

WORLD  
NORTHEAST

- At least 70 people killed in fire in multi-storey building in Johannesburg
- North Korea says it simulated nuclear attacks on South Korea
- CSOs want Liquor Prohibition Act lifted from Dimapur dist
- Civil bodies in Manipur should talk in one voice: CM Biren Singh

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## Assam to conduct special summary revision of electoral rolls

**GUWAHATI, Aug 31:** The Election Commission of India (ECI) has directed the Assam election department to carry out a special summary revision of electoral rolls in accordance with constituencies post delimitation, chief electoral officer (CEO) Anurag Goel said on Thursday.

Before revision of the electoral rolls, intensive pre-revision activities by electoral registration officer (ERO) and 100 per cent physical verification through field machinery are required to be undertaken, Goel said.

New polling stations have to be created while the old ones will have to be mapped in accordance with the new constituencies and voters list will have to be also prepared accordingly, the CEO said.

The entire process will be done with the help of a software and so on the directives of the ECI, both online and offline submissions of forms for correction and inclusion of names have been stopped till November 30, he said. The draft publication of voters list will begin from December 1 and it is only then that these forms will be accepted with the process continuing till the last day of filing of nomination papers for elections, Goel said. The decision on all the forms received will be taken by January 15 and the final voters list will be published on January 31.

The continuous updating of the list will continue till



the last date of filing of nomination for the elections as announced by the ECI.

Meanwhile, the first level checking of voting machines for next year's Lok Sabha polls will begin from Friday and continue till September 29. Goel said a meeting with all national and (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

## Brahmaputra flowing above danger level at several places Flood scene deteriorates, death toll up

HT Bureau

**GUWAHATI, Aug 31:** Incessant rains have worsened the flood situation in Assam with a total of 4,03,313 people affected in the past 24 hours.

One person was washed away in the floodwaters in Golaghat district, taking the death toll in this year's deluge to 16.

The Brahmaputra continues to flow above the danger level at Dhubri, Goalpara, Guwahati, Tezpur and Neamatighat. A total of 19 districts in the state are reeling under the impact of floods. They are Barpeta, Biswanath, Bongaigaon, Chirang, Darrang, Dhemajai, Dhubri, Dibrugarh, Goalpara, Golaghat, Kamrup, Kamrup (Metro), Lakhimpur, Majuli, Morigaon, Nagaon, Nalbari, Sivasagar and Sonitpur.

A total of 44 revenue circles and 884 villages in these districts have been adversely affected by the



floods in the state. Moreover, flood waters have inundated a total area of 23,130.62 hectares of cultivable land in the state.

A total of 2,31,088 animals comprising of 1,40,469 big animals, 63,136 small animals and 27,483 poultry have been affected by the floods.

Meanwhile, the district administrations of the affected districts have set up a total of nine relief camps in the affected places. Another 116 relief distribution centres have been set up where essential food items consisting of food grains, salt, edible oil and baby food are being distributed. In addition,

cattle feed consisting of 1,969.76 quintals wheat bran and 630.10 quintals of rice bran have been distributed among the public so far.

Moreover, several teams of the State Disaster Management Force (SDRF) are conducting relief and evacuation operations in the affected districts. A total of 34 boats have been deployed in these districts to aid in the relief operations. Five medical teams are also engaged in providing basic medical care to the affected.

There are also reports of flood waters damaging the several roads, bridges and other infrastructure in Bongaigaon, Dhubri, Majuli, Morigaon, Darrang, Goalpara, Lakhimpur, Nagaon, Tamulpur and Udalguri. There are also reports of erosion occurring at different places in Bongaigaon, Chirang, Kamrup, Majuli, Nalbari, Sonitpur, Tinsukia and (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

## Arunachal MLA urges PM to discuss 'standard map' issue with China during G20 Summit

**ITANAGAR, Aug 31:** Senior Congress MLA of Arunachal Pradesh Ninong Ering has requested Prime Minister Narendra Modi to raise the issue of China showing Arunachal Pradesh and Aksai Chin as part of its territory in its map, with Chinese President Xi Jinping in the upcoming G20 Summit in New Delhi in September.

Ering who represents the Pasighat West constituency in the Arunachal Pradesh assembly claimed that China had made its claim on territories earlier too.

"This unforeseen, unfortunate yet deliberate incident on the part of China has invoked deep resentment among the people of Arunachal Pradesh. It is in common knowledge that China has earlier too tried to assert its claim over the state by renaming 11 locations in April 2023, 15 locations in

2021 and 6 places in 2017," Ering said in a letter to Modi.

China on Monday officially released the 2023 edition of its "standard map" that claimed Arunachal Pradesh and Aksai Chin as belonging to that country.

"...Being an elected representative of Arunachal Pradesh's Pasighat West seat, I appeal to you to discuss this matter of China unilaterally making changes in its map with Chinese President Xi Jinping in the upcoming G20 Summit," Ering said in the letter.

However, it is not yet clear whether Jinping will take part in the summit to be held from September 8 to 10. India on August 29 lodged a strong protest with China over its so-called "standard map" laying claim over Arunachal Pradesh and the Aksai Chin, and asserted (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

## Northeast got projects worth ₹ 1700 cr for Inland waterways development: Union minister Sonowal

Staff reporter

**GUWAHATI, Aug 31:** Union Minister of ports, shipping and waterways (MoPSW) Sarbananda Sonowal said that projects worth ₹ 1700 crore have been launched for development of Inland waterways in Northeast.

Sonowal said this while inaugurating the roadshow on Global Maritime India Summit, 2023 (GMIS) on Thursday.

GMIS 2023 is a premier maritime sector-focused event organised by the ministry of ports, shipping & waterways slated to be held from October 17 to 19 at Bharat Mandapam, New Delhi.

Notably projects worth ₹ 474 crore for development of River Brahmaputra (NW-2) was launched in 2020-21. Sonowal said that significant allocations like ₹ 208 crore for a ship repair facility at Pandu turns out to be a major boost. Additionally for the development of new



national waterways like River Barak (NW-16) and the Indo-Bangladesh Protocol Route for ₹ 148 crores has also been undertaken, he said.

Sonowal further said that the inland waterways sector has received

a tremendous boost of investment to the tune of ₹ 5200 cr from the centre since 2014. He said that ₹ 4634 investment backs Jalmary Vikas, and the (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

## Assam oncologist wins Ramon Magsaysay Award

**SILCHAR, Aug 31:** Renowned oncologist and Assam's first Magsaysay award winner Ravi Kannan on Thursday said the prestigious award is not about him, but for all those who have contributed to cancer care in the community. He said the award belongs to all the people who have joined hands to make the lives of those suffering from cancer better.

"The award is not about myself; it is also about many people including 450 colleagues of the Cachar Cancer Hospital and Research Centre, who have contributed immensely and the not-for-profit society that set it up," Kannan said after being announced as the distinguished recipient of the 'Hero For Holistic Healthcare' award on the 65th anniversary of the Ramon Magsaysay Award Foundation.

"The award belongs to many people, the hospital and the community who have joined hands to make lives better for those suffering from cancer and I am just one of the many faces involved in this effort," said the renowned oncologist, who is also the director of the Cachar Cancer Hospital and Research Centre.

Assam Chief Minister's Office in a post on 'X' said, "Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma extends his warm congratulations to Ravi Kannan R on being bestowed with the prestigious Ramon Magsaysay Award 2023. Kannan has played an impactful role in transforming cancer care in Assam, especially in rural areas. He is also a Padmashree recipient." Kannan said they are now focusing on "decentralising cancer care by setting up smaller hospitals in different parts of the state and even in Tripura so that people do not have to travel far to reach a hospital for treatment". (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

## KAAC top officials takes charge at Hamren branch office

**DIPHU, Aug 31:** The Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC) authority has transferred three high ranking officials to its branch secretariat in Hamren, West Karbi Anglong from Diphu. The order was given on August 30.

The officials are joint secretary Michael Timung, deputy secretary Tarun Engti and under secretary Sar-im Ronghang.

According to sources, joint secretary, Michael Timung will be responsible for the overall functioning of the branch secretariat along with taxation, education, public works, border matters etc. While deputy secretary, Engti will look after the land revenue department, under secretary, Ronghang has been given charge of the executive officer of the Hamren Municipal Board and will assist the joint secretary and deputy secretary.

## Himanta flags off mobile forensic vans

HT Bureau

**GUWAHATI, Aug 31:** Chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Thursday flagged off the first batch of mobile forensic vans for the directorate of forensic science. These vans have been introduced to augment the investigative capabilities of the law enforcement agencies in the state.

Sarma flagged off the first batch of seven mobile forensic vans during a ceremony held at the Assam Secretariat Complex in Dispur.

Speaking at the event, Himanta Biswa Sarma said, "I am confident the mobile forensic vans will contribute immensely towards Assam Police's forensic evidence collection capabilities, which in turn would lead to significant increase in conviction rates in days to come. It is often seen that under-trials accused of serious criminal offences go scot free owing to lack of adequate evidence, which is required for conviction."

"The forensic vans are equipped with state-of-the-art equipments and tools, which will help the law enforcement agencies to reach crime scenes at the earliest and would enable the investigators to collect and securely preserve crucial evidences and ensure that the same are not contaminated," said Sarma.

The state government will allocate sufficient numbers of resource persons and forensic for each of these vans. More such mobile forensic vehicles will be made available to the law enforcement in future.



able to the law enforcement in future.

Speaking on the importance of forensic evidence in convictions under the criminal justice system, Sarma said a robust forensic science regime has to exist to deal with crimes ranging from murder to drug trafficking. With this objective the state government has decided to establish four regional (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

## PM SVANidhi to alleviate condition of 13.5 cr poor Indians

**GUWAHATI, Aug 31:** The PM SVANidhi scheme will play a significant role in alleviating 13.5 crore Indians from poverty, Union minister of state for Finance Bhagwat Karad said on Thursday.

The Union minister said this while chairing the Northeast zonal conference of PM SVANidhi in the city. Assam holds the top position in the Northeast after achieving 89 per cent target under the scheme, while Uttar Pradesh ranks first across the country.

He appealed to the banks to accelerate coverage of SVANidhi loans to the poor and "fund the unfunded on a priority basis along with organizing camps at village levels to provide various banking services". He said that region-wise meetings are being held to give the benefits of the central scheme to the hawkers in the municipal areas and to increase awareness about the scheme.



Vendors who have a bank account, Aadhaar card and are registered with the municipal corporations can get the benefit of the scheme. Initially, ₹ 10,000 loan is disbursed and those making timely payment, can get an additional loan for ₹ 20,000 and then ₹ 50,000. The minister said the target decided in the meeting should be achieved within a month and that the benefits of the PM SVANidhi scheme should be given to the poor. He said efforts for the economic upliftment of the poor are being made (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

## New born infant abandoned in Jorhat

HT Correspondent

**JORHAT, Aug 31:** A tense situation prevailed in Jorhat's Bagchug area when a new born bundled in a bag was handed over to a boy at Saikia Path, Bagchug, by a couple riding on a scooter.

The couple reportedly fled from the spot after leaving the infant behind. A police source said that the boy on peeping inside the bag was shocked to see the baby and called his mother to inform her about what had happened. His mother accompanied by other residents of their locality soon arrived on the spot. They took the baby boy to the Lichubari Police Station and then to the Primary Health Centre at Bagchug.

Doctors at the health centre conducted a health check-up of the infant and termed him to be in good health. Later the infant was handed over to Jorhat's Child Welfare Committee, which placed it with the Specialized and Adoption Agency at Rajamaidam here.

## Video of 'Pragyan' rover rotating released by ISRO

## Moon mission confirms presence of sulphur in lunar region

**BENGALURU, Aug 31:** Another instrument onboard the Chandrayaan-3 mission's rover 'Pragyan' has confirmed the presence of sulphur in the lunar region by deploying a different technique, the Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO) said on Thursday.

The Alpha Particle X-ray Spectroscopy (APXS) has detected sulphur as well as other minor elements on the moon, the Bengaluru-headquartered national space agency said in a social media post. "This finding by Ch-3 compels scientists to develop fresh explanations for the source of Sulphur (S) in the area: intrinsic?, volcanic?, meteoritic?.....?" read the post.

ISRO also released a video of the rover rotating in search of a safe route. The rotation was captured by a lander imager camera.

It feels as though a child is playfully frolicking in the yards (sic) of Chandamama, while the mother



watches affectionately. Isn't it?" ISRO quipped in the social media post. The Laser Induced Breakdown Spectroscopy (LIBS) instrument onboard the rover has already confirmed the presence of sulphur. Detailed scientific analysis of these observations is in progress.

The 26-kg, six-wheeled, solar-powered Pragyan rover is equipped

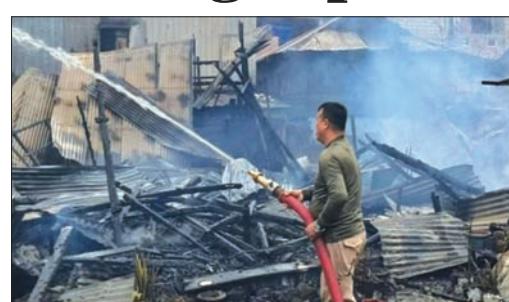
to use its scientific instruments to record what the lunar soil and rocks are made of in the south polar region where Chandrayaan-3 landed and it would also show how the readings contrast with that of the highland regions.

APXS instrument is best suited for in-situ analysis of the elemental composition of soil and rocks on the

surface of planetary bodies having little atmosphere, such as the Moon, an ISRO statement said.

It carries radioactive sources that emit alpha particles and X-rays onto the surface sample. The atoms present in the sample in turn emit characteristic X-ray lines corresponding to the elements present. By measuring the energies and intensities of these characteristic X-rays, researchers can find the elements present and their abundances.

APXS observations have discovered the presence of interesting minor elements, including sulphur, apart from the major expected elements such as aluminum, silicon, calcium and iron. APXS has been developed by the Physical Research Laboratory (PRL), Ahmedabad, with support from the Space Application Centre (SAC) Ahmedabad, whereas UR Rao Satellite Centre (URSC), Bengaluru has built the deployment mechanism, it stated. (PTI)



**IMPHAL, Aug 31:** Two persons succumbed to splinter injuries in Manipur over the past 12 hours even as heavy gunbattle between two groups was reported from Khoirentak foothills in Bishnupur district and Chingphai and Khousabung areas in Churachandpur district on Thursday morning, officials said.

According to officials, the fresh round of firing comes after a few hours of lull since Wednesday evening. A person who sustained bomb splinter injuries on his head in Wednesday's violence died on the way to Guwahati via Mizoram, officials added.

Another injured person, who also sustained splinter injuries, died around 9am on Thursday in Churachandpur district hospital where he was undergoing treatment, officials said.

According to officials, out of the five persons who sustained splinter injuries at Chingphai area on Wednesday evening, three were taken to Churachandpur district hospital. While one was hit by splinters on his head, the others sustained injuries on their shoulders, legs and back, officials said.

On Tuesday, two men were killed and six injured in separate incidents of violence near Narainsena village in Bishnupur. While one of the victims was killed by a bullet wound, the other died when a country-made gun he was using misfired and hit him on his face, sources said.

Meanwhile, the Indigenous Tribal Leaders' Forum (ITLF) called for an emergency shutdown in Churachandpur with immediate effect, with the toll in the ongoing violence climbing to four.

Essential services, including water and medical supply, are exempted from the purview of the shutdown, a statement by the ITLF said.

Search operations were conducted by security forces in the fringe and vulnerable areas of Kangpokpi, Thoubal, Churachandpur and Imphal-West districts and recovered 5 arms, (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)



# Hindenburg 2.0: Adani family secretly invested in own shares, alleges OCCRP

**NEW DELHI, Aug 31:** Billionaire Gautam Adani's group was on Thursday hit by fresh allegations of associates of the promoter family using Mauritius-based 'opaque' investment funds to secretly invest hundreds of millions of dollars to fuel the spectacular rise in group stocks during 2013 to 2018, a charge the conglomerate denied vehemently.

The Organised Crime and Corruption Reporting Project (OCCRP) said documents obtained by it revealed details of a complex offshore operation in two Mauritius-based funds managed by the partners of the promoter family to support prices of shares of group companies from 2013 to 2018 - a period during which the ports-to-energy conglomerate saw meteoric rise to become India's largest and most powerful businesses. OCCRP said two close associates of Vinod Adani - the elder brother of group founder, and chairman Gautam Adani - are sole beneficiaries of Mauritius-based companies through which the money appeared to flow.

Nasser Ali Shaban Ahli from the United Arab Emirates and Chang Chung-Ling from Taiwan spent years trading hundreds of millions of dollars worth of Adani group stock through two Mauritius-based funds that were overseen by a Dubai-based company run by a known employee of Vinod Adani.

Market regulator SEBI had been handed evidence in early 2014 of alleged suspicious stock market activity by the Adani Group, OCCRP said citing a letter.

U K Sinha, who headed the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) in 2014, is now a director and chairperson of Adani-owned news broadcaster NDTV.

The fresh broadside, which comes months after US short-selling firm Hindenburg Research published an explosive report in



January that accused Adani Group of running the "largest con in corporate history", sent all 10 listed Adani stocks down.

Shares of flagship Adani Enterprises Ltd closed 3.72 per cent lower after dipping as much as 5.2 per cent. Other group stocks closed 2-3.5 per cent lower.

Hindenburg had alleged corporate fraud and stock price manipulation at the conglomerate and raised questions on Vinod Adani's role. The Group had denied Hindenburg allegations, which wiped close to USD 150 billion in the market value of the group at its lowest point and cost Gautam Adani his prime spot on the world rich list, and had stated that Vinod Adani has "no role in the day to day affairs" of the company.

On the OCCRP allegations, the Group on Thursday termed them as "recycled allegations" and called them "yet another concerted bid by (George) Soros-funded interests supported by a section of the foreign media to revive the meritless Hindenburg report".

On the allegation of about USD 1 billion of over-invoicing scam money being routed to the two Mauritius funds, it said, "These claims are based on closed cases from a decade ago when the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence

(DRI) probed allegations of over-invoicing, transfer of funds abroad, related party transactions and investments through FPIs."

An independent adjudicating authority and an appellate tribunal had both confirmed that there was no over-valuation and that the transactions were in accordance with applicable law, it said, adding the matter attained finality in March 2023 when the Supreme Court of India ruled in the group's favour. "Clearly, since there was no over-valuation, there is no relevance or foundation for these allegations on transfer of funds," it said.

Opposition parties, which stalled proceedings in Parliament for nearly one full session when the Hindenburg allegations first came out, were quick to latch on to the OCCRP to attack the government and Adani group. Congress general secretary Jairam Ramesh questioned the role of SEBI in investigating the role of shell companies linked to the Adani Group.

"Despite the Modi government's best efforts, the truth will not stay suppressed forever. However, the full story about the flow of Benami funds into the Adani Group, how foreign citizens came to play a role in critical national infrastructure and how PM (Narendra) Modi 'violated rules, regulations and norms

to enrich his close friends' can only be revealed by a JPC," he said.

