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Brief Post

Iran Travel Alert

New Delhi: The Government of India has issued a renewed travel advisory urging Indian citizens to defer all non-essential travel to Iran as the country's security environment has become increasingly uncertain due to escalating regional tensions and heightened military activity. Stressing that the safety of Indian nationals remains its highest priority, the Embassy of India in Tehran has advised all those planning to visit Iran for tourism, business, education, pilgrimage or any other purpose to postpone their travel until the situation stabilises. The advisory reflects the government's close monitoring of developments in the region and underlines that precautionary measures taken now can significantly reduce risks for travellers. Officials have clarified that while there is no mandatory evacuation order in place, the rapidly changing security scenario warrants greater vigilance and careful planning by anyone considering travel to the country. The embassy has simultaneously appealed to Indian nationals already present in Iran to seriously consider temporarily leaving the country by using available commercial flight options while they continue to operate normally.

Adequate Flood Relief and Pure Drinking Water Distributed to Flood-Affected People by the District Administration in Various Flood-Hit Areas of Jorhat District

District Commissioner Jay Shivani Closely Monitoring the Flood Situation

Jorhat, July 23: Continuous rainfall in Jorhat district has caused floods that have severely impacted various parts of the district. According to the latest official flood report (July 22, 2026), a total of 177 villages across 5 revenue circles of the district—namely Mariani, Jorhat West, Jorhat East, Teok, and Titabor—have been affected by this flood. As a result of this disaster, a total of 97,690 people



(40,745 men, 38,445 women, and 18,500 children) and 34,592 livestock (23,880 big and 10,712 small) in the district have been affected. Additionally, 5,510.96 hectares of crop area have been damaged by the flood.

It is worth noting that the district administration has opened a total of 16 flood relief camps and 34 relief distribution

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For any emergency situation or rescue operations during the flood, the district administration has requested the public to contact the District Emergency Control Room at the following numbers:
* Toll-Free Number: 1077
* Telephone Number: 0376-2300124 or * 6026598982 / 7002025416

Assam Flood Rage Hits More Lives, Land and Hope Hard Daily

Guwahati, July 23: Assam continues to battle one of its most severe flood emergencies of the monsoon season as relentless rainfall, overflowing rivers and widespread inundation have pushed the flood-related death toll to 41 this phase of the disaster. More than 6.4 lakh people across 40 revenue circles remain affected, while several major rivers continue to flow above the danger level, keeping thousands of families under constant threat and forcing authorities to sustain large-scale rescue and relief operations. The situation remains critical across several districts, with floodwaters submerging villages, damaging homes, disrupting transport, affecting agriculture and forcing thousands of residents to remain in relief camps or safer locations. Rescue teams from the State Disaster Response Force, National Disaster Response Force, Indian Army, Fire and Emergency Services and district administrations continue evacuation and relief operations round the clock, deploying boats and specialised equipment to reach marooned villages. Relief materials, including food, drinking water, medicines, baby food and other essential supplies, are being distributed through relief camps and distribution centres established across the affected districts, while medical teams are monitoring public health to prevent outbreaks of waterborne diseases. Authorities have intensified surveillance over vulnerable embankments and flood-prone locations to prevent further damage and ensure timely evacuation wherever necessary. The India Meteorological Department has forecast moderate to heavy rainfall over the coming three to four days, raising concerns that river levels may rise further and prolong

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People-Centric reforms key to Viksit Bharat Vision: PM Modi

New Delhi, July 23: Prime Minister Narendra Modi has reaffirmed that every reform introduced by the government must ultimately improve the lives of citizens and contribute to the larger national objective of transforming India into a developed nation by 2047, placing people-centric governance at the centre of policy making and administrative reforms. Chairing a high-level review meeting with Secretaries from key ministries dealing with rural development, agriculture, social welfare and allied sectors at his official residence at Lok Kalyan Marg, the Prime Minister outlined a comprehensive roadmap aimed at making governance

more efficient, coordinated, technology-driven and responsive to the aspirations of the people. Stressing that governance must continuously evolve with changing times, Mr. Modi observed that reforms should not remain confined to administrative improvements alone but must create measurable benefits for every citizen while accelerating economic growth, social progress and national development. He called upon senior officials to work with renewed commitment, ensuring that policies are

implemented effectively on the ground and that every govern-



ment initiative reaches its intended beneficiaries without delay. During the extensive review, the Prime Minister high-

lighted the importance of strengthening coordination among ministries and departments, stating that seamless collaboration is essential to address increasingly complex governance challenges. He noted that development today requires integrated planning rather than isolated departmental efforts and urged officials to adopt a whole-of-government approach in implementing flagship programmes. According to him, coordinated action can eliminate duplication, improve efficiency, reduce administrative bottlenecks and ensure faster delivery of public services across the country. Emphasising that governance systems should remain future-ready, Mr. Modi directed min-

istries to undertake comprehensive mapping of emerging requirements, identify future challenges and develop institutional mechanisms capable of responding to changing national and global circumstances. He underlined that technological advancements, demographic shifts, climate concerns and changing employment patterns require government departments to modernise administrative processes and embrace innovation at every level. The Prime Minister stated that governance should anticipate future needs instead of merely responding to existing challenges, thereby creating a more resilient administrative framework capable of supporting

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Financial Assistance to Flood-Affected People by the Indian Red Cross Society, Dibrugarh District Branch

M Hashim Ali, Correspondent, Dibrugarh, July 23: Inspired by the humanitarian ideals and spirit of service of the Indian Red Cross Society, the Dibrugarh District Branch of the Indian Red Cross Society has undertaken an urgent humanitarian initiative to assist people affected by the devastating flood situation in Sivasagar district and adjoining areas of Upper Assam. Following the spontaneous response and generous cooperation of members of the district branch, a sum of money was collected within a very short period. The financial assistance has already been transferred to the bank account of the Red Cross Society of Sivasagar district, following discussions with the Secretary of the Sivasagar District Red Cross Society, for the welfare of the flood-affected people. The society has also

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NFR Announces Shravani Mela Special Train Service between Katihar and Manihari

Maligaon, July 23: To facilitate the additional passenger rush during the forthcoming Shravani Mela, Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR) has decided to operate special train services between Katihar and Manihari under the Katihar Division. These special trains have been planned to ensure convenient and comfortable travel for thou-

sands of devotees, pilgrims and travellers visiting the annual Shravani Mela.

The first pair of special trains, Train No. 07540/07539 (Katihar-Manihari-Katihar) Shravani Mela Special, will operate for 22 trips each. Train

No. 07540 will depart from Katihar at 19:00 hours on every Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday from 25th July to 23rd August, 2026, reaching Manihari at 19:45 hours. In the return direction,

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Cachar Admin sets up 24x7 flood health response centre amid rising water level in river Barak

SILCHAR, July 23: With the water level of the River Barak and its tributaries continuing to rise across parts of Cachar district, the Health Department has established a 24x7 Flood Control Room at the Urban Primary Health Centre (PHC), Trunk Road, Silchar to ensure uninterrupted health services and swift emergency response during the flood season.

The Flood Control Room has been constituted with immediate effect under an office order issued by the Joint Director of Health Services, Cachar, and will remain

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Flood Situation Improves in Nagaon, But Over 2,600 Hectares of Cropland Still Under Water

23 Villages Across Three Revenue Circles Remain Flood-Hit; Authorities Continue Relief and Rescue Operations

Safiqur Rahman, Staff Reporter, Nagaon, July 23: Even as the flood situation in Nagaon district has shown signs of improvement with the water levels of all major rivers remaining below the danger mark, the impact of the recent deluge continues to be felt across several parts of the district.



According to the District Disaster Reporting and Information Management System (DRIMS), Assam, updated at 6:30 PM on Thursday, 23 villages under the Kampur, Nagaon and Samaguri

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BJP's Development Agenda Wins Hearts in Assam: CM

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

Defence Finance Leadership

New Delhi: In a key bureaucratic reshuffle aimed at strengthening financial governance within India’s defence establishment, Vishvajit Sahay, a distinguished 1990 batch officer of the Indian Defence Accounts Service, has formally taken charge as Secretary (Defence Finance) in the Ministry of Defence, marking a crucial transition in one of the most strategically significant financial oversight roles in the government, with his appointment coming at a time when India’s defence sector is undergoing rapid modernization, increased capital expenditure, and a strong push towards self-reliance under the broader framework of defence reforms and indigenous capability development, and prior to taking on this key responsibility, Sahay served as the Controller General of Defence Accounts, where he was instrumental in strengthening financial accountability, improving transparency in defence expenditure, and streamlining audit and accounting processes across various wings of the armed forces and associated establishments, thereby bringing to his new role a wealth of experience in public financial management, defence budgeting, and institutional governance; his elevation to Secretary (Defence Finance) is widely seen as a natural progression given his extensive background in managing complex financial systems and his deep understanding of the intricacies involved in defence procurement, expenditure monitoring, and fiscal discipline, all of which are critical to ensuring that India’s growing defence budget is utilized efficiently and effectively in line with national security priorities, and as Secretary (Defence Finance), Sahay will play a pivotal role in advising the government on financial aspects of defence policy, overseeing budget formulation and implementation, and ensuring that financial prudence is maintained while supporting the operational readiness and modernization needs of the armed forces, a balancing act that requires both strategic foresight and meticulous attention to detail; the position of Secretary (Defence Finance) is integral to the functioning of the Ministry of Defence, as it serves as the principal financial advisor to the ministry and is responsible for vetting proposals related to defence acquisitions, infrastructure development, and other capital-intensive projects, ensuring that they align with budgetary allocations and financial norms, and in this capacity, Sahay’s experience as Controller General of Defence Accounts is expected to prove invaluable, particularly in navigating the complexities of large-scale procurement programs, optimizing resource allocation, and enhancing the efficiency of financial processes within the defence establishment, which has been a key focus area for the government in recent years as part of its broader efforts to modernize the armed forces and strengthen national security; his tenure as Controller General of Defence Accounts was marked by several initiatives aimed at improving the robustness of financial systems, including the adoption of digital tools and technologies to enhance transparency and efficiency, the strengthening of internal audit mechanisms to ensure compliance with financial regulations, and the promotion of best practices in financial management across defence organizations, all of which have contributed to building a more resilient and accountable financial framework, and these reforms are expected to continue under his leadership in the Ministry of Defence, where there is an increasing emphasis on leveraging technology and data analytics to improve decision-making and optimize resource utilization; moreover,

Guwahati: In a remarkable achievement for Assam’s youth, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma proudly announced that 47 candidates from Assam’s ITI Tinsukia have been selected by Maruti Suzuki Motors in Ahmedabad, Gujarat, for apprenticeship and Fixed Term Contract (FTC) roles out of a pool of 59 candidates who underwent rigorous screening, marking a significant milestone for skill development in the region. Sarma, extending congratulations to the young achievers and their mentors, emphasized that this success reflected not only the students’ dedication but also the high standard of training offered by ITI Tinsukia, underscoring the quality of Assam’s vocational training institutions. The Chief Minister highlighted how this achievement aligns with the state’s broader vision of empowering its youth through vocational education, pointing out that the government has been keen to develop a skilled workforce capable of competing in domestic and international job markets. Under the leadership of Sarma, the Assam government has made significant strides in enhancing vocational training, with a multi-layered approach that includes strengthening Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs), establishing Centers of Excellence, and developing the Assam Skill University, all aimed at preparing young people for the modern job market. As part of this strategic initiative, the government is making substantial investments in upgrading training facilities, providing industry-standard equipment, and aligning curriculum with the needs of emerging sectors, thereby ensuring that Assam’s youth are equipped with the technical expertise re-

quired in high-demand industries like automotive engineering, healthcare, and information technology. The success of the ITI Tinsukia candidates is an important testament to this forward-thinking strategy and showcases how investments in education and training are beginning to bear fruit in the form of tangible job opportunities, such as the collaboration with Maruti Suzuki. Maruti Suzuki’s selection of Assam’s ITI candidates for its roles highlights the growing recognition of the state’s ITIs, which have been modernized with cutting-edge tools and machinery to provide hands-on experience, ensuring that graduates are job-ready and prepared to meet industry demands. Sarma emphasized that these developments are part of Assam’s long-term strategy to create sustainable employment opportunities for its youth, reduce outmigration, and contribute to local and regional economic growth. With

Assam's Skill Development Program Gets Major Boost

the establishment of institutions like the Assam Skill University, which will provide advanced technical education in fields critical to Assam’s future growth, the state is positioning itself as a hub for skill development and youth empowerment. The university is expected to become a leading center for vocational education in the region, offering courses designed to meet the needs of industries and enhance the employability of Assam’s workforce. This is further complemented by the creation of Centers of Excellence, which are aimed at promoting specialized skills that will not only benefit the local economy but also help build a strong and self-sufficient workforce capable of driving innovation and economic progress. The selection of 47 students from ITI Tinsukia by Maruti Suzuki, one of India’s largest and most successful automotive manufacturers, demonstrates the success of

these initiatives, as it provides young professionals with the opportunity to work with a globally recognized company, setting a benchmark for the potential of skill-based training in Assam. These candidates, many of whom come from rural backgrounds, have now been offered a platform to display the power of vocational education, and their success serves as an inspiration for other young people in the state. The ITI Tinsukia students’ achievement in securing positions with Maruti Suzuki also underscores the alignment between Assam’s skill development initiatives and the needs of the corporate world, which is increas-

ingly looking for candidates with specialized skills that can directly contribute to their business growth. The state government’s focus on strengthening the link between education and industry has created a pipeline of skilled workers who are ready to meet the demands of leading companies in sectors ranging from automotive engineering to information technology, thereby increasing employment prospects and bolstering the local

AFFIDAVIT

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

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

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

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

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

Sabikun Nihar
Vill=Brahman Beel,
Samaguri, Nagaon
Assam

AFFIDAVIT

I, ACHIYABIBI, W/o- Mujibar Sheikh, a resident of Vill- Shimutapu No-3, PO - Shimutapu, PS - Gossaigaon, Dist- Kokrajhar, Assam do hereby solemnly affirmed and declared by an affidavit before the Notary public, Govt of Assam at Gossaigaon on 03/07/2026 that My actual and correct name is ACHIYABIBI as per my Aadhaar card, PAN Card and other documents, But my name has been wrongly recorded in my SBI Bank Account vide A/C No. 34074551847 under Srirampur Branch as ASIYABIBI in place of ACHIYA BIBI. That, ACHIYA BIBI and ASIYA BEGAM are the same person having one identical person i.e. myself.

AFFIDAVIT

I, SHAJIDA BIBI, C/o - Hasmad Ali, a resident of Vill- Shimutapu No-3, PO - Shimutapu, PS - Gossaigaon, Dist- Kokrajhar, Assam do hereby solemnly affirmed and declared by an affidavit before the Notary public, Govt of Assam at Gossaigaon on 21/07/2026 that My actual and correct name is SHAJIDA BIBI as per my Aadhaar card, PAN Card and other documents, But my name has been wrongly recorded in my SBI KIOSK Bank Account vide A/C No. 39178370753 under Srirampur Branch as SAJIDA BEGAM in place of SHAJIDA BIBI. That, SHAJIDA BIBI and SAJIDA BEGAM are the same person having one identical person i.e. myself.

AFFIDAVIT

I, JOYFUL BEGUM, W/o - Abdur Rouf Khan, D/o - Abdul Jalil, a resident of Vill- Bhomrabil No-2, PO - Haraputa, PS - Gossaigaon, Dist- Kokrajhar, Assam do hereby solemnly affirmed and declared by an affidavit before the Notary public, Govt of Assam at Bilasipara on 21/07/2026 that My actual and correct name is JOYFUL BEGUM, as well as my father's correct name is Abdul Jalil as per my Aadhaar card, PAN Card and other documents, But my name has been wrongly recorded in my SBI Bank Account vide A/C No. 36001894466 under Gossaigaon Branch as JOYFUL BIBI in place of JOYFUL BEGUM as well as my father's name has been wrongly recorded as Abdul Jalil Sheikh in place of Abdul Jalil. That, JOYFUL BEGUM and JOYFUL BIBI are the same person having one identical person i.e. myself as well as Abdul Jalil and Abdul Jalil Sheikh are the same persons having one identical persons who are my father.

economy. The selected candidates from ITI Tinsukia expressed their excitement and gratitude for the opportunity to work with Maruti Suzuki, noting that it would provide them with invaluable experience and help them build a career in the automotive industry.

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 Habib 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. Habib 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 Habib Uddin" is the name of same and one person. This is true.

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

IndiGo logs Rs 238 crore Q1 net loss amid Middle East disruptions

New Delhi: InterGlobe Aviation -- the parent company of IndiGo -- on Thursday reported a consolidated net loss of Rs 238 crore for the first quarter of FY27, compared with a

a year earlier. However, the company posted a standalone net loss of Rs 382 crore for the quarter ended June 30.



profit of Rs 2,176.3 crore in the corresponding period last year, which is a decline of about 90 per cent (year-on-year). Revenue from operations rose 19.9 per cent year-on-year to Rs 24,584 crore during the April-June quarter, up from Rs 20,496.3 crore

Total income increased 18.9 per cent to Rs 25,614.1 crore, while other income slipped 1.6 per cent to Rs 1,030 crore. In addition, total expenses jumped 34 per cent to Rs 25,852 crore from Rs 19,231.9 crore. Aircraft fuel expenses surged 85.7 per cent

year-on-year to Rs 10,832.9 crore, an increase of about Rs 5,000 crore, outpacing the rise in operating revenue. Operationally, IndiGo's capacity, measured in available seat kilometres (ASKs), increased 2.9 per cent year-on-year to 43.5 billion ASKs, while the number of passengers carried rose 0.7 per cent to 31.3 million during the quarter. Commenting on the results, Rahul Bhatia, Managing Director of InterGlobe Aviation, said the first quarter was marked by a volatile operating environment, with elevated fuel costs and network-related constraints in the Middle East weighing on profitability. "At the same time, demand remained healthy and our revenue performance improved year-on-year, supported by better yields and continued customer preference for IndiGo as we served more than 31 million passengers," Bhatia said. He added that while near-term uncertainties persist, the airline remains focused on its long-term priorities of strengthening its network, expanding customer choice and creating sustainable value for all stakeholders. As of June 30, IndiGo's total debt, including capitalised operating lease liabilities, stood at Rs 81,531.3 crore, while the capitalised operating lease liability alone was Rs 53,755.6 crore. The airline's passenger fleet declined by a net nine aircraft during the quarter. Shares of IndiGo ended almost 2 per cent lower at Rs 5,023.9 on the BSE on Thursday.

