

WORLD

6 Death toll from Maui fire reaches 93

7 killed in Ukraine's Kherson region, including a 23-day-old baby girl

NATION

8 Cong calls for wider consultations on 3 Bills to replace India's criminal laws

'India, UK striving to create more transparent, corruption-free society'

Flood situation deteriorates further

HT Bureau
GUWAHATI, Aug 13: The flood situation in Assam further aggravated on Sunday as the number of affected individuals surpassed 75,200 across eight districts and sub-divisions.

Chirang, Darrang, Dhemaji, Dibrugarh, Golaghat, Kokrajhar, Sivasagar, and Sonitpur are the districts and sub-divisions currently grappling with the flood's impact.

Dhemaji remains the hardest hit, with over 46,750 people affected solely in that district. Sivasagar accounted for around 22,650 flood-affected individuals.

Key rivers like the Brahmaputra at Dhubri and Nimatighat, Disang at Nanglamuraghat, and Dikhou at Sivasagar continue to flow above the danger level, according to an official bulletin from the Assam State Disaster Management Au-

thority (ASDMA) on Sunday.

A total of 357 villages in the state are currently dealing with the consequences of floodwaters, which have affected 6,136.25 hectares of agricultural land.

A new fatality was reported from Sivasagar during the day, bringing this year's flood-related death toll to twelve.

Across the affected districts and sub-divisions, district administrations are operating 61 relief camps and 52 relief distribution centres, providing shelter to 1,515 people.

In Sivasagar alone, over 1,280 individuals are taking refuge in eight relief camps. The flood has also impacted 21,139 animals, according to the ASDMA bulletin.

The floodwaters have damaged a total of nine houses, with five in Dhemaji and four in Sivasagar. Additionally, (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

PM Modi to lead celebrations at Red Fort ● 1,800 people invited as 'special guests' Stage set for 77th Independence Day

NEW DELHI, Aug 13 (PTI): Around 1,800 'special guests' from different walks of life, including several workers employed in the construction of the new Parliament building, have been invited to attend the 77th Independence Day celebrations at Red Fort on August 15. Prime Minister Narendra Modi will lead the nation in marking the occasion.

Besides, 75 couples from each state and Union Territory, in their traditional attire, have been invited to witness the ceremony, the defence ministry said in a statement on Sunday. As part of the celebrations, selfie points dedicated to different government schemes and initiatives have been installed at 12 locations, including the National War Memorial, India Gate and Vijay Chowk, it said.

Around 1,800 people from dif-



ferent vocations, with their spouses, have been invited as special guests from across the country to be a part of the celebrations at the Red Fort.

A larger number of guests have been invited compared to last year. The invitation to the about 1,800 special guests has been extended in

line with the government's vision of 'Jan Bhagidari', the ministry said. These special guests include over 400 sarpanches of more than 660 vibrant villages; 250 from the farmer-producer organisations scheme; 50 participants each of the Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi Scheme and the Pradhan

Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana; 50 'shram yogis (construction workers)' of the Central Vista project, including the new Parliament building; 50 khadi workers, those involved in construction of border roads, making of Amrit Sarovars and Har Ghar Jal Yojana each, as well as 50 primary school teachers, nurses and fisherfolk each.

Some of these special guests are scheduled to visit the National War Memorial and call on minister of state for defence Ajay Bhatt as part of their stay in Delhi, the statement said. This year's Independence Day will also see the culmination of the 'Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav', launched from the Sabarmati Ashram in Ahmedabad by Modi on March 12, 2021, and will, once again, usher the country into 'Amrit Kaal' with renewed vigour to realise (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

Man lynched to death

NAGAON, Aug 13 (PTI): One person was beaten to death by villagers on suspicion of being a thief in Assam's Nagaon district on Sunday, police said.

According to senior officials, the incident took place at Bamungaon under Lanka police station in Hojai in the wee hours.

"We got information in the morning that one person was severely beaten by villagers suspecting him to be a thief. When police reached the spot, the victim was already dead. The body has been sent for post-mortem to Nagaon Civil Hospital," a senior official said.

The deceased has been identified as Hibzur Rahman, who hailed from Hojai sub-divisional area, he added.

"We have apprehended six individuals so far. Probe is on to find out and arrest more people involved in the incident," he added.

Himanta flags off Assam Police March, calls for national dedication

HT Bureau
GUWAHATI, Aug 13: Chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma took the lead on Sunday as he flagged off a March Past conducted by Assam Police personnel, marking the culmination of the Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav and Meri Maati Mera Desh campaign. The event took place at the Latail Playground in Guwahati.

In line with the 77th Independence Day celebrations, chief minister Sarma, accompanied by his wife Riniki Bhuyan Sarma, also paid his respects at the war memorial in Dighalipukhuri, honoring the sacrifices of war heroes. Later, the chief minister engaged in a laser light and sound show, followed by a breathtaking fireworks display at the same venue.

Addressing the gathering, chief minister Sarma expressed his belief that the mesmerizing light and sound show, coupled with the fireworks, would evoke feelings of patriotism and a deep sense of love for the



country. He extended his heartfelt greetings to the public on the 77th Independence Day and urged them to actively participate in the celebrations. Furthermore, the chief minister called (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

CBI set to take over nine more cases, taking total to 17

NEW DELHI, Aug 13 (PTI): The CBI is set to investigate nine more cases related to Manipur violence, which will take the total number of cases probed by the agency to 17, officials have said.

Officials in the know of the developments said the probe by the central agency would not be limited to these 17 cases. Any other case related to crime against women or sexual assault may also be referred to it on priority, they said. The CBI has so far registered eight cases which include two related to alleged sexual assault on women in Manipur. It is

in the process of taking over nine more cases, officials said.

According to them, the probe agency is likely to take over one more case of alleged sexual assault in the state's Churachandpur district. With the society divided on

ethnic lines, the CBI is facing the critical task of avoiding allegations of bias during the Manipur operation as any involvement of people from one community will result in fingers pointed from the other side, the officials said. Sources said that several of these cases being probed by the CBI may (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

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RBI selects McKinsey and Company, Accenture Solutions to use AI, ML to improve regulatory supervision

MUMBAI, Aug 13 (PTI): The Reserve Bank has selected global consultancy firms McKinsey and Company India LLP and Accenture Solutions Pvt Ltd India to develop systems using artificial intelligence and machine learning for its supervisory functions. The RBI is looking to extensively use advanced analytics, artificial intelligence and machine learning to analyse its huge database and improve regulatory supervision over banks and NBFCs. For this purpose, the central bank plans to hire external experts.

In September last year, the RBI invited expressions of interest (EOI) for engaging consultants for the use of advanced analytics, artificial intelligence and machine learning for generating supervisory inputs. Based on the scrutiny/evaluation set out in the EOI document, the central bank had shortlisted seven applicants to participate in the request for proposal process (RFP) for the selection of consultant(s).

The seven firms were Accenture Solutions Private Limited; Boston Consulting Group (India) Pvt Ltd; Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu India LLP; Ernst and Young LLP; KPMG Assurance and Consulting Services LLP; McKinsey and Company; and



Pricewaterhouse Coopers Pvt Ltd. Of these, McKinsey and Company India LLP and Accenture Solutions Private Limited India have been awarded the contract, as per a Reserve Bank document. The value of the contract is about ₹91 crore.

While the RBI is already using AI and ML in supervisory processes, it now intends to upscale it to ensure that the benefits of advanced analytics can accrue to the Department of Supervision in the central bank.

The Department of Supervision has been developing and using linear and a few machine-learned models for supervisory examinations. The interest now is to explore the data to identify its attributes that can be leveraged to generate new and improved supervisory inputs, said the EOI issued in September.

The supervisory jurisdiction of the RBI extends over banks, urban cooperative banks, NBFCs, payment banks, small finance banks, local

area banks, credit information companies and select all Indian financial institutions. It undertakes supervision of these entities with the objective of assessing their financial soundness, solvency, asset quality, governance framework, liquidity, and operational viability to protect depositors' interests and financial stability.

The RBI undertakes continuous supervision of SEs with the help of on-site inspections and off-site monitoring, the EOI said.

Across the world, regulatory and supervisory authorities are using machine learning techniques (commonly referred to as 'suptech' and 'regtech') for assisting supervisory and regulatory activities, it added.

Most of these techniques are still exploratory, however, they are rapidly gaining popularity and scale.

On the data collection side, AI and ML technologies are used for real-time data reporting, effective data management and dissemination.

For data analytics, these are being used for monitoring supervised firm-specific risks, including liquidity risks, market risks, credit exposures and concentration risks; misconduct analysis; and mis-selling of products.

Apple supplier Foxconn ups its investment proposal in Telangana

HYDERABAD, AUG 13 (PTI): The Board of Directors FIT Hon Teng Ltd (Foxconn) approved the investment of USD 400 million in Telangana, V Lee, Foxconn India representative said in a social media post. Taiwan-based contract manufacturer Foxconn is Apple's biggest supplier.

"FIT Singapore's proposal to make a capital injection of US\$ 400,000,000 to Chang Yi Interconnect Technology (India) Private Limited, which is held by FIT Singapore as to 99.99 per cent of the capital stock," FIT Hon Teng informed the Hong Kong Stock Exchange on Friday. Posting the company's disclosure on his social media handle, V Lee said "Moving so fast, Telangana! Another US \$400M is coming."

Reacting to V Lee's post, Telangana Minister for IT and Industries KT Rama Rao tweeted on Saturday saying the fresh investment proposal is in addition to the already committed USD 150 million earlier.

"Our friendship with Foxconn Group remains steadfast, each of us delivering on mutual commitments. With total infusement of \$550m (adding previous \$150m), FIT is poised to deliver on its promises in Telangana. This once again proves Telangana Speed," Rama Rao tweeted on X.

MakeMyTrip, Tourism Ministry partner to bring 'Traveller's Map of India' to boost offbeat destinations



MUMBAI, Aug 13 (PTI): Online travel company MakeMyTrip on Sunday said it has joined hands with the tourism ministry to showcase over 600 destinations which are beyond the country's most popular travel wonders.

The Traveller's Map of India microsite, developed by MakeMyTrip, provides an interactive platform for travellers to discover destinations within the country, the company said in a statement.

This microsite has been designed in line with the government's - DekhoApnaDesh - programme. Om Infra Q1 net profit more than doubles to ₹16 cr New Delhi: Construction player Om Infra's consolidated net profit has more than doubled to

₹16 crore during June quarter, backed by higher revenues.

It had clocked Rs 7.20 crore net profit during the April-June period of the preceding 2022-23 fiscal, the company said in a statement on Sunday. The company's revenue from operations also more than doubled to ₹262.71 crore in the first quarter of ongoing fiscal, compared to ₹116.85 crore in the same quarter a year ago.

As on June 30, the company order book was at ₹2500 crore.

Om Infra is a Rajasthan-based diversified business house into hydro mechanical equipment, turnkey-based solutions for infra engineering, water pipe lines and civil structures of dams among other infrastructure projects.

Commerce ministry seeking views of ministries, NITI on draft bills on 5 cash crops

NEW DELHI, Aug 13 (PTI): The commerce ministry is seeking views from different ministries and government think tank Niti Aayog on draft bills pertaining to five cash crops like tea and tobacco, an official said. The ministry has circulated separate notes for the bills related to cash crops of tea, coffee, spices, rubber and tobacco, which seek to promote their growth and create a conducive environment for businesses by decriminalising minor offences, the official said.

After taking the comments, the ministry will approach the Union Cabinet for approval on the drafts of the Spices (Promotion and Development) Bill; the Rubber (Promotion and Development) Bill; the Coffee (Promotion and Development) Bill; the Tea (Promotion and Development) Bill; and the Tobacco Board (Amendment) Bill.

In 2022, the Department of Commerce proposed the repeal and updation of decades-old laws on these sectors and to introduce new legislation with a view to promoting their growth and creating a conducive environment for businesses.

"Earlier the Niti Aayog had raised certain issues with the ministry on these five bills. Now all the issues have been resolved," the official added.

The commerce ministry had conducted stakeholder consultations on these draft bills to address the concerns.

The Department of Commerce proposes the repeal of Tea Act, 1953; Spices Board Act, 1986; Rubber Act, 1947; Coffee Act, 1942 and updation of Tobacco Board Act, 1975.

According to the draft bills, the new proposed legislations reflect the present realities and objectives of these sectors.

Explaining the rationale behind the proposal to repeal the Rubber Act, the draft bill has stated that in recent years, there have been widespread changes in the industrial and economic scenario especially with regard to development in rubber and allied sectors.

The draft Coffee (Promotion and Development) Bill has underlined that substantive portions of the existing Act dealing with pooling and marketing of coffee have become redundant/inoperative. According to the draft Spices (Promotion and Development) Bill, 2022, there is a need to enable the Spices Board to provide focused attention across the entire supply chain of spices.

The ministry has proposed repeal of the archaic Tea Act as there is a paradigm shift in the recent decade with respect to the way tea is grown, marketed and consumed.

Similarly, the draft bill on tobacco has sought to update the existing law by promoting ease of doing business in the sector.

ACC battery market demand in India to rise to 220 GWh by 2030: Report

NEW DELHI, Aug 13 (PTI): The advanced chemistry cell battery market demand in India is expected to grow at a CAGR of 50 per cent from 20 GWh in 2022 to around 220 GWh by 2030, according to a CII report released on Sunday. The growth is expected to be supported by the thriving local battery manufacturing industry and a robust local supply chain.

As a result, India is expected to localize a significant portion of the entire value chain from material processing to pack assembly and integration, said the report on 'Raw materials for Battery & Component Manufacturing'. The report, prepared in collaboration with 6Wresearch, is the third in a series of reports on 'Roadmap for Future Mobility 2030'.

"EV is determined primarily by the battery running the powertrain of the vehicle. Advancements in the battery technology space is pivotal for the development of better-performing EVs," said Vipin Sondhi, Chairman, CII National Committee on Future Mobility and former CEO & MD, Ashok Leyland and JCB.

He added, "It is imperative for India to not only strengthen the national battery raw materials and

manufacturing set-up but also to become a globally trusted supplier of high-quality, innovative battery materials to counter the Chinese supremacy in the domain."

The report recommends incentivising development of domestic mines as several raw minerals such as cobalt, nickel, lithium and copper have a negligible reserve, production, and refining capacity in India.

It also calls for lowering the custom duty of critical minerals used in battery manufacturing and incentivising setting up of mineral processing plants to extract required minerals. India needs a battery chemical processing industry at par with several other stages of battery manufacturing and various measures in form of incentives, exemptions from various taxes etc., said the CII report.

This may be done by way of incentives from the government, additional funding for R&D, collaboration with countries with advanced technology for technological collaboration and simplification of the regulations related to chemical industry - obtaining licenses, environmental clearances, and other approvals etc., it added. The government last month announced the re-bidding

of production-linked incentives for 20 GWh Advanced Chemistry Cell manufacturing -- India's Rs 18,100-crore programme to boost local battery cell production. ACCs are the new generation of advanced storage technologies that can store electric energy either as electrochemical or as chemical energy and convert it back to electric energy as and when required.

These have major applications in electric vehicles, maintaining grid stability, solar rooftop, consumer electronics etc. With India's commitment towards renewable energy and achieving net-zero by 2070, energy storage is expected to play a crucial role in the overall energy ecosystem.

The government approved the PLI scheme 'National Programme on ACC Battery Storage' for achieving a manufacturing capacity of 50 Giga Watt Hour (GWh) of ACC to enhance manufacturing capabilities with a budgetary outlay of Rs 18,100 crore.

Under the initiative, the emphasis of the government is to achieve greater domestic value addition, while at the same time ensuring that the levelised cost of battery manufacturing in India is globally competitive.

SPIC reports decline in Q1 PAT at ₹ 43.97 cr due to global energy prices

CHENNAI, Aug 13 (PTI): Southern Petrochemical Industries Corporation Ltd (SPIC) has reported a decline in its profit after tax for the April-June 2023 quarter at ₹ 43.97 crore, due to rising global energy prices, the company said on Sunday.

The city-based agri-nutrient and fertiliser company, a part of AM International, Singapore had reported profit after tax of ₹ 66.85 crore during the corresponding quarter of the previous year.

For the year ending March 31, 2023, the company's profit after tax stood at ₹ 284.44 crore, a statement released by the company said.

Commenting on the company's financial performance, SPIC Chairman Ashwin Muthiah said, "The company during the quarter has navigated through a dip in turnover while successfully safeguarding the

PAT, as compared to the corresponding period of the previous year, in the face of rising global energy prices."



Total income during the quarter under review slipped to ₹ 571.19 crore from ₹ 753.07 crore recorded in the corresponding period of last year.

For the full year ending March 31, 2023 the total income was at ₹

2,849.45 crore.

"We are focusing on continually enhancing cost and operational efficiencies," said Muthiah, also the Chairman of AM International, Singapore.

On industry overview, the company said the domestic market demonstrated its resilience and adaptability despite evolving challenges.

The industry remained steadfast in its commitment to bolstering agricultural productivity and food security despite certain fluctuations in demand and supply, the statement said.

The industry's collaborative approach continues to contribute significantly to the nation's agricultural self-sufficiency goals, ensuring a prosperous and resilient future for Indian agriculture, the statement added.

Centre directs institutions to work in tandem on scheme for loans to street vendors

BHUBANESWAR, Aug 13 (PTI): Union Minister Bhagwat K Karad has asked banks and civic bodies to collaborate to achieve the goals of the PM SVANidhi scheme, which was launched to help street vendors get easy loans.

Chairing a regional-level meeting on Saturday to assess the scheme's progress in Bihar, Jharkhand, Odisha and West Bengal, Karad asked civic bodies to review the applications returned by banks and resubmit them after rectification.

The minister of state for finance also asked the municipal bodies to work in a 'camp mode' and mobilise fresh applications to achieve the targets in a time-bound manner.

Karad urged urban local bodies to intensify their efforts with innovative strategies to enhance the digital onboarding of street vendors, a statement said.

Sebi levies ₹ 60 lakh fine on individual for flouting regulatory norms

NEW DELHI, Aug 13 (PTI): Capital markets regulator Sebi has levied fine totalling ₹ 60 lakh on an individual for violating market norms. The penalty is to be paid by Manish Goel (Manish Kr. Goyal), a Sebi-registered research analyst, within 45 days.

In its 46-page order on Friday, Sebi found that Manish had collected ₹ 4.16 crore from 583 clients by charging them for services provided as a Research Analyst.

However, he failed to comply with basic requirements of research analyst (RA) norms and also promised assured returns and mis-sold his services to clients.

The regulator also observed that Manish assured the members of the Whatsapp/Telegram groups that they would get one stock recommendation for free in case anyone suffers a loss on account of a particular stock recommendation. "... the promise of an assured return in the Whatsapp/Telegram chats, which were not supported by any research on noticee's part, amounted to dissemination of misleading information which amounted to a violation of PFUTP (Prohibition of Fraudulent and Unfair Trade Practices) regulations," Sebi's adjudicating officer Soma Majumdar said in the order.

In addition, the regulator also alleged that Manish



being an individual RA, was engaged as principal officer of a Sebi-registered investment adviser while undertaking business as a research analyst. The investment advisory business of MSRAPL and noticee's business as a research analyst should have been managed by separate teams and separate accounts should have been maintained with respect to revenues from noticee's investment advisory business and research analyst business, as per the order.

NARCL may wind up Srei group's equipment finance arm, retain SIFL

KOLKATA, Aug 13 (PTI): After completion of the takeover of two Srei group firms through NCLT route, state-owned asset reconstruction company NARCL is expected to retain only one of the acquired companies, official sources said. The Kolkata bench of the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) has approved the resolution plan of NARCL for takeover of the twin Srei firms under Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code.

The resolution plan had already received approval from banking sector regulator Reserve Bank of India.

NARCL emerged as the winning bidder for the two Srei group firms -- Srei Infrastructure Finance Ltd (SIFL) and Srei Equipment Finance Ltd (SEFL) -- through a bidding process in February.

"According to the resolution plan submitted, the National Asset Reconstruction Company Ltd (NARCL) will cease all fresh lending activities in the group's equipment financing arm -- SEFL, and after recovering the outstanding debt, it will be 'wound up'," the official told PTI.