CPI(M) charged that the links of the Gujarat-based business conglomerate with Modi have ensured no action against it.

The documents show that, through the Mauritius funds, they "spent years buying and selling Adani stock through offshore structures that obscured their involvement - and made considerable profits in the process," the OCCRP said. "They also show that the management company in charge of their investment paid a Vinod Adani company to advise them in their investments."

The trove of documents lays out a complex web of companies that date back to 2010, when Chang Chung-Ling and Nasser Ali Shaban Ahli, who have both been directors of Adani-linked companies, began setting up offshore shell companies in Mauritius, the British Virgin Islands and the United Arab Emirates. Four offshore companies established by them sent hundreds of millions of dollars into a large investment fund in Bermuda called Global Opportunities Fund (GOF), with those monies invested in the Indian stock market from 2013 onwards.

Another layer of opacity was introduced as the money from the duo's offshore companies flowed from GOF into two funds to which GOF subscribed: Emerging India Focus Funds (EIFF) and EM Resurgent Fund (EMRF).

These funds then appear to have spent years acquiring shares in four Adani-listed companies -- Adani Enterprises, Adani Ports and Special Economic Zone, Adani Power and Adani Transmission.

The foreign portfolio investors named in the OCCRP report "are already part of the investigation by the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI)", Adani Group said. "As per the Expert Commit-

tee appointed by the Hon'ble Supreme Court, there is no evidence of any breach of the Minimum Public Shareholding (MPS) requirements or manipulation of stock prices."

"These attempts are aimed at, inter alia, generating profits by driving down our stock prices and these short sellers are under investigation by various authorities. As the Supreme Court and SEBI are overseeing these matters, it is vital to respect the ongoing regulatory process," it said. "We have complete faith in the due process of law and remain confident of the quality of our disclosures and corporate governance standards. In light of these facts, the timing of these news reports is suspicious, mischievous and malicious - and we reject these reports in their entirety." PTI had on August 24 reported that the Soros-funded organisation, which calls itself an investigative reporting platform formed by 24 non-profit investigative centres, spread across Europe, Africa, Asia and Latin America, is planning the publication of fresh allegations against a top Indian corporate.

Separately, 360 ONE Asset Management (Mauritius) Ltd said it is the investment manager for Emerging India Focus Fund and EM Resurgent Fund.

Both funds "are fully compliant broad-based funds registered with Financial Services Commission, Mauritius," it said in an exchange filing. "In neither of these two funds, the Adani group or any of the individuals mentioned in the (OCCRP) article, are investors. These funds as on date have zero investments in any of the shares of the Adani Group." It went on to state that in the past among many other portfolio investments, the funds have had investments in shares of Adani Group companies; all of which were sold in 2018. (PTI)

## Sensex falls 256 points due to selling in banking, FMCG shares on F&O expiry



**MUMBAI, Aug 31:** Benchmark Sensex closed lower by around 256 points in a volatile trade on Thursday, snapping its three-day gaining streak due to selling in banking, FMCG and oil and gas shares amid weak Asian cues. The BSE barometer fell by 255.84 points or 0.39 per cent to close at 64,831.41 points with 22 of its constituents ending in the red.

The index opened higher and later touched a high of 65,178.33 in early trade. It, however, failed to hold onto the gains and plunged 553 points from the day's high to touch a low of 64,723.63 amid selling on the expiry of derivatives contracts for August month.

The broader Nifty of NSE also lost 93.65 points or 0.48 per cent to settle at 19,253.80 with 35 of its stocks ending in the red. "Markets traded volatile on the monthly expiry day and lost nearly half a per cent," Ajit Mishra, SVP, Technical Research, Religare Broking Ltd, said.

"A slew of weak economic indicators from the US, including a softened GDP figure, have heightened the likelihood of a pause in the Fed's rate tightening, resulting in a downward trajectory of bond yields," said Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services.

However, this development had a limited impact on domestic sentiment on the day of expiry, with the market experiencing declines ahead of the release of India's GDP data, scheduled later in the day, Nair said.

Asian Paints dropped the most by 1.33 per cent. IndusInd bank fell 1.2 per cent, Axis Bank by 1.19 per cent, SBI by 1.12 per cent, Bajaj Finance by 1.07 per cent, Nestle by 1.04 per cent, and TCS by 0.97 per cent. Hindustan Unilever, Reliance Industries, Power Grid and Kotak Bank also retreated. Maruti Suzuki was the lead gainer, rising by 2.22 per cent. Titan advanced 1.09 per cent, UltraTech Cement by 1.02 per cent, and Tata Steel by 0.78 per cent. Jio Financial Services, Tech Mahindra, Wipro, ICICI Bank and Jio Financial Services also closed higher.

In the broader market, the BSE Midcap index edged lower 0.02 per cent while the Smallcap index bucked the weak trend to close 0.79 per cent higher. BSE Oil & Gas dropped by 1.34 per cent, BSE Utilities by 1.28 per cent, Services by 1 per cent, FMCG by 0.71 per cent, and Energy by 0.84 per cent. On the other hand, Consumer Durables (0.89 per cent), Industrials (0.63 per cent) and Realty (0.68 per cent) advanced.

Meanwhile, nine of ten Adani group stocks ended lower on Thursday after a report from investigative reporting platform OCCRP alleged hundreds of millions of dollars were invested in publicly traded group stocks through Mauritius-based 'opaque' investment funds managed by partners of promoter family of billionaire Gautam Adani. (PTI)

## Tata Power Renewable Energy inks pact with Sanyo Special Steel Manufacturing to set up 28-MW solar plant



**NEW DELHI, Aug 31:** Tata Power Renewable Energy Limited (TPREL) has partnered with Sanyo Special Steel Manufacturing India Private Limited (SSMI) to set up a 28.12-megawatt green energy plant in Maharashtra. In a statement on Thursday, TPREL, an arm of Tata Power, said it has signed the Power Delivery Agreement (PDA) with SSMI through its Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) TP Alpha Limited.

"TPREL joins hands with SSMI for setting up of 28.125 MW AC (39.375 MWp) captive solar plant in Aachegaon under district Solapur, Maharashtra," the statement said.

The plant is expected to produce 61.875 million

units (MUs) of electricity annually, which would meet the energy requirement of steel manufacturing unit of SSMI. It will also help to reduce SSMI's carbon footprint by 42,534 tonnes annually. The project will be commissioned by March 2024, as per the arrangement. This project aligns with SSMI's long term strategy towards climate change by reducing dependency on fossil fuel-based energy, lower the carbon footprint and manufacture green steel.

Ashish Khanna, CEO of Tata Power Renewable Energy Limited, stated, "These initiatives yield advantages like cost reduction, lower emissions, enhanced energy security, and alignment with sustainability targets. The government's prioritisation of captive power projects, driven by their economic and environmental merits, highlights their significance for various industries." Dilipkumar Pachpande, Managing Director of Sanyo Special Steel Manufacturing India Pvt Ltd, said: "This collaboration perfectly describes our commitment towards the clean and green energy solutions, which not only aligns with our goals towards climate change and sustainable development but also significantly benefits the steel manufacturing unit by reducing CO2 emissions and costs, enhancing sustainability, and contributing to carbon neutral goals by producing green steel." (PTI)

## Rupee falls 16 paise to settle at 82.79 against US dollar

**MUMBAI, Aug 31:** The rupee depreciated by 16 paise to settle at 82.79 (provisional) against the US dollar on Thursday, tracking a firm American currency and rising crude oil prices.

Forex traders said that negative sentiment in the equity market and outflow of foreign funds also weighed on the domestic unit. Investors were also awaiting the domestic GDP data which is scheduled to be announced later in the day. At the interbank foreign exchange, the domestic unit opened at 82.65 and moved between the peak of 82.58 and the lowest level of 82.76 during intra-day trade.

The Indian currency finally settled at 82.79 (provisional) against the dollar, registering a fall of 16 paise compared to the previous close. On Wednesday, the rupee closed at 82.63 against the dollar. The latest US data indicated that the pace of growth was less than expected, raising hopes for the easing of interest rates by the Federal Reserve.

"We expect the rupee to trade with a slight negative bias on expectations that the US dollar may bounce back amid disappointing European data. Rising crude oil prices and FII outflows may also weigh on the rupee. Month-end dollar demand from importers may also put downside pressure on the domestic unit. However, improved global risk appetite amid expectations of a Chinese stimulus may support riskier assets.

"Traders may remain cautious



ahead of India's fiscal deficit and GDP data today and manufacturing PMI data tomorrow. Investors may remain cautious ahead of the US core PCE deflator, weekly unemployment claims and personal income data today and non-farm payrolls report tomorrow," Anuj Choudhary, Research Analyst at Sharekhan by BNP Paribas, said.

Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, rose 0.37 per cent to 103.54.

Brent crude futures, the global oil benchmark, was trading 0.52 per cent higher at USD 86.31 per barrel.

On the domestic equity market front, the BSE Sensex closed 255.84 points or 0.39 per cent lower at 64,831.41 points while the broader Nifty declined by 93.65 points or 0.48 per cent to end at 19,253.80 points. Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) were net sellers in the capital market on Wednesday as they offloaded shares worth ₹ 494.68 crore, according to exchange data. (PTI)

## Gold climbs ₹ 150 to ₹ 60,250/10gms

**NEW DELHI, Aug 31:** Gold prices climbed ₹ 150 to ₹ 60,250 per 10 grams in the national capital on Thursday amid strong global cues, according to HDFC Securities. In the previous trade, the yellow metal had settled at ₹ 60,100 per 10 grams. However, silver remained flat at ₹ 77,500 per kilogram. In the overseas markets, gold was trading higher at USD 1,945 per ounce, while silver was down at USD 24.53 per ounce. (PTI)

## PLI IT hardware scheme attracts 38 applicants so far; Foxconn, HP, Lenovo among list of cos

**NEW DELHI, Aug 31:** As many as 38 companies, including big names like Foxconn Group, HP, Dell and Lenovo, have applied for incentives under the mega Production Linked Incentive (PLI) IT hardware scheme for manufacturing laptops, PCs and servers.

As of 10.30 PM on Wednesday, the number of applications had climbed to 38, from 32 applicants around 5.30 PM. The window for submission of applications for PLI IT hardware scheme closes at midnight.

Earlier in the evening, Minister of Electronics and IT Ashwini Vaishnaw had said that Foxconn Group, HP, Dell and Lenovo are among companies which have applied. Others who have thrown their hat into the ring include Flextronics, Dixon, Acer, Thompson, VVDN, HP Enterprises and Asus, Vaishnaw said, terming the response from companies as "fabu-

lous." At that time, 32 applications had already come in, and while that list had impressive names, Cupertino, California-headquartered Apple had not put in its application till then.

The name of companies who submitted their applications late evening could not be immediately ascertained.

PLI for IT hardware covers laptops, tablets, all-in-one PCs, servers and ultra-small form factor devices. India is wooing global IT and electronics players with policy sweeteners and incentive schemes, making a push to position itself as a global powerhouse for hi-tech manufacturing.

"India is emerging as a trusted supply chain partner and value added partner... companies are happy to come to India for manufacturing and design work," the Minister said at a media briefing. Electronics manufacturing in

## Fiscal deficit touches 33.9 pc of full-year target at end-July: CGA data

**NEW DELHI, Aug 31:** The Centre's fiscal deficit in the first four months of 2023-24 touched 33.9 per cent of the full-year target, government data showed on Monday. In absolute terms, the fiscal deficit -- the gap between expenditure and revenue -- was ₹ 6.06 lakh crore as of end-July, according to the data released by the Controller General of Accounts (CGA).

The deficit stood at 20.5 per cent of the Budget Estimates (BE) in the corresponding period of the financial year 2022-23.

In the Union Budget, the government projected to bring down the fiscal deficit to 5.9 per cent of the gross domestic product (GDP) in the current 2023-24 financial year. The deficit was 6.4 per cent of the GDP in 2022-23 against the earlier estimate of 6.71 per cent.

Unveiling the revenue-expenditure data of the Union government for the April-July period of 2023-24, CGA said the net tax revenue was ₹ 5.83 lakh crore or 25 per cent of the BE for the current fiscal. The net tax revenue collection was 34.4 per cent at end-July 2022.

The central government's total expenditure in the



first four months stood at ₹ 13.81 lakh crore or 30.7 per cent of BE. The expenditure touched 28.6 per cent of the BE in the year-to-date period.

Of the total expenditure, ₹ 10.64 lakh crore was on the revenue account and ₹ 3.17 lakh crore was towards the capital account.

Fiscal deficit is the difference between the total expenditure and revenue of the government. It is an indication of the total borrowings that are needed by the government. (PTI)

## Tea production rises 6.2 per cent at 165 million kg in July 2023

**KOLKATA, Aug 31:** Tea production in the country increased marginally by 6.2 per cent at 165.01 million kilogramme during July 2023 as compared to 155.29 million kilogramme in previous similar period.

As per the latest Tea Board data, North India tea production during July this year stood at 143.05 million kilogramme, as against 135.77 million kilogramme in the corresponding previous period. Production in South India in July 2023 was also marginally higher at 21.95 million kilogramme as against 19.52 million kilogramme in the previous similar period. The percentage of production by small tea growers (STGs) as a proportion of overall volumes increased to 50.9 per cent in July 2023. This was 50.2 per cent in the previous similar month of 2022.

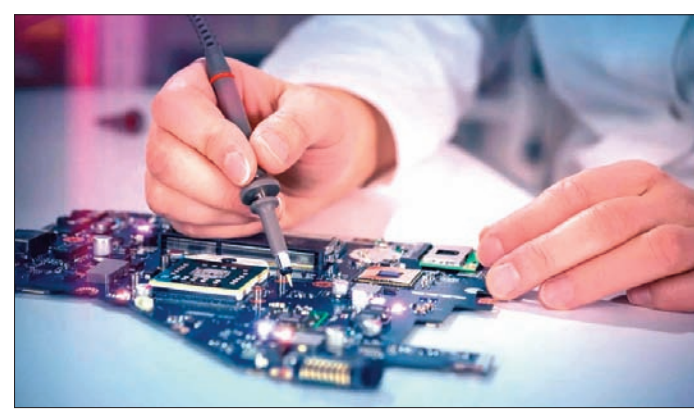
In North India, both Assam and West Bengal registered higher production volumes during July 2023. The premium Darjeeling variety crop was lower at one million kilogramme during July 2023, as against 1.04 million kilogramme in the previous similar period, according to the data. (PTI)

## Net profit of EOGEL rises 12 pc to Rs 81 cr during Q1 of FY24

**KOLKATA, Aug 31:** Post-tax profit of Essar Oil and Gas Exploration and Production Ltd (EOGEL) increased 12 per cent to ₹ 81 crore during the first quarter of the current fiscal as compared to ₹ 72.3 crore in the similar previous period. A company spokesman said that the revenue of the company, engaged in unconventional hydrocarbon space, stood at ₹ 190 crore during the current quarter, registering a decline of 14 per cent year-on-year. EBITDA of the firm during the current first quarter also stood lower at ₹ 150 crore.

The company, which produces coal bed methane (CBM) from its wells at Ranigunj in West Bengal, saw an improvement in net profit due to a rise in sales volumes.

The company said that after the completion of the Urja Ganga Pipeline in June 2021, the company's Ranigunj gas project is now seamlessly connected to the national grid, granting it unrestricted access to the market and helping unlock the growth potential. (PTI)



India has witnessed consistent growth with 17 per cent Compound Annual Growth Rate in the last eight years. This year it surpassed a major benchmark in production - USD 105 billion (about ₹ 9 lakh crore).

India has emerged as the world's second-largest manufacturer of mobile phones. Exports of mobile

## Economy grows by 7.8 pc in Q1: NSO data

**NEW DELHI, Aug 31:** India recorded economic growth of 7.8 per cent in the April-June quarter of 2023-24 against 13.1 per cent in the year-ago period, as per the National Statistical Office (NSO) data released on Thursday.

India remains the fastest-growing major economy as China's GDP growth in the April-June quarter was 6.3 per cent. As per the NSO data, the agriculture sector recorded a 3.5 per cent growth, up from 2.4 per cent in the April-June quarter of 2022-23.

However, the growth in the manufacturing sector decelerated to 4.7 per cent in the first quarter of the current fiscal compared to 6.1 per cent in the year-ago period. The growth in Gross Domestic Product (GDP) during the January-March quarter of 2022-23 was 6.1 per cent and 4.5 per cent in October-December. (PTI)

the facility has been constructed already and it will soon start functioning.

"Many people are investing in design services also...they would like to have the design also done in India, that builds on value addition further," he said.

Most companies will begin production from April 2024, and the rest from 2025.

India has scripted a success story in mobile phone production and the Minister exuded confidence that a similar Make-in-India success story will play out in the manufacturing of laptops, PCs and servers, as well.

Many of these applicants will be using semiconductors manufactured in India, bolstering an end-to-end ecosystem framework.

The Minister said that applicants and companies are not concerned about the import licence move. (PTI)





Department of Women & Child Development  
Govt. of Assam

## 6<sup>TH</sup> RASHTRIYA POSHAN MAAH-2023

### STATE LEVEL LAUNCHING CEREMONY



Chief Guest

**SMT. AJANTA NEOG**

Minister  
Women & Child Development  
Assam

“To maintain the good health and wellbeing of various sections of the society such as children and women, it is very essential to take care of their good nourishment”

**-DR HIMANTA BISWA SARMA**  
Chief Minister, Assam

Distinguished Guest

**SHRI KESHAB MAHANTA**

Minister  
Health & Family Welfare Dept.  
Assam

**SHRI ATUL BORA**

Minister  
Agriculture, Horticulture, Animal  
Husbandry and Veterinary Dept.  
Assam

**SHRI KAMAKHYA PRASAD TASA**

MP, Rajya Sabha

**SHRI BHABENDRA NATH BHARALI**  
MLA, Dergaon

**SHRI MRINAL SAIKIA**  
MLA, Khumtai

**SHRI BISWAJIT PHUKAN**  
MLA, Sarupathar

**Venue: Samannay Kshetra,  
Golaghat**

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

**Time: 11 AM**

*Wishing for the gracious blessings of all*





## QUOTE OF THE DAY

*"Act as if what you do makes a difference. It does."*  
-William Jones

## The golden boy of India

In a country often starved of international sporting success, the emergence of Neeraj Chopra as India's greatest javelin thrower has been a source of immense pride. This week, he achieved a remarkable feat by adding a World Championship title to his Olympic gold, marking a rare double for Indian athletes. Chopra's journey from Haryana to becoming a global sensation is a testament to his extraordinary talent and unwavering dedication. Unlike many Indian sporting legends that excelled in team sports like cricket, hockey, and football, Chopra stands alone in his solitary splendour. His success is not shared glory; it's a solitary achievement that has captured the hearts of millions. At just 24 years old, he has shattered records and thrown further and further, leaving the world in awe of his javelin prowess. As he prepares to defend his Olympic title in Paris next year, the entire nation will hold its collective breath, watching in anticipation. Chopra's ability to consistently better his own throws has made him a sporting phenomenon. He has transcended the boundaries of his sport and has become a household name, joining the ranks of legends like Sunil Gavaskar, Kapil Dev Nikhanj, and Sachin Tendulkar.

