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## HT BRIEFS

### Ferry boat capsizes

**GUWAHATI:** A ferry boat carrying 32 passengers met with an incident of capsizing in the Dibang River near Amarpur Ghat in Tinsukia district, on Wednesday morning. Fortunately, all passengers were successfully rescued by individuals present on the river bank before the boat submerged. The boat was on its way from Amarpur to the Chapkhowa area when it collided with an underwater wooden structure, causing it to begin sinking. Alert bystanders on the river bank noticed the distressing situation and took immediate action by jumping into the water to save the passengers. In addition to the ferry boat, a four-wheeler vehicle and two motorcycles were also submerged due to the accident. The incident drew concern from various quarters, including Assam urban development minister Ashok Singhal, who expressed his distress over the unfortunate event. Authorities are currently investigating the cause of the accident.

### JE, dengue cases

**GUWAHATI:** The state continues to grapple with dengue cases, with a total of 79 cases recorded on Wednesday. The district of Karbi Anglong East reported the highest number of positive cases, with 75 individuals testing positive for dengue. Additionally, two cases were reported from Nagaon and one each from Nalbari, and Dibrugarh. Meanwhile, a single case of Japanese Encephalitis (JE) was recorded in Bongaigaon. The latest data highlights the ongoing health challenges posed by mosquito-borne diseases in the region. Notably, no malaria cases were reported in the state on Wednesday. Despite efforts to combat these diseases, the situation remains serious. From January 1, 2023, to August 30, 2023, Assam has witnessed 31 deaths attributed to Japanese Encephalitis. During the same time frame, the state has reported four deaths linked to dengue.

# Over 1,000 bridges coming up in state: Himanta

## GUWAHATI GETS STATE'S LONGEST FLYOVER

**HT Bureau**  
**GUWAHATI, Aug 30:** Chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Wednesday said his government will undertake the construction of 1,000 bridges across the state. Inaugurating a 2.6-km-long flyover from Kamakhya Gate to Maligaon in Guwahati, touted to be the longest in Assam, Sarma said the state government has completed 842 small and big bridges in recent times.

"I am happy to announce that our government will build 1,000 bridges across the state. All these projects will be completed by 2026. People say that Guwahati is the gateway to the Northeast, but we want to make it the gateway to South East Asia," Sarma said.

"Today we are opening the Nilachal Flyover to the public. This has been con-

structed on one of the busiest roads of Guwahati, and it was a huge challenge for the PWD to complete on time," he said. The state PWD carried out the project at an investment of ₹ 420 crore.

The bridge has been constructed using concrete slabs and steel composite guard. 18,000 metric tons of cement, 20,000 cubic metric tons of sand and 7,500 metric tons of steel have gone into the construction of this flyover.

The chief minister also listed out around a dozen other road projects in Guwahati and other towns of Assam, which are in different stages of planning and execution.

"At present, work on 22 big projects like flyovers and bridges over the Brahmaputra is underway. Out of these, 21 are at the last stage of com-

pletion," he said.

The chief minister also said that the government has plans to build a flyover connecting the Lokapriya Gopinath Bordoloi International Airport with the Kamakhya Mandir. There are also plans to ease the communication from the Kamakhya Mandir to the last point of Pandu.

The new botanical garden coming up at Fancy Bazar and a park under construction at the site of the old deputy commissioner's office in Panbazar will be made open to the public before the Durga Puja celebrations this year.

Moreover, the government is also planning to construct a ropeway connecting the Kamakhya Railway Station with the Kamakhya Temple atop the Nilachal Hills. (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)



# Flood situation continues to worsen in state; over 3.4 lakh affected

**HT Bureau**  
**GUWAHATI, Aug 30:** The flood situation in Assam continues to deteriorate, with more than 3,40,900 individuals bearing the brunt across 22 districts, according to the latest bulletin from the Assam State Disaster Management Authority (ASDMA) on Wednesday.

In the midst of intermittent rainfall, key rivers like Disang at Nanglamuraghat, Burhidihing at Chenimari, Subansiri at Badatighat, and the Brahmaputra river at various points such as Dhubri, Goalpara, Guwahati, Tezpur, and Nimatighat, are surging above the danger mark.

The tally of affected districts has surged from 21 on Tuesday to 22 on Wednesday. Among the impacted districts are Barpeta, Biswanath, Chirang, Darrang, Dhemaji, Dhubri, Dibrugarh, Goalpara, Golaghat, Jorhat, Kamrup, Kamrup (M), Kokrajhar,



Lakhimpur, Majuli, Morigaon, Nagaon, Nalbari, Sivasagar, Sonitpur, Tamulpur, and Udalgori.

Altogether, 52 revenue circles and 818 villages are grappling with the inundation, as highlighted in the ASDMA bulletin.

Majuli remains one of the hardest-hit areas with over 65,000 individuals reeling from the effects,

followed by Golaghat with 58,439 and Biswanath with 36,671. Moreover, approximately 21,644.43 hectares of agricultural land are submerged under the floodwaters.

District authorities are currently managing 153 relief camps and 150 relief distribution centers, offering shelter to 1,308 displaced individuals. The deluge has also

affected a staggering 3,02,932 animals. Rescue operations, involving circle offices, local administrations, community members, and Aapda Mitra Volunteers, were carried out ceaselessly throughout the day in the affected regions.

Embankments were breached in Mangaldoi of Darrang district and faced damage in Kalaigaon of Udalgori.

Multiple infrastructural damages were reported across various districts, including Darrang, Dhubri, Golaghat, Jorhat, Kamrup (M), Karimganj, Majuli, Morigaon, Udalgori, Dibrugarh, Lakhimpur, Nagaon, Nalbari, and Sonitpur.

Wildlife habitats at Orang National Park and Tiger Reserve, along with Pobitora Wildlife Sanctuary, have also suffered adverse impacts. Massive erosions were reported from Barpeta, Biswanath, Bongaigaon, Dibrugarh, Majuli, Nalbari, (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

# CBI takes over 27 FIRs, including 19 related to crime against women

**NEW DELHI, Aug 30:** The CBI has taken over the investigation in 27 FIRs lodged in connection with ethnic clashes in Manipur that have claimed more than 160 lives in nearly four months, officials said.

According to the latest data, the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) has so far registered 27 cases handed over to it by the state police -- 19 cases of crime against

women, three related to an armoury loot

by a mob, two of murder and one each of rioting and murder, kidnapping and general criminal conspiracy, sources aware of the developments said. The agency has re-registered these cases but has not made the details public because of the sensitive nature of the situation prevailing in the northeastern state, they said.

CBI teams have started questioning the suspects and victims after visiting the crime sites, the sources added. The investigation

gained momentum after the CBI top brass mobilised a team of 53 officers, including 29 women, drawn from various units of the federal agency across the country to probe the cases, they said.

With the society in Manipur divided on ethnic lines, the CBI is facing the critical task of avoiding allegations of bias during the operation as any involvement of people

from one community will result in fingers pointed from the other side, the sources said.

They said several of these cases being probed by the CBI may attract provisions of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989, which can be probed by an officer of the rank of deputy superintendent of police.

Since the deputy SPs cannot be supervisory officers in such cases, the agency has mobilised one of its SP-ranked (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

## Manipur violence

# Protest staged in Diphu; EM, others under fire

## Delay in payment of land compensation irks KNYC



**HT Bureau**  
**DIPHU, Aug 30:** The Karbi Nationalist Youth Council (KNYC) on Wednesday gheraoed the office Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC) at Diphu in protest against the government's failure to duly compensate people who have lost their land due to the ongoing construction of a four-lane road between Parokhuwa and Lahorijan.

They also burnt effigies of the KAAC's land and revenue department's executive member, Amarsing

Tisso and joint secretary, Tensing Rongpi during the protest.

The under construction four-lane of the National Highway 36 passes through the district. Led by KNYC president Padmo Teron, the protestors could be heard shouting slogans like "Amarsing Tissu murdabad" and "Tensing Rongpi murdabad".

Addressing the media later, Padma Teron said, "Corruption is not a new thing for the people of Karbi Anglong. Several such allegations of corruption on the part of elected members and officers of the autonomous council have come to light several times in the past."

"Several landowners, whose lands were requisitioned for construction of the four-lane road between Parokhuwa to Lahorijan, have not received any compensation. EM Tissu, who is in charge of the land and revenue department, has not taken the necessary measures to release the compensation," said Teron.

"There are also many people who have also wrongfully forged land documents to claim compensations in place of the ones who genuinely deserve them," he further said. (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

# Karbi, Jaintia student bodies join hands for peace

**HT Bureau**  
**DIPHU, Aug 30:** In a significant move towards resolving tension along the inter-state border between Meghalaya and Assam, the Karbi Students Association (KSA) and Jaintia Students' Movement (JSM) held a joint meeting in Taralango on Wednesday.

The objective of the meeting was to address the ongoing border disputes and promote a peaceful atmosphere in the region. To achieve this, a "Students Committee for Peace Initiative" has been constituted. Led by the president of the JSM, Leningstar Rymbai, and the general secretary, Roitre Dkhar, the JSM central body delegation engaged in constructive discussions with the KSA in Diphu. The joint meeting aimed to find common ground and build mutual trust between the communities residing in the border areas.

Rymbai stated, "The joint meet-



ing between KSA and JSM resulted in a consensus to establish the 'Students Committee for Peace Initiative.' This committee is dedicated to fostering peace and normalcy in the tension-ridden inter-state border region. Our goal is to enable both the Karbi and Jaintia communities to coexist harmoniously without feelings of insecurity."

The committee will undertake

initiatives to strengthen peace, promote understanding, and eliminate misunderstandings or mistrust between the two communities. A joint visit to the border areas is also planned to build mutual confidence and alleviate tensions. The committee's efforts are expected to facilitate free business and promote a conducive environment for the residents of (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

# 'Smile, please': Pragyan rover sends image of Vikram lander on lunar surface

**BENGALURU, Aug 30:** The first image of the Vikram lander on the lunar surface, which was released by the Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO) on Wednesday, is bound to instill a sense of pride in the heart of every Indian.

Chandrayaan-3 mission's Pragyan rover clicked an image of the Vikram lander on Wednesday, a week after the moon mission successfully soft-landed near the moon's South Pole.

The 'image of the mission', shared by the Bengaluru headquartered national space agency, was taken by the navigation camera (NavCam) on board the rover.

"Smile, please", an ISRO social media post read. "Pragyan rover clicked the image of Vikram lander this morning".

NavCams from the Chandrayaan-3 mission have been deployed by



the Laboratory for Electro-Optics Systems (LEOS), a unit of ISRO. The lander and the rover are designed to operate for one lunar daylight period (about 14 Earth days). Earlier this week, ISRO released the first observations from

the ChaSTE payload onboard Vikram. ChaSTE (Chandra's Surface Thermophysical Experiment) measures the temperature profile of the lunar topsoil around the pole, to understand the thermal behaviour of the moon's surface. (PTI)

# Guwahati set to host roadshow for GMIS 2023 today

## Event aimed at unlocking the potential of waterways sector in NE: Sarba

**HT Bureau**  
**GUWAHATI, Aug 30:** Guwahati is gearing up to host a significant pre-event roadshow for the 3rd Global Maritime India Summit 2023 (GMIS), organised by the Union Ministry of Ports, Shipping, and Waterways and the Inland Waterways Authority of India. The roadshow, scheduled for Thursday, aims to engage with various stakeholders in the maritime sector and the inland waterways industry, setting the stage for the forthcoming GMIS.

The inauguration of the roadshow will be led by Sarbananda Sonowal, Union minister of ports, shipping & waterways and Ayush, along with the participation of ministers from the Northeastern states.

Speaking ahead of the roadshow, Sarbananda Sonowal emphasised, "The potential that Northeast India holds, along with our neighboring countries, presents a substantial opportunity for growth and development. This roadshow seeks to tap into the waterways sector's potential in the Northeast and explore maritime avenues for the region's advancement. By bringing various stakeholders onto a common platform, we can discuss, share, and explore the possibilities of leveraging waterways and other aspects of the maritime sector to

drive growth in the Northeast."

Sonowal added, "Under the visionary leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the Ministry has organized the GMIS from October 17 to 19, 2023, at Bharat Mandapam. Themed 'Connect, Collaborate & Create,' the summit aims to provide a global and domestic platform to unlock the vast potential of the maritime sector. I am confident that the discussions and collaborations during this event will pave the way for a successful Global Maritime India Summit 2023."

The event will see the participation of key dignitaries, including ministerial representatives from all the northeastern states, alongside foreign delegates from Bhutan and Bangladesh. The roadshow's focus lies in emphasising the role of inland waterways in harnessing maritime sector possibilities and engaging in comprehensive dialogues about utilising waterways for regional growth, improved maritime infrastructure, trade, and overall development.

An initiative anchored by the Inland Waterways Authority of India, the Guwahati roadshow aims to encourage growth in the maritime sector, foster collaboration, and unlock opportunities for various stakeholders.



# ₹ 200 LPG price cut on oil cos, govt unlikely to give subsidy

**NEW DELHI, Aug 30:** Bumper earnings in the first five months of the current fiscal and international benchmark coming off its highs will help state-owned oil companies absorb the ₹ 200 per cylinder cut in cooking gas LPG prices, sources said indicating there may be no government compensation for that.

On Tuesday, the government announced a ₹ 200 per cylinder cut in prices of domestic cooking gas to soften the impact of rising inflation on households as well as counter the promise of cheaper LPG made by the Congress party in upcoming assembly elections.

This resulted in the price of a 14.2-kg LPG cylinder in the national capital coming down to ₹ 903 from ₹ 1,103 earlier. For Ujjwala beneficiaries, the price will be ₹ 703 after considering the continuing ₹ 200 per cylinder subsidy.

State-owned Indian Oil Corporation (IOC), Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd (BPCL) and Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Ltd (HPCL) posted bumper earnings in the April-June quarter and the trend is continuing in thereafter, government and industry sources said.

Also, Saudi CP - the price to which domestic LPG rates are benchmarked due to high import dependence - declined

from USD 732 per tonne in March 2023 to USD 385 in July. Rates have gone up in August to USD 464 per tonne but still provide enough cushion for oil companies to cut LPG prices, they said.

Oil minister Hardeep Singh Puri in television interviews on Wednesday said the three oil marketing companies cut the prices as "good corporate citizens" and the extension of "very healthy profits" of April-June (the first quarter of the current fiscal) in the following months will help their decision.

He however did not give a direct reply to questions on the government providing subsidy support for the decision.

Sources said the price cut is on oil companies and the government has so far not indicated any intention to provide for that.

The three firms booked under-recoveries or losses when Saudi CP had shot up in March/April. The losses are yet to be recovered, they said.

What may have compounded their woes is the rise in rates in August. Saudi CP for propane has gone up to USD 470 per tonne in August and that for butane to USD 460. This compares to USD 400 per tonne rate for propane and USD 375 for butane in July.



A mix of propane and butane results in the creation of LPG.

An industry source said if the reduction in benchmark rate was the only criterion for deciding the price cut, LPG rates should have then been cut in July.

But the decision is political. Cooking gas prices have shot up in the last couple of years and have become a major election issue.

The Congress party used the high LPG prices, which had burnt a hole in the budgets of households already reeling under high inflation, effectively in the re-

cently concluded assembly elections in Karnataka.

It has promised to give LPG at ₹ 500 per cylinder if voted to power in Madhya Pradesh, where elections are due in November-December. The Congress is also providing the LPG at the same price in Rajasthan, where elections are due in November-December.

The ₹ 200 per cylinder subsidy provided to Ujjwala consumers would cost ₹ 7,680 crore in the current financial year ending March 31, 2024 (April 2023 to March 2024).

While Ujjwala beneficiaries are only 9.6 crore, there are some 33 crore domestic cooking gas users in the country.

The government in June 2020 stopped giving LPG subsidies. Cooking gas across the country was priced at market rate, which rose to ₹ 1,103 in the national capital.

The only subsidy that was available was for poor women who got free connections under Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana. The government gave ₹ 200 per cylinder subsidy for up to 12 refills in a year. This subsidy was transferred into the bank accounts of the beneficiaries, who bought LPG at market price from the dealer.

The government in October 2022 provided a one-time grant of ₹ 22,000 crore to oil companies to cover for the losses they had incurred on selling LPG at below cost in the previous two years.

This is not going to be repeated this time, another source said.

The three firms posted healthy profits in April-June as the freeze on petrol and diesel prices revision despite the fall in oil prices helped margins.

IOC reported a net profit of ₹ 13,750.44 crore, BPCL ₹ 10,644 crore and HPCL a net profit of ₹ 6,203.90

crore. This compared to heavy losses in the same period of last year.

Last year, the three froze retail petrol and diesel prices to cushion domestic consumers from rising international oil rates.

That freeze led to the three retailers suffering heavy losses in not just the April-June 2022 period but also in the subsequent quarter.

Margins on petrol and diesel turned positive earlier this year on the softening of international oil prices but rates were not revised, and the companies recouped losses they incurred last year.

IOC, BPCL and HPCL temporarily abandoned the daily price revision last year and have not revised petrol and diesel prices in line with the cost. And the losses they incurred when the oil prices were higher than the retail selling prices were recouped with rates dropped. The same is true for LPG as well.

Petrol and diesel prices have been on a freeze for a record 16 months in a row.

Puri said the government ensured that affordability and availability of fuel and the common man is not hit by the volatility in oil prices that followed the Russia-Ukraine conflict of February last year. (PTI)

## Gold jumps ₹ 300; silver climbs ₹ 400



**NEW DELHI, Aug 30:** Gold prices jumped ₹ 300 to ₹ 60,100 per 10 grams in the national capital on Wednesday amid strong global cues, according to HDFC Securities.

In the previous trade, the precious metal had closed at ₹ 59,800 per 10 grams.

Silver also bounced ₹ 400 to ₹ 77,500 per kg.

"Gold advanced on Wednesday, with spot gold prices in the Delhi markets trading at ₹ 60,100/10 gram, up by ₹ 300 following positive cues from overseas markets."

"Investors will now monitor the US ADP private employment and estimate of Q2 gross domestic product data which is due later today," Saumil Gandhi, senior analyst, commodities at HDFC Securities, said.

In the global markets, both gold and silver were trading higher at USD 1,936 per ounce and USD 24.60 per ounce, respectively.

Gold rallied to its three-week highs as the dollar and treasury yields slipped amidst weak economic data points, said Navneet Damani, senior vice-president of commodity research at Motilal Oswal Financial Services. (PTI)

## Sensex, Nifty retreat from early highs to end flat; power, banking shares decline

**MUMBAI, Aug 30:** Benchmark equity indices Sensex and Nifty retreated from early highs to close on a flat note on Wednesday due to fog-end selling in banking and power shares amid mixed global cues.

The 30-share BSE Sensex ended 0.02 per cent or 11.43 points higher at 65,087.25 points, marking its third straight day of gains.

Similar trends were witnessed on the NSE where the broader 50-share Nifty inched up 0.02 per cent or 4.80 points to settle at 19,347.45 points.

Most of the European stocks were trading in the negative territory while Asian shares ended the day on a mixed note.

"European stocks fell after the latest round of price data suggested inflation may not yet be fully on the retreat in the euro region. Asian markets too gave up some of their morning gains," Deepak Jasani, head of retail research, HDFC Securities said.

Vinod Nair, head of research at Geojit Financial Services, said positive sentiment initially propelled domestic equities, buoyed by softer US labour market data that caused a retreat in US bond yields, alleviating concerns about rate hikes.

"This positive outlook was reinforced by Chinese banks' move to reduce existing mortgage rates, favourably impacting Indian metal stocks. However, gains were tempered as the day progressed, primarily due to weakness in global markets attributed to lacklustre economic data from Europe."

"Banking stocks bore the brunt of this downturn, while mid- and small-cap segments displayed resilience amid the market dynamics," he said.

In the Sensex pack, majority of the shares closed in the positive territory. Among the main gainers were Jio Financial Services which jumped 4.99 per cent, Tata Steel (2.09 per cent), Maruti Suzuki (1.87 per cent), M&M (1.31 per cent) and Infosys (1.19 per cent).

Sensex had reached an intra-day low of 65,052.74 points.

During intra-day trade, Nifty had touched a high of



19,452.80 points and a low of 19,334.75 points.

Jio Financial Services (4.99 per cent), Tata Steel (2.09 per cent), Maruti Suzuki (1.75 per cent), Eicher Motors (1.24 per cent) and M&M (1.19 per cent) were among the gainers in the broader index.

"Markets traded volatile and ended almost unchanged amid mixed cues. After the gap-up start, the Nifty oscillated in a narrow band and selling pressure in the final hours trimmed all the gains," Ajit Mishra, SVP - technical research, Religare Broking Ltd, said.

A mixed trend continued on the sectoral front wherein metal and realty posted decent gains while energy and banking remained subdued.

In the broader market, BSE Midcap index rose by 0.55 per cent while the smallcap index spurted by 0.83 per cent.

In Asian markets, Japan's benchmark Nikkei 225 advanced 0.3 per cent, South Korea's Kospi rose 0.4 per cent and Hong Kong's Hang Seng settled unchanged. The Shanghai Composite inched up 0.1 per cent.

In Europe, France's CAC 40 fell 0.1 per cent in early trading while Germany's DAX slipped nearly 0.3 per cent. Britain's FTSE 100 was up added 0.1 per cent.

Brent crude futures rose 0.55 per cent to USD 85.96 per barrel.

On Tuesday, Foreign Portfolio Investors (FPIs) were the net buyers, purchasing shares worth ₹ 61.51 crore, as per BSE data. (PTI)

## PhonePe launches Share(dot)Market

**HT Bureau**

**GUWAHATI, Aug 30:** PhonePe, a leading digital payment and financial services platform in India, has entered the stock broking arena with the launch of Share(dot)Market, operating under its subsidiary PhonePe Wealth Broking Pvt. Ltd. This strategic move aims to revolutionize discount broking services by providing market intelligence, quantitative research-based WealthBaskets, a scalable technology platform, and an excellent customer experience for both investors and traders.

