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- Reinstatement of Rahul's LS membership victory of democracy: Maha Cong leaders

Rahul returns to Lok Sabha ahead of no-trust motion



NEW DELHI, Aug 7 (PTI): Over four months after he was disqualified, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi returned to Lok Sabha on Monday with his membership of the Lower House restored in the wake of the Supreme Court staying his conviction in a defamation case.

His return as an MP comes as a boost to the opposition ranks ahead of the no-trust motion against the Modi government which is likely to be taken up in Lok Sabha on Tuesday. Gandhi is set to be one of the key speakers of the opposition bloc INDIA that would look to send a message to the people through the motion even as its outcome is a

foregone conclusion with the numbers heavily stacked in favour of the ruling NDA.

Announcing the reinstatement of Gandhi as an MP, a Lok Sabha notification said in the wake of the SC order on Friday, the disqualification has ceased to operate subject to further judicial pronouncements.

Soon after the Lok Sabha secretariat communication, Gandhi reached the Parliament House and offered floral tributes to Mahatma Gandhi's statue before entering the House to attend proceedings around noon. But the House was adjourned within minutes.

Inside the Parliament premises, Gandhi was also seen spending time with his mother and Lok Sabha MP Sonia Gandhi. He also went to the Central Hall of Parliament where he briefly interacted with NCP chief Sharad Pawar and Shiv Sena (Uddhav Thackeray faction) leader Sanjay Raut.

Gandhi also paid respects to former Tamil Nadu chief minister M Karunanidhi on his death anniversary in the DMK party office in Parliament. He was accorded a warm welcome by the Congress and other opposition MPs on his arrival in Parliament which saw festive scenes (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

Intensified Mission Indradhanush 5.0 launched in state

CM inaugurates, lays foundation for a series of projects in Bokakhat

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Aug 7: Lending a new momentum to the development of Bokakhat, chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Monday inaugurated and laid foundation stones of different development projects worth ₹ 85 crore.

It may be noted that chief minister Sarma inaugurated the first phase of the Integrated Sports Complex involving worth ₹ 10 crore. Moreover, he laid the foundations for an Inspection Bungalow worth ₹ 10 crore, a hospital for domestic animals worth ₹ 9 crore and an integrated handloom park involving an outlay of ₹ 56 crore.

The chief minister also launched an Intensified Mission Indradhanush 5.0 at Bokakhat. He also attended a programme held on the occasion of state level celebration of National Handloom Day at Bokakhat.

Speaking on the occasion, CM Sarma narrating the glorious heritage of Bokakhat said that besides Kaziranga National Park, the sub-division has Numali-



garh Refinery and other historical sites.

Moreover, talking on 'one district one product initiative', the chief minister said that efforts have been undertaken for transforming Golaghat into an organic tea production district.

Speaking on Agarwood and its immense importance in Golaghat, he said that the government has approved processing of home-grown Agarwood harvested from private plantation for the growth of the Agarwood industry.

Stating that Assam has a very deep connection with handloom, the chief minister said that Srimanta Sankardeva made Vrindavani Bastra having 120 hand length and 60 hand breadth.

To improve handloom in the state, the chief minister said that the government has banned selling gamocha prepared from power looms. Moreover, following restrictions imposed on bringing the Mekhala, Arnai, etc., manufactured outside the state, Assam's own production of handloom received a new momentum.

The chief minister said that with earmarking of ₹ 100 crore for purchasing products from Assam's weaver, the local artisans got immensely benefited.

Giving a snapshot of different projects being undertaken in Kaziranga and in Golaghat district, CM Sarma said that along with an elevated corridor, the proposed underwater bridge in the Brahmaputra connecting Kamargaon with Gohpur will revolutionise connectivity and (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

HT BRIEFS

Assembly session

GUWAHATI: The Autumn Session of Assam Legislative Assembly will begin on September 11, an official release said on Monday. According to the statement, the secretariat of the Assam Legislative Assembly has issued a notification calling the sitting of the House at 9:30 am on Sept 11, 2023. When contacted, an official of the Assembly Secretariat told PTI that the Business Advisory Committee (BAC) of the House is likely to meet in the first week of September to finalise the tenure of the coming session. "The proposal will be presented before the BAC to hold the session for five days. They will then confirm it," she added.

Medical sub-centre

BOKAJAN: A new medical sub-centre was inaugurated at Langchething (Saphapani) by Dr Numal Momin, the MLA of Bokajan and Deputy Speaker of Assam Legislative Assembly on Monday. During the inauguration, a meeting was held to discuss the development and public works initiatives in Bokajan sub-division of Karbi Anglong. The medical sub-centre, equipped with 30 beds, aims to enhance healthcare facilities in the area. Additionally, the foundation stone for a school at Khatkhati Jor Tokbi village was recently laid, with an estimated cost of ₹ 6 crore for its construction. The inaugural event witnessed the presence of prominent figures, including Member of Autonomous Council Kadom Terangpi, executive member of Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council Richard Tokbi, chairman of Village Development Committee Silarsong Rongpi, and other dignitaries.

Flood scene

GUWAHATI: Dhemaji and Dibrugarh districts in Assam are grappling with floods once again, affecting 3,541 and 3,857 people respectively. The Brahmaputra river has surpassed the danger level mark at Nimatighat, as reported by the Assam State Disaster Management Authority (ASDMA) on Monday.

KADHASDCOM clears 3 ex-women HC judges to be members SC sets up panel to look into relief & rehab

HT Bureau

DIPHU, Aug 7: The Karbi Anglong & Dima Hasao Autonomous State Demand Committee (KADHASDCOM) has addressed the criticism levelled against its recent visit to New Delhi by the All Party Hills Leaders Conference (APHLC).

During the visit, a delegation consisting of KADHASDCOM and other organisations submitted a memorandum to the Union home minister, Amit Shah, urging the implementation of Autonomous State status under Article 244 (A) of the Indian Constitution. However, the president of APHLC, JI Kathar, criticised the visit, alleging that it was a ploy by the ruling party (BJP) to gain an advantage in the 2024 general elections.

One of the organisations in the delegation was the Karbi Students Association (KSA). George

Timung, the general secretary of KSA, addressed the issue during a press conference at the KSA Rongthe-ang office, stating, "We submitted a memorandum to Union Home Minister, Amit Shah, on July 31 at his Parliament office, New Delhi, urging the immediate implementation of Article 244(A) of the Indian Constitution for Autonomous State status. The allegations made by APHLC President JI Kathar that the visit and meeting with the Union Home Minister were politically motivated to gain electoral advantage in the 2024 Parliamentary election are biased, baseless, and politically motivated. We strongly condemn such unfounded allegations aimed at undermining the legitimate demand of the hill tribes and the general public of Karbi Anglong Autonomous Hills District and Dima Hasao (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

NEW DELHI, Aug 7 (PTI): As Manipur sank deeper into ethnic violence, the Supreme Court on Monday ordered setting up of a committee of three former women high court judges to oversee relief and rehabilitation of victims and compensation to them besides asking former Maharashtra police chief Dattatray Padsalgikar to monitor the probe in criminal cases.

Observing that its effort is to restore people's faith in the rule of law in the strife-torn state, the top court also decided to monitor the overall situation there. The court said the three-member panel will be submitting reports to it directly.

A bench chaired by Chief Justice D Y Chandrachud said the committee will be headed by former Jammu and Kashmir High Court Chief Justice Gita Mittal and include Justices (ret'd) Shalini P Joshi, a former



judge of the Bombay High Court, and Asha Menon, an ex-judge of the Delhi High Court.

Cognizant of reports about the border state descending deeper into chaos, with more and more people getting killed and arson and mayhem prevailing, the bench, also comprising Justices J B Pardiwalla and Manoj Misra, which had termed as "deeply disturbing" the video of women being paraded naked, said it will appoint a committee of three

former high court judges to oversee relief and rehabilitation of those affected. "We will appoint a committee of three former high court judges," the bench said, adding the panel will be looking at issues including relief, remedial measures, rehabilitation, compensation and also restoration of homes and places of worship. The bench said the committee of judges will visit the relief camps and assess the conditions there. On the investigation of cases, the court said 11 FIRs will be transferred to the CBI.

"We are not going to supplant the CBI because you (the state government) have the investigating agency which will be looking after the investigation," the bench said. The top court said to ensure there is a sense of faith, it will direct that at least five officers, not below the rank of deputy (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

Lok Sabha clears Digital Personal Data Protection Bill

NEW DELHI, Aug 7 (PTI): The Lok Sabha on Monday cleared the Digital Personal Data Protection Bill by a voice vote amid slogan shouting by opposition members over the Manipur issue.

Some amendments moved by opposition members seeking changes in the bill were defeated by a voice vote. The bill seeks to protect the privacy of Indian citizens while proposing a penalty of up to ₹ 250 crore on entities for misusing or failing to protect the digital data of individuals. The bill which comes after six years of the Supreme Court declaring "Right to Privacy" as a fundamental right has provisions to curb the misuse of individuals' data by online platforms.

Moving the bill for consideration and passage, Union IT minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said, "It would have been good had the opposition discussed the bill today (in the House). But no opposition leader or member is concerned over the rights of the citizens."

He said the bill has been brought after extensive public consultation. Referring to the salient features of the bill, the minister said its language is very simple so that even a common person can understand it.

Referring to certain principles on which the bill is based, Vaishnaw said that according to the principle of legality, data of a person has to be taken based on prevailing laws. He also said as per the principle of purpose limitation, data should be used for the purpose it was



taken for. "Why should more data be taken than required," the minister told members, referring to the principle of data minimisation. He also noted that there has to be a storage limitation as far as the data of individuals is concerned. "Data should not be kept beyond what is needed to be stored," the Union minister said. Notice and consent will be provided in all the 22 languages mentioned in the 8th Schedule so that it becomes easier for the people to comprehend. Referring to the alternative dispute resolution mechanism put in place, he explained that if an organisation commits a mistake, it will go to the data protection board, rectify the mistake and pay a penalty "and move ahead". Responding to suggestions by members that the Right to Information (RTI) provisions have been diluted in the bill, he said RTI and personal data protection have been harmonised.

Pijush acts swiftly to tackle Brahmaputra erosion

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Aug 7: Govt Jai Khaiti Village in the Dhing constituency has been facing erosive impacts from the Brahmaputra River since Sunday, causing concern among the local residents. Upon learning of the situation, Assam water resource minister, Pijush Hazarika, took prompt action to address the issue.

Minister Pijush Hazarika engaged with the departmental engineer immediately after being informed about the erosion. To tackle the problem, the minister ordered the dispatch of 4000 geo-bags to the affected area. These geo-bags will be utilised as a preventive measure to counter the erosive force of the river. Efforts to prevent further erosion have already begun at the location. As part of the response plan, construction work has commenced for a supplementary short embankment adjacent to the existing one, aimed at safeguarding its integrity and protecting the village from further damage.



In his commitment to resolving the issue swiftly, minister Pijush Hazarika personally inspected the site on Monday. During the inspection, he instructed the departmental engineer to fortify and widen the primary embankment, further bolstering the protective measures.

The residents of Bajai Khaiti Village have expressed relief and gratitude for the prompt response and actions taken by the water resource minister to address the erosion issue. The ongoing efforts will help mitigate the impact of the Brahmaputra River's erosive forces and protect the village and its residents from potential damages caused by the river's unpredictable course.

Huge cache of explosives recovered

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Aug 7: In a significant operation, a joint team of Assam Rifles and Assam Police successfully seized a substantial cache of explosives in Cachar district, Assam. The recovery included 200 gelatin sticks and 200 detonators, all of which were found at the Ranighat market in the district. The timely intervention and seizure of such a huge quantity of explosives have raised concerns over potential violence and security threats in the region.

Officials have speculated that the explosives were likely intended to be transported to Manipur, where ongoing ethnic clashes have resulted in the tragic loss of more than 160 lives during the past three months. This discovery has heightened vigilance as authorities work to prevent any further escalation of violence in Manipur. The joint security team remains committed to investigating (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

Lat Mandal arrested

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Aug 7: In a swift operation, the Directorate of Vigilance & Anti-Corruption, Assam, apprehended Nowshad Ali, a Lat Mandal from the office of the circle officer, Gohpur Revenue Circle, Biswanath district, for allegedly demanding a bribe of ₹ 8,000 for processing Namjari.

Acting on a complaint, a trap was laid by the Vigilance team on Monday at a canteen inside the office premises. Nowshad Ali was caught red-handed around 1:55 PM, accepting ₹4,000 as part of the demanded bribe from the complainant. The tainted money was seized as evidence.

The accused has been arrested and a case has been registered against him under Section 7(a) of the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988. Legal proceedings are ongoing as authorities take strict action against corruption.

India loses over 3 lakh hectares of forest land Green cover loss threatens country's ecosystem

NEW DELHI, Aug 7 (PTI): It's about time all states get into action mode to save their green cover, lest they lose their valuable forests and irrevocably damage the ecosystem and communities.

It is alarming that India has already witnessed the diversion of over three lakh hectares of forest land for non-forestry purposes in the past 15 years under the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980. Union environment minister Bhupendra Patel Yadav revealed this in the Lok Sabha on Monday. India's total forest cover stands at 7,13,789 square kilometres, which is 21.71 per cent of the country's total geographic area.

As per government data, Punjab leads the list with 61,318 hectares of its forest land being diverted for non-forestry purposes since 2008-09. The state has a total forest area of 1,84,700 hectares.

It was followed by Madhya



Pradesh with 40,627 hectares of its forest land being diverted for non-forestry purposes, followed by Odisha at 28,320 hectares, Telangana at 19,419 hectares, Gujarat at 16,070 hectares, Jharkhand at 15,691 hectares, Chhattisgarh at 15,082 hectares, Uttarakhand at

14,141 hectares, Maharashtra at 13,297 hectares, Rajasthan at 12,877 hectares, Arunachal Pradesh at 12,778 hectares and Andhra Pradesh at 11,093 hectares.

Major factors behind such diversion include mining (58,282 hectares), road construction (45,326

hectares), irrigation (36,620 hectares), transmission lines (26,124 hectares), defence (24,337 hectares), hydel projects (13,136 hectares), railways (9,307 hectares), thermal power (4,101 hectares) and wind power infrastructure (2,181 hectares). The Union minister also said that 514 hectares of land was encroached upon during this period.

Meanwhile, the Forest (Conservation) Act (FCA) 1980, a crucial law to conserve forests and biodiversity in India, requires obtaining prior approval from the central government for any project or activity that involves clearing forest land. The Act helps in striking a balance between development and environmental protection by ensuring sustainable use of forest resources.

However, after the government amended the FCA, it limited its applicability to lands recorded as forest in govt (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

Modi govt intensely focusing on boosting infra along border with China: EAM

NEW DELHI, Aug 7 (PTI): India has significantly enhanced border infrastructure along the Line of Actual Control with China in the last nine years that resulted in bolstering the country's overall military preparedness to respond to any security challenge, external affairs minister S Jaishankar said on Monday.

In an interaction with a group of journalists, he said India and China made progress in five-six friction points in eastern Ladakh through talks in the last three years and efforts are underway to resolve the remaining issues. Jaishankar said the Modi government's commitment to securing borders and defending national interest is reflected in its strong push for boosting critical infrastructure along the northern frontier.

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

In remarks that appeared to be directed at the Congress for its criticism of the government's handling of the border row, Jaishankar said making strong comments is not a sign of seriousness and what matters is practical action such as infrastructure push as it helped effective deployment of troops.

Those who neglected border infrastructure cannot



claim they were concerned about the situation (with China), he said. "In the past, (Chinese) troops would come in vehicles while our troops used mule tracks. Now, if we can deploy our troops in large numbers, one big reason is infrastructure. China had the first mover advantage, and now we will do what needs to be done, whether they like it or not," Jaishankar said.

He criticised the policy of the past to not develop border areas and said Chinese patrolling along the LAC became stronger from around the 2000s as China built roads and bridges along the frontier. Jaishankar said India could deploy its troops quickly in 2020 following the border row in eastern Ladakh (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

Need for international collaboration on crypto assets regulation: MoS Finance

NEW DELHI, Aug 7 (PTI): Minister of State for Finance Pankaj Chaudhary on Monday underlined the need for international collaboration to prevent regulatory arbitrage with regard to crypto assets.

Crypto Assets and Non-Fungible Tokens (NFTs) are by definition borderless and require international collaboration to prevent regulatory arbitrage, he said in a written reply in the Lok Sabha.

"Therefore, any legislation for regulation or for banning can be effective only with significant international collaboration on evaluation of the risks and benefits and evolution of common taxonomy and standards. There is no available timeline on such collaboration as multiple countries and organisations are involved in the process," he said.

In reply to another question, Chaudhary said, the central government's debt was ₹ 58.6 lakh crore (52.2 per cent of GDP) and ₹ 155.6 lakh crore (57.1 per cent of GDP) as of March 31, 2014, and March 31, 2023, respectively. At the end of FY 2019-20, the Central Government debt was ₹ 105.1 lakh crore (52.4 per cent of GDP), which increased to ₹ 121.9 lakh crore (61.5 per cent of GDP) at the end of FY 2020-21, he said. This change in Central Government debt by about 9 percentage points in a single year was mainly on account of Covid-19 pandemic, which hugely disrupted projections of the government's public finances. However, he said, the Central Government's debt has declined to 57.1 per cent of GDP at the



end of FY 2022-23. It needs to be noted that, India's nominal GDP has increased from ₹ 112.34 lakh crore in 2013-14 to ₹ 272.41 lakh crore in 2022-23, he said.

The risk profile of Central Government's debt stands out as safe and prudent in terms of accepted parameters of indicator-based approach for debt sustainability, he said, adding, the Government debt is held predominantly in domestic currency. As on March 31, 2014, he said, Government's external debt (at current exchange rate) was 6.4 per cent of total debt and 3.3 per cent of GDP, which has declined to 4.8 per cent of total debt and 2.7 per cent of GDP as on

March 31, 2023. Government's external debt is financed mainly from multilateral and bilateral agencies, he said.

Replying to a question on inflation, he said, the government has taken various measures to augment domestic availability and stabilize the prices of essential food items. These steps include releases from the buffer stock, imposition of stock limits, monitoring of stocks declared by entities to prevent hoarding as also requisite changes in trade policy instruments like rationalization of import duty, changes in import quota, and restrictions on exports of specific commodities, he said. Besides, he said, in order

to control core (non-food, non-fuel) inflation, the Government has, from time to time, calibrated the import duty and excise duty on specified key inputs. In response to another question, the minister said, the government has taken various measures including delicately balancing the need for broad-based and sustained economic revival and fiscal consolidation. The government has announced its commitment to reduce fiscal deficit to a level below 4.5 per cent of GDP by 2025-26. Increasing the buoyancy of tax revenue through improved compliance, improving efficiency and effectiveness of public expenditure, augmenting productive efficiency of the economy, etc. are the important measures taken by the Government to bring down the debt and strengthen the economy, he said.

Chaudhary in another reply said an export target of USD 2 trillion has been set for the year 2030 for India. No target for trade deficit has been fixed so far, he said.

"At end-March 2023, India's external debt was placed at USD 624.7 billion as against USD 619.1 billion as at end-March, 2022. Valuation gains due to the appreciation of the US dollar vis-à-vis the Indian rupee and major currencies such as Yen, SDR, and Euro were placed at USD 20.6 billion," he said.

Excluding the valuation effect, external debt would have increased by USD 26.2 billion instead of USD 5.6 billion at end-March 2023 over end-March 2022, he said.

14,277 GST appeals pending against disputed tax demands by Central authorities: FinMin



NEW DELHI, Aug 7 (PTI): As many as 14,227 appeals against disputed tax demands raised by Central GST authorities are pending as of June 2023, Parliament was informed on Monday, Minister of State for Finance Pankaj Chaudhary said the 49th meeting of the GST Council had approved the setting up of GST Appellate Tribunals across the country.

"It has been planned to establish the State benches in a phased manner based on the request of states," the Minister said in a written reply in the Lok Sabha.

He also gave details of the number of GST appeals against de-

mands by Central GST authorities pending at various levels. During 2023-24 (up to June 2023), 14,227 appeals were pending. The number was gone up from 11,899 pending appeals as of March 2023.

Setting up of GST Appellate Tribunal benches in states would help in faster dispute resolution. Currently, taxpayers aggrieved with the ruling of tax authorities are required to move the respective High Courts. The resolution process takes longer time as High Courts are already burdened with backlog of cases and do not have a specialised bench to deal with GST cases.

Equity markets extend rally, Infinix unveils the GT 10 Pro



MUMBAI, Aug 7 (PTI): Benchmark equity indices ended with gains on Monday, extending their previous day's rally, unfazed by a weak trend in global markets amid buying in Mahindra & Mahindra, Infosys, Tata Consultancy Services and Reliance Industries.

However, continuous foreign fund outflows prevented markets from registering a sharp rally.

The 30-share BSE Sensex

climbed 232.23 points or 0.35 per cent to settle at 65,953.48. During the day, it jumped 346.65 points or 0.52 per cent to 66,067.90.

The NSE Nifty advanced 80.30 points or 0.41 per cent to end at 19,597.30. From the Sensex pack, Mahindra & Mahindra jumped over 4 per cent, emerging as the biggest gainer. Sun Pharma, Bajaj Finserv, Tata Consultancy Services, Infosys, Hindustan Unilever,

JSW Steel, Wipro, Maruti, HCL Technologies, Tech Mahindra and ICICI Bank were the other major gainers.

State Bank of India, Tata Motors, Axis Bank, Kotak Mahindra Bank, Bajaj Finance, Tata Steel, Nestle and HDFC Bank were the laggards.

"The Indian market began the data-centric week with modest gains, primarily propelled by strong performances in pharma and IT sectors. Global markets portrayed a mixed picture, with US futures exhibiting positivity in response to a moderation in bond yields, while European markets experienced declines due to weak economic data. Caution prevailed in the market due to the anticipation of upcoming inflation data and the RBI's monetary policy," said Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services.

In the broader market, the BSE midcap gauge climbed 0.56 per cent and smallcap index advanced 0.26 per cent.

Among the indices, healthcare jumped 1.61 per cent, telecommu-

nication climbed 1.28 per cent, IT (1.07 per cent), teck (0.91 per cent), realty (0.63 per cent), auto (0.32 per cent) and commodities (0.28 per cent).

Utilities, bankex, metal and power were the laggards.

In Asian markets, Tokyo settled in the green while Seoul, Shanghai and Hong Kong ended lower.

European markets were trading in the negative territory. The US markets ended lower on Friday. Global oil benchmark Brent crude declined 0.73 per cent to USD 85.63 a barrel.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth Rs 1,892.77 crore on Monday, according to exchange data. After five months of sustained buying, foreign investors have turned net sellers and pulled out over ₹ 2,000 crore from the Indian equities in the first week of August.

After three days of decline, the BSE benchmark on Friday climbed 480.57 points or 0.74 per cent to settle at 65,721.25. The Nifty advanced 135.35 points or 0.70 per cent to end at 19,517.

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Aug 7: Infinix, a leading smartphone brand, has officially launched its highly anticipated flagship smartphone, the GT 10 Pro, setting new standards in the world of smartphones. The GT 10 Pro is packed with cutting-edge features, blazing-fast memory, and a groundbreaking camera system, promising to redefine design, performance, and user experience for tech enthusiasts and avid gamers alike. With a competitive price of just ₹ 17,999, the GT 10 Pro will be available in two captivating color variants: Cyber Black and Mirage Silver.