What sets Chopra apart is his relentless pursuit of perfection. He knows he has many more peaks to conquer and is willing to put in the hard work required to achieve them. Paris Olympics beckon, and with his exceptional abilities, Chopra is more than ready. He has demonstrated a level of professionalism that allows him to handle the immense pressure that comes with being a national icon. It's important to recognize that Chopra's success is not just about his individual achievements; it's about inspiring a new generation of Indian athletes to dream big and aim for excellence in their chosen fields. His story is a testament to what can be achieved with talent, dedication, and unwavering determination. In a world where team sports often take the spotlight, Chopra's rise as a solo star is a breath of fresh air. He has redefined the boundaries of Indian athletics and has set a new standard for excellence in javelin throwing. His performances on the global stage have made every Indian proud and have given us a reason to believe in the limitless potential of our athletes.

As we look ahead to the Paris Olympics and the challenges that lie beyond, there's no doubt that Chopra will continue to be a source of inspiration and pride for the nation. His body of work speaks for itself, and we can trust that he will overcome any obstacle that comes his way. In Neeraj Chopra, India has found not just a sporting icon but a symbol of hope and determination. His journey from a small town in Haryana to the pinnacle of international athletics is a story that will be told for generations to come. As he prepares to carry the hopes of a billion people in Paris, we stand united in our support, knowing that we have a true champion in Neeraj Chopra.

## What unites G-20 leaders in India

As the forthcoming G 20 summit is going to take place after couple of days in national capital, there is a place that can unite many G 20 nations. If you roam around inside the York cemetery near India Gate, you would bound to see a small grave that unites US, Brazil and Japan, the three major G-20 member countries. The small symbolic grave belongs to those unfortunate passengers of Japan Air Lines that was crashed on fateful June 14, 1972 in the barren land in South Delhi. All together 82 passengers were perished in the crash. The ill-fated plane was mainly carrying passengers from Japan, Brazil and US. Japan Air Lines flight from International Airport in Bangkok, Thailand to Palam International Airport in New Delhi. On June 14, 1972, the plane crashed short of the New Delhi airport, killing 82 of 87 occupants: 10 of 11 crew members, and 72 of 76 passengers. Four people on the ground were also killed.

The epitaph written on the grave announces: "In the memory of those US, Brazilian and Japanese passengers of ill fated plane."

George Solomon of Delhi Brotherhood society and priest of Pitampura church says, "I place flowers at the symbolic grave as and when I visit the grave. I think US President Joe Biden, Brazil

President Lula da Silva and Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida must visit the symbolic grave of their compatriots, and place wreath there."

Sixteen of the dead were Americans. Brazilian actress Leila Diniz was also among those killed. The sole Indian passenger on the flight was Dr. K.K.P. Narasinga Rao, a senior official of the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) of the United Nations.

The exact cause of the accident remains disputed. Investigators representing Japan pointed to the possibility of a false glide path signal causing the crash. Indian investigators claimed the crash was caused by pilot error, specifically the captain ignoring instrument indications and not having sight of the runway. "I feel bad that nobody from US, Japan or Brazil visit the grave. It is high time that the visiting leaders should be told about it," says George Solomon.

## Will Japan PM to meet our 'Japanese'

Meanwhile, the Japan Prime Minister Fumio Kishida would like to meet the tender looking diminutive Katsu Sana, 87 while he would be in Delhi. Katsu Sana is also known as Katsua behn. She has not missed even a single all religion prayer since she was first asked to join it way back in 1969. She recites Buddhist prayer on October 2 and



on January 30. Japanese by birth, Katsu Sana came to India in 1959 to study Buddhism in the land of Buddha. In the process, she taught both Hindi and Gandhi and thoughts as well.

"While exploring Buddhism here I started loving India deeply. That has forced me to stay here for rest of my life. I learnt Hindi and the life and times Gandhi ji from Kaka sahab Kalalkar in Delhi," informs Katsu Sana, who looks after the affairs of the Vishay Shanty Stupak, also known as the World Peace Pagoda, located in the heart of Delhi in the Indiraprashta Park.

## South Korean war memorial in Delhi

And when South Korean President Moon Jae-in will move to his hotel after his arrival here in capital on next September

## DEGREE OF THOUGHT

By: Vivek Shukla

8 to take part in the G20 summit, he may not visit the South Korean War Memorial.

However, he could visit there at Thimayya Park in Delhi Cantonment area during his almost four days stay here. It is not very far from the Army Base hospital.

Alas, not many people are aware of the fact that the capital has a South Korean war memorial too built at Thimayya Park. The South Korea greatly owe to India for sending medical and custodian forces during the Korean War from 1950-53. "Both India and South Korea agreed to build a war memorial here to commemorate the service India had provided to South Korea

during the war time," South Korea's envoy in India Shin Bong-kil once said.

Well, such memorials are there in all the 22 countries that had helped the South Korea when it was fighting a grim war with North Korea. There is also a bust of Gurudev Rabindra nath Tagore is there. He is very respected there since he wrote a poem on the great heritage of Korea in 1929. "There is a stamp of Korean architecture there in war memorial. The South Korean had government has requested to Indian government to allot a piece of land in Thimayya Park for emotional reasons. Gen. Thimayya is not only an Indian military hero. He is also a hero of the Korean War. It has been decades since the end of the Korean war but even to this day he is remembered by

Koreans with gratitude and affection for his tactical support," sources said. India also had rushed 3500 custodian forces to assist South Korea in the post-war settlement for the prisoners of war while other countries sent their combat forces. India played a neutral country and contributed in a peaceful manner.

An acclaimed Delhi based architect late Anup Kothari had designed the South Korean embassy in Delhi. "I am very proud of the fact that I was responsible for the designs of South Korean, Bulgarian and Ethiopian missions. An interesting thing happened when I was designing the South Korean embassy. The ambassador wanted me to make a South Korean pagoda in the campus. So he asked me, would you like to go to South Korea.

Newsweek had covered a very famous architect, Professor Kim, who had won a competition from the queen of Iran. So I mentioned, if I have to go to South Korea, I have to meet this man. So the ambassador said, alright, we'll arrange it. And I had the opportunity to spend a week with him and see his office was quite international," Kothari narrated this anecdote to this writer couple of years ago in his office. Kothari had also designed PTI building at Delhi and Jaslok Hospital in Mumbai.

## Constitutional betrayal: Adivasis, India's original inhabitants, deceived?

By: Dipak Kurni

The tribal people in India, comprising approximately 8.6 percent of the population (which is around 110 million individuals), can be categorized into three main groups. The primary group includes populations that existed before the Indo-Aryan migrations and are often identified by anthropologists as the Austro-Asiatic-speaking Australoid people. Within this category, the Central Indian Adivasis can be found.

The late Prof. Nihar Ranjan Ray, an eminent historian, characterized the Central Indian Adivasis as "the original autochthonous people of India." This indicates that their existence in India predates the arrivals of the Dravidians, Aryans, and any other settlers in the nation. Anthropologist Verrier Elwin expressed this sentiment even more strongly in his words: "These individuals truly embody India's indigenous essence, rendering all others foreign in their presence. With moral rights and claims spanning millennia, these ancient people rightfully deserve utmost respect. Being the first inhabitants, they should hold the foremost place in our considerations."

The other two groupings, which are considerably more recent, encompass the Caucasoid tribes such as the Banjaras, Gujjars, Meenas, and other North Indian tribes, as well as the Sino-Tibetan or Mongoloid tribal communities, primarily concentrated in the northeastern regions, who have migrated relatively recently. These two extensive tribal categories have experienced comparatively better outcomes in the post-Independence era. It is evident that not all Scheduled Tribes are Adivasis. The government recognizes approximately 573 communities as Scheduled Tribes, granting them access to special privileges and reserved positions in legislatures, government roles, universities, and schools. However, the majority of these advantages have been extended to non-Adivasi tribal groups.

The Adivasis of India, much like indigenous populations worldwide, have suffered the devastating consequences of later groups purporting to be more "civilized." Regrettably, they have emerged as the most marginalized and oppressed segment of the population.



Among the prominent tribal communities, the Gonds stand as the largest with approximately 13 million members, followed by the Santhals with a population of around seven million. The heartland of Central India harbors the country's most significant tribal groups, encompassing approximately 75 percent of the entire tribal populace. These regions, which house the Adivasi communities, are currently grappling with numerous challenges.

The Adivasi leader Jaipal Singh, a legendary figure, explicitly articulated the tribal perspective and concerns on December 16, 1946, while welcoming the Objectives Resolution in the Constituent Assembly. He conveyed, "The history of my people is marked by unceasing exploitation and dispossession by non-aboriginals in India. This history is punctuated by uprisings and unrest. Nonetheless, I choose to believe in Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru's sincerity. I believe in all of you, that we are embarking on a new era—an era of independent India, characterized by equal opportunities and the absence of neglect." The Adivasi community bore significant costs for placing their trust in Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru's words. Even if certain provisions of the Constitution were partially enacted, even if not entirely capturing its essence and wording, the current situation could have been averted.

During the early years of our Republic, guided by individuals like Verrier Elwin, Jawaharlal Nehru endeavored to shield the tribal regions from the encroachments of the evolving new order in India. However, the influx of outsiders into the traditional Adivasi heartlands persists without restraint. Despite this challenge, there are presently 332 tehsils in India where tribal communities form the majority, out of which 110 are situated in the Northeastern

region. This signifies the existence of 222 tehsils predominantly inhabited by Adivasis, accounting for a population exceeding 20 million, approximately equating to one-third of the Central Indian Adivasi population.

Enacted in 1950, the Indian Constitution's Article 244 introduced the Fifth and Sixth Schedules, facilitating autonomous governance within designated tribal-majority regions. Spanning nine Indian states—Andhra Pradesh, Jharkhand, Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Odisha, and Rajasthan—the Fifth Schedule plays a crucial role. This schedule safeguards the rights of Adivasi (tribal) communities residing in scheduled areas, preventing the dispossession of their lands and natural resources to non-tribal individuals.

The rarely enforced constitutional safeguard is currently facing an imminent risk of being amended to explicitly facilitate the transfer of tribal lands to non-tribals and corporate entities. Such a step carries significant consequences for the fundamental existence and cultural heritage of India's numerous tribal communities.

The Government of India introduced a preliminary National Policy on Tribals in 1999, aiming to tackle the developmental requirements of tribal populations. The policy notably focused on areas like education, forestry, healthcare, languages, resettlement, and land rights. The initial NDA administration went as far as instituting a dedicated ministry for tribal affairs. The draft was intended for distribution among Members of Parliament, Members of Legislative Assemblies, and civil society organizations, yet it never achieved this circulation.

The draft policy remains in its draft form, signifying the absence of a finalized policy. However, it's important to acknowledge that this abrupt

concern for tribal communities was largely driven by apprehensions regarding potential conversions to Christianity, which were believed to hinder their integration into the Hindu Samaj (society).

Consequently, even though states like Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand were carved out of Bihar and Madhya Pradesh, the essential tribal issues pertaining to their cultural identity, lifestyle, and aspirations remained unattended. The attainment of meaningful political influence has largely remained elusive for them. In a parallel effort, the UPA government developed the Scheduled Tribes (Recognition of Forest Rights) Bill in 2005, but implementation was halted due to pressure exerted by self-proclaimed wildlife advocates and the wildlife tourism industry.

The time since Independence and the unfulfilled commitments of the Constitution has seen considerable change. However, there remains a chance to reclaim some of the original pledges. As outlined by the Constitution, all regions with a tribal majority should be consolidated into administrative units, overseen by institutions democratically elected by the people. This collective entity might be termed the Adivasi Maha-panchayat, empowered to operate as a predominantly self-governing body. State legislations should be subject to approval by the Maha-panchayat, ensuring its satisfaction.

In lieu of governance centered in state capitals, responsibilities regarding education, healthcare, irrigation, roadways, and land records should be entrusted to local administrative structures. Additionally, local elected officials should hold the police accountable, curtailing any tendency to function outside the bounds of the law.

The sentiment expressed in a well-known Gonds folk song will continue to resonate until these changes transpire: "And the Gods were greatly troubled/ In their heavenly courts and councils/ Among them, no Gods of Gonds were seated/ There sat Gods of various lands/ Eighteen threshing-floors of Brahmins/ Sixteen scores of Telinganas/ Yet no Gods of Gonds were present there/ From the Glens of Seven Mountains/ From the twelve hills of the valleys." (The writer can be reached at [dipaknewsline@gmail.com](mailto:dipaknewsline@gmail.com))



By: Mark Gruenberg

Senator Bernie Sanders is proposing the United States and the People's Republic of China mutually agree to cut military spending, shifting the money to combatting global warming.

Sanders made his proposal in an Op-ed in The Guardian on August 21. But when he proposed a 10% cut—at least \$90 billion—on July 27 during Senate debate on the annual U.S. military money bill, he lost by an 88-11 margin.

The only response in that brief debate came from Senate Armed Services Committee Chairman Jack Reed, D-R.I. "The senator's amendment excludes defence health programs, military personnel accounts, and assistance to Ukraine, but that means the actual cuts on every other function will be much greater than 10%," said Reed.

The Senate rebuke didn't stop Sanders, a longtime foe of bloated military spending and champion of environmental causes. He repeatedly points out the U.S. outspends every other nation on its military, that the Defence Department can't pass an audit, and that the Pentagon is a cash cow for military contractors, whose weapons eat up approximately half of the military money.

In that brief Senate debate, Sanders cited unmet domestic priorities and Pentagon waste as well as combatting global warming as reasons for the cut. In the Guardian op-ed, he stuck to fighting that threat, but put it in context of "a radical rethinking" of global relationships, especially between the two powers.

"The U.S. and China must unite to fight the climate crisis, not each other," Sanders wrote. It's "absolutely necessary for the survival of the planet." But "the cooperation required to address this existential threat is being undermined by hawks...who are moving us toward a disastrous cold war."

That's a criticism of Democratic U.S. President Joe Biden, who, like Sanders, grew up in the Cold War era, but when the USSR was the main target. Both men were born in 1941. Biden has kept that Cold War era mindset, but with China now substituted as a sometime antagonist, both militarily and on trade. Sanders did not propose a specific cut in each power's military spending, but if the Chinese matched his 10% proposal, their reduction would be around \$30

billion. China is second to the U.S. in military spending among all nations, which Sanders noted in his op-ed.

A negotiated military money cut should be "part of a radical rethinking of geopolitics to reflect the reality that international cooperation is not only in the best interests of all countries, but is absolutely necessary for the survival of the planet," said Sanders, a longtime campaigner, starting in college decades ago, against U.S. wars abroad.

Here's the reality. The last eight years have been the eight hottest on record. This year is on track to be the hottest year in recorded history, and this past July was the hottest month on record. Across the United States, July broke more than 3,200 daily temperature records and dozens of American cities broke or tied their previous daily temperature records three or more times.

"Phoenix experienced 31 days in a row at or above 110F, 13 days longer than the previous record. El Paso, Miami, Austin and many other places also suffered under record-breaking stretches of extreme heat. South of Miami, [Atlantic] waters reached 101F. You're supposed to find temperatures like that in a hot tub, not the ocean."

"But it's not just the U.S. that is dealing with record-breaking heatwaves and enormous climate-caused devastation. China experienced record-high temperatures last month, including the country's all-time temperature record of 126F, and recent flooding has killed about 100 people, destroyed nearly 200,000 homes, displaced some 1.5 million people and caused more than \$13 billion in damage."

"Into the future, scientists tell us that great cities like Shanghai and New York will be underwater if we do not act effectively against the climate crisis." Global warming is truly global, the senator noted. "In Iran, the heat index hit 158F, testing the limits of human survival. Cuba, the Dominican Republic, and El Salvador all saw temperature records fall. It's winter right now in South America, but that hasn't stopped temperatures from exceeding 100F."

All this evidence of global warming cries out for spending money to combat it, first and foremost, he said. The U.S., under Biden, has started with \$300 billion in last year's Inflation Reduction Act, but must do more, Sanders added. China spent almost double that last year—\$546 billion—

"and continues to manufacture and deploy more renewable energy than the rest of the world combined."

But it's also now the global leader in carbon emissions, having overtaken the U.S. The emissions cause greenhouse gases that produce global warming. "Right now, China is building six times as many coal-fired power plants as the rest of the world combined—the equivalent of two new coal plants every week. Last year, they quadrupled the number of new coal plants approved compared with 2021."

But as long as the U.S. and China engage in a new arms race, they can't divert money to combating the common threat of global warming, Sanders declared. The path to that goal is cutting a deal to reduce arms spending and use the freed-up funds to combat the "existential threat" to the world.

"Organizing most of our national effort around a zero-sum global confrontation with China...will alienate allies and partners," Sanders warned. "Most importantly, it could doom our planet by making climate cooperation impossible between the world's two largest greenhouse emitters. We need to move in a bold new direction."

The senator then offered what he called "a 'radical' idea." Instead of spending enormous amounts of money planning for a war against each other, the U.S. and China should agree to "mutually cut their military budgets and use the savings to move aggressively to improve energy efficiency, move toward sustainable energy, and end our reliance on fossil fuels. They should also provide increased support for developing countries who are suffering from the climate crisis through no fault of their own."

Sanders forecast reaching such an agreement would face opposition from "establishment politicians" and special interests in the U.S.

"My response is this: Go talk to the people in Vermont who lost their homes because of unprecedented flooding and the families in Hawaii who lost loved ones in the recent fires. Go talk to the more than one million people in China who have been displaced by catastrophic floods. Go talk to the people in southern Africa who are starving because of the terrible drought and floods they are experiencing or farmers around the world who can no longer grow their crops because of water shortages."

"Perhaps most importantly, go talk to the hundreds of millions of young people in every country on earth who are losing hope, wondering whether they should even have children of their own, given the enormous challenges the climate crisis poses for a normal life."

He then recalled the words of the late Nelson Mandela, who famously remarked, "It always seems impossible until it's done." Sanders then concluded by taking up the challenge: "If we are to save the planet, now is the time for bold action. Let's do it." (IPA Service)



# China's submarine activities in the Bay of Bengal: Considerations for India

By: Sohini Bose

In the last few years, China has been instrumental in developing the underwater naval capacities of a number of the littoral countries outlining the Bay of Bengal. Most recently, it helped construct the BNS Sheikh Hasina-Bangladesh's first submarine base, worth US\$1.2 billion, at Pekua in the Cox's Bazaar district of Chittagong, which was inaugurated in March 2023. It is built with the capacity to dock six submarines and eight warships simultaneously, as a part of Bangladesh's 'Forces Goal 2030', to expand and modernise the country's defences. At present, it will station Dhaka's two submarines, BNS Navajatra and BNS Joyjatra, also acquired from Beijing, six years ago in 2017. In 2021, China delivered a Type 035 or Ming class diesel-electric attack submarine, formerly used by the People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN), to Myanmar.