The loan repayment process may extend for the next seven years, he said.

At present, most of the assets remain within SEFL's books due to a previous restructuring.

"As outlined in the resolution plan, NARCL, upon assuming control of the companies, will abstain from pursuing fresh lending from SEFL. The non-banking financial company (NBFC) will be dissolved once its outstanding debt is recuperated and ongoing court cases are settled," an official close to the development told PTI.

"SIFL with a cleaner balance sheet and a few legal imbroglios will be revitalised, and fresh lending operations will be conducted under this entity. Regulatory authorities are also aligned with this perspective, as previously discussed," the official said.

This strategy aims at ensuring business continuity and safeguarding employment.

Kanoria, the erstwhile promoters, did not offer any comments on the development.

No official comments were received from NARCL.

On February 15, the Committee of Creditors (CoC) for the Srei group firms endorsed NARCL's resolution plan, which garnered the highest vote share of 89.2 per cent.

There were three final contenders for Srei companies.

NARCL offered a Net Present Value (NPV) bid of Rs 5,555 crore. Authum Investment and Infrastructure secured the second-highest vote

with 84.86 per cent through a bid of ₹ 5,526 crore.

The consortium comprising Varde Partners and Arena Investors with a financial bid of approximately ₹ 4,680 crore, secured the third spot with around nine per cent of the vote, according to the official.

The total value of NARCL's resolution plan stands at ₹ 14,301 crore, encompassing a cash component of ₹ 3,001 crore, debentures and security receipts amounting to ₹ 3,300 crore, along with an uncommitted payment of ₹ 8,000 crore via Optionally Convertible Debentures (OCDs). These payments are contingent upon the recovery from underlying assets over the ensuing seven years.

Creditors accepted a haircut of 55 per cent, considering a complete retrieval of the uncommitted value of ₹ 8,000 crore. The cumulative claims of financial creditors for the two NBFCs amounted to ₹ 32,750.22 crore.

The Reserve Bank of India superseded the boards of SIFL and SEFL in October 2021 due to governance concerns and repayment defaults.

Subsequently, the banking regulator approached the NCLT Kolkata to initiate the insolvency proceedings against the twins for a consolidated resolution.

Not so keen on any other new acquisitions: Tata Steel CEO Narendran



NEW DELHI, Aug 13 (PTI): Tata Steel - which is in an expansion mode in India - is not so keen on any other new acquisitions, the company CEO T V Narendran has said.

The statement from Narendran has come amid Vedanta Ltd reviewing and evaluating its steel and steel-making raw materials businesses.

In June, Vedanta Ltd said it will immediately begin the review and evaluate a broad range of options including potential strategic sale of

some or all of its steel businesses.

"Not so keen on any other new acquisitions... We don't need it," Narendran said in a reply to a question on his company's interest in buying Vedanta Ltd's steel business.

There is a lot to do at Tata Steel's existing sites, he added.

The company has a plan to scale up its annual installed steel making capacity to 40 million tonnes per annum (MTPA) by 2030 in India, from around 22 MTPA at present.

In June 2018, Vedanta Limited acquired Jharkhand-based steel company ESL Steel Limited through an insolvency resolution process.

The company set up a green field integrated manufacturing facility, which is currently commissioned at a capacity of 2.5 MT per annum.

Speaking on Tata Steel UK operations, Narendran, who is also the MD of the company, said "we are (still) engaged with the UK government to find a solution. If we can find a common ground with the government (there)."

There is no problem in the UK. The production is not affected. The only challenge is the upstream assets are old and reliability of the equipment is sometimes not so great, he said. India-headquartered Tata Steel owns the UK's largest steelworks at Port Talbot in South Wales and employs around 8,000 people across all its operations in the country.

The company had sought 1.5 billion pounds from the UK government to execute its decarbonisation plans. However, the British government earlier this year made a counter offer which was much lower to the company's expectations.

AGP chief calls for renewed efforts to expand party base

HT Correspondent

JORHAT, Aug 13: Atul Bora, the president of Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) and the minister for agriculture and various other departments in Assam, has urged party workers and leaders to approach their tasks with renewed enthusiasm. The call was made during an extended executive meeting of the Jorhat district unit of AGP, held at the party's office in Jorhat.

Bora emphasised the need for intensified efforts to connect with the grassroots level and advance the party's policies and ideals in the backdrop of changing political dynamics. He highlighted the ongoing delimitation of parliamentary and Assembly constituencies by the Election Commission of India (ECI) as a significant factor



influencing the state's political landscape.

Commending the delimitation

process for its goal of safeguarding the rights of ethnic communities in Assam, Bora expressed the party's

support for this initiative.

He noted that AGP had successfully organised workers' meetings at the Lok Sabha level in the 14 constituencies and was now focusing on strengthening organisational activities at the district and Assembly constituency levels.

Bora acknowledged the establishment of booth-level committees by Vidhan Parishads under the Jorhat district and conveyed his satisfaction regarding the progress made in this regard.

The meeting was attended by prominent figures including Keshab Mahanta, executive president of AGP and the minister for health and family welfare, along with other key leaders of AGP and its affiliated organisations.

Pijush assesses rehabilitation center; highlights its role in community welfare



HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Aug 13: Assam's minister of social justice and empowerment, Pijush Hazarika, conducted a thorough assessment of Orsini Care Home, a rehabilitation centre located in Kishan Bazar, Bongaigaon district, on Sunday. During his visit, the minister inspected the centre's facilities and engaged in insightful discussions with the staff members overseeing

its operations. Additionally, he took the opportunity to engage in conversations with individuals undergoing treatment at the facility.

Minister Hazarika took to social media to underscore the critical importance of acknowledging that individuals grappling with drug addiction actively seek out rehabilitation centres like Orsini Care Home to liberate themselves from dependency and embark on a trans-

formative journey towards recovery. He emphasised the vital role played by such rehabilitation facilities in fostering a healthier community by effectively aiding individuals in overcoming their addiction challenges. In his tweet, Minister Hazarika stated that rehabilitation centres occupy a significant place in society's framework and pledged his commitment to ensuring their optimal functioning. He highlighted his regular visits to these centres and underscored his hands-on approach to closely monitoring their operations, thereby ensuring strict adherence to the relevant rules and guidelines governing their functioning.

NAME CORRECTION

I, Basant Koiri son of Ram Prasad Koiri inhabitant of Village- Akanta Bill, P.O. - Kharikhana, PS- Lanka, District - Nagaon, PIN - 782446, Assam do hereby declare that in my LIC Policy bearing No. 407776350, my name has been inadvertently recorded as Basant Kumar Bhagat instead of my actual and correct name Basant Koiri.

I, hereby solemnly affirm on oath before the Addl. District Magistrate, Nagaon that Basant Koiri and Basant Kumar Bhagat are one and the same person having a single legal identity and entity.

LOST

I Rinku Raj Bordoloi son of Lt Keshab Bordoloi have lost my HSLC Admit Card and Marksheets bearing Roll-N2-62 No. 24 of the year 1992. And have lost my caste certificate also. Anyone find please return to my following address or contact us : Rinku Raj Bordoloi Vill- Halodhiati P.O. + P.S.- Bakaliaghat Phone No.- 7002533401 Dist- Karbi Anglong (Assam)

LOST

I have lost my original- (1) HSLC Certificate S/No- 731198, Roll No- 14960045, dated 2-6-15; (2) HSLC Marksheet S/No-309980 dated 2-6-15; (3) HS Pass Certificate SL/No. 128873, Roll 0616 No.20148, dated 31-5-2018; (4) HS Marksheet MS No. 167039, dated 31-5-2018, Roll 0616 No.20148.

Bhim Chauhan
S/o: Gyan Chauhan
Village:- Nawaibill No.5, P.S: Kheroni, West- Karbi Anglong Assam.

NAME CORRECTION

I, Md Mashuk Ahmed S/O. Faruk Ahmed, Dinki Gaon, Gopal Nagar, Hojai (Assam) do hereby solemnly declare that my actual and correct name is Md Mashuk Ahmed. But, that has been inadvertently recorded in some documents as Mashuk Ahmed. I hereby declare that both names Md Mashuk Ahmed and Mashuk Ahmed are of one and same person i.e Md Mashuk Ahmed.

Monthly mouthpiece of Rotary Club released at Nagaon



HT Correspondent

NAGAON, Aug 13: The district governor of the Rotary Club, Nilesh Kumar Agarwal, paid a visit to the Nagaon Rotary Club on Friday. During his visit, he ceremonially released the governor's monthly letter titled 'Hope', which serves as a monthly mouthpiece for the club. The function was held at the DRT Hotel near Haibargaon Khutikata.

The event was attended by distinguished members of the Rotary Club, including the first lady and wife of DG Nilesh Kumar Agarwal, Laxmi Agarwal, assistant governor Arun Agarwal, Birendra Kumar Jain, and Aman Dassani, who respectively serve as the

president and secretary of the Nagaon Rotary Club. The event was organised with Vikash Bajaj as the editor. The program was hosted by Jugal More, while Birendra Kumar Jain, the president of Nagaon Rotary Club, welcomed the attendees and discussed the purpose of the occasion.

During his address, DG Nilesh Kumar Agarwal elaborated on how Rotarians can contribute to social service within their communities. He also answered various questions posed by fellow Rotarians. As part of the event, Birendra Kumar Jain inaugurated the service of an ambulance that was generously donated by MP Pradyut Bordoloi to the Rotary Club.

In addition to these activities, DG Nilesh Kumar Agarwal inaugurated a drawing competition called 'Taare Zameen Par', which was organised by the Nagaon Rotary Club in connection with the Amrit Mahotsav of independence. The competition took place at Nagaon Government Boys' HS School and saw participation from over a thousand students from pre-nursery to class 12. Local MLA Rupak Sarma graced the event as the chief guest, and other members of the Rotary Club, including Amrit More, Keshav Khetawat, Silja Khetawat Bhajanka, and Muskan Bhattirajpal, were also present at the program.

Siu-Ka-Pha Multi Speciality Hospital introduces trauma team for critical care



HT Correspondent

DEMOW, Aug 13: The Swargadeo Siu-Ka-Pha Multi Speciality Hospital conducted a press meet on Saturday to unveil its latest initiative. Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar Vaidyakiya Pratishthan's Swargadeo Siu-Ka-Pha Multi Speciality Hospital, a corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiative by ONGC, is located near Rajabari, close to Demow in Sivasagar district.

During the press meet, it was announced that the Siu-Ka-Pha Multi Speciality Hospital has introduced a dedicated trauma team comprising experts in orthopaedics, neurosurgery, general surgery, rehabilitation, and intensive care. The primary objective of this team is to provide exceptional medical

care and save lives during the critical 'golden hours' following traumatic incidents.

Supriya Dutta, from the administration management, welcomed the attendees and provided insights into the newly introduced emergency and trauma care team. She highlighted that the hospital has also established a neurosurgery department to further enhance its capabilities.

Sanjit Konwar, a staff member of the Siu-Ka-Pha Multi Speciality Hospital, facilitated the press meet. Dr Gautam Das, the CEO of the hospital, emphasised the importance of delivering swift and specialised medical attention during the crucial golden hour after a traumatic event. This approach signif-

icantly increases the chances of successful recovery.

Dr Nirmal Chandra Chutia, a general surgery consultant at the hospital, shared that the hospital has successfully conducted over 1000 surgeries. He discussed the hospital's commitment to providing high-quality medical care.

Dr Arijit Chakraborty, a neurosurgeon consultant, stressed the critical significance of brain trauma care. He explained that prompt actions, early brain surgeries, and specialised care are essential to saving lives and preventing long-term complications. Through a detailed powerpoint presentation, Dr Arijit Chakraborty illuminated the complexities of brain trauma care.

Dr Uday Arun Ranade, an orthopaedic surgeon, also delivered a presentation during the event. He shed light on the hospital's orthopaedic services, elaborating on the advanced techniques and treatments available.

The program also featured the presence of patients who had successfully undergone treatment at the Siu-Ka-Pha Multi Speciality Hospital. Their relatives shared their experiences and expressed gratitude towards the hospital and its medical staff for the care provided.

Fire breaks out at stone crusher plant

HT Correspondent

KHERONI, Aug 13: A fire incident occurred at the stone crusher plant owned by NM Construction in Hawaipur, West Karbi Anglong. The quick response of the employees helped alert the nearby residents, and together they attempted to extinguish the flames. Subsequently, the fire brigade team reached the location and successfully managed to control the fire. However, a portion of the plant suffered damage due to the fire.

International Youth Day celebrated

HT Correspondent

DEMOW, Aug 13: The International Youth Day was marked with zeal and enthusiasm through an event organised by Nehru Yuva Kendra, Sivasagar Momentum Country, and Global Leadership India Yash in collaboration with Sonapur Social Development Society, an esteemed NGO. The event took place in the auditorium of Athabari Higher Secondary School on Saturday. Chaired by Sanjay Prasad Sah, president of Sonapur Social Development Society, the meeting featured Aaman Ullah Ahmed, convenor of Momentum Country and Global Leadership India Yash Sivasagar district, as the anchor. The gathering saw active participation from various dignitaries and individuals.

Sabina Ahmed from Sivasagar Polytechnic College delivered insights on career counselling, focusing on polytechnic education and sports.

Farmers concerned over lack of rain & irr WKA

HT Correspondent

KHERONI, Aug 13: The agricultural community in West Karbi Anglong is currently facing significant concerns due to inadequate rainfall and a lack of proper irrigation facilities. The absence of sufficient rain coupled with the absence of proper irrigation infra-

structure has led to the drying up of fields in various regions, including Greater Kheroni, Langchibu, Hawaipur, Prelou, Ampathar, Langmepi, Langthat, and others.

This situation has left farmers in the area deeply worried about the well-being of their crops and livelihoods.

NTPC joins hands with Arunachal Pradesh govt for hydro projects

HT Correspondent

KOKRAJHAR, Aug 13: In a significant move towards sustainable energy development, NEEPCO, a fully-owned subsidiary of NTPC, has entered into a memorandum of agreement (MoA) with the Arunachal Pradesh government for the development of hydroelectric projects with a total capacity of 2620 MW. The MoA signing ceremony took place in Itanagar on Saturday and was attended by officials and representatives from relevant authorities. The collaborative effort between NEEPCO and the Arunachal Pradesh government aims to contribute to India's ambitious goals in the field of clean energy.

By developing these hydro projects, India will take strides towards fulfilling its Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) target of achieving a non-fossil energy capacity of 500 GW by the year 2030. Moreover, hydroelectric power will play a crucial role in advancing the nation's commitment to achieve Net Zero carbon emissions by 2070. Beyond the environmental benefits, the projects are anticipated to have a positive impact on the local economy and employment landscape. The region is poised to benefit from significant employment opportunities generated by the projects, thus fostering skill development and technical expertise within the local community.

Nagaon district admin plants 75 saplings at Dr Bhupen Hazarika Kalatirtha

HT Correspondent

NAGAON, Aug 13: Marking the culmination of the Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav celebrations, which honour India's 75 years of independence, the 'Meri Maati Mera Desh' campaign is underway from August 9 and will continue till August 15, 2023. This heartfelt initiative pays tribute to the brave men and women who sacrificed their lives for the country. Nagaon district actively participated in this nationwide celebration with various programs. As a part of this commemoration, the Vasudha Vandan event was organised, focusing on the creation of an Amrit Vatika with 75 saplings of indigenous trees. The event took place on Sunday at the site of the under-construction Dr Bhupen Hazarika Kalatirtha, in the presence of Nagaon MLA Rupak Sarma. As a symbol of growth, 75 saplings of the agor plant were planted around the premises.

The program witnessed the participation of several dignitaries, including Ambika Mazumdar, chairman of Nagaon Municipality Board; ward commissioners of Nagaon Municipal Board; ADC Phyllis V L Hrangchal; Shilpi Pandit, executive officer of Nagaon Municipal Board; eminent citizens of the district; members of the journalist fraternity; officials of Nagaon district administration; and employees of Nagaon Municipal Board.



HT Correspondent

MORIGAOON, Aug 13: The inauguration of the office for the 11th Special Annual Convention of Asam Sahitya Sabha took place with notable speakers highlighting the importance of preserving and promoting the Assamese language and culture. The convention is scheduled to be held at Barpujia, situated on the border of Nagaon and Morigaon districts.

Former vice president of Asam Sahitya Sabha, Mrinalini Devi, emphasised the urgency of increasing the number of Assamese speakers to ensure the survival of the language in the state.

She expressed concern over a section of Assamese people embracing Western culture, which could lead to a gradual erosion of Assamese culture. Devi un-

derlined that literature and culture are indispensable for the survival of a nation and its societal fabric. She urged the younger generation to be well-versed in the ancient teachings of the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, emphasising that these teachings can play a significant role in reforming Assamese society.

The event also marked the formation of the main reception committee and 34 sub-committees, all working towards the successful execution of the convention.

Hemanta Kr Deuri, president of the reception committee, mentioned that the 11th Special Annual Convention of the Asam Sahitya Sabha would take place

at Barpujia, with a budget of ₹ 3 crore allocated for the event.

Several prominent figures attended the event, including Dr Upendrajit Sharma, general secretary of Asam Sahitya Sabha, Devashish Sharma, Morigaon district commissioner, Mahendra Shaikia, president of Morigaon District Sahitya Sabha, and Dr Achut Das, secretary of Morigaon Zilla Sahitya Sabha. The gathering was also graced by the presence of Birinchi Kumar Sharma, executive president of the committee, and renowned writers like Dharendra Nath Sharma.

Asam Sahitya Sabha central executive members, including Binu Laskar Thakuria and Harendra Bora, along with senior journalists Mahendra Nath Hazarika and Ajit Sharma, participated in the program as well.



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QUOTE OF THE DAY

Liberty, when it begins to take root, is a plant of rapid growth. - George Washington

Rahul's resurrection and LS polls

Over the last year, Rahul Gandhi has been attempting political resurrection. First, via the five-month walkathon of Bharat Jodo Yatra that saw him play the role of a doughty fighter. Second, a subsequent five months spent outside of Parliament which allowed Gandhi to assume the role of a martyr. The martyrdom parade might have been stopped by the Supreme Court's recent judgment staying Gandhi's disqualification. Yet, the judgment also lends to Congress' claim of unjust punishment. From the assassination of Indira Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi to the renunciation of Sonia Gandhi, the myth of Gandhi family martyrdom has provided an essential glue to the Congress, in absence of a clear ideology. This particular reiteration of 'Rebranding Rahul' has been more fruitful than earlier versions. It has helped cement Gandhi's centrality not only to the Congress but also to the larger opposition coalition. Many Congress supporters feel the stage is now set for a rejuvenated Gandhi to undertake a third and final act; the role of the primary challenger to Narendra Modi for the office of the Prime Minister.

But on this question, Congress still finds itself stuck in a quagmire. Its 2024 strategy is composed of two mutually conflicting goals; the achievement of a broad opposition unity and the recovery of the former 'Congress space'. Congress realises that a presidential style 'Rahul vs Modi' contest, as a referendum on a national agenda, might not work favourably for it. In subsequent elections, Congress lost 171 out of the 186 seats where it battled head-to-head. Most of these seats lie in northern and central India where the popularity gap between Modi and Gandhi is still formidable. To cite an example; a recent C-voter survey in Madhya Pradesh showed 57% people to continue to repose faith in Modi as their preferred choice for PM, as opposed to a much smaller 18% who favour Rahul. Thus, self-interest pushes both the Congress and regional parties towards a shared platform against powerful incumbents, with the hope of converting the national election into a series of state elections.

It is very likely that any strident attempts by the Congress to project Gandhi as their PM candidate would scupper the goal of broad opposition unity heralded by the India alliance, at least, in its current configuration. The disqualification had not only supercharged a shared threat perception among the opposition ranks, it had also conveniently discharged the vexed issue of the PM candidate, enabling the entry of fellow PM aspirants Arvind Kejriwal, Mamata Banerjee and Nitish Kumar. Thus, the reception of Gandhi's parliamentary career does complicate the fragile political equations involving the INDIA alliance. A straightforward way to rule Gandhi out of contention.

