK TO PASS BUDGET OVER DEMOCRATIC OBJECTIONS

The GOP budget proposal is expected to flow through the reconciliation process, which enables the majority to approve the plan on its own, over the objections of Democrats in the minority. It's the same lengthy process Republicans used to approve Trump's big tax cuts bill last summer, as well as Homeland Security money earlier this year. The proposal is headed toward a House vote this week, which would start the process by instructing various committees to begin drafting the legislation. Johnson can afford only a few defectors from his slim majority, and some conservatives want the funding offset with spending reductions elsewhere. GOP senators have so far panned the House budget plan, but are waiting to see if Johnson can kickstart the process.

Stocks rise despite climbing oil prices

New york: Stock markets rose Tuesday (Jul 21) as technology shares rebounded further, while oil prices climbed as Iran targeted US radar and air defence installations in the Gulf. "Traders have been treated to an odd sight today as oil prices rise in tandem with equities and precious metals," said Chris Beauchamp, Chief Market Analyst at online trading and investing platform IG. International benchmark Brent crude struck its highest level since mid-June, at US\$91.99 per barrel, before paring gains. Wall Street stocks spent the entire day in positive territory, with the S&P 500 finishing up 0.9 per cent. The stock market "doesn't seem as if it wants to go down at all," said CFRA Research's Sam Stovall, who pointed to positive results from General Motors and others. "I just think that Wall Street is expecting the earnings surprises to continue to the upside." Iran stepped up its attacks in the Middle East on Tuesday, two weeks after its war with the United States resumed, with Iran's Revolutionary Guards saying they had attacked and stopped two "non-compliant oil tankers" attempting to transit the Hormuz Strait. Tehran has attempted to blockade the strait - through which a fifth of the world's oil supplies transited before the war - as leverage since the US-Israeli attack that kickstarted the war on Feb 28. But US President Donald Trump said Tuesday that the United States plans more attacks, saying, "we're not finished at all ... we're not leaving right now." Trump also said he would "take care of" the Houthi rebels if the Iran-backed militant group follows through on its threatened block-

ade of Saudi ports. "Oil remains the key macro anchor," Sudden brokers wrote in a research note to clients. "We expect markets to remain headline-driven in the near term." But the higher oil prices didn't weigh on equities trading as it often does, with investors piling back into tech stocks. Tech stocks have in recent months been periodically hit by sharp drops as investors take fright at excessive valuations in the artificial intelligence (AI) sector, with chipmakers leading a rout las week. But Wall Street's tech-heavy Nasdaq index advanced for a second straight day, with semiconductors' stocks leading the gains. A recovery in tech shares will face a test with the release of earnings from Tesla and Alphabet in the coming days, followed by Microsoft, Meta, Apple and Amazon next week. "Big Tech earnings now need to prove that AI revenues, margins and cash flow can justify the scale" of the huge investments in AI infrastructure, noted Stephen Innes of SPI Asset Management. Bret Kenwell at eToro said investors now have higher expectations. "They want growth and guidance strong enough to justify elevated valuations," he said. Europe's main stock markets ended the day higher, with London's benchmark FTSE 100 index reacting positively to the appointment of John Healey as finance minister. Investors were watching British bond yields after new Prime Minister Andy Burnham - taking on stretched public finances - said he would cut taxes on household electricity bills. UK bond yields edged higher while the pound dipped.

Philippines, China summon each other's envoys over South China Sea incident

Beijing: Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr will summon China's ambassador in Manila, his office said on Tuesday (Jul 21), hours after Manila's envoy in Beijing was similarly summoned following accusations by both sides of provoking tensions in the contested South China Sea. Presidential Communications Undersecretary Claire Castro confirmed to reporters Marcos had summoned Chinese Ambassador Jing Quan at 5pm on Tuesday. Earlier in the day, China's foreign ministry said it summoned Manila's envoy to China. The summoning of ambassadors comes a day after the Philippines and China accused each other of an encounter in the Second Thomas Shoal of the South China Sea. Philippine officials

said one of its navy personnel was struck on the head but Beijing said Manila provoked the incident. "The Philippine side provoked the incident first, yet has turned around and made counter-accusations, distorted the facts and engaged in malicious hype," the Chinese foreign ministry said. The China Coast Guard (CCG) said on Monday that two rubber boats sent by the Philippines' grounded vessel BRP Sierra Madre rammed into a Chinese patrol boat in the South China Sea, and the Philippine personnel initiated "malicious attacks" against Chinese law enforcement officers by using oars and long sticks. Such diplomatic summons are relatively rare despite frequent tensions between China and the Philippines in the South China Sea.

Assamese Film Rudra Now Streaming on Reeldrama

Guwahati : - The much-anticipated Assamese film Rudra has officially premiered on the OTT platform Reeldrama, bringing one of the region’s most talked-



about cinematic works to a wider digital audience. Rudra is already creating ripples on the awards circuit, directed with a strong regional sensibility and grounded storytelling. Veteran Assamese superstar Ravi Sharma, the lead actor of the film, has been awarded the prestigious INCA Award and the Filmfare Assam Best Actor Award for his power-packed and emotionally layered performance. The performance of Sharma in Rudra has been

praised for its depth, restraint and intensity, which only goes to prove his stature as one of the most enduring and versatile performers of Assamese cinema. His performance is viewed as a key element to the film’s critical success. In a statement on the film’s digital release, the team behind Rudra said, “We are excited that the film is available on Reeldrama and the OTT premiere provides a chance for audiences outside Assam to experience contemporary Assamese storytelling at scale.” Rudra, which comes to Reeldrama, joins a growing list of regional films that are finding national and international visibility via digital platforms. The release is an indication of the continuing rise of Assamese cinema in the changing entertainment landscape of India where the stories of the regions are finding a wider resonance among the audiences of different hues. Rudra is now streaming on Reeldrama. ReelDrama is a premier OTT streaming platform dedicated to celebrating and distributing Indian regional content, with a primary focus on Assamese-language entertainment. The platform offers one of the world’s largest digital catalogues of Assamese content, alongside films, web series, mobile theatre, music, cultural programming, educational masterclasses, and more. Through technology, creator support and global accessibility, ReelDrama continues to connect regional storytellers with audiences around the world.

Monsoon travel tips you should not skip

Monsoon in India isn’t just a season—it’s a feeling. The hills wrap themselves in mist, waterfalls roar back to life, and the scent of wet earth stirs up nostalgia and promise. As everything slows down, monsoons also bring lush landscapes, romantic rain showers, and refreshing escapes. Travelling during the monsoon season can be a magical experience. It’s one of those lovely times when surroundings take all your worries away and you are reduced to a mute spectator, basking in the glory of the moment. Monsoon season is one of the best times of year for travellers to explore a rainforest, a beachside town or a hilly city which offers ecstasy, beauty, and divine delight. As a traveller, you must be careful while wandering around during the monsoon due to extreme weather conditions. The wet season can make travel more complicated. If you’re planning a trip during this rainy season, the constant temperature shifts can take a toll on your skin and leave it irritated and oily. The high humidity can affect skin health negatively. Like any trip to a far-away destination, preparation is key. The following practical tips explain how to travel during the rainy season:

