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- Pak's ex-foreign minister Qureshi arrested under Official Secrets Act
- Zelenskyy in Netherlands after US approved sending Dutch F-16 jets to Ukraine
- Amit Shah releases 'report card' of MP BJP govt
- Kharge forms new CWC, includes some G23 members in new team

Case of 7-yr-old boy, mother, aunt burnt alive in ambulance handed over to CBI

IMPHAL, Aug 20: The incident of a seven-year-old boy of mixed Kuki-Meitei parentage being burnt alive along with his mother and aunt are among the 20 cases handed over by the Manipur Police to the CBI, which has begun its probe into the ethnic clashes that erupted in the state on May 3, officials said.

The clashes broke out between Kukis and Meiteis organised in the hill districts to protest against the Meitei community's demand for Scheduled Tribe (ST) status. More than 160 people have been killed and several hundreds injured in the violence.

The boy, Tonsing Hangsing, was killed when an ambulance being escorted by police was attacked by a mob and set ablaze in West Imphal district's Iroisemba on June 4.

His mother and aunt - Meena Hangsing and Lydia Lourembam - were taking him to a hospital in the Manipur capital after he suffered a bullet injury in his head during a shootout. While the boy's mother was from the Meitei community, his father was a Kuki.

Officials of the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) have been handed over two

Manipur violence

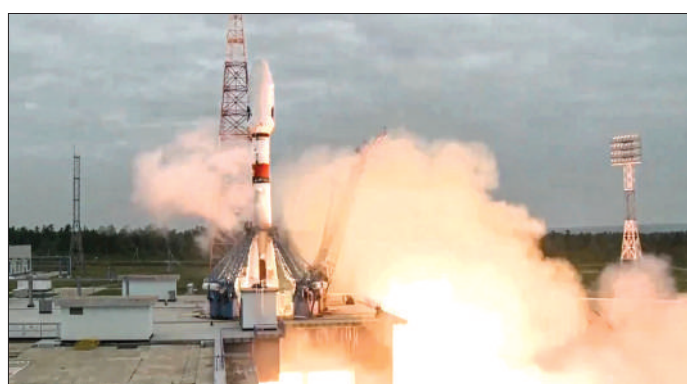
FIRs - one filed by police at the Lamphel station and the other filed by the boy's father - Joshua Hangsing - at the Kangpokpi police station. The case at the Lamphel police station has been registered under sections pertaining to murder while the one at Kangpokpi has been registered under attempt to commit culpable homicide not amounting to murder. Tonsing, with his mother and aunt, (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

Race to the moon: Russia out of contest, India on track for soft landing Luna-25 crash lands, Chandrayaan-3 set for Aug 23 date

BENGALURU, Aug 20: Russia has bowed out of the race to the moon with India after its robot lander crashed on the lunar surface, setting Chandrayaan-3 on an easier course while ISRO scientists achieved yet another successful manoeuvre to take the spacecraft closer to the moon in its soft-landing attempt on August 23.

ISRO on Sunday said it has successfully reduced the orbit of Chandrayaan-3 mission's Lander Module (LM), and it is now expected to touch down on the surface of the Moon at 6.04 PM on Wednesday.

This came even as Russian lander Luna-25 crashed into the moon after going into uncontrolled orbit. "The apparatus moved into an unpredictable orbit and ceased to exist as a result of a collision with the surface of the moon," Russian space agency Roscosmos said in a statement.



Roscosmos said it lost contact with the spacecraft on Saturday after it ran into trouble while preparing for its pre-landing orbit after reporting an "abnormal situation" that its specialists were analysing. The Luna-25 was launched from the Vostochny Cosmodrome in Russia's Far East on August 10.

Incidentally, the ambitious

Chandrayaan-2 had also crashed into the lunar surface four years ago, but its successor has ticked all the orbit-related boxes so far as part of its journey towards the Moon. Chandrayaan's LM, comprising the lander 'Vikram' and rover 'Pragyan', is expected to touch down on the lunar surface on Wednesday, August 23 at 6.04 pm, added ISRO, which had earlier

said the soft landing would take place at 5.47 pm that day.

Having taken off on August 11, Luna-25 was supposed to touch the moon surface on August 21, two days before Vikram's scheduled landing. ISRO said the second and final deboosting (slowing down) operation has successfully reduced the LM orbit to 25 km x 134 km. The module would undergo internal checks and await the sunrise at the designated landing site. The powered descent is expected to commence on August 23, 2023, around 5.45 pm, ISRO said in a post on 'X', formerly Twitter.

The Russian setback brought back memories of ISRO's Chandrayaan-2 with the lander 'Vikram' along with its rover 'Pragyan' crash landing on September 6, 2019, while attempting a touchdown in the south pole of the moon. Russia's space agency Roscosmos said in accordance

with the flight programme of the automation station Luna-25, on August 19, it was planned to issue an impulse to form its pre-landing elliptical orbit.

However, the communication was interrupted and the measures taken to get in touch with Luna-25 did not produce any results.

According to ISRO, India's pursuit of space exploration will reach a remarkable milestone with the Chandrayaan-3 mission poised to achieve a soft landing on the surface of the Moon. This achievement marks a significant step forward for Indian Science, Engineering, Technology, and Industry, symbolising our nation's progress in space exploration, it said.

This eagerly anticipated event will be broadcast live on August 23, starting from 5.27 pm IST on multiple platforms, including the ISRO Website, its YouTube channel, the (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

HT BRIEFS

Eviction notice

KHERONI: Tensions are rising in the vicinity of Lamsakhang Railway Station as local residents have been asked by railway officials to vacate the area surrounding the station. Local residents have raised allegations that the railway officials issued this directive without any prior notice or official announcement. The officials have instructed those residing around the railway station to clear the area within 15 days, after which an eviction process will be initiated. However, locals argue that they have been operating shops and engaging in small businesses in the area for the past five decades. The railway authorities' claim extends over 90 meters from the railway station, encompassing institutions such as Lamsakhang LP School, ME School, High School, rural bank, and health center. As a result, the local community is deeply concerned about the impact of this eviction notice on their homes, businesses, and the essential services provided by these institutions.

Man arrested with brown sugar

IMPHAL: Manipur police apprehended a man from Assam and seized a substantial amount of brown sugar concealed in soap cases during a recent operation. The arrested individual, identified as Rahul Saikia (38) from Jorhat district in Assam, was driving a Renault KWID car. The anti-narcotic cell of Senapati district police intercepted the vehicle during a routine check near Martyr's Park, about two kilometers south of Mao police station. The incident took place around 5:30 am on Sunday. Upon inspecting the car, the police discovered 30 soap cases hidden under the front dashboard, containing a total of 346.43 grams of brown sugar. The drug was cleverly packed in the soap cases, indicating an attempt to smuggle it without detection. Rahul Saikia was detained and handed over to the Mao police station for further investigation. The seized brown sugar and the evidence related to the case were also turned over to the authorities for legal proceedings.

A significant step, says Khandu; People of both regions to come closer: Pramod

Bodo civic holds meet in Arunachal to promote cooperation and understanding

HT Correspondent KOKRAJHAR, Aug 20: A significant event aimed at fostering strong communication, cooperation, and relationship between Arunachal Pradesh and Assam's Bodoland Territorial Region took place in Itanagar on Sunday. The Bodo civic meet and interactive session focused on comprehending the socio-cultural concerns of the Bodo community in Arunachal Pradesh.

The event, organised by the All Arunachal Pradesh Bodo Welfare Society, unfolded at the Dorjee Khandu Convention Hall, attracting Bodo individuals from different parts of Arunachal Pradesh and the Biswanath and Sonitpur districts of Assam. The gathering facilitated fruitful discussions concerning the well-being and development of the Bodo community residing in both regions.

Gracing the occasion as the chief guest Arunachal Pradesh chief minister Pema Khandu applauded the organisers for spearheading the event, aiming to



strengthen collaboration and relationships among those living along the Assam-Arunachal Pradesh border.

He acknowledged that this interactive session marked a significant step towards addressing socio-cultural issues faced by the Bodos in Arunachal Pradesh. Khandu stated, "It is a remarkable moment in the context of Assam-Arunachal relations." He commended the participation of top leaders from the Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR), Bodo Sahitya Sabha, Nyishi Elite Society, and members of the Bodo community in Arunachal Pradesh. The cooperative effort between Assam and Arunachal Pradesh has resulted in a significant milestone in terms of harmonious coexistence along the border.

Khandu extended gratitude to Pramod Boro, the chief executive member of BTR, for facilitating a cultural stall for Arunachal at Srirampur Gate, the checkpoint at the Assam-West Bengal border, which serves as the gateway to Northeast India. Pramod Boro expressed hope that the interactive session organized by the All Arunachal Pradesh Bodo Welfare Society would strengthen bonds and bring the people of both regions closer in the future. He highlighted the historic and fraternal bond that the Bodo people share with those in Arunachal Pradesh. The event was attended by notable figures including Itanagar MLA Techi Kasso, BTR executive members, Bodo Sahitya Sabha vice president, and ABSU advisor Kusum Khungur Swargiyar, among others. The successful event signifies a step forward in enhancing mutual understanding and cooperation between the regions of Assam and Arunachal Pradesh.

KSA raises concerns over alleged land compensation fraud in road construction

HT Correspondent

KHERONI, Aug 20: The Karbi Students Association (KSA) has raised serious allegations of land compensation fraud in the ongoing road construction process under Assam Mala in West Karbi Anglong. This issue bears a resemblance to previous allegations of fraudulent activities involving Revenue and Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC) officials during the four-lane road construction in Karbi Anglong.

KSA has put forth claims that land compensation for the acquisition related to the Assam Mala road construction in the Tumpreng-Mulokbong stretch is being fraudulently manipulated by a coalition of officials from the Donkumkam Revenue Circle and KAAC. They assert that landowners, particularly in the Mulokbong area, are being deprived of rightful compensation. Allegedly, individuals who have never resided in the area are making compensation claims using falsified documents.

The association further accuses officials from the Donkumkam Revenue Circle, including individuals like Pimpoo Kro, Benting Hanse, and Krishna Sarma, of being involved in this land compensation fraud. Despite filing Right to Information (RTI) applications, KSA claims that they have not received satisfactory replies from these officials.

Moreover, the authorities have not provided clear information about the compensation to be awarded for agricultural land and homestead. KSA has issued a warning that if the matter remains unresolved, they will initiate an agitation to draw attention to the alleged fraudulent activities and lack of transparency in the land compensation process related to road construction.

Formal dress code for teachers

HT Bureau GUWAHATI, Aug 20: In a bid to promote professionalism and maintain a sense of decorum, the Department of Higher Education in Assam has introduced a formal dress code for teachers in higher educational institutes. This directive aims to uphold standards of modesty, decency, and seriousness among educators during their duty hours.

Recognising the significant role that teachers play in shaping students' lives, the Department of Higher Education has mandated that teachers avoid wearing flashy or casual attire while at work. Instead, teachers are expected to opt for clean, modest, and decent clothing in subdued colours that project an air of professionalism. The decision to implement a dress code stems (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

Guv attends 3rd foundation day of Assam Chah Janagosthi Shiksha Sanskriti Nyas

HT Bureau GUWAHATI, Aug 20: Assam Governor Gulab Chand Kataria graced the 3rd foundation day celebration of Assam Chah Janagosthi Shiksha Sanskriti Nyas at the PWD Convention Centre in the city on Sunday.

In his address, Governor Kataria emphasised the significance of the organisation in working towards the socio-economic, cultural, and academic development of the tea workers and the tea community. He commended the Nyas for its dedication to raising awareness among the tea community about their rights and privileges, as well as various government schemes and healthcare facilities.

Governor Kataria highlighted the Nyas's role in instilling cultural and moral values in children, fostering



a love for the nation, and enhancing education through cultural enrichment. He stressed that education combined with cultural and societal values is essential for the holistic development of students. He encouraged the Nyas to focus on providing education that nurtures culturally aware individuals who contribute positively to society.

Recognising the Nyas's efforts in shaping the youth and promoting knowledge and wisdom, even in remote areas, (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

Assam Police uses Bollywood humour to highlight online security

SRK, Hrithik Roshan caution against sharing OTPs

HT Bureau GUWAHATI, Aug 20: Assam Police showcased their creativity on the microblogging site 'X' (formerly Twitter) on Sunday by using a popular Bollywood scene to deliver an important lesson in online security. Drawing inspiration from the iconic movie "Kabhi Khushi Kabhie Gham" (K3G), the police department ingeniously conveyed the significance of safeguarding One Time Passwords (OTPs) and refraining from sharing them carelessly.

In a tweet, Assam Police shared a video featuring Bollywood actors Shah Rukh Khan and Hrithik Roshan from the movie, humorously cautioning against sharing OTPs with unauthorised individuals. The police urged users to promptly delete their OTPs after use, emphasising that these pass-



words are specifically designed for single-use security.

An OTP is a dynamically generated alphanumeric or numeric code that functions as a temporary authentication measure for a solitary

transaction or login session. This method is known for its enhanced security compared to static passwords, which can be prone to hacking or reused across multiple accounts. Although OTPs signifi-

cantly enhance security, they can still be intercepted by cybercriminals if shared recklessly. The police's clever reference to the K3G scene aims to capture attention and stress the importance of preserving online security.

Integrating OTPs into the login process adds an extra layer of protection, either as a standalone authentication method or in conjunction with conventional passwords. The dynamic nature of OTPs, changing with each use, ensures that even if intercepted, they hold no value to malicious actors. Various techniques exist for generating OTPs, encompassing security tokens, mobile applications, and more. Security tokens, including hardware devices or software applications, generate unique codes at regular intervals to authenticate users.

Rahul speaking like 'China's propaganda machinery', alleges BJP

NEW DELHI, Aug 20: The BJP on Sunday condemned Congress leader Rahul Gandhi's claim that China has grabbed grazing land in Ladakh, alleging he was defaming India by making statements like Beijing's "propaganda machinery".

Senior BJP leader and former Union minister Ravi Shankar Prasad dismissed Gandhi's claims as "absolutely wrong" and said China had to withdraw in Galwan due to the bravery and sacrifices of the Indian soldiers.

The BJP's reaction came after Gandhi claimed that Prime Minister Narendra Modi's assertion that not an inch of the land in Ladakh has been taken over by China is not true. The people of Ladakh are concerned about their grazing land "taken over by the Chinese Army," Gandhi, who is visiting Ladakh, said after paying tributes to his father and former prime minister Rajiv Gandhi on his birth anniversary.

Lashing out at Rahul Gandhi for his claims, Prasad said at a press conference, "Whatever you have said about Ladakh is absolutely wrong... I condemn your

entire statement on behalf of the party."

"Rahul Gandhi ji, you are raising questions over our soldiers' bravery and sacrifice in Galwan... Why do you defame India visiting there? Why do you become China's propaganda machinery?" the BJP leader said. "Rahul Gandhi, whenever you visit border area you say something and you offer propaganda to China against India," he added.

Prasad said that China had to withdraw in Galwan due to the bravery and sacrifice of Indian soldiers.

"Is it the truth or not?" he asked, alleging that it has become the "nature of Rahul Gandhi to make anti-India statements".

The BJP leader questioned Gandhi's understanding of issues related to India's security and appealed to the Congress leader to not weaken the morale of the country with such remarks.

"We will debate with you on how much you understand the needs of India's security... But please in matters of security, do not weaken the morale of India," Prasad said. (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

Finance Commission expected to be constituted by November end: Finance secretary

NEW DELHI, Aug 20: The government is expected to constitute the 16th Finance Commission by end of November, finance secretary T V Somanathan said.

Finance Commission is a constitutional body that gives suggestions on Centre-state financial relations.

It suggests, among other things, the ratio in which tax is to be divided between the Centre and states for five years, beginning April 1, 2026.

"The Finance Commission is expected to be constituted by end of November because that's the statutory requirement," he told PTI in an interview.

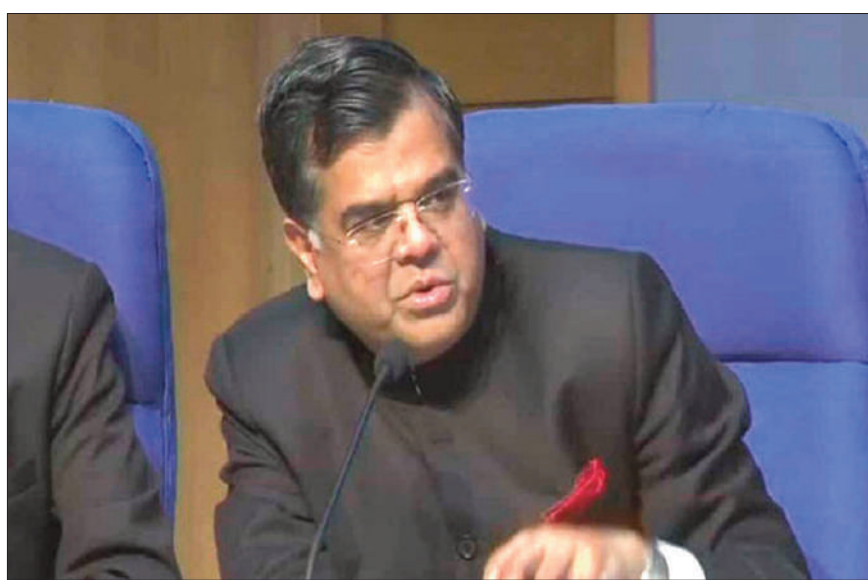
Terms of Reference (ToR) for the commission is being finalised, he said.

The previous Finance Commission submitted its report on November 9, 2020, for the 5 fiscals -- 2021-22 to 2025-26 -- to the President.

The 15th Commission under N K Singh had kept the tax devolution ratio at 42 per cent -- at the same level suggested by the 14th Commission.

The central government accepted the report of the commission, and accordingly, the states are being given 42 per cent of the divisible tax pool of the Centre during the period 2021-22 to 2025-26.

The 15th finance commission's recommendations include the fiscal deficit, debt



path for the Union and states, and additional borrowing room to states based on performance in power sector reforms.

As per the glide path for fiscal consolidation, the government aims to bring down the fiscal deficit to 4.5 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP) by the 2025-26 fiscal.

For the current fiscal, the deficit is projected at 5.9 per cent of GDP, lower than 6.4

per cent in the last fiscal ended March 31, 2023. He also said the government will stick to the fiscal deficit target of 5.9 per cent of the GDP as robust tax, non-tax collections will help meet the spending requirement and make up for any shortfall in disinvestment proceeds.

Although there would be a shortfall with respect to disinvestment, he said, this short-

fall would be met by non-tax revenue mobilisation.

"Disinvestment target is unlikely to be met. However, I would say in aggregate the collective amount between disinvestment and non-tax revenue is likely to be very close to the budget," he said.

The total of disinvestment receipts, plus non-tax receipts are likely to be very close to the Budget Estimates, he said.

"We expect to adhere to our fiscal deficit target this year...none of the events so far have caused anything for us to deviate from it," he said.

The government has already got a higher dividend from the Reserve Bank of India and expects higher dividends from public sector banks and other PSUs than estimated in the Budget.

The Reserve Bank of India in May approved a ₹ 87,416-crore dividend payout to the central government for 2022-23, nearly triple of what it paid in the preceding year. The government was expecting ₹ 48,000 crore from the RBI, public sector banks and financial institutions in the current fiscal.

The dividend payout by the RBI was ₹ 30,307 crore for the accounting year 2021-22. With public sector banks posting record profits of over ₹ 1 lakh crore in fiscal 2022-23, the government's earnings from them are likely to be higher. (PTI)

'India in final stages of introducing national policy to promote R&D in pharma-medical devices sectors'



GANDHINAGAR, Aug 20: Union Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya on Sunday said India is in the final stages of introducing a national policy to promote research and development and innovation in the pharma-medical devices sectors.

India's commitment to quality, accessibility and affordability in healthcare is unwavering, particularly demonstrated during the Covid-19 pandemic, Mandaviya said in his keynote address on Sunday to the Indian industry leaders in pharmaceuticals, G20 ministers and delegates, on sidelines of the G20 health ministers meeting organised here between August 17-19. He also spoke about India's vision for the future of healthcare, centered around a transition from volume-based approaches to a value-based leadership model.

"Acknowledging the paramount importance of research and development in healthcare advancement, Dr Mandaviya announced India's strides in fostering an innovative environment," a government release said.

"India is in the final stages of introducing a national policy to promote research and development and innovation in the pharma-medical devices sectors," the release said quoting Mandaviya.

The Union minister invited countries, government bodies, industry leaders, healthcare professionals and researchers to join forces in a united effort "to elevate the pharmaceutical and medical devices sectors to unprecedented heights."

He also acknowledged India's prowess in the pharmaceuticals and medical devices field, emphasising its role as a global hub for pharmaceutical excellence.

In their opening remarks, Minister of Health for the Republic of Indonesia Budi G Sadikin, and Health Minister of the Netherlands Dr Ernst Kuipers highlighted India's success in health and pharmacology and stressed the need for collaboration between nations.

"The medicines manufactured in India save lives- in the Netherlands, in Europe and across the

world. I look forward to intensified collaboration with India. There are tremendous opportunities for partnership in innovative medicines," Dr Kuipers said.

"With the capacity and knowledge that India has in generic and specific drugs, we look forward to a more integrated collaboration with India," he added.

Mandaviya also held a bilateral meeting with Indonesia's Health Minister Sadikin and discussed several issues of cooperation and collaboration in the health sector.

He also led a delegation of G20 delegates and ministers, including the Indonesian health minister, to a Jan Aushadhi Kendra to share with them India's success in providing accessible, affordable and quality medicines to its citizens.

After visiting the Jan Aushadhi Kendra, Sadikin said his country wants to replicate the Indian model to provide easy access to the best quality medicine to his people at the best price.

India provides a large number of quality generic medicines and surgical equipment at affordable prices for all through its network of 9,600 Jan Aushadhi Kendras.

After the visit, Sadikin told mediapersons, "I want to give the best medicines to my people in Indonesia. I have seen many models of different countries, and India's Jan Aushadhi Kendra model is the best in the world in terms of providing quality, accessibility and affordability of medicines to the people."

"I look around many countries and I confess that India has the best," he said. Sadikin said he asked Mandaviya to visit Indonesia and bring his government officials and businessmen to talk, "public to public, private to private," and then replicate, with his permission, the model that has been done marvelously in India.

"In the summit, discussions were held on the Jan Aushadhi Kendra. In a scenario where the cost of healthcare and medicine is on the rise, the Indian model has been lauded by health ministers across the world for its low cost and quality medicines," Mandaviya said. (PTI)

HDFC MF pares 2.12 stake in GRSE

KOLKATA, Aug 20: HDFC Mutual Fund (MF) has pared 2.12 per cent stake in Garden Reach Shipbuilders and Engineers (GRSE) between February 28 and August 17, held by its schemes.

The MF, informing the bourses, said it held a 7.4 per cent stake in GRSE as on February 28, and this has come down to 5.28 per cent as on August 17.

HDFC Balanced Advantage Fund is the MF scheme that holds a stake in GRSE. As on June 30, this scheme held a 6.04 per cent stake in the company, BSE data showed.

On the other hand, foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) held a 3.11 per cent stake in GRSE as on June 30, 2023. The government holds 74.5 per cent of the city-based PSU.

GRSE shares rose 28.53 per cent during the week to close at ₹ 748.55 in NSE with a high volume of trading.

Foreign Portfolio Investors hold 3.11 per cent in the PSU warship maker as on June 30.

Other PSU port stocks like Mazgaon Dock and Cochin Shipyard also rose during the week. (PTI)

Trials for Coal India's e-auction platform successful: Officials

KOLKATA, Aug 20: The trials for Coal India's in-house e-auction platform have been carried out satisfactorily, and the mechanism can have a full-fledged rollout across the company's coal-producing subsidiaries, officials said Sunday. A total of seven trial auctions involving nearly 18 million tonnes of coal have been conducted, they said. The mining major has entrusted its wholly owned subsidiary Central Mine Planning & Design Institute (CMPDI) to roll-out the in-house e-auction system, with technical assistance from the National Informatics Centre.

At present, external agencies like MSTC and mjunction are in agreement with Coal India to execute e-auctions of coal.

"During initial trials, there were some teething issues that were resolved by CMPDI and NIC officials. In subsequent e-auctions, the trials were conducted smoothly. The entire system is automated, without any manual intervention," one of the officials said. (PTI)

GST reward scheme on anvil; customers can participate in lucky draw

NEW DELHI, Aug 20: Individuals may soon get rewarded for uploading GST invoice on a mobile app as the government is likely to launch the long awaited 'Mera Bill Mera Adhikar' scheme soon. Under the invoice incentivisation scheme, cash prize of ₹ 10 lakh to ₹ 1 crore monthly/quarterly could be given to individuals who upload invoice received from retailer or wholesaler on the app, two officials told PTI.