Nestlé delivered robust 25.4% sales growth led by strong volume growth

Guwahati: The Board of Directors of Nestlé India today approved the results for the first quarter of financial year 2026-2027. Commenting on the results, Mr. Manish Tiwary, Chairman and Managing Director, Nestlé India, said: "We delivered a strong quarter with sales growth of 25.4% led by volume growth. Sales stood at INR 6,363.3 crore, powered by continued consumer trust in our brands and a strong focus on execution. Exports delivered 35.6% growth, despite ongoing geopolitical headwinds. During the quarter, we further accelerated operational cost savings, and continued to step up investments behind our brands with advertising spends increasing by over 40%, with a healthy EBITDA margin of 24.2%. Profit After Tax for the quarter stood at Rs. 975.1 crore, up 47.9% over the corresponding quarter. All four product groups delivered strong double-digit growth, supported by high double-digit growth across channels. The Confectionery product group recorded another strong quarter of volume led double-digit growth that was bolstered by premiumisation and e-commerce, with strong underlying transaction across powerhouse brands. KITKAT continued to gain market share. The Powdered and Liquid Beverages product group recorded another quarter of strong and consistent performance, marking the 20th consecutive quarter of double-digit growth. This performance was powered by increased coffee penetration, accelerated premiumization, and deeper category relevance across consumer segments, supported by sustained brand-building that continues to strengthen our equity and by an expanding footprint. Over the past year, NESPRESSO has expanded its presence across Delhi NCR, Mumbai and Bengaluru through a range of retail formats, including boutique, pa-

vilion and pop-up. The launch of the NESPRESSO pavilion in Bengaluru this quarter marks another step in taking the brand closer to discerning consumers, meeting them in the spaces and moments where they seek premium coffee experiences. The Prepared Dishes and Cooking Aids product group recorded strong double-digit growth, driven by sharper engagement with urban consumers, continued expansion in rural markets and focused innovations. This translated into gains in both market share and penetration. The Milk Products and Nutrition product group recorded strong, broad-based performance built on underlying volume growth across key brands and channels. The delivery was supported by disciplined brand investments in strengthening category fundamentals, including digital activation, consumer-needs oriented portfolio refinement and continued focus on execution excellence across the portfolio. The Pet Food business delivered strong double-digit growth, supported by portfolio expansion, wider distribution and sharper consumer engagement. We strengthened our presence in cat food with the launch of FELIX Gravy Lover and PRO PLAN Cat, addressing evolving pet parent needs across mainstream and premium offerings. Nestlé Professional continued its robust momentum and delivered double-digit volume-led growth, evolving its portfolio into a total solution provider for operator needs across all channels in the Out-of-Home space. General Trade continued to deliver strong double-digit growth across town classes, with rural markets leading the momentum. Rural distribution touchpoints expanded during the quarter, strengthening direct reach and improving the quality of coverage. This progress was underpinned by technology-led interventions, including

DMS adoption at the sub-distributor level, which helped deepen retailer engagement and improve execution across rural markets. Even as we delivered strong business performance, we remained focused on building the capabilities, partnerships and value chains that strengthen our business for the long term. This is especially evident in our sustainability journey, particularly in the work we are doing to build a more resilient dairy value chain. Across our milk procurement network, we continue to work closely with dairy farmers to promote climate-resilient and resource-efficient practices that are meaningful on the ground. These efforts help strengthen livelihoods, reduce environmental impact and create a dairy ecosystem that is more productive, resilient and future-ready. Near our Moga factory in Punjab, Bachitter Singh, a third-generation dairy farmer, offers a compelling glimpse of how sustainability can strengthen the future of dairy. On his farm, improved feeding systems, modern infrastructure, energy-efficient operations and scientific manure management are making the farm more productive and resilient. Technologies such as total mixed ration feeding, automated milking systems and a biogas digester are helping convert waste into value, generating renewable energy and returning nutrients to the soil. Stories like Bachitter Singh's are made possible by the collective effort of many hands across our ecosystem. My sincere appreciation to our esteemed Board, shareholders, employees, retailers, distributors, government stakeholders and other partners for their continued trust, commitment and support. Their efforts enabled us to stay close to consumers and execute with agility and discipline, even in a demanding environment."

India's first dengue vaccine, who can get 'Qdenga' and how it works

New Delhi: India has approved its first vaccine for the prevention of dengue, a major step in strengthening the country's response to one of its fastest-growing mosquito-borne diseases, an official statement said on Tuesday. The Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO) -- under the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare -- has granted marketing authorisation for Qdenga, a live, attenuated tetravalent dengue vaccine developed by Takeda GmbH, Germany. The vaccine will be imported into the country by Takeda Biopharmaceuticals India Pvt. Ltd. The approval follows a comprehensive scientific evaluation of the vaccine's quality, safety and efficacy under the provisions of the Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940, and the Drugs Rules, 1945. Qdenga is a live, attenuated tetravalent vaccine developed using recombinant DNA technology and it is designed to protect against all four dengue virus serotypes, which are responsible for causing the disease.

The vaccine is supplied as a freeze-dried powder for reconstitution and is administered as a subcutaneous injection. The vaccine has been approved for people aged 4 to 60 years. The recommended immunisation schedule consists of two doses of 0.5 ml each, administered three months apart. According to the Health Ministry, the approval is backed by data from an extensive global clinical development programme assessing the vaccine's safety, immunogenicity and efficacy in both dengue-endemic and non-endemic countries. Clinical studies were conducted in participants across more than eight countries, including Brazil, Thailand and Sri Lanka. The regulatory review also included findings from a pivotal Phase III study conducted in India involving people aged 4 to 60 years. Qdenga has already received regulatory approval in 42 countries, including the European Union, the United Kingdom, Switzerland, Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand. It has also re-

ceived World Health Organization (WHO) prequalification. More than 24 million doses have been distributed globally. According to the ministry, post-marketing surveillance has demonstrated a favourable safety profile, with no significant safety concerns reported. As per officials, the vaccine is expected to complement existing measures such as vector control, disease surveillance, early diagnosis and case management under the National Vector Borne Disease Control Programme. However, the ministry emphasised that vaccination is intended to strengthen—not replace, ongoing dengue prevention efforts, including eliminating mosquito breeding sites and promoting personal protective measures. According to the government, the approval reflects its commitment to ensuring timely access to safe, effective and quality-assured vaccines through a robust, science-based regulatory framework.

IDFC FIRST Bank goes live on the EPFO platform

Mumbai: IDFC FIRST Bank has launched the Provident Fund (PF) payment services through its integration with the Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO), under the Ministry of Labour & Employment, Government of India. This integration enables establishments to initiate PF payments directly through the EPFO portal and seamlessly complete transactions via IDFC FIRST Bank's Retail and Corporate Internet Banking platforms. The solution offers a secure and fully digital experience, with real-time transaction confirmations, an intuitive user interface, and instant challan downloads for easy record-keeping and reconciliation. Commenting on the launch, Mr. Ashish Singh, Head - Retail Liabilities, IDFC FIRST Bank, said, "We understand that timely statutory compliance is a priority for every business, and we believe managing these payments should be simple and stress-free. With our EPFO integration, customers can now make provident fund payments quickly, securely, and with ease through IDFC FIRST Bank's digital platforms. This is part of our continued effort to simplify banking and offer solutions that save time, reduce effort, and deliver a better experience for our customers." IDFC FIRST Bank is one of the few banks authorised to support statutory payments across Direct Taxes (CBDT), GST, Customs Duty, and EPFO, offering customers a comprehensive suite of solutions on a single, integrated platform for all banking needs.

Govt disconnects over 88 lakh suspicious mobile connections to tackle cyber frauds

New Delhi: The Department of Telecommunications (DoT) has used an artificial intelligence and big data analytics tool to identify and disconnect 88 lakh suspicious mobile connections, as part of measures to tackle cyber frauds, an official statement said on Thursday. DoT developed the tool namely ASTR which identified these mobile connections that "have been disconnected after failing reverification," Union MoS Communications and Rural Development Dr. Chandra Sekhar Pemmasani said in the Rajya Sabha outlining measures taken to tackle cyber frauds. Further, Chakshu facility of Sanchar Saathi enables citizens to report the suspected fraud communications and it has helped target misuse of telecom resources. Around 50.90 lakh mobile connections had been disconnected as of July 15, 2026, based on 11.18 lakh crowd sourced reports of suspected fraud communications submitted through the Chakshu facility on Sanchar Saathi, the statement from the Ministry of Communications said. The statement added that DoT uses crowd-sourced data for analysis rather than acting on individual submissions. Under the Government of India (Allocation of Business) Rules, 1961, matters re-

lating to cybercrime are allocated to the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA). However, DoT has developed Digital Intelligence Platform (DIP), for bi-directional information sharing with stakeholders including Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (I4C) of MHA for prevention of



misuse of telecom resources for cyber-crimes and financial frauds. Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) has issued advisories to its regulated entities for onboarding on DIP for information sharing. DoT has conducted sessions on DIP for the regulated entities of SEBI and more than 50 such entities are on-boarded on DIP, the minister said. National Cyber Coordination Centre (NCCC), implemented by CERT-In, examines cyberspace to detect cyber security threats. It shares the information with concerned organizations, state governments and stakeholder agencies for taking action.

Samsung opens pre-orders for Galaxy Z Fold8, Fold8 Ultra and Flip8

New Delhi: Samsung announced the start of pre-orders for its latest foldable smartphone lineup in India, introducing the Galaxy Z Fold8, Galaxy Z Fold8 Ultra and Galaxy Z Flip8 with a stronger focus on artificial intelligence (AI), productivity and slimmer designs. The new Galaxy Z series, built on seven generations of Samsung's foldable technology, is powered by Galaxy AI with Gemini Intelligence, enabling users to complete tasks across multiple apps with fewer steps while offering enhanced privacy and security controls. The Galaxy Z Fold8 Ultra is the premium offering in the lineup and is priced at Rs 1,99,999 for the 12GB+256GB variant, Rs 2,19,999 for the 12GB+512GB model and Rs 2,59,999 for the 16GB+1TB version. It will be available in Graphite, Cream and Violet Shadow colours, along with an online-exclusive Green Shadow option. The Galaxy Z Fold8 starts at Rs 1,79,999 for the 12GB+256GB variant, while the 12GB+512GB and 16GB+1TB models are priced at Rs 1,99,999 and Rs 2,39,999, respectively. Customers can choose from Graphite, Cream and Lavender colours,

with Pistachio available exclusively online. Samsung has priced the Galaxy Z Flip8 at Rs 1,24,999 for the 12GB+256GB model and Rs 1,44,999 for the 12GB+512GB variant. The smartphone comes in Graphite, Cream and Pink, while Mint will be offered as an online-exclusive colour. "The response to our foldable smartphones over the last seven generations reaffirms Samsung's leadership in a category we pioneered. Consumers are choosing Samsung foldables for their distinctive design and personalised Galaxy AI experiences that enable productivity and creativity," said JB Park, President and CEO, Samsung Southwest Asia. The Galaxy Z Fold8 has been designed to deliver an immersive viewing experience with a lightweight form factor. Weighing 201 grams, it is Samsung's lightest Galaxy Z Fold smartphone to date and features a 4,800mAh battery. The device comes with a Flex Titanium display structure to reduce crease visibility, a peak brightness of up to 3,000 nits and a dual 50MP camera system with features such as Dual Recording and My FanCam.

Mercedes-Benz launches AMG E 53 Hybrid 4MATIC+ at Rs 1.45 crore

New Delhi: Mercedes-Benz India on Thursday launched the Mercedes-AMG E 53 HYBRID 4MATIC+, marking the debut of the first electrified AMG E-Class sedan in the country as the luxury carmaker strengthens its plug-in hybrid (PHEV) portfolio under its "powertrain agnostic"

multiple powertrain choices, including internal combustion engine, electric and plug-in hybrid models, allowing buyers to choose the technology that best suits their requirements.

Speaking on the launch, Santosh Iyer, Managing Director and CEO of Mercedes-Benz India, said the E-Class



has been one of the longest-running nameplates in the Indian automotive industry and the AMG E 53 HYBRID 4MATIC+ brings together performance, practicality and electric efficiency.

"The E-Class has been the longest running nameplates in the Indian automotive industry and the AMG E 53 HYBRID 4MATIC+

underlines performance, practical usability and electric efficiency, making the E-Class portfolio truly unmatched," Iyer stated.

"This performance sedan combines genuine AMG performance with plug-in hybrid's efficiency, balancing an AMG customers need of racetrack performance with practicality of daily usage, perfectly," he added.

strategy. Priced at Rs 1.45 crore for the Performance Edition and Rs 1.48 crore for the Racing Edition (both ex-showroom), the new AMG E 53 combines the performance credentials of the AMG brand with the efficiency and practicality of a plug-in hybrid powertrain. The launch comes as Mercedes-Benz continues to offer customers

No. DPRD/BTC/(15 th FC)/Ut.IX/Chi-13/2026/8		Dated Kokrajhar the 22 nd 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 (Activity Code-128643497). ” under the Award of 15 th 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			
IPR(BTC)/C/2026-27/860			

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.

Why Iran’s 60 per cent enriched uranium is non-negotiable

The three main sticking points in a US-Iran peace deal are Iran’s untraceable 440.9 kg of 60 per cent highly enriched uranium (HEU), the period of suspension of nuclear enrichment and the control of the Strait of Hormuz. The HEU is the biggest stumbling block. Iran has repeatedly stressed that the enriched uranium is non-negotiable.

Where is Iran’s Highly Enriched Uranium

According to the IAEA, Iran’s enriched uranium stock a day before Israel’s attack on June 13, 2025, was 9,874.9 kg, of which 9,040.5 kg was uranium hexafluoride (UF6). The UF6 stockpile included 440.9 kg of 60 per cent HEU. Donald Trump believes that the HEU is buried in the rubble of the damaged Natanz Uranium Enrichment Complex and the Fordow Fuel Enrichment Plant (FFEP). However, two days before the June 2025 US bombing, IRGC’s former commander Mohsen Rezaei said that the enriched uranium had already been moved to secure locations. Even a Pentagon intelligence assessment and a Defence Intelligence Agency report indicated the same. In fact, two Israeli officials told The New York Times that intelligence suggested Iran had moved equipment and a part of the stockpile from Fordow. According to the IAEA, around 50 per cent of the HEU stored in a tunnel complex at the Isfahan Nuclear Technology Centre (INTC) remains there. In the June bombing, the facility was targeted by 30 UBM-109 Tomahawks, not GBU-57 bunker busters. The remaining 240 kg of the stockpile was split between the Natanz and Fordow facilities before the bombing. Now, the French newspaper Le Monde and a team of visual investigators, including the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, have visually and technically analysed a previously unreported satellite image dated June 9, 2025, of a large truck loaded with containers at INTC. The analysis suggested that the HEU was around 540 kg, not 440.9 kg, and the stockpile was moved to INTC, not distributed, much before the bombing. In the image, taken from one of the two Airbus Pléiades Neo satellites, a flatbed or lowbed truck loaded with 18 blue containers, either cylindrical or cubical, is seen parked facing the tunnel entrance. A smaller truck, parked behind the flatbed truck—which isn’t fully loaded—apparently has a yellow crane that probably unloaded the containers.

Uranium Enrichment Process and Levels

Uranium oxide consists mostly of 0.7 per cent uranium-235 (U-235)—essential for nukes—and 99.3 per cent

uranium-238 (U-238) isotopes. U-235 must be enriched to increase its concentration into a form usable in nukes. Uranium can be enriched in three ways: Gas centrifuge (used by Iran), laser enrichment and gaseous diffusion. In the gas centrifuge method, a reaction between uranium and hydrofluoric acid creates UF6 gas. A centrifuge spins the gas at high speed. The heavier U-238 atoms move towards its walls while the U-235 atoms stay at the centre. Every time the gas is spun, the concentration of U-235 increases. When the process is repeated thousands of times inside centrifuges chained in long cascades, the gas created is highly enriched in U-235. Low-enriched uranium (LEU) contains less than 20 per cent U-235, high-assay LEU has 5-19.75 per cent and HEU has more than 20 per cent U-235, which can be used to build a nuke.

Iran Doesn’t Need 90 Per Cent HEU to Build a Nuke

A purity of 60 per cent isn’t required for civil nuclear power generation—that was the reason for the West’s alarm. The bigger concern is that Iran could enrich the 60 per cent HEU to 90 per cent in a week. Uranium enriched up to 93 per cent is the ideal purity to build a nuke. In March 2025, the IAEA reported that Iran could produce 90 per cent HEU within a week. Per the IAEA, 25 kg of weapon-grade uranium (WGU) is needed per nuke. Analysis of the IAEA’s May 2025 ‘Iran Verification and Monitoring Report’ by the Institute for Science and International Security on June 9 showed that Iran could enrich 60 per cent of its HEU to 233 kg of WGU at FFEP, making 9 nukes. Countless news reports, the IAEA, analyses by scientists and experts and concerns expressed by the West for years have highlighted how Iran can quickly enrich 60 per cent HEU to 90 per cent.

Iran doesn’t need 90 per cent HEU to make a bomb—60 per cent is enough.

This is the reason Iran doesn’t want to surrender or transfer the stockpile and the US is desperate for it. According to the IAEA’s Safeguards Glossary 2022, “significant quantity” (SQ) is the “approximate amount of nuclear material for which the possibility of manufacturing a nuclear explosive device cannot be excluded”. “Direct use material”—uranium enriched to 20 per cent or more—is defined as “nuclear material that can be used for the manufacture of nuclear explosive devices without transmutation or further enrichment”.

The math is simple.

This morning, I woke up to a message from a friend: “What the hell is happening?” Attached was a screenshot of the rupee-dollar exchange rate, flashing at another all-time low. On Tuesday, the rupee had slipped to a record low of 96.60 against the dollar for the first time in history, as the West Asian conflict sent crude prices back above \$100 a barrel. For anyone paying foreign university fees, planning travel, or simply watching imported prices climb, the panic felt immediate and personal. The anger came quickly too. Social media filled with questions about economic management and anxieties about inflation and national decline. Speaking in Hyderabad on Sunday, Prime Minister Narendra Modi urged Indians to reduce petrol and diesel use, take the metro, carpool, curb foreign travel, and work from home where possible — language that deliberately echoed the moral appeals of the Covid-19 years: collective discipline and sacrifice for a national good. But beneath the rupee’s fall lies a much larger story. India imports nearly 85 per cent of its crude oil requirements, which means an oil shock rapidly becomes a currency shock. When crude prices surge, India needs vastly more dollars to pay for energy imports, and the rupee takes the pressure. The country spent \$174.9 billion on crude and petroleum products in the financial year ended March 2026, some 22 per cent of its total import bill. That number doesn’t shrink when geopolitics turns difficult. The deeper paradox is this: the rupee’s vulnerability during a global energy crisis is also, in part, a consequence of India’s own development. A richer, more industrialised, more mobile India consumes far more energy than it did two decades ago. More freight moves across highways.

More factories operate across industrial clusters. More homes run air-conditioners during increasingly brutal summers. More people fly, more people drive, and more infrastructure gets built. These aren’t signs of waste — they’re what development looks like on the ground. For decades, India’s low per capita energy consumption was treated as evidence of underdevelopment. Even today, the average Indian consumes roughly one-eighth the energy of the average American and about a third of the average Briton. But when hundreds of millions begin consuming more energy — which is precisely what development requires — import vulnerability rises too. India still suffers from enormous inefficiencies and deeply energy-intensive elite lifestyles, but a significant portion of its growing energy demand is structural: expanding freight networks, new factories, construction booms, electrified rail, data infrastructure, and a manufacturing push designed to position India as an alternative supply-chain hub to China. The transition away from fossil fuels is underway. In June 2025, India reached 50 per cent of installed power capacity from non-fossil sources, five years ahead of its Paris target. Railway electrification covered 99.6 per cent of the broad-gauge network by March 2026. Around 1.4 million electric two-wheelers were sold in FY2026, making them the largest part of the EV market (although issues with the grid still persist for wider adoption). This is where India’s energy transition may look different from the West: less about expensive electric cars in suburban driveways, more about scooters, trains, dense cities and public transport. The direction is clear. But installed capacity is not delivered energy. Non-fossil

sources still accounted for only 29.2 per cent of actual power generation in 2025-26. And electricity transition is not the same as oil transition. Freight trucks run on diesel, aviation depends overwhelmingly on jet fuel, and industrial logistics remain tied to hydrocarbons. A country of continental scale cannot decarbonise overnight while simultaneously industrialising, urbanising, and expanding living standards for hundreds of millions of people. This is where simplistic climate debates tend to disconnect from the realities of developing countries. The question is not whether India should transition away from fossil fuels. It of course must. The question is how a country still climbing toward middle-income prosperity manages that transition without freezing the development it took generations to begin. Europe industrialised first and decarbonised later. America built its prosperity on more than a century of cheap fossil fuel consumption. India is attempting something without clear precedent: industrialising at the exact moment the world is trying to move beyond fossil fuels altogether. For years, Indians demanded the material markers of development that wealthier countries already enjoyed: mobility, infrastructure, manufacturing growth, reliable electricity, air-conditioning, logistics networks, and modern consumption. We are now living through the uncomfortable reality that these things require enormous amounts of energy — and that much of that energy, for now, still has to be bought in dollars. The falling rupee is not simply a story of policy failure or market panic. It is also the sound of a developing country colliding with the limits of the geopolitical world it inherited.