Anish Kapoor, CEO of Infinix India, expressed his excitement about the latest launch, stating, "At Infinix, we have always been at the forefront of delivering groundbreaking advancements across various product categories. With the GT series, we take a momentous leap forward by introducing breakthrough innovations to the smartphone industry."

Designed for gaming excellence

Recognising the growing demand for powerful gaming smartphones, the GT 10 Pro boasts a captivating cyber mecha design and is equipped with a powerful 8050 gaming chipset. The device offers a pure OS experience, enhancing its value as a gaming powerhouse. Infinix's commitment to pushing boundaries is evident in the GT 10 Pro, providing exceptional solutions that blend unrivaled performance, style, and innovation.

Fastest memory and most powerful chipset

The GT 10 Pro leads the segment with the

fastest memory, featuring a spacious 256GB UFS 3.1 storage, ensuring lightning-fast data transfer and seamless multitasking. With up to 16GB of RAM (8GB LPDDR4x + 8GB Virtual RAM), the GT 10 Pro delivers unparalleled performance, promising smooth and efficient multitasking for users.

Setting a new benchmark for processing power

Powered by the MediaTek Dimensity 8050 chipset, the GT 10 Pro sets a new benchmark for processing power. Rigorous testing conducted in Infinix labs has validated its impressive AnTuTu score of approximately 700K, placing it at the forefront of its competition.

An immersive display experience

The GT 10 Pro offers a 6.67" 10-bit FHD+ Eye-care AMOLED Display, providing an immersive gaming experience with brilliant visuals. Its adaptive 120Hz refresh rate and a 360Hz touch sampling rate ensure smooth and responsive interactions, offering seamless gameplay with exceptional clarity. The DCI-P3 100% wide color gamut, 900 NITS of peak brightness, and a 5,000,000:1 contrast ratio bring content to life with vibrant colors and exquisite detail.

The Infinix GT 10 Pro promises to be a game-changer in the smartphone market, catering to the needs of tech enthusiasts and avid gamers with its unparalleled performance, striking design, and immersive display. With its official launch, the GT 10 Pro opens doors to limitless possibilities, setting a new standard for smartphones in the industry.

Rupee rises 5 paise to close at 82.76 against US dollar

NEW DELHI, Aug 7 (PTI): The rupee gained 5 paise to close at 82.76 (provisional) against the US dollar on Monday, tracking positive domestic equities.

However, sustained foreign fund outflows and a stronger American currency in the overseas market dented investor sentiments, forex traders said.

At the interbank foreign exchange market, the local unit opened at 82.73 against the US dollar and moved in a range of 82.71 to 82.77 in the day trade.

The rupee finally settled 5 paise higher at 82.76 (provisional) against the previous close of 82.81 on Friday.

The Indian rupee began the week on a positive note, adjusting Friday's weakness in the dollar index and lower crude oil prices, said Dilip Parmar, Research Analyst, HDFC Securities.

The near-term focus will remain on the RBI monetary policy decision scheduled on Thursday. The market is already pricing in the status quo and don't expect any cut this year following inflation worries, Parmar said.

The RBI monetary policy announcement on Thursday is the key event this week. The RBI Governor-headed six-member Monetary Policy Committee's (MPC) meeting is scheduled for August 8-10. The policy decision will be announced on August 10 by Governor Shaktikanta Das.

From the technical side, spot USDINR has given a bullish breakout on the weekly chart and is eyeing an all-time high of 83.30 and may hold the support at 82.25, the long-term moving average line.

The dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, rose 0.33 per cent to 102.35.

Meanwhile, Brent crude futures, the global oil benchmark, declined 0.94 per cent to USD 85.43 per barrel.

Access Development Services organises workshop for NABARD-promoted FPOs

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Aug 7: On Monday, Access Development Services conducted a one-day workshop and interaction for Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs) promoted by NABARD. The workshop aimed to provide support and handholding services to these FPOs as part of the MANDI-Mainstreaming Agriculture through Networks and Development Initiatives project, in collaboration with The Mastercard Centre for Inclusive Growth.

The workshop saw the participation of 80 FPO representatives and the Chief Guest, CGM of NABARD's Assam Regional Office. Various sessions were held, focusing on crucial aspects of

FPOs, such as developing input linkages, credit and financial inclusion, output linkage, and market access.

Prominent speakers addressed the participants during the event. Amarjit Lahkar, Proprietor of Crop Smart Agricultural Services, discussed the importance of input linkages and strategies for establishing a thriving input business. Dhritiman Deka, Director of Nutriagro Natura Agrotech Ltd, and Ida Van Grevenbroek, Operations Manager of aQysta, a Netherlands-based Social Enterprise under their GROWN Farm Incubation program, elaborated on output linkages, market access, and future prospects for establishing viable market linkages

for FPOs' produce.

Pankaj Barman, Project Lead of Sammunati, conducted a session on the significance of credit linkage and financial inclusion for FPOs.

The event also witnessed a momentous occasion—the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between Baska Block Farmer Producer Company, promoted by NABARD, and Nutriagro Natura Agrotech. This MoU, a first-of-its-kind initiative for Baksa District, BTAD, aims to ensure sustainable market linkage for the FPC. Nutriagro Natura Agrotech will procure various agricultural and horticultural produce from the FPC at negotiable rates under the MoU.

Auto component industry reports highest turnover in FY23; aims to log double-digit growth this fiscal

NEW DELHI, Aug 7 (PTI): The domestic auto component industry expects to log in double-digit sales growth in the current fiscal after having reported its highest-ever turnover in 2022-23, as demand is expected to remain robust.

As per the Automotive Component Manufacturers Association (ACMA), the sector reported a turnover of ₹ 5.6 lakh crore last fiscal, registering a growth of 33 per cent over ₹ 4.2 lakh crore in 2021-22.

In 2022-23, exports grew by 5 per cent to ₹ 1.61 lakh crore while imports grew by 11 per cent to ₹ 1.63 lakh crore, it added.

The aftermarket, estimated at ₹ 85,333 crore also witnessed a steady growth of 15 per cent while component sales to OEMs in the domestic market grew by 39.5 per cent to ₹ 4.76 lakh crore, ACMA said.

"With significant mitigation in the supply-side issues of availability of semiconductors, input raw-material costs and logistics, the vehicle industry is expected to continue to perform well in FY24, which augurs well for the auto components sector," ACMA President Sunjay Kapur noted.

Whilst the automotive value chain faced significant disruptions in the wake of the pandemic, ve-



hicle sales, especially in the PV, CV and tractor segments have now reached pre-pandemic levels. Even the two-wheeler industry has recovered well, he added.

When asked about the growth expected for the industry in the current fiscal, Kapur said, "It should be double-digit."

ACMA Director General Vinnie Mehta said the industry is looking to enhance exports while reducing imports, especially from China which accounts for around 30 per cent of the total imports.

He noted that from a peak trade deficit of USD 2.5 billion a couple of years back, the industry has moved to a better position with a trade deficit of USD 200 million in terms of imports.

"We are continuously working along with other industry bodies like SIAM to enhance exports and reduce imports," Mehta said.

ACMA said auto component sales to OEMs, in the domestic market, grew by 39.5 per cent to ₹ 4.76 lakh crore as compared with the previous year.

"On the back of significant vehicle sales in the country, a robust aftermarket and steady exports, the auto component industry demonstrated its best-ever performance in FY23," Mehta said.

Commenting further, Kapur noted that there has been a steady growth in exports despite recessionary trends in Europe and the US which are key export destinations for the auto components industry.

"Strong rebound in vehicle sales in the domestic market also led to a sharper rise in imports that has translated into trade deficit this year," he added.

The ACMA represents over 850 manufacturers who constitute more than 90 per cent of the auto component industry's turnover in the organised sector.

Emami Q1FY24 net up by 88pc to ₹137 cr on strong demand

KOLKATA, Aug 7 (PTI): Driven by robust growth, FMCG player Emami Limited on Monday said its consolidated net profit for the first quarter of FY'24 surged by 88 per cent to ₹ 136.75 crore, compared to ₹ 72.69 crore in the corresponding quarter of the previous year.

The company's consolidated revenues grew by 7 per cent to ₹ 826 crore during the quarter.

The company attributed the increase in net profit to strong growth in both its domestic and international businesses.

"Excluding the sales of the summer portfolio, the domestic business grew strongly by 16 per cent, while the overall growth of the domestic business in Q1FY24 stood at 7 per cent. The pain management range, healthcare range, and BoroPlus achieved robust double-digit growth, and Dermicool posted high single-digit growth," the company said in a statement.

Meesho emerges as the first profitable horizontal e-commerce company in India

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Aug 7: Meesho, India's unique e-commerce marketplace, proudly announces its historic achievement of becoming the first horizontal e-commerce company in India to turn profitable. This landmark moment solidifies Meesho's position as a trailblazer in the Indian e-commerce landscape, demonstrating the success of its innovative business model. The company achieved profitability at a consolidated PAT level, encompassing all costs, including ESOP, across all divisions and categories, well ahead of the expected timeline, as of July 2023.

In the last 12 months, Meesho experienced remarkable growth, with order volumes increasing by 43%, resulting in over a billion orders. The platform's strong user retention is evident as 85% of the orders came from returning users. Non-fashion categories also surged by over 120%, showcasing the platform's diverse appeal. Notably, each category is profitable on a standalone basis, emphasizing Meesho's commitment to sustainable growth.

The revenue over the last 12 months witnessed an impressive 54% surge, driven by substantial growth in order volumes and monetization rate. Despite an 80% reduction in customer acquisition cost (CAC) and marketing spends year-on-year, Meesho remains the most downloaded shopping app in India, highlighting its organic strength and strong word-of-mouth presence. Serving over 140 million unique transacting users in the last 12 months, Meesho continues to revolutionize the e-commerce landscape in India.

Meesho's operational efficiency also saw significant improvements, with a 60% year-on-year reduction in tech costs. The company's current run rate has soared to an impressive 3.5 million orders per day, further solidifying its position as a true industry leader.

Vidit Aatrey, CEO, and founder at Meesho, expressed his pride in the achievement, stating, "Today's milestone is a testament to the unwavering dedication of the entire Meesho family. Since our inception, we have been driven by a vision to empower millions of small businesses, entrepreneurs, and customers. As the first horizontal e-commerce platform to achieve profitability in India, we remain committed to driving sustainable growth, democratizing e-commerce for everyone, and unlocking the true potential of India's heartland."

Meesho operates on a 0% commission model, providing a lucrative proposition for its sellers who are small businesses and individual entrepreneurs. By offering a diverse range of unique, high-quality products at competitive prices, Meesho caters to the preferences of its diverse customer base. The company's strategic focus on servicing tier 3 and tier 4 cities extends its reach to new-to-e-commerce users, promoting inclusivity. Meesho's asset-light model with 80% utilization in third-party logistics providers contributes to positive unit economics, providing a competitive advantage.

With a series of achievements in 2023, including world's fastest shopping app to register 500 million downloads, India's fastest e-commerce platform to cross 1 million seller base, and recognition as TIME's 100 most influential companies, Meesho continues to make waves in the e-commerce industry, setting new standards for growth and innovation.

E-Rickshaws leading to massive traffic jams in Boko town



HT Correspondent

BOKO, Aug 7: The increasing presence of battery-operated rickshaws, also known as E-Rickshaws, has become a major cause of massive traffic jams in Boko town on a daily basis. Hundreds of E-Rickshaws flock to Boko town through the highway, resulting in severe congestion on National Highway 17. The situation has become a matter of concern as several accidents have already occurred due to the reckless behaviour of E-Rickshaw drivers.

Anupam Rabha, a mechanic dealing with E-Rickshaws, stated that four shops in Boko sell approximately 100 E-Rickshaws each month.

In response to the growing issue, Kamrup district transport officer Rupjyoti Kalita asserted that E-Rickshaws operating on highways are strictly prohibited. A road safety awareness meeting was recently organised in Boko to address the problem. Kalita warned that legal actions will be taken against E-Rickshaw operators if they continue to violate traffic rules.

An enforcement inspector of Kamrup district, Krishna Kanta Patgiri, and his team visited Boko on Saturday to assess the situation. However, they faced challenges in controlling the traffic jam and seizing E-Rickshaws that were breaking traffic rules due to limited space in the Boko police station for storing seized vehicles.

The officer-in-charge of Boko PS, Phanindra Nath, revealed that they had previously seized E-Rickshaws for violating rules, but some drivers resumed their reckless behaviour after a brief period of compliance. He also expressed that taking action against violators often results in allegations of police brutality from E-Rickshaw drivers, who claim to represent the poor and working class.

Moreover, it has been reported that certain community leaders have influenced E-Rickshaw drivers to threaten protests if their vehicles are seized, rather than advising them to abide by the rules and regulations. This has added to the challenge faced by the administration in controlling the situation and ensuring smooth traffic flow in Boko town.

Modern English School student earns admission to Shri Ram College of Commerce, New Delhi

HT Bureau

Guwahati, Aug 7: Modern English School, located in Kahilipara, is delighted to announce the exceptional achievements of its students in various renowned educational institutions across the country. Jyotishman Das, a recent class 12 pass-out from the institute, has been accepted into one of India's prestigious colleges, Shri Ram College of Commerce, New Delhi, for further studies in B. Com (Hons.). Shri Ram College of Commerce is affiliated with the University of Delhi and is ranked as the top commerce college in the nation and 11th overall in the Colleges Categories by the National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF), ministry of Education, and government of India. Jyotishman has consistently been an outstanding student, previously bringing many accolades to Modern English School. The achievements of Modern English School students also include successful placements in prestigious institutes across various disciplines, such as Symbiosis Law School, Hyderabad, NIT Silchar, Kamala Nehru College, New Delhi, Christ University, Bengaluru, Jindal Global Law School, Sonapat, and more. The school's comprehensive approach to education, focusing on critical thinking, creativity, and character development, has undoubtedly played a significant role in shaping these accomplished individuals.

Jonali Das, the principal of Modern English School, expressed her delight and pride, stating, "We are immensely proud of our students for their outstanding achievements. These accomplishments reflect their hard work, determination, and the value-added education we have instilled during their time at our institution. We are confident they will continue excelling in their chosen paths and contribute positively to society."

BSS and ABSU joint delegation seek introduction of Bodo in Delhi University

HT Correspondent

KOKRAJHAR, Aug 7: A joint delegation team comprising six members from Bodo Sahitya Sabha (BSS) and All Bodo Students Union (ABSU) visited the faculty of Arts and department of Modern Indian Languages Literary Studies at Delhi University. The team submitted a memorandum urging the introduction of the Bodo language department in the University of Delhi on Monday. The delegation team included Dr Surath Narzary, president of Bodo Sahitya Sabha; Dipen Boro, president of ABSU; Kungkha Swargiary, adviser of ABSU; Kameswar Boro, secretary of BSS; Kwrmdao Wary, vice president of ABSU; and Khanindra Basumatary, ABSU general secretary.

During the meeting with Prof Amitava Chakraborty, dean of Faculty of Arts, and head of department (HOD) of department of MIL & Literary Studies, and Dr Mitali Barman, assistant professor of department of MIL & Literary Studies, the delegation received meaningful and informative insights. The dean and HOD assured to initiate Bodo MIL (Modern Indian Language) under the Ability Enhancement Course (AEC) from this year under the department of Modern Indian Language and Literary Studies. The proposal includes appointing guest faculty for teaching Bodo in the University of Delhi, with plans for creating a permanent post in the future, for which the university will approach the government.

Asomiya Yuva Mancha calls for 24-hour ONGC bandh tomorrow

HT Correspondent

SIVASAGAR, Aug 7: Asomiya Yuva Mancha has announced its plan to launch a protest against ONGC management and the Sivasagar district administration in response to ONGC's recent 372 vehicle recruitment notification. The organisation is expressing displeasure with the new criteria set by ONGC for vehicle drivers, which requires a minimum of three years of experience as divers. The Mancha argues that this requirement violates the standard set by the Road Transport department for drivers' qualifications.

Jadov Gogoi, president of the unit, raised the issue of the discrepancy in the driver qualification standards set by ONGC, which differs from the national standard on which driver licenses are based. The organisation demands that ONGC recruit local employees for the Sukapha Multi Speciality Hospital funded by the company and declare Nazira as an ONGC Township.

DG SSB Rashmi Shukla visits 1st Bn SSB Sonapur



HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Aug 7: Rashmi Shukla, IPS, the director general of Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB), visited the Frontier Headquarters SSB in Guwahati and the 1st Bn SSB in Sonapur, Assam on Sunday.

Upon her arrival, she was warmly received by RK Bhumbra, the inspector general of Frontier Hqrs SSB Guwahati, and other senior officers of SSB. At Frontier Headquarters Sonapur, Guwahati, she was welcomed with a splendid Guard of Honour. During her visit, she assessed the work and security preparations carried out by the Frontier Headquarters & 1st Bn SSB Sonapur. She emphasised the importance of effective guarding of the Indo-Bhutan border and the need for meaningful civic action programmes. Rashmi Shukla also provided necessary directions while reviewing the ongoing work.

Later, Rashmi Shukla, IPS, interacted with officers and addressed the Sainik Sammelan at 1st Bn SSB Sonapur. The visit concluded with a cultural programme and 'badakhana' organised at 1st Bn SSB Sonapur.



Additionally, they urge ONGC to invest in the area's development, considering the significant revenue the oil giant has earned from the Sivasagar district over the past six decades.

The organisation had submitted a memorandum to the deputy

commissioner, Sivasagar, and the executive director of ONGC, Nazira, expressing their concerns on July 27. However, as there has been no response from ONGC, Asomiya Yuva Mancha has decided to call for a 24-hour ONGC bandh on August 9. The decision

was made during a meeting in Sivasagar, attended by central committee president Jadov Gogoi, executive members Dharmakanta Gogoi, Dwipen Nath, district committee president Jadumoni Kalita, secretary Bishnujyoti Saikia, and others.

JE outbreak in Boko area; 2 confirmed deaths, 2 suspected deaths reported

HT Correspondent

BOKO, Aug 7: Japanese Encephalitis (JE) outbreak in the Boko area has claimed the lives of two individuals, with two more deaths under suspicion. The sub-divisional medical officer (SDMO) of Boko, Mantu Kumar Das, confirmed the fatalities of Hari Pathak, 58, from Bhalukghata area on July 28, 2023, and Juli Das, 35, from Garamimura Jakupara village, who passed away at GMCH on August 4, 2023.

SDMO Mantu Kumar Das also mentioned two other suspected cases of the virus, Jaharun Bibi from Jambari village under Chaygaon LAC and Arup Das from Sekhadari village, who also died in July.

Urging the people of Boko to take safety precautions, SDMO Das said that Japanese Encephalitis is primarily transmitted through the bite of infected mosquitoes, especially during the months of June, July, and August.

Noting that Japanese encephalitis outbreaks occur annually in Boko and across Assam, SDMO Das expressed concern over this year's situation being more severe. He attributed part of the problem to the practice of pig farming in close proximity to houses, as mosquitoes transmit the virus from pigs to humans.

To mitigate the risk, the SDMO advised keeping farms at a distance from residential areas and encour-



aged the use of mosquito nets while sleeping. Additionally, the use of incense and frankincense in the evening hours was recommended as primary precautions against the virus.

SDMO Mantu Kumar Das urged people to be vigilant and seek immediate medical attention if anyone experiences fever or related symptoms. He assured that the state government has provided necessary treatments for Japanese Encephalitis.

Nowgong College celebrates 79th foundation day and graduation ceremony

HT Correspondent

NAGAON, Aug 7: Nowgong College marked its 79th foundation day with great enthusiasm and also celebrated the graduation ceremony at the college auditorium in Nagaon. The event commenced with the hoisting of the college flag by Sarat Kr Dutta, president of the college governing body.

The distinguished guest for the occasion was retired Justice of Gauhati High Court and chairperson of the Inquiry Commission of Assam Public Service Commission, Bipalab Kumar Sarma. The open session was chaired by Sarat Kr Dutta, and Dr Bhuvan Chandra Chetia, the coordinator of the Internal Quality Assurance Cell of the college, served as the anchor for the event.

Dr Sarat Borkatoki, the principal of the college, delivered the welcome address and expressed how the graduation ceremony added a new dimension to

the foundation day celebration, making the event even more enriching.

During the program, the college authorities presented appreciation certificates to the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd rank holders in Arts, Science, and Commerce in the 2023 examination. The Women Cell of the college awarded the 'Best Graduate Award' to Mukibur Rahman, and the 'Niresch Chandra Paul Memorial Award' was presented to Chirasmitta Saha.

In his address as the chief guest, Bipalab Kumar Sarma said that the universality of humanity and the language of love unites everyone. He compared knowledge to a flowing river that cannot be confined to a container.

The open session witnessed the presence of Dr Pulin Ch. Bora, the vice-principal of the college, along with all teaching staff, students, alumni, and non-teaching staff of the college, making it a memorable and cherished event.

Man held in Guwahati after video of torturing mother goes viral

GUWAHATI, Aug 7 (PTI): A person was detained in Guwahati on Monday after a viral video purportedly showed him assaulting his aged mother, police said.

The purported video, which has gone viral on social media, was filmed by a neighbour of the family. It showed the man hitting his aged mother with a stick as she pleaded with him to stop beating her.

As the video reached the police, a team from the Dispur police station went to the house of the accused in the Hengrabari area and picked him up, an official said.

"We have detained the man and questioning is on," he said.

Neighbours alleged that the man had also tied his mother in the courtyard of the house in scorching heat and poured hot water on her.

"We are yet to ascertain the facts of the matter and an investigation is underway," the official said.

Biswanath girl to represent India in 11th Junior Wushu Championship in China

BISWANATH CHARIALI, Aug 7: Mingbi Borphan, a promising young Wushu player from Gereki village in Sootea, under the Biswanath subdivision, has been selected to represent India in the 11th Junior Wushu Championship, scheduled to take place in Macau, China, from August 14 to 21. Mingbi, the daughter of Robert Borphan, embarked on her journey to Delhi on Monday in preparation for the prestigious championship.

The entire Sootea community, including individuals and organisations, has extended their best wishes to Mingbi for her remarkable achievement. Notably, Mingbi's elder sister, Ningshi Borphan, has also represented the nation in the Moscow Star International Wushu Championship in Russia.

ACMS to launch protest on Aug 11 across tea estates

HT Correspondent

DIBRUGARH, Aug 7: The Assam Chah Mazdoor Sangha (ACMS) has announced plans to launch a one-hour protest on August 11 in every tea estate across the state to voice their various demands and submit a memorandum to the chief minister. ACMS president Paban Singh Ghatowar stated during a press conference, "On August 11, we will initiate a one-hour protest program in every tea estate across the state to press for our demands and submit a memorandum to the chief minister regarding our long-pending issues."

The key demands put forward by the ACMS include increasing the minimum wages of tea garden workers to ₹ 351 and ensuring that small tea garden workers receive wages of ₹ 232. Although this increase was already notified, many workers have not received the updated wages due to the failure of the Social Welfare department of Assam.

Ghatowar also highlighted the dire situation of hospitals in around 60% of tea gardens, where there is an acute shortage of doctors and medical staff. The condition of these hospitals is appalling, and the ACMS demands urgent repairs and recruitment of nurses, medical staff, and doctors to improve healthcare services for tea garden workers.