The 'Mera Bill Mera Adhikar' mobile app will be available on both iOS and android platforms. The invoice uploaded on the app should have the GSTIN of the seller, invoice number, amount paid and tax amount. An individual would be able to upload a maximum of 25 genuine invoices in a month on the app and the invoice should have a minimum purchase value of ₹ 200, an official said. Over 500 computerised lucky draws would be conducted every month

where prize money could run into lakhs of rupees. Two lucky draws will be done in a quarter where the prize amount could be ₹ 1 crore, officials said. The scheme is in the process of being finalised, they said, adding it could be launched as early as this month. To curb the menace of GST evasion, the government has already made electronic invoice mandatory for B2B transactions where the annual turnover exceeds ₹ 5 crore. The 'Mera Bill Mera Adhikar' scheme would ensure electronic invoice generation even in case of B2C customers so as to enable the buyer to be eligible to participate in the lucky draw. The scheme is conceptualised in a way so as to incentivise citizens and consumers to ask for genuine invoices from the seller when making business to consumer (B2C) purchase of goods or services, which are under the purview of Goods and Services Tax. (PTI)

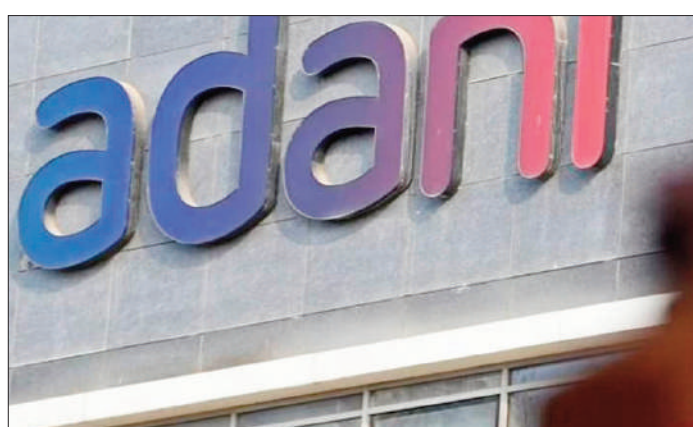
Adani to invest ₹ 2,000 cr to build 2 transmission lines in Mumbai city

MUMBAI, Aug 20: Adani Electricity Mumbai is investing over ₹ 2,000 crore to build two new transmission lines in the city to strengthen its network as it moves closer to go more green by sourcing as much as 60 per cent of the energy needed for the city from renewables by 2027, a senior company official said.

The two new transmission lines comprise the 84 ckm Kharghar (in Navi Mumbai) Vikhroli line in the northeastern suburb of the megapolopolis and the Thane-Aarey Colony line. The Vikhroli line will be ready by 2025.

"We hope to begin the work on the project from this October. The Thane line will begin after the first line and will be commissioned in 2027," a senior company official, who did not want to be quoted, told PTI. The company reached financial closure last week by securing ₹ 1,700 crore debt from international lenders for the projects being executed by its parent Adani Transmission.

"We will be investing more than ₹ 2,000 crore for this, of which ₹ 1,700 crore will be debt-funded," the official said, adding the project also includes setting up a 400-kV substation which will raise the transmission capacity by 1,500



mw, as the company expects the peak demand for the megapolis to cross 5,000 mw mark by FY25 from around 4,000 mw now.

The official said the company has made rapid strides in improving the supply of green energy to the city where it serves more than 34 lakh customers or 6 per cent of the total consumers of the city, by increasing the supply of solar and wind power by 10 times in the past three years to 30 per cent now from only 3 per cent when three years ago.

Asked if the Adani group company which entered the city's distribution business three years ago by buying out the licence from the

now crippled Anil Ambani group firm Reliance Energy for ₹ 18,000 crore, is on course to meet the recent public statement on increasing green energy mix to 60 per cent by 2027, the official answered in the affirmative saying "very much or even earlier given what we have done so far."

"We'll be following a hybrid model of solar and wind and given our current success the company is quite confident of making it or even bettering it," he said.

The transmission lines project involves developing the city's first-ever 400 kV substation facility. The Kharghar-Vikhroli project comprises 34 km of 400 kV and

NCCF to sell buffer onion at subsidised rate of ₹ 25/kg in Delhi from today

NEW DELHI, Aug 20: Cooperative NCCF will commence retail sale of onion from the government buffer stock at a subsidised rate of ₹ 25 per kg in the national capital from Monday to give relief to consumers from high prices of the kitchen staple, its top official said on Sunday.

The National Cooperative Consumers' Federation of India (NCCF) is already selling tomatoes on behalf of the central government at a subsidised rate and it has now been mandated to retail buffer onion.

The government has created a buffer stock of 3 lakh tonne of onion for 2023-24 fiscal. It has also decided to procure additional 2 lakh tonne onion for the buffer this year.

"To begin with, we will start retailing buffer onions in Delhi. We will sell at a subsidised rate of ₹ 25

per kg through our mobile vans and two retail outlets," NCCF Managing Director Anice Joseph Chandra told PTI.

Around 10 mobile vans will be dispatched on Monday in the national capital and more areas will be covered gradually. NCCF will also sell the commodity through its two retail outlets located at Nehru Place and Okhla in the national capital, she said.

NCCF also plans to sell onion online via ONDC (Open Network for Digital Commerce) platform and it is working out modalities, she added.

The government has identified Delhi, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Himachal Pradesh and Assam for the market intervention. The availability is being enhanced in these five states by disposing of buffer onion both in the wholesale and retail markets.

At wholesale markets, buffer onion is being sold at mandi rate, while in retail markets at a subsidised rate of ₹ 25 per kg. Retail sales will commence in Delhi from Monday, while in other four states it will start after two days, she said.

As per the official data, all-India average retail price of onion has increased by 19 per cent to ₹ 29.73 per kg on Sunday, from ₹ 25 per kg in the year-ago period.

In Delhi, retail price of onion has increased to ₹ 37 per kg from ₹ 28 per kg in the same period.

NCCF has been selling tomatoes at subsidised rates since last one month in Delhi, Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan. It started selling initially at ₹ 90 per kg when prices were ruling over ₹ 250 per kg in the retail market. Now that the arrivals have improved, the subsidised rate has been reduced to ₹ 40 per kg. (PTI)

Delivery work not permanent career choice, gig staffing segment sees half-yearly churn: Experts

MUMBAI, Aug 20: Blue-collar jobs in delivery and logistics are still a stopgap for workers with gig staffing companies recording a churn in recruited partners every 4-5 months, according to experts. Blue collar staffing for delivery and logistics, a relatively new job category, is seen by workers as a stopgap arrangement or means of generating supplementary income, say experts adding that many prefer not to take it up as a permanent career choice citing the "stigma" attached to these roles.

A Zinnov and Microsoft study in March noted that gig workers will play an instrumental role in India's \$5 trillion economy, with the current 77 lakh gig workforce set to triple to 2.3 crore by 2030, generating \$250 billion.

Out of the 13.5 lakh enrolments on work-as-a-service platform Awign, 18.1% are in blue-collar roles.

AI-driven hiring automation app, Vahan.ai, sees the highest demand for blue-collar workers from Hyderabad, Chennai, Bangalore, and Mumbai with substantial market share from tier 2 and tier 3 cities - Coimbatore, Jaipur, Lucknow, Amritsar, Chandigarh, and Ahmedabad.

Vahan.ai contributes to 50% of a leading food delivery player's delivery partners, founder and CEO



Madhav Krishna said. "We work with every large delivery company today, being the largest recruitment vendor for Zomato and Swiggy. The number of gig workers is about 4 to 5 lakh monthly, with 15 to 20% increase annually," Krishna notes.

He said there is "no slowdown" in the delivery space despite macroeconomic conditions. "We onboarded 86,000 new riders, adding to the 2.25 lakh riders onboarded previous year. Our referral program had 7 lakh touchpoints this year," Krishna added.

Blue collar staffing for delivery and logistics is relatively new, with about 60% of workers seeing them as stopgap arrangements, he points. (PTI)

Govt to procure 2 lakh tn of onion to create total 5-lakh-tn buffer stock this year

NEW DELHI, Aug 20: The government on Sunday announced it will procure an additional 2 lakh tonnes of onion in order to maintain a total buffer stock of 5 lakh tonnes this year and use that for retail intervention. The announcement has come a day after the government imposed a 40 per cent duty on the export of onions to improve local supplies and check its prices. For the current 2023-24 fiscal, the target for onion buffer was kept at 3 lakh tonnes, which has already been procured. Currently, the same buffer stock is being disposed of in the targeted markets in select states to improve the local availability and check price rise.

According to the official data, all-India average retail price of onion was ruling 19 per cent higher at ₹ 29.73 per kg on Sunday compared to ₹ 25 per kg in the year-ago period. In Delhi, retail price of onion has increased to ₹ 37 per kg from ₹ 28 per kg in the said period. "In an unprecedented move the government raised the quantum of onion buffer to 5 lakh tonnes this year, after achieving the initial procurement target of 3 lakh tonne," Consumer Affairs Ministry said in a statement.

The National Cooperative Consumers' Federation of India (NCCF) and the National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation of India (NAFED) have been directed to procure one lakh tonne each to achieve the additional procurement target alongside calibrated disposal of the procured stocks in major consumption centres, it said.

The buffer stock is maintained under the Price Stabilisation Fund (PSF) to meet any exigencies, if rates go up significantly during the lean supply season. The government had maintained a buffer



onion of 2.51 lakh tonne during the 2022-23 fiscal.

On disposal of onion from the buffer stock, the ministry said it has already commenced in target

major markets in states and union territories where retail prices are above the all-India average and/or are significantly higher than the previous month.

"As of date, about 1,400 tonnes of onions from the buffer have been dispatched to the targeted markets and are being continuously released to augment the availability," it said.

Apart from releasing in major markets, onions from the buffer are also being made available to retail consumers at a subsidised rate of ₹ 25 per kg through retail outlets and mobile vans of NCCF from August 21 in key markets.

"Retail sale of onion will be suitably enhanced in coming days by involving other agencies and e-commerce platforms," according to the ministry. (PTI)

Noted litterateur Dr Swadhinata Mahanta to receive Asomiya Sishu Sahitya Bota Award

HT Correspondent

TEZPUR, Aug 20: The highly regarded Asomiya Sishu Sahitya Bota Award for 2022, presented by Akanir Sishu Sahitya Sabha, will be bestowed upon esteemed educationist and prominent literary figure of the state, Dr Swadhinata Mahanta. Recognised for her contributions to the literary world, Dr Mahanta has earned multiple accolades and awards, including the Bina Sarma Memorial Children's Literature Award in 2015 from the Sadou Asom Lekhika Samaroh Samiti, the State Literary Award for 2016-17 from the government of Assam, and more.

A native of Tezpur, Dr Mahanta has enriched the Assamese literary landscape with her diverse creations, which encompass children's novels such as 'Kaziranga', 'Bol Aguwai Bol', and 'Pallabi'. Her children's poems, including 'Rod Jilmil', 'Mou Gun', 'Rong Chilmil', 'Tora Tirbir', 'Jon Jikmik', and 'Selected Children



Poem', have resonated with readers. Her biographical works, literary histories, and critiques, such as 'Naamghoshanupam', 'Jonakir Poharot Asomiya Kobita', 'Bharatar Swadhinata Andolonot Dhekiajuli Mukti Jujaru Phanidhar Das', 'Gahan Chandra Gowami', and 'Xoponor Bharat', have garnered acclaim within the Assamese liter-

ary sphere.

In addition to her role as an author, Dr Mahanta has contributed more than two hundred articles to newspapers, magazines, and souvenirs, as well as radio scripts and features. Her impact has extended to the field of education, where she served as a faculty member in the Assamese department at Darrang

College and presented several notable research papers.

Dr Mahanta's involvement in various literary and socio-cultural organisations is also noteworthy. She played a pivotal role as the founding joint secretary of Sadou Asom Lekhika Samaroh Samiti in 1974-75, as the secretary of the Sonitpur district committee of the same organisation, as the president of the Sonitpur Zila Sahitya Sabha, and as the state president of Bharatiya Itihas Sankalan Samiti, among other leadership positions.

The announcement of Dr Swadhinata Mahanta as the recipient of the prestigious Asomiya Sishu Sahitya Bota Award was made by Akanir Sahitya Sabha president Pankaj Barua and secretary Deepjyoti Bora.

The award ceremony is scheduled to take place in Tezpur in the near future, where Dr Mahanta will be honoured for her outstanding contributions to Assamese literature and education.

Assam Nepali Sahitya Sabha celebrates Bhasa Manyata Divas in Dongkamukam

HT Correspondent

DONGKAMUKAM, Aug 20: The Assam Nepali Sahitya Sabha's West Karbi Anglong District Committee organised the 32nd Bhasa Manyata Divas (Language Recognition Day) at Mugasong Bhanu Natya Manch near Tumpren in West Karbi Anglong. The event was a celebration of the Nepali language and literature.

Durga Khatiwara, president of Assam Nepali Sahitya Sabha, graced the occasion as the chief guest. He spoke about the courage, intelligence, and discipline exhibited by Gorkha people worldwide and emphasised the need to show-

case their history through writing. Khatiwara acknowledged that while many writers have emerged from the Gorkha community in the past, it is essential to continue contributing to literature.

Khatiwara released two books during the event: 'Aasthanta' written by Late Khagendra Dahal (published by Keshab Humagain) and an Assamese book titled 'Bukusat Himalor Bakhona' written by Bishnu Nirola and translated by Durga Katuwal (published by Indira Luitel Nirola).

The program featured poetry recitations in memory of Late Bom Bahadur Bhandari, sponsored by

Kamar Bhandari.

Lila Prasad Nirola, president of the Sabha, unfurled the organisation's flag, followed by tributes to departed leaders led by Bhavani Upadhyay, headmaster of Sumeswar Saikia Girls ME School, Taradubi. A plantation drive was also undertaken, led by Kul Prasad Adhikari.

The event aimed to promote Nepali language and literature, encourage writing, and honour the contributions of Nepali writers in the region. Renowned local writer Rana Kafle also participated in the program, which was conducted by Bishnu Nirola.

Intimate discussion held to enhance educational environment in Bhurbandha Block

HT Correspondent

MORIGAON, Aug 20: An intimate discussion aimed at fostering an educational environment and ensuring accountability among teachers was held on Sunday at Bhurbandha Education Block. Organised by the Bhurbandha Block Primary Teachers' Association of Morigaon district, the meeting brought together teachers, the newly appointed block primary education officer Parag Dutta, and newly transferred accounting officers in a friendly atmosphere.

Chaired by Manas Pratim Patar, president of the Bhurbandha Block Primary Teachers' Association, the meeting addressed various issues concerning primary teachers working under the Bhurbandha Education Block. The participants collaborated to provide positive cooperation for the future enhancement of education in the region.

Key attendees included Mojibur Rahman, advisor of Morigaon District Primary Teachers' Association, Pradip Kumar Nath, assistant



secretary, Pabitra Barman, block vice president, Arit Kumar Bar-doloi, block organising secretary, and various centre secretaries of the Bhurbandha Block Primary Teachers' Association. Additionally, senior accountant Sumitra Pal, accountants Jyotimoi Devnath, Chandan Singh, Jogesh Das, Hiro Pal, and Munindra Kowar graced the event. During the discussion, education officer Parag Dutta assured that every possible effort will

be made to enhance the educational aspects of the Bhurbandha education block in the future. He expressed gratitude to the Bhurbandha Block Primary Teachers' Association for organising this important discussion within the block.

The meeting served as a platform for meaningful dialogues, collaboration, and the shared goal of improving the quality of education within the Bhurbandha education block.

NFR achieves significant freight unloading in July

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Aug 20: Northeast Frontier Railway continues to bolster its efforts to maintain the supply of essential and other commodities by achieving a remarkable increase in freight unloading. In the month of July this year, a total of 1064 freight carrying rakes were successfully unloaded. From April to July 2023, within the current financial year, NF Railway achieved unloading of 4447 freight carrying rakes within its jurisdiction.

Various goods, including FCI rice, sugar, salt, edible oil, fertiliser, cement, coal, automobiles, containers, and other items, were transported and unloaded in different goods sheds within the jurisdiction of NF Railway.

During July 2023, Assam witnessed unloading of 598 rakes of freight carrying trains, out of which 321 were loaded with essential commodities.

Sivasagar declares 'no-tobacco zone' in encouraging move

HT Correspondent

SIVASAGAR, Aug 20: In a commendable step towards creating a tobacco-free environment, the Sivasagar Zilla Parishad office and the ASTC campus in Sivasagar have been officially designated as 'no-tobacco zones'. This decision comes as a result of official orders issued by the District Tobacco Control Committee of Sivasagar. The campuses have been adorned with appropriate signage, and both officials and visitors have been sensitised about the adverse effects of tobacco use.

The need for such measures is underscored by statistics. According to the India Global Adult Tobacco Survey (GATS 2016-17), nearly 49% of adults in Assam use tobacco in some form. Nationally, tobacco use contributes to the deaths of approximately 13 lakh people each year, with daily fatalities hovering around 3500. Tobacco consumption is a leading cause of various health issues, including cancer, cardiovascular disease, diabetes, chronic lung disease, stroke, infertility, and tuberculosis. Smokers of beedis and cigarettes tend to die 6 to 10 years earlier than non-smokers.

Moreover, exposure to second-hand smoke also poses significant health risks to infants, children, and adults, leading to conditions like asthma attacks, respiratory infections, and ear infections. In India, 30.2% of adults are exposed to secondhand smoke in indoor workplaces, 7.4% in restaurants, and 13.3% on public transportation. Among youth aged 13 to 15, 36.6% are exposed to secondhand smoke in public places, and 21.9% are exposed at home.

To enforce the provisions of the Cigarettes and Other Tobacco Products Act (COTPA Act 2003), an enforcement drive was conducted in areas of Sivasagar town including Melachakar, KPM Chariati, and Christian Patty. A fine of ₹2050 was collected for violating Section 6 (B) of the COTPA Act 2003, which prohibits the sale of tobacco products within a 100-yard radius of educational institutions. Dr Deepamoni Saikia, DNO, DTCC Sivasagar, led the enforcement team, accompanied by Rudhir Prakash Sarma, divisional coordinator.

Observance of Nepali Language Recognition Day at Jamugurihat

HT Correspondent

BISWANATH CHARIALI, Aug 20: The 32nd Constitutional Recognition Day of the Nepali language was observed at Bordikorai High School premises in Jamugurihat. The event was organised by the North Jamuguri branch of Assam Nepali Sahitya Sabha in association with the North Jamuguri branch of All Assam Gorkha Students' Union.

The day-long programme began with the hoisting of the institutional flags of Assam Nepali Sahitya Sabha and AAGSU by Dambur Acharya and Hemu Limbu, presidents of the organising committees respectively. This was followed by a plantation drive inaugurated by Dipak Newar. Floral tributes were offered to the martyrs of the language movement, and a chorus marked the opening of the open session.

The open session included a multilingual poetry cir-

cle, inaugurated by Rajen Joshi, and analysed by eminent dramatist Bal Bir Gurung. Over forty poets shared their self-composed poems in the circle. Anjan Baskota, recipient of Sahitya Akademi's Yuva Puraskar 2020, spoke about the history of the language movement and discussed educational issues related to the Nepali language in relation to NEP 2020. Anil Goutam and Dipak Subba, presidents of Sonitpur district Assam Nepali Sahitya Sabha and Sonitpur district AAGSU, respectively, also addressed the session as guests of honour.

The event included a series of cultural activities interspersed between the programs. Tinku Dahal, secretary of North Jamuguri branch of ANSS, conducted the proceedings, and Rudra Chetry offered a vote of thanks. The event was attended by dignitaries and the general public of the locality.

Dance academy brings Lakshminath Bezbaruah's 'Champawati' to life

HT Correspondent

SIVASAGAR, Aug 20: The esteemed dance academy, Abhigyanam Nrityam Abhikendra, Sivasagar, captivated the audience with a mesmerising presentation of Rasaraj Lakshminath Bezbaruah's timeless tale 'Champawati' through a dance drama titled 'Champawati Kothare' at the Sivasagar Yuva Dal Auditorium on Saturday. Under the direction of renowned dancer Kaushik Kumar Handique, a recipient of the Young Talent Artist Award from the Ministry of Culture, government of India, the performance skillfully translated Bezbaruah's exceptional storytelling into the Sattriya dance style. Handique himself portrayed the role of the Sutradhar (narrator) and seamlessly interwove the entire story, enriched by light, sound, and folk songs. The cultural evening was inaugurated by former AASU education secretary Sarat Hazarika, with guest speakers BJP activist Samir Gogoi and educationist Manoj Kumar Borthakur. The students' performance was met with enthusiastic applause from the audience.

Earlier, on Friday, the dance school's students showcased the dance drama 'Shakuntala'. The event commenced with the lighting of the ceremonial lamp by senior doctor Dr Binapani Hazarika, followed by an inaugural speech by former professor of Gargaon College, Dr Arundhati Mahanta. DDC Sivasagar Bitupon Neog, principal of Gargaon College Dr. Sabyasachi Mahanta, and journalist Anamuddin Ahmed also graced the occasion. The dance drama 'Shakuntala', directed by cultural activist and artist Kaushik Kumar Handique, was beautifully staged. In a separate event, the renowned stage and film actor Bishnu Kharghoria was honoured with the Abhigyanam Kala Surov Award by Abhigyanam Nrityam, Sivasagar's premier dance school, on its third anniversary. Receiving the award, Kharghoria expressed gratitude to the dance institution and expressed hope for its continued dedication to the cultural realm.

Agri dept implements PM Kisan Samman Nidhi 100% Saturation Mission in KA

HT Bureau

DIPHU, Aug 20: The Agriculture Department, operating under the Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC), has undertaken the implementation of the PM Kisan Samman Nidhi 100% Saturation Mission, which commenced on July 20 and is set to conclude on August 27. As part of this initiative, eligible farmers will receive their 15th instalment of the PM Kisan Samman Nidhi. The selection process for eligible farmers will involve linking their profiles to Aadhaar cards, E-Kyc, Aadhaar Payments Bridge System (APBS), and Land Seeding across all eight Agriculture Development Officers (ADO) Circles in the Karbi Anglong district. Bidu Kr Rajiung, the district agriculture officer of Karbi Anglong, has encouraged eligible

farmers in the region to approach their respective ADO Circles, Agriculture Extension Assistants, and other officials to avail the benefits of the PM Kisan Scheme. The Common Service Centers (CSCs) have been set up to facilitate the application process. The PM Kisan Samman Nidhi initiative, launched by the central government, has significantly empowered farmers economically throughout the country. Under this scheme, enrolled farmers receive an annual support payment of ₹ 6,000, disbursed in three equal instalments of ₹ 2,000 every three months directly into their bank accounts. The 14th instalment of this payment was released by the government on July 27, 2023, with the 15th instalment anticipated to be released in the near future.

Meritorious students' experience exposure visit and interaction in Sonitpur

HT Correspondent

TEZPUR, Aug 20: An enriching interaction session was held on Saturday at the district commissioner's office in Sonitpur, under the 'Arohan' scheme initiated by the government of Assam. A total of 111 meritorious Class 9 students from various schools in Sonitpur district participated in this special event.

District commissioner Deba Kumar Mishra chaired the meeting, where he elaborated on the aims and objectives of the 'Arohan' scheme. He delivered an inspirational speech, encouraging the students to strive for success in their future endeavours. Additional district commissioner Kabita Kakati Konwar welcomed the participants.

Arohan, conceived by chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, is a unique mentor-mentee program. It selects talented secondary school students from various government schools across the district for an exposure visit. The program aims to support



students aged 13 to 18 in classes 9 to 12 by offering mentoring, career counselling, exposure opportunities, and incentives such as cash or goods.

During the program, additional SP Shaiful Hussain, Dr Palashmoni Saikia (principal, Darrang

Alleged bitumen scam raises concerns in national highway construction

HT Correspondent

NAGAON, Aug 20: The Krishak Shramik Unnayan Parishad, a prominent state farmers' organisation, has submitted a memorandum to the Nagaon district commissioner, raising concerns about an alleged bitumen scam in the construction of a four-lane national highway from Nagaon Uriagaon bypass Chariati towards Tezpur.

According to the memorandum, a few construction companies engaged in the four-lane national highway project are accused of violating directives and guidelines set by the ministry of Road Transport and Highways, government of India. Instead of procuring bitumen from authorised oil refineries as mandated, they allegedly sourced bitumen from the local open market. This alleged mismanagement has resulted in cracks appearing in the under-construction four-lane road soon after its completion.