- 1---Eat Healthy --- It's OK to splurge on vacation, but maintaining balance is a good idea. Hitting the road or catching a flight for a monsoon trip this year? Travelling can be tough on healthy habits. If you’re trying to eat healthy, dining while travelling and away from home can derail even the best of intentions. Whether you find yourself famished at the airport or are tempted by fast food joints along the interstate, the challenges are there. Prioritise steaming-hot cooked foods, peelable fresh fruits, and safe hydration. Avoid raw vegetables, street vendor items, and tap water. If you’re selecting food from a buffet or salad bar, make sure the hot food is steaming and the cold food is chilled. Avoid eating raw foods. Fruits or vegetables may be safer to eat if you can peel them yourself or wash them in bottled or disinfected water. Carbonated drinks in bottles or cans, such as sodas or sparkling water, are typically safe because the bubbles indicate that the bottle was sealed at the factory and not tampered with. Avoid drinks that have ice. Hot coffee or tea should be safe if it is served steaming hot. Do not drink coffee or tea that is served warm or at room temperature.
- 2--- Use Waterproof Sunscreen Despite the rain and cloud cover during the monsoon season, UV rays can still harm our skin, even on overcast days. Sun is barely visible in this season, so people tend to skip the sunscreen, thinking their skin will not get damaged as the weather is cloudy and rainy. However, UV radiation can be higher during cloudy days because the clouds can reflect and scatter the UV rays, increasing their intensity. The weather is humid, and the thick formulation of sunscreens can make your skin oily, sticky, and prone to sweating all day. So it would be a good idea to pick something that’s gel-based, lightweight and does not end up clogging your pores. For the monsoon season, one must opt

- for water-resistant sunscreen. A single application will not protect your skin the entire day. Sunscreen must be reapplied every three hours for the best result and strictly to reapply after prolonged sun exposure, heavy sweating, swimming, or heavy exercising.
- 3---Keep it Minimal Applying makeup can be challenging during humid weather during travelling as they might have a chance of melting in the rain. In the monsoon season, less is always more. So, you may want to consider pausing the usage of heavy moisturisers and facial oils for skin prep.



- Embrace a minimalistic approach to your makeup routine. Opt for a natural, dewy look with gel-based moisturisers and lightweight serums enriched with hyaluronic products that enhance your features rather than masking them. For your base, you can also substitute a foundation with a BB or CC cream to even out your complexion, followed up with a hydrating concealer to cover up any blemishes
- 4---Antifungal Treatment ----- A jump in a puddle in the rain might satisfy your inner child, but this could cause a host of fungal infections for you. High levels of humidity in the air allow bacteria and infections to multiply with ease, which leads to problems like itching, swelling, and a foul smell. The air is

saturated with moisture during the rainy season, which makes it an ideal breeding season for bacteria, viruses and fungi. In humans, fungal infections happen when an attacking fungus takes over a part of your body, and your immune system is not capable enough to ward it off. Lotion-based moisturisers are better than cream-based ones in this season. Pure coconut oil provides instant relief. In its unheated form, coconut oil works as a potent antifungal agent. Applying it over the skin makes it a good, safe topical medicine. Neem oil is considered a natural antifungal. Neem is easily available and works as one of the best treatments for fungal infections. Washing the infected area with neem water helps in treating fungal infections. To make neem water, boil neem leaves in water for a few minutes and let it cool. It can be used to massage the feet and can be applied to the toes. Lightly dab the neem oil onto the area using a cotton swab or cotton ball, and allow it to soak in for up to 30 minutes. Wash off the oil with warm water. Dry and crush some neem leaves. Add this powder to sandalwood powder and make it a paste with rose water. Now apply this paste to the area where you have the infection. In feet and nails

5---Don’t forget your rainy day essentials. A signature fragrance makes everything better, especially on grey days. Carry a soft fabric wipe or mini handkerchief misted with your signature scent. It gives your preparation a feminine and unforgettable touch.

A raincoat is an essential item you should always keep in your vehicle's seat compartment for maximum protection during a downpour. Create a playlist of songs that match your rainy season mood and relax as you listen to the rain outside. Styling during the monsoon isn't about staying dry. It is about staying divine while staying dry. Whether you’ve got caught in a downpour or you’ve been forced to walk through an unavoidable puddle, Waterproof boots are rightfully beloved for their ability to shield your feet from the discomfort of damp conditions. So Waterproof shoes are essential for maintaining comfort and dryness during rainy season travelling. Choosing the right pair of waterproof shoes can be a daunting task for travellers. It’s critical to try shoes before you buy them whenever possible to ensure the upper fits the way you like. Preferably buy sneakers that are comfortable to walk in and are skid-free. Invest in a pair of popular brand waterproof, windproof and breathable socks that live up to their name. Not only will they keep your feet safe from dirty water and slippery paths, but they also make for a great statement piece for your outfits!

Shahnaz Husain

13 iconic Odia festive recipes, 1 YiPPee! twist during Rath Yatra at Puri

Guwahati: This Rath Yatra, SunfeastYiPPee! celebrated Odisha's rich culinary heritage with 'Baro Masa, YiPPee! Parba', a first-of-its-kind cultural and culinary experience inspired by the state's cherished philosophy of 'Baro Masa, Tero Parba' (12 months, 13 festivals). Showcasing the versatility of YiPPee! noodles, the campaign reimagined some of Odisha's most-loved festive dishes into innovative noodle creations, offering consumers a fresh way to experience familiar flavours. Inspired by Odisha's vibrant festivals and the rich storytelling tradition of Pattachitra art, Baro Masa, YiPPee! Parba featured a grand pavilion at the Puri Beach with 12 month-themed windows represent-

ing the Odia calendar. Each window showcased a unique culinary innovation that reimagined beloved regional dishes with the twist of YiPPee! noodles. From Potala Posta with a creamy Posto-inspired noodle fusion, to Dahi Bara Aloo Dum infused with YiPPee! noodles, Chaula Bara stuffed with noodles and Muga Dali Khichdi blended with YiPPee!, every recipe offered a fresh take on traditional flavours. The initiative celebrated Odisha's rich culinary heritage while transforming classic regional favourites into exciting, contemporary creations. Adding to the celebration, MasterChef Season 6 winner Abhinav Nayak interacted with visitors and presented the specially curated YiPPee! dishes,



FDA’s ruling on Nicotine raises case for India to commission own scientific appraisal

plifies this pragmatic approach: in COVID-19 diagnostic validation, gene therapy development and clinical trials, and Good Clinical Practice, it has aligned its structures with internationally accepted benchmarks, including those of the U.S. FDA and ICH. This method enabled India to adopt proven technical practices while calibrating them to the national context. A similar assessment of the U.S. trajectory in tobacco governance is now worth pursuing. Over several decades, cigarette smoking and overall tobacco consumption have declined substantially in the United States, while India continues to face a large and, in some segments, growing challenge. Studying that divergence could inform strategies suited to India’s distinct landscape.” India carries one of the world’s largest tobacco burdens, with nearly 267 million users. Tobacco-related illness remains a leading cause of cancer, cardiovascular and respiratory disease. Preventing initiation and supporting complete cessation must remain the cornerstone of tobacco control. Yet millions of adult consumers are unable to quit despite repeated attempts. That is where an evidence-based conversation on options for grown users becomes necessary. Dr. Chandrakant S. Pandav Former Professor & Head of the Department – Centre for Community Medicine at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS New Delhi) and a Padma Shri Awardee, says, “The strongest objection is that such a discussion will spur youth uptake. U.S. figures counter that concern. The record shows that as the FDA authorised modified-risk claims for adults, over-

all youth tobacco use fell from 23.3% in 2019 to 7.5% in 2025 — the third consecutive annual decline. Youth e-cigarette consumption dropped to 5.2%, its lowest in a decade. Cigarette smoking among teenagers stands at 1.4%, and use of oral products, the category authorised for adults, was 1.7%. Calibrated governance combined with sustained public health messaging can curb youth uptake while pathways for grown users away from combustible tobacco are evaluated. Protecting young people and providing alternatives for adult consumers are not incompatible goals. Calling for an independent scientific review does not mean adopting another nation’s policies, endorsing any product, or weakening India’s tobacco control framework. It means enabling Indian researchers to examine the data rigorously its strengths, limitations, long-term outcomes and population-level effects and determine what relevance, if any, it holds within India’s epidemiological and regulatory environment.” Science has long underpinned sound public health policy in the country. It guided the COVID-19 response, strengthened clinical research standards, and shaped vaccine development. Strategies for tobacco and nicotine consumption deserve the same rigour. The question is not whether the country should mirror the FDA. It is whether the country will apply the same independent scrutiny to emerging findings that has shaped much of its healthcare policy. Given the scale of India’s tobacco epidemic, the answer should be driven by evidence both global and local for the benefit of Indian public health not by ideology, as the cost of lives lost each year is never recoverable.