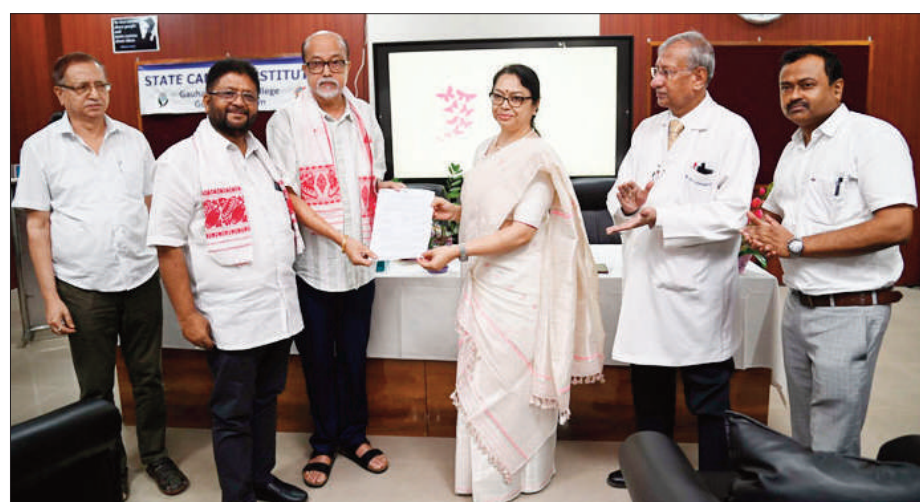
Furthermore, Ghatowar said that 112 Adivasi communities residing in Assam have not yet been granted the Schedule Tribe (ST) status. The ACMS urges the government to include them under the purview of ST status, as is the case in other states where they enjoy the benefits of this status.

SITA extends funding to GMCH for 'Molecular Profiling of Breast Cancer Cases in Assam'

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Aug 7: The State Innovation and Transformation Aayog (SITA) vice-chairman, Ramen Deka, handed over the first installment of funds to Gauhati Medical College and Hospital (GMCH), Guwahati, to initiate a joint project titled 'Molecular Profiling of Breast Cancer Cases in Assam for Future Therapeutic Intervention'.

Ramen Deka, along with co-vice chairman Dhruva Prasad Baishya, presented the funds to Dr Muktanjalee Deka, HoD, Oncopathology, State Cancer Institute, GMCH, Guwahati, during an official function held at the State Cancer Institute, GMC, Guwahati. The primary objective of the project is to conduct outreach programs in rural areas of Assam, conduct molecular profiling of breast cancer cases, and explore ways to prevent and manage the increasing instances of breast cancer in



the region.

Speaking as the chief guest, vice-chairman Ramen Deka emphasised the medical fraternity's responsibility towards society. He also stressed the importance of research and development in the field and expressed his desire to provide further assistance in this regard.

The department of Oncopathology, State Cancer Institute, GMCH, Guwahati, will be the implementing partner of SITA for this project.

Other dignitaries who addressed the program included co-vice chairman Dhruva Prasad Baishya, Dr Muktanjalee Deka, HoD, Oncopathology, State Cancer Institute, GMC, Guwahati, Dr BC Goswami, director of

State Cancer Institute, GMC, and Tandralee Bhuyan, research scientist.

The event was attended by Vijay Kumar Gupta, chairman of DNPL, Guna Gobinda Das, advisor (F & A) SITA, DS Hazri, ARO SITA, Dr Devajit Choudhary, superintendent, SCI, and other officials from SITA and the medical fraternity.

Kamrup DC launches IMI 5.0 and U-Win app at Hahim

HT Correspondent

HAHIM, Aug 7: Keerthi Jalli, the deputy commissioner of Kamrup district, inaugurated the Intensified Mission Indradhanush (IMI) 5.0 district-wise, a vaccine catch-up campaign aimed at reaching zero-dose children between the ages of 0 and 5 years, and pregnant women who may have missed any vaccine doses in the national immunisation schedule. The launch event took place at Hahim State Dispensary in Boko, situated along the Assam-Meghalaya border, on Monday.

Intensified Mission Indradhanush 5.0 will be conducted in three phases across the country. The first phase will run from August 7 to 12, the second phase from September 11 to 16, and the third phase from October 9 to 14.

Dr Ananias Sangma, in charge of the Hahim State Dispensary, stated, "During the program, eight babies and three pregnant women were vaccinated who may have missed Measles-Rubella vaccines, DPT booster, or OPV booster doses."

In addition to the vaccination campaign, DC Keerthi Jalli also launched a mobile app named 'U-Win' portal. The platform aims to facilitate the registration and vaccination of every pregnant woman, record their delivery outcomes,



register newborn deliveries, administer birth doses, and record all vaccination events. DC Keerthi Jalli emphasised the significance of the program in remote areas like Hahim, saying, "I chose to launch the program district-wise because I wanted to assess the health conditions of the women and children in this area."

During the event, DC Keerthi Jalli interacted with the women and children and inspected the Hahim hospital prem-

ises along with Dr Ananias Sangma, in charge of the hospital.

The program saw participation from various officials and stakeholders, including RHAC executive member Sonam Rabha, Boko revenue circle officer Dibash Bordoloi, joint director of health services, Kamrup, Dr Mohitosh Benerjee, SDMO&H of Boko Hospital Mantu Kumar Das, ASHA workers, and local residents of the area.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

Never find fault with the absent.
- Alexander Pope

RaGa's triumphant return

In a stunning turn of events, Rahul Gandhi has made a triumphant comeback as the Member of Parliament for Wayanad, rekindling hopes and ambitions within the Congress party. The Lok Sabha Secretariat's decision to reinstate Gandhi, who had previously been disqualified due to a conviction in the Modi surname defamation case, has breathed new life into the Congress ranks. This development also comes as a significant boost to the party's No-Confidence Motion against Prime Minister Narendra Modi. While the Lok Sabha Secretariat acted swiftly in disqualifying Rahul Gandhi earlier, allegations have arisen against Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla for not displaying the same alacrity in his reinstatement. Many speculate that his disqualification was part of a broader plan to remove him as a potential threat to the Modi government, especially following his highly successful 'Bharat Jodo Yatra'. With his return to Parliament, Rahul Gandhi is expected to take on Prime Minister Modi head-on, much like his powerful display during his previous tenure. His previous scathing remarks against Modi's close associate, Gautam Adani, had the treasury benches mesmerized and anxious about what lies ahead with the looming No-Confidence Motion.

Rahul Gandhi's transformation during his time away from the political scene has been remarkable, causing a shift in the Congress party's dynamics. His 3750 km-long journey from Kanyakumari to Kashmir not only strengthened his resolve but also earned him respect from the opposition and concern from the BJP. Gone are the days when he was labeled the 'Pappu' by the BJP IT Cell, as he emerged as a formidable force with a 'salt and pepper beard,' bearding 'Modani' in the Modi government's den. His return has sparked celebrations in the Muslim-dominated Wayanad parliamentary constituency, securing his position as an unwavering figure in the region. Rahul Gandhi's reentry into the political landscape has been met with enthusiasm by Congress workers, confident that he will reclaim the shine that Narendra Modi has held for nearly a decade. The No-Confidence Motion against Prime Minister Modi promises to be a gripping affair, particularly with Rahul Gandhi's influential presence and the fiery spirit of Congress MPs. His reinstatement is expected to have a profound impact on the upcoming assembly elections and the 2024 general elections, elevating the spirits of the opposition alliance 'INDIA'.

The BJP, on the other hand, will be left wondering about the potential impact of Rahul Gandhi's resurgence and how close they were to facing a potent challenge. The Modi government may be feeling nervous as they brace themselves for the storm that Rahul Gandhi is likely to unleash. As Rahul Gandhi returns to his official MP residence after 135 days in the political wilderness, the Congress party finds relief in his presence once again. The rejuvenated leadership, coupled with Rahul Gandhi's unwavering determination, promises to bring Congress back to its roaring best. Kerala, known as a Gandhi family political bastion, will continue its unwavering support for the Congress party, further cementing Rahul Gandhi's position in the region. Rahul Gandhi's triumphant return to the Lok Sabha marks a significant moment in Indian politics. His presence is expected to inject new energy into the Congress party and the opposition alliance, leaving the Modi government wary of the challenges ahead. As the nation watches with bated breath, only time will reveal the true impact of Rahul Gandhi's re-entry into the political arena.

Fitch downgrade of US debt hastens dollar's displacement as default global currency

By: K Raveendran

When empires fall, they don't exactly come crashing down. It is a process that takes time to complete. So when rating agency Fitch decided to lower the credit rating of the United States triple A to AA+, the market was not expecting the heavens to fall. But it is a clear disapproval of the economic policies of America. The Fitch downgrade, which puts a question mark over the credibility of American debt, is the first in over 10 years after S&P lowered the US rating in 2011, a downgrade that the rating agency has refused to change since then.

Fitch had issued a warning in May this year that there might be a credit rating cut if the United States did not address the debt ceiling issue. This problem was resolved by raising the debt limit until the projected 2025 year, but it doesn't change the issues that the rating agency had flagged. It pointed to deteriorating management standards in the US over the last 20 years, potential fiscal issues in the next three years, and a massive increase in interest costs in recent years. The interest cost has ballooned from \$500 billion in 2020 to almost \$1 trillion. The market has taken the news in its stride in the sense the reaction has been rather muted, although dollar continues to smart under some big hits. The current US debt market is almost five times larger than the total market of all other government issuers with an AAA rating and nearly four times larger considering countries with a prevailing AAA. So there is a dearth of alternatives. The big question, however, is how long will the financial hegemony of the U.S. last, especially since there is growing competition from Asia. Clearly there are risks that could accelerate the passing of the leadership baton. Experts have warned that the surprise US credit rating downgrade will not doubt trigger short-term volatility for the dollar, but more importantly, it will speed-up the long-term decline of the US and global reserve currency.

Apparently, the rivals of America, led by China, are forming a new major economic bloc.

The outcome of a three-day summit between Russia's Vladimir Putin and China's Xi Jinping recently has big implications for the US and its currency. It emerged from the meeting that Putin declared Russia's intention to switch to the Chinese yuan for oil settlements.

In this respect, two recent deals in oil trade are ominous for the dollar. Under one of these, Saudi Arabia's Aramco will supply two Chinese companies with a combined 690,000 barrels a day of crude oil, bolstering its rank as China's top provider of the commodity. Saudi Arabia is reportedly in talks with Beijing to settle with the yuan instead of the dollar. If Saudi Arabia does move to the yuan, that would lead to an enormous shift in the global economic system. Oil has played a significant role in ensuring the dominance of US dollar as it is one of the most widely traded commodities and is prices in the US currency. Every time an oil trade takes place in dollar, it adds to the clout of the US currency because the buyer has to acquire the value in dollar.

But if oil trading were to shift away from the US dollar, it would dramatically reduce the demand for US dollars, which would lead to a decrease in the value of the US currency. And this could have a number of ripple effects throughout the global economy, including hugely increased inflation in the United States and potentially destabilising effects on financial markets.

China has never made a secret of its desire to make the yuan a global force and probably the default global currency, dislodging dollar from that position. The Chinese government launched the Cross-Border Interbank Payments System in 2015 to facilitate cross-border payments in yuan. Three years later, in 2018, it launched the world's first yuan-denominated crude oil futures contracts to allow exporters to sell oil in yuan.

The Ukraine war and the crisis that followed the slapping of embargo by western nations has given a major push for the yuan, with even third countries preferring to settle their trade using the Chinese currency, which has the Chinese laughing away to glory. (IPA Service)

Orunodoi – An Instrument for Women Empowerment

The evolution of society is an outcome of the evolution of human thought. The quest for novelty has permeated the very fabric of modern Indian society, igniting a fervent awareness. Women, an indispensable part of society, are now at the forefront of this movement, embracing newfound enlightenment with unmatched zeal.

The illustrious civilization of ancient Bharat has always held women in high regard, treating them with utmost dignity and respect. Women were revered as paragons of strength and wisdom, epitomized by the term 'Janani,' meaning mother. Figures like Gargi, Draupadi, Janakanandini Sita, and Maitreyi were revered during that era. History attests to their honored lives, free from subjugation. In Indian society, women are seen as embodiments of prosperity, Lakshmi, or other divine forms. According to Vedic tradition, women and men are likened to the two indispensable wheels of a chariot, each contributing equally to its movement. The progress of a society lies in fostering economic, social, and political collaboration between genders.

Recognizing women's pivotal role and acknowledging their vital contribution to cooperation is imperative. The visionary words of India's esteemed Prime Minister, Narendra Modi, "Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas, Sabka Vishwas, Sabka Prayas," echo a clarion call for unparalleled leadership in this area. As India emerges as a global powerhouse, the visionary idea of constructing a robust welfare state is being ardently pursued. The Bharatiya Janata Party, which assumed power shortly after the 2014 general elections under the visionary leadership of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, has consistently prioritized women's welfare. Initiatives like "Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao," "Sukanya Samridhi

Yojana," etc., have played a positive role in women's empowerment and poverty alleviation. The Prime Minister's inspiring vision for a 'New Bharat' has galvanized leaders across all levels of government to work towards the betterment of all citizens. The Government of Assam, led by Chief Minister Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma, has also introduced various welfare schemes, following the Prime Minister's dream. The Orunodoi scheme is a stride towards realizing this noble purpose. Orunodoi, which translates to "rising of the sun," embodies the power of the sun to dispel darkness and elevate society to new heights.

Much like the rising sun, this initiative shines as a beacon of hope, inspiring those facing economic and social struggles to lend a helping hand to those in need, fostering diverse and harmonious interactions, and uplifting economically disadvantaged individuals who have been grappling with various challenges.

Driven by the principle of "One Family, One Scheme," Orunodoi has launched an initiative to support housewives, widows, physically challenged individuals, unmarried women, and members of the third gender. The government acknowledges the significance of uplifting economically disadvantaged individuals and has taken steps to provide them with financial and social support.

Initially, the scheme provided a monthly amount of 830 rupees to each beneficiary. After two revisions, the amount has been increased to 1250 rupees per month for each beneficiary through the direct transfer process (DBT), which has been instrumental in eradicating poverty and promoting economic self-reliance. The government has also reviewed the list of eligible beneficiaries, resulting in a decrease in the number of beneficiaries from 19 lakhs to 17.07 lakhs.



ORUNODOI
Empowering Women. Enriching Lives. Ensuring Growth.

Orunodoi

Financial assistance to economically weaker families

Furthermore, plans are underway to expand the scheme's coverage in Orunodoi 2.0, with a target of reaching 27.61 lakh beneficiaries, including the Indira Miri Universal Widow Pension Scheme and the Deendayal Divyang Pension Scheme, encompassing 10.57 lakh beneficiaries.

The Orunodoi scheme has proven to be a blessing in disguise for marginalized sections of society who have borne the brunt of the COVID-19 pandemic. It has offered relief in meeting the needs of daily essentials, medicines, fruits, vegetables, and other elements of a balanced diet.

The Orunodoi Scheme is a ray of hope for economically vulnerable women, an endeavor to provide good health, social standing, and self-reliance to economically disadvantaged women in society. Through this scheme, self-reliance can be achieved through personal and collective efforts. Personal assistance provided by this initiative can help overcome various challenges. For instance, for an elderly widow with no source of income, the financial support from Orunodoi is invaluable. During times of illness, essential needs like fruits, vegetables, and other necessary

items can be met.

Additionally, in rural areas, elderly individuals often play a role in religious ceremonies like Namghar and Than. In such scenarios, the assistance provided by Orunodoi becomes a lifeline. A housewife is the cornerstone of a household.

A healthy home environment stems from the relentless efforts of a housewife, ensuring continuous comfort. Alongside her responsibilities towards her children, a housewife tirelessly manages other family members and household chores in an unpaid capacity. Although their unpaid work is a crucial component of economic activity, it has often been overlooked in economic analysis and policymaking. How can we address the root causes of their struggles? Who will step forward to bridge the gaps? Can the aspirations of a housewife, harbored for so long, lead to self-reliance? Yes, the government of Assam has taken the initiative to meet these needs.

It's essential to note that Orunodoi operates not only at a personal level, providing assistance, but also at a societal level. The impact of self-help groups (SHGs) is evident in every village and city. By raising awareness

about women's crucial role in collective savings, these groups enhance their influence within society. Women-led small businesses, such as food production and handicrafts, are being established, elevating their economic status. Moreover, banking services have been extended to these women, as having a bank account is essential for their financial inclusion. Consequently, women in society are becoming actively engaged in economic activities, contributing to meaningful economic integration.

It's worth highlighting that women's empowerment transcends economic aspects; it holds significant social implications. A strong woman contributes to a strong family, which in turn strengthens society, ultimately fortifying the nation. This empowerment is not merely a personal achievement; it's a small endeavor that can lead to substantial societal transformation. Small efforts invariably bring about significant changes over time. Orunodoi represents such a modest effort with a noble purpose for the future. Thus, this initiative to empower women is crucial not just for the present but also for a more promising future.

With a visionary perspective, Honorable Chief Minister Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma has set a genuine example of women's empowerment. The women of Assam welcome the scheme and hope for its continual enhancement. Beneficiaries have expressed their belief that this scheme was introduced not only to gain votes in elections but also to propel women forward hand in hand. Gender equality, poverty eradication, and inclusive economic growth can all be achieved through investments in women's empowerment, and the government of Assam is steadfastly bringing the women of the region to the forefront, pledging to provide them with a secure and healthy livelihood to cherish.

Ignoring SDG8 will lock humanity in cycle of crisis and conflict

By Dr. Gyan Pathak

The world is observing August as the month of SDG8, one of the 17 goals that were agreed upon by the global community in 2015 to improve the lives of all people by 2030 and to protect the planet we live in. Unfortunately, the world is lagging far behind the targets and likely to miss all. India, with largest population in the world, will have largest contribution in the failure.

Most importantly, SDG8 impacts, all other 16 Sustainable Development Goals. It covers sustainable economic growth and decent work for all, which brings together social, economic, and environmental targets. India, under the premiership of Narendra Modi, has been ignoring it throughout these years, though ironically, during his election campaign as prime ministerial candidate, had promised 'economic growth and decent work for all'.

The ruling establishment under PM Narendra Modi in India is in contrast marked by 'economic growth with little job creation' due to policies adopted by the government that promotes only creation of wealth for handful of entities. Only 20 per cent of the companies bagging 60 per cent of wealth and 70 per cent of the entire profit of the country, while unemployment rate is hovering at historically high around 8 per cent for quite some time. Formal decent jobs are replaced unprecedentedly faster rate with informal jobs without social security. The net result is – India houses largest number of poor in the world and about 68 per cent of the people are not able to afford healthy food. Far reaching consequences are bound to appear.

In this backdrop, observance of SDG8 month globally has special significance for India. It is expected to prepare the political leadership across the world for the SDG Summit in September, which will be a vital moment for the international community to give SDG8 and the other 16 goals the boost they need in the mid-way (2015-2030).

At the beginning of the SDG8 month on August 1, the ILO Director-General Gilbert F Houngbo had appealed the leadership across the countries to accelerate work of SDG8 for 'sustainable economic growth with decent work for all' with a warning that without concerted action on the social, economic and environmental targets Goal 8 covers, humanity risks being locked in a cycle of crisis and conflict on a forever damaged planet.

The Atlas of the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 2023 released by the World Bank says that in 2023, India's GDP is expected to see a shortfall of around \$296 billion compared to pre-COVID expectations, 8.7 percent below earlier projections. The country's economy is not expected to make up the lost

ground at least through 2025. This suggests long-lasting damage.

In the light of this assessment, it would be difficult to maintain the euphoria created by the Modi government regarding India's fastest growing economy tag. It is deceptive though it may help the ruling establishment in forthcoming general election 2024. It is clear that India is far behind achieving sustainable economic growth, the first part of the SDG8.

It is disheartening that India ranks 112 out of 166 countries in overall SDG Index Rank with a score of merely 63.5. With unemployment rate at historically high, significant challenges remain for India in respect of SDG8. The adjusted GDP growth value for the year 2021 was in minus (-) 2.63 per cent.

Challenges remain in respect of the victims of modern-day slavery. The latest data is available for the year 2018, and the value for the country's achievement was 6.1 per thousand population.

As for the adults with an account at a bank or other financial institution or with a mobile-money-service provided, challenges remain as 77.53 per cent of people had accounts in 2021.

Unemployment rate remains as high as 7.34 per cent in 2023, says the SDG report with a score stagnating or increasing at less than 50 per cent of required rate. It indicated that challenges remain, and it would be too difficult for the country to provide decent work for all by 2030. Unemployment rate reduction target by 2030 is 0.5 per cent.

Major challenge remains in respect of the fundamental labour rights effectively guaranteed. On the scale of 0-1, India's score in 2021 was only 0.49, which is insufficient to attain this goal by 2030.

The SDG index says that information regarding employment-to-population



ratio is unavailable for India. However, the government data released for 2021-21 in March 2023 says that India's worker-population ratio has risen from 50.9 per cent in 2019-20 to 52.9 per cent. However, the long term objective for this indicator is targeted at 77.8 per cent. It is therefore clear that India is heading towards utter failure in this regard.

As for the youth not in employment, education and training (NEET), the SDG report says that information is not available. However, according to the latest Multiple Indicator Survey (MIS) report of the government's National Sample survey, released in April 2023, about 33 per cent of India's youth (15-29 years of age), that is one in three, was not in NEET. Over 50 per cent of Indian women in this age group were neither employed nor studying. Most aren't even seeking for jobs.

India needs, therefore to work hard to achieve SDG8 goals by 2030, since it is out of track to achieving them, which will

impact all other Ageda 2030 goals, as per the ILO warning.

The world of work is undergoing unprecedentedly faster changes. What we don't know is whether these changes in technology, demography, economy and climate etc will change our world of work for better or worse, says the ILO.

Globally, inequalities are reaching unprecedented levels. Global employment growth will be only 1.0 per cent in 2023, less than half that of 2022. Global unemployment is expected to rise by around three million in 2023 to 208 million. The cost-of-living crisis is pushing more people into poverty, including working poverty. The most vulnerable workers include 200 million people living in absolute poverty and two billion in the informal economy, where they frequently lack legal rights or social protection.

So, what can be done? This will remain among the key question during August, the SDG8 month, and the SDG Summit in New York in September. (IPA Service)

POST BAG

Special Issue Magazines and some thoughts

Sir/Ma'am

The reading culture is at its lowest point right now, and we can only blame the time for arriving at such a juncture where people are comfortable shelling out money on material things but when it comes to buying a book, they would suddenly turn thrifty. Earlier, many Assamese newspaper groups would bring out special issues on the occasion of festivals or any important event.

Come the Bihu season or the Puja season, the Assamese newspaper groups would publish colorful special issues where literary stalwarts like Homen Borgohain, Dhruvajyoti Bora, Anuradha Sharma Pujari would pen out beautiful pieces. But since 4-5 years many newspaper groups have stopped publishing these special issues as they started to remain largely unsold. It pains me to see such a dismal state of Assamese literature. Also, very few writers in Assamese can create a whirlwind today. The void left behind by geniuses like Homen Borgohain and Lakshminandan Borah is yet to be filled. But there is hope, hope that people will again imbibe the reading habit and there will be fine writers to keep them engaged.