Nishad Sanzagiri

The IAEA’s SQ is 25 kg of 90 per cent HEU for an implosion weapon. If it’s 60 per cent HEU, the SQ should be 41.7 kg of total uranium, explains Edwin Lyman, the director of Nuclear Power Safety with the Union of Concerned Scientists’ Climate and Energy programme. The higher the level of enrichment, the smaller the amount of HEU needed to make a smaller, lighter and easier-to-deliver nuke. The Nuclear Threat Initiative (NTI), a Washington, D.C.-based nonprofit, nonpartisan organisation, explains by visualising both the mass and diameter of a bare spherical critical mass of enriched uranium (in a weapon design using a reflector) for various levels of enrichment. Critical mass is the minimum amount of fissile material (like U-235 or Plutonium-239) required to maintain a self-sustaining nuclear chain reaction. Uranium has almost the same density as gold and occupies much less volume for its weight than another metal like iron would. The mass and size required to build a nuclear weapon vary according to the level of enrichment. Around 3,600 kg of 5 per cent LEU will be a bare spherical critical mass of 70 cm diameter; 143 kg of 19.75 per cent LEU will be a 24 cm ball; 36 kg of 45 per cent HEU will be a 19 cm volleyball; and 12 kg of 93 per cent HEU will be a 10.5 cm apple. Last June, the US struck the two enrichment plants at Natanz (one was destroyed), the one deep inside a mountain at Fordow and the massive nuclear fuel cycle complex at Isfahan. Per the IAEA, the underground plants at Natanz and Fordow were badly damaged. Iran’s nuclear programme isn’t “obliterated”, as claimed by Trump. In fact, Iran can restart enrichment within months, the IAEA said last June. However, WGU isn’t enough to build a nuke. Weaponisation, a time-consuming process, is the main part. Iran would need to convert WGU into metallic components, integrate them and mount the weapon on a missile for an underground test—all thus under extreme secrecy. It could take months or a year. At best, Iran can make a crude nuclear bomb using the 60 per cent HEU under an accelerated programme without producing warheads for ballistic missiles. Though such a nuclear device would have a larger and heavier core and require more high explosives to compress the core and other structures to increase fission reactions, Iran would become the 10th nuclear power.

Aninda Dey

fracture international unity against the regime, and secure sanctions relief without giving up the core infrastructure.

The hardliners in Tehran have made it crystal clear: there are “no direct negotiations” with the Great Satan, only indirect messaging through convenient proxies like Pakistan. This allows them to maintain their revolutionary idealism at home while quietly advancing their agenda. Just look at Iran’s track record. For years, the regime has perfected the art of diplomatic bad faith. It has signed deals only to cheat on them, funded terrorist proxies across the region while denying responsibility, and using every ceasefire or negotiation window to rearm and regroup. The Strait of Hormuz threats, the missile barrages, and the nuclear sabre-rattling — these aren’t defensive moves by a cornered victim. They’re calculated provocations meant to extract maximum leverage.

By hiding behind Pakistan, Iran gets to portray itself as the reasonable party forced into talks by American aggression, all while its proxy network continues destabilising the Middle East. Pakistan’s role enables this duplicity. Shared borders, Shia religious ties, and energy dependencies give Islamabad unique access to Tehran. Pakistani leaders are so desperate to rehabilitate their image with Trump — who once rightly slammed them for “lies and deceit” — that they’re willing to overlook Iran’s bad faith. Framing mediation as “reassuring Iran that Pakistan isn’t a Saudi or American proxy” essentially means carrying water for a regime that exports revolution and chaos.

The Limits of Leverage

Pakistan’s constraints are real. Iranian hardliners view the whole Islamabad channel as little more than convenient cover for US pressure. On the American side, plenty are furious that Trump is “outsourcing” diplomacy to a country with a long history of playing both sides — sheltering Taliban elements, maintaining ties with China, and now burnishing its credentials with the mullahs.

Gaza Peace Board: Why India must reject Trump’s offer

‘The system’s power comes not from its truth, but from everyone’s willingness to perform as if it were true, and its fragility comes from the same source... For decades, countries like Canada prospered under what we called the rules-based international order. We joined its institutions, we praised its principles, we benefited from its predictability... We knew that the story of international rules-based order was partially false, that the strongest would exempt themselves when convenient, that trade rules were enforced asymmetrically. And we knew that international law would be applied with varying rigour depending on the identity of the accused or the victim...’
- Mark Carney, Prime Minister of Canada’s Davos Speech

This week, in the Halls of Davos, a new ghost from the past emerged. This time, it was Canada, one of the few nations that long believed in the sanctity of international law, that the world listened to. But for India, Canadian PM Mark Carney’s admission is not something it did not already know. For us, it was more of a warning for a new, even more precarious invitation: US President Donald Trump’s Board of Peace. The Board is being marketed as the ‘institutional centrepiece’ to end the Gaza conflict. To many in New Delhi, it looks like a seat at the high table or, to a few, even more ‘construction contracts’ in Gaza’s reconstruction. However, in reality, it is a corporate shell company masquerading as a diplomatic mission, and for India, joining it would be a strategic blunder.

A Corporate Governance Model

If one closely observes ‘The Board of Peace’s’ architecture, one will see how explicitly it is ‘corporate in nature’. It features a three-tier power structure that places President Trump at the apex as Chairman for Life, holding an absolute veto even after potential resignation or incapacity. While some suggest it has the capability to take over the United Nations, I do not. In the United Nations, diplomacy played an important role. While here, this isn’t diplomacy; it is a ‘pay-to-play’ model with its own legal personality. The Board would essentially insulate itself from the oversight of any international law or organisation. It will operate as a sovereign private equity firm, where the ‘reconstruction of Gaza’ is viewed not as a humanitarian necessity but as a ‘beautiful piece of property’ with an infrastructure to scale. Furthermore, at the

heart of this plan lies a comprehensive plan to end the Gaza conflict and present it as a regional stabilisation mechanism. Through this body, it is proposed to advance an alternative to the United Nations – an ambition which is sweeping and troubling in itself. The United Nations has framed diplomacy; this is more of a deliberate move to bypass an already established multilateral organisation rather than reform it. Furthermore, this proposed “Board of Peace” is designed to operate under a three-tier power structure that privileges private-sector logic over democratic deliberation. At its apex sits the Board of Peace itself, vested with sweeping strategic authority, including exclusive power to interpret and implement its own charter. This concentration of authority effectively removes any meaningful system of checks and balances. Beneath it lies the Gaza Executive Board, responsible for ground-level coordination, followed by the National Committee for the Administration of Gaza (NCAG), a technocratic Palestinian body tasked with managing day-to-day governance. While this layered structure is presented as efficient, it is, in reality, profoundly top-heavy—designed to centralise power rather than distribute it. Crucially, Donald Trump would retain absolute veto authority within this framework, including unilateral control over membership decisions and renewals. While members of his broader team would focus on international legitimacy-building and diplomatic outreach, ultimate authority would remain firmly personalised. This is not multilateral peacebuilding in the traditional sense; it is a corporate governance model transposed onto international conflict resolution, with a single dominant stakeholder exercising decisive control.

The Ghost of East India Company

For a nation that has spent two hundred years under the British Raj, the rhetoric surrounding the ‘Board of Peace’ sounds familiar. The British Raj also justified its presence and presented itself as a stabiliser, a civiliser, and a guarantor of order. Similarly, Trump’s vision for Gaza ignores a fundamental pillar of consent. In our own history, we have seen how colonising states have justified their presence by promising ‘development’ while stripping away our autonomy. To say the least, Gaza should be a mix of Arab countries coming together, rather than a board, which dictates the future of a nation ravaged by war.

Student Protest Turns Tense in Nagaon; Eight Detained, Paramedical Student Injured:: Voice of Nagaon' Holds Demonstration Over Alleged NEET Paper Leak; District Administration Issues Advisory

Staff Reporter, Nagaon, July 23: Tension gripped Nagaon town on Thursday after a protest organized by a newly formed students' platform, 'Voice of Nagaon', over the alleged NEET question paper leak and the demand for the resignation of the Union Education Minister, escalated into a confrontation with police outside the Nagaon Sadar Police Station.

The demonstration, reportedly inspired by the ongoing student protests in other parts of the country, began near Motiram Bora Udyan in the heart of Nagaon town, where a large number of students assembled to voice their concerns over alleged irregularities in the NEET examination and corruption in the education sector.

Raising slogans such as "One Nation, One Voice," "Better Education, Better Future," and "Education is Our Right," the protesters demanded accountability from the Central Government and called for reforms in the education system.

The situation became tense after youth leader Birinchi Bora joined the protest. Police intervened and detained Birinchi Bora along with two others, taking them to the Nagaon Sadar Police Station. The detention prompted scores of students to march towards the police



station demanding their immediate release.



dent displayed a black flag outside the police station. Police detained the student as well. His identity could not be immediately confirmed.

Following the intervention of the district administration, the situation was brought under control. Police eventually detained eight persons, including Birinchi Bora, Ishan Debnath, and Rakib Ahmed, in connection with the protest.

The sudden demonstration has also triggered speculation over the forces behind the newly emerged organization, though no official confirmation has been made regarding its affiliations.

In the wake of the incident, Nagaon District Commissioner Devashish Sharma issued an appeal urging students and citizens to maintain peace and public order. He cautioned that no protest or public programme should be held on roads without prior permission from the district administration, warning that legal action would be taken against violators.

The District Commissioner also appealed to students to remain focused on their studies while expressing their views through lawful and peaceful means.

The situation in Nagaon remained peaceful by the evening, although security was tightened in sensitive areas as a precaution.

Dibrugarh District Sports Association General Secretary Kamakhya Saikia Appointed Manager of Indian Senior Cricket Team for T-20 Series in Zimbabwe



M Hashim Ali correspondent Dibrugarh, July 23: There is good news for the sports fraternity of Assam. The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) has appointed Kamakhya Saikia, General Secretary of the Dibrugarh District Sports Association and former Joint Secretary of the Assam Cricket Association, as the manager of the Indian national cricket team for its tour of Zimbabwe. Kamakhya Saikia will serve as the manager of the Indian team during the T20 cricket series to be held in Harare, Zimbabwe, from July 23 to July 28. It is worth mentioning that Kamakhya Saikia is a former cricketer of the Assam team and is currently a reputed sports administrator. This prestigious appointment is a recognition of his long standing contribution to cricket administration and sports development. His selection as manager of the national cricket team reflects the confidence placed in his administrative capabilities and extensive experience in the field of sports. The appointment has brought pride not only to the Dibrugarh District Sports Association but also to the people of Dibrugarh and Assam as a whole.

Speaking about the development, Dibrugarh District Sports Association President Niranjan Saikia said, “We feel proud that Kamakhya Saikia has been appointed as the manager of the Indian senior cricket team. This is not merely a personal achievement for Kamakhya Saikia; we consider it an honour bestowed by the Board of Control for Cricket in India upon the Dibrugarh District Sports Association. We extend our best wishes to him and hope that he will discharge his responsibilities during the series successfully”. It may be mentioned that during the Indian national cricket team’s tour of Zimbabwe, the team will compete in an international series, and Kamakhya Saikia has been entrusted with the important responsibility of overseeing the team’s administrative and organisational activities throughout the tour. He has already travelled to Zimbabwe with the Indian team.

Look beyond FTA: A chastened, humbled, pragmatic Europe could be a great strategic partner for India

The penny has finally dropped for Europe. Slow to the take, it is finally dawning on Europe that if the United States can turn against one of its staunchest allies and try to annex its sovereign territory, then it implies the inversion of the very idea of NATO. The principal guarantor of European security is now violating the core tenet of the European project. The lesson for Europe, therefore, as Canada’s Mark Carney said in his widely appreciated speech, “When the rules no longer protect you, you must protect yourself.” The attempted Greenland grab was one abuse too many even for the collective docility of a self-pitying continent. After five stages of grief over Donald Trump’s thuggish and coercive ways, his strategy of hemispheric supremacy, there’s now a sense of resignation among European leaders that the transatlantic divorce is inevitable and an acceptance that the old world order won’t return. There’s even a hint of defiance as the old continent grapples with realities new and uncertain. Macron said Europe must reassert itself and reject the “new colonial approach”. For Poland’s Tusk, “appeasement” means no results, only humiliation.” Bart De Wever, the Prime Minister of Belgium, said Europe being a happy American vassal is one thing, but “being a miserable slave is another. If you back down now, you are going to lose your dignity and that is probably the most valuable thing you can have in a democracy.” From George III to Caligula, history has no dearth of mad kings. Emperor Trump is the latest entrant in its annals. His most recent move is the decision to slap 100% tariff on Canada because Carney, in a bid to diversify Canadian economy, made the ‘mistake’ of signing a trade deal with China—a deal that Trump administration itself has been chasing for months. As Peter Wehner writes in The Atlantic, Trump is “a malignant narcissist, consumed by hate and driven by vengeance. His mind is warped, his sense of morality corrupted. And yet his mind and his morality are the only checks on his power that he recognizes. Trump believes he is free to do whatever he wills. And it’s not at all clear who or what can stop him.” By adopting a blanket coercive strategy towards its partners and allies such as Canada, its closest neighbour, in no small measure of irony Trump proved the efficacy of Carney’s comments at Davos where the Canadian PM said great powers are “using economic integration as weapons”, “tariffs as leverage”, “financial infrastructure as coercion” and “supply chains as vulnerabilities to be exploited.” In such a world, “integration becomes the source of subordination.” In this paradigm, norms are no longer predictable, signed agreements are subject to the whims and fancies of a rapacious American President and multilateral institutions have fallen prey to either China-centric or Trump-centric international order. The prescription for Europe, therefore, is simple. It must diversify. The transatlantic project was incumbent on an axiomatic belief that no longer holds true—that integration with America brings prosperity and security. The question, whether Europe was too naïve or opportunistic, is moot. The reality is that Trump has altered America and even the world order in fundamental ways. For a while, Europe tried the appeasement policy, settling for a lopsided trade deal, calling Trump ‘daddy’, driven by fears of a fundamental American pivot away from collective security commitments. But it quickly became clear that Trump’s assault on alliance credibility extends beyond tariffs into the existential foundations of the post-1945 security and economic order. Something has flipped in Europe. It is now speaking India’s language, talking of strategic autonomy—the capacity to act independently in defence, economic security and technology domains. As the 27-member bloc undergoes economic repositioning and strategic recalibration, India emerges as a natural partner in this endeavour. The significance of the EU-India strategic partnership—that may further strengthen collaboration across key policy areas such as trade, security and defence—goes much beyond the elusive free-trade agreement (FTA) that has dominated the headlines. Be-

yond tariffs, customs, or an expansive security and defence collaboration that are high on the agenda, it represents a deliberate architectural shift by two of the world’s largest democratic polities to insulate themselves against the twin shocks of Chinese hegemonic ambition and the gunboat diplomacy of an aggressive, cynical and increasingly unhinged America. Stephen Miller, one of the most influential members of the Trump administration and a key adviser to Trump, laid bare the MAGA worldview in an interview with CNN. “We live in a world in which you can talk all you want about international niceties and everything else, but we live in a world, in the real world... that is governed by strength, that is governed by force, that is governed by power. These are the iron laws of the world since the beginning of time.” This obsession with power projection might seem that the US is lashing out at the prospect of its inevitable decline. Janan Ganesh writes in FT that it is only to be expected. “The belligerent turn in American behaviour has in fact come during its relative decline... It is easier for a nation to be magnanimous from a great height. Paranoia and aggression set in when that position slips. As such, we should expect a volatile US until it gets used to the role of being a, not the, superpower.” Be that as it may, the redefinition of the global order in starkly Thucydidean terms, where might is always right, the strong do what they can and the weak suffer what they must, presents the backdrop where the relationship between Europe and India is undergoing a tectonic shift. For the European Union (EU), the Indo-Pacific strategy is existential. The bloc’s economic prosperity is tethered to the stability of Asian markets, yet its security architecture has historically been dependent on the US. The return of unpredictable trade policies in Washington, exemplified by the tariff threats from the Trump administration, its coercive policies and savaging of the transatlantic alliance, has forced the EU to seek alternative economic engines. India, with its demographic dividend, its status as the world’s fastest growing large economy, a huge and widening consumer market and trajectory to become the world’s third-largest economy by 2030, offers the only scale comparable to China, making it an indispensable partner for European diversification. For India, the EU serves as a vital partner for high-technology, economic investment, and a partnership that lends stability without requiring a formal military alliance. New Delhi’s strategic calculus involves reducing its legacy of over-dependence on Russian defence hardware and managing the security threat posed by China on its northern borders. A deepening partnership with the EU provides access to capital, advanced defence manufacturing and a stable partner. The trade agreement, in this context, acts as the economic anchor for this strategic convergence, ensuring that political goodwill is cemented by deep commercial interdependence. The FTA’s strategic value extends beyond tariff reduction. For India, it provides diversification from US market dependence at a moment when access to American consumers faces unprecedented political risk. For the EU, the deal offers supply chain resilience and an alternative to Chinese manufacturing in sectors where European dependence has created deep and seemingly irreversible vulnerabilities. The description of the India-EU FTA as the ‘mother of all deals’ by India’s commerce minister Piyush Goyal or European Commission president Ursula von der Leyen, therefore, is not merely rhetorical. It reflects the opportunities and the sheer complexities and magnitude of the economies involved—a combined market of nearly two billion people and a trade relationship that exceeded €180 billion in 2024. As the Global Trade Research Initiative observes in a report, “the agreement would be India’s biggest and most complex trade deal so far.”