Share(dot)Market offers a mobile app and a dedicated web platform, empowering retail investors to buy stocks, engage in intraday trading, purchase Curated WealthBaskets, and invest in mutual funds. This venture capitalizes on SEBI's initiatives such as simplified onboarding through Aadhaar/Video KYC, expedited settlement times, and regulatory safeguards for customer funds, which have fueled the surge in retail investors participating in stock markets and investing in Mutual Fund SIPs. Share(dot)Market sets



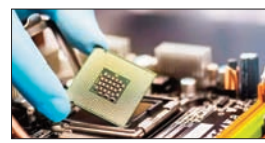
itself apart by combining quantitative research with execution capabilities on a reliable technology platform, all at a competitive discount broking price. This approach aims to create a customer-centric investing journey focused on sustained wealth creation. PhonePe's extensive reach, distribution capabilities, secure transaction system, and commitment to providing a superior customer experience are expected to facilitate wealth-building opportunities for a wide range of Indian investors.

Share(dot)Market users will access real-time insights and intelligence integrated into products and DIY tools to make informed investment decisions. Additionally, the

platform will feature a dedicated Markets section for tracking stock market performance, indices, stocks, and sectors via an intuitive Watchlist tracker. PhonePe users can access Share(dot)Market using their PhonePe-linked mobile numbers and complete the KYC process to activate their Broking and Demat accounts. Ujjwal Jain, CEO of Share(dot)Market, expressed excitement about the launch, emphasizing the platform's role in driving financial inclusion and supporting the increasing interest in equity investments. He highlighted Share(dot)Market's commitment to delivering discount broking benefits while creating lasting customer value.

## 32 cos apply under PLI IT hardware scheme: Vaishnav

**NEW DELHI, Aug 30:** As many as 32 companies, including global biggies like HP, Dell and Lenovo, have applied under the production linked incentive scheme for IT hardware, union minister Ashwini Vaishnav said on Wednesday.



The expected incremental production under the scheme is pegged at ₹ 3.35 lakh crore, said Vaishnav, minister for electronics and IT. "India is emerging as a trusted supply chain partner and value added partner... companies are happy to come to India for manufacturing and design," Vaishnav said at a media briefing.

Overall, 32 applications have been received under PLI for IT hardware scheme so far, Vaishnav said describing it as a good response. The response is more than anticipated, he said. (PTI)

## TRAI recommends changes to license fees and policies for DTH services



**HT Bureau**  
**GUWAHATI, Aug 30:** The Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) has issued a set of recommendations that could bring substantial changes to the license fees and policies governing Direct-to-Home (DTH) services in India.

This development follows a request from the ministry of information and broadcasting (MIB) made on February 2, 2022, under Section 11(1)(a) of the TRAI Act, 1997. The MIB sought TRAI's input regarding amendments made by the department of telecommunications (DoT) to the Unified License (UL) Agreement. These amendments, dated October 25, 2021, and October 6, 2021, aimed to rationalize the definition of Adjusted Gross Revenue (AGR) and the quantum of Bank Guarantees (BG) under structural reforms. Under the existing policy guidelines, DTH operators are required to pay a License Fee (LF) equal to 8% of their Adjusted Gross Revenue (AGR) on a quarterly basis to the MIB. Bank Guarantees (BG) are also mandated as financial instruments to ensure operators fulfill their license agreement obligations.

The key recommendations put forth by TRAI are as follows: Redefined Gross Revenue (GR): TRAI suggests that Gross Revenue should encompass all income derived from operations and activities, including interest, dividends, rent, and other revenue sources, without set-offs for related expenses.

Applicable Gross Revenue (ApGR): To calculate license fees, TRAI proposes ApGR, which includes the total GR reduced by revenue from DoT-issued licenses/permissions, government reimbursements, and certain types of income such as dividends, interest, and gains from foreign exchange rate fluctuations.

Adjusted Gross Revenue (AGR): TRAI recommends that AGR should exclude GST paid to the government if ApGR included GST.

Online Reporting and Verification: The recommendations advocate for the revision of Form-D (the Statement of Revenue and License Fee for DTH Licensees) by the MIB and the adoption of a digital format for submission. A robust online mechanism for verifying deductions should be established, with DTH licensees required to provide necessary documents for revenue reconciliation.

License Fee Reduction: TRAI suggests a significant reduction in the annual license fee to 3% of AGR. Furthermore, it recommends phasing out license fees entirely for DTH operators by the end of the financial year 2026-2027.

Bank Guarantees: Initially, DTH licensees should provide a Bank Guarantee of ₹ 5 crore for the first two quarters. Subsequently, the amount should either be equivalent to the Initial Bank Guarantee or 20% of the estimated sum payable as License Fee for two quarters, whichever is higher. Once license fees become zero, a fixed amount Bank Guarantee of ₹ 5 crore should be maintained annually, with the Licensor having the authority to encash it in case of license condition violations.

Electronic Bank Guarantees: To streamline operations, TRAI encourages the use of electronic Bank Guarantees.

These recommendations, which include revised definitions for Gross Revenue, Applicable Gross Revenue, and Adjusted Gross Revenue, as well as changes to the percentage of AGR used for calculating License Fees, are expected to be applied prospectively.

## Rupee recovers 6 paise to settle at 82.74 against US dollar

**MUMBAI, Aug 30:** The rupee recovered 6 paise to settle at 82.74 (provisional) against the US currency on Wednesday following weakness in the US dollar in global markets. FII inflows into the capital market and firm equity markets supported the local unit while gains in crude oil prices restricted the rupee upside, according to analysts. At the interbank foreign exchange, the domestic unit opened higher at 82.67 amid overnight losses in the US dollar against major global rivals. It moved between a high of 82.66

and a low of 82.81 in intra-day trade.

The rupee finally closed at 82.74 against the dollar, a gain of 6 paise compared to the closing level of 82.80 on Tuesday.

Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was trading 0.03 per cent lower at 103.50 after US data suggested that labour market was cooling, a scenario that could provide support for the US Federal Reserve in eventual easing interest rates.

Brent crude futures, the global oil benchmark, rose 0.56 per cent to USD 85.97 per barrel. On the domestic equity market front, the BSE Sensex closed higher by 11.43 points or 0.02 per cent at 65,087.25 points while the broader Nifty advanced by 4.80 points to close at 19,347.45 points.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) were net buyers in the capital market on Tuesday as they bought shares worth ₹ 61 crore, according to exchange data. (PTI)

## China will be 'uninvestable' without action on raids, fines: US commerce secretary

**SHANGHAI, Aug 30:** Commerce secretary Gina Raimondo on Wednesday said she warned Chinese leaders that U.S. businesses might stop investing in their country without prompt action to address complaints about worsening conditions due to raids on firms, unexplained fines and unpredictable official behavior.

Raimondo's comments add to pressure on Chinese leader Xi Jinping's government, which is trying to revive investor interest and reverse an economic slump. Business groups say confidence among foreign companies is at an all-time low. Official figures show foreign investment plunged in the latest quarter.

Raimondo visited Beijing as part of U.S. efforts to restore relations that plummeted to their lowest level in decades due to disputes about technology, security, Taiwan and other issues. She called her meetings with China's No. 2 leader, Premier Li Qiang, and other officials "very productive" but said she "didn't pull any punches" in conveying business complaints.

Raimondo said CEOs ahead of her trip told her they face increased pressure from Beijing's expansion of an anti-spying law this year, raids on some firms, tighter controls on data and lack of information about rule changes.

"My point was U.S. business needs to see some action taken to address these issues. Otherwise, they will deem it as just too risky and, as I said, uninvestable," Raimondo told reporters at a Boeing Co. joint venture in Shanghai's eastern district of Pudong.

Foreign direct investment in China fell 89% from a year earlier in the three months ending in June, according to official data. Most investment is believed to be brought into the country by Chinese companies disguised as foreign money to get tax breaks and other incentives, but business groups have warned foreign com-



panies are withholding new spending until their status is clearer.

"Patience is wearing thin," Raimondo said. She said conditions for companies that have complained for years about technology theft and official favoritism toward Chinese competitors are "becoming in some ways even tougher."

Economic growth slid to 0.8% compared with the previous quarter in the three months ending in June from the January-March period's 2.2%. That is equal to an annual rate of 3.2%, which would be among China's weakest in decades.

Despite that, Li, the premier, has expressed confidence the economy can hit the ruling party's annual growth target of "about 5%."

Raimondo said she welcomed moves such as the ruling party's announcement of a 24-point plan to improve conditions for entrepreneurs. She said the party secretary for Shanghai, Chen Jining, told her Wednesday the city was considering creating a hotline to

receive business complaints.

"We have to see the situation on the ground match the rhetoric," Raimondo said.

Raimondo's visit produced the most substantial results of a series of trips to Beijing over the past three months by U.S. officials including Secretary of State Antony Blinken in June and treasury secretary Janet Yellen last month.

The two governments announced Monday they would form two groups to reduce trade tension by sharing information about U.S. export controls on technology that irritate Beijing and discuss other commercial disputes. They also agreed to have officials meet to discuss protection of trade secrets and to hold a "travel and tourism summit."

Beijing broke off dialogue with Washington over military, climate and other issues in August 2020 in retaliation for a visit to Taiwan by then-House Speaker Nancy Pelosi. The ruling party claims the self-ruled island democracy as part of its territory and objects to foreign official contacts.

Relations already were strained by a tariff war launched by then-President Donald Trump over complaints including that Beijing steals or pressures companies to hand over technology.

Li appealed to Raimondo on Tuesday for "concrete actions" by Washington to improve relations, a reference to Chinese pressure for changes in U.S. policy on Taiwan, technology and other issues.

Washington has blocked Chinese access to processor chips and other technology on security grounds. That threatens to hamper the ruling party's ambitions to create artificial intelligence and other industries. Xi accused Washington in March of trying to block China's development.

The group held its first meeting Tuesday.





**POSHAN Abhiyaan**  
PM's Overarching Scheme for Holistic Nourishment  
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Department of Women & Child Development  
Assam



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Towards a new dawn



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Chief Guest

**AJANTA NEOG**  
Hon'ble Minister  
Women & Child Development  
Assam

Distinguished Guest

**KESHAB MAHANTA**  
Hon'ble Minister  
Health & Family Welfare Dept.  
Assam

**ATUL BORA**  
Hon'ble Minister  
Agriculture, Horticulture, Animal  
Husbandry and Veterinary Dept.  
Assam

**KAMAKHYA PRASAD TASA**  
Hon'ble MP, Rajya Sabha

**BHABENDRA NATH BHARALI**  
Hon'ble MLA, Dergaon

**MRINAL SAIKIA**  
Hon'ble MLA, Khumtai

**BISWAJIT PHUKAN**  
Hon'ble MLA, Sarupathar

**Venue: Samannay Kshetra, Golaghat**

**1<sup>st</sup> September 2023**

**11 AM onwards**

*Wishing for the gracious blessings of all*











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## QUOTE OF THE DAY

Someone is sitting in the shade today because someone planted a tree a long time ago. - Warren Buffett

## INDIA alliance must craft a new narrative

As leaders of the INDIA alliance prepare to convene for their third meeting in Mumbai on August 31 and September 1, one question looms large: How can they present a compelling new narrative to counter Narendra Modi's three-pronged strategy of nationalism, Hindutva and welfare measures, especially for the OBCs? In any battle, a clear understanding of the opponent's strengths and weaknesses is essential for devising a foolproof strategy. The INDIA alliance must accurately assess the strengths and weaknesses of the nine-year NDA rule under Prime Minister Narendra Modi, especially in the eight months leading up to the Lok Sabha elections scheduled for April/May 2024. Prime Minister Modi, known for his mastery of optics, is expected to tout significant economic successes, generating hype that may overshadow the grim reality faced by many. The ground reality for a significant portion of the electorate, particularly the lower middle class and the poor, is centered on the challenges of rising prices and acute unemployment. These issues were pivotal in the 2019 Lok Sabha elections, where a substantial number of these voters supported the BJP and PM Modi.

Let's first address the issue of inflation and price rise. The past four years have been particularly harsh for common citizens, with essential commodity prices soaring. In July this year, the consumer price index surged to 7.4 percent, up from 4 percent in June. For the most vulnerable, including unorganised laborers and low-wage earners, this inflationary pressure is felt most intensely, coinciding with stagnant job opportunities and declining real wages. Real wages for male agricultural workers, non-agricultural laborers, and construction workers grew by less than one percent between 2014-15 and 2021-22, the first eight years of Modi's rule. The situation worsened in 2022-23, with real wages for the first group growing by just 0.2 percent, and the other two sectors experiencing declines. This paints a stark picture of declining real income and rising household expenditures, particularly on essential food items. While corporate profits have soared during the pandemic years, the burden of the economic crisis has fallen disproportionately on the underprivileged. Income inequality has widened significantly over the past nine years, highlighting the dichotomy in the nation's economic landscape.

Turning to the employment sector, the latest CMIE report indicates an unemployment rate of 8.16 percent in the June 2023 quarter. PM Modi's promise in 2014 to generate two crore jobs annually has faded from his campaign addresses. Instead, the government promotes Rozgar Melas, masking the grim reality of jobless growth over the past nine years.

# CM's Amrit tree movement and the journey to restore balance

The survival of people relies on trees. These beautiful plants on Earth create a livable environment for various creatures, including humans. Throughout history, thinkers have been fascinated by trees, and they have been revered as gods because ancient sages recognized their immense importance. Respect for trees has been ingrained in human society for centuries. Animals found shelter and sustenance under these trees, which continue to provide for our basic needs. However, with each step of "civilization's progress," trees have suffered. The impact on trees has been devastating due to deforestation caused by civilized societies, and this destruction has been ongoing for the past three centuries.

The elements of nature all work to help each other. They have clear roles in the environment to keep everything balanced. Only humans have disrupted this balance, leading to environmental disasters. This has made life harder for all animals. Some animals have even disappeared forever because of human actions that didn't seem important. Nature provides many things, and one of them is that plants give the Earth clean and free oxygen.

Everyone knows we need enough oxygen in the air for big creatures like humans, animals, and birds to survive. But despite this, there's a competition to cut down trees without anyone saying it out loud. When trees are cut down, it's not just that we lose clean oxygen. The consequences go further than that.

The Government of Assam plans to start a tree planting movement called 'Amrit Brikshya Andolan' in the state. They aim to plant 1 crore trees within three hours on September 17. The Chief Minister, Dr.

Himanta Biswa Sharma, launched the movement by unveiling a web portal, a mobile app, and a theme song. The goal is to protect the environment, tackle climate change, and help farmers earn more. The movement is not limited to just three hours; it's planned until 2070. It aligns with the Prime Minister's efforts for climate conservation and involves modern technology and farmers. Farmers will grow valuable trees for food and profit, practicing agroforestry. Government nurseries are also involved. The government will plant valuable trees that benefit the environment and con-



tribute to the timber industry and the economy.

Assam needs such a program because many trees have been cut

down for construction and development, including national highways. From 2001-2020 to last year's data, the state lost 2,690 square kilometers of forest. Over a crore trees were cut down for the East-West corridor expansion. Development has led to pollution and conflicts between animals and humans.

Despite being proud of the state's green cover, we're destroying agricultural land and forests, replacing them with concrete.

Neighboring states like Meghalaya, Mizoram, and Arunachal Pradesh have 75% forest

cover, while Assam only has 34.2%. The Amrit Tree Movement is a commendable and timely effort in this context.

The cutting down of trees, known as deforestation, has led to a decrease in the amount of carbon dioxide in the air and the ability to soak up harmful greenhouse gases. This has caused problems like global warming, changes in the climate, harm to the carbon cycle, disruption of natural balance, loss of different kinds of plants and animals, turning land into deserts, upsetting the water cycle, reducing how much water the ground can hold, causing floods and landslides, carrying sand into rivers and fields, making soil less good for farming, and affecting humidity.

All these issues bring about negative effects on buildings, cause conflicts

between people and animals, and even make some kinds of animals and birds disappear forever. These harmful actions keep happening. As the world's climate changes and becomes a danger to human life, there's a worry that both human society and animals might face destruction. Now, people are starting to understand how vital trees are once again. Environmental experts are warning everyone that if animals are going to survive, there's no choice but to increase the number of trees all around the Earth. People are already showing an interest in planting and protecting trees.

The Chief Minister, Dr. Himanta Biswa Sharma, stated that with the people's sincere cooperation, the 'Amrit Brikshya Andolan' will achieve its intended outcomes. This movement is expected to be incredibly valuable for the state in economic, social, and environmental aspects. The initial goal is to plant 1 crore trees on September 17 and eventually 5 crore trees over the next five years. However, the success of this ambitious government initiative relies on the dedication and commitment of those involved.

Growing a sapling into a tree isn't simple. If it were, our state would already be

a forest due to previous tree planting efforts by institutions, NGOs, and governments. But that hasn't happened, mainly because planted saplings aren't nurtured until they grow. Many people think their duty ends after posting tree pictures on social media on a specific day. It's crucial to focus on tasks like proper fencing, regular watering, fertilization, and cleaning after planting a sapling. Only then can it truly grow into a tree.

The earlier CAMPA scheme aimed at enriching forests didn't yield the desired results. To ensure that the 'Amrit Brikshya Andolan', undertaken with strong determination by the government, succeeds, everyone involved must take responsibility. The soil in Assam isn't particularly supportive of plant growth, so understanding why the planted saplings here don't survive is important. It's worth noting that Assam's dry season begins after September and lasts until April.

Hence, consistent watering for seven months after planting is vital. The government's intention is to see every tree thrive, and they've even announced a reward of Rs 300 per tree, which is a positive step.

(The writer can be reached at dipaknewslive@gmail.com)

## Far right political violence is on rise in Germany as Left influence declines

By: Katharina Hunfeld

In Germany, a high-profile trial has drawn the attention of the media and reignited debates around the political nature of the country's judiciary. On May 31, the Higher Regional Court of Dresden sentenced Lina E., a left-wing activist, to five years and three months in prison for attacks on high-profile neo-Nazis. Public debate surrounding the case was quick to paint her as the alleged figurehead of a nascent "left-wing extremism." What has been dubbed the Antifa-East trial constitutes one of the most significant cases targeting someone associated with a left-wing political organization since the Red Army Faction, the West German militant urban guerrilla network that carried out bombings, assassinations, and bank robberies from the 1970s to the early 90s.

The prosecution has accused Lina E. and her three codefendants of having organized and carried out at least six assaults against prominent neo-Nazis in the period from 2018 to 2020, injuring thirteen people. However, the prosecution did not just allege that Lina E. and her associates had caused bodily harm, but that they were involved in the "foundation of a criminal organization." Most of the reporting focused on Lina E., the alleged ringleader, a twenty-eight-year-old student of social pedagogy with no previous convictions. Brought to the general federal prosecutor in Karlsruhe by helicopter, surrounded by masked police officers, Lina E. became an effective symbol of a movement whose existence is dubious. The conservative politicians have used the public obsession with Lina E. - whom the right-wing tabloid Bild called "Germany's most dangerous far-left extremist" - to motivate a relentless campaign of fearmongering about "left-wing terrorism." The German state based its charges primarily on Paragraph 129 of the German Criminal Code, a highly contentious section dealing with the formation of criminal associations. According to Paragraph 129, anyone who founds or attempts to establish an association aimed at committing offenses can receive a prison sentence of up to five years. Law enforcement initially used this law to criminalize communist organizations in the Federal Republic of Germany in the 1950s. Since then, however, Paragraph 129 has remained an important juridical mechanism for justifying almost unlimited investigative authority. Since lawmakers reformed the law in 2017, prosecutors no longer need to provide detailed proof of an organizational structure in order to charge defendants. This does not

just allow but necessitates the use of circumstantial evidence by the jury to support the existence of a coherent criminal organization.

Importantly, invoking Paragraph 129 allows the court to consider several separate criminal offenses within one case, which legitimizes far-reaching surveillance measures to prove the connection between individuals alleged to be part of a single organization. In the context of the Antifa-East trial, the definition of an offense under Paragraph 129 lends itself to the legitimization of extensive information gathering about the leftist scene as a whole.

Paragraph 129 also criminalizes being a member of, recruiting members to, or generally supporting any criminal organization, effectively creating a situation in which a liberal, democratic state puts political activism in close proximity to criminal liability, while also moving towards the criminalization of anti-fascist sympathies. The judgment in the Antifa-East trial should therefore be understood as part of a larger wave of repression against left-wing activism. In these cases, the application of Paragraph 129 is part of the state's deterrence mechanism - the narrative of "state-threatening offenses" aims to undermine both left-wing solidarity and public sympathy. In some cases, however, this tactic has had the opposite effect. When the Centre for Political Beauty, a political performance art collective, built a replica of Berlin's Holocaust memorial on the plot of land right next door to Björn Höcke's home in 2019, the group gained significant public approval. Höcke, a former history teacher and, since 2014, the leader of the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) in Thuringia, had described Peter Eismann's original Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe as "a monument of shame" in a relatively routine exercise of neo-Nazi rhetoric. In response, Höcke, backed by the right-wing media, attempted to create a public campaign against the Centre for Political Beauty, which he wanted to see treated as a terrorist organization under a law closely related to Paragraph 129.

Influenced by Höcke's campaign, Thuringia's state prosecutors pressed what was a clearly a baseless case against the center, exposing in the process the influence the political right holds over Germany's judiciary. Allegations made by Höcke, and unsuccessfully pursued by the public prosecutors, that the collective's artistic director, Philipp Ruch, could, according to Paragraph 129, be described as the "founder and leader of criminal association," proved unsubstantial. They did, however, succeed in one respect: they provided an effective

marketing campaign for the Centre for Political Beauty that called on willing "accomplices" to incite "public unrest in the service of aggressive humanism."

Most recently, public attention was captured by investigations into the German chapter of the climate protest group Letzte Generation (Last Generation). Earlier this year, the Bavarian state targeted seven activists under Paragraph 129 for having "formed or supported a criminal organization." Arguing that the group posed "a considerable threat to public safety," the state legitimized electronic surveillance, raids targeting fifteen properties, freezing bank accounts, and temporarily blocking the group's website.

Ironically, the group is known for their overwhelmingly peaceful actions aimed at raising awareness about the climate emergency through road blockades, hunger strikes, dumpster diving, and art stunts. Their "extremist" demands range from adding a speed limit on German motorways to reducing the price of public transport and forming a democratic emergency council to address climate policies. However, two activists linked with the German environmental movement at large have been charged with attempting to sabotage the Trieste-Ingolstadt oil pipeline in 2022. Thanks to Paragraph 129, these two arrests allow the police to investigate Letzte Generation as a whole.