Prime Minister has let down the suffering people of Manipur once again

Prime Minister Narendra Modi finally opened his mouth on Manipur violence in Lok Sabha on August 10 to reply the no-confidence motion brought by the opposition INDIA alliance, but only to expose himself to be sanctimonious – talking piously and giving assurances – in the backdrop of inaction and 'complete breakdown of law and order and constitutional machinery in the state' as Supreme Court of India has observed. Same is the feeling of the people of Manipur who have still been suffering.

Manipur violence erupted on May 3, 2023, and continues since under the double engine government of BJP in the state and the Centre, while PM is keeping mysterious silence, and the country needed no-confidence motion to make him open his mouth. Manipur was burning, while PM Modi was eulogizing himself and his government.

In the first 1:40 hrs he spoke, there was no Manipur Violence and the suffering of the people of the state. Opposition heard him with patience, all his self-grandiose and hypnotizing attempt by selling big dreams, waiting to hear him on Manipur. PM Modi got them frustrated by talking about everything else but not on Manipur Violence, which made INDIA alliance to stage a walkout after 1 hour 40 minutes of his speech.

The effectiveness of PM Modi's shrewd political strategy is obvious, but he did not stop at that. He continued his speech which lasted about 2 hours 20 minutes. He continued with his self-grandiose while there was no opposition in the House, and Manipur was still burning. But at last, he came to the point, but for only about 10 minutes, and only for expressing his pious utterances and assurances for the people of Manipur, which seemed only sanctimonious as they were brought to mask the ground reality of putting grease to the communal fire in which Manipur burns still now with complete breakdown of law and order for which, he tried to make it appear that his double engine government was not at all accountable.

Congress and the opposition INDIA alliance were attacked in PM Modi's extensive speech, which was objected by them since PM was supposed to reply on the Manipur violence. The House became a scene, and the leader of the Congress in Lok Sabha Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury was suspended for "misconduct". Amid chaos in the House, when the opposition started walking out, PM Modi, after his 1:42 minutes, mentioned the name of Manipur for the first time.

Have the government at the Centre and the State become deaf, dumb, and blind? Does it require a High Court order to know what was happening in Manipur? What would be a better proof of the lie and incompetency of a prime minister, which in enshrined in his own speech!

"Yesterday, Amit bhai said that an order came from the high court of Manipur, which saw a sequence of events that led to violence in the state. Many families lost their loved ones. Terrible crimes were committed against women and this is condemnable," he said.

It should be a matter of shame that the PM needed the High Court of Manipur to see the sequence of events that led to violence in the state, especially if the government was not aware of it.

To lie is an act of utterance that conceals the truth the utterer already knows. What the PM said next reveals that even before the High Court of Manipur seeing a sequence of events that led to violence in the state, the Centre and



Manipur's problems are being presented as if these problems have started recently. ... the genesis of the problems in Northeast is Congress. It is not the people of the North East but the Congress's politics that is responsible for this."

The date of the present eruption of Manipur violence was May 3, 2023. Complete breakdown of law and order had occurred after that. How can Congress be blamed for failure of BJP led state and Centre governments? Even if the allegation of the genesis of the problem is correct, it is no answer to the majority communal politics that BJP has been doing in Manipur or elsewhere that has been continuously adding fuel to the fire. PM Modi cannot, and must not, shift his or BJP governments' responsibility on the parties who have formerly ruled the country.

PM Modi was supposed to make speech on Manipur violence since May 3, but he tried to present the history of Manipur with the colour of Hindu majoritarian politics of the BJP-RSS clan in the form of an alibi. Such an excuse cannot absolve PM Modi from responsibility and accountability on continuing Manipur Violence, even after his speech and assurance for action.

He targeted opposition by saying, "Those who don't believe in democracy are ready to speak but not listen. If you speak the truth they leave. They throw garbage and run away, they spread lies and run away. The country has no hopes from them." But it was also a lie, since opposition was there during his first 1 hour and 40 minutes but he has not time to even mention Manipur. He says he was speaking the truth, but it is a fact that his truth had nothing to do with Manipur violence, while the opposition was present in the House. (IPA Service)

DEGREE OF THOUGHT

By Dr. Gyan Pathak

What exactly he said in these words, was absent in PM Modi's first one hour and 42 minutes of his speech, which betrayed his real intention. Not even mentioning Manipur, during this time when the opposition was present in the House, reveals the contrary. Had he wanted a good discussion, he would have come to the point straight forward, with clean and open heart, without steeping his words in murky politics full of self-grandiose only.

He then made a sharp attack on the opposition by saying, "We had said come and discuss Manipur, the home minister even wrote a letter. But they had no intention or courage..." He himself did not mention Manipur in his speech while the opposition was present in the house long enough, which was nothing but a political strategy, but he said that Shah's speech on Wednesday continued for over two hours and was a detailed reply on Manipur "without any politic" that took into account "the concerns of the citizens and the government".

Avoiding the present burning situation and complete failure of law and order under his double-engine government, he put the onus on Congress. He said, "Ma-

The Quest for Equality and Autonomy in India's Tribal Communities

By: Dipak Kurmi

As the BJP pushes for the implementation of a uniform civil code, it has adopted a cautious approach due to emerging concerns from the tribal regions. With over 700 distinct tribes in India, each possessing their own set of customary laws related to marriage, divorce, succession, and inheritance, these laws hold sacred and inviolable status among the tribes. Recognizing the potential ramifications of imposing a uniform code on them, the BJP has become wary of the risks involved. They fear that enforcing a common code could lead to ethnic violence, hamper national integration, and disrupt the peace process in the Northeastern states. Additionally, the BJP is apprehensive of facing political risks, such as a decline in its electoral base among tribal communities, setbacks in co-opting tribal leaders, potential desertion by allies, and the risk of losing power in the Northeastern states. As a result, the party is treading cautiously on this contentious issue.

Opposition to the implementation of a uniform civil code has gained momentum in the Northeastern region of India, with various regional parties, community organizations, and religious groups voicing their concerns. Notably, the chief ministers of Nagaland, Mizoram, Meghalaya, and Arunachal Pradesh, who lead parties allied with the BJP, have openly expressed their reservations towards the uniform code. Their opposition stems from the strong resistance to such a code among the tribes they represent. In a notable move, Nagaland Chief Minister Neiphiu Rio led a delegation of ministers to Delhi in early July to meet with Union Home Minister Amit Shah. During the meeting, they pleaded that the implementation of a uniform civil code would infringe upon Article 371(A) of the Constitution, which guarantees the preservation of customary laws and traditions of the Nagas. A few days before this meeting, Rio's party, the Nationalist Democratic Progressive Party, reassured the Nagas of their unwavering commitment to safeguarding their identity, customs, traditions, and unique history. The opposition from these BJP-aligned chief ministers and their parties highlights the depth of concern among the tribes in the Northeast regarding the proposed uniform civil code. Despite being part of the BJP-led alliance, they priori-

tize safeguarding the distinct customs and traditions of their respective communities, reflecting the complexity and sensitivity surrounding the issue.

The resistance against a uniform civil code from various quarters has led BJP MP Sushil Modi, who chairs the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Law, to propose excluding tribes from its applicability. Supporting this stance, the Vanvasi Kalyan Ashram, an organization associated with the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh and working among tribal communities, called for the Law Commission to conduct thorough investigations in tribal areas. They emphasized the need to comprehend the traditional systems of tribes concerning marriage, divorce, adoption, succession, and other matters before presenting any recommendations to the government. Furthermore, media reports citing sources from the Nagaland government suggested that Union Home Minister Amit Shah assured the delegation led by Chief Minister Neiphiu Rio that the proposed uniform civil code would not adversely affect tribal communities.

Upon achieving independence, India recognized tribal areas as regions with unique governance requirements, ensuring that the Indian State respected the autonomy of tribal councils. This approach granted tribes special rights and privileges, safeguarding their distinctive way of life. They were granted the freedom to abide by their customary laws in family matters, resolve interpersonal disputes through tribal village councils, and maintain ownership and utilization of land within forests, along with managing natural resources. However, as time passed, the State gradually encroached upon tribal autonomy, particularly in matters relating to the exploitation of natural resources in tribal areas. Consequently, tribal autonomy now exists only in family and social affairs, with its significance diminishing in other domains. Imposing a uniform civil code would further erode the last vestige of tribal autonomy. The tribes stand to lose even this remaining stronghold of self-governance, leading to an erosion of their unique way of life and traditions.

The central government should refrain from encroaching upon the last bastion of tribal autonomy. Simultaneously, it must adopt a cautious approach while addressing the existing distortions and imbalances in tribal regions, ensuring

the active involvement of the tribes themselves. It is crucial to recognize that this island of autonomy does not guarantee an idyllic existence for all its inhabitants, particularly women. While men often enjoy the benefits, women are left with the remnants or, in many cases, receive nothing at all. Therefore, any reforms must prioritize gender equality and women's empowerment, striving to create a more equitable and inclusive environment for all tribal communities.

According to the customary laws prevalent among various tribal communities in India, such as the Mizos, Gillongs, Wanchos, Nagas, Santhals, Oraons, Jantiyas, Halams, Dongaria-Kandhas, and Paudi-Bhuyans, the inheritance pattern heavily favors sons over daughters. In these communities, the youngest son typically inherits the father's assets, including the ancestral house, while daughters do not receive any share in their father's property. In cases where there are no sons, daughters still do not have a claim to the property, as it usually passes on to close male relatives, such as the father's brother or his sons. Although there may be instances where a father gifts a small piece of land to his daughter, it is more of a gesture of kindness rather than a recognition of her rightful inheritance.

This gender-biased inheritance system prevalent in tribal customs has led to unequal distribution of assets, with sons benefitting from the lion's share of immovable property like land and daughters being left without any inheritance rights. It highlights the need for addressing such inequalities and advocating for gender equality within tribal societies.

Divorced women fare no better than daughters under the Mizo customary laws. The prevailing practice allows a man to divorce his wife merely by uttering the words, "Ka ma che (I divorce you)," leaving her without any claim to the family property. This situation is even more severe than the misuse of the law of well-spaced triple talaq by some Muslim men to dismiss their wives. The lack of rights and protections for divorced women under such customary laws highlights the urgent need for reforms to ensure gender equality and safeguard the rights of women within the community.

Married women in tribal communities do not necessarily experience blissful lives either. Polygamy remains prevalent

among affluent families, particularly among Northeastern tribes, as reported by the National Family Health Survey-5 (2019-20). These wives are burdened with the responsibility of managing both household chores and agricultural lands. However, despite their significant contributions, they are systematically excluded from ownership and decision-making processes within the family, village, and community. The gender disparity extends to political representation as well, evident by the scarcity of women members in the legislatures of Nagaland, Mizoram, Meghalaya, and Arunachal Pradesh. This lack of female representation reflects the larger issue of women's marginalized status and limited agency within tribal societies. To address these inequalities, there is a pressing need for empowering women with equal rights, opportunities, and participation in decision-making at all levels.

Enforcing a uniform civil code upon tribal communities would be arbitrary, imperious, and tyrannical, undermining their last vestige of autonomy. Instead, the tribes should be allowed to retain their unique self-governance. However, the central government must initiate a process of constructive dialogue with them to reform their customary laws and put an end to discrimination against women. Equal rights for daughters in inheriting parental property, fair provision for divorced women in terms of property and alimony, and the abolishment of polygamy are crucial areas that demand reform. Mizoram's progressive step in 2014, with the enactment of the Mizo Marriage, Divorce, Inheritance of Property Act, reflects the potential for evolution.

The central government can foster a conducive atmosphere for dialogue among other tribal communities to revamp their age-old family laws. While change may not happen overnight, initiating these dialogues is a significant step towards progress. The aspirations of tribal women for equal rights and empowerment are evident, and addressing these issues through dialogue and reform is a collective responsibility. Though it may take decades to fully effect these changes, the process must commence without delay, as the voices of tribal women yearn for a more just and inclusive future.

(The writer is a journalist and commentator based in Guwahati, can be reached at dipaknews@ gmail.com)

Assassination of a candidate raises tempo in Ecuadorian presidential polls

By Satvaki Chakraborty

Ecuador will vote for a new President and a national assembly on August 20 this year. Indications from the opinion polls just ten days before polling suggest that the Left wing candidate Luisa Gonzalez belonging to the party of former president Rafael Correa, is leading as against the seven other candidates belonging to other parties and the groups belonging to the right.

Gonzalez is the only woman member in the presidential race and she was a leading member of the dissolved national assembly. Other front runners include Otto Sonnenholzner, a journalist and former vice president Lenin Moreno's term from 2017 to 2021, Yaku Perez, an environmental activist and Fernando Villavicencio, an activist and investigative journalist famous for revealing charges against former president Correa. Unfortunately on August 9, Fernando Villavicencio was assassinated in an election rally.

Current president Guillermo Lasso was elected in 2021 presidential elections in a run off on April 11 by narrowly defeating the left wing candidate Andres Arauz who was a follower of Correa. Lasso dissolved the national assembly in May this year ordering snap elections following a constitutional crisis. Lasso nor anyone from his conservative CREO party is participating in the elections.

Former president Rafael Correa who was president for ten years from 2007 to 2017 was sentenced in 2020 for breaking company finance laws. Correa had denied the charges. He is living in Belgium in exile but he is having big influence on the activities of his supporters in Ecuador. Correa made lot of changes in favour of poor during his ten year rule. He still commands big respect from the electorate in this Latin American state.

In terms of voter concerns, insecurity is the top one, given that the country's murder rate shot up 245 percent between 2020 and 2022.

More than half of Ecuadorians polled said that fixing the country's insecurity problem is their biggest priority.



Only on Wednesday, the popular presidential candidate Fernando Villavicencio was shot dead at a campaign rally in Quito. He was very vocal against drug cartels and corruption. President Lasso also condemned the killing and said that organised crime was behind his killing.

The assassination has raised the tempo in the election campaign. If no candidate receives more than 50 percent of the vote—or 40 percent with a 10-point lead—a runoff will take place on October 15.

In addition to the presidential election, voters will elect lawmakers for the country's unicameral National Assembly. Winners will govern until May 2025, when Lasso's term was meant to end.

Ecuador is located in the western corner at the top of the South American continent. Ecuador is named after the Equator, the imaginary line around the Earth that splits the country in two. Most of the country is in the Southern Hemisphere.

Ecuador is roughly the size of Colorado and is bordered by Colombia and Peru. The high Andes Mountains form the backbone of the country. Cotopaxi in the Andes is the highest active volcano in the world.

About 10 percent of the population is of European descent. Another 25 percent belong to indigenous or native cultures and the remainder are of mostly mixed ethnicity. Many of the native people are subsistence farmers and only grow enough food for their family. The leftwing candidate Gonzalez has a programme of giving rights and special assistance to the indigenous people.

Ecuador is considered one of the most diverse areas of the world. There are some 25,000 plant species, and over 1,600 known bird species. The search for oil has caused environmental devastation due to oil leaks and destruction of forests.

Ecuador has many geographical zones, including Andean peaks, tropical rainforests and - 1,000km (600 miles) off the coast - the volcanic Galapagos Islands, home to the animals and birds whose evolutionary adaptations shaped Charles Darwin's theories.

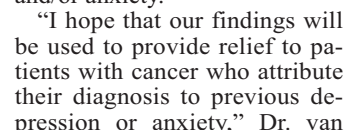
In 2022, Ecuador was beset by rising gang violence linked to Mexican drug cartels, including shootings and car bombings. President Lasso declared a state of emergency in two regions and labelled such violent incidents "a declaration of open war".

Some analysts have suggested the country is on the edge of becoming a narco-state. The assassination of one of the presidential candidates just before the August 20 elections is further confirmation of the terror of drug cartels in the country.

The coming presidential elections in Ecuador is being observed with keen interest by the other Latin American nations. In 2021 elections, the Left lost narrowly, since then the people's discontent has risen against the Lasso regime. It is to be seen whether the presidential candidate Luisa Gonzalez can inspire confidence among nearly 16 million electorate in favour of her programme for a corruption free pro people government. (IPA Service)

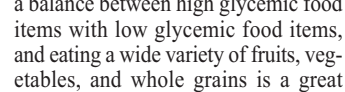
By: Corrie Pelc

The research team did find depression and anxiety were linked



Dr. Kristina Espinosa, an accredited clinical psychologist with Miami Cancer Institute, part of Baptist Health South Florida, agreed.

"It is important to note that while these are considerations, other factors, such as genetics and environmental factors that are beyond one's control, play a role in cancer risk. The key is to maximize prevention by taking the necessary lifestyle changes to reduce risk," Dr. Espinosa said. (Courtesy: Medical News Today)



agnosis. Making simple changes to your daily habits can seem challenging at first but will eventually result in improving your overall health. (Courtesy: Rediff.com)

Finally, it's important to know everyone slips up now and then. Practice self-forgiveness if you do have a drink on a planned alcohol-free day and don't give up. (Courtesy: *The Quint*)

As death toll from Maui fire reaches 93, authorities say effort to count the losses is just starting

One terrorist killed, 3 injured in Pakistan

LAHAINA, Aug 13 (AP): As the death toll from a wildfire that razed a historic Maui town reached 93, authorities warned Saturday that the effort to find and identify the dead was still in its early stages. It's already the deadliest US wildfire for over a century.

Crews with cadaver dogs have covered just 3 per cent of the search area, Maui Police Chief John Pelletier said.

"We've got an area that we have to contain that is at least 5 square miles and it is full of our loved ones," noting that the death toll is likely to grow and "none of us really know the size of it yet."

He spoke as federal emergency workers picked through the ashen moonscape left by the fire that razed the centuries-old town of Lahaina.

Teams marked the ruins of homes with a bright orange X to record an initial search, and HR when they found human remains.

Pelletier said identifying the dead is extremely challenging because "we pick up the remains and they fall apart ... When we find our family and our friends, the remains that we're finding is through a fire that melted metal." Two people have been identified so far, he said.

Dogs worked the rubble, and their occasional bark — used to

alert their handlers to a possible corpse — echoed over the hot and colourless landscape.

"It will certainly be the worst natural disaster that Hawaii ever faced," Gov. Josh Green remarked Saturday as he toured the devastation on historic Front Street.

"We can only wait and support those who are living. Our focus now is to reunite people when we can and get them housing and get them health care, and then turn to rebuilding."

At least 2,200 buildings were damaged or destroyed in West Maui, Green said, of which 86 per cent were residential. Across the island, he added, damage was estimated at close to USD 6 billion. He said it would take "an incredible amount of time" to recover.

The confirmed death toll was later raised to 93 from the total of 89 announced in a press conference with Green and other officials.

At least two other fires have been burning on Maui, with no fatalities reported thus far: in south Maui's Kihei area and in the mountainous, inland communities known as Upcountry. A fourth broke out Friday evening in Kaaanapali, a coastal community north of Lahaina, but crews were able to extinguish it, authorities



said. Green said the Upcountry fire had affected 544 structures, of which 96% were residential.

Emergency managers in Maui were searching for places to house people displaced from their homes.

As many as 4,500 people are in need of shelter, county officials said on Facebook early Saturday, citing figures from the Federal Emergency Management Agency and the Pacific Disaster Centre.

He encouraged those with missing family members to go to the family assistance center.

"We need you to do the DNA test. We need to identify your loved ones," Pelletier said.

Those who escaped counted their blessings, thankful to be alive as they mourned those who didn't make it.

Retired fire captain Geoff Bogar and his friend of 35 years, Franklin Trejos, initially stayed behind to help others in Lahaina and save Bogar's house. But as the flames moved closer and closer Tuesday afternoon, they knew they had to get out.

Each escaped to his own car. When Bogar's wouldn't start, he broke through a window to get out, then crawled on the ground until a police patrol found him and brought him to a hospital.

Trejos wasn't as lucky. When Bogar returned the next day, he found the bones of his 68-year-old friend in the back seat of his car, lying on top of the remains of the Bogars' beloved 3-year-old golden retriever Sam, whom he had tried to protect.

Trejos, a native of Costa Rica, had lived for years with Bogar and his wife, Shannon Weber-Bogar, helping her with her seizures when her husband couldn't. He filled their lives with love and laughter.

