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- Russian missiles kill 7 in Ukrainian city; Kyiv accuses Moscow
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- Oppn parties move privilege notice against Piyush Goyal
- Ktaka CM orders CID probe into bribery charge against Agriculture Minister

M'laya govt takes up Assam border issue with PM

HT Bureau

SHILLONG, Aug 8: Meghalaya chief minister Conrad K Sangma, alongside Speaker of the Meghalaya Legislative Assembly Thomas Sangma and State Cabinet ministers, called on Prime Minister Narendra Modi in New Delhi on Tuesday.

The delegation submitted a memorandum to the Prime Minister seeking his intervention in various issues including border dispute with Assam.

"The Prime Minister heard our concerns, and assured us to look into it. We thank him for giving us this opportunity," the chief minister said, while highlighting the issues that were discussed.

On the Assam-Meghalaya area of differences, chief minister

Sangma sought the support of the Prime Minister for the ongoing resolution of the remaining six out of twelve disputed areas between Assam and Meghalaya.

He told the Prime Minister on the reconstitution of three Regional Committees to assess the current status of the remaining six disputed areas.

The committees were tasked with verifying village claims, establishing geographical locations, and preparing asset registers in collaboration with both state governments.

Notably, six areas were successfully resolved in March 2022, with an agreement signed in the presence of Union Home Minister Amit Shah. A joint survey by both states is (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

Sparks fly in LS, debate to continue today

PM terms no-trust motion as test of opposition's 'confidence'

● Oppn slams govt for 'failure' to contain violence in Manipur, Haryana

NEW DELHI, Aug 8 (PTI):

Sparks flew on the first day of the debate on the no-trust motion moved by the Congress with the opposition on Tuesday asserting that it was forced to do so to break Prime Minister Narendra Modi's 'maun vrat' (vow of silence) on Manipur and the treasury benches hitting back saying it was a no-trust vote against a 'poor person's son' who has worked for the welfare of the people.

Several opposition leaders, including Congress MP Manish Tewari, on Tuesday targeted the government, alleging that it failed to contain violence in BJP-led states of Manipur and Haryana.

Participating in the debate on the no-confidence motion against the government, Tewari in Lok Sabha



said it has "failed" on various fronts, including national security, economic growth, communal harmony and independence of institutions, in the last nine years. This is unfortunate, he said.

Modi on Tuesday said that the

opposition brought the no-confidence motion against his government to test the confidence of its own alliance members as the INDIA bloc is marked by distrust among its constituents.

Addressing MPs at a closed-

door meeting of BJP's parliamentary party, he described the opposition alliance as "ghamandia" (marked by arrogance) and congratulated the party's Rajya Sabha members for the "semi-final" win in voting on the Delhi services bill.

Union minister Arjun Ram Meghwal quoted Modi as saying that the opposition brought the no-confidence motion despite the fact that the government enjoyed a strong majority.

The opposition parties had formed the Indian National Developmental Inclusive Alliance (INDIA) to prevent the ruling BJP-led NDA from coming to power for a third term under Modi.

With the ruling party certain to defeat the no-confidence motion in Lok (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

Gaurav Gogoi invokes Atal to target PM

NEW DELHI, Aug 8 (PTI):

The opposition on Tuesday invoked BJP veteran Atal Bihari Vajpayee to target Prime Minister Narendra Modi and remind him of 'rajdharm', as it accused him of taking a "vow of silence" over crucial issues such as the ethnic violence in Manipur.

Initiating the debate on the no-confidence motion against the government in Lok Sabha, Congress member Gaurav Gogoi recalled that former prime minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee had visited Gujarat (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

Come as 'guest' to see changed Assam, Himanta to ULFA-I chief

GUWAHATI, Aug 8 (PTI): Chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Tuesday invited United Liberation Front of Asom (ULFA-I) chief Paresh Barua to visit the state as a "guest" and witness the changed situation over the decades.

Talking to reporters on the sidelines of a programme here, Sarma said the invitation to Barua is not for taking part in any talks, but to witness the developed and peaceful Assamese society today.

"Paresh Barua himself is a knowledgeable person. It does not mean that he will come because I have invited him. He will act according to his own wisdom and logic."

"However, I feel that if he stays in Assam for just seven days, he will realize that the old Assam has changed a lot..." he said.

Sarma said that once Barua had a feeling that outsiders occupied everything in Assam, but now a large number of Assamese youths stay in Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh as the situation has changed.

Asked if he will facilitate the militant leader's visit to Assam, the Chief Minister said, "Yes, everything. As I am inviting him, I will invite with full responsibility for all arrangements. If he comes and stays for 7-10 days, he himself will understand the situation."

Drug Bust

HT Bureau

DIPHU, Aug 8: Acting on a secret information, a special naka was set up on Tuesday night at 1.30 am by C/20 BN CRPF U/C Ravi Gill (A/C) and Assam Police led by ASP (security), John Das, and assisted by OC Bokajan and OC Khatkhathi at Janakpukhuri under Khatkhathi Police Station and recovered 45 boxes of soap cases of heroin weighing 566.84 grams from a Gypsy bearing registration No NL 07 CC 0629. The following two persons have been arrested, namely S Sivicho John Thro (30) and S/o Sani Thro of village Khullen under Tadubi police station district Senapati, and Rapu Elea (24) and S/o Stephen of village Phaibung Khonou under Tadubi police station district Senapati. A case has been registered, and further investigation is underway to find out linkages.



Trinamool Congress' Assam unit president, Ripun Bora during the Assam Trinamool Congress protest against skyrocketing prices of essential commodities in front of DC office, Kamrup Metro in Guwahati on Tuesday. UB Photos

Assam Rifles replaced by Manipur Police, CRPF at Bishnupur checkpoint

GUWAHATI, Aug 8 (PTI): The Assam Rifles personnel, based at Moirang Lamkhai checkpoint in Manipur's Bishnupur district, where fresh violence erupted last week, have been withdrawn and substituted by the CRPF and the state police, a notification said.

The withdrawal of Assam Rifles comes at a time when several groups of women in the valley districts launched a demonstration on Monday, demanding the removal of the paramilitary force from the ethnic strife-torn northeastern state.

The notification, issued by additional director general of police (law and order) L Kailun said, "The checkpoint at Moirang Lamkhai on the Bishnupur to Kangvai Road shall be manned by the civil police and 128 Bn CRPF in place of 9 AR with immediate effect and until further orders."

Assam Rifles has been contacted, and a response from the paramilitary force is awaited.



Meira Paibi, a body of Meitei women blocked a road at Hodam Leirak and Kwaikethil in Imphal West district and Angom Leikai and Khurai areas in Imphal East on Monday, demanding removal of Assam Rifles from Manipur. They claimed that the paramilitary force has brutalized the locals during the recent agitations in the strife-torn areas.

Meanwhile, the administrations of Imphal East and West districts increased the curfew relaxation by two hours on Tuesday.

The curfew has been relaxed in Imphal East and Imphal West from 5 am to 2 pm, officials said.

For Thoubal district, it will be relaxed from 5 am to 4 pm and for Kakching, (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

Cong holds LS polls strategy meeting on Assam

NEW DELHI, Aug 8 (PTI): Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge on Tuesday asked party leaders and workers in Assam to reach out to people and expose the "misgovernance" of the BJP, as he chaired a Lok Sabha poll strategy meeting for the northeastern state.

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, All India Congress Committee (AICC) in-charge of Assam Jitendra Singh, Assam Pradesh Congress Committee chief Bhupen Borah and MP from Assam Gaurav Gogoi among others attended the meeting here at the AICC headquarters.

"In Assam, the Congress party is gearing up for the Lok Sabha elections. We are reinvigorating the organisation. All leaders and workers must (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

No question of Brexit-like referendum on abrogation of Article 370: SC

NEW DELHI, Aug 8 (PTI): There is no question of a Brexit-like referendum on abrogation of Article 370 in Jammu and Kashmir, the Supreme Court said on Tuesday, as it grappled with the question as to whether its repeal was constitutionally legal.

India, it said, is a constitutional democracy where the will of its people can be ascertained only through established institutions.

Brexit was the name given to the United Kingdom's departure from the European Union. Britain's exit from the EU was actuated by a rise in nationalistic fervour, daunting immigration issues, and a distressed economy.

The remark by the five-judge bench headed by Chief Justice DY Chandrachud came following the submission by senior advocate



Kapil Sibal that the abrogation of Article 370 of the Constitution, which accorded special status to the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir, was a political act like Brexit where the opinion of British citizens was elicited through a referendum. This was not the case when Article 370 was repealed on August 5, 2019, he said.

Sibal was appearing for National Conference leader Mohd Akbar Lone, who has challenged the abrogation (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

Some researchers believe that the Mottled Wood Owl and the West Himalayan Bush Warbler are only (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

We challenge you to furnish details of Union ministers' visit to Manipur in last 97 days: Cong slams Rijiju



NEW DELHI, Aug 8 (PTI): The Congress on Tuesday hit out at Union Minister Kiren Rijiju over his remark that the prime minister has directed ministers to visit the Northeast every 15 days, challenging him to furnish details of the

visits of Union ministers to Manipur in the last 97 days.

Intervening in the debate on the no-confidence motion against the government, Rijiju said, "When our government was formed, in the first cabinet meeting, (Prime Min-

ister Narendra) Modi ji made a group and said that every 15 days, five cabinet ministers and seven ministers of state must tour the Northeast. It is still going on, all the ministers sitting here have toured the northeast."

"PM Modi has also given directives to officials to visit the Northeast and meet people. There is no meaning of ruling from Delhi, one can reach the people through service. You never thought about this. The prime minister has won the confidence of the people," Rijiju said.

Reacting to the remarks, Congress general secretary Jairam Ramesh said that during the no-confidence motion in Lok Sabha, union (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

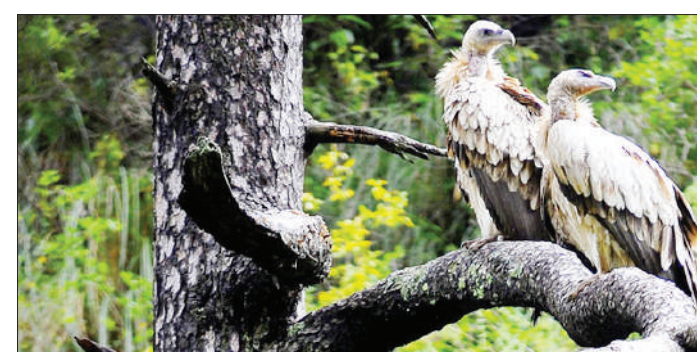
KOLKATA, Aug 8 (PTI): A study by ZSI (Zoological Survey of India) has revealed that there are as many as 78 bird species which are found only in India.

There is a rich diversity of 10,906 bird species in the world, and of them, India is home to 1,353. Zoological Survey of India scientist Amitava Majumder said.

These 1,353 bird species account for 12.4 percent of the global avian diversity, he said.

According to the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) categorisation, 25 of the 78 bird species, which are found only in India, are classified as 'threatened', the scientist said.

"Seventy-eight bird species are found only in the country's geographical region. On the occasion of the 75th Independence year, we



have focussed on 75 such species in the book, '75 Endemic Birds of India', Majumder told PTI.

These selected winged species exhibit "remarkable distribution patterns" across various regions of the country, he said.

Twenty-eight bird species are restricted to the Western Ghats, 25 to

the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, four to the Eastern Himalayas and one each to the Southern Deccan plateau and Central Indian Forest, the scientist said.

Of the 25 'threatened' species, three are listed as 'critically endangered', five as 'endangered', and 17 as 'vulnerable'.

Eleven species are categorised as 'near threatened'.

Majumder said three bird species - the Manipur Bush Quail (*Perdica manipurensis*), listed as 'endangered' by IUCN, the Himalayan Quail (*Ophrysia superciliosa*), categorised as 'critically endangered', and the Jerdon's Courser (*Rhinoptilus bitorquatus*), classified as 'critically endangered', - have not been included in the ZSI publication.

According to records, the Manipur Bush Quail was last sighted in 1907, while the Himalayan Quail and the Jerdon's Courser were last seen in 1876 and 2009 respectively, he said.

Some researchers believe that the Mottled Wood Owl and the West Himalayan Bush Warbler are only (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

Of the 25 'threatened' species, three are listed as 'critically endangered', five as 'endangered', and 17 as 'vulnerable'

78 species of birds are found only in India: Report

Guj HC quashes NIA court order which sentenced businessman to life imprisonment for leaving hijack threat note on flight

AHMEDABAD, Aug 8 (PTI): The Gujarat High Court on Tuesday quashed and set aside a 2019 order of a NIA court sentencing a businessman to life imprisonment for leaving a hijack threat note on a Mumbai-Delhi flight in 2017, saying the trial court sentenced him for the offence of hijacking "on the premise of evidence which is tainted with doubt."

Businessman Birju Salla was the first person to be booked under the stringent Anti-Hijacking Act, 2016. The NIA had filed a chargesheet against him under sections 3(1), 3(2)(a) and 4(b) of the Anti-Hijacking Act, 2016. A division bench of HC Justices AS Supreya and MR Menagdey said the appellant (Salla) is acquitted from the offences under sections 3(1) and 3(2)(a) of the Act. As a sequel the sentence under section 4(b) of the Act is set aside, it added. The HC also directed that ₹ 5 crore fine which Salla was ordered to pay be refunded in case it is already paid.

The special National Investigation Agency (NIA) court in Ahmedabad on June

11, 2019 sentenced Salla to life imprisonment under the Anti-Hijacking Act, 2016, and imposed a fine of ₹ 5 crore for leaving a hijack threat note on a Mumbai-Delhi flight in October 2017.

Salla had become the first person to be booked under the stringent Anti-Hijacking Act, 2016, which replaced a vintage law of 1982. He was also the first person to be put under the "national no fly list".

While quashing and setting aside the NIA court order against Salla, the HC said it does not subscribe to "the view expressed by the trial court convicting and sentencing the appellant for the offence of hijacking on the premise of evidence which is tainted with doubt." It also directed that ₹ 5 crore fine which Salla was ordered to pay be refunded in case it is already paid, and his properties seized and ordered to be confiscated by the investigation officer under provisions of section 19 of the Act be released.

The high court also directed crew members of the affected flight to refund the amount of compensation in case the same



was paid as per directions of the trial court. The trial court had said ₹ 5 crore fine submitted by the convict shall be distributed among the crew members and passengers on board the affected plane.

"In the alternative, the state is directed to pay the amount which is paid to the crew members, and it will be open for the state to recover such amount from the crew members," the HC bench said in its order. Salla was accused of creating a hijack scare by

planting a threat note written in English and Urdu in the tissue paper box of the aircraft's toilet on October 30, 2017.

The NIA had said Salla prepared a "threat note" in both English and Urdu language and placed it "intentionally" in the tissue paper box of the toilet near the business class of the Mumbai-Delhi Jet Airways flight on October 30, 2017, thereby jeopardising the safety of passengers and crew on board. He was arrested after the plane made an emergency landing at the Ahmedabad airport after a female flight attendant found the note in the washroom which read, "there are hijackers on board and explosives on the plane".

As per the prosecution, Salla confessed to the crime and told investigators he had done it in the hope that it would force Jet Airways to close its Delhi operation and his girlfriend, who worked in the airline's office in the national capital, would come back to Mumbai. The note asked the plane to be flown to Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK). The note ended with the words "Allah is Great".

US inflation data later this week Markets fall as investors turn cautious ahead of RBI monetary policy review



MUMBAI, Aug 8 (PTI): Benchmark equity indices fell on Tuesday as investors turned cautious ahead of the key events -- RBI's monetary policy and the US inflation data -- due to be announced later this week.

Continuous foreign fund outflows and weak trend in Asian and European markets also played spoilsport for the domestic markets.

The 30-share BSE Sensex fell 106.98 points or 0.16 per cent to settle at 65,846.50. During the day, it declined 200.85 points or 0.30 per cent to 65,752.63. The NSE Nifty slipped 26.45 points or 0.13 per cent to end at 19,570.85. Amid expectations of another status quo on the key interest rates, RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das-headed high-powered rate-setting panel MPC on Tuesday began its three-day meeting to firm up the next bi-monthly policy.

The decision of the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) would be announced on Thursday, August 10, by Governor Das. "On the global front, investors are adopting a cautious approach even amidst declining bond yields as they await the release of crucial economic data. The significant drop in Chinese exports has also contributed to concerns within the global market. "FII remain in a selling mode in the domestic market, yet active buying from DIIs is mitigating downside risks. Among sectors, PSU banks and pharma stocks inched up, while mid and small-cap stocks have continued to outperform the benchmark, showcasing their resilience," said Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services.

From the Sensex pack, Power Grid, Mahindra & Mahindra, JSW Steel, HCL Technologies, Sun Pharma, Nestle, IndusInd Bank, Reliance Industries, Bharti Airtel and ITC were the major laggards.

Tech Mahindra, Wipro, Bajaj Finance, State Bank of India, Bajaj Finserv, Axis Bank, Titan and ICICI Bank were among the major gainers.

"Caution prevailed in the market ahead of the RBI's monetary policy announcement, while weak European and Asian cues saw the local benchmarks linger in negative territory for the majority of the trading session. Listless trading could be seen till the MPC meeting outcome and global cues will continue to dictate trends in the local market," said Shrikant Chouhan, Head of Research (Retail), Kotak Securities Ltd.

In the broader market, the BSE smallcap gauge climbed 0.25 per cent and midcap index gained 0.15 per cent. Among the indices, metal declined by 0.94 per cent, telecommunication fell by 0.92 per cent, utilities declined 0.60 per cent, commodities dipped 0.54 per cent, power (0.39 per cent) and energy (0.32 per cent). Financial Services, healthcare, industrials, bankex, capital goods and consumer durables were the gainers.

In Asian markets, Seoul, Shanghai and Hong Kong settled lower while Tokyo ended in the green. European markets were quoting in the negative territory. The US markets ended in the positive territory on Monday. Global oil benchmark Brent crude fell 1.38 per cent to USD 84.16 a barrel. Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth ₹ 1,892.77 crore on Monday, according to exchange data.

RBI's rate-setting panel starts 3-day deliberations on monetary policy

MUMBAI, Aug 8 (PTI): Amid expectations of another status quo on the key interest rates, RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das headed high-powered rate-setting panel MPC on Tuesday began its three-day meeting to firm up the next bi-monthly policy.

The decision of the six-member Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) would be announced on Thursday, August 10, by Governor Das.

Experts are of the view that the central bank may continue with the pause on the repo rate as concerns on the inflation front and keeping the borrowing cost stable to maintain the economic growth momentum persist.

The borrowing cost, which started rising in May last year, has stabilised with the RBI keeping the repo rate unchanged at 6.5 per cent since February when it was raised from 6.25 per cent. Later, in the two bi-monthly policy reviews in April and June, the benchmark rate was retained. BofA Securities in a report said it expects the RBI MPC to deliver a hawkish hold on August 10 while retaining the stance as with-drawal of accommodation.

"We don't see the recent tomato price spike to push the MPC to hike rates right away, we have seen such episodes in the past," it said.

Dhruv Agarwala, Group CEO of Housing.com, said market analysts expect the central bank to opt for maintaining the current status quo on both interest rates and policy stance. The RBI is closely monitoring inflation figures, particularly in light of the recent significant surge in prices of essential food items, including vegetables, he said.



"Given the ongoing global economic uncertainties and persistent geopolitical risks, it is likely that the RBI will continue to exercise a cautious approach and keep interest rates unchanged, leading to a rate pause in its upcoming policy decision," Agarwala added.

The government has tasked the central bank to ensure retail inflation remains at 4 per cent with a margin of 2 per cent on either side. The central bank factors in the CPI to arrive at its bi-monthly monetary policy decision.

Puneet Kaura, Managing Director & CEO of Samtel Avionics, an MSME which majorly manufactures products for defense and railways opined that it is going to be a tough call with regard to the interest rate for the Reserve Bank as both the Federal Bank and European Central Bank have raised their benchmark interest rates.

"It is expected that the RBI will continue with a pause for the third time in a row as inflation is likely to be benign in the wake of a good monsoon. The MSME sector which faces problems in getting institutional credit at competi-

tive rates, however, would want the rates to come down," he said. India's retail inflation based on Consumer Price Index (CPI) rose to a three-month high of 4.81 per cent in June, mainly on account of hardening prices of food. The inflation, however, remains within the RBI's comfort level of below 6 per cent. The inflation data for July will be released on August 14.

According to Deepak Agrawal, CIO-Fixed Income, Kotak Mahindra Asset Management Company, the second quarter inflation is likely to be a little over 6 per cent as against the RBI forecast of 5.2 per cent. This is due to a sharp spike in vegetable prices, particularly tomatoes.

However, he does not expect any spill-overs from food inflation to core inflation, as the rise in prices are expected to be temporary. "This should be source of comfort for the RBI and we expect RBI to keep rates unchanged and continue with "withdrawal of accommodation" monetary policy stance," he said.

"Status quo is given in the MPC meeting this week, but the odds of interest rate hike or cut is equally poised going ahead. Global economic and inflationary environment are still not up to the mark because of renewed strengthening of crude oil prices and surge in global food prices on extreme weather conditions," Umesh Kumar Mehta, CIO of Samco Mutual Fund, said.

Kaushik Mehta, Founder & CEO of Ruloans Distribution Pvt Ltd said that the RBI's steadfast strategy of maintaining stable interest rates is likely to be the driving force for growth in retail loans, encompassing both personal and home loans.

Gold falls ₹ 80 to ₹ 60,120/10 gm; silver plunges ₹ 800

NEW DELHI, Aug 8 (PTI): Gold edged lower by ₹ 80 to ₹ 60,120 per 10 grams in the national capital on Tuesday amid a decline in the precious metal in global markets, according to HDFC Securities.

The yellow metal had closed at ₹ 60,200 per 10 grams in the previous trade. Silver also plunged ₹ 800 to ₹ 74,000 per kg.

Gold declined for the second consecutive day on Tuesday, with spot gold prices in the Delhi market trading at ₹ 60,120/10 gram down by ₹ 80 per 10 gram, Saumil Gandhi, Senior Analyst - Commodities at HDFC Securities, said. In the overseas markets, both gold and silver were trading lower at USD 1,932 per ounce and USD 23.09 per ounce, respectively.

The Federal Reserve's potential to continue tightening monetary policy helps the dollar gain some momentum, which is seen as a major factor weighing on the price of gold. In futures trade, the October contract of gold declined by ₹ 50 to ₹ 59,370 per 10 grams in afternoon deals on MCX. Silver futures also declined by ₹ 225 to ₹ 71,043 per kg on MCX.

Rupee falls 9 paise to close at 82.84 against US dollar

MUMBAI, Aug 8 (PTI): The rupee depreciated 9 paise to settle at 82.84 (provisional) against the US dollar on Tuesday weighed down by safe-haven dollar demand and a muted trend in domestic equities. Foreign fund outflows also weighed on the local unit, analysts said.

At the interbank foreign exchange, the domestic unit opened at 82.80 against the dollar and finally ended the day at 82.84 (provisional), registering a fall of 9 paise from its previous close. During the session, the local unit touched a peak of 82.78 and hit the lowest level of 82.85. On Monday, the rupee had settled at 82.75 against the dollar.

The Indian rupee depreciated on Tuesday on a positive dollar and a weak tone in domestic markets. FII outflows also weighed on rupee. However, weak crude oil prices cushioned the downside, said Anuj Choudhary - Research Analyst at Sharekhan by BNP Paribas. The US dollar gained on safe-haven demand on risk aversion in global markets and hawkish Fedpeak.

APB becomes 1st Indian Bank to introduce eco-friendly cards

GUWAHATI, Aug 8: Airtel Payments Bank (APB) has achieved a significant milestone by introducing the country's first eco-friendly debit card. This innovative move aligns with the bank's dedication to sustainability and the promotion of environmentally friendly practices within the financial sector.

The newly launched debit cards are crafted from r-PVC material, a certified eco-friendly substance. This decision not only reflects Airtel Payments Bank's commitment to the environment but also has a remarkable positive impact on it. With every batch of 50,000 r-PVC cards manufactured, a noteworthy

reduction of 350 kgs of carbon emissions is achieved compared to the conventional PVC cards widely used in the market. Airtel Payments Bank introduces two card variants under the Classic category—the Personalised Classic Card and the Insta Classic Card. Customers can easily order the Personalised Card through the Airtel Thanks app, while the Insta Card will soon be available at select neighborhood banking points by the end of the current quarter. These cards offer enticing rewards, including e-commerce benefits up to ₹ 10,000 and complimentary One Dine experiences across major Indian cities.