Critics of politically motivated investigations conducted under Paragraph 129 tend to foreground the question of parity across the political spectrum. The Antifa-East trial is, from this perspective, yet another case which contrasts with the large number of far-right prosecutions that lack a similar level of investigative vigor and public attention. Citing the case of Lina E., the Office for the Protection of the Constitution (BfV) - Germany's domestic intelligence agency - warns against "growing left-wing extremism." In its latest annual report, the BfV worries about the increasing radicalization, noting "anti-fascism" as key to such "extremist ideological orientation." Simultaneously, however, it also notes an actual decline in "violent left-wing extremist offenses" by 39 percent, with most offenses only constituting property damage.

In contrast, according to its own numbers, politically motivated right-wing crimes - the vast majority of which are physical assaults - are not only six times more prolific than criminal actions carried out by leftists, but actually on the rise. Meanwhile, public trust in the BfV remains low, particularly following the scandal surrounding the trial of the National Socialist Under-

ground (NSU) group. The case against this neo-Nazi terrorist cell, which was responsible for murdering ten people with immigrant backgrounds in the 2000s, highlighted extensive links between German intelligence services and the far right. Despite the popularity of narratives that laud the seriousness with which Germany has fashioned a culture of remembrance during the postwar era, its investigative authorities are increasingly under pressure for underestimating the sharp rise in violence associated with the populist AfD.

Beyond questions of the equal application of state force, we need a sustained critique of the logic underlying the idea that neo-Nazi violence and militant anti-fascism are two sides of the same coin. Mainstream narratives of left-wing and right-wing radicalism follow what is commonly referred to as "horseshoe theory." Widely discredited among leading political scientists, this theory asserts that the far left and the far right are similarly "extreme," creating and perpetuating the illusion of a politically neutral middle ground. The political consequence of such a reductive understanding is the loss of collective ability to not only differentiate between the political substance of various camps, but also to identify regressive, undemocratic positions in the political center. Debates around "left extremism," such as the one surrounding the Antifa-East trial, play into the hands of the increasingly institutionalized far right.

The populist AfD has already largely succeeded in shifting Germany's political center to the right. Since its establishment in 2013, the AfD has made significant gains across various sections of society. Split into ethnonationalist, national-conservative, and ordoliberal currents, the AfD is now a well-established presence in the German political landscape. Recent polls that suggest that the AfD is currently the second strongest party, ahead of the ruling Social Democratic Party (SPD), sent shock waves throughout Germany. While cooperation with the AfD at the federal level seems inconceivable for now, the shift towards right-wing populism has not been met with sufficient resistance. In the aftermath of the judgment in the Antifa-East trial, prominent politicians of the libertarian Free Democratic Party, the center-right Christian Democratic Union, and even the SPD warned against the trivialization of leftist activism, with only the Green Youth chairman Timon Dziemus publicly criticizing the verdict. As Germany's rising far right continues to make headlines, a compelling leftist project needs to resist its normalization. (IPA Service)

## Neeraj Chopra: The golden boy created history

By: Lalit Garg

Among the happy news and records that the country is getting continuously, Neeraj Chopra set another record. For the first time in four decades, an Indian winning a rare gold medal for the country at the World Athletics Championships is nothing short of creating a new history. Neeraj Chopra's gold medal win in Javelin Throw competition will be considered like raindrops in a drought. A ray of this light has given the countrymen the light of happiness, has given a message that if a single person of the country is determined to move forward with determination, he can reach the summit; can make the world a dwarf, can lift the heads of the inhabitants of the whole country. When the news of this historic and memorable achievement was published in the newspapers, everyone felt joyous.

Neeraj's journey as a sports person has been through many struggles, storms and challenges. Few years ago he was a young man troubled by increasing weight. At the age of 13, his weight had increased to 80 kg, due to which other children of his age used to tease him. Starting from there, Neeraj not only trained his body, but disciplined his mind and focused in such a way that he kept moving forward, creating records. But his feet are on the ground and when he throws the javelin, he goes far and creates a golden history. That's why till now no athlete has been able to bring glory to the country, Neeraj has brought it. But it is not just about this one gold. There are many things associated with this achievement of his which make him special. In making him special, where his dedication, hard work, loyalty and sportsmanship remained, he won gold in Asian Games in 2018 and then Commonwealth Games in 2018, Gold in Tokyo Olympics in 2020, Silver in World Championship in 2022, Gold in Diamond League in 2022 itself and his charisma of bringing gold in the World Championship in 2023 says a lot, the biggest thing is that he kept improving his performance during this period.

He has also taken Indian sports to the top of the world. The most important question in this achievement-rich atmosphere is why the most populous country in the world has not been able to achieve the status it deserves in sports? Do we not have the atmosphere of sports here or due to lack of facilities the players are not able to move forward? Or is sports also a victim of politics? These questions arise because India is far behind in the list of countries that have won medals so far in the World Athletics



Championships. Kenya, a country with a population of just five crores, has reached the second position with 65 gold medals. At the same time, Cuba, a country with a population of one crore, has put 22 gold medals in its bag in the World Championships. Talking about the Olympic Games, India's performance there has also been disappointing.

In the 127-year history of the Olympic Games, apart from hockey, we have got only two gold medals so far. Of these, one is in the name of Neeraj Chopra and the other is Abhinav Bindra. It is not that the country has not caught the pace of development after independence. India has touched new heights of progress in every field. Be it science or space, the country has made a distinct identity in the world. At this time we have become the fifth economic superpower of the world. Tricolor has been hoisted on the moon six days ago. Because of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, India's talk is given importance in the world. Amidst all these achievements, the question arises that why are we lagging behind in sports? Are sports federations responsible for this? Politicians and bureaucrats who have encroached upon sports associations for years, are they not becoming an obstacle in the journey of development of sports?

At a time when Indian scientists have raised their flag in the field of space exploration by landing Chandrayaan near the south pole of the moon and young talents like Praggnananda in chess are showing new hopes, this achievement of Neeraj Chopra not only boosts the morale of the countrymen but also it not only elevates, but also gives confidence and inspiration to do better in other areas and gives courage to make the nectar of freedom. Neeraj set a record by throwing the javelin at a distance of 88.17 meters and proved that this country can do wonders if Indians themselves look at sports born in the soil of India with respect. If the truth is asked, Neeraj Chopra has become the 'superhero' of sports of Indian origin. Before him, this status has been achieved only by wrestler Ghulam Muhammad Baksh alias 'Gama' or by Major Dhyan Chand, a hockey player

who participated in the Olympic Games. The contribution of Neeraj Chopra is big and great because he has given world prestige to rural and indigenous sports. Even though the game of cricket is more popular in India due to economic and dazzling thinking, but where is the real spirit of the game? Compared to him, by dedicating his life to sports like javelin throw, Neeraj worked to give a new direction and a new destination to the new generation of India and gave the message that if Indians want, they can also take the events called rural sports to the world stage.

Players like Neeraj Chopra are not less here. If the players get proper environment, training and facilities, then they can pile up medals, create new records. Records are always meant to be broken and breaking is a sign of progress. Neeraj is at the peak, so the efforts to touch him did not stop. There is limitless expanse to soar. When a player participates in our sports on the basis of his ability, he is neither a Hindu nor a Muslim, but an Indian or an Indian citizen. Our sports and players are also an example to show the strength of India's unity. So the existence of religion or religion is strictly a personal matter for us. Pakistan's player Arshad Nadeem was a little behind Neeraj Chopra last time as well and this time also this player was successful in winning the silver medal. Those who take sarcasm on the friendship of Neeraj and Arshad, also try to give communal colour to the sports.

Whenever a Neeraj picks up a spear and covers a great distance, or an Arjuna picks up a bow, takes aim, two hundred and eighty crore hands get stretched, one hundred and forty crores have a determination, a sense of concentration and many Neeraj are born. In our country, every ball lifter thinks himself Gavaskar-Sachin, every ball catcher thinks himself Kapil. Every player holding a hockey stick thinks himself to be Dhyan Chand, every player holding a tennis racket thinks himself to be Ramanathan Krishnan. There are many other names, Milkha Singh, P.T. Usha, Prakash Padukone, Geet Sethi, who have become the measure of the height of sports. Today Neeraj has also become a measure and the one who becomes a measure is the best condition for the upliftment and progress of man. This is exemplary. Whoever establishes value, whoever creates merit, whoever creates, who increases the pride of the country, which is sung in songs, salute him. Salute to Neeraj's spear! Salute to his resolution!! Congratulations on his faith!!! (The author is a journalist, columnist who can be reached at lalitgarg11@gmail.com)



# Cursed by the rain gods? Assam's climate challenge

By: Anirban Sarma

As every year, the month of June saw a series of dire forecasts of 'extremely heavy rainfall' for Assam. And in the month's third week, the monsoon unleashed its full fury upon the state, with consequences that have now become disturbingly familiar.

Even as the India Meteorological Department issued its Red Alerts and Orange Alerts, torrential rains raised the water levels of the Brahmaputra and its tributaries, multiple districts were hit by devastating floods, soil erosion began on a massive scale, and emergency relief distribution centres had to be set up. With the dawn of a dark and wet July, Assam's flood situation was critical. Over 34,000 people found themselves adrift and homeless.

## Assam's climate challenge

The Climate Vulnerability Index (2021) ranks Assam as India's most climate-vulnerable state. Several factors are responsible for this extreme vulnerability, chief among which are the presence of the expansive Brahmaputra and Barak river basins, Assam's fast dwindling green cover, and the overall geological fragility of Northeast India. Climate change has manifested itself in the state most visibly through the growing volatility of annual and seasonal rainfall, as well as a rise in yearly mean temperatures. These two phenomena trigger more frequent

extreme precipitation events such as high-intensity rainstorms, which in turn cause Assam's three main climate hazards—catastrophic floods, landslides, and soil erosion.

Nearly 40 percent of Assam's area is prone to floods; additionally, its monsoons have grown increasingly erratic and unpredictable. Much of the rain expected annually sometimes arrives in a space of weeks. In 2022, for example, Assam received double its average June rainfall in the month's first three weeks alone. Torrential concentrated rainfall is also the principal cause of the state's major landslide events; over 100 lives have been lost to nearly 1,000 landslides in the six-year period between 2016-22. Studies show that landslide frequency is increasing and could worsen both in Assam and across the Northeast as a whole.

Finally, the magnitude of soil erosion that Assam experiences is far greater than that of any other state, with the Brahmaputra's width increasing significantly in places as a result of bank erosion, embankments being breached regularly, with a severe impact on the state's rural economy because of shrinking riverine and fertile agricultural lands.

## Addressing Assam's climate and disaster risks

Based on an analysis of Assam's State Action Plan on Climate Change 2015-20 (SAPCC) and its State Disaster Manage-

ment Plan 2014-22 (SDMP), as well as efforts to implement them, the following measures could be undertaken to strengthen responses to Assam's climate and disaster risks.

## • Decentralising risk mapping exercises

The process of climate and disaster risk mapping should be made as local as possible. While District Disaster Management authorities have been established to prepare district-level plans and build local capacities across Assam, as a next step, panchayats could be encouraged or incentivised to develop and implement climate action plans (as is being done in Uttar Pradesh and Kerala). This would support community-enabled actions, and devolve responsibilities to at-risk communities.

## • Mainstreaming communities into capacity development processes

Assam's SAPCC and SDMP focus principally on building the capacities of government officials, though training is sometimes also extended to community volunteers and front-line workers. Community training efforts must be approached more systematically, and integrated into action plans more organically, to ensure an effective bottom-up approach to climate action.

## • Understanding the link between climate change and disasters

SDMPs tend to focus on a list



of hazards, but barely elaborate on their connection to climate change. This may have produced an insufficient or incomplete understanding of climate change within the administration (in Assam and elsewhere), and could also reflect a general tendency to focus narrowly on 'incidents' rather than their causes or effects. In this context, Assam's recent creation of a separate new department on climate change—that will focus on climate threats and measures for adaptation and mitigation—is praiseworthy. It could eventually foreground an understanding of climate risks, help align the agendas and work of various ministries, and facilitate integrated planning.

## • Exploring innovative financing options for climate action and disaster management

Assam's SAPCC and SDMP do not, at present, include a blueprint for climate or disaster fi-

ancing from government budgets, but caution that if adaptation efforts are not systematically undertaken and budgeted for, their costs could spiral upwards. Climate adaptation costs must, therefore, be factored into departments' annual planning processes. In the space of disaster risk reduction, for instance, a new strategy has recently been approved, under which 3 percent of the annual budget of all departments allied with Assam's Revenue and Disaster Management department shall be allocated for disaster reduction. More mechanisms of this kind are required.

## • Collaborating with the private sector

Neither the SAPCC nor the SDMP 2014-22 define a strategy for leveraging private sector funds. Assam's new Draft SDMP 2022-30, however, marks a departure in this regard and presents several possible private funding

options, including the introduction of insurance and risk pooling; provisions for the State government to issue reconstruction bonds in post-disaster scenarios with the Union government's approval; and crowd-funding as a means of supporting disaster relief and recovery. Each of these options could prove valuable, and ought to be piloted.

Importantly, the draft SDMP 2022-30 also recommends actively drawing on corporate social responsibility (CSR) funding. Businesses in Assam should be sensitised about how their contributions might benefit climate actions. The idea of a Northeastern CSR Corpus Fund could be explored, with a view to aggregating the resources of the region's companies, and then utilising a proportion of the Fund for climate action.

## • Promoting community adaptation initiatives and leveraging traditional knowledge systems

Assam's SAPCC and SDMP have drawn attention to the importance of ground-up approaches for climate adaptation and disaster management. Ongoing community initiatives such as tree-planting drives and the creation of water channels to improve drainage must continue. Besides, the adaptation initiatives of indigenous communities—such as the construction of 'portable' houses on bamboo stilts by the Mising tribe of flood-

prone eastern Assam—must be showcased, promoted, and replicated.

## Light in August?

As a new month advances, there appears to be little respite for the citizens of Assam. As of writing, yet another 'above normal' flood alert has been broadcast in Jorhat, the Brahmaputra is expected to rise 10-25 cm in the course of a single day, and the number of people directly affected and displaced by floods so far has risen to nearly 64,000. Vast swathes of cropland have been destroyed as floodwaters refuse to recede, and large-scale relief efforts are underway across the state. There is no light at the end of the tunnel for the victims of Assam's rains in August.

Addressing Assam's climate and disaster risks effectively—and building a lasting change—is likely to be a long and difficult process. As this article argues, it will call for systemic changes at multiple levels: From decentralising risk mapping efforts, involving communities in new ways, and educating administrators and other stakeholders, to crafting and executing progressive climate and disaster management financing options, co-opting the private sector as a partner and ally, and leveraging traditional knowledge systems. Unless urgent action is taken on each of these fronts, the losses to Assam's lives, lands, and livelihoods will only continue to mount in the years ahead. (Courtesy: ORF)

# 'Antarctic sea ice has transitioned to a different state with less volume overall, shorter presence'

By Akshit Sangomla

During the winter months in the southern hemisphere, sea ice usually grows back from its lowest extent during the summer season. This process has been monitored using satellites for the last 44 years. The fact that sea ice over a region almost the size of Greenland has not grown back in the current winter season has alarmed scientists. They have called it a highly unlikely event.

This February, Antarctica had also recorded its lowest summer sea ice extent. Down To Earth interacted with Petra Heil, sea ice scientist at the Australian Antarctic Program, to understand the reasons behind this occurrence, its impacts on the local ecology and the spectre of Antarctic sea ice extent going past the point of no return.

## Akshit Sangomla: Why is the Antarctic sea ice not getting replenished in winter?

Petra Heil: Sea ice forms and exists at the interface between the ocean and atmosphere in the Polar Regions. As such, its evolution is subject to conditions afforded by each — the surface ocean and the lower atmosphere. Sea-surface warming has occurred globally, including in the Southern Ocean. A warmer lower atmosphere has also

reduced the freezing potential, which means there is less thermodynamical ice growth. In addition, the atmospheric circulation has changed under global warming. This impacts Antarctic sea ice via the changed position of the polar vortex, for example, which now has an increased southerly flow over the Antarctic sea ice, pushing more sea ice to the south.

## AS: What could be the impact of the low sea ice extent on the marine ecosystem of Antarctica?

PH: There are several levels at which marine ecosystems are impacted. First, there is a strong link of marine primary production and its overall rate on the presence and quality of sea ice. Less sea ice means less marine primary production. The follow-on effects mean less food to sustain higher trophic levels. Another impact of low sea ice extent is less support for higher trophic levels. For example, sea ice provides a stable platform for penguins and seals to haul out from the water and rest upon.

Similarly, less fast ice (the sea ice near the coastline) or shorter presence of fast ice impacts the breeding success. This is seen in, for instance, Weddell seals and Emperor penguins who spend substantial parts of their breeding cycle on the fast ice. Weddell seals pup

on the fast ice and spend time on the fast ice till the pups are strong enough to enter the water. Emperor penguins spend time on the sea ice to incubate their eggs and raise their chicks till they are ready (grown and moulted) to enter the water.

## AS: Does the current data show that the sea ice extent in Antarctica has gone past a point of no return or a climate tipping point? How can we assess and be sure about such an occurrence?

PH: That is a difficult question to answer. The 2023 observations show that the deficit of Antarctic sea ice is statistically highly unlikely if we assume the recent past seasonal cycle of Antarctic sea ice. This suggests that Antarctic sea ice has transitioned to a different state with less sea ice overall and shorter presence (duration) of sea ice. Indications are that this transition is due to anthropogenic global warming. How can we assess? Via mapping of the impacts of changed forcing on the formation, evolution and melt of Antarctic sea ice. This requires observational data, including sustained in-situ measurements, to support analysis including so-called fingerprinting. (Fingerprinting is when we use what is happening over a small region or part of the system to approximate

an impact on the larger system.)

## AS: What could be the climatic / oceanic consequences of Antarctic sea ice extent crossing its tipping point?

PH: Sea ice feeds influences other climate components via a number of processes. For one, there is the so-called sea ice-albedo feedback loop. Less sea ice means less high albedo surface on the Southern Ocean. This, in turn, means increased penetration of radiative forcing into the upper ocean, hence directly warming the upper ocean (called the oceanic mixed layer). This contributes to further reducing the freeze potential and increased melt rates, thereby leading to less sea ice. Lower sea-ice cover means less production of Antarctic Bottom Water, which is a critical element driving the meridional overturning circulation, and with it the oceanic "conveyor belt" which renews water masses across many depth levels in the global ocean.

Less sea ice overall influences the gas and other exchange between ocean and atmosphere. This includes the aerosol production and with it the cloud formation over the Southern Ocean. Subsequently, the radiation budget is affected with dramatic consequences for the energy budget at the surface of Earth. (Courtesy: Down To Earth)

# The looming crisis: How reckless tourism is threatening Uttarakhand's future

By: Shania

Uttarakhand, with its breathtaking landscapes and spiritual sites, has captured the hearts of countless travelers. However, this popularity has come at a cost. The state is grappling with the consequences of overcrowding, threatening its natural beauty, cultural heritage, and the essence of what makes it unique. The year 2023 began with a stark reminder of Uttarakhand's fragile balance between nature and human activities.

The unsettling events in Joshi math, a crucial town along the revered Badrinath circuit, were a distress signal that should not be taken lightly. As water infiltrated homes and highways cracked under strain, it became evident that the consequences of unchecked tourism and poor planning were making headlines nationally and globally.

The administration's response, including the relocation of families and halting of construction projects, highlighted the situation's urgency. Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami acknowledged the critical issue of carrying capacity and pledged to stop construction when these limits were exceeded. However, the subsequent actions of his government tell a contradictory tale.

Fast forward to July 2023, and Chief Minister Dhami appears determined to break reckless records with the ongoing Uttarakhand Char Dham Yatra. Despite setting initial daily pilgrim limits, the decision was hastily revoked following protests from influential local businesses and religious authorities.

The lack of transparency surrounding this reversal reflects a troubling pattern of shortsighted decision-making that has become familiar in Uttarakhand's struggle with over-tourism. The environmental toll of overcrowding cannot be underestimated. The escalating footfall has led to littering, deforestation, pollution of water bodies, and the degradation of fragile ecosystems. Uttarakhand's rich biodiversity, a source of pride and wonder, is threatened due to unsustainable tourism practices.

The carrying capacity predicament is exacerbated by the state's over-centralized tourism model, which heavily focused on a handful of popular destinations. Haridwar, Rishikesh, the Char Dhams, Nainital, Mussoorie, and Jim Corbett National Park bear the brunt of this influx, leading to an overcrowded and unsustainable environment. While promises were to diversify and develop new tourist spots, as Uttarakhand possesses hidden gems that offer



unique experiences beyond the crowded hotspots, these pledges still need to be fulfilled, leaving the state's future hanging in the balance.

The state can evenly distribute tourist flow by spotlighting these lesser-known locales and diversifying tourism offerings. It will not only ease the burden on popular destinations but also fosters economic development in local communities. Efforts to introduce novel destinations with theme-based attractions seemed promising on paper. Places like Chakrata, Piran Kaliyar, and Tehri Lake were envisioned as alternatives to alleviate pressure on traditional hotspots.

However, these ideas have stagnated, symbolic of the state government's inability to turn intentions into tangible solutions. The recent shift in focus towards creating high-quality gateway hubs under the Uttarakhand Tourism Policy 2030 signals a new direction. These hubs aim to provide essential amenities and infrastructure, presenting sustainable growth opportunities. Investments in infrastructure are indispensable to accommodate the burgeoning tourist numbers. Upgrading roads, establishing sustainable lodging, refining waste management, and enhancing public transportation are critical steps toward relieving the stress on existing systems to entail a delicate equilibrium between tourism growth and environmental preservation. Moreover, imposing carrying capacity limits on popular destinations will ensure a higher quality experience.