Thailand had also agreed to purchase three submarines from Beijing in 2017, for the price of two, along with an extended quality guarantee, communications, combat systems and training programmes for the Thai personnel. However, the order was reduced to one submarine, as the Thai government faced criticisms from the Opposition and its populace for its exorbitant defence expenditure in the face of the pandemic's detrimental impact on the Thai economy. The growing unease in Thai society, about an overt reliance on China culminating in its growing strategic influence, especially after witnessing the Hambantota case in Sri Lanka, may have also led to the reduced deal.

Currently, the single order is also in jeopardy as a German company appointed to provide a propulsion system necessary for the submarine has stated its inability, owing to Germany's limited defence export to China, following the European Union (EU) embargo. Subsequently, the Thai Opposition has proposed that scrap-

ping the deal would be in the country's best interests. Indeed, these submarine deals with Bay littorals, have sparked much contemplation about Beijing's intentions in these waters, especially as India is also trying to develop the submarine capacities of its Eastern Naval Command to better secure the Bay, which it considers to be one of its 'primary areas of interest'.

## China's interest in the Bay

Sino-Indian competition has been one of the defining features of the Bay of Bengal's strategic resurgence in recent years, as India tries to retain its prominence as a resident power, in the face of China's deepening footprint in the region. In a future riddled with energy uncertainty, the lure of the Bay is undeniable for Beijing, as not only is the maritime space home to a vast repository of hydrocarbons, but it is also traversed by important sea lanes of communication, that are used to ferry critical energy imports from the Middle East to the countries of East Asia.

Most important among these, is the East-West shipping route, which passes along eight nautical miles below India's Andaman and Nicobar Islands in the Bay, before entering the chokepoint of the Strait of Malacca, connecting Europe and Africa with Asia. The Bay's proximity to the Strait of Malacca is one of the cardinal reasons for China's interest in this maritime space as it suffers from the "Malacca Dilemma". This refers to Beijing's apprehensions about any blockages in this narrow chokepoint, which would hinder the passage of almost 80 percent of its imports, thereby negatively affecting the country. Consequently, China wants to maintain a strong presence in the Bay to ensure that its energy supply remains uninterrupted and thereby its growth unfettered. Accordingly, it is keen to strengthen ties with the Bay littoral countries, a manifestation of which is the submarine deals.

## Developing the under-sea leg of Bay littorals- What's the byline for



Beijing?

Indeed, as rapidly growing economies, most countries belonging to this region, are intent on expanding their defence capacities and are therefore attracted to purchase Chinese naval crafts as these are competitively priced. The acquisition of the submarines has allowed the Bangladesh Navy in particular to become a 'three-dimensional force', by adding the under-sea leg, to the pre-existing surface-level operations and naval aviation wing.

Dhaka's agenda is to not only become self-reliant in protecting its sovereignty as well as its sizeable maritime resources but also to play a leading role in furthering regional security. In a way, this will complement India's efforts to maintain security and stability in the Bay of Bengal, as it undertakes coordinated patrols with Bangladesh and the latter also participates in India's multilateral naval exercise- MILAN, that is held in this maritime space. However, there is also a cause of concern for India, as the possible operation of Bangladesh's submarines by Chinese sailors, brings them near India's Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs) in the Bay, thereby providing Beijing with an opportunity to gather more information to aid Chinese submarine operations in the region.

Islands, are also located close to India's Andaman and Nicobar Islands where the Army, Navy and Airforce integrated, serve as the country's Far Eastern Tri-command. However, the Myanmar junta government has denied claims of Chinese involvement in the Coco Islands and dismissed India's apprehensions.

## A cautionary for India

China's proactive presence in South Asia has undoubtedly complicated the situation for India, especially since its underwater naval capacities are yet to be optimally developed. Observers maintain that the deficit between the Indian and the Chinese navies is exceptionally stark in the undersea domain, as there continue to be asymmetries in the budget and warship-building capacities of the two countries. Despite the induction of five Scorpene (Kalvari) class submarines, the Indian Navy continues to be eight boats short of the 24 that were scheduled for induction by 2030, as per the Navy's 2012-27 Maritime Capability Perspective Plan. The older Kilo and HDW/Shishumar class boats are also still pending their decommissioning.

Beyond military capacity building, the need for underwater domain awareness is also more than ever before, for India to be truly cognizant of Chinese activities in the Bay. In 2019, India Today reported, that a Chinese maritime research and survey ship had been spotted carrying out research activities, in India's EEZ near the Andaman and Nicobar Islands without its consent.

Seemingly, the vessel could have been used "to monitor all underwater and surface vessels of the Indian Navy stationed in the region." This marks a violation, not only of India's legislation (Act No. 80/1976) "that requires foreign marine scientific vessels to seek licence before undertaking activities," but also of the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Laws of the Sea (UNCLOS), which makes it necessary for countries to abide by the

laws of the coastal state to which the EEZ belongs (Part V, Article 58). The UNCLOS also prohibits foreign marine scientific research and hydrographic survey ships undertaking transit passage through straits that are used for international navigation between one part of an EEZ to another, from carrying out any research or survey without the prior authorisation of the necessary coastal state (Section 2, Article 40). This was consistent with the Indian Navy's statement at that time: "if you have to do anything in our EEZ, you have to notify us and take permission." In its defence, China maintained that it was only taking innocent passage through the Indian EEZ, which the UNCLOS permits.

While Beijing claims that its surveys serve global scientific research, the purpose may well be to gauge the operational conditions for its submarine activity or detect anti-submarine warfare. The need of the hour for India is therefore three-fold; first, to expedite the development of its underwater naval capacities; second, to enhance defence cooperation with other Bay littorals, to ascertain that their resources and territories are not used for purposes that are detrimental to India's security; and lastly, to devise measures to improve its underwater domain awareness, such as developing the surveillance capacities in the Andaman Nicobar Islands, overlooking the Strait of Malacca. This will help identify Chinese submarines passing through it into the Bay of Bengal, as the vessels will have to surface for safe navigation due to the shallow depth of the chokepoint. It is promising to note that the Indian Ministry of Defence has already designed a military acquisition initiative, Project 75-I, for the planned procurement of diesel-electric submarines for the Indian Navy, and is also drawing up "a plan for the indigenous construction of nuclear attack submarines." These endeavours need to be realised and implemented with alacrity. (Courtesy: ORF)

## 6 years after Doklam standoff, China-Bhutan talks give India reason to worry

By: SNM Abdi

China is fast-tracking its boundary talks with Bhutan as is evident from the 21-24 August negotiations between the two countries held in Beijing.

The joint communique, obviously drafted by the hosts with the visitors playing second fiddle, emphasises on speeding up the resolution of their territorial dispute.

Importantly, the acceleration has grave ramifications for India's border defence and national security.

New Delhi has reasons to worry as the motive behind President Xi Jinping's government expediting the boundary talks with Bhutan is to compel it to formally and officially hand over Doklam to China as quickly as possible.

## Remember Doklam?

### China's coercive diplomacy with Bhutan

The plateau at the tri-junction of India, Bhutan, and China witnessed a dangerous standoff in 2017 after Indian troops clashed with Chinese troops and stopped them from constructing a road on Bhutan's soil as it posed a threat to India's defence.

Six years ago, soldiers of the two nuclear-armed nations withdrew from Doklam after a stalemate lasting over two tension-filled months as South Asia held its breath.

Now, China wants Doklam on a platter by browbeating Bhutan — one of the world's smallest countries nestling in the Himalayas — into parting with it through coercive diplomacy.

China's boundary talks with Bhutan, in geopolitical terms, are aimed at India and India alone. Beijing is piling pressure on Thimphu, but its objective is to harass and intimidate India which is undoubtedly a cause for concern.

It's another matter that Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government not only has its ear to the ground but is mentally prepared to do everything and more to ensure that Bhutan doesn't buckle under tremendous pressure and signs away Doklam to get Beijing off its back. The strategic importance of Doklam, which has been a part of Bhutan until now, for both China and India can't be over-emphasised. If China wrests control of Doklam, the People's Liberation Army (PLA) can easily overrun the "Siliguri Corridor", a thin strip of Indian territory linking the mainland to the northeastern region.

## The strategic importance of Doklam

Doklam borders the "Siliguri Corridor", also known as the "chicken's neck" because it is as narrow as 22 km, underlining its vulnerability in the event of a limited invasion. That's why the takeover of Doklam is such a priority and a mouth-watering proposition for Beijing. Conversely, New Delhi simply can't let China gain such a crucial military advantage over India under any circumstances. If the northeast is cut off from the rest of India, the PLA can swoop down and annex Arunachal Pradesh which China illegally claims as an extension of south Tibet. Even the latest standard map released by Beijing this week shows Arunachal Pradesh within China.

Fundamentally, India would be at the receiving end every which way if Bhutan agrees to give Doklam to China.

For years, China has been preparing the grounds

for forcing Bhutan into parting with Doklam by staking its claim not only to Doklam in west Bhutan but also to Jampalung and Pasamlung valleys in north Bhutan and even the Sakteng wildlife sanctuary in east Bhutan since 2020. In order to achieve its goal, Beijing is persistently offering to give up its claims in the north and the east in lieu of Bhutan ceding the high-value Doklam in the west.

Beijing seeks to project itself as the paragon of reason, fair play, and magnanimity by offering to completely forego its claims in the north and the east in exchange for what it is seeking in the West. To strengthen its case, it even points out that the territory in the north and the east which it is prepared to give up is much bigger than what it wants in the west! But India has seen through the sweet talk and firmly advised Bhutan not to fall for it.

Today, China's urgency to bag Doklam is manifested in the increased frequency of China-Bhutan Expert Group Meetings (which handle border talks) in 2023. The 13th EGM was held from 21-24 August in Beijing.

The 12th EGM took place in May in Thimphu only four months after the 11th EGM was held in Kunming in China's Yunnan province in January. In contrast to three successive engagements so far this year, the 10th EGM was held way back in April 2021, laying bare China's tearing hurry in 2023 after a long lull of 20 months in boundary negotiations.

That China is bent upon forcing the pace of talks is also borne out by the establishment of a Joint Technical Team which held its first meeting on the margins of the 13th EGM and has been officially described as an "important outcome". Moreover, an announcement was made to hold the 14th EGM as soon as possible to "keep up the positive momentum."

For India-China: Ladakh, G20, and now Doklam. Significantly, China wants to grab Doklam by bullying Bhutan even as there is no resolution of the China-India conflict triggered in April-May 2020 by the PLA's territorial aggression in Ladakh. External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar keeps describing the situation at the China-India frontier as "abnormal". The dispute is so complicated that the two sides don't agree even on how long the border is. India insists that the border is 3488 km long while China says it is only 2000 km.

And after last week's Xi-Modi meeting in Johannesburg, Beijing promptly declared it was held on Modi's request to show India in poor light as a supplicant.

Additionally, there is no confirmation yet of X's in-person participation in the G-20 Leaders' Summit India is hosting early next month. Contrast this with US President Joe Biden's announcement that he would be in New Delhi from 7 to 10 September for the grand G-20 event.

But the suspense over Xi is giving India no respite. As far as China's obsessive overdrive to take control of Doklam is concerned, India should use the carrot-and-stick policy to keep Bhutan on a tight leash so that it holds its own and doesn't capitulate.

And, if necessary, India should not hesitate to get its partners in the Indo-Pacific grouping Quad — US, Australia, and Japan — to call out Beijing for bullying Bhutan and express solidarity with Thimphu and New Delhi. (Courtesy: The Quint)

## Why is the Modi regime so worried about the caste survey in Bihar?



By: Nalin Verma

Ahead of the third meet of the Indian National Developmental Inclusive Alliance — INDIA — at Mumbai on August 31 and September 1, Bihar chief minister Nitish Kumar has said that the caste survey in Bihar has been completed. "Its data is being compiled. It will be published soon," Nitish said.

His remarks coincided with the Narendra Modi government filing two successive affidavits in the Supreme Court with regard to its stand about the caste survey in Bihar. The Union government, in paragraph five of its first affidavit on Monday, August 28, said: "Only the Centre can conduct a census or any action akin to census".

Hours later, it purged this remark in another affidavit, saying that the paragraph had "inadvertently crept in" and, as such it had no objection against the caste survey in Bihar.

The Union government's action has sparked a massive row with INDIA leaders — mainly those of the Rashtriya Janata Dal and Janata Dal (United) — hitting out at Prime Minister Modi and the Bharatiya Janata Party. The opposition leaders accused the government of continuously conspiring against the interests of Dalits and backward classes of the country.

"The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh-BJP represents the forces that have perpetrated atrocities on the poor for centuries and are still doing it. The poor people have understood Modi's machinations now. They are determined to drive Modi out of power in 2024", the RJD supreme Lalu Prasad Yadav told this writer ahead of leaving for Mumbai.

"The Prime Minister's Office (PMO) is playing every trick in its bag to impede the caste survey in Bihar. I appeal to him to correct his anti-poor mindset", the RJD's national spokesman Manoj Jha said.

Bihar deputy CM Tejashwi Yadav said, "The BJP's conspiracy has been exposed. It's utterly scared now".

## BJP's worries

Apart from Hindutva and its continuous hate campaign against minorities, what has benefitted the BJP at the elections most,

particularly 2014 onwards, is the shift of the major chunk of the backward classes and Dalits votes to it in the Hindi heartland comprising Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Bihar.

The implementation of the Mandal Commission report in the 1990s led the regional parties — Samajwadi Party in Uttar Pradesh and Janata Dal in Bihar — to have complete sway over the Other Backward Classes or OBC voters who broadly constituted about 60% of the votes in these regions.

However, these regional parties in Bihar and UP suffered multiple splits and the BJP eventually got many of these splinter groups in its fold. The Hindutva party's work was relatively easy in Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan because these states did not have strong regional parties and the BJP was locked in direct contest with the Congress, which did not play OBC politics.

In addition to that, the RSS cadres worked meticulously at the ground level to incorporate the non-Yadav OBCs and non-Jatav Dalits in Uttar Pradesh in the Hindutva fold. In Bihar, RSS's comparative lack of success notwithstanding, the BJP was indirectly benefited by the extremely backward classes (EBCs) and Dalits voting for the JD(U), with which it was in an alliance.

The statistics gathered by a CSDS survey suggests that only 17% of OBCs had voted for BJP in 1996 Lok Sabha elections. The figures largely remained the same in the 2004 and 2009 elections. However, the BJP got 43% of the OBC votes in the 2014 elections. The Hindutva party's OBCs vote share further swelled with 48% of them voting for it in 2019 polls.

In fact, perhaps recognising the importance of OBCs votes for his party, the PM announced the Vishwakarma Yojna in his Independence Day address, his last ahead of the 2024 polls. The scheme involves giving financial and technological help to iron-smiths, wood workers, goldsmiths and others engaged in leather and aluminium-related occupations in rural India.

## Caste survey

In such a backdrop, the caste survey acts as a tool for Nitish Kumar to take on the BJP's clout among OBCs and bring them

back to the fold of the regional parties in the Hindi heartland.

"The caste survey in Bihar is going to prove a watershed in the history of India. All the states must adopt it. The Centre should have carried out the caste census in 2021 itself, but it delayed it. Now the time has lapsed," the Bihar CM said ahead of the INDIA meet at Mumbai.

Nitish's dumping of the BJP and joining the grand alliance in August 2022 paved the way for the caste survey in the state with the RJD and his deputy Tejashwi supporting it. The survey is also putting pressure on the Union government to carry out caste census at the national level. It has also led to Nitish cementing his proximity with the Samajwadi Party under Akhilesh Yadav. Yadav has suffered heavily on account of losing his non-Yadav OBC votes to the BJP in his state.

The RSS-BJP is known to have caste Hindus — Brahmins and Banias (business communities) — at the core of its socio-political base. The RSS invariably has had Chitpavans — a sub-caste of the Brahmins — heading it ever since its formation in 1925. The upper crust of the BJP too is layered with caste Hindus.

"The BJP's work for the backward and marginalised sections is only peripheral and cosmetic in nature. The Samajwadi Party is highly appreciative of the caste survey in Bihar and has continuously been demanding the Union government conduct a caste census at the national level too," the senior Samajwadi Party leader and professor at Lucknow University, Sudhir Panwar, said.

The BJP, ostensibly, had supported Nitish when he had moved the resolution for the caste survey in the Bihar legislature. The party also supported the alliance parties' representatives in their meeting with the PM to demand a caste census early last year. But the party got jittery when the Nitish government set in motion the process. Outwardly, BJP leaders kept speaking in favour of the caste survey but the saffron cadres led a covert operation to ensure it did not happen.

The Hindu Sena, Akhilesh Kumar and others were among seven groups and individuals — all directly or indirectly associated with the RSS — who challenged the caste survey in the Patna high court on the ground that it would "imperil the unity and integrity" of India. The Patna HC initially put an interim stay on the survey but later allowed it.

These RSS cadres and sympathisers then challenged the HC's order in the Supreme Court. The PMO was, apparently, exposed when the Solicitor General of India Tushar Mehta questioned the caste survey in Bihar on August 21 and said that the government would file an affidavit to that effect in the SC.

The government did file the affidavit but dithered on it. Clearly, the BJP is in a state of confusion on a sensitive issue that might dominate the discourse of 2024 elections. (Courtesy: The Wire)



# Ousting of Gabon's unpopular leader was a 'smokescreen' for soldiers to seize power, analysts say

**DAKAR (SENEGAL), Aug 31:** Gabonese awoke Thursday to a new military leader after mutinous soldiers ousted a president whose family had ruled the oil-rich Central African nation for more than five decades.

The new leader is Gen. Brice Clotaire Oligui Nguema, head of the elite republican guard unit, soldiers announced on state TV Wednesday hours after President Ali Bongo Ondimba was declared winner of last week's presidential election, which Gabonese and observers say was marred with irregularities and a lack of transparency.

The soldiers accused Bongo of irresponsible governance that risked leading the country into chaos and have put him under house arrest and detained several

people in his cabinet, they said. While there were legitimate grievances about the vote and Bongo's rule, his ousting is just a pretext to claim power for themselves, Gabon experts say.

"The timing of the coup, following the announcement of the implausible electoral results, and the speed with which the junta is moving suggests this was planned in advance," said Joseph Siegle, director of research at the Africa Centre for Strategic Studies.

"While there are many legitimate grievances about the vote and Bongo's rule, that has little to do with the coup attempt in Gabon. Raising those grievances is just a smokescreen," he said.

Gabon's coup is the eighth military takeover in Central and West Africa in



three years and comes roughly a month after Niger's democratically elected president was ousted.

Unlike Niger and neighbouring Burkina Faso and Mali, which have each had two coups apiece since 2020 and are being overrun by extremist violence,

Gabon was seen as relatively stable.