Ganesh Ananthanarayanan, Chief

Operating Officer of Airtel Payments Bank, expressed enthusiasm about the launch, stating, "We are excited to introduce our latest eco-friendly Debit Cards, crafted using recycled PVC. Airtel Payments Bank stands by responsible consumption and production for a sustainable future. These cards not only showcase our commitment to sustainability but also our promise to provide a secure and seamless banking experience. Our mission is to bring accessible and inclusive banking services to India, driving positive change in the financial industry and ensuring our customers enjoy a safe and convenient payment journey."

Omega Seiki inaugurates new dealership in Guwahati

GUWAHATI, Aug 8: Omega Seiki Mobility concurrently unveils two groundbreaking electric passenger vehicle models—the OSM Stream and OSM Stream City. The much-anticipated OSM Stream, available for purchase at an introductory price of INR 3.40 Lakhs, embodies versatility and style, offering an ideal electric three-wheeler experience tailored for seamless urban and rural commuting. In tandem, the OSM Stream City, an urban electric three-wheeler priced at ₹ 3.01 Lakhs (Fixed Battery), is also launched, boasting a sleek design and formidable performance. This vehicle guarantees an unparalleled riding experience, navigating congested streets with both agility and elegance, while furthering the cause of environmental preservation through its zero-emission technology.

With close to 200 dealerships already in operation, Omega Seiki Mobility is set to accelerate its footprint in the electric vehicle market by aiming to establish 300 dealerships by the end of 2023.

In a resounding move set to revolutionize the elec-

tric vehicle landscape in Assam, Omega Seiki Mobility concurrently unveils two groundbreaking electric passenger vehicle models—the OSM Stream and OSM Stream City. The much-anticipated OSM Stream, available for purchase at an introductory price of INR 3.40 Lakhs, embodies versatility and style, offering an ideal electric three-wheeler experience tailored for seamless urban and rural commuting. In tandem, the OSM Stream City, an urban electric three-wheeler priced at ₹ 3.01 Lakhs (Fixed Battery), is also launched, boasting a sleek design and formidable performance. This vehicle guarantees an unparalleled riding experience, navigating congested streets with both agility and elegance, while furthering the cause of environmental preservation through its zero-emission technology.

Akasa Air Celebrates a Successful Year of Operations

GUWAHATI, Aug 8: Akasa Air, marks a significant milestone as it completes one year of commercial operations in the Indian skies. The airline inaugurated its maiden commercial flight on August 7, 2022, flying from Mumbai to Ahmedabad. This anniversary highlights the airline's commitment to providing empathetic service, affordable options, and improved connectivity to the Indian population, ushering in a new era of growth for the Indian aviation sector. The introduction of the 20th aircraft marks a significant turning point for Akasa Air, signaling its entrance into international skies. This achievement paves the way for the airline's international operations set to commence by December 2023. This expansion will allow Akasa Air to showcase its exceptional and pioneering service to a global audience, marking a new chapter in the airline's growth story. In just its first year of operations, Akasa Air has impressively served over 4.3 million passengers and conducted more than 900 weekly flights. The airline has established a network of 35 unique routes across 16 destinations. Additionally, Akasa Air has successfully transported more than 25,000 tonnes of cargo across its network during this period. The airline has rapidly secured a 4.9% market share, demonstrating its remarkable growth from a starting point of 0%.

Gold Demand Resilient in H1 2023

GUWAHATI, Aug 8: The latest Gold Demand Trends report by the World Gold Council has unveiled encouraging developments for the precious metal. The first half of the year witnessed a record surge in central bank acquisitions of gold, supported by robust investment markets and resilient demand for jewelry. During the second quarter, gold demand (excluding OTC) experienced a marginal 2% year-on-year dip to 921 tons. However, the overall demand (inclusive of OTC) displayed a 7% year-on-year increase, signaling a robust global gold market. In the realm of gold investment, bar and coin demand saw a notable 6% year-on-year growth, reaching 277 tons in the second quarter and a cumulative 582 tons in the first half. This expansion was driven by key markets such as the US and Turkey. While gold ETFs experienced modest outflows of 21 tons in the second quarter, this was significantly lower than the 47 tons in the same period of 2022, resulting in net outflows of 50 tons in the first half of the year. Furthermore, total gold supply observed a substantial 7% year-on-year increase to 1,255 tons in the second quarter. Mine production is estimated to have achieved a record high of 1,781 tons in the first half. Louise Street, Senior Markets Analyst at the World Gold Council, emphasized, "Record central bank demand has been a defining factor in the gold market over the past year. Despite a slightly slower pace in the second quarter, this trend underscores the enduring significance of gold as a safe haven in the face of ongoing geopolitical tensions and challenging global economic conditions."

BEL eyes ₹ 20,300 crore turnover in 2023-24 with push from indigenous products expected to drive growth

BENGALURU, Aug 8 (PTI): State-run Bharat Electronics Limited has set a target of ₹ 20,300 crore for financial year 2023-24 as demand for indigenous products is driving growth for the company, its Chairman and Managing Director Bhanu Prakash Srivastava said on Tuesday.

In an interview with PTI here, he said the order book of the 'Navratna' PSU under the Ministry of Defence stands at around ₹ 64,800 crore as on August 1 this year. The Bengaluru-headquartered company has plans to start marketing offices in Brazil, Armenia and Kazakhstan, Srivastava said. He said export sales target for 2023-24 is USD 90 million.

BEL achieved a turnover of about ₹ 17,300 crore in the previous financial year, a 15



per cent growth. Srivastava pointed out that defence business in any country is closely linked to government policies that are based on factors like the geopolitical scenario, security threats and economic growth of the nation. The Government of India, he

noted, is focussing on self-reliance to encourage domestic industry and has imposed restrictions on import of certain category of defence equipment. "This will enhance the demand for indigenous products and services in the near future," he said. "BEL being a

leading indigenous solution provider in defence sector will have more opportunities in the coming years and this will drive the growth of the company". In order to increase indigenous solution and value addition, BEL, a technology-oriented company, has been investing approximately six to seven per cent of its turnover in research and development.

Constant efforts in indigenous development has led to achieving about 70 to 80 per cent of turnover from indigenous products, he said. BEL, Srivastava said, is giving increased thrust to harnessing the export potential of its defence and non-defence products that represent its core areas of business. "BEL has broadened its footprints into multiple geographic locations by opening overseas marketing offices in

Vietnam, Sri Lanka, Oman, the United States, Singapore, Nigeria and plans to start marketing offices in Brazil, Armenia and Kazakhstan," he said.

Also, capex investments like infrastructure and facility, along with strategic alliances with niche companies, including startups and MSMEs, are also some of the key factors driving the growth of BEL, according to him. The major orders expected by BEL during 2023-24 are: 'Buyer Nominated Equipment for Ships', 'Long Term Electronic Fuses for Ammunition', Radars, Tank Upgrade products and Electronic Warfare Systems for Ships, he said.

According to him, the defence segment continues to be BEL's main business and provides about 85 per cent of revenues.

ANNUAL MAINTENANCE CONTRACT & PROVISION OF EFFLUENT TREATMENT PLANT

E-Tender Notice No: TSK/Elect/133
Dated: 07-08-2023. E-Tenders are invited by the undersigned for the following works: **SN.1. Tender No. LV/T-14/TSK/848-R** Single Tender. **Brief Description of Item:** Comprehensive Annual Maintenance Contract (AMC) of Escalator No. E-5683 and E-5684 at New Tinsukia Railway Station for a period of 5 (Five) years. **Tender Value:** ₹16,00,000/-. **Earnest Money:** ₹33,200/-. **SN.2. Tender No. LV/T-14/TSK/849-R** Open Tender. **Brief Description of Item:** At New Tinsukia Railway Hospital, Dibrugarh Town Railway Station Platform: Provision of Effluent Treatment Plant (ETP) of 20 KLD Capacity (Power supply Arrangement). **Tender Value:** ₹8,28,339/-. **Earnest Money:** ₹16,600/-. **Date & time of Closing of Tender:** 13.00 hrs. of 29-08-2023 & opening at 15.00 hrs. of 29-08-2023. The complete information with the tender document of above e-tender will be available upto 13.00 hrs. of 29-08-2023 in website www.reps.gov.in

DRM (Elect), Tinsukia
NORTHEAST FRONTIER RAILWAY
 Serving Customers With A Smile

Two-day 'Jalshala' program raises safe drinking water awareness among students

HT Bureau

DIPHU, Aug 8: A two-day block-level program titled 'Jalshala', focused on raising awareness about safe drinking water, was conducted at the Rongkirdap Public Water Supply Scheme (PWSS) in Taralango. The event witnessed the enthusiastic participation of students from Rengbonghom HS School. 'Jalshala' is an initiative falling under the Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM) framework. The program began on Tuesday and is scheduled to conclude on Wednesday.

During the program, students were taken to the Taralango PWSS site to gain hands-on knowledge about the process of pumping water from a submersible pump to storage tanks and distribution points.



Sandeep Paul, the technical consultant (TC), and assistant executive engineer (AEE) of the PHE Diphu Rural Water Supply Division, stated that the students have acquired insights into safe

drinking water practices. They were given practical demonstrations of how groundwater is extracted using a submersible pump, treated, and distributed.

Karbi Anglong's Executive

Members (EMs) and Members of the Autonomous Council (MACs) have shown support and awareness for the program, according to TC Sandeep Paul. The PHE and JJM officials are dedicated to effectively implementing JJM across all areas. The Rongkirdap PWSS serves 180 beneficiaries, as mentioned by the AEE.

Following the completion of a water supply scheme under JJM, it is handed over to the Water Reserve Committee. This committee takes responsibility for maintaining and operating the scheme. Villagers can contribute a small amount, usually around ₹ 20 to ₹ 50, to address minor issues with the scheme. The AEE emphasised that community participation is crucial for the successful operation of the scheme.

Truck laden with suspected PDS rice bags seized in Boko, three arrested

HT Correspondent

BOKO, Aug 8: In an early morning operation on Tuesday, the Boko police seized a truck loaded with bags of rice at Boko Bazar. Officer in charge of Boko police station, Phanindra Nath, stated, "On August 7 at 03:30 am, we received information from a reliable source regarding a vehicle with registration number AS-25-EC-2428, suspected of carrying stolen Public Distribution System (PDS) rice. The vehicle was coming from the Champupara side, Chaygaon LAC, headed towards Meghalaya via Hahim." It is worth mentioning that the Public Distribution System (PDS) has evolved as a means of managing scarcity by distributing food grains at affordable prices or free of cost in some states. Over the years, PDS has become a significant component of the government's strategy for managing the food economy in the country.

Nath added, "Consequently, we intercepted the Tata LPT truck with registration number AS-25-EC-2428 at Boko Bazar. Upon inspecting the vehicle, we found three individuals inside the cabin—Sahabuddin Ali (32 years) from Kanhaba village, Chaygaon, who was driving the vehicle; Jakir Hussain (31 years) from Shampupara Pathar village (Chaygaon); and Sirajul Islam (29 years) from Shampupara Pathar village, Chaygaon."

Nath further explained, "Sa-



habuddin Ali was driving the vehicle. Upon inspection, we discovered that the truck was loaded with 200 bags of rice. The occupants could not provide any documentation to substantiate the suspected PDS rice load. Consequently, we seized the Tata LPT truck along with the 200 bags of suspected PDS rice and brought them to the Boko police station."

A case has been registered and is being investigated under Boko Police Case No. 367/23 US - 379/411 IPC, R/W Sec. 7 of EC Act. All three accused have been arrested and remanded to judicial custody.

Netizens and residents of the Boko area lauded the Boko police for their swift action against the smuggling of PDS rice. Police sources indicated that the market value of the 200 bags of rice exceeds ₹ 3 lakhs.

Name change

I have changed my name Mohammad Jiyaar Rahman Chowdhury to Jiyaar Rahman Chowdhury by a Notary at Hojai District for all my future public and professional purpose.

Jiyaar Rahman Chowdhury, College Road, Krishna Nagar, Ward No 12, Hojai town (Assam)

Name change

I have changed my name Mohammad Burhan Uddin Chowdhury to Burhan Uddin Chowdhury by a Notary at Hojai District for all my future public and professional purpose.

Burhan Uddin Chowdhury, College road, Krishna Nagar, Ward No 12, Hojai town (Assam)

AFFIDAVIT

By an affidavit sworn before the Notary Public, Judicial Court, Diphu, I have declare that my actual name is Sri Bablu Deb son of Lt Gopal Deb. But in my L.I.C. Policy No. 483471967 where my name is inadvertently recorded as Biresh Dev instead of Sri Bablu Deb. Sri Bablu Deb S/O- Late Gopal Deb Vill- Phuloni Bazar P.O.- Phuloni Dist- Assam

Unpaid wages plague JDA employees

HT Correspondent

JAGIROAD, Aug 8: A distressing situation persists as the employees of the Jagiroad Development Authority (JDA) have been denied their rightful monthly salaries for the past 48 months. The government of Assam established the Jagiroad Development Authority (JDA) in 1989 under the provisions of the Assam Town and Country Planning Act 1959 (as amended) to oversee the execution of master plans and zoning regulations. The government's initiative extended beyond the JDA, with the formation of an additional 24 development authorities across various towns in Assam, all aimed at master plan implementation and zoning regulation enforcement.

Each Authority consists of a chairman from the ruling party, a member secretary cum town planner from the relevant district's Town and Country Planning Office, along with several members including the local MLA, deputy commissioner, and department heads. These development authorities are primarily tasked with granting No Objection Certificates (NOCs) for building construction and land sale deed registration. While they also have the potential to undertake development schemes and generate revenue, a dearth of adequate funds and land has hindered most authorities from undertaking such initiatives.

Consequently, the authorities heavily rely on the fees collected from NOC issuance, which falls sig-

nificantly short of meeting the employees' needs. Adding to the challenges, the government has curtailed the jurisdiction of development authorities in accordance with the 74th amendment to the Constitution of India, excluding Urban Local Body (ULB) areas from their purview. This limitation restricts the authorities' fee collection to construction projects outside the ULB territory. Moreover, allegations have surfaced that the government has not provided funding to the development authorities for the past few years.

This predicament has cast a shadow over the employees of not just the Jagiroad Development Authority, but also those across all 24 development authorities, who endure sleepless nights due to the prolonged absence of their salaries.

The All Assam Development Authority Employees Joint Council (AADAEJC) has submitted numerous memorandums to the chief minister, Urban Development Minister, Commissioner, and Secretaries of the Urban Development Department (UDD). Despite these efforts, no concrete measures have been devised by the UDD to bolster the development authorities, including the vital matter of employee compensation.

The employees of the Development Authorities implore the government to address the dire circumstances they face and take immediate actions to rectify the situation.

AASU observes 10-hour fast in protest

HT Correspondent

MORIGAON, Aug 8: The All Assam Students' Union (AASU) organised a 10-hour 'annasan' demonstration as a mark of protest against the escalating costs of vital goods. The event took place at the Swahid Bhawan premises in Morigaon. Utpal Sarma, the interim state president of AASU, led the 'annasan' initiative, condemning the ruling BJP government for its inability to curb the surging prices of essential commodities.

Aaranyak-SSA hosts teachers' workshop on biodiversity conservation

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Aug 8: Aiming to instill a deeper understanding of biodiversity among students and teachers, and thereby foster a sense of responsibility for its conservation, premier biodiversity conservation organisation Aaranyak, in collaboration with Samagra Shiksha Assam (SSA) Baksa district, organised a 'comprehensive teachers' training workshop on 'Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainability Education'. The workshop took place on August 3 at Nikashi High School in Baksa district.

During the workshop, Jayanta Kumar Pathak, senior manager at Aaranyak, stated about the importance of employing scientific approaches to address environmental concerns, which include preserving traditional ecological knowledge, mitigating human-elephant conflict (HEC), and safeguarding water sources. Pathak engaged the participants in several interactive activities to illustrate his points.

Pathak underscored the immediate need to conserve the rivers and tributaries of the Bodoland Territorial Region (BTC), which serve as lifelines for numerous communities. He highlighted that the practice of sustainability is deeply ingrained in the indigenous community of BTC, exemplifying their reverence for the Siju tree in Bathou religion. This reverence is rooted in the belief that the tree's five branches symbolise the sun, earth, air, water, and sky - essential elements for sustaining life on Earth.

Drawing attention to the ecological uniqueness of northeastern India and the New Educational Policy, Pranab Jyoti Kalita, district programme officer of SSA, Baksa district, underscored the expanding roles and responsibilities of teachers. He emphasised the necessity of collaborating with knowledge partners from various fields, and discussed the role of Youth and Eco-Clubs in fostering critical thinking and environmentally-conscious citizens.

Tanvi Hussain, an official from Aaranyak, stressed the significance of integrating sustainability education into school curricula. She highlighted the importance of understanding biodiversity, natural resources, and waste management for sustainable living and livelihoods. Hussain accentuated the importance of documenting traditional knowledge and fusing it with modern science to address resource scarcity and achieve Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Rabiya Daimary, another Aaranyak official, engaged teachers in discussions about human-elephant conflict in Baksa district and the greater BTC region.

Cancellation, diversion of trains due to track maintenance

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Aug 8: Due to scheduled pre non-interlocking works between Gorakhpur Cant and Kasmhi stations on the North Eastern Railway route, a number of NFR trains passing through this section will experience alterations in their routes. The following trains are set to be cancelled: Train no 04654 (Amritsar Jn. - New Jalpaiguri) Special on August 9, 16 & 23, 2023; Train no 15621 (Kamakhya - Anand Vihar Terminal) Express on August 10, 17 & 24, 2023; Train no 04653 (New Jalpaiguri - Amritsar Jn.) Special and train no 15622 (Anand Vihar Terminal - Kamakhya) Express on August 11, 18 & 25, 2023; Train no 05734 (Kati-har Jn. - Amritsar Jn.) Special on August 12, 19 & 26, 2023; Train no 05616 (Guwahati - Udaipur City) Special on August 13, 20 & 27, 2023; Train no 05733 (Amritsar Jn. - Kati-har Jn.) Special and train no 15651 (Guwahati - Jammu Tawi) Express on August 14, 21 & 28; Train no 15652 (Jammu Tawi - Guwahati) Special on August 16, 23 & 30; Train no 05615 (Udaipur City - Guwahati) Special on August 16 & 23; and Train no 15078 (Gomti Nagar - Kamakhya) Express on Aug 28, along with train no 15077 (Kamakhya - Gomti Nagar) Express on Aug 29. Additionally, certain trains will be diverted to alternate routes: Train no 15707 (Kati-har Jn. - Amritsar Jn.) Express from August 6 to 29, 2023, which will travel via Chhapra Jn., Ghazipur City, Varanasi, Banaras, Prayagraj Jn., and Kanpur Central.

NABARD organises seminar on digital marketing of handloom products in Hojai

HT Correspondent

NAGAON, Aug 8: On the occasion of National Handloom Day, NABARD's Assam Regional Office, in collaboration with Hojai Unnayan Moncha, a local NGO, hosted a seminar focused on digital marketing for handloom products. The seminar took place at the Jugijan Dangoriabari Hall in Hojai last Monday.

Lasit Ch Das, sub-divisional officer of Hojai, graced the seminar as the chief guest. Other prominent attendees included Rajendra Perna, district development manager (DDM) of NABARD; Satish Baishya from the department of Handloom; Ankana Madhuri Nath from the department of Sericulture; Rupanjit Bhattacharya from DICC; Santanu Gogoi and Tapas Kumar Sarma from ASRLM; Tapas Kumar Sarma, regional manager of AGVB; Binod Kumar Dev, chief manager of State Bank of India; Anil Pappu, branch manager of Punjab National Bank; and Suraj Kumar Dutta, secretary of Hojai Unnayan Moncha, who participated as resource persons.

The seminar drew the participation of over 150 women weavers and various artisans from the greater Hojai region. Simultaneously, an exhibition showcased handloom products crafted by trainees of the LEDP (Livelihood Enterprise Development Pro-



gramme) under NABARD.

A press release revealed that more than 50 women weavers were organised into 10 activity-based Joint Liability Groups, receiving loans from Asom Gramin Vikash Bank, Hojai branch, and SBI, Hojai branch. Furthermore, NABARD and the Handloom and Textile department facilitated over 20 weaving trainees with appreciation letters during the seminar.

Rajendra Perna, DDM of NABARD, addressed the gathering, highlighting the organisation's commitment to enhancing livelihoods through skill development programs. These programs encompass activities like weaving, design development, artificial jewellery making, agarbatti and candle making, mushroom cultivation and processing, detergent and phenyl making. Perna stated NABARD's efforts in branding and presenting these unique products on platforms such as the Open Network for Digital Commerce, enabling their accessibility to national and international markets.

Divine blessings showered by Siddhguru Sri Siddheshwar Brahmarsi Gurudev

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Aug 8: Amidst the auspices of Vishwa Dharma Chetna Manch and the Sri Brahmrisi Ashram, the Amrit Mahotsav has been ceremoniously inaugurated in Guwahati. This momentous occasion was graced by the presence of Siddhguru Sri Siddheshwar Brahmarsi Gurudev at the ITA Center in Guwahati. The event was inaugurated by Governor Gulab Chand Kataria, who honoured the event as the chief guest. Notable attendees included Meghalaya cabinet ministers AL Haque and Sripal Jain, prominent industrialist Kailash Lohia, Sri Brahmrisi Ashram chairman Sarala Bothra, as well as members of the Reception Committee such as Shubhakaran Bothra, Kamal Baid, Amarchand Baid, Navratan Baid, national chairman of the Media Cell at Sri Brahmrisi Ashram, Ravi Pugalia, Manmal Lodha, Pankaj Jalan, Subhash



Surana, and numerous other esteemed dignitaries.

Expressing his sentiments at the Amrit Mahotsav, the Governor shared, "Participating in this divine event fills me with immense joy. India's soil has been blessed by the footsteps of rishis, saints, and mahatmas. Throughout history, on this sa-

cred land, great sages and saints have upheld the banner of sanctity through their austere practices. I humbly offer my respect and salutations to these venerable Mahatmas."

The Governor also received the blessings of Siddhguru Sri Siddheshwar Brahmarsi Gurudev, remarking, "We are all extremely fortunate to

have a Siddhguru in human form who tirelessly engages in spiritual practices to safeguard our lives."

Shubhakaran Bothra, a member of the Amrit Mahotsav Reception Committee, praised Siddheshwar Brahmarsi Gurudev as a profound Siddhguru, emphasising that his awakening of the Seven Kundalini and Seven Chakras since birth has elevated him to the stature of a Brahmarsi, transcending realms from Brahma Lok to Vishnu Lok and Shiv Lok.

Global chairperson of Sri Brahmrisi Ashram, Sarla Bothra, highlighted that Brahmarsi Gurudev possesses Ashta Siddhi and Nava Nidhi, which he employs for the betterment of the world. Ravi Pugalia, the national media president of Sri Brahmrisi Ashram, noted the substantial gathering of devotees from across the country who congregated in Guwahati for this significant event.

APPLICATION INVITED FROM ELIGIBLE CANDIDATES FOR SKILL TRAINING ON MACHINE OPERATION &REPAIRING

The Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK), Karbi Anglong, invites applications from eligible candidates residing in Karbi Anglong and West Karbi Anglong districts for a one (01) month duration certificate skill training programme on "Operation, repair, and maintenance of agricultural machinery", commencing in the first week of September 2023. The training programme aims to provide hands-on training in the operation, maintenance, and servicing of agricultural farm machinery. Details of the training programme are indicated below:-

Title of the training	Operation, repair and maintenance of agricultural machinery
Training duration	30 days (1 month)
Training mode	Residential
Total participants	25
Scheduled time	September, 2023
Last date of application	31.08.2023
Fee	The organizing institute, KVK Karbi Anglong, will cover all expenses related to the training, including travel, food, and lodging for the trainees during the training period.
Selection process	Candidates will be selected on a first-come-first-served basis among eligible applicants.

Eligibility Criteria for Application:

Domicile	The candidate should be a resident of Karbi Anglong and West Karbi Anglong district.
Education Qualification	Matriculation (Minimum).
Age limit	Age should not be less than 18 years and more than 40 years.
Desired documents	Identity proof Aadhaar card or Driving license or Pan card or Voter ID card Age proof HSLC or Class X Board Admit Card or Pass Certificate, Birth Certificate, PAN Card

- To apply, candidates must submit their application in the prescribed format (Annexure-I) along with the desired photocopies of documents either in person to the office of the Head, KVK, Karbi Anglong, or via email to kvk_diphu@aau.ac.in on or before 31.08.2023.
- Intending candidates may also obtain physical application forms from the Office of the Head, Krishi Vigyan Kendra, Karbi Anglong, Birla Gate, Diphu 782462, Assam.
- All shortlisted candidates will be intimated via telephone and required to bring their original certificates as indicated above on the day of the training to prove their identity and age.