The organisation's state secretary, Utpal Boruah, claimed that the construction contractors and companies used unfair means to influence certain officials in the concerned department, allowing them to acquire substandard

bitumen at a lower cost from the local market. This action violated the ministry's notification dated August 24, 2018, which directed the use of quality and modified bitumen only from authorised oil refineries for constructing national highways across India.

The memorandum also expressed concerns about the quality and integrity of the road constructed using the allegedly substandard bitumen. It further alleged that such actions by construction companies resulted in the misappropriation of government funds allocated for national highway projects.

The Krishak Shramik Unnayan Parishad called for a thorough investigation into the matter and requested the district commissioner to cross-check the invoices submitted for bitumen procurement. The organisation urged legal action against the construction companies involved in the alleged scam.

The alleged bitumen scam has raised questions about the adherence to construction standards and ethical practices in national highway projects, highlighting the need for transparent and accountable practices in such infrastructure developments.

Soota Divas celebrated

HT Correspondent

BISWANATH CHARIALI, Aug 20: Soota Divas, a day commemorating the courageous act of freedom fighters who raised the tri-colour flag at the Soota police station on August 20, 1942, has been observed with great enthusiasm. This historic event marked the lowering of the Union Jack flag and the peaceful hoisting of the Indian national flag for the first time in India, symbolising the nation's struggle for independence. The tradition of celebrating Soota Divas began in 2022 to honour the significance of this event, and this year's observance was no exception. The event was organised by the Soota Town Committee in collaboration with the local community. The day's celebrations commenced with the hoisting of the national flag at the premises of the old Soota police station by Shubhash Barua, superintendent of police, Biswanath. Soota MLA Padma Hazarika paid tribute to the martyrs who sacrificed their lives for the cause of freedom.

All Assam Bengali Parishad regional committee formed

HT Correspondent

MARGHERITA, Aug 20: The Chariati Margherita Durga Bari premises saw the establishment of the All Assam Bengali Parishad Margherita regional committee on Saturday. This occasion also marked a felicitation program along with the inauguration of the Margherita Ram Thakur Mandir. Shiladitya Deb, former Hojai MLA, present chairman of Assam Linguistic Minority Development Council, and advisor of All Assam Bengali Parishad, graced the event as the chief guest.

A number of dignitaries and resource persons were present at the event, including Dr Santanu Sanial, president of the All Assam Bengali Parishad central committee, Bhim Karmakar, advisor of All Assam Bengali Parishad Tinsukia district committee, Ashish Paul, Arup Paul, Rajdeep Nandi, Ranga Dulal Dey, and several other individuals from the Margherita region.

During his speech, Shiladitya Deb emphasised the importance of unity among Hindu people to prevent any potential division that might allow the infiltration of Bangladeshi Muslim elements into Assam. He highlighted that such division had negative economic, social, and geographical consequences for the society.

As part of the event, Shiladitya Deb also laid the foundation stone of Margherita Ram Thakur Mandir and announced a sanction of Rs 10 lakhs from the Assam Linguistic Minority Development Council.

However, the arrival of Shiladitya Deb was met with protests from members of the All Assam Bengali Youth Student Federation central committee. They chanted slogans against him, accusing him of divisive actions and controversial speeches that harm the sentiments of the community.

Ajit Debnath, the general secretary of the All Assam Bengali Youth Student Federation central committee, expressed concerns about Shiladitya Deb's actions, stating that he has divided the community and delivered inflammatory speeches that cause harm.

The All Assam Bengali Youth Student Federation, formed in 1990 with the intention to safeguard and voice against any atrocities faced by the Hindu Bengali-speaking community in Assam, urged chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma to conduct an impartial inquiry into the utilisation of funds from the Assam Linguistic Minority Development Council. They opposed the sanction of ₹ 10 lakhs and demanded the funds be directed towards the families of the five innocent victims who lost their lives in a past incident.

The event, intended to celebrate and inaugurate, was thus marked by both felicitations and controversy, shedding light on the tensions surrounding linguistic and cultural matters in the region.

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QUOTE OF THE DAY

Life is far too important a thing ever to talk seriously about.
- Oscar Wilde

India's economic reality

In recent times, India's economic landscape has been awash with optimism, with bold claims of becoming the world's third-largest economy in the next few years. While these statistics may sound promising, they often paint an incomplete picture of the ground reality. The vast majority of India's population still grapples with poverty, and economic disparities remain glaring. It's high time for the government to veer away from selective number crunching and present a more realistic portrayal of the economy. One critical issue lies in the external factors that could further derail the economy. The post-Covid economic recovery narrative may be somewhat inflated, as recent export figures reveal. Notably, India's merchandise exports have been hampered by a colossal 43.7% decline in oil exports, despite rising oil prices. This points to a worrying drop in demand for oil on the global stage. Additionally, the once-surging electronic goods exports have softened, pharmaceutical exports have seen minimal growth, and the textile sector, particularly readymade garments, continues to struggle. Gold exports have also taken a hit. August 2023 brought further challenges, with food inflation surging and the Index of Industrial Production showing signs of slackening. Consumer Price Index (CPI) surged to 7.4% in July, driven mainly by an 11.5% increase in food inflation, particularly in vegetables.

While India may boast the tag of the fastest-growing economy in a gloomy global landscape, this title holds little value if the revival after Covid-19 remains fragile and uncertain. The recent spike in food inflation has pushed the RBI's CPI forecast for July-September to 6.2%, a concerning rise from the initial 5.2%. The central bank can momentarily overlook volatile vegetable prices, but the persistent high food grain inflation demands attention due to its substantial weight in the CPI basket. The Federation of Indian Export Organisations (FIEO) has raised a red flag on slowing exports, further dampening hopes of economic revival. Sluggish global demand, especially in economies like China and the EU, coupled with growth contractions, has led to continuous declines in India's exports. The Euro Zone and the US have witnessed manufacturing contractions due to stringent monetary policies. The gloom has extended to Britain, and many Asian economies grapple with uncertain recoveries. Falling commodity prices have also adversely affected export values. Monetary tightening and recessionary fears have contributed to the global decline in consumer spending.

Despite the Modi government's optimism and rhetoric about a booming Indian economy, the prevailing economic scenario appears far from rosy. A slowing global economy and complex geopolitical situations pose significant challenges. India's economic woes cannot be resolved with mere election-time slogans and misrepresentation of facts. The government must confront this reality head-on and adapt the economy accordingly. Reviving demand, both domestically and internationally, will not be a simple task. The world is grappling with slowing demand, and this trend is set to persist. India needs comprehensive economic reforms and strategies that extend beyond political campaigns and false economic narratives. India's economic journey is more complex than the numbers suggest. While aspirations of becoming the world's third-largest economy are commendable, they must be underpinned by substantial policy changes and a commitment to addressing the real challenges that millions of Indians face daily. The government must pivot towards a more pragmatic approach, acknowledging the global economic context and focusing on sustainable growth rather than short-term gains.

Bhima Koregaon case: NIA in a quandary over SC's bail terms

By: Sarah Thanawala

"If you gaze for long into an abyss, the abyss gazes also into you," wrote German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche in his book *Beyond Good And Evil*.

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) seems to have discovered the meaning of the quote recently. On July 28, a division Bench of the Supreme Court, comprising Justices Aniruddha Bose and Sudhanshu Dhulia, granted regular bail to Vernon Gonsalves and Arun Ferreira.

Gonsalves is a trade unionist, activist and academic, while Ferreira is an activist and a lawyer. The two are accused in the Bhima Koregaon-Elgar Parishad case and charged under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967 (UAPA).

They had been incarcerated for almost five years without a trial. Among the conditions of the bail, the duo were required not to change their mobile phones, keep their phones charged at all times, keep the location status of the phones 'active' all through the day, and pair the devices with the devices of the investigating office of the NIA.

These harsh bail conditions did nothing to protect the right of the duo to a minimal level of privacy, as the bail conditions intend to keep the duo tethered to the authorities at all times. The bail conditions were perhaps also an indirect recognition of the commonplace notion that mobile phones are used as surveillance tools by authorities.

On August 17, an NIA special court of judge Rajesh Katari heard the difficulty faced by the NIA in complying with the bail conditions. On the issue of non-compliance with the bail condition of pairing devices, the court suggested installation of applications that can assist in pairing and tracking the devices on the mobile phones of the accused and the NIA officials. To this, the counsel representing the NIA raised concerns about the possi-

ble infringement of privacy of the concerned investigating officers of the NIA if the devices were to be paired.

As held in the case of Justice K.S. Puttaswamy and Another versus Union of India and Others (2017), the right to privacy is protected by Article 21 (protection of life and personal liberty) of the Constitution. Section 5(2) of the Indian Telegraph Act, 1885 allows electronic tapping and interception under certain conditions, including on the occurrence of public emergency, in the interest of public safety and for preventing incitement to the commission of an offence.

In the case of People's Union for Civil Liberties versus Union of India and others (1996), the Supreme Court held that interception of telephones and wiretaps was a serious invasion of privacy. Notably, mobile phone tracking remains a grey area around the globe. In July 2018, the United States Supreme Court mandated a warrant for tracking a suspect.

Today, the court directed the NIA to conduct a thorough verification of the bail conditions. It also directed the NIA to apprise the court of the difficulties in complying with the bail conditions on the next date.

Further, the court observed that if the NIA is not able to meet the bail conditions, it will have to approach the Supreme Court to seek modifications of the conditions. The matter is posted for hearing on the plea of the accused persons for the NIA to comply with Section 207 (supply to the accused of a copy of the police report and other documents) of the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC).

During the previous hearings, the accused persons had raised the grievance that despite filing several applications with the investigating authorities under Section 207 of the CrPC, they had not been allowed access to the compact disks, which are an important piece of evidence furnished by the NIA in the case. The matter will be further heard on September 5. (IPA Service)

Congress-AAP alliance move in Delhi suffers teething troubles

The National Capital Territory of Delhi drew political attention of the entire nation on August 16, due to a very short-term problem that occurred in the early stages of the opposition INDIA alliance, which can be termed as only teething troubles. A 'news hype', a well-known term in the newsrooms, overblown the issue as if INDIA alliance is well nigh broken. However, the wisdom got precedence over certain political immaturities in both the Congress and AAP camps, and what seemed to be a major eruption subsided within hours. The lesson for INDIA alliance is: they need to tread carefully across the states and UTs while avoiding political immaturity.

Any new political alliance, or any new project whatsoever, happens to have teething troubles in its early stages. Therefore, there was nothing serious in respect of the Congress and the AAP leaders to say that they were preparing to contest all the Lok Sabha seats in Delhi, until they reach an agreement on seat sharing. AAP had declared it for several times in the past, and now Congress leader Alka Lamba said it on Wednesday.

Alka Lamba's statement was considered significant since she was spokesperson of the Delhi Pradesh

Congress. Her statement was understood more than it actually meant – first by the media people, and then by the AAP spokesperson Priyanka Kakkar, who overreacted as if Lamba's words "to be ready" in all seven seats meant Congress plan "to contest" in all seats in Delhi.

AAP spokesperson Priyanka Kakkar's overreaction was obvious in her statement, "If they do not want an alliance in Delhi, then going to INDIA meeting is pointless and a waste of time. Out top leadership will decide whether we have to attend the next INDIA meeting."

The war of words between leaders of both the Congress and AAP sides was presented with news hype implying that INDIA alliance has landed into serious trouble on account of the respective adamant stance of the Congress and AAP in contesting Lok Sabha election in Delhi.

However, within hours, AICC's Delhi in-charge Deepak Babaria, clarified that Alka Lamba has not said anything on polls that is what she has reported me. He also said that she is in a spokesperson but she is not an authorized spokesperson for talking on such important issues.

"I feel that there are immature people in Aam Admi Party," he said while responding to AAP leader's overreaction which was



DEGREE OF THOUGHT

By: Dr. Gyan Pathak

based on merely media reports. He also said that no discussion over the matter related to elections and the alliance were held during the elaborate meeting at the party headquarters.

Earlier, AAP leader Saurabh Bharadwaj had given a mature response and said that seat sharing will be decided by the central leadership and both AAP's political affairs committee and INDIA parties would discuss them.

Now, Alka has said that her statement on Congress preparing on all seven seats in Delhi had no mention of having or not having any alliance with anyone. "What is the controversy about?" she questioned while reproducing her statement, "First, the discussion was on the or-

ganisation -- what are the weak points, how to strengthen etc. Then the discussion was on the Lok Sabha election from Delhi. There have been similar meetings in 18 states. We have been told to be ready in all seven seats as seven months are left. We will start working from today because whoever has Delhi has the country."

It should be noted here that Alka Lamba has been in Congress since her re-joining the party in 2019. In between 2014 and 2019 she was in AAP. She was in Congress before her joining AAP in 2014. She has been insider in both the parties and may be knowing the ground level political realities of the respective parties.

Given the political situ-

ation prevailing on the ground today, both the Congress and AAP cannot afford to have split of anti-BJP votes to their own destruction. It is clear from the vote share trend in the recent few elections, especially since the Lok Sabha election 2019.

Congress' vote share in 2019 was 22.63 per cent, AAP's 18.2 per cent, and BJP's 56 per cent. In 2020 Vidhan Sabha election Congress vote share was reduced to merely 4.26 per cent, while AAP's vote share jumped to 53.57 per cent, and BJP's vote share shrank to 38.51 per cent.

The most recently, in the MCD election 2022, Congress' vote share was 11.68 per cent which was an increase from 2020 Vidhan Sabha election indicating that Congress is slowly improving. AAP's vote share was 42.05 per cent which was over 10.50 per cent decline compared to its share in 2020 Vidhan Sabha election, which indicates a deterioration of AAP's clout in Delhi. As for the BJP is concerned its votes share was 39.09 per cent implying its influence among votes has almost stagnated compared to 2020 Vidhan Sabha election when it gained 38.51 per cent.

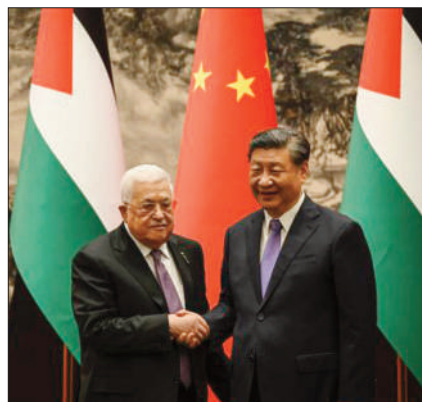
Congress and AAP, thus know, if they could offer joint contest, they could defeat BJP in all 7 seats that it holds now. How-

ever, if they do not enter into seat sharing arrangement, winning even a single seat would be difficult to them.

It is in this backdrop both the political parties – Congress and AAP – cannot afford to be idle and disunited. Therefore, they would be preparing in all the seven seats. Such preparations do not mean that the doors for seat sharing arrangements between the two has been closed. Both the political parties know their respective strengths in the state, and it would be in their own interest to enter into seat sharing arrangement at appropriate time. In the meantime, they may claim all seats in Delhi but only to get more seats to jointly contest.

There is no denying the fact that the Congress and AAP have come closer to each other especially since the first meeting of INDIA alliance held in Patna on June 23, 2023. The bond between the two have become stronger by the second meeting in Bengaluru held on July 17-18. The Congress opposed the Delhi Services Bill in the Parliament, for which AAP leader Arvind Kejriwal thanked the Congress and its leadership. Third meeting is going to be held in soon in Mumbai, perhaps by the end of August or beginning of September. (IPA Service)

Will China succeed in brokering peace between Palestine and Israel?



By: Ramzy Baroud

It is feasible for China to continue playing an important role in mediating Middle East conflicts. In fact, it already has. In the case of the Israeli occupation of Palestine, however, mediation is hardly the issue. Even before Beijing successfully managed to achieve reconciliation between Saudi Arabia and Iran last April, Chinese diplomacy has shown exceptional maturity. For many years, China has been perceived to be an outsider to global affairs, supposedly contenting itself to domestic economic expansion or to regional economic integration.

Former U.S. President Donald Trump forced, or rather, accelerated China's global outreach when, in 2018, he launched an unprecedented trade war on the powerful Asian country. Trump's plan backfired. Not only did Washington fail to dissuade Beijing from bowing to American dictates, but it also inspired what became known as China's "wolf diplomacy"—a self-assertive Chinese approach to foreign policy.

From an American—or Western—viewpoint, the new tactic was perceived to be hostile and aggressive. But from a Chinese perspective, the new policy was necessitated by the relentless war launched against China by successive U.S. admin-

istrations, along with their Western allies. The Russia-Ukraine war, however, accentuated China's role in international conflicts and diplomacy. Though Beijing's "12-point peace proposal" last March failed to impress the West and was superficially welcomed by Moscow, the proposal highlighted an important shift.

The fact that China found it necessary to develop an elaborate political position as a potential mediator conveyed that China is no longer content with playing the role of the supporting actor in international forums. China's diplomacy was dismissed by many, especially in Western media and politics, as a non-starter, if at all serious or even well-intentioned.

Merely three weeks later, the Chinese-brokered Iran-Saudi agreement took place. Major political actors in the region, including Washington, appeared to be taken by surprise. The Chinese success story was juxtaposed by many journalists in the Global South to Washington's conflict-prone, dead-end diplomacy in the Middle East. Buoyed by its success, China ventured further into new diplomatic territories, offering to mediate between Israel and Palestine. The Palestinians welcomed a Chinese role; the Israelis were disinterested.

The Chinese government is aware of the near impossibility of engaging both Palestinians and Israelis in genuine peace talks. Though Palestinians are desperate to escape or, at least, balance out Washington's hegemony, it is not in Israel's interest to abandon its greatest political benefactor, financier, and military backer—the United States.

Though China and Israel have developed relatively strong economic and, for China, strategic ties, in recent years, Beijing's geopolitical worth for Tel Aviv is simply incomparable to that of Washington. It would also make little sense for Tel Aviv to grant Beijing any political leverage at a time of geopolitical transitions, especially because China has historically

supported the Palestinian people's struggle for freedom.

Indeed, for decades, China served as a vanguard for the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and, later, the State of Palestine at the United Nations, insisting on the respect and implementation of international laws relevant to ending the Israeli occupation of Palestine. Unsurprisingly, China recognized the PLO's political status in 1965 and the State of Palestine in 1988. Now, China is pushing for full Palestinian membership in the international body.

The Chinese position was fundamental to Beijing's strategic alliances in the Global South in previous decades. The economic growth of China and its integration into a Western-centric economic system, starting in 1978, however, progressively weakened China's trade and political relevance in the Global South.

This process, however, is being reversed, not only because of Washington's trade war, and the hesitance of Western countries to join Beijing's Belt and Road initiative, but because of the U.S.-led Western sanctions on Moscow. The Western economic war on Russia over the Ukraine invasion is an urgent reminder to China that it cannot fully rely on Western markets and financial systems.

China's slow drift from a Western-centric economic system is being coupled with a whole new approach to foreign policy—"wolf diplomacy" in the West, and a gentler, kinder approach in the Global South. Even before former Foreign Minister of China Qin Gang phoned his Palestinian and Israeli counterparts, offering mediation, China had already introduced a peace initiative known as the four-point proposal.

The proposal highlighted China's readiness to move past its role as a trade partner into that of a political actor on the global stage. For China, this was not only a matter of prestige, as various Muslim and Arab countries, along with Israel, are crit-

ical parties in the ambitious BRI project. In recent months, however, China's interest in being a peace mediator increased exponentially, especially amid the near total absence of Washington, the self-proclaimed "honest peace broker." China has also shown a willingness to mediate between rival Palestinian groups. That, too, ushers in an evolution in China's approach to Palestinian politics. However, it will not be easy.

The Palestinian Authority's (PA) financial well-being—and political future—is largely linked to Washington and other Western capitals. Though some Palestinian officials, such as Foreign Minister Riyad al-Maliki, are threatening to "turn to China" due to the PA's "disappointment" in Washington, such a shift will not be permitted, if not by Washington, then by Tel Aviv itself.

The visit in June by PA President Mahmoud Abbas to Beijing, although touted by the PA-run media as an earth-shattering event, will not be a game changer. True, it highlights China's growing interest in Palestine, but it is unlikely to be followed by substantive action on the part of the Palestinian leadership. Palestinians need China, as they need other powerful players in the Global South, but it is not mediation that they desperately require. Mediations do not end military occupations or dismantle apartheid regimes. Instead, Palestinians need solidarity.

The major changes underway in the world's geopolitical map, and the rising importance of the Global South present Palestinians with unique opportunities to break away from U.S.-Western hegemony and to reconnect with Palestine's true strategic depth in Asia, Africa, South America, and the rest of the world.

For this to occur, Palestinians must present their cause as one united front, not as political fragments and factions. Only then will emerging powers view Palestine as a serious geopolitical asset in a vastly changing world. (IPA Service)

India's pivotal role in BRICS and global affairs

By: Dipak Kurmi

With the impending BRICS summit in South Africa, the world's gaze turns toward the convergence of leaders from Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa. This annual gathering, set to unfold from August 22 to 24, holds momentous significance, seeking to evolve the alliance of nations, collectively accounting for a substantial quarter of the global economy, into a potent geopolitical force capable of challenging the hegemony of Western powers in international affairs.

Amidst discussions spanning economic cooperation and multilateral influence, India's central role within BRICS stands as a lighthouse of significance. Though the absence of Russian

President Vladimir Putin due to the ongoing Ukraine conflict will be noted, the attendance of leaders like China's Xi Jinping, Brazil's Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, and India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi is expected.

As the host nation, South Africa has set a stage adorned with a theme that resonates profoundly: "BRICS and Africa." This thematic selection underscores the alliance's aspiration to expand its influence, forge connections, and engage in cooperative endeavors with an African continent gradually emerging as a theater for global power competition.

Among the BRICS nations, India's role gleams luminously in this pursuit. Its economic might, strategic positioning, and adept diplomacy cast it as a key-stone in the alliance's journey

toward a more multipolar global order. The cohesiveness within BRICS often emanates from shared skepticism toward a world order that sometimes appears skewed in favor of Western powers.

The clarion call for enlargement is poised to dominate discussions. Around 40 nations have expressed their eagerness to join BRICS, a fact spotlighted by South Africa. China, ardently seeking enhanced global influence, advocates for swift expansion, while Brazil harbors reservations fearing dilution of the group's efficacy.

In this debate, India's stance might wield a pivotal role. As a staunch proponent of multipolarity and inclusive international systems, India's voice can contribute to finding a balanced approach to enlargement—one that

maintains the alliance's unity while embracing like-minded partners.

The central challenge that confronts BRICS revolves around the transition from aspirational ideals to tangible actions. The consortium's New Development Bank (NDB) seeks to reshape the global financial landscape, offering an alternative to traditional institutions.

However, its progress has been gradual, with sanctions on Russia impeding its operations. India, with its extensive financial acumen and developmental experience, possesses the potential to propel the NDB's aspirations forward.

The imperative of addressing climate change also commands the alliance's attention. Here, India's involvement assumes

paramount importance given its substantial population and expanding carbon footprint. Collectively, the BRICS nations contribute significantly to greenhouse gas emissions, and India's proactive engagement in seeking sustainable solutions could galvanize substantial progress.

The upcoming summit serves as a platform for India to showcase its global vision, collaborative spirit, and steadfast commitment to forging a more equitable global order.

As the BRICS alliance collectively seeks to reconfigure the contours of international influence, India's role as a guiding light and constructive contributor can pave the way toward a future defined by cooperation, balance, and shared prosperity. (The writer can be reached at dipaknews@gmail.com)

Exercise tips for pregnancy

By: Angel Miller

Exercise can benefit a woman's mental and physical health during pregnancy, and it may give the newborn a healthier start, too. Despite this, studies suggest that only about 40% of pregnant women exercise.

Current guidelines recommend at least 150 minutes a week of moderate intensity aerobic physical activity, both during and after pregnancy.

An exercise slot does not need to be lengthy. Women can, for example, exercise five times a week for 30 minutes or 10 times a week for 15 minutes.

Those who were doing more vigorous activity, such as running, before becoming pregnant can usually continue with their existing regimen, although they should check first with their doctor.

Six types of exercise to stay fit and healthy

Exercising while pregnant can help prevent pregnancy complications and give the infant a healthier start.

Suitable activities during pregnancy include:

- brisk walking
- swimming
- indoor stationary cycling
- prenatal yoga
- low impact aerobics under the guidance of a certified aerobics instructor

• special exercises to prepare for labor and delivery

These activities carry little risk of injury, benefit the entire body, and are usually safe to do until delivery.

1. Brisk walking

If pre-pregnancy exercise levels were low, a quick stroll around the neighbourhood is a good way to start.

This activity has several advantages:

- It provides a cardiovascular workout with relatively little impact on the knees and ankles.
- If women start from home, it is free.

• It is possible to walk almost anywhere and at any time during pregnancy.

• Friends and other family members can join for company.

Safety tip: Stay safe by choosing smooth surfaces, wearing supportive footwear to prevent

falls, and avoiding potholes, rocks, and other obstacles.

