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Platinum Jubilee celebration of College of Veterinary Science ends; ₹ 30-cr international guest house of AAU at Khanapara opened

Health mission for vety sector on the anvil: CM

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Aug 17: The state government will come up with a State Health Mission for the veterinary sector in the line of the National Health Mission.

This was announced by chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma while attending the closing ceremony of the Platinum Jubilee Celebration of the College of Veterinary Science, Khanapara on Thursday.

Sarma also inaugurated the newly-built International Guest House of Assam Agricultural University located at Khanapara.

Speaking at the event that was held at the premises of the College of Veterinary Science, Sarma stressed on creating a live-link between researchers in the field of agriculture and field-level farmers so that the latter are able to enjoy the benefits of the research.

The chief minister said in comparison to states in the rest of the country, the northeastern region and Assam are yet to make best use of the opportunities the agriculture sector



offers. "In order to be able to compete with states such as Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh, among others, an ecosystem that promotes entrepreneurship needs to be built up," he said, adding that students of agricultural and veterinary science from Assam should focus on becoming job-creators rather than being job-seekers.

Sarma said to meet the country's milk demand by 2030, milk-production shall have

to grow at the rate of 7% year-on-year for the next seven years and that Assam has immense potential for growth in the field.

Further, stating that Assam is far from attaining self-sufficiency in meeting the demand for egg and meat products in the state, chief minister Sarma said an ecosystem needs to be built that unleashes the state's growth potential in these fields.

Referring to the College of Veterinary Science, the chief minister said that it has managed to add many feathers on its hat in the more than seven decades of its glorious existence.

He also lauded the College of Veterinary Science for producing some of the finest alumni who have made a name for themselves through their professional expertise in the field of veterinary and allied sectors.

Thursday's event was also attended by Union minister for fisheries, animal husbandry and dairying Parshottam Rupala among others.

Guv takes stock of execution of govt schemes in KA



HT Bureau

GUWAHATI/DIPHU, Aug 17: Governor Gulab Chand Kataria on his maiden visit to Karbi Anglong on Thursday reviewed the development work of 30 departments under the Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC).

He also held discussions on the implementation and achievements of the central government flagship programmes.

Kataria also visited Diphu Medical

College and Hospital and interacted with the doctors and students and took stock of the facilities put in place for the patients.

In a meeting at the conference hall of Arboretum cum craft centre, Diphu, the Governor discussed issues on the implementation of various development schemes with the heads of departments.

He also interacted with the beneficiaries and exchanged thoughts with them. (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

Two arrested for role in illegal animal parts trade

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Aug 17: The Assam Police's special task force (STF) has made a significant breakthrough by apprehending a woman and her son from West Karbi Anglong district for their alleged involvement in the illegal trade of tiger skin and bones.

Acting on a tip-off, the STF collaborated with the Karbi Anglong district police and the Wildlife Crime Control Board (WCCB) to successfully arrest the duo on Wednesday, as confirmed by police sources.

The arrested individuals were purportedly operating as intermediaries, facilitating the transportation of contraband tiger skins and bones to neighboring states. Subsequently, these illicit items were smuggled out of the country, with neighboring countries, including China, Bangladesh, and various South East (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

WHO South-East Asia region commits to enhancing efforts to end TB

GANDHINAGAR, Aug 17: The WHO South-East Asia Region, which bears a disproportionate burden of nearly half of the global TB cases and deaths, on Thursday committed to further accelerate efforts to end tuberculosis by 2030 with its member countries adopting the Gandhinagar Declaration.

"Today urgent action is needed more than ever to achieve our goal of a region free of tuberculosis, that has been menacing millions of people with disease and death, poverty, and despair," Dr Poonam Khetrpal Singh, regional director WHO South-East Asia, said in her address to a ministerial meeting on "Sustain, Accelerate, and Innovate to end TB in the South-East Asia Region".

The Gandhinagar Declaration was adopted at the end of the two-day meeting held to follow-up on

the progress made to end TB, a flagship priority in the region, and in the run-up to the UN High Level Meeting on TB on September 22 in New York.

The declaration calls for establishing a high-level multisectoral commission reporting to the highest political level in each country for synergy of efforts among various stakeholders, and to monitor progress towards ending TB and other priority diseases.

"These high-level multisectoral commissions on TB could also help build responsive health systems and advance universal health coverage and health security," the WHO regional director said, adding that during the Covid-19 pandemic, TB infrastructure was rapidly deployed for infection diagnosis and containment. (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

Historic soft landing on moon to take place on Aug 23

Chandrayaan-3 lander separates from propulsion module

BENGALURU, Aug 17: India's Chandrayaan-3 mission on Thursday achieved a major milestone when its Lander Module carrying the rover inside successfully separated from the Propulsion Module to be on course for an unprecedented soft-landing on the moon's south pole planned on August 23.

The Lander Module comprising the lander Vikram and rover Pragyan is now ready to be lowered to an orbit that takes it closer to the moon's surface. The soft landing on the lunar south pole is scheduled at 5.47 pm next Wednesday. "Thanks for the ride, mate! said the Lander Module (LM). LM is successfully separated from the Propulsion Module (PM). LM is set to descend to a slightly lower orbit upon a deboosting planned for tomorrow around 1600 Hrs IST," the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) said in a post on X (formerly Twitter). The estimated ₹ 600 crore Chandrayaan-3 mission was launched on July 14, a far more complicated 41-day voyage to reach the lunar south pole.

After Thursday's separation, the lander is expected



to undergo a "deboost" (the process of slowing down) to place it in an orbit, where the Perilune (the orbit's closest point to the Moon) is 30 km and Apolune (farthest point from the Moon) is 100 km, from where the soft landing on the south polar region of the Moon will be attempted, an ISRO official said. The Propulsion Module will continue its journey in the current orbit for months/years, the ISRO said.

"Now really the match starts. These are the final overs we are talking about," Chandrayaan-3 project director M Annadurai told PTI. (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

Dengue outbreak: 45% positivity rate in Diphu

HT Bureau

DIPHU, Aug 17: The Dengue outbreak in the Diphu Municipal Board area shows no signs of abating, with the positivity rate remaining alarmingly high at 45% as of Wednesday. Tragically, the death toll from the outbreak has reached 3.

According to the latest Dengue status report released by the health department, a total of 130 tests (Elisa) were conducted up to Wednesday, of which 79 yielded positive results.

At the Diphu Medical College & Hospital, out of a total of 130 samples tested, 79 were found to be positive for Dengue. On Wednesday alone, 11 new cases were admitted for treatment, while 6 patients were discharged. The cumulative (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

NFR official killed in road accident

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Aug 17: In a heart-wrenching incident, a senior official from the Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR) lost his life in a fatal road accident in Assam's Morigaon district on Thursday. Anand Swarup, the chief engineer of NFR's Maligaon unit, tragically passed away at the scene, while his driver sustained critical injuries, as reported by the authorities.

The unfortunate mishap occurred when the SUV he was traveling in skidded and lost control, ultimately colliding with a stationary truck near Jagiroad town, according to a police spokesperson. Swarup was en route from the NFR headquarters in Guwahati to Dimapur in Nagaland at the time of the accident. The injured driver is presently receiving medical treatment in a hospital, as stated by the officer. The entire NFR community mourns the loss of Anand Swarup and extends heartfelt condolences to his family and loved ones. (With inputs from PTI)

Arunachal govt constitutes one-man commission to probe paper leaks



ITANAGAR, Aug 17: The Arunachal Pradesh government has constituted a one-man commission to probe into the alleged question paper leaks in various recruitment examinations conducted by the Arunachal Pradesh Public Service Commission (APPSC).

The Commission, led by retired Justice P K Deka will investigate the alleged question paper leaks in various exams conducted by the APPSC from April 2014 to August 2022, an official order said.

The constitution of the commission came in the backdrop of the hue and cry concerning transparency and fairness of the recruitment process due to suspected question paper leaks in various exams conducted in those years.

Chief secretary Dharmendra in the order, stated that the panel was formed aiming at unearthing the truth behind alleged instances of question paper leaks and associated irregularities during the specified period of APPSC examinations.

It will also scrutinize potential lapses on the part of officials, officers, and other stakeholders directly or indi-

rectly involved in the recruitment process.

The Commission is also tasked with suggesting corrective measures to ensure future recruitment procedures, uphold transparency, impartiality, and efficiency. Furthermore, any other relevant issue that emerges during the investigation will be examined, and recommendations will be formulated accordingly.

The APPSC has been asked to provide all secretarial, logistics and other assistance to the commission, which is expected to compile a comprehensive report detailing its findings and recommendations within three months.

The question paper leak incident came to light after one Gyamar Padung, a candidate of the APPSC assistant engineer (civil) examination, filed a police complaint on August 29 last year, claiming that he suspected that the examination paper had been leaked. The case was initially investigated by the capital police and later it was transferred to the state police's Special Investigation Cell (SIC) and then the Central Bureau of Investigations. (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

State govt officials in vigilance net

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Aug 17: In a significant crackdown against corruption, the Directorate of Vigilance & Anti-Corruption, Assam, has successfully apprehended individuals involved in bribery cases, leading to the arrest of public servants.

In the first case, a complaint reached the Directorate of Vigilance & Anti-Corruption, accusing Manuj Kumar Saikia, executive engineer of PWD(R&B) Haflong Division, of demanding a bribe of ₹ 55,000 from the complainant for the release of pending bills. The bribe amount was later negotiated to ₹ 25,000. In response to the complaint, a trap was set in the office of the executive engineer, PWD(R&B) Haflong Division. Manuj Kumar Saikia was caught accepting ₹ 10,000 as part of the demanded bribe, resulting in his arrest.

In another such case, a complaint was submitted to the Directorate of Vigilance & Anti-Corruption, Assam, alleging that Debashish Barman, Lot Mandal at the office of the circle officer in Tihu Revenue Circle, Nalbari, demanded a bribe of ₹ 2,00,000 from the complainant for resolving land-related matters concerning his father's property. The bribe amount was later reduced to ₹ 1,40,000. Refusing to succumb to the demand, the complainant sought legal action against the accused.

In response, a trap was set by the Directorate's team on Thursday, at the office of the circle officer, Tihu. Nayan Barman, a middleman, was caught red-handed at 1:30 PM, accepting ₹ 5,000 as part of the bribe, on behalf of Lot Mandal Debashish Barman. The tainted money was seized, and both Nayan Barman and Debashish Barman were apprehended for their involvement in the bribery scheme. The case has been registered under Section 7(a) of the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988.

The Directorate's actions are aimed at curbing corruption within government agencies and ensuring transparency and fairness in administrative processes.

ART LOVERS' DELIGHT



20 Modern Indian Masters exhibition organised by Lalit Kala Academy (National Academy of Art) in collaboration with Gauhati Artist Guild and Srimanta Sankardeva Kalakhetra in Guwahati. HT Photo

Stealth frigate 'Vindhyagiri' a symbol of 'Atmanirbhar Bharat'

Prez Droupadi Murmu launches Vindhyagiri in Kolkata

KOLKATA, Aug 17: 'Vindhyagiri', an advanced stealth frigate anchored on the banks of the river Hooghly in Kolkata now epitomizes the country's endeavor to become self-reliant.

President Droupadi Murmu, while launching the ship at a dock in the city on Thursday, termed its indigenous construction as a symbol of Atmanirbhar Bharat or self-reliance in ship building. West Bengal Governor CV Ananda Bose and chief minister Mamata Banerjee were also present on the occasion.

The city based Garden Reach Shipbuilders and Engineers (GRSE) constructed the advanced ship for the Indian Navy.

The state-of-the-art ship will be fitted with the latest gadgets and undergo extensive trials before being handed over to the Indian Navy for commissioning into service.

"I am very happy to be here at the



launch of Vindhyagiri. This event marks a move forward in enhancing India's maritime capabilities. Vindhyagiri is also a step towards achieving the goal of Atmanirbhar Bharat through indigenous ship-building," Droupadi Murmu said at the programme.

She congratulated the Indian Navy and everyone involved in the design and construction of this ship. "I want to congratulate the entire team of GRSE for having constructed and delivered more than one hundred warships including frigates like Vindhyagiri. Your skill

and tireless efforts have brought us to this milestone," she said.

"Project 17A of which Vindhyagiri is a part, reflects our commitment to self-reliance and technological advancement. This project demonstrates indigenous innovation for developing state-of-the-art technology. I have been informed that the multi-mission frigates of this series would be capable of dealing with all kinds of threats to our maritime interests," she said.

Kolkata's strategic location makes it vital for our naval preparedness, safeguarding our maritime interests and maintaining regional stability.

Murmu said the ship is aptly named after the 'Vindhya' ranges, which have been a symbol of fortitude. "I am confident that when this warship gets commissioned, it will symbolise (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

Bengal pitches for more employment generation in state through Indo-US ties

KOLKATA, Aug 17: West Bengal on Thursday pitched for more employment generation in the state through US-India partnership.

Principal chief advisor to West Bengal chief minister Amit Mitra said that the need of the hour is creation of more employment through exports, strengthening of the MSME sector in the state and value-chain integration.

Speaking at a session of the Indo-American Chamber of Commerce virtually, Mitra said "During 2022-23, exports from West Bengal to the US increased 55 per cent over the previous period."

Mitra, who also holds the rank of a state cabinet minister, said that exports from West Bengal to the US stood at approximately USD 13 to 15 billion.

"Nearly ten per cent of India's exports to the US originates from West Bengal," he said.

The major items of exports to the US from West Bengal are gems and jewellery, shrimp, human hair for wigs and industrial gloves among others, he stated.

Mitra said, "According to the

Xiomi India joins hands with Kaun Banega Crorepati

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Aug 17: Xiaomi India, the country's most trusted Smartphone X AOT brand has joined hands with one of India's most iconic television shows - Kaun Banega Crorepati, which airs on Sony Entertainment Television. Bringing in technology integration that enhances the show's technology quotient, this collaboration will introduce a new way for contestants to seek the "Video Call a Friend" lifeline.

In the newest season of Kaun Banega Crorepati, the "Video Call a Friend" lifeline will be powered by Xiaomi's 5G devices including the latest Redmi 12 5G. This lifeline enables contestants to connect with their friends through video calls, helping them make an informed decision during the game.

Commenting on the partnership, Anuj Sharma, chief marketing officer at Xiaomi India stated, "Kaun Banega Crorepati has been an integral part of Indian households for years. Like the show, Xiaomi India has been touching millions of hearts in its 9 years of journey in India. Both are rooted in authenticity and dedicated to connecting with the masses. Through this collaboration, we are delighted to introduce a fresh dimension to the 'Video Call a Friend' lifeline through our 5G technology."

Prateik Das, head-marketing partnership & alliance, Xiaomi India said, "A robust partnership is the driving force behind a brand's progress and ingenuity. This partnership exemplifies the power of collaboration that resonates deeply with audiences, creating an impact that goes beyond boundaries."

Vaishali Sharma, head-marketing & communications, SET, Sony SAB and Sony MAX Movies Cluster said, "Kaun Banega Crorepati is one of the most loved formats in the reality TV shows segment. Demonstrating the power of knowledge and mirroring the spirit of change in the country, this season will see the introduction of a host of fresh elements that make the gameplay more intriguing. In this updated and upgraded version, the 5G technology of Xiaomi smartphones will play a pivotal role in enhancing the critical 'Video Call a Friend' lifeline experience for our contestants." Kaun Banega Crorepati, hosted by the legendary Amitabh Bachchan, has been a cultural phenomenon since its inception, captivating audiences with its blend of knowledge and entertainment. This initiative aligns seamlessly with Xiaomi's reputation for pushing the boundaries of technology to enhance everyday lives.

AFFIDAVIT

I, Shofique Uddin, S/O-Late Rayab ali, a resident of Vill- Moudanga Pather, P.O-Borhwar, P.S- Murajhar, Dist.- Hojai(Assam)

That, my actual and correct name is Shofique Uddin.

That, all the Academic records of my son namely Sharul Alom wherein my name has been recorded as Shofique Mia instead of Shofique Uddin.

That, both the names Shofique Uddin & Shofique Mia are the names of one and same person.



RBI, West Bengal is the fourth largest economy in the country in terms of net value added (NVA)."

He said more technological collaboration between the US and West Bengal is required for increased manufacturing activity in the state.

Citing an example, he said US technology is being used by two companies for production of coal bed methane (CBM) gas in West Bengal.

The West Bengal government

will support the initiative for which collaborative effort is needed, he noted. Mitra said in the last fiscal, the US has emerged as the largest trading partner of India with two-way trade volumes touching USD 130 billion with a trade surplus in favour of India.

According to Mitra, this shows that the US had given significant market access to India. "Merchandise exports from India to US has overtaken China", he said.

Mitra said, "This shows the na-

ture of openness of the US-India relationship".

US Consul General in Kolkata Melinda Pavlek said that both the two leaders (Joe Biden and Narendra Modi) affirmed the closeness of the relations between the two countries (US and India).

She said India conducts more military exercises with the US than any other country. "The objective of the US-India relationship is for a prosperous, peaceful and secure future", Pavlek said.

She said US and India are working on critical and emerging technologies, adding that an open accessible eco-system is being worked upon in the areas of space, new-age telecom, artificial intelligence and semiconductors.

The US government is working hard on reducing bureaucratic and administrative hurdles for a frictionless relationship between the two countries, Pavlek said.

The US has set a target for issuing one million visas to Indian citizens in 2023. "We are well on our way to reach that target and might also surpass that", she said. (PTI)

Airtel Payments Bank delivers another quarter of strong growth

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Aug 17: Airtel Payments Bank, India's only profitable multi-segment fintech operating at scale with a banking license, delivers another quarter of strong performance. In a significant milestone, for the first time, the Bank's quarterly revenue grew to ₹ 400 Cr for Q1'FY24, an increase of 41% YoY. For the Q1'FY24, the Bank's profits grew by 143% on YoY.

The customer deposits grew to ₹ 1,922 Cr, fuelled by a healthy addition of new users. The Bank now has 55.4 Mn monthly transacting users, an annualised gross merchandise value (GMV) of ₹ 2,381 Bn and revenue of over ₹ 1,600 Cr on an annual basis.

For the Bank, this growth in revenues is driven by strong uptake for its digital offerings comprising digital banking solutions and financial services. The Bank registered a strong demand for its customized plans, which allow the savings bank account customers of the Bank to get additional benefits like insurance on an annual basis by making an additional payment.

Anubrata Biswas, MD and CEO of Airtel Payments Bank said, "We have achieved a remarkable milestone in our growth journey this quarter. For the first time, our revenues have surged to ₹ 400 Cr Our

brand's reliability and cutting-edge product offerings, combined with an unparalleled distribution network and advanced technology, have positioned us favourably to continue accelerating our expansion. The remarkable success we've achieved serves as a validation of the payments bank model and its crucial role in meeting the digital and financial inclusion requirements of the country."

Airtel Payments Bank has pronged its business into three segments to serve the customers and businesses across the geography - the Urban Digital Consumer, the Rural Underbanked, and Industries & Businesses. The Bank offers a complete end-to-end digital banking solution along with a bouquet of digital financial services - Insurance, lending, and investment solutions. Airtel Payments Bank now processes over 7 billion annualised transactions across its platforms, making it the fastest-growing digital bank. The Bank is solving the problem of access by taking banking to the deep rural pockets of the country with the largest retail-banking network of 500,000 neighbourhood-banking points. Today, Airtel Payments Bank is also the largest micro cash player in the country, with more than 3,000 corporate partners. Here the Bank is in a rare space of solving for last-mile cash digitization, utilizing its distribution and technology.

Aalekh Foundation signs MoU with Amazing Namaste Foundation



HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Aug 17: We are pleased to announce that Aalekh Foundation and Amazing Namaste Foundation have entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to establish skill development centers in the North East region of India. The primary objective of this collaboration is to foster employment opportunities and self-employment prospects among the local u to youth.

The first skill center under this partnership will be established in Nagaland soon, focusing on the domain of sound audio engineering. This course has been chosen due to the significant talent pool present in the North East in this field. By offering specialized training and education in sound audio engineering, we aim to equip individuals with valuable skills that can lead to fulfilling careers.

Dr Rennie Joyy, founder of Aalekh Foundation says "As the managing director of Aalekh Foun-

ation, I am thrilled to announce our partnership with ANF to launch a series of skill-based programs in the North East of India. This collaboration not only symbolizes our dedication to empowering the region's youth but also highlights the significance of equipping them with practical skills that will not only transform their lives but also uplift the entire community. Together, we embark on a journey to unleash the immense potential that resides within the North East, fostering progress, innovation, and sustainable growth."

Atul Kulkarni chairman of Amazing Namaste Foundation says, "Together ANF & Aalekh would aim to further enhance the performative character of our NE brethren and explore the opportunities in the 'Content' industry globally"

Aalekh Foundation and Amazing Namaste Foundation share a mutual commitment to uplift the communities in the North East by empowering them with relevant skills and knowledge. This MoU symbolizes our dedication to nurturing local talent, creating employment avenues, and fostering a self-reliant workforce in the region. We look forward to the successful implementation of this collaboration and the positive impact it will have on the North East's economic growth and development.

Darjeeling tea industry is a 'patient in ICU': ITEA chairman

KOLKATA, Aug 17: Chairman of Indian Tea Exporters Association (ITEA) Anshuman Kanoria on Thursday said that the Darjeeling tea industry is a "patient in ICU" and virtually on its death bed. For the Darjeeling tea industry to survive, some government support is needed in the form of subsidy which will help stave off the threat posed by tea from Nepal, he said.

Speaking at a session organised by the Bengal Chamber of Commerce and Industry (BCCI) here, Kanoria said, "Darjeeling tea is an emotion for us. It flows in our blood. Today, the Darjeeling tea industry is a patient in ICU, virtually in its death bed".

The closure of the gardens due to political agitation in 1971, followed by lockdowns had caused huge financial loss to the industry as a whole, Kanoria said.