Head
KVK Karbi Anglong

Annexure-I

APPLICATION PROFORMA
VOCATIONAL TRAINING ON
"OPERATION, REPAIR AND MAINTENANCE OF AGRICULTURAL MACHINERY"
KRISHI VIGYAN KENDRA: KARBI ANGLONG
FILL IN CAPITAL LETTER

1	Full Name					Attach Passport size Photograph
2	Fathers/Husband Name					
3	Mothers Name					
4	Gender					
5	Marital Status					
6	Occupation (Please tick✓)	Student	Farmer	Self employed	Others	
7	Date of Birth	Date/Month...../Year.....				
8	Education qualification					
Permanent Address	Vill./Town					
	Police Station					
	Post Office					
	Pin Code					
	District					
9	Email ID					
10	Contact No.					
11	Alternative contact No.					
15	Category (Please tick✓)	General	OBC	SC	ST	
16	Age proof ID (Please tick✓)	HSLC pass certificate	HSLC Admit Card	Birth certificate	PAN card	
17	Identity proof (Please tick✓)	Aadhaar card	Driving license	PAN card	Voter ID card	
18	Full Signature					
19	Candidate ID	To be filled by organizing institute.				

QUOTE OF THE DAY

When one must, one can.
- Charlotte Whitton

Crisis unfolds in Niger

In a stunning turn of events, a splinter faction of the Niger military orchestrated a coup on July 26, overthrowing President Mohamed Bazoum and leaving the nation's political landscape in turmoil. As Colonel Amadou Abdramane assumed control and declared the end of the preceding regime due to security concerns and governance issues, the international community's response has been swift and unequivocal. The African Union and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) promptly condemned the overthrow attempt, emphasizing the importance of respecting Niger's constitution and democratic processes. European leaders, the United Nations, and even Ethiopia's government joined the chorus in condemning any use of force to seize power. The United States expressed deep concern and called for President Bazoum's release from captivity, underlining the gravity of the situation. The coup marks the seventh in Africa's Sahel region since 2020, raising alarms about the region's stability. Mali and Burkina Faso, both under military rule, have stated their intentions to respond with full-scale invasions should ECOWAS or external military forces attempt to reinstate Bazoum. Amidst these tensions, neighbouring Mali and Burkina Faso's newfound alignment with Russia further complicates the already intricate geopolitical landscape. Niger's strategic significance in the Sahel cannot be overstated. With a history of instability in Chad, Mali, and Burkina Faso, the West viewed Niger as a crucial partner in countering rising jihadist movements and pro-Russian sentiments. However, the country's fragility, evident from its economic woes and dire human development indicators, complicates these efforts.

Russia's foreign minister called for the restoration of constitutional order, while Yevgeny Prigozhin, of the Wagner Group, denied any involvement in the coup but spoke of liberation from Western influences. As global powers tread cautiously, Niger's 27 million inhabitants, many living in extreme poverty, face an uncertain future. The upheaval also shines a spotlight on the West African franc (CFA) currency, a remnant of colonialism that constrains the region's economic autonomy. Despite providing some stability, the CFA franc limits intra-regional trade and independent industrial policies, perpetuating economic inequality. This, along with Niger's role in the global uranium trade, underscores the complexity of international interests intersecting with local turmoil. In light of the geopolitical struggle, the West's attempts to ensure security in the Sahel have led to mixed results. France's involvement, marked by assisting governments in the face of jihadist threats, often falters in remote regions. This power vacuum paves the way for coups and the emergence of Russian-backed forces.

The dilemma of intervention looms large, as any move by Western allies could spark a proxy war with Russia-backed factions, amplifying the refugee crisis and further destabilizing the region. In this ever-evolving crisis, regional stability, democratic principles, and humanitarian concerns must be balanced with geopolitical interests. The fate of Niger rests at the crossroads of global powers, with the potential to reshape the region's future. As world leaders grapple with the course of action, one thing remains certain: the people of Niger, burdened by poverty and youth, deserve a path towards stability and prosperity. The events unfolding in Niger not only challenge the status quo but also present an opportunity for the international community to rise above political interests and prioritize the well-being of a nation and its people. As we watch this crisis unfold, the eyes of the world remain fixed on the choices made by global leaders, decisions that will undoubtedly shape the Sahel's destiny for years to come.

Imran Khan is a victim of army's wrath

By: Tirthankar Mitra

Allows or a prison term seem to be awaiting the men who occupied the seat of power in Pakistan once they are eased or ejected out of it if during their tenure after they have crossed the army's path. As former Prime Minister Imran Khan marks time behind the bars following conviction on a charge of corruption, he may send up a silent prayer that his troubles end with his incarceration and does not lead him the road where death awaited Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto. Khan's conviction comes in the wake of an announcement that Pakistan's National Assembly would be dissolved on August 9; fresh elections would be held 90 days thereafter.

The election announcement followed by Khan's conviction sets the political stage in a country where democracy has often been seen to stutter. And army seems to have cast a long shadow on the election process unlike its eastern neighbour India. The election announcement and Khan's conviction seem to be in a tandem of sorts. The former prime minister has been convicted in what is called the "toshakhana" case in which he will be serving a prison term of three years.

The verdict ensures Khan will not be around as a candidate to test the people's will as he is excluded from the poll process for three years. Unless the higher court intervenes, he will be down and out for this time period which would be curtains for his political career that showed signs of going up on a rising graph if the run-ins between his supporters and the men in uniform following his arrest were anything to go by.

But even a cursory look at Khan's conviction order reveals that it had nothing to do with the May 9 attacks on army installations which triggered a swathe of violence which gripped Pakistan after his arrest. The man who led his national cricket team to a World Cup victory and reaped in his popularity in elections was charged with retaining gifts he received as Prime Minister.

The former Prime Minister was accused of corruption by the Election Commission of Pakistan. He is alleged to have submitted false details. Imran Khan is said to have taken away wrist watches worth Pakistan Rs 96.6 million. He did so after paying the exchequer about Rs 21 million. Khan was accused of corruption by Election commission of Pakistan. The legal process deviated from its usual pace by not dragging on.

Khan's fans and followers and even those not quite enamoured by his feats in white flannels and in a politician's garb are left clueless about the verdict. He has been charged with and convicted of a charge which turns out to be a practice institutionalised by his predecessors.

Khan's deed for which he is no longer a free man pales into insignificance when one recalls former President Asif Ali Zardari who apart from retaining all 182 gifts he received, drove off with a BMW and a Lexus. He cannot be accused of taking these objects of desire gratis having paid a fraction of the value, according to details made public early this year. Expensive watches and a bullet proof vehicle are among the gifts which former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif kept back.

More than six dozen gifts including a car were among the gifts which General Pervez Musharraf and his family walked away. Commonalities arise in the modus operandi followed by these worthy predecessors of Khan in retaining the gifts received in their official capacity. The values of the goodies were under declared and they did not find any place in the state treasury. Khan has every right to feel indignant for walking down a much travelled path. Clearly he has been singled out.

Yet there is not much Khan can do about it given the disarray his party Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf is now in. Hope of a backlash lies in tatters even though the populace is burdened with burgeoning inflation as also food and petroleum products shortage.

If the army brass, a stumbling block before restoration of democracy in Pakistan, is enjoying a quiet chuckle at Khan's expense, there is a message for the populace. If Khan finds himself in the dumps for rubbing the army establishment the wrong way, he stood up to the men in uniform unlike his predecessors who got away scot free for a deed for which he has been convicted. (IPA Service)

UPA's I.N.D.I.A.: Facelift or Transformation?

In these intriguing times, PM Modi adopts a rather unconventional approach by playfully associating the (purported) united opposition alliance, I.N.D.I.A., with acronyms like PFI, SIMI, IM, and EIC, hinting at possible parallels.

Teasing the newly formed alliance, PM Modi suggested that mere names do not automatically grant credibility. He asserts that the Opposition appears "desperate and directionless," which, in turn, places greater responsibility on the BJP. According to him, there are clear signs indicating that the NDA is poised to return to power for a third consecutive term.

Using a euphemism, the UPA has recently showcased their accomplishments by repackaging the same old wine in a new bottle. After a two-day meeting in Bengaluru, the opposition parties emerged with a newfound alliance called INDIA, standing for Indian National Developmental Inclusive Alliance, aimed at toppling the BJP in 2024.

However, upon closer inspection, this appears to be nothing more than a shamelessly audacious attempt to present the failed UPA era as a grand al-

liance, which exists only on paper. The irony lies in recalling HD Kumaraswami's picturesque oath-taking ceremony in Karnataka back in 2018, where the same opposition parties came together for a photo, reflecting a similar show of unity.

This coalition of contradictions, comprising 26 diverse and disorganized regional parties led by the declining Congress, is ambitiously attempting to transform their incoherent alliance into a formidable force capable of halting Modi's historic third term.

The use of the term 'INDIA' appears as a crass attempt to exploit nationalism and appropriate the BJP's resonating agenda, which has struck a chord with the Indian populace. But, do they truly believe the public is gullible and incapable of discerning this desperate and pathetic ploy?

Analyze the key players in this dysfunctional alliance:

1. The Congress remains the most significant stakeholder in the alliance, but it now appears as a mere shadow of its former self, grappling with one crisis after another under the leadership of the inept Nehru-Gandhis. Their authority has been openly



questioned by the G-23 mutineers, with many members abandoning the party as it struggles to stay afloat. To maintain its relevance, the Grand Old Party finds itself clutching at straws. One wonders what it can truly offer the country if it cannot even manage its internal affairs effectively.

2. A series of startling revelations made by different courts over the years shed light on Mamata Banerjee's TMC, a pivotal player in forming the coalition, being deeply entangled in politics of Muslim appeasement and intimidation. Under Didi's leadership, West Bengal has witnessed a disturbing

surge in political violence and communal tensions. One must question whether this is the kind of secularism that I N D I A aims to promote.

3. Arvind Kejriwal, the convener of AAP, seems to prioritize political stunts over effective governance. Despite his aspirations of expanding nationwide, his party in Delhi grapples with corruption issues. Setting aside the political rhetoric, the pertinent and critical question remains about the administrative capabilities he can truly bring to the table.

4. There are claims that Sharad Pawar's NCP has become proficient in orchestrating scams and concealing black money, with

DEGREE OF THOUGHT

By: Dipak Kurmi

Before 'Study in India,' take care of Indian students

By: Lalit Garg

Today's governance systems are becoming economically and politically driven, rather than in favour of public welfare and national sensitivities. Even for the basic needs, like education and medicine, the government's attitude has been providing tell tale signs. For this, we have had to pay very heavy prices for the privatization of health and education. See the irony that proper education is not being provided to the children of our own country, while extensive efforts are being made to provide advanced education to foreign children. For foreign students, the central government has launched a new portal 'Study in India'. Through this, international students will be encouraged to take admission in educational institutions of the country.

Inaugurating this portal, Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan and External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar described it as a means for the country to establish a strong international presence of Brand India in the field of education. Surely this can be a unique initiative from the point of view of India's prosperity and world prestige, but as for the question of Indian students, the problems still persist related to their education. Expensive education is becoming distant from common life, in such a situation, now that will take care of Indian students? 'Study in India' project is guided by the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. It reflects the government's commitment to make India the preferred educa-

tional destination, as well as to shape India's prosperous future. But how is it beneficial and useful for the deprived Indian students of higher education? The 'Study in India' website will provide information on undergraduate (UG), postgraduate (PG), doctoral level programs, as well as other educational programs including Yoga, Ayurveda, classical arts. In this, information related to educational facilities, research help will also be made available. But all this will be for the foreign students. Amidst all this, the efforts are also being made to improve the level of local education in the country.

One cannot lose sight of the fact that there is not a single name from India in the top 100 higher educational institutions of the world. Even today, foreign educational institutions remain the first choice for the higher education of capable families. Then how will we attract foreign students, even if we do, won't it be unfair to Indian students? What India's higher education will achieve from 'Study in India', which is already struggling with lack of resources and lack of better teachers, is a big question. Making education and medicine a business through handing them over to private hands, both have become too expensive; access to them for the common man has become complicated. Expressing concern over this, Dr. Mohan Bhagwat, Sarsangchalak of Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh said that education and health are the basic needs of every person, but both are becoming expensive and rare. The reason for this is the lack of availability and profes-

sionalism according to the rising population of India.

When we are not able to give proper education to the people of the country, then how can it be justified to open doors to the foreign countries, and spend huge resources of the government on them? In a country where the underprivileged group is already going through an ordeal to educate its future generation, the insensitivity and greediness of private schools and hospitals have raised voices of social discontent and rebellion. In such circumstances, there is a question mark on the government's intention to provide advanced education to foreign students.

Former President Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam has dreamed of making India a developed nation by 2020. Addressing the nation on the eve of the 57th anniversary of India's independence on 14th August 2004, he emphasized on education in his speech saying that 'India is in the process of becoming a developed nation in the next 16 years and it is not possible without education'. In fact, education is the most important element for prosperity and development. Everyone's access to educational facilities is very important. Still, education is not easily available for villages and poor families. India should spend 6-7 percent of its GDP on education. Governments are spending on education, but how much the poor and deprived sections get its benefits is a matter of speculation.

Politicians, educationists, officials and ministers who give long speeches on education are familiar with the wretched conditions

of the country. Who does not see these children selling peanuts in buses, begging at railway stations, roasting corn at crossroads, filling water in Biseri bottles in factories, selling vegetables on roadside or selling chaat. Why do they have to do this? How many people try to know this? The story behind the rickshaw-pullers, auto rickshaws and buses drivers is also similar.

Even if the policy-makers had considered the family situation of their personal driver, servant or maid, they would have easily understood a lot about such situations. It is also seen at some places that children who are young enough to play with toys are found selling toys in fairs and markets. They have nothing to do with books at all. Then how can they see the golden dreams of development? In these conditions, how will a new India - a strong India - take shape? Are far-reaching schemes like 'Study in India' not a rude slap on the face of these deprived children? IITs, NITs and universities like IISERs, IIMs, Central Universities, JNU, BHU may have slightly lower fees, but the process to reach here is very complex and competitive. Children reach there through struggling and studying easily. But now the exercise of increasing the fees is also going at a fast pace. Education is becoming expensive due to all government efforts and schemes, so the lower and working class of the country are forced to think how to arrange for the education of their children. In private colleges, so much money is spent that even the middle class' standing is deterred, then what to

say about the lower class? The real aim of the government is to hand over higher education to the corporate houses, to establish foreign universities and colleges in India, so that higher education can become a profit-making industry, instead of adding the expenditure of the government. When India became independent after two hundred years of slavery, we had many challenges and dreams before us. To face those challenges and to fulfill dreams, the constitution was made the main base. Rhetoric was placed on giving special emphasis on education, the basic right of the people, and it was believed that until education does not reach the people of the country, the concept of all-round development of the country is impossible. But unfortunately, there has been a steady decline in the government's investment in the field of education.

By the way, it is said that the process of privatization promotes the spirit of competition and it is very important for development. This seems to be false propaganda, because if we talk about India, the process of privatization has only given rise to monopoly, neglect, exploitation and inflation. The underprivileged of the country are facing huge loss, instead of profit due to this privatization process, be it in the field of agriculture, health or education.

Now with programs like 'Study in India,' education is likely to become a will-of-the-wisp for the deprived and underprivileged children of India. (The author is a journalist & columnist based in Delhi who can be reached at lalitgarg11@gmail.com)

Many Nepalese Gorkhas joining foreign mercenary groups including China

By: Ashis Biswas

Recent reports about the number of Nepalese Gorkhas joining mercenary groups like Wagner Army of Russia may be exaggerated, but Indian government is still concerned about China making a fresh attempt to recruit them as soldiers.

For some time, news of Nepalese Gorkhas being recruited by various agencies, reported at some length in international social media backed by videos, has led to a generally negative diplomatic fallout in south Asia and beyond. India stands squarely blamed because of its decision to introduce the new Agnipath recruitment scheme for future aspirant entrants to the Indian army. For decades, Gorkha applicants of both Nepali and Indian origin have been highly welcome within Indian army ranks, because of their fierce fighting spirit, sense of loyalty and discipline. On average over 1200 Gorkha youths from both countries joined the army, until last year. For the record, there are currently seven Gorkha regiments comprising (more or less) 40,000 heads in the Indian army, while the number of resident pensioners in Nepal is over 120,000.

However, some provisions of the Agnipath scheme were strongly rejected by Nepal Government, as it halted the recruitment of Nepalese citizens for joining the Indian army - ending a 200 year old bilateral arrangement!

GOI's new proposals ensure secured jobs for only 25% of initially selected youths, at the end of a 4 year arms and other training period also, there will be no mandatory pension or other social security benefits for retiring soldiers, completing their service tenure!

These conditions along with other game-changing alterations come as part of what have been described as part of an ambitious new GOI scheme to build a stronger, more modern army for the future. It needs stressing that there have been angry youth demonstrations in Bihar and other

parts of India against the Agnipath provisions, quite apart from the resentment reported from Nepal!

In part, the state of its economy as well as the unforeseen economic impact of the continuing Ukraine war might also have forced Nepal's break with India, which does not exactly improve the existing frosty relationship between the two countries. The assured recruitment to the Indian army was undoubtedly an economic opportunity especially for Gorkha youths to work out their future for themselves as well as their families, near home. The current extent of unemployment among job seekers is a high 12%, with only limited domestic opportunities available.

Given this backdrop, prospects of a monthly pay packet of around \$2500 US offered by Wagner recruiters according to reports, together with the offer of Russian citizenship on completion of one year's service as a soldier, are obviously attractive for physically fit but jobless youth in Nepal--or anywhere else in South Asia! The reports further suggest that there is no language bar --- Afghans and other mercenaries have also served in Wagner without knowing Russian! In fact, the offer of citizenship in an advanced country like Russia for a Gorkha soldier and family is another major incentive, besides being a sure confirmation that the full weight of a major power like Russia works in favour of Wagner. Despite being seen as a 'Transnational criminal organisation' by US Government authorities, the Wagner group until recently led by Yevgeny Prigozhin, had effectively intervened in military conflicts in Libya, Syria, Mozambique and more recently, in Crimea. US-EU aided armies and regimes had been fully or partially checkmated in the areas, as the controversial West-sponsored regime change operations failed spectacularly in Syria and parts of Africa as well.

Observers feel that the US-led opposition to the activities of the Wagner group-- not to mention the larger long term Western design to cut down Russia to size politi-

cally/economically/militarily-- has prompted the cautious response of Nepali diplomats and authorities regarding Gorkhas becoming part of armed East--against-- West hostilities. Kathmandu is determined to maintain its non aligned, neutral stance in the East vs West confrontation.

Recent Press inquiries have elicited the Nepalese response that a few individual Gorkhas, some of retirees, might have joined Wagner on their own initiative. They did not inform or seek permission from Nepalese authorities. Their number might be 12 or more, according to one report. As such, it was officially difficult for Nepal to intervene in the present situation. This comes in the wake of fresh reports of a renewed Chinese interest in recruiting Nepalese Gorkhas for the Peoples Liberation Army (PLA). There are suggestions that Nepali recruits could prove highly effective in standing up to Indian troops guarding the disputed Himalayan borders and adjacent regions. The Chinese border troops, it is common knowledge, had faced strong resistance from Indian border guards during the recent skirmishes at Galwan and other areas.

Observers recall that in 1962, Indian troops killed by the Chinese during the border conflict had included many Gorkhas. Beijing authorities reportedly invited them to join the Chinese and fight for them, but the Gorkhas refused. Evidence that the Chinese were now taking a fresh look at the situation became available in 2020, as Beijing authorities ordered a survey to ascertain why the Gorkhas had generally sided with India on most occasions, despite occasional Indo-Nepalese tensions.

Significantly, the Chinese have renewed such efforts now, as tensions and controversies plague Indo-Nepal relations during the tenure of the second NDA government led by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). Stronger Sino-Nepalese ties will also strengthen China's presence and influence in the strategic Himalayan region where the US has become more diplomatically active. (IPA Service)

Why Muslim women are divided on the question of a Uniform Civil Code

By: Zafar Aafaq

On June 27, Prime Minister Narendra Modi made his first public pitch for a uniform civil code while addressing party workers in Bhopal.

"Tell me how a house can function smoothly if there is one law for one family member and another law for another member," he said. More significantly, he alleged that opposition parties were "instigating" Muslims into opposing a uniform civil code in the name of personal law while ignoring their welfare. Modi's comments were a reflection of the Bharatiya Janata Party and its allied groups' long-held desire to abolish personal laws and approve a common code for all Indians, irrespective of religion, ethnicity or gender.

Currently, different religious and tribal communities have their own laws that govern their personal affairs, including marriage, divorce, adoption, and inheritance. In its campaign for a uniform civil code, the BJP has mainly targeted Muslim personal law, arguing that it discriminates against women as it allows Muslim men to have more than one wife, get a greater share in inherited property, initiate divorce, and deny alimony.

In Assam, for example, chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma has said his government will bring a bill to outlaw polygamy "within this financial year". In Uttarakhanda, the expert committee for a Uniform Civil Code, according to The Indian Express, is ready to submit its report and draft of the law.

The newspaper also reported that the Law Commission, which has invited suggestions from the public on such a code, is working on a draft where "personal laws that clash with the constitutional mandate of gender equality" will be examined and addressed – such as laws that allow polygamy or prohibit equal rights for women in inheritance of property. Under Islamic law, a Muslim woman is entitled only to half of her brother's share of inherited property. As the rhetoric around uniform civil code appears to highlight the need for gender justice in Muslim personal law, Scroll spoke to several Muslim women on their views.

While many supported the call for reform of personal laws, they questioned the Modi government's intentions behind. "It is an outright majoritarian demand," said Shayma S, a PhD scholar at Jawaharlal Nehru University whose work is on Muslim engagements with law and judiciary, adding the ongoing campaign was "not based on any goodwill or genuine care for Muslim women".



Sabah Khan, a Mumbai-based women's rights activist and co-founder of Parcham, said the debate on uniform civil code is politically motivated. "I feel this demonisation of Muslim personal law is to reap electoral dividends," Shayma S said the debate over a uniform civil code is an example of Muslims being forced to explain and apologise for their religious practices. "The media too is re-circulating this focus and creating an image of a community that needs to be disciplined, controlled and reshaped," she said.

The question of polygamy

The uniform civil code is not a solution to the discrimination faced by women, said many activists. "This country is too diverse to have a single code," Khan said, adding that personal laws are not completely either good or bad. She, however, supported the reform of Muslim personal laws to make them gender-just and align them with the spirit of equality in the Constitution. "We should be thinking about how to address inequalities within each personal law so that we have gender-just laws and everyone is equal before law as the constitution guarantees," Khan said, adding, however, that any reform should be the result of dialogue.

According to Khan, the provision of polygamy in Muslim personal law should be revoked because of how such an arrangement traps women in unequal relationships. The Muslim personal law in India allows a Muslim man to have more than one wife. "Sometimes it is the second wife who is treated unfairly and sometimes it is the first wife who faces discrimination," she said.

Polygamy, however, is not practised only among Muslims in India. According to the National Family Health Survey-5 carried out in 2019-21, about 1.9% Muslim women said their husbands had more than one wife – compared to 1.3% of Hindu women and 1.6% of women of other communities. Among caste groups, polygynous marriage, where a man has multiple wives, was found to be highest among Scheduled Tribe communities

(2.4%). In Assam, an expert committee formed to examine the state legislature's legislative competence to bring a law against polygamy acknowledged that "the practice of polygamy is not entirely unheard of among" the tribals. It has recommended that the Assembly "should deliberate upon this aspect at the appropriate level" and the "appropriate time" while bringing in a law.

Sania Mariam, a PhD scholar who heads a collective of young Indian Muslim women, however, said that instead of banning polygamy, the practice should be regulated. "The response from within the Islamic tradition would be that while you are getting married, you can clearly state in your papers that the husband will not engage in a second marriage or there would be an automatic divorce in case of a second marriage," she said. For a lot of women, polygamy was acceptable practice as long as the consent of everyone involved is sought, she said. Dr Asma Zohra, the former head of the now-defunct women's wing of the All India Muslim Personal Law Board, argued that banning polygamy would deny the second wife and her children legal status. "If they care about women, then where is their care for the second wife? Is she not a woman?" Zehra asked, adding that she opposes any calls for change in the personal laws.