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Why humans don't lay eggs: A viral story

By: Savandip Mukherjee

In 2011, a team of scientists led by the paleontologist Zhe-Xi Luo discovered a well-preserved fossil from North-east China that will push back the timeline of the emergence of a very important group of animals by 35 million years to 160 million years ago. Named Juramaia sinensis i.e., the Jurassic mother from China, the fossil revealed a shrew-like mammal, barely 100 mm in length, that had walked upon the Earth alongside the gigantic dinosaurs of the Jurassic era. The discovery of Juramaia is considered 'a giant leap for mammal-kind' as it represented the earliest known ancestor of Eutherians or placental mammals which roamed the Mesozoic earth. Eventually, this group of mammals were destined to rule the animal kingdom with the impending extinction of the giant reptiles at the end of the Cretaceous era.

Placental mammals i.e., mammals that nourish the developing foetus through placenta, from bats to whales to humans, are very different from the two other mammalian groups that emerged before the Eutherians and which still have living representatives amongst us. These are the egg-laying mammals (Prototherians whose surviving examples are duck-billed platypus and echidna) and the pouched mammals (Metatherians represented by the Marsupials like Kangaroos and Opossums).

It has been argued by diverse groups of researchers that in a harsh Jurassic environment strewn with ferocious predators, Juramaia and its offspring would not have had a fair chance to thrive, if not for the placenta. The placenta allows for continuous nutrition supply, efficient exchange of respiratory gases, and a means for waste disposal in the live-bearing mammal.

In other words, the placenta acts as the gut, lungs, kidney, and liver of the

foetus in addition to secreting major hormones which will control the metabolism of not just the developing foetus but also of the mother. All these actions of the placenta will result in faster brain development, larger mature brains at birth, and a high metabolic rate – future trump cards for becoming the apex predator which descendants of Juramaia are destined for in the ensuing Cenozoic era, also known as the Age of Mammals.

The obvious question is whether acquiring the placenta is a once-in-a-million-years flash in the evolutionary pan, a genetic prerogative that empowered the ancestral Eutherians to get a head start on ensuring the survival of offspring. The answer surprisingly is no! Let's take the seminal definition of the placenta by professor H. W. Mossman as "apposition or fusion of the fetal membranes to the uterine mucosa (of the mother) for physiological exchange".

Placentas have evolved within every vertebrate class (fishes, amphibia, and reptiles) other than birds. It makes us wonder what sets apart the primitive placenta of these non-mammalian vertebrates from the more advanced placenta of 5,000 species of Eutherian mammals that are present on today's earth. Are there greater adaptive driving forces? The quest for this answer leads us to a fascinating history of natural infection and invasion of placental tissues by viruses that occurred million years ago. Soon after fertilisation, the embryo implants into the uterine wall, wherein all its future physiological demands will be met through the placenta that begins forming at about week four post-conception for humans. As the ball-like embryo attaches to the wall of the uterus, the outermost layer of this ball extends finger-like projections known as placental villi to invade the uterine tissue. A continuous layer of fused cells known as syncytiotrophoblasts line the outermost border of these finger-like villi and stand



guard at the junction of the mother's tissue with the fetal tissue. They act as the placental barrier ensuring nutrient and gas exchange occurs with the mother's blood but nothing undesirable can get in from the maternal circulation to harm the embryo and the future fetus. Behind this critical ability of syncytiotrophoblasts to act as selective filter is the contribution of a unique gene and its encoded protein known as syncytin-1.

In 1999, French researchers stumbled upon the origin of the syncytin-1 gene in human placenta and were amazed to find that the gene sequence showed a 100% match with the envelope protein of a human endogenous retrovirus known as HERV-W2. Further studies on laboratory mice subsequently revealed that if syncytin-1 is removed or inhibited, it will surely lead to the abortion of the foetus or cause embryonic death – thereby underlying the central role in mammalian reproduction. Human endogenous retroviruses (HERVs) can be considered as fossil remains of ancient retroviruses (a family of viruses of which the most well-known representative is the human immunodeficiency virus type 1, which causes AIDS) which had infected our proto-placental ancestors. After gaining entry inside the host

cell, retroviruses typically insert themselves into the host's DNA, hijack the host's cellular machinery to make thousands of copies of themselves, and then exit to infect more cells. During such an insertion event, it is likely that some ancient retroviruses lost their ability to multiply, eventually getting trapped inside the cells of the proto-placental ancestor and their genes consequently becoming a part of our DNA.

Although the retroviruses of today are known to infect only bodily (somatic) cells, it is believed that in the past, they might have occasionally integrated into the germline DNA (DNA of eggs and sperms), enabling vertical transmission from one generation to the next.

The Human Genome Project, which mapped the entire DNA sequence found in humans, revealed upon its completion that as much as 8% of our DNA is in fact derived from different retroviruses which were endogenised over the course of mammalian evolution. For a long time, it was believed that these HERVs are part of our "junk DNA" i.e., DNA with no known function. But recent findings indicate the contrary, that many of the genes derived from HERVs possess biological activity that directly influences our healthy and diseased states

(including multiple cancers and autoimmune disorders). So, how did our placental ancestors gain syncytin-1? Paleovirologists estimate that retroviruses started infecting vertebrates around 450 million years ago. Somewhere between 150 and 200 million years ago, an ancestor of HERV-W2 may have infected a proto-placental ancestor of Juramaia.

During infection, this retrovirus infected cells in the germ line (eggs and sperms) and owing to some random mutation lost its ability to multiply or exit thereby becoming an endogenous retrovirus. Through millions of years of evolution, most of the genes of this retrovirus got silenced but one gene continued to be functional. This is the syncytin-1 gene, originally responsible for encoding envelope glycoproteins to help the virus 'to fuse' with the host cell during the initiation of infection. Having lost its ability to contribute to the viral life cycle, the function of syncytin-1 was repurposed for the development of a multi-nucleate tissue layer which separates maternal and fetal blood in placental circulation thereby ensuring the integrity of the developing embryo.

Is syncytin-1 the only ERV-derived gene that contributes to mammalian development in utero? A recent report in Science in 2022 by John A. Frank and colleagues from Cornell University indicates otherwise. Scanning the human genome for HERV-derived proteins, they found more than 1,500 coding sequences with 50% or more of these sequences suspected to play some role in human physiology. More detailed analysis identified a gene called suppressyn that is now believed to have infected our mammalian ancestors as recently as 30 million years ago and continues to be expressed in the embryo and the placenta. Experimental evidence indicates that suppressyn ironically plays a critical role in safeguarding the placenta from

the invasion of other viruses. Another HERV-K-derived protein discovered in 2011 was proposed to play a defining role in suppressing the mother's immune system, thereby ensuring that the embryo is not rejected during implantation. Other than contributing to placental selectivity, host immunity, and maternal immune suppression, non-coding gene sequences from multiple HERVs have also contributed to other stages of mammalian pregnancy. In a study published in 2018 in PLoS Biology, Dunn-Fletcher and colleagues presented evidence that sequences residing within ERVs that integrated into our mammalian ancestors 50 million years ago control the timing of birth by regulating the levels of the immensely critical corticotrophin-releasing hormone (CRH).

A growing body of evidence continues to reveal and build on this remarkable evolutionary relationship between retroviruses and the placenta. Retroviral genes once destined to aid the virus in infection, hijacking, and multiplication within a susceptible host suddenly found themselves in a position from where they underwent exaptation by co-opting for roles that would prove critical to the survival and triumph of the placental mammals. It is incredibly tempting to speculate that human pregnancy would perhaps be very different, even non-existent, if not for the waves of successive viral pandemics afflicting our evolutionary ancestors since Juramaia.

As we return to the new normal in the post-COVID world, one may wonder if there will be far-reaching evolutionary consequences of this recently concluded pandemic. We indeed continue to exist in a virosphere, where the estimated number of viruses is greater than the estimated number of stars in the galaxies across the universe. The viruses have got the means and the motive. Are they just waiting for more opportunities to shape our future? (Courtesy: The Wire)

Are we just scrolling along? The careful chemistry behind that perfect scoop of smooth, textured ice-cream

By: Abhinav Nayyar

Have you seen that video that I was unfortunate enough to come across yesterday? Thanks to the trend-friendly nature of human depravity, it had apparently become a sensation on a certain online hellscape recently. In it, we see a man in khaki standing in a dimly lit railway carriage, with the silhouettes of the travellers' heads popping all around him – holding onto their camera phones – as he threatens them to vote for his dearest leaders. All seems unusually ominous – like most things on social media these days – until you locate what seems to be the corpses of the people this sworn saviour has slain.

It is at this point that the clip cuts off and the MachineTM nudges me to scroll along, which I instinctively do, my gaze reading through the next hot take that comes up. It doesn't take long for me to come across a similar scene as the last video, this time in Haryana's Mewat district, and subsequently, in Gurugram, where we see multiple incidents of violence, followed by the suspension of internet facilities and the imposition of the state-favourite Section 144. A few strategic clicks and I am already quite aware of how the situation unfolded and reached its current state.

This time, however, when the MachineTM nudges me to move along, I find it difficult to just scroll by. I sit there, my thumb hovering above the screen, as I reel from this twofold reminder of India's rapid descent into fascism. A sense of guilt, a pang of concern, and desperate helplessness are my instinctive responses, but after they wither away and leave me more clear-headed, I find myself questioning this worsening reality and wanting to resist it in some way. My head rushes through a flurry of options but for one reason or another, my desire to act only lingers for a little while before giving way to defeatism, which encourages me to scroll along.

Purely from anecdotal experience, this little journey is not something I undertake alone. For some, it happens on a regular basis; for others, it takes the form of gradual epiphanies that bring about grand, but aimless, desire to transform. For almost all of us, however, it ends with this deep-seated feeling of defeat as we scroll along to the whims of our overlords, quietly thinking about the next weekend. Don't get me wrong – it is not as if there aren't ways for us to act. Go to protests. Engage with politics. Fund grassroots organisations. Be the irritating one who sours up family dinners. Hell, take a career that keeps you rooted to social and economic realities. At the very least, stay informed. But after you go through the motions, it feels as if all this amounts to nothing but meaningless action, like running in one place, like self-patting for the ages where we applaud ourselves for doing nothing. I don't know if this rant is coherent enough to be relatable to others, and I am not quite sure how to place a lot of these thoughts, either. At the core of it, though, I feel a growing frustration towards our collective inaction and our ability to stand at the side, as the fabric of our humanity is pulled apart. And through this short piece, I want to share my thoughts on this sense of frustration and try to understand where we go from here.

The emergence of this frustration

In a brief section in his book, 'The Tyranny of Merit', Michael Sandel draws a short parallel between capitalism and the rise of fascist tendencies across the world. While this is a theme that has been articulated by philosophers and political scientists for decades now, its location in a book that is mainly focused on the flaws of meritocracies, intrigues me. The argument that Sandel, and many before

him, put forth is that rising levels of globalisation and capitalism, while increasing overall income levels, have also led to extreme wealth inequality and many cost of living crises, one of which is ongoing as I write this. In this context, they argue, authoritarian regimes that would have otherwise been a little cautious, openly rely on demonising religious and ethnic communities to address growing economic insecurities in the population. Taken to its extreme, this trend might lead to the Nazis and their propaganda around a 'global Jewish conspiracy'. On a more moderate level, though, this scapegoating can be seen as dog whistles and subtle insinuations, which, as the RPF shooting from two days ago shows, lead to very real consequences for the country's marginalised populations.

Assuming this premise holds some ground, then, it might be difficult to see the growing material inequality and the rise of fascism as two independent strands. For instance, the physical and mental exhaustion that so many of us face from our jobs limits our ability to act as an aware electorate, or, as it is popularly known, it 'burns us out'. On top of it, the fear of persecution, either professional or political, stifles any remaining urge to act that might remain inside us. To paraphrase an idea from David Graeber's 'Bullshit Jobs', our agency is one of the most unique traits of our species, and in this time of fear-fuelled silence, this intentional indifference of ours is exactly what leaves all of us guilt-ridden and frustrated.

Don't get me wrong – it is not as if this cannot be overcome! It requires us to resist the everyday onslaught of the fascist forces in newer and more innovative ways, often challenging capitalism simultaneously. But the rise of siloed lives and the phenomenon of urban isolation ensures that we are too disconnected with each other to know and act in these ways. As a result, we continue to live as individuals, concerned only about ourselves, our families, our careers, and the ways in which we personally treat those around us.

Where to from here?

In short, I do not know. Despite being a cynic, I find myself searching for hope and optimism a lot these days, which, as some of you might point out, is nothing but my instinctive response to these unanswered frustrations. While hope and optimism are necessary for any political movement to succeed, especially those wanting to counter fascism, I also want to be wary of mindless hope. I know that lulling ourselves into a collective hallucination of India's 'better' future, hoping that someone somewhere might act on our behalf is a losing game. The sad truth is that no one will, and as we stand at the side, waiting for the next elections to roll up and convince us of our democratic spirit, we are wasting precious time and even more precious lives in the process.

This fact might be the bitter pill that most of the privileged won't enjoy swallowing, especially at the end of this piece. But if you find yourself thinking of the worsening realities around you and if you find yourself afraid of acting in a critical manner, it might be helpful to think of the rich history of anti-fascism that surrounds us. To start with, Bhagat Singh's words in 'Why I am an Atheist' surely ring true. Talking about the origin of religion and its role in preserving the status quo, he reminds us that "Rebellion against any king has always been a sin in every religion." While the context differs, his words act as an essential reminder that we all share this sin-like fear to act with many generations before us – an uneasy, but helpful, idea that could enable us in learning from our predecessors and, hopefully, wake us up from our mass slumber soon. (Courtesy: Youth Ki Awaaz)

By: Nathan Kilah

Ice cream seems like a simple concept. Take some dairy, add some sugar and flavours, and freeze. But to get a perfectly creamy, smoothly textured frozen treat, we need more than just a low temperature – it takes a careful interplay of chemistry and three states of matter: solid, liquid and gas.

What's in the box
Commercial ice cream includes many ingredients: air, water, milk fat, so-called milk solids (mainly milk proteins and lactose), sweeteners, stabilisers, emulsifiers and flavours. The ingredients are mixed and pasteurised for food safety.

How it's made
Ice cream makers (commercial or for home use) ensure small ice crystals by agitating or beating the liquid as it freezes. This keeps the water molecules moving and prevents the crystals from growing larger. The mixing process also incorporates air, which is the secret ingredient to give ice cream a lighter texture.

Next, the fat
The fat in the milk exists as globules surrounded by proteins. These proteins bridge the fat and the water, helping to keep the fats suspended. (Milk looks white because light scatters off these fat globules.) These dairy fat molecules have different properties at different temperatures. At room temperature they are semi-solids (like butter), and are about two-thirds solid when at 0°C. The fat globules can stick together – that's why you get a layer of cream on top of unprocessed milk.

A process called homogenisation forces the milk through a small opening under very high pressure, breaking large fat globules down into smaller ones. This process

Milk is composed of everything a young cow needs to grow and develop – water, fats, carbohydrates, proteins, minerals and vitamins. These components respond in different ways when they are frozen.

First, the crystals

As the mixture of ice cream ingredients is cooled down, small clusters of water molecules assemble to form tiny ice crystals. The size of the ice crystals is responsible for the mouth feel of the ice cream – the smaller the crystals, the smoother the feel. If the crystallisation is not well controlled, these crystals can get very large. Ice cream makers (commercial or for home use) ensure small ice crystals by agitating or beating the liquid as it freezes. This keeps the water molecules moving and prevents the crystals from growing larger. The mixing process also incorporates air, which is the secret ingredient to give ice cream a lighter texture.

Then, the sugar

The sugar and other dissolved ingredients in milk are also essential to the final texture of ice cream. The presence of sugars in the water lowers the mixture's freezing temperature to below 0°C. Here's why that's important. As ice crystals start to form, the concentration of sugars and other dissolved materials in the unfrozen liquid increases, which further lowers its freezing point.

By the time the majority of the ice crystals have formed, the resulting liquid is very concentrated in sugars. This concentrated liquid, known as the "serum", bridges between the ice crystals, solid fat globules and air bubbles. The serum remains a liquid well below 0°C and adds enough flexibility to the mixture so the ice cream can still be scooped or shaped. In this way, the unique chemical properties of water, fats, proteins and sugars come together with air to give the solid, liquid and gas mixture we know and love.

makes many small fat globules – as many as a trillion per litre.

Homogenised milk ensures the mixture will freeze evenly, and separated fats won't get stuck to the mixing machinery. Freezing the fat globules makes them clump together, with the surrounding proteins acting as bridges to other fat molecules and to the ice crystals. These fats melt in your mouth, giving a creamy feel and taste.

Not everything is ice-cream

What's called "ice cream" is actually governed by a food standards code. That's why not all frozen desserts can be legally called ice cream, because they don't contain enough milk fat. There are lots of variations on the standard ice cream recipe. Gelato uses more sugar, incorporates less air, and typically has less fats and other solids. Sorbets do away with the dairy and typically contain more sugar, but have historically used egg or gelatin as a protein source.

Regardless of the exact recipe, the fundamental ice crystal formation, fat solidification, and serum phase separation steps are the same. Product names like "soft serve", "dairy dessert", or "ice confection" are often an indication the ingredient list includes vegetable fats rather than more expensive milk fats.

Soft serve products are also formed by agitation as the mixture freezes, but tend to contain less air than ice cream you'd buy in a tub, due to the constant agitation inside the dispensing machine. Icy poles, ice blocks, freezies, or freeze pops (depending on your local phraseology) and other "water ices" are frozen inside a mould or plastic tubing. The shape of the mould limits the ability to stir the mixture, so the freezing process is typically done "quiescently", meaning at rest.

The crystallisation of the ice is not well controlled, and you may have experienced large crystals that have grown (technically "seeded") from the popsicle stick. Humanity has enjoyed ice cream for centuries. It's a marvellously versatile food with endless variations of flavours, additives, and toppings coupled with memories of happiness, comfort, indulgence and nostalgia. And plenty of chemistry, too. (Courtesy: Scroll.in)

Ovid's metamorphoses and the Greco-Roman idea of sex and gender

By: Raghu Davan Krishnan

Ovid's Metamorphoses is often regarded as one of the finest pieces of classical literature. It isn't a mere collection of mythical poems, but also a reflection of Greco-Roman society. Within the great Latin poet's magnum opus, we find infused ideas of sex and gender, one such tale being that of the myth of Hermaphroditus. This tale revolves around a young man, Hermaphroditus, the divine offspring of two Olympians: Hermes, also known as Mercury by the Romans, the god of travel, and Aphrodite, also known as Venus, the goddess of beauty.

The youth embodied in totality the Greek idea of masculine beauty with his lithe figure and divine good looks. Like much of Ovidian poetry, there are a lot of wanderings by the youth during which he comes across a clear pool of water. This, however, is no ordinary pool and is the residence of Salmacis, a rogue nymph who is besotted by the beauty possessed by the divine youth. Salmacis is an ardent and impatient individual, and when the opportunity arrives, she dives into the water and clings to the youth with feverish erotic intent. The boy struggles in great distress to escape the tight clutches of the maniacal nymph, who, in a desperate attempt to possess the youth, calls upon the gods to make her and Hermaphroditus inseparable. The gods grant the nymph's wish and merge both individuals, resulting in a sudden transformation that causes the youth to possess both male and female genitalia. This chaotic transformation described by Ovid results in the creation of sexual ambiguity.

"The intermingled bodies of the two are joined together, and one form is brought upon them. Just as if someone grafts a branch onto a tree and sees

that they are joined in growth and mature equally, whenever their limbs come together in a tenacious embrace, they are not two and their form is double so that it can be called neither woman nor man, and they seem simultaneously neither and both."

Ovid's Metamorphoses book IV

This sudden bodily change results in Hermaphroditus becoming loathsome and cursing the waters of the spring. So pained is he to see himself in this state that he urges his parents to curse the spring waters such that whoever bathes in them 'emerges half woman, weakened instantly.'

Stigma against the intersex community

Though Ovid was banished from Rome during the Augustan age, his manuscripts remained popular and were often seen as a reflection of Roman society at that time. His works also saw a resurgence alongside other classical literature during the Renaissance, resulting in a heavy influence on art, art theory, and societal ideas in general. The myth of Hermaphroditus, in particular, has had a profound impact on shaping ideas about sexuality and gender. During the Roman Empire's reign, intersex people were looked at through a discriminatory lens as they were looked at as sub-human, and infants born with intersex variations were often subjected to infanticide, in which the baby would be drowned at sea in a ritualistic manner to appease the Pantheon, thus showing the extent of this prejudice.

We see the story of the divine youth as an account of intersexuality and ambiguity. It influenced many ideas, stereotypes, and preconceived notions surrounding intersex individuals, showing, in turn, the power mythical tales have in moulding our minds. Ovid's tale reinforces certain misconceptions, such as the idea that intersexuality is obtained rather than a biologically ascriptive

identity dependent upon an individual's anatomy. This resulted in the perception that there is something inherently wrong or incorrect about intersexual individuals rather than a naturally occurring variation found in human beings. This idea was coupled with the feeling of shame and self-loathing that we can see at the end of this Ovidian tale, in which Hermaphroditus is overcome with disgust and self-hatred over his new emasculated figure. This perception of the intersex figure as hideous further aggravated a stigmatised view. This stigmatised view and discriminatory perception of the intersex community have remained rampant, leading to horrific human rights violations, namely infanticide and forced medical procedures, coupled with a lack of judicial remedies and representation.

The term hermaphrodite was widely used for many centuries and became a common term used to refer to intersex individuals. This term was heavily used by medical practitioners in the Victorian era who lacked true embryological and etymological knowledge about intersexuality. It was only in the late 1940s that Alexander Polycleitos Cavadias suggested using the term intersex instead since hermaphrodite had misleading and stigmatising connotations.

Though recent years have seen a healthy rise in activism and representation, the intersex community remains marginalised and suppressed. Many intersex individuals continue their fight to escape from the societal prison of preconceived notions and stigma. They yearn for an era ushering in acceptance, and their fight for equitable representation could be best encapsulated by the words of Ovid himself: Suppressed grief suffocates; it rages within the breast and is forced to multiply its strength. (Courtesy: The Quint)

Niger's junta shuts airspace and accuses neighbouring nations of plan to invade as deadline passes

West African regional bloc ECOWAS demands that the coup leaders reinstate Prez Mohamed Bazoum or face military force

NIAMEY (NIGER), Aug 7 (AP): Niger's mutinous soldiers closed the country's airspace and accused foreign powers of preparing an attack, as the junta defied a deadline to restore the ousted president and said any attempt to fly over the country will be met with "an energetic and immediate response."

Niger's state television announced the move on Sunday night, hours before a deadline set by West African regional bloc ECOWAS, which demanded the coup leaders reinstate President Mohamed Bazoum or face military force. A spokesman for the coup leaders, Col. Maj. Amadou Abdramane, warned of "the threat of intervention being prepared in a neighbouring country," and said Niger's airspace will be closed until further notice. The junta asserted that two central African countries are preparing for an invasion, but did not say which ones, and called on the country's population to defend it.

Regional tensions have mounted since mutinous soldiers overthrew Niger's democratically elected president nearly two weeks ago,

detaining him and installing Gen. Abdourahmane Tchiani as head of state. Tchiani was head of the presidential guard, and is accused of leading the coup with several members of his unit.

Analysts say the coup is believed to have been triggered by a power struggle between him and the president, who was about to fire him. It was not immediately clear what ECOWAS will do now that the deadline has passed, especially because the region is divided on a course of action.

On Saturday, Nigeria's Senate pushed back on the plan to invade, urging Nigeria's president, the bloc's current chair, to explore options other than the use of force.

ECOWAS can still move ahead, as final decisions are made by consensus by member states.