"God took a really good man," Weber-Bogar said.

The newly released death toll surpassed the toll of the 2018 Camp Fire in northern California, which left 85 dead and destroyed the town of Paradise.

A century earlier, the 1918 Cloquet Fire broke out in drought-stricken northern Minnesota and raced through a number of rural communities, destroying thousands of homes and killing hundreds.

The wildfires are the state's deadliest natural disaster in decades, surpassing a 1960 tsunami that killed 61 people.

An even deadlier tsunami in 1946, which killed more than 150 on the Big Island, prompted development of a territory-wide emergency alert system with sirens that

are tested monthly.

Hawaii emergency management records do not indicate the warning sirens sounded before fire hit the town. Officials sent alerts to mobile phones, televisions and radio stations, but widespread power and cellular outages may have limited their reach.

Fueled by a dry summer and strong winds from a passing hurricane, the wildfires on Maui raced through parched brush covering the island.

"It outpaced anything firefighters could have done in the early hours," US Fire Administrator Lori Moore-Merrell said, adding that it moved horizontally, structure to structure and "incredibly fast." "It was a low-to-the-ground fire. It was grass-fed by all evidence that we could observe today," she said.

The most serious blaze swept into Lahaina on Tuesday and destroyed nearly every building in the town of 13,000, leaving a grid of gray rubble wedged between the blue ocean and lush green slopes.

Maui water officials warned Lahaina and Kula residents not to drink running water, which may be contaminated even after boiling, and to only take short, lukewarm showers in well-ventilated rooms to avoid possible chemical vapor exposure.

KARACHI, Aug 13 (PTI): One terrorist was killed and three others injured on Sunday in an exchange of fire with security forces in the port city of Gwadar in Pakistan's troubled Balochistan province, the army said.

Gwadar port is one of the focal points of the multi-billion China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) with many Chinese workers working at the port. China is investing heavily in Balochistan under the CPEC.

According to the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), Pakistan military's media wing, the operation was launched after the presence of terrorists in the area was reported.

"The security forces have cordoned off the entire area [and] launched a search operation," the ISPR said. Pakistan has seen an uptick in terror activities, especially in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan, after the outlawed Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan ended its ceasefire with the government in November last year.

Last month, as many as 12 soldiers of the Pakistan Army were killed in separate military operations in the Zhob and Sui areas of Balochistan. This was the military's highest single-day death toll from terrorist attacks reported this year.

Syrian capital rocked by explosions

BEIRUT, Aug 13 (AP): The sound of repeated explosions could be heard in the area around the Syrian capital before dawn on Sunday, state media and Damascus residents said. There was no immediate statement from government officials on the source or target of the attack. Similar incidents in the past have usually been attributed to Israeli airstrikes, with Syrian air defences responding to shoot down the missiles.

Britain-based opposition war monitor the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said the explosion came from a warehouse storing rockets for Iran-backed militias, though it could not confirm whether it was an Israeli strike.

The Observatory said it was still unclear if anyone was wounded or killed in the explosion. The most recent reported Israeli strike was on August 7, when Syrian state media reported airstrikes in areas around Damascus, killing at least four Syrian army soldiers. The Observatory has said those strikes targeted weapons and munitions warehouses and positions of Iran-backed militias around Damascus. Israel, which has vowed to stop Iranian entrenchment in its neighbour, has carried out hundreds of strikes on targets in government-controlled parts of Syria in recent years, but it rarely acknowledges them.

7 killed in Ukraine's Kherson region, including a 23-day-old baby girl



KYIV, Aug 13 (AP): Seven people — including a 23-day-old baby girl — were killed in Russian shelling in Ukraine's southern Kherson region on Sunday, the country's Internal Affairs Ministry said. Artillery shelling in the village of Shiroka Balka, on the banks of the Dnieper River killed a family — a husband, wife, 12-year-old boy and 23-day-old girl — and another resident.

Two men were killed in the neighbouring village of Stanislav, where a woman was also wounded. The attack on Kherson province followed Ukrainian Deputy Defense Minister Hanna

a key village in the southern Zaporizhzhia region and capturing other unspecified territories.

Ukraine's General Staff said they had "partial success" around the tactically important Robotyne area in the Zaporizhzhia region, a key Russian stronghold that Ukraine needs to retake in order to continue pushing south towards Melitopol.

"There are liberated territories. The defense forces are working," General Oleksandr Tarnavskiy, commander of Ukraine's southern forces, said of the southern front.

Battles in recent weeks have taken place on multiple points along the over 1,000-kilometer (600-mile) front line as Ukraine wages a counteroffensive with Western-supplied weapons and Western-trained troops against Russian forces who invaded nearly 18 months ago. Ukrainian troops have made only incremental gains since launching a counteroffensive in early June.

In Russia, local officials reported on Sunday that air defense systems shot down two drones over the Belgorod region and one over the neighbouring Kursk region, both of which border Ukraine. Ukrainian drone strikes on Russian border regions are a

fairly regular occurrence. Drone attacks deeper inside Russian territory have been on the rise since a drone was destroyed over the Kremlin in early May. In recent weeks, attacks have increased both on Moscow and on Crimea, which Russia annexed from Ukraine in 2014 — a move that most of the world considered illegal.

Firing drones at Russia, after more than 17 months of war, has little apparent military value for Ukraine but the strategy has served to unsettle Russians and bring home to them the conflict's consequences.

The Wagner mercenary group has played a key role in Russia's military campaign, but there is a "realistic possibility" that the Kremlin is no longer providing funding, according to British defense officials.

In its latest intelligence briefing, the Ministry of Defense said it believed Wagner was "likely moving towards a down-sizing and reconfiguration process" in order to save money, and that the Kremlin had "acted against some other business interests" of Wagner chief Yevgeny Prigozhin. The officials assessed that Belarusian authorities were the "second most plausible paymasters."

Niger's junta gains upper hand over regional bloc threatening military force, analysts say



NIAMEY (NIGER), Aug 13 (AP): One week after a deadline passed for mutinous soldiers in Niger to reinstate the country's ousted president or face military intervention, the junta has not acquiesced.

No military action has been taken and the coup leaders appear to have gained the upper hand over the regional group that issued the threat, analysts say. The West African regional bloc ECOWAS had given the soldiers that overthrew Niger's democratically elected President Mohamed Bazoum until last Sunday to release and reinstate him or they threatened military action. On Thursday, the bloc ordered the deployment of a "standby" force to restore constitutional rule in Niger, with Nigeria, Benin, Senegal and Ivory Coast saying they would contribute troops.

But it's unclear when, how or if the troops will deploy. The move could take weeks or months to set into motion, and while the bloc decides what to do the junta is gaining power, some say.

"It looks the putschists have won and will stay ... The putschists are holding all the cards and have cemented their rule," said Ulf Laessing, head of the Sahel program at the Konrad Adenauer Foundation.

ECOWAS is unlikely to intervene militarily and risk dragging Niger into civil war, he said, adding that ECOWAS and Western countries would instead likely press the junta to agree to a short transition period. Europe and the United States will have little choice but to recognize the junta in order to continue the security cooperation in the region, Laessing said. The July 26 coup is seen as a major blow to many Western nations, which saw Niger as one of the last partners in the conflict-riddled Sahel region south of the Sahara Desert that they could work with to beat back a growing jihadist insurgency linked to al-Qaida and the Islamic State group.

The US and France have more than 2,500 military personnel in the region and together with other European countries have invested hundreds of millions of dollars in military assistance and training Niger's forces.

There was still little clarity about what would happen days after ECOWAS announced the "standby" force deployment.

A meeting of the region's defense chiefs was postponed indefinitely. The African Union is expected to hold a meeting on Monday to discuss Niger's crisis. The group's Peace and Security Council could overrule the decision if it felt that wider peace and security on the continent was threatened by an intervention.

The delay of the defense chiefs' meeting to discuss the "standby" force shows that ECOWAS views the use of force as a last resort, said Nate Allen, an associate professor at the Africa Centre for Strategic Studies.

"Given the likely challenges an intervention would face, (the use of force would) require a high degree of consensus and coordination not just within ECOWAS, but within the African Union and international community writ large," he said. But those with ties to the junta say they are preparing for a fight, especially since the soldiers are unwilling to negotiate unless ECOWAS acknowledges its leader, Gen. Abdourahmane Tchiani, who overthrew the president, as the new ruler.

"ECOWAS is demanding that (the junta) immediately release president Bazoum and restore him as head of state. Is this a joke?" said Insa Garba Saidou, a local activist who assists Niger's new military rulers with their communications and says he is in direct contact with them. "Whether Bazoum resigns or not, he will never be Niger's president again."

As time drags on, there is mounting concern for Bazoum's safety, who has been under house arrest with his wife and son since the coup.

Those close to him say his situation is deteriorating with no water, electricity and a lack of food. Niger's junta told a top US diplomat that they would kill the deposed president if neighbouring countries attempted any military intervention to restore his rule, two Western officials told The Associated Press. Most Nigeriens are trying to go about their lives as the standoff continues between the coup leaders and regional countries.

For the most part, the streets in the capital, Niamey, are calm with sporadic pockets of pro-junta demonstrations.

On Friday hundreds of people marched toward France's military base demanding the French leave while waving Russian flags.

Mercenaries from the Russian-linked Wagner group already operate in a handful of other African countries and are accused of committing human rights abuses. Earlier this month during a trip to neighbouring Mali, which is also run by a military regime and cooperates with Wagner, the junta reportedly asked the mercenaries for help. But many Nigeriens don't have time for protests and are more focused on feeding their families. The country of some 25 million people is one of the poorest in the world and the harsh travel and economic sanctions imposed by ECOWAS are taking a toll.

Leader of Ecuadorian crime gang moved to maximum-security prison

GUAYAQUIL (ECUADOR), Aug 13 (AP): Authorities moved the leader of one of Ecuador's most powerful gangs into a maximum-security prison Saturday, three days after the assassination of a presidential candidate who had denounced threats from the feared criminal.

President Guillermo Lasso said the relocation of Los Choneros leader Adolfo Macias, alias "Fito," was meant "for the safety of citizens and detainees." The gang boss was moved out of a jail with lighter security into a maximum-security prison in the same large complex of detention facilities in the port city of Guayaquil. "Ecuador will recover peace and security," Lasso tweeted. "If violent reactions arise, we will act with full force." About 4,000 soldiers and police officers raided the jail where Macias was being held Saturday and seized weapons, ammunition and explosives. Corrections officials released images of the raid showing several prisoners, including Macias, who is serving a 34-year sentence for drug trafficking, organized crime and homicide. Ecuador's transformation into a major drug trafficking hub and the ensuing three-year surge of violence reached a new level with Wednesday's assassination of Fernando Villavicencio during a campaign rally in Quito, the capital. The candidate, who was not a front-runner, was known for speaking up against drug cartels.

UK's Suella Braverman speaks of tragic loss of lives as migrants drown

LONDON, Aug 13 (PTI): The British govt is under renewed pressure on Sunday as six migrants drowned in the English Channel and 59 were rescued after their vessel sank off the French coast. Home Secretary Suella Braverman said she spoke to UK Border Force teams as she expressed her grief over the "tragic" loss of lives.

The Opposition Labour Party and campaigners renewed their calls on the government to act on the small boat crisis of unsafe vessels being used by migrants to cross over illegally into the UK.

"My thoughts and prayers are with those affected by the tragic loss of life in the Channel today.

This morning I spoke with our Border Force teams who have been supporting the French authorities in response to this incident," Braverman tweeted on Saturday.

The overloaded vessel got into difficulty and capsized 20km off Sangatte in France on Saturday. Five French ships, two British ships and a helicopter were involved in the rescue operation to save lives.

"This incident is sadly another reminder of the extreme dangers of crossing the Channel in small boats and how vital it is that we break the people smugglers' business model and stop the boats," a UK government spokesperson

said. Labour's shadow immigration minister, Stephen Kinnock, accused the government of having "no workable plan" to sort out the asylum system. "It's time to end the small boats nightmare — we can't sit by as more lives are put at risk. The country deserves better than this mess," he writes in the 'Sunday Mirror'.

The Conservative Party government also faced pressure on the issue from within its own ranks, with former Tory chairman Jake Berry calling for "radical changes" to turn the tide. "We have a moral duty, both to our own citizens and those asylum seekers, to act," he writes in the 'Sunday Express'.

China's foreign minister visits Cambodia days after incumbent premier hands off the job to his son

PHNOM PENH, Aug 13 (AP): China's foreign minister visited Cambodia over the weekend to reaffirm his country's commitment to the southeast Asian country after its incumbent prime minister handed off the job to his son following a one-sided election last month, officials said.

Wang Yi is the first foreign leader to visit Cambodia, days after Hun Sen's announcement that his 45-year-old son and the country's army chief, Hun Manet, is replacing him. A video of the meeting was posted on Hun Sen's Telegram channel on Sunday.

Eang Sophalleth, Hun Sen's spokesman, told reporters after the meeting that Wang Yi expressed China's willingness to cooperate with the newly-appointed prime minister.

Cambodia's foreign ministry later released a statement citing Wang Yi as expressing China's support for "the Kingdom's emerging government leadership."

Hun Sen, the longest-serving government head in Asia, and his party sealed a landslide victory in the country's general election after barring the main opposition group — the Candlelight Party — from contesting the polls on a technicality. Western nations and rights groups criticised the election saying it was neither "free" nor "fair."

Wang Yi met with both Hun Sen, his newly appointed son



as well as Foreign Minister Prak Sokhonn. He praised the election saying it was free and fair, with more than 80 per cent of Cambodians participating in the presence of several dozens of foreign observers. On August 7, King Norodom Sihamoni formally appointed Hun Manet as the new premier. He will take office on August 22 when the new National Assembly adopts the new cabinet.

Hun Manet won his first seat in Parliament in the election,

and the handover from his father is part of a larger, generational shift: Many younger lawmakers — mostly educated in the West — are expected to take up ministerial positions, including Hun Sen's youngest son and others related to older party members. Cambodia is a key Chinese diplomatic partner, helping dampen criticism of Beijing within the 10-member Association of Southeast Asian Nations, several of whose members are engaged in territorial disputes with China in the South China Sea.

In return, China has gained an outsized role in Cambodian politics and the economy, as seen in the numerous Chinese-funded projects, hotels and casinos dotting the landscape.

China's state banks have also financed airports, roads and other infrastructure built with Chinese loans. More than 40 per cent of Cambodia's USD 10 billion in foreign debt is owed to China. In June last year, China and Cambodia broke ground on a naval port expansion project that has raised concerns from the US and others that it could give Beijing a strategically important military outpost on the Gulf of Thailand. Hun Sen in 2019 reportedly granted China the right to set up a military base at the Ream Naval Base. He has long denied that, saying Cambodia's Constitution prohibits foreign military facilities.

Dr Pranab Jyoti Chetia remembered at Biswanath



HT Correspondent

BISWANATH CHARIALI, Aug 13: Dr Pranab Jyoti Chetia, the director of Jorhat Vigyan Kendra and Planetarium and a renowned scientist dedicated to popularising science, was commemorated during a meeting organised by Akash Vigyan Aru Paribesh Siksha Kendra in Biswanath Chariali on Sunday. The meeting, presided over by Khiradhar Barua, an eminent scientist and the founder president of Akash Vigyan Aru Paribesh Siksha Kendra, aimed to pay tribute to the legacy of Dr Chetia. Addressing the gathering, president Barua highlighted the remarkable contributions made by the late scientist, Dr Pranab Jyoti Chetia, stating that his passing has created an irreplaceable void in the domain of science communication and fostering scientific awareness in the state. The memorial event witnessed speeches from Surjya Hazarika, Gajen Barua, Preeti Barua, Mamud Ahmed, Shiva Parajuli, Akshay Barman, and Tikendrajit Bora, among others.

Ripunjay Bordoli, the secretary of Akash Vigyan Aru Paribesh Siksha Kendra, conducted the proceedings of the memorial meeting, which served as a platform to acknowledge and celebrate the immense contributions of Dr Pranab Jyoti Chetia in promoting science education and raising scientific consciousness in the region.

'Meri Mati Mera Desh' initiative organised at Biswanath

HT Correspondent

BISWANATH CHARIALI, Aug 13: A day-long event marking the nationwide 'Meri Mati Mera Desh' campaign, initiated by the central government to honour the contributions of freedom fighters, martyrs, and war heroes, was observed with fervour in Biswanath Chariali. The event took place at Kamala Kanta Natya Mandir and was organised by the Biswanath administration in collaboration with the Biswanath Unit of Child Protection Cell and Biswanath District Legal Services Authority. The 'Meri Mati Mera Desh' program commenced under the auspices of the Biswanath administration, marked by the ceremonial lighting of lamps by Dr Neha Yadav, SDO Civil cum additional commissioner of Biswanath, Dhruvajyoti Das, ADC, and assistant commissioners Shristi Kalita and Bichitra Das. The event featured a series of engaging competitions, captivating cultural performances, and enlightening science exhibitions, all involving the enthusiastic participation of students from various schools in the Biswanath area.

Unidentified body found

HT Bureau

DIPHU, Aug 13: An unidentified male dead body was found by the roadside in Birla here under Diphu police station. The body is in a highly decomposed state. Inquest was done by Executive Magistrate and the body will be kept for 72 hours at Diphu Medical College & Hospital morgue for identification.

The syndicate system allegedly charges ₹ 30 per kg of poultry before entering Dimapur 'Authorised' poultry syndicate baffles Dimapur trader's body

HT Correspondent

DIMAPUR, Aug 13: The Dimapur Chamber of Commerce and Industry (DCCI) expressed shock that the office of secretary taxation of the Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council in Assam has allegedly authorised a poultry syndicate and allowed to set up a check gate at Khatkhati near Dimapur to intercept vehicles transporting chickens to Nagaland on the pretext of license checking.

The Poultry Union Dimapur (PUD) imposed an indefinite ban on import of poultry to Nagaland on August 10 opposing the syndicate system that allegedly charges Rs 30 per kg of poultry before any poultry consignment is allowed to enter Dimapur. The union decided to continue the ban till a viable solution is reached in order to stop exploitation of poultry traders and consumers of Nagaland.

Extending support to the poultry ban by the PUD, the DCCI in a release wondered why the Nagaland government and the

Dimapur district administration have so far not come up with any concrete action and update the public on the issue.

Saying that it has always been at the forefront against any form of monopoly or unfair trade practices, especially in the commercial hub Dimapur, the DCCI said the recent disclosure by the PUD of a syndicate system operating in neighbouring Assam with regard to import of live chickens into Nagaland is indeed alarming.

The traders' body reiterated its stand that there should not be any syndicate system, whether in poultry or any other businesses, in Dimapur and the whole of Nagaland. The syndicate system has for long stifled healthy competition in business, especially at the cost of local entrepreneurs and small-time businessmen, it observed.

Noting that the total ban on import of live chickens is affecting almost every household in Nagaland, the DCCI extended support to the PUD in its fight against the syndicate



system as it will deprive the local poultry traders and farmers of their profit margin, and ultimately their very livelihood.

The DCCI members along with members

of the Confederation of Nagaland Chamber of Commerce and Industry also visited the inter-state check gate on August 11 to extend solidarity to the PUD.

Solemn ceremony in Sivasagar pays tribute to martyrs



HT Correspondent

SIVASAGAR, Aug 13: As the 77th Independence Day approaches, a solemn ceremony took place in Sivasagar to pay tribute to the sacrifices made by the martyrs. Sivasagar district commissioner Aditya Vikram Yadav, Sivasagar

Municipal Board chairperson Mrinali Konwar, and Pronab Barua of Fuleswari Girls' School came together to light ceremonial lamps and offer floral tributes to the 95 martyrs of Sivasagar. The event was held in the premises of Fuleswari Girls HS School, align-

ing with the theme 'Meri Mati Mera Desh' of the Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav. As a symbolic gesture of growth and remembrance, saplings were planted by the dignitaries before addressing the gathered audience. During the public meeting, district commissioner Yadav, president of the Association of Martyrs' Families Atul Nath, Municipality chairperson Mrinali Konwar, and senior journalist Manoj Kumar Borthakur delivered speeches, urging everyone to honour the memory of the martyrs who selflessly gave their lives to free the nation from British rule.