However, Bongo's family has been accused of endemic corruption and not letting the country's oil wealth trickle down to the population of some 2 million people. Bongo 64, has served two terms since coming to power in 2009 after the death of his father, who ruled the country for 41 years, and there has been widespread discontent with his reign.

Another group of mutinous soldiers attempted a coup in 2019 but was quickly overpowered. The former French colony is a member of OPEC, but its oil wealth is concentrated in the hands of a few — and nearly 40 per cent of Gabonese aged 15 to 24 were out of work in 2020, according to the World Bank. Its oil export revenue was USD 6 billion in 2022, ac-

cording to the US Energy Information Administration.

Gabon's coup and the overturning of a dynastic leader, such as Bongo, appeared to have struck a nerve across the continent that coups in more remote, volatile West Africa previously hadn't.

Hours after soldiers in Gabon announced the new leader, president of neighbouring Cameroon, Paul Biya, who's been in power for 40 years, shuffled his military leadership, and Rwandan President Paul Kagame "accepted the resignation" of a dozen generals and more than 80 other senior military officers. Even Djibouti's Ismail Omar Guelleh, in power in the tiny former French colony in the Horn of Africa since 1999, condemned the coup in Gabon and

denounced the recent trend of military takeovers.

Still, on Wednesday, White House National Security Council spokesman John Kirby said it was too early to call the attempted coup in Gabon a trend.

"It's just too soon to do a table slap here and say, yep, we've got a trend here going or yep, we've got a domino effect," he said. Since Bongo was toppled, the streets of Gabon's capital, Libreville, have been jubilant with people celebrating alongside the army.

"Today we can only be happy," said John Nze, a resident. "The country's past situation handicapped everyone. There were no jobs. If the Gabonese are happy, it's because they were hurting under the Bongos". (AP)

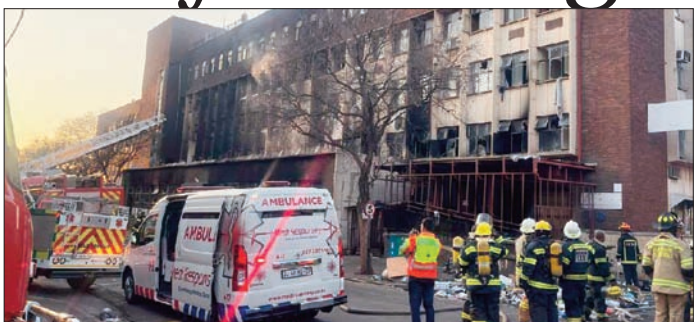
Building in central Marshelltown neighbourhood was being used as 'informal' housing for some 200 homeless people

## At least 70 people killed in fire in multi-storey building in Johannesburg

**JOHANNESBURG, Aug 31:** At least 70 people were killed and 43 others injured after a massive fire broke out on Thursday in a multi-storey building occupied by migrants in the central business district here in South Africa's biggest city, emergency services said. Authorities said it was unclear what sparked the blaze at the five-storey building in the city centre.

City of Johannesburg emergency services spokesperson Robert Mulaudzi said firefighters were alerted to the fire in a building on the corner of Delvers and Alberts streets at about 1:30 a.m.

Dozens of emergency and rescue workers are still on the scene as bodies continue to be brought out. "We managed to evacuate the people who were inside the building as soon as we arrived while we were conducting firefighting operations," Mulaudzi said, adding that most of those treated for injuries had suffered smoke inhalation or minor injuries. Mulaudzi said arrangements were being made to accommodate those who had been



left homeless by the incident. The fire gutted the building. A total of 70 bodies were recovered and 43 were injured in the fire, Mulaudzi said. A video posted by Mulaudzi on X, formerly known as Twitter, showed fire trucks and ambulances outside the building with burnt-out windows. A toddler was among the deceased. Of the injured, some suffered smoke inhalation with others sustaining minor injuries.

Mulaudzi said the fire had been contained and that they were busy with "damping down" as well as search and recovery operations.

He said the death toll may in-

crease because there was an informal settlement inside the building which may have resulted in people being trapped while trying to flee.

"Every floor has an informal settlement, and those that were trying to evacuate were trapped because of the structures between the floors," the News24 website quoted Mulaudzi as saying. "We have informed people who are at the scene looking for their relatives that chances of finding them alive are very slim." The building is one of many in the once bustling district of Johannesburg that has been hijacked by criminal elements who

then let them out to desperate migrants, both legal and illegal, who need accommodation. Often, this is despite there being no electricity, water, or sanitation services as the municipality discontinues these in abandoned buildings in an attempt to make them safer.

"There are dozens of shacks inside this building and there must be a few hundred people living in small shacks into which the five floors have been divided," said a resident from Tanzania, who lives next to the building and refused to be identified as he said he was still struggling to get refugee status.

He said most of the residents in several buildings in the area were illegal migrants from African states who came to the economic heart of South Africa in search of jobs, but most had to struggle to make ends meet as these were very scarce. He said there were also South Africans from rural areas who did that and who were also exploited by unscrupulous criminal syndicates who have hijacked the buildings.

"Most of us are forced to use candles for light and cook on small paraffin stoves and some even use boulders (open fires made in old steel drums), which are very dangerous in closed buildings. I'm not sure how this fire started, but last night was cold and it could have been something like that," he said.

He added that there were some families with small children living in the building.

"I don't see much hope for any one else coming alive out of that building now. We just see firemen bringing out bodies one by one. It's very sad!" said another woman, who also lives in a shack nearby, again refusing to be identified.

Hundreds of economic migrants live in makeshift homes on empty land and even some streets or converted small sections of buildings in the suburbs surrounding the centre of Johannesburg. Those injured in the blaze were taken to hospital.

Officials from the City of Johannesburg disaster management have been activated to facilitate relief for affected families. (PTI)

## 15 killed in a Philippine factory fire

**MANILA, Aug 31:** A fire killed 15 people on Thursday in a small apparel factory in a Philippine residential area, where firefighters were delayed by flooding, traffic and a wrong address, a fire protection official said.

Most of the victims appeared to be factory workers and carpenters who were sleeping in rooms when the fire broke out Thursday morning. Some were found dead on an aisle outside the rooms and the factory owner and his child were among the dead. Chief Superintendent Nahum Tarroza of the Bureau of Fire Protection said.

Three people survived with injuries by jumping off the second floor of the two-story factory in panic, Tarroza said. The three were taken to a hospital. The firefighters' arrival was delayed by about 14 minutes after a monsoon-season downpour and wind caused flooding and traffic jams and a wrong address was given to firefighters, Tarroza said. Tarroza said he would order an investigation into the firefighters' delayed response.

The fire in the Pleasant View residential enclave in Tandang Sora village in suburban Quezon city was extinguished in two hours. An investigation was looking into the cause and if safety regulations were breached by the factory owner, officials said. (AP)

Ethiopia, according to American officials.

The notification, a copy of which was obtained by The Associated Press, did not specify what military equipment or systems would be paid for under FMF, which commits US taxpayer dollars to pay for the supply of materiel to foreign countries.

But, it said items that could be covered would include: air and coastal defense systems, armoured vehicles, infantry fighting vehicles, drones, ballistic missile and cyber defenses, and advanced communications equipment. It added that protective gear, an array of small, medium and heavy weapons systems, ammunition, armoured and infantry fighting vehicles could also be included. In addition to equipment, FMF may also be used to support training for Taiwanese military forces. Rep. Michael McCaul, a Texas Republican who chairs the House Foreign Affairs Committee, welcomed the FMF being provided to Taiwan.

"These weapons will not only help Taiwan and protect other democracies in the region, but also strengthen the U.S. deterrence posture and ensure our national security from an increasingly aggressive CCP," he said in a statement, referring to the Chinese Communist Party. (AP)



States has provided Foreign Military Sales (FMS) to Taiwan for years. FMF simply enables eligible partner nations to purchase US defense articles, services, and training through either FMS or, for a limited number of countries, through the foreign military financing of direct commercial contracts (FMF/DCC) program.

The officials were not authorized to comment publicly and did so on condition of anonymity. But the language used implied that Taiwan is or could be compared to a "nation" or a "country" — something China has fervently opposed, blocking Taiwan's full membership in any number of UN and other international organisations unless it is identified as part of China. The only other time the US has provided a non-nation-state with military assistance under FMF was to the African Union, an organisation of sovereign states based in

## US, Indonesia and 5 other nations hold war drills

**JAKARTA, Aug 31:** Soldiers from the US, Indonesia and five other nations began annual training exercises on Thursday in Indonesia's main island of Java while China's increasing aggression is raising concern.

American and Indonesian soldiers have held the live-fire drill since 2009, and Australia, Japan and Singapore joined last year. The United Kingdom and French forces are participating in this year's Super Garuda Shield exercises, with a total of about 5,000 personnel.

China sees the expanded drills as a threat, accusing the US of building an Indo-Pacific alliance similar to NATO to limit China's growing military and diplomatic influence in the region.

Brunei, Brazil, Canada, Germany, India, Malaysia, Netherlands, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, South Korea, and East Timor also sent observers to the two-week exercises in Baluran, a coastal town in East Java province.

Commanding general of US Army Pacific, Gen. Charles Flynn, said the 19 nations involved in the training are a powerful demonstration of multilateral solidarity to safeguard a free and open Indo-Pacific region. (AP)

## US OKs military aid to Taiwan under programme usually reserved for sovereign nations

**WASHINGTON, Aug 31:** The Biden administration has approved the first-ever US military transfer to Taiwan under a programme generally reserved for assistance to sovereign, independent states.

The State Department notified Congress of the sale on Wednesday. It said the material would "be used to strengthen Taiwan's self-defense capabilities through joint and combined defense capability and enhanced maritime domain awareness and maritime security capability." The package is modest — only USD 80 million of what Congress had set aside as a potential USD 2 billion — but the implications of using the so-called Foreign Military Financing programme to provide it will likely infuriate China.

Beijing, which regards Taiwan as a renegade province, has repeatedly not ruled out the use of force to reunite it with the mainland and vociferously protests all US arms sales to the self-governing island.

However, previous arms sales to Taiwan have been approved under other authorities that do not necessarily imply statehood. US officials were quick to say that the provision of FMF funding to Taiwan did not represent a change in policy. It's a position the Chinese are sure to disagree with.

In explaining the change, two US officials said: "The United

## Palestinian driver rams truck into pedestrians at West Bank checkpoint, wounding 3

**TEL AVIV, Aug 31:** A Palestinian driver slammed his truck into pedestrians at a busy checkpoint in the occupied West Bank on Thursday, wounding three people in the latest bloodshed in a relentless cycle of violence to roil the region.

The violence came a day after Israeli police shot and killed a 14-year-old Palestinian boy who stabbed a man in a Jerusalem light-rail station and after Palestinian militants detonated a bomb near a convoy of Israeli troops escorting Jewish worshippers to a holy site in the West Bank, wounding four Israeli troops.

The unrest is part of more than a yearlong wave of violence that has surged to levels unseen in the West Bank in some two decades. Israeli paramedics said they were treating three people, one critically, in the aftermath of Thursday's attack.

According to Israel's Defense Ministry, the driver sped away and

was stopped by security guards at a separate checkpoint nearby. His condition was not immediately clear. Israeli PM order ministries to get his OK before secret talks, as drama over Libya meeting persists.

Video circulating on social media showed a white truck surrounded by security guards at the second checkpoint as gunshots rang out.

The checkpoint where the truck rammed the pedestrians occurred on a major highway leading from central Israel through the West Bank and into Jerusalem and is next to the Israeli city of Modiin. The checkpoint is typically packed with commuters and security guards or soldiers.

Palestinian assaults against Israelis have spiked alongside Israel's intensification of arrest raids in the West Bank since the spring. Some 30 people have been killed in Palestinian attacks against Israelis since the start of 2023. (AP)

PM urged Malaysians to unite and reject racial and religious bigotry, as the country marked its 66th year of freedom from British rule with fireworks and a street parade

## A divided Malaysia celebrates National Day with PM Anwar rallying for unity

**PUTRAJAYA, Aug 31:** Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim urged Malaysians to unite and reject racial and religious bigotry, as the country marked its 66th year of freedom from British rule on Thursday with fireworks and a street parade.

Fireworks were set off in various locations at midnight to usher in National Day. Tens of thousands of people thronged the government administrative capital of Putrajaya early Thursday for the main procession, waving national flags and cheering as bands, dancers and convoys of vehicles went past.

Anwar, along with the nation's King Sultan Abdullah Sultan Ahmad Shah, were among the dignitaries at the parade.

In a televised speech on the eve of National Day, Anwar appealed to Malaysians not to let their differences ruin the nation. He warned that powerful nations have collapsed not just due to misman-



agement or corruption but because they "played with fires of ethnic and religious fanaticism."

"Don't take this lightly ... our differences can be a strength or a force that can destroy the fabrics of society and the country," said Anwar, who took power in November after a divisive general election. "We can choose to continue to sow doubt and suspicion, political and racial hatred or we can choose to say that enough is

enough."

Islam is the official religion in Malaysia and by law, Malays — who make up over 2/3 of the country's 33 million people — must strictly be Muslims and cannot convert. Malaysia also has large Chinese and Indian minorities.

Racial and religious divides further deepened in Malaysia after Nov. 19 general elections led to the rise of a strong Islamic-Malay nationalist opposition bloc. Anwar's

coalition won the most seats but fell short of a majority to form a government. Anwar, 76, later established a multi-coalition unity government with the backing of former rivals.

The opposition Perikatan Nasional bloc, which included a powerful Islamic party, further reinforced its strength in local polls earlier this month. It made major inroads in three government-controlled states and nearly swept all the seats in three other states it ruled. It has framed its gains as a protest vote against Anwar's unity government.

Sultan Abdullah, in a National Day post on Facebook, echoed Anwar's call for racial unity.

"This unity is the main key to the country's stability and prosperity, as well as the seed and source of strength for us to face any current and future challenges," he said.

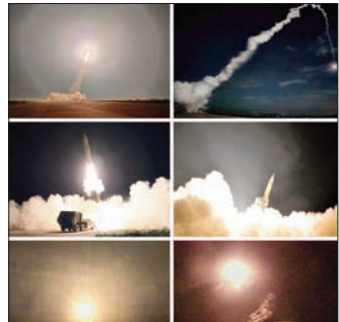
Although his government has a

two-thirds majority in Parliament, Anwar has not yet managed to shore up support among Malay voters, many who view him as too liberal. They fear their Islamic identity and economic privileges under a decades-old affirmative action program could be chipped away.

Anwar refused to budge from his multiethnic stance, urging Malaysians in his speech to reject outdated and parochial mindsets. He said the status of Islam and Malay privileges are enshrined in the constitution and will not change. At the same time, he said his unity government will also defend the rights of all minorities and marginalized groups.

Malay society is generally conservative, in other respects, including banning all LGBTQ activities.

"Malaysia must only be known for its skyscrapers... but also for its guarantee of justice for all citizens," he said. (AP)



## NKorea says it simulated nuclear attacks on SKorea and rehearsed occupation of its rivals

**SEOUL, Aug 31:** North Korea said Thursday its latest missile launches simulated "scorched earth" nuclear strikes on South Korea and that it's also been rehearsing an occupation of its rivals' territory in the event of conflict.

Pyeongyang has previously tested nuclear-capable missiles and described how it would use them in potential wars with South Korea and the US. But the North's disclosure of detailed war plans reaffirmed its aggressive nuclear doctrine to intimidate its opponents, as it escalates its protest of the ongoing South Korean-US military exercises that it views as a major security threat, observers say.

North Korea's military said it fired two tactical ballistic missiles from the capital on Wednesday night to practice "scorched earth strikes" at major command centres and operational airfields in South Korea, according to the official Korean Central News Agency.

The North's military said the missiles carried out their simulated strikes through air bursts, suggesting it confirmed the explosions of dummy warheads at a set altitude.

North Korea said its missile tests were response to the United States' flyover of long-range B-1B bombers for a joint aerial training with South Korea earlier Wednesday as part of the allies' field exercises.

"(The aerial drill) is a serious threat to (North Korea) as it was just pursuant to the scenario for a preemptive nuclear strike at" North Korea, the Korean People's Army general staff said.

"The KPA will never overlook the rash acts of the US forces and the (South Korean) military gangsters." The missile launches Wednesday were the latest in the North's barrage of weapons tests since last year.

According to South Korean and Japanese assessments, the two short-range missiles travelled a distance of 360-400 kilometres (225-250 miles) at the maximum altitude of 50 kilometres (30 miles) before landing in the waters between the Korean Peninsula and Japan.

South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff called the launches "a grave provocation" that threatens international peace and violates UN Security Council resolutions that ban any ballistic launches by North Korea. The US Indo-Pacific Command said the US commitment to the defense of South Korea and Japan remains "ironclad."

South Korean and Japanese authorities said their warplanes conducted combined aerial drills with US B-1B bombers respectively on Wednesday. South Korea's Defence Ministry said that Wednesday's B-1B deployment is the 10th flyover by US bombers on the Korean Peninsula this year.

North Korea is extremely sensitive to the deployment of US B-1B bombers, which can carry a huge number of conventional weapons. The North describes the bombers as "nuclear strategic" although the planes were switched to conventional weaponry in the 1990s.

On August 21, the US and South Korean militaries kicked off their summer Ulchi Freedom Shield computer-simulated command post exercise.

During this year's training, slated to end later Thursday, the allies have included more than 30 kinds of field exercises, such as Wednesday's joint aerial exercise involving the B-1B aircraft.

North Korea calls major US-involved military drills on and near the Korean Peninsula preparation for invasion.

KCNA said Kim on Tuesday visited an army post where his military has been holding command post drills in response to the South Korean-US military training.

It said the drills are aimed at practising procedures for "occupying the whole territory of the southern half" of the Korean Peninsula in the event of war.

Kim underscored the need to "deal a heavy blow at the enemy's war potential and war command centre and blinding their means of command communication at the initial stage of operation."

Kim also detailed tasks to acquire an ability to launch "simultaneous super-intense strikes" at key enemy military targets and other sites whose destruction can cause social and economic chaos, according to KCNA.

The North's report showed it has operational plans to launch full-blown attacks on South Korea in the event of military clashes between the rivals to achieve Korean unification by force, said analyst Cheong Seong-Chang at the private Sejong Institute in South Korea. He said that North Korea plots to conduct nuclear and EMP (electromagnetic pulse) attacks at the early stage of war.