The security and defence partnership, to be signed concurrently with trade discussions, represents an equally consequential dimension. EU foreign policy chief Kaja Kallas has said that the pact will deepen cooperation in maritime

security, counterterrorism, cyber defence and maritime domain awareness, with particular focus on stability in the Indo-Pacific region. In a post Sunday after arriving in India, Von der Leyen wrote, “I’m so glad to be in India today. India and Europe have made a clear choice. The choice of strategic partnership, dialogue and openness. Leveraging our complementary strengths. And building mutual resilience. We are showing a fractured world that another way is possible. During her address at the World Economic Forum in Davos last Tuesday, the European Commission chief had said, “Right after Davos, I will travel to India. There is still work to do. But we are on the cusp of a historic trade agreement. Some call it the mother of all deals. One that would create a market of 2 billion people, accounting for almost a quarter of global GDP. And, crucially, that would provide a first-mover advantage for Europe with one of the world’s fastest growing and most dynamic continents.” And yet, amid this euphoria, it is easy to forget that this strategic partnership took an inordinately long time to mature and perhaps would never have had it not been for the rupture in the matrix caused by Trump. The negotiations for the trade deal, known originally as the Broad-based Trade and Investment Agreement (BTIA), are a study on lost opportunities. Launched in 2007, the deal remained elusive for nearly two decades due to deep-seated structural and regulatory divergences. For 19 years, the talks were characterized by seemingly unbridgeable gaps and ‘clash of sensitivities’ where one side’s trade interest was the other’s nightmare. And there was another dimension. As Garima Mohan of German Marshall Fund points out in her essay, “India’s role and importance was not always recognized in many European capitals, with few exceptions such as Paris. For most European governments, India came second to China and ranked below other partnerships in the Indo-Pacific, such as that with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations.” She writes that India’s “efforts started being reciprocated only after certain leadership changes in Europe. Germany, following the departure of former Chancellor Angela Merkel, is seen as one prominent example. But a shift in the European Commission is arguably the most important change. As an Indian official noted, ‘India had always reached out to the EU’, but the ground ‘only really shifted under von der Leyen’.” While Mohan posits that a turning point came in 2019 as Europe’s relations with China took a turn for the worse, contrast the superciliousness of a virtue-signalling Europe and its institutions, replete with long lectures on democracy, civil rights and religious freedom—with the rhetoric now on display. German Chancellor Friedrich Merz said at Davos, “In a few days’ time, the President of the European Commission will travel to India to establish the principles of a free trade agreement between the subcontinent and the EU. I was in India a week ago and I have no doubt whatsoever that the era of great powers presents an opportunity for all of us and for all countries that favour regulations above arbitrary rule and see greater benefit in free trade than in protectionism and isolationism.” While Kallas, the EU’s highest-ranking diplomat, told European parliamentarians in Strasbourg that EU and India must become more ambitious partners. “Two major democracies cannot afford to hesitate.” She referred to India as “indispensable” to Europe’s economic resilience. In an interview to Indian Express, Kallas pitched Europe as India’s “reliable partner” and said, “at a time when free trade is under pressure and supply chains are being weaponised, deepening our economic partnership makes perfect sense. This agreement is a strategic choice.” For German economy minister Katherina Reiche, “when old partnerships weaken or break down, we need new partnerships around the world, and we should achieve this more quickly than before.” She told reporters in Davos on Wednesday: “I am optimistic that this can be achieved, particularly with regard to India.” This is a chastened, humbled, and a more pragmatic Europe.

Sreemoy Talukdar

INS Malvan commissioned into Indian Navy

New Delhi: 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. Unlike deep-sea destroyers or frigates designed for blue-water operations, these specialised ships are optimised for patrolling coastal areas, protecting harbours, escorting high-value vessels and conducting continuous underwater surveillance in littoral environments. Their compact

yet highly capable design enables them to operate efficiently in areas where larger warships may face operational limitations. Such versatility makes them an essential element of India's layered maritime defence strategy. The successful construction of INS Malvan also highlights the impressive growth of India's shipbuilding capabilities. Over the past decade, the country has steadily expanded its indigenous warship production programme, delivering aircraft carriers, destroyers, frigates, corvettes, submarines and patrol vessels through domestic shipyards. The increasing participation of Indian industries in supplying propulsion systems, electronics, sensors, weapons integration, steel, communication equipment and combat management systems demonstrates how the country's defence manufacturing ecosystem has matured significantly. Indigenous production not only lowers long-term maintenance costs but also enables faster upgrades and customisation according to operational needs. The Atmanirbhar Bharat initiative has provided fresh momentum to these efforts by encouraging domestic production, reducing imports and promoting innovation across the defence sector. Government policies supporting technology transfer, research partnerships and procurement reforms have created favourable conditions for Indian companies to develop advanced military platforms and systems. Projects like INS Malvan serve as practical examples of how national policy, industrial capability and military requirements can come together to strengthen India's strategic autonomy. The warship's induction further contributes to the Indian Navy's long-term force modernisation programme aimed at maintaining a balanced and technologically advanced fleet capable of safeguarding national interests across the Indo-Pacific region. Maritime security today extends beyond conventional warfare and includes protecting shipping lanes, offshore energy assets, fishing communities, undersea communication cables and strategic ports from both traditional and emerging threats. Anti-submarine platforms such as INS Malvan play a critical role in ensuring uninterrupted maritime commerce while deterring hostile activities in India's coastal waters. They also contribute to humanitarian assistance, disaster relief, maritime surveillance and search-and-rescue operations whenever required, highlighting the multi-dimensional role of modern naval assets. The commissioning ceremony at Karwar also underscored the strategic importance of the naval base, which has steadily emerged as one of India's most significant maritime facilities.

VISHWAS 2026

New Delhi: In a significant move aimed at encouraging voluntary compliance and reducing long-pending legal disputes, the Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO), functioning under the Ministry of Labour and Employment, has introduced a one-time dispute resolution initiative titled VISHWAS 2026. The special scheme seeks to provide employers with an opportunity to settle disputes related to damages and penalties imposed under the Employees' Provident Fund and Miscellaneous Provisions Act, 1952, and the provisions of the Code on Social Security, 2020, through a transparent, technology-driven and time-bound mechanism. The initiative represents a major policy effort to simplify compliance while safeguarding the interests of millions of employees whose provident fund contributions form a critical component of their long-term financial security. The scheme has been formally incorporated into the EPF Scheme, 2026 through a government notification and came into force on June 29, 2026. It will remain available for six months from the date of notification, offering employers a limited window to resolve eligible cases under substantially relaxed terms. Labour and employment authorities have described the initiative as a balanced approach that combines regulatory enforcement with facilitation, allowing compliant employers to clear legacy disputes without prolonged litigation. The launch reflects the government's broader emphasis on improving the ease of doing business while ensuring that statutory social security obligations are fulfilled. Under the initiative, employers involved in disputes concerning compensation or penalties can opt for settlement through a fully digital application process, eliminating the need for extensive paperwork and reducing administrative delays. The online system has been designed to enable quick submission, electronic verification, digital scrutiny and prompt issuance of settlement orders, ensuring greater transparency and accountability. The scheme covers a wide range of pending matters, making it relevant to establishments at different stages of the legal process. These include cases where penalty or compensation orders are under challenge before judicial forums, matters where final orders have been issued but recoveries remain pending or only partially completed, including Recovery Certificate

proceedings, cases where notices have already been issued but final orders are yet to be passed, and even situations where notices have not yet been issued despite existing defaults. By including disputes across multiple stages, the initiative seeks to provide a comprehensive framework for clearing accumulated compliance issues that have remained unresolved for years. One of the most attractive features of the scheme is the concessional calculation of damages for defaults relating to periods before June 14, 2024. Instead of the higher rates applicable under normal provisions, employers opting for settlement will benefit from significantly reduced compensation rates. Defaults extending up to two months will attract damages at only 0.25 per cent per month, defaults lasting from two months to less than four months will be charged at 0.50 per cent per month, while defaults exceeding four months will be calculated at 1.00 per cent per month. These reduced rates are expected to encourage employers to voluntarily settle old disputes rather than continue expensive and time-consuming litigation. However, participation under the scheme is subject to important conditions intended to protect employees' financial interests. Before filing an application, employers must ensure that the entire statutory interest payable under the relevant provisions of the EPF Act or the Social Security Code has already been deposited in full. In addition, applicants must submit an undertaking confirming that no further appeals or legal proceedings will be initiated regarding disputes settled under the scheme. This requirement aims to ensure finality of settlements and prevent future litigation over the same issues. The initiative also contains detailed provisions governing the adjustment of amounts that may already have been deposited towards damages or penalties. It provides clarity on the treatment of statutory pre-deposits made while filing appeals and establishes procedures for equitable adjustment wherever necessary. Such provisions are expected to eliminate ambiguity and facilitate faster disposal of pending matters. At the same time, the scheme excludes certain categories from its ambit to preserve the integrity of the compliance framework. Establishments where penalties or damages have already been fully recovered cannot seek relief under the initiative.

Prez Murmu calls for more India North Macedonia Trade and Growth

New Delhi: President Droupadi Murmu has called for a new era of deeper economic engagement between India and North Macedonia, urging businesses, investors and industry leaders from both nations to move beyond conventional trade and build long-term partnerships driven by investment, innovation, technology transfer and sustainable development. Addressing the India-North Macedonia Business Forum in Skopje during her landmark state visit, the President said that the relationship between the two countries is entering an important phase marked by expanding opportunities across multiple sectors. She described her visit as a historic milestone, being the first-ever visit by an Indian President to North Macedonia, and said it reflects India's strong commitment to strengthening bilateral ties based on mutual trust, shared democratic values and a common vision for inclusive economic growth. President Murmu observed that although diplomatic relations between India and North Macedonia have remained warm and friendly over the years, the existing level of bilateral trade remains far below its actual potential. She stressed that the present trade figures represent only a small fraction of what the two economies can achieve together and expressed confidence that with focused efforts by governments, businesses and industry bodies, bilateral trade can be doubled before the end of this decade. Highlighting India's rapid economic transformation, technological progress and expanding global partnerships, the President said India is well positioned to become a trusted partner for North Macedonia in its economic development journey. She emphasized that today's global economy is increasingly shaped by innovation, digital technologies and resilient supply chains, making it essential for friendly countries to build partnerships that create local value while also serving regional and international markets. President Murmu underlined that India has emerged as one of the fastest-growing major economies in the world with a thriving start-up ecosystem, expanding manufacturing capabilities and globally competitive digital infrastructure. She invited North Macedonian companies to take advantage of these strengths through greater business collaboration, joint ventures and investment partnerships. The President identified several high-potential sectors where both countries can significantly expand cooperation. She pointed to digital innovation and artificial intelligence as areas capable of transforming industries and public services while creating new employment opportunities. India's experience in digital governance, software development, fintech solutions and innovation-driven entrepreneurship, she said, offers valuable opportunities for collaboration with North Macedonia's growing technology ecosystem. Stressing the importance of Digital Public Infrastructure, President Murmu highlighted India's globally recognised digital transformation journey and invited North Macedonia to explore cooperation in this field. She referred to India's Unified Payments Interface, popularly known as UPI, as a successful example of how technology can improve financial inclusion by enabling secure, affordable and accessible digital payments for millions of people. She noted that India's digital public infrastructure has demonstrated how technology can become a powerful instrument of inclusive development, benefiting citizens, businesses and governments alike. President Murmu said collaboration in digital public infrastructure could help strengthen innovation, enhance public service delivery and encourage greater digital connectivity between the two countries. Healthcare and pharmaceuticals also figured prominently in the President's vision for stronger bilateral cooperation. She said India's globally respected pharmaceutical industry possesses the expertise, manufacturing capacity and research capabilities needed to support North Macedonia's healthcare sector through investment and joint production. She encouraged Indian pharmaceutical companies to explore manufacturing partnerships in North Macedonia for medicines, vaccines and medical devices, serving not only local demand but also the wider Balkan region and European markets. Such cooperation, she said, would generate employment, strengthen healthcare systems and create mutually beneficial

commercial opportunities. The President further highlighted medical technology, healthcare innovation and affordable healthcare solutions as important areas where Indian experience can contribute meaningfully to North Macedonia's development priorities. Agriculture and food processing were also identified as promising sectors for expanded engagement. President Murmu said both countries possess complementary strengths that can support collaboration in agro-processing, food preservation, cold-chain logistics and value-added agricultural products. Modern supply chains, efficient storage infrastructure and food processing technologies can significantly reduce post-harvest losses while improving income opportunities for farmers and agribusinesses. She encouraged businesses from both countries to work together in developing modern agricultural solutions capable of serving regional and international markets. Renewable energy and green development formed another important pillar of the President's address. She em-



phasized that clean energy cooperation has become essential for ensuring sustainable economic growth while addressing climate challenges. India has made significant progress in renewable energy deployment, solar power expansion and green technology innovation, she noted, adding that these experiences can create new opportunities for cooperation with North Macedonia. President Murmu invited the country to participate actively in global sustainability initiatives led or supported by India, including the International Solar Alliance, which seeks to accelerate solar energy adoption across the world. She also extended invitations to join the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure, aimed at strengthening infrastructure resilience against natural disasters, and the Global Biofuels Alliance, which promotes cleaner and sustainable energy alternatives. These platforms, she said, represent practical examples of international cooperation for addressing common developmental and environmental challenges. Innovation and entrepreneurship featured strongly throughout the President's remarks. She encouraged stronger collaboration between Indian and North Macedonian start-up ecosystems through technology partnerships, research cooperation, incubation programmes and knowledge exchange. Artificial intelligence, cyber security, digital technologies and advanced manufacturing, she observed, are rapidly reshaping the global economy, making international innovation partnerships increasingly valuable. President Murmu said businesses from both countries should actively pursue technology transfer, joint research and collaborative product development that generate long-term economic benefits while strengthening competitiveness. She urged investment agencies, chambers of commerce and industry associations to facilitate greater business interaction, encourage direct investment and help entrepreneurs identify emerging opportunities across

both markets. Stressing the importance of people-to-people connections in strengthening economic partnerships, the President noted that stronger business engagement should be complemented by greater educational exchanges, tourism cooperation and cultural interaction. Such exchanges, she said, deepen mutual understanding while creating a stronger foundation for sustainable bilateral cooperation. She also invited North Macedonia to participate in the World Audio Visual and Entertainment Summit (WAVES), scheduled to be held in India next year, describing it as an important platform for expanding cooperation in creative industries, digital content, media technologies and cultural exchange. The President expressed confidence that wider participation in international events hosted by India would strengthen commercial, technological and cultural partnerships while creating new opportunities for businesses and creative professionals. President Murmu reiterated that the India-North Macedonia Business Forum represents much more than a routine commercial event, describing it as an important platform for shaping a forward-looking economic partnership capable of delivering shared prosperity. She encouraged companies from both countries to think beyond traditional buyer-seller relationships and instead establish long-term collaborations based on innovation, investment, technology sharing and local manufacturing. Joint ventures, she said, can create durable economic value while contributing to employment generation, industrial development and regional economic integration. During her visit, President Murmu is also participating in several engagements highlighting the cultural and historical connections between India and North Macedonia. She is scheduled to visit the Mother Teresa Memorial in Skopje, accompanied by President Gordana Siljanovska-Davkova. Mother Teresa, whose early life is closely associated with Skopje, continues to symbolize compassion, humanitarian service and universal values admired across the world. The President will also visit the Skopje Museum, where she, along with President Siljanovska-Davkova and the Mayor of Skopje, will unveil a bust of Mahatma Gandhi, honouring the enduring global legacy of the Father of the Nation and his message of peace, non-violence and human dignity. The installation of Gandhi's bust represents another significant symbol of friendship and shared respect between the two countries. President Murmu will further travel to the renowned Lake Ohrid alongside her Macedonian counterpart and the Mayor of Ohrid. Recognised as one of Europe's oldest and deepest lakes and designated as a World Heritage Site, Lake Ohrid is celebrated for its extraordinary natural beauty and unique biodiversity, including hundreds of endemic aquatic species found nowhere else in the world. The visit reflects the importance of environmental conservation, cultural heritage and sustainable tourism as additional areas where international cooperation can flourish. Throughout her engagements in North Macedonia, President Murmu has consistently conveyed India's readiness to build stronger political, economic, technological and cultural partnerships with countries that share its commitment to peace, development and international cooperation. Her message at the Business Forum underscored India's confidence that stronger bilateral engagement with North Macedonia can unlock substantial opportunities across trade, investment, manufacturing, innovation, healthcare, renewable energy, agriculture, digital technology and entrepreneurship. By encouraging businesses to embrace long-term collaboration and by inviting North Macedonia to participate in several global initiatives led by India, the President reinforced New Delhi's vision of creating resilient international partnerships that promote inclusive growth, technological advancement and sustainable development. As both countries seek to diversify economic relationships and strengthen cooperation in emerging sectors, the historic visit is expected to provide fresh momentum to bilateral ties while opening new avenues for investment, commercial exchanges, institutional cooperation and enduring people-to-people connections that can benefit both nations well into the future.

How kimchi, yoghurt and other fermented foods may affect your health

Breweries sell craft kombucha on tap. Fruit vinegars and cultured chilli pastes are featured on five-star restaurant menus. Supermarkets stock kimchi and kefir. Fermented foods have been popular for decades, but more recently, they have been thrust into the spotlight. In the US, for example, the government released dietary guidelines earlier this year that recommended, for the first time, that Ameri-

another that ate plenty of fibre-rich foods like legumes, whole grains, fruits and vegetables. After 10 weeks, those in the fermented food group had significantly lower levels of inflammatory markers in their blood – and more diverse gut microbes – than they did at the start of the study. (Both measures are associated with lower risks of chronic disease.) Those in the fibre group had no changes in those mea-



cans eat sauerkraut, kimchi, kefir and miso for better gut health. Humans have been fermenting foods for thousands of years. What does the science show now about how they may affect our health? We asked experts to explain. **WHAT ARE FERMENTED FOODS?** They’re defined as any foods or drinks that have been transformed by microbes such as yeast, bacteria and fungi in ways that preserve and infuse them with tangy, savoury, fruity or funky flavors, said Robert Hutkins, an emeritus professor of food science at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. Milk can turn into yoghurt and kefir; vegetables become sauerkraut and kimchi; fruit is transformed into vinegar and wine; wheat is fermented into sourdough and beer. Even chocolate and some coffee is fermented, said Maria Marco, a professor of food science at the University of California, Davis. **ARE FERMENTED FOODS GOOD FOR US?** Research on their health effects is limited, Marco said. But some studies suggest that the foods (excluding alcohol) may offer a few benefits. In a trial published in 2021, for instance, researchers split 36 healthy adults into two groups: one that ate a lot of fermented foods like yoghurt, kimchi and kombucha and

others. Other research has found associations between fermented food consumption and less risk of eczema – as well as kimchi consumption and lower rates of obesity; yoghurt consumption and reduced risks of Type 2 diabetes and weight gain; and sauerkraut consumption and fewer irritable bowel syndrome symptoms. In one study of more than 46,000 US adults published in 2023, researchers linked fermented food consumption to small reductions in blood pressure, body weight, waist size and blood insulin and triglyceride levels. The existing studies on the health benefits are promising, Hutkins said. But many are limited by their size, duration or observational nature (meaning they can’t prove cause and effect). More research is needed to see whether eating fermented foods can directly improve people’s health, he said. And not all research has been positive. Some studies have found higher rates of stomach and esophageal cancers in people in East Asia who ate a lot of kimchi and other fermented vegetables, said Suzanne Devkota, director of the Cedars-Sinai Human Microbiome Research Institute. The evidence for the cancer link is weak, though, she said, and many other factors

could have influenced that result. **WHY MIGHT FERMENTED FOODS BE GOOD FOR US?** Many fermented foods are healthful in their own right, Marco said. A serving of kimchi or sauerkraut counts as a serving of vegetables, for instance, and yoghurt and kefir provide calcium, potassium and protein. The microbes that ferment foods can also help with digestion and the absorption of nutrients, and even create nutrients of their own. The lactose in milk and the gluten in wheat, for example, are broken down during fermentation, making yoghurt, kefir and sourdough bread easier for those with lactose or gluten intolerances to digest. They also help the body absorb minerals such as calcium, iron, magnesium and zinc, and create new vitamins (like folate, riboflavin, Vitamin B12 and Vitamin K) during the fermentation process. But researchers are just beginning to probe other unique attributes of fermented foods that may influence our health. There’s emerging evidence that some of the molecules microbes make during the fermentation process can reduce inflammation, regulate blood sugar and help us feel full, among other benefits, though those effects have mostly been demonstrated in studies on rodents and in petri dishes, said Dr Sean Spencer, a gastroenterologist and microbiome scientist at Stanford. Some researchers also hypothesise that exposure to the “friendly” microbes in some fermented foods can reduce inflammation by training the immune system to tolerate harmless microbes or potential allergens, yet be ready to mount a robust response to “bad” microbes in the future, Marco said. **WHAT’S THE TAKEAWAY?** We have enough evidence to support incorporating more fermented foods into your diet, Spencer said – such as having yoghurt for breakfast, adding kimchi to eggs or sandwiches, or making salad dressings with apple cider vinegar. People who are immunocompromised, however, should be cautious with fermented foods that contain live microbes, such as those labelled raw, unpasteurised or as containing live cultures (typically found in refrigerated sections). Such people may not be able to handle the “bacterial load” present in fermented foods, even if the bacteria are “friendly,” Devkota said. Some fermented foods, including sauerkraut, cheese and wine, can also contain large amounts of histamines, natural molecules that may trigger symptoms such as diarrhea, hives or headaches in those who are sensitive, Marco said. And people with high blood pressure should be mindful of fermented foods that are typically high in sodium, like sauerkraut, kimchi, miso and soy sauce, Hutkins said. While beer, wine and other types of alcohol are technically fermented foods, it’s best to limit them, Marco said, given their established health risks.