Aashirvaad honours Vishwakarma Maharanas with immersive Rath Yatra campaign

Guwahati: Continuing its deep-rooted association with the iconic Puri Rath Yatra, Aashirvaad, India's No.1 packaged atta brand, is presenting 'Gunatmaka Paramparaa', an immersive cultural experience inspired by the enduring legacy of the



Vishwakarma Maharana community, the master craftsmen behind Lord Jagannath's sacred Rath. The campaign, whose name translates to 'Tradition of Quality,' celebrates generations of skill, precision and craftsmanship while bringing Aashirvaad's promise of 'Quality Ki Guarantee' to life. Rooted in Odisha's centuries-old traditions, the experience draws inspiration from the meticulous craftsmanship involved in constructing Lord Jagannath's Rath. Every year, the revered chariots are built by the Vishwakarma Maharana community, whose dedication and expertise have preserved this sacred tradition across generations. These timeless values of craftsmanship and quality resonate deeply with Aashirvaad's commitment to delivering trusted quality to millions of Indian households. At the heart of the experience is a symbolic connection between the Rath wheel and the traditional stone chakki. While one carries the divine journey of Lord Jagannath, the other has long represented the pursuit of quality and nourishment in Indian homes. The experience was inaugurated in the presence of renowned Odia actress Elina Samantaray, who interacted with the Vishwakarma community, devotees, and experienced the immersive

installation. Sharing her thoughts, Elina Samantaray said, "I am delighted to be associated with Aashirvaad, a brand that has earned the trust of families across the country through its unwavering commitment to quality. Being part of Gunatmaka Paramparaa makes this association even more special, as it thoughtfully celebrates Odisha's rich cultural heritage and honours the remarkable craftsmanship of the Vishwakarma Maharana community. It is truly heartening to be part of an initiative that connects people with such a meaningful tradition." Commenting on the initiative, Mr. Anuj Rustagi, Chief Executive, Staples Business Unit, Foods Division, ITC Ltd., said, "Aashirvaad has always stood for quality, trust and nourishment. Through Gunatmaka Paramparaa, we are proud to pay tribute to the Vishwakarma Maharana community, whose extraordinary craftsmanship has kept the sacred tradition of Rath Nirman alive for generations. Inspired by their unwavering commitment to quality, this initiative brings our promise of 'Quality Ki Guarantee' to life through an immersive cultural experience that celebrates heritage, craftsmanship and faith." The experience unfolds through a 360-degree hemispheric projection dome, taking devotees on the journey of Rath construction and the stories of the artisans behind it. Visitors symbolically contribute to the creation of Lord Jagannath's Rath before witnessing a divine visual reveal of the Lord's compassionate eyes accompanied by chants of 'Jai Jagannath' Through Gunatmaka Paramparaa, Aashirvaad reaffirms its longstanding connection with Odisha by honouring the Vishwakarma Maharana community and celebrating the enduring tradition of quality that lies at the heart of Rath Nirman.

giving consumers an opportunity to discover these innovative noodle interpretations inspired by Odisha's festive cuisine. Ali Harris Shere, BU Chief Executive, Snack Foods & Beverages, Foods Division, ITC Ltd., said, "Odisha's 'Baro Masa, Tero Parba' philosophy celebrates the joy of coming together through festivals, traditions and food. By reimagining some of Odisha's most-loved festive dishes with YiPPee! noodles we created a unique culinary experience that honoured local traditions while inspiring consumers to discover exciting new ways of enjoy their favourite noodles." Visitors also explored a specially curated Pattachitra-inspired experience zone, engaging with Odisha's art, culture and festival stories through interactive installations. As keepsakes from the celebration, they took home personalised Pattachitra-style portraits along with exclusive YiPPee! calendars and tote bags, extending the memories of the experience beyond Rath Yatra.

World Rugby, UK bodies seek to throw out ex-players' concussion lawsuits

London : World Rugby and England and Wales' governing bodies on Wednesday sought to throw out nearly 380 former rugby union players' lawsuits over neurological injuries, arguing their lawyers repeatedly failed to disclose key medical evidence. World Rugby, the Rugby Football Union and the Welsh Rugby Union are facing lawsuits from around 800 ex-amateur and professional players, who say repeated concussive and sub-concussive blows left them with serious neurological conditions. The claimants' lawyers allege the governing bodies breached their duty of care by failing to protect them from those risks, but World Rugby argues in its written defence that it had no such duty and that

injuries are an "inherent risk" in rugby. The case began in 2022 but has been beset by delays over disclosure, as has a parallel action by ex-rugby league players. World Rugby, the RFU and the WRU have now asked London's High Court to throw out claims brought by former rugby union players because their lawyers have breached court orders requiring them to provide records, including recordings of "neurology interviews" carried out before lawsuits began. The Rugby Football League and the British Amateur Rugby League Association are similarly applying for around 130 ex-players' lawsuits to be thrown out. Neil Block, a lawyer representing the RFU, told the court that "enough is enough".

Man City's Foden extends contract until 2030

July 22 : Manchester City's Phil Foden has signed a new contract that will keep him at the club until 2030, the English Premier League club announced on Wednesday. The new deal reinforces City's commitment to the academy graduate, who has made 411 appearances and scored 131 goals since breaking into the first team under Pep Guardiola in 2017, winning six Premier League titles, the Champions League and three FA Cups. "It's not lost on me that ?I've been lucky enough to be part of a historic period with so many titles won, but we're always looking to the future and trying to win more," Foden said in a statement. "I can

only thank the club, staff, teammates and fans who continue to put their faith in me and trust that I give everything I can for City and I hope I'll be able to repay you for years to come." Foden registered 10 goals and seven assists in 50 appearances for City across all competitions last season, but the 26-year-old was omitted from England's World Cup squad by manager Thomas Tuchel after a dip in form in 2026, during which he failed to score and managed only three assists. Manchester City will begin their Premier League campaign under new manager Enzo Maresca on August 23 against Bournemouth.

World Cup final draws record 63 million US viewers, signals soccer's mainstream moment

July 21 : Nearly 63 million Americans tuned in to watch Spain beat Argentina in the FIFA World Cup final on Sunday, shattering viewership records and underscoring soccer's growing appeal in the U.S. after decades of efforts to broaden its audience. Held in New Jersey, the final remained scoreless until Spain broke through in the 106th minute to secure a 1-0 victory. Fox's English-language broadcast attracted 38.9 million viewers, while Comcast's Telemundo and its Peacock streaming platform pulled in another 23.9 million viewers for the Spanish-language coverage, the companies said. The combined audience far exceeded the 22.3 million U.S. viewers who watched the 2022 World Cup final in Qatar. The strong viewership capped what analysts said was a solid run for the tournament's broadcasters, with Fox and Comcast paying roughly \$485 million and \$600 million, respectively, for rights packages that included the World Cup, according to media reports. Several knockout-stage matches also outperformed recent championship games in other major U.S. sports. The Round of 16 meeting between England and Mexico drew nearly 45 million viewers, well above the roughly 27 million who watched Game 7 of Major League