He said, "A lot of foreign buyers had been turned away and this gave an opportunity to our neighbour (Sri Lanka) to capture some of the some of the export market".

Kanoria said the challenge of Nepal has become

serious as it is infiltrating the Indian Market. "With the Darjeeling crop down to 6.5 million kilograms per annum, the production in Nepal has gone up to six million kilograms. We have a serious competitor now," he noted.

The Darjeeling crop has fallen due to low productivity partially caused by climate change, he said, adding the Nepal tea industry comprising mostly small factories is run unlike that in India which is governed by the Plantations Labour Act.

"Darjeeling has become a high-cost operation with 60 per cent of the cost emanating from wages to labourers. Most of the Darjeeling gardens are losing to the tune of ₹ 200 per kilogram with each garden losing a few crores," he said.

Kanoria said that some support from the government is needed for the Darjeeling tea industry to survive. (PTI)

Rupee falls 2 paise to close at all-time low of 83.10 against US dollar

MUMBAI, Aug 17: The rupee pared its initial gains and settled for the day lower by 2 paise at an all-time low of 83.10 (provisional) against the US dollar on Thursday, weighed down by a strong greenback overseas and a negative trend in domestic equities.

Forex traders said rupee is likely to trade with a negative bias on risk aversion in global markets and rising US dollar.

At the interbank foreign exchange, the domestic unit opened at 83.10 against the dollar, and it finally ended the day at the same level 83.10 (provisional), registering a fall of 2 paise from its previous close.

During the session, the local unit touched a peak of 82.99 and a low of 83.16.

On Monday, the rupee depreciated 26 paise to settle at an all-time low of 83.08 against the US dollar.

Forex market was closed on Tuesday and Wednesday on account of Independence Day and Parsi New Year, respectively.

Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, rose 0.05 per cent to 103.48.

103.48. Brent crude futures, the global oil benchmark, advanced 0.52 per cent to USD 83.88 per barrel.

"The Indian rupee traded lower in line with the Asian currencies and risk-averse sentiments," said Dilip Parmar, Research Analyst, HDFC Securities.

The greenback enjoyed good momentum reacting to July FOMC minutes that signalled clear openness to more tightening.

"We remain bullish on the pair and a crossing of 83.30 will pave the way for 83.50 and 83.70 while expected to hold the support at 82.70," Parmar added.

On the domestic equity market front, the 30-share BSE Sensex closed 388.40 points or 0.59 per cent lower at 65,151.02 points. The broader NSE Nifty declined 99.75 points or 0.51 per cent to close at 19,365.25 points. Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) were net buyers in the capital markets on Wednesday as they purchased shares worth ₹ 722.76 crore, according to exchange data. (PTI)

Markets snap 2-day winning run; Sensex slumps nearly 390 pts on weak global cues



MUMBAI, Aug 17: Snapping their two-day winning run, equity benchmarks Sensex and Nifty closed in the negative territory on Thursday, tracking losses in index majors Reliance Industries, ITC and HDFC bank amid a weak trend in global markets.

The 30-share BSE Sensex declined 388.40 points or 0.59 per cent to settle at 65,151.02. During the day, it fell by 493.32 points or 0.75 per cent to 65,046.10.

The NSE Nifty slipped 99.75 points or 0.51 per cent to end at 19,365.25.

"The mounting influence of weak global cues hindered the domestic market's ability to recoup, resulting in sustained selling pressure. The release of Fed minutes unveiled a divided stance among its members regarding the necessity of additional rate hikes, contrasting the previously anticipated rate pause," said Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services.

ITC was the biggest loser from the Sensex pack, sliding 2.04 per cent, followed by Power Grid, Reliance Industries, Larsen & Toubro, Nestle, Kotak Mahindra Bank, Bajaj Finance and JSW Steel.

On the other hand, Titan, State Bank of India, Bajaj Finserv, Axis Bank, Tata Steel, Sun Pharma, Tech Mahindra and Bharti Airtel were the gainers. In the broader market, the BSE smallcap gauge climbed 0.19 per cent, and midcap gained 0.06 per cent.

"As per a study by Goldman Sachs, overseas investors holding in midcaps in India has increased by 175 basis points to 16 per cent of their market capitalisation this year, compared with a drop of 250 basis

points over the last five years," Deepak Jasani, Head of Retail Research, HDFC Securities, said.

Among the indices, utilities declined 1.03 per cent, FMCG slipped 0.93 per cent, oil & gas (0.77 per cent), capital goods (0.75 per cent), power (0.73 per cent) and metal (0.25 per cent).

Consumer Discretionary, consumer durables and realty were the gainers.

"Global stocks were mostly lower on Thursday after notes from a US Federal Reserve meeting denied hopes interest rate hikes are finished. Fears over China's sluggish economic recovery did not help matters either," Jasani said.

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

European markets were trading lower in the afternoon session. The US markets ended in negative territory on Wednesday.

Global oil benchmark Brent crude climbed 0.36 per cent to USD 83.75 a barrel.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) turned buyers on Wednesday as they bought equities worth ₹ 722.76 crore, according to exchange data.

"Profit-taking came to the fore amid weak global cues, as rising US bond yields and fall in the currency levels weighed on the equity market sentiment."

"Investors are also worried about further rate hikes coupled with deflation and slowing demand in China, which has been prompting investors to flee equity markets amid choppy trends," Shrikant Chouhan, Head of Research (Retail), Kotak Securities Ltd, said. (PTI)

Gold price declines to ₹ 59,300 per 10 grams



NEW DELHI, Aug 17: Gold prices declined ₹ 300 to ₹ 59,300 per 10 grams in the national capital on Thursday amid weak cues in international markets, according to HDFC Securities.

The precious metal had settled at ₹ 59,600 per 10 grams in the previous trade.

Silver also dipped by ₹ 300 to ₹ 72,800 per kg.

On Thursday, gold traded lower with spot prices in the Delhi market at ₹ 59,300 per 10 grams, down by ₹ 300 from its previous close, Dilip Parmar, research analyst at HDFC Securities, said.

In the global markets, both gold and silver were trading lower at USD 1,895.5 per ounce and USD 22.65 per ounce, respectively.

"Gold price hovered around five-month lows as the US dollar and treasury yields gained momentum after recent upbeat economic data added weight to expectations that the Federal Reserve would carry on with its monetary policy tightening," Navneet Damani, senior vice-president, commodity research, at Motilal Oswal Financial Services, said. (PTI)

Police verification of SIM dealers mandatory: Ashwini Vaishnaw

Bulk connections discontinued to curb frauds

NEW DELHI, Aug 17: The government has made police verification of SIM card dealers mandatory and discontinued the provision of bulk connections to curb fraudulent activities, Union minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said on Thursday.

The minister said that the government has disconnected 52 lakh mobile connections. While 67,000 dealers have been black-listed, 300 FIRs have been filed against SIM card dealers since May 2023. The minister said WhatsApp on its own blocked around 66,000 accounts that were involved in fraudulent activities. "Now we have made police verification of SIM dealers mandatory to curb frauds. Penalty of ₹ 10 lakh will be imposed on dealers found violating norms," Vaishnaw said.

He said that there are 10 lakh SIM dealers and they will be given sufficient time for police verification.

The minister said that the Department of Telecommunications has also discontinued the provision of bulk connections and instead a new concept of business connection will be introduced.

"Besides, KYC of businesses, KYC of person taking handover of SIM will also be done," Vaishnaw said. (PTI)

QUOTE OF THE DAY

Immaturity is the incapacity to use one's intelligence without the guidance of another. - Immanuel Kant

Unity must for INDIA

As INDIA stands at a pivotal crossroads, the nation's political landscape has become a canvas of uncertainty and opportunity. Home minister Amit Shah's proclamation that Prime Minister Narendra Modi is poised for a triumphant third term underscores the need for a cohesive opposition strategy. The onus lies on INDIA to prevent Modi's aspirations from becoming reality. This requires the Congress party to refine its leadership approach, with Rahul Gandhi steering the ship towards a united opposition front, rather than aspiring to be a lone 'tapaswi', which could be his undoing. At 53, Rahul Gandhi must engage in candid discussions with opposition leaders, rallying them around the principles of coalition politics. Drawing from the lessons of the UPA experience, he should guide them toward a collective goal. The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), while valuable to the opposition mosaic, must align with the broader agenda. Arvind Kejriwal's role, though pivotal, cannot stall the emergence of a formidable alternative to Modi's rule. In this pursuit, no opposition leader, regardless of stature, should eclipse the greater alliance that is 'India'. The AAP's decision to eschew the Mumbai meeting of the alliance underscores the need for a unified stand. While AAP's ambitions are respected, it's essential to remind Kejriwal that no single entity is irreplaceable. Despite Alka Lamba's assertions, the Congress party's stance should prevail, as a harmonious alliance speaks louder than the concerns of any individual component.

The forthcoming Mumbai conclave, slated for August 31-September 1, must persist despite any dissent from AAP. The argument posed by chief AAP spokesperson Priyanka Kakkar regarding Congress' role in Delhi's constituencies must be weighed against the broader mission. AAP's dominance cannot jeopardize the alliance's core values. It's a pivotal moment where the future of India's democracy hangs in the balance, and veteran opposition leader Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge's experience should guide the way. Undoubtedly, unseating Narendra Modi requires collective effort. Both AAP and Rahul Gandhi's Congress are formidable but incomplete alone. The power of unity is undeniable. This isn't about Delhi's seven seats steering India's fate. It's about crafting a comprehensive narrative that resonates across the nation, transcending narrow regional ambitions. The dynamics between Kejriwal and Lamba, marked by their histories in AAP, mustn't cloud the larger objective. The 2024 elections hold tremendous potential for change if harnessed astutely. The formula lies in uniting the Pasmanda Muslim community against BJP and harnessing the disenfranchised Hindutva constituents, thereby potentially leading to Modi's electoral downfall.

As the monsoon session of Parliament unveiled, the rising prominence of Rahul Gandhi as Modi's equal is undeniable. It's a testament to his resurgence and the collective strength of the opposition. Gandhi's presence is symbolic of the opposition's vigor and its commitment to challenge Modi's narrative. It's an endeavor that transcends personal rivalries and egos. The Congress, AAP, and a myriad of other parties must see the bigger picture – a future where India's democracy thrives. Modi's vulnerability can be exploited, but only if the opposition speaks with one voice, devoid of discordant notes. In this complex tapestry of politics, the ultimate victor should be India, the country that unites under the banner of a diverse yet cohesive opposition. This is the hour when democracy's strength prevails, shaping the nation's destiny, not as a sum of parts, but as a united force working tirelessly for the common good.

Indian govt steps into mould of British who considered themselves as aliens

By: K Raveendran

Home Minister Amit Shah's legislative package in relation to the country's criminal law system, hailed by his ruling party as path-breaking, has more symbolism than real reform and even includes a good measure of deception.

Of course, there are a couple of good things, such as stringent punishment for mob lynching, though without specifically mentioning as such, and crimes against women, but Shah makes the vital mistake of confusing English with British and in assuming that the two are freely interchangeable. His package ends up changing names of existing laws while in the process betraying an Indianised version of the British arrogance on the part of the present day rulers. The propriety of giving Hindi names to the three main criminal laws – the Indian Penal Code, Criminal Procedure Code and the Indian Evidence Act – when the entire judicial process in the country is being conducted in English has already been questioned. There is nothing whatsoever to the change of nomenclature than symbolism.

Tamil Nadu chief minister M K Stalin has raised the red flag over the change, accusing the Modi government of a certain linguistic imperialism and describing Shah's package as representing re-colonisation in the name of de-colonisation. He is not much off the track.

The British considered themselves as aliens, for logical reasons too, and perceived people as their enemies as the colonialists were aware that they had usurped their rights. But BJP, despite all its protestations about Indianness, has stepped itself into the shoes of the British and is likewise treating people as their adversaries.

Shah's introduction of the new bills was marked by a dramatic announcement that the British-era law against treason was being repealed completely. But even before the excitement died out, the realisation came that he has incorporated a new provision which is more draconian than the one that was being abrogated.

The existing sedition laws have been replaced by Section 150 which outlines that anyone who

deliberately, knowingly, or through words, spoken or written, signs, visible presentations, electronic communication, financial means, or any other means, stirs up or tries to stir up secession, armed rebellion, subversive activities, fosters separatist sentiments, or poses a threat to India's sovereignty, unity, and integrity, or engages in such acts will be liable to imprisonment for life or imprisonment of up to seven years, along with a potential fine.

Attempts at secession cannot be tolerated by any means, but the real danger here is that there is no proper definition of secession. In fact, the very word secession is missing in the new provision. This makes it easy for the government to interpret anything as secessionist and use the provision to suppress criticism. The new provision, in fact, brings through the back door what the Supreme Court had struck down more than one year ago.

In a landmark development, the Supreme Court had asked the Central government and States to refrain from registering any cases for the offence of sedition under Section 124A of the Indian Penal Code. A bench of Chief Justice of India NV Ramana and Justices Surya Kant and Hima Kohli directed that proceedings under Section 124A be kept in abeyance till the government's exercise of reviewing Section 124A is complete. The bench also asked governments not to continue investigation or take coercive steps in all pending proceedings under the provision till the government's exercise is complete.

Should such cases be registered, the parties are at liberty to approach court and court has to expeditiously dispose of the same, the bench added. "It would be appropriate to put the provision in abeyance," the order further said. The government's intention behind the new provision is to circumvent the courts in cases relating to what it considers as objectionable conduct or event. This was essentially a law that the British framed to deal with any challenge to the imperialists' authority and by retaining it in the new Sanhita, the government has got into the mould of the British, whose distrust for the people was a cardinal aspect of their rule in India. (IPA Service)

Modi's speech strikes enthusiasm to build a developed nation

This year, Prime Minister Narendra Modi's address to the nation from the ramparts of the Red Fort in the Independence Day celebrations has been a meaningful presentation of the new resolutions of New India covering a vast and auspicious history in the context of the period of Amritkal. Even though those who bake loaves of political interest are looking at it by linking it with the Lok Sabha elections of the year 2024, whereas this address is a call to make India a world guru and an economic superpower of the world by outlining the future direction of India.

It is the light of peace, the high way of prosperity, the trust of light and the resolve to become a superpower. But it is true that Modi sought blessings for the 2024 General Elections, and expressed confidence that he would deliver the same speech from the Red Fort next year as well. The Prime Minister not only enumerated the achievements of his reign, but also outlined the country's progress for the next five years. Describing the achievement of bringing the country's economy from the tenth to the fifth position in 10 years, he also assured to make the country the third largest economy in the world in the next five years. Surely, among the speeches made so far from the ramparts of the Red Fort, it was the most inspiring, resolute and one that wrote the story of a new India - a strong India There is a call for everyone to wake up, be determined and have a strong spirit to make the nectar of freedom, for the great journey of India moving towards the light by breaking the darkness.

The opposition is free to criticize and may term the Prime Minister's speech as an election speech. But the Independence Day address is such an address to the nation which analyses from where to where we have reached.

Be it space or sea, land or sky, country or world, today India's flag is flying everywhere, every countryman is proud of being an Indian seeing the progress India has made, so the credit should be given to Modi. It is not an exaggeration, its discussion is not political, it is an expression of India's cultural, economic and political prosperity. Every Indian has been inspired and impressed by Modi's speech because for the first time he presented the whole country as a family and instead of sisters and brothers and friends, he addressed the countrymen as family members and in his 90-minute speech; he used this word 26 times.

Not only do you yourself a favour, you also have to do charity. Live not only for yourself but also for others. It is our responsibility as well as the debt which we have to repay to our society and our motherland. Parshuram had said the same thing while giving Sudarshan Chakra to Lord Krishna that Vasudev Krishna, you have eaten a lot of butter (Makhan), performed a lot of pastimes, played a lot of flute, now do that for which you have come on earth. Modi also said something similar while awakening enthusiasm and determination among the people of the country, which not only reveals the expectations of life, but also reveals the truths of life layer by layer.

India has been considering the world as a family since the past, that's why it proclaimed the mantra of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam. Carrying forward the tradition of the past, Modi introduced the feeling of considering the world as his family during the Corona period, and also selected Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam as the motto of the G-20 group. We the people of India can fulfill the wish of world welfare



only when the first nation is imbued with the spirit of welfare. For this, those who are the successors of the past and responsible for the future will have to show strong morale

DEGREE OF THOUGHT

By: Lalit Garg

and leadership, rising above position, party prestige and prejudice. This feeling will make a strong, capable and harmonious nation and will increase the prestige of India in the world, by this India will become a world guru.

The most important thing about this time's address and Independence Day celebration with many features and eccentricities was that workers, nurses, workers from many areas across the country and Sarpanches of vibrant villages of border areas were invited to make the new parliament. This was a unique and inspiring dimension giving the prestige of labour and the identity of labour. The Prime Minister has made the working class realize that their contribution to India's strong democracy and progress is as important as that of others. The Prime Minister has started the tradition of giving proper respect to the people of India by giving Padma Samman to the talents related to the land.

In his address, the Prime Minister not only inspired the people of the country, but also assured

that despite many challenges, India is moving in the right direction and the dream of a developed nation is about to come true. The Prime Minister has announced the launch of Rs 15,000 crore Vishwakarma Yojana for the workers, be it hair cutters, clothes washers or other small businesses. Such a scheme for such classes will start on Vishwakarma Jayanti. Realizing the basic mantra of 'Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas', Modi is trying to change the country's destiny and picture.

Referring to the reduction in terrorist incidents in the country, curbing corruption, and the government's work with honesty and transparency, the Prime Minister said that his government has spent maximum money for the welfare of the poor and has brought 13.5 crore people below the poverty line. Definitely poverty is going away from India. He made the countrymen realize that when the country becomes economically strong, not only do the coffers get filled, but the strength of the country also increases. He also called upon the countrymen to fight against nepotism, corruption and appeasement as they take away the rights of the poor, backward, tribals and Dalits.

On the Manipur violence, he said that the centre and the state government are working together to solve the Manipur problem and

the problems will be solved peacefully. Today the mother power of the country is creating new dimensions of success.

We have to fight for tomorrow. We have to give up the habit of looking towards the world, we have to rise above political narrow-mindedness, those who have faith in India, are proud of their culture, their intelligence and wisdom, they are aware of their power somewhere deep inside, they know that India is today Has taken a step towards freedom from the mentality of following behind. We get many illusions at every turn of thinking. Sometimes near and sometimes far away, they keep searching for the truth. What always impresses the most in this confusion is the speed with which we move with the times. We have to live each and every moment of life - for ourselves, for others, this resolution will be a resolution of good use, not of misuse. It is only from here that the vision of Neer-Kshir begins. It is from here that the first step from darkness to light arises.

The theme of this year's Independence Day also remained the same as 'Nation First, Always First'. We got a complete glimpse of this in the address of the timeless leadership Modi which was the roadmap to realize the goal of 2047 developed India. When Modi called upon the youth and said, 'Listen to the challenge, Sina Taan, Jag Mein Badhao Desh Ka Naam' - it was a declaration of the potential of India's youth to the world. Reform, Perform and Transform have now become a part of the work culture of the country. Due to these, policy stability, better coordination and ease of doing business have improved. Due to this, India has been distinguished as a self-confident nation. (The author is a journalist, columnist who can be reached at latitgarg11@gmail.com)

Debtor nations seek IMF assistance amidst austerity struggles

By: Dipak Kurmi

Amidst a global economy experiencing a pronounced deceleration, even conservative economists are labeling it as 'secular stagnation'. This downturn is accentuating the critical issue of external debt for numerous Global South nations. As their export revenues dwindle, they find themselves unable to cover both import costs and debt servicing obligations. Consequently, these countries confront a dire situation where essential private financial inflows diminish precisely when they are most needed, coinciding with the anticipation of currency depreciation that further exacerbates the scenario. Consequently, debtor nations are compelled to seek aid from the International Monetary Fund (IMF), which often enforces severe 'austerity' measures disproportionately impacting the working populace. The aftermath can be swift and stark, transforming a nation from 'medium income' status to a dire 'basket case', a reality underscored by instances within our own regional vicinity.

Numerous recommendations have surfaced within this context to assist countries burdened with debt. These proposals encompass a spectrum from debt restructuring to the issuance of a new cycle of Special Drawing Rights, injecting renewed liquidity into the global economy, as well as amplifying lending from within the Global South itself, facilitated by institutions like the BRICS bank. Undoubtedly valuable, these suggestions fall somewhat short. The ultimate goal should extend beyond merely easing borrowing terms for impoverished nations, aiming instead to substantially curtail, if not entirely eradicate, the necessity for borrowing.

This necessity emerges due to the fact that at any specific level of global economic output, distributed unevenly among nations, debtor countries exhibit aggregate demand surpassing their own production. However, given that global aggregate demand must inherently match production (as anything produced requires corresponding demand), this results in creditor countries experiencing an aggregate demand that falls below their productive capacity. Consequently, any deficit, indicative of borrowing, inherently corresponds to an equally substantial surplus.

If surplus nations consistently diminish their surplus by consistently boosting their domestic consumption each time a current account surplus emerges within their balance of payments, this proactive approach would inherently eradicate the deficits faced by countries in deficit. This, in turn, would obviate the necessity for borrowing by deficit countries.

This approach would yield an added benefit beyond eradicating the need for borrowing. The global demand would expand beyond its initial state, pre-adjustment, resulting in heightened worldwide employment, output, and consumption. In essence, the world would be enhanced, free from inter-country indebtedness, if every surplus nation consistently and promptly eradicated its current account surpluses. However, the question arises: why does this scenario not materialize? Indeed, during the establishment of the Bretton Woods system in 1944, a proposition was put forth suggesting that surplus nations should be compelled to boost their domestic consumption to nullify their surpluses. However, this proposal

faced a veto from the United States of America, which, at the time, maintained a surplus position (later transitioning to a deficit) and held a pivotal role as the capitalist world leader, exerting significant influence over its formation.