Regional countries Guinea, Burkina Faso and Mali, as well as Algeria, have come out against the use of force, with Burkina Faso and Mali saying an attack on Niger "would be tantamount to a declaration of war" against them.

Senegal and Ivory Coast have both expressed support for



ECOWAS' efforts to restore constitutional order, and Senegal's government said it would participate in a military operation if it went ahead. But the junta does not appear interested in negotiation.

An ECOWAS delegation sent to Niger last week for talks was not allowed to leave the airport, and met only representatives of Tchiani. On Sunday, junta leaders appeared at a rally in the capital, Niamey promising the thousands of supporters present that their loyalty will not be betrayed.

"We are with you against them. We will give you the Niger that you are owed," said junta member Brig. Gen. Mohamed Tomba. After his speech, The Associated Press saw rally goers behead a chicken decorated in the colours of former coloniser France. The junta is exploiting anti-French sentiments among the population to shore up its support base and moving swiftly to cut ties with France, which French soldiers worked with

the Nigerian military to fight extremist groups, while looking to other partners. Last week the junta also suspended French broadcaster RFI and France 24 television from operating in the country and severed accords with France. French soldiers have been working with the Nigerian military to fight extremist groups. It also asked for help from the Russian mercenary group Wagner, which operates in a handful of African countries including neighbouring Mali, which is also run by a military regime.

Niger had been seen by the United States, France and other countries as their last major counterterrorism partner in the vast Sahel region, south of the Sahara Desert, where groups linked to al-Qaida and the Islamic Group state have been expanding their range.

The future of the some 1,500 French military personnel and 1,100 US military personnel in Niger is not immediately known.

Many people, largely youth, have rallied around the junta, taking to the streets at night to patrol, check cars for weapons and stand guard against foreign intervention.

Philippines summons Chinese ambassador over water cannon incident in disputed sea: official



MANILA, Aug 7 (AP): The Philippine government summoned the Chinese ambassador on Monday to convey a diplomatic protest over the Chinese coast guard's use of a water cannon against a Filipino supply boat in the disputed South China Sea, a Philippine official said. The Philippine military on Sunday condemned the Chinese coast guard ship's "excessive and offensive" use of water cannon to block a Filipino supply boat from delivering a new batch of troops, food, water and fuel to the Philippine-occupied Second Thomas Shoal in the disputed waters.

The United States, the European Union and their key allies including Australia and Japan expressed support to the Philippines and concern over the Chinese ship's actions. Washington renewed a warning that it is obliged to defend its longtime treaty ally if Filipino public vessels and forces come under an armed attack including in the South China Sea. The tense confrontation on Saturday was the latest flare-up in the long-seething territorial conflicts involving China, the Philippines, Vietnam, Malaysia, Taiwan and Brunei.

One of several top Philippine officials dealing with the incident told The Associated Press that the Department of Foreign Affairs in Manila summoned Chinese Ambassador Huang Xilian on Monday morning to convey a strongly worded diplomatic protest.

The protest would underscore how the Chinese coast guard ship's action violated international regulations aimed at avoiding collisions at sea and the 1982 U.N. Convention on the Law of the Sea, said the official, who spoke on condition of anonymity because of a lack of authority to discuss the government's actions before they are publicly disclosed.

The disputes in the South China Sea, one of the world's busiest sea lanes, have long been regarded as an Asian flashpoint and a delicate fault line in the rivalry between the United States and China in the region. China claims ownership over virtually the entire strategic waterway despite international rulings

that invalidated Beijing's vast territorial claims, such as that in 2016 by the Permanent Court of Arbitration, an international body based in The Hague. China rejects that ruling. Philippine navy personnel on board two chartered supply boats were cruising toward Second Thomas, escorted by Philippine coast guard ships, when a Chinese coast guard ship approached and used a powerful water cannon to block the Filipinos from the shoal that China also claims, the Philippine military and coast guard said Sunday.

The Chinese ship's action was "in wanton disregard of the safety of the people on board" the Philippine navy-chartered boat and violated international law, the Armed Forces of the Philippines said on Sunday.

The "excessive and offensive actions against Philippine vessels" near the shoal prevented one of the two Filipino boats from unloading supplies needed by Filipino troops guarding the shoal onboard a long-marooned Philippine navy ship, the BRP Sierra Madre, the Philippine military said. It called on the Chinese coast guard and China's central military commission "to act with prudence and be responsible in their actions to prevent miscalculations and accidents that will endanger people's lives."

The U.S. State Department said in a statement that by "firing water cannons and employing unsafe blocking maneuvers, PRC ships interfered with the Philippines' lawful exercise of high seas freedom of navigation and jeopardized the safety of the Philippine vessels and crew." It used the acronym for the People's Republic of China.

It added that such actions are a direct threat to "regional peace and stability."

China has long demanded that the Philippines withdraw its small contingent of naval forces and tow away the actively commissioned but crumbling BRP Sierra Madre. The navy ship was deliberately marooned on the shoal in 1999 and now serves as a fragile symbol of Manila's territorial claim to the atoll.

Sunak unveils tech partnership to crack down on illegal migration

LONDON, Aug 7 (PTI): Prime Minister Rishi Sunak has unveiled a voluntary partnership between social media companies and the UK government to accelerate action to tackle people smuggling content online, such as criminals sharing information about illegal English Channel crossings.

In an announcement over the weekend, Sunak said the move would help meet his "stop the boats" target of clamping down on illegal migrants being charged large sums by human traffickers to make dangerous crossings across the high seas.

The online content being targeted by the new partnership would cover discount offers for groups of people, free spaces for children, offers of false documents and false claims of safe passage — all of which the government says target vulnerable people for profit and put people's lives at risk through dangerous and illegal journeys. "To stop the boats, we have to tackle the business model of vile people smugglers at source," said Sunak in a statement released by 10 Downing Street.

"That means clamping down on their attempts to lure people into making these illegal crossings and profit from putting lives at risk. This new commitment from tech firms will see us redouble our efforts to fight back against these criminals, working together to shut down their vile trade," he said.

Figures from the UK's National Crime Agency (NCA) claim that over 90 per cent of online content linked to people smuggling is taken down when social media companies are notified. The new partnership between tech firms and the UK government is aimed at driving forward efforts to further crackdown on the tactics being used by criminal gangs who abuse the internet to lure people into paying for crossings.

"Heartless people smugglers are using social media to promote their despicable services and charge people thousands of pounds to make the illegal journey into the UK in unsafe boats. They must not succeed," said UK Home Secretary Suella Braverman.

Cambodia's king appoints army chief Hun Manet as successor to his father, long-ruling Hun Sen

PHNOM PENH, Aug 7 (AP): Cambodia's king on Monday formally appointed army chief Hun Manet to succeed his father and long-ruling Prime Minister Hun Sen as the nation's leader later this month after their party sealed victory in a one-sided election last month.

The royal decree signed by King Norodom Sihamoni and shared to the public by social media means the 45-year-old Hun Manet is officially the incoming leader and will take office Aug. 22 when the new National Assembly adopts the new cabinet.

Hun Manet thanked the king for his trust and said in a Telegram post that it was his life's highest honor to serve the nation and its people. He added that he was determined to fulfill his duties and promised to keep raising Cambodians' living standards and the nation's prestige.

His appointment came after Cambodia's electoral body on Saturday announced the final results of last month's election. The polls that gave Hun Sen's party a mandate for the next five years were criticized by Western governments and rights groups as neither free nor fair because the main credible opposition party was barred from participating.

Hun Manet won his first seat in Parliament in the election, and the handover from his father is part of a larger, generational shift: Many younger lawmakers are expected to take up



ministerial positions, including Hun Sen's youngest son and others related to older party members. Many were educated in the West, like Hun Manet, who has a bachelor's degree from the United States Military Academy at West Point, a master's degree from New York University and a doctorate from Bristol University in Britain, all in economics.

After the royal decree was announced, Hun Sen posted on Telegram and the X social media platform that he was stepping down to give a "chance to the successors to lead."

Hun Sen, who turned 71 on Saturday, noted that he took office at age 32 as the youngest prime minister in the world at the time. He

added that stepping down as prime minister "is not the end yet" and he would serve in other positions at least until 2033, which would bring him to a half-century in office.

Hun Sen is expected to retain a large amount of control as president of his Cambodian People's Party and as the Senate president. "I will still have the ability to serve the interests of the people and help the government oversee the country's security and public order, as well as joining them in guiding the development of the country," Hun Sen said on July 26, the day he announced the widely expected succession plan. Cambodia under Hun Sen has ushered in a free-market economy that raised living standards, but the gap between Cambodia's rich and poor has widened and land grabs by Hun Sen's domestic allies and foreign investors are widespread.

After a strong election challenge from the opposition in 2013 that the CPP barely overcame, Hun Sen targeted the opposition's leaders and the main party was dissolved by Cambodia's sympathetic courts. The pattern of crushing any serious opposition followed this year when the main challenger was banned on a technicality before the vote. The European Union said the election was "conducted in a restricted political and civic space where the opposition, civil society and the media were unable to function effectively without hindrance."

Imran Khan's party voices concern over safety and health of ex-Pak PM in jail



LAHORE, Aug 7 (PTI): Imran Khan's party has voiced concern over the health and safety of the former Pakistan prime minister in jail and firmly opposed the decision to subject him to "harsh solitary confinement", according to a media report on Monday.

The core committee of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), under the leadership of party Vice Chair-

man Shah Mahmood Qureshi, held a crucial meeting on Sunday.

Khan, 70, was arrested from his home in Lahore on Saturday shortly after an Islamabad trial court found him guilty of "corrupt practices" in the Toshakhana corruption case and sentenced him to three years in jail.

Khan's party earlier on Sunday accused authorities of denying his legal team access to the leader to get his signatures on essential documents for court purposes.

During the core committee's meeting, the party vehemently criticised the government's imposition of Section 144, which it said infringed upon the public's fundamental right to peacefully protest "against cruelty and injustice". The Express Tribune newspaper reported. The committee addressed the growing concerns over life and

health threats. The meeting held in-depth deliberations on critical issues, including the former prime minister's arrest by the Punjab Police instead of the Islamabad Police despite the court's orders to the capital police chief to arrest him.

Similarly, the members also raised alarm over Khan's transfer to the Attock Jail instead of Rawalpindi's Adiala Jail. The meeting expressed the conditions of his solitary confinement and the denial of access to lawyers and family members and explored the legal strategy for his prompt release. It was the second meeting of the core committee held after Khan's arrest, which saw protests and strong condemnations from the legal fraternity as well as Khan's supporters who saw the trial as "biased" for its hurried proceedings.

China releases TV documentary showcasing army's ability to attack Taiwan



TAIPEI, Aug 7 (AP): China has released a new documentary about the army's preparation to attack Taiwan and showcasing soldiers pledging to give up their lives if needed as Beijing continues to ramp up its rhetoric against the self-ruled island. "Chasing Dreams," an eight-part docuseries aired by state broadcaster CCTV earlier this week to mark the People Liberation Army's 96th anniversary, features military drills and testimonials by dozens of soldiers, of which several express their willingness to die in a potential attack against Taiwan.

China claims Taiwan, a self-ruled democracy, as its own territory, to be conquered by force if necessary. State media and the PLA frequently release propa-

ganda materials promoting the army's modernization as well as sleek videos of military drills.

The materials serve to fan rising Chinese nationalism and display military confidence against Taiwan and, implicitly, its ties with the United States. While the U.S. doesn't recognize Taiwan as a sovereign country, it has pledged to help the island defend itself in case of an invasion. Last month, the White House announced a \$345 million military aid package for Taiwan. The move, which experts said drew on lessons from the U.S. military assistance to Ukraine, was criticized by Beijing.

The "Chasing Dreams" documentary showcased, among other things, the PLA's "Joint Sword" drills, which simulated precision strikes against Taiwan. The exercises were undertaken around the self-governed island in April after a visit by Taiwanese President Tsai Ing-wen to the U.S. Among the more dramatic parts of the program are pledges by PLA soldiers from various divisions to relinquish life in a potential attack on Taiwan. "If war broke out and the conditions were too difficult to safely remove the naval mines in actual combat, we would use our own bodies to clear a safe pathway for our (landing) forces," Zuo Feng, a frogman with the PLA Navy's minesweeper unit, said in a testimonial.

Pakistan authorities to inspect site of railway accident that killed 31 people

ISLAMABAD, Aug 7 (PTI): Pakistan's railway department will conduct an inspection on Monday at the site of a major accident in Sindh province where an express train derailed and killed at least 31 people and injured 130 others.

The Hazara Express train travelling from Karachi to Rawalpindi derailed on Sunday in Nawabshah district near the Sarhari Railway Station, 275 kilometres from the provincial capital Karachi.

Ten bogies went off the track and they were removed while repair works were underway.

The administration of the People's Medical College Hospital in Benazirabad - the district home to Nawabshah, said that over 120 injured had been shifted to the facility and most of them have been discharged after treatment while 30 people are currently undergoing



treatment, Geo News reported.

Also, a total of 29 bodies were claimed and taken by family members while the bodies of two deceased women - who could not be identified - are still at the hospital. The railway department will conduct an inspection of the site of the Hazara Express derailment in district Sanghar's Nawabshah Monday to gather evidence.

The train operations on the af-

ected up-track have been halted after the crash. However, the down-track was restored nearly 18 hours after the accident and the departures of trains facing delays at different stations began.

Railways Inspector Ali Mohammad Afridi said that the up-track will be restored entirely in four to five hours. The official said that a site inspection will be done on Monday, while the inquiry will be initiated in four to five days after recording statements of the related individuals.

Meanwhile, Minister for Railways and Aviation Khawaja Saad Rafique stated that the possibility of sabotage or a mechanical fault in the Hazara Express tragedy cannot be ruled out. During the ongoing rescue operation at the site, the Karachi-bound Khyber Mail also encountered an accident near Bahawalpur.

Tens of thousands of young scouts to evacuate world jamboree in S Korea as storm Khanun looms

Scouts from 158 countries, will be accommodated at venues in the capital city, Seoul, and the nearby metropolitan area

SEOUL, Aug 7 (AP): South Korea will evacuate tens of thousands of scouts by bus from a coastal jamboree site as Tropical Storm Khanun looms, officials said on Monday. The vehicles beginning on Tuesday morning will move 36,000 scouts - mostly teenagers - from the World Scout Jamboree in the southwestern county of Buan, according to Kim Sung-ho, a vice minister at South Korea's Ministry of the Interior and Safety.

He said most of the scouts, who come from 158 countries, will be accommodated at venues in the capital city, Seoul, and the nearby metropolitan area.

Officials were trying to secure spaces at government training centers and education facilities as well as hotels. Kim said it would take six hours or more to evacuate the scouts from the campsite, which organizers said will no



longer be used for any event after they leave.

The announcement came after The World Organization of the Scout Movement said it urgently called on South Korea to quickly move the scouts from the storm's path and "provide all necessary resources and support for participants during their stay and until they return to

their home countries."

Khanun has taken an unusual, meandering path around Japan's southwestern islands for more than a week, dumping heavy rain, knocking out power to thousands of homes and disrupting flights and train services. On Monday afternoon, it had sustained winds of 108 kilometers (67 miles) per hour, with higher gusts, and was forecast to maintain that strength as it brushed Japan's main island of Kyushu this week, the Japan Meteorological Agency said.

South Korea's weather agency reported that Khanun was expected to make landfall in South Korea on Thursday morning, potentially packing winds as strong as 118 to 154 kilometers (73 to 95 miles) per hour. Large swaths of the country's south, including Buan, could be affected by the storm as early as Wednesday, the agency said.

85 families evacuated in two flood-hit Mizoram districts



AIZAWL, Aug 7 (PTI): Eighty-five families in two districts of Mizoram have been evacuated to safer places following a flood triggered by incessant rain for the past four days, officials said on Monday.

Low-lying areas of various parts of the state's southernmost district of Lawngtlai and its neighbouring Lunglei are now inundated. An official of Lunglei district said that 40 families from Tlabung town and two adjacent villages were evacuated to schools, a community hall and a trade facilitation centre due to the swelling of the Khawthlangtuipui River.

Several houses in the low-lying area were partially submerged by the water, he said.

"The water level is increasing due to continuous rainfall. However, no casualty was reported till now," the official told PTI over the phone.

Officials and volunteers of the Young Mizo Association (YMA), an influential civil society organisation, are executing rescue operation, he said.

At least 45 families residing in Chawnge town in Lawngtlai district were also evacuated to safer places due to inundation.

Some dwelling houses in the Kamalanagar-IV area were fully submerged, officials said. The district administration is closely monitoring the situation, they said.

Manipur: Meira Paibis stage protests against Assam Rifles

IMPHAL, Aug 7 (PTI): Meira Paibi, a collective of Meitei women, on Monday staged protests against Assam Rifles in the Imphal valley.

They staged sit-in demonstrations in various localities blocking roads, demanding the removal of Assam Rifles from violence-hit areas and accusing the paramilitary force of "brutality during recent agitations".

Meira Paibi, which literally means 'women torch bearers', took the decision to conduct the stir during a convention held in Malom Tulihal area in Imphal West district on Sunday.

In Hodam Leirak area in Imphal West district, dozens of women came out on the streets and blocked one lane of the Tiddim Road which leads to Bishnupur and Churachandpur districts.

They also staged sit-in demonstrations in Kwakeithel, Uripok and Singjamet areas in Imphal West district and Angom Leikai and Khurai areas in Imphal East district.

Similar protests were also held in Thoubal and Bishnupur districts.

L. Mema, a protester at Hodam Leirak, told reporters, "Our protest was necessitated by the continuous



brutal crackdown by the Assam Rifles on the public, including women. Evidence has come to light that Assam Rifles is biased and is targeting the Meiteis instead of discharging their duties responsibly and sincerely."

Meanwhile, curfew in the Imphal East and West districts was relaxed from 5 am to noon on Monday.

Separate statements were issued by the office of the respective district magistrates in this regard.

"Restriction of movement of the public from their residence is hereby lifted from 5 am to noon on August 7 to facilitate the general public to purchase essential items

Manipur tribal body ITLF to meet Amit Shah today

NEW DELHI, Aug 7 (PTI): A conglomerate of tribals in Manipur will meet Union home minister Amit Shah here on Tuesday and raise their five key demands, including a separate political administration and a mass burial in Churachandpur district of the Kuki-Zo community members killed in the ethnic violence since May 3. A five-member delegation of the Indigenous Tribal Leaders' Forum (ITLF) will hold talks with the home minister and place the demands, ITLF secretary Muan Tombing told PTI over phone from Aizawl.

"We have five main demands. Our political demand of total separation from Manipur should be sped up. As the burial of the bodies of the Kuki-Zo community members delayed, the bodies are now lying in Imphal and all the bodies should be brought to Churachandpur," he said.

About the other demands, Tombing said that the burial site at S. Boljang in Churachandpur should be legalised, all "Meitei state forces" should not be deployed in hill districts for the



safety of the Kuki-Zo community members and tribal jail inmates in Imphal should be transfer to other states for their safety. According to an ITLF memorandum, addressed to the union home minister and submitted through the headquarters of the 27 Sector, Assam Rifles, the tribal body said it had a long deliberation on the request of Shah to delay the burial for another five days with various stakeholders.

"We have agreed to consider the request of the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) for waiting another five days for the burial, provided the demands are met," the memorandum said.

The tribal group was planning to bury the bodies of the Kuki-Zo community victims of the violence at a place in Churachandpur but it was opposed by the Meitei community following which the MHA requested it to postpone the burial. The ITLF leaders reached Aizawl, the capital of neighbouring Mizoram, from Churachandpur in Manipur and from there they were on their way to New Delhi. Mizoram chief minister Zoramthanga, on his Instagram account, has expressed hope that the talks will yield results.

He said the ITLF leaders held a day-long discussion on Saturday and consulted him on whether to respond to the invitation or not.

"I suggested they accept the invitation. I told them that it is a good opportunity to have a face-to-face discussion with the Home Minister," Zoramthanga said on his Instagram handle.

3 killed, 2 injured as truck falls into gorge in M'laya

SHILLONG, Aug 7 (PTI): Three persons were killed and two others injured after a truck in which they were travelling fell into a gorge in Meghalaya's East Khasi Hills district on Monday, police said. The accident happened around midnight when the truck was heading towards Laitlyngkot from Pynursla town, they said. "Three bodies were pulled out of the gorge today afternoon," a police officer told PTI. After the accident, B Khongkham, who was travelling in the truck, somehow managed to get out of it, climb around 300 feet to reach the road and call the police.

Naga body calls for massive rallies tomorrow to conclude peace talks

IMPHAL, Aug 7 (PTI): The 24-hour general strike called by the coordinating committee of 27 assembly constituencies in Manipur on Saturday paralysed normal life in Imphal Valley, with markets and business establishments remaining shut in almost all localities.

Public transport stayed off the road and only a few private vehicles were seen plying on the streets.

Schools also remained closed due to the strike from midnight.

The hill districts, however, have largely been unaffected by the strike, which was called by the committee to demand an emergency assembly session to discuss various issues. The committee's convenor L Binod had earlier said that the strike is not to add to the hardships of the people, but to "pressure the government".

Meanwhile, the Manipur cabinet on Friday recommended Governor Anusuiya Uiquey to convene a session of the assembly from August 21. The previous assembly session



was held in March.

Manipur has been witnessing ethnic violence that broke out in May, and sporadically continued to plague the northeastern state for the last three months, claiming over 160 lives. The state, which remains curfew bound, has seen a recent flare-up of hostilities between the two warring communities -- the Meiteis and Kuki-Zomis, after an announcement of a public mass

burial of tribals killed during the ongoing race riots. Tension between the two communities also heightened after talks between former Kuki militant organisations and the Centre were restarted.

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

Tribal women group in Manipur seeks withdrawal of remarks by SG

NEW DELHI, Aug 7 (PTI): A Delhi-NCR-based women's organisation of the Kuki-Hmar-Zomi community of Manipur has demanded the withdrawal of a remark made by solicitor general Tushar Mehta in the Supreme Court where he had reportedly said that most of the unclaimed bodies of the ethnic violence in Manipur belong to those of "infiltrators".

In a statement, the UNAU Tribal Women's Forum, Delhi-NCR, said the mothers of the Kuki-Hmar-Zomi community of Manipur, represented by the group, are "deeply hurt and appalled" by the remarks made by the solicitor general in the Supreme Court on August 1.

"Such a loose and unfounded remark from the solicitor general of the country is unacceptable, unbecoming and abhorrent. It is deeply hurtful to the families of the dead who, till today, are unable to perform the last rites of their loved ones," the group said.

In some cases, the women's body claimed, where the bodies are lying in Imphal, the be-

reaved families are unable to access the bodies due to the prevailing security situation in which "they will face certain death" if they were to try and retrieve the bodies.

It said that the Kuki-Hmar-Zomi community has been making repeated calls for these bodies to be brought to Churachandpur "to no effect".

The women's group said calling any citizen of India "an infiltrator or illegal migrant" without basis or proof is a serious matter and "it is tantamount to lying and misleading the court, and does not behave someone holding the office of the second highest law officer of the country".

"In view of the foregoing, UNAU Tribal Women's Forum, Delhi-NCR representing the mothers of the Kuki-Hmar-Zomi community, demands withdrawal of the remarks from solicitor general Shri Tushar Mehta...", the group said.