Baseball's World Series, when the Los Angeles Dodgers beat the Toronto Blue Jays in extra innings, and the nearly 25 million who tuned in for Game 5 of the NBA Finals, where the New York Knicks ended a 53-year title drought by defeating the San Antonio Spurs. While the figures remained below the nearly 126 million viewers who watched Super Bowl LX, when the Seattle Seahawks defeated the New England Patriots, they marked a significant milestone for a sport long overshadowed in the U.S. by American football, basketball and baseball. The tournament, co-hosted by



the U.S., Canada and Mexico for the first time, benefited from prime-time kickoff slots for American audiences. Fans were also drawn by what could be the final World Cup appearances of a generation's biggest stars, including Argentina's Lionel Messi and his long-time Portuguese rival Cristiano Ronaldo. The last time the U.S. hosted the tournament was in 1994. Fox One, which had the English-language streaming rights in the U.S., recorded 2.8 million sign-ups in June, its strongest month since the service's launch in August and more than double the 1.1 million sign-ups generated during NFL Playoffs in

January, according to industry tracker Antenna. Soccer's popularity among Hispanic audiences also drove strong turnout on Spanish-language broadcaster Telemundo. "Ratings have blown past internal forecasts for both networks, and it's not close," said Vicente Navarro, managing partner at soccer-focused marketing firm GotDigital. Navarro said a marquee 30-second advertising spot in the knockout-stage matches cost as much as \$1 million, more than double 2018 levels. Major advertisers included PepsiCo, Home Depot, Anheuser-Busch and

Coca-Cola, according to market intelligence firm SensorTower. For comparison, a 30-second Super Bowl advertisement typically costs about \$8 million or more.

WATER BREAKS PROVE LUCRATIVE FOR FOX

Beyond the ratings, the tournament also proved lucrative for broadcasters, helped by new so-called hydration breaks that split matches into four segments and created additional advertising opportunities. Some experts said the extra ad slots helped offset TV rights costs and drew interest from beverage and food brands. Fox, led by Lachlan Murdoch, is expected to make at least \$250 million from hydration-break advertising alone, according to a June report by the Hollywood Reporter. Telemundo did not run ads during those breaks. "The new inventory definitely creates more spending for the World Cup," said Luke Stillman, a managing director at research firm Madison and Wall. "It would be surprising if the structure wasn't a permanent fixture now going forward, and therefore the broadcast rights are going to be more valuable going forward." Still, it remains unclear whether some of the tournament's Americanized elements, including a major halftime

show that drew comparisons with the Super Bowl and led to a 27-minute interval, well beyond soccer's sacrosanct 15-minute halftime period, will endure. FIFA also announced the World Cup champions will for the first time receive a ring in a nod to "one of the most recognisable American sporting traditions." The next World Cup will be co-hosted by Spain, Portugal and Morocco in 2030, followed by Saudi Arabia in 2034. Both tournaments are likely to feature less favorable kickoff times for U.S. viewers, which could weigh on future ratings.

Springboks name 43-man squad for Argentina, All Blacks clashes

Cape town : South Africa have named 43 players for their test series against New Zealand and a warm-up international against Argentina in what coach Rassie Erasmus says will be a strategic approach to selection. A total of 10 seasoned Springboks return from injury after missing this month's three tests in the new Nations Championship, where South Africa won home clashes against England, Scotland and Wales on successive weekends. Captain Siya Kolisi and exciting flyhalf Sacha Feinberg-Mngomezulu are back as well as forwards Lood de Jager, Eben Etzebeth and Franco Mostert and backs Andre Esterhuizen, Ethan Hooker, Canan Moodie, Handre Pollard and Morne van den Berg. As a result, six players drop out of the squad with Ntuthuko Mchunu, Embrose Papier, Evan Roos, Andre-Hugo Venter and Jaco Williams available to play for their franchises against the All Blacks, who begin their eight-match South African tour next month. Lock Ruben van Heerden, who made his debut against Wales last Saturday, has been put on standby as he moves to French club Montpellier. "We put a lot of thought into how we will manage the entire group of players to give everyone a chance to stake a claim for places in the squad for the (New Zealand) series, and we decided that splitting the squad into two groups will be best for the Springbok team and the players to play their way into the squad," Erasmus said in a statement on Monday. "Some players are returning from injury and need some valuable game time, so depending on how they progress from their injuries during next week's training camp, we will decide who we will take to Argentina, while the other guys in the 43-man squad will remain behind in

Johannesburg with a group of coaches and management to begin preparing for the tests against New Zealand. "Then there are other players who have played a lot of rugby this year and for us during the Nations Championship, and need a match off to allow their bodies to recover," the coach added. The squad will assemble in Johannesburg on Sunday and train for a week before the travelling squad to Argentina. The test against the Pumas at Estadio Jose Amalfitani in Buenos Aires is on August 8. The Springboks host the All Blacks in four tests – at Ellis Park in Johannesburg on August 22, in Cape Town on August 29, at Soccer City in Johannesburg on September 5 and then in Baltimore in the U.S. on September 12.

Squad:
Props: Thomas du Toit (Sharks), Wilco Louw (Stormers), Ox Nche (Sharks), Zachary Porthen (Stormers), Carlu Sadie (Bordeaux Begles), Gerhard Steenekamp (Bulls), Boan Venter (Lions)
Hookers: Johan Grobbelaar (Bulls), Malcolm Marx (Kubota Spears)
Locks: Lood de Jager (Wild Knights), Eben Etzebeth (Sharks), Ruan Nortje (Kubota Spears).
Loose forwards: Paul de Villiers, Ben-Jason Dixon (both Stormers), Cameron Hanekom (Bulls), Siya Kolisi (Stormers), Elrigh Louw (Bulls), Jasper Wiese (Uruguay D-Rocks)

Utility forwards: Pieter-Steph du Toit (Toyota Verblitz), Franco Mostert (Honda Heat),



Vincent Tshituka (Sharks), Marco van Staden, Jan-Hendrik Wessels, Cobus Wiese (all Bulls)
Scrumhalves: Herschel Jantjies (Bayonne), Cobus Reinach (Stormers), Morne van den Berg (Lions), Grant Williams (Kobe Steelers)
Flyhalves: Manie Libbok (Kintetsu Liners), Sacha Feinberg-Mngomezulu (Stormers), Vusi Moyo (Sharks), Handre Pollard (Bulls)
Centres: Damian de Allende (Wild Knights), Andre Esterhuizen (Sharks), Jesse Kriel (Canon Eagles)
Utility backs: Kurt-Lee Arendse (Mitsubishi Dynaboars), Aphelele Fassi (Toshiba), Ethan Hooker (Sharks), Quan Horn (Lions), Cheslin Kolbe (Stormers), Canan Moodie (Bulls), Edwill van der Merwe (Sharks), Damian Willemse (Stormers).

Italy football federation president confirms talks with Guardiola for coaching role

July 22 : Pep Guardiola has held talks about becoming Italy's head coach, the country's football federation (FIGC) president Giovanni Malago told local media. Guardiola left Manchester City this summer after a trophy-laden decade in charge, during which he won six Premier League titles, three FA Cups, five League Cups and the Champions League. Italy have been searching for a new coach since Gennaro Gattuso stepped down in April after the four-time world champions failed to qualify for a third consecutive World Cup. Speaking to Italian digital sports platform Cronache di Spogliatoio, Malago said discussions had taken place with Guardiola and suggested financial flexibility could be shown for a candidate of his stature. "(Financial) Exceptions have been made, exceptions that for example may concern the name that is so overbearing in these hours: Pep Guardiola," said Malago. "Exceptions for obvious reasons that I

am not here to explain, but it is not certain that this thing will go through." Malago's comments are the first public confirmation that the former Barcelona, Bayern Munich and Manchester City manager has been approached in connection with the vacant Italy job. The FIGC did not immediately respond to a Reuters request for comment. Guardiola, 55, left City at the end of last season after a decade of dominance in English football. Before joining City in 2016, he won two Champions League titles and three La Liga titles with Barcelona and three Bundesliga crowns with Bayern Munich. Italian football has hit its lowest point in nearly 40 years, following an early wholesale exit from European club competition and last season's failure to reach the World Cup. The appointment of a new national coach is viewed as the first step in overhauling a youth and talent infrastructure that has largely collapsed in a country where football remains a national obsession.