The mutually beneficial outcome that arises from compelling surplus nations to eliminate their surpluses can be exemplified using a scenario within the European Union. Here, Greece has consistently operated as a deficit country, whereas Germany has maintained a surplus position. If the German government were to elevate its fiscal deficit by, let's say, one million euros, and subsequently distribute this sum gratuitously among its populace for vacations in Greece, it would result in a corresponding increase in Greece's foreign exchange earnings, enabling the repayment of a portion of its existing debt. (Simultaneously, Germany's current account surplus would diminish by the same amount.) Consequently, Greek indebtedness would decrease while employment opportunities in Greece would rise. Meanwhile, for Germany, the populace would enjoy enhanced well-being through their Greek holidays instead of accumulating claims on Greece. This illustration further underscores the reasons behind the absence of such actions. Firstly, within a capitalist economy, the preference lies in possessing claims on other nations, affording it leverage over them, rather than enhancing the quality of life for its citizens.

Secondly, an elevation in the living standards of the populace, predominantly composed of workers, amplifies their negotiating power, empowering them to demand higher wages. Consequently, due to both these factors, the seemingly advanta-

geous win-win scenarios, which would be logical choices, are rendered unfeasible within a capitalist framework.

The likelihood of establishing an international economic order mandating surplus countries to enact adjustments appears distant. This serves as an argument for the Global South to incrementally disengage from a global structure largely dominated by advanced capitalist nations and instead establish local or sub-global trade agreements. In these arrangements, countries may still possess claims on each other, yet these claims would be settled bilaterally or multilaterally within the arrangement itself, free from the encumbrance of interest. In the past, India embraced such an approach with the Soviet Union, wherein bilateral trade was conducted exclusively in rupees and roubles, with a fixed exchange rate between them, excluding the use of dollars or other major currencies.

These arrangements are experiencing resurgence in popularity. Brazil, for instance, has recently forged such an arrangement with China, while India has established a similar agreement with the United Arab Emirates. The mounting instances of advanced capitalist nations, spearheaded by the US, unilaterally imposing sanctions on numerous countries without United Nations Security Council approval are expected to drive the proliferation of such arrangements in the near future. While these arrangements may not address the historical external debt burden of the Global South, they hold potential for curbing future debt challenges. (The writer is a journalist and commentator based in Guwahati, can be reached at diipaknews@live.com)

POST BAG

Tezpur needs more care in road-traffic management

Sir/Ma'am

Being a resident of Tezpur, I have witnessed a tremendous transition of the city in a few years. When I was a kid, Tezpur was a very calm and peaceful city. But today, the old fragrance of my lovely city has gradually vanished. Various malls and other elements of globalisation have totally captured the unique beauty of Tezpur. It is inevitably true that we all are slaves of the time. We have to accept the rapid changes of our environment as natural phenomena to a large extent. But in the name of development how can Tezpurians will bear the pain of de-shaping of the essence of our beloved city. Probably lack of proper town planning is the root cause behind it.

Lack of adequate parking places and lacuna in the traffic management have made public life deplorable. The people of the city are facing problems bringing their car to the main town because of annoying traffic jams. The flood of e-rickshaws has also become a prime problem in the present day city. Fortunately, though the government has taken various development schemes to uplift and conserve Tezpur, the giant pond-like potholes still stand on the road in several places in the town causing lots of problems towards day to day life of the netizens. All such problems have surely degraded the real beauty of our beloved city. I, being a Tezpurian, request the authority concerned to give a proper look over the matters.

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GST on Pollution Certificates

Sir/Ma'am

GST was brought in to disentangle a complex web of state and central taxes and to provide a breather to the public. But now GST is doing just the opposite of what it was meant to as it is turning out to be an expensive alternative to the earlier taxes. Products such as rice, tea, coffee, etc. which were kept out of this GST scheme when GST was put into force are now slapped with a 5% GST which is double that of the earlier regime of taxes.

Slapping GST on essential items was not enough for this government as now it has slapped an 18% GST on the issuance of Pollution certificates. The government may be unaware that common people are not witnessing an exponential rise in their income like their ministers so paying taxes on literally everything is burning a hole in our pocket. I urge the government to seriously consider all these taxes they have slapped on the hard-earning common man and listen to the economists rather than making their own decisions.

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An unholy omen is looming over Bangladesh

By: Jyoti Rahman

On a warm August night 75 years ago, the sun set on the British Raj. In the mottled dawn that followed came into existence two, then three, countries. It wasn't just the country and provinces that were divided – to use Annada Shankar Ray's words, Partition entailed allotting everything from tea gardens, coal mines, colleges, police stations, office rooms to chairs, tables, wall clocks to peons, policemen, and professors into two countries. And it was accompanied by one of the largest population movements in human history.

In a seminal 2008 article by Prashant Bharadwaj and his colleagues, *The Big March: Migratory Flows after the Partition of India*, it is estimated that nearly 3 million Hindus emigrated out of then East Pakistan, while three quarters of a million Muslims moved there from India. The relatively small number of people emigrating eastwards, juxtaposed against the relatively large number of people fleeing, possibly explains why the public memory of partition differs so starkly on the two sides of the Radcliffe Line in the eastern subcontinent. In Indian Bengal, partition is ever-present in the literature as well as in the visual media, in classic novels and movies, evoking a lost world and the plight of a people cut off from their rural roots, and their struggles among the teeming multitudes of Calcutta.

But what about the lives of those who stayed behind?

Nirad C. Chaudhuri and Jatin Sarker were both born in Hindu families in the Mymensingh district of eastern Bengal, now Bangladesh. Chaudhuri, about four decades older than Sarker, wrote his autobiography before India held its first election, and ceased to be unknown. Sarker also wrote his life story. Unlike Chaudhuri, Sarker's was in Bangla, published in Bangladesh, never translated in English, and not widely available. He remains unknown. Which is a pity, because Sarker is a far, far better guide than Chaudhuri when it comes to the land of their birth. When Sarker's hometown Mymensingh became part of East Pakistan – the rural slum of Jinnah's moth-nibbled two-winged land of the pure – his family didn't move to India. They were not atypical. Many Hindu families remained in East Pakistan. Perhaps it was the presence of Mahatma Gandhi or the fantastical belief that Subhas Chandra Bose would return in 1957 – a century after the

Great Uprising of 1857, two centuries after the Battle of Plassey – to reunite Mother Bengal. Whatever the reason, there were no trains full of dead bodies to and from Calcutta in that dreadful August. Instead, there were emigrations in dribs and drabs, with major outflows during the communal violence of 1946, 1950, and 1964. Sarker describes the lives of middle class bhadralok (gentlemen) Hindus of mofussil East Pakistan in Pakistan-er Janma Mrittu Darshan ('Witnessing the Life and Death of Pakistan'). While he stopped being an Indian on 14 August 1947, he didn't become a Pakistani. That country became an Islamic Republic. Hindus were not equal citizens there. They were dhimmis, under the 'sacred protection' of the majority. Sarker could never be a Pakistani, but his Bengali Muslim neighbours did not quite feel at home in Pakistan either. In 1971, when East Pakistan died and Bangladesh was born, Sarker thought he would become an equal citizen of a free country.

And on paper, he is. Bangladesh never became an Islamic Republic, although Hussein Muhammad Ershad, military ruler in the 1980s, inserted Islam as the state religion in the Constitution, and his ally and current prime minister, Sheikh Hasina refused to take it out despite other wholesale changes to the document. There is no formal discrimination with respect to religion. Hindus are not formally denied a job, a bank loan, or admission to an educational institution (except madrassas of course). On paper, Sarker has no reason to write *Bangladeshey Pakistan-er bhut darshan* ('Witnessing Pakistan's Ghost in Bangladesh'), a hypothetical sequel where he might have talked about things that one did not wish for in the People's Republic of Bangladesh. Things like communal violence targeting Hindus for example.

By communal violence, one does not mean a Gujarat 2002 – nothing like that has ever happened in Bangladesh. And one also needs to acknowledge that the mutual apathy and distrust, if not overt antagonism, between the eastern subcontinent's two large religious communities (and multiple ethnic communities) is much more complex than the tales of eternal harmony. As Annada Shankar Ray noted, the two communities had co-existed in the region for generations and centuries without really intermingling. Of course, that complex interplay of historical legacy affects the Hindu-Muslim interpersonal interactions on a daily basis – no one is



better off to deny this. For example, in a fascinating experiment, Pushkar Maitra and colleagues show that it is the minority status, not religious identity itself, that drives people's behaviour. That is, a Muslim in West Bengal trusts a fellow Muslim more than a Hindu, but a Bangladeshi Muslim is indifferent between the communities.

The historical legacy of the divergent paths taken by the two communities in the 18th and 19th century continue to have economic consequences even in today's Bangladesh. Salma Ahmed found that even in the decade to 2009, Hindu male workers earned more than their Muslim colleagues because they were better educated on average, but they faced discrimination and earned less than might have been expected from their qualification.

There is, of course, no law supporting discrimination against Hindus. There is, however, a law that makes the community particularly vulnerable – the Enemy Property Act 1965 and its Bangladesh successors.

The Act allows the state to seize properties of those who leave the country. In practice, this has been used over the decades to grab Hindu properties. Typically, local big-wigs grab some prime land, and then use death or emigration of one of the family members as an excuse to enlist the entire property. If emigration is not voluntary, coercion or intimidation is commonplace.

What were the political affiliations of the offenders? According to Barakat – who is well-connected with the Awami League, allegedly contributing to the party's electoral platform in the 2000s and rewarded with cushy jobs by the current government – over 44% of the land grabbers were connected with the Awami League, more than the combined total of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), Jatiya Party and

Jamaat-e-Islami linked offenders. And this study came out in 2000, well before the current 15 years of Awami League reign.

And thus we come to the dysfunctional polity that curses the life of Bangladeshi Hindus. All the historical legacies notwithstanding, the single biggest threat to the wellbeing of Bangladeshi Hindus in 2023 is an authoritarian and increasingly dysfunctional political landscape where most members of the community are treated as the expendable untermensh (racially or socially inferior) by the powers-that-be. Even though there has been no incident comparable to the Gujarat riots in Bangladesh, there has been violence. In December 1992, when the centuries-old Babri mosque in Ayodhya was razed to ground, temples were desecrated across Bangladesh. Khaleda Zia, then prime minister, ordered the state machinery to move in quickly to stem the violence.

Zia must have remembered the experience very well. The Gujarat rampage happened during her second stint in power. Her government ensured that there were no reprisals against the Hindu community in Bangladesh. She was also acutely aware of the communal violence that marred her return to power in 2001.

Of the 300 seats in Bangladesh's parliament, Hindus were a non-trivial minority in about 70. In a tight election, their votes could make a huge difference. Not allowing them to vote was one way of reducing their influence. That is precisely what happened in 2001. In that election, Awami League received 40% of the votes against the BNP's 41%. Hindu voters in some districts became the victim of targeted communal violence after the election.

Bangladesh's stressed and stretched electoral democracy failed to safeguard the Hindu community.

The story, of course, does not end there. Two decades later, images and stories of the victims of 2001 resurfaced in a toxic cocktail of misinformation and propaganda against Mamata Banerjee in the 2021 West Bengal election. Majoritarian democracy is not sufficient to safeguard citizens' rights, this much is self-evident when one looks across the Radcliffe Line.

Of course, discarding democracy is guaranteed to extinguish citizens' rights, this much is also self-evident when one just thinks of Bangladesh of the past decade.

In Bangladesh under a supposedly secular, inclusive government of Hasina Wajed, however, there has been repeated communal violence, with active connivance if not instigation of her partymen. Never in the history of Bangladesh, the Hindu community saw coordinated attacks on temples during Durga Puja, until 2021 that is, after a copy of the Quran was found in a temple. A video of the incident spread like wildfire and soon, angry mobs started attacking temples across the country. Within four days, eight people died including three Hindus.

During the coordinated attack, in Chandpur, Ariyan Sajjad, a member of the Awami League's student wing and son of local Awami League leader Shahida Begum, called the local Muslims to launch an attack on temples and pandals of Hindus in protest of the "desecration of Quran". In Bandarban, Awami League leader Zahirul Islam addressed the mob before they started attacking the temple. This was not an isolated incident. As a former officer of the Indian Police Service, Vibhuti Rai, remarked about communal violence in India, no such event can last for more than 24 hours without the consent of the state – a sentiment that is applicable on an even shorter time-frame in Bangladesh, given the more compressed distances involved. Ain O Salish Kendra, a Bangladeshi human rights organisation, has documented 3,679 incidents of attacks on Hindus from 2013 to 2021, which included 1,559 incidents of housebreaking and arson, 1,678 incidents of vandalism and arson in idols, worship halls, and temples and the death of 11 Hindus in these attacks. The individuals involved in these attacks are loyal to Awami League, Bangladeshi media outlets revealed. Of course, none of the cases involving the attacks on minority communities have been properly investigated. This shouldn't come as a surprise.

Bangladesh has been under a de facto one-party, if not one-person, rule for nearly a decade now. Hasina Wajed's authoritarian regime may or may not come to an end soon – elections are due in a few months and discontent is rising but then again, she rigged the last two and may as well rig another one.

There is every reason to fear that the increasingly beleaguered dictator may turn to the age-old tactic of communal violence. In November 1990, L.K. Advani led a yatra across India to demand the razing of the Babri mosque. In Dhaka, goons associated with his party vandalised the Dhakeshwari Temple in the capital, to give President Ershad an excuse to impose curfew and act like a statesman. Ershad's gambit failed, and his government fell the next month after a popular uprising. Might Hasina update the playbook for the 21st century, deploying social media and disinformation on the one hand, and a far more draconian state machinery of repression on the other, all against the backdrop of a Hindutva government seeking a third term in India a few months later?

One does not need to be a paranoid conspiracy monger to be apprehensive about the unholy omen as we approach the autumn – the traditional festive season of the Bengali Hindus.

Nearly 76 years after partition, Gayeshwar Chandra Roy, a member of the BNP standing committee, recently bemoaned, "It is a sad fact that the people of Bangladesh's minority community have no say anywhere; neither in administration, nor in judiciary. In one word, Bangladesh does not care. Due to insecurity, there is a gradual exodus of Hindus from Bangladesh."

Almost 77 years ago, the Bengal delta was red with communal bloodletting that couldn't have been stopped by the British Raj in its last days, until a frail old man came with a message of peace. There is, of course, no Mahatma in Bangladesh. But nor is one needed. It would suffice for the state machinery to do what it did in 1992 or 2002.

The reality, however, is that in the past decade, the Bangladesh state has become very good at stamping out dissent. But given the rot, it has become very bad at statehood and the type of resolute action that would have thwarted these attacks. Until and unless there is an honest acknowledgment that the state is broken and needs to be rebuilt, with a free and fair election as the first step of that process, Bangladesh will remain haunted by the spectre of unholy omens. (Courtesy: *The Wire*)

India-China tensions on the global stage

By: Harsh V. Pant

Since the Galwan clashes of 2020, India's bilateral relationship with China has entered one of its worst phases. While acknowledging that China is an important neighbouring country, Indian policymakers have been underscoring the importance of mutual respect and adherence to agreements to maintain a positive and constructive relationship. New Delhi has been categorical in emphasising that the present downturn in bilateral relations was created by China and not by India, placing the responsibility of bringing the ties back on track squarely on Beijing.

While India continues to underline the importance of peace on the Line of Actual Control (LAC) as a prerequisite for normalcy in the broader relationship, pressing China to take forward disengagement in remaining friction areas, China continues to go back to the old rule book, suggesting that "specific issues" shouldn't "define the overall relationship." For Beijing, it is important that India and China continue to work together on global and bilateral economic concerns, even as the border issue is dealt with by officials on both sides.

This old paradigm has been the guiding principle in shaping the trajectory of Sino-Indian relationship over the past few decades. However, today there are few takers for this in India as New Delhi sharpens its policy response vis-à-vis China. In the past, there was a sense that India and China, despite serious bilateral divergences, had significant convergences at the global level that could be explored to build a partnership benefiting the two nations.

However, today the divergences between India and China on global platforms are becoming equally evident. Recently, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar told the Parliamentary Consultative Committee for External Affairs that China is the only country among five permanent members of United Nations Security Council (UNSC) that is opposing India's entry into the powerful body. It was always clear that China won't allow India into the UNSC, but for India to articulate it openly makes it evident that New Delhi has no faith in the UNSC reforming anytime soon. As a result, India is signaling that it will work with other platforms to pursue its global interests and contribute to the global order.

The Sino-Indian contestation is also intensifying across various platforms. At last month's virtual summit of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) that India hosted, Prime Minister Narendra Modi not only took on Pakistan directly but also the duplicitous attitude of nations

like China, when he remarked, "Some countries use cross-border terrorism as an instrument of their policies and provide shelter to terrorists. SCO should not hesitate to criticise such nations. There should be no place for double standards on such serious matters." With his comments, Mr Modi was making clear that sanctimonious statements from SCO on terrorism have no meaning if Pakistan is not made to feel the heat of regional states. He was underlining New Delhi's concerns about the effectiveness of the SCO on a matter as important as this.

Modi also addressed issues related to territorial sovereignty and connectivity, underlining that strong and better connectivity "not only enhances mutual trade but also fosters mutual trust". He, however, cautioned that "in these efforts, it is essential to uphold the basic principles of the SCO charter, particularly respecting the sovereignty and regional integrity of the member states." In line with its longstanding and consistent approach on China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), India refused to sign the paragraph supporting BRI in the New Delhi declaration and stayed out of a joint statement on SCO Economic Development Strategy 2030.

The future of BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) is also under stress as Chinese attempt to expand the platform is being resisted by India and Brazil. Beijing is focused on a quick expansion with the aim of giving the platform a distinctly anti-Western orientation, which New Delhi and Brasilia seem to have no interest in. While the five members expressed an interest in the expansion of the grouping last year, India is keen that the principles defining the process of expansion are articulated clearly. As the platform works through consensus, it will be difficult for China to push its agenda unilaterally.

India's presidency of the G20 has allowed New Delhi to set the agenda of the grouping and it has rightfully focused on the concerns of the Global South. But China-Russia combine on the one hand and the West on the other are likely to be the most important fault-lines in defining the legacy of this G20. Beijing has no real interest in ensuring a successful G20 in India.

From the SCO and BRICS to the United Nations and the Indo-Pacific, the Sino-Indian contestation is moving from the bilateral to the global arena. As a consequence, New Delhi will have to work more closely with like-minded nations in creating and sustaining new institutional frameworks that not only respond to today's geostrategic realities but also serve Indian interests that are increasingly becoming more global. (Courtesy: *ORF*)

India under Modi gave Pakistan more chances to redeem itself than it deserves

By: Vivek Katju

Prime Minister Narendra Modi assertively defended his government's record and performance during his Lok Sabha speech on the No-Confidence motion moved by the Opposition parties. In the course of his address, he attacked the Congress party for believing foreigners instead of relying on the capabilities of India.

In this context, Modi also accused the Congress of going to the extent of accepting Pakistan's denials about its involvement in terrorism. He said that India carried out surgical and air strikes against terrorism but the Congress did not have faith in India's Armed Forces but put its faith in the claims of the enemy.

India's approach to Pakistan's terror excesses

Ultimately, the Parliament is a political forum and necessarily reflects the political approaches of the government and the opposition parties on all issues under this supreme legislative body's consideration. This is even more so during a debate on no-confidence in the government. It, therefore, follows that Modi's comments on India's approaches to Pakistan were more from a political standpoint rather than strategic and diplomatic positions.

Nevertheless, his remarks provide an opportunity to consider how successive governments, including that of Modi, have dealt with Pakistan, including its sponsorship of terrorism against India.

Pakistan has resorted to proxy armed aggression since 1947 when it sent raiders into the then princely state of Jammu and Kashmir. That led to J&K's accession to India which is final and irrevocable. Later, in 1965, it again sought to send proxies to J&K but India not only crushed them but opened a front outside the state leading to the 1965 war. Pakistan's aim of wresting the state from India failed.

This continuing round of proxy, terrorist aggression through Islamic groups under its control began in 1990 and has continued since then. Its intensity though has been calibrated by Pakistan. All governments since then have had to find ways and means of dealing with Pakistan and Pakistani-sponsored terrorism.

How have different governments tackled the Pak issue

These have been Congress-led governments, those of the Third-

Front, the NDA government headed by the BJP with Atal Bihari Vajpayee as Prime Minister, and since May 2014, effectively BJP governments led by Modi.

The approach of all governments, till the end of 2015, was two-fold. The first was to combat Pakistani terrorism through hardening Indian defences against infiltration and seeking to effectively combat terrorists on Indian territory largely in J&K but elsewhere in India too. The second was to engage Pakistan in dialogue so that it realised that its quest for gaining J&K through violence and terror was futile but also to show it the advantages which will accrue to it if it agrees to putting in place a framework of cooperative ties with India.

In 1998, India and Pakistan agreed on a structure of Composite dialogue

on eight subjects which covered the full spectrum of ties – humanitarian concerns, the resolution of outstanding issues, and cooperation in different areas.

The Pakistan Army did not really have any interest in normalising ties. It was, therefore, not only indifferent but hostile to dialogue mechanisms.

This was because it is convinced that India is an eternal enemy which has to be thwarted at each step. The use of terrorist proxies was also integrated by the Army as part of its security doctrine.

Dialogues did not sit well with Pakistan

From 1990 till 2015 whenever the Pakistan Army thought that a dialogue process may gain momentum, it acted to undermine it. The Kargil operation, the Parliament attack, the Mumbai train attacks, and the 2008 Mumbai terrorist attacks demonstrate the veracity of this contention. The cyclical process which occurred in these decades was: dialogue, followed by a violent terrorist attack (Kargil operations were an exception because they were undertaken by regular Pakistani forces), the rupture of dialogue, a period of cooling off,

and then, once again the beginning of the dialogue. The fact is that Modi did not deviate from this pattern after becoming Prime Minister in 2014. He invited the then-Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif for his swearing-in and the two agreed that the Foreign Secretaries would meet to work out modalities for a dialogue process because it had become moribund after the 2008 Mumbai attack.