South Korea's Unification Ministry said later Thursday it strongly condemns North Korea for openly revealing its intent to attack the South. It warned North Korea will only face "an overwhelming response" by South Korea, the US and Japan if it continues its provocation and military threats. (AP)



## Yapoli Pegu clinches 'Mrs India - She is India 2023 Diva Award'



### HT Bureau

**GUWAHATI, Aug 31:** In a remarkable feat of accomplishment, Yapoli Pegu, hailing from Assam, emerged victorious by clinching the coveted 'Mrs India - She is India 2023 Diva Award' at a prestigious national-level female empowerment event held at The Umrao, New Delhi. The event took place on Wednesday, and saw Yapoli Pegu representing the North East India region with grace and prowess. Among a group of nine finalists, she stood out and secured the award, showcasing her exceptional qualities. Born in the town of Jonai, Yapoli Pegu is the daughter of Holi-ram Pegu and Renu Doley Pegu. She is not only an esteemed practitioner of advanced yoga but also a source of inspiration for her community and beyond. The award-winning competition, organised by the esteemed team of Mrs India Universe, recognised Yapoli Pegu's outstanding accomplishments and her commitment to empowerment and personal growth.

## Dead body of Manglu Kurmi recovered from pond in Kachumari

### HT Correspondent

**DEMOW, Aug 31:** The body of Manglu Kurmi (45), a resident of Kachumari, was recovered from a pond near Demow on Thursday morning. Kurmi was reported missing on Wednesday evening. On Thursday morning, locals saw his body floating in the pond and informed the police. The police reached the scene and recovered the body. The body has been sent for post-mortem. The cause of death is not yet known. The police are investigating the matter. Kurmi's family members have been informed of his death.

## Tezpur University launches Android app for writing Bodo

### HT Correspondent

**TEZPUR, Aug 31:** Tezpur University has launched an Android app called 'Demi' for writing Bodo. The app, which is available on the Google Play Store, makes it easy to type Bodo by suggesting possible words when the user types the first few letters of a word. It can be used with existing software such as WhatsApp, Instagram, email, etc.

The app was developed by a team of students and faculty members from the university, including MTech (IT) student Sudem Daimari, Prof S K Sinha of the CSE department, Dr Nayan Basumatary, an alumnus of the CSE department and chairman of the Sub-Divisional Board of Tribal Development, Tezpur, Prof Utpal Sharma of the CSE department, Sujal Kumar, a student of BTech (ECE), and Manash Pratim Lahkar, a PhD student of the CSE department.

Speaking at the launch of the



app, Prof Shambhu Nath Singh, vice chancellor of Tezpur University, said that the app would help popularise the Bodo language. "More than 3 million people in north-east India speak Bodo as their native tongue. It is widely used for conversation, document creation, and communication. However, the Bodo language lags in terms of technology. This app will help people write in their own Bodo scripts," he said.

Prof Utpal Sharma, one of the developers of the app, explained that the app uses a misspelling checker and word suggestion system to make it easier for users to type Bodo. "These days, documents are commonly created on computers and mobile devices. Due to the lack of Bodo word recommendation and word suggestion, people are forced to rely on the use of software for the Hindi language, which requires an ex-

cessive amount of time for the construction of words, and consequently, many people do not prefer to use it. Additionally, people are forced to rely on the use of the Roman (English) alphabet, which has caused people to forget the use of writing in their own Bodo scripts. Therefore, the availability of appropriate technology is a must. This effort of ours focuses on the development and implementation of a misspelling checker and word suggestion system for the Bodo language," he said.

Dr Nayan Basumatary said that the app is one of the first of its kind for the Bodo language. "It makes composition and writing in Bodo easy. It requires no need to type Bodo words one-by-one. This app can be used in all kinds of social media platforms," he said.

The app launch ceremony was attended by members of the Bodo Sahitya Sabha, All Bodo Students Union, students from Darrang and Tezpur college.

## Review meeting on road safety conducted by District Road Safety Committee in Dima Hasao



### HT Correspondent

**HAFLONG, Aug 31:** A crucial review meeting focused on road safety was recently organised by the District Road Safety Committee (DRSC) at the DC Conference Hall in Haflong, under the leadership of district commissioner Simanta Kumar Das, ACS. The aim of the meeting was to address road safety measures and awareness within the Dima Hasao district.

During the meeting, superintendent of police, Dima Hasao, Mayank Kumar IPS, highlighted alarming statistics. According to recorded data, more than 32 accidents occurred in the district during the 2022-23 period, leading to the unfortunate loss of over 16 lives due to road accidents.

The district commissioner led discussions with the committee to assess the accident data and formulate strategies to tackle the road safety issue. Immediate action points were identified, including conducting road safety awareness

campaigns in educational institutions, removing debris and obstructions from road surfaces, and prioritising the repair of potholes on highways and roads.

The meeting also addressed vital aspects such as the installation of road signage and speed limit signboards along the Lanka to Umrao road, the implementation of CCTV cameras, joint inspections of vulnerable stretches on NH-27, and the proposal for a combined enforcement drive by the police and transport department to combat motor vehicle offenses.

Key officials attending the meeting included ADC James Aind ACS, senior medical & health officer Dr Parikshit Barman, as well as representatives from various departments including MVI, DTO, NHAI, PWD (R&B), and the inspector of school. This review meeting demonstrated a collective effort to enhance road safety measures and ensure the well-being of residents in the Dima Hasao district.

## AASAA Demow Regional Committee presents memorandum to CM

### HT Correspondent

**DEMOW, Aug 31:** Lalit Tanti, president, and Kamal Bhumij, general secretary of the All Adivasi Students Association of Assam (AASAA), Demow Regional Committee, submitted a memorandum to the chief minister through the Demow circle officer on Thursday. In the memorandum, they drew attention to the issue of the Governor's Brevet. The AASAA had previously submitted memorandums to the government regarding this matter on multiple occasions.

The memorandum highlighted that in the Governor's Brevet, the chief secretary IAS Mukesh Chandra Sahu of the State Valley Tribes and Other Backward Department had directed its implementation from May 1, 2022. The notification specified that caste certificates and the applicant's genuine tribe/caste/sub-caste should be in their names, excluding membership in Tea Estate/former Tea Estate Samaj (Society).

However, despite the issuance of the notification, its implementation has not been realised until the present date. Within the memorandum, the AASAA Demow Regional Committee urged for the prompt enforcement of Governor's instruction No. AD/BC/766/2022/18-A.

## Queen Oja inaugurates Guwahati - Barmer Express equipped with LHB coaches



### HT Bureau

**GUWAHATI, Aug 31:** With the aim of elevating passenger safety and comfort, the coaches of the weekly express train no 15632/15631 running between Guwahati and Barmer have been upgraded to modern LHB (Linke Hofmann Busch) coaches, featuring state-of-the-art amenities. On Thursday, Queen Oja, Member of Parliament (Lok Sabha), inaugurated the train with the new LHB rake at Guwahati Railway Station. The event saw the presence of senior railway officials, division rep-

resentatives, and other dignitaries.

The revamped LHB train, numbered 15632 Guwahati - Barmer - Guwahati Express, will commence its journey from Guwahati every Thursday at 10:40 hrs. The train will cover a distance of 2453 kilometres in approximately 45 hours, maintaining an average speed of around 50 km/hr. The route will include stops at Kamakhya, New Bongaigaon Jn, New Alipurduar Jn, New Jalpaiguri Jn, Katihar Jn, Mokama, Kanpur Central, Agra Fort, Jaipur Jn, Degana Jn, Merta Road, and Jodhpur.

The train composition will feature 22 LHB design coaches, including 1 AC 2 tier, 5 AC 3 tier, 12 sleeper, 1 second class, 1 pantry car, and 2 power cars.

LHB coaches offer several advantages, such as increased space, enhanced comfort, and improved passenger amenities, contributing to a seamless journey with enhanced safety features. The hydraulic shock absorbers and upgraded suspension systems of LHB coaches ensure a smoother ride compared to conventional rakes. These coaches boast 'Modular Interiors', integrating lighting into the ceiling and luggage racks, along with wider windows. Additionally, all LHB coaches are fitted with controlled discharge bathroom systems and bio-toilets, which are eco-friendly when compared to ICF coaches.

The Indian Railways consistently endeavours to provide a safer, faster, and more comfortable travel experience for residents of the north-eastern region. The conversion of the Guwahati - Barmer Express to a modern LHB rake marks a significant stride toward achieving this goal.

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## Training program on agricultural machinery concludes successfully at KVK, Kokrajhar



### HT Correspondent

**GOSSAIGAON, Aug 31:** A comprehensive three-day training program focusing on portable rice mills (tractor operated), dry grinding machines, solar bubble dryers, super bags, and grain moisture meters has successfully concluded at KVK, Kokrajhar under the APART project. The training, which commenced on August 28, wrapped up on Wednesday, witnessing active participation from 28 enthusiastic attendees.

The training initiative commenced with a warm welcome address by Sunil Patro, project associate of APART at KVK, Kokrajhar. Dr Sunil Kr Paul, head of KVK, Kokrajhar, provided an overview of the training program's objectives.

Akhoy Jyoti Bhattacharya, junior researcher at IIRI, initiated the training with a pre-evaluation test to gauge participants' existing knowledge regarding the featured agricultural machinery. Subsequently, Vipin Kumar, associate scientist in Agronomy at IIRI, con-

ducted an in-depth theoretical session about super bags, moisture meters, dry grinding machines, and more.

Practical sessions were conducted as well, including demonstrations of super bags and moisture meters by Akhoy Jyoti Bhattacharya, followed by a detailed demonstration on dry grinding by PK Mahapatra, RT at IIRI.

The second day of the program featured Akhoy Jyoti Bhattacharya's theory and practical session on portable rice mills, followed by Dharmendra Das explaining the intricacies of the tractor-operated portable rice mill machine.

The final day saw Vipin Kumar leading a theoretical and practical session on solar bubble dryers, providing participants with hands-on experience and guidance. The participants expressed high levels of satisfaction, motivation, and encouragement towards adopting these modern agricultural machinery tools.

As the program concluded, a post-evaluation test was conducted to assess the participants' knowledge acquired during both theory and practical sessions. Narzina Parbin, assistant project scientist of APART, extended a vote of thanks.

Throughout the three-day training program, Dr Sunil Kr Paul, head of KVK, Kokrajhar, Porina Sarmah, SMS of Community Science, Vipin Kumar, associate scientist in Agronomy at IIRI, Akhoy Jyoti Bhattacharya, junior researcher at IIRI, PK Mahapatra, RT at IIRI, and Gopal Ch Roy, RT at APART, actively participated and contributed to the enriching experience.

## Miscrrent apprehended

### HT Correspondent

**DEMOW, Aug 31:** In a daring daylight incident, a thief was caught red-handed attempting a burglary at the residence of a teacher in Gudhabil, near Demow, on Thursday. The swift response from local residents led to the capture of the thief, identified as Hemanta Japhajia, who has a history of similar offenses in the area. The victimised homeowner, Rameswar Sahu, was not present at the time of the attempted theft. Reports indicate that Hemanta Japhajia had previously faced legal consequences for his criminal activities, having been incarcerated for similar offenses.

## Death in Uriagaon Bypass

### HT Correspondent

**NAGAON, Aug 31:** The body of a youth was found in the veranda of a roadside outlet near his residence in Uriagaon Bypass Chariali on Thursday morning. The youth has been identified as Bhaskar Das. Some locals noticed Das lying in the veranda and informed the police and his family members. The police rushed to the spot and recovered the body. The cause of death is yet to be ascertained. Das' family members alleged that he might have been killed by someone else through injecting an overdose of drugs.

## Filariasis elimination programme kicks off in Biswanath



### HT Correspondent

**BISWANATH CHARIALI, Aug 31:** The mass drug administration (MDA) for lymphatic filariasis to eliminate filariasis was kicked off on Thursday at Biswanath along with three other block primary health centres in the state.

The inaugural session was held at the conference hall of Biswanath BPHC and was attended by Dr Neha Jadhav, SDO Civil, Biswanath subdivision cum ADC, Dr Jogen Chandra Bay, joint director of Health Services, Biswanath, Dr Aliza Deka, district surveillance offi-

cer, Amarjyoti Borthakur, chairman of Biswanath Town Committee, Dr Jonali Gogoi, superintendent of Biswanath Chariali Subdivisional Hospital, Dr Dulamani Saikia, SDMO, and other dignitaries.

In the inaugural session, a total of ten people were given the preventive medicine for filariasis. The ASHA workers, Anganwadi workers, and the health workers have started provide the medicines to all public by visiting their door steps from Thursday and will continue till September 9.

Only four primary health centres, including Hapjan BPHC of Tinsukia, Rangapara BPHC of Sonitpur, Biswanath BPHC, and Behali BPHC of Biswanath district, have been shortlisted for the pilot project.

The MDA is a preventive measure to stop the spread of filariasis. Filariasis is a parasitic disease that is transmitted through the bite of mosquitoes. The disease can cause elephantiasis, a condition in which the limbs and genitals become swollen.

## Guwahati Theatre Fest to stage plays of Saurabh Shukla, Bharat Dabholkar, Ashvin Gidwani

**GUWAHATI, Aug 31:** Three nationally acclaimed plays by renowned directors Saurabh Shukla, Bharat Dabholkar and Ashvin Gidwani will be staged here during the Sixth Guwahati Theatre Festival from September 8, organisers said on Thursday.

The plays to be staged in the three-day festival are 'Barff', directed by Saurabh Shukla, 'The Scent of a Man' by Ashvin Gidwani and 'Blame it on Yashraj' by Bharat Dabholkar.

The three-day festival this year has a diverse collection of contemporary plays, chief executive officer of the English weekly 'GPlus', the organisers of the festival, Sidharth Bedi Varma told PTI.

A workshop will also be organised during the festival for school students.

The festival will open with the highly acclaimed thriller 'Barff', set over one snowy night in an abandoned village in Kashmir, and will feature Saurabh Shukla, Sunil Palwal and Aanchal Chauhan.

'The Scent of a Man' will be staged on the second day. Set in present-day Mumbai, the play is a comedy on lies and infi-



delity and it features Ashwin Mushran, Bhavna Pani, Suchitra Pillai and Manyu Doshi.

'Blame It on Yashraj', will be staged on the final day, and is also a comedy mounted with fast-changing video walls as backdrops where every scene and every emotion is enhanced with popular Bollywood music. This play has an ensemble cast of 27 members including Anant Mahadevan and

Jayati Bhatia, Bedi said.

The sixth edition of the Festival is significant as plays that pack a lot of drama will be staged. The response by the people of the city has been great, but we can only hope that it gets bigger this time, he said.

Festival advisor Nandinee Kalita told PTI that the Guwahati Theatre Festival is now recognised at the national level among

theatre culture and festival fraternity.

A three-day workshop will be conducted by visiting artists such as Saurabh Shukla, Anant Mahadevan, Bharat Dabholkar among others, she said.

"This will enable the youth of the state to gain exposure and lessons in various aspects of performing arts from such stalwarts," she said.

The Festival also honours personalities with lifetime achievement awards and the jury is finalising the selection of this year's winner which will be presented on the last day of the festival.

The Guwahati Theatre Festival started in the year 2016 with an objective to bring in nationally and internationally acclaimed plays to theatre enthusiasts of the region and has become a landmark event in the cultural landscape of the region.

The Festival completed five editions where stalwarts like Shabana Azmi, Amol Palekar, Rajat Kapoor, Lilette Dubey, Vinay Pathak, Saurabh Shukla, Kalki Koechlin, Rajit Kapoor, Atul Kumar had performed. (PTI)

## NAME CORRECTION

My correct name is Sokin Uddin and my fathers name is Surat Ali Vill. Khupati pt.1 under South Salmara Mankachar District which has been correctly recorded in my Adhar Card Vide No.997954712786 and in my other relevant documents date of birth is 01.01.1960. In my passport vide No.L2189689 under Republic of India where in my father and my address has been spelt and written as Surut Ali Vill. Boro kazir Gaon under Dhubri District instead of Surat Ali vill. Khopati pt.1 under south salmara Mankachar. Both the name and address are the same.

**Sokin Uddin  
S.O. Surat Ali  
Vill. Khopati Pt.-1  
P.O.- Sukchar  
Dist. South Salmara Mankachar.**



## Civil bodies in Manipur should talk in one voice: CM Biren Singh



**IMPHAL, Aug 31:** Manipur chief minister N Biren Singh on Thursday lamented that there are too many civil society organisations in the state and they speak in different voices, making it difficult to find a solution to the ethnic problem rocking Manipur for nearly four months.

He urged those bodies to present a concrete proposal to solve the crisis in one voice, so it can be conveyed to the centre by the state government.

"There are too many organisations. We are at a very crucial stage now. Both the central and the state governments are confused about whom to talk to. We will go with the public (opinion) and never work against the interests of the people," Singh said at a programme. A number of civil society organisations are community-based. Meiteis and Kukis, the two warring communities, have their own such bodies.

Kukis are represented by organisations such as the Indigenous Tribal Leaders Forum (ITLF), Committee On Tribal Unity (COTU), Kuki Inpi and the Zomi Council. On the other hand, civil bodies like the Coordinating Committee on Manipur Integrity (COMI), United Committee Manipur (UCM) and the All Manipur United Clubs Organisation (AMUCO) represent Meiteis.

"People and civil society organisations should come together and

take a concrete proposal showing their stand so that the government can convey it to the Centre."

"We must come together irrespective of our political and community affiliation and work together for the present and future generation to enable them to live with dignity," Singh said at the state-level celebration of the 'Meri Maati Mera Desh' programme.

The 'Meri Maati Mera Desh' envisions a unified celebration of India's soil and valour, commemorating the nation's journey of freedom and progress. This campaign comprises many activities and ceremonies conducted across the country.

Condemning the gun attacks on farmers tending their fields at Naransena in Bishnupur district on Tuesday, the chief minister said, "Security forces arrested one person in this connection along with a .303 rifle."

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. (PTI)

## Kohima DC eyes for departments and establishment plastic-free



**HT Bureau**

**GUWAHATI, Aug 31:** Kohima deputy commissioner Shanavas C. has once again reminded all departments and establishments to do away with the use of single-use plastic items especially use of packaged drinking water bottles below 20 litres in offices and during meetings or functions.

Shanavas requested all government establishments to hold sensitization sessions in offices to highlight the negative impact of single-use plastic items and formulate an action plan for respective offices for a plastic-free environment. The DC further informed that a team constituted by District Task Force will be carried out a surprise checking and a penalty will be imposed for non-compliance.

## New Meghalaya Assembly building construction cost escalates to ₹ 200 cr

**SHILLONG, Aug 31:** The cost for constructing a new building of the Meghalaya Assembly building increased to Rs 200 crore with a High-Powered Committee (HPC) on Wednesday approving an escalated expenditure of Rs 60 crore for the purpose, speaker Thomas A Sangma said.

Addressing reporters, Sangma justified the escalation of price citing technical issues and increase in floor area.

"The floor area has become bigger. The cost escalated is due to expansion of structural area and not due to the time required for completing the project," he said.

The building is being constructed at New Shillong township near here.

The project was delayed after the dome of the new assembly building collapsed in May last

## Tezpur shines in state level Yoga championship in Sivasagar

**HT Correspondent**

**TEZPUR, Aug 31:** Tezpur shone in 26th edition of Yoga Sports Championship in junior and sub junior category organised by Assam Yoga Association in Sivasagar from August 25.