Why can’t I eat as much as I used to? What happens to your appetite as you age

When you were younger, you used to have a large, healthy appetite. But as you get older, you notice you get fuller faster and can’t eat like you used to. So

with less muscle will need to eat less food, he said. **FOOD BECOMES LESS ENTICING** Our senses of smell and taste can diminish with time, Rolls said.



In a 2022 study that involved 60 participants, researchers found that among those older than 50, a little more than half had issues with taste sensitivity and 70 per cent couldn’t smell very well. If food doesn’t taste or smell good, you tend to want less of it, Rolls said. In a study involving 359 older adults in the Netherlands, researchers found that those who said they couldn’t taste very well had less of an appetite than those who reported that they could taste just fine. Older adults also often eat alone, which may result in them eating less. A number of studies have shown that people eat more when they dine with others, especially with friends and loved ones, Rolls said. This tendency may be rooted in the fact that people spend more time eating when they’re around others – and the longer they sit, the more they eat.

HOW TO REGAIN YOUR APPETITE If your appetite has waned and you want it back, Manus recommended regular exercise. When you burn calories, your body wants to replenish them with food. Weight training can be especially helpful, Manus said, because it builds muscle, which will increase your appetite even more. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends that adults 65 and older do muscle-strengthening exercises at least twice a week. Manus recommended exercises that involve high repetitions with light weights (those between 2 and 10 pounds, for example) or resistance bands. If you’re eating less and are worried about developing a nutritional deficiency, Fielding recommended following a balanced diet that prioritises nutrient-rich foods such as fruits, vegetables, legumes, whole grains and lean sources of protein. Those who aren’t hungry for three square meals a day may have better luck eating four or five smaller ones throughout the day, Manus said. Handy online calculators can help estimate your caloric needs. Consider dining with friends and loved ones, too, Rolls said. And try experimenting with herbs and spices to counteract any losses in smell and taste. Squeeze lemon juice on your chicken or add hot sauce to your eggs. “Perk things up a bit,” Rolls said. **what’s going on?** It’s common for people to eat less as they age, said Roger A. Fielding, a professor of nutrition at the Friedman School of Nutrition Science and Policy at Tufts University. In one analysis of nearly 60 studies, for instance, researchers found that those 60 or older consumed 16 to 20 per cent fewer calories than younger adults did. The big question is why, said Barbara Rolls, a professor of nutritional sciences at Penn State. Various factors, including a person’s age, can shape their appetite and how sated they feel after eating, so it’s challenging to know what might be affecting them. Here are a few potential culprits to consider, according to experts, and what you can do about them. **HUNGER SIGNALS QUIET DOWN** Hormonal shifts that occur with ageing can influence how much you want to eat, said Dr Margaret Manus, an internist at Houston Methodist Hospital. Some limited research has shown, for instance, that older adults produce less ghrelin – a hormone that makes you feel hungry – than younger people do. If that happens, or if you continue producing the same amount of ghrelin but your body isn’t responding to it as strongly as it once did, you may experience less of a desire to eat, Manus said. Other research has shown that people produce more of two other hormones – leptin and cholecystokinin, which cause people to feel full – as they age. As a result, Manus said, they eat less. There’s also limited evidence suggesting that the stomach empties more slowly as people get older, Rolls said. This shift could delay how soon a person feels hungry again after their last snack or meal. And people tend to lose muscle with age, Fielding said. Muscle burns more calories than fat, so people

petite than those who reported that they could taste just fine. Older adults also often eat alone, which may result in them eating less. A number of studies have shown that people eat more when they dine with others, especially with friends and loved ones, Rolls said. This tendency may be rooted in the fact that people spend more time eating when they’re around others – and the longer they sit, the more they eat. **HOW TO REGAIN YOUR APPETITE** If your appetite has waned and you want it back, Manus recommended regular exercise. When you burn calories, your body wants to replenish them with food. Weight training can be especially helpful, Manus said, because it builds muscle, which will increase your appetite even more. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends that adults 65 and older do muscle-strengthening exercises at least twice a week. Manus recommended exercises that involve high repetitions with light weights (those between 2 and 10 pounds, for example) or resistance bands. If you’re eating less and are worried about developing a nutritional deficiency, Fielding recommended following a balanced diet that prioritises nutrient-rich foods such as fruits, vegetables, legumes, whole grains and lean sources of protein. Those who aren’t hungry for three square meals a day may have better luck eating four or five smaller ones throughout the day, Manus said. Handy online calculators can help estimate your caloric needs. Consider dining with friends and loved ones, too, Rolls said. And try experimenting with herbs and spices to counteract any losses in smell and taste. Squeeze lemon juice on your chicken or add hot sauce to your eggs. “Perk things up a bit,” Rolls said.

PMS making your usual workout feel impossible? 6 gym exercise swaps to try

You know how it is when it’s that time of the month – or the days leading up to it. You’re lethargic, grumpy and feel defeated by throbbing abdominal cramps, lower backaches, headaches and maybe even bowel changes – all the classic signs of pre-menstrual syndrome or PMS. No thanks to fluctuating hormonal levels, everything – especially your abdomen and breasts – feels heavy, tender and bloated, like you’d burst with a single touch. Squeezing your body into a tight sports bra and leggings, and hauling yourself to the gym? You’d rather be hit on the head with a dumbbell. But if you’re chiding yourself for not taking advantage of your follicular phase to work out (see The 4 Phases below) when oestrogen levels rise, and you feel more energised – don’t be so hard on yourself. Here’s why.

HOW DOES YOUR MENSTRUAL CYCLE AFFECT YOUR WORKOUTS?

While certain studies suggest that body strength and endurance during the follicular phase is increased in women, the evidence is not strong, said Dr Karen Lim, a consultant with National University Hospital’s Department of Obstetrics & Gynaecology, Division of Maternal Fetal Medicine. Secondly, “there is conflicting evidence on whether the different phases of the menstrual cycle truly impact exercise performance”, she said. “This is likely because there are many factors that influence exercise performance, and there is a wide variation between the physical abilities of individual women. Kino Soh, a personal trainer with UFit, agreed: “Multiple studies suggest that strength is not significantly affected during menstruation. However, common PMS symptoms such as fatigue, back pain, headaches and nausea, coupled with Singapore’s hot and humid climate, may contribute to greater cardiovascular strain and reduced exercise tolerance. “As a result, some women may feel more breathless than usual, or experience a higher perceived level of exertion during high-intensity activities.” Moreover, not every woman goes through the distinct phases of a menstrual cycle, said Dr Lim. “The phases only occur in women with regular monthly cycles (that is, 21-to-35-day cycles). Women with irregular cycles or who are on hormonal treatments may not go through the menstrual, follicular, ovulation and luteal phases on a monthly basis.”

SO SHOULD YOU PUSH OR PULL BACK IN THE GYM?

The key is to let your body tell you. “Everyone responds differently, so it really comes down to how the person feels on the day,” said Soh. “If someone is dealing with more severe symptoms like strong pain, dizziness or vomiting, rest is the better option.” For mild to moderate discomfort, she said: “We can always adjust the session’s intensity.” Soh highlighted that “in real-world settings, many women continue with their daily activities such as work, life and mummy duties, despite experiencing menstrual symptoms”. Of course, “no one should feel obliged or pressured not to take a break from her training”, she added. Another reason to not skip the

gym is your body’s reaction to exercise – more specifically, endorphins, a chemical that your body produces to relieve pain and give a sense of well-being, said Dr Lim. For women who experience PMS, endorphins could improve mood and primary dysmenorrhea (menstrual cramps that occur in the absence of any underlying pelvic disease), she said. However, “there is no clear evidence that exercise results in lighter menstrual flow”. The only time when rest is non-negotiable is when you have very heavy periods over a long period of time. This is defined as having to use more than four or five heavy-flow pads a day on your heaviest days, said Dr Lim. You may be anaemic due to the regular blood loss – in which case, you should see a doctor for help. “Intense exercise while being anaemic may result in feeling dizzy or fainting,” said Dr Lim. “Importantly, this can put a strain on the heart muscles, which could be life-threatening.”



WHAT ARE THE ALTERNATIVE EXERCISES TO TRY? Generally speaking, said Soh, there aren’t specific gym exercises to avoid during menstruation. “Some women can train normally during their periods, so there really isn’t a one-size-fits-all approach.” If you want to take it a bit easier during this time, you can simply reduce the number of repetitions and lighten the load of your usual exercises, said Soh. “Work with two to four repetitions in reserve (or RIR; meaning you still have energy to complete two more repetitions) instead of pushing to failure. This helps you to complete your session without accumulating excessive fatigue,” she said. Or “lower your weights but work with a tempo to focus on quality and move with intention”, she added. And “allow a bit more time to rest between sets”. That being said, it can be helpful to adjust certain exercises, said Soh. “When you’re experiencing bloating or discomfort in the abdomen area, you can choose to reduce load-on movements like heavy squats, hip thrusts or leg presses, which could potentially increase intra-abdominal pressure or bear down on the belly. “For example, if you have cramps, you can switch to a different type of core exercise that can still work on core strengthening at an altered intensity,” she added. Here’s a look at six alternative exercises you could try during your period in place of your usual ones:

Try: Goblet squats

Instead of: Barbell back squats

- Stand with your feet slightly wider than hip-width apart and toes angled slightly outward.
- Hold the dumbbell with both hands at chest height.
- Inhale as you bend your knees and sit your hips back, lowering over 3 seconds until your thighs are parallel to the floor.
- Stand back up while exhaling.

Try: Dumbbell floor presses

Instead of: Barbell bench presses

- Lie on your back with knees bent, hip-width apart and feet flat on the ground.
- Hold a dumbbell in each hand, shoulder-width apart.
- Lower the dumbbells to your upper chest with control, until your elbows touch the floor.
- Press up the dumbbells and straighten your arms to complete the repetition.

Try: Seated cable rows

Instead of: Bent-over rows

- Sit on the bench with your feet on the machine’s footrest and knees slightly bent.
- Grip the attachment with both hands, arms fully extended in front of you while sitting tall with a straight back and neutral neck.
- Drive your elbows back, pulling the handle towards your lower abdomen. Squeeze your shoulder blades together at the end of the movement.
- Slowly extend your arms back to the starting position in a controlled manner.

Note: Remain upright throughout the movement and avoid using momentum to pull the weight.

Try: Dumbbell Romanian deadlifts

Instead of: Barbell deadlifts

- Stand with your feet hip-width apart. Hold a dumbbell in each hand and position it at the front of your leg. Keep your back straight and neck neutral.
- Send your hips back until your knees start to bend; that is a hinge. At the same time, keep your arms straight and move the dumbbells down the shins.
- Once you feel a stretch in the back of your thighs, take a short pause.
- Bring your hips forward again, allowing your body to straighten back to the upright position.

Try: Box-elevated glute bridges

Instead of: Hip thrusts

- Lie on a mat with both legs elevated on a box. Place your heels or mid-foot at the edge of the box. Keep your knees bent around 90 degrees.
- Maintaining your chin tucked and core braced, drive through your heels to push hips up toward the ceiling until your body forms a straight line from shoulders to knees.
- Squeeze your glutes at the top and hold for a short pause, then slowly lower your hips back down towards the floor.

Tesla shares fall as Musk touts ambitious – and costly – plans

New york: Tesla reported weaker-than-expected quarterly profits on Wednesday (Jul 22) despite increased auto sales, depressing shares in after-hours trading amid questions over massive capital spending plans. Elon Musk's fast-growing electric vehicle maker reported second-quarter profits of US\$1.1 billion, down about 5 per cent from the year-ago level. That translated into 33 cents per share compared with analyst estimates of 53 cents per share. Revenues rose 26 per cent to US\$28.2 billion. Tesla had impressed market watchers earlier this month when it released higher-than-expected second-quarter auto sales, due in part to a recovery in European markets. But the company's earnings press release said profitability was dented by lower vehicle sales prices, lower revenue from regulatory credits and unspecified "energy warranty-related charges". Another factor was a more than doubling in capital expenditures to US\$5.8 billion during the three-month stretch compared with the year-ago period. Tesla is embarking on a massive construction spree that Musk characterised on a conference call as probably the United States' "fastest industrial scale up since World War II". Tesla is participating with Musk's other ventures, SpaceX and xAI, in Terabab, a US\$20 billion project in Austin that calls itself "the most epic chip-building effort ever". Tesla described progress on expansion initiatives as in line with plans, saying it began production of its "Cybercab" vehicle in Texas and that production of the Tesla Semi truck "remains on track" for 2026. In another closely watched item, Tesla reported gains in subscribers to its "FSD" driver-assistance program, boosting revenues. Musk faced questions about plans for scaling its robotaxi venture and benchmarks for assessing the company's progress on it, telling analysts he was confident the product will enjoy bountiful consumer demand and that Tesla was

working to achieve perfect or near-perfect reliability. "How many nines of reliability do you need to scale?" Musk said. "Ideally, you want 99.99999, you know, per cent reliable." SPENDING SPREE Like other big tech companies such as Google and Amazon, Tesla has faced questions about the payoff from its ambitious and costly technology buildout. CFRA Research analyst Garrett Nelson described concerns about the spending as a drag on Tesla shares, saying: "They just haven't been very transparent with the Street on the expected return of the dollars that have been spent." Chief Financial Officer Vaibhav Taneja said Tesla expects that operating expenses driven by research and development will "continue to grow in 2026 and beyond." Musk said capital efficiency is not the only priority. "We should be spending on capex as fast as we can spend ... without it being too wasteful," Musk said. "It's okay to be a little less capital efficient if we get things done sooner." The Wednesday report is Tesla's first earnings announcement since Musk successfully launched SpaceX as a publicly traded company in June, temporarily lifting his fortune to over US\$1 trillion when shares of the rocket and satellite company soared in its initial sessions. Shares of SpaceX cooled in the ensuing weeks, but the company's valuation at around US\$1.5 trillion has been viewed as a potential means to transact a combination between SpaceX and Tesla. That topic has generated significant speculation among Wall Street investors. "It's sort of the elephant in the room surrounding the company," said Nelson. Musk described "many collaborations" between Tesla and SpaceX. "There's more and more overlap," said Musk. "Obviously we can't talk about combining companies and that kind of thing on an earnings call. It's got to be done with the appropriate process." Tesla shares dropped 4.1 per cent in after-hours trading.

US announces civilian nuclear deal with Saudi Arabia

Washington: The United States on Wednesday (Jul 22) announced a landmark deal with Saudi Arabia that would establish a civilian nuclear programme in the Gulf country, with Washington insisting the agreement includes safeguards against non-proliferation. The move comes as the United States under US President Donald Trump fights a war with Iran that began in part over US concerns with Tehran's nuclear programme - an issue that remains a key point of contention during now-stalled talks between the two foes. Two agreements - one on "peaceful nuclear cooperation" and another on "bilateral safeguards" - were signed by US Energy Secretary Chris Wright and his Saudi counterpart Prince Abdulaziz bin Salman, the US Energy Department said. The text of the deals was not immediately made public. "Together, these two agreements lay the legal foundation for a decades-long, multi-billion-dollar partnership that advances several priority economic and strategic objectives, including nuclear nonproliferation," the department said in a statement. A provision in the deal would potentially see US companies build a uranium enrichment facility in Saudi Arabia, the Wall Street Journal reported. The energy department statement made no mention of such a provision, and the department did not offer comment when asked about it by AFP. The deal will be submitted to Congress for review, but the Republican-controlled legislature is unlikely to be able to hold up its implementation. US lawmakers from both parties and Israeli officials have voiced opposition to a civilian nuclear project for Saudi Arabia over fears it could be converted to eventually develop nuclear weapons. Saudi Arabia, like Tehran, has long been adamant about its right to pursue a civilian nuclear program. Last year it signed a mutual defence pact with nuclear-armed Pakistan. Washington has sought in recent years to include any deal concerning a nuclear agreement in a wider strategic play that would see Saudi Arabia normalise ties with Israel, along with the signing of a US defence pact. DESTABILISED REGION The United States signed a nuclear agreement with the kingdom's neighbour, the United Arab

Emirates in 2009, although the country does not enrich its own uranium. A drone struck a generator in May near the UAE's Barakah nuclear plant, the Arab world's only such fa-

deal had been in the works for a considerable period, but some raised concerns about the potential for enrichment on Saudi soil. "It would be a mistake to allow Saudi Arabia the



cility, causing a fire. Policymakers have long feared that if Iran produced a nuclear weapon, the move would set off an arms race across the Gulf. US Energy Secretary Wright dismissed concerns about proliferation, insisting the deal was in Washington's economic and strategic interest. "Rest assured, these agreements uphold the highest standards of nuclear safety and nonproliferation, while relying on the world's best nuclear technology and scientists, designed right here in the United States," he said in a statement. The US-Saudi deal was signed under Section 123 of the US Atomic Energy Act. The United States has agreements governing nuclear cooperation with more than 50 countries, although the extent varies by each deal. Experts said such a

capability for enrichment," said Matthew Kroenig of the Atlantic Council in comments made before the deal was formally announced. "Washington is right to strengthen its relationship with Riyadh, but it should not do so at the expense of its effective nuclear weapons nonproliferation standards." Jennifer T Gordon, director of the Atlantic Council's Nuclear Energy Policy Initiative, lauded the agreement as a "win for the United States over Russia and China". "Saudi Arabia has made it clear that it will purchase nuclear energy technologies and begin a civil nuclear program; the only question has been whether the kingdom would choose to work with the US and its allies, or whether it would turn to Russia or China," she said.