This process could not take place because it got enmeshed in Pakistan's insistence that its visiting representatives would have the right to meet the Hurriyat. India could not agree.

Times when Pak tested India's patience

In July 2015, Modi and his Pakistani counterpart Nawaz Sharif met in Ufa in Russia on the margins of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) summit. They agreed that a

normalisation process would begin with a meeting of the two National Security Advisors. However, Pakistani generals were enraged because the Ufa Joint Statement did not mention J&K.

They therefore 'rejected' it. Modi relented and the National Security Advisors and the Foreign Secretaries of India and Pakistan met in Bangkok in early December 2015. A few days later then External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj visited Islamabad for an Afghanistan-related meeting. She agreed with Pakistan to begin a Comprehensive Bilateral Dialogue process once again. Modi put the seal of approval on these developments as an act of statesmanship when he dropped in to meet Nawaz Sharif on his way back from Kabul to Delhi on Christmas Day in 2015. However, as in the past, so now, the Pakistan Army did not want this to go forward.

Within ten days of the Modi visit, the Pathankot airbase was attacked. Yet Modi persisted with the peace initiative and allowed a team which included an ISI officer to visit India for investigations and also go to

Pathankot. This did not change Pakistani approaches.

India's retaliation post Pulwama

In July 2016, the Kashmiri terrorist Burhan Wani was killed by the security forces and Pakistan unleashed a propaganda war against India. In September, the Uri military base was attacked by terrorists from Pakistan. It is at this time that Modi's approach changed and he ordered a surgical strike against Pakistani terrorist launch pads.

This was a significant change in policy and has to be appreciated. Yet it would seem that despite the surgical strike, there was thought being given by Modi to continue with contacts with the Pakistan leadership.

In his book 'In Pursuit of Peace', the late Satinder Kumar Lambah who was the Indian part of the back channel between India and Pakistan during the Prime Minister Manmohan Singh period notes, "On 20 April 2017, a senior official of the PMO came to see me at my house. He said that the Prime Minister wanted me to go to Pakistan to meet Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif". (page 314) Eventually, Lambah did not go but a "leading Indian businessman" went, according to press reports.

It was the Pulwama terrorist attack of February 2019 which changed Modi's position finally.

He ordered the Balakot air strikes. This was an indication to Pakistan and the world that India would take military action against unacceptable Pakistani terrorist attacks. Along with the air strike, India enunciated a doctrine of pre-emption which needs to be reiterated from time to time but is not.

The constitutional changes in J&K in August 2019 caused Pakistan to go irrational. It broke off ties and the rupture in the relationship has continued. Even then, perhaps as claimed by some Gulf countries diplomats, India and Pakistan entered into a ceasefire in February 2021 along the LOC and the International Border in the UT of J&K with the facilitation of some Gulf country leaders. That has largely held.

Even as Modi's initial instinct was to pursue the policies of his predecessors, the record shows that Modi has changed the dynamics of the India-Pakistan relationship in the context of terrorism. Its test may come if Asim Munir the new Pakistani Army Chief decides as some of his predecessors have done—to act irrationally. (Courtesy: *The Quint*)



Hawaii governor vows to block land grabs as fire-ravaged Maui rebuilds

LAHAINA, Aug 17: Hawaii's governor vowed to protect local landowners from being "victimized" by opportunistic buyers when Maui rebuilds from a deadly wildfire that incinerated a historic island community, as schools began reopening.

Gov. Josh Green said on Wednesday that he had instructed the state attorney general to work toward a moratorium on land transactions in Lahaina. He acknowledged the move will likely face legal challenges.

"My intention from start to finish is to make sure that no one is victimized from a land grab," Green said at a news conference. "People are right now traumatized. Please do not approach them with an offer to buy their land. Do not approach their families saying they'll be much better off if they make a deal. Because we're not going to allow it."

Also Wednesday, the number of dead reached 111, and Maui police said nine victims had been identified, and the families of five had been notified. A mobile morgue unit with additional coroners arrived on Tuesday to help process and identify remains.

Since flames consumed much of Lahaina about a week ago, locals have feared that a rebuilt town could be even more oriented toward wealthy visitors, Lahaina native Richy Palalay said Saturday at a shelter for evacuees.

Hotels and condos "that we can't afford to live in — that's what we're afraid of," he said.

Many in Lahaina were struggling to afford life in Hawaii before the fire. Statewide, a typical starter home costs over \$1 million, while the average renter pays 42% of their income for housing, according to a Forbes Housing analysis, the highest ratio in the country by a wide margin.



The 2020 census found more native Hawaiians living on the mainland than the islands for the first time in history, driven in part by a search for cheaper housing. Green pledged to announce details of the moratorium by Friday. He added that he also wants to see a long-term moratorium on sales of land that won't "benefit local people."

Green made affordable housing a priority when he entered office in January, appointing a czar for the issue and seeking \$1 billion for housing programs. Since the fires, he's also suggested acquiring land in Lahaina for the state to build workforce housing as well as a memorial.

Meanwhile, signs of recovery emerged as public schools across Maui reopened, welcoming displaced students from Lahaina, and traffic resumed on a major road.

Sacred Hearts School in Lahaina was destroyed, and Principal Tonata Lolesio said lessons would resume in the coming weeks at another Catholic school. She said it was important for students to be with their friends, teachers and books, and not constantly thinking about the tragedy. "I'm hoping to at least try to get some normalcy or get them in a room where they can continue to learn or just be in another environment where they can take their minds off of that," she said. At least three surviving schools in Lahaina were still being assessed after sustaining wind damage, Hawaii Department of Education Superintendent Keith Hayashi said.

"There's still a lot of work to do,

but overall the campuses and classrooms are in good condition structurally, which is encouraging," Hayashi said in a video update. "We know the recovery effort is still in the early stages, and we continue to grieve the many lives lost." The Federal Emergency Management Agency opened its first disaster recovery center on Maui, "an important first step" toward helping residents get information about assistance, FEMA administrator Deanne Criswell said Wednesday. They also can go there for updates on aid applications. Criswell said she would accompany President Joe Biden on Monday when he visits to survey the damage and "bring hope."

At Wednesday's news conference, the head of the Maui Emergency Management Agency defended not sounding sirens during the fire. Hawaii has what it touts as the largest system of outdoor alert sirens in the world, created after a 1946 tsunami that killed more than 150 on the Big Island. "We were afraid that people would have gone mauka," said agency administrator Herman Andaya, using a navigational term that can mean toward the mountains or inland in Hawaiian. "If that was the case, then they would have gone into the fire." There are no sirens in the mountains, where the fire was spreading downhill, he said. Avery Dagupion, whose family's home was destroyed, said he's angry that residents weren't given earlier warning to get out and that officials prematurely suggested danger had passed. (AP)

Pakistan's caretaker PM Kakar assures US of 'free and fair election process'

ISLAMABAD, Aug 17: Pakistan's caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar has assured the US of "a free and fair election process" in the country, days after the little-known politician from Balochistan province assumed office.

Pakistan is likely to have general elections in the coming months with the National Assembly's term ending on August 12.

Taking to X, formerly Twitter, on late Wednesday, Kakar said, "The interim government will be assiduously working to facilitate a free and fair election process in Pakistan according to the Constitution."

His tweet came in response to a congratulatory tweet by US Secretary of State Antony Blinken after Kakar, a first-time Senator, was appointed as Pakistan's caretaker Prime Minister on August 12.

Congratulating Kakar for becoming Pakistan's interim prime minister, Blinken tweeted, "As Pakistan prepares for free and fair elections, in accordance with its constitution and the rights to freedom of speech and assembly, we will continue to advance our shared commitment to economic prosperity."

Kakar in his response also said Pakistan places importance on its partnership with the US and deeply values the shared commitment to economic prosperity, democracy and stability in the region.

Blinken has recently been quite active in commenting on the developments in Pakistan.

Previously also he issued a statement after cash-strapped Pakistan managed to secure a standby agreement with the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

"We stand by the Pakistani people



during these hard times and welcome the International Monetary Fund's approval of a program to support Pakistan. We urge Pakistan to continue working with @IMFNews toward macroeconomic reforms and sustainable economic recovery," Blinken tweeted after the Washington-based global lender agreed to give a USD 3 billion bailout to Pakistan on June 29.

Earlier this week, the US said it would work with the interim administration led by Kakar and his team as they prepare to hold elections in Pakistan.

"We are aware that the Pakistan National Assembly and government have been dissolved and note the announcement of Senator Anwar-ul-Haq Kakar, and he has been named the caretaker prime minister, and we look forward to working with the interim prime minister and his team as they prepare to hold elections," State Department's principal deputy spokesperson Vedant Patel said.

"We, of course, will continue to partner with Pakistan on areas of mutual interest, including our interest on Pakistan's economic stability, prosperity, and security, and the conduct of free and fair elections and the respect for democracy and the rule of law," Patel said on Tuesday.

Former prime minister Imran Khan, who is currently serving a three-year jail term in a corruption case, has been alleging the US of hatching a conspiracy to topple his government.

Khan was ousted from power in April last year after losing a no-confidence vote in his leadership. He alleged that the US targeted him because of his independent foreign policy decisions on Russia, China and Afghanistan. The US has repeatedly dismissed his allegations. (PTI)

Plea negotiations could mean no 9/11 defendants face the death penalty, the US tells families



WASHINGTON, Aug 17: The suspected architect of the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks and his fellow defendants may never face the death penalty under plea agreements now under consideration to bring an end to their more than decade long prosecution, the Pentagon and FBI have advised families of some of the thousands killed.

The notice, made in a letter that was sent to several of the families and obtained by The Associated Press, comes 1 1/2 years after military prosecutors and defense lawyers began exploring a negotiated resolution to the case. The prosecution of Khalid Sheikh Mohammed and four others held at the U.S. detention center in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, has been troubled by repeated delays and legal disputes, especially over the legal ramifications of the interrogation under torture that the men initially underwent while in CIA custody. No trial date has been set.

"The Office of the Chief Prosecutor has been negotiating and is considering entering into pre-trial agreements," or PTAs, the letter said. It told the families that while no plea agreement "has been finalized, and may never be finalized, it is possible that a PTA in this case would remove the possibility of the death penalty."

The letter, dated Aug. 1, was received by at least some of the family members only this week. It asks them to respond by Monday to the FBI's victim services division with any comments or questions about the possibility of such a plea agreement. The FBI had no comment Wednesday on the letter. On Sept. 11, 2001, conspirators from the al-Qaida militant group seized control of jets to use them as passenger-filled missiles, hitting New York's World Trade Center and the Pentagon near Washington. A fourth plane was headed for Washington but crashed in Pennsylvania after crew members and passengers tried to storm the cockpit.

It was Mohammed who presented the very idea of such an attack on the United States to al-Qaida leader Osama bin Laden, and who received authorization from bin Laden to craft what became the 9/11 attacks, the United States' 9/11 Commission concluded. The four other defendants are alleged to have supported the hijackers in various ways.

The attacks led to the U.S. "war on terror," which included U.S. invasions and prolonged wars in Afghanistan, where al-Qaida was based, and in Iraq, which had no connection with the attacks.

Jim Riches, who lost his firefighter son Jimmy in 9/11, went to Guantanamo for pretrial hearings in 2009. He remains deeply frustrated that the case remains unresolved 14 years later. (AP)

Death toll rises to 27 as Dominican firefighters find more bodies

SANTO DOMINGO, Aug 17: The death toll from this week's powerful explosion in the Dominican Republic rose to 27 on Wednesday as firefighters continued efforts to extinguish the persistent fire set off by the blast, the national emergency director said.

Juan Manuel Méndez, director of the Centre of Emergency Operations, also said there were no longer any people believed missing. Earlier, authorities cited 10 missing but said that would change as forensic officials identified bodies found by search teams. Firefighters still have not been able to fully put out the fires in a building where the explosion occurred Monday at a bakery in the city of San Cristobal, which lies just west of the capital of Santo Domingo.

Anguished friends and family

have been pacing outside hospitals and morgues in anger and frustration, saying no one has been providing them information.

Meanwhile, authorities are probing what might have caused the explosion, vowing to crack down on any business that might not have been following regulations.

Itso Bisonó, minister of industry and commerce, told reporters that officials already have determined there were no tanks of any type in the area, adding that he is waiting on authorities to investigate what happened. "It was of great magnitude," he said of the explosion.

Bisonó spoke inside a cathedral in San Cristobal that held a service Wednesday for those who died, with mourners dressed largely in white filling the building to standing room only. (AP)

China's Xi calls for patience as Communist Party tries to reverse economic slump

BEIJING, Aug 17 (AP): Chinese leader Xi Jinping has called for patience in a speech released as the ruling Communist Party tries to reverse a deepening economic slump and said Western countries are "increasingly in trouble" because of their materialism and "spiritual poverty."

Xi's speech was published by Qiushi, the party's top theoretical journal, hours after data on Tuesday showed consumer and factory activity weakened further in July despite official promises to support struggling entrepreneurs. The government skipped giving an update on a politically sensitive spike in unemployment among young people.

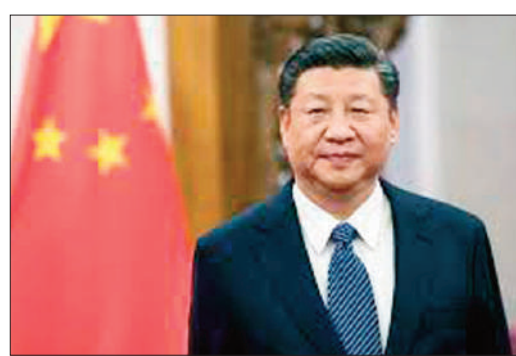
Xi, the country's most powerful leader in decades, called for China to "build a socialist ideology with strong cohesion" and to focus on long-term goals of improving education, health care and food supplies for China's 1.4 billion people instead of only pursuing short-term material wealth.

Since taking power in 2012, Xi has called for restoring the ruling party's role as an economic and social leader and has tightened control over business and society since taking power in 2012.

Some changes come at a rising cost as successful Chinese companies are pressured to divert money into political initiatives including processor chip development. The party tightened control over tech industries by launching data security and anti-monopoly crackdowns that wiped out billions of dollars of their stock market value.

"We must maintain historic patience and insist on making steady, step-by-step progress," Xi said in the speech. Qiushi said it was delivered in February in the southwestern city of Chongqing. It is common for Qiushi journal to publish speeches months after they are delivered.

Economic growth slid to 0.8 per cent in the three months ending in June compared with the previous month, down from 2.2 per cent in January-March.



That is equivalent to a 3.2 per cent annual rate, which would be among China's weakest in decades.

A survey in June found unemployment among urban workers aged 16 to 24 spiked to a record 21.3 per cent. The statistics bureau said this week it would withhold updates while it refined its measurement.

The government also has expanded anti-spying rules and tightened controls on information, leaving foreign and private companies uncertain about what activities might be allowed.

Xi stressed "common prosperity," a 1950s party slogan he has revived. He called for narrowing China's yawning wealth gap between a tiny elite and the poor majority and to "regulate the healthy development of capital" but announced no new initiatives.

"Common prosperity for all people" is an "essential feature of Chinese-style modernisation and distinguishes it from Western modernisation," Xi said.

Western-style modernisation "pursues the maximisation of capital interests instead of serving the interests of the vast majority of people," Xi said.

"Today, Western countries are increasingly in trouble," Xi said. "They cannot curb the greedy nature of capital and cannot solve chronic diseases such as materialism and spiritual poverty."

Five Indian youths named among 2023 International Young Eco-Hero award winners

WASHINGTON, Aug 17: Five youths from India have been named among 17 teen environmental activists from across the globe to receive the 2023 International Young Eco-Hero Award who have taken initiatives to tackle the world's most pressing environmental challenges.

The young eco-warriors who were recognised for their efforts by the US-based non-profit organisation, "Action For Nature", are Eihsha Dixit from Meerut, Manya Harsha from Bengaluru, Nirvaan Somany and Mannat Kaur from New Delhi and Karnav Rastogi from Mumbai.

The International Young Eco-Hero Awards programme recognises and encourages children and teens from ages 8 to 16 who have taken action towards solving the most critical environmental issues.

The awardees are eco-conscious youth who took the crucial steps to solve tough environmental problems. Winners of the International Young Eco-Hero Award are selected by a panel of independent judges, including experts in environmental science, biology, and education. For the past 20 years, "Action For Nature" has recognised 339 Eco-Heroes from 27 countries and 32 US states, a media release on Tuesday said.

All of this year's young climate champions are proving one thing loud and clear: the next generation

of leaders has arrived, and they're unleashing their power on a global scale to tackle the climate crisis head-on," said Beryl Kay, president of Action for Nature.

"The incredible accomplishments of this year's winners are more than just isolated projects — they're changing lives and transforming communities for the better," he said. Dixit, who won first place in this year's competition has been growing saplings to protect the environment since she was 4.

Through the Green Eihsha Smile Foundation, she and a group of volunteers have planted over 20,000 saplings, creating mini forests, parks, and green belts in her Indian city, providing shade and cleaner air. Dixit also established a plant bank at her home, using plants donated by people who can no longer care for them.

These plants are used to obtain seedlings and seeds, and other people may take these plants free of charge. "Age doesn't matter," said Dixit. "If the work is done with dedication and sincerity, then the biggest goal can be achieved," she said. Manya Harsha who won second place in the 8-12 year-old category has embarked on a mission to raise awareness about environmental issues and climate action.

Through her books, blog, and YouTube channel, "The Little Environmentalist", she aims to in-



spire youth to take action and become environmentally conscious. Manya engages in various activities such as walkathons, planting saplings, distributing seed balls, and organizing clean-up drives to make a positive impact on the environment. With over 5,000 sustainable bags distributed, 3,500 saplings planted, and 3,000 seed bombs thrown, she continues to work tirelessly to create a better future for the coming generations and to protect the earth for all.

"Don't wait for a superhero to lead the march," said Manya Harsha. "Be one! Today's children are tomorrow's future," said Manya.

Nirvaan Somany, who took second place in the 13-16 year-old category is the founder of "Project Jeans" to tackle the environmental

impact of the fashion industry, specifically the waste caused by discarded denim, while also addressing the needs of the underprivileged. He repurposes used jeans into washable and insulating sleeping bags for the homeless, reducing landfill waste and providing better protection from harsh weather conditions.

With 6,000 pairs of jeans collected and 800 sleeping bags distributed to date, Nirvaan's initiative has made a positive impact on both the environment and the lives of those in need.

"Mindless consumerism without consideration of the environmental impact is a huge problem with long-lasting ramifications," said Nirvaan. "Most people only think of financial cost when making pur-

chasing decisions, and ignore the additional hidden costs, often at the expense of the earth's resources," he said.

Mannat Kaur won third place in the 13-16 year-old category. Her project aims to address water scarcity and carbon emissions associated with freshwater supply and wastewater treatment.

She has designed a system to collect, filter, and reuse greywater from households for non-potable purposes, thus conserving precious drinking water. The impact of her invention goes beyond individual households, and could potentially save thousands of litres of fresh water daily and reduce operational and infrastructure costs for the city's sewage treatment.

"India is facing an acute water crisis. We must reduce, recycle, and reuse potable water however we can," said Mannat. Karnav Rastogi, 13, who received an honourable mention in this year's competition is committed to raising awareness about and taking action to reduce plastic waste and combat climate change. He wrote two books, "Kartik, Daddy & Plastic: A Journey About Beating Plastic Pollution" and "Kartik, Mixie & Monster: A Journey About Ocean Pollution," to educate young people about the impact of plastic pollution and climate change, providing solutions to tackle these issues. (PTI)

10 tribal MLAs in Manipur to boycott state Assembly session due to security concern

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Aug 17: As many as 10 tribal MLAs, who have been demanding separate administrations for tribals in Manipur, will boycott the state Assembly session scheduled to begin from August 21 due to security reasons, sources said.

Tribal ministers, MLAs, as well as the general public, are scared of visiting the Meitei-dominated state capital of Imphal, sources said.

"None of the Ministers, MLAs and leaders belonging to the Kuki, Zomi and other tribal communities are willing to visit Imphal due to the security reasons. Hence they will boycott the session," Sources further said. The crucial upcoming session, called after the demands of various quarters, including the opposition Congress, is likely to discuss the ethnic violence which broke out on May 3 and has so far killed over 160 people, injured more than 600 others, and destroyed a massive number of properties, including thousands of houses. The ITLF, one of the leading and influential tribal body Manipur, boycotting of the Assembly session is also in solidarity to the



killings and attacks on the tribals. Since May 12, the 10 MLAs, including seven from the state's ruling BJP, have been demanding a separate administration for the tribals.

Union home minister Amit Shah, Chief Minister N Biren Singh, BJP, Meitei body Coordinating Committee on Manipur Integrity (COMI), and many other organisations strongly opposed the separate administration demand.

The MLAs on Wednesday sent a memorandum to Prime Minister Narendra Modi demanding creation of the Posts of chief secretary and director general of police or equivalent posts for the five hill districts of Churachandpur, Kangpokpi,

Chandel, Tengnoupal and Pherzawl. They also demanded the sanction of Rs 500 crore from the PM's Relief Fund for proper rehabilitation of the Zomi-Kuki people.

The MLAs alleged that Imphal has become a valley of death and destruction for the Kuki-Zomi people, no one dares to go back to the city, where important offices, including the state secretariat and other important government offices and institutions are located.

"Even members of the state Assembly were not spared. MLA Vungzagin Valte and his driver were waylaid while he was returning from a meeting from the chief minister's Bungalow in May. His

driver was beaten to death, and the MLA was tortured and beaten and left for dead. The MLA, however, was rescued by the security forces and was rushed to New Delhi, where he is slowly recovering, but left incapacitated both physically and mentally," the memorandum said. It said that the houses of two other cabinet ministers, Letpao Haokip and Nemcha Kipgen, were burnt to ashes during the riot.