Sonitpur district team has won 15 prizes along with the first runners up award.

Besides winning first runners up award by the 24 members Sonitpur group Nandini Kaushik of 8-12 years group(girls) was placed in 2nd position while Smorika Deka and Sonakshi Sut of the same group were placed in 4th and 5th position respectively. In the 10-12 years group of girls Krishnakshi Devi and Jiyana Nih Goutam won the third and fifth position respectively. Dimple Kalita, Munmi Devi and Bistina

Kashyap secured the 2nd, third and 6th position respectively in the 12-14 years group of girls.

As well as Sharanyam Dikshit Pujari got the third prize in the 12-14 years boys group. In 16-18 year girls group Bhaswati Barua won the first prize while Dimple Kalita won the first prize in Girls Sub-junior Artistic (single) and Riyon Kaushik and Sharanyam Dikshit Pujari won the second and third prize respectively in Boys Sub-junior Artistic (single) yoga sports competition.

Meanwhile, Namita Deka Lahkar, national referee and secretary of the Sonitpur District Yoga Association along with Manoj Hazarika and Chinmoyee Kakati led the team from Sonitpur and took part in the programme.

The CSOs mentioned that they observed that drug abusers, especially among school and college-going students, have multiplied because of this Act

## CSOs want Liquor Prohibition Act lifted from Dimapur dist

**HT Correspondent**

**DIMAPUR, Aug 31:** Twenty Naga tribes and several civil society organisations (CSOs) of Dimapur, under the aegis of the Naga Council Dimapur, urged Nagaland governor La Ganesan to put up for urgent discussion the matter of lifting the Nagaland Liquor Total Prohibition (NLTP) Act, 1989, in Dimapur district in the upcoming state assembly session.

In a joint representation to the governor during his visit to Dimapur on Wednesday, the Naga Council Dimapur, Dimapur Urban Council Chairmen Federation, Naga Women Hoho Dimapur, Dimapur Naga Students Union, Dimapur GB's Union, Dimapur Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Business Association of Nagaland, Dimapur District GB's Association and Dimapur Eastern Naga Students Union sought to point out that the NLTP Act has



been a total failure in the district and that it has become a 'mockery'. They said the entire civil society organisations of Dimapur aspire that the Act be lifted from the district with 'proper mechanism'.

The representation said despite continued reminders to the public and law enforcement department, there are about 1,000 liquor outlets in Dimapur itself.

## Nagaland becomes first NE state to link Aadhaar with birth registration



**HT Bureau**

**GUWAHATI, Aug 31:** Nagaland has become the first state in the Northeastern region to initiate Aadhaar linked birth registration,

ALBR. ALBR initiative aims to streamline birth registration by integrating it with Aadhaar enrolment for children in the age group of 0 to 5 years.

The ALBR launched on Thursday at the commissioner's office in Nagaland was presided by commissioner T. Mhabemo Yanthan in the presence of economics and statistics director Neidilhou Angami.

Speaking at the event, Yanthan urged government officials to co-operate and ensure the successful implementation of ALBR across all districts in the state.

He said ALBR initiative is anticipated to enable children's access to various social welfare schemes designed for their welfare. To extend the reach of this service to residents across districts, the directorate of economics and statistics has collaborated with unique identification.

## Tripura to set up pink toilets for women: CM

**AGARTALA, Aug 31:** The Tripura government has initiated efforts to install pink toilets for women in urban areas, Chief Minister Manik Saha said.

Asserting that the BJP-IPFT government has been giving priority to women's safety and comfort, he said the number of self-help groups (SHGs) has risen from over 4,000 in 2018 to 50,000 in 2022.

"We will set up pink toilets for women in urban areas and an outlay (for it) has been earmarked in the budget," he told reporters here.

"Be it domestic violence or some other crime against women, our government takes prompt action. CCTV cameras are installed across the city, and I keep a close eye on the functioning of these electronic gadgets," he said.

Saha said he had last year promised to make education free for girl students up to the college level, and "it has been implemented".

"Thirty-three per cent reservation for women in government jobs, and 50 per cent reservation for them to operate shops in government shopping complexes are some of the steps taken by us towards women empowerment," the chief minister said.

He also said that the state government has adopted a zero-tolerance policy on drug trafficking and infiltration. (PTI)

## Morigaon DC completes one year in office



**HT Correspondent**

**MORIGAON, Aug 31:** Morigaon DC Devashish Sharma completed one year in office on Thursday.

Since his arrival on August 31, 2022, he has been instrumental in driving socio-economic growth within the district. Notably, he has taken various independent initiatives to uplift all segments of society. Despite navigating through challenges, the district commissioner is resolutely working towards positioning Morigaon as a leading district in the state, despite resource constraints.

Expressing gratitude, he offered acknowledgment to the people of Morigaon, mediapersons, officers, and staff across departments for their support during this year. He emphasised the importance of continued collaboration and seeks the district's collective cooperation and support going forward.

## CPI(M) responsible for mushrooming of regional parties in Tripura: Biplab Deb



**AGARTALA, Aug 31:** Former Tripura chief minister and Rajya Sabha member Biplab Kumar Deb alleged that the CPI (M) was responsible for the mushrooming of regional parties in the northeastern state.

He said this while addressing a rally for BJP candidate in the Dhanpur Assembly bypoll in Sepahijal district on Wednesday.

"The regional parties like TUIJS, INPT and IPFT were born in Tripura because of

CPI(M)'s long-lasting exploitation and harassment. They believed that indigenous voters are their secured vote bank but the situation has changed completely nowadays", Deb said.

Manik Sarkar of the CPI(M) was the chief minister when the state witnessed a massive influx of Reang refugees from neighbouring Mizoram in 1998 but he did not take any steps to solve their problem, Deb alleged.

"But things started moving in favour of Bru refugees when the BJP-IPFT government came to power in the 2018 Assembly elections. Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Union Home Minister Amit

Shah and BJP national president JP Nadda came forward to solve the 23-year-old refugee issue", he said.

Deb alleged that Manik Sarkar who ruled the state for several years had tried to destroy the future of the young generation of Bru refugees.

"But the BJP central leadership came forward considering the sufferings of refugees and inked a historic agreement allowing the Bru refugees to permanently settle in Tripura. Pradyot Kishore Manikya, Tipra Motha supreme and IPFT president NC Debbarma were among the signatories of the agreement", he said.

Deb claimed that the tribal people taught the CPI(M) a lesson for ignoring the interest of indigenous people as the CPI(M) could not win a single Scheduled Tribe (ST) reserved seat in the 2023 assembly election.

"The CPI(M) which considered itself as saviour of the indigenous people, could not open an account in the election to Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council (TTAADC). Now, the Communists are irrelevant in tribal politics", he said. (PTI)

## Arunachal govt undertaken various initiatives for women empowerment: Khandu

**ITANAGAR, Aug 31:** Arunachal Pradesh chief minister Pema Khandu on Thursday said various initiatives have been taken by his government during its seven-year rule for women empowerment.

He said empowering women helps empower the whole society.

"When we empower women, we empower the whole society. When we uplift and support them, we're unlocking boundless potential for progress and equality," Khandu wrote in X, formerly Twitter.

"Glad to have gone the extra mile in enabling our Naari Shakti to break barriers, challenge norms, and create a future where every woman's voice and choice matter," he also said.

The CM said so far 67,280 women have been mobilized into 8,410 SHGs and ₹ 14 crore bank credit has been extended to them. 60,000 bank accounts have been opened and ₹ 1 lakh has been fixed deposit each in bank accounts of 500 SHGs.

He said as much as 50 per cent of schemes under Atma

Nirbhar Arunachal are earmarked for SHGs. Under the Dulari Kanya Yojana, an amount of 25,000 has been kept as fixed deposit in the accounts of 8,371 girls born during the Golden Jubilee year. Moreover, an amount of ₹ 10,000 each has been kept as fixed deposit for girl child, payable to them after passing class 12 exams, Khandu said. The CM reiterated his government's resolve to maintain the momentum of women empowerment in the state with the support of all stakeholders. (PTI)

## Nine students from Arunachal's Puroik community receive Governor's Excellence Award

Puroiks are found in 53 villages in Subansiri, Upper Subansiri, Papumpare, Kurung Kumey and East Kameng districts

**ITANAGAR, Aug 31:** Nine students from the Puroik tribe of Arunachal Pradesh received the Governor's Excellence Award on Thursday in recognition of their academic achievements, a communiqué issued by the Raj Bhavan here said.

The recipients of the award are Jacinta Yakali, Yari Bechang, Laxman Bechangdao, Paji Yapa, Haye Danny, Ban Gram Yakli, Ruth Yachu, Eliza Puroik and Daniel Bechang.

The students have exhibited exemplary dedication and diligence in their academic pursuits, setting a high standard for their peers and embodying the potential for posi-



itive change within their community, the communiqué said.

The Raj Bhavan recognises their efforts and encourages them to continue their pursuit of excellence in their chosen fields, it said.

Puroiks are found in 53 villages in Subansiri, Upper Subansiri, Papumpare, Kurung Kumey and East Kameng districts. Earlier, they were treated as bonded labourers by other tribes.

The official census indicates there are around 9,000 Puroiks but members of the community claim there are over 20,000 Puroiks.

The Puroik community has long been an integral part of the societal fabric and this initiative by the Raj

Bhavan underscores its commitment to the holistic upliftment of all sections of society, particularly the marginalised, the communiqué said.

The Governor's Excellence Award serves as a testament to the value that the administration places on education and empowerment as crucial drivers of progress, it said.

By recognising and encouraging academic excellence among the Puroik community's meritorious students, the Raj Bhavan reaffirms its commitment towards creating a more equitable and promising future for all, the communiqué added. (PTI)



## Polls in J-K can be held 'anytime from now', Centre tells SC but sets no time-frame for restoration of statehood

**NEW DELHI, Aug 31:** Elections in Jammu and Kashmir can be held "anytime from now" as the work on updation of voters list is almost over, the Centre told the Supreme Court on Thursday but remained non-committal about setting a time-frame for restoration of statehood to the union territory (UT).

Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, appearing for the Centre, told a five-judge constitution bench headed by Chief Justice DY Chandrachud that the UT status of Jammu and Kashmir is a "temporary thing" and it is for the Election Commission of India and the union territory's election commission to decide when the elections for panchayats, municipal bodies and the legislative assembly will be held.

"The central government is ready to hold elections anytime from now... It is for the Election Commission of India and the Election Commission of the UT to take the call on which election will take place first and how. The updating process of the voters' list is almost complete and will be over in a month," he told the bench, also comprising Justices Sanjay Kishan Kaul, Sanjiv Khanna, BR Gavai and Surya Kant.

The solicitor general said as far as restoration of statehood to the union territory of J-K is concerned, union home minister Amit Shah has already made statements in Parliament that it will be done in due course.

"The UT is a temporary thing in J-K. We are dealing with an extremely extraordinary situation. The exact time frame for restoration of complete statehood in J-K cannot be given at the moment. It might take some time. Various steps are being taken to restore the status of the state in Jammu and Kashmir," Mehta said at the outset.



The central government made the submissions in response to the apex court's August 29 observations on restoration of electoral democracy in Jammu and Kashmir.

Mehta, on the 13th day of hearing on a batch of petitions challenging the abrogation of Article 370 which accorded special status to the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir, said, "Peace does not merely come by policing."

He told the court about the various steps the Union government has taken for restoration of normalcy in the region.

"Large-scale investment proposals post abrogation of Article 370 have been received, which include ₹ 28,400 crore of central sector

schemes for industrial development, ₹ 78,000 crore of private sector and the actual investment done in 2022-23 is ₹ 2,153 crore," he said.

Mehta said out of the 53 projects worth ₹ 58,477 crore sanctioned under the Prime Minister's Development Package, 32 have been completed.

Senior advocate Kapil Sibal, appearing for Jammu and Kashmir National Conference leader Mohd Akbar Lone, objected to the bench recording the figures put forth by the central government, saying it should not be taken on record as it will "affect the mind" of the court adjudicating the constitutional validity of abrogation of Article 370.

CJI Chandrachud assured Sibal that the data given by the solicitor general will not have any bearing on the adjudication of the constitutional issue.

Mehta added so far as elections in Ladakh is concerned, there are

two areas of Leh and Kargil. The elections for the Hill Development Council of Leh were already over and the exercise will be held in Kargil next month.

He said terror-related incidents have gone down by 45.20 per cent compared to 2018. Infiltration, which was one of the biggest concerns, was down by 90.20 per cent, Mehta added.

Citing more data, he said, "Law and order events reduced 97.20 per cent. Incidents of stone-pelting and 'hartaals', which were 1,767 in 2018, are now nil. Casualty of security personnel has gone down by 65.90 per cent, organised 'bandhs', which were coordinated by secessionist groups, have gone down from 52 in 2018 to nil in 2023."

Mehta said tourism, a major source of revenue for J-K, has seen improvement, with footfall of 1.88 crore in 2022, and in 2023, till date, over one crore people have visited the UT.

Sibal told the bench the petitioners will have to counter facts and figures put forward by the Centre.

"They are saying there were zero 'hartaals'. Five thousand people were put under house arrest. How will there be any 'hartaal', when you don't allow them to even go to hospital. The proceedings of this court are televised and these figures may aid in creating an opinion," he said.

The bench told Sibal what the solicitor general has said was pursuant to the court's query as to what steps were taken by the Union of India to restore electoral democracy. (PTI)

## Govt calls 'special session' of Parl between Sept 18-22, keeps agenda under wraps

**NEW DELHI, Aug 31:** The government on Thursday announced a "special session" of Parliament for five days between September 18 and 22 but kept the agenda for it under wraps, triggering speculation. "Special Session of Parliament (13th Session of 17th Lok Sabha and 261st Session of Rajya Sabha) is being called from 18th to 22nd September having five sittings. Amid Amrit Kaal, looking forward to having fruitful discussions and debate in Parliament," Parliamentary Affairs Minister Pralhad Joshi said on X.

It will be the first such special session under the nine years of the Prime Minister Narendra Modi-led government which had convened a special joint sitting of Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha to mark the mid-night GST roll-out on June 30, 2017. However, it will be a full-

fledged session of five days this time with both Houses meeting separately as they usually do during sessions. Generally, three parliamentary sessions are held in a year- Budget, Monsoon and Winter sessions. Sources said the "special session" could see parliamentary operations being shifted to the new Parliament building which was inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on May 28.

With the government not spelling out its agenda, speculation swirled that the government may push some showpiece bills in the run-up to some key state assembly polls followed by the all-important Lok Sabha election.

Sources, including in the ruling BJP, spoke of the possibility of bills on simultaneous general, state and local polls, something Modi has assiduously pushed, and reser-

vation for women in directly elected legislatures like Lok Sabha and assemblies. Both are constitutional amendment bills and will require passage with the support of two-third members in both Houses.

The recent historic success of the Chandrayaan-3 mission and India's goals for 'Amrit Kaal' may be part of the wider discussions during the special session, which will come a week after the G20 summit meeting scheduled for September 9-10. Congress leader Jairam Ramesh alleged that the announcement of the special session just three weeks after the end of the Monsoon session was aimed at managing "the news cycle" and countering the news about the on-going meeting of INDIA parties in Mumbai and the latest revelations on Adani. (PTI)

Contd. from Page 1...

## Assam to conduct special summary

state political parties of the state was held on Wednesday where the schedule of the special summary revision, 2024, was explained and he sought their cooperation during the entire process.

The ECI had carried out the delimitation exercise in the state and published the final report on August 11, keeping intact the number of assembly constituencies at 126 and Lok Sabha seats at 14, while revising the nomenclature of one parliamentary and 19 assembly constituencies.

The ECI had reserved 19 assembly and two Lok Sabha constituencies for scheduled tribes (STs) while one Lok Sabha and nine assembly constituencies have been reserved for scheduled castes (SCs).

All assembly and parliamentary constituencies in the state were delimited (redrawn) based on the 2001 census. The last delimitation exercise in Assam took place in 1976 on the basis of the 1971 census. (PTI)

## Flood scene deteriorates

Udaluri districts. On the other hand, the 10 forest camps of the Pobitora Wildlife Sanctuary have been inundated by flood waters in the Morigaon district.

## Arunachal MLA urges PM to

that such steps only complicate the resolution of the boundary question. The External Affairs Ministry also rejected these claims as having "no basis". China on August 30 defended its move saying it is a "routine practice" in accordance with its law, and urged India to "stay objective and calm" and refrain from "over-interpretation" the issue. (PTI)

## Assam oncologist wins

He said satellite clinics have been established in Karimganj, Hailakandi and Dima Hasao district, he said. "We have to interact with the people and focus on prevention, treatment and cancer care. We need a lot of support for infrastructure and equipment, which are a one-time investment, but what we need most is human resources, which is a recurring requirement", the oncologist said.

Both state and central governments have always supported us and with government health schemes like Atal Amrit Abhyjan and others, poor people are being able to avail better treatment, he said.

"We are a society-run centre. However, the government has also supported," he said. Kannan said he wants to tell each and every patient that cancer is curable like any other disease. "I don't want to see a single person dying without dignity because he or she has cancer," he said. Assam and other parts of the Northeast are more prone to cancer due to the lifestyle of people as they consume a lot of tobacco, betel nuts and alcohol. They also do not exercise and follow an improper diet, he said.

Son of an Indian Air Force personnel, Kannan hails from Chennai where he earlier worked as a surgeon in Adyar Cancer Institute before moving to Silchar with his wife in 2007 to start the Cachar Cancer Hospital.

Since 1958, over three hundred outstanding individuals and organizations have received the prestigious Ramon Magsaysay Award for their dedication in presenting the world with successful solutions to some of the most challenging problems of human development. The particular award has been dubbed as the Asian Nobel Prize. (PTI)

## PM SVANidhi to alleviate

at three levels. "Firstly, opening of bank accounts for those who do not have bank accounts; secondly providing benefits of the insurance scheme to the public and thirdly, making finance available to those who are deprived of financial assistance," he said. PM SVANidhi scheme envisages the empowerment of street vendors through hassle-free access to affordable credit and their digital on-boarding for their economic development. PM SVANidhi is a central-sector micro-credit scheme launched in June, 2020 by the Union ministry of housing and urban affairs (MoHUA) to provide handholding support to street vendors.

The scheme aims to formalize the street vendors and open up new opportunities for this sector to climb the economic ladder. Moreover, through 'Svanidhi se Samridhi' scheme, they will be attached to more central schemes like PM Jan Dhan Yojana, PM Suraksha Bima Yojana, PM Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana, One Nation One Ration Card, PM Janani Suraksha Yojana, PM Matrivandana Yojana among others. (PTI)

## Himanta flags off mobile

forensic science laboratories across the state, of which three are already operating. Moreover, as many as 400 police personnel from the Assam police force are being trained at the Ahmedabad based National Forensic Science University and the expertise they gain would aid them in solving complex cases requiring application of sophisticated forensic science techniques.