Chelsea sign England's Rogers from Villa in record British deal

July 21 : Chelsea have signed England international Morgan Rogers from Aston Villa on a contract until 2033, both Premier League clubs said on Tuesday, with British media reporting the deal was worth £117 million (\$157 million), making him the most expensive British player. Neither club disclosed financial details, but Sky Sports reported the package surpassed the reported fee of up to £116 million Manchester City paid Nottingham Forest for midfielder Elliot Anderson earlier this month. Chelsea's previous record signing was Ecuador midfielder Moises Caicedo, who joined from Brighton & Hove Albion for £115 million in 2023. "I'm so excited," said Rogers in a club statement. "For me, Chelsea are the biggest club in London and a club I've always admired since I was a kid. "I'm really excited about the project with the new manager,

the players we've got and where the club is heading. That's why I'm here and I can't wait to get started." Rogers, who can play on the wing or as an attacking midfielder, leaves Villa after two years, having helped them win the Europa League in May. He scored in the 3-0 final victory over Freiburg as Villa claimed their first major European trophy since 1982. The 23-year-old scored 31 goals in 125 appearances for Villa after joining from Middlesbrough in 2024, earning his England debut later that year. Rogers featured in seven of England's eight matches as they finished third at the World Cup and enjoyed his most prolific domestic campaign last season, scoring 10 Premier League goals. Chelsea, who finished 10th in the Premier League last season, begin their league campaign away to Fulham on August 24.

Liverpool have 'obvious' gaps to address in transfer market, says Iraola

July 21 : Liverpool have a few areas that need to be strengthened in the transfer market after losing key players and suffering injury setbacks, the Premier League club's manager Andoni Iraola said. Liverpool have signed Jeremy Jacquet and Victor Munoz, but lost Mohamed Salah, Andy Robertson and Ibrahima Konate, while Hugo Ekitike, Conor Bradley and Giovanni Leoni are sidelined through injury. "I think it's difficult to say a number (of players needed) when the market is open, and you have to be always open to new options to improve the squad," the Spaniard told reporters in Chicago on Tuesday. "There are obvious situations that we know where we need to sign players. A winger, for example — we definitely need to sign a winger. "But there are other situations that we will have to analyse what the market gives you, what's the cost, how we also see the players we have. We have some tricky positions

where we have injured players that we trust but is still not the ideal situation." Salah, Konate and Robertson's departures have also left Liverpool with a dearth of experience in their squad. Goalkeeper Alisson is another veteran whose future at Anfield is uncertain, but Iraola said he was keen to keep the Brazil international. "I think he's someone that definitely will help us in this process of adaptation of the new signings, of the new players, the young players," he added. "We need the references like Virgil (van Dijk), like Alisson, like Joe Gomez, players that have been here for a long time. And I'm sure we will have this help, yes." Liverpool begin their pre-season preparations with a match against Sunderland in Nashville on Saturday, before taking on Wrexham, Leeds United, AS Monaco and Como. They play their first game of the Premier League season away to Newcastle on August 23.

Evenepoel admits 'bittersweet' win after teammate Lipowitz crashed

Thonon-les-bains : Belgium's Remco Evenepoel delivered a crushing performance in Tuesday's individual time trial to claim his second consecutive Tour de France stage victory, but the Red Bull-Bora-hansgrohe team's celebrations were dampened by teammate Florian Lipowitz's race-ending crash. "That's very unfortunate. It's like a bittersweet pill to swallow with this victory," Evenepoel said after winning stage 16, adding to his triumph two days earlier at the Plateau de Solaison. The Belgian's dominant display cemented his second place behind Slovenia's Tadej Pogacar, trailing the yellow jersey holder by four minutes and 32 seconds. Evenepoel holds a commanding lead of two minutes and 19 seconds over third-placed Isaac del Toro of Mexico, who races for UAE Team Emirates-XRG. Despite his superb form, Evenepoel dismissed suggestions he could challenge Pogacar for overall victory. "Honestly, no," he answered when asked if he was aiming to dethrone Pogacar. "I'm just focused on

my own spot. I mean, Tadej (Pogacar) is on his way to win a fifth Tour de France. It's just amazing that I can be a bit close to him." Lipowitz's Tour de France came to an abrupt conclusion when he crashed in a right-hand turn with more than six kilometres to go. The German was sitting fifth in the general classification before the start of stage 16. "The feeling is a bit strange," his sports director Patxi Vila said. "On one side, you are happy because you won, on the other side, you are sad because Florian (Lipowitz) had that crash. "He is on his way to the hospital. I hope he can come back healthy soon." The 25-year-old rider suffered a right collarbone injury, race organisers said in their daily press release. Evenepoel, who had shared leadership duties with Lipowitz during the race, expressed his sadness for his teammate. "He will be very missed in the team," he said. "It's a big shame for us as a team to lose him because he was obviously doing a very good Tour de France. It's an extra-sad moment."

Nazira Secures First-Innings Lead Over Jorhat in U-16 R.G. Baruah Inter-District Cricket Tournament

Safiqur Rahman, Staff Reporter, Nagaon, July 22: Nazira gained a crucial 12-run first-innings lead over Jorhat on the opening day of their Group-I (Upper Assam Zone) match in the Under-16 R.G. Baruah Inter-District Cricket Tournament at Nurul Amin Stadium, Nagaon. The tournament is being conducted under the aegis of the Assam Cricket Association and hosted by the Nowgong Sports Association.

After electing to bat first, Nazira were bowled out for a modest 63 runs in 26.2 overs. Lakshya Sharma top-scored with 20 runs, while Akashdeep Rajkonwar contributed 18. Jorhat's Ishan Ranjan Dutta produced a sensational bowling performance, claiming 8 wickets.

In reply, Jorhat failed to capitalize on their impressive bowling display and were dismissed for 51 runs in 25.1 overs, conceding a 12-run first-innings lead. Prince Shreyars and Priyam Sarkar were the only batsmen to reach double figures, scoring 11 runs each.

Nazira then began their second innings but struggled against disciplined bowling. At stumps, they were 11 for 6 in 20.4 overs, with Vishal Gogoi unbeaten on 1 run. For Jorhat, Gurshwan Singh picked up 4 wickets, while Ishan Ranjan Dutta added 2 more wickets to cap another impressive performance with the ball.

The match remains finely poised as play heads into the final day, with Nazira holding a narrow overall advantage despite their second-innings collapse.