The MLAs further claimed that even the IAS and IPS officers belonging to the Kuki-Zomi tribes have been unable to function and discharge their duties.

Meanwhile, 40 MLAs of the ruling Manipur coalition had also signed a joint letter to the Prime Minister demanding complete disarmament, withdrawal of the Suspension of Operation (SoO) agreement with surrendered militant groups, and withdrawal of the Assam Rifles from the state. Strongly opposing the separate administration demand, they alleged that the Assam Rifles was biased and they have been sheltering militants, and also using excessive force in dealing with Meitei women protesters.

NSCN (IM) criticises Naga MLAs of Manipur who wrote to PM along with Meitei legislators

DIMAPUR, Aug 17: The NSCN (IM) criticised the eight Naga MLAs of Manipur who joined 32 Meitei legislators to write to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, stating that their memorandum has nothing to do with the political aspirations of the Naga people.

Forty MLAs from violence-hit Manipur wrote to PM Modi demanding the withdrawal of the Suspension of Operations (SoO) Agreement with Kuki militant groups and implementation of NRC in the state, besides maintaining that a 'separate administration' sought by Kuki groups was absolutely unacceptable under any circumstances.

"In what can be termed as treachery on 'treacherous ground', the eight Naga MLAs of Manipur have proved themselves as confused lot of people not knowing who they are and who they represent



sent in the Manipur Legislative Assembly," said a statement issued by the NSCN(IM) here on Wednesday.

The Nagas of Manipur were caught off-guard when these "spineless MLAs" joined hands with 32 Meitei legislators to submit a representation to the prime minister on the issue that has nothing to do with the political as-

plications of the Naga people, it said.

"Their representation to the Prime Minister is in totality against the voice of the Naga people demanding early implementation of Framework Agreement of 3rd August, 2015 to meet the political right and legitimate aspiration of Naga people," the statement said. (PTI)

Yechury-led CPI-M delegation to visit Manipur from August 18-20

NEW DELHI, Aug 17: A four-member delegation headed by CPI(M) general secretary Sitaram Yechury will be visiting restive Manipur from August 18 to 20, the party said in a statement.

Besides Yechury, the delegation will also comprise Central Committee members Jitendra Chaudhury (secretary, Tripura State Committee), Suprakash Talukdar (secretary, Assam State Committee) and Deblina Hembram.

Apart from strife-torn areas, the delegation will also visit relief camps at Churachandpur, Moirang and Imphal. The delegation will also meet Governor Anusuiya Uikey in Imphal and civil society organisations, the statement said.

In Manipur, ethnic clashes broke out on May 3 after a 'Tribal Solidarity March' was organised in the hill districts to protest against the Meitei community's demand for Scheduled Tribe (ST) status. (PTI)

Mizoram moving ahead with responsible tourism policy: Minister

AIZAWL, Aug 17: Mizoram is making headway with a responsible tourism policy that came into force from August 2020, state sports minister Robert Romawia Royle said.

The policy, which was one of the political planks of the ruling Mizo National Front (MNF) in 2018, envisages a sustainable development strategy, coordination, strengthening institutional framework and skill development, he said.

The policy also focuses on making tourism a tool for development of villages and local communities, eradicating poverty and providing livelihood for the local population while upholding the principles of economic, social and environmental responsibilities, he said.

The Mizo Registration of Tourist Trade Act 2020 was also enacted to introduce proper regulatory framework for suitable development of the tourism sector, he said. The Act provides for registration of tourism service providers within the state.

At present there are 70 registered hotels, 63 homestays, 10 tour operators, 40 travel agents, 657 registered restaurants and tea stalls and 22 catering units in the state, he said.



According to the minister, the state tourism department generated a revenue of ₹ 297.67 lakh during 2022-23 fiscal, nearly 50 per cent more than what it earned in the preceding fiscal. The tourism department's revenue in 2021-22 was ₹ 149.79 lakh, while it was ₹ 38.39 lakh in 2020-21 and ₹ 305.70 lakh in 2019-20.

Although the tourist footfall was minimal during the Covid pandemic, it rose from 20,564 in 2020-21 to 1.32 lakh in 2021-22 and further to 2.22 lakh in 2022-23, he said.

At present, there are 69 operational tourist facilities in the state developed by the tourism department.

Of these, 35 facilities are operated and managed by the department directly and the remaining are outsourced to private parties.

Royle said funds amounting to ₹ 12,834.57 lakh are being sanctioned under various schemes for development of tourism infrastructures.

The tourism department also organised and hosted several events from 2019, which included international tourism mart for the northeastern states (2022), Anthurium festival (2022) and Zo Kutpui or Zo grand festival in Tripura and Manipur's Churachandpur in 2020.

Royle said the state government will construct a state institute of hotel management (SIHM) in Aizawl, which will offer degree-level courses and food craft courses.

The Union ministry of tourism has provided financial assistance amounting to ₹ 10 crore for the project, he said.

He said ₹ 1,000 crore has been allotted for development of tourism in the state under the externally aided project. The minister expressed hope that the project will completely change the tourism scenario of the state. (PTI)

Landslides block highway leaving 500 trucks stranded in Manipur

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Aug 17: Heavy rains led massive landslides in Manipur's Noney district blocked the Imphal-Silchar highway due to which at least 500 goods vehicles have been stranded, officials said on Thursday, sources said.

The landslides took place on the National Highway 37 between Irang and Awangkhum part 2, Khongsang and Awangkhum, and Rangkhui village on Wednesday, they said.

Work is underway to clear the road, and re-start movement of traffic, officials said.

Incessant rains over the last few days triggered the landslides, they said.

At least 500 goods vehicles are stranded in different parts of the highway due to the landslides, sources said.

In June last year, a massive landslide hit a railway construction site in the district, killing at least 61 people. The landslide happened at Tupul railway yard construction site of the Jiribam-Imphal railway line on June 30.

The supply of essential items is feared to be affected due to the landslides in the violence-hit state.

West Khasi Hills reports 2nd highest POCOS cases in Meghalaya

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Aug 17: The West Khasi Hills reported 2nd highest POCOS cases in Meghalaya. This has come to light when the delegation from the Meghalaya Legislative Assembly's Committee on Women Empowerment on August 17 visited Nongstoin (WKHD) to assess the state of POCOS cases and crime against women and children in the area.

The delegation—led by Santa Merry Shylla, MLA—met with district representatives and stated that the committee discovered several examples of POCOS and criminality against women and children in WKHD.

Some of these cases have been resolved, while others are still being investigated or are about to go to trial. The committee has directed government lawyers and the police department to expedite the

cases and ensure that the victims receive justice.

The committee also discovered that WKHD is Meghalaya's second most populous district in terms of POCOS cases. The team asked district officials for clarification on the latest POCOS case in Umsaw village.

The committee has stated that it will investigate these instances and guarantee that such incidents do not occur again. Meanwhile, the committee has instructed the police department, village dorbar, and schools to launch public awareness campaigns concerning POCOS and crime against women and children.

Members of the committee, including Miani D. Shira, Gabriel Wahlang, Adelbert Nongrum, Damanbait Lamare, Marathong Sangma, and Beyondstar Kurbah, also attended the meeting.

CPI(M) delegation to visit Manipur from today

IMPHAL, Aug 17: A four-member delegation of the CPI (M), led by party general secretary Sitaram Yechury, will visit the ethnic strife-torn Manipur for two days from Friday.

Besides Yechury, the delegation will also have the party's Central Committee members Jitendra Chaudhury, Suprakash Talukdar and Deblina Hembram, CPI (M) said in a statement on Thursday.

"Apart from the strife-torn areas, the delegation will also visit relief camps at Churachandpur, Moirang and Imphal. The delegation will also meet Governor Anusuiya Uikey and various other civil society organisations," it said.

A group of MPs of the opposition bloc India visited Manipur for two days from July 29. Congress leader Rahul Gandhi also visited the northeastern state in June.

Union Home Minister Amit Shah had visited Manipur in May. (PTI)

Tipra Motha, Congress not to field candidates in Tripura byelections

AGARTALA, Aug 17: Tipra Motha and Congress will not field candidates in the byelection to two assembly constituencies in Tripura.

Leader of Opposition in Tripura Assembly Animesh Debbarma of Tipra Motha said his party will not field any candidate in the byelection to the Dhanpur and Boxanagar Assembly constituencies.

"Contesting elections involves a lot of resources, money, manpower, time, etc. Besides, it appears the ruling party gets an advantage if votes are divided among the opposition parties," he told PTI.

Debbarma claimed that Tipra Motha is neither 'Lal Motha' nor an ally of the BJP. The party has its own ideology and commitment towards the people, he said. (PTI)

Kohima to set up ward committees to manage traffic

HT Correspondent

DIMAPUR, Aug 17: The Regional Transport Authority (RTA) Kohima has decided to set up ward parking committees, as a pilot project, in five wards in the state capital Kohima.

This was decided at a meeting chaired by Kohima deputy commissioner Shanavas C at the DC's conference hall on Thursday.

Kohima Sadar SDO (C) has been designated as the convener of the parking committees while DSP (Traffic), RTA representatives, Kohima Municipal Council officials and ward chairmen are members. The committees have been tasked to manage traffic in these wards more effectively.

Deliberating on the pressing concern of escalating traffic congestion and the challenges faced by the public in the state capital, the meeting also proposed immediate utilisation of the Kohima Smart City Development Ltd. (KSCDL) multi-level parking facilities on an experimental basis to alleviate traffic congestion.

A committee led by Kohima additional SP, along with members from relevant departments, will be formed to explore innovative methods for operating

two multi-level car parking facilities.

The KSCDL has been asked to install high-resolution CCTV cameras at key entry and exit points around Kohima to facilitate proper parking management. The meeting also discussed feeder passenger vehicle services to ISBT, regional taxi parking, identification of a "green channel" for dedicated city bus services for students and office workers and review and regulation of traffic management outside Oking Hospital and Jail Colony.

During a PowerPoint presentation on Kohima's current traffic scenario by DSP (Traffic), factors contributing to traffic issues, including population density, non-compliance with traffic rules and VIP motorcades, were highlighted. With approximately 1,95,284 vehicles plying daily in Kohima, the traffic management remains a significant challenge.

The meeting further discussed strategies to ease traffic congestion during peak hours, construction of a veterinary centre, upgrading of educational institutions and various infrastructure projects aimed at improving the overall living conditions of the city dwellers.



Meghalaya CM inaugurates 'Travellers Nest'

SHILLONG, Aug 17: Meghalaya chief minister Conrad K Sangma stressed the importance of community engagement in driving the state's economic model.

He said this while inaugurating the "The Travellers Nest" at Kyiem village in Mawphlang in East Khasi Hills close to the famed sacred forests of the Khasis on Thursday.

"Our strength lies in community involvement, which we are leveraging for our economic model," he said.

Highlighting the collective responsibility of various stakeholders, including the government, community, and public at large, he said, "Meghalaya's progress cannot be achieved in isolation. Every stakeholder has a role to play, and identifying these roles while keeping the ultimate goal in mind is crucial".

He said the government is working to promote the strengths of Meghalaya as a shining example of sustainable economic growth driven by community strengths.

"We are building an economy and livelihood based on our state's strengths. This model is one we wish to showcase to the world.", the CM



said. The chief minister expressed his optimism about the role of initiatives like "The Travellers Nest".

The Travellers Nest, a prefab structure, has five cottages and a restaurant to cater to the need of visitors and is located 28km south of the state

capital. "Tourism is a key sector for us. Our goal is to create close to one lakh job opportunities in the sector through various interventions by stakeholders," he added.

Sangma said under the Chief Minister's Elevate programme, the government is offering

substantial subsidies ranging from 30 per cent to 75 per cent for projects initiated by different entrepreneurs, self-help groups, and other entities.

"The goal of the programme is to invigorate the economy through diverse initiatives, from cinema halls to health clubs and tourism projects", he added.

He also informed the gathering of the significance of improved road infrastructure in the state. He said that the ongoing improvement and construction of the road from Mawphlang to Weilo is a testimony of the government's commitment to prioritising road connectivity.

He expressed confidence that Meghalaya's relentless efforts would result in a prosperous and sustainable future.

"We are on a path to success, and our progress is underpinned by community participation and collaboration. Together, we are shaping a brighter tomorrow for Meghalaya," he exhorted.

During the programme, the CM also flagged off eight Toyota tourist vehicles released under the Prime Tourism Vehicles scheme. (PTI)

MP Konyak urges eastern Nagaland women to embrace unity

HT Correspondent

DIMAPUR, Aug 17: Rajya Sabha MP and vice chairperson S Phangnong Konyak urged the women of eastern Nagaland to embrace unity, forgiveness and solidarity among the "seven sisters" of the eastern region of the state.

Addressing the inaugural session of the 5th general conference of the Eastern Nagaland Women's Organisation (ENWO) in Longkhim town on Thursday, Konyak emphasised the paramount importance of peace and exhorted the women to exemplify the role of peacemakers in the eastern region.

She underlined the region's unique blend of developmental challenges and cultural richness, emphasising the need to preserve the heritage and values embedded within the tradition.

She also stressed the significance of women's participation in politics as a means to shape policies and foster comprehensive development.

During the event, Konyak inaugurated an exhibition showcasing the work of ENWO units and also released the ENWO magazine.

RAILWAY NOTIFICATION NO. 01/2023 (Para-Medical)

"WALK IN" INTERVIEW FOR RE-ENGAGEMENT OF RETIRED STAFF ON MONTHLY REMUNERATION BASIS IN EXISTENCE OF SERVICES IN HIGHER MEDICAL DEPARTMENT, N.F. RAILWAY

It has been decided to fill up following vacancies by re-engagement of Para-medical staff, who have retired from Railway service from Nursing, Radiographer, Laboratory Assistant and ECG Technician Cadre.

DATE OF WALK-IN INTERVIEW: 28-08-2023 (Monday), Time: 10.00 hrs.

Venue: General Manager (P)/ Conference Hall/Maligaon, (N.B.: The Location is liable to be changed as per Administrative Need); SN.01: Category: Nursing Superintendent in level-07, No of post to be filled up: 13; SN.02: Category: Radiographer in level-05, No of post to be filled up: 01; SN.03: Category: Laboratory Assistant Gr-III in level-03, No of post to be filled up: 02; SN.04: Category: ECG Technician in level-04, No of post to be filled up: 01 (Total = 17); (1) The re-engagement shall be strictly up to the age of 65 years (OR) till 30-06-2024 (OR) till the availability of regular candidates, whichever is earlier. Senior-most retired re-engaged employees in terms of age will be disengaged first on joining of regular candidates. (2) The maximum upper age limit for the Re-engagement of retired staff is 65 years. The service of re-engaged employee will terminate automatically on completion of 65 years of age. (3) The monthly remuneration for re-engaged retired employee is fixed as monthly remuneration determined by reducing pension from his/her last pay drawn (i.e. Basic Pay+DA). The re-engaged retired employees are not entitled for any other benefit or facilities except the monthly remuneration. No increment, DA & HRA shall be allowed during the term of contract.

The willing retired staff should report for the "WALK-IN" interview to the office of the General Manager (P)/ Conference Hall/Maligaon, Guwahati-11 on 28-08-2023 at 10.00 hours, with copies of all certificates/ testimonials in ORIGINAL and attested true copies of Service Certificate, Pensioner Identity Card & Pension Payment Order, Bank Pass Book (1st Page) indicating A/C No., IFSC Code, PAN Card, Aadhar Card and also three passport size photographs. In event of any wrong information/ fake academic certifications/testimonials etc. The candidates liable to be taken up under Govt. of India's law, in force. For details please refer N.F. Railway's website: www.nfr.indianrailways.gov.in

General Manager (P), Maligaon

NORTHEAST FRONTIER RAILWAY

"SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE"

Education should be beacon of progress, not political pawn: Pradhan on Karnataka scrapping NEP

NEW DELHI, Aug 17: Union education minister Dharmendra Pradhan on Thursday condemned Karnataka government's decision to scrap National Education Policy (NEP) as "politically-motivated" and said education should be a beacon of progress and not a political pawn.

"Disappointed to learn about Karnataka CM's politically-motivated decision to discontinue the National Education Policy 2020. Our education system needs evolution, not regression. NEP was a result of years of consultations, reflecting aspirations of all. This decision reveals the anti-reform, anti-Bharatiya Bhasha and anti-Karnataka character of @INCIndia."

"Karnataka deserves leadership that values progress and inclusivity and not petty politics. Let's put students first and stop the petty politics! @siddaramaiah." Pradhan wrote on X (formerly Twitter).

Karnataka chief minister Siddaramaiah on Monday said the NEP will be scrapped in the state from the next academic year. He said his government by scrapping the NEP, which was brought in by the previous BJP government, will try to provide education in accordance with the Constitution.

"NEP was implemented in Karnataka, when it was not introduced in any other BJP-ruled states...I want to tell one thing, this year there was a bit of delay, from the next year onwards we will change the NEP and try to provide education in accordance with the Constitution, because BJP is anti-constitution and they believe in Manuwaad," Siddaramaiah said.

Speaking at the general body meeting of the Karnataka Pradesh Congress Committee here, he said NEP has to be scrapped after making necessary preparations, and as the academic year had begun by the time the election results were out and the government was formed, it has been continued this



year to avoid inconvenience to students in the middle of the year.

NEP has been opposed by students, parents, lecturers and teachers, he said, alleging the BJP has sacrificed the interest of students by implementing NEP in Karnataka even before other states implemented it. Karnataka became the first to adopt NEP in higher education, in August 2021. The Congress, then in opposition, had criticised the NEP, dubbing it the "Nagpur Education Policy aimed at propagating RSS agenda". RSS headquarters is situated in Nagpur.

The Congress, in its election manifesto, had promised to scrap the NEP, and during the recent budget, the CM had said it will be replaced by a state education policy. (PTI)

Not just Assembly polls, BRS should also sweep LS seats: K T Rama Rao

HYDERABAD, Aug 17: Ruling BRS Working President K T Rama Rao on Thursday said the party should sweep not just the coming Assembly polls in Telangana but also the Lok Sabha seats in the state, for the party to emerge as a strong force at the national level.

Addressing an event here, where a leader from Khammam district returned to the BRS fold from the Congress, he said the BRS would be in a decisive role in government formation at the Centre if the people of the state strongly willed in favour of it.

BRS President and Chief Minister K Chandrababoo Naidu said "is getting a lot of support in Mahabubnagar as the party is making efforts to expand its footprint in the neighbouring state," he said.

BRS should win 90-95 out of the total 119 seats in the Assembly polls for the party to build a strong foundation in national politics, he said. He also said that the BRS should win all the

17 Lok Sabha seats in the state.

Referring to Congress seeking one chance to rule the state, Rama Rao, son of Chief Minister Chandrababoo Naidu, said that the Congress was



given as many as 10-11 chances since independence but it failed to ensure basic facilities like uninterrupted supply of power and drinking water in the state.

It is now making tall promises such as a raise in social security pensions to Rs 4,000 per month, for the sake of power, he said.

He asserted that the BRS, after returning to power in the assembly polls scheduled to be held in a few months, would renovate the famous Lord Ram temple at Bhadrachalam near Khammam on a grand scale.

The BRS government has renovated the Lord Lakshmi Narasimha Swamy temple at Yadadri near Hyderabad in a splendid manner, he said.

It would also address the problem of floods in the Godavari river and Munneru rivulet in Bhadrachalam, he said.

He urged the gathering to think whether it is true or not to say that there is no house in Telangana that did not benefit from the BRS government's welfare schemes.

Is it not a fact that 70 lakh farmers are getting benefit under the 'Rythu Bandhu' investment support scheme, he asked.

Rama Rao also highlighted other welfare measures implemented by the BRS government in the state. (PTI)

RPF constable who killed senior, 3 passengers sacked; harassed Muslim man in 2017

MUMBAI, Aug 17: RPF constable Chetan Singh Chaudhary, who shot dead his senior and three passengers on board a moving train last month, has been dismissed from service and he was involved in at least three discipline-related incidents, including the harassment of a Muslim man in 2017, an official said on Thursday.

The order to sack Chaudhary was issued on Monday by Railway Protection Force (RPF) senior divisional security commissioner, the official said.

As per the official, Chaudhary was part of the force's dog squad in Madhya Pradesh's Ujjain in 2017 when he once brought a Muslim man to the RPF post and harassed him for no reason.

Superiors ordered an inquiry against Chaudhary over the harassment and action was taken against him as per disciplinary rules, he said.



During his posting in Gujarat, Chaudhary assaulted a colleague on one occasion. In another incident, he withdrew money using a co-worker's ATM card, the official said.

The decision to sack him was taken based on the train killing incident, he added.

Chaudhary (34) is accused of gunning

down his senior officer, Tikaram Meena, and three passengers when the Jaipur-Mumbai Central Superfast Express was near Palghar station on the outskirts of Mumbai in the early hours of July 31.

The three passengers, Abdul Kadar Mohamed Hussain Bhanpurwala, Sayyad Saifuddin and Asgar Abbas Shaikh, were travelling in different bogies of the train. Chaudhary was later arrested by the Government Railway Police (GRP). The motive behind the chilling crime is still not clear.

Chaudhary first shot dead RPF Assistant Sub-Inspector Meena and a passenger in B5 coach with his automatic service weapon. He then gunned down another passenger in the pantry car of the train and one more traveller in S6 coach, according to GRP.

Chaudhary is now in judicial custody, the official said. (PTI)

Have engaged best lawyers in SC to challenge Article 370 revocation: Omar Abdullah

SRINAGAR, Aug 17: The National Conference has engaged the best lawyers in the Supreme Court to challenge the revocation of Article 370, said party leader Omar Abdullah on Thursday and expressed hope the judges will be convinced by their arguments.