An older demand

But organisations representing Muslim women such as the Bharatiya Muslim Mahila Andolan or BMMA have also advocated a ban on polygamy in the past. Discrimination cannot be justified in the name of personal law and customs, said Zakia Soman, the founder of BMMA.

"We continue to be governed by the 1937 Shariat Application Act, which allows polygamy and is silent on crucial personal issues like the legal age of marriage, guardianship, and mother-child custody," she said. "As a result, there is legal discrimination against Muslim women in matters related to marriage and family."

Soman said that the ideal solution to the issue was codifying personal law, but she added that the clergy was resisting such demands, which pushes women like her to look for relief in secular law and the uniform civil code. She claimed that a lot of affirmative rights granted by the Quran and Islam have not translated into legal rights in personal law.

For instance, in Islamic law, a bride has the right to Mehr, where a groom is obliged to pay a dowry to her in the form of money or possessions. But that is diluted in reality, said Soman. "Rather than pay a substantive mehr to the bride they

are made to say 'mehr maaf' or are paid Rs 786 as mehr. The absence of any law or guidelines to uphold Quranic injunctions leads to a systematic violation of rights of women," she said.

Scope for reform

Legal experts also raise questions over the government's plans to enact UCC in the name of reform, equality, and unity.

"Reform is a complicated and nuanced process. It is not as black and white as the majoritarian government makes it out to be where it confuses homogeneity with reform," said Shahrukh Alam, a Supreme Court lawyer. "On the one hand, they want to do away with the differences, but on the other hand, they discourage inter-faith and inter-caste marriage." Alam said any exercise towards reform should ensure the active participation of Muslim women. "You can't be doing things on their behalf without the presence of Muslim women in the debate," she said.

The clergy resist

On July 5, the All India Muslim Personal Law Board made written submissions before the Law Commission, opposing the proposal to enact the Uniform Civil Code. The board defended personal laws, saying that under the constitution, "different communities have been made entitled to different rights. Different religions have been given different accommodations."

Muslim women, however, expressed resentment towards community leaders and organisations over their alleged resistance to reforms in the personal laws. "The self-appointed Muslim organisations out to 'preserve' Muslim personal law are actually doing more harm to it by not initiating reforms. The organisations and the government seem to benefit from playing their politics on Muslim women for their own causes," rued Mariam.

She suggested that stakeholders should work to bring in Shariah-compliant reforms for women, as there is a massive diversity of opinions in Islamic jurisprudence. Soman said that the laws in Muslim countries like Morocco and Tunisia can be emulated to make personal laws more gender-just. Khan, too, argued that the Islamic laws need to evolve with time. A thousand four hundred years ago, when Islam began, she said, "it was a religion of social transformation with a futuristic outlook and gave so many rights to women including property rights in a deeply patriarchal society where a girl child was buried alive." Muslims should hold on to those principles to ensure that women get equal rights, including an equal share in the property, Soman and Khan said. (Courtesy: Scroll.in)

Taking care of your feet during Monsoon

By: Shahnaz Husain

Taking care of feet during monsoons can be quite tricky as they're exposed to dirt, germs, humid wet climate and fungal infections than any other body part due to prolonged and constant exposure to standing water and rainwater during a downpour.

Getting drenched in the rains is common during monsoon and it happens to almost everyone. Monsoons bring along an excess of humidity which causes into wet shoes, sweaty feet, cracked toes, fungal infections, itching, athlete foot and many other allergies.

Your feet bear the real brunt of monsoon. That's precisely why foot care is of extreme importance this season. Your feet are the most care worn part of the body during rainy season. You can avoid foot and toe infections during rainy season by taking some extra care.

The main problem during the Monsoons is high humidity and sweat. The feet are among the areas where germs accumulate and odour forms.

The waste matter, which is secreted with sweat, has to be removed by daily washing, to eliminate odour and feel fresh and clean. Pay special attention to your feet, while bathing. After washing them well, dry them thoroughly and apply talcum powder. If you wear closed shoes, talcum powder can be sprinkled inside the shoes. However, in the hot season, slippers and open sandals are best, as they allow maximum ventilation and help the perspiration evaporate. However, if you have no option but to wear closed footwear, make sure you're using fungal powder to prevent any infections.

But, open footwear also attracts dirt and therefore, foot hygiene becomes all the more important. After a hot day, soak your feet in cold water, to which some salt has been added. Developing a habit to wash feet right after an outdoor visit does wonders. Wash your feet with an anti-bacterial soap/mild shampoo with warm water thoroughly. Pat them dry immediately after without letting them be damp for a prolonged time.

A foot problem called "Athlete's Foot" develops more easily during hot and humid weather, because it thrives on soggy skin. If neglected, it can become a stubborn problem, with an itchy condition. Athlete's foot starts as a fungus infection. So, if there is dry scaling on the feet, especially between the toes, with some itching, consult a dermatologist without delay. Anti-fungal preparations are effective in dealing with the problem in the initial stages. However, excessive mois-

ture, caused by excessive sweating, tight shoes and humid weather can lead to bacterial activity and this worsens the condition. Avoid socks and wear open shoes, use talcum powder and keep the feet as dry as possible. If socks are a must, wear cotton ones. In fact, during the hot and humid season, the feet should be exposed to the air as much as possible.

Have a salon pedicure once a week. It keeps the feet in good condition and is also most relaxing! Here are some home remedies for Monsoon foot care:

Moisturize - Moisturising is the golden rule for feet during hot and humid monsoon season. Massage a moisturizing lotion with a nice fragrance gently on your feet, and wipe it off with a warm towel after a few minutes twice a day, in the morning after shower and at night before going to bed. Invest in a good foot cream that will keep your feet hydrated, prevent allergies, and keep the heels soft and smooth.

Foot soak: In one-fourth bucket of warm water, add half cup of coarse salt and 10 drops of lemon, or orange essential oil (if you cannot get essential oil, use half cup of lemon or orange juice). If your feet tend to sweat a lot, use a few drops of tea tree oil, as it has germicidal properties. It helps to deal with bad odour. Soak the feet for 10 to 15 minutes.

Foot lotion: Mix together 3 tablespoons of rose water, 2 tablespoons of

lemon juice and one teaspoon pure glycerine. Apply on feet and leave on for half an hour.

Foot care for dryness: In one-fourth bucket cold water, put 2 tablespoons honey, one tablespoon herbal shampoo, one tablespoon almond oil. Soak feet in it for 20 minutes.

Cooling foot bath: Add rose water, lemon juice and a splash of eau de cologne in cold water and soak feet in it. Cools, cleans and removes odour.

Toenails: Keeping your toenails groomed by cutting them to an optimal short length is a way of making sure that an unnecessary amount of dirt doesn't get accumulated in your toenails. Additionally, moisture causes toenails to become brittle so a regular trim keeps it under check.

Cooling massage oil: Take 100 ml olive oil and add 2 DROPS eucalyptus oil, 2 drops rosemary oil and 3 drops khus, or rose oil. Mix together and keep in an airtight glass jar. Use a little of this for foot massage. It cools and protects the skin and keeps it healthy. (The author is an international fame beauty expert and is called the Herbal Queen of India)



What is the best diet for women?

By: Louisa Richards

People need a balanced diet for health and well-being regardless of their gender. Even though no particular diet is best for women, there are specific areas to consider when it comes to supporting women's health. This article explains what a healthy diet is and what it should include. It also looks at different diets that are suitable for women and the scientific evidence behind them.

What is a healthy diet?

The Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2015–2020 recommend that people eat healthful, nutritious foods that are not calorie dense, such as vegetables and whole fruits. Healthful eating patterns tend to include nutrient dense forms of:

- a variety of vegetables in different colours
- legumes, such as beans and peas
- fruits (mostly whole fruits)
- protein foods, such as lean meats and poultry, fish and seafood, soy products, and nuts and seeds
- grains (at least half of which are whole grains)
- unsweetened dairy products, such as milk, yogurt, and cheese
- healthful fats, such as olive oil, olives, avocados, and oily fish

The same guidelines also recommend that people limit or avoid certain foods, as follows:

- Limit calories from added sugars to 10% of total daily calories. Processed foods, sweet treats, and sugary drinks all contain added sugars.
- Limit saturated fats to less than 10% of total daily calories. Foods high in saturated fats include butter, cheese, and meat that is not lean.
- Avoid trans fats. Processed foods such as desserts, frozen pizzas, and coffee creamer can contain trans fats.
- Limit sodium to fewer than 2,300 milligrams (mg) daily (for adults).
- Limit alcohol to no more than one drink daily for women and no more than two drinks daily for men.

• Some diets can help people make more healthful food choices. Also, some specific diets can support health conditions or reduce the risk of chronic diseases. The following diets all have a plant-based focus and include fish. The sections below will discuss each diet and what the evidence says about supporting women's health.

The DASH diet

According to several studies, the Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension (DASH) diet can lower blood pressure and may help people lose weight. Rates of high blood pressure, or hypertension, can increase in women after menopause.

One 2017 study indicates that women aged 70 years and over maintain better cognitive function when they adhere to a long-term DASH diet. A 2017 Cochrane review suggests that the DASH diet may also reduce cesarean section incidence in women with gestational diabetes.

Women aged 19–50 years who are moderately active need 2,000–2,200 calories per day. According to the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute, based on a 2,000-calorie per day diet, the DASH diet has the following goals for daily and weekly servings of food groups:

- 6–8 daily servings of grains
- One serving is one slice of bread or half a cup of cooked rice.
- a maximum of 6 daily servings of lean meats or poultry, eggs, and fish
- One serving is 1 ounce (oz) of cooked meat, fish, or poultry or one egg.
- 4–5 daily servings of vegetables
- One serving is a cup of leafy vegetables or half a cup of raw or cooked vegetables.
- 4–5 daily servings of fruit
- One serving is a medium piece of fruit or half a cup of frozen or canned fruit.
- 2–3 daily servings of low fat or fat-free dairy products
- One serving is one cup of milk or 1.5 oz of cheese.
- 2–3 daily servings of fats and oils

- One serving is a teaspoon of margarine or vegetable oil.
- 4–5 weekly servings of nuts, seeds, beans, and peas
- One serving is a third of a cup of nuts or half a cup of cooked beans or peas.
- 2,300 mg of sodium daily (or 1,500 mg to lower blood pressure further)
- five or fewer sweet treats weekly

Women may wish to work out their calorie needs and decide whether or not they want to lose weight. They can then adjust the number of servings accordingly.

The MIND diet

The Mediterranean-DASH Intervention for Neurodegenerative Delay (MIND) diet combines the Mediterranean and DASH diets.

Adopting the MIND diet may help women as they age, as some studies suggest that it is associated with reduced cognitive decline and a lower risk of Alzheimer's disease. The same benefits could also apply to men. A 2020 study of Iranian women suggests that the participants had a 50% lower risk of breast cancer when they adhered to the MIND diet. Migraine is more common in men than women, and one 2020 study suggests that participants following the MIND diet had less frequent, less severe, and shorter migraine headaches.

The MIND diet emphasizes natural, plant-based foods, much like the DASH and Mediterranean diets. It specifically encourages people to increase their berry and green leafy vegetable intake.

The diet also limits animal-based and high saturated fat foods, especially butter, which people should limit to a tablespoon per day. According to an article in the Journal of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, other guidelines for the MIND diet include:

- eating at least 3 servings of whole grains, a salad, and one other vegetable each day
- drinking a glass of wine each day
- snacking on nuts most days
- eating beans every other day

The flexitarian diet

A flexitarian diet is a semi-vegetarian diet, in which some one occasionally eats meat or fish. According to one 2016 review, flexitarian diets are more popular with women than men. The review suggests that the diet has benefits for:

- body weight
- blood pressure
- diabetes risk
- inflammatory bowel conditions

People who follow a flexitarian diet base their meals around plant foods but occasionally include animal foods, such as eggs, meat, or fish.

Someone who eats a plant-based diet should ensure that they get essential nutrients, such as vitamin B12. They may need to take a supplement for this purpose. (Courtesy: Medical News Today)

India's internet shutdowns hurt women more, Manipur assaults show

By: Rina Chandran

When videos of two women being paraded naked and assaulted in Manipur went viral last week on social media, the remote northeastern state had been cut off from internet access for nearly three months.

The attack took place on May 4, but the videos of the women being dragged and groped by armed men before what onlookers say was a gang rape, surfaced last week. Authorities said they are investigating the incident and have arrested several men.

Officials imposed a statewide internet shutdown on May 3, saying it was needed to curb rumours and disinformation, and quell violent ethnic clashes that have killed at least 125 people and displaced tens of thousands. But the internet ban in the state – among the longest in India to date – has made it difficult to alert authorities and journalists to rights violations, many of them directed at women, activists say.

"If there was no internet shutdown, those videos would have surfaced over two months ago and the horror could have been addressed quickly, and other similar offences could have been curbed," said Patricia Mukhim, an activist and editor of the Shillong Times daily headquartered in Meghalaya. "The internet shutdown is a violation of human rights – it curtails people's freedom, and it shuts out news of violent incidents and allows perpetrators to carry on undeterred," she told Context. The shutdowns also have an "adverse impact on women's ability to feel safe and restrict their freedom of movement," said Jaysree Bajoria, an associate director at Human Rights Watch in Asia.

"It took a horrific video of violence against women in Manipur to emerge on social media for the authorities to take action. This shows how necessary the internet is for the flow of information, and reporting and documenting abuses," she said.

After the Manipur high court directed the state government to restore the internet in a "limited fashion", authorities on Tuesday said they had "conditionally" lifted the ban on broadband services. Social media websites, WiFi hotspots, virtual private networks (VPNs) and mobile internet – used by a majority of people – still remain blocked in Manipur. India had the most number of shutdowns in the world for the fifth successive year in 2022, according to Access Now, a digital rights group. The shutdowns – including during protests, elections and examinations – were often imposed for indefinite periods and without the publication of shutdown orders, in violation of a 2020 judgment by the nation's top court.

"Authorities have cited violence as part of the rationale for shutting down the internet. However, there is no evidence to show internet shutdowns reduce violence – quite the opposite," Access Now said in a report in May. The clashes in Manipur, which borders Myanmar, began when members of the Kuki and Naga tribal groups launched a protest on May 3 against the possible sharing of their benefits with the ethnic majority Meiteis in the state. The federal government rushed thousands of paramilitary and army troops to the state of 3.2 million people, but the state has remained tense since, with killings and other incidents of sporadic violence. The restive northeast region is among the least developed in the country, with patchy internet access and facing frequent shutdowns, according to data compiled by the Software Freedom Law Center, a digital rights group.

As more services are digitised under the Digital India programme, internet shutdowns disproportionately hurt rural communities and other vulnerable groups such as those who depend on social welfare benefits, a recent report by Human Rights Watch and the Internet Freedom Foundation (IFF) showed.

Toll on women

In addition to shutdowns, Indian authorities also frequently block websites and issue takedown orders to social media platforms. The government issued nearly 7,000 takedown orders of social media posts and accounts last year compared to 6,000 in 2021, according to Access Now.

Most shutdowns involve blocking the internet on mobile phones, which is how most of the population, particularly in rural areas, access the internet. This severely impacts access to education and livelihoods, particularly for rural women, the report by Human Rights Watch and IFF showed.

In Rajasthan, which has had the most internet shutdowns after Kashmir, the majority of workers in the government's rural employment guarantee programme are women. As attendance checks and wage payments for workers have been digitised, frequent internet shutdowns in the state mean that many women don't get to work, or that they don't get paid, said Bajoria. "Most of the women come from socially and economically marginalised households... shutdowns that cut off internet access make their situation worse," she said.

In Manipur, the shutdown means that women cannot communicate as easily with their families via WhatsApp, check the news, make and receive payments on the phone, or even recharge their mobile SIMs, said Ninglun Hangal, who works with development non-profits.

Unable to work from home because of the internet ban, Hangal travelled 13 hours to relocate to neighbouring Assam state. But for women forced to stay back, conditions are tough, she said. "There are more rumours and misinformation circulating, and there's no way to check or clarify what is true" she said.

"Women feel isolated and scared for their safety, and it's taking a terrible toll. More cases of assault and abuse are bound to come to light when the internet is restored." (Courtesy: The Wire)

Russian missiles kill 7 in Ukrainian city and Kyiv accuses Moscow of targeting rescue workers

The Iskander missiles, which have an advanced guidance system that increases their accuracy, hit within 40 minutes of each other

KYIV, Aug 8 (AP): The death toll from two Russian missile strikes that hit apartment blocks and other buildings in an eastern Ukrainian city climbed to seven, with 81 people injured, authorities said on Tuesday, as officials accused the Kremlin's forces of targeting rescue workers.

Two Russian missiles slammed into the downtown area of Pokrovsk, in the eastern Donetsk region that is partially occupied by Russia, on Monday evening, officials said.

The dead were five civilians, one rescuer and one soldier, Donetsk Gov. Pavlo Kyrylenko said. The wounded were 39 civilians, including two children; 31 police officers; seven emergency workers; and four soldiers.

The Iskander missiles, which have an advanced guidance system that increases their accuracy, hit within 40 minutes of each other, according to Kyrylenko.

Russia unleashes missile and drone strikes against Ukraine, re-



taliating for an attack on a tanker

Russia has since the start of the war aimed artillery and missiles at the exact same spot it struck around 30 minutes earlier, often hitting emergency workers who had deployed at the scene. It's a tactic, called a "double tap" in military jargon, that the Russians also used in Syria's civil war.

"All of (the police) were there

because they were needed, putting their efforts into rescuing people after the first strike," Ivan Vyshivskyi, chief of Ukraine's National Police, said Tuesday. "They knew that under the rubble were the injured — they needed to react, to dig, to retrieve, to save. And the enemy deliberately struck the second time."

Kyrylenko said that 12 multi-

story buildings were damaged as well as a hotel, a pharmacy, two stores and two cafes.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy accused Moscow of trying to leave nothing but "broken and scorched stones" in eastern Ukraine.

Russian missiles, drones and artillery have repeatedly struck civilian areas in the war. The Kremlin says its forces target only military assets and claim other damage is caused by debris from Ukrainian air defense weapons. Neither side's claims can be independently verified.

Meanwhile, an overnight attack on the town of Kruhliakivka, in the northeastern Kharkiv region, killed two people and injured nine others, Gov. Oleh Syniehubov said.

Russia also dropped four guided bombs on a village near Kupiansk, in the Kharkiv region, killing two civilians, Ukraine's presidential office said. Rescuers later came under fire and two of them were injured, it said.

Pak ex-PM Imran kept in bug-infested jail cell, given C-class facilities: Report

ISLAMABAD, Aug 8 (PTI): Pakistan's former Prime Minister Imran Khan has been kept in a small bug-infested cell with an open washroom in the high-security Attock jail after his conviction and arrest in a corruption case.

Khan's attorney Naeem Haider Panjotra said that the 70-year-old Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman has been provided C-class facilities in the jail in Punjab province.

He said the jail cell where the former captain of the country's world cup winning cricket team is being held was infested with flies and bugs.

He is in a small room "which has an open washroom", Panjotra said after meeting Khan in prison on Monday.

"The PTI chairman says he is ready to spend his whole life in jail," the lawyer was quoted as saying by Geo News.

Panjotra said Khan told him that police did not show him an arrest warrant and tried to break the door of his wife's room when they were at his home in Lahore.

He met Khan for one hour and 45 minutes in the presence of a jail official to get his signatures on legal paper for launching appeals against the former premier's conviction. The lawyer told the media that Khan informed him that he has been kept in a dark room with an open toilet, frequented by flies during the day and ants at night.

"I have been kept in a dark room with no television or newspaper available. Nobody is allowed to meet me as if I am a terrorist," Panjotra quoted Khan as saying.

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



He was shifted to Attock jail in the city of Attock in Punjab province, despite the court order directing authorities that he be sent to Adiala prison in Rawalpindi.

The court ruling on Saturday came as a blow to Khan and has put his political future in jeopardy.

The verdict came as Pakistan is heading for general elections later this year, with the current National Assembly set to complete its term on August 12.

The cricketer-turned-politician has been accused of illegally selling state gifts for profit worth USD 497,500. Khan has denied wrongdoings, saying he legally bought the gifts from Toshakhana, a government-owned treasure house.

This is the second time in three months that Khan has been arrested.

Earlier, he was arrested on May 9 in Islamabad from the high court's premises in the Al-Qadir Trust corruption case, sparking violent protests by his supporters. Khan faces more than 140 cases across the country and charges like terrorism, violence, blasphemy, corruption and murder.

Niger's neighbours and the UN seek to deescalate tensions with last-minute diplomacy



NIAMEY, Aug 8 (AP): Nigeriens awoke on Tuesday to deepening uncertainty about whether a regional bloc will follow through on its threat to use military force to try to reinstall ousted President Mohamed Bazoum or if last-minute diplomacy will prevail, nearly two weeks after mutinous soldiers overthrew the country's democratically elected leader.

The West African regional bloc ECOWAS had given the mutinous soldiers until Sunday to release and reinstall Bazoum or they threatened to use force.

Members from ECOWAS, the United Nations and the African Union were expected to join talks in the capital, Niamey, on Tuesday, a foreign official told The Associated Press on condition of anonymity because they were not authorised to speak to media.

On Monday, acting US Deputy Secretary of State Victoria Nuland met with the coup leaders in Niger and said they refused to allow her to meet with Bazoum, whom she described as under "virtual house arrest."

She described the mutinous officers as unresponsive to her appeals to start negotiations and restore constitutional rule.

"These conversations were extremely frank and at times quite difficult because, again, we are pushing for a negotiated solution. It was not easy to get traction there. They are quite firm in their view of how they want to proceed," Nuland told reporters on a call from Niamey.

Talks are expected throughout the week. ECOWAS is expected to meet again Thursday in Abuja, the capital of neighbouring Nigeria, to discuss the situation.

Niger has been a crucial partner to the United States and other European countries, which viewed it as one of the last democratic nations in the vast Sahel region, south of the

Sahara Desert, that they could partner with to fight growing jihadi violence linked to al-Qaida and the Islamic State group. If deemed a coup by the US, Niger will lose hundreds of millions of dollars in military assistance and other aid.

Coups have been rampant in the region in recent years. Neighbouring Mali and Burkina Faso have had two each since 2020, and ECOWAS had little influence in stopping them.

The bloc's harsh response to Niger, by imposing economic and travel sanctions and threatening force, is an attempt to change course. But the junta doesn't appear open to dialogue. On Sunday, it closed the country's airspace and accused foreign powers of preparing an attack.

Analysts and diplomats say the window for military intervention is closing and without regional support for the use of force, ECOWAS and others are searching for a way out.

"A lot of the tough talk from the region and beyond is perhaps more a reflection of how they wish they had responded to previous in coups in Mali, Burkina and Guinea," said Cameron Hudson, a former official for the US Central Intelligence Agency.

Similarly, Washington and Paris will now have to make their own hard choices about working with junta leaders on counterterrorism or risk ceding hard-won ground to jihadist groups and possibly Russia, he said.

The junta, led by Gen. Abdourahmane Tchiani, has been exploiting grievances among the population toward its former colonial ruler France and has asked the Russian mercenary group, Wagner, for help. Wagner already operates in a handful of African countries, including Mali, and has been accused of committing human rights abuses.

PM Modi to attend BRICS Summit in South Africa: Foreign Minister Pandor

JOHANNESBURG, Aug 8 (PTI): Prime Minister Narendra Modi will attend the next BRICS Summit to be held here in-person from August 22, the South African government has said, dismissing some media reports as "rumours" that the Indian leader will not take part in the meeting of the five-nation grouping.

The BRICS bloc - comprising Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa - brings together five of the largest developing countries of the world, representing 41 per cent of the global population, 24 per cent of the global GDP and 16 per cent of the global trade.

Briefing the media on South Africa's preparations for the 15th edition of the summit, Minister of International Relations and Cooperation Naledi Pandor told journalists on Monday that the leaders of Brazil, China, India and host South Africa will participate in a range of discussions.

Russian President Vladimir Putin will participate virtually, due to an ICC warrant which would have obliged South Africa to arrest him if he came in person.

"I did speak to various colleagues in government and outside, and everybody was astounded by this rumour. I think that someone who is trying to spoil our summit is creating all sorts of stories that suggest that it won't be successful," Pandor said as she confirmed Modi's attendance.

"The Prime Minister of India has never said that he is not attending the summit. I am in constant contact with foreign minister Jaishankar. He has never said that. Our sherpas are in touch and they have never said it. So, we have all been trying to look for this needle in a haystack that began this rumour," Pandor said.