2. Swimming

Swimming, walking in water, and aqua aerobics allow for motion without putting pressure on the joints. Buoyancy may offer some relief from the extra body weight as the pregnancy progresses.

It is important to choose a stroke that feels comfortable and does not strain or hurt the neck, shoulders, or back muscles. Breaststroke may be a good choice for this. Using a kickboard can help strengthen the leg and buttock muscles.

Safety tips:

- Use the railing for balance when entering the water to avoid slipping.
- Refrain from diving or jumping, which could impact the abdomen.

• Avoid warm pools, steam rooms, hot tubs, and saunas to minimize the risk of overheating.

3. Stationary cycling

Cycling on a stationary bike, also called spinning, is safe for most women during pregnancy, including first-time exercisers.

Advantages include:

- Cycling helps raise the heart rate while minimizing stress on the joints and pelvis.
- The bike helps support body weight.

• As the bike is stationary, the risk of falling is low.

• Later in pregnancy, a higher handlebar may be more comfortable.

4. Yoga

Prenatal yoga classes can help women keep their joints limber and maintain flexibility. Yoga may also help with pain and stress management, according to one study.

The benefits of yoga include:

- strengthening the muscles
- stimulating blood circulation
- helping maintain a healthy blood pressure

• increasing flexibility

• enhancing relaxation

• teaching techniques to help women stay calm during labor and delivery

Safety tips:

As pregnancy progresses, consider skipping poses that:

- may lead to overbalancing
- involve lying on the abdomen
- involve spending time lying



flat on the back

When lying flat on the back, the weight of the bump can put pressure on major veins and arteries and decrease blood flow to the heart. This reduced blood flow can lead to faintness.

Women should also take care to avoid overstretching, as this could lead to injury.

5. Low impact aerobics

In low impact aerobic exercise, at least one foot stays on the ground at all times.

This type of exercise can:

- strengthen the heart and lungs
- help maintain muscle tone and balance
- limit stress on the joints

Some classes are designed especially for pregnant women. They can be a good way to meet other people and train with an instructor who is qualified to meet the specific needs of pregnant women.

Women who already attend a regular aerobics class should let the instructor know that they are pregnant. The instructor can then modify exercises where necessary and advise about suitable movements.

6. Preparing for labor: Squatting and pelvic tilts

Some exercises are particularly useful during pregnancy, as they prepare the body for labor and delivery.

Squatting: As squatting may help open the pelvis during labor, it may be a good idea to practice during pregnancy.

1. Stand with the feet shoulder-width apart and flat on the

floor, keeping the back straight.

2. Lower the buttocks down slowly, keeping the feet flat and the knees no further forward than the feet.

3. Hold for 10 to 30 seconds at the lowest point, then slowly push up.

Pelvic tilts: These can strengthen the abdominal muscles and help reduce back pain.

1. Start on the hands and knees.

2. Tilt the hips forward and pull the abdomen in, rounding the back.

3. Hold for a few seconds.

4. Release and let the back drop.

5. Repeat this up to 10 times.

Kegel exercises: These tone the muscles in the pelvic floor. Strong pelvic muscles will help the woman push during delivery and reduce the risk of urine leakage afterward.

Benefits

During pregnancy, exercise can help by:

- increasing the heart rate steadily and improving circulation
- reducing the risk of obesity and related complications, such as gestational diabetes and hypertension

• helping prevent constipation, varicose veins, backache, and other pregnancy complications

• keeping the body flexible and strong

• supporting and controlling healthy weight gain

• preparing the muscles for labor and birth

• helping prevent deep vein

thrombosis

- improving sleep and emotional health
- It may also:

• shorten labor and decrease the need for medication and pain relief

• reduce the risk of a preterm or cesarean delivery

• speed up recovery after delivery

• give the infant a healthier start

Research suggests that there may also be benefits for the baby, such as:

- a lower fetal heart rate
- a healthier birth weight
- a lower fat mass
- improved stress tolerance
- enhanced nervous system development

Tips

Physical changes during pregnancy place extra demands on the body, so it is important to exercise with care.

Women who were active before pregnancy and healthy during it can often continue as before, adjusting their program as the pregnancy progresses.

Women who were not active before pregnancy can start with a low intensity program and gradually increase their activity levels.

How to exercise safely

A few tips can help people stay safe when exercising.

It is advisable to begin by warming up for 5 minutes and stretching for 5 minutes. People can then finish the session with 5-10 minutes of slower exercise, ending with gentle stretching.

Here are some useful tips:

- Wear loose fitting, comfortable clothes and a good support bra.
- Choose supportive shoes specific to the exercise type to help prevent injury.

• Wear compression stockings if the legs are swelling.

• Exercise on a flat, level surface to avoid injury.

• Avoid overheating when exercising.

• Drink plenty of water before, during, and after exercise to stay hydrated.

• Get up slowly and gradually to prevent dizziness.

• Monitor the effect of each activity and adjust the regimen if necessary as the pregnancy progresses.

Remember that:

• The body needs more oxygen and energy during pregnancy.

• The hormone relaxin, which the body produces more of during pregnancy, causes the ligaments that support the joints to stretch, increasing the risk of injury.

• Weight changes affect the center of gravity, putting extra strain on the joints and muscles in the lower back and pelvis and increasing the chance of losing balance.

Risks and cautions

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the risks that moderate intensity aerobic exercise carries are very low during pregnancy. There is no evidence that exercise will lead to an early delivery, pregnancy loss, or low birth weight.

However, the body undergoes significant changes at this time, and some precautions are necessary.

Women can stay safe by:

- taking care not to overheat
- refraining from exercising in high humidity

• avoiding activities that increase the risk of abdominal trauma

• avoiding exercising to the point of exhaustion

• slowing down the activity if it is not possible to talk while exercising

It may be necessary to moderate the regimen over time.

Who should not exercise?

Anyone with a medical condition, such as asthma, heart dis-

ease, hypertension, diabetes, or a pregnancy-related condition, should speak to their doctor before changing their exercise habits.

The doctor may advise resting if a woman has:

- vaginal bleeding or spotting
- a low placenta or placenta previa

• a history or possibility of pregnancy loss or preterm delivery

• a weak cervix

A healthcare provider can help develop a program to suit the individual.

Sports to avoid

Some forms of exercise are not suitable during pregnancy. These include:

- scuba diving
- some contact sports, such as kickboxing and judo

• activity above an altitude of about 8,000 feet

• heavy weightlifting and activities that require straining

These activities may entail additional risks, such as injury and altitude sickness. Activities with a risk of falling — such as downhill skiing, hockey, and cycling — may also not be suitable.

When to stop

Stop exercising and seek medical advice if any of the following occur:

- pain, including stomach, pelvic, or chest pain
- muscle cramps
- weakness or fatigue
- faintness or dizziness
- nausea
- feeling cold or clammy
- vaginal bleeding
- leakage of amniotic fluid
- a rapid or irregular heartbeat
- sudden swelling in the ankles, hands, face, or all of them
- increased shortness of breath
- contractions that continue after rest
- difficulty walking
- a reduction in the baby's movement

Regular physical activity can boost the health of both the woman and the baby, and it may make pregnancy, labor, and post-delivery recovery easier.

However, it is important to stay safe during exercise, so women should check with their doctor before making any changes, and as their pregnancy progresses. (Courtesy: Medical News Today)

Meal timings & intermittent fasting: How do they impact your health?



By: Frederic Gachon & Meltem Weger

Early hunter-gatherers faced long periods of fasting. Their access to food relied on successful hunting, fishing, and the availability of wild plants.

Over time, the development of modern agriculture and the transition to industrialised societies changed our regular eating patterns — shifting our dinner time to later in the day to accommodate work schedules.

Today, with access to an abundance of food, we rarely experience prolonged periods of fasting, except for weight loss or religious practices.

It's now common to have four or more meals a day, with most calories being consumed later in the day. Frequent snacking is also common, over a window of around 15 hours.

However, research increasingly shows our health is not only affected by what and how much we eat, but also when we eat. So what does this mean for meal scheduling? And can intermittent fasting help?

Our body clock controls more than our sleep

Our internal biological timekeeper, or the circadian clock, regulates many aspects of our physiology and behavior. It tells us to be awake and active during the day, and rest and sleep during the night. It can also tell us the best time to eat.

Our body is biologically prepared to have food during the day. Food digestion, nutrient uptake and energy metabolism is optimised to occur when we're supposed to be active and eating.

Working against this default stage, by regularly eating when we're supposed to

sleep and fast, can compromise these processes and impact our health.

Erratic eating patterns, including late-night meals, have been linked to weight gain and a greater risk of metabolic disease.

Shift-workers, for example, and people who work on the evening, night, or rotating shifts, have a higher risk of obesity, heart disease, and diabetes.

But adopting an eating pattern that aligns with our circadian rhythm can reduce these risks.

So can intermittent fasting help?

Nutritional interventions are increasingly focused not only on "what" we eat but also "when." Intermittent fasting is one way to restrict the timing, rather than the content, of what we eat.

There are several types of intermittent fasting, one of which is time-restricted eating. This means eating all our calories in a consistent 8-12 hour, or even shorter, interval each day.

But is it backed by evidence?

Most of what we know today about intermittent fasting and time-restricted eating is from mouse studies, which demonstrate remarkable weight loss and overall health benefits associated with these types of dietary interventions.

However, some aspects of mouse physiology can be different to humans. Mice need to eat more frequently than humans and even a short period of fasting has a more significant physiological impact on mice.

One day of fasting in mice leads to a 10 percent loss of body weight, whereas humans would need to fast for 14 days to achieve similar results. This makes a direct translation from mice to humans more complicated.

While health benefits of intermittent

fasting and time-restricted eating have also been observed in humans, the findings in respect of weight loss are less clear.

Current data suggest only modest, if any, weight loss in human participants who undergo these diet regimens when compared to calorie-restricted diets.

Drawing definitive conclusions in humans may be more difficult because of the small sample sizes and individual differences in metabolism, variations in study design (such as the use of different protocols with varying times and duration of food restriction), and participants not complying with their instructions.

Health benefits could be due to eating fewer calories

Most studies describing the health benefits of time restricted eating or intermittent fasting also found these diets were accompanied by calorie restriction: reducing the time of food access implicitly leads people to eat less.

Studies that controlled calorie intake did not detect any more benefits of intermittent fasting than calorie restriction alone.

The weight loss and health benefits observed with intermittent fasting is likely attributed due to the resultant reduction in calorie intake. Similar findings have been reported for time-restricted eating.

Benefit of following our body clock

Nevertheless, time-restricted eating offers additional health benefits in humans, such as improved glucose metabolism and blood pressure, even without differences in calorie intake, in particular when restricted to the earlier part of the day (that is, when having a six-hour eating window with dinner before 3 pm).

Restricting food intake to the daytime for shift-workers can alleviate metabolic differences caused by shift-work, whereas this effect is not observed when food intake is restricted to nighttime.

One idea is that consuming food early, in alignment with our circadian rhythm, helps synchronise our circadian clock.

This restores the rhythm of our autonomous nervous system, which regulates essential functions such as breathing and heart rate, to keep our physiology "tuned," as it was shown in mice.

While there's still much to learn from research in this field, the evidence suggests that to maintain a healthy weight and overall wellbeing, aim for regular, nutritious meals during the day, while avoiding late-night eating and frequent snacking. (Courtesy: The Quint)

Sudden cardiac death: A silent threat that can be prevented

By: Dr Bimal Chhajra

Sudden cardiac death has been making headlines lately and thus there is a dire need to shed light on this pressing issue and raise awareness. People often come across distressing incidents where individuals succumb to this silent threat without any warning. While accidents and disasters capture the news, sudden cardiac death demands our attention equally.

Unlike accidents, which can happen within moments, sudden cardiac death is often a result of heart-related conditions. The leading cause of SCA is heart disease, particularly blockages in the heart's arteries. Astonishingly, about 95% of adults who suffer

from sudden cardiac death have these blockages. When these blockages restrict blood flow to the heart, it can trigger a heart attack, ultimately leading to sudden cardiac death.

Several other factors can also contribute to sudden cardiac death, including accidental incidents, intense physical exercise, excessive alcohol consumption, and drug overdoses. However, it is important to highlight that the majority of cases are closely associated with heart disease. The heart's arteries play a critical role in supplying blood to different parts of this vital organ. Among these arteries, the left artery is responsible for providing blood to around 70% of the heart. Blockages in this artery can

lead to a severe heart attack, culminating in sudden cardiac death.

Preventive measures are of utmost importance, particularly for individuals with a history of heart disease or those with risk factors such as high cholesterol, high blood pressure, diabetes, smoking, obesity, or a family history of heart disease. Regular check-ups, including coronary angiography, can effectively identify blockages and potential risks, enabling timely interventions and treatments.

Sudden cardiac death is a serious concern that demands our attention. Understanding the risk factors and prioritizing regular check-ups can significantly reduce the likelihood of this unfortunate

event. Embracing a healthy lifestyle, engaging in regular exercise, and managing risk factors can collectively protect our hearts and decrease the risk of sudden cardiac death.

As a heart specialist, I am dedicated to providing information on heart health and promoting non-invasive treatments at our heart center. Our mission is to educate and empower individuals to adopt healthier lifestyles, preventing cardiac incidents. I urge the people to spread awareness about sudden cardiac death to help save lives.

Remember, knowledge is power, and together, we can combat this silent threat and ensure a healthier future for all. (The author is the Director, SAAOL Heart Centre)

Kidney transplant: Common causes of kidney disease and treatment options

By: Dr Shafiq Ahmed

A kidney transplant is a surgery to implant a healthy kidney from a living or deceased donor into a patient whose kidneys are no longer function properly.

The function of kidney is to remove waste product from our blood and conserve the essential nutrients and water for our body beside controlling Blood pressure and helping in haemoglobin production and vitamin D synthesis for bone health. When kidneys lose this filtering ability, harmful levels of fluid and waste accumulate in the body, which can raise blood pressure and result in kidney failure (end-stage renal disease).

Common causes of end-stage kidney disease include:

- Diabetes
- Chronic, uncontrolled high blood pressure
- Chronic glomerulonephritis — an inflammation and eventual scarring of the tiny filters within the kidneys
- Polycystic kidney disease

- Use of illegal drugs including pain killers and smoking
- Chronic infection and kidney blockage due to stone disease

Treatment options: Dialysis & Kidney transplant

A kidney transplant is often the treatment of choice for kidney failure, compared with a lifetime on dialysis. A kidney transplant can treat chronic kidney disease or end-stage renal disease to bring you back to normal life.

Types of kidney transplant

- Deceased-donor kidney transplant (cadaver kidney Transplant)
- Living-donor kidney transplant (Compatible and incompatible) Blood group
- Preemptive kidney transplant
- Swap Transplant (Paired donor exchange among incompatible blood groups)

Compared with dialysis, kidney transplant is associated with:

- Better quality of life
- Lower risk of death
- Fewer dietary restrictions
- Lower treatment cost
- Some people may also benefit

from receiving a kidney transplant before needing to go on dialysis, a procedure known as pre-emptive kidney transplant.

Conditions where kidney transplant is not the treatment of choice e.g.

- Advanced age
- Severe heart disease
- Active or recently treated cancer
- Dementia or poorly controlled mental illness

Any other factor that could affect the ability to safely undergo the procedure and take the medications needed after a transplant to prevent organ rejection.

Only one donated kidney is needed to replace two failed kidneys, making living-donor kidney transplantation an option.

If a compatible living donor isn't available, you can register on a kidney transplant waiting list to receive a kidney from a deceased donor as per the NOTTO waiting LIST. (The author is the Director - Urology, Andrology & Renal Transplant at BLK-Max Super Speciality Hospital, New Delhi)

'Not shared any such document with any unrelated person'

Pakistan's ex-foreign minister Qureshi arrested under Official Secrets Act

ISLAMABAD, Aug 20: Pakistan's former foreign minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi, a close aide of jailed former Prime Minister Imran Khan, has been arrested from his house here under the Official Secrets Act in connection with the leakage of a confidential diplomatic cable.

Qureshi, 67, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party's Vice Chairman, was arrested on Saturday night and taken to the Federal Investigation Agency's (FIA) headquarters soon after he demanded that a level playing field be provided to the embattled party during the upcoming general elections.

Qureshi, a two-time foreign minister, was arrested under the Official Secrets Act for violating the secrecy of the official cable sent by the Pakistani embassy in the US to the foreign office when he was the foreign minister. On Sunday, Qureshi appeared in a sessions court, which granted the FIA a day's remand of the PTI senior leader in the cipher case.

Judicial Magistrate Ehtisham Alam Khan issued the orders, asking the body to produce him before the court on Monday.

"I have not shared any such document with any unrelated person," Qureshi said while talking to the media before being sent on remand.

Qureshi said no secret code of Pakistan has been compromised. He spoke about proving his responsibility and has "acted responsibly". "This is a politically motivated case," he added.

Former premier Khan has for long mentioned the missing cable as evidence of a "foreign conspiracy" to remove him as the prime minister in April last year.

A first information report (FIR) registered against Qureshi by the FIA refers to the matter and invokes Sections 5 (wrongful communication of information) and 9 (attempt to commit or abet the commission of an offence under this Secrets Act) of the Of-



ficial Secrets Act read with Section 34 (acts done by several persons in furtherance of common intention) of the Pakistan Penal Code. The development came only two days after PTI chief Khan was named in an FIR registered by the FIA under Section 5 of the Official Secrets Act 1923 in the case.

"PTI vice chairman Shah Mehmood Qureshi has been illegally arrested once again," the PTI said in social media post on X, formerly known as Twitter.

Qureshi was foreign minister when the issue of the diplomatic cable erupted.

Meanwhile, Geo News reported on Sunday that another senior leader of Khan's party, Asad Umar, has been arrested from Islamabad in the cipher case.

Umar has been a close aide of Khan and formerly held the post of the party's general secretary. However, following his arrest during the May 9 riots, in which PTI workers attacked government and military installations, he stepped down from his party positions. The purported cipher (secret

diplomatic cable) contained an account of a meeting between US State Department officials, including Assistant Secretary of State for the Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs Donald Lu, and Pakistani envoy Asad Majeed Khan last year.

PTI General Secretary Omar Ayub said that Qureshi was arrested shortly after reaching home after addressing a press conference.

"Had hoped that the reign of lawlessness would have ended after the exit of the fascist PDM (Pakistan Democratic Movement) government, but it appears that this caretaker government wants to break the records of their predecessor fascist government," Ayub said.

Interim interior minister Sarfaraz Bugti said on Geo News that the former foreign minister had been taken into custody in connection with the cipher case.

"He (Qureshi) is nominated in the case and will soon be presented in the court," Bugti said, adding, "We have to enforce the

law and all those nominated in the cipher case will be arrested and presented in court." Addressing a news conference minutes before his arrest, Qureshi had rejected media reports about a split in the party and also demanded elections on time. He also said in the presser that he had recently met foreign ambassadors recently.

"Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaarul Haq Kakar has said that he will ensure transparent elections. I would ask him how he will do so in such an environment. I would request the CJP and ECP to take notice and ensure level playing field for PTI," he said.

Qureshi also said that it was unfortunate that his party leaders were being arrested and then released after an announcement that they want to part ways with the party.

"Our vice chairman Shah Mehmood Qureshi has once again been arrested for doing a press conference and reaffirming PTI stance against all tyranny and pre-poll rigging that is going on currently in Pakistan," PTI leader Zulfi Bokhari said on X, formerly Twitter.

Qureshi was also arrested on May 11 and released on June 6.

Of late, Khan has come under increased scrutiny following the publication of a purported copy of the secret cable by the US media outlet The Intercept, with many in the previous government led by Shehbaz Sharif pointing fingers at the PTI chief for being the source of the leak.

Former interior minister Rana Sanaullah has said that if Khan had indeed lost the copy of the cable provided to him, it would constitute a crime under the Official Secrets Act.

Khan, 70, is currently serving a three-year jail term after he was sentenced by a court in a corruption case earlier this month.

The former cricketer-turned-politician-led government was ousted through a no-confidence vote in April 2022. (PTI)

Zelenskyy in Netherlands after US approved sending Dutch F-16 jets to Ukraine



EINDHOVEN, Aug 20: Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy arrived in the Netherlands on Sunday, two days after the country said the United States had given its approval for Dutch and Danish authorities to deliver F-16 fighter jets to Ukraine's air force.

Zelenskyy is meeting Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte at a military air base in the southern city of Eindhoven. The Ukrainian leader was in Sweden a day earlier.

The US approval Friday for the Netherlands and Denmark to deliver American-made F-16s to Ukraine was seen as a major boost for Kyiv, even though the fighter jets won't have an impact any time soon on the almost 18-month war.

Ukraine has long pleaded for the sophisticated fighter to give it a combat edge. It recently launched a long-anticipated counteroffensive against the Kremlin's forces without air cover, placing its troops at the mercy of Russian aviation and artillery.

The Dutch and Danish governments are also involved in a coalition that is working to train Ukrainian pilots to fly the advanced fighter jets.

Danish Defense Minister Jakob Ellemann-Jensen said Friday that the training of Ukrainian pilots is starting this month. Officials have previously said that Ukrainian pilots will need six to eight months of training.

Washington says the F-16s — like the advanced US Abrams tanks — will be crucial in the long term as Kyiv faces down Russia.

Ukraine has been relying on older aircraft, such as Russian-made MiG29 and Sukhoi jets. F-16s have newer technology and targeting capabilities. They are also more versatile, experts say. In a video message earlier Sunday, Zelenskyy vowed a stern retaliation to a Russian missile strike the previous day in the center of the northern Ukrainian city of Chernihiv that killed seven people and wounded over 100 others. (AP)

Indian couple, son found dead in US; police suspect double suicide-murder

NEW YORK, Aug 20: An Indian couple and their six-year-old child have been found dead in the US state of Maryland in a suspected case of double suicide-murder, police said.

The three people, from Karnataka, were found dead from gunshot wounds in their Baltimore County home on Friday when police responded to a welfare check around noon, police said on Saturday.

The deceased were identified as Yogesh H. Nagarajappa (37), Prathiba Y. Amarnath (37) and Yash Honnal (6).

Police said they are believed to be husband, wife and son.

"Based on the initial investigation, the incident is believed to be a double murder-suicide that Nagarajappa committed," Baltimore County Police spokesperson An-

thony Shelton was quoted as saying by The Baltimore Sun newspaper.

"Each appeared to suffer from an apparent gunshot wound," Shelton added.

The family members were reportedly last seen alive on Tuesday evening, police said, adding that an autopsy would be conducted by the Office of the Chief Medical Officer to determine the manner and cause of death.

"I am heartbroken and deeply saddened for the innocent victims whose lives were cut short by this horrific act. We will do everything possible to assist family and community members following this tragic incident," a statement by Baltimore County Executive Johnny Olszewski read. Police said that there was no threat to the surrounding communities. (PTI)

Large wildfire ravages forest in northern Greece as 8 villages are evacuated

ATHENS, Aug 20: Greek authorities on Saturday evacuated eight villages near the northeastern border with Türkiye, where a large summer wildfire was burning out of control, whipped on by high winds.

The fire service said more than 130 firefighters, assisted by 14 water-dropping planes and three helicopters, were struggling to contain the blaze and reinforcements were being sent from other parts of the country. The forest fire broke out early Saturday near the village of Melia, east of the town of Alexandroupolis.

There were no immediate reports of injuries to firefighters or residents, but authorities said some houses suffered damages in two of the evacuated villages. Earlier, a section of a major highway in the area was closed down due to heavy smoke drifting across it.

Residents of Alexandroupolis were also advised to keep their windows closed due to smoke blown over the town from the fire.

Another smaller wildfire was burning outside Thessaloniki, in the north, the second-largest city in Greece. (AP)

Pakistan's former human rights minister Shireen Mazari's daughter arrested; family calls it 'abduction'

ISLAMABAD, Aug 20: Imaan Mazari, the daughter of Pakistan's former human rights minister Shireen Mazari, was arrested early on Sunday from her residence here for interference in state affairs, police said.

A Tarnol Police Station personnel said the young lawyer and activist was booked for interference in state affairs, staging a sit-in, and resistance.

Her mother Shireen Mazari, who quit the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party after spending her time in police custody following the May 9 riots, however, termed the arrest an "abduction" and said plain clothes people "took my daughter away after breaking down our front door".

"Taking away our security cameras and her laptop and cell. We asked who they had come for and they just dragged Imaan out. They marched all over the house. My daughter was in her night clothes and said let me change but they just dragged her away. Of course

no warrants or any legal procedure. State fascism. Remember we are only 2 women living in the house. Thus is an abduction," Shireen said on platform X, formerly known as Twitter.

Before her arrest, Imaan herself posted an update on X, sharing about "unknown persons" breaking down their home cameras, banging the gate, and jumping over.