Yet, only time will reveal whether this policy shift can lead to a more balanced and economically viable future. Collaborating with stakeholders, the state government can implement measures like carrying capacity assessments, flow regulation, promoting offbeat destinations, and advocating responsible tourism behaviors. A grave concern that looms large amid the tourism crisis is waste management. The staggering influx of pilgrims during the Kanwar Yatra is a stark example, with an estimated 30,000 metric tonnes of waste generated in Haridwar alone in days. The issue extends beyond solid and plastic waste, as human fecal waste during the Yatra poses an equally

daunting challenge. The environmental impact of these practices, especially along the sacred Ganges, cannot be understated.

Tourist education is a linchpin in addressing overcrowding. Tourists must embrace key elements that promote responsible behaviour, respect local customs, minimize waste generation, and preserve the environment. Tourism authorities can be pivotal in spreading awareness through campaigns, information centers, and collaborations with travel agencies. Failure to address these pressing issues could lead to irreparable damage to Uttarakhand's natural beauty, cultural heritage, and economic prospects. The time for transformative action is now, and the state must seize the opportunity to redefine its relationship with tourism.

Only through conscious and concerted efforts can Uttarakhand pave the way for a brighter, more sustainable future, ensuring its beauty and bounty are preserved for future generations. As we reflect on the recent disaster in the Yamuna Valley and the ongoing devastation in Uttarakashi, it is clear that urgent action is imperative. The centralized over-tourism model, the disregard for carrying capacity principles, and the alarming waste generation cannot persist. Business as usual is a luxury the state and its people can no longer afford. The strain on the infrastructure is palpable. Overcrowding has placed excessive demands on roads, parking facilities, waste management systems, and public amenities. This pressure cascades onto local communities, affecting their daily lives and overall well-being.

Balancing the influx of tourists with the needs of these communities is imperative for sustainable growth. Engaging local communities in tourism planning and management is pivotal for sustainable success. Empowering these communities in decision-making processes, supporting community-based tourism initiatives, and raising awareness about responsible tourism practices can foster a sense of ownership and ensure equitable sharing of tourism benefits.

Uttarakhand's future hinges on a recalibration of its approach to tourism. The state must prioritize sustainability over short-term gains and embrace a holistic strategy encompassing responsible development, infrastructure improvement, and effective waste management. It is a collective responsibility that demands the cooperation of government bodies, local businesses, communities, and tourists. (Courtesy: Youth Ki Awaaz)

# Abandon the Idea of 'Great Green Walls'

By: Matthew Turner, Diana Davis, Emily Yeh and Pierre Hier

For more than a century, people around the world have tried to stop "encroaching deserts" by planting "green walls" of trees, sometimes thousands of kilometres long. These efforts have failed. Tree survival rates are often less than 30 percent, biodiversity has decreased, water tables have dropped, local livelihoods have been disrupted, and already-poor people have been further marginalised.

Despite this problematic history, the vision of a green wall of trees to hold back the desert remains very popular, with billions of dollars pledged and spent in China on the Three Norths Shelterbelt Program, and in Africa on the Great Green Wall Initiative.

As ecologists and geographers who have worked in the drylands of Africa and Asia for decades, we argue that the idea of "green walls" is not only misguided but dangerous. Bound to fail for both social and ecological reasons, the green wall idea reinforces false assumptions about the nature of environmental change in the world's drylands — lending powerful support to misguided notions that top-down, techno-centric interventions are the best. We should abandon the idea to make room for more realistic, evidence-based and effective interventions. Scientists today define desertification as the degradation of arid lands caused by local human mismanagement. This is different from aridification, which is the loss of vegetation due to climate change. We now know that desertification doesn't cause the edges of deserts to march forwards; rather, desertification happens in patches, in areas of high and more persistent land pressure from grazing, farming and firewood collection. There's no need to stop the forward march of desertification — because there isn't one. Although some desert boundaries might be expanding due to aridification from climate change, water-hungry trees do little to combat that. In other words, a wall of trees isn't suited to fix either issue.

Green wall programs are fed by an erroneous belief that planting trees anywhere will always improve climates, water supplies and biodiversity, while preventing erosion and mitigating climate change. This tree-centric belief has its origins in 18th century Europe; by the 19th century it attained the level of ideology, with forest cover equated with civilisation. The concept was used by Western powers to justify a wide variety of colonial and imperial projects in inappropriate environments around the globe.

A tree-focused worldview that equates ecological improvement with tree cover, although valid for some ecosystems, does not translate well to dryland ecologies that were not originally covered with forests but rather with steppes, grasslands or savannas. Their replacement with rows of trees, often all of the same species, is generally not an ecological improvement. Research has shown that trees at higher densities can compete with native vegetation, which can lead to reductions in moisture availability, biodiversity and ground-cover protection from erosion, with limited climate change mitigation benefits. In China, where more than a quarter of the nation was targeted for tree planting from 1952 to 2008, surprisingly little evidence has been found for a positive impact of planting efforts on changes in vegetative cover or dust storms. More comprehensive assessments of the ecological effects of mass tree-planting efforts remain elusive, given the limited data collected or shared by the governments and organisations that support these programs.

Green walls are problematic not only ecologically but also socially. Promoters often give the impression that these dryland areas are basically empty. The reality is that they are almost always populated by people who make good use of their drylands and, understandably, often resist the replacement of their fields or rangelands with tree plantations and fences.

Green wall projects also provide an opportunity for the powerful to control and exclude the most vulnerable through the guise of environmental rehabilitation. In Niger, for example, local elites have used green wall programs as an opportunity to take over (and profit from) formerly public lands. In Algeria, the Green Dam program was used by the government to reduce and control pastoralism — the practice of moving with livestock over large areas, which has been administratively burdensome and erroneously seen as "primitive." In China, too, the Three Norths Shelterbelt Program has, in combination with other programs, removed pastoralists from their rangelands and employed them in tree-planting instead. Pastoralism has been long misunderstood and devalued. Ecologists now recognise that mobile livestock husbandry promotes social and ecological resilience in the face of climate change. Acting against it does a disservice to dryland communities.

Policymakers must recognise that drylands are homes to people who do not usually degrade the landscapes upon which they depend. Development programs led by local people to meet local needs show greater promise than top-down technocratic efforts. Such programs may include technical interventions like rangeland protection, irrigation or even tree-planting, if focused on the protection and planting of native trees. Such interventions must respect and support local livelihoods to be successful, as is illustrated by a water program in Chad that has begun to accept the importance of pastoral mobility in its highly variable drylands. The funding of green wall programs has at times helped to support effective interventions. But their success has come not because of their ties to the "great green wall," but in spite of it. The myth of green walls holding back the desert continues to garner strong public interest and generous funding despite being discredited by contemporary ecological science. It should be discarded. Instead, we need to move forward with alternative dryland conservation and development efforts that are more ecologically appropriate, and that support local sustainable livelihood strategies in the face of global climate change. (Courtesy: The Wire)

Environmental rehabilitation. In Niger, for example, local elites have used green wall programs as an opportunity to take over (and profit from) formerly public lands. In Algeria, the Green Dam program was used by the government to reduce and control pastoralism — the practice of moving with livestock over large areas, which has been administratively burdensome and erroneously seen as "primitive." In China, too, the Three Norths Shelterbelt Program has, in combination with other programs, removed pastoralists from their rangelands and employed them in tree-planting instead. Pastoralism has been long misunderstood and devalued. Ecologists now recognise that mobile livestock husbandry promotes social and ecological resilience in the face of climate change. Acting against it does a disservice to dryland communities.



## Imran Khan's judicial remand extended till Sept 13 in cipher case

ISLAMABAD, Aug 30: A special court on Wednesday extended till September 13 the judicial remand of Imran Khan in a case related to the alleged disclosure of state secrets, dashing the beleaguered former Pakistan prime minister's hopes of quick release from jail.

Judge Abul Hasnat Zulqarnain, who arrived at Attock jail in the Punjab province to conduct the hearing, issued the order in the case of the missing cipher, a classified state document that Khan had waved during a political rally ahead of his ouster from office last year.

The hearing of the case took place at Attock District Jail following approval by the Law ministry amid security concerns expressed by the Interior ministry.

Authorities decided on Tuesday to hold the hearing of the case inside the Attock jail where 70-year-old Khan has been kept since August 5 after his conviction in the Toshakhana corruption case.

Khan's sentence was suspended by a two-member bench of the Islamabad High Court on Tuesday, but he was not allowed to walk free, as the judge hearing the cipher case ordered that the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) chief be kept in prison and produced for hearing on Wednesday.

According to Geo News report, Judge Zulqarnain extended judicial remand till September 13, meaning that Khan will remain in jail. The same judge ordered Khan's one-day remand on Tuesday and ordered that he be presented for hearing on Wednesday.

Khan's five-member legal team — headed by Advocate Salman Safdar — attended the court hearing in the prison, the report said, adding that initially the team was denied access, but was later allowed to enter and meet Khan inside the jail. Khan's party said only three lawyers were allowed to represent the former prime minister during the hearing.

Earlier, PTI criticised the decision to conduct hearing in Attock jail. "When Imran Khan requested technology be used for his daily hearings it was spun as if he was trying to avoid them. Now, the hearing is ordered from his jail cell. Why can't it be live on TV or at least in presence of his friends and family," PTI spokesperson Zulfiqar Bukhari said in a statement.

"The world should be able to watch if this illegal hearing has any

element of justice within it. The plan was to trample & dismantle PTI ... the Constitution & law got brutally murdered instead..." he said.

Khan's close aide and former foreign minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi is already in custody in the same case. The case launched earlier this month alleged that Khan and others were involved in the violation of the secret laws of the country.

Qureshi will also be produced at the judicial complex in relation to the cipher case on Wednesday after his two-day remand is completed, the sources said.

Qureshi's lawyer and PTI leader Babar Awan will be representing him at the court.

In March last year, ahead of the vote of no-confidence that resulted in his ouster, Khan pulled out a piece of paper — allegedly the cipher — from his pocket and waved it at a public rally in Islamabad, claiming it was the evidence of an "international conspiracy" being hatched to topple his government.

However, during the interrogation with the joint investigation team (JIT) in the jail on August 26,

Khan denied that the paper he waved at a public gathering last year was the cipher. He also admitted to losing the cipher, saying he couldn't recall where he kept it. His principal secretary Azam Khan stated before a magistrate and the FIA that the Khan used it for his 'political gains' and to avert a vote of no-confidence against him.

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

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.

A division bench comprising Islamabad High Court (IHC) Chief Justice Aamir Farooq and Justice Tariq Mehmood Jahangiri on Wednesday suspended Khan's three-year sentence in Toshakhana corruption and ordered his release from the jail in Punjab province. (PTI)

Drones hit an airport in Russia's western Pskov region near the border with Estonia and Latvia, sparking a massive fire

## Air attack kills 2 in Kyiv while Russia accuses Ukraine of biggest drone attack of the war

KYIV, Aug 30: Russian officials on Wednesday accused Ukraine of launching what appeared to be the biggest nighttime drone attack on Russian soil since the war began 18 months ago. The Kremlin's forces also hit Kyiv during the night with what Ukrainian officials called a "massive, combined attack" that killed two people.

Drones struck hit an airport in western Russia's Pskov region near the border with Estonia and Latvia, damaging four Il-76 transport aircraft that can carry heavy machinery, Russian state news agency Tass reported, citing emergency officials.

The airport strike, which was first reported minutes before midnight, started a massive fire, the regional governor and local media reported. Unconfirmed media reports said up to 20 drones may have targeted the airport. More drones were shot down over the Oryol, Bryansk, Ryazan and Kaluga regions, as well as the region surrounding the Russian capital, according to the Defense Ministry. Three main Moscow region airports — Sheremetyevo, Vnukovo and Domodedovo — temporarily halted incoming and outgoing flights.

Aerial attacks on Russian soil have escalated in recent months as Ukraine pursues a counteroffensive to drive the invading forces out of its territory. Ukraine has increasingly



targeted Russia's military assets behind the front lines in the country's east and south. The Kremlin has repeatedly accused the Ukrainian military of also launching drones toward Moscow. Russia, meanwhile, used drones and missiles in its biggest bombardment of Ukraine's capital in months, Ukrainian authorities said. Two people were killed and another person was injured by falling debris, Serhiy Popko, the head of the Kyiv military administration, wrote on Telegram.

Russia launched Shahed exploding drones at the city from various directions and then followed with missiles from Tu-95MS strategic aircraft, Popko said. It was unclear how many were launched, but Popko called the

attack the biggest on the capital since the spring. In the aftermath, Kyiv resident Iryna Oblat pointed to debris in the street and shattered windows in surrounding buildings.

"Look where it hit, look what happened to the house," she told The Associated Press. "Garages are on fire. We don't know how many cars and garages were destroyed because firefighters and police won't let us in."

In Russia, Pskov regional Gov. Mikhail Vedernikov ordered all flights to and from the airport in the region's namesake capital canceled for the day so the damage could be assessed during daylight. Footage and images posted on social media showed smoke billowing over the city of Pskov and a large blaze. Vedernikov said there were no casualties, and the fire has been contained.

Pskov was the only region reporting substantial damage. In Kaluga, one drone was brought down and another hit an empty oil reservoir, causing a fire that was quickly extinguished, Gov. Vladislav Shapsha reported. Residential windows were shattered, Shapsha said. In the Bryansk region, Gov. Alexander Bogomaz said six drones were downed overnight. One of them damaged an administrative building, he said, prompting a brief fire. Two were targeting a television tower, but were brought down. Russian media earlier on Wednesday cited local residents as

saying they heard a loud explosion.

Two drones were downed over the Oryol region, Gov. Andrei Klychkov said. Two more were downed over the Ryazan region and one over the Moscow region, officials said. The Oryol and Kaluga regions border Bryansk, and the Moscow region sits on top of Kaluga. Pskov, however, is about 700 kilometers (434 miles) north of Russia's border with Ukraine, and was described by Russian media and military bloggers as an unlikely target. Also early Wednesday, Russian-installed officials in Crimea, which Moscow annexed from Ukraine in 2014, reported repelling an attack of drones targeting the harbor of the port city of Sevastopol.

Fuel depots and airfields have been hit in drone attacks on Crimea or Russian-held regions that Moscow officials have blamed on Kyiv. There was no immediate comment from Ukrainian officials, who usually refuse to take responsibility for any attacks on Russian soil. Explosions in Ukraine were also reported in the southern city of Odesa and the Cherkasy region.

Ukraine's air defenses destroyed 28 cruise missiles and 15 of 16 Iranian-made Shahed attack drones targeting the capital and multiple regions across the country overnight, the Ukrainian air force said in its daily Telegram update on Wednesday. (AP)

## Gabon military officers say they're seizing power just days after the presidential election

DAKAR, Aug 30: Mutinous soldiers in Gabon said on Wednesday they were seizing power in order to overturn the results of a presidential election, seeking to remove a president whose family has held power for 55 years.

The coup attempt came hours after the central African country's President Ali Bongo Ondimba, 64, was declared winner of an election marred by fears of violence. Within minutes of the announcement, gunfire was heard in the centre of the capital, Libreville. A dozen uniformed soldiers appeared on state television later the same morning and announced that they had seized power.

The soldiers intended to "dissolve all institutions of the republic," said a spokesman for the group, whose members were drawn from the gendarme, the republican guard and other elements of the security forces.

The situation in the capital wasn't immediately clear, and there was no word from the president. The private intelligence firm Ambrey said all operations at the country's main port in Libreville had been halted, with authorities refusing to grant permission for vessels to leave. It wasn't immediately clear if airlines were operating in the country.

The coup attempt came about one month after mutinous soldiers in Niger seized power from the democratically elected gov-



ernment, and is the latest in a series of coups that have challenged governments with ties to France, the region's former coloniser.

Gabon's coup, if successful would bring the number of coups in West and Central Africa to eight since 2020.

In his annual Independence Day speech August 17, Bongo said "While our continent has been shaken in recent weeks by violent crises, rest assured that I will never allow you and our country Gabon to be hostages to attempts at destabilisation. Never." Unlike Niger and two other West African countries run by military juntas, Gabon hasn't been wracked by jihadi violence and had been seen as relatively stable.

But nearly 40 per cent of Gabonese ages 15-24 were out of work in 2020, according to the World Bank. Gabon is a member of the OPEC oil cartel, with a production of

some 181,000 barrels of crude a day, making it the eighth-largest producer of oil in sub-Saharan Africa.

It is home to over 2 million people, and is slightly smaller than the US state of Colorado. At a time when anti-France sentiment is spreading in many former colonies, the French-educated Bongo met President Emmanuel Macron in Paris in late June and shared photos of them shaking hands.

France has some 400 troops in the country. French Prime Minister Elisabeth Borne said Wednesday: "We are following the situation in Gabon closely. The mutinous officers vowed to respect 'Gabon's commitments to the national and international community'."

When asked about Gabon Wednesday, the EU's top diplomat, Josep Borrell said it would be discussed by EU ministers this week. Defence ministers from the 27-nation bloc are meeting in Spain on Wednesday, and foreign ministers on Thursday. Borrell will chair both meetings, and Niger will also be a focus.

"If this is confirmed, it's another military coup, which increases instability in the whole region," he said. Bongo's family has long-standing ties to former colonial ruler France, dating to the four-decade presidency of his late father Omar Bongo. These have come under legal scrutiny in recent years. (AP)

## Britain's top diplomat visits China for the first time in 5 years

BEIJING, Aug 30: Britain's top diplomat, James Clev-erly, began a long-awaited visit to China on Wednesday as the two countries attempt to stabilise bilateral ties that have frayed badly in recent years. The trip is the first by a United Kingdom foreign secretary to China in more than five years, underscoring the downturn in relations over Beijing's curbing of civil liberties in Hong Kong, a former British colony, abuses against Muslim minorities in the Xinjiang region, China's support for Russia and Britain's close security ties with the United States.

Clev-erly met first with Vice President Han Zheng, who said the visit will "further promote the sound and stable development of bilateral relations."

Clev-erly will meet later in the day with his Chinese counterpart, Wang Yi, who is both the ruling Communist Party's top official for foreign affairs and recently resumed his former post as foreign minister after the still-unexplained disappearance of his predecessor, Qin Gang.

On Tuesday, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin said Beijing hoped the British side will "work with us to uphold the spirit of mutual respect, deepen exchanges, enhance mutual understanding and promote the stable development of Sino-British relations."

Clev-erly has said he would raise issues such as Xin-jiang and Hong Kong, and is expected to stress that Chinese influence comes with responsibility on the global stage — including helping end Russia's invasion of Ukraine and diffusing geopolitical tensions in the South China Sea. British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak is aiming to pursue a nuanced, non-confrontational approach to relations with Beijing. (AP)

## Australians to vote in a referendum on Indigenous Voice to Parl on October 14

CANBERRA, Aug 30: Australians will vote on October 14 on a proposed law to create a so-called Indigenous Voice to Parliament in the nation's first referendum in a generation. Prime Minister Anthony Albanese on Wednesday announced the referendum date, triggering just over six weeks of intensifying campaigning by both sides of the argument.

The referendum would enshrine in the constitution an Indigenous Voice to Parliament, a collection of advocates aimed at giving the nation's most disadvantaged ethnic minority more say on government policy.

Australia has not held a referendum since 1999 and a referendum has not passed since 1977. No referendum has ever passed without bipartisan support and the major parties remain divided over the Voice. (AP)

## Pope heads to Mongolia to complete centuries-old East-West mission

VATICAN CITY, Aug 30: When Pope Francis travels to Mongolia this week, he will in some ways be completing a mission begun by the 13th-century Pope Innocent IV, who dispatched emissaries east to ascertain the intentions of the rapidly expanding Mongol Empire and beseech its leaders to halt the bloodshed and convert. Those medieval exchanges between Roman pope and Mongolian khan were full of bellicose demands for submission and conversion, with each side claiming to be acting in the name of God, according to texts of the letters that survive. But the exchanges also showed mutual respect at a time when the Catholic Church was waging Crusades and the Mongol Empire was conquering lands as far west as Hungary in what would become the largest contiguous land empire in world history.

Some 800 years later, Francis won't be testing new diplomatic waters or seeking to

proselytize Mongolia's mostly Buddhist people when he arrives in the capital Ulaanbaatar Friday for a four-day visit. Pope Francis' trip to Mongolia in September will be closely watched by Russia and China. His trip is nevertheless a historic meeting of East and West, the first-ever visit by a Roman pontiff to Mongolia to minister to one of the tiniest, newest Catholic communities in the world.

"In a way, what's happened is that both sides have moved on," said Christopher Atwood, professor of Mongolian and Chinese frontier and ethnic history at the University of Pennsylvania. "Once upon a time, it was either/or: Either the world was ruled by the pope, or the world was ruled by the Mongol Empire. And now I think both sides are much more tolerant." Officially, there are only 1,450 Catholics in Mongolia and the Catholic Church has only had a sanctioned presence since 1992. (AP)

## US' relationship with India 'critical' in dealing with China, Russia: Ro Khanna

WASHINGTON, Aug 30: The US' relationship with India is "critical" in dealing with its strategic adversaries - China and Russia, Indian-American Congressman Ro Khanna has said. Khanna spoke to Tuesday talk show host Hugh Hewitt on radio after his return from India, where he led a bipartisan Congressional delegation.

"China and Russia are clearly two strategic challenges, adversaries. That's why the relationship with India is going to be so critical in dealing with it. I think China and Russia aren't always going to march lock-step and there are opportunities there, but by and large, we should be clear-eyed about what they're doing," he said.

Khanna said it was unreasonable for the US to expect that India will block the Strait of Malacca during a conflict with China, but New Delhi can be aggressive on its borders in Ladakh and Arunachal Pradesh to open a two-front war if Beijing invades Taiwan.



The Strait of Malacca is a waterway connecting the Andaman Sea (Indian Ocean) and the South China Sea (Pacific Ocean). As the link between the Indian Ocean and the South China Sea, the Strait of Malacca is the shortest sea route between India and China and hence is one of the most heavily travelled shipping channels in the world. Khanna, who is currently Co-Chair of the Congressional India Caucus, did not agree with Indian American presidential candidate Vivek Ramaswamy

who said on Tuesday that he would wish India to close Malacca Strait in the case of a Chinese invasion of Taiwan. China views self-ruled Taiwan as a breakaway province that must be reunified with the mainland. China has not ruled out the possible use of force to achieve this objective.

"We should be clear-eyed about what India will or will not do. I mean this is another important point. The idea that they're going to block the Malacca Strait is just unreasonable to expect. Japan and South Korea wouldn't go along with that in India," he said.