Houthis say they attacked Saudi tankers in the Red Sea, threatening new chokepoint in Iran war

Cairo: The Iranian-aligned Houthis said on Thursday (Jul 23) they struck two Saudi oil tankers as part of a naval blockade on Saudi Arabia, threatening to create a second chokepoint on global oil supplies alongside Iran's near-closure of the Strait of Hormuz. Meanwhile, the United States military said on Wednesday it launched a new round of strikes on Iran at President Donald Trump's direction, marking a 12th successive night of American attacks. The Yemen-based militants, who control areas near the Bab el-Mandeb Strait on the opposite end of the Arabian Peninsula from the Strait of Hormuz, said on Monday they were imposing a naval blockade on Saudi Arabia in what some analysts have viewed as a tactical move by Iran to seek leverage. Even before the renewed threats to shipping traffic in the Red Sea, Iran's near-total blockade of the Strait of Hormuz had stoked inflation around the world, pushing up oil prices and squeezing US gasoline consumers at a time when the unpopular war has put Trump's Republican allies under pressure ahead of congressional elections in November. Five tankers changed course in the Red Sea to avoid the Bab el-Mandeb Strait on Wednesday, and three tankers loaded with Saudi oil for China and India made U-turns on Tuesday. The Houthis said their forces carried out missile and drone strikes on two Saudi oil tankers in the Red Sea, identifying them as the Encelia and the Layla. Saudi state news agency SPA cited an official source as saying the Encelia was struck, causing a fire at the bow. The attack on the Layla remained unconfirmed. A maritime security source said Encelia had transmitted a distress call, reporting it had been struck by a missile near the Saudi port of Jizan in the Red Sea late on Wednesday. Millions of barrels per day of Saudi oil have been heading to the kingdom's Red Sea port of Yanbu to avoid the Strait of Hormuz. If shipments cannot pass through the Red Sea's southern strait, they have only the northern route through the Suez Canal, adding weeks and costs to the journey. The Houthi threat to impose a naval blockade against Saudi Arabia could significantly widen the war and strain the US military, current and former US officials said. Two Chinese very large crude carriers carrying a combined 4 million barrels of Saudi Arabian oil were heading toward the Bab el-Mandeb Strait on Thursday, shipping data showed. TRUMP THREATENS INFRASTRUCTURE Before the Red Sea flare-up, Trump vowed on

Wednesday to destroy an Iranian bridge or power plant every time Iran shoots at a ship in the Strait of Hormuz. Iran's joint military command in turn warned that if Trump's threat against infrastructure was carried out, Iranian forces would target regional oil, gas, electricity and economic infrastructure and prevent the export of "even a single drop of oil", Iranian state media reported. Hours later, Iran's Revo-

lutionary Guards reported an explosion in what it called a mined route south of the Strait of Hormuz, saying one of three oil tankers had caught fire while the other two turned back. The Guards said the strait was under their control and "completely closed", warning that no tanker would be allowed to enter or leave without coordination with Iran. In 12 straight days of attacks since a June ceasefire fell apart, American strikes have widened from the south to western and central areas of Iran. The US military's Central Command said it would continue to "further degrade" Iran's ability to threaten ship traffic. Iranian media reports said the US twice on Thursday attacked a military target in Bushehr, near the country's only operating commercial nuclear power reactor, marking three strikes there in two days. State TV reported two people were killed and 11 wounded in what a Khuzestan provincial official described as a US missile attack on the Shalamcheh border crossing with Iraq. Despite claims from Washington that it has destroyed Iran militarily, Tehran has demonstrated it retains missile and drone capabilities. Iran pounded vital water desalination and energy plants in Kuwait this week and struck US military assets there, in Bahrain and in Jordan. Each side has also reported an escalating human toll. An Iranian health ministry official said 53 civilians had been killed and 592 wounded since late last month. Since the US and Israel launched the war on Feb 28, thousands of people have been killed and millions displaced. The US military has said it never targets civilians, which could violate the 1949 Geneva Conventions on humanitarian conduct in war. Trump, however, has repeatedly threatened to attack civilian infrastructure, which may be targeted if it is also being used for military purposes, provided the civilian harm is not excessive. The war has also led to the deaths of 18 US service members and injured more than 450 troops. Trump attended a ceremony on Wednesday at Dover Air Force Base in Delaware for four US service members killed in Iranian attacks on military bases over the last few days - three in Jordan and one in Iraq. "For me it's one of the hardest things to do as a president. But it has to be done," Trump said before leaving for the ceremony. Later, at a speech in Georgia, Trump struck a different tone, saying of the war, "I call it a skirmish".

Five soldiers killed in bomb attack in Thailand's restive south

Bangkok: Five Thai soldiers were killed in a shooting and bomb attack at a checkpoint in the country's insurgency-hit south, the army said, one of the deadliest such incidents in years. Six civilians were also wounded in the Wednesday (Jul 22) evening attack in Narathiwat province, local officials said. A screenshot of CCTV footage posted on the Facebook page of Narathiwat authorities appeared to show six suspects dressed in black travelling in a black pickup truck at around 6.45pm on Wednesday (7.45pm, Singapore time). The post said the suspects fled towards a neighbouring district and authorities had sealed off the area. Members of Task Force Ranger Regiment 45 "were killed when assailants opened fire and threw pipe bombs at the Bukeh Sami checkpoint ... while they were

on duty protecting local residents", the army said in a statement late on Wednesday. The public relations department of Narathiwat province said six civilians were hurt, adding that no group had claimed responsibility and no arrests have been made. Narathiwat Governor Boonchuay Homyamien visited the injured at a hospital, including a 10-year-old boy who suffered a leg wound, according to the province's Public Relations Department. A low-level conflict has simmered in Thailand's southernmost provinces since 2004, killing more than 7,000 people, as rebels in the region battle for greater autonomy. In 2019, a group of separatists threw grenades and opened fire on a checkpoint in the southernmost province of Yala, killing 15 people, including

local security forces, and wounding five others, according to monitor group ACLED. Thai authorities claimed the rebel group Barisan Revolusi Nasional was responsible, ACLED said. Chantip Tatiyakaroonwong, a human rights researcher at Amnesty International, told AFP that while attacks in Thailand's deep south mostly target security personnel, the incident on Wednesday was "different in terms of death tolls and young civilians that were injured from crossfire". The army paid tribute to those killed on Wednesday, saying: "Their service and sacrifice will be remembered and honoured with the highest respect." Opposition leader Natthaphong Ruengpanyawut condemned the attack in a Facebook post late on Wednesday, saying he regretted the loss of the five soldiers.

US House passes US\$1 trillion defence Bill despite Iran, Israel concerns

Washington: The US House of Representatives narrowly passed its version of a massive defence policy Bill on Wednesday (Jul 22), despite Democrats' concerns about its huge price tag, the Iran war and a provision that would boost Pentagon ties to Israel. The fiscal 2027 National Defense Authorization Act, or NDAA, which

would substantially expand military technology cooperation between the United States and Israel, despite calls from many Americans - particularly on the left - to roll back US support for Israel over concern about the heavy toll on Palestinian civilians of its attacks in Gaza.



authorises an unprecedented US\$1.15 trillion in spending for the military, passed the House by 216 to 212. The vote was largely along party lines, as all but seven Republicans voted in favour of the measure and all but six Democrats voted against. Democrats objected to the huge amount of money being authorised for the Pentagon, at a time when President Donald Trump and his fellow Republicans are slashing spending on social programs. They also object to the ongoing and deeply unpopular war with Iran, which the Pentagon said has cost US\$37.5 billion so far. Republicans said the trillion-dollar spending is essential to support the military as it wages war in Iran, fund defense systems development and equipment purchases and provide benefits for the troops like raises of up to 7 per cent and construction for barracks and family housing. Another measure that worried Democrats was a provision that

IN 2026, "MUST-PASS" BILL MAY NOT PASS Historically seen by both parties as "must-pass legislation," the NDAA is one of the few major Bills that always gets through Congress, having become law for 65 straight years. This year's Bill faces major challenges, given deep partisan divisions within Congress on issues ranging from the massive size of the military budget to the Iran war, aid to Israel and Ukraine and "culture war" causes like the treatment of transgender troops. The fiscal 2027 NDAA's fate was also complicated because Republicans voted to attach it to the "SAVE America Act". Trump-backed legislation to tighten restrictions on voting, before sending it to the Senate. The impact of that decision on the NDAA's fate was unclear, given that there are not enough votes in the Senate to pass the voting law. Senate Democrats blocked the Senate's version of the NDAA last week. The chamber's Republican leaders have pledged to try again to advance the Bill before leaving Washington for their August recess. It is early in the NDAA process. Each year, the House and Senate pass their own versions of the NDAA before Armed Services committee negotiators agree on a compromise version that then comes up for a vote in each chamber. If the compromise version passes, it would be sent to the White House for Trump to sign into law or veto.

PBPartners' PoSP network helping families stay financially protected during the monsoon

Guwahati: The monsoon brings respite from the summer heat, but it also leads to a sharp rise in seasonal illnesses such as dengue, malaria, viral infections and water-borne diseases. Along with the health risks comes the possibility of unplanned medical expenses, which can put considerable pressure on household finances. As these seasonal challenges become increasingly common, PBPartners, Policybazaar's PoSP platform, is working through its nationwide network of Point of Sale Person (PoSP) advisors to help families understand the importance of planning ahead. By enabling informed decisions around health insurance, the platform is expanding access to financial protection, particularly across Tier II and Tier III India. Turning Awareness into Preparedness Medical emergencies often arrive without warning, but their financial impact can be reduced with the right protection in place. Whether it is hospitalisation due to dengue or treatment for other seasonal infections, a suitable health insurance policy helps families manage healthcare costs without disrupting their long-term financial goals. Bringing Trusted Guidance Closer to Consumers Many families, especially outside large

urban centres, rely on expert advice for a product like insurance. PoSP advisors help bridge this gap by simplifying policy features, answering customer queries and helping families navigate available options with confidence. As members of the communities they serve, these advisors understand local needs and communicate in regional languages, making insurance conversations more relatable and easier to understand. Their guidance helps consumers move beyond viewing insurance as an expense and recognise it as an essential financial safeguard. Strengthening Insurance Reach Across Bharat PBPartners equips its advisor network with digital tools, continuous training and access to a wide range of health insurance products, enabling them to deliver informed recommendations tailored to individual customer needs. As healthcare costs continue to rise and seasonal illnesses remain a recurring challenge, improving insurance adoption requires both accessibility and trust. By combining technology with a strong local advisor network, PBPartners is helping more families across Bharat build financial resilience and face the monsoon with greater confidence.

Doctors take steps towards better patient health; Positive results observed

Guwahati: 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.

PoJK erupts, again

At the time of writing, Pakistan-occupied Jammu and Kashmir (PoJK) is on boil. Once again, serious unrest has had with authorities launching a widespread crackdown on protesters and opposition leaders, with sharp accusations of the government's use of excessive force. Internet services have been suspended across much of the territory, effectively isolating the region, while the administration has reportedly sought up to 14,000 additional personnel from the Federal Government. The deteriorating situation has prompted local authorities to discourage tourism between June 5 and June 20. The United States Embassy in Islamabad has also advised its citizens in PoJK to exercise caution. The latest violence erupted on June 7, 2026, when clashes between Security Forces (SFs) and supporters of the Joint Awami Action Committee (JAAC) left at least 12 people dead, including eight civilians and four police personnel. At least 73 others - 23 SF personnel and 50 civilians - were injured. Authorities claim that a violent mob attacked a hospital following a ruling by the Supreme Court of PoJK that upheld the constitutional status of 12 legislative seats reserved for refugees from the Indian Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) residing in Pakistan. According to official accounts, four police officers and a passerby were killed before SFs responded, after which six protesters were killed. Protesters, however, argue that the violence began when JAAC supporters gathered outside a hospital morgue where the body of activist Shahzaib Habib, allegedly shot dead earlier by SFs, had been taken. They maintain that demonstrators were subsequently targeted by SF personnel. The current unrest follows similar protests in September and October 2025 that left more than 10 people dead and over 100 injured. Those disturbances, eventually, led to the signing of the Muzaffarabad Agreement, also known as the October 4 Accord, between the Federal Government, the PoJK administration, and JAAC representatives. The agreement covered compensation, governance reforms, economic relief measures, and political commitments. Families of those killed during the 2025

protests were promised compensation equivalent to that provided to law enforcement personnel, while those injured by gunfire were to receive PKR 1 million. Government jobs for families of the deceased, judicial inquiries into major incidents, and action against those involved in violence were also included. Economic measures envisaged PKR 10 billion for electricity infrastructure, continuation of wheat and electricity subsidies, and tax reforms. The Accord also proposed improvements in healthcare, education, infrastructure, and the creation of a committee to examine the status of the 12 refugee seats.

Although authorities later claimed that 36 of JAAC's 38 demands had been accepted, the organisation rejected those assertions and, on May 31, 2026, announced an indefinite strike beginning June 9, 2026. Meanwhile, tensions escalated when, on June 5, the government banned JAAC, citing concerns over public order and security. Several members were subsequently arrested. At the centre of the present agitation is JAAC's demand for the abolition of 12 seats in the 53-member Legislative Assembly reserved for refugees from J&K who settled in Pakistan after 1947 and 1965. JAAC argues that these seats allow mainstream Pakistani political parties to influence government formation in PoJK and dilute local political representation. For many protesters, the issue has become synonymous with demands for greater autonomy and local control. The controversy gained further significance after the Supreme Court ruled that the reserved seats are constitutionally protected and cannot be abolished without a constitutional amendment. The ruling effectively closed one avenue for resolving the dispute and contributed to the current escalation.

The present movement marks a significant shift in the character of public mobilisation in PoJK. JAAC initially emerged as a platform focused on economic grievances, particularly rising electricity tariffs, inflation, and governance failures. While economic concerns

Rainbow Children's Hospitals Chairman Meets CM

Assam, to discuss Rainbow's long-term vision of strengthening specialized healthcare for women and children across Assam and the North East. During the meeting, Dr. Kancharla outlined Rainbow's vision to further strengthen pediatric healthcare in Guwahati by building on the services already offered at Pratiksha Rainbow Hospital. While the hospital has established itself as a trusted destination for women, children and fertility care in the region, Rainbow plans to expand advanced pediatric specialties and critical care capabilities, bringing more comprehensive child healthcare closer to families across Assam and the North East. Dr. Kancharla also highlighted Rainbow's recent successful management of one of the region's most complex pediatric emergencies involving an eight-year-old child from Guwahati. After conventional treatment options were exhausted, Rainbow's specialized Pediatric ECMO Retrieval Team travelled from Hyderabad to Guwahati, initiated life-saving ECMO support at the referring hospital and safely airlifted the child to Hyderabad for advanced critical care. Following 36 days on ECMO, the child made a remarkable recovery and returned home. The case, one of India's longest-duration pediatric ECMO retrievals and the first reported pediatric ECMO retrieval from North East India, reflects Rainbow's ability to seamlessly connect its national clinical expertise with regional care, ensuring children in Assam have access to highly specialized, life-saving treatment when every minute matters. The Hon'ble Chief Minister appreciated Rainbow's contribution to healthcare in Assam through Pratiksha Rainbow Hospital and welcomed the Group's plans to strengthen pediatric services in the state. He also extended his support towards Rainbow's efforts to improve access to world-class healthcare across the region. Rainbow Children's Hospitals is one of India's leading healthcare providers for women, children and fertility, with its flagship quaternary care centres in Hyderabad and an established network across Bengaluru, Chennai and the National Capital Region. Over the past 26 years, the Group has built a network of hospitals de-

living highly specialized pediatric, neonatal, maternity and fertility care through its integrated hub-and-spoke model. Following its

mentals of a multidisciplinary approach with a full-time consultant led clinical service along with 24/7 commitment in a child centric envi-



entry into Assam through the acquisition of Pratiksha Hospitals, Rainbow is now focused on strengthening specialized pediatric services in the region while expanding access to advanced child healthcare across the North East. As part of its long-term growth strategy, Rainbow aims to further strengthen its footprint in Guwahati by bringing its nationally recognized pediatric super-specialty expertise closer to families in Assam while expanding access to advanced child healthcare across the North East. Rainbow Children's Medicare Limited network comprises of 241 hospitals and 5 clinics in 9 cities, with a total bed capacity of 2,4351 beds. Our Pediatric services operating under the brand "Rainbow Children's Hospital" includes newborn and pediatric intensive care, pediatric multi-specialty services, pediatric quaternary care (including organ transplantation); whereas our women care services under "Birthright by Rainbow" offers perinatal care services which includes normal and complex obstetric care, multi-disciplinary fetal care, perinatal genetic and fertility care along with gynecology services. Rainbow Children's Hospital built on strong funda-

ronment. The company follows a hub-and-spoke operating model where the hub hospital provides comprehensive outpatient, inpatient care, with a focus on tertiary and quaternary services, while the spokes provide 24/7 emergency care, large outpatient services and comprehensive obstetrics, pediatric inpatient and level 3 NICU services. This model is successfully operational at Hyderabad and is gaining traction in Bengaluru. The endeavour is to replicate this approach in Chennai and across the National Capital Region. Subsequently Rainbow intends to expand into tier-2 cities of Southern India. Rainbow Children's Hospital embraces a unique doctor engagement model, where doctors work exclusively on a full-time, retainer basis. The doctors work in teams and have 24/7 commitment, which is particularly important for children's emergency, neonatal, pediatric intensive care services and to support pediatric retrieval services. The Company also operates the country's largest pediatric DNB training programme in private healthcare, offering post graduate residential DNB and fellowship programme.

Samsung expands Solve for Tomorrow outreach to 135 cities as innovation contest enters next phase

Guwahati: Marking the fifth edition of its flagship CSR programme Samsung Solve for Tomorrow, Samsung India has taken its Design Thinking Workshops to 135 cities across the country, creating one of India's largest grassroots innovation platforms for young people. Samsung Solve for Tomorrow is a nationwide innovation and education competition that empowers young people aged 14–22 to identify pressing challenges in their communities and develop technology-based solutions through design thinking, mentorship and incubation. Over the years, the programme has evolved into a launchpad for India's next generation of innovators, entrepreneurs and social changemakers. This year, Samsung conducted 184 Design Thinking Workshops, reaching thousands of students across schools, colleges and universities — from Jammu & Kashmir to Tamil Nadu and Gujarat to Tripura. The workshops introduced participants to human-centered design thinking, enabling them to understand real-world problems before building technology-led solutions with meaningful social impact. With the Design Thinking Workshops now concluded, Samsung Solve for Tomorrow enters its next phase, where the top 100 teams will be selected based on the ideas submitted by participants before progressing through mentorship, expert guidance and further evaluation. "Every breakthrough starts by listening, observing and asking the right questions. Through Samsung Solve for Tomorrow, we are helping young people across India develop that mindset by combining design thinking with tech-

nology to solve challenges that matter in their own communities. As we mark the fifth year of the programme, it is inspiring to see innovative ideas emerge from every corner of the country. We believe the next generation of entrepreneurs and technology leaders can come from anywhere, and Samsung is proud to help them turn their ideas into real-world impact," said SP Chun, Corporate Vice President, Samsung Southwest Asia. The diversity of ideas shared by students reflected the diversity of India itself. Working through structured design thinking exercises, students learned to observe, empathise, define challenges, ideate and prototype solutions aligned with the programme's four themes — AI Living for India, Health & Education, Environmental Sustainability, and Sport & Tech. Students proposed AI-powered civic governance platforms, intelligent food quality scanners, assistive technologies for people with disabilities, portable solar-powered refrigeration for rural communities, real-time river water quality monitoring systems, and digital platforms that make sports coaching and equipment more accessible. In Hyderabad, engineering student A. SharanyaRao developed the concept for a real-time river water quality monitoring system after observing the hidden dangers posed by microscopic pollutants. "The real danger in our rivers isn't the plastic we can see; it's the microscopic pollutants that stay hidden until the damage is already done," she said. In Ahmedabad, Class IX student Saanvi Nair designed a portable solar-powered refrigerator to address food and water storage challenges in rural communities. "Workers and farmers in villages often struggle to store grains, water and food," she said. Students participating in the Sport & Tech workshop in Gurugram also explored affordable ways to improve access to sports equipment and digital coaching, demonstrating how technology can make sports more inclusive. As Samsung celebrates 30 years in India, the continued expansion of Samsung Solve for Tomorrow reflects the company's long-term commitment to nurturing innovation, entrepreneurship and problem-solving among India's youth. The top four teams of Samsung Solve for Tomorrow 2026 will receive incubation grants worth INR 2 crore, along with mentorship, prototype development and incubation support from FIT-IIT Delhi, enabling them to transform promising ideas into impactful real-world innovations.