The Ministry of External Affairs said in New Delhi last week that Prime Minister Modi will



be visiting Johannesburg to attend the BRICS Summit.

"President (Cyril) Ramaphosa invited PM for the BRICS Summit being hosted by South Africa on August 22-24, 2023 and briefed him on the preparations for the same. PM accepted the invitation and conveyed that he looked forward to his visit to Johannesburg to participate in the Summit," the MEA said in a press release on August 3 after the two leaders held a telephone conversation. Reacting to a question on whether Modi had agreed to come after a phone call by President Ramaphosa, Pandor said the phone call had been in the planning for some time already for Ramaphosa to brief Modi on a number of issues as they developed.

"The phone call was on our agenda. It had nothing to do with this rumour of non-attendance (by Modi)," she said.

Pandor highlighted a wide range of activities which will take place during the Summit.

"The Department of Trade, Industry and Competition and the BRICS Business Council will be hosting a content-rich BRICS Business programme from August 19 to 23; an event that seeks to foster economic growth, collaboration,

attracting investment, and showcase opportunities within South Africa, Africa (as a continent) and all the BRICS countries," the minister said.

All Business Councils from the BRICS countries are expected to bring large delegations to participate in sector-focused visits to various South African areas.

Pandor said BRICS leaders are expected to discuss the opportunities for realising the full potential of BRICS for inclusive global recovery and sustainable development.

"The leaders' national statements at the plenary will be followed by reports of the president of the New Development Bank (NDB) as well as the South African chair of the BRICS Business Alliance and the BRICS Women's Business Alliance, which will be reporting in person to the BRICS leaders for the first time," Pandor said.

The minister explained how the NDB was established in 2015 to play a catalytic role in providing financial support to emerging markets and developing countries for infrastructure and sustainable development.

"In late 2021, the Bank welcomed Bangladesh, Egypt, the UAE and Uruguay as new members, firmly positioning the Bank as a preferred global financing mechanism for emerging markets and developing countries," Pandor said.

The minister said it was important to remember that BRICS countries are at the centre of global recovery.

"One of the stated objectives of BRICS membership is to leverage the political and economic relations as BRICS members to address the triple challenges of inequality, poverty and unemployment through increased intra-BRICS trade, investment, tourism, capacity-building, skills and technology transfer," Pandor said.

Israel demolishes home of alleged Palestinian attacker, fuelling West Bank tensions

RAMALLAH, Aug 8 (AP): Israeli security forces on Tuesday demolished the West Bank home of a Palestinian man accused of carrying out a deadly shooting attack earlier this year, the military said, the latest incursion to fuel tensions in the occupied territory. Israel's decades-old tactic of leveling the family homes of alleged Palestinian assailants has drawn intense criticism from human rights groups, which call it collective punishment — prohibited under international law.

Opponents of the policy also raise questions about its efficacy, arguing that leveling the residences of often uninvolved parents, spouses and children of alleged assailants and leaving them homeless only fuels an unrelenting cycle of hatred and bloodshed.

Israel defends such home demolitions as a deterrent meant to prevent future attacks. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's far-right government, which has taken a hard line against the Palestinians, has vowed to ramp up home demolitions of Palestinian attackers as violence spirals in the West Bank.

The UN cut their food aid this summer. These Palestinians now struggle to find their next meal.

The Israeli military said its forces entered the Askar refugee camp in the northern West Bank city of Nablus early Tuesday and demolished the apartment of 49-year-old Abdul Fattah Kharushah, an alleged member of the Hamas militant group who was suspected of shooting and killing two Israeli brothers in the town of Hawara earlier this year.

The highway shooting on Feb. 26 that killed the two men — brothers from the Jewish settlement of Har Bracha — had followed a deadly Israeli military raid in Nablus and unleashed the worst outburst of settler violence in decades. Israeli settlers went on a violent rampage in the town of Hawara after the shooting, burning dozens of Palestinian cars and shops and leaving one man dead.

Kharushah was later killed during an Israeli military raid on the Jenin refugee camp in March. Young Palestinians burned tires and hurled stones and explosive devices at Israeli forces who stormed into the Askar refugee camp to demolish Kharushah's home, on the third floor of an apartment building, on Tuesday.

European scientists make it official: July was the hottest month on record by far

July's global average temperature of 16.95 degrees Celsius was a 3rd of a degree Celsius higher than the previous record set in 2019

COPENHAGEN, Aug 8 (AP): Now that July's sizzling numbers are all in, the European climate monitoring organisation made it official: July 2023 was Earth's hottest month on record by a wide margin.

July's global average temperature of 16.95 degrees Celsius (62.51 degrees Fahrenheit) was a third of a degree Celsius (six tenths of a degree Fahrenheit) higher than the previous record set in 2019, Copernicus Climate Change Service, a division of the European Union's space programme, announced on Tuesday.

Normally global temperature records are broken by hundredths or a tenth of a degree, so this margin is unusual.

"These records have dire consequences for both people and the planet exposed to ever more frequent and intense extreme events," said Copernicus deputy director Samantha Burgess. There have been deadly heat waves in the Southwestern United States and Mexico, Europe and Asia. Scien-



tific quick studies put the blame on human-caused climate change from the burning of coal, oil and natural gas.

Days in July have been hotter than previously recorded from July 2 onwards. It's been so extra warm that Copernicus and the World Meteorological Organisation made the unusual early announcement that it was likely the hottest month days before it ended. Tuesday's calculations made it official.

The month was 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 degrees Fahrenheit) warmer than pre-industrial times. In 2015, the nations of the world agreed to try to prevent long-term warming — not individual months or even years, but decades — that is 1.5 degrees warmer than pre-industrial times.

Last month was so hot, it was .7 degrees Celsius (1.3 degrees Fahrenheit) hotter than the average July from 1991 to 2020, Copernicus said. The world oceans were half a degree Celsius (0.9 degrees Fahrenheit) warmer than the previous 30 years and the North Atlantic was 1.05 degrees Celsius (1.9 degrees Fahrenheit) hotter than average. Antarctica set record lows for sea ice, 15% below average for this time of year.

Copernicus' records go back to 1940. That temperature would be hotter than any month the US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration has recorded and their records go back to 1850. But scientists say it's actually the hottest in a far

longer time period.

"It's a stunning record and makes it quite clearly the warmest month on Earth in ten thousand years," said Stefan Rahmstorf, a climate scientist at the Potsdam Institute for Climate Research in Germany. He wasn't part of the Copernicus team.

Rahmstorf cited studies that use tree rings and other proxies that show present times are the warmest since the beginning of the Holocene Epoch, about 10,000 years ago. And before the Holocene started there was an ice age, so it would be logical to even say this is the warmest record for 120,000 years, he said.

"We should not care about July because it's a record, but because it won't be a record for long," said Imperial College of London climate scientist Friederike Otto. "It's an indicator of how much we have changed the climate. We are living in a very different world, one that our societies are not adapted to live in very well."

Powerful storm kills 2 people and leaves 1.1 million without power in eastern US

WASHINGTON, Aug 8 (AP): At least two people died, thousands of U.S. flights were cancelled or delayed, and more than 1.1 million homes and businesses lost power on Monday as severe storms, including hail and lightning, moved through the eastern U.S.

The National Weather Service issued a tornado watch for the greater D.C. area, lasting until 9 p.m. A special Weather Service statement warned, "There is a significant threat for damaging and locally destructive hurricane-force winds, along with the potential for large hail and tornadoes, even strong tornadoes."

The storms' spread was massive, with tornado watches and warnings posted across 10 states from Tennessee to New York. The National Weather Service said more

than 29.5 million people were under a tornado watch Monday afternoon.

In Anderson, South Carolina, a 15-year-old boy who arrived at his grandparents' house during the storm was struck and killed when a tree fell on him as he got out of a car, according to the Anderson County Office of the Coroner.

In Florence, Alabama, police said a 28-year-old man was struck by lightning and died, WAAY-TV reported.

By Monday night, more than 2,600 U.S. flights had been canceled and nearly 7,900 delayed, according to flight tracking service FlightAware. Many cancellations were at Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport, which was digging out from disruptions caused by Sunday storms.

Manipur police files FIR against Assam Rifles for 'obstructing search ops'

State BJP unit requests PM to replace paramilitary force

IMPHAL, Aug 8 (PTI): Manipur Police has registered an FIR accusing the Assam Rifles of blocking their vehicle after an altercation between the two groups last week, while the state unit of the BJP requested Prime Minister Narendra Modi to replace Assam Rifles "by any other paramilitary force permanently" from the state.

Security sources, however, described the FIR as a "travesty of justice" and said the Assam Rifles was undertaking a task given by the command headquarters of ensuring sanctity of the buffer zones between Kuki and Meitei areas.

The FIR, a copy of which is with the PTI, was filed on August 5 when police alleged that the Assam Rifles blocked police vehicles on the Kwakta Gothol road in Bishnupur district.

The FIR claimed Assam Rifles stopped its personnel from proceeding when "the state police was on its way to Pholjang Road along Kwakta as follow up action to conduct search operations in an arms act case in search of Kuki militants."

The police claimed that its personnel were stopped by 9 Assam Rifles which parked their 'Casper'

vehicle blocking the road. Defence sources reacted stating "Assam Rifles was undertaking a task given by the command headquarters of ensuring sanctity of the buffer zones between Kuki and Meitei areas."

In the evening, the Manipur unit of BJP requested Prime Minister Narendra Modi to replace Assam Rifles "by any other paramilitary force permanently" from the state in the interest of the public and also sought his intervention to bring an amicable solution to the ongoing ethnic unrest at the earliest.

In a memorandum to Modi, the party's Manipur unit said, "The role of Assam Rifles in regard to the ethnic unrest and in maintaining peace and tranquility in the state has been under considerable criticism and public outrage."

"Since Day 1 of the violence on May 3, Assam Rifles has failed to maintain neutrality so as to restore peace in the state," the party said, adding, "The public anger and protest over Assam Rifles for playing the role of partisanship in this highly delicate and sensitive ethnic unrest continues to be witnessed unabated...the Assam Rifles has been charged by the public for their



biased role in tackling the situation." The memorandum signed by its president A Sharda Devi and vice-president Chidananda recalled the recent incident when Assam Rifles allegedly blocked a team of the state police who were in pursuit of militants who had killed three civilians. The memorandum comes days after Manipur Police filed an FIR against 9 AR for "disobeying law by public servant with intent to cause injury to any person, obstructing public servant in charge of public function."

In another development, Assam Rifles personnel, based at Moirang Lamkhai checkpoint in Manipur's Bishnupur, where fresh violence erupted last week, have been withdrawn and substituted by the CRPF and the state police, a notification said.

The notification, issued by Additional Director General of Police (Law and Order) L Kailun on Monday, said "the checkpoint at Moirang Lamkhai on the Bishnupur to Kangvai Road shall be manned by the civil police and 128

Bn CRPF in place of 9 AR with immediate effect and until further orders". Assam Rifles has been contacted, and a response from the paramilitary force is awaited.

Meanwhile, security has been tightened across the state ahead of United Naga Council's proposed rallies in Naga-inhabited areas of the northeastern state on August 9 to press for successfully concluding the peace talks with the Centre based on the Framework Agreement.

In a statement, the United Naga Council (UNC) said rallies will be held in the district headquarters of Tamenglong, Senapati, Ukhrul and Chandel districts from 10 am on Wednesday.

The UNC, an influential Naga body, has appealed to all Nagas to participate in the rallies in large numbers.

Naga Hoho, a powerful civic body of the Naga tribes, has meanwhile asked the 10 Naga MLAs in Manipur not to attend the proposed assembly session from August 21, claiming that the Manipur government has been working against peace talks with Naga groups.

Most of the Kuki MLAs irrespective of their party affiliations

are unlikely to attend the Manipur assembly session in view of the continued ethnic violence, according to leaders from the community.

There are 10 Kuki-Zomi MLAs, including seven from the BJP, two from the Kuki People's Alliance and one independent, in the Manipur House which has a strength of 60 members.

Rioting between the Meiteis and Kuki-Zomi communities broke out in May after protests over a court judgment which seemed to favour the majority Meiteis who live in the Imphal valley and who have been demanding Scheduled Tribe status, currently enjoyed by Kuki-Zomi and Naga tribes in the state.

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

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

Security tightened ahead of Naga community rallies in Manipur today

IMPHAL, Aug 8 (PTI): Security has been tightened across Manipur ahead of United Naga Council's proposed rallies in Naga-inhabited areas of the northeastern state on August 9 to press for successfully concluding the peace talks with the Centre based on the Framework Agreement.

In a statement, the United Naga Council (UNC) said rallies will be held in the district headquarters of Tamenglong, Senapati, Ukhrul and Chandel districts from 10 am on Wednesday.

"The inordinate delay in signing the final agreement is a cause of concern and has the potential to derail the peace negotiation," it said.

The UNC, an influential Naga body, has appealed to all Nagas to participate in the rallies in large numbers.

It said the peace process made significant progress with the signing of the historic Framework Agreement between the Centre and the NSCN (IM) on August 3, 2015.

Supporting the cause, the Kuki Inpi Manipur (KIM), the apex body of the Kuki Tribes, has extended its support to the mass rally in all Naga-inhabited areas in Manipur.

"At a critical time wherein the tribal Kukis of Manipur are being subjected to bear the brunt of ethnic cleansing being unleashed by the majority Meiteis, aided and abetted covertly by the State machineries, the Kuki Inpi Manipur fully endorsed the proposed mass rally being organized by the United Naga Council," a statement by the KIM said.

Naga Hoho, a powerful civic body of the Naga tribes, has asked the 10 Naga MLAs in Manipur not to attend the proposed assembly session from August 21, claiming that the Manipur government has been working against peace talks with Naga groups.

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Meanwhile, Manipur police has appealed to the public not to believe in rumours and be aware of false videos. "Any circulation of unfounded videos may be confirmed from the rumour free number - 9233522822 of central control room," it said in a statement.

Drugs worth over ₹ 1,610 cr seized by Assam Rifles in Manipur since July 2022

IMPHAL, Aug 8 (PTI): Drugs worth more than ₹ 1,610 crore have been seized by the Assam Rifles between July 2022 and July this year in Manipur, according to data provided by the paramilitary force. In the financial years 2021-22 and 2020-21, it seized drugs worth ₹ 850 crore and ₹ 1,200 crore, respectively.

However, official sources said the Assam Rifles — a border guarding force — primary mandate or task is not drug law enforcement.

"That is the responsibility of the NCB (Narcotics Control Bureau) and the state police. However, the routes, conduits, and funding for terrorism, weapons, and drugs are common at times. Hence, in the process of catching terrorists, the Assam Rifles ends up catching drug smugglers. In all such cases, they are handed over to police," a source in the security establishment said.

"The deployment posture along the Indo-Myanmar border has been strengthened ever since the crisis began in May. Ethnic violence, while necessitating a focus on hinterland security, has also led to an increase in security forces, which, in some way, would have countered drug trafficking as a second-order effect," the source said.

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

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

During 2022-23, the Manipur Police registered 620 cases under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, leading to 724 arrests, of which 474 people



are in judicial custody and 250 were released on bail, according to the state government.

Since 2017, 2,518 people have been arrested in drug-related cases, according to Manipur Police records. Of them, 873 belong to the Kuki-Chin community and 381 to the Meitei community, and 1,083 are Muslims among others, the records showed. Law enforcement agencies have suggested that the "drug value chain" should be dismantled at all levels to end the drug menace in the state. "Completion of the border fence should be a priority. Drug processing and transportation along foot tracks across the Myanmar border are known menaces," an official said.

A senior official in the external affairs ministry told PTI that border fencing stands as a pilot project. "We do not have any specific time-line for the completion of border fencing. While Manipur, as a state, calls for such fencing, it is crucial to recognise that reevaluating the 'Free Movement Regime' is not feasible," the official said.

The Free Movement Regime (FMR) permits tribes residing along either side of the border to journey up to 16 kilometres within the other country's territory, without requiring a visa.

Official sources said the stress should be on expansion of "administration and infrastructure to reach out to remote areas so that horticulture and agriculture can be better

connected to consumers, and thus, reliance on poppy cultivation can be reduced".

The Coordinating Committee on Manipur Integrity (COCOMI), an umbrella body of several Imphal-based civil society organisations, has demanded that the "central government should enforce detection and detention of illegal migrants and a war should be declared on drugs".

The COCOMI has been alleging that many Kukis are illegal migrants from northwestern Myanmar where racially similar Chins live and that many Kuki villagers cultivate poppies in hillside farms. These allegations have as yet not been proven. Ginza Vualzong, media and publicity secretary, Indigenous Tribal Leaders Forum, said, "The Kuki community, like many others in Manipur, has been linked to poppy cultivation. However, it is crucial to recognise that only a segment of the community is involved in this activity, and not everyone can be branded as 'narco-terrorists'." "Those engaged in poppy cultivation often do so out of necessity and as a means of livelihood, rather than with malicious intent. It is essential to provide alternative employment opportunities to address the root causes of this issue and empower communities to pursue sustainable livelihoods," he said.

By-election in two Tripura Assembly seats on Sept 5

AGARTALA, Aug 8 (PTI): The by-election to two Tripura Assembly constituencies — Dhanpur and Boxanagar in Tripura's Sepahijala district will be held on September 5, a poll official said here on Tuesday. The Dhanpur seat fell vacant after the resignation of Union Minister Pratima Bhowmik and the death of CPI(M)'s Boxanagar lawmaker Samsul Haque in July this year, he said. The state additional chief electoral officer U G Mog said the notification for the by-poll will be issued on August 10 and the last date for filing nomination is August 17. The scrutiny of the nomination papers will be held on August 18 and the last date for withdrawal is August 21. Counting is scheduled to take place on September 8. The two seats in Tripura where the by-poll will be held are among the seven in the country where the election will be held on the day, he said. In the 60-member House BJP now has 31 MLAs while its ally - the Indigenous People Front of Tripura (IPFT) has one lawmaker. Tipra Motha won 13 seats in the last Assembly election held in February, while the Congress won three seats. CPI(M)'s tally has been reduced to 10 after Haque's death.

Tripura CM Manik Saha expresses concern on infiltration

AGARTALA, Aug 8 (PTI): Tripura Chief Minister Manik Saha on Tuesday chaired a meeting with the state's police brass in which the issue of illegal infiltration of Rohingyas and Bangladeshis was discussed. Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma had recently said Tripura is being used as a corridor by the Rohingyas infiltrators from Bangladesh to either go to Delhi or Kashmir with the help of brokers. "We had a detailed discussion on the illegal infiltration of Rohingyas and Bangladeshis into Tripura," he told reporters after the meeting at Prajna Bhavan here. Saha said he had recently visited Unakoti district to see how floods had caused extensive damage to the barbed-wire international fencing with Bangladesh. "The river has changed its direction there causing extensive damage to the fencing. Now, infiltrators are using the damaged portion to cross the border," he said.

ITANAGAR, Aug 8 (PTI): People of three villages in West Siang district of Arunachal Pradesh have threatened to boycott the Lok Sabha and assembly elections due next year, if the government fails to construct a permanent bridge over a river, a key demand of them since 2014.

The villages — Rime Moko, Pidi Rime and Todi Rime — have a population of nearly 400 and approximately 300 of them are voters. The northeastern state has a population of only 13.84 lakh, according to the 2011 census.

There is a makeshift bridge — a 20-metre odd log with a rickety wooden railing on one side for a user to hold — made by locals, but this is of no use during the monsoon as it goes below the rising water level of the Hujum river, a tributary of the Pisu.

"When the river is in spate, parents don't send their wards to schools. They fear that the children might slip off the log bridge," said Pokpe Rime who lives in Rime Moko village.

It is also extremely difficult to take a patient to a hospital in the absence of a proper bridge, monsoon or not.

"We have to carry patients on our back and cross the log bridge over the river to the Nikte primary health centre or the Aalo General Hospital," Pokpe said.

The road connectivity issue is

also affecting the area economically and socially, people of the villages feel.

Residents of Rime Moko, Pidi Rime and Todi Rime villages recently discussed the issue among themselves and resolved to urge the state government to construct an all-weather road from Pidi Rime to Hujum and a permanent bridge over the river.

They also sought improvement of the existing PMGSY road from Tabasora to Rime Moku and development of another road from Nyorak to Todi Rime, via Pidi Rime.

"If the state government fails to fulfil our demands, we will resort to democratic agitation and if necessary, we will go to the extent of boycotting the upcoming Parliamentary and assembly elections," Rime Moko 'gaon burah' (village head) Gambin Rime said.

Pidi Rime village head Pokjo Rime said they have requested the local MLA about their requirements twice — once after his election in 2014 and also during his second term in 2019, but in vain.

"Our last hope is to request Union minister Kiren Rijiju (who hails from Arunachal Pradesh)," Pokjo Rime said.

The villages come under the Aalo West Assembly constituency and Arunachal West Lok Sabha constituency.

Union Earth Science minister Kiren Rijiju is the local MP while

District police making significant community centric efforts: Dy CM

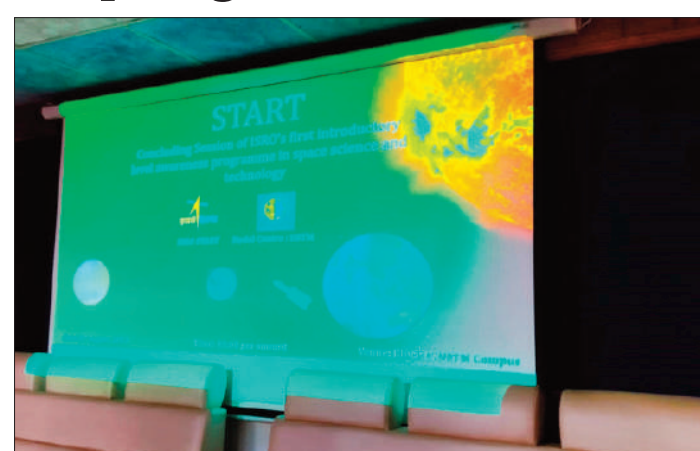
GUWAHATI, Aug 8: Nagaland Deputy chief minister Y Patton said, district policing has made significant progress through community centric efforts, ensuring improvement of case registration to an all time high in 10 years. Patton said this during the virtual inauguration programme of the new office buildings of Commandant, 3rd NAP Battalion Tuensang and superintendent of police Zunheboto at PHQ Kohima. He said, 102 cases were registered during a period of 7 months so far and overall 114 cases have been registered in the last nine months, which is highest in last 12 years. The deputy chief minister said, the state police initiative 'War on Drugs' has ensured 26 cases registered under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act, leading to arrests of approximately 40 persons and proactive policing ensuring improved security scenario through high detection under NDPS. He also said, 42 people were arrested under the Nagaland Liquor Total Prohibition Act.

ISRO's START programme concludes at USTM

GUWAHATI, Aug 8: The University of Science and Technology Meghalaya (USTM) concluded a triumphant three-week journey with ISRO's esteemed START programme.

ISRO, India's premier space agency designated USTM as a pivotal Nodal Centre for their groundbreaking "Space Science and Technology Awareness Training" programme, popularly known as START. This introductory initiative showcased the collaborative efforts of India's eminent academics and scientists, who delivered comprehensive insights into space science and technology, with a special emphasis on ISRO's latest pioneering missions.

The concluding session commenced with a compelling address by Dr R P Singh, director of the Indian Institute of Remote Sensing (IIRS), a constituent of ISRO. Dr Singh expressed profound gratitude to ISRO for orchestrating a resounding success and underscored



the significance of knowledge exchange among students hailing from diverse corners of the nation. He advocated prototype development as a means of fostering engagement for ISRO's upcoming space odysseys.

Dr T P Das, Director of the Scientific Programme Office at ISRO headquarters, embraced this proposal with enthusiasm and con-

Reliance insurance bags contract for M'laya universal health insurance scheme

SHILLONG, Aug 8 (PTI): Reliance General Insurance Company Ltd on Tuesday said they have been awarded the contract for the implementation of Meghalaya's health insurance for citizens. The ICL will be implementing the Megha Health Insurance Scheme and the Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana phase 6. "The contract is awarded after a competitive bidding process, in which ICL emerged as the successful bidder to implement a revised MHIS 6 scheme in convergence with PMJAY, providing an insurance cover of ₹ 5,30,000 for all eligible beneficiaries on a family floater basis," ICL said in a statement here. It stated that the state government has decided to review the Health Benefits Package and other terms in the Insurance Contract of MHIS 6 and will cover over 7 lakh families

in Meghalaya, providing them with comprehensive health insurance coverage that will meet their secondary and tertiary care hospitalisation, outpatient care, diagnostic tests, and follow-up care. ICL CEO Rakesh Jain said, "We are honoured to partner with the Government of Meghalaya in this noble initiative of providing universal health coverage to the citizens of Meghalaya under the Megha Health Insurance Scheme and Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB-PMJAY)-Phase 6." He said "the company firmly believes that with the help of this contract, we will be supporting the state in bridging the much-needed gap of quality healthcare within the region, while increasing health insurance awareness and strengthening our foothold in the Northeast region."

platform, offering students an opportunity to earn valuable credits. The session's closure was marked by heartfelt gratitude extended by Dr K Praveen Kumar from ISRO Headquarters to all participants.