Meanwhile, the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan condemned Imaan's arrest and demanded her immediate and unconditional release.

The organisation, terming the Islamabad Police's act "unacceptable", said on platform X: "The manner in which the Islamabad Police broke into her home, allegedly without a warrant, is unacceptable and points to a larger, more worrying pattern of state-sanctioned violence against people exercising their right to freedom of expression and assembly."

Last week, Imaan reportedly ad-

ressed in Islamabad a rally of the Pashtun Tahafuz Movement (PTM), a group of ethnic Pushtu-speaking activists highly critical of the army, and criticised the powerful military establishment.

The young Mazari has been quite vocal and faced a criminal case last year for using abusive language against then Army chief Gen (ret'd.) Qamar Javed Bajwa.

Imaan was also highly critical of her 57-year-old mother when the latter was a minister in the PTI government.

The mother and daughter once had an open duel on X in October 2021 after Imaan accused former prime minister Imran Khan-led government of "using witchcraft" to run the state's affairs.

Reports emerged that the PTI chairman's wife Bushra Bibi is a spiritual healer or 'peerni' to which Imaan tweeted that if the country was to be run by witchcraft, why was a huge amount of taxpayer money wasted on the prime minister's oversized cabinet? (PTI)

Talks between regional bloc and Niger's junta yield little: Official

NIAMEY, Aug 20: Mutinous soldiers in Niger are under pressure from regional sanctions as they refuse to reinstate the country's president whom they toppled nearly a month ago while being fearful of attacks from France, an official said.

The official spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity after Saturday's meeting between Niger's new military regime and a delegation from the West African regional bloc, ECOWAS.

He said the roughly two-hour discussion aimed at finding a peaceful solution to the country's deepening crisis, yielded little with no clarity on the next steps.

It was the first time head of the junta, Gen. Abdourahmane Tchiani, met with the delegation after rebuffing previous attempts.

Saturday's meeting was a last-ditch diplomacy scramble by the bloc to resolve the crisis peacefully and followed last week's announcement that 11 of its 15 member states had agreed to intervene militarily if democratically-elected President Bazoum was not released from house arrest and reinstated.

The bloc's three other countries under military rule following coups, Guinea, Mali and Burkina Faso, were not included.

The latter two had previously warned they would consider intervention in Niger on a case of war.

On August 10, ECOWAS ordered the deployment of a "standby force" to go into Niger and restore constitutional rule. It's unclear if and when the troops would intervene.

During the talks, Tchiani pushed for the lifting of economic and travel sanctions imposed by



ECOWAS after the coup, saying Niger's population was suffering because of them, but he was unwilling to give much in return, said the official.

The junta said they were under pressure, at times striking a conciliatory tone and apologising for past disrespect towards the bloc, while also defiantly standing by its decision to overthrow Bazoum and unequivocal about him not returning to power, the official added.

Tchiani also repeatedly expressed concerns that its former colonial ruler France — which has some 1,500 troops in the country and had been providing training and conducting joint operations with Niger's military — was actively planning an attack, said the official.

Niger was seen by many Western countries as the last democratic partner in the region it could work with to beat back a growing jihadist insurgency by militant groups linked with al-Qaeda and the Islamic State.

France, the United States and other European nations have poured hundreds of millions of dollars into shoring up Niger's

army and the coup has been seen as a major setback.

Sahel experts say it's not surprising that nothing came from Saturday's meeting as each party is trying to show they're open to discussions, yet the chances of an agreement are slim because their positions are starkly different.

"ECOWAS and the rest of the international community want to restore President Bazoum and the junta is not on this agenda," said Seidiki Abba, a Nigerian researcher and Sahel specialist and president of the International Centre for Reflection for Studies On the Sahel, a think tank based in Paris.

"The next step will be military confrontation ... What we don't know is when this confrontation will take place, how it will go, and what the consequences will be," he said.

Shortly after the meetings Saturday, Tchiani went on state television and laid out a roadmap for the country, saying it would return to civilian rule within three years and that details for the plan would be decided within 30 days through a national dialogue set to launch immediately.

Japan's Kishida visits Fukushima plant to highlight safety before start of treated water release

TOKYO, Aug 20: Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida visited the tsunami-wrecked Fukushima nuclear plant on Sunday and said an impending release of treated radioactive wastewater into the Pacific Ocean cannot be postponed. He said the move is safe but his government will do its utmost to support fishing communities from the potential impact of damaging rumours during the decades-long project.

Kishida made his trip hours after returning from a summit with US and South Korean leaders at the American presidential retreat of Camp David. Before leaving Washington on Friday, Kishida said it is time to make a decision on the treated water's release date, which has not been set due to the controversy surrounding the plan.

Kishida on Sunday saw wastewater filtering and dilution facilities and met with the plant and company executives. He told reporters that he



confirmed their commitment to safely carrying out the upcoming water discharge. To make room for new facilities needed for the progress of the decommissioning, the treated water needs to be disposed of and tanks removed to make room.

The treated water discharge "by no means can be postponed for the decommissioning and Fukushima's recovery", Kishida said.

He said he hoped to meet with representatives of fisheries organisations on Monday before his ministers decide the start date at a

meeting next week. It is widely expected to be the end of August.

Kishida said the water release is a long-term project and that he is aware of the importance of recognising the concerns and needs of local fishing groups. "I hope to convey the government position directly to the fisheries representatives," he said.

Since the government announced the release plan two years ago, it has faced strong opposition from Japanese fishing organisations, which worry about further damage to the reputation of their seafood as they struggle to recover from the accident. Groups in South Korea and China have also raised concerns, turning it into a political and diplomatic issue.

The government and the plant operator, Tokyo Electric Power Co., or TEPCO, say the water must be removed to make room for the plant's decommissioning and to prevent accidental leaks from the tanks be-

cause much of the water is still contaminated and needs further treatment.

Japan has obtained support from the International Atomic Energy Agency to improve transparency and credibility and to ensure the plan by TEPCO meets international safety standards.

The government has also stepped up a campaign promoting the plan's safety at home and through diplomatic channels.

The IAEA, in a final report in July, concluded that the TEPCO plan, if conducted strictly as designed, will cause negligible impact on the environment and human health, encouraging Japan to proceed.

While seeking understanding from the fishing community, the government has also worked to explain the plan to neighbouring countries, especially South Korea, to keep the issue from interfering with their relationship-building. (AP)

11 labourers killed in blast in northwest Pak

PESHAWAR, Aug 20: At least 11 labourers were killed and two others injured in a terrorist attack in the restive North Waziristan tribal district in Pakistan's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, bordering Afghanistan, police said on Sunday.

Terrorists detonated explosives near Gul Mir Kot in Shawal tehsil late Saturday night and blew up a vehicle carrying 16 labourers, Deputy Commissioner North Waziristan Rehan Gul Khattak said.

As many as 11 labourers, who worked in an under-construction government building, were killed on the spot while two were critically injured, and three went missing, Khattak said.

Officials said the victims belonged to tehsil Makin and Wana of South Waziristan tribal district. They injured and bodies were shifted to a nearby hospital.

Efforts to identify and locate the missing workers are ongoing, he said.

Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar ul Haq Kakar condemned the attack which claimed the lives of innocent labourers.

"Heartbreaking to know about the terrorist attack in North Waziristan which claimed the lives of 11 innocent labourers. Strongly condemn this senseless act of violence and stand in solidarity with the families affected," he said in a post on X, formerly Twitter.

Meanwhile, earlier on Saturday, four personnel of the Bomb Disposal Squad were seriously injured in the Makin tehsil of Upper South Waziristan after miscreants fired a rocket at their vehicle. (PTI)

Disarmament pre-condition for talks: Yechury on Manipur crisis

IMPHAL, Aug 20: The government must ensure disarmament to start the talks with the warring Kuki and Meitei communities for resolving the crisis in Manipur, CPI(M) general secretary Sitaram Yechury said on Sunday.

Speaking to reporters at the Manipur Press Club, Yechury said the 'double engine' government of the BJP should double its efforts in resolving the conflict, which has been going on for over three months.

"There has to be some sort of dialogue and discussion, and that is where the governments -- both Centre and state -- have the primary responsibility. If it's a double-engine government, then please make double-energy efforts to try and bring everybody together to a table. We have done this in the past. It is the only way all problems that India has faced in last 75 years have been resolved," he said.



"Disarmament should be a pre-condition for the talks. Talks have to begin with ceasefire, and then it should proceed on the issues," he added.

Yechury also urged the Centre to send a parliamentary delegation to the state. The governments at the Centre and in the state are either incompetent or complacent, he al-

leged, pointing to the continuing violence since May 3.

"We have told the Centre repeatedly -- send a delegation of all political parties in Parliament led by Union Home Minister Amit Shah to Manipur," he said, also urging the government to hold meetings with opposition parties in the state.

Yechury alleged that there were no basic amenities at the relief camps where the people affected by the violence were staying.

"We appealed to Governor Anusuiya UIkey to interfere for ensuring the amenities," he said.

Yechury led a four-member delegation of his party to the state on a three-day visit, which began on Friday.

Besides meeting the governor, members of the delegation also visited relief camps in Churachandpur and Moirang.

Over 160 people have been killed in the ethnic clashes that broke out in the state in May. (PTI)

Manipur violence: BSF men to be deployed in village where 3 were killed



IMPHAL, Aug 20: A Border Security Force (BSF) team is likely to be posted in Thawai Kuki village in Manipur's Ukhrul district where three persons were killed by armed men on Friday, sources said.

Security forces are combing the jungles of the adjoining hills where the armed men are believed to be hiding, they said.

The likely move to deploy a BSF team in the village comes days after Chief Minister N Biren Singh sought reports from Churachandpur

deputy commissioner and SP about the open display of sophisticated firearms by a group of people during an Independence Day parade.

Sources also added that around 60 companies of the BSF are likely to be deployed in nine districts of the state to assist the administration in maintaining law and order.

BSF (EC) ADG Sonali Mishra along with four senior officers had recently called on Governor Anusuiya UIkey at Raj Bhavan and briefed her about the prevailing se-

curity situation in the northeastern state. Meanwhile, more than 200 Meiteis who had crossed over to neighbouring Myanmar to escape the ethnic violence in Manipur and safely returned to the state after more than three months were provided food and medicines by the Army and the civil administration.

More than 160 people have been killed and several hundreds injured in clashes between Meiteis and Kukis in Manipur since May 3. (PTI)

Tipra Motha leader suspended for seeking votes for BJP ahead of Tripura bypolls



AGARTALA, Aug 20: A Tipra Motha leader, who had unsuccessfully contested the last Tripura assembly elections on a party ticket, has been suspended for seeking votes for the BJP ahead of the September 5 bypolls in the northeastern state, a regional party functionary said on Sunday.

Abu Khayer Miah, who had contested, on a Tipra Motha ticket, from the Boxanagar assembly constituency in the last elections held in February and conceded defeat, has been suspended, a party leader said.

A video clip that went viral on social media was purportedly

showing Miah, the Tipra Motha leader in Sepahijala district, seeking votes in favour of the ruling BJP for the by-election to Boxanagar seat.

Based on the video footage, Tipra Citizens' Forum, a wing of Tipra Motha, demanded disciplinary action against Miah, party leader Animesh Debbarma told reporters here.

"Taking serious note of the development, our party president BK Hrangkhawl and other senior leaders have decided to suspend Abu Khayer Miah for six months for violating party discipline. He was asked not to join the party's

election-related activities during the bypolls", he said.

Bypolls to Dhanpur and Boxanagar assembly constituencies in Sepahijala district will be held on September 5.

"Miah has crossed the party's laxman rekha by seeking votes for the BJP as the Tipra Motha has not decided to whom it will support in the by-elections in two seats," Debbarma said.

The regional party has not fielded any candidate in the bypolls.

"We will hold a meeting on August 22 to decide whom the party will back in the by-election," he said.

The BJP is set to take on the CPI(M) as the Tipra Motha and the Congress have decided not to contest the by-elections.

The by-poll to the Boxanagar constituency was necessitated due to the death of CPI(M) MLA Samsul Haque.

Union Minister Pratima Bhoumik's resignation as the MLA of Dhanpur necessitated the by-election to that seat.

The CPI(M)-led Left Front has fielded Kaushik Chanda and Mijan Husain as its nominees for the Dhanpur and Boxanagar assembly constituencies respectively.

The BJP nominated Taffajal Hussain for the Boxanagar assembly seat and Bindu Debnath for the Dhanpur segment. (PTI)

Mathematics Festival enlightens students at Nagaon Seamark School

HT Correspondent

NAGAON, Aug 20: The 4th Seamark School Mathematics Festival concluded with a day-long program on Saturday. More than 71 students from the educational institution enthusiastically participated in various competitions organised as part of the festival.

The primary focus of the festival is to popularise mathematics among students. Traditional mathematical concepts, time, measurement, and other essential elements of mathematics are creatively introduced through competitions during the festival, stated Mathematics Festival coordinator Puja Dhar. These initiatives aim to integrate the subject into students' everyday lives.

"Mathematics is an inseparable part of life, and our goal is to bring it closer to our students," she explained. During the event, outstanding students were recognised for their mathematical prowess. Neel-nayana Bora (from Kindergarten with 99 points), Samiran Bharadwaj and Darsit Borua (jointly from Class 1 with 97 points), Prasujya Bora (Class 2 with 100 points), Zihan Rahman (Class 3 with 82 points), Swasthika Bora, and Ikrana Ahmed (Class 4 with 100 points) were declared as class champions.

The Seamark School Mathematics Festival serves as a creative platform to nurture students' interest and enthusiasm for mathematics, making the subject an engaging and integrated part of their educational journey.

32nd Manipuri Language Day observed widely



IMPHAL, Aug 20: The 32nd Manipuri Language Day was observed widespread in Imphal on Sunday to commemorate the inclusion of Manipuri language in the 8th Schedule of the Indian Constitution.

Manipuri language was included in the 8th Schedule of the Indian constitution under the 71st Amendment Act on August 20, 1992.

The state level observance of the day was held in Imphal's Iboyaima Shumang Leela Shangkhen under the aegis of State Level Celebration Committee of Manipuri Language Day.

Speaking on the occasion, Convener of the committee, Leihathabam Sarchandra informed that efforts are on to include among the classical languages of India.

He recalled the struggle by the people of the state for inclusion of the language in the 8th Schedule of Indian Constitution and before 1992, the language was not among the 14 languages of the country recognized by the constitution.

After prolonged agitations of the people, the language along with Konkani and Nepali was

added to the 8th Scheduled by amending the constitution.

After being included in the 8th Schedule, now Manipuri with Meitei scripts is being studied upto the level of university. The Manipuri is a lingua franca language of the people of the state, he said.

He claimed that there is significant improvement in the language since it became one of the scheduled languages of the country while stressing the need for popularizing the language.

President Noaroibam Indramani of Naharol Sahitya Premee Samiti, speaking on the occasion, said that the development of the language lies with the people speaking the language.

The podium of the celebration function was adorned by president Longjam Joychandra Singh of Manipur Sahitya Parishad, president, Hurem Behari Singh of Cultural Forum Manipur, president Noaroibam Indramani of Naharol Sahitya Premee Samiti, lifetime president Ph Gunachandra Sharma of Manipur State Sumang Leela Council, chairman L Surjakanta Sharma of Film Forum Manipur and president Syed Ahmed of Writers' Union, Imphal. (NNN)

Two-day Mizoram Assembly session from tomorrow

AIZAWL, Aug 20: Mizoram Governor Hari Babu Kambhampati has convened a two-day session of Mizoram Assembly on August 22 and 23, officials said on Sunday.

The assembly secretariat has so far received six government bills to be tabled during the session, they said, adding it also received 237 starred and 119 unstarred questions till now.

The assembly secretariat has also received 12 papers to be presented during the session, officials said. (PTI)

Protesters plant shrubs to highlight poor road conditions in Panidehing

HT Correspondent

DEMOW, Aug 20: Activists of the All Tai Ahom Students' Union (ATASU), Panidehing Regional Committee, along with local residents, staged a unique protest on Sunday by planting shrubs along Naga Ali Road in the Panidehing mouza of Thowra constituency. The protest aimed to draw attention to the deplorable condition of the road and the difficulties it has caused for the local community.

The protesters not only planted shrubs but also raised slogans against the government, and Thowra MLA Sushanta Borgohain. The deteriorating state of Naga Ali Road has been a cause of concern for the people of Naga Ali Gaon under Panidehing Gaon Panchayat. The poor road conditions have resulted in various problems, especially for students who struggle to commute using this road to reach their schools and colleges.

The demonstrators appealed Thowra MLA Sushanta Borgohain to take immediate action and prioritise the reconstruction and improvement of Naga Ali Road to alleviate the difficulties faced by the local residents, particularly the students.

Symposium explores female subjectivity in novels of Assamese women writers

HT Correspondent

JORHAT, Aug 20: The Sahitya Akademi, in collaboration with the Central Office of Asam Sahitya Sabha and Jorhat Zila Sahitya Sabha, organised a symposium titled 'Representation of Female Subjectivity in Novels of Assamese Women Writers'.

The event took place at the Danbir Radha Kanta Handique Bhawan in Jorhat.

The symposium aimed to delve into the portrayal of female subjectivity in the novels of Assamese women writers, shedding light on their contributions to Assamese

literature.



During the inaugural session, Devendra Kumar Devesh, Regional secretary of Sahitya Akademi, Kolkata, delivered the welcome address. Diganta Biswa Sarma, convener of the Assamese Advisory Board at Sahitya Akademi, introduced the program. Anuradha Sharma Pujari, a distinguished novelist, writer, journalist, and Sahitya Akademi Award winner, delivered the keynote address. She discussed the significant contributions of Assamese women writers to Assamese literature and

their exploration of female subjectivity in their works.

Dr Surjya Kanta Hazarika, president of Asam Sahitya Sabha, shared his insights on the subject as the chief guest of the event. The inaugural session was presided over by Bhaba Goswami, president of Jorhat Zila Sahitya Sabha.

The symposium continued with two sessions, during which several writers presented their papers, adding to the discourse on the representation of female subjectivity in the novels of Assamese women writers. The event provided a platform for insightful discussions and exchanges of ideas among scholars, writers, and enthusiasts.

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Private schools body urges Dimapur dist admin to revoke order on closure of schools

HT Correspondent

DIMAPUR, Aug 20: The All Nagaland Private Schools Association (ANPSA) has urged the Dimapur deputy commissioner to either revoke or modify the order asking all schools under the district to suspend physical classes from August 21 to August 26 due to rising cases of conjunctivitis among school students.

The DC, in an order on August 19, following consultations with the district officials of the health and family welfare department and school education department, directed all schools under Dimapur district to suspend physical classes for six days from August 21 to contain the spread of the eye flu among the school-going students.

In a letter to the DC, ANPSA (central) president Nini Sekhose and general secretary PJ Nathan informed that as per the verbal direction of Nagaland Board of Secondary Education (NBSE) chairman, the ANPSA (central) had conducted a survey of schools on the prevalence of eye flu among the students. The letter said many of the schools reported that the infection was



present in their schools but not to an alarming extent while some schools reported nil prevalence. As per the schools, only a few students, about two or three, were absent on a daily basis because of the disease, it said.

"There was no problem in continuing

physical classes due to this disease," the ANPSA said.

"We have seen that though a few students get infected, they recover fast, and therefore, there has been no significant number of absentees in the schools due to the eye

flu. We are able to carry on physical classes taking care to adhere to the recommendation of the health department in preventing the flu," it said.

The letter further said all the schools under the NBSE are now in the process of conducting mid-term exams for Class 12 while some schools are also conducting exams for lower classes.

It said if the schools in Dimapur are closed down for a week, they will not be able to complete the exams in the given timeframe thereby affecting the completion of the syllabus. It added 99% of schools in the state are affiliated to NBSE.

It also pointed out that there are also all Catholic schools in the state which come under the NBSE and that they have common question papers for their schools. It will not be possible for them to bring out another common question paper for Dimapur district alone as the exams are slated to begin by August 21, 2023.

In view of the above, the ANPSA requested the DC to allow the schools to remain open voluntarily so that the exams can be conducted uninterrupted.

33rd State Level Children's Science Exhibition to be held in Jorhat

HT Correspondent

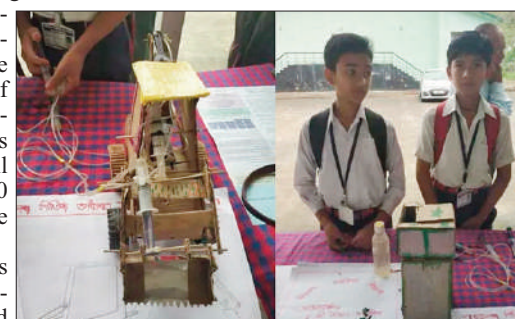
JORHAT, Aug 20: The 33rd State Level Children's Science Exhibition, also known as 'Bal Vaigyanik Pradarshini', is scheduled to take place at the Post Graduate Training College (Institute of Advanced Studies in Education) and Normal School in Jorhat on August 22 and 23.

The event is being organised by the State Council of Educational Research and Training, Assam, in collaboration with the National Council of Educational Research and Training. It will feature the participation of more than 100 students from across the state, who will present over 50 models they have created.

The event aims to promote scientific curiosity and innovation among young minds. The best five models selected will have the opportunity to participate in the national-level children's science exhibition scheduled for November-December 2023.

Dr Binoy Kumar Saikia, principal scientist at CSIR NEIST Jorhat and a recipient of the Shanti Swarup Bhatnagar award, will deliver a popular talk on scientific innovation for a sustainable future.

The two-day event will also include various competitions to engage participants in interactive and hands-on scientific activities. The inauguration of the exhibition is expected to be conducted by state Education minister, Ranaj Pegu.



Cong president Kharge forms new CWC, includes some G23 members in new team

NEW DELHI, Aug 20: Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge on Sunday reconstituted the party's top decision-making body - CWC - with some leaders of the G23 grouping, including Shashi Tharoor and Anand Sharma, who were critical of the party leadership in the past among the 84 members.

The all-important Congress Working Committee, formed 10 months after Kharge took charge after defeating Tharoor, includes several young faces who are below the age of 50, leaders from weaker sections and 15 women.

The new CWC has 39 regular members, 32 permanent invitees, including some in-charges of state, and 13 special invitees, including presidents of the Youth Congress, the National Students' Union of India, the Mahila Congress and the Seva Dal as ex-officio members.

Mukul Wasnik, Anand Sharma and Tharoor, who were part of the group of 23 dissident leaders who had written to then Congress president Sonia Gandhi and had raised questions on the party's leadership, are among the regular members of the new CWC.

Manish Tewari and Veerappa Moily, who were also part of the grouping, have been made permanent invitees to the CWC. Sachin Pilot, who rebelled against the party's government in Rajasthan in 2020 and was later removed as deputy chief minister, is also among the new CWC members. Prominent exclusions in the new CWC include ex-MP from Rajasthan Raghuveer Singh Meena, Jai Prakash Aggarwal, Dinesh Gundu Rao, H K Patil, K H Muniappa, P L Punia, Pramod Tiwari and Raghu Sharma.

Gundu Rao, Muniappa and Patil have since become ministers in the Congress government in Karnataka.

Former Punjab chief minister Charanjit Singh Channi and Pratibha Singh have also been included in the important panel, according to a Congress statement.

Former Maharashtra chief minister Ashokrao Chavan,

N Raghuveera Reddy, Tamradhwaj Sahu, Deepa Das Munshi, Syed Naseer Hussain, Mahendrajeet Singh Malviya, G A Mir, Gourav Gogoi and Jagdish Thakore are among the new additions in the CWC as regular members.

Among the new CWC permanent invitees are Kanhaiya Kumar, Mohan Prakash, K Raju, Chandrakant Handore, Meenakshi Natarajan, Phulo Devi Netam, Sudeep Roy Burman, Damodar Raja Narasimha, Gurdeep Sappal and Sachin Rao. Those also included as special invitees are former Union minister Pallam Raju, besides Pawan Khara, Ganesh Godiyal, Kodikkunil Suresh, Yashomati Thakur, Supriya Shrinete, Prinit Shinde, Alka Lamba and Vamshi Chand Reddy.

The new CWC, which replaces the Steering Committee that was formed as a stop-gap arrangement after Kharge became the party president on October 10 last year, has been announced as the principal opposition party prepares for a crucial round of assembly polls in the coming months and the 2024 general elections.

The last time the Congress Working Committee was reconstituted was on September 11, 2020 under Sonia Gandhi's presidency. This is the first Working Committee formed under Mallikarjun Kharge's presidency.

The new working committee has been formed after several rounds of deliberations.

There are, however, only 15 women in the 84-member body, including six general members, four permanent invitees and five special invitees.