INS Malvan commissioned into Indian Navy

New Delhi, July 22: India took another significant step towards strengthening its maritime defence capabilities with the formal induction of INS Malvan, the second Anti-Submarine Warfare Shallow Water Craft (ASW-SWC) of the Mahe class, into the Indian Navy at Karwar in Karnataka. The commissioning marks yet another milestone in India's determined pursuit of self-reliance in defence manufacturing under the Atmanirbhar Bharat initiative while reinforcing the country's expanding ability to secure its vast coastline and strategic maritime interests. The induction ceremony, attended by Chief of the Air Staff Air Chief Marshal A. P. Singh as the chief guest, reflected the growing synergy among India's armed forces and underscored the importance of maritime security in an increasingly complex regional and global environment. Addressing the gathering, Air Chief Marshal Singh lauded the Indian Navy's sustained efforts to promote indigenous defence production and highlighted that INS Malvan would become an important asset in protecting India's coastal waters against underwater threats. He noted that the successful induction of another indigenously built frontline warship demonstrated India's growing confidence in designing, constructing and deploying sophisticated naval platforms capable of meeting present and future security challenges. The addition of INS Malvan comes at a time when the Indian Ocean Region has emerged as one of the world's most strategically significant maritime theatres, witnessing increasing naval deployments, expanding trade routes and evolving security concerns. With nearly 7,500 kilometres of coastline, a vast Exclusive Economic Zone and crucial sea lanes carrying a major portion of global trade and energy supplies, India continues to invest heavily in strengthening its maritime surveillance and coastal defence infrastructure. Anti-submarine warfare has become one of the most vital components of modern naval operations as submarines remain among the stealthiest and most dangerous platforms capable of threatening commercial shipping, naval task forces and coastal installations. The induction of INS Malvan therefore substantially enhances the Navy's ability to detect, track and neutralise hostile submarines operating in shallow coastal waters, where conventional anti-submarine operations often become more challenging due to environmental conditions and underwater terrain. Built by Cochin Shipyard Limited, one of India's premier shipbuilding organisations, INS Malvan reflects the remarkable progress achieved by the domestic defence manufacturing sector in recent years. More than 80 percent of the ship's equipment, systems and technology have been sourced from indigenous industries, showcasing the rapid expansion of India's defence industrial ecosystem. The vessel represents years of collaborative work involving public sector enterprises, private industries, research institutions, naval designers and defence laboratories, all working together to produce a highly capable warship tailored to the operational requirements of the Indian Navy. Such indigenous development reduces dependence on foreign suppliers, strengthens supply chain resilience, encourages technological innovation and creates employment opportunities across multiple sectors of the economy. The ship is equipped with advanced anti-submarine warfare capabilities designed specifically for operations close to India's coastline. Among its primary weapons is the formidable RBU-6000 anti-submarine rocket launcher system, which enables rapid engagement of underwater threats by delivering powerful salvos of rockets capable of destroying or disabling hostile submarines. Complementing this capability are advanced torpedoes developed by the Defence Research and Development Organisation, reflecting India's steady progress in indigenous underwater weapon technologies. These systems provide the ship with the flexibility to respond effectively to multiple underwater threats while operating independently or as part of larger naval task groups. A key feature of INS Malvan is its sophisticated sonar suite developed through German-Indian technological collaboration. Modern sonar systems are the eyes and ears of anti-submarine warfare platforms, allowing them to detect, classify and track underwater contacts with remarkable accuracy. The integration of advanced sonar technology significantly improves the vessel's operational effectiveness in identifying potential threats before they can approach sensitive maritime assets. Combined with modern navigation, communication and command systems, the warship provides the Navy with enhanced situational awareness and rapid response capability across coastal waters. The Mahe class has been specifically designed for shallow water anti-submarine operations, a mission that has gained increasing importance as underwater threats continue to evolve.

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CM Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma Visits...

of missing persons, he said, “As of now, around 70 people in Sivasagar district are reported to be missing. However, we cannot confirm the exact figure at this stage. We will be able to provide a clearer picture after two or three days.”

Nagaon DC Visit Entrepreneurship...

2.0 and encouraged aspiring entrepreneurs to take full advantage of the opportunities provided by the government.

Addressing the participants, the DC said that becoming a successful entrepreneur, rather than solely pursuing government jobs, is one of the greatest opportunities as well as challenges of the present time. He urged the trainees to make the best use of the financial assistance and specialised training being provided under the scheme to transform their entrepreneurial dreams into reality.

Sharma emphasized that self-employment not only makes an individual financially independent but also creates employment opportunities for others. He noted that the effective utilisation of local resources and individual skills through micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) would play a crucial role in strengthening the economy of both Nagaon district and Assam.

Highlighting the vision of building a self-reliant Assam, the DC said the contribution of young entrepreneurs would be indispensable in turning that vision into reality.

The programme was attended by the Principal of Nagaon Girls' College, Dr. Kulen Chandra Das, EDP Nodal Officer Dr. Amiya Patar, and officials and staff of the District Industries and Commerce Centre (DICC), Nagaon.

ALA discussed Flood...

Chairperson Pradyut Bordoloi presented the reports on development on Grant Nos. 17, 33, 44, 64, 26, 28, 29, 71, 14, 15, 20, 48, 67, 30 and 3. Chairperson Bhupen Kr. Borah, presented the reports on 9 Nos of Grant. MLA Diganta Kalita of behalf of Chairperson Rupjyoti Kurmi presented the reports on 10 Nos of Grant. Chairperson Rihon Daimary presented the reports on 7 nos of Grant. Chairperson Prithiraj Rabha presented the reports on 8 nos. of grants, Chairperson Naba Kr. Doley presented reports (G) on 8 nos. of Grant, Bhabesh Kalita, Chairperson presented the Reports of the Development under the Standing Committee on Development (H) in respect of Grants Nos. 53, 52, 49, 44, 36, 28, 4 and 11.

The Minister, Parliamentary Affairs etc. Pijush Hazarika laid the Annual Administrative Reports for the FY 2034-25 and 2025-26 of the Parliamentary Affairs Department, Government of Assam. The Minister of Revenue and Disaster etc. Keshab Mahanta moved for leave to introduce "Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement (Assam Amendment) Bill, 2026". Financial Business was discussed during the period of City Motion.

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Cachar gears up for grand 80th...

of the previous year's celebrations following which the meeting adopted a series of decisions for the smooth conduct of the national event.

The District Sports Association (DSA) Ground has been selected as the venue for the main Independence Day function while the Police Parade Ground will be used for parade rehearsals.

As per the approved programme, the day will begin with patriotic songs broadcast through the Fixed Loud Speaker network from 5.30 am. Citizens have been encouraged to hoist the National Flag at their homes and establishments at 7 am, while all government offices and educational institutions will organise flag hoisting ceremonies at 7.30 am. Schools will also hold community singing of the National Anthem.

Students from schools across the district will march to the ceremonial venue before floral tributes are paid to Mahatma Gandhi at Gandhi Bagh. The programme will also include Swahid Tarpan to honour the sacrifices of the country's freedom fighters.

The ceremonial flag hoisting at 9 am will be followed by a combined parade involving contingents of the CRPF, Assam Police, 6th Assam Police Battalion, Home Guards, NCC, Scouts and Guides, along with school students. The Senior Superintendent of Police, Cachar, has been entrusted with overseeing the parade, rehearsals and security arrangements in coordination with all participating agencies.

Extensive preparations have also been planned at the venue. The concerned departments will undertake levelling of the ground, trimming of grass, sanitation, drainage cleaning, electrification, barricading and installation of temporary infrastructure well before the celebrations. Police will conduct anti-sabotage checks, frisking and security surveillance at the parade venue and other locations to be visited by dignitaries.

To ensure the well-being of parade participants, refreshments will be provided throughout the rehearsal period with support from the district administration, business organisations, banks and local associations. Medical teams, ambulance, drinking water and emergency healthcare facilities will remain available during rehearsals as well as on Independence Day.

Fruits and sweets will be distributed among patients in hospitals, inmates of orphanages, old age homes, de addiction centres and the Central Jail with the support of various organisations. A community feast has also been planned with the cooperation of Rotary Club, Silchar.

An exhibition football match between the District Commissioner's Office and the District Bar Association (Veteran) XI will be organised at the DSA Ground in the afternoon. The day's programme will conclude with the ceremonial retreat of the National Flag and illumination of government buildings, important public institutions, statues and major traffic islands across Silchar.

The meeting also decided that a 30-minute cultural programme featuring performances by different ethnic communities of the district would be organised at the DSA Ground. Demonstrations by local yoga and physical culture organisations will also form part of the celebrations.

Doordarshan Kendra and All India Radio, Silchar have been requested to provide coverage of the official programme while the Information and Public Relations Department will coordinate publicity through print, electronic and public address media. Public awareness campaigns on the proper display of the National Flag in accordance with the Flag Code of India will also be taken up.