In Jaisagar, another program was organised under the supervision of commandant Lalit Kumar Verma of the 149th Battalion of the CRPF. Usha Rani Das and Nitu Khongia, the kin of the martyrs, were honoured by the commandant in the presence of BDO Chandan Kumar and Papai Das, officer in charge of Nehru Yuva Kendra.

Left Front announces candidates for Tripura Assembly bypolls

AGARTALA, Aug 13 (PTI): A day after meeting Tipra Motha and Congress leaders, the CPI (M)-led Left Front on Sunday announced its candidates for the September 5 bypolls in Dhanpur and Boxanagar assembly constituencies in Tripura's Sepahijala district. While Kaushik Chanda will be the Left Front's candidate from Dhanpur constituency, Mizan Hussain will contest from Boxanagar, front convenor Narayan Kar said.

In the last Assembly elections, Chanda had lost to Union Minister Pratima Bhoomik from Dhanpur, but the CPI (M) managed to retain the Boxanagar seat defeating the BJP candidate in a triangular contest.

Mizan is the son of Boxanagar CPI (M) MLA Samsol Haque who passed away in July causing a vacancy. The bypoll in Dhanpur was necessitated after Bhoomik resigned from the Assembly days after her election. "The two candidates will submit their nomination papers on August 15," Kar told a press conference.

CPI (M) state secretary Jitendra Chowdhury told reporters he had a meeting with two opposition parties — Tipra Motha and Congress — on Saturday and discussed about the polls.

"We told the leaders of both parties that the CPI (M) has a strong political base in Dhanpur and Boxanagar. While the CPI (M) won the Boxanagar seat despite a difficult situation, the party could not win in Dhanpur seat because of Tipra Motha's presence," he said.

Claiming that the Left Front is '200 per cent' sure of getting support from Tipra Motha and Congress in the bypolls, Chowdhury said all the three parties have vowed to avoid split of anti-BJP votes to defeat the saffron party. The CPI (M) state secretary claimed that the BJP has been ruling the northeastern state with 'less mandate' (39 per cent vote share) because of a split in the anti-BJP vote bank.

Security heightened in Manipur ahead of Independence Day celebrations

IMPHAL, Aug 13 (PTI): Security arrangements were beefed up in Manipur on Sunday after some Imphal valley-based banned organisations called for a strike on Independence Day, officials said.

Security forces also conducted search operations in vulnerable areas of five districts and recovered arms and ammunition, the police said.

Preparations for the I-Day celebrations are in full swing across the state with BSF, police and Assam Rifles personnel and students joining rehearsals for march past to be held on August 15.

"Rehearsals for I-Day celebrations were held on Saturday at Peace Ground in Churachandpur district's Tuiboung area. Twenty-one parade contingents of BSF, police, students and Assam Rifles participated in the preparations," an official said. Preparations are also underway in the capital Imphal with temporary gates being erected and hoardings being put up to celebrate Independence Day on August 15.

"Security measures have been significantly heightened after several militant outfits called for a strike on I-Day," another official said.

Several outlawed outfits, such as Coordi-

nating Committee (Corcom), called for a general strike on I-Day from 1 am to 6.30 pm.

Corcom includes banned groups including United National Liberation Front (UNLF), People's Liberation Army (PLA), and PREPAK.

Two more proscribed outfits in Manipur have also separately called for a shutdown on August 15.

"Search operations were conducted in the fringe and vulnerable areas of Imphal-West, Imphal-East, Thoubal, Bishnupur and Churachandpur districts by the state police and central security forces and recovered 12 arms, six ammunitions and eight explosives," the Manipur Police said on Twitter.

Notably, more than 160 people lost their lives and several hundred were injured since the ethnic clashes broke out in Manipur on May 3, after a 'Tribal Solidarity March' was organised in the hill districts to protest against the Meitei community's demand for Scheduled Tribe (ST) status.

Meiteis account for about 53 per cent of Manipur's population and live mostly in the Imphal Valley. Tribals — Nagas and Kukis — constitute little over 40 per cent and reside in the hill districts.

CPIML, AIPWA, AILAJ eight-member team blames centre and state for Manipur crisis

IMPHAL, Aug 13 (NNN): An eight-member team of CPIML, AIPWA, AILAJ and an independent activist, after taking ground stock of the prevailing crisis in Manipur during their four days camping in the state, on Sunday blamed both the BJP governments at the Centre and in Manipur for the "complete breakdown of constitutional machinery" in the state.

Addressing the media at Manipur Press Club, Imphal, before concluding their four-day visit in the state, they alleged complete breakdown of constitutional machinery resulted in an unending saga of violence and untold human suffering in Manipur.

They said that over the past four days, the eight-member team from different parts of the country has visited affected villages and relief camps across the state.

The eight members were Pratima Engihpee (CPIML leader from Karbi Anglong of Assam, Bibek Das (CPIML leader from Assam), Sucheta De (CPIML leader from Delhi), Avani Chokshi (CPIML leader from Karnataka), Clifton D' Rozario (CPIML leader from Karnataka), Krishnaveni (All India Progressive Women's Association), Madhulika T (All India Lawyers Association for Justice) and Du. Saraswati (Dalit and women's rights activist from Karnataka).

"We are shocked at the political turmoil created by the double-engine BJP governments in Manipur and at the Centre," they said.

The team had visited villages and relief camps in Imphal valley, Kangpokpi and Churachandpur districts.

In a written statement distributed during the press conference, the team alleged that the unprecedented violence in the state is the gift of the BJP on the 75th anniversary of India's independence.

"Never before in the history of India has a government overseen such a complete decimation of society's social fabric that entire communities within a state are ethnically segregated into different parts of a state," it stated.

It alleged that the double-engine BJP government has manufactured this segregation in a state, which despite previous conflicts, was able to reconcile and live together. The violence and ethnic segregation has been raging for more than three months now and it is the product of the actions of the BJP government, the statement also said. Even as the chief minister proved thoroughly incompetent and reluctant to put an end to the violence, the Prime Minister prioritized his visits to France and the US over Manipur, the statement added.

The miserable response of the Prime Minister and the union home minister in Parliament exposed the bankruptcy in offering any comprehensive political solution to this crisis, it further alleged. On the conditions of the displaced people taking shelter at the relief camps, they stated that the situation is grim.

Across the valley and the hills, thousands of internally displaced persons live in desperate conditions. Basic services are lacking and the government has wiped its hands off the suffering people, they alleged in the written statement.

Sikkim to get organic agriculture university

CM lays foundation stone

GANGTOK, Aug 13 (PTI): Chief Minister Prem Singh Tamang on Sunday laid the foundation stone for the Sikkim Organic Agriculture University (SOAU) at Mondegang in Soreng district. Stating that Sikkim has established itself as the country's first organic state, Tamang said SOAU will be a centre of excellence where subjects related to organic farming will be taught.

Hundreds of students from the state go outside to study agriculture, horticulture and forestry, he said, adding that he had met over 500 students in Dehradun itself who were doing undergraduate and post-graduate courses in these subjects.

With the SOAU coming up in Sikkim, the students of the state will no longer have to travel outside for studying these subjects, Tamang said.

He directed officials to identify temporary spaces for the commencement of courses at the earliest.

The Sikkim assembly passed the Sikkim Organic Agriculture University Act, 2023 earlier this year. The varsity will also boost economic activities in the remote Mondegang area, the chief minister said.

"The SOAU will become a hub of economic activities, generating employment opportunities for the local people once the infrastructure is developed within a year," Tamang said.

Women of tribal organisations attend solidarity prayer for strife-torn Manipur

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Aug 13: Women representatives from eight apex tribal organisations of Nagaland comprising of Ao, Angami, Chakhesang, Lotha, Pochury, Rengma, Sumi and Zeliang, organised a solidarity prayer for the ethnic clashes and violence against women in strife-torn Manipur at PHQ junction.

Angami Women Organisation (AWO), Chakhesang Mothers Association (CMA), Lotha Elohe Ekhang (LEE), Pochury Mothers Association (PMA), Rengma Mothers Association (RMA), Sumi Totimi Hoho (STH), Watsu Telen (WT), Zeliang Mpuj Organisation (ZMO) and Central Nagaland Women Association (CNWA), Angami Public Organisation took part on the occasion.

Leading the solidarity messages and call to shun violence, APO vice president, Neivor Rutisa, maintained that since the situation in Manipur was man-made, it could also be brought under control and stopped eventually.

He reiterated that atrocity or violence in any form especially against women and children cannot be justified and therefore, deemed that it has to be stopped at the earliest.

Rutisa said besides loss of precious lives, the unrest was also hampering the career and education of the children.

"The neighbouring state Manipur has been burning for more than hundred days now. We are deeply concerned and our hearts weep especially for the womenfolk," AWO president Neihuzono Nagi said. The AWO president also asserted that atrocities against women or any human being would not bring solution to any problem. She appealed to the people of Manipur to stop the violence and let good sense prevail. CMA president, Zhonelü Tunyi, said the mothers were gathered to express solidarity with the people of Manipur who were going through untold hardships.

She pointed out that women were made to bear the brunt of the violence ever since it broke out more than three months back. Tunyi said that abuse and insult perpetrated on womenfolk cannot be tolerated anymore. "Mothers and daughters have become targets after the unrest broke out because of land issues. This is a very big disgrace and should be stopped immediately," she said.

LEE president, Renboni Ezung,

expressed solidarity with the people of Manipur and said the mothers were voicing out against the violence. She said that unrest in the neighbouring state cannot be looked at in isolation. Ezung said that Manipur as one of the sister states in the Northeast was considered as family and that Nagas feel the pain, shame and unspoken anger against the unrest.

She called upon the leaders at both the Centre and Manipur to listen to the voice of the people and restore peace.

Speaking on behalf of PMA, Atono Nyuthe, said the ethnic clash in Manipur was not just a local, tribal or racial issue, but one that was universal in nature.

Describing the situation as "a humanitarian crisis", Nyuthe said that people needed to come together now more than ever.

"It is an absolute tragedy that two of our womenfolk were being used as pawns in a political game and their precious lives were thrown away so easily under the most terrible circumstances," she said.

RMA president Sojule Tep appealed to the people of Manipur to stop the "madness", lay down their arms and embrace dialogue.

She also appealed to the people



to respect each other's rights and dignity, uphold the values of democracy, secularism and remember that human beings were created by God in His image.

Tep also appealed to the people government in Manipur and Centre to intervene and urgently address the root cause of the conflict.

Speaking on behalf of STH, Piholi Swunetho, expressed pain and shock at the ghastly act carried out against two women in Manipur in a widely circulated video.

She added that it was more unsettling that the viral video was not an isolated event and that there were reports of other brutal act of atrocities meted out against women that went unreported to the victims

silenced with dire consequences.

While condemning heinous crimes, she reminded perpetrators that they were once also nurtured and looked after by mothers and sisters. "It may seem foolish, inconceivable and a pathetic attempt to seal a festering wound to talk about healing at this juncture, however, we pray to our sovereign Lord to sweep over and grant healing to the wounded hearts and souls in Manipur," Swunetho said.

Speaking on behalf of Watsu Telen Mungdang, Aotula said protection and preservation of women and children was intrinsic to the moral core of human beings and absolute among virtues.

Condemning the violence in-

flicted on womenfolk in Manipur, she said the Naga mothers were gathered to express their solidarity and sympathy with those who had suffered physical and mental torture. She said outraging the modesty of women was the most humiliating, painful and detestable thing possible.

While expressing sympathy and solidarity with those afflicted by the unrest, Aotula called upon all the responsible citizens to be building blocks for dialogue.

Speaking on behalf of ZMO, Dr. Zaiwang, said Nagas must not remain mute spectators to the atrocities and social injustices being witnessed in neighbouring Manipur. She said coming together to express solidarity to the victims was an indication of conviction and belief. Although Nagas could not do much physically, she said they could pray for the those affected by the turmoil and be source of solace and comfort.

She expressed hope that humanity would triumph over the atrocities, while peace and hope would return to the land.

CNWA president, Atoli Sema, said womenfolk were created to bring humanity into the world, but they were being mistreated and disgraced to a great extent in Ma-

nipur.

She strongly suggested that the constitution of India should be rewritten and death penalty should be awarded to rapists. "Women are made beautiful so that they would be loved. But men are destroying the very body which birthed and nurtured them. How many more of such cases shall we tolerate? We will not stop now until justice is delivered. All women in the Northeast should rise up against these atrocities against women," Sema said.

Women participants took part in the prayer holding placards some of which read "stop brutal acts against women", "stand up for women rights", "we condemn killing of people, burning of houses and churches in Manipur", "we want peace in Manipur" etc.

The mass solidarity prayer for victims and their families and for restoration of peace was led by Baptist Pastors Fellowship Kohima, president, Rev Vezopa Rhakho.

Earlier, the programme was chaired by CNWA joint secretary, Kanili Kinilimi, invocation was given by Rengma Baptist Church Kohima, pastor, Jonathan Mesen while Angami Students Union (ASU) provided volunteers for the event.

Cong calls for wider consultations on 3 Bills to replace India's criminal laws

'Some of these acts, especially CrPC, have state amendments given that law and order is a state subject'

NEW DELHI, Aug 13 (PTI): The Congress on Sunday called for wider consultations involving experts and the general public on the three Bills that seek to overhaul India's criminal justice system to stay away from the "trap of bulldozing the entire criminal law structure" without discussion. In a statement, Congress general secretary Randeep Surjewala said that on August 11, without any prior intimation or public consultation or inviting suggestions from legal experts, jurists, criminologists and other stakeholders, the Modi government introduced three Bills from its "black magic hat", thereby restructuring the nation's entire criminal law apparatus in a "clandestine, hidden and opaque manner".

"The introductory remarks of the home minister himself gave away the fact that Amit Shah is himself out of depth, ignorant and oblivious to the entire exercise," the Congress leader said.

"Other than some credit seeking and point scoring in desperation, a hidden exercise, away from the public glare or stakeholders' suggestions and wisdom, cannot serve the public purpose of reforming the criminal law structure of the country," he said.

Union home minister Amit Shah introduced the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) Bill, 2023; Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS) Bill, 2023; and Bharatiya Sakshya (BS) Bill, 2023 that will replace the Indian Penal Code, 1860, Criminal Procedure Act, 1898, and Indian Evidence Act, 1872, respectively.

The minister also urged Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla to refer the three bills for examination by the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Home Affairs. In a detailed analysis, Surjewala



countered Shah's remarks on the changes made through the Bills and alleged that he had "lied and misled" on many points of the proposed legislations.

"While the Bills have been referred to the Select Committee of Parliament, the Bills and their provisions must be thrown open for a larger public debate by judges, lawyers, jurists, criminologists, reformers, stakeholders and the general public in order to stay away from the trap of bulldozing the entire criminal law structure without discussion that is so ingrained in the DNA of the BJP government," he said.

"We hope that better sense will prevail," he added. Congress MP Manish Tewari has also called for wider consultations on the bills.

"Some of these acts, especially CrPC, have state amendments given that law and order is a

state subject. Each provision in each of these enactments has been extensively litigated over the past 150-100 years and the interpretation of each provision has been settled by judicial pronouncements by the privy council, federal court, Supreme Court, various high courts and in some cases even by subordinate courts," Tewari said on X, formerly known as Twitter.

The three new Bills introduced by Shah and referred to the Standing Committee on Home Affairs need to be examined critically provision by provision in the light of judicial pronouncements interpreting them, he said.

"It therefore is imperative that a Joint Committee of Parliament consisting of lawyers, retired judges, former police officials/civil servants, jurists and members active in human, women and civil rights movements should be constituted by Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla, Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar to examine all these three bills very very critically," Tewari said on Saturday. These Bills have serious implications on the fundamental rights enshrined in Part-III of the Constitution of India especially the Golden Triangle of rights Article-14, 19 and 21, he asserted.

Among other things, the three Bills propose to repeal the sedition law and introduce a new provision with a wider definition of the offence.

Besides defining terrorism for the first time, the changes aimed at transforming the country's criminal justice system include provisions for maximum capital punishment for mob lynching, sexual assault of minors, maximum imprisonment of 20 years for all types of gangrape and community service as one of the punishments for first-time petty offences.

India, UK striving to create more transparent, corruption-free society: Jitendra Singh

KOLKATA, Aug 13 (PTI): India and the United Kingdom are striving to create a more transparent and corruption-free society, Union minister Jitendra Singh has said.

He also called for wider cooperation between the two countries in sharing information and communication technology (ICT) innovations, promoting cross-sector cooperation and forging partnerships to prevent and combat corruption, according to an official statement issued on Sunday.

UK minister for security, Tom Tugendhat, called on Singh and held a "bilateral" meeting on the sidelines of the G20 anti-corruption ministerial meet being held in Kolkata, it said. Tugendhat was accompanied by a high-level British government delegation and reaffirmed closer cooperation with India. Singh said Prime Minister Narendra Modi has reiterated that India has a strict policy of zero tolerance against corruption, said the Personnel Ministry statement.

Tugendhat renewed the UK's offer that India, being a signatory to the United Nations Convention Against Corruption (UNCAC), also implement Article 16 of UNCAC that deals with bribery of foreign public officials (foreign bribery), it added.

He also called upon India to sign the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Convention on Combat-



ing Bribery of Foreign Public Officials in International Business Transactions, also known as OECD anti-bribery convention of which Britain is a member, the statement said.

Singh stated that India has already ratified the UNCAC.

"On December 1, 2022, India, led by PM Modi, assumed the G20 presidency amidst global crises. Embracing India's message of 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam', both developed and emerging economies of G20 have come together for sharing responsibilities in tackling critical global issues like fighting corruption," he said.

Singh said steps have been taken to ensure transparency and accountability in the functioning of

the government. "This includes the adoption of e-governance, implementation of the Aadhaar system for direct benefit transfer, procurement reforms and citizen charters in public offices," the statement said.

Singh said India actively participates in the G20 anti-corruption working group (ACWG) forum and related joint meetings. "Under India's leadership, the G20 ACWG has achieved significant milestones, including the adoption of three sets of high-level principles and hosting three successful working group meetings. This will give political impetus to the ongoing momentum of facilitating international collaboration and enhancing accountability in the fight against corruption," he said.

BJP gave RLD 'respect', any decision on forging alliance to be taken by leadership of both parties: UP min

LUCKNOW, Aug 13 (PTI): The Rashtriya Lok Dal's alliance with the BJP in the 2009 Lok Sabha polls had proved "most advantageous" for the Jayant Chaudhary-led party as it had won five seats and any decision on forging an alliance with the Samajwadi Party ally is yet to be taken, Uttar Pradesh minister Kapil Dev Aggarwal has said. He also claimed that the RLD's voters were today attracted towards the BJP.

The minister's remarks come days after the RLD accused the BJP of spreading rumours about the party joining the National Democratic Alliance (NDA).

A delegation of RLD MLAs had on Wednesday met chief minister Yogi Adityanath triggering speculation that the party might join the BJP-led NDA. However, talking to PTI, RLD national spokesperson Anil Dubey had said the party MLAs met the chief minister to highlight the problems of farmers due to drought and floods.

This is being projected as a preparation for the RLD to join the NDA, which is "false", Dubey had said, adding the BJP was worried about the popularity of the RLD and that is why it is engaging in "propaganda". Aggarwal said whether the RLD forges an alliance with the BJP or not in the Lok Sabha polls early next year



will be decided by the BJP's leadership and RLD chief Chaudhary. "It is not my job. However, I would definitely say that the RLD's voters are today attracted towards the BJP," Aggarwal, the MLA from Muzaffarnagar which is in Western Uttar Pradesh, told PTI in an interview. In the 2009 Lok Sabha elections, the RLD had an alliance with the BJP, and it had won five seats. In the subsequent polls, they did not have an MP in the lower house, he said. "This means that for the RLD, its alliance with the BJP has proved to be most advantageous," he said. He asserted that the BJP has given the RLD respect and reservation.

Currently, the RLD is an ally of the Samajwadi Party, and had contested the 2022 Uttar Pradesh Assembly elections with the SP.