The regular members of the CWC are Mallikarjun Kharge, Sonia Gandhi, Manmohan Singh, Rahul Gandhi, Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury, A K Antony, Ambika Soni, Meira Kumar, Digvijaya Singh, P Chidambaram, Tariq Anwar, Lal Thanhawala, Mukul Wasnik, Anand Sharma, Adhokrao Chavan, Ajay Maken, Charanjit Singh Channi, Priyanka Gandhi Vadra and Kumari Selja, the statement said. (PTI)

Amit Shah releases 'report card' of MP BJP govt

'It removed BIMARU tag from state and put it on path of development'



BHOPAL, Aug 20: Union home minister Amit Shah on Sunday released the Madhya Pradesh government's 'report card' from 2003-2023 and said the BJP government in these years successfully removed the BIMARU (laggard) category tag from the state, which, according to him, was a legacy of the Congress regime.

He said the people of the state took a historic decision in 2003 by removing the government of "Mr Bantadhar", apparently referring to senior Congress leader and former chief minister Digvijaya Singh.

The BJP government laid the foundation of making the state developed and self-reliant in the last 20 years, he said.

Shah released the government's 'report card' of 20 years at a function in the Madhya Pradesh capital Bhopal in the presence of chief minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan, MP BJP president VD Sharma and state home minister Narottam Mishra.

He also asked the opposition Congress to give a report card of its nearly five-decade rule in the state.

The assembly elections in MP are due this year-end.

Shah also expressed confidence that the BJP will win all 29 Lok Sabha seats in the state in the general elections due next year.

The BIMARU acronym has often

been used to refer to Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh, to imply that these states lagged in terms of economic growth, health care, education, and other indices.

"Madhya Pradesh came into existence in 1956 and since then, except for five-six years, the Congress ruled the state till 2003, but the state remained BIMARU during their regime," Shah said.

"However, the BJP government has successfully brought the state out of the BIMARU tag and put it on the path of development by implementing various welfare schemes," he said.

Shah said Madhya Pradesh is at the top in the country with a contribution of 45 per cent in wheat exports, it has distributed more than

3.62 crore Ayushman cards (of government health scheme) to remain on the first position (in that field) in the country, and the quality of rural roads developed under the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana in MP is the best in the country. Madhya Pradesh has approved cases worth ₹ 4,300 crore under the Agriculture Infrastructure Fund Scheme to attain first position in the country, the state is at the second place in constructing houses in rural areas under the PM Awas Yojna (PMAY), and its Indore city has maintained first position since the last six years in the Swachh (cleanliness) scheme, he said.

Highlighting the achievements under various welfare schemes, Shah said in the last five years, 1.36 crore people have come out of poverty in

the state, the per capita income has increased from ₹ 12,000 in 2003 to ₹ 1.40 lakh at present, and more than 44 lakh poor families have got pucca houses under the PMAY in both urban and rural areas.

Targeting the opposition Congress, Shah said during the regime of "Mr Bantadhar," the state was lagging behind in every sphere, especially power water and roads.

"Once known as a Bantadhar state, Madhya Pradesh is now touching new heights of development. In the last 20 years, the BJP government has established new dimensions in power, water, roads and education sectors," Shah said.

He also highlighted figures of development in road, industry and health sectors among others to prove that Madhya Pradesh has become a developed state in the last 20 years. Shah said in the 2014 Lok Sabha polls, people of the state gave 27 out of the total 29 seats to the BJP while in 2019, they gave 28 out of 29 to his party.

"I firmly believe that in the 2024 Lok Sabha polls, the people of the state will give this remaining one seat also to the BJP," Shah said.

In 2019, the Congress bagged only Chhindwara Lok Sabha seat in the state, which was won by senior party leader Kamal Nath's son Nakul Nath. (PTI)

7 pilgrims killed in Uttarakhand bus accident

AHMEDABAD, Aug 20: Gujarat chief minister Bhupendra Patel on Sunday said the administration is in constant touch with the Uttarakhand government after seven pilgrims from the western state were killed in a bus accident and expressed grief.

As per the preliminary information, the tourists travelling on the ill-fated bus were from Bhavnagar, Gujarat officials said.

Seven people were killed and 27 injured when a bus carrying pilgrims from Gujarat fell into a gorge in Uttarakashi district of the hill state. The bus with 35 people on board was returning from Gangotri when it met with the accident at Gangnani.

"I am saddened by the tragic incident in which the pilgrims from Gujarat lost their lives after the bus fell into the gorge in Uttarakhand. My heartfelt condolences to the families of the deceased," chief minister Patel posted on X.

He said the Gujarat government is in constant touch with the Uttarakhand government.

"Praying for the speedy recovery of the injured citizens," Patel added.

Gujarat Relief Commissioner Alok confirmed that seven tourists from the state were killed and 27 were injured in the bus accident.

As per the preliminary information obtained from the relief commissioner of Uttarakhand, 33 tourists from Bhavnagar were on board the private bus from Bhavnagar. For the onward journey, they had hired a local private tourist bus, he said.

The Gujarat government is trying to obtain details of the deceased tourists. (PTI)

Most corruption complaints against home ministry, railways, bank officials in 2022: CVC

NEW DELHI, Aug 20: The highest number of corruption complaints last year were against employees of the Union home ministry, followed by those working for the railways and in banks, according to the Central Vigilance Commission's latest annual report.

In total, 1,15,203 such complaints were received for all categories of officers and employees across central government departments and organisations in 2022, it stated. Of these, according to the report, 85,437 were disposed of and 29,766 were pending -- 22,034 for more than three months. The Central Vigilance Commission (CVC) has prescribed a time-limit of three months for chief vigilance officers, who act as a distant arm of the probity watchdog, to examine complaints, an official said.

While the home ministry received 46,643 complaints against its employees last year, 10,580 were received by the railways and 8,129 by banks, according to the report.

Out of the total complaints against home ministry employees, 23,919 were disposed of and 22,724 were pending disposal -- 19,198 pending for more than three months, it said.

The railways had disposed of 9,663



complaints, while 917 were pending disposal -- nine for more than three months, the report, which was made public recently, stated. Banks had disposed 7,762 corruption complaints and 367 were pending -- 78 for more than three months.

There were 7,370 complaints against employees of Government of National Capital Territory Delhi, it stated. Of these, 6,804 were disposed of and 566 were pending -- 18 for more than three months.

The report stated that 4,710 complaints were against employees of the housing and urban affairs ministry (including the Central Public Works Department), the

Delhi Development authority, the Delhi Metro Rail Corporation, the Delhi Urban Art Commission, the Hindustan Prefab Ltd, the Housing and Urban Development Corporation Limited, the NBCC and the NCR Planning Board. Of these, 3,889 were disposed of and 821 were pending -- 577 for more than three months, it stated.

The CVC annual reported stated that 4,304 complaints were against those in the coal ministry (4,050 disposed of), 4,236 were against those in the labour ministry (4,016 disposed of) and 2,617 against petroleum ministry employees (2,409 disposed of).

There were 2,150 complaints against employees of the Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT), 1,619 against defence ministry employees, 1,308 against Department of Telecommunications employees, 1,202 against finance ministry employees and 1,101 against those in the Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC), the report stated.

The CVC report stated that 987 complaints were against those working in insurance companies, 970 against employees of the personnel, public grievances and pensions ministry and 923 against steel ministry employees, among others. (PTI)

Gehlot accuses PM Modi of arrogance, says people will bring back Cong govt in Rajasthan

JAIPUR, Aug 20: Rajasthan chief minister Ashok Gehlot on Sunday accused Prime Minister Narendra Modi of arrogance over his remark that he will return next Independence Day to address the nation from the Red Fort.

Gehlot also said people will make 'Mission 156' of the Congress successful in the Rajasthan assembly election due later this year. 'Mission 156' refers to the party's target of winning 156 of the total 200 assembly seats in the state.

The chief minister was speaking to reporters at the Congress headquarters here after paying tribute to former prime minister Rajiv Gandhi on his birth anniversary.

"We do not have the ego and arrogance like them (PM Modi) to say that next time I will again come to Red Fort on August 15. I cannot say this. He can only say this. Neither do we have ego nor arrogance. We are doing our work," he said.

On the renaming of the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library as the Prime Ministers' Museum and Library Society, Gehlot said PM Modi is doing it either under

pressure from the RSS or the BJP to wipe out the names of those who created history for this country.

He alleged the ruling party at the Centre wants to forget those who sacrificed their lives and remained in jails before Independence. "Now, they have changed the name of Nehru Memorial Museum and Library," Gehlot said.

To a question on how he was moving towards his party's 'Mission 156', Gehlot said, "I can claim that people have made up their mind towards the mission and are moving towards it. People are supreme..."

He said Prime Minister Modi has visited Rajasthan six times in the last few months but "this is not going to help". "Whether you come to Rajasthan 15-20 times or do up-down, people have made up their mind to repeat the government," the chief minister said.

He alleged that there is an environment of fear among traders and industrialists that they are afraid to speak out. "They have to donate money out of fear and these electoral bonds are a big scandal in the country," Gehlot claimed. (PTI)

Centre concerned over JU student's death, UGC asked to take strictest action: Pradhan

KOLKATA, Aug 20: Stating that the Centre has taken the death of a student at Jadavpur University allegedly following ragging and sexual harassment "seriously", Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan on Sunday said that he has asked the UGC to take the strictest action as per law in the case.

Condemning the 17-year-old boy's death at a hostel just three days into his first-year undergraduate course in Bengali department, he said that the incident is very worrisome.

"I have asked the UGC to take the strictest action as per law," he said. He asserted that the young student lost his life due to ragging and said that whatever steps are required to be taken against the menace as per the rules of the University Grants Commission (UGC) will be taken.

"Questions are being raised whether an anti-ragging cell was there (at the university) and if so, what were its activities, if CCTVs were in place or not... why outsiders were allowed to stay in the hostel," Pradhan said while speaking

on the sidelines of a programme here. It is alleged that several former students of the varsity stay in hostels and a section of them rag freshers.

The union minister said that the UGC is not satisfied with a report given by the university authorities over the boy's death after falling from the second-floor balcony of the main boys' hostel, located outside the campus, on August 9. The UGC had made certain suggestions on the anti-ragging system, the minister said, adding that these include the installation of CCTV cameras, a separate cell to deal with ragging cases, and a communication facility.

"The University Grants Commission has sought a response from the university on what steps it has taken to implement these suggestions. The UGC has taken the matter seriously, and we have also taken it seriously," Pradhan said. There is no place for ragging in educational institutions, he said.

The UGC had voiced dissatisfaction after getting the preliminary report from the univer-

sity on the incident, labelling it as a "generic" one, an official of the statutory body said in Delhi. A JU official said the university authorities have responded to queries "within the regulatory framework".

"We have mentioned what had been done and the reasons for what could not be done," the varsity official said.

The prestigious 67-year-old state-run university in Kolkata also sent an exhaustive report to the UGC on multiple queries about the alleged ragging and sexual harassment of the undergraduate student that led to his death, as directed by the statutory body.

Asked whether the Centre will take any action, Pradhan said, "It is a state university and the West Bengal government must take action against the perpetrators."

Holding that several activities were made which were contrary to the UGC rules, Pradhan said that the Education department of the West Bengal government has a responsibility towards it. (PTI)

Centre approves release of ₹ 200 cr to flood-hit Himachal Pradesh

NEW DELHI, Aug 20: The Centre on Sunday approved the release of ₹ 200 crore from the National Disaster Response Fund as advance assistance to Himachal Pradesh to help the rain-battered state undertake relief measures for affected people.

A spokesperson of the Union Home Ministry said the Centre had earlier approved the advance release of ₹ 360.80 crore from the central share of the State Disaster Response Fund in two instalments on July 10 and 17.

The Central government also released ₹ 189.27 crore of the state's past dues from the National Disaster Response Fund (NDRF) on August 7, the spokesperson said.

The home ministry has approved the release of ₹ 200 crore, as an ad-

vance from the National Disaster Response Fund to the government of Himachal Pradesh to help them undertake relief measures for affected people during the ongoing monsoon season, a spokesperson said.

The central government is monitoring the situation in Himachal Pradesh round the clock and providing necessary logistics and financial help to the state government to deal with the situation efficiently.

Twenty teams of the National Disaster Response Force, nine columns of the Indian Army and three helicopters of the Indian Air Force were deployed in Himachal Pradesh for rescue and relief.

The central government, without waiting for a memorandum from

the state government, had also deputed inter-ministerial central teams, to make an on-the-spot assessment of the situation and relief works being carried out by the state government, the spokesperson said. The central teams visited the affected areas in the state from July 19 to 21.

According to the home ministry data, at least 330 people lost their lives due to rains, floods, landslides and lightning in Himachal Pradesh since the monsoon's onset in the state.

All 12 districts of Himachal Pradesh were hit by the rains, floods, landslides and cloudbursts this monsoon.

The state was also hit by 25 landslides and one cloudburst in the last week, the data said. (PTI)

Ensure proper implementation of provisions of RTI Act on proactive disclosure of information: SC

NEW DELHI, Aug 20: The Supreme Court has directed the Central Information Commission and the State Information Commissions to ensure proper implementation of provisions of the Right to Information Act, 2005 including on proactive disclosure of information by public authorities.

A three-judge bench led by Chief Justice D Y Chandrachud said public accountability is a crucial feature that governs the relationship between 'duty bearers' and 'right holders'. The top court said power and accountability go hand in hand and noted that while all citizens shall have the 'right to information' under Section 3 of the Act, the co-relative 'duty' in the form of the obligation of public authorities is recognised in Section 4 of the RTI Act.

"We direct that the Central Information Commission and the State Information Commissions shall continuously monitor the implementation of the mandate of Section 4 of the Act as also prescribed by the Department of Personnel and Training in its Guidelines and Memorandums issued



from time to time," the bench also comprising justices P S Narasimha and J B Pardiwala said.

Section 4 of the Right to Information

Act deals with the obligations of public authorities.

Section 4(1)(b) of the RTI Act lays down the information which should be

disclosed by public authorities on a suo motu or proactive basis. Section 4(2) and Section 4(3) prescribe the method of dissemination of this information.

The apex court stated this in a judgement on a plea seeking effective implementation of a provision of the Right to Information Act which mandates public authorities to suo motu disclose vital information about their functioning.

The top court was hearing a plea filed by Kishan Chand Jain seeking effective implementation of the mandate of Section 4 of the RTI Act dealing with the obligations of public authorities.

The PIL contended that the provision is the soul of RTI without which it remains an ornamental law.

The plea also referred to the reports of the Central Information Commission which reflect poor compliance with the mandate of Section 4.

It said that the Department of Personnel and Training had issued an Office Memorandum requiring a third-party audit, which witnessed poor participation. (PTI)

Four-day Y20 summit concludes in Varanasi

VARANASI (UP), Aug 20: A four-day Youth 20 (Y20) summit concluded in Varanasi in Uttar Pradesh on Sunday, according to a statement.

The meet made various recommendations including empower lifelong learning, prepare the global workforce for global challenges, strengthen international research collaboration, promote universal gig worker Rights and implement accessible sustainable financing and mentoring.

"Y20 under the overall framework of G20 under the presidency of India has set new milestones for the world. During the summit, Y20 communiqué was discussed and negotiated, thereafter, it has been signed successfully with global consent," according to the statement.

The communiqué was released by representatives of Y20 Chair India, Indonesia Organising Committee and Brazil Organising Committee. The outcome of the summit in form of the Y20 communiqué was signed by heads of delegations,

marking the conclusion of various discussions held during the past few months.

It is a testament to the collective common vision across the five identified themes of Y20, which will ensure that the voices of young people are heard by the highest-level decision-makers on global platform, it said.

During the four-day summit, delegates visited Sarnath, the famous Kashi Vishwanath Temple and the Ganga ghat during a river cruise. India's rich art, culture and heritage left a long-lasting impression on the delegates from across the world.

Rich and diverse cultural heritage of the holy city of Varanasi, its spirituality, literature, art, and music also mesmerized the delegates from G20 countries, guest countries and international organisations.

Y20 is the official youth engagement group of G20. It provides a platform that allows the youth to express their vision and ideas on the G20 priorities. (PTI)

Chhattisgarh CM transfers ₹ 2k cr to welfare scheme beneficiaries

'Sonia Gandhi hails CM Baghel for making Rajiv Gandhi's dream come true'

MAHASAMUND, Aug 20: Chhattisgarh chief minister Bhupesh Baghel on Sunday transferred ₹ 2055.60 crore online into the accounts of beneficiaries as part of the Rajiv Gandhi Kisan Nyay Yojana and other schemes in an event in which senior Congress leader Sonia Gandhi in a video message hailed him for making the dreams of the former prime minister come true.

The function took place on the birth anniversary of Rajiv Gandhi, which was observed as 'Sadbhavana Diwas' by the administration.

A state government release said ₹ 1,810 crore was transferred as second instalment under RGKNY, ₹ 168.63 crore under Rajiv Gandhi Bhumihin Krishi Majdoor Nyay Yojana (RGBKMNY), ₹ 66.21 crore to Rajiv Yuva Mitra Clubs, ₹ 9.65 crore to the beneficiaries of Godhan Nyay Yojana and ₹ 1.11 crore under Mukhmantri Parab Samman Nidhi Yojana.

In her video message, Sonia Gandhi said the Baghel govern-



ment had made the dreams of Rajiv Gandhi come true by improving the living standards of all sections of society, which was the finest tribute to the late PM.

She said progress in agriculture was essential to tackle poverty in the country and the Chhattisgarh government had taken concrete steps due to which the financial

condition of several lakhs farmers in the state had continuously improved.

"There is a ray of hope in their lives and happiness in their families. I am happy that apart from government subsidies under the Rajiv Gandhi Kisan Nyay Yojana, many decisions have been taken for the upliftment of farmers of

Chhattisgarh, which are an example for other states," she said.

Decisions of the state government had resulted in record production and rise in income of farmers, while meaningful steps had been taken under Rajiv Gandhi Bhumihin Krishi Majdoor Nyay Yojana for agricultural labourers, the senior Congress leader said.

"Rajiv ji used to say India is an ancient country but a young nation. In his own words, I am young and I also have a dream. My dream is to bring India strong, independent, self-reliant and to the first place in all the countries of the world and to serve mankind," she said.

"Today, when we remember these words of Rajiv ji, it is understood that this dream cannot be fulfilled without the youth and farmers of the country. Rajiv ji had an unbreakable attachment to the farmers of the country. He had said if the farmers become weak then the country loses self-reliance but if they are strong then the independence of the country also becomes strong," she added. (PTI)

HYDERABAD, Aug 20: Telangana chief minister K Chandrababhan Nara Chandrababu Naidu on Sunday hit out at the opposition Congress, saying if the party comes to power in the state, the middleman era will begin in government offices. Assembly elections in Telangana are set to be held before the end of the year. Speaking at a public rally in Suryapet, about 140 km from here, Rao said that the Congress Party has said it will abolish the Dharani portal (integrated land records system). "The move will bring back middlemen into the system... If the Congress comes into power, there will be middlemen at the revenue office and registration offices," he warned. KCR claimed that land records in the Dharani Portal cannot be tampered with, and even the chief minister or chief secretary does not have the power to change the records -- only farmers do. According to him, it is because of Dharani that some of the government schemes are being implemented effectively. Further targeting the Congress over its promise to pay ₹ 4,000 as social



pension if elected to power in the state, KCR asked why such a scheme was not being implemented in the states ruled by the party. "The Congress, which has ruled for 50 years, used to give only ₹ 200 as social pension. Now they say, 'give us a chance, we will make it ₹ 4000', KCR said. "Are they giving it in Chhattisgarh which is being ruled by them? Are they giving it in Karnataka? Are they giving it in Rajasthan? Is there a separate policy for each state?" Speaking about governance in his state, Rao said despite the loss of revenue faced by Telangana due to the Covid-19 pandemic and also the "note ban by Prime Minister Narendra Modi" in 2016, the BRS government has success-

fully waived farm loans to the tune of ₹ 37,000 crore. Taking a dig at the Congress and hinting at poor governance by it, Rao alleged that Bangalore city in neighbouring Karnataka has been facing power cuts ever since the party assumed power in that state. He said the BJP and Congress are asking the Telangana people to give them a chance. "But they could not do anything despite being given several chances in the last 50 years," he alleged. Exuding confidence that the BRS party would win five or six more seats than last time in the upcoming assembly election, he highlighted the developments of the state and said the growth momentum reached by Telangana should be maintained for another seven or eight years without any disruption. Speaking of helping farmers become the "pride of the nation", he said the state had achieved the distinction of producing three crore tonnes of paddy, surpassing Punjab. KCR said the state government is selling one crore tonnes of paddy in the open market in spite of incurring ₹ 1,000 crore loss. (PTI)

Contd. from Page 1...

Luna- 25 crash lands, Chandrayaan-3

agency's Facebook page, and DD National TV channel. "The soft landing of Chandrayaan-3 is a monumental moment that not only fuels curiosity but also sparks a passion for exploration within the minds of our youth," ISRO said. "It generates a profound sense of pride and unity as we collectively celebrate the prowess of Indian science and technology. It will contribute to fostering an environment of scientific inquiry and innovation," it said.

In light of this, all schools and educational institutions across the nation are invited to actively publicise this event among students and faculty, and organise a live streaming of the Chandrayaan-3 soft landing on campuses, ISRO said. On Thursday, 35 days after the mission was launched on July 14, the lander module of Chandrayaan-3 had successfully separated from the propulsion module.

ISRO sources earlier said that after the separation, the lander would undergo "deboost" (the process of slowing down) operations to place it in an orbit where when it's at a point closest to the Moon (Perilune) it would be at a distance of 30 km and at its farthest point (Apolune) it would be 100 km away. At this point, the soft landing on the south polar region of the Moon will be attempted.

At around 30 km altitude, the lander enters the powered braking phase and begins to use its thrusters to reach the surface of the Moon, they said. At an altitude of about 100 m, the lander would scan the surface to check whether there are any obstacles and then start descending to make a soft landing. Post its launch on July 14, Chandrayaan-3 entered into lunar orbit on August 5, following which orbit reduction manoeuvres were carried out on the spacecraft on August 6, 9, 14 and 16, ahead of the separation of both its modules on August 17, in the runup to the landing on August 23.

Earlier, over five moves in the three weeks since the July 14 launch, ISRO had lifted the Chandrayaan-3 spacecraft into orbits farther and farther away from Earth. Then, on August 1 in a key manoeuvre -- a slingshot move -- the spacecraft was sent successfully towards the Moon from Earth's orbit. Following this trans-lunar injection, the Chandrayaan-3 spacecraft escaped from orbiting the Earth and began following a path that would take it to the vicinity of the Moon. The current mission is a follow-on to Chandrayaan-2 and seeks to demonstrate end-to-end capability in safe landing and roving on the lunar surface.

The mission objectives of Chandrayaan-3 are to achieve safe and soft landing on the lunar surface, to demonstrate the rover's mobility on the Moon, and to conduct in-situ scientific experiments. The lander has the capability to soft land at a specified lunar site and deploy the rover that will carry out in-situ chemical analysis of the Moon's surface during the course of its movements.

The lander and the rover are carrying scientific payloads to carry out experiments on the lunar surface. Only three countries -- the erstwhile Soviet Union, the US and China have achieved successful moon landings, but not on the moon's south pole. India and Russia were racing to create history by becoming the first countries to do so. (PTI)

Case of 7-yr-old boy, mother,

both Meitei Christians, were in the ambulance along with a driver and a nurse when the mob attacked them, officials said. The driver and nurse were allowed to escape while police personnel, who had fired in the air, had to retreat.

Members of the mob paid no heed to repeated pleas by the boy's mother and aunt to let them go, and set the ambulance on fire with them inside the vehicle, the officials said.

Tonsing, who was staying at a relief camp like many others, was injured when a bullet ricocheted from an iron pillar, they said and added that the camp was attacked by a group of armed men from the "majority community" of the northeastern state.

Following the incident, a senior army officer immediately got in touch with the Imphal superintendent of police to seek passage so that the boy can be taken to the hospital, the officials said. It was decided that only his mother and aunt would travel with him as they belonged to the "majority community", they said.

The army handed them to the police escort and the ambulance at the border of Imphal but the convoy was accosted by a mob of around 2,000 people, the officials said.

In his complaint at the Kangpokpi police station, Joshua had said that on June 4, a Meitei mob of Meitei Lepun, Arambai Tenggol and Kangleipak Kanba Lup groups stopped the ambulance near Iroisemba and set it ablaze with people inside.

In its case at the Lamphel station, police acknowledged the presence of the Imphal West superintendent of police at the spot and mentioned that they fired in the air to disperse the mob comprising men and women. But the patient and the other two occupants were killed by the mob and later burnt along with the ambulance at Iroisemba, police said.