"We are fighting and we are there with a hope for justice. We have not left any stone unturned, we engaged the best lawyers and their performance was appreciated by all. The hearings are on and we hope the judges will be convinced by our arguments. It will go on and we are waiting," he told reporters here.

Addressing his party workers earlier at the National Conference (NC) headquarters Nawa-i-Subah, Abdullah said the party could not have done better than hiring Kapil Sibal and Gopal Subramaniam to fight the case in the Supreme Court. "We hired the best lawyers. Kapil Sibal and Gopal Subramaniam are two of the top five lawyers in the country... Win or loss is in the hands of God. A human being can only try and we did not leave any stone unturned. Now, we should pray to God to give us success," said the NC vice-president. Asked about the Jammu and Kashmir administration removing the name of NC founder Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah, popularly known as Sher-e-Kashmir, from the government buildings, including the convention centre on the banks of Dal Lake here, Abdullah said no one can erase his grandfather's name from the hearts of the people.

"You can remove his name from the buildings but not from the hearts (of the people). If you remove Sher-e-Kashmir's name from SKICC or cricket stadium or hospitals, it will make no difference. You cannot hide the truth. The CJI has renewed that truth before the people," he said. The former Jammu and Kashmir chief minister was referring to Chief Justice of India Justice D Y Chandrachud's remarks while hearing the petitions challenging the abrogation of Article 370 in the apex court.

"You remove the name, but tomorrow another government will come, it will bring it back. But remember, Sher-e-Kashmir's name will not be erased. People who are removing his name will leave from here and no one will remember them. Their name will not remain here, but Sher-e-Kashmir's name will remain etched in the hearts of the people forever," he added. Asked about Democratic Progressive Azad Party (DPAP) chief Ghulam Nabi Azad's statement that Muslims in Kashmir are mostly converts from Hinduism, Abdullah said: "I do not know in which context he said it or why or whom he wanted to make happy by saying so."

To a question about the administration bringing in another agency - TCS - for conducting recruitment exam for various posts advertised by the Jammu and Kashmir Service Selection Recruitment Board (JKSSRB), the former chief minister said the current government has "failed" to complete recruitments in Jammu and Kashmir.

"Whoever you got, failed. The inquiry on Apteck has not been completed, no list has been finalised. Now, you are bringing TCS into this. Was no list finalised before 2019? Were the recruitments not done in a transparent manner? Were people not recruited? Different governments did recruitments here. What is the reason that recruitment is not taking place in the governor's rule?" Abdullah asked.

"There was no need to get TCS. Make the JKSSRB stronger. Bring right people into it. When you do that, the process will become right," he added.

The Jammu and Kashmir administration cancelled the police sub-inspector recruitment process in July after allegations of irregularities in the conduct of the recruitment exams and handed over the case to the CBI. Similar allegations came to the fore in the conduct of the Fire and Emergency Services exams. Fingers were raised at Apteck -- the agency conducting the examination process. (PTI)

BJP announces 2 Rajasthan poll panels, Vasundhara Raje missing from both

JAIPUR, Aug 17: The BJP on Thursday announced two key election committees for the Congress-run Rajasthan, with former chief minister Vasundhara Raje not being made a member of any one of them.

The 21-member election management committee is headed by former MP Narayan Panchariya. Union minister Arjun Ram Meghwal will lead the election manifesto panel, called the Pradesh Sankalp Patra (manifesto) committee. The party is expected to announce a third committee - an election campaign committee - for the state in the coming weeks, before the year-end assembly polls.

When asked about Raje's non-inclusion in the poll panels, BJP state in-charge Arun Singh said she will campaign in the election.

"She is the national vice president of the party. She has a big role to play. She has been the chief minister

of the state twice. She will campaign in the election. We all respect her," he told reporters.

BJP's state election in-charge and Union minister Pralhad Joshi said both state and central leaders of the party will campaign for the crucial polls.

"Our strategy is ready. I have full confidence that people will give the mandate to the BJP, and we will get a historic victory," he said.

The election committees were formed by the party's national president J P Nadda.

The 21-member election management committee is headed by former MP Narayan Panchariya, while Union minister Arjun Ram Meghwal will lead the Pradesh Sankalp Patra (manifesto) committee.

The announcement was made by BJP state president C P Joshi and Arun Singh at the party office here.

Joshi said Union minister Meghwal will be the convener of the party's 'Pradesh Sankalp Patra Samiti'.

Rajya Sabha members Ghanshyam Tiwari and Kirori Lal Meena, national secretary Alka Singh Gurjar, former Assembly deputy speaker Rao Rajendra Singh, former Union minister Subhash Maharia, former state vice president Prabhu Lal Saini and Rakhi Rathore have been made co-convenors in the 25-member manifesto committee. In the election management committee headed by former MP Narayan Panchariya, former state general secretary Onkar Singh Lakhawat, party's national spokesperson and MP Rajyavardhan Singh Rathore, state general secretaries Bhajan Lal and Damodar Agarwal, former information commissioner C M Meena and Kanhaiya Lal Bairwal will be the co-convenors. (PTI)

Delhi HC questions DU's decision of admission to 5-yr law courses through CLAT, not CUET

NEW DELHI, Aug 17: The Delhi High Court on Thursday questioned the Delhi University's decision to admit students to the five-year integrated law course solely on the basis of the Common Law Admission Test (CLAT-UG), 2023.

The high court said when other central universities were taking admissions for the course on the basis of the Common University Entrance Test (CUET) UG 2023 introduced by the Ministry of Education (MoE), Delhi University was "not special".

"Under the National Education Policy, once the decision is taken by the Government of India, Ministry of Education that admissions are to be done in central universities only on the basis of CUET, then you are not special. Very sorry," a bench of Chief Justice Satish Chandra Sharma and Justice Sanjeev Narula said. The high court was hearing a petition challenging the decision of DU to grant admissions to the five-year integrated law course solely on the basis of CLAT-UG, 2023.

The bench granted time to the counsel for DU to seek further instructions in the matter and file its counter affidavit in response to the petition before the next date of hearing on August 25.



"It is made clear that in case no counter affidavit is filed before the next date of hearing, the matter will be heard on the question of grant of interim relief," the bench said.

It also granted time to the counsel for Centre to file its reply to the plea and seek instructions in the matter.

During the hearing, the counsel for DU submitted that the varsity has started the five-year integrated law course this year only and if a stay is granted on the operation of the August 4 notification, the whole academic year will be wasted. He said no admission is being taking place as of now and only the notification

has been issued and sought time to file a reply to the petition.

The DU's counsel stated that "the university will not issue any advertisement inviting applications for the five-year law course based on CLAT till the next date of hearing."

The petition sought that the admissions to the five-year integrated law course be done through the CUET-UG, 2023.

It said CUET-UG 2023 was introduced by the MoE for admission to all undergraduate programmes in central universities for the academic session 2023-24. Petitioner Prince Singh, a law student at Campus Law Centre in Delhi University, claimed that the university, while issuing the impugned notification, has imposed a "wholly unreasonable and arbitrary condition" that the admission to five-year integrated law course shall be solely based upon merit in the CLAT-UG 2023 result, which is violative of the right to equality under Article 14 and right to education under Article 21 of the Constitution.

The plea said the condition lacks any intelligible differentia and has no rational nexus with the object of admission to the five-year integrated law course at the Faculty of Law. (PTI)

Chennai-based Agnikul prepares for maiden sub-orbital flight of Agnibaan rocket

'This vehicle standing on the launch pad is a testament of everyone's hard work in the team'

NEW DELHI, Aug 17: After Skyroot Aerospace, Chennai-based Agnikul Cosmos is all set to carry out the sub-orbital test flight of its 3D-printed rocket Agnibaan SubOrbital Technological Demonstrator (SOTeD) from its launch pad at Sriharikota. The single-stage rocket powered by Agnilet semi-cryogenic engine was wheeled for integration with Agnibaan's launch pad at Sriharikota on Tuesday and carrying out mechanical and electrical interface checks. Agnibaan SOTeD is a single-stage launch vehicle driven by Agnikul's patented Agnilet engine - an entirely 3D-printed, single-piece, 6 kN semi-cryogenic engine, a company statement said. "Agnikul plans to complete its first flight in the coming few weeks," it said.

Agnibaan SOTeD was unveiled on August 15 at Agnikul's Mission Control Center (AMCC) at Sriharikota in the presence of officials from the Satish Dhawan Space Center Director A Rajarajan and officials from the Indian National Space Promotion and Authorization Center. Unlike traditional sounding rockets that launch from guide



rails, Agnibaan SOTeD will lift off vertically and follow a predetermined trajectory while performing a precisely orchestrated set of manoeuvres during flight, it said. "This suborbital mission serves as a validation of the success of Agnikul's proprietary autopilot, navigation, and guidance algorithms. It also serves as a crucial trial for gauging the launchpad's preparedness for more ambitious undertakings," Srinath Ravichandran, co-founder and Chief Executive Officer of Agnikul Cosmos said in a

statement. Last November, Agnikul inaugurated India's first private launchpad and mission control centre at Satish Dhawan Space Centre, which would serve as the base from which the start-up intends to execute its suborbital and orbital missions in the coming years.

"This vehicle standing on the launch pad is a testament of everyone's hard work in the team," said Moin SPM, co-founder and Chief Operating Officer of Agnikul. (PTI)

SP rebel Dara Singh Chauhan files nomination for Ghosi bypoll as BJP candidate

MAU (UP), Aug 17: Accompanied by Uttar Pradesh Deputy Chief Minister Brajesh Pathak, Samajwadi Party rebel and BJP candidate Dara Singh Chauhan filed his nomination papers for the bypoll to Ghosi Assembly seat here.

The September 5 bypoll is being seen as a straight contest between the ruling BJP and the Samajwadi Party (SP) as the Congress and the BSP have not announced their candidates for it. The counting of votes will take place on September 8.

Elected last year on an SP ticket, Chauhan quit the party and joined the BJP in July.

The Ghosi bypoll was necessitated following the resignation of Chauhan.

The SP has announced Sudhakar Singh, a Rajput, as its candidate for the seat.

After filing his nomination, Chauhan said the Ghosi bypoll will lay foundation for BJP's victory in 2024 Lok Sabha polls. "On September 8, it will be decided that all 80 Lok Sabha seats from UP will go to the BJP," Chauhan told reporters.

In Lucknow, SP chief Akhilesh Yadav claimed to win the Ghosi seat.

"The people are troubled by inflation and unemployment in the BJP government and they will give a befitting reply to the BJP in the Ghosi by-election," Yadav said.

The former chief minister said that though the government is "misusing" the state machinery to "influence" the bypoll, the SP is going to retain the seat with huge margin.

During the filing of nomination, Chauhan was also accompanied by state BJP chief Bhupendra Chaudhary, MP from neighbouring Aza-



mgarh Dinesh Lal Yadav, Power Minister A K Sharma, Transport Minister Dayashankar Singh, Suheldev Bharatiya Samaj Party (SBSP) chief Om Prakash Rajbhar, and Nirbal Indian Shoshit Hamara Aam Dal (NISHAD) party chief Sanjay Nishad.

Later, senior BJP leaders and alliance partners attended a public meeting at Bapu Inter College here.

Though the Ghosi bypoll outcome will have no major impact on the BJP's tally in the UP Legislative Assembly, the party will make all efforts to win the seat to assert its popularity among the non-Yadav OBC voters ahead of the Lok Sabha elections next year.

The SP, which has announced Sudhakar Singh, a Rajput, as its candidate for the seat, would also like to defeat the BJP to send a strong message to its core voters in the state.

The bypoll to the Ghosi constituency is the first election in the state to take place after the formation of the opposition bloc INDIA and the SBSP joining the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA).

Chauhan was the forest and environment minister in the Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath government during its first term before he resigned from the Council of Ministers in January 2022 and joined the SP. (PTI)

State govt should not be selective in remission, opportunity to reform be given to every prisoner: SC

NEW DELHI, Aug 17: State governments should not be selective in granting remission to convicts and the opportunity to reform and reintegrate with society should be given to every prisoner, the Supreme Court Thursday told the Gujarat government which defended its decision of premature release of all 11 convicts in the Bilkees Bano gang-rape case during the 2002 riots. The top court's observation came in response to the submission by Additional Solicitor General S V Raju, appearing for the Gujarat government, that law says a chance must be given to even the hardened criminals to reform themselves.

The law officer submitted the crime committed by the 11 convicts was "heinous" but does not fall in the rarest of rare category. "Therefore, they deserve the chance of reformation. Person may have committed the offence...Something may have gone wrong in a particular moment. Later, he can always realise the consequences."

"This can largely be determined from their conduct in jail, when released on parole, or furlough. All these show they have realised what they had done is wrong. Law is not that everyone should be punished perpetually. Chance should be given for reformation," Raju said.

Responding to the submission, a bench of Justices BV Narasimha and Ujjal Bhuyan wanted to know how far the law is being applied to other inmates in jail.

"Why are our jails overcrowded? Why is the policy of remission being applied selectively?"

"Opportunity to reform and reintegrate must be given to every prisoner not only to few prisoners. But how far is remission policy being implemented where the convicts have completed 14 years? Is it being applied in all cases?" the bench asked Raju.

The ASG replied that all states will have to answer this question and that the remission policy varies from state to state.

Commenting on the remission policy of states, the bench said the question is whether the policy of premature release is being implemented uniformly in all cases in respect of all those who have completed 14 years and are eligible for it.

"On the other hand, we have cases like Rudul Shah. Even though there was an acquittal, he continued to remain in prison. Extreme cases, both this side and that side," the bench said. Rudul Shah was arrested for his wife's murder in 1953 and was in jail for many years, in spite of his acquittal by a sessions court in June 3, 1968. He was finally released in 1982.

The ASG submitted the opinion given by the CBI on remission of the sentence of the 11 convicts shows there was no application of mind.

The CBI had said the offence committed was "heinous, grave and serious" and hence the convicts "cannot be released pre-



BILKEES BANO CASE

maturely and no leniency may be given" to them.

Raju said, "They just narrate facts. Except for stating the offence was heinous, nothing is mentioned. Officer sitting in Mumbai has no knowledge of ground reality. Opinion of local police superintendent more useful than that of CBI officer in

this case.

"CBI's opinion has no application of mind. They have repeated the facts and said it's a heinous crime. What is the purpose of remission? Does committing a heinous crime debar you from getting its (remission's) benefit?" Raju said.

The hearing in the case will resume on August 24.

At the earlier hearing, TMC MP Mahua Moitra had told the apex court that the gang-rape of Bilkees Bano and murder of seven of her family members during the 2002 Gujarat riots were a "crime against humanity", and accused the Gujarat government of having failed to exercise its constitutional mandate of protecting the rights of women and children by granting remission to the 11 convicts in the "horrendous" case.

Besides the petition filed by Bilkees Bano contesting the remission granted to them, several other PILs including one by CPI(M) leader Subhashini Ali, independent journalist Revati Lall and former vice-chancellor of Lucknow University Roop Rekha Verma have challenged the remission. Moitra has also filed a PIL against the remission.

Bilkees Bano was 21 years old and five months pregnant when she was gang-raped while fleeing the horror of the communal riots that broke out after the Godhra train-burning incident. Her three-year-old daughter was among the seven family members killed in the riots. (PTI)

We are a combination without challenge, says Fadnavis on CM, Ajit Pawar and his alliance

SHIRDI, Aug 17: Maharashtra deputy chief minister Devendra Fadnavis on Thursday said chief minister Eknath Shinde, deputy CM Ajit Pawar and he were a combination that has no challenge due to their "working style".

He also took a swipe at Nationalist Congress Party chief Sharad Pawar after the latter claimed Prime Minister Narendra Modi's assertion that he would be back to unfurl the Tricolour at the Red Fort next year (on Independence Day) was inspired from Fadnavis, who had routinely said during the 2019 Assembly poll campaign that he would be back (mi punha yael).

Fadnavis said the PM would address the nation from the Red Fort on Independence Day next year as the entire country was standing with the latter who was working tirelessly for its citizens.

Speaking at a 'shasan aapla daari' (government at your doorstep) programme in Shirdi, Fadnavis said, "We three have come together. You know about the working style of Shindeji and you are also aware of me and Ajit dada. We three coming together is a combination which has no challenge."

Without taking the name of Sharad Pawar, Fadnavis retorted, "Last time, I said 'mi punha yael' (I will be back) and I can see the terror of that statement is still there. Some people are still



in terror. I would like to tell him one thing that when I said 'mi punha yael', people actually brought me back but some persons betrayed us."

In an apparent reference to the split in the Uddhav Thackeray-led Shiv Sena after the rebellion by Eknath Shinde, who went on to become CM, Fadnavis said "those who betrayed us we brought their party along with us".

"There is no reason to doubt that the people will stand with Modiji, who has taken India to

new heights and has worked tirelessly for the betterment of the country. He will once again address the country from the Red Fort on August 15 next year," the senior BJP leader asserted.

Quoting Ajit Pawar, who was also present at the event, Fadnavis brushed aside the opposition parties coming together to form an anti-BJP alliance by calling them "khichdi" that was not worth paying attention to.

He said the opposition parties will continue to talk while the state government will work transparently and tirelessly to bring about change and betterment in the lives of people.

Speaking at the event, CM Shinde said the opposition parties can continue to indulge in politics while his government will answer all allegations through its work.

Ridiculing frequent statements from opposition parties that his government would fall or his chief ministership would go, Shinde said the ruling dispensation had got stronger with Ajit Pawar joining it.

With Ajit Pawar joining it, his government was a triple engine one and it was ensuring Maharashtra was progressing quickly, Shinde asserted.

As long as the blessings of the people are with the government, nothing will happen to the ruling dispensation, the CM added. (PTI)

Cow vigilante Bittu Bajrangti sent to 14-day judicial custody

GURUGRAM/NUH, Aug 17: Cow vigilante Bittu Bajrangti, arrested in connection with communal clashes in Nuh earlier in the month, was sent to 14-day judicial custody on Thursday, police said. Bajrangti was produced in a Nuh court on Thursday from where he was sent to judicial custody in Neemka jail of Faridabad district, a senior police officer said.

Bittu Bajrangti alias Raj Kumar was arrested on Tuesday from Faridabad after a fresh FIR was registered against him at Nuh's Sadar Police Station on a complaint of Assistant Superintendent of Police Usha Kundu.

A Nuh Police spokesperson said that eight swords were found in Bajrangti's possession.

In its submission to court, Nuh Police requested it to not send Bittu Bajrangti to the Nuh district jail, apprehending fear Muslim inmates there may cause harm to him.

"Most of the accused lodged in Nuh jail belong to the Muslim community. If Bittu is sent to Nuh Jail then his life is in danger. The Muslim inmates are enraged against Bittu. In such a situation, the accused should be sent to Bhandi Jail in Gurugram to prevent any untoward incident. Also proper instructions should be given

to the jail superintendent," read the remand request paper submitted by police. After hearing the submission, the court sent Bajrangti to Neemka jail in Faridabad. A senior police officer said that police are now conducting raids to nab Bajrangti's associates.

According to the FIR, Bajrangti, who was identified through social media posts, along with some of his unidentified supporters, had allegedly misbehaved with and threatened an ASP Kundu-led police team which had stopped them while they were carrying swords and 'trishuls' to Nalhar temple. (PTI)

Case against Balaji handed to special court

CHENNAI, Aug 17: A city court on Thursday transferred the money laundering case pending against arrested Tamil Nadu Minister V Senthil Balaji to a special court or MPs and MLAs here. Principal Sessions Judge S Ali, before whom the Enforcement Directorate (ED) had filed charge sheet on August 12 against the minister, took it on file and transferred the matter to the special court dealing with cases related to MPs and MLAs. In her order, the judge said "Case made over (transferred) to the special court No.1 for the trial of cases relating to MPs and MLAs of Tamil Nadu." The case was posted for August 28 for next hearing. (PTI)

Delhi's plan to mitigate heat impact: No schools in afternoon, curb on non-essential water use

NEW DELHI, Aug 17: Delhi will alter school timings, suspend non-essential water use, provide uninterrupted power supply to health facilities and survey vulnerable locations daily to mitigate the impact of extreme heat on susceptible populations in peak summers, according to the city's new heat action plan.

The Delhi Disaster Management Authority (DDMA), which prepared the plan and submitted it to the Centre last month, also plans a pilot project to paint roofs in identified areas with white colour to help keep the indoors cooler.

The nodal officer, who will be responsible for the implementation of the heat action plan (HAP), is still to be appointed, a DDMA official told PTI.

Delhi is one of the hottest cities in India and ranks among the most susceptible to heat waves due to its large population and a significant concentration of lower-income groups. Heat waves are becoming more intense and frequent due to climate change.

India reported 706 heatwave incidents from 1971-2019 which claimed more than 17,000 lives, according to a paper authored by M Rajeevan, former secretary of the Ministry of Earth Sciences, along with scientists Kamaljit Ray, S S Ray, R K Giri and A P Dimri.

A study by the Indian Institute of Technology-Gandhinagar says India could witness a staggering 30-fold increase in severe heat waves by 2100. A 75-fold rise is predicted under a business-as-usual scenario.

The Delhi HAP relies on heat wave forecasts from the India Meteorological Department for the next seven days for issuing colour-coded alerts to the local population. A 'red alert' will be triggered when the maximum temperature



exceeds the normal temperature by at least 6 degrees Celsius. An 'orange alert' will be issued if the maximum temperature is four to five degrees Celsius above normal, while a 'yellow alert' will be given for a departure from normal ranging from 0 to 3.9 degrees Celsius.

Based on land surface temperature maps, the plan lists 10 wards - Harkesh Nagar 092s, Harkesh Nagar 092s, Khyala 008s, Wazirpur 072n, Bijwasan 048s, Vishwas Nagar 017e, Hari Nagar A 010s, Jahangirpuri 021n, Delhi Gate 088n and Shastri Park 025e -- as thermal hotspots in the capital, emphasising the importance of rapidly equipping them with amenities to cope with extreme heat.