"From the conversations we had, we aren't going to go to do that because you can bypass that through the Lombok or Sunda and you wouldn't get Asian support for that," Khanna said. Lombok is an island in West Nusa Tenggara province, Indonesia. It forms part of the chain of the Lesser Sunda Islands, with the Lombok Strait separating it. (PTI)

## Israeli PM orders ministries to get his OK before secret talks

JERUSALEM, Aug 30: Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu issued an order on Tuesday mandating that his office approve all secret diplomatic meetings in advance, his spokesperson said, as officials scrambled to contain the growing diplomatic firestorm over Israel's disclosure that its top diplomat had met with his Libyan counterpart.

The exposure of the first-ever known encounter between Israeli and Libyan foreign ministers ignited angry street protests in several Libyan cities and sent Libyan Foreign Minister Najla Mangoush fleeing to Turkey for fear of her safety.

Libyan Prime Minister Abdul Hamid Dbeibah, who heads one of the country's rival governments, said he was temporarily suspending Mangoush from her position over the reported meeting. Libya has a history of unremitting hostility toward Israel. Netanyahu sent the directive Tuesday to all government ministries, requesting they receive approval from his office before conducting any covert political talks. The order also asked that Netanyahu

personally approve the publication of news concerning such sensitive meetings. A Netanyahu aide, Topaz Luk, said Netanyahu issued the order in response to fallout from the Libya scandal. It was not known if Netanyahu knew about Foreign Minister Eli Cohen's meeting with Mangoush ahead of time.

Israel's Foreign Ministry announced Sunday that Cohen met Mangoush in Rome last week in what it hailed as a "historic" step toward the normalization of ties with Libya.

Having established diplomatic ties with Gulf Arab sheikhdoms, the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain, during the Trump administration, Netanyahu's government anxiously wants to do so with other Arab states — including Saudi Arabia — to change its status in its long-hostile neighborhood and end its regional isolation. But the backlash served as a glaring reminder that despite the warming ties between Israel and the Arab world, challenges remain as ordinary citizens in the region still oppose closer relations with Israel. (AP)

## Saudi Arabia gets some unlikely visitors when a plane full of Israelis makes an emergency landing

TEL AVIV, Aug 30: A plane carrying Israelis home from the Indian Ocean island nation of Seychelles made an emergency landing in Saudi Arabia before flying back to Tel Aviv on Tuesday, in what Israel praised as a sign of goodwill as Washington works to establish formal relations between the two countries.

The Air Seychelles flight carrying 128 passengers was forced to land Monday because of an electrical malfunction. Israel's Foreign Ministry said the passengers spent the night at an airport hotel in Jeddah and were flown back by the airline on an alternate plane.

Passengers described a frightening stretch of time as an acrid burnt smell filled the cabin and the pilot came over the intercom to say the plane would be forced to make an emergency stop in Saudi Arabia, a kingdom with which Israel has no air links or diplomatic ties.

With dozens trapped on board and the plane idling on the tarmac, tension grew, passengers said,

while Israeli officials scrambled to figure out what to do. Soon Saudi security forces escorted the Israelis to a hotel. Israel says its foreign minister met with his Libyan counterpart in sign of burgeoning ties.

"It was very scary," passenger Mayama Stahl recalled as she streamed out of Israel's Ben Gurion International Airport later Tuesday with the dozens of others, some seemingly surprised by the swarm of reporters, photographers and party balloons that greeted them. "But we were all welcomed very well (by the Saudis). ... We were very excited to see that we were OK and safe."

The passengers told The Associated Press their experience in Jeddah was pleasant, with some Saudis even greeting them in Hebrew. Tracking data from FlightRadar24.com showed the Air Seychelles Airbus A320, flight No. HM22, diverted to Jeddah on Monday night while it was over the Red Sea. The airline did not respond to a request for comment.



Another Air Seychelles A320 flew to Jeddah on Tuesday from Dubai to pick up the travelers and carry them on to Tel Aviv. In 2022, Saudi Arabia lifted its ban on Israeli overflights during a visit by President Joe Biden to the kingdom. Israel and Saudi Arabia do not have official ties, although they have developed strong but informal connections over recent years over their shared concerns about Iran's growing influence in the region.

After Israel and four Arab states

signed normalization deals in 2020 under the former Trump administration, Biden has been working to strike a similar agreement with Saudi Arabia. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who has made an agreement with Saudi Arabia a major goal, seized on the incident to highlight the potential for improved ties.

"I greatly appreciate the warm attitude of the Saudi authorities to the Israeli passengers whose flight was in distress," he said in a video recorded in Hebrew with Arabic

subtitles, as he gestured toward a map of the region behind him. "I greatly appreciate the good neighborliness."

There was no immediate reaction in Saudi Arabia. A normalization deal with Saudi Arabia, the most powerful and wealthy Arab state, has the potential to reshape the region and boost Israel's standing in historic ways.

But brokering such a deal is a heavy lift as the kingdom has said it won't officially recognize Israel before a resolution to the decades-long Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The Saudis are also apparently seeking defense guarantees and access to American nuclear technology.

Extracting any major concessions to the Palestinians from Israel will be difficult under Israel's current government, which is made up of ultranationalists who support expanding Jewish settlements on land the Palestinians seek for a state and oppose Palestinian independence. (AP)



## KTMC&RI hosts freshers' social meet



### HT Bureau

**DIPHU, Aug 30:** The Karbi Traditional Music, Culture & Research Institute (KTMC&RI), dedicated to Karbi traditional music and folk songs and operated under the Art & Culture department of Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC), organised a freshers' social meet to welcome the new batch of students for the academic session 2023-24. The event was held at the KTMC&RI office in Loru-lango.

During the program, meritorious students from the previous academic session (2022-23) were also recognised and felicitated for achieving high marks in their examinations.

Surjya Rongphar, executive member (EM) of KAAC Art & Culture and Health & Family Welfare, graced the occasion as the chief guest. Rongphar highlighted the importance of KTMC&RI in promoting and preserving Karbi folk culture. He stressed how the institute has enabled individuals to learn about the rhythms of Karbi traditional drums and other musical instruments, reviving the endangered folk songs. Rongphar also emphasised the value of the Karbi traditional music and songs course for students' future en-

deavours.

The EM mentioned that the significance of KTMC&RI has prompted Members of the Autonomous Council (MACs) to request similar institutions in their constituencies. However, setting up such institutions requires financial support from KAAC to cover salaries for the principal, instructors, and staff. Responding to the request of KAAC chairman Raju Tisso, one KTMC&RI has been established at Dokmoka.

Principal of KTMC&RI, Bon-sam Kathar, shared that the institute offers courses in Chengpi kethip, Lun barim, and Lam-tasam, with classes held on Saturdays and Sundays. The courses span a duration of three years. The current academic session (2023-24) has 29 new students, and instructors include Haberam Ingti, Jorsing Bey, and Mohori Bey.

The principal extended a warm welcome to the incoming batch of students and wished them a successful academic session. The event was attended by MAC Johnny Timung, deputy director of Art & Culture Rani Terangpi, tribal cultural research officer Dilip Kathar, president of Karbi Cultural Society Chandrosing Kro, and Padmashree Dhaneswar Engti, among others.

## First Yoga & Naturopathy Hospital in NE India to be established in Dibrugarh: Sarbananda Sonowal

### HT Correspondent

**DIBRUGARH, Aug 30:** Sarbananda Sonowal, Union minister of Ports, Shipping & Waterways and Ayush, recently visited the proposed site for a 100-bedded Yoga and Naturopathy Hospital at Jokai near Dibrugarh. This hospital, the first of its kind in North East India, will also serve as a research centre to enhance healthcare solutions through yoga and naturopathy.

Sonowal expressed his honour and excitement about Dibrugarh becoming the site of the first Yoga and Naturopathy Hospital in the region. He attributed this development to the visionary leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and praised the resurgence of traditional medicine, which has made significant contributions to preventive healthcare and the overall quality of life.

### Interaction held between new DIPRO and MDJA

### HT Correspondent

**MORIGAON, Aug 30:** An interactive session took place at the District Information and Public Relation Officer's (DIPRO) office between Pompy Devi, the newly appointed DIPRO, and members of the Morigaon District Journalists' Association (MDJA) on Wednesday. The position of DIPRO had remained vacant for nearly two years, causing difficulties in both office operations and addressing the concerns of media personnel.

During the session, the MDJA extended a warm welcome to DIPRO Pompy Devi and pledged their cooperation in resolving various issues faced by media professionals.



ity of life. Sonowal said that yoga, as one of India's greatest contributions to humanity, has promoted a global wellness movement, aided by the success

of International Day of Yoga celebrations worldwide. He noted that this achievement was possible due to Prime Minister Modi's recognition of the po-

tential in traditional medicine and its global promotion. The hospital in Dibrugarh is expected to provide world-class healthcare facilities to the people of North East India and may also foster healthcare tourism due to the growing popularity of yoga and naturopathy globally.

Sonowal highlighted the government's efforts to integrate traditional and modern medicine for a holistic healthcare solution, promoting a vision of a healthy India under the leadership of Prime Minister Modi.

The visit was attended by several dignitaries, including Union minister of State for Petroleum & Gas and Labour & Employment Rameshwar Teli, MLAs Prashanta Phukan and Binod Hazarika, and other prominent officials and citizens from both state and central governments.

## BJP organises training program in West Karbi Anglong

### HT Correspondent

**DONGKAMUKAM, Aug 30:** The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), West Karbi Anglong District Committee, conducted a 'Voters Chetona Abhijan' training program at the Dongkamukam Waisong Stadium in West Karbi Anglong. The event aimed to raise awareness among voters and strengthen the party in preparation for the upcoming Parliamentary elections in 2024.

Rupsing Teron, the MLA of Baithalango, graced the event as the chief guest. In his address, he stressed the importance of engaging with newly recruited young voters. He urged party members to educate them about the voting process, particularly since they will be casting their votes for the first time. Teron also called upon booth committee leaders to inform both old and new voters about the development initiatives undertaken by the BJP government.

Prabhat Ch Taro, executive member of Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC), and Richardson Hanse, general secretary of BJP WKADC, also shared their insights with party workers. During the meeting, Krishna Sharma was appointed as the Booth Level



Agent (BLA) for the newly created Amri MLA constituency.

The event was attended by prominent party figures, including Radip Ronghang, president of BJP WKADC, Birsing Hanse, vice president, D Uphing Maslai, EM of KAAC, Arun Terang, vice chairman of Assam Hills Small Industry Development Corporation Limited, Ditola Hasnu, chairman of Veterinary Development Board, and several other leaders. The 'Voters Chetona Abhijan' training program highlighted the party's commitment to voter awareness and political engagement in the region.

## IIT Guwahati's Techniche gears up for its 25<sup>th</sup> edition

### HT Bureau

**GUWAHATI, Aug 30:** IIT Guwahati's much-anticipated event, 'Techniche', is gearing up for its 25th edition, scheduled from August 31 to September 3. From its modest beginnings, Techniche has evolved into one of India's largest Techno-Management Fests, attracting participants from across the country.

This year's edition promises a lineup of distinguished personalities across various domains. The event will feature appearances by Ehud Olmert, former Prime Minister, David Straily, CEO of Brinkboud Games and former product director of Valorant, David Orban, managing advisor of Beyond Enterprise, and Mohit Tyagi, director of Competishun.

Techniche's robotics module remains a highlight, drawing engineering enthusiasts nationwide. The 2023 edition introduces engaging events including Aquawars, Robowars, Escalade, IDRL, Track Titans, Sky Sprint, and Micro-mouse. Of particular interest is Aquawars, a novel event where bots compete in IIT Guwahati's

administrative lake. Robowars, night drone racing in partnership with IDRL, and the 12th Escalade edition promise heightened excitement.

The Celestial Confluence Lecture Series offers a platform for emerging professionals to interact with accomplished individuals who've redefined progress. This year's luminaries include David Straily, Ehud Olmert, and David Orban.

A panel discussion on 'Beyond Reality: Exploring the frontiers of AR & VR in Metaverse' promises insightful conversations. Esteemed panellists include Arijit Bhat-tacharya, Varun Khatri, Shrey Mishra, Yash Pradhan, and Prafulla Mathur, with David Orban moderating.

Nexus, the Corpo-Management Conference, returns with its fifth edition, featuring keynotes, panel discussions, hackathons, competitions, workshops, and networking sessions. Speakers like Vivek Prasad and Mohit Tyagi will contribute to enriching participants' understanding.

Corporate Module 2023 pre-

sents opportunities for exploration and innovation, with events like Chakravayuh, Bull vs Bear, Innovation Unveil, and various hackathons, including the forward-looking Web3 hackathon, DecentralX.

TechExpo showcases the strides in technology achieved by India's youth. The event spans diverse domains, including hardware innovations, software projects, and entrepreneurial ventures.

Techniche 2023's outreach extends beyond its events. The festival contributes to society through initiatives such as the Guwahati Half Marathon, blood donation camp, fitness camp, and mental health workshop.

The Proshows at Techniche offer a spectrum of technical performances, visual shows, stand-up comedians, and bands, providing attendees with a rejuvenating experience.

The Techniche Team, entirely comprised of IIT Guwahati students, ensures the event's success through a three-tier structure involving organisers, core team members, and heads of the fest.

## Mobile tower workers stage protest decrying exploitation

### HT Correspondent

**SIVASAGAR, Aug 30:** The All Assam Mobile Tower Workers Union held a protest demonstration on Monday, accusing mobile tower installation companies of violating labour laws and exploiting workers. The union claimed that the companies, responsible for erecting these towers, have been subjecting workers to unfair treatment. Workers alleged that not only are they often subjected to threats by company executives, but they also face delays in receiving their meagre salary of ₹ 2700. Adding to their grievances, the workers asserted that the companies have terminated the employment of over 300 workers since 2005. During the protest, participants called for government intervention to address these issues and take action against the companies responsible. Sringkhal Chaliha, the leader of Bir Lachit Sena Asom, along with their supporters, joined the protest and emphasised the need for the affected workers to receive appropriate compensation from the companies.

## Road safety awareness campaign held for students at Dillai Higher Secondary School

### HT Correspondent

**DILLAI, Aug 30:** A road safety awareness campaign was organised by the District Road Safety Committee (DRSC) in collaboration with the District Press Club of Karbi Anglong (DPCKA) for the students of Dillai Higher Secondary School. The campaign aimed to educate students about road safety measures and responsible behaviour on the road. The awareness program took place in the examination hall and was attended by students and teaching staff.

Senior journalist Sonju Bora, while addressing the students, emphasised the importance of adhering to road safety rules and regulations. He highlighted the dos and don'ts of road safety, particularly for riders of two-wheelers and four-wheelers. Bora stressed the mandatory use of helmets for riders and pillion passengers on two-wheelers, with violations resulting in fines and even suspension of driving licenses. He informed the students that helmets should bear the ISI mark when purchasing.

Given that many students walk to school, Bora advised caution when crossing roads. He emphasised the need to check both sides for approaching vehicles before crossing and not to run along the road. Bora also shared the unfortunate statistic that, up to August 2023, 43 lives had been lost due to road accidents.

Bora informed the students that obtaining a driving license is only permissible after turning 18 years old.



Driving without a valid license could lead to fines of up to Rs 25,000. Secretary of DPCKA, Danielson Bey, stressed on the importance of following road signs and using zebra crossings while crossing roads. He urged students to be mindful of road markings and signs, such as stop lines, broken white lines, continuous white lines, and double white lines.

The headmistress, Jayanti Teronpi, also accentuated the need for caution while walking on roads. She expressed concern about students running along roads without paying attention to approaching vehicles, emphasising the risks involved.

Assistant secretary of DPCKA, Vivian Longki Rongpi, introduced the speaker and other guests at the event. The road safety awareness campaign aimed to equip students with essential knowledge to ensure their safety while navigating roads and intersections.

## Alumnae reunion event scheduled for Darrang College Girls Hostel

### HT Correspondent

**TEZPUR, Aug 30:** The Darrang College Girls Hostel has announced a day-long event set for November 5 at the college's girls hostel premises. The event marks the much-anticipated reunion of the hostel's alumnae. An enthusiastic organising committee, led by Minu Devi (retired professor, Darrang College) as the president, Rashmi Rekha Hazarika as the general secretary, and Dr Mitali Hazarika as the editor of the commemorative souvenir, is in full swing for the occasion.

Rashmi Rekha Hazarika, the general secretary of the committee, extends a warm invitation to all alumnae to participate in the event and encourages them to

pre-register through the provided link: <https://forms.gle/s6KcQVgpYk8wy1Za6>. Further details can be found on the social media page linked on Facebook.

Simultaneously, Dr Mitali Hazarika, the editor of the souvenir, kindly requests the alumnae to submit their articles for inclusion. Submissions can be sent to the Email ID mitalebaruah588@gmail.com. Additionally, the articles should be typed in Gootanjali font using a PageMaker file format. Contact via WhatsApp is also available at +917896628057.

The event promises to be a memorable occasion for the alumnae to reconnect and celebrate their shared experiences at Darrang College Girls Hostel.

## NCC introduced as subject at Assam Women's University

### HT Correspondent

**JORHAT, Aug 30:** Professor Ajanta Borgohain Rajkonwar, vice chancellor of Assam Women's University (AWU), announced the introduction of NCC as a subject at AWU starting from this academic session in accordance with the guidelines of the New Education Policy, 2020.

Addressing the 10-day annual training camp of the National Cadet Corps (NCC) organised by AWU and 51 Assam Air Tech Sqn at Rowrah, Professor Ajanta Borgohain Ra-

jkonwar welcomed students from different states who were participating in the camp. She emphasised the significance of NCC training, highlighting how it enables cadets to cultivate qualities of team spirit, discipline, and self-dependence, all of which are invaluable for their future endeavours.

Brigadier Ritesh Bhal, group commander of the Indian Army and guest of honour at the event, encouraged the cadets to use these camps for community service and personal development. He also discussed the privi-

leges enjoyed by NCC cadets and provided insights into various aspects of NCC.

The opening ceremony included a welcome address by AWU registrar Tapan Kumar Gohain and was moderated by Goldee Bora, assistant professor in the department of Fashion Technology at AWU, and coordinator of NCC at the university. The annual training camp promises to provide cadets with an opportunity to enhance their skills, knowledge, and personal growth through structured activities.

## WCCB-Aaranyak sensitises 99 SSB men on combating wildlife crime

### HT Bureau

**GUWAHATI, Aug 30:** In a training workshop conducted at the Recruit Training Centre of Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB) in Saloni Bari, Tezpur, Assam, 99 senior and junior officials/personnel from the elite border guarding force were educated about the national and international implications of the escalating wildlife crimes.

The workshop, titled 'Preventing Wildlife Crime and Illegal Wildlife Trade', was organised jointly by experts from the Wildlife Crime Control Bureau (WCCB) and the prominent biodiversity conservation organisation Aaranyak, following an invitation from the SSB.

During the workshop, SSB officials and jawans, including new recruits, gained insights into the broader landscape of wildlife crimes and the pivotal role that border guarding forces like the SSB play in combating them. The deputy commandant of the Recruit Training Centre, Vishnu Praveen, inaugurated the training program and expressed gratitude to the resource persons for their valuable time and efforts in sensitising



the SSB personnel to the critical issue of wildlife crimes, which pose a significant threat to the conservation of precious wildlife resources in the country.

Jawaharlal Baro, assistant director of WCCB, extensively discussed various provisions of India's Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, which was amended in 2022, along with the trafficking of various wildlife species and products in the North East India

region. He also led a practical session on identifying frequently seized wildlife products in the area, aimed at benefiting the participating SSB officers.

Representatives from Aaranyak, including Dr Jimmy Borah, senior manager, and Ivy Farheen Hussain, project officer and wildlife crime analyst, delved into diverse dimensions of wildlife crimes from national, regional, and international perspectives. The

discussions focused on the Indo-Bhutan landscape and examined methods employed by smugglers to traffic illegal wildlife products, a crime closely intertwined with the smuggling of drugs and weapons. The session included engaging discussions and a Q&A segment.

Dr Jimmy Borah from Aaranyak shared, "The training program fostered active participation, with SSB participants enthusiastically raising inquiries about various aspects of wildlife crime, all of which were expertly addressed."

As part of their ongoing commitment to facilitate cooperation among different stakeholders and enforcement agencies to combat wildlife crimes in the region, Aaranyak has been organising such training workshops and interactions on wildlife crimes with various Central Armed Police Forces (CAPF), including SSB, BSF, and CISF across the north-eastern region of the country. This year alone, Aaranyak has conducted six such training and sensitisation workshops for SSB personnel in the region, with support from the US Fish and Wildlife Service.

## Excessive school bag weight poses a burden on children: NHRCCB

### HT Correspondent

**BISWANATH CHARIALI, Aug 30:** In an era focused on educational progress and overall development, a pressing concern often overlooked is the weight of school bags that children bear. Despite commendable efforts by the Education department to address this issue through bag weight regulations introduced on November 24, 2020, many schools have yet to fully implement these guidelines. The burden of heavy school bags can extend beyond the physical strain on a child's growing body, impacting their well-being, learning experience, and potentially leading to future health issues. Nishant Thard, the state president of the National Human Rights and Crime Control Bureau (NHRCCB) in Assam, highlighted this concern. In a statement provided to the newspaper by Mrinmay Kr Nath, the state media officer of the organisation, Thard stated that the Education and Health departments' initiative to regulate bag weight is a positive step. This initiative recognises the importance of protecting the health and development of future generations. The guidelines not only aim to reduce physical stress on students but also promote a balanced education that fosters mental and physical growth without excessive pressure.

The policy outlines bag weight ranges for different classes, starting from pre-primary up to classes 11 and 12. However, it's disappointing to see that some educational institutions have yet to fully implement these regulations. Thard highlighted the importance of collaborative efforts between schools, parents, school management committees, and education boards to address this issue effectively.



## PM determined to bring equal devp across the country: Jardosh

**DIMAPUR, Aug 30:** Union minister Darshana Jardosh said Prime Minister Narendra Modi is determined to bring about equal development throughout the country.