Godrej launches Bloq underarm roll-on brand nationwide

Guwahati: Godrej Consumer Products Limited (GCPL) announced the national launch of Godrej Bloq, its underarm deo & antiperspirant brand, while partnering with Bhamla Foundation to support the distribution of 500 Pink E-Rickshaws to women across Maharashtra. The initiative brings together women empowerment, livelihood generation, and sustainable mobility, while marking the debut of a new personal care offering designed for active, on-the-go consumers. Launched by the Government of Maharashtra, the Pink E-Rickshaw Scheme aims to create livelihood opportunities for women through vehicle ownership and entrepreneurship. To further expand the programme, Bhamla Foundation is distributing 500 additional beneficiaries by funding the beneficiary contribution under the scheme and facilitating financing, training, registration and onboarding support. As part of the partnership, Godrej Bloq is supporting the distribution of 500 Pink E-Rickshaws and providing Bloq Freshness Kits to participating drivers, helping them stay fresh and confident during long hours on the road. Commenting on

the launch Samir Suryawanshi, Head of Marketing – Personal Care, Godrej Consumer Products Limited (GCPL), said, "Consumers today lead increasingly active and dynamic lifestyles and they expect products that deliver both



performance and convenience. Godrej Bloq has been developed to address this evolving need through an innovative

lotion-based format that offers effective sweat and odour protection, helping consumers feel fresh and confident throughout the day. Samir Suryawanshi further added, "We firmly believe that confidence can play a meaningful role in enabling women to pursue opportunities and achieve financial independence. Godrej Bloq is designed for women who are constantly on the move, women who work hard, take charge and keep our cities moving. Through the Pink E-Rickshaw initiative in partnership with Bhamla Foundation, we are proud to support women entrepreneurs who are building livelihoods while contributing to a cleaner and more sustainable mode of transportation." Godrej Bloq enters the growing antiperspirant category with a lightweight lotion format that delivers up to 48 hours of sweat and odour protection while providing underarm care benefits. Suitable for all skin types, it is available in a 40g pack priced at ₹99 and can be purchased through leading quick-commerce and e-commerce platforms, including Blinkit, Zepto, BigBasket, and Amazon.

Inter Miami sign Casemiro as MLS opens tampering investigation

July 22 : Inter Miami announced the signing of Brazil midfielder Casemiro as a free agent on Wednesday, but Major League Soccer said it was investi-



gating a "tampering allegation" against the club. The league's probe cast a shadow over the midfielder's arrival, with MLS saying it would withhold details of a settlement between Inter Miami and LA Galaxy over Casemiro's discovery rights until the review concludes. Inter Miami said they had signed the five-time Champions League winner - who left Manchester United at the end of last season - on a deal through the 2027 MLS Sprint campaign, with an option to extend to June 2029. Yet the league then said in a statement that it had launched an investigation and was gathering all relevant information and would refrain from further comment until the review was complete. MLS confirmed Inter Miami and the Galaxy had reached a settlement over Casemiro's Discovery

Priority rights, but said the terms "will be released upon conclusion of the tampering investigation". Under MLS rules, clubs must negotiate discovery rights with any team that previously listed a player before signing him outside the draft or free agency. The Galaxy had held rights to Casemiro before he opted to join Miami instead. The league did not specify potential penalties or a timeline for when the investigation might conclude. In their statement announcing the signing, Inter Miami said the club had acquired his discovery rights from the Galaxy as part of the deal. LA Galaxy said on social media platform X that they had "reached a settlement for the Discovery priority to sign Casemiro, and the terms will be released upon conclusion of the tampering investigation currently open with Major League Soccer." Reuters has contacted both Inter Miami and LA Galaxy for comment on the MLS investigation. Casemiro, 34, won five Champions League titles and three Spanish league titles over eight seasons at Real Madrid before moving to Manchester United in 2022, where he helped the club win the English League Cup and FA Cup. "What motivates me the most, and I think this is true for every player, is winning and continuing to grow," Casemiro said in Inter Miami's statement. Casemiro has made 91 appearances for Brazil and won the 2019 Copa America.

Hamilton can head into F1's August break on a Hungary high

Budapest : Ferrari's Lewis Hamilton could go into Formula One's August break on a Hungarian high this weekend while championship leaders Mercedes seek urgent answers to George Russell's car woes. Russell's plight, with his car losing chunks of time on the straights, has dominated paddock chatter as his 19-year-old Italian teammate Kimi Antonelli goes from strength to strength with six wins in 10 rounds. The Briton, who started the season as title favourite and with the nickname 'Mr Consistency', is now 50 points adrift of Antonelli after spinning off into the gravel in Belgium last Sunday for his third no-score of the year. That blank let Hamilton back into second place overall, 45 points behind Antonelli, and the Hungaroring is a favourite for the seven-time world champion who won six of his titles with Mercedes before moving to Maranello.

EIGHT TIMES WINNER AT THE HUNGARORING Hamilton has won eight times in Hungary over the years, an unparalleled feat at the Budapest track, and can equal his outright record Silverstone tally of nine wins at the



same circuit. Hungary is also the scene of Hamilton's most recent pole position, back in 2023. Ferrari boss Fred Vasseur was wary of talking up the team's prospects, at a circuit where engine power and straight line speed matter far less, even if others were

already doing so. "Now each weekend we start from scratch. It's a lot about setup, tyre management. On this one Budapest will be probably much better than Spa, it will be a different game ... but it's not a given," said the Frenchman. "I don't want to go to Budapest considering that it will be easy, because it won't be easy. On paper for sure the engine deficit will be less of an issue, but then we have to do the same thing,"

Charles Leclerc won at Silverstone and was second in Spa, and is the form Ferrari driver from the last two races, while Hamilton won in Barcelona and was third in Britain, fourth in Belgium.

COULD BECOME A FOUR-TEAM BATTLE Antonelli said it could be a four-way battle, with Max Verstappen's Red Bull and champions McLaren in with a shout at a slower and twistier track where energy deployment is less of an issue. "It's going to be another track where it's maybe a bit more like Monaco, where you just try to drive as fast as you can," said the Italian. "It's going to be interesting. I think it's going to be very tight between all of us, and that's why it's going to be important to try to put things together." Four of the top seven drivers in the standings have won previously in Hungary, the Mercedes drivers and Leclerc being the exceptions, and Leclerc was on pole last year when Lando Norris won in a McLaren one-two with Oscar Piastri. McLaren will be bringing some big upgrades to Hungary, including a new floor and aerodynamic parts. They will also continue to test an experimental rear wing. Italian Leonardo Farnarioli, the team reserve and last year's F2 champion, will be taking part in Friday's first practice while Piastri sits out the session. Aston Martin are also bringing a long-awaited chassis upgrade but will have to wait until the Dutch Grand Prix at the end of August before they get the latest Honda engine.

Aston Martin hope Hungary upgrade puts them 'back in the game'

Budapest : Struggling Aston Martin hope a new chassis puts them 'back in the game' at the Hungarian Grand Prix this weekend, chief trackside officer Mike Krack said on Thursday while also trying to manage expectations. Honda-powered Aston are 10th of 11 teams in the Formula One constructors' standings with one point from 10 rounds so far. The team that finished fifth in 2023 and 2024, and seventh last year, have been woefully uncompetitive in the first year of their partnership with Honda and despite having top F1 designer and serial title-winner Adrian Newey at the helm. The cars brought to Hungary have a new chassis with significant aerodynamic upgrades and weight reduction. The gearbox remains unchanged and a more powerful Honda engine will come for the following Dutch Grand Prix in Zandvoort at the end of August. "The reason why we do this is to go racing," Krack told reporters at the Hungaroring. "We have not been racing over the last events and this is what we need to return to. "Where we race in a big, competitive field we will see. This I can really not predict, but the key question is that we are back in the game, because we were not before."

SEVERAL SECONDS OFF THE PACE Aston Martin's sole point, from double world champion Fernando Alonso, came in Monaco after Cadillac's Sergio Perez was demoted from 10th - promoting the Spaniard from 11th on the road at the finish. At the Belgian Grand Prix last weekend, Alonso was the last runner two laps behind Mercedes' winner Kimi Antonelli, whose time in qualifying was more than four sec-

onds faster than either the Spaniard or teammate Lance Stroll. Neither Aston Martin driver has got past the first phase of quali-

have a good track team, we have a good support team from home that will go through that (the data) quickly and we will



fying so far in 2026. Krack said Alonso and Canadian Stroll, son of team owner Lawrence, would both have the same specification cars, with the old ones as spares. "We do not expect that we get everything out of it in the first run tomorrow," he added. "I think we need to learn how to manage this and how to get the best out of it. "We

get the right conclusions quickly, but it will take a bit of time. "I think the tests we will have to do, the basic tests - be it ride-height, rakes and these kind of things - will come over the next events." Honda's Shintaro Orihara was confident the upgrade would not see any repeat of the vibration problems that plagued the car that started the season.

UCI defends night-time anti-doping tests at Tour de France

Voiron : The governing body of world cycling (UCI) on Wednesday defended night-time anti-doping tests at the Tour de France after controls involving race leader Tadej Pogacar and rival Jonas Vingegaard drew criticism, saying the fight against doping remained an "absolute priority". Pogacar of UAE Team Emirates-XRG and Vingegaard of Visma-Lease a Bike, who has since withdrawn from the race, underwent unannounced anti-doping tests in the early hours of Sunday, at around 5 a.m. and 2 a.m. respectively. The UCI said such checks were "exceptional" and carried out only in "limited and justified circumstances", while stressing the importance of maintaining the integrity of the sport through rigorous anti-doping measures. Slovenian rider Matej Mohoric said on Tuesday that he too had undergone a test at 5 a.m. during this year's Tour, without specifying the date. The night-time controls have been criticised by the international riders' union CPA, which said this practice "runs counter to the intended objectives" because of their impact on riders' recovery. "Following a number of reactions in recent days to unannounced anti-doping controls carried out by the International Testing Agency (ITA) during the Tour de France - in particular following the statement issued by the association of professional

riders (CPA) - the Union Cycliste Internationale (UCI) wishes to respond and to reaffirm that the fight against doping is an absolute priority," cycling's world governing body said in a statement. "The UCI of course acknowledges that night-time testing can disrupt riders' rest and recovery, and wishes to reiterate that carrying out such controls outside normal hours remains an exceptional measure, reserved for limited and justified circumstances," it added. The UCI said it "fully supports the ITA's use of every means at its disposal to carry out its mission as effectively as possible." The ITA has managed the UCI's anti-doping programme since 2021. Earlier on Wednesday, the Movement for Credible Cycling (MPCC) called "to keep the light on these issues, and to support the development of anti-doping systems that are robust." "Cycling's history has shown that weaknesses and loopholes within anti-doping and whereabouts systems can be vulnerable to exploitation," the MPCC said. "Identifying where such vulnerabilities may exist is therefore essential so that appropriate measures can be proposed to address them." The ITA said on Tuesday it had tested all riders still in the race on Monday's second rest day as part of a comprehensive Athlete Biological Passport programme.

WNBA, players' union vow stronger security measures amid online abuse concerns

July 22 : The Women's National Basketball Association (WNBA) and its players' union said on Wednesday they would continue to enhance security measures after meeting to discuss a recent rise in racist, hateful and abusive messages directed at players. The joint statement from the league and the Women's National Basketball Players Association (WNBPA) followed a meeting between WNBA leadership and members of the union's executive committee and Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion committee. The meeting was requested by the WNBPA after an incident in a June 24 game, where Phoenix Mercury forward Alyssa Thomas made contact with Indiana Fever guard Caitlin Clark's throat, as Thomas later

said she had been subject to online harassment. "The conversation underscored the importance of addressing issues early through proactive communication and strengthening the league-union relationship," the statement said. "The league committed to continuing to enhance security resources and will work with the players' union to explore collaborations with organizations that share the values of our league and advance our shared priorities." The league suspended Thomas for one game after upgrading the play to a Flagrant Foul 2, while Fever coach Stephanie White criticised officials for failing to call a foul on the play. After the fallout, Clark condemned abuse directed at players, coaches and officials. "Harass-

ment, hate, none of that is okay," Clark told reporters earlier this month. "That goes for the opposing teams we play, that goes for my teammates, that goes for my coaches." The WNBA launched a player safety programme last year after players raised concerns that racist and sexist abuse had become an unwanted consequence of the league's rapid growth in popularity. The league also has security protocols in place, including league and team security personnel who assess threats and coordinate with law enforcement when appropriate. "Yesterday's discussion marked the beginning of an ongoing dialogue, and we are united in our commitment to building on this work together," the WNBA and WNBPA added.

28-year-old added. "I didn't find my feeling, the team had to deal with it." The 2024 Milano-Sanremo winner had been visibly frustrated following earlier stages, where he failed to add to his tally of Tour victories, currently standing at 11 overall wins. "I just doubted myself. I did everything I could, we did amazing preparation with the team but I was just not myself," Philipsen said. "Was it because of the heat? It was really horrible. Was it something else? I don't know, but I was not at the level I was hoping for. "Mentally, it was a rollercoaster." Philipsen is now trailing the green jersey holder Mads Pedersen by seven points, and acknowledged that "it will be very hard" to dethrone the Dane with three difficult mountainous stages ahead.

Kiss to keep Wallabies door open to overseas players in search of winning formula

Melbourne : Australia coach Les Kiss will "look far and wide" for talent and not hesitate to select overseas-based players if they give the Wallabies the best chance of winning, signalling a prag-



matic approach as he begins his tenure in the buildup to the World Cup. Kiss named his first Wallabies squad on Thursday for next month's two-test series against Eddie Jones's Japan, retaining virtually all of the fit players used by predecessor Joe Schmidt during the Nations Championship. Rugby Australia policy limits Wallabies coaches from selecting overseas-based players to encourage more to compete at home, and Schmidt used his discretionary picks sparingly through his two years in charge. Kiss, however, suggested he would be more open to looking abroad if it gave the World Cup hosts an edge. "We want the right players to be here on many levels, and we want players that can make a difference and give us what we need to win games," Kiss told reporters in Sydney at his first Wallabies press conference. "We'll look far and wide for those, and I won't be

afraid of looking overseas, that's for sure, but at the same time (I will) respect the players that are here and what we've got here." 'AUSSIE SPIRIT' He revealed he had already spoken with several off-shore players, including Japan-based outside back/centre Jordan Petaia, who is recovering from injury. The 61-year-old former Queensland Reds boss has otherwise kept faith in the playing group that Schmidt used in the home Nations Championship tests, which included a tight loss to Ireland, a thrashing by France and a demolition of a tired Italy outfit. Most incoming Wallabies coaches pledge to have their teams play "the Australian way" - a fast, ball-in-hand game that won World Cups in the 1990s but has largely failed due to a paucity of world-class players since Michael Cheika's team made the 2015 final in England. Kiss was not about to depart from the orthodoxy, saying he wanted the Wallabies to embrace an identity built around creativity and competitiveness. "I think there is an Aussie spirit that comes through in our game," he said of a team which has lost nine of its past 11 tests and is a lowly eighth in world rankings. "We're a good, innovative type of thinking player and team. Let's play with our spirit." He will hope A\$5 million-man Joseph Suaalii can answer that call and justify the huge price Rugby Australia paid to poach him from the National Rugby League. Since an eye-catching start in the 2024 Northern Hemisphere tour, 22-year-old Suaalii has shown only flashes of brilliance in the gold jersey while triggering debate about whether he is best suited at fullback or in the midfield. Kiss confirmed he would follow Schmidt's lead and persist with Suaalii at outside centre. "I know that he can go to 15 (fullback) and win ... but our starting point with Joseph is 13."

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People-Centric reforms key to...

India's long-term growth aspirations. Referring to the national vision of Viksit Bharat, Mr. Modi said the objective of building a developed India should become a people's movement involving every section of society. He stressed that government programmes alone cannot achieve this ambitious goal unless citizens actively participate in nation-building. Describing India's youth as the strongest pillar of the Viksit Bharat mission, the Prime Minister said young people possess the energy, creativity and determination required to transform the country's future. He encouraged ministries to formulate policies that expand opportunities for youth through education, skill development, entrepreneurship, innovation and employment generation. He further stated that empowering the younger generation would create a stronger foundation for sustained economic growth, social harmony and technological advancement. During discussions on social development, Mr. Modi expressed concern over the growing challenge of substance abuse among young people and called for stronger institutional coordination to address the issue comprehensively. He stressed that drug abuse cannot be tackled through isolated departmental initiatives and requires sustained cooperation among ministries responsible for education, health, youth affairs, social justice, home affairs and community development. The Prime Minister advocated integrated youth-centric programmes that combine awareness campaigns, preventive education, counselling, rehabilitation and community participation to protect the younger generation from the harmful effects of narcotics. He observed that preserving the health, discipline and productivity of India's youth is essential for achieving long-term national development objectives. Turning to sports, the Prime Minister highlighted India's growing global sporting ambitions and urged officials to formulate an integrated strategy capable of transforming the country into a major international sporting destination. He said India should prepare itself to host prestigious global sporting competitions while simultaneously strengthening sports infrastructure, encouraging grassroots participation and supporting athletes through modern training systems. Mr. Modi also underlined the importance of developing sports tourism as a significant contributor to economic growth, employment generation and regional development. He encouraged ministries to promote innovation, digital technologies and startup-led solutions in sports management, sports science, fitness technology, event organisation and sports infrastructure. According to him, a vibrant sports ecosystem will not only improve India's international performance but also inspire healthier lifestyles and greater community participation across the country. Agriculture also received significant attention during the review meeting, with the Prime Minister highlighting the transformative potential of the PM-KUSUM Scheme in strengthening the rural economy and improving farmers' livelihoods. He encouraged wider adoption of the scheme to enable greater use of solar energy in agriculture, reduce irrigation costs, improve energy security and promote environmentally sustainable farming practices. Mr. Modi noted that renewable energy initiatives in agriculture can simultaneously increase farmers' incomes, reduce dependence on conventional energy sources and contribute to India's climate commitments. He urged officials to ensure that eligible farmers receive timely assistance, easier access to scheme benefits and greater awareness about available opportunities. The Prime Minister reiterated that agriculture remains the backbone of India's economy and that modernisation, technology adoption and sustainable practices will be essential for ensuring long-term prosperity in rural areas. Discussions also focused on rural development initiatives aimed at improving infrastructure, housing, sanitation, drinking water availability, livelihood opportunities and digital connectivity in villages. The Prime Minister directed ministries to strengthen implementation mechanisms so that development programmes produce visible improvements in the quality of life of rural citizens. He stressed that balanced regional development remains critical for inclusive economic growth and that no village or community should be left behind in India's development journey. Reviewing social welfare initiatives, Mr. Modi emphasised the importance of ensuring efficient delivery of benefits to eligible citizens through transparent, technology-enabled and accountable systems. He encouraged greater use of digital platforms, data analytics and real-time monitoring to improve implementation, reduce leakages and enhance public trust in government programmes. The Prime Minister noted that governance reforms should focus not merely on administrative convenience but on ensuring faster, simpler and more citizen-friendly services across sectors. Skill development emerged as another important area of discussion during the meeting. Recognising the rapidly changing nature of the global labour market, Mr. Modi called for comprehensive mapping of international skill requirements to better prepare India's workforce for future employment opportunities. He observed that technological transformation, artificial intelligence, automation and emerging industries are reshaping employment patterns worldwide, making it necessary for India to align its training systems with evolving global demand. He urged ministries to identify emerging sectors, strengthen vocational education, promote industry partnerships and expand skill development programmes that equip young Indians with internationally relevant competencies. Such initiatives, he said, would enhance employment prospects, support economic growth and reinforce India's position as one of the world's leading providers of skilled human resources. Throughout the meeting, the Prime Minister repeatedly stressed that governance should remain focused on measurable outcomes and citizen satisfaction rather than procedural achievements alone. He encouraged ministries to regularly review implementation progress, identify bottlenecks, promote innovation and adopt best practices capable of delivering faster and more effective results. He also highlighted the importance of evidence-based policymaking supported by reliable data, continuous monitoring and periodic evaluation. According to Mr. Modi, transparent governance, responsive administration and efficient public service delivery are fundamental pillars for achieving the vision of a developed India. The review meeting reflected the government's broader emphasis on administrative reforms that combine technology, coordination and citizen participation to accelerate national development. Senior officials from multiple ministries discussed strategies for strengthening governance systems, improving policy convergence and enhancing implementation across sectors ranging from agriculture and rural development to social welfare, youth empowerment and skill development. The Prime Minister concluded by reiterating that every ministry should align its efforts with the larger national mission of Viksit Bharat while ensuring that citizens remain the primary beneficiaries of every reform. He said India's development journey depends upon efficient governance, coordinated policymaking, empowered youth, prosperous farmers, inclusive social welfare, modern infrastructure and sustained innovation. Calling upon officials to work with dedication, accountability and a spirit of public service, Mr. Modi expressed confidence that a united and people-centric approach would enable India to realise its aspiration of becoming a fully developed nation within the coming decades, with every reform contributing directly to the welfare, dignity and prosperity of its citizens.