The heat action plan will be implemented in three phases: Phase 1 (pre-heat season -- February and March) is dedicated to developing early warning systems and a communication plan for issuing alerts to the general public, healthcare professionals, and voluntary groups (caregivers). The focus is

on training and capacity-building for these groups.

In Phase 2 (March to July), "cooling centres", including temples, public buildings, malls, and temporary night shelters, will be activated to offer outdoor workers, slum communities, and other vulnerable populations access to shaded areas in response to heat alerts. Non-essential water uses will be suspended in case of water shortages. Access to potable water will be expanded to religious places, and bus transit stations, and water pouches will be provided in poor and high-risk areas, the plan states.

The education department will have to ensure that "schools do not function during peak hours (12 noon to 4 pm)" when a heatwave is declared.

According to official estimates, around 2 crore residents of the national capital need approximately 1,300 MGD of water for consumption and daily needs. But the Delhi Jal Board can supply only around 1,000 MGD, leaving many areas

grappling with water shortage.

The Delhi HAP recommends creating water points and providing oral rehydration solution (ORS) at construction sites, bus stops, and other public places, especially during events like rallies in the summer. Water tankers will be made accessible in slum areas upon request during days with an orange or red heat alert, it says.

Uninterrupted power supply to critical facilities such as hospitals and health centres will be given priority, the night shelters will remain open throughout the day, and large LED display boards will be installed at key locations to share temperature forecasts with the general public.

The nodal officer will hold regular meetings to monitor developments during a heat alert.

Under Phase 3, which will be implemented in the July-September period, cool resting centres will be established in high-risk areas and tree plantation will be undertaken in heat hotspots.

The nodal officer will evaluate the reach and impact of the plan and revise it accordingly. The revised plan will be uploaded on the Delhi government's website ahead of the next heat season for stakeholders' feedback and opinion.

As part of a trial project, roofs will be painted with white colour to help keep the surface cooler. Cool roof paints reflect a significant amount of sunlight away, preventing the roof from getting as hot as it would with regular paint.

Many cities in India, for instance, Ahmedabad and Hyderabad, have adopted cool roof strategies because of their simplicity and low cost. Depending on the setting, cool roofs can help reduce indoor temperatures by 2 to 5 degrees Celsius as compared to traditional roofs. (PTI)

Contd. from Page 1...

Guv takes stock of execution

The Governor assured that he would do everything to address the issues faced by the beneficiaries. "I am on a visit to review the implementation of various schemes initiated by the state government and the Centre," he later said, adding he met the beneficiaries to get their viewpoints. Chief executive member of the Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council Tuliram Ronghang, Member of Parliament Haren Singh Bey, MLA Vidya Singh Englang, district commissioner, police superintendent, and heads of various departments were present during the meeting. Earlier, the Governor upon arriving at Diphu railway station was accorded the guard of honour by the Assam Police personnel.

Two arrested for role in illegal

Asian nations, being the final destinations of the illegal trade. An STF additional superintendent of police, Kalyan Pathak, emphasised that an elaborate network exploiting the northeastern region as a transit route for such animal parts trade has been identified. The contraband items are moved through the region to reach international destinations, ultimately threatening the wildlife and contributing to environmental degradation.

In a parallel incident, the police had earlier apprehended four individuals in possession of tiger skin and bones from the Azara area in Kamrup district on June 29 this year. This case showcased inter-state implications, as the animal was poached in Gadchiroli, Maharashtra, and the illegally obtained skin and bones were intended for transportation to Meghalaya before being further distributed. The case has been transferred to the WCCB, and a comprehensive case has been registered under various sections of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972. The authorities are actively pursuing actions to curtail such illegal activities that pose a grave threat to both wildlife conservation and regional security. (With inputs from PTI)

Historic soft landing on

Chandrayaan-3 is a follow-on mission to Chandrayaan-2 and its objectives are to demonstrate safe and soft landing on the lunar surface, roving on the moon, and to conduct in-situ scientific experiments. Chandrayaan-2 had failed in its lunar phase when its lander 'Vikram' crashed into the surface of the moon following anomalies in the braking system in the lander while attempting a soft landing on September 7, 2019. Chandrayaan's maiden mission was in 2008.

The lander has the capability to soft land at a specified lunar site and deploy the rover that will carry out in-situ chemical analysis of the moon's surface during the course of its mobility. The lander and the rover have scientific payloads to carry out experiments on the lunar surface. If the Chandrayaan-3 mission succeeds in landing a robotic lunar rover in ISRO's second attempt in four years, India will become the fourth country to master the technology of soft-landing on the moon's surface after the US, China and the former Soviet Union.

The race to the uncharted south pole of the Moon is also hotting up with Russia's Luna-25 also gearing up for lunar landings next week. The proximity, possible overlap, of their landing dates -- August 21-23 for Luna-25 and August 23-24 for Chandrayaan-3 -- has heightened excitement in the scientific community worldwide. Polar regions of the moon are a very different terrain due to the environment and the difficulties they present and therefore have remained unexplored. All the previous spacecraft to have reached the moon landed in the equatorial region, a few degrees latitude north or south of the lunar equator. The moon's south pole region is also being explored because there could be a possibility of presence of water in permanently shadowed areas around it.

"It (separation) is a great moment and this will imply how the lander is performing and the lander will be verified and tested and brought closer and closer to the moon. Then it will be given the required commands such that it takes over on the cue on August 23 to go all the way to the targeted place and have a safe and secure landing," Anandurai said. He said this is the beginning and all further milestones have to be seen very carefully.

"We have crossed major milestones from the launch vehicle and after that the propulsion system (separation)...now really the match starts. These are the final overs we are talking about. I think it is a great moment. The whole world is waiting to see what Vikram will do and what Pragyan will come out and do...I am also enthusiastically waiting." ISRO chairman Somanath had recently said the most critical part of the landing is the process of bringing the velocity of the lander from 30 km height to the final landing, and that the ability to transfer the spacecraft from horizontal to vertical direction is the "trick we have to play" here.

"The velocity at the starting of the landing process is almost 1.68 km per second, but this speed is horizontal to the surface of the moon. The Chandrayaan-3 here is tilted almost 90 degrees, it has to become vertical. So, this whole process of turning from horizontal to vertical is a very interesting calculation mathematically. We have done a lot of simulations. It is here where we had the problem last time (Chandrayaan-2)," Somanath explained.

The significance about Chandrayaan-3 mission, unlike its unsuccessful predecessor, is that the PM has a payload -- SHAPE -- Spectro-polarimetry of Habitable Planet Earth which is to study earth from lunar orbit.

The ISRO said the SHAPE is an experimental payload to study the spectro-polarimetric signatures of the Earth in the near-infrared wavelength range. Apart from the SHAPE payload, the PM's main function is to carry the LM from launch vehicle injection orbit till lander separation. (PTI)

Dengue outbreak: 45% positivity

statistics up to Wednesday indicate that 348 individuals have been admitted for treatment, out of which 318 have been discharged. Additionally, 4 cases were referred for further medical attention. The overall number of tests conducted using the Elisa method stands at 6,309, out of which 2,857 have been confirmed as positive for Dengue, while 3,452 tests returned negative results. As the health authorities in Diphu continue to grapple with the Dengue outbreak, efforts to contain the disease and provide adequate medical care remain a top priority.

Arunachal govt constitutes

So far, a total of 46 people including 39 government officials and employees were arrested for their alleged involvement in the scam.

Meanwhile, Arunachal chief minister Pema Khandu stated that all 13 demands raised by a group concerning the APPSC issue have been fulfilled. Khandu said that detailed information regarding these accomplishments would be released to the public in the forthcoming days. "The collaboration between our government and the CBI is vital for conducting a thorough and efficient investigation," Khandu said.

Regarding the enforcement directorate's (ED) involvement in the case, the chief minister shared that an official request has been made for the ED's participation. "The impact of this incident extends beyond the youth and general public, reaching me personally. Our focus should now shift towards contributing to the solution rather than exacerbating the problem," Khandu added. (PTI)

Prez Droupadi Murmu launches

the robustness of the Vindhyas," she said. Highlighting the importance of ensuring security in the Indian Ocean Region and the larger Indo-Pacific the President said, "It includes piracy, armed robbery, drug smuggling, illegal human migration, natural disasters and several such issues. Against this backdrop, the Indian Navy has the mandate to protect, preserve, and promote India's maritime interests. The Navy has to always remain proactive in tackling security threats." This is the sixth of the seven ships built under 'Project 17 Alpha' for the Navy. The first five ships of the project were launched between 2019 and 2022. This is also the third and last stealth frigate that the Kolkata-based shipyard has built for the Navy under the project.

An official said 75 per cent of orders for equipment and systems of P17A ships are from indigenous firms, including micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs). P17A ships are guided missile frigates, each of which is 149 metres long, with the displacement of approximately 6,670 tonnes and a speed of 28 knots, according to a GRSE official. These are capable of neutralising threats in all three dimensions of air, surface and sub-surface. (PTI)

WHO South-East Asia

The declaration calls for ensuring appropriate adoption and use of science and technology for equitable and human rights-based TB services that are accessible to all, irrespective of any social, cultural, or demographic divide, through an integrated, primary health care approach, she said. It emphasises on allocation of necessary resources to meet TB service coverage targets and address social determinants to have multi-disease impact.

"In 2022, TB allocations in the region reached US dollar 1.4 billion, of which 60 per cent was from domestic sources. However, for mission success, we need at least 3 billion US dollars annually, which will also help maintain key social protection programmes such as for nutritional support. Let us build on the substantial increases already achieved," Dr Khetrapal Singh said. She also emphasised on empowering and engaging TB-affected communities by not just listening to but truly hearing them.

The declaration calls on WHO to maintain TB as a flagship priority programme over the coming years and provide leadership and technical support to countries for sustained and accelerated approaches supported by research and innovation. Home to a quarter of the global population, the WHO South-East Asia Region accounts for nearly half of the new TB cases and deaths globally every year. (PTI)

'GADAR 2' CROSSES ₹ 250 CRORE MARK AT BOX OFFICE



MUMBAI, Aug 17: "Gadar 2", starring Sunny Deol and Ameesha Patel, earned ₹ 32.37 crore on the sixth day of its release taking its total domestic box office earnings to ₹ 261.35 crore, according to the makers.

Directed by Anil Sharma, the film is a sequel to the 2001 blockbuster "Gadar: Ek Prem Katha". The movie, a Zee Studios production, released in theatres on August 11.

Sharma shared the box office update on his X account on Wednesday. "Mohabbatein jab milti hain .. aashirwad jab milta hai .. toh kamaal

hota hai .. 6th day .. collection never before like this .. GOD is v kind," the director said in his post.

On Tuesday, the makers said the total earnings of "Gadar 2" at the countrywide box office stood at ₹ 228.98 crore. With ₹ 32.37 crore minted on the sixth day, the updated figures of the movie were ₹ 261.35 crore.

Set in 1971, "Gadar 2" follows Tara Singh (Deol)'s journey to Pakistan to rescue his son, Charanjeet Singh, played by Utkarsh Sharma, from the Pakistani Army. The original film was set during the Partition. (PTI)

FILMS REFLECT SOFT POWER OF INDIA: AMITABH KANT AT G20 FILM FESTIVAL INAUGURATION



NEW DELHI, Aug 17: India's G-20 Sherpa Amitabh Kant on Wednesday said Indian films reflect the soft power of the country as well as its unity and diversity. He was speaking at the inauguration ceremony of the G20 Film Festival organised by the India International Centre (IIC) in collaboration with the G20 Secretariat, Ministry of External Affairs.

Satyajit Ray's 1955 black-and-white classic film "Pathar Panchali" (Song of the Little Road) opened the festival, which will run till September 3. Kant, who was the chief

guest at the event, said films reflect the "unity and diversity" of India.

"I have been a great believer in Indian films. Our G20 presidency is 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam': One Earth, One Family, One Future... Indian films truly reflect the soft power of India. More than anything else, they reflect the unity and diversity of India. And, there's no better way to start a film festival than to show Satyajit Ray's 'Pathar Panchali'," he said.

Tourism and culture are two major components of G20, Kant added.

"They have helped us promote the soft power of India. Unlike other countries, India has done its G20 presidency very differently. It has taken G20 out to every state of India across 60 cities," Kant said.

"It has used the opportunity to improve infrastructure in many cities. The soft power has helped to market all the states vigorously," he said.

The film gala also helped bring G20 to the people and not let it become "just a bureaucratic or government exercise", Kant said. (PTI)

Want to work with all my lines and wrinkles Madhoo



NEW DELHI, Aug 17: She has no regrets about quitting movies at the peak of her career in the '90s and now that she is back with a critically-acclaimed role in the series "Sweet Kaaram Coffee", actor Madhoo says she has a new goal: to work with all her "lines and wrinkles". Known for films such as "Raja" and "Phool Aur Kaante", Madhoo plays a housewife in the Prime Video show that revolves around women belonging to three different generations who embark

on a road trip.

Veteran actor Lakshmi, Madhoo and Santhya Balachandran star as mother-in-law Sundari, daughter-in-law Kavari and granddaughter Niveditha in the eight-episode series. The actor said the love for the show's characters, particularly the one played by Lakshmi, a well-loved actor with over five decades of experience in all the South Indian language movies as well as Hindi, proves that age is just a number for artists.

"The love that Lak-

shmi aunty is getting, she's 70. She's not hiding a single wrinkle on her face or changing her body size to fit into any image. She is just a loving grandmother who has performed at such a beautiful level. I'm hoping that I will go that way. "In my mind, now that is the motto: I will never give up working even when I'm 70 or 80. When someone comes to me, I will work with all my lines and all my wrinkles, whatever my age is," Madhoo told PTI in an interview. (PTI)

Raftaar to make acting debut with series 'Bajao', show to come out on Aug 25

MUMBAI, Aug 17: Streamer JioCinema on Wednesday announced musical comedy series "Bajao", which will mark rapper Raftaar's acting debut.

The show, directed by Shiva Varma and Saptaaraj Chakraborty, will premiere on the streaming platform on August 25. It is written by Nikhil Sachan.

The ensemble cast of the series also include actors Tanuj Virwani, Sahil Vaid, Sahil Khattar, and Mahira Sharma.

"Bajao" is described as an "uproarious coming-of-age bromance" that follows the hilarious escapades of three young filmmakers, navigating the high-octane world of Punjabi Pop music.

Their lives take an unexpected turn when they find themselves entrusted with a bag of Rs 2 crore to shoot the comeback music video for Punjab's most celebrated rapper. However, a night of revelry leads to chaos, and the trio wakes up with no memory, the bag missing, and the rapper mysteriously absent.

Raftaar said making his acting debut with "Bajao" was a fulfilling milestone in his journey as an artist.

"It's a project that resonates with my own journey in the music industry - full of twists, turns, and unexpected surprises. It's incredible how this series has allowed me to explore a whole new dimension of creativity and storytelling.



"Bajao" is not just a show; it's an out of control adventure that captures the essence of the Punjabi music scene in the most entertaining way possible. The camaraderie and fun on set was infectious, and I hope that translates onto the screen as genuine laughter and entertainment for the viewers," the 34-year-old musician said in a statement.

"Bajao" is presented by Jio Studios and produced by Jyoti Deshpande, Pragma Singh and Vijendra Sahaani. (PTI)

NEW DELHI, Aug 17: Embodying the first Latino superhero of the DC universe was an honour, says "Blue Beetle" star Xolo Maridueno, who is confident that the film and its themes will resonate across cultures.

With the Warner Bros movie, Maridueno brings to the screen the first iteration of Jaime Reyes, a young college graduate who returns to his family in Palmyra City.

He is chosen to become a symbiotic host to the Scarab, an ancient alien biotechnological relic that grants him a powerful exoskeleton armour, turning him into the titular superhero. Maridueno, who shot to fame with his role as Miguel Diaz in hit Netflix series "Cobra Kai", called "Blue Beetle" the biggest milestone of his nascent career. "Just to play a superhero in itself, I think, has really been the biggest milestone in my life to date. It's really such an honour.

And when you add the cultural aspect to it, I'm so excited to highlight a really positive story on the biggest screen. "I feel that the story transcends any kind of ethnicity as well. I'm excited for everyone else who isn't necessarily Latino to connect and understand as well," he told PTI in an interview. (PTI)



Akshay thanks audiences for 'greatest week in Indian film history', tweets with #OhMyGadar



MUMBAI, Aug 17: Bollywood star Akshay Kumar on Thursday thanked viewers for giving the exhibition sector "the greatest week in Indian film history" following the positive response to his film "Oh My God 2" and Sunny Deol's "Gadar 2", both of which were released on August 11. According to the Producers Guild of India (PGI) and Multiplex Association of India (MAI), August 11-13 was the "busiest single weekend" since cinema halls opened after the Covid pandemic with "Gadar 2" earning ₹ 134.88 crore and "OMG 2" raising ₹ 43.11 crore at the domestic box office.

The actor used the hashtag #OhMyGadar in an apparent refer-

ence to the combined success of "OMG 2" and "Gadar 2", both sequels. "A big thank you to our audiences for all the love for #OhMyGadar and giving us the greatest week in Indian Film History! Pyaar aur aabhar (Love and gratitude) #Gadar2 in cinemas #OMG2 in cinemas," Akshay said in his post on X, formerly called Twitter. Interestingly, the actor is also seen singing "Udd Ja Kaale Kaawan", the song from "Gadar 2", in his film "OMG 2", where he is in the role of a messenger of Lord Shiva.

Written and directed by Amit Rai, "OMG 2" features Pankaj Tripathi as a devotee of Lord Shiva named Kanti

Sharan Mudgal and Akshay. Produced by Cape of Good Films and Wakao Films, the film touches upon various issues of teenagers and the importance of sex education.

Wakao Films on Wednesday announced that "OMG 2" has earned ₹ 79.47 crore since its release.

"Aapka pyaar hee hamara puraskaar hai (Your love is our reward)," the production banner captioned the box office update on its official X page.

"Gadar 2", directed by Anil Sharma, earned ₹ 32.37 crore on the sixth day of its release taking its total domestic box office earnings to ₹ 261.35 crore, according to production house Zee Studios.

"Mohabbatein jab milti hain .. aashirwad jab milta hai .. toh kamaal hota hai .. 6th day .. collection never before like this .. GOD is v kind," Sharma said in his post on X.

Set in 1971, "Gadar 2" follows Tara Singh (Deol)'s journey to Pakistan to rescue his son, Charanjeet Singh, played by Utkarsh Sharma, from the Pakistani Army.

"OMG 2" and "Gadar 2" along with Rajinikanth's Tamil movie "Jailer" and Chiranjeevi's Telugu title "Bhola Shankar" earned a combined gross box office collection of over ₹ 390 crore over the weekend across all India theatres, according to PGI and MAI. (PTI)

Arteta concerned about packed soccer calendar after glut of early season ACL injuries

LONDON, Aug 17: Arsenal manager Mikel Arteta is concerned about the welfare of players in the packed soccer calendar after a glut of high-profile knee injuries in the opening week of the European season.

One of Arsenal's big offseason signings, Jurrien Timber, is set to be sidelined for most of his first year in English soccer after damaging the anterior cruciate ligament in his right knee on his competitive debut on Saturday against Nottingham Forest in the

Premier League.

Elsewhere in the league, Aston Villa playmaker Emu Buendia is expected to miss most of the season with a significant knee problem — reportedly an ACL injury — sustained in training ahead of the first round.

In Spain, Real Madrid goalkeeper Thibaut Courtois and center back Éder Militão sustained ACL injuries over the past week. With Villa center back Tyrone Mings (knee) and Manchester City midfielder Kevin De



Bruyne (hamstring) also picking up injuries in the first round of league games that will keep them out long term, Arteta said on Thursday it was not a coincidence and there were "big worries" about the year-round modern-day soccer schedule.

Last season, for example, a World Cup was placed in the middle of most European seasons.

"In the past you can say, Yes there have been games, there have been tours as well, but with

games, tours, the World Cup in December, plus this, plus that, plus internationals, it is a lot," Arteta said. "It is too much for the players."

"It is incredibly demanding. When you see the next 36 months of the calendar for these players, it is just better not to look at it because it is incredible what they are going to be doing."

The European Championship takes places at end of this season, a new 32-team Club World Cup will be held in the offseason

of 2025, and the World Cup in 2026 will be the first involving 48 teams and therefore will last an extra week.

"We have to look after the (players) but, as a club, when do you look after them?" he posed. "To prioritize other competitions? Then we are the ones that have to look after them — what we really need is to be sitting down (discussing plans), but I think it is too late, at least for the next 36 months. It is too late already. (AP)

Barca hosts Cadiz in 1st game at temporary home stadium, Madrid visits Almeria



BARCELONA, Aug 17: After having both its coach and best winger sent off last week, Barcelona will try to jump start its Spanish season on Sunday at home.

Except home isn't what it used to be.

Barcelona will play its first official game in its temporary home against Cadiz while Camp Nou undergoes an extensive makeover, and coach Xavi Hernández will be watching from the stands.

Xavi was sent off for excessively complaining about the decisions of the referee during his team's 0-0 draw at Getafe in their season opener last week. The former midfielder was handed a two-game suspension for his behavior.

The hosts will also be missing forward Raphinha, who earned a red card against Getafe when he elbowed an opposing player. That leaves Barcelona without a pure winger, after Ousmane Dembélé left for Paris Saint-Germain in the offseason. The empty spot in the starting lineup could be filled by forwards Ferran Torres or Ansu Fati, or another midfielder like Gavi Páez. Former Manchester City midfielder İlkay Gundogan debuted for Barcelona in the opening match.

Barcelona wants to avoid another slip after both Real Madrid and Atlético Madrid won their openers. Cadiz barely avoided relegation last season and is considered among the most modest of the teams in the top division. It beat Alaves 1-0 in its opener.