According to media reports, Mehta, appearing for both the union and Manipur governments, on August 1, told the Supreme Court that

"most of the unclaimed bodies are of infiltrators". His remark came towards the end of a half-day-long hearing on the violence in Manipur, before a bench headed by Chief Justice D Y Chandrachud.

"But at the end of it, the people who were raped and murdered were our people, right? Therefore, we have to ensure that justice is done, that is all," the Chief Justice laid down the court's stand.

Mehta had intervened at this point, saying that "most of the unclaimed bodies are those infiltrators... Those who came with a particular design and got killed... I don't wish to mention anything further and vitiate things..."

However, senior advocate Colin Gonsalves said, "118 tribal bodies are in the morgue in Imphal". Appearing for tribal communities, he submitted, "The bodies are unidentified for months. They are rotting. We cannot go there to identify them. No attempt is being made to help us identify".

Sikkim CM reshuffles cabinet, Arunachal RD urges officials to ensure early release of PMAY-G fund

GANGTOK, Aug 7 (PTI): Sikkim chief minister Prem Singh Tamang made a reshuffle in his cabinet on Monday, and allocated the culture and printing & stationary departments to Rhenock MLA Bishnu Kumar Sharma.

Sharma was sworn in as a minister on August 4. Samdup Lepcha, who holds the roads & bridges department was given the additional charge of the sports & youth affairs department, according to a notification.

Tourism and civil aviation minister BS Panth was given the additional charge of the informa-

tion technology department. He also holds commerce and industries, and information & public relations portfolios.

Education minister Kunga Nima Lepcha was given the additional charge of the health & family welfare department. Lepcha, the senior-most minister in this government, also holds law, parliamentary affairs, land revenue and disaster management departments.

The chief minister retained home, finance, planning & development, and excise departments.

ITANAGAR, Aug 7 (PTI): Arunachal Pradesh rural development and panchayati raj minister Bamang Felix on Monday directed officials of the department to ensure that funds under Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana - Grameen (PMAY-G) are released to the beneficiaries immediately. Reviewing all Central sponsored schemes under the rural development and panchayat departments here, Felix said that PMAY-G should reach saturation status by November 31, this year.

The minister also directed the officers to ensure timely payment to MNRGA beneficiaries and that cent per cent Aadhaar seeding and mapping of MGREGA be completed by

the end of this month, an official communique said. Expressing confidence in project directors (PDs) and district panchayat development officers (DPDOs) to execute their duties and responsibilities in a time-bound and effective manner, the minister hoped that there would be a drastic improvement during the next review meeting. He also assured all possible assistance to them wherever required. Emphasising on the importance of having a Gram Panchayat Development Plan (GPDP), Felix said that the panchayati raj department must take it as their responsibility to ensure that meetings are held for finalising GPDP.

| GOVERNMENT OF ASSAM | |
|---|--|
| DIRECTORATE OF TECHNICAL EDUCATION, ASSAM | |
| KAHILIPARA, GUWAHATI-19. | |
| No. TE[Ex] Admn-1/2023/ | |
| EXTENSION NOTICE FOR JLEE -2023 CANDIDATES | |
| Online choice filling process has been extended upto 10 th August 2023 till 23.59.59 hrs. for admission into the B.Tech Courses in the State Engineering Colleges of Assam through Joint Lateral Entrance Examination (JLEE 2023) Candidates are requested to visit the under mentioned website for details. | |
| Website: dte.assam.gov.in | |
| Sd/- Director of Technical Education, Assam, Kahilipara, Guwahati-19. | |
| Janasanyog ID/8483/23 | |

Immunisation drive begins in Nagaland

KOHIMA, Aug 7 (PTI): The Intensified Mission Indradhanush (IMI) 5.0 was launched in Nagaland along with the rest of the country on Monday with the target to immunise 2,064 pregnant women and children below 5 years in the state.

Principal director of health and family welfare Vibetuoquo M Sachu launched the programme by administering the first dose to an infant at the Urban Primary Health Centre (UPHC) in Kohima district.

During the first round, 209 sessions will be held to immunise 2,064 beneficiaries, including 1,885 children and 179 pregnant women, across Nagaland, state immunisation officer Dr Imkongtemu Longchar told PTI. The drive aims to vaccinate the children and pregnant women left out during the routine immunisation activities, he said.

Sachu said that IMI 5.0 aims to strengthen routine immunisation under the Universal Immunisation Programme (UIP). A lot of beneficiaries in the first round are those who have missed different vaccines or were left out after the first dose, she said. Healthcare workers will trace the



children and pregnant women who missed immunisation, she said, adding that IMI 5.0 will have three rounds that will be carried out over three months till October.

With the immunisation rate in Nagaland being at 58 per cent, which is lesser than the national average, she appealed to civil society organisations and faith-based groups to support the department to ensure

that no children or pregnant women are left unimmunised or half-immunised.

"We want to ensure that no children should suffer due to vaccine-preventable diseases," Sachu said.

While the first round will continue till August 12, the second round will be held from September 11 to 16 and the third round from October 9 to 14.

No:- KOK/Bldg/Tech-132/2018-19/1928

Date :- 02/08/2023

SHORT NOTICE INVITING TENDER

Sealed tenders affixing non-refundable court fee stamp of Rs.8.25 (Rupees eight and paise twenty five) only with a validity period of 180 (One hundred eighty) days, which will subsequently to be converted and drawn up in the printed F-2 Form are invited from the intending Registered contractors of Class - I (A,B,C) & Class-II Categories of the Assam, P.W.D.(Bldg) for submitting tenders for the work stated below. The tenders will be received by the undersigned up to 1:30 P.M on 14/08/2023 and will be opened on the same date and place at 2:00 P.M.

| Name of Division | Name of Work | (Approx.) Estimated Value of work | Earnest money 1% for ST/SC/OBC/ MOBC & 2% for GNL | Cost of Tender Documents | Time of Completion |
|--|--|-----------------------------------|---|--------------------------|--------------------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| P.W.D. Kokrajhar Dist. & Chirang Dist. | Construction of Community Hall at Aodang Bazar under Kokrajhar Development Block. | Rs.6,58,056.00 | Rs.7,000.00 & Rs.14,000.00 | Rs.500.00 | 6(Six) Months |
| Territorial Building Division. | Construction of Crematorium ground at Laoripara Village, Haltugan under Kokrajhar Development Block. | Rs.4,69,897.00 | Rs.5,000.00 & Rs.10,000.00 | Rs.500.00 | 6(Six) Months |

Detailed N.I.T. may be seen in all working hours in the office of the undersigned. Tender papers will be issued to the contractors or their authorized agent up to 1:30 P.M. in all working days from 08/08/2023 to 14/08/2023 in the office of the undersigned on payment in the form I.P.O./Demand Draft/Bank Draft/C.D duly pledged in favour of the Executive Engineer, P.W.D. Kokrajhar District & Chirang District Territorial Building Division, Kokrajhar. The Contractors should submit attested copy of Registration Certificate for the year 2023-2024, latest clearance Certificate of Income Tax, GST, along with tenders. In case the office is remain closed/ bandh for any reason on tender papers issuing/receiving/opening date, then the same will be issued/received/opened in the next working day.

Sd/- Executive Engineer, P.W.D.
Kokrajhar Dist. & Chirang Dist.
Territorial Building Division, Kokrajhar.

IPR(BTC)-2023-24/405

Corruption, dynasty Quit India, PM's swipe on opposition

'Reinstatement of Rahul's LS membership victory of democracy'

NEW DELHI, Aug 7 (PTI): Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday stepped up attack on the Opposition that has rechristened itself as INDIA, saying it was an "obstacle" to India becoming a developed nation and that 'Bharat' was calling for corruption, dynast-based politics and appeasement to 'Quit India'.

A day ahead of the debate in Lok Sabha on the no-confidence motion against his government, Modi used 'Bharat' to describe the country and attacked 'INDIA' bloc by calling it "a grave threat" to the country.

Speaking at the National Handloom Day celebration at Bharat Mandapam, Pragati Maidan, Modi also said it is his government's endeavour to make India's handloom, Khadi and the textile sector a world champion.

He also highlighted various steps taken by his government since 2014 for weavers and the handloom sector.

Stressing that 'Vocal for Local' has become a mass movement, the prime minister called upon the textile sector and fashion industry to expand their scope and work to

make India a USD 5 trillion economy.

Modi said the country is witnessing the rise of a neo-middle class, which has created opportunities for the textile sector.

He also said a new revolution has come in the country regarding Swadeshi and urged people to take it further during the forthcoming festivals, including Raksha Bandhan, Ganesh Chaturthi, Dusshera and Diwali.

Speaking about the relevance of August 9, he said the date has been a witness to the biggest movement of India under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi who sent the message of Quit India to the British.

The Prime Minister said the same mantra can be used now to chase away such elements that have become an obstacle as the nation resolves to build a 'Viksit Bharat' or developed India.

"We have a dream and commitment to make India a developed nation, but there are evils which have become obstacles... Entire India is echoing in one voice - corruption, dynasty, appeasement must Quit India," Modi said.



He underlined that these evils in India are a big challenge for the country and exuded confidence that the nation will defeat these evils.

"The country will be victorious, the people of India will be victorious," he added.

Highlighting the contribution of the handloom industry of India, Modi said the confluence of old and new defines the new India of

today. "The India of today is not just 'Local for Vocal' but also providing a global platform to take it to the world," he said.

The prime minister said that the turnover of Khadi and village industries was only around ₹ 25,000-30,000 crore nine years ago but today it has reached more than ₹ 1.30 lakh crore. The additional ₹ 1 lakh crore has reached those asso-

ciated with the handloom sector in villages and the tribals, he added.

Modi reiterated the need to repeat the Swadeshi resolution to support weavers and handicraftsmen in the upcoming festivals.

He also said 'Ekta Mall' is being developed in every capital city of states by the government to promote handicraft and products. An Ekta Mall has already been set up at the Statue of Unity in Gujarat.

Referring to the rise of a neo-middle class in India, Modi said a huge young consumer class is being formed for every product and it presents a huge opportunity for textile companies, and said it is also the responsibility of these companies to strengthen the local supply chain and invest in it.

"If we want to take advantage in the future, then we have to invest in local supply chain today.

This is the way to build a developed India and realise the dream of a USD dollar five trillion economy," he said.

He asked the textile industry and the fashion world to increase the scope of thinking and work to make India one of the top three economies of the world.

MUMBAI, Aug 7 (PTI): Senior Maharashtra Congress leaders Vijay Wadetiwar and Ashok Chavan on Monday hailed the reinstatement of Rahul Gandhi's Lok Sabha membership as the victory of democracy and said this has strengthened the opposition bloc INDIA.

Shiv Sena (UBT) Lok Sabha member Arvind Sawant also welcomed Gandhi's return to the Lower House of Parliament.

The Lok Sabha membership of Gandhi was restored on Monday, days after the Supreme Court stayed his conviction by a Gujarat court in a defamation case.

Gandhi was accorded a warm welcome by the Congress and other opposition MPs on his arrival in Parliament. The Lok Sabha Secretariat issued a notification announcing that his disqualification has been revoked and his membership restored.

"The Union government was worried that Rahul Gandhi would expose its bad practices. Gandhi will continue to raise his voice in the Lok Sabha in the interest of the common man," Wadetiwar, who is the leader of opposition in the Maharashtra assembly, told reporters.

He said Gandhi raised issues pertaining to the Rafale jets (deal) and Adani group in the Lok Sabha. Gandhi always criticised "wrong decisions" of the Union govern-



ment. He will continue to do so, he said.

"His return to the Lok Sabha has strengthened the opposition bloc INDIA," Wadetiwar said.

Ashok Chavan in a tweet said the entire country was waiting for this decision and termed it as the "victory of justice and democracy".

"This is not only a happy moment for Congress workers, but also for those who are supporters of democracy in this country," the former state chief minister said.

Rahul Gandhi fought for the nation's issues by coming out on road. Now his right to raise these issues in the Lok Sabha is restored, Chavan tweeted. Talking to reporters, Sena (UBT) leader Arvind Sawant said, "The country's freedom is in danger. We welcome Gandhi's return to the Lok Sabha. The Supreme Court's decision is a tight slap on the face against the conspiracy of the government."

No other strong leader like PM Modi at national level: Ajit Pawar

PUNE, Aug 7 (PTI): Maharashtra deputy chief minister Ajit Pawar on Monday said he does not see any other strong leader like Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the national level on Monday.

Speaking to reporters in Pune, Pawar said some people might be criticising him for his decision to join the Eknath Shinde-Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government, but a man can have a different opinion on the basis of his "experiences".

Ajit Pawar, the nephew of Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) founder Sharad Pawar, joined the Shiv Sena-BJP government along with eight party MLAs on July 2.

On Sunday, union home minister Amit Shah during an event in Pune said Ajit Pawar is now at the "right place after a long time", but "came very late".

Asked about Shah's comments, Ajit Pawar said he earlier reiterated that he had taken the decision to join the Shiv Sena-BJP alliance to take the state towards development, transform the region, address several issues, and help the elected representatives complete their work in their constituencies.

"Today, I personally do not see any other leader as strong as Narendra Modi at the national

level. I do not see any other alternative. Some people criticise me citing my past statements, but a man can have different opinions on the basis of his experiences," he said.

He said the prime minister has made provisions of ₹ 25,000 crore for the revamping of 500 railway stations, which include 44 stations in Maharashtra. Appreciating Shah, he said the Union minister took "courageous" decisions which were not taken for last 20 to 22 years, after taking charge of the Cooperation Ministry.

"We as farmers should accept the fact that the decisions which were pending have been taken by Amit Shahji under the leadership of PM Narendra Modi," Ajit Pawar said. Asked about a meeting on review of constituencies with Amit Shah during his recent visit here, he said, "We had a brief discussion on the maha-yuti (mega alliance) of BJP, Shiv Sena and NCP, but detailed discussions took place on the Centre's various projects worth ₹80,000 crore going on in the state."

Ajit Pawar said along with him, chief minister Eknath Shinde and deputy CM Devendra Fadnis were also present during the meeting with Shah.

Haryana & Punjab HC halts demolition drive in Nuh; miscreants start fire in Gurugram mazar



GURUGRAM/CHANDIGARH, Aug 7 (PTI): The Punjab and Haryana High Court on Monday halted the demolition drive in Nuh where authorities were bulldozing "illegally-constructed" buildings following communal clashes last week, while unidentified men allegedly started a fire in a mazar in adjoining Gurugram.

The court of Justice G S Sandhawalia took suo motu cognisance of the exercise in Nuh and directed the Haryana government not to carry out any further demolition.

Officials had said some of the buildings were used by rioters when a Vishva Hindu Parishad procession was targeted by a stone-pelting mob on July 31. It led to communal clashes that spread to Gurugram.

Six people, including two home guards and a cleric, were killed in the violence.

In the early hours of Monday, some prayer material at a mazar, visited both by Muslims and Hindus in Gurugram's Khandas village, was set afire, said the shrine's caretaker Ghase Ram.

According to a complaint filed by Ram at the Sector 37 police station, he received a phone call around 1.30 am about a fire in the shrine. He said the fire was brought under control with the help of people. But the prayer material kept inside the mazar were burnt, he added.

Ram said he learnt that a group of five-six young boys gathered there and started the fire. He said he has been working at the shrine for about seven years and has seen "people of all religions offering their respect there".

The small shrine located in the middle of a market also has pictures of Hindu deities on the inner walls along with the tomb of a "peer baba". On the outer wall also, there are picture of a Hindu deity, and the Om and Swastik symbols.

Ram told PTI on Monday morning, "This is a decades-old mazar of 'peer baba' and all villagers offer prayers here."

Police have lodged an FIR in the case against unidentified persons under sections 34 (acts done by several persons in furtherance of common intention), 153A (promoting enmity between different groups), 188 (disobedience of an order duly promulgated by a public servant), 436 (mischievous by fire or explosive substance

with intent to destroy house) of the IPC.

A senior police officer said they are trying to identify the accused and arrest them.

The incident happened when prohibitory orders under section 144 of the CrPC were still in force in Gurugram in view of the communal clashes that began in the neighbouring Nuh district and spread to parts of the city and nearby areas last week. The Gurugram district administration lifted section 144, which prohibited an assembly of four or more persons at a time, on Monday. As authorities in Nuh district Sunday razed some illegal structures including a hotel from where stones were allegedly pelted on the religious procession, the high court took suo motu cognisance of the exercise and directed the state government not to carry out any further demolition.

Deputy commissioner, Nuh, Dhirender Kharagata said the demolition drive in the district has been stopped following the orders of the court.

"I have ordered the officials to stop the drive against the illegal construction," he said.

In the last three days, illegal constructions have been removed from 57.5 acres of land at 37 places in the district.

As many as 162 permanent and 591 raw structures have been demolished in the district till Monday, officials said.

Meanwhile, police said an eatery (dhaba) near Rathiwas village in Gurugram was set on fire on Saturday night. They said an FIR was registered at the Bilaspur police station in the night itself.

Rahul slams govt overinflation, shares video of Azadpur Mandi



NEW DELHI, Aug 7 (PTI): Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Monday attacked the Centre over rising inflation and alleged that the government is not even listening to the poor, as he shared a video of his recent visit to the Azadpur Mandi where he had met some vegetable and fruit vendors as well as traders.

Gandhi shared the video of his interactions at the Azadpur Mandi on his social media handles.

In a tweet along with the link to his video, Gandhi said he met labourers, traders and farmers in Azadpur Mandi to know why there is 'mandi (slowdown) in the Mandi'.

"Jata Shankar is a labourer who has not been able to go home, meet his family, for more than a year because of this work. How will he go, if he misses work, money will be deducted and it will become more difficult to survive in this inflation," the former Congress chief said in a tweet in Hindi.

"A shopkeeper also told me that due to the losses, he has to sleep hungry two to three nights in a week. Far from solving the problems of the country's poor, the government is not even listening to them!" Gandhi said.

Time will change, India will unite, the tears of the poor will be wiped off, Gandhi said.

"During the meeting, I talked with every section working in the market. Everyone has their own problems but still they are related to each other. Where the traders were troubled by GST and inflation, the labourers were troubled by unemployment along with inflation," Gandhi was quoted as saying by a party statement on his visit to the Azadpur Mandi.

Kevalanand Lohani, a businessman, told Gandhi that there used to be savings in the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) government, but he is facing losses under the current government.

"The children want me not to do this work, but there are no employment opportunities," he tells Gandhi in the video.

"The most special thing about Azadpur Mandi is harmony here, people from every religion, caste and province work together here. Even if there is competition among themselves, there is respect," Gandhi said.

He had last Tuesday visited the Azadpur Mandi in the national capital and met some vegetable and fruit vendors there.

The visit came days after he met some farmers planting paddy in their fields in Haryana's Sonapat district and met some women farm labourers, whom he later invited them over to his mother's residence.

Gandhi had shared food with some 30-odd women farmers from Haryana, with his mother Sonia Gandhi and sister Priyanka Gandhi Vadra also joining them.

Family members breathe sigh of relief as patients brought to safety Shah, CM Several J-K leaders join Congress, many from DPAP

NEW DELHI, Aug 7 (PTI): Sixteen-year-old Naznin was worried for the safety of her mother, who was unconscious after being administered anaesthesia for an endoscopy procedure at AIIMS, when a fire broke out in the room on Monday. As dense smoke engulfed the second floor of the old OPD building, Naznin, other patients and family members waiting there were quickly evacuated. In the rush, all she could do was worry about her mother's safety.

"I went to AIIMS with my mother as she was to undergo a procedure. She was already given anaesthesia and was

on the table while I waited outside the room when the fire broke out," Naznin -- from Nangloi in Delhi -- told PTI.

Describing the chaos that ensued, Naznin said, "Nothing was visible as dense smoke filled the area. I was clueless about my mother as she was unconscious till I saw her being brought outside on a stretcher after 15-20 minutes."

Panic gripped the patients, their family members and hospital staff as a fire broke out in the endoscopy room on the second floor of the old OPD building at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS). No casualties were reported in the fire, the cause of which is still to be ascertained. Hospital sources said the fire forced the suspension of endoscopy, emergency and diagnostics services in the old OPD building. Emergency services are now being restored.

Visuals from the spot showed black smoke billowing out of the windows. Tannu Devi, who was admitted in the emergency ward, was among those to be evacuated.

"Smoke filled the emergency area all of a sudden. We were so scared but the hospital staff flung into action and evacuated us. I was so worried for my mother," her daughter Kiran told PTI.

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"Smoke filled the emergency area all of a sudden. We were so scared but the hospital staff flung into action and evacuated us. I was so worried for my mother," her daughter Kiran told PTI.

NEW DELHI, Aug 7 (PTI): Over 20 leaders from Jammu and Kashmir, many of them from Ghulam Nabi Azad's Democratic Progressive Azad Party, joined the Congress in the presence of party chief Mallikarjun Kharge here on Monday.

Congress president Kharge, AICC general secretary in-charge organisation K C Venugopal, AICC in-charge of state Rajani Patil and Jammu and Kashmir Congress chief Vikar Rasool Wani were also present on the occasion.

Yashpal Khandel, an ex-Minister, a two-time legislator from Panthers Party and the Chief of the SC/ST and OBC Department of AAP in J-K, was among those who joined the Congress here. Haji Abdul Rashid Dar, a former vice president of JKPC who later joined Azad's

party, also returned to the Congress fold.

Naresh K Gupta (DPAP), Sham Lal Bhagat (DPAP), Namrata Sharma (Apni Party), Saima Jan (DPAP), Shahjehan Dar (DPAP), Farooq Ahmad (AAP), Taranjit Singh Toni, Gazanfar Ali, Santosh Majotra (DPAP), Rajni Sharma (DPAP), Nirmal Singh Mehta (DPAP), Madan Lal Chalotra (APNI Party), Hamit Singh Batti (AAP), Ramesh Pandotra (AAP), Vaid Raj Sharma (AAP), Mandeep Chowdhary (AAP), Nazir Ahmed Auqab, Maheshwar Vishwakarma and Jung Bahadur Sharma (DPAP) joined the Congress.

Several leaders, who had left the Congress to join Azad's party after he quit the grand old party and formed his own outfit, have rejoined the Congress since then.

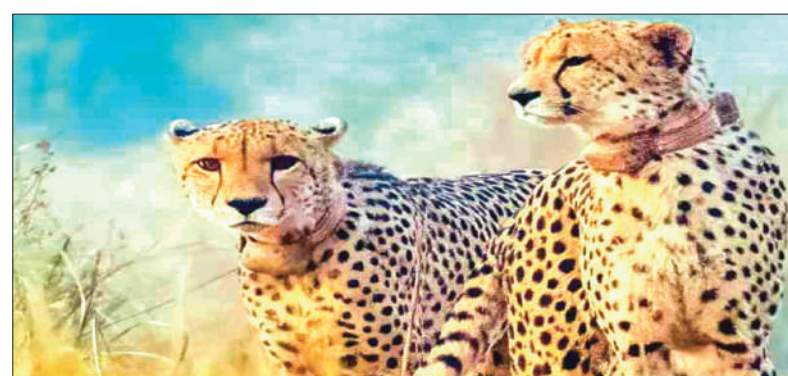
KNP cheetahs have developed 'winter cover' in 45-46 degrees in anticipation of African winter: Govt tells SC

NEW DELHI, Aug 7 (PTI): The central government's ambitious Project Cheetah is facing a major problem, with the animals translocated from South Africa developing a "winter cover", a thick coat of fur, in anticipation of African winter, the Supreme Court was told on Monday.