Adequate Flood Relief and Pure...

centers. During this complex disaster, the district administration is actively working on the ground in the flood-affected areas with complete dedication. Under the direct supervision of District Commissioner Mr. Jay Shivani, relief and rescue operations are underway in full swing across the flood-hit regions. The District Commissioner himself has visited various remote flood-affected areas to inspect the situation firsthand. Accompanying him, Co-District Commissioners, Additional District Commissioners, Circle Officers, Assistant District Commissioners, and officials and employees of all emergency departments are present in the flood-affected areas to ensure the delivery of emergency services. The District Commissioner has directed the designated officials to keep a close watch so that the flood-affected people are not deprived of flood relief items, drinking water, medical services, baby food, and cattle feed under any circumstances. The efforts of the District Disaster Management Authority (DDMA), National Disaster Response Force (NDRF), State Disaster Response Force (SDRF), Civil Defence Department, and Fire & Emergency Services in rescuing and providing relief to the affected people at the grass-roots level are highly commendable. Through field-level Lat Mandals, Gaon Burhas (Village Headmen), and Panchayat Secretaries, timely availability of rice, dal, salt, mustard oil, biscuits, drinking water, baby food, medical services, necessary daily essential items such as candles, bleaching powder, sanitary napkins, tarpaulins, halogen tablets, and cattle feed is being ensured for every individual. *NFR Announces Shravani Mela...* No. 07539 will depart Manihari at 03:30 hours on every Wednesday, Thursday, Saturday, Sunday and Monday from 26th July to 24th August, 2026, arriving at Katihar at 04:15 hours. The service will make scheduled stoppages at Mansahiand Mahiyarpurenroute. Additionally, Train No. 07542/07541 (Katihar-Manihari-Katihar) Shravani Mela Special will operate for 8 trips each. Train No. 07542 will leave Katihar at 20:30 hours on every Monday and Thursday from 27th July to 20th August, 2026, reaching Manihari at 21:15 hours. In the return direction Train No. 07541, will depart Manihari at 05:15 hours on every Tuesday and Friday from 28th July to 21st August, 2026 and arrive at Katihar at 06:00 hours, with intermediate stoppages at Mansahiand Mahiyarpur. The operation of these special trains is aimed at providing enhanced connectivity and easing congestion during the Shravani Mela period. Northeast Frontier Railway remains committed to ensuring safe, convenient and efficient travel for pilgrims and passengers by augmenting train services in response to seasonal travel demand, Informed by CPRO of NFR Kapinjal Kishore Sharma.

Assam Flood Rage Hits More...

the flood situation in many parts of the state. In response, the Assam State Disaster Management Authority has urged people, especially those residing in low-lying riverine areas and landslide-prone hillsides, to remain alert, avoid unnecessary travel and strictly follow weather bulletins and official advisories. In Guwahati, traffic advisories remain in force as heavy rainfall continues to create waterlogging, slow vehicular movement and cause localised disruptions across several roads and residential areas. Residents have been advised to exercise caution while commuting and avoid flooded stretches wherever possible. The state administration continues to monitor the evolving situation closely, with Chief Secretary Dr. Ravi Kota reviewing flood conditions in the worst-affected districts, including Charaideo, Sivasagar, Jorhat and Golaghat. During high-level review meetings with senior officials, he directed departments to ensure uninterrupted relief distribution, speedy restoration of electricity, drinking water, communication and other essential services, besides undertaking immediate repair of damaged infrastructure. State Minister Bimal Borah also reviewed the situation in Sivasagar and Charaideo, holding discussions with district officials to assess ongoing rescue operations and the availability of relief supplies. He stated that rescue efforts are continuing without interruption and additional boats and manpower have been deployed wherever required. The Indian Army has further strengthened its humanitarian response under Operation Jal Rahat, working alongside the NDRF, SDRF and civil administration to evacuate stranded residents, transport relief materials and provide emergency assistance in inaccessible flood-hit locations. Army helicopters have also been deployed in selected areas to rescue people trapped by rising floodwaters where road access has been completely cut off. The floods have severely affected agriculture, with more than 24 thousand hectares of crop area remaining submerged, causing heavy losses to farmers during an important cultivation period. Roads, bridges, embankments and other public infrastructure have also suffered extensive damage due to floodwaters and erosion, affecting connectivity and delaying restoration work in many remote areas. Urban flooding continues to impact Kamrup and Kamrup Metropolitan districts, affecting thousands of residents as drainage systems struggle to cope with continuous rainfall. Persistent waterlogging has disrupted daily life, education, business activities and transportation in several towns and cities. Landslides triggered by incessant rain have emerged as another major concern, particularly in Guwahati. A major landslide at Madhabdev Nagar in the Goshala area of Maligaon damaged a residential house after soil and trees from a nearby hillside collapsed onto the structure, leaving four people injured. They were shifted to Gauhati Medical College and Hospital for treatment. Landslides have also been reported along the road leading to the Kamakhya Temple, prompting the Kamrup Metropolitan District Administration to regulate traffic and advise people to avoid unnecessary movement in vulnerable hillside areas, including Maligaon, Pandu and Kamakhya, until weather conditions improve. Earlier, the flood situation had affected more than 5.64 lakh people across 16 districts, with 872 villages inundated and over 24 thousand hectares of agricultural land under water. Relief operations at that stage included 71 relief camps and 202 relief distribution centres, providing shelter to more than 12 thousand displaced people while extending assistance to over one lakh flood-affected residents. Rescue personnel worked continuously to evacuate stranded families and supply essential commodities to isolated villages. Previously, floodwaters had spread across 45 revenue circles and 794 villages, affecting more than three lakh people and submerging over 19 thousand hectares of cropland. Sivasagar emerged as the worst-hit district with more than 1.57 lakh affected residents, followed by Charaideo with over 1.04 lakh and Jorhat with nearly 51 thousand people facing the impact of rising waters. Combined rescue operations by the Army, NDRF, SDRF and other agencies rescued more than 6,700 people from flood-hit areas, while relief camps sheltered thousands displaced by inundation. In the initial phase of the disaster, continuous rainfall affected eight districts, including Dhemaji, Dibrugarh, Charaideo, Tinsukia, Lakhimpur, Sivasagar, Udalguri and Jorhat, impacting more than 57 thousand people across 22 revenue circles and 298 villages. Over 3,874 hectares of cropland were submerged as rivers began swelling following heavy rainfall, marking the beginning of a crisis that rapidly expanded across Upper Assam and later spread to several additional districts. Since then, persistent rainfall has steadily worsened the flood situation, inundating more villages, increasing the number of affected people and placing enormous pressure on rescue agencies and district administrations. As the monsoon continues to remain active and further rainfall is expected over the coming days, authorities remain on high alert, strengthening rescue preparedness, monitoring river levels and ensuring relief supplies reach every affected community. The government has appealed to the public to remain calm, rely only on verified official information, cooperate with rescue personnel and immediately shift to safer places whenever advised, while all departments continue coordinated efforts to minimise loss of life, protect vulnerable communities and accelerate recovery once floodwaters begin to recede.

Financial Assistance to Flood...

been requested to take immediate necessary measures to provide assistance to those affected. In this regard, Dr. Pankaj Kumar Srutikar, President of the District Branch, said, "The amount of assistance may not be very large, but it reflects the deep humanitarian responsibility, empathy and sincere commitment of our members to stand by helpless people during times of disaster. We believe that during such a devastating crisis, this contribution will not only provide some relief to the flood-affected families but also instil new courage and hope in them". He further said that the Indian Red Cross Society, Dibrugarh District Branch, would remain committed to extending all possible assistance during any natural disaster or humanitarian crisis in the future as well. The President of the Society expressed his deep gratitude and sincere thanks to all the members and associate patrons of the district branch who made heartfelt financial contributions to this humanitarian initiative.

Cachar Admin sets up 24×7 flood...

operational until further orders. A dedicated helpline, 9394615401, has also been activated to facilitate prompt communication and coordination during flood-related medical emergencies. A team of Multi-Purpose Workers (MPWs) drawn from Sonai, Borkhola, Digorkashipur, Dholai, Lakhipur, Udharbond and Harinagar health institutions has been assigned to man the control room in carefully planned shifts, ensuring uninterrupted functioning throughout the day and night. The roster covers morning, afternoon and overnight duties on different days of the week so that emergency calls and health related requirements receive immediate attention. Health officials said the control room will serve as the district's central coordination point for monitoring flood related health situations, responding to public queries, facilitating deployment of medical teams wherever required, and maintaining close communication with health institutions and field functionaries. The arrangement is expected to support timely delivery of medical assistance in areas affected by rising water levels. The department has appealed to residents to make use of the dedicated helpline in case of any flood related medical emergency or urgent health assistance. Officials have also advised people living in vulnerable and low-lying areas to remain alert, follow advisories issued by the district administration, and seek medical help without delay whenever necessary. The Health Department has affirmed that all necessary arrangements are being kept in place to ensure uninterrupted emergency medical support for the people of Cachar throughout the flood period. This is stated in a press release issued by the Regional office of Information & Public Relations Barak valley Zone Silchar Assam.

Flood Situation Improves in...

Revenue Circles remain affected by floodwaters. Official figures reveal that 1,199 people, including 962 males, 453 females and children, continue to be affected by the floods. The inundation has damaged nearly 2,614 hectares of agricultural land, posing a serious concern for farmers during the cultivation season. The district administration has opened four relief distribution centres, all located in Samaguri Revenue Circle, from where relief materials are being supplied to affected families. No relief camps have been opened as of the latest report. The administration has also confirmed that no human casualty or missing person has been reported due to the current spell of floods. The floodwaters have affected 1,868 animals, including 404 large animals, 234 small animals and 1,230 poultry birds. Besides, roads in Kampur and Nagaon Revenue Circles have suffered damage or remained submerged, disrupting communication in several localities. A fishery covering 18.39 hectares at Silakhowa and one elementary school at Khalihamari have also been affected by floodwaters. Rescue preparedness remains in place, with two medical teams and two boats deployed in vulnerable areas to respond to any emergency. Meanwhile, the latest bulletin issued by the Nagaon Water Resources Division Control Room at 6:23 PM stated that the Brahmaputra at Silghat, Kopili at Kampur, and the Kolong at Nagaon and Raha are all flowing below their respective danger levels, with most rivers showing a falling or steady trend, providing much-needed relief after days of heavy rainfall. The district administration and the District Disaster Management Authority (DDMA) are maintaining close surveillance over the evolving situation and have appealed to residents of low-lying and riverine areas to remain alert and follow official advisories until floodwaters completely recede.

Goa Institute of Management Students Drive Digital Empowerment for Women Entrepreneurs Through Give Goa Initiative

Rajib Borgohain GOA, 23rd July 2026: With an aim to apply modern management skills for societal welfare, Goa Institute of Management (GIM) through its Give Goa project, has completed the pilot phase of DAKSH (Digital Ability & Knowledge for Sustainable Her-Income). This is an initiative designed to equip women-led micro-enterprises with practical digital skills for business growth.

The Give Goa project of GIM is a compulsory service-learning initiative for its second-year Post Graduate Diploma in Management (PGDM) Banking Insurance and Financial Services (BIFS) students. It aims to de-

velop a sense of social responsibility in future corporate leaders by connecting them directly with less privileged communi-

ties. Under this initiative, students are tasked with addressing local challenges who designed and developed a four-module curriculum to teach and es-

100% shift to structured mes-

saging



Speaking about the initiative, Prof. Vikram Singh, Assistant Professor, GIM, said, "The gap is not merely technological but behavioral. The pilot research revealed that psychological readiness is fundamental to digital empowerment. Our students identified and worked closely with 10 women-led enterprises through sustained field engagement and interestingly leveraging GIM's goodwill to overcome their initial psychological reluctance towards digital adoption. Together, they co-created practical solutions that enhanced business visibility and strengthened customer engagement potentially leading to incremental income growth for participating women entrepreneurs."

Other than building a digital literacy model for small-scale business promotion, this initiative has also generated key insights for policymakers and development practitioners. It suggests that improving digital capability and business processes can deliver meaningful improvements without requiring significant financial investment.

The initiative was undertaken by second-year students of the PGDM (BIFS) program, including Mr. Prakhar Mishra, Mr. Shivin Santu, Mr. Puneet Saluja, Mr. Vaibhav Mittal, Ms. Uditia Agarwal, Mr. Aayush Lalit Jain, Mr. Yerra Kumar Raja, Mr. Anthony Joseph, Mr. Maurya Bhatt, Ms. Lucky Garg, Mr. Mohit Sultania, Mr. Vansh Mehndiratta, Mr. Anmol Bapat, Mr. Aditya Deelip Phadte, Mr. Soham Kalgaonkar, and Mr. Kanwar Devaansh Singh, under the guidance of Prof. Vikram Singh.

Nature body urges BTC chief to save Mahamaya sal trees

Tapan Sen Gupta, Correspondent, Orang, July 23: Aranya Suraksha Samiti, Assam, has urged BTC Chief Hagrama Mohilary to stop the proposed felling of 27 mature sal trees at Rajapara in the Mahamaya forest area of Kokrajhar district for road widening, saying the trees are crucial nesting sites of the endangered white-rumped vulture.

A delegation of the organisation submitted a memorandum on July 22 through the Sub-Divisional Officer of Parbatjhora, with copies also sent to the Assam Forest Minister and the BTC Executive Member in charge of Forests.

The organisation said a 2011 survey had recorded 26 vultures in the area, while sustained conservation efforts have helped increase the population to more than 50.

It maintained that the road could be constructed without cutting the large sal trees and warned that their removal could seriously threaten the breeding habitat of the rare vultures.

The Samiti has also reiterated its demand to declare the area as a 'Jatayu Udyan' and called for permanent protection of the tall sal trees as part of efforts to conserve the region's rich biodiversity.

Badruddin Ajmal Demands Rs 1,000 Crore Special Relief Package for Flood-Hit Upper Assam

Sabir Ahmed, Sivasagar, July 23: Jamiat Ulema-e-Assam President Maulana Badruddin Ajmal has urged Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the President of India to announce a special flood relief package of Rs 1,000 crore for flood-affected Upper Assam.

Ajmal made the appeal while inaugurating a relief distribution programme organised by the Ajmal Foundation at Jola Gaon, near Sivasagar town, for flood-affected families.

He said that the districts of Jorhat, Sivasagar, and Charaideo have suffered extensive damage due to the devastating floods. Many families have been rendered homeless, while a large



number of livestock have also perished. Ajmal expressed concern that the deaths of more than 60-70 people and animals could pose a serious public health risk in the affected districts. He further stated that around 99 percent of the flood victims belong to the Hindu community, and emphasized that, in times of such disaster, relief should be provided to all affected people regardless of religion or caste. Ajmal also called on the Central Government to immediately deploy additional National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) teams, intensify rescue operations, and use Army helicopters to airlift essential relief materials to inaccessible flood-hit areas.

He announced that he would remain in Upper Assam for three days to personally monitor the relief and rescue operations.

The relief campaign, titled "Emergency Flood Relief-2026 in Upper Assam," aims to provide food, medicines, and other essential supplies to thousands of flood-affected families across the region.

Pragatishil E-Rickshaw Chalok Santha, Barpeta District Formed New Committee

Jania, July 23: The e-rickshaw drivers of Barpeta district, who had united to form the Pragatishil E-Rickshaw Chalok Santha, Barpeta District, have constituted a new executive committee. The association was registered nearly three years ago, and as per its constitution, a new committee is to be formed every three years. Accordingly, a general meeting was held on July 19 at the association's office at Gandhinagar, Barpeta, under the chairmanship of senior journalist Mainul Haque Choudhury. The meeting began with an explanation of its objectives by the association's secretary, Abdul Hai. The meeting unanimously elected Achyut Pathak as President, Abdul Halim as Working President, Fazlur Rahman and Shahjahan Ali as Vice-Presidents, Abdul Hai as Secretary, Nurul Haque Beg as Assistant Secretary, Sanatan Chandra Das as Treasurer, Abdus Samad and Abed Ali as Publicity Secretaries, and Jalal Uddin as Organising Secretary. Several other members were also included in the newly formed executive committee.

Senior journalist Mainul Haque Choudhury was unanimously appointed as the Chief Adviser, while Hakim Ali was selected as Adviser. The meeting also constituted a Core Committee to take decisions in emergency situations.

The general meeting further resolved to hold the next executive meeting on July 30. On that day, the newly elected committee will formally assume office and take the oath of office.

Jorhat Registers Comfortable Eight-Wicket Victory Over Nazira in U-16 R.G. Baruah Inter-District Cricket Tournament

Staff Reporter, Nagaon Nagaon, July 23: Jorhat cruised to an emphatic eight-wicket victory over Nazira in the fifth Group-I match of the Upper Assam Zone of the R.G. Baruah Under-16 Inter-District Cricket Tournament, being conducted under the aegis of the Assam Cricket Association (ACA) and hosted by the Nowgong Sports Association (NSA) at the Nurul Amin Stadium in Nagaon.

Resuming the second day at 11 for 6, Nazira's second innings folded for just 21 runs in 26.2 overs, leaving Jorhat with a modest target. Jorhat bowlers dominated the innings, with Gurshwan Singh producing a superb spell to claim six wickets, while Ishwan Ranjan Dutta provided excellent support by taking four wickets, dismantling the Nazira batting line-up.

Having secured a 12-run first-innings lead after scoring 51 runs in their first innings, Jorhat required only 22 runs for victory. The team comfortably achieved the target, scoring 34 for 2 in 11.2 overs. Bhavarnav remained unbeaten on 14 runs, guiding his side to an easy win.

For Nazira, Rikhiraj Gogoi claimed both wickets to fall in Jorhat's second innings. For his outstanding all-round bowling performance, Ishwan Ranjan Dutta of Jorhat was adjudged the Player of the Match.

The convincing victory earned Jorhat valuable league points, strengthening the team's position in the Group-I standings of the prestigious age-group tournament.



Photo shows a moment of 6 days long workshop on songs of Parvati Prasad Baruah, Dr. Bhupen Hazarika and Jayanta Hazarika etc on the Khanindra Nath Choudhury memorial stage in the Udayan Sangha Campus, Krishnanagar, Japorigong, Guwahati inaugurated on 21st of July. Distinguished singers Manisha Hazarika, Hirakjyoti Das (Tokari Geet), Kabita Talukdar and others are the Training Guides for the workshop. The workshop was held under the banner of Tarun Ch. Talukdar Memorial Trust and organised mainly by the family members and relatives of Kabita Talukdar. The closing ceremony of the workshop will be held on 26th of July.