Speaking during the inaugural function of SAMARTH, a skill development programme of the Central government here on Tuesday, the union minister of state for textiles and railways said the prime minister has set a system for equal development from east to west and from north to south of the country.

The prime minister has made a development plan for the Northeast with the DoNER ministry and therefore all central ministers are visiting the region to take feedback on the functioning of the government and the implementation of various welfare schemes. The 'SAMARTH' scheme by the union ministry of textiles empowers artisans by capacity building training programme and offers employment opportunities.

"The inauguration of SAMARTH Training programme and distribution of Fly Shuttle frame looms to weavers in Dhanisipar, Nagaland begins a new era for Weavers," Jardosh wrote in X, formerly Twitter. The union minister said that people need training and skill to make their products and for that, the ministry has provided more than 100 equipments. She said that the artisans can now move forward with the latest equipment. After agriculture, the sector which provides highest employment is handloom and handicraft, she said. On her meeting with chief minister Neiphiu Rio on Monday, Jardosh said they discussed the implementation of the various schemes of the central government in Nagaland. (PTI)

## 2 modified food safety on wheels launched in Nagaland

**HT Correspondent**  
**DIMAPUR, Aug 30:** Nagaland's health and family welfare department launched two modified food safety on wheels (MFSWs) to test food samples. The MFSWs were launched under the Nagaland Food Safety Project scheme 'Strengthening of Food Safety Ecosystem in the State' in Kohima on Wednesday.

With the launch of the two MFSWs, the state now has three mobile food testing laboratories under Nagaland Food Safety Project which are allotted for Kohima, Mokochung and Dimapur zone.

The two new MFSWs were flagged off by principal director-cum-additional food safety commissioner Dr Vibeitunuo M Sachu.

Food safety commissioner-cum-commissioner and secretary, health and family welfare department, V Kezo, who was present on the occasion, in his address said the MFSWs are not only to be used for testing of food samples but also to focus on inculcating safe food habits and to create a food safety mindset among the public. He emphasised that consumers should check food package labelling like best before, expiry date, ingredients, FSSAI registration/license number on the package before buying any food products.

The main function of food safety on wheels (FSWs) is to execute testing of surveillance samples, training and creating awareness to food business operators and consumers on food safety in urban as well as rural areas and to provide on-the-spot test facilities on common food adulterations.

The FSWs can also be used to transport samples picked from remote areas to the nearest food testing laboratory.

## COHSEM announces date for improvement examination

**HT Bureau**  
**GUWAHATI, Aug 30:** The Higher Secondary Improvement Examination, 2023 for theory subjects will be held on September 4, 2023, COHSEM stated.

The Council of Higher Secondary Education, Manipur has notified all concerned candidates and principals and heads of institutions with regards to the Higher Secondary Improvement Examination, 2023.

According to a notification by Ch Biren Singh, secretary, COHSEM, the Higher Secondary Improvement Examination, 2023 for theory subjects will be held on September 4, 2023 (Monday) from 10:00 am to 1:00 pm, and that practical will be held on September 9, 2023 (Wednesday) from 10:00 am onwards.

## Election Commission chief meets political parties in Mizoram



**AIZAWL, Aug 30:** Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Rajiv Kumar on Wednesday met leaders of various political parties here to discuss poll-related issues ahead of the Mizoram Assembly elections scheduled later this year.

Talking to reporters, Kumar said 95 polling booths will be managed by women and 11 by people with disabilities.

He said the team met representatives of various parties including the Congress, BJP, AAP and Mizo National Front (MNF) to discuss election-related issues.

"Representatives of all the parties requested us to increase the limit of expenditure for candidates," Kumar said. He said the parties also requested the poll panel not to hold

the polls on Saturday or Sunday.

"In all, 95 polling booths will be managed by women, 40 by youth and 11 by people with disabilities," he said, adding that the total number of voters is 8.38 lakh.

Kumar said to ensure that the polls are held peacefully, there will be extra vigil along the international and inter-state borders to check inflow of liquor, cash and drugs.

"Check-posts on strategic locations with CCTV monitoring, action against drug and liquor kingpins and strict watch over online bribery and cash distribution will be done to ensure that the polls are held devoid any corruption," he said.

He said out of the 1,276 polling stations, 751 are in rural areas while 525 are in urban areas. (PTI)

## Mizoram: ZPM forms alliance with HPC with eye on assembly polls



**AIZAWL, Aug 30:** The opposition Zoram People's Movement (ZPM) in Mizoram announced that it will fight the assembly elections in the state in an alliance with the Hmar

People's Convention (HPC).

An agreement was signed between the two parties in Sakawrdai village in the northeastern part of the state on Tuesday.

The HPC will extend full support to the ZPM in the assembly polls, due to be held later this year, without fielding any candidates on its own to ensure that the ZPM candidates are elected to the state assembly, the agreement said.

Both the parties will also work together for the Sinlung Hills Council (SHC) elections, which will be held next year, it said.

The ZPM will take steps to implement the Memorandum of Settlement signed between the Hmar People's Convention-Democratic or HPC(D) and Mizoram government in April 2018 if the party comes to power after the assembly polls, the agreement said.

ZPM vice president Kenneth Chawngliana said HPC had signed such agreements with several parties in the past but none of them fulfilled the promises made.

HPC president Rohringa said that Hmar-dominated areas in Mizoram have been deprived of development.

He urged party workers to give their best to ensure that the alliance becomes fruitful. (PTI)

## BJP Krishak Morcha executive meeting convenes in Tezpur

**HT Correspondent**  
**TEZPUR, Aug 30:** The BJP Sonitpur district Krishak Morcha convened an executive meeting on Tuesday, presided over by Debajit Dutta, vice president of Krishak Morcha Sonitpur. The meeting was graced by the presence of Nibaran Lahkar, state vice president of BJP Krishak Morcha, and Mrinal Saikia, who attended as distinguished guests. During the meeting, Nibaran Lahkar, state vice president of BJP Krishak Morcha, highlighted and deliberated upon several critical matters. He emphasised that no leader within the party possesses the authority to weaken the strength of the BJP solely for

the sake of advancing their personal interests. Lahkar, in his address, urged party workers to refrain from such actions to prevent potential challenges in the future. Furthermore, he motivated the workers to endorse agricultural pursuits for self-employment, rather than exclusively pursuing jobs in external establishments.

The gathering witnessed the participation of office bearers and activists from BJP Sonitpur district Krishak Morcha, collectively engaging in productive discussions.

The meeting reflected the party's commitment to internal unity and the promotion of agricultural self-sustainability among its members.

## Assam Science Society's 'Bijnan Chetana Jatra' concludes

**HT Correspondent**  
**DEMOW, Aug 30:** The Assam Science Society, Demow branch, in collaboration with the Assam Science Technology and Environment Council under the department of Science, Technology and Climate Change, government of Assam, conducted a three-day Bijnan Chetana Jatra: Drive against Superstition on August 26, August 28, and August 29 in three schools. The final day of the program was held on Tuesday at Bamrajabari High Medium School.

Arup Kumar Dutta, president of Assam Science Society Demow branch, presided over the event, and Mahendra Kurmi, secretary of the same branch, acted as the anchor. KhirudDeori, headmaster of Bamrajabari High

Medium School, delivered the welcome speech at the program. The event included various activities and presentations.

Dr Wakidur Rahman, librarian of Demow College, delivered a lecture on overcoming superstitions and dispelling beliefs in evil powers within society. The lecture aimed to promote rational thinking and scientific understanding among the attendees. Naba Kumar Bori, a teacher, conveyed the vote of thanks, expressing gratitude for the participation and support.

The 'Bijnan Chetana Jatra' program concluded successfully on Tuesday, contributing to the advancement of scientific awareness and critical thinking among students and the community.

# Nagaland appoints 587 recruits through staff selection board

*'It is now up to the younger generation to further the cause'*



**HT Correspondent**

**DIMAPUR, Aug 30:** In the largest-ever exam conducted in the state, the Nagaland government appointed 587 new recruits to Group C posts under 45 state departments. The newly constituted Nagaland Staff Selection Board (NSSB) conducted its first-ever

exam for appointment to the posts in November last year.

All the successful candidates were felicitated at an official felicitation programme at the capital cultural hall in Kohima on Wednesday.

Chief minister Neiphiu Rio, who was the special guest, handed over

the appointment letters to the successful candidates. Altogether 50,583 candidates appeared for the NSSB examination out of which 587 candidates were selected for various posts in 45 departments.

Rio extended his appreciation to his colleagues in the cabinet for their immediate response to the setting up of the NSSB and also senior officials of the state for working relentlessly towards the successful constitution of the board. He said the dream of the government to have a state based on meritocracy has finally been achieved. He vowed to bring about more transparency and justice to the working system of the government.

Rio also acknowledged the hard work and dedication of the NSSB staff who despite numerous challenges and drawbacks were able to successfully conduct the first-ever NSSB examination.

Congratulating the successful candidates, he said the pool of new and young IT-savvy government employees would be an asset to the

government who, he hoped, would ensure that the benefits of e-governance will slowly trickle down to the grassroots level.

The CM urged the successful candidates to be fearless in their work and serve the people of the state with dedication and devotion.

Also speaking at the occasion, tourism and higher education minister Temjen Imna Along said it was a red letter day for the people of Nagaland. He said despite the initial struggles, it is a new beginning for the people of the state and a step towards building a strong and resilient Nagaland.

"It is now up to the younger generation to further the cause," he added.

NSSB chairperson Sedevikho Khro gave a brief insight into the struggles and tireless efforts of the board that enabled it to successfully conduct the first-ever NSSB examination. He asserted that the NSSB would remain steadfastly committed to the recruitment policy based on merit, justice and transparency.

## KNOT OF FAITH



Celebration of Raksha Bandhan unfolded at Raj Bhavan, Shillong as ten children and two mothers from SOS Children's Village met the Governor of Meghalaya, Phagu Chauhan on Wednesday. UB Photos

## Assam Rifles initiates tree plantation drive

**HT Correspondent**  
**BISWANATH CHARIALI, Aug 30:** Assam Rifles, operating under HQ Inspector General Assam Rifles (East), orchestrated a tree plantation drive as part of the 'Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav' initiative. The drive was aimed at fostering environmental consciousness among school students and NCC Cadets and was conducted at Rangachakua Higher Secondary School in the northern region of Jangurihat on Monday, according to a press release. The event saw vibrant participation from students and NCC cadets, creating a positive impact on the local environment.

A brief lecture was delivered during the event, underscoring the importance of tree planting in preserving the environment and addressing climate change. A diverse range of native tree saplings were distributed among the participants. Meticulously chosen plantation sites ensured the maximum ecological benefit. All attendees actively participated in the tree planting process, contributing to the restoration of the region's green cover. In total, 230 saplings of various indigenous trees were planted during the drive. (PTI)

## Sikkim: 50 students from across India tie Rakhi to Army personnel on Nathula border



**GANGTOK, Aug 30:** Altogether 50 university and college students from all over the country visited Sikkim's Nathula bordering China to celebrate Raksha Bandhan with Army personnel.

The students tied Rakhi to the wrists of the soldiers and distributed sweets to them, besides interacting with the residents of Tsomgo under the Vibrant Village Programme, a centrally sponsored scheme.

The programme was announced in the Union Budget 2022-23 for the overall development of villages on the Indo-China border and the improvement of the quality of life of people in these areas.

The students also tied Rakhi on chief minister Prem Singh Tamang's wrist during the Seema Darshan programme inaugurated by him from

here. The function, Seema Darshan, was organised under the Vibrant Village Programme jointly organised by the state government, ITBP, Army and Hemant Yadav Foundation.

"Seema Darshan" is one of the priority activities under the Vibrant Village Programme to generate awareness about the life, culture and tradition of the people, and security forces in the border areas.

Addressing a gathering, the chief minister said, "I extend my gratitude to the Prime Minister for his dedication to prioritising border villages and striving to create vibrant communities."

Singh also pointed out that being a border state, Sikkim gives priority to national security and takes a serious approach to their service towards the nation.

He also extended greetings to the people of Sikkim, especially to all sisters, on the occasion of Raksha Bandhan, and the army personnel who are rendering their service for the safety and security of the public. "As we celebrate this special day, let us also reflect on our collective responsibility to protect and uphold the values of unity, diversity, and brotherhood that are the cornerstone of our society. (PTI)

## Trial run of Nischintapur-Gangasagar railway likely in September

**AGARTALA, Aug 30:** Trial run of the railway line connecting Tripura's Nischintapur with Bangladesh's Gangasagar railway station is likely to be held on September 9 or 10, a senior official said on Wednesday.

Initially, goods train will be introduced from Gangasagar to Nischintapur. Later it will be extended up to Agartala station, the official said.

Additional secretary in the ministry of external affairs (MEA), P Kumaran visited Nischintapur railway yard and held a meeting with railway and IRCON officials on August 26. In the meeting, officials from BSF, Land Ports Authority of India (LPAI), Customs, Immigration and National Informatics Centre (NIC) were present.

On August 27, Kumaran along with Tripura transport secretary U K Chakma and railway officials went to Gan-



gasagar in Bangladesh to see the ground reality. On the same day, Kumaran and other officials took a gang car ride (trial run) from Gangasagar to Nischintapur.

"Additional secretary in MEA, P Kumaran visited Nischintapur railway yard

and held a meeting with the concerned officials to take stock of the preparedness for commissioning of the Indo-Bangla railway link connecting Nischintapur with Gangasagar. The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) is handling the entire issue and

they have targeted September 9 or 10 for goods train from Gangasagar to Nischintapur", said the official.

To commission even goods trains, there is a need to set up facilities for Customs, Immigration, Internet service and security, he said, adding the MEA will pursue the matter with the Ministry of Home Affairs for Customs and Immigration facility at Nischintapur.

"Both construction agencies - IRCON (Indian side) and TexMaco Rail Engineering (Bangladesh side) are ready to flag off trial goods trains on the newly built track from Gangasagar to Agartala either on September 9 or 10", said an official of IRCON.

An amount of ₹ 1,100 crore has been spent for the Indo-Bangla railway project connecting Agartala with Gangasagar, he added. (PTI)

## GOVT. OF ASSAM OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER:: DIPHU DIVISION (IRRIGATION) DIPHU KARBIANGLONG:::ASSAM

### PRESS NOTICE INVITING BID

No. EE/DDI/T-I/Pt.-V/2023-24/473

Dt.30/08/23

The Executive Engineer, Diphu Division (Irrigation) Diphu on behalf of Governor of Assam invites the item rates bid from registered contractor of Class - I, II & III category for Improvement/ Renovation/ Re-construction etc. of 22(twenty-two) Nos. Schemes under Diphu Division (Irrigation) Diphu, under the administrative control of Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council, Diphu for the year 2023-24. **The detail may be seen from the office of the undersigned during office hours from 31-08-2023 to 14-09-2023.**

Sd/-  
Executive Engineer,  
Diphu Divn. (Irrigation)  
DIPHU.

Memo No. EE/DDI/T-I/Pt.-V/2023-24/474

Dt.30/08/23



# Does Congress, Chinese Communist Party MoU require Rahul to break morale of Indian forces: BJP

**NEW DELHI, Aug 30:** The BJP on Wednesday flagged a 2008 MoU between the Congress and Chinese Community Party to target Rahul Gandhi, asking if the agreement required him to work against India's interests and to hurt the morale of Indian forces.

BJP spokesperson Gaurav Bhatia's attack came hours after Gandhi reiterated his charge that Prime Minister Narendra Modi's assertion during the early weeks of the Ladakh standoff that China had not captured any part of Indian territory was an "absolute lie". "The whole of Ladakh knows that China has usurped our land," Gandhi told reporters.

Hitting back, Bhatia said China captured over 43,000 sq km of Indian land when Jawaharlal Nehru was prime minister and asked if Gandhi believed the stalwart Congress leader and his great grandfather was a "traitor". The term 'gaddar' (traitor) was used by Gandhi recently for those who "gave away a part of Bharat Mata" to China, the BJP leader noted.

Gandhi should disclose the details of the MoU signed between the Congress and the CCP, he said, alleging it has been claimed the agreement requires him to "spy" against India and to break to morale of Indian forces when they act decisively against the Chinese.



Does this MoU also require to him to mock a prime minister, who is the protective shield for every citizen and has elevated India's global stature, as "surrender Modi"? Bhatia asked in a reference to Gandhi's earlier barb at him. Noting that China had also donated to the Rajiv Gandhi Foundation, Bhatia asked if this "bribe" is the reason behind his statements "against" India. He asserted that no one can dare to capture an inch of Indian land under Modi's leadership. The people of India will bless him again in the 2024 Lok Sabha polls and the BJP will retain power

with a bigger mandate, Bhatia said. Earlier in the day, Gandhi termed "very serious" the issue of China releasing a "standard map" that laid claim over Arunachal Pradesh and Aksai Chin, saying the neighbouring country had already taken India's land in Ladakh and Prime Minister Narendra Modi should speak on the issue.

Gandhi told reporters, "I have just returned from Ladakh and I have been saying for years that what the PM has said, that not one inch of land has been lost in Ladakh, is an absolute lie. The whole of Ladakh knows that China

has usurped our land."

Union Minister Pralhad Joshi flayed Gandhi for claiming that China has usurped India's land and accused him of making "baseless allegations".

China grabbed India's land during the Jawaharlal Nehru's tenure as prime minister, Joshi said. "Rahul Gandhi's allegations are baseless."

"They (China) are doing some activities in the area that was grabbed during Nehru's tenure as prime minister. This is due to the sins committed by the Congress post-Independence that China has become our neighbour. From the time it was Tibet till today, these people pursued policies which led to this," Joshi said.

Rahul Gandhi "does not have any understanding" of policies, Joshi charged.

On Monday, Beijing released the 2023 edition of the so-called "standard map of China" that laid claim over Arunachal Pradesh and Aksai Chin as regions within its borders.

"Our External Affairs Ministry has already condemned China's action on the map issue and has also strongly protested it. But he (Rahul Gandhi) does not trust our External Affairs Ministry. He believes in what China says," the Union minister said. (PTI)

## Modi govt 'weaponising' Aadhaar to deny most vulnerable citizens their social welfare benefits: Cong

**NEW DELHI, Aug 30:** The Congress on Wednesday accused the government of "weaponising" Aadhaar and technology to deny the most vulnerable citizens their social welfare benefits and demanded release of payments due to MGNREGA workers.

The opposition party's attack came after the rural development ministry said the progress of Aadhaar-based payment system has been reviewed and the mixed route of wage payment has been extended till December 31 or till further order. In a statement, Congress general secretary Jairam Ramesh said the extension has been given for the fifth time.

This has become inevitable because despite four extensions, 41.1 per cent of the total 26 crore job card holders still remain ineligible for this mode of payment, he said.

The government had initially ruled out any more extensions as the fourth extension ends on August 31, saying that only 18.3 per cent active workers will become eligible, he said.

Ramesh alleged that with five state polls around the corner and the widespread outrage, the government is trying to delay the inevitable with its continued "experiments with technology".

"The prime minister's disdain for MGNREGA is well-documented.

Yet, the Modi government was forced to turn to MGNREGS during the Covid-19 pandemic and even now due to the continuing rural distress, record numbers of workers have demanded work under MGNREGA this year," he said. To escape its law-mandated responsibility to pay wages to all those who demand work, the government, in the name of improving transparency and efficiency, has repeatedly denied work or wages to MGNREGA workers, he alleged.

According to the government's own estimate, more than 2.6 crore active workers would not have been paid their legally mandated wages from September 1, Ramesh said. This number does not include the crores of workers who have had their job cards deleted due to various errors of omission and commission, he said.

A working paper released by a public research & advocacy group, Libtech, analyses approximately 3.2 crore wage transactions, spread across 327 blocks in 10 states notes that there is no significant efficiency gain with Aadhaar-based payment system vis-a-vis bank account payments - as there is neither a notable difference in time taken to process payments (39 per cent in 7 days versus 36 per cent), nor an improvement in rejection rates (2.1

per cent versus 2.6 per cent), Ramesh said.

The paper also notes that massive issues exist with the payments system - wages are being diverted or misdirected to different account holders due to Aadhaar linking errors, and crores of job cards have been deleted as workers are unable to meet the cumbersome Aadhaar-based payment system requirements due to systemic errors and systematic discrimination, he said. "A large amount of the delay payment compensation due to the workers has not been released yet, nor even acknowledged by the Modi government, despite repeated demands," Ramesh said, citing the paper.

Aadhaar was introduced by the UPA government as a tool to empower citizens by making it easier for them to access social welfare benefits, he said.

The Modi government, especially in the case of MGNREGA and soon with pensions and other social welfare benefits, has used it as a "weapon to exclude citizens from their guaranteed rights", Ramesh said.

"By making them bear the brunt of its 'experiments with technology', the Modi government has hurt the incomes of the most vulnerable and the poorest of the poor," he alleged. (PTI)

## AAP spokesperson pitches Kejriwal as INDIA bloc's PM face; Atishi says he is not in race

**NEW DELHI, Aug 30:** The Aam Aadmi Party's chief national spokesperson Priyanka Kakkar Wednesday pitched for Arvind Kejriwal as the prime ministerial candidate for the opposition INDIA bloc. Hours later, Delhi cabinet minister Atishi said the chief minister does not have such aspirations.

Kakkar said that Kejriwal, as the chief minister of Delhi, has given a model that the whole country can benefit from.

The comments came a day ahead of the INDIA alliance's meeting in Mumbai during which the opposition leaders are expected to chalk out a joint campaign strategy to take on the BJP-led NDA in the 2024 Lok Sabha elections and iron out the differences among themselves.

To a question on who should be the prime ministerial candidate for the INDIA alliance, the AAP's chief national spokesperson Priyanka Kakkar told PTI, "As a spokesperson, I would propose our national convener Arvind Kejriwal's name."

She said Kejriwal has constantly raised the issues of the people and "has given a model" which has led to the least inflation in Delhi. "He has given a model that benefits the people. I would want it to happen but the decision is not in my hands," the AAP's chief spokesperson said.

When the party's Delhi convener and Environment Minister Gopal Rai was asked about it, he said that every member of the AAP wants Kejriwal for the prime minister's post but a decision

on it would only be finalised by all the members of the INDIA bloc.

"Every party wants their leader to become prime minister. AAP members also want their national convener to become PM. All members of the INDIA alliance will sit down and whatever the decision is, we will go accordingly," he said.