Among the 20 cases handed over to the CBI, is also that of a Meitei woman who claimed that she was raped on May 3 by unidentified tribal Kuki leaders. Officials said it is a complex case as authorities of the village, where she claimed she was raped, have denied the allegations and issued a statement. The woman had claimed that she had been sexually assaulted near Khumujamba in Churachandpur district on May 3, and an FIR was registered at the Bishnupur police station.

Village authorities, however, issued a statement debunking her claim and said that she once resided in Ngathal village under Churachandpur district with her family but had left the area with her husband five years ago as she had incurred huge debts. The family since then had not returned to the village, it said. (PTI)

Guwahati Airport introduces

Technology (FRT) to identify passengers, and the gates will open once the face is recognised on the camera. The 'Digi Yatra' service is available at three key areas of the airport: the first entrance, check-in, and boarding areas. The implementation of this facility aims to enhance the overall travel experience for passengers, making air travel more convenient and hassle-free. Currently, the 'Digi Yatra' facility is accessible to Akasa and IndiGo passengers at Guwahati Airport. It is expected that all other airlines will provide this service by September, ensuring that more passengers can benefit from this seamless and secure travel experience. (With inputs from PTI)

Formal dress code for teachers

from concerns that some educators might not be adhering to public and educational environment expectations in terms of attire. A department notification emphasised that teachers should be exemplary figures of decency due to their pivotal role in shaping young minds.

"As teachers are expected to uphold decency, especially during their duties, it has become necessary to establish a dress code that reflects decorum, decency, professionalism, and a serious approach in the workplace," the notification stated.

The prescribed dress code outlines specific guidelines for both male and female teachers. Male teachers are required to wear suitable formal attire, including options such as formal shirts with pants or traditional attire like dhoti-pyjama. Female teachers are encouraged to choose from a range of options, such as decent salwar suits, sarees, mekhela chadors, and other traditional outfits.

Guv attends 3rd foundation

Governor Kataria acknowledged its role in making the youth more socially conscious. Discussing the rich cultural diversity of the North Eastern Region, Governor Kataria urged the Nyaas to play an active role in raising awareness about the cultural heritage of the state among the people.

Joint organising secretary of Vidya Bharti, Yatindra Kumar Sharma, also addressed the gathering. President of Assam Chah Janagosthi Shiksha Sanskriti Nyas, Ranjit Bora, secretary Dr Amal Bawri, vice president Kavita Tasa, and program coordinator Dr Dhiren Das Panika, along with other dignitaries, were present at the event.

Rahul speaking like 'China's

India-China ties nosedived significantly following the fierce clash in the Galwan Valley in June 2020 that marked the most serious military conflict between the two sides in decades.

Indian and Chinese troops are locked in an over three-year confrontation in certain friction points in eastern Ladakh even as the two sides completed disengagement from several areas following extensive diplomatic and military talks. (PTI)

Disengagement of experts and consultants hampering work of Delhi Transport dept: Officials

NEW DELHI, Aug 20: Key policies and schemes of the Delhi government's Transport department, including electric vehicles and cab and bus aggregators, have been affected due to the disengagement of experts and consultants, official sources said on Sunday.

A total of 437 specialists, advisors and fellows appointed by the Arvind Kejriwal government in different departments were terminated by the Services department following the lieutenant governor's order.

The appointments were discontinued over alleged non-transparent manner of recruitment and violation of reservation norms. Later, the Finance department of the Delhi government also asked the departments to stop salaries of such appointees.

Officials said around 50 advisors and experts were engaged in the Transport department who were playing crucial role in formulations of various policies and schemes related to electric vehicle, cab aggregators and premium bus service.

"The work on these including electric vehicle policy 2.0, cab aggregator policy and premium bus service has halted due to removal of the consultants. The highly qualified domain experts were closely associated with these policies and schemes that were still in formulation stage when they were given marching orders," a senior government official said. The issue was also raised in the recently concluded session of the Delhi Assembly. The 437 advisors and fellows removed included 116 working in the Delhi Assembly. The House referred to its privileges committee the issue of disengagement of fellows for action against the officers responsible for doing so. The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) government has challenged in the Supreme Court the termination of consultants and fellows appointed by it. Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal has assured Delhi people that hurdles like this may slow the speed of works undertaken by his government, but all the schemes and projects will continue. The ambitious electric vehicle policy that was notified in 2020 expired earlier this month. Its new version is likely to get delayed by two-three months. Similarly, the cab aggregator policy and the premium bus service that are long overdue will also get delayed further by a few months, officials added. (PTI)

DMK won't stop until NEET exemption is secured, says Stalin

CHENNAI, Aug 20: Ruling DMK President and Tamil Nadu chief minister M K Stalin on Sunday assured all efforts to ensure NEET exemption for Tamil Nadu, as his son and cabinet minister Udhayanidhi led the party's state-wide hunger strike demanding the abolition of the test. The DMK will not stop till Tamil Nadu got exemption from the central qualifying test, Stalin said.

The CM's remarks at a wedding coincided with his party's agitation seeking to do away with the National Entrance-cum-Eligibility Test (NEET). Stalin also took a swipe at TN Governor RN Ravi for his recent remarks that he would never sign in favour of the state's anti-NEET bill, saying the matter was now with the President and that the Governor's job was only that of a "postman," who has to send to the Rashtrapathi Bhavan matters taken up by the state Assembly.

The ruling party hunger strike was held all through Tamil Nadu except in Madurai where the AIADMK is holding a massive state conference today. It will be now held on August 23.

At the protest venue at Valluvar Kottam here, DMK youth wing chief Udhayanidhi was joined by senior leaders and cabinet ministers-- Duraimurugan, Ma Subramanian and PK Sekar Babu, party MPs including Dayanidhi Maran, MLAs and Chennai Mayor Priya R.

A collage of medical aspirants who allegedly

died of suicide over NEET, including S Anita of Ariyalur was put on display at the stage and floral tributes paid to them. Newlywed couples joined the protest carrying anti-NEET banners.

The hunger strike is being held in the wake of another alleged suicide of an aspirant last week.

In his address at the wedding, Stalin reiterated that his party has been opposing NEET ever since it was brought.

The earlier bill adopted by the Assembly during the AIADMK regime was returned and the then ruling party did not reveal it, even when Assembly was on, he said. That bill subsequently lapsed, Stalin said, adding his party, ahead of the 2021 elections promised to wholeheartedly strive for a NEET ban. The bill seeking exemption for TN was adopted twice after the DMK came to power and was "finally sent for Presidential assent after much struggle."

He alleged that Ravi kept the bill at Raj Bhavan and sent it to the President only after the government strongly pressed for it.

"The President should decide on the bill on the basis of Centre's advice. Only the President has the power, not the governor; he only has the job of a postman. he has to send what we sent," he said, referring to Ravi's recent remarks at an interaction that he would never give assent to the state's anti-NEET bill. (PTI)

Countless Indians who seek more inclusive India deserve best from us: Tharoor after CWC inclusion

NEW DELHI, Aug 20: Congress leader Shashi Tharoor Sunday said he was honoured by party chief Mallikarjun Kharge and the central leadership's decision to nominate him to the working committee and asserted that countless Indians who seek a more inclusive India "deserve the best" from the party.

Kharge on Sunday reconstituted the party's top decision-making body, the Congress Working Committee (CWC), with 39 members, 32 permanent invitees and 13 special invitees.

Tharoor, who unsuccessfully ran for the post of Congress chief against Kharge in the inter-

national polls last year, has been included in the committee along with the likes of Sonia Gandhi, Manmohan Singh, Rahul Gandhi, Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, K C Venugopal, P Chidambaram and Sachin Pilot, among others.

"I am honoured by the decision of the @INCIndia President Shri Mallikarjun @Kharge ji and the Congress central leadership to nominate me to the Working Committee," Tharoor said in a post on X.

"As one who is aware of the historic role played by the CWC in guiding the party over the last 138 years, I am humbled and grateful to be part of this institu-

tion, and look forward to the opportunity to serve the party alongside my dedicated colleagues," the MP from Thiruvananthapuram said.

He said, "None of us can accomplish anything without the lakhs of committed workers who are the lifeblood of the party. Today, above all, I bow to them. The countless Indians who seek a more inclusive and accepting India deserve the best from us."

Tharoor was part of the group of 23 leaders that had raised questions on the Congress' leadership under Sonia Gandhi. (PTI)

Several parishes under Ernakulam-Angamaly Archdiocese abandon Sunday Mass fearing disruption over 'imposition' of uniformity

KOCHI, Aug 20: The Vatican's order to celebrate Holy Mass in a uniform manner failed to have the desired effect among parishioners in Kerala's Ernakulam-Angamaly Archdiocese as Mass was suspended in most parishes on Sunday, including the St Mary's Cathedral Basilica, the principal church in the Archdiocese of the Syro-Malabar Catholic Church.

Last week, Pontifical Delegate Archbishop Cyril Vasil had warned of canonical punishment to priests who do not follow the uniform Holy mass as per the synod's direction.

Parish members opposed to the order to celebrate Holy Mass in a uniform manner gathered in large numbers at the Basilica from early morning, determined to stop newly appointed priest Father Antony Puthaveilil from conducting the liturgical service.

Many parishes under the archdiocese on Sunday decided not to celebrate Mass considering the opposition from a section of priests and believers.

"I want to solve the issue in a peaceful manner. I do not intend to be the reason for people to become violent and fight inside the church premises. Holy Mass should be celebrated in a peaceful atmosphere. Since the situation was not conducive, I have decided not to conduct Holy Mass," Fr Puthaveilil told the media.

However, a church in Kakkanad and Fort Kochi are reported to have celebrated Holy Mass in the prescribed manner.

Puthaveilil had taken charge yesterday even as over 300 priests of the archdiocese of the church had on Friday said they cannot accept the warning issued by papal representative Vasil



to celebrate Holy Mass as prescribed by the synod.

The Basilica has been closed for months following the altercation over the conduct of the synod-specified unified Holy Mass.

Papal representative Vasil had recently issued a hard-hitting letter addressing priests in the Ernakulam-Angamaly Archeparchy, directing them to follow the synod-approved Holy Mass from August 20.

Vasil had said that those who oppose the Syro-Malabar Church Synod's decision will invite canonical punishment. He also warned the protesting priests that any disobedience to this order would be considered "voluntary, personal, and culpable disobedience to the Holy Father".

The Synod of the Syro-Malabar Catholic Church had introduced the uniform way of celebrating Holy Mass in August 2021.

According to it, priests celebrating Holy Mass must face the faithful only in the first and last parts of the liturgical service and turn towards the altar for the rest of the Mass.

While all other dioceses under the Syro-Malabar Church have adopted the instruction approved by the synod, the majority of priests of the Ernakulam-Angamaly Archdiocese, supported by their laity, opposed it. They said they could not depart from the tradition by which the priest faces the faithful throughout the Mass.

The Syro-Malabar Catholic Church is one of the 22 Eastern Oriental Churches in full communion with the Pope.

Vasil was appointed by the Vatican to address and resolve the ongoing conflict over the unified Mass in the Ernakulam-Angamaly Archdiocese, where discontent has been brewing for some time among a significant section of priests, nuns, and laity over the synodal decision to "impose" uniformity in celebrating Holy Mass in churches under its control.

On August 15, he was stopped at the gate of St Mary's Basilica here by a section of laity and priests opposing the unified mass, who staged a protest.

Vasil had also ordered that the letter of Pope Francis regarding the celebration be read out on August 20 in all parish churches, filial churches, and all other institutions under the Ernakulam-Angamaly Archdiocese where Sunday Qurbana (holy communion) is celebrated.

The priests refused to accept this order as well, saying the reason behind such a warning was that someone had misled the papal delegate. (PTI)

Glad I'm part of this era: Yami Gautam on playing 'meatier roles'



MUMBAI, Aug 20: Change takes time and Yami Gautam says better roles will be written for women in films when actors will be forthcoming about playing a character of substance, genre no bar. The actor, who plays lawyer Kamini Maheshwari in the recently released hit Hindi film "OMG 2", also credited her women colleagues, both seniors and contemporaries, for doing an "incredible job".

"I think it all comes from the writing. The audience was always welcoming such films... Change takes time. There should be awareness that actresses themselves want to essay a pivotal role in any kind of film, be it an out-and-out commercial, a high concept or a women-related film. The role has to have some substance, that is important."

"Accordingly, meatier roles will be written for women. Audiences always accept good films and eventually all this will have an impact on the box office. I'm glad I'm part of this era, that this awareness is there. I'm happy that my contemporaries and my seniors are doing such an incredible job. This is just the beginning." Gautam told PTI. Billed as a spiritual sequel of 2012's "OMG - Oh My God!", "OMG 2" explores various issues concerning teenagers and the importance of sex education. Also starring Pankaj Tripathi and Akshay Kumar, the film is directed by Amit Rai. "OMG 2", which released on August 11, is emerging as one of the commercial and critical hits of 2023. The movie has amassed Rs 101.61 crore at the national box office in 10 days and it is receiving acclaim for deftly dealing with taboo subjects like sex education with comedy. At the end of the day, Gautam said, what matters is the love and respect of the audience. "Stardom and all will come and go, it's all temporary. We are fortunate as actors that we get so much love from people. People often desire to be admired by others, be loved and respected, irrespective of the profession. (PTI)

'OMG 2' BREACHES ₹ 100 CRORE-MARK AT DOMESTIC BOX OFFICE

MUMBAI, Aug 20: "Oh My God 2" ("OMG 2") has raised ₹ 101.61 crore at the national box office in 10 days of its release, the makers announced Sunday.

Written and directed by Amit Rai, the film features Pankaj Tripathi as a devotee of Lord Shiva named Kanti Sharan Mudgal and Akshay Kumar as a messenger of God.

Produced by Cape of Good Films and Wakao Films, the film touches upon various issues of teenagers and the importance of sex education.

Wakao Films shared the latest box office figures on its official Instagram page.

"Hamari yatra saphal karne ke liye dhanyawad. (Thank you for making our journey fruitful)," the production house captioned the post.

Presented by Viacom18 Studios, "OMG 2" also stars Yami Gautam and Pavan Malhotra.

It is billed as a spiritual sequel of 2012's "OMG - Oh My God!". The film was released in theatres on August 11. (PTI)



Was heartbroken when CBFC gave 'A' certificate to 'OMG 2', says director Amit Rai

MUMBAI, Aug 20: Director Amit Rai says he wanted everyone to watch his latest release "OMG 2" in theatres, a wish that remained unfulfilled after the CBFC cleared the film with a few modifications and an 'A' certificate.

The Hindi movie, starring Pankaj Tripathi and Akshay Kumar in the lead, explores various issues concerning teenagers, including sex education. It hit the screens on August 11. After being "heartbroken" over the censor board's decision to limit the viewing of the movie to adults ('A' certification), the filmmaker is happy with the audience's response. "OMG 2" has earned Rs 101.61 crore at the national box office

in 10 days of its release, the makers announced Sunday.

"We were heartbroken because we made the film for everyone to watch, now that cannot happen. We begged them to give us a U/A certificate (children below 12 years of age can watch a film under parental guidance) but they didn't. We tried to convince them till the very end... But then they walked some distance, we walked some distance. The film has been released with modifications... "We are happy people have loved the film. The intent of the film was pure. Nobody wanted to titillate the audience, hence they liked it. We have dealt with it (the story) in a way that

doesn't sound vulgar. We talk about the reality, but in a sweet and humorous way," Rai told PTI in an interview.

Asked if the team would make "OMG 2" available on OTT without any changes, Rai said yes.

"We have decided that we will show the original film (on streaming), a film that the censor never wanted people to see, but... The public has seen the film and given their verdict. If the censor board doesn't understand it, what do we say?" At the outset, Rai said he had trouble finding a producer for the film. "OMG 2" is produced by Cape of Good Films and Wakao Films, and presented by Viacom18 Studios.

Hrithik Roshan accorded warm welcome by fans in Jammu, dances to 'Ek Pal Ka Jeena'

JAMMU, Aug 20: Hundreds of enthusiastic fans, mostly youngsters, on Sunday waited for hours in the scorching heat to catch a glimpse of Bollywood superstar Hrithik Roshan, who reached the city of temples to inaugurate a showroom of a leading jewellery brand here.

The actor also grooved to his popular song "Ek Pal Ka Jeena", from his 2000 debut film "Kaho Na... Pyaar Hai", at the event held at Channi in the outskirts of the city where police had a tough time keeping the surging crowds at a safe distance from him. Amid the chants of 'Welcome to Jammu', the 49-year-old star thanked the local people for their "love and support" over the years.

"Thank you Jammu for your love and support. I am very happy and thankful to my lord. I will continue my hard work to be loved by you," Hrithik, known for films such as "War", "Kaabil" and "Zindagi Na Milegi Dobara", said.

He also thanked the jewellery brand for an "exciting" day.

"This was my first public engagement for the jewellery brand and that also in Jammu, which is the best place that it could have been because of its world-class hospitality," he said.

"It is a matter of pride for me to represent this iconic brand that is built on the core pillars of trust, transparency and customer-centricity," he added.

Several people stood on top of the buildings around the venue to catch sight of the actor, who will next be seen in "Fighter", billed as India's first aerial action film.

The people were seen waiting since early morning to meet Hrithik and started clicking pictures and recording videos from their smartphones the moment he reached.

Gunjan, a young student, said she was waiting to have a close look at her favourite actor since last week. (PTI)



JOY OF DOING LIVE SHOWS UNMATCHED: Rahman's concert tour choreographers Arun Mode and Chetan Kadam

MUMBAI, Aug 20: The joy and energy of a live concert is an "unmatched" experience, say choreographer duo Arun Mode and Chetan Kadam, who have extensively contributed in creating music maestro AR Rahman's various stage performances. The Mumbai-based duo, who have been collaborating with Rahman for over a decade now, said their aim is to see the viewers smile after every concert.

"As dancers, choreographers, we always want to see a smile on the audience's face... Live concerts give us that opportunity. When you are doing a film, it is always the camera for which you are performing, you are not interacting with an individual. The joy that comes from live concerts is unmatched," Mode told PTI in an interview here.

"We have movies and theatres. But the kick that you get from theatre, you don't get from films. You get instant gratification from the audience," added Kadam.

In the world of live shows, the spotlight is always on the performer, and Mode and Kadam said they are happy to be in the background.

"We have never done work to be recognised as Arun and Chetan. When we do a

good shoot, we feel that our work has been recognised. If we were not good enough, we would not be working with the biggest legend in this country for 10 years," Mode said referring to Rahman.

The duo is currently hard at work as Rahman embarks on his concert tour 'Marakkuma Nenjam' (loosely translated from Tamil to mean 'Will my heart be able to forget this?'), which will celebrate his 30th anniversary as a music composer.

The first show will be held in Coimbatore on Sunday and will move to other Indian cities, including Chennai (September 10). The tour will also travel to France, Germany and Switzerland for the first time.

"It is an adrenaline rush. We are lucky to be part of sir's concert. The number of audience (members) is often 50,000 or 70,000 or more. They all scream, cheer and we can feel the energy and we put in more energy," Mode said.

Unlike movies, choreography in live-shows isn't restricted to the performances of background dancers.

According to Mode, their job requires them to conceptualise the dance acts, choose specialised dancers, as well as zero in on costumes and accessories, among other aspects. "When a concert comes up, there's a major influence of where we are performing, like the geographical

location. With Rahman sir's body of work, it is difficult to fit it into a two-hour concert. "For instance, we have to choose all his best songs. We will have to do four concerts and still few songs will be left out. The process is always like, he tries to understand the pulse of the fans, he likes to cater to his fans," he said. Rahman's stage performances reflect his diverse discography, added Kadam. "If the concert is in Mumbai, then it will be in Hindi. He will do all kinds of songs, he will do a song in Hindi, Malayalam, or Tamil, etc. Like, 'Jai Ho' (from 'Slumdog Millionaire') is a global phenomenon, so it depends on which part of the globe he is performing in and what the fans want to listen to more often."

"Also, like the 'Jiya Jale' track, it is something that everybody knows about, but he will mix it beautifully. The song is big and he takes it to another language. Then, it is a big challenge for us to match that level at every single concert."

After Rahman and the show's director select songs for a concert, it is up to the duo to further narrow down the list for the final gig. "Every song that has choreography needs to have some meaning: Why are we doing it? From 60 songs that are shortlisted, we think 'x' songs will look more beautiful with the choreography. (PTI)



WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS

Prannoy, Sen lead India's medal hunt; inform Satwit-Chirag title favourites

COPENHAGEN, Aug 20: The in-form duo of HS Prannoy and Lakshya Sen will be at the forefront of India's medal hunt at the BWF World Championships beginning here on Monday.

All eyes will also be on Satwit-saraj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty, the country's best doubles pair at world number 2, as they look to better the colour of the bronze that they claimed in the last edition. India have won 13 medals, including one gold, four silvers and 8 bronze medals since 1977 when the tournament first started before turning into a biennial event from 1983 to 2005. It has been an annual event, with the exception of the Olympic year, ever since.

While the legendary Prakash Padukone was the first Indian to win a medal -- a bronze -- at the World Championships in 1983, the country's shuttlers, led by PV Sindhu, have managed to win at least one medal since 2011.

Sindhu, the 2019 champion, is the most successful Indian with five medals but she has not been able to reach the podium since Basel edition and has looked a pale shadow of her former self this season.



Kidambi Srikanth and Lakshya Sen, however, swelled India's medal tally with a silver and bronze in the 2021 edition, while Satwik and Chirag secured a bronze in 2022.

One player who has been lurking around the podium in the last editions is Prannoy, who finished at the quarterfinal stage in both 2021 and 2022 and would be favourites this time, given his

consistent run in the last 12 months. With a Malaysia Masters win and a final finish at Australian Open, Prannoy is looking in good shape to tick another box when he begins his campaign

against Finland's Kalle Koljonen, ranked 56th in the world.

The ninth seeded Indian is likely to face the tricky Chico Aura Dwi Wardoyo of Indonesia next. Sen too will look to hang around for the weekend as he opens against world No. 110 Georges Julien Paul of Mauritius and is expected to meet Korea's Jeon Hyeok Jin next. A favourable result is likely to pit him against third seed Kunlavut Vitidsarn in round 3.

Srikanth has been erratic this season with his game imploding at crucial junctures and he would look to turn it around quickly in the pre-Olympic season with Paris qualification on line.

The 30-year-old from Guntur will square off against a tougher opponent in Japan's world number 15 Kenta Nishimoto. A 6-3 head-to-head record over the Japanese player, however, will give the Indian enough confidence as he begins his campaign here. Indonesia's world number 2 Anthony Ginting's withdrawal has opened up the draw for Srikanth and the world number 20 Indian is expected to reach the quarterfinals at least if he manages to play to his potential. (PTI)

KAMA celebrates 33rd foundation day

HT Bureau

DIPHU, Aug 20: Karbi Anglong Mountaineering Sports Association (KAMA) celebrated its 33rd foundation day with a daylong programme in Karbi Anglong Sports Association (KASA) stadium here on Sunday. The celebration started with hoisting of the KAMA flag by the president and Assam Gaurav awardee, Khorsing Terang and was followed with homage to departed members. Speaking about KAMA the president Terang said the organisation was formed on August 20, 1990 at Diphu Government College (DGC). The idea of forming KAMA was came up by lecturers of DGC at that time. It was due to the guidance of past leaders like Jagdish Hussain, Robiram Engti, Katharson Engti and many more that KAMA is doing well. The objective of KAMA is to promote adventure sports among children and youth in the district. Through adventure sports Robiram Engti, Katharson Engti and he himself have got government jobs, the KAMA president said.

Through the guidance of KAMA, girls have been able to achieve success in adventure sports. Naro Ronghangpi is the first female to get a chance in the Assam expedition team. While Serdihun Ronghangpi completed the National Mountaineering course, Terang said. Surjo Ronghang also finished the highest mountaineering course.

Terang also said with the support from District Sports Officer, Rili Ronghang and KASA general secretary, Dr. Pankaj Teron adventures sports will be introduced in KASA so that the boys and girls of the district can take up adventure sports.

MLA, Bidyasing Englang and Executive Member (EM), Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC), Ritesh Engti, KAMA secretary, Edward Terang; KASA, general secretary, Dr. Pankaj Teron and former leaders of KAMA including Robiram Engti, Bhupen Chakroborty, Jagadish Basumatary, Koushik Das and Jayanta Nath participated in the celebration.

It is a big achievement: Ashwin on UAE beating New Zealand in T20

NEW DELHI, Aug 20: Star India spinner Ravichandran Ashwin on Sunday hailed United Arab Emirates (UAE)'s stunning win over New Zealand in a T20I, saying it underlines the impact of franchise cricket and gives hopes to next generation of cricketers from non-Test playing nations.