The all-encompassing START programme delved into diverse domains of space science, including Astronomy & Astrophysics, Helio-physics & Sun-Earth Interaction, Instrumentation, and Aeronomy. This intellectually enriching experience was orchestrated by experts from esteemed Indian academia and various ISRO centers.

USTM stands as the sole centre in the northeastern region chosen by ISRO to conduct the START programme, which facilitated the vibrant involvement of postgraduate and final-year undergraduate students in pioneering space science and technology research. Enthusiastic students from the region eagerly participated in this free-of-cost, three-week digital programme following their online registration, a PR stated.

NAME CORRECTION

I, Minakshi Hazarika, w/o Dhiraj Mazumdar, resident of vill- Midupathar, PO — Kachpukhuri, PS — Bokulia, dist — Karbi Anglong, Assam has declared before Notary, Diphu Court that my actual name is Minakshi Hazarika, but my name is wrongly mentioned in my marriage certificate as Minakshi Hazarika.

From now I shall be known as Minakshi Hazarika in all purposes.

K'taka CM orders CID probe into bribery charge against Agriculture Minister

'The shameless chief minister who justifies the disgraceful acts of the ministers, has descended upon the state'

BENGALURU, Aug 8 (PTI): Karnataka chief minister Siddaramaiah on Tuesday said he has directed the CID to investigate the alleged complaint letter sent to Governor Thawarchand Gehlot by assistant agriculture directors of Mandya district accusing agriculture minister N Chaluvarayaswamy of demanding Rs six lakh to Rs eight lakh as bribe.

Seven assistant agriculture directors allegedly wrote a letter to Gehlot recently complaining that the minister was exerting pressure on the officers and employees of the agriculture department through the joint director of agriculture to pay the bribe.

They even threatened to commit suicide with their families if such a "tradition" of demanding bribe is not controlled.

Accordingly, the Governor sent the letter to Chief Secretary Vandita Sharma to look into the complaint and initiate appropriate action.

While Siddaramaiah called it a fake letter and blamed the BJP and their "brother", an apparent reference to the JD(S) leader and former chief minister H D Kumaraswamy, for "creating it", he told reporters on Tuesday that he has ordered a probe.

"With regard to the purported letter written by the agriculture officers against the agriculture min-



ister, it has been decided to conduct a CID (Crime Investigation Department) inquiry. The chief minister decided to hand over the matter to the CID after discussing with home minister Dr G Parameshwara," the CM's office said in a statement.

Earlier, in the day, the chief minister told reporters that he had ordered a police inquiry.

"I have told the police to inquire into it. Chaluvarayaswamy has called it fake because the joint director of agriculture has also issued a statement that it is fake and complained to the police. I have told the police to investigate and find out the truth," Siddaramaiah said on the sidelines of an event.

After the Governor's letter became public, Siddaramaiah posted

on Twitter, "It has come out that the letter in circulation in public domain is fake. The Joint Agriculture Director has already clarified that no officers in the district have written such a letter."

Stating that he will get the matter investigated, he wondered whether the BJP was behind it.

"BJP leaders, are you the creator of such a fake letter spreading slander against the government or your brother?" he tweeted further.

Meanwhile, Kumaraswamy hit out at the chief minister for "supporting" the minister in a series of tweets. "The shameless chief minister who justifies the disgraceful acts of the ministers, has descended upon the state. The 'Siddha Kalle' (expert art) of justifying the extortion by the minister is dis-

gusting and nauseating," the JD(S) second-in-command said.

He sought to know if the letter was fake, will the Governor's office "falsely" write to investigate it.

"Has the Governor responded to the false letter? Should the preachers of 'Rajadharma' suspect the sanctity of 'Raj Bhavan'? This is no compliment to the self-proclaimed pseudo-constitutional expert," Kumaraswamy said.

The BJP too lashed out at the Congress government in Karnataka.

The party state unit president Nalin Kumar Kateel tweeted, "The people of the state now have a 'guarantee of corruption'. The 'High Command' has given a collection task to the 'ATM Sarkara'. The ministers are putting pressure on the officials."

"Now it is minister Chaluvarayaswamy's turn. Was it instructed in the high command meeting to collect using officials?" Kateel sought to know.

He alleged that it has become the Congress strategy to call all the letters against them fake to mislead corruption cases.

"Now, by calling the letter against Chaluvarayaswamy fake, this government is insulting the dignity of Raj Bhavan and the Governor's action," Kateel alleged.

Rahul gets back Tughlaq lane bungalow, may shift soon

NEW DELHI, Aug 8 (PTI): Congress leader Rahul Gandhi has been re-allotted the 12, Tughlaq Lane bungalow a day after his Lok Sabha membership was restored following the Supreme Court staying his conviction in a defamation case, officials said on Tuesday.

The House Committee of the Lok Sabha decided to allot the bungalow which Gandhi was asked to vacate after he was disqualified as member of the lower house on March 24 and given a two-year jail term for the 'Modi surname' remarks. "Mera ghar pura Hindustan hai (Whole country is my home)," quipped Gandhi when asked about being allotted the 12, Tughlaq Lane bungalow.

Sources said Gandhi has received the letter re-allotting the same house he occupied as Lok Sabha MP for the past almost two decades. They said Gandhi would be shifting back to his residence soon. He is currently staying with his mother Sonia Gandhi, who is also the chairperson of the Congress Parliamentary Party. On Monday, the Lok Sabha Secretariat restored Gandhi's membership of the lower house after the Supreme Court stayed his conviction in the defamation case. In April, Rahul Gandhi vacated his official residence in central Delhi, in line with the protocol, after he was disqualified as an MP in March following a Surat court's conviction in the criminal defamation case.

Oppn parties move privilege notice against Piyush Goyal over remarks against them

NEW DELHI, Aug 8 (PTI): Several leaders of the opposition alliance INDIA have given a privilege notice against leader of the house in Rajya Sabha Piyush Goyal over his certain remarks against some opposition leaders.

Among the parties whose leaders gave the notice are the Congress, TMC, AAP, RJD, DMK, JDU, NCP and the Left parties.

Sources said leaders of INDIA parties gave the notice to the



Rajya Sabha chairman complaining against Goyal's certain remarks made while he was speaking on the issue of media portal 'NewsClick' receiving funding from China-linked firms allegedly to spread Chinese propaganda.

Goyal questioned the relationship between the opposition parties and the news portal 'NewsClick', which has been accused in a New York Times report of receiving funding from China-linked firms.

"Today at 1300 hrs, the floor leaders of INDIA parties in the Rajya Sabha submitted a privilege motion against Leader of the House Piyush Goyal for addressing the Opposition as all of them 'traitors'," Congress MP Jairam Ramesh said on Twitter.

"Nothing less than an apology from him on the floor of the House, when it is in order, will do," the Congress leader, who is a signatory to the privilege notice, said.

The leaders also raised an uproar in the House and demanded an

apology from

Goyal. "The INDIA parties walked out of the Rajya Sabha today for the rest of the day because of: The continued refusal of the Modi government to allow an immediate discussion on Manipur on the basis of a mutually negotiated Motion."

"The continued refusal of the Leader of the House Piyush Goyal to apologise for the highly objectionable and completely unacceptable remarks he made against leaders of the INDIA parties," Ramesh also said in another tweet after the opposition parties walked out of the House.

In the House, Goyal, however, said he takes back any words which may not be parliamentary and urged the chair to remove the same from the records.

The chairman said he will go through the records and if there is anything unparliamentary, that cannot remain as part of the records of the House.

Delegation of Haryana Cong stopped from entering affected villages in Nuh

GURUGRAM, Aug 8 (PTI): A 10-member delegation of Haryana Congress on Tuesday was stopped from entering violence-hit villages of Nuh district, police said. Citing curfew imposed in the area and security concerns for the delegation, a senior police officer said the delegation was stopped at Rojka Meo village and were stopped from entering villages affected by the communal clashes in the district. The delegation returned after that, police said.

Rajya Sabha MP Deepender Singh Hooda said they wanted to listen to the problems of affected people in Nuh city and send out a message of peace.

"If the huge force deployed today to stop us had been deployed that day also, there would have been no clash between the two communities. The government is entirely responsible for this whole episode. Obviously, the government was negligent and their intentions were not right," Hooda said.

"The purpose of the delegation was to



meet traders and other affected people of Nuh city, and give out a message of peace after listening to their issues. We also wanted to visit the Shiva temple at Nalhar," he added. The delegation was led by state Congress president Chaudhary Udaybhan. Deepender Singh Hooda, Captain Ajay Singh Yadav, Mahendra Pratap, BB Batra, Bajrang Das Garg, Rao Dan Singh, Pankaj Dawar and Jitender Bhardwaj were also part of the delegation.

Hooda also said that both the home

guards who died in the violence should be given "martyr status". The family of the deceased should also be given financial assistance and a family member should also be given a job, he said. Slamming the Haryana govt, senior Congress leader Captain Ajay Singh Yadav said, "The Haryana government is not even ashamed of its failure. Our delegation wanted to go to Nuh with the purpose of restoring peace. Politics is of no use at this point," Yadav said. Party state chief Chaudhary Udaybhan said that they will inform the Congress high command that were stopped from visiting the affected parts of Nuh.

Meanwhile, the police said that the work of the administration would have increased if there was a "political visit". "Permission is not allowed due to the imposition of Section 144 in the district. The administration is making every possible effort to help the victims. If there is a political visit, the work of the administration will increase," Nuh SP Narender Bijarnia said.

Parl approves National Dental Commission Bill, Nursing and Midwifery Commission Bill

NEW DELHI, Aug 8 (PTI): Rajya Sabha on Tuesday approved the National Nursing and Midwifery Commission Bill, 2023, and the National Dental Commission Bill, 2023, which are aimed at further improving the quality of education in the healthcare sector.

Lok Sabha had passed these two bills on July 28. With Rajya Sabha's approval, the parliamentary process regarding the proposed legislations has been completed. The two bills piloted by Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya were passed by voice vote after a brief discussion. The National Dental Commission Bill seeks to repeal the Dentists Act, 1948, and proposes to set up the National Dental Commission (NMC) to regulate dental education and the profession. It also aims at making dental education affordable and quality oral healthcare accessible.

The National Nursing and Midwifery Commission Bill, 2023, aims at setting up the National Nursing and Midwifery Commission (NNMC) and repealing the Indian Nursing Council Act, 1947. The Bill provides for regulation and maintenance of standards of education and services by nursing and midwifery professionals, assessment of institutions, maintenance of a national register as well as state registers.

Replying to the discussion, the health minister said these legislations are aimed at meeting the present and future domestic as well as global requirements in the health sector.

These Bills are part of the government's effort to improve quality of education in the healthcare sector, which includes nursing and dentistry, Mandaviya said.

The minister also announced that the government would be soon coming out with a pharmacy commission.

He also highlighted the steps taken by the Narendra Modi government in the last nine years for the holistic growth of the health sector. Mandaviya said the number of MBBS seats have increased from 54,000 to 1.07 lakh in the last nine years. Number of MBBS colleges too have significantly increased, he said.

Parliament clears inter-services organisations bill

NEW DELHI, Aug 8 (PTI): Parliament on Tuesday passed a bill that seeks to provide the commander-in-chief and officer-in-command of inter-services organisations disciplinary and administrative powers over personnel from other forces serving in such establishments.

The bill was cleared in Rajya Sabha with a voice vote. Lok Sabha had given its nod to the legislation on August 4. Speaking in the Upper House, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said India is fully prepared to face any type of warfare and the country's defence spending can be increased to 5-6 per cent of GDP if needed.

In his reply to a discussion on The Interservices Organisations (Command, Control and Discipline) Bill, 2023, Singh said the legislation has been brought to keep in tune with the changing nature of modern warfare and ensure better coordination among the three services. "It (warfare) is not conventional now, it has become technology and network-centric... It is therefore important considering the new challenges, which we and our forces are facing, there is a need for better coordination. This bill has been brought for that purpose only," the defence minister said. Singh further said, "After the passage of this Bill, our inter-services organisations will be able to work in a better way." Replying to a query, he said the country's maritime interests are fully protected and there is no reason for worry.

"Also, we are fully prepared for any type of warfare," he said. This preparedness will continue going forward, Singh asserted. On low defence spending and vacancies in the armed forces, he reiterated all efforts have been made to ensure there are no short-comings in any form in protecting the country. He said financial resources will not be allowed to be a constraint and, if need be, the defence budget can be increased to even 5-6 per cent of GDP.

Mumbai: Drivers of BEST call off strike after 7 days

MUMBAI, Aug 8 (PTI): The drivers of the private bus operators hired by BEST announced on Tuesday afternoon their decision to call off their strike claiming that Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde has assured them of fulfilling their salary hike and other demands.

The move by the contractual staffers will provide relief to lakhs of bus commuters as the agitation had entered the seventh day on Tuesday morning with 551 of the 1,600 buses wet-leased by the Brihanmumbai Electric Supply and Transport Undertaking (BEST) remaining off roads.

A representative of the contractual employees told mediapersons at Azad Maidan that their delegation met CM Shinde after midnight on Monday. Shinde assured that the demands of the agitating employees would be fulfilled, the representative said.

The delegation was led by Pradnya Khajurkar, wife of contractual worker Raghunath Khajurkar, an employee of Daga group, one of the private operators.

"Our primary demands about salary hike, bonus, leaves and free bus rides have been accepted. Hence the strike has been called off," said Vikas Kharmale, coordinator of a group of employees of private bus operators.

The employees, including drivers, of the private bus operators had been agitating over demands, including salary hikes and pay parity with BEST employees.

The BEST undertaking, which provides public bus services in Mumbai and neighbouring areas, has hired more than 1,600 buses from seven contractors on a wet lease model, under which the vehicle ownership, maintenance, fuel and driver costs are the responsibility of the private operator.

The public transport body ferries more than 30 lakh com-



muters on its buses in Mumbai and neighbouring Thane, Navi Mumbai and Mira-Bhayander cities with its fleet of more than 3,100 buses, of which it owns less than 1,400 buses. Chief minister Eknath Shinde has agreed to their demands about salary hikes, paid weekly off, annual paid leaves, Diwali bonus and other demands, Kharmale told PTI.

As per the employees, the private bus operators providing buses on wet lease have around 7,000-9,000 employees including drivers and conductors.

He said the CM also assured them that neither any action will be taken against the protesting employees nor their salary for those days will be deducted.

According to Kharmale, the chief minister also assured to give them free bus pass facility like regular BEST employees. Kharmale said the CM has promised to find a way after talks about their main demand for permanent jobs in the

BEST undertaking. "Therefore we announced to call off our agitation. We appeal to all the employees to re-join duty at their respective depots," he said. Kharmale said that the chief minister also assured them that he would personally hold a meeting with the labour commissioner and come out with a solution on Tuesday itself.

According to employees of private bus operators, on the directives of Shinde, former Thane mayor Naresh Mhaske first listened to their demands and then called them for the meeting with the CM on Monday night.

BEST sources said the public transport body was working on alternative arrangements to avoid the inconvenience to commuters had the employees of the private bus operators remained firm on strike despite the state government's intervention.

A BEST official, who did not wish to be named, said the civic-run public transport body had sought an additional fleet of buses and some spare drivers from state-run transporter MSRTC to operate buses in the city if the protesting drivers didn't resume work. He further said that acting on BEST's demand and the state government's directive, the Maharashtra State Road Transport Corporation (MSRTC) provided more than 200 buses on Tuesday morning as against their demand of over 300 buses.

Notably, Mumbai guardian minister Mangal Prabhat Lodha on Monday said the affected BEST bus services will be restored in the next 24 to 48 hours.

Commuters have been facing a tough time due to the strike. As the number of buses plying on roads has reduced, the service frequency has been affected, resulting in the buses which are operating being overcrowded.

Air pollution could be driving rise in antibiotic resistance, new Lancet study finds

NEW DELHI, Aug 8 (PTI): Controlling air pollution could aid in reducing antibiotic resistance, which is when disease-causing microbes are able to resist the drugs designed to kill them, according to new research published in The Lancet Planetary Health journal.

The association between PM2.5 air pollution and increase in antibiotic resistance has strengthened over time, with enhances in PM2.5 levels leading to larger increases in antibiotic resistance in more recent years, the analysis found using data for 116 countries from 2000 to 2018. Sources of PM2.5 include industrial processes, road transport, and domestic coal and wood burning.

Previous research indicates 90 per cent of the world's population, or 7.3 billion people, are directly exposed to unsafe average annual PM2.5 levels, with 80 per cent of

them living in low- and middle-income countries.

PM2.5 air pollution was one of the leading factors driving antibiotic resistance, accounting for 11 per cent of changes in average antibiotic resistance levels globally, this study found.

Further, every 1 per cent rise in air pollution was linked with an increase in antibiotic resistance of between 0.5 and 1.9 per cent, depending on the pathogen, or the disease-causing microbe, the study covering nine bacterial pathogens and 43 types of antibiotics found.

The highest levels of antibiotic resistance were found to be in North Africa, the Middle East and South Asia, while levels in Europe and North America were found to be low. Misuse and overuse of antibiotics still remain the main drivers of antibiotic resistance.



However, evidence suggests air pollution also contributes to the spread of antibiotic-resistant bacteria and resistance genes, the study said. PM2.5 air pollution-driven antibiotic resistance was also

linked to an estimated 480,000 premature deaths in 2018, leading to additional economic costs of USD395 billion, the analysis said.

Owing to their huge populations, India and China are expected to

face the greatest impact of PM2.5 changes on premature death toll from antibiotic resistance.

By 2050, levels of antibiotic resistance worldwide could increase by 17 per cent under no changes to current air pollution policies, the authors' modelling suggested. India is expected to experience a 2.5 per cent increase in antibiotic resistance resulting from a 10 per cent increase in yearly PM2.5 levels. In other scenarios, such as increased health spending, controlling air pollution, improving drinking water and reducing antibiotic usage, the level of antibiotic resistance could be greatly reduced, the study said.

For example, limiting PM2.5 to 5 micrograms per cubic metres in the atmosphere (recommended by the World Health Organization) could decrease global antibiotic re-

sistance by 17 per cent by 2050. It could further reduce premature deaths linked to antibiotic resistance by 23 per cent and save USD 640 billion annually, the study said.

"Antibiotic resistance and air pollution are each in their own right among the greatest threats to global health. Until now, we didn't have a clear picture of the possible links between the two, but this work suggests the benefits of controlling air pollution could be two-fold: not only will it reduce the harmful effects of poor air quality, it could also play a major role in combatting the rise and spread of antibiotic-resistant bacteria," said lead author Hong Chen, Zhejiang University, China.

Future research should investigate underlying mechanisms of how air pollutants impact antibiotic resistance, the study said.

Kerala assembly adopts resolution against Centre's move to implement UCC

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, Aug 8 (PTI): The Kerala assembly on Tuesday unanimously adopted a resolution urging the BJP-led central government to refrain from implementing the Uniform Civil Code (UCC) in the country.

Earlier in February, the Mizoram assembly had unanimously adopted an official resolution opposing any move to implement the UCC in the country.

On Tuesday, Kerala chief minister Pinarayi Vijayan moved a resolution in the House against the UCC by terming it as a "unilateral and hasty" action on the part of the Centre. Vijayan contended that the UCC as visualised by the Sangh Parivar was not according to the Constitution, rather it was based upon the Hindu legal text 'Manusmriti'.

"That has been made clear by Sangh Parivar long back. They are not trying to implement something that is there in the Constitution. There is no need to misunderstand it like that," he said.

Vijayan contended that the ruling BJP government at the Centre only criminalised the divorce laws under the Muslim personal law, but has not done anything to ensure safety and security of women or take steps for the welfare of the marginalised.

After the resolution was moved



by the chief minister, several amendments and modifications were suggested by the Congress-led opposition UDF that welcomed the Left government's move.

After taking into account the modifications suggested, the Chief Minister read out the finalised resolution in which he said that the state assembly was concerned and dismayed with the Centre's move to impose UCC as it was a unilateral and hasty decision that would take away the secular character of the country.

Vijayan said the Constitution refers to having a general civil law only as a directive principle and it is not mandatory.

He said that when the freedom of religion is guaranteed under Article 25 of the Constitution and includes the right to follow and practice religious personal rules,

any legislation prohibiting that would be a violation of the constitutional right.

The Chief Minister further contended that Article 44 of the Constitution merely states that the State shall endeavor to establish a common civil code.

He said that any such move has to be preceded by debates and discussions to create a consensus among the people and not doing so was concerning.

He said that the Kerala assembly too shares this concern and believes that imposition of UCC is a "non-secular move" to attack the unity of the people and the nation as a whole.

Vijayan said that even in the Constituent Assembly debates, there were differences of opinion with regard to the UCC and B R Ambedkar's position at that time was that the Parliament can try to

bring a general civil law, but he did not insist that it should be compulsory. "He only indicated a possibility," the Chief Minister contended.

The CPI(M)-led government's decision to move the resolution came amid an ongoing campaign against the UCC by both the ruling Left and the opposition UDF in the state, as well as various religious organisations in the state. Both the fronts had organised seminars separately in Kozhikode recently against the UCC, in which the representatives of various religious outfits took part.

The Law Commission of India had last month received submissions from the public regarding suggestions on implementing the UCC in the country.

In a recent statement, the Chief Minister alleged that the "electoral agenda" of the BJP was behind raking up the issue of the UCC and urged the Centre to withdraw from the move to impose it.

Vijayan, who is also a senior leader of the CPI(M), has said the Centre's move can only be seen as a plan to implement the "majority communal agenda of 'one nation, one culture' by wiping out the cultural diversity of the country".

"The Central government and the Law Commission should withdraw from the move to impose the Uniform Civil Code," he has said.

CBI Academy joins Interpol Global Academy Network

'The corporation between CBI Academy and Interpol has a tremendous potential to enhance policing outcomes in India and across the world'



NEW DELHI, Aug 8 (PTI): The CBI Academy on Tuesday joined the Interpol Global Academy Network becoming its 10th member which will pave the way for development and delivery of joint training programme and research projects, officials said here.

The CBI Academy, based in Ghaziabad, is a premier training institution in the fields of crime investigation, prosecution and vigilance functioning.

A letter of acceptance was signed by DIG (Training) Mohit Gupta of the CBI Academy with his counterpart at Interpol Glenn Martindale, Director, Capacity Building and Training Directorate based at Global Complex for Innovation in Singapore, through a virtual signing ceremony.

The letter of acceptance was signed after detailed deliberations with the international police cooperation body Interpol in consultation with the Union Home Ministry, External Affairs Ministry and the Department of Personnel and Training. The three-year-old Interpol Global Academy Network aims to support Interpol in leading a global approach to law enforcement training, the CBI spokesperson said here.

"The Network has members in all regions and supports academic collaboration amongst Law Enforcement Training Institutions across the globe. The CBI

Academy has become the 10th member of INTERPOL Global Academy Network. It is a step towards CBI Academy's growing engagement with International Law Enforcement Institutions enabling effective capacity building and innovation activities," the agency said in a statement.

The CBI, which is a nodal body for all matters related to Interpol, conducts several international training programmes through its academy based in Ghaziabad, neighbouring Delhi.

"Over the years, CBI Academy has emerged as a major police institution of the country and South Asia. CBI Academy has imparted training to over 50,000 police officers since 2005 including around 1,432 foreign nationals from SAARC Nations, Africa, South East Asia, Central Asia and West-Asia.

"Several programmes have been conducted in collaboration with foreign agencies like US Homeland, French Embassy, FBI, NCCU UK, NCA UK, RCMP Canada along with four Interpol Global Programmes," it said. Speaking during the ceremony, Martindale said that CBI Academy is a premier training institution and extremely well placed to contribute to the Interpol Global Academy Network.

"The corporation between CBI Academy and Interpol has a tremendous potential to enhance policing outcomes in India and across the world. This collaboration will not only be highly beneficial to police personnel in India but also offer high quality capacity building, capability development and training opportunities to police personnel across the world," the CBI said in the statement.