When asked whether the AAP will propose Kejriwal's name as a prime ministerial candidate, he said, "There is nothing like giving a name. We are already its part and Arvind Kejriwal is a part of the bloc."

Atishi, however, said Kejriwal is not in the race for the prime minister's post.

Responding to a question on Kakkar's comments, the Delhi cabinet minister said, "I am making it official that Arvind Kejriwal is not in the race to become the Prime Minister of the country."

"He has joined the India bloc to save the Constitution, democracy and the country," she said, while stating that Kakkar's views were personal.

Last year, during an interview with PTI, the AAP's senior leader and then Delhi deputy chief minister Manish Sisodia had also pitched for Kejriwal as prime minister. "Ek Mauka Kejriwal Ko" (One chance to Kejriwal) has become a national level talk, Sisodia had said.

"People see Kejriwal as an alternative to (Narendra) Modi in 2024 because he talks about health, education and employment," he had told PTI. (PTI)

## LS panel adopts resolution to revoke Adhir's suspension

**NEW DELHI, Aug 30:** The Privileges Committee of Lok Sabha on Wednesday unanimously adopted a resolution to revoke the suspension of Congress leader Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury from the lower house.

The resolution was adopted after Chowdhury appeared before the Committee and expressed regret over certain remarks made by him in the House which had led to his suspension from the Lok Sabha on the last day of the monsoon session of Parliament on August 11. Chowdhury is learnt to have told the Committee, chaired by BJP member Sunil Kumar Singh, that it was never his intention to hurt anybody's feelings and expressed regret for certain remarks made by him.

"The Committee has adopted a resolution to revoke the suspension of Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury from the Lok Sabha. The resolution will be sent to the Speaker as soon as possible," a committee member said. Chowdhury was named by Speaker Om Birla for "unruly conduct" on August 11, the last day of the monsoon session and was suspended from the membership of Lok Sabha pending a report from the Privileges Committee.

At the meeting of the Committee on August 18, several members were of the view that Chowdhury has been punished for his conduct by Lok Sabha and there was no further need to examine his behaviour by a parliamentary panel. (PTI)

## Push to set up green crackers units to continue in Bengal: Official

**KOLKATA, Aug 30:** Officials of the state environment department and the apex body of fireworks manufacturers in West Bengal said the death of nine persons in a blast at an illegal crackers unit in North 24 Parganas district on August 27 will not derail the move to set up five green fireworks clusters in the state which are likely to be operational by 2024. Around 600 people engaged in manufacturing crackers, who belong to the unorganised sector, have been trained by environment department officials under the guidance of experts from central agencies such as PESO (Petroleum and Explosives Safety Organisation) and NEERI (National Environmental Engineering Research Institute), a senior state environment official told PTI, adding they will be housed in the five green fireworks manufacturing clusters.

"Our drive to create green fireworks manufacturing clusters in Maheshdala in South 24 Parganas, Haldia in Purba Medinipur and Bongaon in North 24 Parganas among the five hubs will continue. The locations of the clusters have been identified and each of them has enough space between two units," the official added.

Chairman of 'Sara Bangla Atabaji Unnayan Samiti', the apex body of fireworks manufacturers, Babla Roy, said the Duttapukur incident in North 24 Parganas was an eye-opener as "materials such as potassium chloride and nitroglycerin" were found in the wreckage.

"No regular firecrackers are manufactured with potassium chloride and nitroglycerin as ingredients which are explosives used for making bombs. Ordinary fireworks workers can never be involved in such practices," Roy, who had been coordinating with the state and central agencies for setting up green fireworks clusters, said. (PTI)

## SC seeks details of availability of medical facilities for inmates

**NEW DELHI, Aug 30:** As it grapples with the problem of overcrowded jails with inmates living cheek by jowl, the Supreme Court has asked the Centre and states to furnish details about the availability of medical facilities for prisoners and imparting them vocational training.

The apex court, which is hearing a matter related to alleged "inhuman conditions" prevailing in 1,382 prisons across India, also asked the Centre and the states to file affidavits giving the details about availability of adequate information technology (IT) infrastructure for conducting virtual court proceedings and visitation rights of family members of those incarcerated.

When the matter came up for hearing on Tuesday before a bench of Justices Hima Kohli and Rajesh Bindal, it noted the sixth, seventh and eight preliminary reports and the final synopsis of the reports of December last year have been submitted by the top court-appointed committee on prison reforms.

In September 2018, the top court had constituted a three-member committee headed by former apex court judge Justice (ret'd) Amitava Roy to look at issues involving jail reforms and make recommendations on several aspects, including overcrowding in prisons.

On Tuesday, the bench asked advocate Gaurav Agrawal, who is assisting the court as an amicus curiae (friend of court), in the matter, to share copies of the reports with the counsel for the Union of India and the state governments.

Some time is sought and granted to counsel for the parties to go through the reports and assist the court on the next date of hearing, the bench said.

"Having perused the terms of



references forwarded by this court to the committee for giving its recommendations in terms of the order dated September 25, 2018, we are of the opinion that some other issues are also required to be addressed, which include the following...

"Availability of medical facilities to the inmates in jail, imparting vocational training to the inmates in the jail and availability of adequate IT infrastructure in jail premises for the purposes of conducting virtual court proceedings and for visitation rights of family members," the court said.

It said, to start with, the aforesaid aspects may be responded to by the Union of India and the state governments by filing appropriate affidavits through the Director General of Prisons of the respective states within three weeks from today, with advance copies to the amicus curiae (lawyers appointed by court to assist it in a case), who is requested to collate the entire information furnished, for the perusal of the court on the next date of hearing," the apex court said.

It said the counsel for the parties shall assist the bench on issues re-

lated to women and children in detention, transgender prisoners, and death row convicts.

The bench has posted the matter for resumed hearing on September 26.

In its September 25, 2018 order, the apex court had said the Supreme Court committee on prison reforms would give its recommendations on several issues, including reviewing the implementation of the guidelines contained in the Model Prison Manual, 2016 by the states and Union Territories.

It had said the committee would examine the extent of overcrowding in prisons and correctional homes and recommend remedial measures, including an examination of the functioning of under trial review committees, availability of legal aid and advice, grant of remission, parole and furlough. The apex court had said the committee would examine violence in prisons and correctional homes and recommend measures to prevent unnatural deaths.

The panel, it said, would also assess the availability of medical facilities in prisons and correctional homes and make recommendations about these aspects. (PTI)

**CHENNAI, Aug 30:** The entire recruitment process in the Tamil Nadu transport department during the tenure of minister V Senthil Balaji was turned into a "corrupt chieftom" and the "cash-for-jobs scam" was executed under his authority, the Enforcement Directorate has claimed in a recent chargesheet filed in the case. The prosecution complaint, filed under various sections of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), was submitted by the federal agency on August 12 before a special court in Chennai, which took cognisance of it on August 16.

DMK leader Balaji (47) was arrested by the ED on June 14 in connection with the "cash-for-jobs scam" alleged to have taken place when he was the transport minister in the previous AIADMK regime in the southern state from 2011 to 2016. Lodged in the Puzhal jail here, Balaji continues to be a minister without portfolio in the Chief Minister M K Stalin-led cabinet and his judicial custody has been extended till September 15. "The whole recruitment in the transport department during the tenure of the then minister V Senthil Balaji has turned into a corrupt chieftom, in which, as per the illegal directions of the chief (V Senthil Balaji), recruitment process was designed and implemented," the ED alleged in the chargesheet. It said Balaji played a "pivotal and central" role, "exploiting" his official capacity as the transport minister for personal gains through corrupt and illegal means.

"He directly acquired illicit proceeds resulting from criminal activities linked to scheduled offences and collaborated with co-conspirators, including his brother, personal assistants and officials from the transport department, to orchestrate a strategy," it alleged. The agency said Balaji and his two personal assistants -- B Shanmugan and M Karthikeyan -- denied their connections with each other during the recording of their statements, but investigative and forensic findings "decisively established" their links and his (Balaji's) involvement and role. It said a paper sheet seized in the case stated that all the candidates who applied and approached Balaji and his PAs for recruitment got jobs illegally by way of "illegal gratification" derived by the minister. "Therefore, it is crystal clear that V Senthil Balaji continuously and meticulously monitored and executed a job racket scam along with his PAs -- B Shanmugan and M Karthikeyan," the ED alleged.

It said the plan for the alleged scam involved channelling cash through the minister's brother (Ashok Balaji) and accomplices and this was supported by digital evidence found during the investigation.

"These records outlined cash collections and job placements. Furthermore, the investigation unveiled tampering in candidate marks, favouring those who paid bribes to the accused," the agency said. It said it has seized a pen drive that contained an excel sheet, which showed that a driver's post in the transport department was "priced and sold" for ₹ 1.75 lakh, a conductor's post for ₹ 2.25 lakh, a junior tradesman's post for ₹ 5 lakh, a junior assistant's post for ₹ 7 lakh and an assistant engineer's post for ₹ 12 lakh.

The ED analysed the bank statements of Balaji and his wife S Meghala and found "huge cash deposits, especially during/after the period of the job racket scam in the MTC (Metropolitan Transport Corporation)". Being a public servant, Balaji "misused" his official capacity as the then transport minister and obtained pecuniary benefits by corrupt and illegal means and directly acquired the proceeds of crime that were generated out of a criminal activity related to a scheduled offence, the agency alleged. It said some of the "proceeds of crime" were laundered by depositing money in the bank accounts of Balaji's family members and associates for use or projection as untainted money and thereby, he was knowingly and actually involved in the process or activity connected with the proceeds of crime and eventually, committed the offence of money laundering.

Contd. from Page 1...

## Over 1,000 bridges coming

The chief minister also said that an additional 20,000 people in the city will be able to avail piped water within a few days. New initiatives have been taken to complete and implement the water supply project in West Guwahati. This project has been partially completed so far.

Guwahati shall not limit itself to being recognised as the "gateway to Northeast" but would gain recognition as the "gateway to Southeast Asia" in days to come, the chief minister added.

Wednesday's event was also attended by Assam minister of housing & urban affairs Ashok Singhal, Member of Parliament Queen Ojha, Members of Legislative Assembly Atul Bora, Siddhartha Bhattacharya, Ramendra Narayan Kalita, chief executive member of Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council Tuliram Ronghang, Mayor of Guwahati Municipal Corporation Mrigen Sarania, director general of police GP Singh, along with a host of other dignitaries. (With inputs from PTI)

## Flood situation continues

Sonitpur, Tinsukia, and Udalguri. As of now, no new reports of fatalities have emerged, and the death toll from this year's floods remains at 15. IMD forecast has predicted heavy rainfall at isolated places in the state for the next four days.

## CBI takes over 27 FIRs,

officers to supervise and monitor the investigation, they said. The team that also includes three DIGs - Lovely Katiyar, Nirmala Devi and Mohit Gupta - and superintendent of police Rajveer will report to a joint director who is supervising the overall probe, the sources said.

It is understood to be a first-of-its-kind mobilisation where such a large number of women officers have been simultaneously pressed into service, they added. Two additional superintendents of police and six deputy superintendents of police - all women - are also part of the 53-member force, they said.

Besides, 16 inspectors and 10 sub-inspectors will also be part of the team, the sources said.

More than 160 people have been killed and several hundreds injured since ethnic violence broke out in Manipur on May 3, when a "Tribal Solidarity March" was organised in the hill districts to protest against the majority Meitei community's demand for Scheduled Tribe status.

Meiteis account for about 53 per cent of Manipur's population and live mostly in the Imphal valley, while tribals, including Nagas and Kukis, constitute 40 per cent and reside mostly in the hill districts. (PTI)

## Protest staged in Diphu;

The KNYC had also filed a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) case at the Gauhati High Court. Meanwhile, the court has directed them to provide the names of the beneficiaries, who have not received compensation from KAAC. The protesters also claimed that the joint secretary in-charge of the land and revenue department did not furnish the names of the beneficiaries to hide the truth.

## Karbi, Jaintia student

the border regions. Mirjeng Kro, the president of KSA, emphasized the collaborative efforts between KSA and JSM. He shared that both organisations are committed to working together to resolve differences and tensions that have arisen between the Karbi and Jaintia communities along the border.

The joint committee's formation aims to prevent misunderstandings and foster goodwill among the residents of the border areas. By issuing a joint statement, KSA and JSM intend to avoid any misinterpretations or hostilities among the communities.

Since October 2022, tension has persisted in the Khanduli area of West Karbi Anglong along the border with West Jaintia Hills district. The collaborative efforts of KSA and JSM are seen as a positive step toward easing these tensions and restoring peaceful coexistence between the communities.





## Creative hunger was getting a little lost in TV Mohit Raina

**MUMBAI, Aug 30:** He became a household name with "Devon Ke Dev - Mahadev" but actor Mohit Raina says he took a break from television as he felt his creative hunger was getting lost there. The actor, who is known for his performance across the three mediums: TV, films and OTT such as "Devon Ke Dev - Mahadev", "21 Sarfarosh - Saragarhi 1897", "Uri: The Surgical Strike", "Shiddat", "Kafir", "Bhaukaal", and "Mumbai Diaries 26/11", said the goal now is to find work that excites him.

"When I took a break from TV, I realized that there is a long format where the creative

hunger was getting a little lost. I was financially safe. So, I decided to go to OTT so that I could satisfy my creative hunger, which wasn't getting satisfied on TV. "When I started doing OTT, my creative hunger and need was taken care of, so there was no need for me to do something else, or films just for the sake of it or just to be part of bigger films," Raina told PTI in an interview. The actor, who started off as a model, said his goals changed with time.

"When I started in the industry the mission was to meet the monthly financial expenses that I achieved with modeling. I'm not a trained actor, so then

the mission was learning as much as I can when I was working...I do work that excites me. That's the mission," the actor said. Raina, whose Disney+ Hotstar series "The Freelancer" will see him as an Indian mercenary on a rescue mission in war-torn Syria, said he is drawn to tales that feature unsung heroes.

Citing the example of "Uri: The Surgical Strike", Raina said he accepted the offer to play a small part in the movie because he wanted to portray the role of an army officer.

"I come from Kashmir, so I never had the superhero image in my mind that there's superman or batman as a

hero. As soon as I opened my eyes, I saw these people wearing uniforms outside my house, so for me they are the superheroes," he said. "As an actor, I've never worked for big or small scenes. I work for the story, and 'Uri' was a deliberate choice. If you see from a career perspective, it wasn't a great choice, it wasn't a debut that anyone would want. It was more of an emotional and friendly gesture because I love the uniform and I love the impact it would leave," Raina, who wanted to join National Defence Academy (NDA) but couldn't because he was short-sighted, said. (PTI)

## 'Gadar 2' is doing incredible, feels good that films are celebrated in theatres, says Vicky Kaushal

**MUMBAI, Aug 30:** Bollywood star Vicky Kaushal on Wednesday said that he was overjoyed with the box-office success of Hindi movies, including "Gadar 2" as it is encouraging to see moviegoers returning to theatres. The actor's last released film, 'Zara Hatke Zara Bachke', a romantic-comedy, received good response at the box office and collected over Rs 110 crore worldwide. Sunny Deol's 'Gadar 2' - which arrived in theatres on August 11 -- has raked in over Rs 430 crore at the box office. Similarly, films like 'OMG 2', Ayushmann Khurrana's 'Dream Girl 2', and Karan Johar's directorial venture



'Rocky Aur Rani Kii Prem Kahaani' have also done well in theatres. "I'm thankful from the bottom of my heart for what happened with 'Zara

Hatke Zara Bachke'. The credit goes to people for showering love on the songs, story, and the film, it was really special, and that too at a time when some experts were saying such films will not work, and that this movie is meant for OTT, etc.

"Since then it has been a good run for our film industry, where every film is bringing the audience back to theatres, it is entertaining people, it is making the audience emotional. Like, what 'Gadar 2' is doing is incredible. It feels good that every film is celebrated," Kaushal told reporters at a promotional event for his upcoming project 'The Great Indian Family'.

The actor hoped that the momentum continues when 'The Great Indian Family' (TGIF) releases. "I pray that this film also receives more love." (PTI)

## EKTA R KAPOOR TO RECEIVE DIRECTORATE AWARD AT 2023 INT'L EMMYS CEREMONY



**NEW DELHI, Aug 30:** Film producer Ekta R Kapoor will be honoured with the Directorate Award at the upcoming International Emmy awards ceremony for her trailblazing career and impact on the

Indian television landscape, the organisation announced on Tuesday. Kapoor, the co-founder of television production powerhouse Balaji Telefilms, will be presented the

award during the annual awards gala, set to be held in New York City on November 20.

"Ekta R Kapoor has built Balaji into one of India's foremost entertainment players with market leadership in the television content industry reaching mass audiences across India and South Asia with their long running series and OTT platform," International Academy president & CEO Bruce L. Paisner said in a statement.

"We look forward to honoring her remarkable career and influence on the television industry, with our Directorate Award," he added.

Kapoor, daughter of legendary actor Jeetendra and Shobha Kapoor, launched Balaji Telefilms, which made a mark on Indian television scene with shows such as "Kyunki Saas Bhi Kabhi Bahu Thi", "Kahaani Ghar Ghar Kii", "Kaahin Kissii Roz", "Kasautii Zindagii Kay" and "Bade Achhe Lagte Hain". Through the banner's film arm Balaji Motion Pictures, she has also produced multiple movies including "Shootout at Lokhandwala", "Love Sex aur Dhokha", "Once Upon a Time in Mumbai", "Dirty Picture", (PTI)

## Glad to integrate India's tradition in our designs: Gaurav Gupta on dressing up Beyonce for world tour

**NEW DELHI, Aug 30:** Fashion designer Gaurav Gupta says creating three strikingly glamorous looks for pop diva Beyonce for her ongoing world tour was an opportunity to put forth India's traditional designs that beautifully encapsulate the "aura and magnanimity" of the singer.

Beyonce has been on a concert tour since May in support of her seventh studio album "Renaissance". During her gigs in Atlanta (Georgia) and Charlotte (North Carolina) in the US, the music icon wore three outfits

created by Gupta — infinity crystal bodysuit paired with crystal leggings boots, a neon green Athena saree gown and the moon dust crystal encrusted orbit gown. "We were so glad to be able to integrate the cultural appreciation of India's traditional design with the neon green chiffon saree gown in line with our brand philosophy. And for the third look, it was all about the 70s Disco era that has become synonymous with the creative direction of the tour," the couturier told PTI in an interview. (PTI)



## Dilip Kumar, Lata Mangeshkar held a connection beyond stardom: Saira Banu

**MUMBAI, Aug 30:** On the occasion of Raksha Bandhan, veteran actor Saira Banu took a trip down the memory lane to remember the brother-sister bond her husband Dilip Kumar and Lata Mangeshkar shared.

In an Instagram post on Wednesday, Banu said despite being occupied with their work commitments, the actor and the singer would meet on every Raksha Bandhan.

"The Kohinoor of Indian Cinema Dilip Sahib and the nightingale of the Music Industry of India Lata Mangeshkar held a connection beyond the dazzle of

their stupendous stardom. They shared the bond of a brother and sister.

"Despite being busy with work or travel or any personal commitments, they both would find a way to meet each other on Raksha Bandhan and Lataji would tie the sacred Rakhi on Sahib's hand (sic)," she wrote, adding that she would gift Mangeshkar a brocade sari on every Rakhi.

The actor said Kumar and Mangeshkar would travel to their work locations in local trains and shared their "thoughts, experiences, and sought each other's advice". "It was at one such journey



**The Kohinoor of Indian Cinema Dilip Sahib and the nightingale of the Music Industry of India Lata Mangeshkar held a connection beyond the dazzle of their stupendous stardom. They shared the bond of a brother and sister**

that Sahib guided Lataji on how much the heart of Urdu lies in its flawless pronunciation and how something as simple as a Nukta adds a beautiful addition to words... Lataji, an obedient sister in every sense, worked upon his advice and sought an Urdu tutor's assistance," Banu added. She said the bond the two icons shared remained intact "until the very end".

"She often came to our home to visit Sahib and they ate lunch or dinner together. The very last time that she came here, she lovingly fed him with her own hands and they made such a loving picture together. Such was the love they shared... monumental," Banu wrote.

Kumar died in July 2021 and Mangeshkar passed away a year later in February. (PTI)



## THE ISL CHAMPIONS WILL FACE FC GOA IN DURAND CUP SEMIFINAL

# Mohun Bagan aim to emulate arch-rivals East Bengal

**KOLKATA, Aug 30:** Regaining form after a sluggish start, the reigning Indian Super League champions Mohun Bagan will look to leverage 'home advantage' against a formidable FC Goa in Durand Cup semifinal, here on Thursday.

That their arch-rivals East Bengal have already made the final with a stunning penalty shootout win over NorthEast United FC would serve an additional motivation for the Mariners, to overcome the Goan challenge and set up a 'Super Sunday' derby showdown in the summit clash.

In the bigger picture, the Manolo Marquez-coached Gaurs have a set squad at their disposal and his return from suspension will be an added boost-up.

But a partisan crowd and the unknown territory of the Salt Lake Stadium — FC Goa played all their Durand Cup matches in Guwahati so far — would challenge them to the hilt.

As a matter of fact, NorthEast United FC experienced it the hard way when they dominated the entire match against East Bengal, only to let it loose in the last two minutes of the added time, which proved fatal.

East Bengal forced a 2-2 equaliser through Nandhakumar Sekar's header in the 97th minute before sealing their first Durand Cup final in 19 years with a 5-3 win in the penalty shootout.

The Gaurs bounced back from



behind to defeat Chennaiyin FC 4-1 in their quarterfinals.

Carl McHugh struck his debut goal while Carlos Martinez, Noah Sadaoui and Victor Rodriguez all found the target.

It remains to be seen how they fare against the most star-studded team of the tournament.

"We know that we are facing a very strong team, who have a lot

of money to spend as well. Thus, they can sign very good players," the Gaurs coach said.

"They have signed practically the best young Indian players in (Anirudh) Thapa, Sahal (Abdul Samad) and so on. They have signed and retained some big names in terms of foreign players as well.