The Chief Executive Officer of Cachar Zilla Parishad, Block Development Officers, Revenue Circle Officers and Co-District administrations have been asked to organise suitable Independence Day programmes in their respective areas to ensure widespread public participation.

Concluding the meeting, District Commissioner Rahul Kumar Gupta urged all departments and participating organisations to work in close coordination and complete their assigned responsibilities well in advance so that the district celebrates the 80th Independence Day in an organised, dignified and inclusive manner.

The meeting was also attended by ADC Smt Jagriti Kalwar ACS, Shri Manojyoti Kutum ACS and other senior officers of district administration cachar.

This is stated in a press release issued by the Regional office of Information & Public Relations Barak valley Zone Silchar Assam.

First Board of Management...

Dr. B. K. Sarmah, Registrar, AVFU welcomed all the members and requested Hon'ble Vice Chancellor cum Chairman of the meeting to put his initial remarks. The Chairman welcomed all the members and asked Registrar to carry forward the meeting as per the Agenda. The Board approved the Logo, Tag-line and Flag of the AVFU; admission to UG degree programme to veterinary and fisheries through CET 2026; adoption of existing AAU statues, regulations and service rules for functioning of the AVFU; nomination of one member to the finance committee; post-facto approval of the Research Advisory and Extension Education Council; filling of few new posts of statutory officers, and recommendation for establishment of a dairy college under AVFU. Besides Hon'ble Vice Chancellor and Registrar of the university, the other Hon'ble members present were - Dr. Abhijit Mitra (Vice Chancellor, Pt. Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Pashu Chikitsa Vigyan Vishwavidyalaya Evam Go Anusandhan Sansthan-on line), Dr. Tapan Das (MLA, Domesia), Dr. Dandeswar Deka (President AVC cum VCI nominee), Sri Anil Chandra Deori (ACS, Secretary to the Govt. of Assam, AHVD), Isfaqur Rahman (IAS Secretary to the Govt. of Assam, Deptt. of Finance), Sri Madhu Sudan Nath (IAS, Secretary to the Govt. of Assam, Deptt. of Agriculture), Smt. Kasturi Bharali (ACS, Secretary to the Govt. of Assam, SEED), Sri Prasanta Borkakati (ACS, Additional Secretary to the Govt. of Assam, Deptt. of Fisheries), Sri Gauri Sankar Das (ACS, Director, Deptt. of Fisheries), Mrs. Panchali Kakati (IAS, Director, Dairy Dev. Deptt.), Dr. Ashwini Kumar (IFS, Director, State Zoo cum Botanical Garden), Dr. Gautam Sarma (Livestock Progressive farmer), Sri Rati Ranjan Das (Fishery Progressive farmer), Sri Nirab Medhi (Established Entrepreneur), Smt. Purabi Roy (Woman Social Worker), Dr. Dilip Kumar Deka (Teacher's representative-Veterinary faculty) and Dr. Dipak Kumar Sarma (Teacher's representative-Fishery faculty). The members of the BoM expressed their satisfaction with the progress made by all concerned to take forward the university for holistic development and emphasized the need to strive for academic excellence, research, innovation and extension activities for the benefit of the society at large.

Restoration Work of the Flood...

Tinsukia Division has launched extensive restoration with 24X7 monitoring to ensure the earliest possible restoration of normal train services. Engineering teams led by senior railway officials of division have been working continuously on a war footing to address the impact of the floodwaters and early restoration of train services.

Restoration work is currently in full swing in the Selenghat–Amguri section, where more than 200workers have been deployed along with railway engineers and supervisors to expedite repair and restoration activities. The workforce is carrying out track restoration, strengthening of infrastructure and continuous inspection of the affected locations to ensure safe resumption of train operations.

Significant restoration work was also undertaken in the Sivasagar Town–Simalugurisection on the previous day, with railway personnel making steady progress despite adverse weather conditions.

Senior officials of Northeast Frontier Railway are closely supervising the restoration efforts, while all concerned departments are working in close coordination to minimise disruption of train services and restore normalcy at the earliest. Passenger safety remains the highest priority, and every effort is being made to ensure that restoration work is completed efficiently and safely.

Northeast Frontier Railway remains committed to providing safe and reliable rail services and appreciates the cooperation of passengers during this period of unprecedented flooding, informed by CPRO of NFR Kapinjal Kishore Sharma.

‘Ankurita Asom’ Initiative...

potential of indigenous rice through value addition and market-oriented approaches.

Speaking on the occasion, noted agricultural expert and Technical Advisor to the programme, Dr. Arunima Deb Chowdhury, emphasized that conserving indigenous rice diversity is the need of the hour. She noted that such initiatives can open new pathways for sustainable agricultural development in Assam.

The programme witnessed the presence of ‘Ankurita Asom’ President Naser Hussain, General Secretary Ramesh Pandey Chetri, Assistant Secretary Nilufa Rahman, along with other office bearers, local farmers, and villagers. A seeding planting ceremony marked the launch, with participants pledging collective efforts to ensure the success of the initiative.

Cachar admin restricts heavy vehicle movement on vulnerable embankments amid monsoon safety concerns

Silchar, July 22: The Cachar District Administration has imposed an immediate restriction on the movement of heavy commercial vehicles over identified vulnerable embankment stretches under the Cachar Water Resources Division to prevent further damage during the ongoing monsoon season and minimise the risk of flooding.

The order issued by the District Disaster Management Authority (DDMA) following a report submitted by the Executive Engineer, Cachar Water Resources Division which states that the continuous movement of commercial and private heavy vehicles over several vulnerable embankments has caused considerable structural stress. The report warned that further deterioration could increase the possibility of embankment breaches lead-

ing to flooding, disruption of essential services and damage to public and private property, besides posing a serious threat to public safety.

Acting under Section 34(b) of the Disaster Management Act, 2005, the District Administration has prohibited the movement of all heavy commercial vehicles, overloaded vehicles, sand-laden trucks, earth-filled dumpers and other heavy vehicles on the vulnerable embankment stretches listed in the official notification. The restriction has come into force with immediate effect and will remain in place until further orders.

Officials said the measure has been taken as a precautionary step to reduce pressure on embankments that remain vulnerable because of continuous rainfall and rising water levels during the monsoon. The administra-

tion has appealed to transport operators and vehicle owners to cooperate fully in the interest of public safety and disaster prevention.

The administration has cautioned that any violation of the order will invite action under the relevant provisions of the Disaster Management Act, 2005, and other applicable laws.

The District Administration has urged residents and transport operators to extend their cooperation stating that restricting heavy vehicular movement over vulnerable embankments is an essential precaution to protect critical flood-control infrastructure and ensure the safety of people during the monsoon season.

This is stated in a press release issued by Regional office of Information & Public Relations Barak valley Zone Silchar Assam.

Block-Level ECCE Day celebrated at Burha Rajagaon Model Anganwadi Centre in Raha

Staff Reporter, Nagaon, July 22: The Block-Level celebration of Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Day was held on Monday at Burha Rajagaon No. 1 Model Anganwadi Centre,

Anamika Barman, CDPO of Raha ICDS Project, and other dignitaries.