The agency said joining the network will further enhance the CBI Academy's international visibility, provide valuable contribution to discussions of international and regional scope in the field of law enforcement education and benefit from knowledge exchange with other members of the network.

Time right for India to create global norms, benchmarks: Sanjeev Sanyal

KOLKATA, Aug 8 (PTI): India should be confident enough to deconstruct the rest of the world on its own terms as a rising economic power, creating global norms and benchmarks in various fields, Sanjeev Sanyal, Member of the Economic Advisory Council to the Prime Minister, said.

Sanyal said India should no longer be bound by benchmarks that are decided by third parties, and in which the country has no role in framing.

The noted economist was speaking at the launch of the Sovereign Risk Assessment Framework by CareEdge Ratings here on Monday evening.

"For the very first time, an Indian rating agency will assign sovereign ratings to the rest of the world... This is an important thing for us as a rising economic power to get used to doing. All this while, we allowed other people to deconstruct us; it's time we get confident enough to deconstruct the rest of the world on our

terms," Sanyal said.

He said the country also needs to come up with global norms in various other fields like medical benchmarks and Environmental, Social & Governance (ESG) standards.

"Our political leadership is visible... but we need to begin to create more institutional systems... like our own ESG norms, sovereign ratings, global benchmarks for technology and regulations," Sanyal told PTI.

CareEdge Ratings MD and CEO Mehul Pandya said sovereign risk assessments in the post pandemic world have gained added importance, and require a holistic approach.

"Continued rise in government debt, changing composition of global GDP, sustained low global GDP growth and expectation of higher interest rates for longer periods on the back of stubborn inflation are fundamentally altering the credit profiles of sovereigns,"

Pandya said.

The agency will likely begin releasing sovereign ratings of individual countries by the end of 2023, after due statutory approvals.

"You can critique the methodology, and the world can look at it and tell us where we can improve... And over time, it will hopefully get adopted by the global community; in a sense we will have an important say in the way the world sees itself," Sanyal said.

The EAC-PM member also took umbrage over the way in which countries like India are ranked in other global indices and benchmarks.

"There are other kinds of ratings, too, where these are completely off kilter... for example you will see India, the world's largest democracy, is placed 102 or 106 or some such absurd ranking in the 'democracy index'. Similar is the case with the 'freedom of speech index' or the 'happiness index'," Sanyal added.

Contd. from Page 1...

M'laya govt takes up Assam

currently underway to demarcate boundaries in these resolved areas. Officials of Assam and Meghalaya on Tuesday jointly agreed to visit the disputed Langpih area in Meghalaya's West Khasi Hills district to meet stakeholders, local representatives, and residents before finalising the interstate border, regional committee chairman Paul Lyngdoh said. Both Meghalaya and Assam lay claim to the Langpih area where four people were shot dead at the heights of the interstate dispute in the area in 2010.

Cabinet Minister Paul Lyngdoh, who is the chair of a regional committee here, led a delegation of the panel from Meghalaya for a meeting with Chandramohan Potawari, chairman of the regional committee from Assam, in Guwahati.

"The regional committees would undertake a joint visit to the Langpih sector and interact with all stakeholders, local representatives, and the people. We are optimistic that Langpih and the problems thereof are a thing of the past soon," Lyngdoh told PTI.

He said, "The discussions were fruitful and there was a spirit of mutual accommodation."

According to the minister, the regional committee from Assam also expressed its "receptiveness" to the proposal put forth that villages which are identified as "problem free" areas and where residents of those areas are inclined to be in Meghalaya to remain in the state.

Lyngdoh said residents of those villages have been voters of Meghalaya and the state government has been carrying out development activities in those areas for many years. He said he is looking forward to those areas being transferred to Meghalaya and are a distinct possibility through the active participation and resolution of the government of Assam. Lyngdoh also informed that a second round of the joint meeting would be held here post August 15. Assam and Meghalaya had in March last year signed a MoU in Delhi to formally resolving interstate disputes in 6 areas of differences between the two states.

Implementation of Inner Line Permit (ILP): The delegation also highlighted the resolution passed by the Meghalaya State Assembly in December 2019, focusing on the need for Inner Line Permit (ILP) implementation in Meghalaya. The delegation sought Modi's intervention as the State Government awaits a response from the Ministry of Home Affairs regarding the consideration of ILP in Meghalaya.

Sparks fly in LS, debate to

Sabha, where it enjoys a strong majority, Modi told party MPs to hit "sixers" on the last ball before the 2024 polls. Lok Sabha adjourned for the day on Tuesday. Debate on no-confidence motion will continue on Wednesday. On Wednesday, top ministers including Home Minister Amit Shah, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, Women and Child Development Minister Smriti Irani and Civil Aviation Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia are likely to intervene in the debate, parliamentary sources said.

Meanwhile, the Biju Janata Dal (BJD) on Tuesday opposed the no-confidence motion against the government on the Manipur violence, saying what happened in the state is due to "legacy issues" running back several decades. Participating in the debate in Lok Sabha, BJD MP Pinaki Misra said it is out of the question for his party to support any motion brought by the Congress.

"They are very adept at cutting their nose to spite their face. It defies logic and political sense to bring a no-confidence motion that is bound to fail," Misra said, targeting the Congress.

"Every time the prime minister gets up on the floor of the House, he pushes the Congress through the shredder," he said. "The conflagration in Manipur is the result of nearly 50-60 years of strife in; the fact of the matter is the entire issue boiled earlier in the 1980s too," the MP said.

Misra said the home minister had called an all-party meeting on Manipur where he gave an exceptionally detailed analysis of the situation there.

"I believe the central government missed a trick there. The central government asking for the matter to be remanded back to the High Court was a huge error. The central government should have been happy to let the matter rest in the Supreme Court because the public has faith in its judgement," he said.

Misra also urged all parties to each party to give constructive suggestions rather than blaming the central government on Manipur.

Gaurav Gogoi invokes Atalt

after the 2002 communal riots. "Why did he (Prime Minister Modi) take about 80 days to speak in Manipur and (he) just spoke for 30 seconds. After that there has been no peace appeal on Manipur from him. Ministers are saying they will speak, but as prime minister, the power of his words cannot be matched by ministers," Gogoi said. "When people were gasping for breath during the Covid second wave, the prime minister was seeking votes in West Bengal. When women were being assaulted in Manipur, the prime minister was seeking votes in Karnataka. What kind of nationalism is this that places power above the nation," the deputy leader of the Congress in Lok Sabha said.

3.75 lakh hectares allotted

their earnings," said Sarma. The chief minister also said that the government procures rice from farmers at a minimum support price that helps them in earning profits. The process of procuring mustard from farmers has also begun. This will produce a significant amount of oil. Oil dates yield five times more than Mustard. The chief minister said that up to ₹ 3 lakh can be earned from one hectare of land.

The state government plants to promote this cultivation by dividing 18 districts into six zones. Dhemajai and Lakhimpur districts will fall in zone I, Jorhat, Golaghat, Dibrugarh and Tinsukia districts in zone II, Karbi Anglong, West Karbi Anglong and Dima Hasao districts in zone III and Kamrup, Kamrup Metropolitan, Goalpara and Nagaon districts zone IV. While zone V will comprise of Chirang, Udalguri and Sonitpur districts, Hailakandi, Kachar and Karimganj will fall under Zones VI.

The state government has listed four experienced oil palm companies for implementation of this scheme and the companies have been entrusted with the responsibility of expanding oil palms in the allotted districts.

While Patanjali Foods Limited has been given 60,300 hectares in Tinsukia, Dibrugarh, Jorhat, Golaghat, Nagaon and Kamrup districts, the Godrej Agrovet Limited has been allotted 34,250 hectares in Hailakandi, Kachar and Karimganj. On the other hand, 3- F Oil Palm will be allocated 23,550 hectares in Chirang and Lakhimpur districts. KE Cultivation has been allocated 25,650 hectares of land in Sonitpur and Dhemajai districts.

The first pilot projects were conducted in Goalpara and Kamrup districts in 2015 and now they are yielding results currently. The chief minister said that other crops can be grown alongside this oil date.

"Our government is trying to form a joint venture comprising of farmers, separate producer societies, self-help groups, agronomists, public representatives, government officials and oil palm companies to advance the entire process of oil palm cultivation. It will be a milestone in the development and expansion of oil palm cultivation in the coming days," said Sarma said.

The chief minister also said that Assam has made considerable progress in the field of agriculture. He said the export of red rice from Majuli to Europe and lemon from Tinsukia to Birmingham and Dubai is a good sign for the farmers of Assam. He added that those who do not have ration cards will be given ration cards in October and through these ration cards they will get medical benefits upto ₹ 5 lakh along with free rice.

Speaking about the Arunodoi scheme the chief minister said that in the first phase another 7 lakh beneficiaries and another 8 lakh beneficiaries will be added in the second phase. He also assured that the monthly allowance of under the scheme will be increased from ₹ 1250 to ₹ 1400.

Agriculture minister Atul Bora, MLAs Bolin Chetia, Bhaskar Sharma, Rupesh Goala, Suren Phukan, Ponakan Baruah, CEM Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council Tuliram Ronghang, additional chief secretary Agriculture Asish Kumar Bhutani, functionaries of PFL and host of other dignitaries were present on the occasion.

Assam Rifles replaced by

it would be from 5 am to 5 pm. More than 160 people lost their lives and several hundreds were injured since the ethnic clashes broke out in Manipur on May 3, after a 'Tribal Solidarity March' was organised in the hill districts to protest against the Meitei community's demand for Scheduled Tribe (ST) status.

Meiteis account for about 53 per cent of the state's population and live mostly in the Imphal Valley. Tribals — Nagas and Kukis — constitute a little over 40 per cent and reside in the hill districts. (With inputs from PTI)

Cong holds LS polls strategy

reach out to people and expose the misgovernance and incompetence of the BJP," Kharge said in a tweet.

"Congress party built Assam, brick by brick, and ensured peace, progress and welfare of the state. Today, the strategy meeting with @INCAssam leaders focused on some crucial issues facing the state," the Congress chief said. The party is holding strategy meetings for every state as part of its preparations for the 2024 Lok Sabha elections.

No question of Brexit-like

of Article 370. "The Parliament accorded its approval to the executive act to unilaterally change the provision of the Constitution as applicable to Jammu and Kashmir. That's the central question this court has to decide whether the Union of India could do it," he said. Sibal has repeatedly questioned Parliament's power to abrogate Article 370 in the absence of the constituent assembly of Jammu and Kashmir. He has persistently maintained that only the constituent assembly, whose term expired in 1957, was vested with the power to recommend repeal or modification of Article 370, and since it ceased to exist after 1957, the constitutional provision according special status to J&K, assumed a permanent character.

During the third-day of the hearing on the pleas challenging the Centre's August 2019 decision, Sibal repeated his contention before the bench, also comprising Justices Sanjay Kishan Kaul, Sanjiv Khanna, BR Gavai and Surya Kant.

"This court will remember Brexit. In Brexit, there was no constitutional provision (in England) seeking a referendum. But, when you want to sever a relationship which has been entered into, you must ultimately seek the opinion of the people because people are at the centre of this decision not the Union of India," Sibal asserted.

CJI Chandrachud was, however, not impressed.

"In a constitutional democracy, seeking the opinion of people has to be done through established institutions. So long as a democracy exists as it does, in terms of constitutional democracy, any recourse to the will of the people has to be expressed and sought through established institutions. You cannot therefore envisage a situation like Brexit type referendum," he told Sibal.

He concurred with Sibal's view that Brexit was a political decision but said, "Within a Constitution like us there is no question of referendum."

Sibal said the repeal was a political decision taken unilaterally by the executive and it cannot be called a decision that was in consonance with the Constitution.

Sibal, who argued through the day, said whether Article 370 was a temporary or permanent provision does not matter now. He said the ultimate question is whether the Union of India can terminate that relationship which was constitutionally recognised under Article 370.

"It is irrelevant. Temporary or permanent does not matter. The manner it was done is a fraud upon the Constitution. It is a politically motivated act. Executive orders are political acts not constitutional acts. Permanent or temporary at the moment is not the issue."

"The reason why I am saying this is because maybe there is a constitutional way of doing it. Though, I am not addressing that (issue) nor have they (Centre) resorted to constitutional methodology. If they resort to it, it will be tested in the court of law," Sibal said.

Sibal has been insisting that Parliament could not have assumed the role of the constituent assembly to repeal Article 370.

He questioned the Centre's decision of dividing the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir into two Union Territories and said the Constitution did not allow it.

"You cannot divide Madhya Pradesh or Bihar into two union territories. This is a representative form of democracy. In this case, where are the voices of people of Jammu and Kashmir? Where is the voice of representative democracy? Five years have passed...have you had any form of representative democracy? This way the whole of India can be converted into Union Territories," he said.

Sibal said though the Constitution is a political document, one cannot manoeuvre or manipulate it as courts are not silent.

"That's not how you interpret a Constitution. It is a political document but you cannot misuse it politically. What is a Constitution? It's a set of values. Values on the basis of which people will represent themselves and their voice will be heard. If you do such executive acts and silence the voices of people, what is left of democracy?"

"All I can say is that this is the historic moment, historic not for the present but for the future of India. And I hope this court is not silent," Sibal said while concluding his arguments.

The hearing remained inconclusive and will continue on Wednesday when senior advocate Gopal Subramanian will advance his arguments for the petitioners.

Several petitions challenging abrogation of the provisions of Article 370 and the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Act, 2019, which split the erstwhile state into two union territories - Jammu and Kashmir, and Ladakh- were referred to a Constitution bench in 2019.

We challenge you to furnish

minister Rijiju has "boasted about the prime minister's directions to Cabinet ministers and ministers of state to visit the Northeast every 15 days".

"Yes, we all know about the frequency of visits of Union ministers before any election. But it has been 97 days since the horrific ethnic violence broke out in Manipur. INDIA (opposition bloc) asks how many of Modi's ministers have been to Manipur?" Ramesh said on Twitter.

"We challenge you to furnish details of the visits of Union ministers to Manipur in the last 97 days!" he said.

The Congress accused Prime Minister Modi of taking a "vow of silence" on issues such as the ethnic violence in Manipur and Chinese incursions, and said opposition parties were forced to bring a no-confidence motion against the government to make him speak up.

78 species of birds are found

available in India's geographical region but new records and distribution patterns indicate their existence in the nearby countries, Majumder said.

Malabar Grey Hornbill Ocyroceros griseus, Malabar Parakeet from the Western Ghats and Nicobar Serpent Eagle Spilornis klossi, Andaman Barn Owl Tyto Deroeptorffi from the Andaman and Nicobar Islands among others have been featured in the ZSI publication.

Smoothest relationship: Gal Gadot on her bond with 'Heart of Stone' co-star Alia Bhatt

NEW DELHI, Aug 8 (PTI): "She's amazing, we hit it from the get go," says Hollywood star Gal Gadot, describing her bond with actor Alia Bhatt on the sets of their upcoming action-thriller "Heart of Stone".

Gadot, who has also produced the movie, said she found that they both share a lot during her interactions with the Indian star, who makes her Hollywood debut with the Netflix film.

"She's amazing, we hit it from the get go. I think we share so much in common for the fact that I'm from Israel and she's from India. We're both now making this film that is global and American."

"And we're both very dedicated and hard workers in what we do, but we also are very family oriented... It was like the smoothest getting into a relationship I've had," Gadot told PTI in a group interview.

"Heart of Stone" follows Gadot's Rachel Stone, a member of an elusive and mysterious group of elite spies called the Charter.

When the shadowy organisation's cutting-edge

weapon, an AI-esque technological core called the Heart, is stolen by hacker Keya Dhawan (Bhatt), Stone embarks on a globe-trotting adventure to prevent the weapon from falling into the wrong hands and saving the day.

Gadot said she enjoyed exploring the complex dynamic between the two main characters in the Tom Harper directorial that pits the two actors against each other.

"Once you have a partner that you can trust, you enjoy the push and pull between the characters, it gives you a fight that has a weight. And you know that she's not faking and she's affected in the right way from me and vice versa."

"It's just delicious. It's a delightful way to work. And I definitely had that with Alia," she added.

The 38-year-old actor, most famous for her role of superhero

Diana Prince aka Wonder Woman in many DC-Warner Bros movies, described her "Heart of Stone" character as a person of "many contradictions".

"I enjoyed playing this character so much. She's a character of many contradictions. On one hand, she thrives on adrenaline. She likes the mission. She's an incredible secret agent."

"But at the same time, she's a loose cannon. She's having a hard time working within the system and following the rules. She's wild and she's not allowed to engage with people. And one thing she really wants is to engage with people and have these human connections in her life."

Gadot said she's a lot like Stone in real life.

"I think that the thing that really guided her was her instincts and the fact that she needs to follow her heart, literally, and listen to her guts. And that's something I try to do in my own life as well," she added.

In the film, the cornerstone of the Charter is its cutting-edge weapon called the Heart, a powerful AI which the organisation uses to tackle potential global threats and even find out the odds on the success in neutralising them.



TIME HAS COME TO TAKE LEGACY OF 'DON' FORWARD: FARHAN AKHTAR CONFIRMS 3RD FILM WITH NEW LEAD

MUMBAI, Aug 8 (PTI): Filmmaker Farhan Akhtar on Wednesday officially announced the third part of his popular action franchise "Don", which will star a new actor.

Farhan, who directed the first two parts featuring Shah Rukh Khan, shared a post about the upcoming project on Instagram.

"A New Era Begins," read the tagline in the short clip set on the theme of "Don".

The first "Don" released in 2006 and the second installment came out in 2011 with Shah Rukh and Priyanka Chopra Jonas in the lead reprising their char-

acters.

The franchise started after Farhan and Ritesh Sidhwani's banner Excel Entertainment bought the rights of the Amitabh Bachchan-starrer 1978 film of the same name, written by veteran writer duo Javed Akhtar and Salim Khan.

Farhan said he is set to take the film se-

ries forward in a new interpretation with "an actor whose talent and versatility" he has long admired. It will release some time in 2025.

"The time has now come to take the legacy of 'Don' forward and joining us in this new interpretation will be an actor whose talent and versatility I have long admired."

"We hope that you will show him the love you have so gra-

ciously and generously shown to Mr Bachchan and Shah Rukh Khan. A new era of Don begins in 2025," the director-writer said in a statement shared on social media.

Farhan, also known for directing films "Dil Chahta Hai" and "Lakshya", said he had a great time working on the "Don" franchise, which stemmed from the enigmatic character created by his father and Salim Khan.

"In 1978, a character created by Salim-Javed and portrayed by Mr. Amitabh Bachchan with effortless elan, captured the imagination of theatregoers across the country."



VIR DAS TO STAR IN 'CALL ME BAE' ALONGSIDE ANANYA PANDEY AND GURFATEH PIRZADA

MUMBAI, Aug 8 (PTI): Actor-comedian Vir Das will be seen alongside Ananya Pandey and Gurfateh Pirzada in series "Call Me Bae", backed by Dharma Productions' digital banner Dharmatics. The series, a slice-of-life comedy, will premiere in India exclusively on Prime Video.

"Call Me Bae" is created by Ishita Moitra who has

also co-written the series with Samina Motekar and Rohit Nair.

In the show, Pandey essays the role of Bae, a billionaire fashionista, who is disowned by her ultra-rich family owing to a salacious scandal. She has to fend for herself, for the first time ever. On this journey, she overcomes stereotypes, negotiates around prejudices and dis-

covers who she really is, the official synopsis reads.

Collin D'Cunha has directed the series, which is executive produced by Karan Johar, Apoorva Mehta and Somen Mishra.

The team has finished shooting for "Call Me Bae" and the show is expected to premiere by end 2023.

Ananya has as many as four projects lined up for this

year. The actress will next be seen opposite Ayushmann Khurrana in Raaj Shandilya's Dream Girl 2, slated to release in cinemas on July 7. She will then feature alongside Siddhant Chaturvedi and Adarsh Gourav in Excel Entertainment's Kho Gaye Hum Kahan, a digital story about three friends living in Mumbai.



SANDRA BULLOCK'S PARTNER BRYAN RANDALL DIES AFTER PRIVATE BATTLE WITH ALS

LOS ANGELES, Aug 8 (PTI): Hollywood star Sandra Bullock's longtime partner Bryan Randall has died after a three-year private battle with amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS). He was 57.

In a statement, the model-turned-photographer's family said Randall passed away "peacefully" on August 5.

"Bryan chose early to keep his journey with ALS private and those of us who cared for him did our best to honour his request. We are immensely grateful to the tireless doctors who navigated the landscape of this illness with us and to the astounding nurses who became our roommates, often sacrificing their own families to be with ours," the statement read.

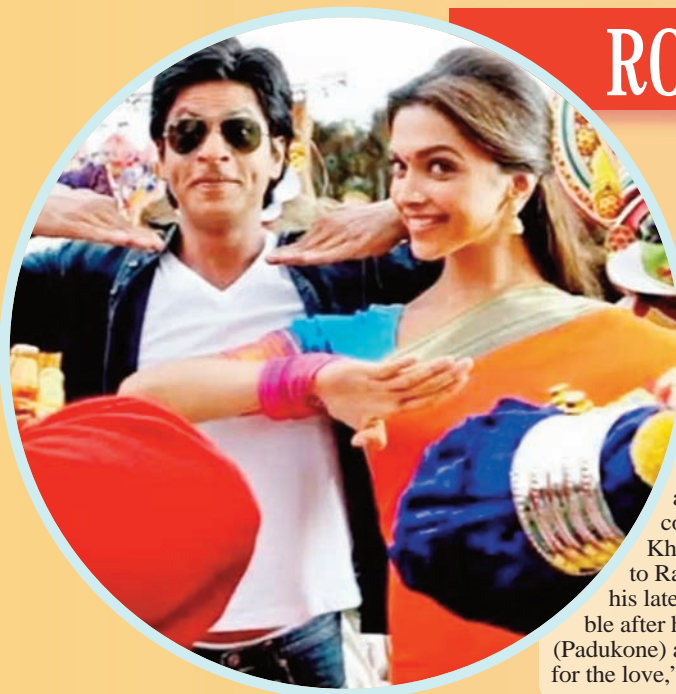
Randall's family further asked for "privacy to grieve and to come to terms with the impossibility of saying goodbye to Bryan".

ALS is a rare disease that attacks and kills the nerve cells that control voluntary muscles.

According to People magazine, Bullock, 59, met Randall when he was hired to capture her son Louis' birthday party in 2015. They went public with their relationship later that year by making an appearance at Jennifer Aniston and Justin Theroux's wedding.

Bullock, who is mother to two adopted children -- Louis, 13, and daughter Laila, 10, had talked about her relationship with Randall during a 2021 appearance on Facebook Watch's Red Table Talk opposite Jada Pinkett Smith.

"I found the love of my life. We share two beautiful children -- three children, (Randall's) older daughter. It's the best thing ever. I don't wanna say do it like I do it, but I don't need a paper to be a devoted partner and devoted mother. I don't need to be told to be ever present in the hardest of times. I don't need to be told to weather a storm with a good man," she had said.



ROHIT SHETTY, DEEPIKA PADUKONE celebrate 10 years of 'Chennai Express'

MUMBAI, Aug 8 (PTI): Filmmaker Rohit Shetty and Bollywood star Deepika Padukone have expressed gratitude to fans for the love they have showered on their film "Chennai Express", which released in theatres on this day 10 years ago. The romantic comedy, headlined by superstar Shah Rukh Khan followed his character Rahul, who travels to Rameshwaram in Chennai Express to immerse his late grandfather's ashes and finds himself in trouble after helping a don's daughter Meenamma (Padukone) and her cousins board the train. "Thank you for the love," Shetty posted on his Instagram Stories on

Tuesday alongside the film's poster, which marked his maiden collaboration with Khan and Padukone. Shetty and Khan then went on to work on "Dilwale" (2015). Padukone said she is glad Meenamma "continues to receive an abundance of love till this date". "They say that comedy is the most difficult genre for an actor. So when I was offered 'Chennai Express', I knew I had a daunting challenge ahead of me. And while it took me a little while to find Meenamma, a process that is extremely lonely and often times frightening, I'm grateful that we were able to create a character that is not only synonymous with the movie, but also one that continues to receive an abundance of love till this date," the actor said in a statement.

You keep moving and doing what's best: Sushmita Sen on health and career

MUMBAI, Aug 8 (PTI): It may not be easy but the life of an artist is a privileged one, says Bollywood star Sushmita Sen, who credits her job for keeping her motivated whenever she feels down and out.

Sen, who underwent an angioplasty following a massive heart attack in March, said acting is a stronger medicine than all the pills prescribed by the doctors.