UAE on Saturday registered their maiden win over New Zealand, humbling the Kiwis by seven wickets in the second T20I in Dubai. "UAE beating New Zealand is a big achievement and it's also showing us what franchise cricket has succeeded in doing," Ashwin wrote in a post in social media platform 'X', formerly twitter. "There is hope for the next generation cricketer coming from countries that aren't mainstream test nations and that's



good news for the game."

Opting to bowl, UAE restricted New Zealand to 142-8 and then overhauled the target, scoring 144 for 3 in 15.4 overs with skipper Muhammad Waseem (55) and

Asif Khan (48) steering the chase. Giving Afghanistan spinner Rashid Khan's example, Ashwin hoped more players will join IPL and bring change in their respective teams. "When @rashid-

khan 19 broke into the IPL, Afghans weren't a feared cricketing nation at world cups but now no one can refuse that fact," he said.

"The future may well see other nations having representations at the IPL and turning the fortunes of the game in their respective countries. Well done UAE #UAEvsnz." The emergence of Afghan players, led by Rashid, has been one of the highlights of world cricket in the last decade.

The 24-year-old has claimed 556 wickets at an average of 18.30 and an excellent economy rate of 6.45 in 410 T20 games so far in his career. He has played 89 ODIs and 82 T20Is, claiming 167 and 130 wickets respectively. He also has 34 wickets from 5 Tests.

HI names 39-member men's core probable group for national coaching camp ahead of Asian Games

NEW DELHI, Aug 20: Gearing up for the all-important Hangzhou Asian Games, Hockey India on Sunday named a 39-member core men's probable group for the national coaching camp beginning in Bengaluru on Monday.

The camp, which will serve as an opportunity for the players to fine-tune their skills, is scheduled to be held at SAI Centre from August 21 to September 18.

The Asian Games is scheduled to be held from September 23 to October 8 in China.

The Indian men's team, which lifted the Asian Champions Trophy title for a record fourth time in Chennai

early this month, will begin their campaign at the Asian Games against Uzbekistan on September 24.

India are placed in Pool A along with Pakistan, Japan, Bangladesh, Singapore, and Uzbekistan.

"Over the past few months, we have shown that we are growing as a team and learning constantly," India chief coach Craig Fulton said in a release issued by HI.

"The camp is an important one for us as we are spearheading our preparations for the Hangzhou Asian Games which could be our road to securing a spot for the Paris Olympics

2024.

"In the Hero Asian Champions Trophy Chennai 2023, we played really good hockey and given the fact that we remained unbeaten in the tournament shows that we are heading in the right direction and we want to keep that going in upcoming tournaments."

India captain Harmanpreet Singh said, "The camp will be an opportunity for us to work in certain areas and to work together as a unit. "We displayed solid team performance in the Asian Champions Trophy and it is important for us to keep the same momentum going." (PTI)



Shocker in World Athletics C'ships: Sable fails to qualify for final round in 3000m steeplechase Those

BUDAPEST, Aug 20: National record holder 3000m steeplechaser Avinash Sable failed to qualify for the final round of the World Athletics Championships after finishing a disappointing seventh in his heat race in a shocking result here on Saturday.

Three Indians brought up the rear in the men's 20km race walk final while young Shaili Singh also failed to make it to the women's long jump final on a mediocre opening day for the country's athletes.

Ajay Kumar Saroj ran his personal best of 3 minute 38.24 seconds in men's 1500m heats but that was not enough to qualify for the semifinals, while none of the three Indians in the men's triple jump -- Praveen Chithravel, Eldhose Paul and Abdulla Aboobacker -- made it to the final round.

Sable, who trained abroad for many months on Sports Ministry's funding to prepare for this showpiece event and was exempted from competing in domestic events, clocked 8 minute and 22.24 seconds to finish seventh in heat number one.

It was a tactical race and the 28-year-old failed yet again on the biggest stage. He was the lead runner at the 2300m mark but lost momentum later on, especially in the last lap, to clock well below his national record time of 8:11.20.

Only the top five finishers in the three heats make it to the final round. Sable was expected to at least make it to the final, if not win a medal. His performance is a huge disappointment for the Indian camp. This was Sable's third World Championships appearance and the first time he could not reach the final round.

He had finished 11th in the final

in Eugene, USA, last year, unable to deal with a tactical race that was one of the slowest in the history of the showpiece. He was 13th in the 2019 Doha edition.

World record holder Lamecha Girma of Ethiopia clocked the best time going into the final with 8:15.89 as he won heat number three, while Olympic and world champion Soufiane El Bakkali of Morocco was second in heat two with 8:23.66.

In the men's 20km race walk, Vikash Singh finished 28th in a time of 1 hour 21 minute 58 seconds, while Paramjit Singh (1:24:02) and Akashdeep Singh (1:31:12) were 35th and 47th respectively in the event in which 50 athletes competed.

The performance of national record holder Akashdeep (NR: 1:19:55) was all the more disappointing as he was the last athlete to finish the race.

Two race walkers did not finish while one was disqualified.

Shaili, a protege of the legendary long jumper Anju Bobby George, finished 14th out of 18 competing athletes in Group B qualification round with a best effort of 6.40m.

The 19-year-old Indian, who has a personal best of 6.76m, ended at 24th spot overall in the combined result of the two qualification groups.

She jumped 6.26m in her first attempt, before clearing 6.40m and 6.30m in his next two attempts.

Those who cleared 6.80m or at least 12 best performers from the two qualification groups make it to the final round.

Saroj finished 13th in his 1500m heat out of 15 competitors. Top six finishers in each of the six heats qualify for the semifinals. (PTI)

Indian junior men's hockey team goes down 2-3 against hosts Germany

DÜSSELDORF, Aug 20: Sudeep Chirmako's twin strike was not enough as the Indian junior men's hockey team lost 2-3 to Germany in the 4 Nations Tournament here.

Chirmako (7', 60') scored a brace for India, while Michel Struthoff (41'), Ben Hasbach (53'), and Florian Sperling (55') were on target for Germany.

Entering the match fresh off a 6-2 victory over Spain, India grabbed an early lead with Chirmako finding the back of the nets in the seventh minute. Despite Germany's attempt to cover the deficit, India managed to maintain their lead by the end of the first quarter.

While Germany searched for the equaliser in the second quarter, India too showed their intent to find another goal to consolidate their lead. But both teams defended well and India went into half-time maintaining their 1-0 lead. The second half started with Germany showing urgency

to get their opening goal of the match, but India managed to defend well.

Michel Struthoff (41') broke India's resistance in the 41st minute and struck the ball into the back of the nets to bring the match back to level pegging. The score remained level at 1-1 at the end of the third quarter.

With 15 minutes left on the clock and the scores levelled, both India and Germany started injecting pace in their attacks to find the winner.

In the 53rd minute, Ben Hasbach (53') put Germany ahead, scoring the second goal for his side and two minutes later, Florian Sperling (55') further extended Germany's lead, scoring the third goal.

Chirmako (60') scored a late goal at the stroke of full time, but Germany managed to win the match 3-2.

India will next square off against England on Monday. (PTI)

GDSA A Division Football League concludes

HT Bureau

DIPHU, Aug 20: The Greater Diphu Sports Association (GDSA) A Division Football League concluded here at Karbi Anglong Sports Association (KASA) stadium Sunday, with Karbi Anglong Morning Star FC (KAMSFC) emerging champion and Diphu FC as Runners-up. The tournament was organised in memory of Sai Terang and Nirola Tissopi. 6 teams participated in the tournament.

KAMSFC played 5 matches and won all with 15 points, while Diphu FC with 5 matches won 3 with 9 points. The match on Sunday was between KAMSFC and Hills United FC. KAMSFC won the match 3-1.

The champion team

KAMSFC was awarded with a trophy and cash prize of Rs. 15,000/-, while the Runners-up, Diphu FC was also awarded with a trophy and cash prize of Rs.10,000/-. Babu Timung of KAMSFC bagged the Highest Scorer award. He scored 10 goals in the whole tournament, while the Best Player was adjudged to KAMSFC player Tenson Tisso. Best Disciplined team was adjudged to KASA FCC.

The Best Player of the match was adjudged to Hum Ronghang of HUFCC; Best Goalkeeper was given to Klarson Timung of Diphu FC and Best Upcoming Player of the league was adjudged to Songja Teron of KASA FC. The tournament started on August 6.

'Celebrating spirit of resilience': Sindhu reminisces about life-changing past seven years, her maiden Oly medal ahead of WC

NEW DELHI, Aug 20: Going through one of the toughest phase of her career, star India shuttler PV Sindhu on Sunday reflected on her life-changing past seven years, which included winning a maiden Olympic medal in Rio, ahead of the World Championships beginning on Monday.

It was on August 20 in 2016 that she grabbed the silver medal during the Rio Olympics after losing to Spain's Carolina Marin in a pulsating women's singles final. The maiden Olympic medal proved to be a watershed moment in her life as she went on to win many medals in big-ticket events such as the World Championships, Asian Games and Commonwealth Games.

"Seven years ago, I embarked on a journey that would forever change my life. Looking back, it's hard to believe that it's been seven long years since that momentous day when I proudly won my first Olympic medal in Rio," she wrote in a post in social media platform 'X', formerly twitter.

"It was a silver, a shining symbol of my dedication, hard work, and the unwavering support of my coaches, teammates, and fans." Sindhu, then just 21, had squandered a one-game lead to go down 21-19 12-21 15-21 to Marin in the high-intensity Olympic final. The duo would faceoff in many such battles in the years that ensued.

"One of the most remarkable chapters of this journey has been



the intense rivalry on the court, especially the battles against Carolina. The journey to the final was a testament to the grit and determination that both of us brought to the game," Sindhu wrote. "The 3-

set marathon final was nothing short of extraordinary, a display of skill, perseverance, and sportsmanship."

The 28-year-old from Hyderabad went on to win two silver

Spain wins its first Women's WC title, beating England 1-0 in the final

SYDNEY, Aug 20: Spain won its first Women's World Cup title less than a year after a player rebellion, holding off England 1-0 on Sunday after Olga Carmona's first-half goal.

The victory made La Roja the first team to hold the under-17, under-20 and senior world titles at the same time. Spain is the fifth winner in nine editions of the Women's World Cup and joins Germany as the only two nations to win both the men's and women's tournament.

At the final whistle the Spanish players piled on each other in front of their goal. They were still dancing on the field until the trophy presentations, where they kissed the trophy and raised their arms in triumph as golden glitter fell from above.

The Lionesses were trying to bring a World Cup back to England for the first time since 1966, but fell just short.

"They're a fantastic team. I think first half we weren't our best, second half, we definitely put the fire in," England captain Millie Bright said. "But yeah, we just couldn't finish it today. This is the hard part of football."

For England, Bright said, the loss brought a "huge amount of disappointment."

"You know at first you feel like you failed with not winning," she said. "I think in a couple of weeks and it settles it will be really really proud."

In a heavily attacking game, Carmona's left-foot strike in the 29th minute was the only goal.

In celebration she raised her jersey to reveal the word "Merchi" scrawled in ink on her undershirt, an apparent nod to her former school.

Carmona also scored the game-winner in the 89th minute of Spain's 2-1 semifinal victory over Sweden, becoming the first player since Carli Lloyd in 2015 to score in a World Cup semifinal and final.

Spain had a chance to double the lead in the 68th but Jenni Hermoso's penalty attempt was saved by Mary Earps, who anticipated perfectly and dived to her left.



Spain's victory comes despite a near-mutiny by players last year. Fifteen players said they were stepping away from the national team for their mental health while also calling for a more professional environment.

Three of those players — Ona Batlle, Aitana Bonmatí and Mariona Caldentey — reconciled with the federation and were at the World Cup. England had momentum going into the tournament after winning the European Championship at home last summer. But three of the team's best players, captain Leah Williamson, Fran Kirby and Beth Mead, all had knee injuries that kept them off the World Cup squad.

England coach Sarina Wiegman was the first coach to take her team to back-to-back World Cup title matches. She led the Netherlands to the final in 2019, but fell 2-0 to the United States.

She's now 0-2 in the championship match. England was coming off a 3-1 victory over host Australia in the semifinal. Lauren James, who was the team's top scorer with three goals and three assists, was forced to sit out two matches after being suspended for stomping on Nigeria's Michelle Alozie to open the knockout stage. While James was available for the final, Wiegman started Ella Toone and used the Chelsea winger as a second-

half substitute in a double change to spark the attack. One of England's best chances was in the 16th when Lauren Hemp's blast caromed off the crossbar. A minute later, Salma Paralluelo raced to the goal but couldn't get a clean shot and Earps stopped Alba Redondo's attempt in the scramble in front of the net. Coach Jorge Vilda started 19-year-old Paralluelo, who scored the breakthrough goal for Spain against Sweden, and the game-winner in extra time over the Netherlands in the quarterfinal. Those efforts helped her win the young player of the tournament award, while Earps won the Golden Glove for best goalkeeper and Bonmatí won the Golden Ball for best player of World Cup.

Paralluelo nearly scored seconds from half time but her shot hit the post.

Hemp had another chance in the 54th but sent it wide. A minute later she was handed a yellow card for a foul on Laia Codina.

Spain had a chance to double the lead midway through the second half after a video review awarded a penalty after Keira Walsh's handball. But Earps kept England in the game, as she did with her succession of saves late.

Vilda had a challenge in working around two-time Ballon d'Or winner Alexia Putellas, who was still working her way back from a torn ACL last year. For the final, Putellas was on the bench at the start.

Putellas went into the game with 15 seconds left in regulation, but there were 13 minutes of stoppage time.

After the match Putellas was in tears as her teammates danced in front of the flag-waving fans behind the team's bench.

There were 75,784 fans at the final at Stadium Australia, including tennis great Billie Jean King. The two teams met last year in the quarterfinals of the Euros, with England coming from behind to beat Spain 2-1 in extra time on Georgia Stanway's goal. (AP)

HCA says back-to-back games not ideal but BCCI VP Shukla says 'change unlikely'



NEW DELHI, Aug 20: Hosting two World Cup games in as many days is not ideal for organisational as well as security reasons, said a Hyderabad Cricket Association (HCA) official on Sunday but BCCI vice-president Rajeev Shukla was clear that any further tweak in schedule is "unlikely". After a much-delayed schedule announcement in June, the BCCI and ICC rescheduled as many as nine games earlier this month, including the marquee clash between India and Pakistan. With the Indo-Pak fixture in Ahmedabad advanced by a day on October 15, Pakistan's game against Sri Lanka in Hyderabad was moved to October 10 from October 12. The HCA is also hosting New Zealand versus Netherlands on October 9.

Now, with Hyderabad police expressing its reservations on providing security for back-to-back games, the HCA had sought another change in schedule, wanting a gap of at least a day between the two games.

"I can't say it would be changed for sure but back to back games are not ideal. I mean if they (BCCI) are reconsidering that will be well and good. We will have

to work with security agencies.

"Anyone would want a day in between two World Cup games. We are still engaging with security agencies to see if it is possible or not. At the same time we are also keeping BCCI in the loop. The BCCI is completely aware of what we are trying to do," said an HCA official on condition of anonymity.

However, Shukla said in an official statement that no further changes are likely as it requires involvement of multiple stakeholders.

"I am in charge of Hyderabad venue for WC. If there will be any issue or anything, will try to get it resolved. It is not easy to change the World Cup schedule and it's unlikely to happen. Only BCCI can't change schedule, teams, ICC, all involved," said Shukla, who is also a Congress Rajya Sabha member.

For an international game, the Hyderabad Police deploys between 2000-2500 personnel. "Deployment also depends on nature of the game and how many people turn up. Police makes those assessments and deploys accordingly," the HCA source added.

Considering Pakistan's involvement in one of those games, the security is expected to be heightened.

Pakistan, who will play in India for the first time since the T20 World Cup in 2016, will have a lengthy stay in Hyderabad as they play two warm-up games before featuring in as many tournament proper matches at the venue.

Their opening fixture is against the Netherlands at the Rajiv Gandhi International Stadium on October 6.

The ticket sales for the ODI mega event start on August 25, not providing enough time to the average cricket fan to plan his or her travel. (PTI)

NEW DELHI, Aug 20: Her days of scorching the astro-turf might be over but legendary former India captain Rani Rampal has absolutely "no regrets" as she believes in making most of whatever opportunities that come her way.

Rani has been India's most decorated women's hockey player, having led the country to its best-ever finish at the Olympics -- a fourth place at Tokyo Games in 2021. Besides, she was bestowed with the Major Dhyan Chand Khel Ratna Award in 2020 and also received the Padma Shri, the country's fourth highest civilian award, in the same year.

"I don't have any regrets now, I know I did my work and still I am doing. In life, if one door closes for you, God opens up another one. You can't get stuck in life. I have realised there will be plenty of people to pull you down in life but you have to raise yourself," Rani told PTI in an exclusive interview as she gears up for her new role as coach of India U-17 girls' team.

"Hockey gave me an identity, people listen to me, talk to me because of hockey. So I just want to work for hockey in any capacity,

you can play, mentor young kids, you can teach. No body can snatch my passion for hockey," the star centre-forward added.

But Rani's journey has been a roller coaster one as she overcame many adversities to create her own identity in Indian hockey circuit.

"The journey has been good but with a lot of struggles. There were very good moments in this journey and learnt a lot as well. It's all about working hard and giving your best and rest leave it to the Almighty," she said.

"I started playing hockey at the age of 7. I am talking about 22 years back then. That time in Haryana, girls taking up sport was still a taboo but it has drastically changed now. Now parents encourage girls to play sports in Haryana.

"When I told my parents for the first time that I want to play hockey, they said you can't, what will people think about, girls don't play sports," she said.

Rani, however, credits her father and coach Baldev Singh for standing strong behind her and supporting in her journey.

"All my relatives objected



against, saying she will have to wear shorts, skirts and that will spoil the name of the family. At that time, my father supported me but said don't do anything which will let us down. It took years for me to instil that trust in them that I can achieve something.

"Besides my coach Baldev sir's contribution is immense in what I am today," she said.

Hockey has given her name, fame and she now leads a financially secure life having seen immense poverty during her

childhood years.

"I have seen a lot of poverty but hockey changed my and my parents' life."

Asked why she chose hockey and not any other sport, Rani replied: "There was only sport from where I felt I belonged. So I didn't know about anything. I just focussed on playing hockey.

Hockey was very famous in Shahbad (Haryana) because India's best hockey academy was there. More than 70 girls represented India from that academy. (PTI)

Boxing coaching camp kicks off in Hanjlangso

HT Correspondent

BOKAJAN, Aug 20: The Office of the District Sports Officer in Diphu, Karbi Anglong, in collaboration with the Hanjlangso Sports Association (HSA), has launched a Boxing Coaching Camp in Hanjlangso. Taking place at the Hanjlangso Indoor Stadium from August 20 to September 20, the camp aims to provide aspiring boxers with professional coaching and training. The inauguration of the camp was led by president Jivan Chandra Pathak of HSA. The event also saw the presence of distinguished individuals such as Sanjeev Handikoi, joint secretary of Assam Olympic Association and secretary of Golaghat Sports Association; Diganta Nath, coach and national player; Jyoti Saikia, sports organiser; Rilip Ronghang, district sports officer, and others. This initiative is geared towards nurturing boxing talent in the region and promoting the sport's development and participation among the youth.

Santhosh Kumar Tamilarnsan, Sarvesh Anil Kushare crash out in 400m hurdles and high jump

BUDAPEST, Aug 20: Indian athletes' disappointing show in the World Championships continued on the second day as Santhosh Kumar Tamilarnsan and Sarvesh Anil Kushare crashing out in the 400m hurdles heat race and high jump qualification round respectively here on Sunday.

Tamilarnsan finished seventh in heat number three with a time of 50.46 seconds and failed to make it to the semifinals. The top four finishers in each of the five heats and another four fastest qualified for the semifinals.

Kushare failed to clear 2.25m in three attempts and finished 11th in qualification round Group B and 20th overall. Those who cleared 2.30m or at least 12 best performers from qualification round Group and Group B together qualified for the final round.

India had a disastrous day in of-

fice on the opening day on Saturday with national record holder 3000m steeplechaser Avinash Sable failing to qualify for the final round after finishing a disappointing seventh in his heat race in a shocking result.

Three Indians brought up the rear in the men's 20km race walk final while young Shaili Singh also failed to make it to the women's long jump final on a forgettable opening day for the country's athletes.

Ajay Kumar Saroj ran his personal best of 3 minutes 38.24 seconds in men's 1500m heats but that was not enough to qualify for the semifinals, while none of the three Indians in the men's triple jump -- Praveen Chithravel, Eldhose Paul and Abdulla Aboobacker -- made it to the final round.

No Indian is in action on Monday. (PTI)

Day people stop coming to stadiums, they might start caring: Fans criticise World Cup scheduling and ticketing mess

NEW DELHI, Aug 20: The regular Indian cricket fan is usually stoic, but ahead of the ODI World Cup at home, he is frustrated and angry. The frustration is understandable as the ticket sales are yet to begin with only a month and a half left for the World Cup opener in Ahmedabad on October 5. The sales start on August 25 in a staggered manner.

The World Cup schedule was announced in June after a delay and earlier this month, as many as nine games were rescheduled by host BCCI and the International Cricket Council (ICC).

Now, another change is on the cards with the Hyderabad state unit wanting a one-day gap between games scheduled on October 9 and 10, potentially putting fans in more uncertainty.

When India co-hosted the 50-over showpiece in 2011, the BCCI was not the financial behemoth that it has now become. However, the sale of tickets began in June 2010, giving the fans enough time to plan their travel around the country.

In the previous edition held in England in 2019, the schedule was announced more than 12 months in advance and fans got enough time to try their luck with the tickets.

India is the driver of the global game and its team is easily the most followed on the planet. The loyal fans are largely responsible for taking the game to new heights but their needs clearly have not been prioritised, especially those who wish to travel from within and outside India.

Delhi-based Atirav Kapur was quick to book his flight for the most awaited game of the tournament



when it was announced in June that India and Pakistan will play in Ahmedabad on October 15. However, the game has been advanced by a day and he will not know until September 3 if he is one of the lucky ones to get a match ticket.

"I have already paid Rs 40000 for the Delhi-Ahmedabad return flight and even if I manage to get the ticket, I will need to reach a day in advance to get a physical copy of it. Considering the prices have already skyrocketed, rescheduling the flight will cost me a lot of money," said Kapur.

"I can only take a call on that if I know I am going to get a match ticket. It is a total mess. I recall the 2011 edition, the tickets were available months in advance. Match tickets are most important if one has to plan travel for games.

"Anywhere in the world the demand for tickets is always greater

than number of tickets. Whether it is a lottery system or any other method, it has to be done months in advance.

"In India we are facing such a challenge. What about the people who want to come from England or Australia. How do you plan with no tickets and on top of that the schedule keeps changing?" asked Kapur, struggling to hide his frustration.

The accommodation cost for the blockbuster clash in Ahmedabad dwarfed the airfares with rooms costing as much as 50,000 a night. The more passionate fans have resorted to booking hospital beds instead.

The situation is much worse for fans who are based outside India. Rishabh Singhvi, who lives in Singapore, has spent close to Rs five lakh on flights and hotels as he plans to watch three to four India games from the stands.

With no guarantee of getting

match tickets, he is keeping his fingers crossed.

"I have been planning this for four to five months, but since ticket sales have not yet started, I don't know what will happen. I have already done my flights and hotels for all the games barring Kolkata where my family is based," said Singhvi.

"I plan to watch the Dharamsala game with my parents and brother and for that we have booked our flights to Amritsar. All of this puts me in a really complicated situation. The tickets should have been put on sale at least four-five months in advance.

"The people who are organising don't seem to have an idea. The whole thing is targeted towards people who have contacts (and get tickets easily). It is a total mess," he added.

A BCCI affiliated state unit official, whose association is among

the 10 hosts of World Cup games, said tournament schedule and sale of tickets should have been handled better.

"We are three-four months late when it comes to schedule and tickets, but I am sure eventually, we will have a successful World Cup. Having said that, it would be much better if we gave fans at least six months to plan," said the official.

Another official of a state unit that is staging World Cup matches said one should not compare timelines of the 2019 and the upcoming edition.

"Announcing one year before is too much in advance. It should be done four to six months before.

"The complexities we have in India compared to other countries, we need so many clearances from multiple authorities. Having said that, surely fans should be given more time so that they can plan well. It is a lesson for the future," said the official.

Despite the mess surrounding the schedule and ticket sales, the World Cup is expected to be a roaring success. The 50-over format faces an uncertain future but trust the fans to pack all the 10 venues.

Kapur is not only a passionate fan of cricket but also has a sound knowledge of the game.

"We are talking about this organisation mess right now, but when World Cup begins, stadiums will be full, life will go on, and nobody will care.

"Honestly, the situation won't change as long as the fans keep coming. The day fans stop coming to stadiums, may be the authorities will start caring." (PTI)