The RLD has nine MLAs in the 403-member Uttar Pradesh Legislative Assembly. The western Uttar Pradesh-centric party under the leadership of Ajit Singh had fought the 2009 Lok Sabha elections with the BJP. While the BJP had won 10 seats, the RLD had bagged five seats. As far as the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) is concerned, Aggarwal said it has "weakened" over a period of time and its traditional voters are being attracted towards the BJP. "The BJP may not be the first choice for them, but it is definitely the second choice. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has given them security, patronage and work is being done for their development and make them competent. They are seeing it," Aggarwal said. He added that the law and order situation has improved, and now "daughters from the Dalit community are pursuing B.Tech and M.Tech, and becoming scientists and professors".

The three-time BJP MLA from Muzaffarnagar also said that a large number of youths from western Uttar Pradesh are joining the Army and are full of patriotism.

"Unlike in the past, when bodies (of jawans) used to come on a daily basis from Kashmir and Assam, as terror incidents took place daily, today terrorism has been controlled 95 per cent."

Priyanka is qualified, hope party plans better for her: Robert Vadra

NEW DELHI, Aug 13 (PTI): Former Congress president Sonia Gandhi's son-in-law Robert Vadra has said that his wife Priyanka Gandhi would be "very good" in Parliament and hoped that the party plans better for her.

"She should be in Lok Sabha for sure. She has all the qualifications for it. She would be very good in Parliament and she deserves to be there. I hope that the Congress party accepts and plans better for her," he told PTI.

Vadra also hit out at Union minister for women and child development Smriti Irani for linking his name with business tycoon Gautam Adani while speaking in Parliament. During a debate on the no-confidence motion in Parliament, Irani displayed a picture of Vadra with Adani.

Vadra said he keeps away from politics but "I will speak to fight for my name because if there is anything they say they have to prove it."

"I challenge them that if they are going to take my name and 'you are going to bring my photograph, please show me something that I have done with Mr Adani. And if there is any wrongdoing I will deal with it and if not, they have to apologise and will have to take it back," he said.

"We have a picture of our very



own prime minister sitting in Adani's plane. Why should not we ask questions about that and what Rahul (Gandhi) has been asking? And why these questions are not answered," he said.

Vadra said champion women wrestlers were protesting in Delhi for their rights, but Irani as the union minister for women and child development never went to meet them and hear out their grievances. "I did not see Smriti Irani meet them and take up their issues. Manipur has been burning and this minister (Smriti Irani) has to bring up some kind of negative thing about me. I am not even in Parliament," he said.

"Since this government came to power, they always come up with something against me whenever they are cornered and they want to digress from real issues... but they have never been able to prove anything against me," he said.

On the opposition alliance, he said, the Congress has joined the

INDIA bloc and it will give them (the BJP-led NDA) a good fight in the 2024 Lok Sabha elections.

"I feel INDIA is a very good title. We are going to make India great again. The BJP government has destroyed India," he said. "I am very hopeful. And I think and I hope the citizens of the country give this group a chance to make India better again, secular again, progressive again and... united again." He also asked why Prime Minister Narendra Modi has not visited Manipur so far and why he talked in a "derogatory way" about the state during his speech in parliament.

"Those shocking videos need to be sent to the prime minister again to show what is happening in Manipur," Vadra said, referring to the video of two women being paraded naked in the state.

"It is definitely a very sensitive matter. The prime minister himself should look into what is happening in Manipur. They have their government there. They need to resolve the matter or let another party handle it," he said.

On the suspension of opposition MPs from Parliament, he said it shows a complete misuse of power by the ruling dispensation.

"As they use central agency on (opposition party) people, they use the suspension tactics," he said.

IIT Delhi drops one set of mid-semester exams to reduce student stress: Director Rangan Banerjee



NEW DELHI, Aug 13 (PTI): The Indian Institute of Technology, Delhi has revamped its evaluation system and dropped a set of mid-semester exams to reduce students' stress, according to institute director Rangan Banerjee. The decision comes against the backdrop of several cases of student suicides across IITs which has sparked a debate about whether the curriculum and the rigorous study schedule are impacting the mental health of students.

"Earlier we used to have two sets of exams during a semester, final exams at the end of each semester and several continuous evaluation mechanisms. We conducted an internal survey and based on feedback from all students and faculty, we have decided to drop one set of exams. So, now there will be two sets of exams besides routine evaluations," Banerjee told PTI in an interview.

"We felt that the exam calendar was too packed and hence decided to reduce student burden and stress. The decision has also been approved by the Senate and will be implemented from the ongoing semester. A maximum cap of 80 per cent weightage has been kept for the two examinations," he added.

The IIT Council, in its meeting in April, decided that there is a need for a robust grievance redressal system; increasing psychological counselling services; reducing pressure, fear of failure and rejection among students. The issue of student suicide, alleged discrimination, and ensuring the mental well-being of students was discussed at length during the meeting.

According to data shared in Parliament last month, IITs have reported the highest number of student suicide cases in the last five years.

From 2018 to 2023, at least 39 out of the total 98 deaths by suicide in top higher education institutions of India took place at IITs.

Delhi HC stays IT reassessment proceedings against NGO Oxfam India

NEW DELHI, Aug 13 (PTI): The Delhi High Court has stayed the income tax reassessment proceedings against NGO Oxfam India.

The court issued a notice to the Income Tax (I-T) Department and sought its response to a petition filed by the NGO, challenging the notices and order issued against it.

According to records, a survey was conducted on the NGO on September 7, 2022 which led to the initiation of the reassessment proceedings for the year 2016-17 and a notice was issued to Oxfam on March 29 this year.

"A counter affidavit will be filed within the next six weeks. Rejoinder thereto, if any, will be filed at least five days before the next date

of hearing. List the matter on November 22, 2023," a bench of justices Rajiv Shukla and Girish Kathpalia said. "In the meanwhile, there shall be a stay on the continuation of the reassessment proceeding, till further directions of the court," it said. A notice was issued to the NGO on March 29 under the provisions of the IT Act which triggered the reassessment proceedings against the petitioner on the grounds that the petitioner was allegedly engaged in litigation activities that were violative of Section 8(1) of the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act (FCRA). Also, it had allegedly received suspicious contributions from foreign nationals and that it failed to recognise as revenue ₹ 15.09

crore received as advances against future projects. The counsel for the NGO contended that the authorities did not share the survey report with the petitioner and the proceedings initiated against it were barred by limitation.

The petitioner said the charge levelled against it that it has received contributions from foreign nationals which were suspicious is misconceived as the details and names of contributors were provided. It said that the Assessing Officer's (AO) assertion that ₹ 15.09 crore should have been recognised as income is completely misconceived, as these were advances that had to be utilised for future objects and therefore were not the income that arose in the period in question.

Bengal: Conservative breeding programme on to protect 'vulnerable' fishing cat

A total of six to eight pairs of fishing cats are expected to be released into their natural habitat in 2024

KOLKATA, Aug 13 (PTI): A conservation breeding programme has been launched in a zoo in West Bengal to protect the fishing cat, a 'vulnerable' species, state forest minister Jyotipriya Mallick said.

The exercise will be carried out in other places as well, and, if the breeding programme for West Bengal's state animal becomes successful, several of the fishing cats to be born will be released into their natural habitat by 2024.

The programme started at Garchumuk Zoological Garden in Howrah district and it will be conducted in districts like Bankura and Jhargram in the southern part of the state and a few places in the north, Mallick said. The Conservation Breeding Programme is the science of conserving a species by preventing imminent population collapse in the wild due to a large number

of eliminative pressures such as habitat loss, habitat fragmentation, industrialisation, poaching, illegal trade and climate change, an official said. The conservation breeding programme aims at conserving the genetic diversity of the species and restocking or reintroducing the species to re-establish a self-sustaining population in its natural wild habitat, the official said.

"A total of six to eight pairs of fishing cats are expected to be released into their natural habitat in 2024," Member Secretary of West Bengal Zoo Authority, Sourav Choudhury, said. The fishing cat (*Prionailurus viverrinus*) or 'Baghrol' in Bengali is a medium-sized wildcat that is found in the Indian subcontinent and parts of south-east Asia. Certain characteristics allow the animal, which has been described as a 'vulnerable'



species, to survive in wet, watery conditions.

According to the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), Vulnerable is a category containing those species that possess a very high risk of extinction

as a result of rapid population decline. Besides Garchumuk Zoological Garden, the zoo in Kolkata's Alipore has initially been selected for the conservative breeding of the fishing cat, Choudhury said.

A study is underway to identify

the places where the animals born in captivity could be released.

"The study is needed to find out whether the people in and around the places where the fishing cats would be released, would be friendly enough so that the animals could survive," Choudhury said.

The aim is to reduce human interference as much as possible before the animals are released into their natural habitat, he said.

Initially, Jharkhand in the Sundarbans in South 24 Parganas district has been selected for releasing the fishing cats bred in captivity. The place was selected after a study was conducted there, the official said. Similar studies are being conducted in districts such as Howrah, Hooghly, Purba and Paschim Bardhaman to find out whether these animals could be released in those places.

MONDAY, AUGUST 14, 2023

Maha: 18 deaths reported in 24 hours in Thane hospital

Probe panel constituted, says civic chief

THANE, Aug 13 (PTI): Eighteen patients have died in the last 24 hours at the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Hospital in Kalwa in Thane, civic commissioner Abhijit Bangar said on Sunday.

These comprise 10 women and eight men, of which six are from Thane city, four from Kalyan, three from Sahapur, one each from Bhiwandi, Ulhasnagar and Govandi (in Mumbai), one patient is from some other place and one is unidentified, he said.

Twelve of the deceased were above the age of 50, Bangar added.

Earlier, state health minister Tanaji Sawant and local deputy commissioner of police Ganesh Gawde had put the number of deaths at 17.

Addressing a news conference, Bangar said chief minister Eknath Shinde had taken feedback about the situation and had ordered the setting up of an independent probe committee that will be headed by the commissioner of health services and will include collector, civic chief, director of health services, interventionist at state-run JJ Hospital in Mumbai and civic surgeon.

It will carry out probe into the clinical aspect of the deaths, he added.

These patients had complications of kidney stone, chronic paralysis, ulcer, pneumonia, kerosene poisoning, septicemia etc, he said.

"The line of treatment will be probed and statements of kin of the deceased etc will be recorded. Allegations of negligence levelled by some kin is a serious matter, which the probe committee will look into," Bangar said.

"The entire Covid staff of 500



has been shifted to this hospital and additional nursing staff has been appointed. We are also aiming to have round the clock post mortem facility here," he told reporters.

Earlier in the day, state health minister Sawant said the dean of the hospital had been asked to submit a report in two days.

A Thane Municipal Corporation official said the deaths were being analysed and several civic officials are at the heavily-patronised facility for inspection of records etc.

Speaking to PTI, deputy commissioner of police Ganesh Gawde said, "We have information of 17 deaths in the last 24 hours. We have been told the usual figure per day is six to seven."

"The hospital management told us some of the patients arrived there in a critical stage and succumbed during treatment. Some were elderly. We have increased police presence at the hospital to avoid any untoward incident due to

these high numbers of deaths," the DCP informed.

Speaking on the issue, Sawant said, "Of these 17, a total of 13 were in the ICU. A few days ago, five patients had died in the hospital. The state government has asked the dean to submit a report in two days."

"Action will be taken as per the report of the dean. This hospital comes under the state medical education and research department. Its minister Hasan Mushrif has reached the hospital and he is looking into the matter," Sawant told reporters in Pune.

Nationalist Congress Party chief Sharad Pawar called the deaths heart-breaking and said the administration did not wake up despite five deaths at the facility in a single day recently.

Maharashtra minister and BJP leader Girish Mahajan said "16 deaths" in a single day in a hospital with a capacity of 500 was a matter of concern.

NCP leader and MLA from the region Jitendra Awhad said the hospital was mismanaged and asked the administration to set things right before it was too late.

State minister Aditi Tatkare, who visited the hospital, called the deaths unfortunate and said the Maharashtra government will take all efforts to ensure such an incident is not repeated.

Nationalist Congress Party spokesperson Clyde Crasto sought a detailed inquiry into the deaths.

Chief minister Shinde belongs to Thane and the medical negligence leading to these deaths took place in his backyard (Thane is the stronghold of Shinde), Crasto said. It goes to show Shinde is not paying attention to Thane and is "probably so busy in breaking and forming governments that he has no time for his own people", the NCP leader alleged.

State NCP chief Jayant Patil too slammed CM Shinde, saying the latter boasted about "government at your doorstep" but there was lack of medical facilities in his own backyard.

Former Thane mayor Naresh Mhakse, who is also spokesperson of the Eknath Shinde-led Shiv Sena, said the hospital was "over loaded" and was treating 650 patients per day against a capacity of 500. The civil hospital in the area is being renovated so the load falls on this facility in Kalwa, Mhakse claimed.

Hospital sources, meanwhile, said some doctors were down with dengue which was also affecting the running of the facility.

Local MNS leader Avinash Jadhav sought proactive measures to improve the efficiency of the hospital.

Modi govt has rendered country's health system 'sick': Kharage

NEW DELHI, Aug 13 (PTI): Congress president Mallikarjun Kharage on Sunday alleged the Centre has rendered the country's health system "sick" with even AIIMS facilities grappling with staff shortage, drawing a sharp rebuttal from Union health minister Manu Singh Mandaviya.

Taking to X, formerly known as Twitter, Kharage targeted Prime Minister Narendra Modi, citing a media report which claimed that 19 All India Institutes of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) are facing a shortage of doctors and other staff.

"Loot and jumbas have made the country unhealthy. Only lies are embedded in every word of Modi ji! (The government) claimed that it has set up many AIIMS. The truth is that our AIIMS are facing a severe shortage of doctors and other staff," the Congress chief said in Hindi. "Mr. Modi, from apathy during the coronavirus pandemic to scams in Ayushman Bharat... your government has made the country's health system sick," Kharage alleged.

"The people have been awakened, your deceit has been recognised and the time has come for your government's farewell," he added.

In a series of posts on X, Mandaviya countered Kharage, saying while only one AIIMS was opened during the Congress' rule, 15 are being opened during the Modi government. "Respected Kharage ji, our intentions are pure and clear... I hope you will understand the reality. One AIIMS was opened during the Congress' 50-year rule. Six AIIMS (were opened) during the tenure of (former prime minister Atal Bihari) Vajpayee ji and 15 new AIIMS are being opened during the tenure of Modi ji," the minister said in Hindi.

"It is expected that you will also try to understand that according to the requirement of AIIMS, phase-wise recruitment has been done from time to time when new departments opened," he said.

Prime Minister Modi has distributed more than 5 lakh appointment letters to the youth of the country at 'Rozgar Mela', he said, adding these were given on the basis of merit and not nepotism.

Two more arrested over JU student's death

Allegations of sexual harassment surface

KOLKATA, Aug 13 (PTI): Two students of Jadavpur University were arrested on Sunday for their alleged involvement in the ragging of an undergraduate student who died after falling from the balcony of a hostel, police said.

Police have taken cognisance of JU students' social media posts, including photographs, which suggest there was an element of sexual harassment in the ragging of the deceased. "He was definitely tormented by the boarders. There can be some passive sexual harassment. We are probing the matter," a senior police officer said. Three people have been arrested in the case so far, he said.

"A second year student of Economics hailing from Bankura town and a Sociology student from Arambagh in Hooghly district were arrested on Sunday morning. A former student of the university, who was staying at the hostel, was nabbed on Friday," he said.

"The names of the two surfaced after night-long grilling of the arrested former student. Both are boarders from the same hostel and were present when the teenager allegedly fell from the second floor of the hostel building. We will question them," the officer told PTI. The two students will be produced before a court later in the day, he said. Police said they have till date spoken to nine people, of whom two were security guards of the hostel. Kolkata Police have recovered the deceased's mobile phone from the room of the former student who was arrested.

Besides, going through the call lists and



messages in the seized cell phone, police are also going through the deceased's red-coloured diary recovered from his room in the hostel. A Kolkata Police team also visited the deceased's home in Nadia district to match the handwriting.

"The first accused has admitted that it was he who had talked to the mother of the deceased's son. It was he who told the mother that her son was fine. He has been lying to us," the policeman said. An FIR has been registered after the deceased's father lodged a complaint, alleging that a few boarders of the hostel were responsible for his son's death. Swapnadip Kundu, a resident of Bagula in Nadia district, fell from the second-floor balcony of the main hostel building around 11.45 pm on Wednesday and died while undergoing treatment at a hospital at 3.40 am on Thursday.

UK has no intention of becoming a place where those seeking to evade justice can hide: British security min

NEW DELHI, Aug 13 (PTI): The United Kingdom has no intention of becoming a place where those seeking to evade justice can hide, British security minister Tom Tugendhat said, amid India's continuing push for extradition of billionaire fugitives Vijay Mallya and Nirav Modi.

Tugendhat, without citing specific cases, said that legal processes must be adhered to in matters relating to extradition.

"We both (the UK and India) have legal processes that must be gone through. But the UK government is absolutely clear, we have no intention of becoming a place where those who are seeking to evade justice can hide," he told PTI in an interview.

Tugendhat was in India on a three-day visit from August 10-12 primarily to attend the G20 anti-corruption ministerial meeting in Kolkata. In Delhi, he held talks with external affairs minister S Jaishankar and national security advisor Ajit Doval.

The British security minister was replying to a question on India's persistent demand for extradition of a number of economic offenders including Mallya and Nirav Modi who are living in the UK. Nirav Modi, the fugitive diamond merchant wanted in India to stand trial on fraud and money laundering charges.

The 52-year-old businessman last year lost his legal battle in the highest UK court against being extradited to India in the estimated USD 2 billion Punjab National Bank loan scam case.

But his case is now said to be "statute barred", indicating further pending litigation.

Mallya, who fled to the United Kingdom in March 2016, is



wanted in India over a default of Rs 9,000 crore that was loaned to Kingfisher Airlines by several banks. Asked about his talks with NSA Doval, the British security minister declined to share the details but noted that the broad bilateral cooperation is focused on security of the two nations and the prosperity of the citizens.

"We're talking about the security of our two nations and the prosperity of our citizens, their ability to conduct their business at home and abroad," he said.

"But we're also talking about the challenges we face and we've both made it clear in different ways that the challenge of China is one that faces us both and we've seen incidents on your northern border, but we've also seen the way in which technology has changed and the way in which we need to address it as areas in which we need to have greater cooperation," he said. Tugendhat highlighted how India and the UK are cooperating in new technologies relating to artificial intelligence (AI).

"We see today that India is not

just a centre of Indian AI, it's also a centre of British AI," he said.

"There are many firms whose data points, whose data sources are located here, often in Bangalore, and using the extraordinary technical capabilities of Indian AI experts to analyse data and to improve the productivity of their businesses," he added.

"This is a fantastic benefit both to the United Kingdom and of course to India. And so making sure that we're able to do that, we're protecting our interests and we're developing those technologies is absolutely essential to our common future," Tugendhat noted.

The India-UK relationship was elevated to a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership during the India-UK virtual summit held between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his then British counterpart Boris Johnson in May 2021.

At the summit, the two sides adopted a 10-year roadmap to expand ties in the key areas of trade and economy, defence and security, climate change and people-to-people connections among others.

Contd. from Page 1...

Flood situation deteriorates

four embankments were reported to be damaged in Sivasagar district on the same day, according to the ASDMA bulletin. Other instances of infrastructure damage were reported from Dhemaji on Sunday. Significant erosion was observed in Kamrup, Kokrajhar, and Nalbari districts during the day. Over the last 48 hours, light to moderate rainfall occurred in various parts of the state, with isolated heavy rainfall reported over Assam.

Stage set for 77th Independence Day

the dream of making India a developed country by 2047, it said. Modi will unfurl the national flag and deliver the customary address to the nation from the ramparts of the historic monument. Selfie points dedicated to different schemes and initiatives of the government have also been installed at New Delhi railway station, Pragati Maidan, Raj Ghat, the metro stations at Jama Masjid, Rajiv Chowk, Delhi Gate and the ITO metro gate, Naubat Khana and Sheesh Ganj Gurudwara, the ministry added.