Additional solicitor general Aishwarya Bhati told the court that this phenomenon was happening when the temperature at the Kuno National Park (KNP), where these cheetahs have been translocated, was around 45-46 degrees.

Nine cheetahs, including three Indian-born cubs, have died in Madhya Pradesh's KNP since March this year, raising questions about the management of the project. At the outset, Bhati told a bench of Justices BR Gavai, PS Narasimha and Prashant Kumar Mishra that cheetah deaths at Kuno were troubling but not alarming.

"The number of deaths is not low given the fact that 20 cheetahs were translocated. Sum and substance of



your argument is that everything is going well and there is nothing wrong. But the general public is concerned about what is being done about the deaths," Justice Narasimha told Bhati, who appeared for the Union Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) and the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA). The top court took note of a letter written to it by four South African

wildlife experts who said some cheetah deaths could have been prevented with better monitoring and veterinary care. They had reportedly said their opinion was being ignored by the Project Steering Committee and also suggested some remedial measures.

The bench noted Bhati's submission that experts are being consulted to check cheetah deaths at KNP and that though the letter in question was said

to have been written by four experts, it was signed by only one.

"We see no reason to disbelieve counsel for the Union of India. It is an issue which is best left to the experts as the court is not an expert in the subject matter. Whether any experts need to be in the panel, it is up to the Union of India to consider. This court cannot thrust any expert in the panel," the bench said.

Senior advocate Prashanto Chandra Sen, appearing for some experts, said it is an emergency situation and experts like MK Ranjitsinh and YB Jhala may be included in the panel of cheetah experts for the project.

The bench asked how can it direct that a particular person be included in the list of experts when already there are experts from South Africa and Namibia.

"Just because you are an expert, you need to be there in the panel? Sorry, that cannot be done. There are already enough experts in the panel," it said.

Train firing: Accused RPF constable's police custody extended till Aug 11

MUMBAI, Aug 7 (PTI): A court here on Monday extended the police remand of Railway Protection Force (RPF) constable Chetan Singh till August 11 (till August 11) for allegedly shooting dead his senior colleague and three passengers on a moving train. The Government Railway Police (GRP) sought the extension of his custody for seven days, saying they need to identify the witnesses and scan CCTV footage. The magistrate, however, granted Singh's custody to the police till August 11. The GRP has added Indian Penal Code section 153-A, for promoting enmity between different groups on grounds of religion, in the case against Singh. The incident took place on July 31 on board the moving Jaipur-Mumbai Central Express near Palghar railway station in Maharashtra. Accused constable Chetan Singh (34) allegedly shot dead his senior - RPF Assistant Sub-Inspector Tikaram Meena - and three passengers on board the train, officials said.

Singh was nabbed with his weapon later while trying to flee after passengers pulled the chain of the train which stopped near Mira Road station (on the Mumbai suburban network)

Delhi services bill perfectly, legitimately valid: Ranjan Gogoi in Rajya Sabha

'The state legislature makes laws for the states, Parliament makes laws for the Union Territories'

NEW DELHI, Aug 7 (PTI): Former Chief Justice of India and Rajya Sabha MP Ranjan Gogoi on Monday said the bill to replace an ordinance for handling the transfers and postings of officials in the Delhi government is "perfectly, legitimately valid".

Home minister Amit Shah introduced the Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi (Amendment) Bill, 2023 for consideration in the Rajya Sabha. The bill was passed by the Lok Sabha last week. Participating in the debate on the bill, Gogoi, a nominated member of the Upper House, said it is the prerogative and the right of the members of the House to debate, and the question of the proposed legislation being sub-judice does not arise.

Several leaders from the opposition parties have termed the Delhi services bill as "unconstitutional". Some even suggested that Parliament should not take up the bill saying the matter was pending before the Supreme Court.

"So far as overreaching or out-



reaching the order of the court, Supreme Court, is concerned, very shortly put the position in my perception is this. The state legislature makes laws for the states. Parliament makes laws for the Union Territories," he said in his maiden speech in the House. He said for the National Capital Region of Delhi, which has a special status,

the state legislature or the legislature of Delhi makes the laws on state subjects except three matters. But as pointed by Mahesh Jethmalani (BJP), Gogoi said Parliament has the power to frame laws beyond the three matters and that is exactly what the bill is seeking to do.

"Therefore, there is no question

of overreaching," he said.

Gogoi further said there is "absolute freedom" of speech in Parliament and whatever a member says in Parliament cannot be questioned in a court of law.

The former chief justice of India spoke on various aspects of the bill and other law points, and asserted that "...in my respectful submission, my contention, Bill is perfectly, legitimately valid".

According to the bill, the National Capital Civil Services Authority will consist of the chief minister, chief secretary and the principal home secretary of Delhi. The bill empowers the authority to make recommendations to the Delhi lieutenant governor regarding transfers and postings of officials and disciplinary matters.

It also empowers the LG to exercise his sole discretion on several matters, including those recommended by the National Capital Civil Services Authority, and the summoning, prorogation and dissolution of the Delhi Legislative Assembly.

Top Hizbul commander among two terrorists killed in J&K's Poonch

POONCH/JAMMU, Aug 7 (PTI): A self-styled divisional commander of Hizbul Mujahideen was killed along with his bodyguard as security forces foiled an infiltration attempt and a conspiracy by the proscribed outfit to revive its activities in Jammu and Kashmir's Poonch district early Monday, officials said. While the body of Hizbul commander Munser Hussain was retrieved, his bodyguard's body was still lying near the Line of Control (LoC) in Degwar sector, the officials said. Troops in the Degwar sector noticed the movement of some terrorists attempting to sneak into this side under the cover of darkness in the early hours of the day and engaged them in an encounter, the officials said. Jammu-based defence PRO Lt Col Suneel Bartwal said the two infiltrating terrorists were engaged by the joint team of Army and police in Garhi Battalion area around 2 am. "One terrorist fell down immediately while the second tried to run back to LoC, engaged and hit and was seen falling down on the ground," the officer said. The movement of the terrorists was picked up in the general area Degwar Terva, he said. Lt Col Bartwal said the body of one of the slain terrorists was retrieved and has been identified on the basis of police records as Hussain — a resident of Bagyladra village of Poonch who was a self-styled Divisional Commander of Hizbul Mujahideen. "In 1993, he went to Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK) for arms training and came back three years later. He has masterminded a number of attacks on Security Forces before returning to PoK in 1998," the officer said. Hussain, who has two wives and several children, was a close associate of Maulana Dawood Kashmiri, a close associate of PoK-based Hizbul supremo Syed Salaudin, he said. "A high-level meeting of the Hizbul group took place in Islamabad, Pakistan recently to chalk out a plan to revive the outfit in the border districts of Poonch and Rajouri in J-K. Hussain along with his bodyguard was believed to have been sent with the agenda of reviving terrorism in south of Pir-Panjal," he said. "Hussain is the most dreaded terrorist killed in the last 10 years in Rajouri and Poonch belt. His killing makes it evident that Pakistan is trying to send old terror veterans to motivate and recruit youth, thus making desperate attempts to revive terrorism," Lt Col Bartwal said.

Spiritual tourism has potential to boost socio-economic development in Puducherry, says Prez

PUDUCHERRY, Aug 7 (PTI): President Droupadi Murmu on Monday said she was glad to find that spiritual tourism was getting a boost in Union Territory of Puducherry.

Addressing a gathering at the civic reception accorded to her at JIPMER during her first visit to Puducherry, the President said Puducherry was a 'wonderful destination for spiritual tourism' and added that spiritual tourism was emerging fast as a global trend.

Murmu further said, "spiritual tourism has the potential to boost socio-economic development in Puducherry". She noted that the central government has taken several measures under Swadesh Dharshan scheme to promote tourism related activities in Puducherry.

Earlier, after inaugurating the ₹17 crore advanced linear accelerator equipment for treatment of cancer patients in JIPMER, the President said the facility would minimize radio therapy exposure.

She virtually inaugurated the ₹10.51 crore Ayush hospital set up in the neighbouring Villianoor and said it had come up under the National Ayush Mission and would provide affordable and wholistic health care under the three systems



of medicine namely Ayurveda, Siddha and Homeopathy.

Praising the multifarious development Puducherry had made in the field of literacy and education, Murmu said Puducherry demonstrated blending of different cultures and measured up to the spirit of the saying that there was 'unity in diversity.' Lt Governor Tamilisai Soundararajan welcomed the President first in Odhiya and switched over to English and Tamil.

Chief minister N Rangasamy

who presented his address in English referred to the various welfare schemes the territorial government was implementing to help the marginalized and needy sections.

Earlier, on arrival at the Puducherry airport from Chennai the President was received by Lt Governor, chief minister, ministers, legislators and officials.

Droupadi is on a two-day visit to Puducherry and this was her first visit to the Union Territory after becoming President.

SC bins petitions challenging TN minister's arrest, says habeas corpus plea maintainable only when detention illegal

NEW DELHI, Aug 7 (PTI): The Supreme Court dismissed on Monday the petitions filed by Tamil Nadu minister V Senthil Balaji and his wife challenging a Madras High Court order upholding his arrest in a money laundering case, holding a remand order passed by a judicial officer cannot be contested under the guise of a habeas corpus plea. It said a habeas corpus plea can be filed only in case of illegal detention.

A habeas corpus petition is filed to ensure a person under arrest is brought before a court which determines whether the detention is legal. Balaji, who continues to be a minister without portfolio in the Tamil Nadu government even after his arrest on June 14, and his wife had contested a Madras High Court order upholding his arrest by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) in a money laundering case arising out of an alleged cash-for-jobs scam in the state's transport department.

"A writ of habeas corpus shall only be issued when the detention is illegal. As a matter of rule, an order of remand by a judicial officer, culminating into a judicial function cannot be challenged by way of a writ of habeas corpus, while it is open to the person aggrieved to seek other statutory remedies.

"When there is a non-compliance of the mandatory provisions along with a total non-application of mind, there may be a case for entertaining a writ of Habeas Corpus and that too by way of a challenge," a bench of Justices A S Bopanna and M M Sundresh said. Noting that the 15-day custody of Balaji, which the Principal Sessions Judge granted to ED, expires on August 12, the top court permitted the anti-money laundering agency to interrogate him for five days. Balaji was hospitalised for a heart surgery during the remand period.

The bench said admittedly, physical custody of Balaji was not given to the central agency as he was in hospital.

"Admission of the appellant to the hospital of his choice cannot be termed as a physical custody in favour of the respondents (ED). Custody could not be taken on the basis of the interim order passed by the High Court which certainly shall not come in the way of calculating the period of 15 days. "An investigating agency is expected to be given a reasonable freedom to do its part. To say that the respondents ought to have examined the appellant in the hospital, and that too with the permission of the doctors, can never be termed as an adequate compliance," the bench said.



Elaborating on the applicability of habeas corpus plea, the top court said in a case where the mandate of Section 167 of the CrPC, 1973 and Section 19 of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act, 2002 are totally ignored by a cryptic order, a habeas corpus petition may be entertained, provided a challenge is specifically made.

"However, an order passed by a Magistrate giving reasons for a remand can only be tested in the manner provided under the statute and not by invoking Article 226 of the Constitution of India, 1950.

"There is a difference between a detention becoming illegal for not following the statutory mandate and wrong or inadequate reasons provided in a judicial order. While in the former case a writ of habeas corpus may be entertained, in the latter the only remedy available is to seek a relief statutorily given," the court said in its 87-page judgement. Balaji's wife Megala had filed a habeas corpus petition in the Madras High Court calling his detention "illegal".

The apex court said the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), 2002 being a sui generis (unique) legislation, has its own mechanism to deal with arrest in the light of its objectives.

"The concern of the PMLA, 2002 is to prevent money laundering, make adequate recovery and punish the offender. That is the reason why a comprehensive procedure for summons, searches, and seizures etc., has been clearly stipulated under Chapter V of the PMLA, 2002.

"An arrest shall only be made after due compliance of the relevant provisions including Section 19 of the PMLA, 2002. Therefore, there is absolutely no need to follow and adopt Section 41A (Notice of appearance before police officer) of the CrPC, 1973 especially in the teeth of Section 65 of the PMLA, 2002," the bench said.

Lowering Chandrayaan-3 from 100 km orbit very critical phase: ISRO chief

NEW DELHI, Aug 7 (PTI): India's third lunar mission — Chandrayaan-3 — is in good health and its most critical phase will be the orbit determination process when the spacecraft starts moving closer to the moon from the 100 km circular orbit, Indian Space Research Organisation Chairman S Somanath said on Monday.

Launched on July 14 by the Launch Vehicle Mark-3 rocket, Chandrayaan-3 spacecraft is now placed in a 170 km by 4,313 km elliptical orbit around the moon and a series of manoeuvres are planned for August 9 and 17 to place it in a 100 km circular orbit. The Vikram lander is expected to descend on the moon on August 23.

"Up to 100 km we do not see any difficulty. The issues are only in estimation of the position of the lander accurately from earth. This measurement is a very critical measurement, we call it the orbit determination process. If it is correct, the rest of the process can be done," Somanath told PTI here.

"We are able to bring it down very correctly this time. The orbit changes are happening as planned. There is no deviation. So, it shows excellent results and we are hoping that all will be fine," the ISRO chairman said.

Contd. from Page 1...

Rahul returns to Lok Sabha

at the main gate and the first floor of Parliament with sweets being distributed and slogans being raised in favour of the former AICC chief. Later, at the party office where he attended a meeting of Haryana leaders for Lok Sabha poll preparations in the state, Gandhi told reporters that "It is a strange thing, even you people look happy". He was asked about his reinstatement.

Gandhi also posted a video of his first day after returning as an MP with a Hindi caption "returned to Parliament today after paying obeisance to Babu (Mahatma Gandhi)". Congress chief Mallikarjun Kharge said the notification was a "welcome step" and it brings relief to the people of India, and especially to Wayanad.

"Whatever time is left of their tenure, BJP and Modi government should utilise that by concentrating on actual governance rather than denigrating Democracy by targeting opposition leaders," Kharge said on Twitter. Asked if Rahul Gandhi will speak during the no-confidence motion discussion in Lok Sabha on Tuesday, Kharge, who was leaving the AICC headquarters after attending a meeting, said he "will definitely speak".

Playing down Gandhi's return to Lok Sabha, BJP MP Sushil Kumar Modi asserted that Rahul has not been declared "dosh-mukt (acquitted)" and only a stay has been given on the conviction.

"The matter is still pending with the court in Gujarat and we should wait for that. There is only a stay on his conviction, he is not acquitted. Also, the Supreme Court said that it (Gandhi's remark) was not in good taste and that should be kept in mind," Modi said. "He was there in Parliament earlier also, what difference did it make to the Congress, they still lost elections. So his being in the House should not make the people of the Congress too happy," the former Bihar deputy chief minister said.

As soon as the news about Gandhi's reinstatement broke, Kharge who was in a meeting with opposition bloc INDIA leaders in his chamber on floor coordination, treated them to sweets. Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra said, "The voice of the real issues of the people" will reverberate again in Parliament. AICC general secretary, Organisation, KC Venugopal said, "Democracy has won! India wins".

Intensified Mission Indradhanush 5.0

tourism in Kaziranga. Chief minister Sarma said that to add beauty and quality to Bokakhat Sports Complex, the state government will provide ₹40 crore. He also announced ₹10 lakh to Uma Chetry for securing a spot in the Indian Women Cricket Team. Deputy Speaker Assam Legislative Assembly Dr Nomal Momin, animal husbandry and veterinary minister Atul Bora, health and family welfare minister Keshab Mahanta, finance minister Ajanta Neog, handloom and textile minister UG Brahma, MLAs Bidyasing Englang, Biswajit Phukan, Bhabendranath Bharali, Mrinal Saikia, CEM KAAC Tuliram Ronghang, and a host of other dignitaries were present on the occasion. Later, the chief minister took stock of the proposed Museum and Aquarium project. It may be noted that under the project, guesthouse, open stage, etc., have also been included. He also visited the site of the proposed heliport to be constructed at Galeki. He also handed over a vehicle to be deployed for patrolling the Kaziranga National Park.

KADHASDCOM clears

Autonomous Hills District of Assam." Timung emphasised that KADHASDCOM and its allies are non-political organisations, solely committed to advocating for the autonomous state status and the welfare of the hill tribes in the region.

3 ex-women HC judges

superintendents of police, be brought into the CBI on deputation from various states to oversee the probe. It said these officers will be functioning within the administrative set up of the CBI and may be supervised by an officer of the rank of joint director in the central agency. "We are going to add one more layer of scrutiny for us. We have already identified the officer," the bench said, adding former Maharashtra DGP Dattatraya Padsalgikar will monitor the overall investigation and keep apprising it of the developments.

It said as per a report placed before it by Attorney General R Venkataramani and Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, appearing for the Centre and the state government, about 42 state SITs will be looking at the cases which will not be transferred to the CBI. The bench said for each of these SITs at least one inspector from another state be brought on deputation to the Manipal Police. It said these 42 SITs should be supervised by six DIG rank officers who will come in from outside the state of Manipur. The bench said a detailed order will be uploaded on the apex court website later in the evening. During the hearing, Manipur chief secretary Vineet Joshi and state DGP Rajiv Singh appeared before the bench. The top law officers submitted a report, which the apex court had sought on August 1, on issues including the segregation of cases.

"The government is handling the situation at a very mature level," the attorney general told the bench. The government law officers said the state government proposed to set up Special Investigation Teams (SITs), headed by the superintendent of police at the district level, to probe sensitive cases. The CBI has been asked to investigate 11 cases. A battery of lawyers, including senior advocate Indira Jaising, Sanjay Hegde, C U Singh, Gopal Sankaranarayanan and lawyers Prashant Bhushan, Vrinda Grover, Nizam Pasha, Vishal Tiwari, gave suggestions to the bench on setting up of SITs for investigating cases of ethnic violence.

The directions by the top court came days after it said on August 1 that there was a complete breakdown of law and order and constitutional machinery in Manipur. It had rapped the state police for a "tardy" and "lethargic" probe of incidents of ethnic violence, especially those targeting women, and had summoned the DGP to answer its queries on August 7. The Centre had urged the bench that instead of the two FIRs related to a video showing women being paraded naked by a mob, 11 out of 6,523 FIRs linked to violence against women and children may be transferred to the CBI and tried out of Manipur. The bench is hearing around 10 petitions related to the spiralling violence, including those seeking court-monitored probe into cases, besides measures for relief and rehabilitation. More than 160 people have been killed and several hundred injured since ethnic violence first broke out in the state on May 3 when a 'Tribal Solidarity March' was organised in the hill districts to protest against the majority Meitei community's demand for Scheduled Tribe status.

Huge cache of explosives

the matter thoroughly and apprehending those responsible for transporting the explosives. The operation aims to neutralize any potential threats posed by these explosives and to safeguard public safety in both Assam and Manipur. This development comes as a significant step towards curbing illegal activities and maintaining regional security. The authorities continue to be vigilant in their efforts to address any potential risks and maintain peace in the affected areas.

Green cover loss threatens

records and exempted certain categories of land from its purview. As per data, the government approved diversion of 17,381 hectares of forest land in 2022-23, 16,785 hectares in 2021-22, 18,314 hectares in 2020-21, 17,392 hectares in 2019-20, 19,359 hectares in 2018-19 and 19,592 hectares in 2017-18. Conservationists meanwhile, argue that limiting the applicability of the FCA to land recorded as forest nullifies the Supreme Court's 1996 judgement in the TN Godavari case, which said the Act was applicable to land covered under the "dictionary meaning of forests" or "deemed forests" (forests not officially recorded as forests).

The environment ministry said that the application of the Act on land covered under the dictionary meaning of forests (or deemed forests) had resulted in a "declining tendency in plantations in non-forest lands owing to the apprehension among individuals, organizations and authorities regarding such plantations being considered forests". This misapprehension became a hindrance in enhancing the green cover to fulfill the Nationally Determined Contribution targets of reducing the carbon emission by an additional 2.5 to 3 billion tonnes.

The amended law also exempts forest land up to 10 hectares for constructing security-related infrastructure and within 100 km of international borders, Line of Control (LoC) and Line of Actual Control (LAC) for "strategic and security-related projects of national importance".

Forest land up to 5 hectares in Left Wing Extremism-affected areas has been exempted from the purview of the FCA for the construction of public utility projects such as schools, water facilities and telecommunication services. State States like Himachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Sikkim, Tripura, Mizoram and Assam, told a 31-member Joint Parliamentary Committee that reviewed the Forest (Conservation) Amendment Bill that such a step could potentially encompass large areas of their forest land and also affect tribals and other traditional forest dwelling communities. Meanwhile, environmentalists opine that areas in the hilly region close to the international borders and LAC/LoC are known for their geological instability and are prone to natural disasters such as heavy rainfall, landslides, flash floods and cloudbursts. Unregulated and large scale diversion of forests for non-forest activities" will aggravate the risks to communities and ecosystems.

They also stressed on the fact that exemption of forest land up to 0.10 hectares alongside roads and rail lines for public amenities lead to unchecked deforestation and ecological degradation in sensitive areas.

Modi govt intensely focusing

in view of the construction of roads, bridges and tunnels. "If the same thing had happened in 2014, we would have been at a huge disadvantage. They developed infrastructure and we did not match it," he said. "Infrastructure and connectivity along the China border is primarily driven by security considerations. In the past, before 2014, there was neglect of border infrastructure that had a negative impact on our ability to deploy troops," he said.

"The big effort really in respect of China has been to push our border infrastructure much stronger than what we used to have," he said. To a question, he said: "After 2014, will the Indian military be able to deploy and counter any Chinese movement better? Absolutely, no question about it." The projected allocation for the Border Roads Organisation (BRO) this year is ₹14,387 crore as against about ₹3,782 crore in 2013-14, a four-time increase, the external affairs minister said.

The length of roads constructed from 2014 to 2022 is 6,806 km, compared to 3,610 km from 2008 to 2014, he said. In the last three years, five tunnels have been completed, work on 10 is ongoing and seven are under planning, he added. Jaishankar cited the critical importance of the Darbuk-Shyok-Daulat Beg Oldie (DSDBO) as well as Umling La pass in the Ladakh sector, adding work has started on a road from Chushul to Demechok in that region. In Arunachal Pradesh, an 1,800 km-long road will be built at a cost of ₹30,000 crore, he added.

"These developments on the ground, in a way, are going to determine the quality of our response to a national security challenge on the northern border," Jaishankar said. Rejecting the opposition's criticism of the government on the eastern Ladakh border row, he said that complexities are involved and both sides are engaged to find solutions. "It was said that we will not be able to do anything, talks will not be successful, there will be no progress, disengagement cannot take place. But solutions were found in some of the focal points in the last three years," he said. "There were five-six areas including Pangong Tso, Galwan, and Hot Springs that were very tense. There has been progress (there). Full solution has not emerged but talks are underway," he said.

He also asserted that the process of talks has not come to a halt.

"At times, diplomacy takes time. These are complex issues," he said Highlighting the government's priority to develop border infrastructure, Jaishankar said the armed forces are now better placed to quickly deploy troops and counter-movement of the Chinese military effectively.

Jaishankar said the overall mobility of both the armed forces and the civilian population in the border areas has increased tremendously in the last few years because of the government's focus on the rapid enhancement of infrastructure in the frontier areas. "The capability is growing year after year," he said.