"Health is good, because they (doctors) give you that many pills. The work aspect keeps me healthiest. When I'm working, the mind doesn't have the time to think about sad stories or tragedies. You keep moving and doing what's best."

"To be an actor or creative person is not an easy life, but it is a life that most of us are privileged to have. So, every time you are dog tired to the bone, tell yourself 'How many people get this? You are so lucky, shut up and do it'," the 47 year-old-actor

told PTI in an interview here.

Sen is back on screen with the JioCinema series "Taali", described as a biographical drama about the story of transgender activist Gauri Sawant, who was born as Ganesh. The show is her second digital outing after her acclaimed web debut "Aarya" on Disney+ Hotstar.

The former Miss Universe, known for films such as "Biwi No 1", "Filhaal", "Maine Pyaar Kyun Kiya" and "Main Hoon Na", said the streaming platforms gave her an opportunity to "grow" as an actor.

"I'm a big fan of OTT. I'm one of the first mainstream actresses to take on OTT at a time when it was not a done thing. I'm glad I did because it allowed me an opportunity to grow and come back to an art form that I love."

"Earlier, it used to be the greatest tragedy, when an actor or actress reached this age,



their careers were long finished, but this is when they know how to bring it to real life. This is the time to be an actor," she said.

Directed by National Award winner Ravi Jadhav of "Natarang" fame, "Taali" is also the first time for Sen playing a real-life character. Portraying a real person on screen can be daunting and the actor said her strategy was to keep it simple.

"One of the key things that we decided when we started 'Taali' was that you cannot try to ape Gauri Sawant, she is strong. We will have to not mimic her, (because) then we will get it wrong... That's how strong that persona is. So, what do we do? 'We take the essence of this woman, and all of what she is hiding and she is projecting. What she is hiding is far more powerful because you don't see that on YouTube or Google. You see that when you meet her. That's what I brought to 'Taali', with her

permission," she added.

The upcoming six-episode series needs to be watched as a human story, the actor said.

"Taali" is about reminding ourselves that watch this as a human story, you will be mesmerised with how this could have been your or my story. You don't have to be born into a world like this."

"It's a desire that drives you, the desire is so powerful that you are willing to sacrifice not just an organ but sometimes your life in the process of trying to give it up. They (trans community) need to be recognised as human beings, who feel like us, who hurt like us, who go through mental depression like us, whose lives matter just like us," she said.

To look the part, Sen said she relied on prosthetics and did a thorough homework to get the mannerisms and voice modulation right.

THE HOSTS ARE UNBEATEN IN THE FOUR GAMES THEY PLAYED SO FAR

ACT 2023: India aim to avoid complacency against Pakistan

CHENNAI, Aug 8 (PTI): Their semifinal berth already sealed, three-time champions India would look to guard against complacency when they take on arch-rivals Pakistan in a high-voltage last round-robin league match of the Asian Champions Trophy here on Wednesday.

There has been complete contrast in the overall performance of both the sides in the tournament so far. While the hosts are unbeaten in the four games they played so far, Pakistan have managed only a win along with a couple of draws and a loss and their semifinal hopes depend on the result of this vital clash.

A win for Pakistan will guarantee them a spot in the last four stage, but a defeat would leave their fate on the result of the match between China and Japan. If Pakistan lose on Wednesday, they will hope for China to upset Japan. In case Japan wins, the victory of margin should be lesser.

Besides Pakistan would also hope for Malaysia to beat South Korea by a big margin, which would benefit the Men in Green. With three wins and a draw, India are atop the table with 10 points, followed by Malaysia (9 points), South Korea (5), Pakistan (5), Japan (2) and China (1).

Even though both India and Pakistan have won the title three times each, going by current ranking and world stature, India will definitely start as favourites on Wednesday.

While India are ranked fourth



in the world, Pakistan are way below in the 16th position.

But ranking hardly matters when it comes to a high-profile India-Pakistan contest and the result could eventually be decided on which team handles pressure the best.

While Harmanpreet Singh and his men have been playing attacking hockey and have improved the strike rate of short corners, India will have to

strengthen their defense ahead of the business end of the tournament.

"We still need to work defensively and not give away silly PCs. We need to tackle better inside and do most of the tackling outside the box," Singh had said. A day's rest after back-to-back matches will definitely help both India and Pakistan.

Elaborating on the challenges of playing matches on consecu-

tive days, India head coach Craig Fulton said: "It's a hindrance for every team in the event, because if you check the scores of the team playing the next day, they have mostly been draws."

"Today (Monday) was a bit different, but yes, consecutive games are a bit harder to play... It's a grind, and it's tough. The momentum swings drastically in back-to-back games, and you

gotta be able to manage all of it."

Pakistan will be going into the match against India on the back of a narrow 2-1 win over China which helped them to stay in contention for a semifinal place.

However, the team was found wanting in their finishing abilities, something which it would have to improve when it takes on the hosts.

NEW DELHI, Aug 8 (PTI):

The Indian men's hockey team has been clubbed alongside arch-rivals Pakistan and will play the big-ticket match on September 30 in the Asian Games, while the women's side has South Korea and Malaysia among others in its pool. Placed in Group A, besides Pakistan, the Indian men have Asian Games champion Japan, Bangladesh, Singapore and Uzbekistan against whom they will begin their campaign on September 24, while the women's side, who are also in Pool A, will be up against Hong Kong and Singapore besides South Korea and Malaysia.

The Indian women will start their campaign against Singapore on September 27.

"We are placed along with some strong teams in our pool, including Japan, who won the Gold medal at the 2018 Asian Games in Jakarta. But we will treat all teams at par and will not be taking any competition lightly," skipper Savita said.

"We are already getting a chance to compete with some of these nations at the Asian Champions Trophy and we will look forward to using this experience to our advantage in the future."

"Our coaches have always instilled in us that we need to be prepared for all our rivals. We will study all our opponents for the Hangzhou Asian Games, re-watch all videos to learn about their strengths and weaknesses and prepare our plans accordingly."

The Group B in men's section comprises South Korea, Malaysia, China, Oman, Thailand and Indonesia, while the women's teams in Group B will comprise of Japan, China, Thailand, Kazakhstan and Indonesia.

After playing Uzbekistan, the Indian men's side will lock horns with Singapore on September 26 and Japan on September 28 before rounding off their group campaign with games against Pakistan and Bangladesh on September 30 and October 2 respectively.

The Indian women's team will look to go for the gold after winning the silver medal at the 2018 Asian Games in Jakarta.

"We are placed along with some strong teams in our pool. But we are confident that the work that we have done over the past year at the camp and training session will help us achieve good results in the competition," skipper Savita said.

"Hangzhou Asian Games is an important event, especially with a chance to earn a direct Olympic qualification. All the players are unified by the common goal to perform their best at the Games and if we can do that, then we are in with a good chance to finish at the podium, irrespective of which teams we face in the competition."

All hockey matches will be played at the Gongshu Canal Sports Park Stadium in Hangzhou, China. The men's final will be played on October 6, while the women's title clash will be held the very next day.

Selection policy 'fair and transparent', says BFI in reply filed in HC on boxers' petition

NEW DELHI, Aug 8 (PTI):

The Boxing Federation of India on Monday told the Punjab and Haryana High Court that its selection policy was totally "fair and transparent", responding to a petition filed by three boxers, including Amit Panghal, over their non-selection for the upcoming Asian Games.

The national federation added that the new selection criteria formulated in February, were "akin to the policy adopted by many leading boxing nations of the world". "The selection process adopted by BFI is totally fair and transparent and is based upon the assessment of various parameters. Due to the various parameters laid down for the selection of the athlete there is zero chance of biasness," the BFI said in its reply. World Championships silver medalist Panghal, Rohit Mor and Commonwealth Games silver winner Sagar Ahlawat had moved the high court against the BFI after they were left out of the Indian squad for the Asian Games to be held from September 23 to October 8 in China. They had petitioned against BFI's evaluation process for the selection of the Hangzhou Asian Games squad.

The BFI said the new selection criteria were formulated and ap-

proved as per the 2011 Sports Code and they "proved its efficiency in the recently held World Championships".

At this year's World Championships, the women boxers won four gold while the male pugilists returned with a haul of three bronze medals.

The BFI further stated that the athletes were "given a comprehensive briefing regarding the selection/evaluation process by the High Performance Unit which included High Performance Directors, Coaches and Sports Staff," adding that "none of the athletes raised any challenge to the selection criteria being adopted."

"Even the petitioners have participated in the selection criteria without raising any challenge to it and now they have challenged the selection criteria which is not permissible at this stage." Names of Indian boxers selected by BFI to represent India at the Asian Games have already been sent by Indian Olympic Association (IOA) to the Organizing Committee of Hangzhou Asian Games, the last date for which was July 15.

Deepak Bhorla (51kg), Sachin Siwah (57kg) and Narender Berwal (+92kg) have been selected ahead of Panghal, Mor and Ahlawat respectively.

Sports Ministry funds 28 Indian athletes for World Athletics Championship

NEW DELHI, Aug 8 (PTI):

The Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports (MYAS) is all set to fund the Indian contingent, consisting of 28 athletes, participating in the World Athletics Championships, which gets underway in Budapest, Hungary, on August 19. The total Indian contingent will be a 42-member squad, which would also include coaches and support staff, as they head to the Hungarian capital to compete against the world's best athletes.

The earlier edition last year saw six athletes from India making it to the finals and three managing to finish within the top eight. India's ace javelin thrower Neeraj Chopra bagged the silver medal. The funding is set to cover the training cost of the team, accommodation costs, airfare, visa and Out of Pocket Allowance. MYAS said in a media release. Among the 28 athletes competing, 13 belong to the Target Olympic Podium Scheme (TOPS), whereas 15 would be making their World Championships debut.

Shaili Singh (19) is the youngest member of the squad, who will be making her senior World Championships debut. She is a former silver medalist at the U20 World Athletics Championships.

List of Indian athletes competing at World Athletics Championships 2023: Jyothi Yarraji (100m Hurdles - TOPS Athlete), Parul Chaudhary (3000m SC), Shaili Singh (Long Jump - TOPS Athlete), Annu Rani (Javelin Throw - TOPS Athlete), Bhawna Jat (Race Walk), Krishan Kumar (800m), Ajay Kumar Saroj (1500m), Santhosh Kumar Tamilamsan (400m Hurdles), Avinash Mukund Sable (3000m SC - TOPS Athlete), Sarvesh Anil Kushare (High Jump), Jeswin Aldrin (Long Jump - TOPS Athlete), M Sreesankar (Long Jump - TOPS Athlete), Praveen Chithravel (Triple Jump - TOPS Athlete), Abdulla Aboobacker (Triple Jump - TOPS Athlete), Eldhose Paul (Triple Jump - TOPS Athlete), Neeraj Chopra (Javelin Throw - TOPS Athlete), D.P Manu (Javelin Throw - TOPS Athlete), Kishore Kumar Jena (Javelin Throw), Akashdeep Singh (Race Walk - TOPS Athlete), Vikash Singh (Race Walk), Paramjeet Singh (Race Walk - TOPS Athlete), Ram Baboo (Race Walk), Amoj Jacob (4 x 400m Relay), Muhammed Ajmal (4 x 400m Relay), Muhammed Anas (4 x 400m Relay), Rajesh Ramesh (4 x 400m Relay), Anil Rajalingam (4 x 400m Relay), Mijo Chacko Kurian (4 x 400m Relay).

CHENNAI, Aug 8 (PTI): Indian men's hockey captain Harmanpreet Singh is happy with his team's improved strike-rate of short corners but wants a curb on conceding silly penalty corners in its important match against arch-rivals Pakistan in the Asian Champions Trophy on Wednesday.

"It would definitely be a high-intensity tie. We need to be smart and focus on our actual gameplan and our responsibilities. We will stick to our original structure and try to finish better," he told PTI after his team's 3-2 victory over South Korea.

"It's going to be a full-house. It was a near full-house yesterday (Sunday), which is a good sign for Indian hockey."

While he is happy that his team is finding ways to score both through penalty corners as well as field strikes, there is still some work on the defensive front --- mainly in terms of conceding penalty corners at crucial junctures.

"We have been scoring goals both through field and PCs. Also, ball possession was quite good, especially during the closing stages of the game."

"We still need to work defensively and not give away silly



PCs. We need to tackle better inside and do most of the tackling outside the box," he added.

Considering the PC conversation debate, the Men in Blue earned four on Monday and converted a couple.

When asked about the inconsistency about the conversion rate, Harmanpreet ascertained that the opponents have improved defensively, which is a good thing for the sport.

"It is not just us, but with

every team. And it's mainly because they are defending well. If you look at our defence, we have Amit Rohidas and Jarmanpreet Singh, who have been doing a great job. Also, the opponents are doing the same thing, which is actually good," he added.

Head coach Craig Fulton has asserted that he and his side will be ready for the Pakistan challenge after sealing the semifinal berth.

LAHORE, Aug 8 (PTI): Mickey Arthur and Grant Bradburn, the foreign coaches attached with the Pakistan cricket team, are likely to continue in their respective roles with new chief selector Inzamam-ul-Haq conveying to the management that he is comfortable working with them.

South African Arthur was appointed as Team Director in April this year by the PCB while Bradburn came as Head Coach in May.

However there was speculation that their stints might be cut short in case the cricket technical committee, that includes Inzamam and Misbah-ul-haq, won't give a positive response on presence of foreign recruits on the selection panel. Inzamam, according to a PCB insider, is said to have played

an influential role in convincing PCB Chief Zaka Ashraf and Board's Technical committee head Misbah-ul-Haq not to try to change the team management at this stage.

"It was Inzamam who gave positive feedback about Mickey Arthur and even Bradburn and assured the Chairman he will be able to work well with them and they can all do their best to select the best teams for coming events," the insider said.

Inzamam, after accepting the paid position, said that he has worked before with Arthur and also knew Bradburn well.

"I have worked before as Chief Selector and formed a good understanding with Mickey. With the Asia Cup and World Cup coming

up and then a Test tour to Australia it is going to be a challenge in the coming days for us," Inzamam said. Inzamam accepted the chief selector's position on Monday after stepping down as a member of the Pakistan Cricket Board's Cricket Technical Committee which is headed by another former captain, Misbah ul Haq.

Ironically Misbah was on the PCB's cricket committee in 2019 which after the World Cup in England had recommended against extending contracts of Arthur, who was head coach and Inzamam, who was the chief selector then.

Inzamam played 120 Tests and 378 ODIs for his country and also remained the captain between 2004 and 2007 when he retired after the World Cup.

He had accepted the chief selector's position in 2016 and worked with Arthur until 2019 when both were released by the PCB.

"I want to do a better job than I did the last time as chief selector and I am confident we have a bunch of strong players with Babar Azam as captain and if we continue to play positively like we did recently in Sri Lanka then we can move forward confidently."

He said at one stage Zaka was not happy with the terms on which his predecessor, Najam Sethi had hired Arthur and how the team director, despite remaining in England, had hand-picked his own coaching staff.

"It was Inzamam who once he came onto the cricket technical committee said Arthur was capa-

ble of delivering and would be with the team for most part of the Asia Cup and then wholly for the World Cup and tour to Australia so the PCB should back him."

The insider said Ashraf had a long discussion with Arthur on the advice of Inzamam and matters have now been settled and there would be no change in the team management.

However, there is one area where Inzamam might again face inquiries over the selection of his nephew Imam ul Haq.

When Inzamam was chief selector the first time, Imam won his Pakistan cap and the former captain had to face a lot of queries on whether his nephew deserved to be picked ahead of other deserving players.

Inzamam wants Arthur and Bradburn to continue with Pakistan cricket team: PCB sources



Extra Pacer's Slot: Unadkat-Shardul set for tie-breaker to get World Cup berth

NEW DELHI, Aug 8 (PTI): The national selection committee will have its task cut out as it would have to choose between Shardul Thakur and Jaydev Unadkat for the extra fast bowler's slot in the 15-member India squad for the World Cup, starting October 5.

As per ICC rule, every team has to submit its initial squad of 15 by September 5 but the final submission can be done by September 27, and a country is allowed to make as many changes as possible between the initial and final submission.

Interestingly, the Australia series ends on September 27, the day of the final submission.

Therefore, one shouldn't be surprised if India carry around 16 to 18 members for both the Asia Cup and Australia home series before zeroing in on the final squad.

So Unadkat and Shardul will certainly get their share of chances during the Asia Cup in Sri Lanka and the three-match home series against Australia (both in September), serving as a pre-cursor to the World Cup. India's World Cup campaign against Australia starts in Chennai on October 8, which is exactly two months from this date, and the squad composition looks far from settled at the moment.

While the availability of injured batters KL Rahul and Shreyas Iyer would certainly make India one of the serious title contenders, it is the bowling combination on low and slow decks which will decide the team's run during the marquee event.

There are two bones of contention -- the extra seamer's slot and the third spinner's spot in the fifteen. But, in the case of speed merchants, it wouldn't be as straightforward as one envisages.

Jasprit Bumrah is coming back from a lower-back stress fracture but even at 80



percent fitness, Bumrah will be playing the World Cup and so will Mohammed Shami and Mohammed Siraj.

With Hardik Pandya also filling up the fourth fast bowler's slot and is expected to bowl at least six to eight overs per game if not 10, the reserve pacer's slot becomes important. In terms of performance and quality, Shardul is way ahead and has again proved his mettle in the Caribbean with eight wickets in three ODIs but Unadkat's advantage is being a left-arm seamer in this set-up.

With Arshdeep Singh, a left-arter with better skill-sets, shunted to the Asian Games T20 squad, Unadkat is very much in the scheme of things as he adds variation despite his lack of pace.

Also since the team management has carried Unadkat for so long, it is imperative that he is considered for the big occasion.

Another option is Bengal pacer Mukesh Kumar, who has impressed one and all with his work ethic but even he has been

picked for the Asian Games in Hangzhou, which ends on October 7, provided India qualify for the gold medal match.

The third spinner's slot could be a more straightforward choice with Axar Patel miles ahead of Yuzvendra Chahal at the moment, although his skill-set is quite similar to Ravindra Jadeja, who is expected to start in all of India's games.

But Axar's better batting abilities and the team management's distinct lack of interest to try Chahal during the West Indies ODIs is an indicator.

The Indian team management is desperate to get a fully fit KL Rahul during the upcoming Asia Cup in Sri Lanka but the senior Karnataka man, just like his pace bowling colleague Bumrah, will need to do 50-over match simulation ahead of the continental showpiece.

Closer to the World Cup, people in the know of things believe that if all specialist bowlers are fit and available, then it will be a straight tie-breaker between Mumbai's seam bowling all-rounder Shardul

and Saurashtra's left-arm medium pacer Unadkat.

Having completed its round of experiments during the three-match series against the West Indies, the think-tank won't cast its net any further and if sources are to be believed, they have zeroed in on the core 18-19 members for the World Cup, out of which 15 will be chosen for the tournament proper.

"The selectors and the team management wants to give both Rahul and Shreyas full chance of recovery. Rahul is certainly way ahead in terms of recovery and getting closer to full match fitness."

"But he needs to do match simulation where he is able to keep wickets for 50 overs," a BCCI source told PTI on the condition of anonymity.

"The Instagram videos show that he is doing well but 50 overs of keeping and at least 30 overs of batting in the heat will prove how his operated thigh is holding up in humid conditions."

"If he is able to do well over next nine possible games (six if India play the Asia Cup final plus three against Australia), it will be the best news for the Indian team," he added.

It is expected that India's Asia Cup squad will be selected end of this week or by the middle of next week (latest by August 16-17).

Likely core group: Rohit Sharma (captain), Shubman Gill, Virat Kohli, Shreyas Iyer, KL Rahul, Hardik Pandya (vc), Ravindra Jadeja, Mohammed Shami, Mohammed Siraj, Jasprit Bumrah, Kuldeep Yadav, Suryakumar Yadav, Ishan Kishan (wk), Axar Patel, Sanju Samson, Shardul Thakur, Jaydev Unadkat, Mukesh Kumar, Yuzvendra Chahal.

Semifinals berth sealed, India edge out South Korea 3-2



CHENNAI, Aug 8 (PTI): Their semifinals spot guaranteed, India prevailed over defending champions South Korea 3-2 in their fourth round-robin fixture of the Asian Champions Trophy here on Monday, maintaining their unbeaten run in the continental hockey tournament.

Even before the action got underway at the Mayor Radhakrishnan Hockey Stadium, India had sealed their place in the semi-finals, following Japan's loss to Malaysia earlier in the day.

Both teams began the match on a fast-paced note, playing mainly possession-based hockey.

In the sixth minute, the deadlock was broken by the hosts, as Nilakanta Sharma tapped the ball in after Sukhjeet Singh dribbled the ball past a couple of defenders.

Unfazed by the goal, Korea came up with a couple of chances of their own but the Indian defence was up to the task.

However, the Koreans did not take much time to equalise as Sunghyun Kim hammered it in after Manjare Jung's low pass, in the 12th minute.

In the second quarter, it was all about India as they came up with as many as four chances and scored their second goal in the 23rd minute through a penalty corner.

The PC was successfully converted by Harmanpreet Singh, who hit the ball low to the right of the goalkeeper before beating him. The Indians followed that up with more attacks, including a PC, but to no avail, as they maintained their slim 1-0 lead at half-time.

After the restart, Korea squandered a

PC earned through video referral, even as Amit Rohidas was green-carded.

However, India came up with an attacking move and it resulted in a field goal by Mandeep Singh, as Shamsher Singh's assist allowed the former to collect it comfortably and fire it in.

Korea received another PC but skipper Jonghyun Jang's shot went wide. It was followed by three chances for India, with Karthi Selvam and Mandeep Singh coming close, as the game moved into the fourth quarter.

Just two minutes into the final quarter, India earned a PC, which ultimately resulted in a penalty stroke. But, Harmanpreet's attempt to go low towards the keeper's right saw his effort being denied.

A minute later, a video referral allowed Korea to gain a PC, which resulted in it earning three more straight PCs. However, Jang failed to convert either of them.

India continued with their attacking intent, with a double save coming from the Korean goalie in the 50th minute off Mandeep and Sukhjeet's shots.

It was followed by another series of PCs for Korea, while they also opted for a review for a possible PC, only to lose it. Finally, in the 58th minute, Jihun Yang found the back of the net through a field goal, keeping the Indians on their toes.

Even as the Koreans looked for the equaliser, the Indian defence managed to hold on to the one-goal lead.

India will next be up against arch-rival Pakistan on Wednesday, while Korea, who remain in the top-four race, face Malaysia.

Neeraj Chopra to lead 28-member Indian team in World Athletics Championships

NEW DELHI, Aug 8 (PTI): Olympic champion javelin thrower Neeraj Chopra will once again headline India's campaign in the World Athletics Championships beginning on August 19 in Budapest, Hungary, as the country will field a 28-member team in the showpiece.

Surprisingly, the Sports Ministry announced the team instead of the Athletics Federation of India (AFI).

Asian record holder shot putter Tajinderpal Singh Toor has pulled out of the August 19-27 showpiece as he is recovering from the groin injury sustained during the Asian Championships in July.

National record holder high jumper Tejaswin Shankar, 800m runner K M Chanda and 20km race walker

Priyanka Goswami (also national record holder) have also decided to skip the World Championships as they wanted to focus on the Asian Games (September 23 to October 8) in Hangzhou, China.

Reigning Diamond League champion Chopra is seeking to clinch a gold medal in Budapest after winning a silver in the last edition in Eugene, USA, in 2022.

The Team:

Women: Jyothi Yarraji (100m Hurdles), Parul Chaudhary (3000m Steeplechase), Shaili Singh (Long Jump), Annu Rani (Javelin Throw), Bhawna Jat (20km Race Walk).

Men: Krishan Kumar (800m), Ajay Kumar Saroj

(1500m), Santhosh Kumar Tamilansan (400m Hurdles), Avinash Mukund Sable (3000m Steeplechase), Sarvesh Anil Kushare (High Jump), Jeswin Aldrin (Long Jump), M Sreesankar (Long Jump), Praveen Chithravel (Triple Jump), Abdulla Aboobacker (Triple Jump), Eldhose Paul (Triple Jump), Neeraj Chopra (Javelin Throw), DP Manu (Javelin Throw), Kishore Kumar Jena (Javelin Throw), Akashdeep Singh (20km Race Walk), Vikash Singh (20km Race Walk), Paramjeet Singh (20km Race Walk), Ram Baboo (35km Race Walk), Amoj Jacob, Muhammed Ajmal, Muhammed Anas, Rajesh Ramesh, Anil Rajalingam, Mijo Chacko Kurian (Men's 4x400m Relay).



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