This will be the first competitive match that Barcelona plays at Lluís Companys Olympic Stadium. The main stadium for the

1992 Barcelona Olympics can hold 49,000 people — compared to the 99,000-strong Camp Nou, Europe's largest soccer stadium. Camp Nou is undergoing a long-delayed overhaul to improve its facilities and add even more seats.

Madrid will go for a second victory to start the season when it plays at Almeria on Saturday.

It will do so without central defender Éder Militão after he tore a ligament in his left knee during the 2-0 win at Athletic Bilbao. England midfielder Jude Bellingham had an excellent debut for Madrid, impressing with his dribbling skills and scoring his team's second goal.

The injury to Militão came days after Madrid goalkeeper Thibaut Courtois also tore a knee ligament. Andriy Lunin, Courtois' backup, started against Bilbao, and Madrid coach Carlo Ancelotti has said that Lunin would be his first-choice goalkeeper. But the club signed Kepa Arrizabalaga on loan from Chelsea this week.

Almeria lost its opener 2-0 to Rayo Vallecano.

Atlético visits Real Betis on Sunday in the top matchup of the weekend after they finished third and sixth, respectively, in the standings last season.

Atlético eased to a 3-1 victory over Granada at home thanks to goals from Memphis Depay, Álvaro Morata and Marcos Llorente in its opener.

Also, Sevilla is at promoted Alaves on Monday seeking to bounce back from back-to-back losses to start the season, including a defeat to Manchester City in a penalty shootout in the UEFA Super Cup. (AP)

'NEVER FELT INJURY LAYOFF WAS A DARK PHASE'

Always kept thinking about World Cup preparation, says Bumrah

DUBLIN, Aug 17: After spending 11 months away from the game, a fit-again Jasprit Bumrah is back hungrier than ever and says he is ready to bowl long spells for India in the Asia Cup and subsequent ODI World Cup at home.

Bumrah, who last played in September 2022 before lower-back stress fractures pushed him on the sidelines for the "biggest break" of his cricketing career, is making his much-anticipated comeback with the T20 series in Ireland.

Here, he will be required to bowl four overs per game but speaking ahead of the first T20 on Friday, the star pacer said the plan was always to prepare for 50-over events including the Asia Cup beginning August 31 and the World Cup at home beginning October 5.

"We were mindful of the fact there is no Test cricket till the ODI World Cup. In my rehab as well, I was not preparing for a T20 game. I was always preparing for the World Cup competi-

tion. "I have been bowling 10, 12 and even 15 overs. So I have bowled more overs, that way it becomes easier when less bowling is required. We kept that in mind that we are preparing for one-day competition and not a four-over competition."

"I have lots of overs under my belt. You have to keep working your way up. From where you left, you are little down and you keep working your way up," Bumrah, who will captain India in the three T20s against Ireland, told reporters.

Bumrah said he is not holding back in the training sessions, as it was the case in the opening nets here on Thursday. A fully-fit Bumrah is a precious asset for India but the 29-year-old is not going to get expectations get the better of him.

"I don't really think about expectations. I just want to go enjoy the game as I have come after a long break. Never been away from the game this long. I am coming back to enjoy as I love this game. (PTI)



TAEKWONDO AND BOXING 52nd Regional sports competition begins at KV



HT Correspondent BISWANATH CHARIALLI, Aug 17: Chief guest Air Commodore V J Singh inaugurated the 52nd regional sports competition of Kendriya Vidyalaya on Thursday

by unfurling the sports flag here on Thursday.

This competition of taekwondo and boxing would be held in two phases.

The first phase is for boys and

the second phase is for girls. A total of 143 participants from 28 schools of Guwahati region are participating in the first phase. School principal Sanjay Sarkar in his speech informed everyone about the outline of the competition, welcomed all the maintainers and participants and also thanked Air Commodore VJ Singh for providing medical and other facilities.

Air Commodore V J Singh told all the participants about physical and intellectual development through sports. At the same time, with emphasis on development of discipline, team spirit, mutual co-operation and leadership ability in sports, he said that participating in sports in a disciplined manner is more important than winning in sports.

All teams are participating in Taekwondo and Boxing in Under 14, Under 17 and Under 19 categories.



Raktim Saikia receiving a Diploma certificate on being promoted to the rank of SHO (1st) DAN by International Shito Ryu Karate Federation India (ISKFI-INDIA). HT Bureau

Antim Panghal one win away from 2nd World C'ship title, 2 more Indians in title contention

AMMAN (JORDAN), Aug 17: Unprecedented success followed India at the junior wrestling World Championships on Thursday with three grapplers, including fast-rising Antim Panghal, storming into the gold medal bouts while Harshita will fight for bronze.

Defending champion Panghal, who hit the headlines for challenging Vinesh Phogat for the Asian Games trials but lost her petition, put up a dominating show to win her three bouts with consummate ease. For the first time, four Indian woman wrestlers have reached the gold medal bouts at the World Championships as Savita (62kg) and Antim Kundu (65kg) also stayed unbeaten on Thursday.

Priya had reached the 76kg final on Wednesday and will fight for gold later in the evening while Harshita will fight for bronze in 72kg after losing her semifinal.

Panghal lost just two points en route the final, annihilating her first round opponent from Poland Nikola Monika Wisniewska in mere 68 seconds and followed that up with technical superiority win over China's Xuejing Liang.

In the semifinals, the wrestler from Haryana district of Haryana outplayed Russia's Polina Lukina, again winning by technical superiority, not losing a single point.

If Panghal can win on Friday, she will become first woman wrestler to win two world titles.

Another Antim was putting the mat on fire in 65kg competition. She was Antim Kundu from Titoli village in Rohtak District as she too put up a dominating show to secure a place in the gold medal bout.

Using her tremendous power, she overpowered Russia's Ekaterina Koshkina in the semifinal, winning 7-5. Before that, the wrestler coached by Kuldeep Kadian, beat Romania's Maria Magdalena Pantiru 7-2 and pinned Poland's Alicja Nowosad.

In the 62kg category, U17 World Champion Savita produced inspiring stuff, winning all three bouts 'by fall', including one against formidable Japanese Suzu Sasaki. She had begun with easy win over Serbia's Dunja Lukic.

In the semifinal she pinned French rival Iris Mathilde Thiebaut. Harshita also reached the 72kg semifinals but got pinned by Turkey's Bukrenaz Sert and will now fight for bronze.

Reena was the only Indian wrestler in action who lost early. Competing in 57kg category, she lost her opening round to Ukraine's Alina Filipovych. (PTI)

Mohit is newest Indian U20 World Champion wrestler, Priya in line become only second woman champ

AMMAN (JORDAN), Aug 17: Mohit Kumar on Wednesday became the first Indian wrestler to win junior world champion since 2019 after edging past Russia's Eldar Akhmaduninov in the 61kg final while Priya lined herself up to be country's only second woman grappler to grab the title.

Mohit was trailing 0-6 in the final but the Russian, who is competing as an individual athlete, lost steam as the bout progressed and the Indian took full advantage to reel off nine straight points.

Deepak Punia, who has now made a transition to the senior circuit, was the last Indian to win a world junior championship in 2019. Before that, Palwinder Cheema (2001) and Ramesh Kumar (2001) had grabbed the world junior title. So Amit is only the fourth Indian wrestler to win the coveted crown.

Mohit got on board with a



takedown move just before the end of the first period and after the break it was one-way traffic. Mohit quickly scored push-out points to unsettle his tiring rival, who even sought a medical timeout to catch his breath. Eldar's defence fell apart with

Mohit staying aggressive. Jaideep won the 74kg bronze with a win over Kyrgyzstan's Zhakshylyk Ruslanovich Baitashov.

The Indian men's freestyle team has so far won five medals.

Sagar Jaglan (79kg) had won a silver, while Deepak Chahal (97kg) and Sagar (57kg) had won bronze on Tuesday.

On Thursday, Rajat Ruhail will be in contention to win a bronze in 125kg. He is up against Karanveer Singh Mahil

All eyes on Bumrah; India's Gen-Next stars ready to shine on international platform



IRELAND T20IS

DUBLIN, Aug 17: Almost 11 months after he hobbled off the field, Jasprit Bumrah will be cynosure of all eyes when he leads India against Ireland as the fast bowler's fitness and rhythm will be tested in the three-match T20 International series, starting Friday.

The team is packed with India's Gen-Next IPL performers like Rituraj Gaikwad, Rinku Singh and Jitesh Sharma but stakeholders in Indian cricket will keenly observe Bumrah, who will be key to home team's plans during the ODI World Cup starting in less than two months.

The 29-year-old Bumrah is coming back after undergoing a surgery to treat the lower-back stress fractures he had suffered during a home series against Australia ahead of T20 World Cup, last year.

He will be bowling a maximum of just 12 overs across three games over five days but this series will allow chairman of selectors Ajit Agarkar, ODI captain Rohit Sharma and head coach Rahul Dravid to get a fair idea of where the Gujarat slinger is placed in terms of match fitness.

The 50-over cricket is, though, a differ-

ent beast where he will need to bowl 10 overs across two, three or may be four-over spells.

The BCCI, on its official social media handle, released Bumrah's bowling video, where he was seen hurrying a right-hander with a well-disguised short-ball and then almost yanked a left-hander with a toe-crusher, a soothing sight for the Indian team management.

But match situation will be completely different and both Dravid and Rohit have once burnt their hands by rushing him too early before the T20 World Cup in Australia last year.

The results were disastrous. That was the last series he played before the longest lay-off of his seven-year international career.

He was bowling for a home series earlier this year, only to be pulled out at the eleventh hour as he underwent a surgery to treat a career-threatening injury.

The Ireland series not only gives Bumrah an ideal opportunity to add miles to his legs but will also help him get ready for the Asia Cup, where he will be pitted against the likes of

Babar Azam upfront on September 2.

Ireland, led by Andrew Balbirnie with useful players like Harry Tector, Lorcan Tucker, left-arm spinner George Dockrell are a quality side in the shortest format even though they are yet to win a match against India till now. Their left-arm seamer Josh Little was an integral part of Gujarat Titans squad last year and wouldn't mind to show what he is capable of against an Indian team full of performers.

The players in this Indian team, save Bumrah and Sanju Samson, will be vying for gold medal at the Asian Games in Hangzhou and the core team would be keen to make most of the three T20Is.

The one player, whose place would surely be under the scanner is Sanju Samson. He is unlikely to get into the playing XI unless head coach Sitanshu Kotak gets a standing instruction from main team management to play the Kerala man ahead of Asia Cup.

Two exciting IPL finds -- Jitesh and Rinku are expected to get their T20 India caps while Shivam Dube would be itching for a shot at redemption.

Just like Bumrah, even Prasidh Krishna is making a comeback to competitive cricket and before his lower back stress fracture injury which also required a surgery, the Bengaluru fast bowler was a certainty in ODI set-up.

It is expected that selectors would check out Krishna's form before taking a final call on the Asia Cup squad expected to be announced by the end of this week.

It will be interesting to see how players and the team management balance individual and team goals while keeping the big picture in mind.

Squads:
India: Jasprit Bumrah (C), Rituraj Gaikwad (VC), Yashasvi Jaiswal, Tilak Varma, Rinku Singh, Sanju Samson (wk), Jitesh Sharma (wk), Shivam Dube, Washington Sundar, Shahbaz Ahmed, Ravi Bishnoi, Prasidh Krishna, Arshdeep Singh, Mukesh Kumar, Avesh Khan.

Ireland: Andrew Balbirnie (captain), Harry Tector, Lorcan Tucker, Ross Adair, Mark Adair, Curtis Campher, Gareth Delany, George Dockrell, Fionn Hand, Josh Little, Barry McCarthy, Ben White, Craig Young, Theo van Woerkom.

Match Starts: 7:30 pm IST. (PTI)

Padikkal out of action for 'three to four weeks'

BENGALURU, Aug 17: Indian opener Devdutt Padikkal on Thursday confirmed he will be out of action for three to four weeks owing to a fracture he sustained in his thumb.

Padikkal, who played two T20Is for India in 2021, suffered the injury during the Deodhar Trophy earlier this month.

The injury has kept Padikkal away from the ongoing Maharaja KSCA T20 trophy here, for which he was picked by Gulbarga Mystics.

"I had a left-thumb fracture during the Deodhar Trophy. So, I had to undergo a minor surgery to get that fixed. I will be out of the game for probably another three to four weeks. Hopefully, I can be back on the field soon," Padikkal told Fan-code. The left-handed batter has undergone surgery on his thumb, about which he wrote on social media.

"Just a quick update. Sustained a fracture on my left thumb and had to undergo a surgery. The road to recovery begins now, and I can't wait to get back out on the field soon," he said. (PTI)

Wataru Endo heads to England for transfer talks

STUTTGART, Aug 17: Stuttgart midfielder Wataru Endo has been given permission to travel to England for transfer talks and a medical examination at Liverpool, the German club's coach said Thursday.

Stuttgart coach Sebastian Hoernes said Liverpool had made a "good" financial offer for the 30-year-old midfielder, who is the Stuttgart captain and played in all four of Japan's games at last year's World Cup. "It is the case that Wataru has been given the club's approval for talks and then also for the medical check," Hoernes said. "We're talking about a 30-year-old whose contract is expiring in 10 months, so from the point of view of the club, the financial package is good." (PTI)

India effect: First two games of Ireland T20Is is complete sell-out, declares Cricket Ireland



DUBLIN, Aug 17: The Indian team's global popularity does add financial muscle to emerging cricket boards as Cricket Ireland realised after all tickets for the first two T20 Internationals were sold out.

"The first and second Men's T20 Internationals between Ireland and India are now sold out, with the third match selling quickly," Cricket Ireland posted in its website.

All the matches will be held at 'The Village' Malahide Cricket Club Ground which has an official capacity of 11,500.

India have won all their five previous T20Is against Ireland since the MS Dhoni-led side defeated them by eight wickets in a World Twenty20 group fixture in England in 2009.

Ireland then went on to host Team India twice in a two-match T20I series in 2018 and 2022 which were held at the same venue here.

The Paul Stirling-led side's wicketkeeper-batter Lorcan Tucker said they are aware of the big challenge and looking forward to make a big impression.

"Malahide generates a special feeling, especially when a big team comes to town," Tucker was quoted saying in Cricket Ireland website.

"We know India may have a good deal of support, but to have such a big crowd -- it's brilliant for cricket in Ireland," he added. "The team are quite experienced with these bigger games. We've played in World Cups; we've played against India before. We know what it's like when these big pressure games come around."

Tucker knows what India brings to the table.

"They are the showpiece of

the summer for fans in Ireland. We just want to make an impression, stay nice and relaxed and play with confidence. That's our main motto going forward."

"We've had a lot of cricket this year. We've been very well prepped, especially in T20 cricket. We've come off a decent run there in Scotland where we managed to qualify for next year's World Cup, so I think everyone's feeling excited," he added.

The series will mark the return of pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah who will be back to lead India after an injury layoff of about one year.

His recurring back injury has ruled Bumrah out since India's home series against Australia in September last year in the build-up to the T20 World Cup.

Bumrah will be leading a second string side with opener Rituraj Gaikwad as his deputy.

India under Hardik Pandya lost their last T20I series against the West Indies 3-2 in the Caribbean and the USA.

"We had two great games against India last summer and I think everyone's really looking forward to the big build-up, and the exciting crowd. They're going to come with that energy and it is going to be great," Tucker said.

The 26-year-old is coming from a 93-ball 133 in Lightning's demolition of North West Warriors in an Inter-Provincial Cup game on Monday.

"It was good to be out there for a long period of time and figure out some quirks that haven't been quite right throughout the summer. It's brilliant to get that kind of energy, and that excitement, going into that big series," he said. (PTI)

Indian archers bag two bronze medals in World Cup Stage 4



PARIS, Aug 17: Indian recurve archers clinched two bronze medals in the men's and women's team events at the World Cup Stage 4, here on Thursday.

Indian men's recurve team of Dhiraj Bommadevara, Atanu Das and Tushar Shelke defeated Spain's Andres Temino, Yun Sanchez and Pablo Acha 6-2 (54-56, 57-55, 56-54, 57-55) in the bronze medal play-off.

The second-seeded Indian men's team misfired an arrow in their semifinal loss against Chinese Taipei to miss out on a gold medal match.

The Indian trio lost out in straight sets 0-6 (54-56, 47-58, 55-56).

The women's team also met with a similar fate as they put up a sloppy show to be blanked 0-6 (52-57, 47-56, 52-53) by their Chinese Taipei rivals in the semifinal.

The trio of Ankita Bhakat, Bhajan Kaur and Simranjeet Kaur hit thrice in the red circle (8-8-7) in the first set, while the second was worse when they shot three 7s and one 8 to manage a poor 47.

Chinese Taipei also shot a poor 53 in the third set but Indians failed to improve lost the set by one point with three 8s and went out of a gold medal contention.

In the bronze medal play-off, the Indian women's team overcame a two-set deficit to get past Mexico 5-4 (52-55, 52-53, 55-52, 54-52) (27-25) in the shoot-off. (PTI)

PCB includes Imran Khan in revised video but controversy refuses to die

KARACHI, Aug 17: In an apparent bid to end the controversy over the release of a video in honour of the former players, the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) has created more problems for itself.

The PCB had faced a lot of backlash on social media over completely ignoring former captain Imran Khan in the tribute video released on August 14.

Late Wednesday night, the PCB came out with an inexplicable explanation that due to duration problems, the tribute video was abridged and some important clips were missing from it but it had been rectified in the complete version.

It also said the PCB had launched a promotional campaign leading up to the 2023 World Cup and the tribute video was part of it.

The interesting part is that the duration of the earlier video from which Imran was missing and the "completed" version are around the same duration but this time the board has hacked all the clips and pictures of Wasim Akram and replaced them with Imran.

Cricketers fans are now asking and wondering on social media where has Wasim disappeared.



Wasim had on Tuesday lashed out at the PCB completely overlooking the role of Imran in some of Pakistan cricket's most memorable and iconic moments. Pakistan's former captain Rashid Latif said the PCB explanation was hard to digest because the tribute video was modified after nearly 48 hours.

"Why wasn't the mistake accepted and resolved as soon as the backlash started on social media and in the media," he questioned.

He also noted that the PCB had a verified X (formerly Twitter) account which meant it can upload clips and videos up to 7-8 minutes duration and secondly there was no duration bar on Youtube as well for the PCB channel to upload longer videos. "So where does this duration problem come in for PCB?"

"It is an attempt to cover up and save face but the PCB still needs to give answers as to who was responsible for authorizing, making, approving and releasing the video," he added.

Ironically, the PCB also got mixed reactions after it uploaded a two and half minute video on Thursday trying to chronicle the journey of Pakistan in all the World Cups from 1975 to 2019.

The video is mostly without any voice over or proper footage of Pakistan's World Cup appearances or key moments.

This has now left some people wondering if a 2:30 seconds video suffices to properly chronicle Pakistan's journey in the 50-over showpiece. (PTI)

Very easy to criticise team for T20I series loss but there were several positives: Ashwin

CHENNAI, Aug 17: The criticism of India's loss to the West Indies in the T20I series has not gone down well with veteran cricketer Ravichandran Ashwin who feels there were several positives as well despite the defeat.

India lost the closely-contested T20I series 2-3 after winning the Test and ODI series, but losing to a side that failed to qualify for the Super 12s during the 2022 T20 World Cup, has critics targeting Hardik Pandya's side.

"Obviously, after losing the series, many of them are criticising (the team) and (are) upset. It's understandable. But we can see this loss from two perspectives. Many players did well for India," said Ashwin on his YouTube channel.

Ashwin felt it's not easy for any youngster to go and perform on foreign soil straightaway.

"It is very easy to criticise the team on social media since they lost to a side that did not qualify for the last T20 World Cup (Super 12) and the 50-over World Cup (in India this year). In all countries, there will be some innate secrets (home advantage).

"Local players will know these little things more than the visiting team's players, especially when the visitors are youngsters. When I visited West Indies, England and Australia for the first time, I had to learn various little things," said Ashwin.

"So many youngsters would have



learned so many things when they toured the West Indies for the first time. They will become better as cricketers. They will definitely get better from here," he added.

Ashwin has all praise for young batter Tilak Varma, who emerged the highest run-getter in the T20Is, and opener Yashasvi Jaiswal.

"The emergence of Tilak Varma as a

batter (is positive). In the final T20I, he chipped in with the ball, too. Suryakumar Yadav continued (his) brilliance in T20 cricket...his fearless batting."

"The opening combination of Shubman Gill and Yashasvi won us the fourth T20I. Jaiswal did not play well in his first T20I (third T20I of the series). (But later) his approach made us wonder if he is going

to be the future of T20I batting," said Ashwin.

"He went for the shots from the very first over. It was a breathtaking batting performance in the second game. We have so many youngsters in the pipeline."

Jaiswal scored just one in his debut T20I but in his second game (fourth of the series), he scored an unbeaten 84 and



shared a 165-run stand with Shubman Gill.

Ashwin also complimented India opener Prithvi Shaw, who slammed a superb 244 as Northamptonshire defeated Somerset in the One Day Cup in England recently.

Shaw backed it up with another impressive unbeaten hundred against Durham before a knee injury ruled him out for the rest of the season.

Ashwin hailed him as an "outstandingly talented player".

"I saw the boundary snippets from his knock. It really looked good, and that was an exceptional knock. We all know Prithvi Shaw's extraordinary bat swing, and he is an outstandingly talented player."

"Both (Cheteshwar) Pujara and Shaw have done really well. Pujara is going through an amazing run of form. This is giving valuable game time for both," he said.

"Really happy for Prithvi Shaw because he has seen plenty of ups and downs in his short career so far. So, for someone like him, away from home in England, seeing new players will be a bit of fresh air for him."

"He will have plenty of learning about his life, work ethic, cricket and what not (in England), because he will be in a position to teach a few youngsters in England as well. Even that can transform your cricket." (PTI)