"Facing them in the semi-finals

will be a very difficult challenge, but at the same time, it is also a fantastic chance to prepare for the ISL — the atmosphere at the Salt Lake Stadium will be favourable to them, and to face them in such a situation will be a great learning experience," Marquez summed up the mood.

Mohun Bagan have not had a great build-up — their eight-

match winning streak ended against East Bengal in the group stage — and this contest provides another opportunity to find rhythm.

Having a team of stars can create a problem of plenty for any coach and Juan Ferrando finds himself in the same situation, struggling to strike the perfect balance. (PTI)

## India rout Bangladesh 15-1 in men's Asian Hockey 5s World Cup Qualifier

**SALALAH (OMAN), Aug 30:** Maninder Singh and Mohammed Raheel scored four and three goals respectively as the Indian men's hockey team hammered Bangladesh 15-1 in their Asian Hockey 5s World Cup Qualifier campaign opener here.

Maninder struck in the 10th, 18th, 28th and 30th minutes while Raheel found the target in the 2nd, 15th and 24th minutes.

Sukhvinder (13th, 22nd), Gurjot Singh (13th, 23rd), Pawan Rajbhar (19th, 26th) scored twice each while Mandeep Mor (8th) and Dipsan Tirkey (9th) struck once each as the Indians scored goals almost at will.

For Bangladesh, Sawon Sarowar (2nd minute) scored the lone goal on Tuesday.

India started the match on an attacking mode with Pawan Rajbhar making a dangerous move. But Bangladesh thwarted the move and caught India on the counter-attack with Sarowar scoring



ing the first goal two minutes into the match.

Within seconds, Raheel brought India back to level terms with a powerful shot. After the initial flurry of attacks, both India and Bangladesh started playing cautiously to avoid early goals.

But the stalemate was broken by Indian skipper Mandeep, who struck a stunning goal in the 8th

minute to put India in the lead. With goals from Dipsan (9th) and Maninder (10th), India extended their lead to 4-1 in the next couple of minutes. A stunning save from goalkeeper Suraj Karkera led to an Indian counter-attack and Gurjot (13th) made the most of it, scoring another goal.

Goals from Sukhvinder (13th) and Raheel (15th) closed out the

first half with India leading by 7-1.

India began the second half with another attack from the right flank and Maninder (18th) struck to continue the goal-fest for India.

Less than a minute later, Pawan (19th) put his name on the score-sheet with the ninth goal for India. Maintaining possession, India pressed deeper in Bangladesh's half, and Sukhvinder (22nd) took India's goal tally to double figures with a shot from near the halfway mark.

Gurjot struck again in the 23rd minute before Raheel (24th) completed his hat-trick a minute later as India continued to toy Bangladesh. Pawan (26th) then scored his second goal of the match.

With two minutes left on the clock, Maninder completed his hat-trick with goals in the 28th and 30th minutes, before adding another at the stroke of final whistle. (PTI)

## Murugappa Gold Cup Hockey: Indian Army triumph; Navy knocked out

**CHENNAI, Aug 30:** Sumeet Pal Singh's hat-trick helped Indian Army Red beat Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG) 3-2 in their Pool B game of the Murugappa Gold Cup hockey tournament, here on Tuesday.

CAG went ahead in the 24th minute courtesy a penalty stroke which was converted successfully by Vishal Singh to lead 1-0 at halftime.

However, the Army bounced back as Sumeet netted a goal each in the 34th and 39th minute to put his side ahead.

Although B Abharan Sudev scored an equaliser in the 51st minute through a field goal, Sumeet produced the winning strike in the 53rd minute, ensuring a 3-2 conquest for the Army.

In another match, the Central Secretariat came from behind to win 2-1 against Navy in their

Pool A contest.

Partee Singh scored in the 24th minute to put Navy in the lead but Dharambir Yadav's 51st-minute strike levelled for Central Secretariat.

G Aniket Balasaheb slammed the winner in the 58th minute to knock Navy out of contention for semifinals.

In the points table, the Railway Sports Promotion Board (RPSB) were at the top in Pool

A followed by the Indian Oil Corporation Limited (IOCL) at second.

In Pool B, CAG were ranked first followed by the Punjab National Bank (PNB) at second.

On Wednesday, PNB will face an already-ousted Hockey Unit of Tamil Nadu, followed by the Navy taking on Hockey Karnataka and IOCL facing RPSB. (PTI)

## England's female int'l cricketers to be paid the same match fees as male counterparts

**LONDON, Aug 30:** England's female international cricketers will be paid the same match fees as their male counterparts on the back of record attendances and viewing figures for the Women's Ashes played over June and July.

The move toward abolishing the pay gap between male and female players in England had already been recommended in a report by the Independent Commission for Equity in Cricket, which was published two months ago and highlighted deep-rooted discrimination in the English game.

That report said the average salary for England Women players was 20.6% of what players in the men's team received for limited-overs games.

A total of 1,10,00 people came to watch the drawn Women's Ashes series between England and Australia, with crowds of around 20,000 at several of the limited-overs matches. More than 23,000 tickets were sold for the five days of the test at Trent Bridge. Broadcast viewing figures of 5.3 million were double those in 2019. The pay increase will take effect immediately, starting with this week's Twenty20 series against Sri Lanka. We all want cricket to be the team sport of choice for female athletes," said Richard Gould, chief executive of the England and Wales Cricket Board. (AP)

## Extraordinary Pakistan team to beat in Asia Cup: Ashwin

**CHENNAI, Aug 30:** Premier India spinner R Ashwin feels Pakistan will be the side to beat in the Asia Cup and consistent performances from Babar Azam and Mohammad Rizwan will make them even more dangerous in the continental event.

Terming both Pakistan and India as favourites for the Asian title, Ashwin said on his YouTube channel, "If Babar Azam and Mohammad Rizwan consistently dish out performances with the bat, Pakistan will be one hell of a team heading into this Asia Cup and the World Cup. It will take some beating since Pakistan is an extraordinary team."

Pakistan faces Nepal in the tournament opener on Wednesday before taking on India in the much-awaited clash on September

2. The Men in Blue have won the last three meetings against Pakistan in ODIs.

Ashwin feels the depth in Pakistan's squad makes them serious contenders for the Asia Cup and subsequent World Cup.

"It is all down to their (Pakistan's) squad depth. Pakistan has invariably developed exceptional cricketers. Thanks to their tape-ball cricket, they have always produced an incredible series of pacers. Also, their batting has been superior during the late 90s and 2000s. In tape ball cricket, electrical tape is wrapped on the tennis ball to make it smooth since it helps bowlers generate greater pace due to its light weight and smoothness of the surface.

In some cases, the tape is ap-



plied only on one side of the ball in order to generate swing.

Ashwin also said the Pakistan Super League and other T20 leagues around the world have helped Pakistan cricketers.

"But, the exposure they have got to various (T20) leagues has been the primary reason for their re-emergence in the previous five or six years. They also have the PSL (Pakistan Super League). Additionally, in the recent BBL (Big Bash League) drafts, there were at least 60-70 Pakistan players," the off-spinner noted.

Ashwin said teams should consider a bowler running out a batter for backing up as a 'strategic advantage'. "Some of them will take the moral high ground in this matter by saying, 'We don't want to play cricket like that'. But street-smart teams should make use of these statements to their advantage. It is a strategic advantage," he said. (PTI)

"It's been five years since I did it in the IPL. Even today, some are

saying nobody should do that. I can perfectly understand why they don't want us to do that. But, it makes me wonder why you are still sticking to the same ideology," Ashwin added.

Ashwin said while no Indian batter has been run out for backing up, it should be accepted if it happens. "I recently tweeted about it. So far, me and Deepti Sharma have done it for India. And that's why people from their quadrant are accepting this. Have we seen England or Australia doing this against India yet?" he said.

"One of the journalists from India had tweeted on this, and his point is correct. If Virat Kohli or Rohit Sharma gets run out this way at a crucial stage during a World Cup game, will we be okay with this?" (PTI)

## Babar, Iftikhar power Pakistan to 342/6 against Nepal in Asia Cup opener



**MULTAN, Aug 30:** Skipper Babar Azam hit a delightful 151 while Iftikhar Ahmed smashed his maiden ODI century to power Pakistan to 342 for six against Nepal in the Asia Cup opener here on Wednesday.

Babar (151 off 130) was involved in two crucial partnerships after a sedate start -- first stitching 86 runs with Mohammad Rizwan (44 off 50) and then sharing a whirlwind 214 runs for the fifth wicket with Iftikhar (109 not out off 71 balls) to take Pakistan to an imposing total. Babar decorated his knock with 14 fours and four sixes, while Iftikhar, who was at his destructive best, struck 11 boundaries and four hits over the fence.

This was after Pakistan made an unimpressive start to their innings as they lost both the openers early. While Fakhar Zaman (14) showed intent initially, he failed to carry on as he was brilliantly caught by a diving Nepal wicketkeeper Asif Sheikh off the bowling of Karan KC in the sixth over.

Pakistan suffered yet another blow soon when Imam-ul-Haq was found short of the crease while attempting a single that was not for the taking. A direct throw from Nepal captain Rohit Paudel ended his innings.

Babar was then joined at the crease by wicket-keeper batter Rizwan and the duo stabilised Pakistan's innings.

While Babar played the role of an anchor, Rizwan showed his attacking instincts during the 86-run stand for the third wicket which came off 111 balls.

But the start of their partnership was far from rosy as the duo struggled to keep the scoreboard ticking initially with Pakistan reaching 50 in the 12th over. The Pakistani duo kept the scoreboard ticking with ones and two thereafter and hit the bad balls to the boundary to bring up the team's 100 in the 22nd over.

Just when he was looking threatening, Rizwan fell to a direct hit at the non-striker's end by Dipendra Singh Airee in search of a quick single. Rizwan paid the price for not grounding his bat, something not acceptable at the highest level. While Babar kept one end steady, Salman Agha (5) failed to trouble the scorers much, falling prey to Sandeep Lamichhane.

Babar brought up his fifty with a double in the 29th over.

But Iftikhar's arrival gave the much-needed boost to Pakistan's innings as he played aggressively from the onset.

Iftikhar's approach seemed to have inspired Babar as well as he too opened up his arms thereafter and found the boundaries at will. Babar brought up his ton off 109 balls in the 42nd over. (PTI)

## Bangladesh wicket-keeper-batter Litton Das ruled out of entire Asia Cup due to illness



**DHAKA, Aug 30:** Bangladesh wicketkeeper-batter Litton Das was on Wednesday ruled out of the entire duration of Asia Cup cricket tournament due to illness, dealing a blow to the side ahead of their campaign opener against hosts Sri Lanka in Pallekele.

Das could not recover from a viral fever, and he did not travel to Sri Lanka whom Bangladesh face in their opening match on Thursday.

The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) has named 30-year-old wicketkeeper-batter Anamul Haque Bijoy as Das' replacement. Bijoy will join the squad in Sri Lanka later on Wednesday.

"Bangladesh opening batsman Litton Kumer Das, who could not travel to Sri Lanka with the Asia Cup squad due to viral fever, has been ruled out of the tournament as he has not recovered from the illness," the BCB said in a statement. "The National Selection Panel of BCB has named 30-year-old fellow right-hander Anamul Haque Bijoy as Litton's

replacement."

Anamul Haque has played 44 ODIs and has scored 1254 runs which include three hundreds. His last ODI appearance for Bangladesh was in December 2022 against India.

BCB's National Selection Panel Chairman Minhajul Abedin said: "He (Anamul) has been in the runs in domestic cricket and we have continued to monitor him in the Bangladesh Tigers programme. He was always in our consideration."

"Due to Litton's unavailability, we needed a top-order batter who could keep wicket and Anamul got the nod."

Bangladesh Squad: Shakib Al Hasan (Captain), Najmul Hossain Shanto, Tawhid Hridoy, Mushfiqur Rahim, Afif Hossain Dhrubo, Mehidy Hasan Miraz, Taskin Ahmed, Hasan Mahmud, Mustafizur Rahman, Shoriful Islam, Nasum Ahmed, Shak Mahedi Hasan, Naim Sheikh, Shamim Hossain, Tanzid Hasan Tamim, Tanzim Hasan Sakib, Anamul Haque Bijoy. (PTI)



## Neeraj Chopra looks to maintain Diamond League unbeaten streak in Zurich

**ZURICH, Aug 30:** Newly-crowned world champion Neeraj Chopra will look to maintain his unbeaten streak in the prestigious Diamond League meet when he competes in a star-studded men's javelin throw field here on Thursday. Chopra on Sunday clinched his maiden World Championships title in Budapest with a throw of 88.17m. He had won a silver medal in the 2022 edition.

The Indian superstar also became only the third javelin thrower in history to hold both the Olympic and World Championships titles after world record holder Jan Zelezny of the Czech Republic and Andreas Thorkildsen of Norway.

Zelezny clinched the Olympics gold in 1992, 1996 and 2000 while winning the World Championships title in 1993, 1995 and 2001. Thorkildsen won the gold medal in the 2008 Olympics and the 2009 World Championships.

The 25-year-old Chopra has been unbeaten this season, having won two Diamond League meetings in Doha (May 5) and Lausanne (June 30) before his World Championships triumph.



In Zurich, where he is competing four days after being crowned world champion, Chopra will be up against familiar rivals like Czech Republic's Jakub Vadlejch, bronze winner in Budapest with 86.67m, Julian Weber of Germany and two-time world champion Anderson Peters of Grenada. Only Pakistan's Arshad Nadeem, silver medalist in Budapest, will not be there in Zurich.

Chopra, who won the Diamond League final trophy last year, sits third with 16 points from two

events. Vadlejch (21 points from three events) and Weber (19 from three events), who finished fourth in Budapest with 85.79m, are on top and at second place respectively.

Peters, who has been struggling this season and failed to qualify for the final round in the World Championships, is at fourth spot with 15 points from three events.

The Zurich leg is the last one in the Diamond League series where men's javelin throw event is on the roster before the season finale

in Eugene, USA on September 16-17 where the Diamond League champion will be crowned.

Only the top six in the points table will compete in Eugene. Chopra won the title in the 2022 finale held in Zurich.

Long jumper Murali Sreesankar will also be in action and he would be looking to redeem himself after failing to qualify for the final round at the World Championships.

Sreesankar, who has a season's and personal best of 8.41m, jumped a below-par 7.74m to finish 22nd overall in the qualification round. He is currently third in the long jump standings of this Diamond League season, with 10 points from two events.

Olympic and world champion Miltiadis Tentoglou (Greece), Tajay Gayle and Carey McLeod (both Jamaica) will also be action. Gayle had won silver in Budapest with a jump of 8.27m.

Tentoglou, who won gold in the World Championships with 8.52m, is leading the Diamond League standings with 21 points from three events. (PTI)

## SL, B'desh look to rise above injuries, modest form for winning start in Asia Cup

**PALLEKELE, Aug 30:** Sri Lanka and Bangladesh will be eager to shake off modest ODI form and spate of injuries to key players as they seek to start their Asia Cup campaign on a winning note when they face each other here on Thursday. Sri Lanka, who won the Asia Cup in 2022 in its T20 avatar, could not even announce their squad for this edition till Tuesday, courtesy niggles and COVID-19 infection to a couple of players.

The Lankans lost Wanindu Hasaranga, Dushmantha Chameera, Lahiru Kumara and Dilshan Madushanka to various injuries, while Kusal Perera, who last played an ODI in 2021, is yet to make full recovery from COVID-19 infection. But even before these setbacks, Sri Lanka's run in the ODIs this year has been sub-par. They started the year with a 0-3 drubbing at the hands of India, and then lost to New Zealand 0-2. The Islanders managed to beat Afghanistan at home before mounting a good run in the ICC Qualifiers in Harare, but the inability to lift their game against top opponents will worry them. They will require runs from Pathum Nissanka (687 runs in 2023), Dimuth Karunaratne (481 runs) and Charith Asalanka (341 runs), their best batters this year so far, to challenge Bangladesh. They will also hope that skipper Dasun Shanaka, who has not fired for the whole year except a hundred against India, will find his touch against Bangladesh. On the bowling front, spinner Maheesh Theekshana (23 wickets from 10 matches in 2023) and pacer Kasun Rajitha (14 wickets) will have to cover the absence of frontline bowlers. The only solace for Sri Lanka could be that Bangladesh too have been in the same boat as them. Bangladesh will miss the services of injured Tamim Iqbal, pacer Ebadot Hossain and wicket-keeper-batter Litton Das, but that is only a speck in the larger picture. Das was on Wednesday ruled out of the entire duration of Asia Cup as he could not recover from

viral fever. The 30-year-old wicketkeeper-batter Anamul Haque Bijoy was named as Das' replacement. Bangladesh, generally a strong force at home, lost ODI series against England and Afghanistan this year. The victory over Ireland would not be sufficient to ease their concerns coming into the Asia Cup. They, however, have individual performers in both batting and bowling. Captain Shakib Al Hasan, Mushfiqur Rahim and Najmul Shanto have scored more than 400 runs this year, while youngster Towhid Hridoy too has made over 300. But a good chunk of those runs came against Ireland. The experienced Mustafizur Rahman, Shoriful Islam and Taskin Ahmed have come up with adequate performances on the bowling front this year but haven't been able to deliver against quality rivals like England or India. Individual worries apart, a win in Thursday's match is important for both Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, as they face a tricky Afghanistan in their respective next fixture in Group B. Both the teams will be keen for a win because the equations of net run rate might come into play as there are predictions of rains here.

The Teams (From):

Sri Lanka: Dasun Shanaka (captain), Pathum Nissanka, Dimuth Karunaratne, Kusal Janith Perera, Kusal Mendis (vc), Charith Asalanka, Dhananjaya de Silva, Sadeera Samarawickrama, Maheesh Theekshana, Dunieth Wellalage, Matheesha Pathirana, Kasun Rajitha, Dushan Hemantha, Binura Fernando, Pramod Madushan.

Bangladesh: Shakib Al Hasan (Captain), Najmul Hossain Shanto, Tawhid Hridoy, Mushfiqur Rahim, Afif Hossain Dhrubo, Mehidy Hasan Miraz, Taskin Ahmed, Hasan Mahmud, Mustafizur Rahman, Shoriful Islam, Nasum Ahmed, Shak Mahedi Hasan, Naim Sheikh, Shamim Hossain, Tanzid Hasan Tamim, Tanzim Hasan Sakib, Anamul Haque Bijoy.

Match starts at 3pm IST. (PTI)

## Medvedev rolls into US Open second round, with Alcaraz and Venus Williams in later action

**NEW YORK, Aug 30:** Daniil Medvedev sent an early message that this U.S. Open might be more than a two-man race between Carlos Alcaraz and Novak Djokovic.

The 2021 champion rolled into the second round Tuesday, beating Attila Balazs 6-1, 6-1, 6-0 in just 1 hour, 14 minutes.

"That's probably the fastest three-set match I played," Medvedev said.

About 12 hours after Djokovic won easily in his return to the U.S. Open, the No. 3-seeded Medvedev looked just as impressive as when he beat Djokovic for the 2021 title to deny the 23-time major champion from Serbia what would have been the first calendar-year Grand Slam in men's tennis since 1969.

Alcaraz edged Djokovic for the title at Wimbledon, after Djokovic eliminated the Spaniard in the semifinals en route to the French Open title.

"Of course we know that the biggest, let's say, players right now are Carlos and Novak," Medvedev said. "But, well, they have to win their matches also to meet me, if I'm there. Same works for me."

Medvedev certainly has the game to compete with either on the hard courts of the U.S. Open, where the Russian was also the runner-up to Rafael Nadal in 2019 before winning his first major two years later.

The women's No. 3 seed, Jessica Pegula, also moved on quickly with a 6-2, 6-2 victory over Camila Giorgi.

Andy Murray, who won the 2012 U.S. Open title, advanced in straight sets but needed nearly

three hours to do it, beating Corentin Moutet 6-2, 7-5, 6-3.

"It was a long one, but the way that we play it was probably always going to be like that," Murray said, joking that it was still shorter than many of his matches these days at age 36.

Stan Wawrinka, who won the trophy in 2016, followed Murray's victory on the Grandstand.

No. 5 seed Ons Jabeur, who lost in last year's final to Iga Swiatek, was checked by a trainer and was coughing and blowing her nose during her match before getting past Camila Osorio 7-5, 7-6 (4). She said she has the flu and a history of asthma, calling it a "a very, very tough day."

"To be honest with you, I just thought: Just put the ball in and see what happens," Jabeur said.

She found a way through, unlike Leylah Fernandez, the runner-up in 2021, who was eliminated by No. 22 Ekaterina Alexandrova 7-6 (4), 5-7, 6-4.

Also ousted was No. 7 Caroline Garcia, a 2022 U.S. Open semifinalist who was routed 6-4, 6-1 by Chinese qualifier Wang Yafan. But Wimbledon champion Marketa Vondrousova, the No. 9 seed, advanced easily by knocking out qualifier Na Lae Han 6-3, 6-0 in an hour.

Other seeded winners on the men's side included No. 12 Alexander Zverev and No. 16 Cam Norrie. No. 11 seed Karen Khachanov, who reached the semifinals last year, lost 6-2, 6-4, 6-2 to American wild card Michael Mmoh; and No. 29 Ugo Humbert of France was swept by Matteo Berrettini, the 2021 Wimbledon runner-up, 6-4, 6-2, 6-2. (AP)

## Ireland coach Vera Pauw out despite leading team to Women's WC



**DUBLIN, Aug 30:** Vera Pauw's four-year tenure as coach of Ireland's women's team will end when her current deal expires this week. The Football Association of Ireland board announced late Tuesday that Pauw won't be retained despite leading the country to its first Women's World Cup.

FAI chief executive Jonathan Hill thanked the Dutchwoman "for her hard work and commitment over the past four years and (we) wish her well for the future." He noted the World Cup qualification that "made history and inspired a nation."

Ireland was eliminated in the group stage of the tournament after losses to co-host Australia and Canada and a draw with Nigeria.

"The future is bright for women and girls' football," Hill said. "Our focus now is building upon the work done by Vera and the historic achievements of our women's team, which we see as a platform to support the next phase of the journey for the team, and more broadly the development of women and girls' football in this country." Pauw was also in the headlines earlier this year when she denied allegations of "abusive and inappropriate" methods during her time as coach of Houston Dash in the U.S. National Women's Soccer League. (AP)

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