Addressing the gathering, the assistant commissioner emphasized the importance of



Youth Seriously Injured in Highway Accident at Haraputa

Mizanur Rahman, Correspondent, Gossaigaon, July 22: A 22-year-old youth sustained serious injuries in a road accident that occurred on Tuesday at the busy turning near Haraputa Mission on National Highway 27. The accident reportedly took place following a head on collision between a motorcycle and an unidentified trailer truck. According to available information, the injured has been identified as Imran Hussain (22), son of Amir Hamza and a resident of No. 2 Bhomrabil village under Gossaigaon Police Station. After completing his day's work as a mason, Imran was returning home on his motorcycle from near Srirampur Chariali at a high speed when his vehicle collided head on with an unidenti-

fied trailer coming from the opposite direction at the Haraputa Mission turning. Following the accident, local residents, with the prompt assistance of Shimultapu Police, rescued the injured youth and rushed him to Gossaigaon RNB Civil Hospital for treatment. Due to the severity of his injuries, he was later referred to a hospital in West Bengal for advanced medical care. It may be mentioned that the turning near Haraputa Mission is widely known as a busy and accident prone location. Local residents have alleged that the accident may have occurred due to negligence or inadequate traffic management by the police personnel deployed at the site for regulating vehicular movement. Meanwhile, upon receiving infor-

mation about the incident, SI Sanjib Handique, In-Charge of Shimultapu Police Outpost, reached the accident site, facilitated the victim's medical treatment,

and initiated an investigation into the incident. Police have also launched a search operation to trace the unidentified trailer involved in the accident.

Man critically injured in wild elephant attack at Rajagarh

Tapan Sen Gupta, Correspondent, Orang, July 22: A 38-year-old man was critically injured in a wild elephant attack at No. 1 Rajagarh under Dimakuchi Police Station in Bhergaon subdivision in the early hours of Monday.

The injured, identified as Nakul Namah Das, was reportedly attacked after a wild elephant entered the village in search of food and damaged his house. The animal allegedly dragged him with its trunk and trampled him.

Das was rescued and shifted to Gauhati Medical College and Hospital (GMCH) in critical condition. His family members managed to escape unhurt.

The incident has once again highlighted the growing human-elephant conflict in the Assam-Bhutan border areas. Local residents have urged the Forest Department to take effective preventive measures and provide necessary assistance to the injured man and his family.

Bandhan Bank's Q1 FY26-27 total business grew by 11%

Total Loan book grew by 16% YoY to Rs.1.56 lakh crore

Kolkata, July 21: Bandhan Bank announced its results for the first quarter of FY26-27. The bank's total business grew by more than 11%, to close at over Rs.3.2 lakh crore. The Bank's share of retail to total deposits now stands at nearly 74%. The business growth observed in the financial year 2026-27 was driven by the Bank's expanded distribution network, improved operational efficiency, and a consistent endeavour towards excellence. Net Profit earned for Q1 FY27 stood at Rs.502 crore.

The Bank now serves around 3.2 crore customers through nearly 6,400 banking outlets across the 35 out of 36 states and UTs of India. The total number of employees working at Bandhan Bank is more than 74,500.

During Q1 FY26-27, the Bank registered a 7% year-on-year growth in its deposit base, and the deposit book now stands at ₹1.65 lakh crore. Total advances have reached ₹1.56 lakh crore for the same period. The Current Account and Savings Account (CASA) ratio stands at 29.4%. The Bank's Capital Adequacy

Ratio (CAR), a key indicator of financial stability, is at a robust 18.2% well above the regulatory threshold.

Speaking on the Bank's performance, MD & CEO, Partha Pratim Sengupta said: "Our Q1 FY2026-27 performance reflects the resilience of Bandhan Bank's franchise, the commitment of our teams, and the trust our stakeholders continue to place in us. As we build on this momentum, we remain focused on delivering customer-centric and digitally enabled growth. By strengthening our distribution network, expanding our product offerings, and harnessing data-driven insights, we are well positioned to create greater value for our customers and stakeholders while driving sustainable, balanced, and future-ready growth."

The Bank is focused on diversifying its asset base, with a strategic emphasis on growing the retail portfolio. Accelerating digitization remains a priority to drive efficiency, improve productivity, and elevate the customer experience.

Magisterial Inquiry Ordered into Death at Nagaon De-addiction Centre

Staff Reporter, Nagaon, July 22: The District Magistrate of Nagaon has ordered a detailed Magisterial Inquiry into the death of a 34-year-old man, Bhaskar Deka, who was undergoing treatment at a de-addiction centre in the district.

According to an official order issued by the Office of the District Magistrate, the inquiry has been initiated following a communication from the Assam Human Rights Commission (AHRC), which directed an investigation into the circumstances surrounding the death.

Bhaskar Deka, a resident of Niz Dimow village under Nagaon Sadar Police Station, was admitted to the Divine Awakening Wellness Society, a de-addiction cen-

tre in Nagaon, on June 11, 2026. As per the order, his health reportedly deteriorated during his stay, and the authorities shifted him to Nagaon Medical College & Hospital on June 16 for further medical examination and treatment.

The deceased's wife, Barsha Devi, later lodged an FIR at Nagaon Police Station, stating that she was informed by the de-addiction centre authorities that her husband died while being taken to the hospital in an ambulance at around 8:11 a.m. on June 16.

To ascertain the facts and circumstances leading to the death, the District Magistrate has appointed Praveen Kr. Mahato, ACS, Assistant Commissioner and Executive Magistrate, Nagaon, as the

Enquiry Officer. The inquiry will be conducted in accordance with the revised guidelines of the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC).

The Enquiry Officer has been directed to complete the investigation within 15 days from the date of issuance of the order and submit a comprehensive report, along with authenticated copies of all relevant records and documents, to the District Magistrate.

The order also instructs all concerned authorities, including the Chief Superintendent of Nagaon Medical College & Hospital and the authorities of the concerned de-addiction centre, to extend full cooperation and make available all records and documents required for the inquiry.

28th Annual Conference of Asam Sahitya Sabha held in the United Kingdom: Three Important Resolutions Adopted

M Hashim Ali, Correspondent, Dibrugarh, July 22: The 28th Annual Conference of the Asam Sahitya Sabha in the United Kingdom was held at North Shields in Northern En-

brant and strong language is like a heart without a pulse. Sabha's Secretary, Jahnabi Gogoi, introduced the Chief Guest, Dr. Nilima Bhagawati. In her speech, Dr. Bhagawati

language compulsory in all educational institutions in Assam for students from the age of four to sixteen. It was also demanded that Assamese language educa-



gland. The conference was presided over by Sahitya Sabha President Geeta Barua, while Professor Dr. Nilima Bhagawati attended the event as the Chief Guest. The programme began with the hoisting of the Sahitya Sabha flag, followed by the rendition of the mass song, "Chiro Senehi Mor Bhakha Jononi." In her welcome address, President Geeta Barua emphasized the need to establish language and culture workshops, digital archives, bilingual educational resources, and online learning platforms to keep the new generation born and raised abroad connected with the Assamese language and culture. She also highlighted the need to bring together Assamese people who have recently migrated to the U K.Vice- President Nirmala Barua, explaining the importance of the mother tongue, said, "A nation without a vi-

particularly highlighted the role of parents and teachers in shaping a bright future for the younger generation. She also called for connecting the teaching of history with the present in order to build a better future. At the event, Chief Adviser Lahari Borthakur unveiled the 2026 souvenir publication, "Prabasi Diganta, Moromi Axom—Juktarajyar Suke-Kone". She emphasized the importance of storytelling and the practice of folk culture to keep young children connected with the Assamese language. During the programme, 14-year-old Karnav Biswas demonstrated an Assamese language-learning app named "Bhashabadi," which he had developed himself for children and teenagers. Three important resolutions were adopted at the conference. Accordingly, an appeal was made to make the Assamese

tion be provided through govt-approved digital platforms in areas facing a shortage of teachers. In addition, a demand was raised to make the ability to speak, read, and understand Assamese compulsory as an eligibility criterion for recruitment to Govt and Private-sector jobs in Assam. Besides, a poetry workshop, a general knowledge competition, and an enchanting cultural programme were also organized as part of the event. Performances of Bhupen Hazarika's songs, folk songs, modern music, dances, and instrumental music added colour and vibrancy to the programme. Following the presentation of the Xologor Xorai, the event concluded with the rendition of the mass song "O Mur Apunar Dekh." The attendees then enjoyed a traditional Assamese feast.