The defence ministry will also conduct an online selfie contest on the MyGov portal from August 15-20. All official invites have been sent online through the Aamantran portal and 17,000 e-invitation cards have been issued through it, the statement said.

Upon his arrival at the Red Fort on August 15, Modi will be received by defence minister Rajnath Singh, Bhatt and defence secretary Giridhar Aramane, the ministry said.

The defence secretary will introduce the General Officer Commanding (GOC), Delhi Area, Lt Gen Dhiraj Seth, to the Prime Minister, it said. Lt Gen Seth will then conduct the Prime Minister to the saluting base, where a combined Inter-Services and Delhi Police Guard will present a general salute to the Prime Minister. The Prime Minister will then inspect the guard of honour, the ministry said.

The guard of honour contingent will consist of one officer and 25 personnel each from the Army, Air Force and the Delhi Police and one officer and 24 personnel from the Navy.

The Army is the coordinating service this year. The guard of honour will be commanded by Maj Vikas Sangwan, it said.

After inspecting the guard of honour, Modi will proceed to the ramparts of Red Fort, where he will be greeted by the defence minister, his deputy, Chief of Defence Staff Gen Anil Chauhan, Army Chief Manoj Pande, Navy Chief Admiral R Hari Kumar and Air Force Chief Air Chief Marshal VR Chaudhary.

Lt Gen Seth will then conduct the Prime Minister to the dais on the ramparts to unfurl the national flag, the statement said.

"After being unfurled, the Tricolour will receive a 'Rashtriya Salute'. The Army band, consisting of one JCO (junior commissioned officer) and 20 other ranks, will play the national anthem during the unfurling of the national flag and presenting of the Rashtriya Salute. The band will be conducted by Naib Subedar Jatinder Singh," it said.

The unfurling of the national flag will be synchronised with the 21-gun salute by gunners of the elite 8,711 Field Battery (Ceremonial), the statement said. The National Flag Guard, comprising five officers and 128 other ranks from the Army, Navy, Air Force and the Delhi Police, will present the Rashtriya Salute at the time of unfurling of the national flag by the Prime Minister, it added.

As soon as the Tricolour is unfurled, flower petals will be showered at the venue by two Advanced Light Helicopters Mark-III Dhruv of the Indian Air Force in the Line Astern formation.

Thereafter, the Prime Minister will address the nation.

At the conclusion of Modi's speech, National Cadet Corps cadets will sing the national anthem and 1,100 boy and girl cadets (Army, Navy and Air Force) from different schools across the country will take part during this festival, the statement said.

Bleachers have been installed at the Gyan Path, on which the cadets will be seated in their official white dress, it added. Another highlight of the programme will be the G20 logo, which will be part of the floral decorations at the Red Fort, the ministry said.

Himanta flags off Assam Police

upon the citizens to unite in efforts to realise the vision of "Har Ghar Tiranga" and the "Meri Maati Mera Desh" campaign at both individual and institutional levels. He encouraged them to recommit themselves to serving the nation, particularly as India embarks on the Amrit Kaal, leading to the centenary celebrations of Independence in 2047. Chief minister Sarma expressed his gratitude to Assam Police for the remarkable March Past and for orchestrating the splendid laser show and fireworks display. Notably, the March Past featured 600 police personnel and 181 college students from 27 police contingents and 12 college contingents.

The event was attended by various dignitaries including MP Queen Oja, chief secretary Paban Kumar Borahakur, DGP GP Singh, Mayor of Guwahati Municipal Corporation Mrigen Sarania, and other prominent figures.

CBI set to take over nine

attract provisions of the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989, which can be probed by a deputy superintendent of police rank officer. Since the deputy SPs cannot be supervisory officers in such cases, the agency will mobilise its superintendents of police to supervise and monitor the investigations, they said.

The central probe agency will transfer all forensic samples to its Central Forensic Science Laboratory as any sample collection or its investigation by any attendant from either of the two warring communities may result in question marks on the fairness of the investigation, they said. The CBI has also mobilised women officers in the state for investigation of cases related to crimes against women which is a mandatory requirement for recording statements and questioning purposes, they said.

More than 160 people have been killed, and several hundred injured since ethnic violence first broke out in the state on May 3 when a 'Tribal Solidarity March' was organised in the hill districts to protest against the majority Meitei community's demand for Scheduled Tribe status. Meiteis account for about 53 per cent of Manipur's population and live mostly in the Imphal Valley, while tribals, which include Nagas and Kukis, constitute 40 per cent and reside mostly in the hill districts.

With 10-fold jump in tourist footfall, Varanasi balances tradition and change

VARANASI, Aug 13 (PTI): A Nandi statue faces the Kashi Vishwanath temple at the centre of Varanasi's Godowlia crossing, continuing the centuries-old tradition of the guardian deity pointing in the direction of Lord Shiva's abode. Just behind, a massive screen plays a cola commercial, the flickering images fading into a call to buy advertising space.

Benares, as the city was once known, is "older than history, older than tradition, older even than legend", Mark Twain famously wrote. But the fabled city of temples, ghats and soul searching is transitioning — tradition and modernness in tow — into a centrepiece of the government's promotion of religious tourism.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, in a recent Mann Ki Baat address, said the recent jump in the number of tourists in Varanasi, reflects a "cultural reawakening."

According to Uttar Pradesh tourism department's official website, the city has 10 times the number of tourists it had before the Covid pandemic. In 2019, the total number of tourists in the city amounted to nearly 68 lakh. Four years later, it matches that figure in one month alone with nearly 7.2 crore tourists in 2022. During Covid in 2020, the number had dropped to under 10 lakh. This makes Varanasi, a city with over 12 lakh people according to the last census, the most visited city in Uttar Pradesh — more than Mathura which topped the list with 6.5 crore tourists in 2022. Agra, the city of the Taj Mahal, gets the most number of foreign tourists though. Most people point to the redevelopment of the Kashi Vishwanath Dham Corridor as the reason for the massive rise in tourist footfall to the city that has long combined mysticism with



its many 'touristy' attractions — the Ganga cruise, the famed 'aarti' and its age-old craft of weaving.

According to Kashi Vishwanath Temple Trust CEO Sunil Verma, 10 crore tourists have visited the temple since the inauguration of the corridor in December 2021. The corridor — which has been instrumental in the boom in Varanasi's tourism sector — is spread across 5 lakh square feet with long queues of devotees raising slogans of "Har Har Mahadev" intermittently as they await their turn for 'darshan'.

"About 1-1.5 lakh devotees visit the temple on a daily basis. During the ongoing Sawan month, it has gone up to 1.5 lakh-2 lakh per day," Verma told PTI.

Many tourists say the new corridor is what has brought them to the eastern Uttar Pradesh city on the banks of the Ganges.

"The government's efforts [in revamping the temple] have made things easier now. There have been many improvements from before. Fa-

cilities both for darshan and for staying here are great," said Sanjay Modi, a tourist from Gujarat. "Every Hindu should visit Kashi once," added his wife Avani.

Banaras Hindu University student Satyam Srivastava said the modernisation of ghats and the redevelopment of the temple has contributed vastly to the city's tourism boom. "It is also part of the government's ideology to make the country culturally rich," he said.

According to his friend Amit Kumar Rao, "the crowd has gone up in the city but there is no inconvenience."

Godowlia, the bustling heart of the city, teems with tourists, lakhs of them daily, who walk with determination towards the revamped temple or the Dashashwamedh Ghat, among other places, immune to the chaos of the aggressive honking of two-wheelers, overenthusiastic tour guides as well as the rain, frequent this time of the year.

Some tourists said that unlike other religious cities such as Haridwar, a trip to Varanasi is cheap. Others pointed out that the controversy surrounding the Gyanvapi mosque is another reason for the recent interest in the city.

Rohit Raghav, a tourist from Delhi, said apart from a visit to the temple and the ghats, some are curious about the distance between the mosque and the temple and want to see it for themselves.

The Gyanvapi-Kashi Vishwanath dispute refers to the contested claim that the mosque was built on the ruins of the temple. The mosque is currently being surveyed by the Archaeological Survey of India after a Varanasi court order on the matter.



Nushratt Bharuccha's thriller movie 'Akelli' to arrive in theatres on Aug 25

MUMBAI, Aug 13 (PTI): Actor Nushratt Bharuccha-led drama thriller film "Akelli" will hit the cinema halls on August 25, the makers announced Sunday.

Set in Iraq, 'Akelli' showcases how a person realizes her own capabilities in adverse situations like being trapped in the desert land.

The film, directed by debutant filmmaker Pranay Meshram, was earlier scheduled to be released on August 18.

"Akelli - Her survival echoes louder than the chaos around her. The tale of survival has a new date, 25th August!" Reliance Entertainment posted on microblogging site X.

The movie is produced by Dashami Studioz' Nitin Vaidya, Ninad Vaidya, Aparna Padgaonkar along with Vicky Sidana and Shashant Shah.

Israeli actors Tsahi Halevi and Amir Boutrous, best known for featuring in the series "Fauda", are making their Indian film debut with the project.

AKSHAY KUMAR-PANKAJ TRIPATHI'S 'OMG 2' COLLECTS ₹ 25.56 CR IN 2 DAYS

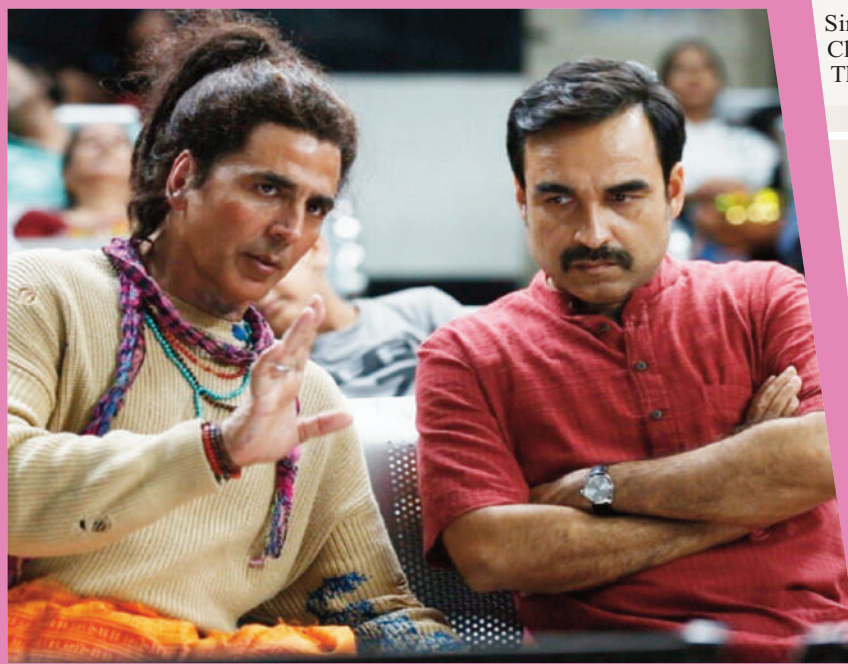
MUMBAI, Aug 13 (PTI): "OMG 2", starring Akshay Kumar and Pankaj Tripathi, has minted ₹ 15.30 crore net on domestic box office in two days, the makers said Sunday.

Written and directed by Amit Rai, "OMG 2" features Tripathi as a devotee of Lord Shiva named Kanti Sharan Mudgal and Kumar in the role of a messenger of God. Yami Gautam plays a lawyer.

"Pyaar aur abhaar (Love and gratitude) ₹ 10.26 crore Day 1 + ₹ 15.30 crore Day 2. ₹ 25.56 crore," the makers said in a press note.

"OMG 2" is produced by Cape of Good Films and Wakao. It touches upon various issues of teenagers and the importance of sex education.

The film, presented by Viacom18 Studios, is billed as a spiritual sequel of "OMG - Oh My God!", starring Kumar and Paresh Rawal, which was released in 2012.



Honey Trehan's 'Punjab 95' pulled from Toronto International Film Festival line-up

MUMBAI, Aug 13 (PTI): Honey Trehan's feature "Punjab 95", based on the life of human rights activist Jaswant Singh Khaira, has been removed from the world premiere line-up of the Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF) that begins next month.

Starring Diljit Dosanjh as Khaira, the film was scheduled to premiere in the Gala Presentations section on September 11, but TIFF's website does not mention the biographical drama in its line-up any more.

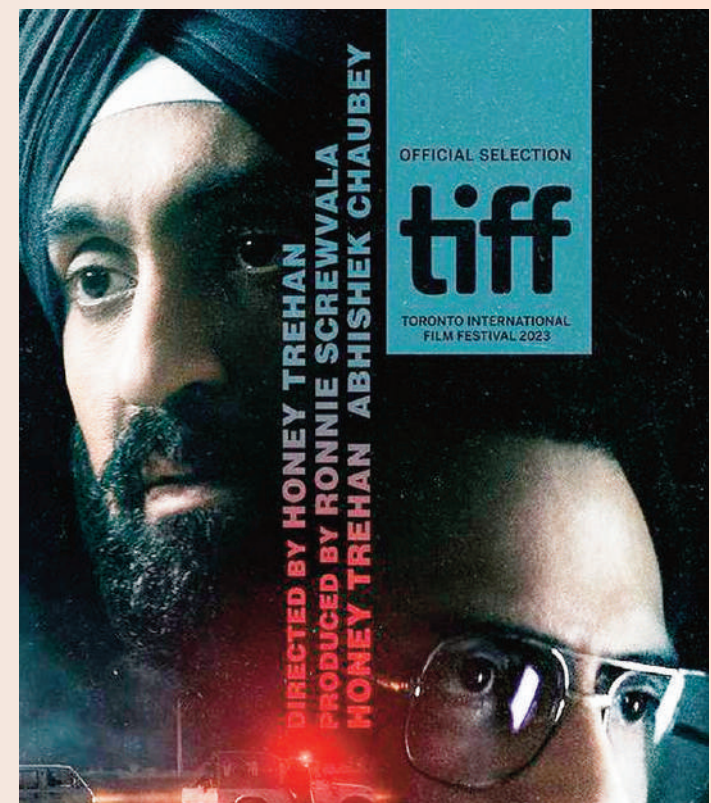
UK-based publication Screen quoted a TIFF spokesperson as saying that "Punjab 65" is no longer part of the programme.

While the festival has not issued any official statement regarding the decision, Trehan declined to comment when contacted by PTI.

Produced by Ronnie Screwvala's banner RSVF Movies, the film also stars Arjun Rampal and "Kohraa" actor Suvinder Vicky.

Khaira investigated the cremation of thousands of unidentified bodies in Punjab during a 10-year period from 1984 to 1994. In 1995, Khaira apparently disappeared and four police officers were arrested for his alleged kidnap and murder in 2005. The Punjab and Haryana High Court extended the seven-year jail term of the four policemen to life imprisonment in 2007.

"Punjab 95" marks the second feature film by Trehan after the 2020 Netflix movie "Raat Akeli Hai". The filmmaker was previously at TIFF in 2016 as a producer on "A Death In The Gunj". TIFF is scheduled to take place September 7 to 17.



'GADAR 2' EARNS ₹ 83.18 CRORE IN TWO DAYS

MUMBAI, Aug 13 (PTI): "Gadar 2", which stars Sunny Deol's reprising his iconic character Tara Singh, has collected ₹ 83.18 crore net at the domestic box office in the first two days of its release, the makers said Sunday.

Directed by Anil Sharma, who also worked on the 2001 original "Gadar: Ek Prem Katha", the film released in theatres on Friday.

"Sunny Deol's magic has taken over the box office, after shattering records on the first day itself, the film has raked in ₹ 43.08 crore net on day 2 of its release.... These remarkable numbers, typically reserved for solo releases, propel 'Gadar 2' towards the second-fastest ₹ 100 crore club for 2023, with a net of ₹ 83.18 crore already achieved," the makers said in a press note.

Produced by Zee Studios, the movie also features Ameesha Patel returning as Sakeena and Utkarsh Sharma as Charanjeet.

"Gadar 2" is set in 1971 and follows Tara Singh's journey to Pakistan to rescue his son, Charanjeet Singh from the Pakistani Army. The original was set during the Partition.



Family, friends celebrate Sridevi's legacy on 60th birth anniversary

MUMBAI, Aug 13 (PTI): Superstar Sridevi's family and film industry friends paid homage to the late actor and celebrated her everlasting impact on the Indian cinema on her 60th birth anniversary.

Sridevi, hailed as one of the first female superstars of the Indian film industry, worked across languages. Some of her most prominent films are "Moondru Mudichu", "Pokkiri Raja", "Sadma", "Chaalbaaz", "Lamhe", "Chandni" and "English Vinglish". The actor's husband, producer Boney Kapoor, shared a throwback photograph with her on Instagram. "Happy Birthday," he wrote along with several heart emoji.

While her elder daughter, "Bawaal" actor Janhvi Kapoor, shared the same post on her Instagram Stories, Khushi Kapoor posted a childhood pic of her and her sister with the screen icon. "Happy birthday mama," Khushi, who is set to make her acting debut with the Netflix film "The Archies", wrote. Anil Kapoor, Sridevi's brother-in-law and co-star from iconic films such as "Lamhe" "Chandni" and "Mr India", said her legacy will live on forever. "Happy birthday, Sri! Your legacy lives on, and your impact on the world of cinema is everlasting. You are deeply missed and forever cherished!" he wrote alongside a photograph from the sets of Yash Chopra's "Lamhe".

Google pays homage to Sridevi on 60th birth anniversary with doodle

MUMBAI, Aug 13 (PTI): Search engine giant Google on Sunday celebrated the 60th birth anniversary of Indian cinema icon Sridevi with a special doodle dedicated to her on-screen charisma.

Born on this day in 1963 in present-day Tamil Nadu, Sridevi fell in love with movies as a child and started acting at the age of four making her debut with the Tamil movie "Kandhan Karunai".

"Today's Doodle, illustrated by Mumbai-based guest artist Bhumiika Mukherjee, celebrates Indian actress Sridevi's 60th birthday! Starring in nearly three hundred

movies over the course of four decades, Sridevi made Bollywood's sweeping dramas and comedies shine, oftentimes without a male counterpart in a traditionally male-dominated industry," said the search engine in its description of the doodle.

Sridevi learned multiple South Indian languages, which helped her to break into other film industries. Early in her career, she acted in a variety of genres across multiple film industries, including Tamil, Telugu, and Malayalam.

The actor gained national recognition in 1976 for K Balachander's "Moondru Mudichu", co-starring cinema veterans Rajinikanth and Kamal Haasan. Widely considered the star of Tamil cinema at the time, Sridevi's on-screen charisma garnered attention from producers from the Hindi film industry as well.

After playing the lead role in the action comedy "Himmatwala", Sridevi established herself as a Bollywood icon and went on to star in hits like "Sadma", "Chaalbaaz", "Lamhe", "Chandani" and "Judaai", before taking a break from acting. In 2012, she made a comeback with "English Vinglish"

which was a critical and commercial success.

Hailed as Indian cinema's first woman superstar, Sridevi was honoured with Padma Shri, the fourth-highest civilian award given by the Government of India.

Sridevi forever made her mark on the film industry by charting new avenues for women to take on leading roles in Indian cinema and her last film "Mom" (2017) was also an effort in the same direction.

The actor passed away in 2018 in Dubai at the age of 54.



HOSTS INDIA CLAIMED THEIR FOURTH ASIAN CHAMPIONS TROPHY

Fighting India beat spirited Malaysia 4-3 to win ACT

CHENNAI, Aug 13 (PTI): India fought back from two goals down to eke out a 4-3 win over a spirited Malaysia in a thrilling final to claim their fourth Asian Champions Trophy title at the Mayor Radhakrishnan Stadium here on Saturday.

Jugraj Singh (9th minute), skipper Harmanpreet Singh (45th), Gurjant Singh (45th) and Akashdeep Singh (56th) were the goal scorers for India.

For Malaysia, Abu Kamal Azrai (14th), Razie Rahim (18th) and Muhamad Aminudin (28th) found the back of the net.

It is India's record fourth title, making it the most successful team in the event.