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



Nawazuddin Siddiqui's revenge drama 'Haddi' to premiere on ZEE5

MUMBAI, Aug 7 (PTI): Actor Nawazuddin Siddiqui-starrer revenge drama movie "Haddi", directed by debutant Akshat Ajay Sharma, will soon arrive on ZEE5, the streaming platform announced Monday.

Produced by Zee Studios, Sanjay Saha and Radhika Nanda's Anandita Studios, the direct-to-digital movie also features filmmaker-actor Anurag Kashyap in a pivotal role. Co-written by

Sharma and Adamyia Bhalla, "Haddi" is a crime revenge drama that will see Siddiqui portraying two distinct characters - Haddi and Harika, a transgender woman demonstrating remarkable versatility. Sharma said "Haddi" revolves around the "intoxicating world of vengeance, violence, and power, delving into the very essence of a criminal's psyche." "It highlights the ruthlessness of the society. It took me a lot of

time to flesh out characters and craft this politician-mobster-transgender drama. With bated breath, I am truly hoping that 'Haddi' exceeds every expectation, leaving an indelible mark on the hearts of our audience on ZEE5," he added.

Manish Kalra, Chief Business Officer, ZEE5 India said "Haddi" delves into the heart of India's "dark criminal chain".

"At ZEE5, we constantly strive

to live up to our consumer's expectations. Our viewers love thrillers and crime-dramas with unique stories. 'Haddi' is one such story that delves into the heart of the country's dark criminal chain, backed by a compelling storyline and unforgettable characters. We are confident that this film will stand out with exceptional performances by Nawazuddin Siddiqui and Anurag Kashyap," he said.

Gal Gadot called my pregnancy great luck for 'Heart of Stone', had my back, says Alia Bhatt

NEW DELHI, Aug 7 (PTI): Alia Bhatt discovered that she was pregnant just before she started shooting for action film "Heart of Stone" but producer-star Gal Gadot was "warm, excited and started cheering" when she heard the news.

Bhatt said she felt very well taken care of by Gadot on the movie set. "I remember when I had to call Gal and let her know that I was pregnant. I'm supposed to start shooting and I have all these action sequences but I wanted her to know because she's the producer on the film and also I would have some restrictions maybe."

"And she was so warm, excited and started cheering, talking about how it's great luck for the movie and that she's got my back. I think very rarely you meet somebody and in the first two minutes feel very well taken care of, extreme warmth and just safety," the actor told PTI in a virtual roundtable.

The year 2022 was momentous for the Bollywood star who got married to actor Ranbir Kapoor, made her production debut with "Darlings" and welcomed daughter Raha.

"Heart of Stone", a Netflix action film that she joined in March 2022, marks Bhatt's Hollywood debut. She plays hacker Keya Dhawan in the movie. Bhatt said she felt comfortable right after her first meeting with Gadot. "When you are working with someone, of course, it's the working relationship that you take away. You just want to meet and interact with people who touch you and make you feel comfortable. And, that's exactly what I felt," Bhatt, 30, added.

"Heart of Stone" also features Jamie Dornan, Sophie Okonedo and Matthias Schweighöfer and Bhatt said throughout the production, all the actors "were very serious, but we never took anything too seriously". "There was a lot of hard work but there was a lot of just living the dream, sort of committing to the moment and just enjoying this film that we eagerly want the audience to enjoy. We had a great time making it. It was difficult and we had a lot of challenges but thank god, we had each other," she said.

Directed by Tom Harper, "Heart of Stone" follows Gadot's Rachel Stone, an intelligence operative working for a shadowy global peace-keeping agency called Charter.

Things are set in motion when the organisation's cutting-edge weapon, a technological core called the Heart, is stolen by Bhatt's character, a hacker driven by her pursuit for justice. Stone then embarks on a globetrotting adventure to prevent the weapon from falling into the wrong hands and saving the day.

There were physical challenges like extreme weather conditions but they are all now a fun memory, the actor said.

"As an actor, when the camera's rolling, even if it's hot or it's too cold, or you're in pain or whatever, everything just sort of disappears for that one particular moment. I'm not someone who says, 'Oh, it was really rough.'"

Every girl would want to imagine looking like 'Baang' heroine: SHANVI SRIVASTAVA

BENGALURU, Aug 7 (PTI): Kannada actor Shanvi Srivastava says she was never an "action film kind of girl" but could not say no to "Baang", which is slated for release on August 18.

"Before this film, I never used to watch action films... Every girl would want to imagine themselves looking like that. Having that power, having that kind of authority..." Shanvi told PTI over Zoom.

Once she decided to take up the role, the actor says she went through a slew of films to get a grip on her character.

"I play one of the gangsters in 'Baang', a glamorous one at that. It took one month time (to be convinced). I saw the footage of the film they had shot before meeting me. The kind of sequences they had, the way she handles the gun, the sword... I couldn't say no," said Shanvi.

Born and brought up in Varanasi, the actor moved to Mumbai with her mom and sister to pursue a career in acting. Her debut Telugu film, "Lovely" happened "just like that", she said.

"They wanted a college going, simple looking girl and I got the part without really any effort," she said.

Kannada debut in "Chandralekha" too happened quite serendipitously.

"Because the girl they originally chose looked similar to me. Her dates were not available so I got the part," she said.

She may have lucked out in getting breaks, but



the decision to venture into Kannada films, is a conscious one, the actor said.

At present, between promoting her "Baang" in Karnataka and other southern states, she is shooting for her debut Marathi film, "Raanti", an action, romance drama, according to her.

"It's a typical format film with a lot of good actors, I am actually enjoying shooting for the film. I have done almost 20 films in the south and I am making my debut in Marathi. I like the graph," she added. Although she has been doing south films for almost eight years, Tamil films are still eluding her.

"There were a lot of times that I was just about to sign the film - I think maybe about seven times - but somehow it didn't work out. But I am OK with it. If I am debuting with Marathi now, I think Tamil is just around the corner," said Shanvi.

Wamiqa Gabbi joins Varun Dhawan in action entertainer from Atlee's banner

MUMBAI, Aug 7 (PTI): "Jubilee" actor Wamiqa Gabbi is set to star alongside Varun Dhawan in an upcoming action entertainer movie, to be produced by filmmaker Atlee and wife Priya Mohan's banner A For Apple Studios.

Also backed by Murad Khetani's Cine! Studios, the untitled project will be directed by Kalees, best known for the 2019 Tamil movie "Kee". It is scheduled to be released on May 31, 2024.

The details of the movie's plot have been kept under wraps. It also features National Award

winner Keerthy Suresh in a pivotal role.

"I am thrilled and grateful to be a part of this project. The opportunity to work alongside Varun Dhawan and Keerthy Suresh is definitely something I'm looking forward to. I have been looking and waiting to do a full commercial Hindi project and this is just it. And I'm really excited to be working and collaborating with Murad sir and Atlee," Gabbi said in a statement.

The actor, best known for her performances in "Graham", "Mai" and "Jubilee", is currently shooting for next project in



Budapest, Hungary. She will also be seen in filmmaker Vishal Bhardwaj's maiden OTT series "Charlie Chappa and The Mystery of Solang Valley" and his film with Netflix titled "Khufiya" co-starring Tabu.

You always go back to personal experiences: Raj & DK on creating '90s nostalgia with 'Guns & Gulaabs'

NEW DELHI, Aug 7 (PTI): Whether it's the title of their new project "Guns & Gulaabs" or its setting in the 1990s era, creators Raj Nidimoru and Krishna DK say the story rings true when it's drawn from personal experiences, something they have done with the Netflix series.

The name "Guns & Gulaabs" is a Hindi derivative of the American hard rock band Guns N' Roses, popular in the late 1980s and 1990s. The trailer of the show, which was released last week, is full of punchlines, over-the-top drama, fashion, and set to tunes of

the bygone era with songs such as Usha Uthup's "Rambha Ho" and "Waiting for a Girl Like You" by the American rock band Foreigner. "You always go back to your personal experiences. That's when it rings true and you can write honestly is when you kind of experience some bits of it. Even if it's a horror genre, which you haven't lived. But you can still draw lots of things from your friends, what you lived in, what you believed in. So, I think that's why you keep going back to nostalgia," Raj, one-half of the acclaimed writer duo Raj & DK, told PTI here



Set in the 1990s, "Guns & Gulaabs" follows the story of a lovestruck mechanic Paana Tipu (Rajkumar Rao), a reluctant heir to a ruling gang Chhota Ganchi (Adarsh Gourav), an honest officer-turned-agent-of-chaos Arjun Verma (Dulquer Salmaan), and a killer called 4-cut Atmaram (Gulshan Devaiah). DK, known for creating hit titles such as "Stree", "The Family Man", and "Farzi" with Raj, said formative years are generally a go-to period for artists.

"This was also the period when we were growing up, our formative years. If we have to take any experiences, you would go back to that. If you want to pick up school stuff, you go back to the era you went to school," he added.

This is the fourth web series collaboration for Raj & DK, following Prime Video's "The Family Man", "Unpaused" anthology (segment 'Glitch'), and "Farzi".

Like Raj & DK introduced Telugu star Samantha Ruth Prabhu with "The Family Man 2" to audiences speaking a different language, "Guns & Gulaabs" will see Malayalam star Dulquer make his series debut.

That's the beauty of working on the long-format of storytelling on OTT, said DK. "When we got the opportunity to make our first OTT show 'The Family Man' season one, the first thing we did was cast actors from the entire country... Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, and other states cast them for the characters because it allowed us to..."

INDIA'S LAST ODI WORLD CUP TITLE CAME IN 2011

Rohits banks on home support to win ODI World Cup after 12 years

NEW DELHI, Aug 7 (PTI): Skipper Rohit Sharma will be banking on the "massive" home support his team will get to win the ODI World Cup in India.

India's last ODI World Cup title came at home in 2011 when M S Dhoni and Co lifted the coveted trophy.

"I've never seen it so close. Even when we won in 2011, I was not part of the squad. But yeah, it looks beautiful, so many memories behind the trophy as well, the past, the history."

"Yeah, so, it looks beautiful and hopefully we can lift it, fingers crossed," Rohit, who is currently in the United States, was quoted as saying by the ICC.

The tournament beginning October 5 will be played across 10 venues in India.

"I know for a fact that every ground, every venue that we will be travelling to will get massive support. You know, it's the World Cup, so everyone is looking forward to this and the World Cup

coming back to India after 12 years."

"...you know 2011 was the last time we played a 50-over World Cup. We played a 20-over World Cup in 2016 but a 50-over World Cup after 12 years in the country, people are quite excited and we can see the buzz already back home. I'll be looking forward to playing in all venues."

Talking about his memories of the World Cup, Rohit said: "In 2003, India played really well up until the finals. You know, Sachin Tendulkar was amazing with the bat, scored so many runs."

"And then comes the 2007 World Cup where we didn't have a great time, didn't even qualify after the league stage, so that was quite unfortunate."

"2011 was a memorable one for all of us, I remember watching it from home, every single match, every single ball which was being bowled and that was being played."

"There were two kinds of emo-



tions, one was obviously I was not a part of it, so I was a little disappointed. I decided I was not going to watch the World Cup, but again, the second memory I remember was that India was playing so well, quarter-finals onwards."

Rohit had excelled in the 2019 edition in which he amassed five hundreds.

"And 2015 and 2019, I was a part of it, which felt really good to play the World Cup. We went to the semi-finals, tried everything we could to go to the finals and play well in the finals, but again, a very unfortunate incident where we couldn't go through to the finals," he said.

"But hopefully, you know, we are back home again, so hopefully we can turn things around and it's still a long way to go. And you know you can't win the World Cup in one or two days. You got to play well for an entire month, month and a half, and be consistent," said Rohit.

PCB re-appoints Inzamam-ul-Haq as chief selector

KARACHI, Aug 7 (PTI): The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) on Monday re-appointed the legendary Inzamam-ul-Haq as its chief selector, bringing back the former skipper for the role for a second term. Inzamam, 53, had earlier held the position of chief selector between 2016 and 2019.

The 1992 World Cup winner had given his consent last week to become a paid selector.

Inzamam has played 120 Tests, making 8830 runs at an average of 49.60 with 25 hundreds and 46 fifties. From 378 ODIs, Inzamam amassed 11739 runs at 39.52 with 10 centuries and 83 fifties. He had also played a lone T20I for his country. In his latest role as the chief selector, Inzamam will succeed Haroon Rasheed who stepped down last month.

Some very important assignments are in front of Inzamam as his primary task will be to name Pakistan squad for the 50-over World Cup to be held in India across October and November.

It may be recalled that Inzamam had picked Pakistan squad for the ICC World Cup 2019 as well. Now, the fate would have him drafting in the Pakistan squad for another World Cup four years down the line. Apart from the World Cup, Inzamam will also have to pick Pakistan teams for Asia Cup, scheduled to take place in Sri Lanka between August 31 and September 17, and the three-match ODIs against Afghanistan, beginning in the island nation from August 22.

Donkam FC win Khatkhati Super League

HT Correspondent

BOKAJAN, Aug 7: Donkam FC lifted the Sarthe Teron and Basapi Bongrunipi Memorial Khatkhati Super League, a football tournament, by defeating Lathorian FC by 3-1. The champions took a trophy and Rs. 15,000/- in cash. The Runners-up were awarded a trophy and a cash award of Rs. 10,000/-. The final of the football tournament was held on August 06 at Bengnabil Jagruti playground which was organised by Khatkhati Sports Association.

India attracting foreigners for all good reasons: Gokulam Kerala's new Spanish duo

NEW DELHI, Aug 7 (PTI): The arrival of players from strong football nations such as Spain is an indication that the sport in India is headed in the right direction, feels Gokulam Kerala's new Spanish duo Nili Perdomo and Alejandro Sanchez.

India has become a rather attractive destination for Spanish footballers over the better part of the last decade. "From what I have seen, football is growing in the country. The national team has been doing really well, and I was impressed with their recent wins in the SAFF Championship too," said Perdomo.

"I think India is steadily preparing to go to a higher level of football, which makes it very interesting. A lot of players from Europe are talking about coming here. The future is certainly bright."

Sanchez, who has already had a taste of Asian football in Australia, believes it is imperative that football in the continent keeps growing, and that the Indian game is an integral part of it. "I've heard a lot about India from other Spanish players who have been here, it's been growing at a fast pace and I certainly want to be a part of it. "For the world of football, it is important that Asia, and more specifically, India keeps growing in the sport," said Sanchez.

"Now that I am here, I want to be a role model for youngsters growing up, dreaming of making it as a professional one day."

The announcement of promotion from the I-League to the Indian Super League had come as a welcome change for Gokulam Kerala FC, who won back-to-back I-League titles in 2020-21 and 2021-22. Gokulam Kerala have signed

Perdomo and Sanchez with the aim of addressing their woes up front.

Playmaker Perdomo not only comes with the vast experience of playing in both Spain and Greece but has also had a brief stint in India with Bengaluru FC in the 2019-20 season when he made 10 appearances for the club in the ISL and the AFC Cup preliminary round 2 and play-off matches before the COVID-19 pandemic struck.

"This is the second time I'll be playing in India, and I'm really looking forward to my time here. I had played earlier with Bengaluru, but that time was cut short because of COVID," said Perdomo to the aiff.com.

"Gokulam Kerala are certainly one of the bigger clubs in India, and I've heard a lot of good things about them from other Spanish players that had come here before, so when I learnt that they were interested in me, it was a quick decision."

A week after Perdomo's signing, Sanchez also joined Gokulam Kerala, as he spent seven days in pre-season camp, followed by the team's campaign in the Durand Cup during the 2023-24 season.

"This is my first time in India, and it's been an amazing experience so far. It's so different from Spain. I've really enjoyed my time in both Kozhikode and Kolkata," said Sanchez. "I am still in the process of getting used to the life and culture here, but my teammates have been very helpful in that regard."

Striker Sanchez is from the Real Zaragoza youth system and has also played for CA Osasuna in Spain, before spending two seasons with Australian side Sydney Olympic FC.

Final list of candidates for WFI elections announced

NEW DELHI, Aug 7 (PTI): Former Indian wrestling great Kartar Singh is among five candidates in the fray for four vice-presidential posts in the Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) elections, scheduled for August 12.

Kartar, the two-time Asian Games gold medalist (1978 Bangkok and 1986 Seoul) is a former WFI secretary-general with years of administrative experience and is in the fray along with Asit Kumar Saha (Bengal), Jai Prakash (Delhi), Mohan Yadav (Madhya Pradesh) and N Phoni (Manipur).

The contest for the post of president will be between outgoing WFI president Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh-loyalist Sanjay Kumar Singh (Uttar Pradesh) and 2010 Commonwealth Games gold medalist Anita Sheoran.

The 38-year-old Sheoran, it is learnt, has the backing of the six wrestlers, including Bajrang Punia, Vinesh Phogat and Sakshi



Malik, who led the protests against Brij Bhushan at Jantar Mantar here.

Sheoran, interestingly, is also a witness against Brij Bhushan in the sexual harassment case.

As per the official list issued by the returning officer for the elections, Justice (retd) MM Kumar

on Monday, there are four contestants in the fray for two joint secretary posts, while seven candidates will vie for five executive committee posts.

The Brij Bhushan camp has filed nominations for all 15 positions and his team is reportedly the favourite to win several key

posts. The contest for the post of senior vice-president will be between Brij Bhushan camp's ID Nanavati and Assam's Devender Kadian. The Assam wrestling body was included in the electoral college after the Indian Olympic Association-constituted ad-hoc body for wrestling gave its approval following the Gauhati High Court order recently.

Elections will be held for the posts of president (1), senior vice-president (1), vice-president (4), secretary-general (1), treasurer (1), joint secretary (2) and executive members (5).

One of the candidates for the joint secretary's post, Rohtash Singh (Haryana), reportedly switched allegiance to the rival group after being in the Brij Bhushan camp.

"We are not going to vote for him in the August 12 elections," said a Brij Bhushan loyalist on condition of anonymity.

69th All India Railway Table Tennis Championship kicks off

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Aug 7: The 69th All India Railway Table Tennis Championship (Men & Women) 2023 is being organised by the Northeast Frontier Railway.

The championship started on Monday at N.F. Railway Indoor Stadium, Maligaon, Guwahati. President/NFRSA, Sandeep Sharma was the chief guest of the sporting event. The chief guest hoisted the Tournament Flag and addressed the gathering in presence of other officials of Northeast Frontier Railway Sports Association (NFRSA). General Secretary/NFRSA welcomed all players and officials in his opening speech. The championship will last for five days and will conclude on August 11. 14 teams representing from various Zonal Railways of Indian Railways will participate in the championship. 12 men team and 07 women team consisting of a total of 160 players, coach officials, referees and Railway Sports Promotion Board Observers will take part in this championship. Sports are an integral part for



one's life to keep mind and body healthy. N.F. Railway is working with the objective to create and develop new talent in the field of sports by taking various steps which will in turn bring glory to Indian Railways. Organising such kind of a championship will boost the overall development of the upcoming youths.

Gymnast Dipa Karmakar likely to be considered for Asian Games

NEW DELHI, Aug 7 (PTI): Star Indian gymnast Dipa Karmakar is likely to be picked in the Indian contingent for the Asian Games following a request to the Sports Ministry by the Gymnastics Federation of India (GFI) to consider her case despite not fitting the selection criteria set by the government.

Dipa, who brought Indian gymnastics into the spotlight by finishing a creditable fourth at the 2016 Rio Olympics, was dropped from the final list of women gymnastics squad for the upcoming Hangzhou Asian Games from September 23 for failing to fulfil the ministry's selection criteria.

The Sports Ministry's selection criteria states that, "In individual events during the last 12 months prior to the commencement of the event (Asian Games), the performance of the sportspersons should not be less than the performance achieved by eighth position holder of the 2018 Asian Games in measurable sports."

Dipa, however, topped the trials held in Bhubaneswar on July 11 and 12 and was part of the initial squad sent to the Asian Games organisers before the July 15 deadline, but was later axed for not fulfilling the ministry's criteria.

"Dipa has changed the face of Indian gymnastics. She has not been competing for the last few years because of injuries and a doping suspension but we need to

consider that she has topped the trials."

A disappointed Dipa then approached the ministry for relaxation and even the Gymnastics Federation of India had shot off a request letter to Sports Authority of India to consider her case, "GFI selection committee chairman Ashok Sahoo told PTI.

Dipa underwent surgery to treat her anterior cruciate ligament (ACL) injury in 2017 but a nagging knee problem kept her away from major competitions, forcing her to also miss the 2019 World Championships in Stuttgart.

Dipa also missed the Tokyo Olympics in 2021 as she could not qualify due to an injury and cancellation of the Asian Championships.

The gymnast then served a 21-month ban ending July 10 this year after testing positive for a prohibited substance.

"We have written to SAI (Sports Authority of India) to consider Dipa's case and she is likely to be given relaxation. We are pretty positive about it," he added.

"The football teams have also been given relaxation and so Dipa too should be considered and we have received positive response from SAI. She is likely to cleared this week," said Sahoo.

A ministry official also said that Dipa is likely to be given relaxation for her contribution to Indian gymnastics.



India's top-order under pressure in must-win game, spinners need to stop Pooran juggernaut

PROVIDENCE (GUYANA), Aug 7 (PTI): Staring at a rare series defeat in the Caribbean, India will need to bat with the fearlessness required in the shortest format when they face the West Indies in the must-win third T20 International here Tuesday.

The slow pitches on offer have not been the best for batting but as skipper Hardik Pandya pointed out after the loss on Sunday, India should have found a way to score additional 10-20 runs.

India, who last lost to the West Indies in a bilateral T20 series back in 2016, trail 0-2 in the five-match series.

The shortest format demands the batters to go hard from ball one and that is something India's top-order, comprising Ishan Kishan, Shubman Gill and Suryakumar Yadav, have not been able to do.



The top-order's failure has put extra pressure on the likes of Sanju Samson and rookie Tilak Varma, who has taken to international cricket like fish to water.

With focus on ODIs in a World Cup year, Gill, Kishan and Suryakumar would want to be amongst runs ahead of the Asia Cup beginning August 31.

"Batters need to take more responsibility," Hardik's message was clear to the batters following the two-wicket loss here on Sunday.

India have been playing with a long tail with Axar Patel batting at seven to maintain the balance of the side and it is unlikely to change in the next game.

India's in-form spinner Kuldeep Yadav missed Sunday's game due to a sore thumb and it remains to be seen if he is available for selection.

The bowlers, especially the spinners, need to find a way to contain a rampaging Nicholas Pooran. The southpaw has been batting with disdain against the likes of Yuzvendra Chahal and Ravi Bishnoi. Left-arm spinner Axar was not even used in the last game.

Hardik and Arshdeep Singh were able to swing the new ball in the second game and would be looking to repeat that on Tuesday.

Chahal, playing after a gap of two months, has been impressive in the series. Bishnoi's frequent googlies were not able to put pressure on the opposition, forcing him to rethink about his plans.

Pacer Mukesh Kumar has

leaked most runs for India and there is a possibility that he could be replaced with Avesh Khan or Umran Malik.

West Indies are in an ideal position for their first series win over India since 2016.

Like the opposition, West Indies' top-order too has not been amongst runs with Pooran left to do the heavy lifting. The hosts would want to change that.

The likes of Pooran and Shimron Hetmyer will once again be looking to take the attack to the Indian spinners.

The home team's bowlers have done well to keep India in check and will be keen to maintain that with series on the line.

"It's a very good position to be in. Since 2016 we haven't won T20 series (against India)," said West Indies skipper Rovman Powell.



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Food, Civil Supplies & Consumer Affairs Department



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