India had earlier thrashed Malaysia 5-0 in the round-robin league stage.

Malaysia were aggressive in the first half as the Indians found it difficult to restrict their opponents.

India converted their first penalty in the ninth minute with Jugraj scoring with a fierce flick to the right of the Malaysian goalie. The Indians got into their groove as the match progressed and played full-pressure hockey after a sluggish start.

But Malaysia didn't sit back and continued to test the Indian



defence. Their efforts bore fruit in the 14th minute when Azrai found the back of the net after being fed by Azuan Hasan from the right flank.

Seconds from the first quarter, India secured back-to-back penalty corners but wasted both the chances.

Malaysia kept up the tempo in the second quarter and earned consecutive penalty corners in

the 18th minute, the second of which was converted by Rahim as the ball went in after getting a deflection from rusher Amit Rohidas' stick.

Malaysia secured a penalty corner for an unnecessary stick check by Jugraj in the 23rd minute but the effort went wide.

Malaysia got another penalty corner in the 28th minute and this time Aminudin made no

mistake to hand his side a 3-1 lead at half-time.

A couple of minutes after the change of ends, India earned a penalty corner but failed to utilise the opportunity. The home team asked for a referral for another set piece, which was turned down by the TV referee.

India worked well to win another penalty corner in the 36th, but Jugraj shot wide.

Sensing urgency, India switched to possession-based play. But the Malaysian defenders did well to intercept at the right time and keep the Indian attackers at bay.

Malaysia earned another penalty corner in the 43rd minute but India defended stoutly.

The Indians turned the match on its head in a span of a minute, pumping in two goals to level the scores 3-3.

While India skipper Harmanpreet scored from a penalty stroke in the 45th minute, seconds later Gurjant found the back of the net from field play to make the scoreline 3-3.

India secured a penalty corner six minutes from the final hooter, but Harmanpreet's flick was saved by the opposition goalkeeper.

India kept up the pressure and earned another penalty corner soon, but Harmanpreet's effort went wide.

Akashdeep scored the winner for India with a slap stick from top of the 'D' after receiving a pass from Mandeep Singh.

The Indians pressed hard in the final few minutes of the match, drawing two fine saves from the Malaysian goalkeeper.



KOLKATA, Aug 13 (PTI): Gokulam Kerala earned three valuable points along with bragging rights as they edged past formidable ISL outfit Kerala Blasters 4-3 in a Durand Cup group league game here on Sunday. There were four goals in the first-half and three in the second as Gokulam clinched their second straight victory in as many games to go on top of the group.

Bouba Aminou (17th min), Sreekuttan (43rd min), Alex Sanchez (45+1 min) and Abhijith K (47th min) scored for the winners, while Emmanuel Justine (34th min), Prabir Das (54th minute) and Adrian Luna (77th minute) scored for the Blasters.

For Indian Super League (ISL) side Kerala Blasters, this was their first game in the group and they will now be looking to win their remaining two, to remain in contention.

Basit Bhat, who has been impressive in this tournament, won the corner after his long-ranger took a touch off a Blasters defender and deflected away from goal. Spaniard Nili Perdomo curled the right-footer in for Gokulam's Cameroonian captain Bouba Aminou to use his height and soar above Jeakson Singh and turn the header into top left corner. The Blasters were stunned and responded with urgency. Seven minutes later young 20-year-old Nigerian striker Emmanuel Justine, turned a similar header from an Adrian Luna corner above the crossbar. Then Luna missed from about six-inches wide.

Finally, off a Luna free-kick which Gokulam keeper Zothanmawia fisted back towards the six-yard box, Naocha's header on the rebound hit the bar and came back into play again.

In the melee which ensued, Justine did well to muscle the ball in to level proceedings.

Blasters' joy was short-lived though as Perdomo put through Alex Sanchez inside the Blasters box, three minutes ahead of the regulation first 45.

The Spaniard drove in and cut-back towards the far post, where Sreekuttan did well to balance himself perfectly and direct a header into goal.

It was a second quality goal from him in the tournament in as many successful attempts.

Then in the first minute of added time, a similar ball for Alex by Perdomo, saw him fend-off his marker Naocha and get a lucky touch ahead of him and an on-rushing keeper Sachin Suresh, as the ball hit the keeper's gloves and trickled in for Gokulam's third.

The break did nothing to stop the goal rush and Abhijith K this time, put Sreekuttan's strike in the first game against the Air Force into oblivion with a thunderbolt just two-minutes into the second-half. Alex it was who got his second assist after a galloping run to the box, whereafter he withdrew and laid it on square for Abhijith. The 26-year-old central midfielder put his laces through the ball, bulging the right top-corner of Sachin's goal for Gokulam's fourth.

Lakshya counting on recent form to win medal at World Championships

GUWAHATI, Aug 13 (PTI): A maiden medal at the Asian Games and breaking into the world's top 5 remain on his radar but Lakshya Sen's first priority is to extend his rich vein of form at the World Championships.

And, he is counting on his recent showing to deliver the goods.

After enduring a rough patch, Sen turned around his fortune with a title-winning run in Canada in July and followed it up with two semifinal finishes at the US Open and Japan Open.

The 21-year-old from Almora, who claimed a maiden bronze at the World Championships in 2021, will hope to secure another medal

when he begins his campaign in Copenhagen, Denmark on August 21.

"World Championships being just a week ahead, I feel the past tournaments which I played will really help me go into the tournament," Sen told PTI on the sidelines of the inauguration of Badminton Association of India's National Centre of Excellence here.

"The preparation has been good. The past few tournaments, the form has been going well, but there are still a few more things to learn and improve.

"With time, it will get better and match preparation for this tournament is really good as I have played a lot of good matches in the recent past, and that will give me a lot of confidence.

"Another week or 10 days, I'm looking forward to really good training and then doing well at the World Championships."

Asian Games, the continental multi-sport event, scheduled to be held from September 23 to October 8 in Hangzhou, China is another big-ticket event which is on his radar.

"It is a really big event and it comes once in four years, so it is a special one. I have played such big events twice in my career. I played in the Youth Olympics and the

Commonwealth Games, so meeting all the players and watching different sports is a big learning experience for me," he said.

"So, I'm looking forward to doing well in the Asian Games but, as of now, the first priority is the World Championships and then we will focus on the Asian Games."

Sen endured a tough phase after the World Championships in August last year and soon found his world ranking slip from six to 25. He is currently world No. 11 after a string of good shows in the last few weeks and hoping to break into the top 5 next year.

"I would want myself to be in

world top 8 soon and then the aim would be to be in top 5 as the Olympic qualification ends. But, again, at the same time, there are a lot of tournaments. So, the priority is to win big tournaments and the ranking will take care of itself," he said.

A year ago, following the World Championships, Sen underwent nasal surgery to treat a deviated septum. What followed was an extended recovery process that took eight months.

His physical condition affected his performance and he made first-round exits in the last four events of 2022 and found the going tough in the early part of 2023.

Jessica Pegula beats top-ranked Iga Swiatek to reach Montreal final

KOLKATA, Aug 13 (PTI): Defending champions Bengaluru FC will begin their title defence when they take on Indian Air Force in the Durand Cup, here on Monday.

Bengaluru FC have announced a 28-member side, comprising mostly young players and new signings, under developmental coach Bibiano Fernandez, to defend the Durand crown.

For BFC to do well, it will be important that their new signings like goalkeeper Amrit Gope, central defender Shankar Sampiringaj and young forward Ashish Jha settle down well.

While Gope and Shankar were roped in from TRAU FC, Jha

played for Sreenidi Deccan before joining the Blues.

The Air Men had begun their campaign with a 0-2 reversal against Gokulam Kerala FC who lead the group C standings with three points.

The only advantage they would have is the experience of playing at the venue of Kishore Bharati Krirangan as they would rely on forward Mandeep Singh to bring their first win.

"The players are excited to play against ISL team and defending champions BFC and well prepared to fight and win

the game," coach Priya Darshan said. Chennaiyin FC favourites against Tribhuvan.

Former Indian Super League champions will look to put a foot in the quarterfinals

when they face Tribhuvan Army FC in a group E match in Guwahati on Monday. Chennaiyin FC defeated Hyderabad FC 3-1 in their previous match and their British coach Owen Coyale will be assured

with the fact that both his foreign frontmen, Australian Jordan Murray and Briton Connor Shields have found goal-scoring form in the win.

MONTREAL, Aug 13 (AP): Jessica Pegula beat top-ranked Iga Swiatek on Saturday to reach the National Bank Open final, breaking serve 11 times in a 6-2, 6-7 (4), 6-4 victory.

Pegula, the 29-year-old American seeded fourth, finally broke through in the semifinals after falling in the round the previous two years.

"It was a great match," Pegula said. "It was tough. Kind of a roller-coaster. Really up and down, but I'm glad I was able to hold my nerve there at the end."

Pegula beat Swiatek a day after fellow American Tommy Paul knocked off top-ranked Carlos Alcaraz in the men's event in Toronto. U.S. players had not

beaten the top-ranked man and woman in the same week since April 2008 in Miami when Serena Williams beat Justine Henin, and Andy Roddick topped Roger Federer. Both players struggled to hold serve, with Swiatek breaking Pegula eight times. They only won 11 of 30 service games combined.

"I was getting frustrated that I wasn't holding," Pegula said. "But then at the same time I knew she was having trouble holding as well. I was just like, 'I know I'll get more chances if I can just ... hold.' Basically, it was whoever could kind of consolidate the break."

Rain forced the postponement of the night semifinal between

third-seeded Elena Rybakina of Kazakhstan and 15th-seeded Liudmila Samsonova of Russia until Sunday. Early Saturday, Rybakina outlasted 10th-seeded Daria Kasatkina of Russia 5-7, 7-5, 7-6 (8) in a match that ended at 2:54 a.m.

Pegula, whose parents own the NFL's Buffalo Bills and NHL's Buffalo Sabres, has two career victories — in 2019 in Washington and 2022 in Guadalajara.

Swiatek leads the tour with 50 match victories. The Polish star won the French Open in June and added her fourth title of the year last week at home in Warsaw. "I kind of knew what I had to do to push her. Sometimes I could do that, sometimes I was

making more mistakes — and I think that was the difference," Swiatek said. "But I tried to play aggressively for the whole match."

Pegula ended the match in 2 hours, 30 minutes, breaking Swiatek a final time after the top seed hit two shots long. Pegula had a chance to end the match much earlier, up 5-4 in the second set and serving, but Swiatek broke her serve to stay alive and took the set in a tiebreaker.

Pegula wondered if the service woes might have something to do with new balls. WTA players are testing out Wilson extra duty balls for the first time on hard courts this week, through next week and into the U.S. Open.

Diksha improves as Aditi slips in third round at Women's Open

LONDON, Aug 13 (PTI): India's Diksha Dagar played a steady round of even-par 72 with a birdie and a bogey to be one-over and placed tied-35th — up from tied-47th — after the third round of the Women's Open at Walton Heath. Diksha's senior country-mate, Aditi Ashok, playing her 27th Major, struggled to a 3-over 75, despite a closing birdie and is now tied-28th from T-9 at the halfway stage. Going into the final round, Diksha has scores of 74-71-72, while Aditi has carded 72-69-75 after 54 holes.

England's Charley Hull (68) and America's Lilia Vu (67), on nine-under-par after three rounds, are sharing the top spot.

Aditi, who has four Ladies European Tour (LET) wins including the Hero Indian Open, seemed headed for a disastrous round as she bogeyed three times on the front nine. She accumulated more bogeys on the 11th and 12th to go

5-over. However, birdies on the 13th, 15th and 18th helped salvage the round, though she had another bogey on the 17th.

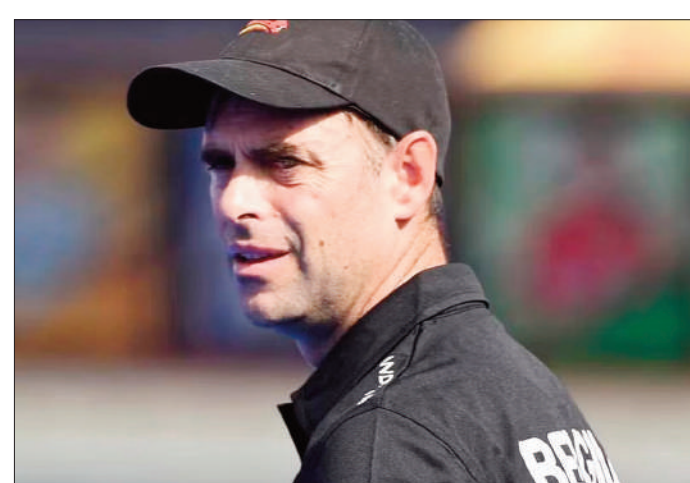
Diksha had 10 pars to start her third round and birdied the Par-5 11th, but gave away a shot on Par-4 15th and parred the remaining holes. Aditi found just 10 of the 15 fairways. She needed 32 putts and had 10 greens in regulation out of 18. Diksha had 15 greens in regulation but needed 33 putts. Home favourite Hull fired a round of 68 (-4) on day three, which put her in contention for the title at the final major of the year. The three-time LET winner made a birdie on the first before dropping a shot on the second. Hull then made further birdies on the eighth and 11th.

The 27-year-old Hull dropped another shot on the 14th but got into the groove, making three consecutive birdies on the 15th, 16th and 17th to move to the top of the leaderboard.

CHENNAI, Aug 13 (PTI): The Asian Champions Trophy title triumph will "really count" as India set sights on Asian Games gold in order to secure automatic qualification to 2024 Paris Olympics, said head coach Craig Fulton. The India hockey team fought back from two goals down to eke out a 4-3 win over Malaysia in the final to claim their fourth ACT title here on Saturday. With the Hangzhou Asian Games scheduled to commence on September 23, Fulton was asked whether a thrilling final like this will help the side in the continental showcase event.

"Finals are cagey; they never go smooth. It comes down to a moment or shootouts. So, it's important to have a game like this because it really counts.

"At the same time, it's (ACT) not the Asian Games. So, our feet



are firmly on the ground. But, if you said to me to win the Asian Games and lose this final, I would obviously vouch for winning the Games," added Fulton. Fulton said the comeback story

of the team had begun two months back.

"Two months ago," Fulton told PTI on the sidelines after India's comeback win.

Asked about the biggest learn-

ing from this tournament, he said, "Not to have back-to-back tournaments; that would be a start."

Several teams had reservations over the timing of ACT with the Asian Games just weeks away. India were trailing 1-3 at half-time before they turned things around in the second half.

Decoding the performance, Fulton, while giving due credit to Malaysia, said that coming into the final after a "high-quality" semifinal against Japan the previous day hadn't been easy.

India thrashed Japan 5-0 in the last-four stage.

"We had a really good game (against Malaysia). Also, against Japan in the semis -- a high-quality match. To back that up is always hard. Malaysia raised their game and controlled the first half.

We didn't do bad, but we were not 100 per cent committed to

what we were trying to do," he added. "We regrouped at half-time. All we needed was a goal to bounce back. And then, it was just a matter of time to equalise and try to get the winner."

Fulton gave credit to his boys for trusting each other when the chips were down. He added that fighting back from a two-goal deficit showed the true character of the side.

"You will find guys who trust each other and trust to get the job done. They feel confident about stepping up. After the first half, we decided to press, and the younger players stood up along with the senior players.

"The character of the team is great. It is a really important step because you need to know that you can come from behind, as it's easy to play when you are up by two or three goals," he continued.

Shillong Lajong beat Downtown Heroes to finish Durand Cup campaign with a win

KOKRAJHAR, Aug 13 (PTI): Ronney Wilson Kharbudon's brace helped 10-man Shillong Lajong FC beat Downtown Heroes 2-1 in a Group D fixture, and end their campaign on a high note in the Durand Cup here on Sunday.

Lajong goalkeeper Ngamsanglena Haokip was shown a straight red card in the 10th minute of the game at the SAI Stadium. Wilson's own goal in the 23rd minute gave Downtown the lead, but he recovered to score two more goals in the 36th and 52nd minute as Lajong finished the tournament with three points from three matches.

Lajong were playing for pride as they were already out of reckoning to qualify for the knockouts, while Downtown were playing to make a mark at the highest level of Indian football.

The first real chance of the opening half came for Lajong as Pursunep's effort was saved brilliantly by Downtown keeper Paramjit Baghel. The counter attack on that save led to Shillong Lajong being reduced to ten men. Nigerian Ezekiel Oroh was free on goal but he was felled by Lajong goalkeeper Haokip who came rushing outside the box.

Lajong played positively even with a man down as they came close to breaking the deadlock in the 16th minute. Kynsailang Khongsit's cross was met by Laiwang Bohham before the Downtown keeper could punch it away but his header went wide.

Figo Syndai's effort minutes later hit the



side net. Downtown broke the deadlock in the 23rd minute through an own goal by Ronney. DHFC Captain Shahid Nazir's free kick was deflected into his own goal by Ronney giving the lead for the side from Kashmir.

Lajong continued to play positive football which led to the equaliser in the 36th minute. A corner from Laiwang Bohham was met by Syndai and the ball was headed in by Ronney, making amends for his own goal earlier. The teams went into the break with scores level on 1-1.

Downtown were trying to make use of their personnel advantage but could not find the decisive moves in the final stretch. On the other end, Lajong were menacing on the counter attacks and were making good use of their set pieces.

One such move led to the second goal for the Reds. Captain Hardy Cliff Nongbri's freekick from the center circle was met well by Ronney and his glancing header beat keeper Paramjit Baghel to give them a 2-1 lead.

The game followed the same pattern as Downtown chased an equaliser. The Shillong side was organised in defence and made good use of the counter attacks.

They created better chances as well, mostly from set pieces. Syndai had a golden opportunity to finish off the game but he shot wide after the Downtown keeper spilled the ball off a corner.

Lajong saw off the rest of the game as they signed off the tournament with a win. Their next assignment will be I-League, having gained a promotion this year.

Minister Jayanta Malla Baruah elected AAA president



HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Aug 13: The annual general meeting of the Assam Athletic Association (AAA) took place at the Sarusajai Stadium, Guwahati on Sunday, witnessing the election of a new leadership team. In the presence of esteemed dignitaries and sports enthusiasts, minister Jayanta Malla Baruah was elected as the president of AAA and MLA Manab Deka assumed the role of vice president. Githartha Goswami was elected General Secretary, AAA. Meanwhile, Shri Ritubaran Sarmah took the role of Treasurer, AAA. The new leadership is poised to steer the association towards a new era of athletic excellence and development.

India jump to No 3 place in FIH rankings after ACT triumph

NEW DELHI, Aug 13 (PTI): Giving them a big boost ahead of the Asian Games, India on Sunday rose to third place in FIH rankings following their Asian Champions Trophy triumph. India (2771.35 points) jumped one place to third and went past England (2763.50 points) behind top-ranked Netherlands (3095.90 points) and Belgium (2917.87 points).

This was the second time India rose to No 3 in FIH rankings. India had achieved a similar ranking in 2021 after securing a bronze in the Tokyo Olympics, which was their first medal at the

Games in 41 years.

On Saturday, the Harmanpreet Singh-led side defeated Malaysia 4-3 to lift the ACT title. They made an incredible comeback from 1-3 down. In the last edition of the event in 2021, India had finished third.

The Indian hockey team's next assignment will be the Asian Games in Hangzhou from September 23. The ACT runners-up Malaysia remained on ninth in the FIH rankings. Apart from India and Malaysia, South Korea too find themselves at 11th while Pakistan is placed 16th.



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বিভাজন বিভীষিকা স্মৃতি দিবস

১৪ আগষ্ট ২০২৩

১৯৪৭ চনৰ ১৪ আগষ্ট ৪ ভাৰত-পাকিস্তান বিভাজনৰ ফলত সৃষ্টি হোৱা জাতিভেদ, হিংসাৰ দাবানলত জ্বলি হাই হোৱা এটা ক'লা অধ্যয়। এই বিভাজনৰ ফলত লক্ষ লক্ষ ভাৰতীয়ই হেৰুৱাইছিল হেঙুলোৱাৰ ঠিকনা আৰু বহুমূলীয়া জীৱন।

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