## Northeast got projects worth

Arth Ganga projects. "This is a significant jump of more than 200% in the amount of investment made by the government in a span of 9 years over investments made in the previous 28 years. This drives home the utmost urgency with which the inland waterways is being developed under the Modi government. This clean, efficient & economical mode of transportation will be pivotal in unlocking the economic potential of the hinterland of India. By investing in the inland waterways and empowering our rich and complex waterways system, we are in the process of creating a collaborative ecosystem for the industry that will foster greater cooperation among our neighbouring countries. This is going to unlock huge trade and commerce potential for all the countries as well as states of India in the south Asia region," he said.

MoPSW secretary TK Ramachandra said that the ministry has identified 20 projects aimed at enhancing connectivity within the Northeast region. "These projects encompass the modernisation of existing terminals, establishment of new terminals, improvement of first and last-mile connectivity, industrialisation, river ports, and skill development, among other initiatives. The work on the eastern waterways grid will revitalise economic position of the entire South Asian region including Myanmar, Malaysia and Thailand," Ramachandra said.

"The Northeast is often referred as the unexplored paradise of our nation. This region is blessed with lush landscapes, vibrant cultures, rich biodiversity, and abundant rivers, which grants it the geographical advantage to leverage transformative solutions and foster increased collaboration with Asia Pacific nations," he added.

Inland Waterway Authority of India (IWA) chairman Sanjay Bandopadhyaya stated that as many 30.40 million tonnes of cargo has been transported through waterways in 2014-15 and that the authority has notched 31.5% growth rate since then.

"In a year that tested the resilience of global trade, the robust growth in cargo movement through our National Waterways is a testament to the effectiveness of our initiatives and the robustness of India's inland waterways system," he said.

The roadshow also featured addresses by international representatives, including Phurpa Tshering, vice consul, Royal Bhutanese Consulate General, Guwahati, who stressed the significance of a collective maritime vision, along with Ruhul Amin, assistant high commissioner of Bangladesh in Guwahati highlighted the pivotal role of regional cooperation in enhancing connectivity within the maritime domain. He also underscored some of the key port projects that will facilitate increased collaboration between India and Bangladesh. Mohammad Monowar Uz Zaman, joint secretary, Member (planning & operation), BIWTA also delivered remarks during the event.

The roadshow on Global Maritime India Summit, 2023 was also addressed by minister of transport, fisheries & excise department Parimal Suklabaidya, minister of industries & commerce and public enterprises, cultural affairs, Bimal Borah; Arunachal minister for water resources Mama Natung; Nagaland MLA & advisor (transport and technical education), Temjenmenba.

The roadshow at Guwahati is the fifth in a series of roadshows being organised by the Ministry as part of the run up to the main event of Global Maritime India Summit, 2023. Earlier, similar roadshows were organised in Kolkata, Mangalore, Vishakhapatnam and Goa. Following Guwahati, road shows are being planned at Chennai, Bhubaneswar, Varanasi, Kochi, Ahmedabad and Bangalore.

## Two succumb to injuries

31 ammunition, 19 explosives, 3 packs of IED material, Manipur police wrote on X. Police have also set up 160 nakas in different districts and detained 1,646 persons in connection with various violations. More than 130 people have been killed and several hundreds injured since ethnic violence broke out in Manipur on May 3, when a 'Tribal Solidarity March' was organised in the hill districts to protest against the majority Meitei community's demand for Scheduled Tribe status.

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

## Nuh violence: Cong MLA fails to appear before SIT

**NUH (HAR), Aug 31:** Congress MLA Mamman Khan on Thursday did not appear before the Haryana Police Special Investigation Team (SIT) probing the July 31 Nuh violence case, officials said.

A medical certificate was sent on Khan's behalf stating that he was suffering from viral fever, according to sources.

In a notice issued recently to Khan, the police had asked the Ferozepur Jhirka MLA to reach Nagina police station at 11 am on Thursday to join the investigation into the Nuh violence that had claimed six lives.

SIT head and Deputy Superintendent of Police, Ferozepur Jhirka, Satish Vats said Khan did not join the probe and also could not be contacted.

"We will serve him a notice again and call him to join the investigation," Vats said.

Sources said a medical certificate was sent on Khan's behalf stating that he was suffering from viral fever. Khan could not be reached for comment as his mobile phone was switched off. Communal clashes had erupted in Nuh and its adjoining areas after a Vishva Hindu Parishad (VHP) procession was attacked by a mob on July 31, killing six people, including two home guards and a cleric.

Haryana Home Minister Anil Vij had said on Tuesday that before the July 31 incident, Khan was spotted "on July 28, 29 and 30" in areas where the violence took place. (PTI)

## Rahul Gandhi seeks JPC probe into fresh report on Adani; says India's reputation at stake

**MUMBAI, Aug 31:** Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Thursday sought a Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC) probe into reports that Adani family associates secretly invested "hundreds of millions" in the company through opaque investment funds based in Mauritius.

Addressing a press conference in Mumbai, Gandhi referred to news articles by some prominent foreign newspapers on Adani Group.

"These are not random newspapers. These newspapers affect investment in India and the perception of India in the rest of the world. They are stating that over a billion dollars of money went from India, was circulated in different places and then came back to India," he said.

"The first question arises: whose money is this? Is it Adani's or someone else's? The mastermind behind this is a gentleman called Vinod Adani who is the brother of Gautam Adani. There are two other peo-

ple who are involved in this round-tripping of money. One is a gentleman called Nasir Ali Shaban Ali and another is a Chinese gentleman called Chang Chung Ling," he said.

"So, the second question arises - why are these two for-



eign nationals being allowed to play with the valuation of one of the companies that controls almost all of Indian infrastructure," Gandhi said.

"The gentleman who conducted SEBI investigation and gave a clean chit to Adani Group is now a director on a media company owned by the same group," Gandhi said.

Billionaire Gautam Adani's

group was on Thursday hit by fresh allegations that it used family associates to secretly invest hundreds of millions of dollars through "opaque" Mauritius-based investment funds to fuel the spectacular rise in group stocks from 2013 to 2018. The conglomerate vehemently denied the charge.

An article by the Organised Crime and Corruption Reporting Project (OCCRP) alleged that millions of dollars were invested in some publicly traded stocks of Adani Group through "opaque" Mauritius funds that "obscured" involvement of alleged business partners of the Adani family.

Gandhi questioned Prime Minister Narendra Modi as to why the latter had not forced an investigation. "Why is PM Modi silent," he added.

"This is raising very serious questions on the PM just before G20 leaders come here. It is important that this issue is made clear before they (G20 leaders) arrive," Gandhi added. (PTI)

## Delhi HC allows stem cell therapy for children suffering from autism

**NEW DELHI, Aug 31:** The Delhi High Court on Thursday allowed two children suffering from autism spectrum disorder (ASD) to undergo stem cell therapy for treatment of their condition.

The family members of the two children had approached the high court earlier this year with a petition after their treatment was stopped by their doctors on account of a recommendation by the Ethics and Medical Registration Board (EMRB) of National Medical Commission (NMC), which said the use of stem cell therapy shall amount to professional misconduct.

A bench headed by Chief Justice Satish Chandra Sharma said there was no law banning the use of stem cell therapy for ASD and even the NMC is yet to take a final decision on the recommendation.

"No fruitful purpose would be served by stopping the treatment that is going on at present and therefore the petitioners are permitted to continue the treatment," the bench, also comprising Justice Sanjeev Narula, said.

Listing the matter for further hearing on October 3, the court also asked the NMC to take a final decision on the recommendation.

"This is an interim order. We don't want treatment to stop right now," the court said. It, however, clarified the treatment shall be at the risk of the petitioners.

Two expert doctors from AIIMS, who were present during the proceedings to assist the court, told the bench that stem cell therapy is allowed as a mode of treatment only for blood cancer and its use for treating ASD was currently at an experimental stage. (PTI)

## Union fisheries minister outlines comprehensive plan to boost mariculture sector in India

**THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, Aug 31:** Union fisheries minister Parshottam Rupala on Thursday outlined a comprehensive plan, which includes expanding cage fish farming operations and scaling up pearl oyster production, to boost the mariculture sector of the country.

The union minister, who is visiting Kerala before beginning the 8th phase of the Sagar Parikrama Yatra from Kanyakumari, said that the immediate focus would be on expanding cage fish farming to offshore waters using bigger and better cages.

Rupala, who was accompanied by Minister of State for Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying Dr L Murugan and Minister of State for External Affairs V Muralidharan, outlined his ministry's plans during his visit to the Vizhinjam Regional Centre of the ICAR-Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI). He said that bigger and better cages of 30 diameter or above would be used for offshore cage fish farming as they can accommodate lakhs of juvenile fish.

Currently, cage farming is undertaken in nearshore waters using the 6-diameter cages, he noted.

The minister further said that CMFRI should spearhead research and development efforts in creating these advanced cages.

"This is expected to significantly boost mariculture production in the country," the minister is quoted as having said according to a release issued by CMFRI. Mariculture is the cultivation, management, and harvesting of marine organisms in their natural environ-



ment.

The minister also urged the CMFRI to expand seed production technologies for fin fishes to all the coastal states utilising the public-private-partnership (PPP) mode.

Rupala said this would help address the seed constraints and make available the required seeds to the fish farmers all over the country.

He indicated that the central government would soon come up with a Mariculture Leasing Policy to ensure the sustainable use of mariculture resources.

"This will ensure that mariculture operations are located in suitable areas and they do not cause environmental damage," he said.

The minister also underscored the untapped potential of pearl oyster production and asked CMFRI to take a proactive role in scaling up its production in a bigger way. Highlighting the critical role played by hatchery technologies in supporting large-scale pearl

oyster production, he emphasized on the necessity of research and innovation in this area.

Rupala also proposed a pioneering sea ranching programme for the hatchery-produced spats of the pearl oyster along the Tuticorin coast, which would be executed under the guidance of the CMFRI.

"Traditionally known as 'Pearl City' on account of the prevailing pearl fisheries in the past in the area, Thoothukudi (Tuticorin) has a fascinating history which was an international cynosure in the days of yore for its pearl fishery," the release said.

Referring to the high prospects of marine ornamental fishery, the Union Minister also suggested that effective marketing avenues be developed for marine ornamentals.

He urged the CMFRI to collaborate with relevant stakeholders to establish effective marketing strategies, saying that it would provide an economic boost to the marine ornamental industry. (PTI)





**Dr Himanta Biswa Sarma**  
Chief Minister, Assam

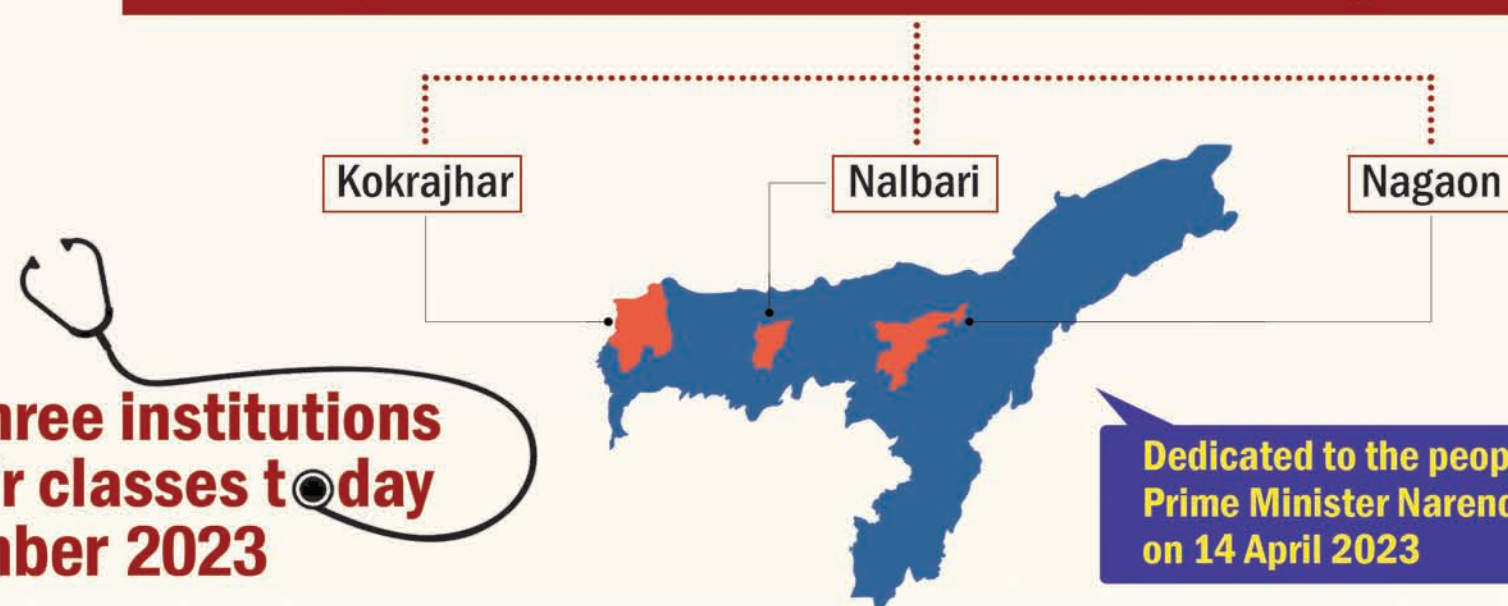
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THE 29-YR-OLD HAS BEEN SELECTED IN CANADA'S WOMEN'S SQUAD

# Canada's McGahey to become first transgender to play int'l cricket



**LONDON, Aug 31:** Danielle McGahey of Canada will become the first transgender cricketer to play in an international match when she represents her adopted country during the 2024 Women's T20 World Cup qualifier in Bangladesh.

The 29-year-old McGahey, an opening batter, has been selected in Canada's women's squad for the next month's qualifying tournament after she fulfilled ICC's eligibility criteria for male-to-female transgender players.

The qualifying tournament will be played in Los Angeles from September 4 to 11.

Canada will take on Argentina, Brazil and the United States in the ICC Americas Qualifier for a place in the Global Qualifiers.

"I am absolutely honoured. To be able to represent my community is something I never dreamed I would be able to do," McGahey was quoted as saying by BBC Sport. McGahey moved to Canada from Australia in Febru-

ary 2020 and began her social transition from a man to a woman in November 2020. She started medical transition in May 2021.

McGahey's participation in international cricket is a big forward-looking step by ICC as part of the game's governing body's policy of equal rights.

According to ICC's player eligibility regulations released in 2018 (and amended in 2021) trans women wishing to play women's international cricket must demonstrate "the concentration of testosterone in her serum has been less than 5 nmol/L continuously for a period of at least 12 months, and that she is ready, willing and able to continue to keep it below that level for so long as she continues to compete". It further states that a trans cricketer must "provide a written and signed declaration, in a form of satisfactory to the designated medical officer, that her gender identity is female".

On allowing McGahey to be the first transgender to play interna-

tional cricket, the ICC said in a statement: "We can confirm that Danielle went through the process as required under the ICC's player eligibility regulations and as a result has been deemed eligible to participate in international women's cricket on the basis that she satisfies the MTF transgender eligibility criteria."

McGahey said she is doing everything possible in her capacity to realise her dream of playing international cricket.

"In order to determine (my testosterone levels), I've been doing blood tests every month now for over two years. I also have to put in my player profile who I have played against and how many runs I've scored," she said.

"A lot of work with my doctor sending my medical information through to the ICC... they have a dedicated medical officer who looks over all of the information provided, and determines whether or not I have provided enough for

an expert panel to make a decision.

"The need to do blood tests every month is probably the biggest challenge because when you are playing cricket you are travelling a lot," McGahey said.

McGahey drew Cricket Canada selectors' attention with her batting exploits during the country's women's inter-provincial tournament, which permits a transgender player to participate based solely on gender self-identification.

McGahey then went on to represent Canada in four T20 matches at the South American Championships in October 2022. But those games were not accorded international status.

"Obviously I felt a huge sense of pride. Not only for what I'm doing, but for my (trans) community. Being able to represent them," McGahey said.

Cricket Canada said McGahey's was selected in the team as she fulfilled all ICC's regulations. (PTI)

Prithvi

Shaw to make  
Northamptonshire  
return in 2024



**NORTHAMPTON, Aug 31:** Young Indian opener Prithvi Shaw will return to Northamptonshire County Cricket Club in 2024 after his stint this year was cut short due to a knee injury.

He made a huge impact during its domestic One-Day Cup campaign, hammering a record-breaking 244 off 153 balls against Somerset, followed by an unbeaten 126 off 76 deliveries against Durham. (PTI)

Shaw scored 429 in four contests at an incredible average of 143.00 before a knee injury halted his glorious season.

"I'm so excited to be heading back to Northamptonshire next summer. Even though it was over quickly, I really enjoyed my time there," he told the club in a release.

"It's a great club to be a part of, and I felt so welcome by everyone immediately. I can't wait to get back over. My goal is always to help win games for the team, and it was so disappointing to get injured and have to leave early this time."

Shaw's return to NCCC next year will be for both the County Championship and the One-Day Cup.

NCCC head coach John Sadler expressed his eagerness to welcome him back to the side.

"Prithvi is a phenomenal talent and what he delivered for us in such a short space of time was incredible. He was utterly disappointed not to stay longer due to his injury as he wanted to play some red-ball cricket, so the chance for him to do this next year is really exciting for us all." (PTI)

## Institutional League tentatively fixed for January 2024 start, top two teams to get Federation Cup berth

**NEW DELHI, Aug 31:** The top-two finishers in the proposed Institutional League, which is likely to start in January next year, will get direct entry in the domestic premier knock-out tournament, the Federation Cup in 2024, the All India Football Federation (AIFF) said on Thursday. The bid document (Request for Proposal) for the Institutional League, which has attracted interest from some of the country's most well-known institutional teams, is set to be released in early September, while the eligible sides are expected to be announced by mid-October.

After a pre-bid meeting with 25 Institutional League teams here on Thursday, the AIFF has set a base participation fee for the Institutional League at Rs 10 lakh annually. The applicants will qualify for a benefit of up to Rs five lakh on the base participation fee which would depend on their legacy evaluation score.

"The winners and runners-up of this Institutional League would be granted direct entry into the 2024 Federation Cup, whereas the promotion-relegation system will come into play in case of multiple divisions," the AIFF said in a release.

The winners of the domestic knock-out tournament will get a chance to feature in play-offs for continental club tournaments.

The participation is open to organisations including, but not limited to, the following -- Private Corporations, Ministerial Units, Public Sector Units, Police/Defence/Paramilitary Forces (Unit-Level), State Departments and Railways (Division-level), the

AIFF stated.

The bids will be subject to a two-step evaluation process -- Technical Evaluation (to assess the preparedness of the applicant to participate in the competition) and Legacy Evaluation (to determine historical contribution of the applicant to Indian football).

Technical credits will be used to determine the applicant's seeding for the competition, while Legacy credits will be used to determine the concession that will be awarded to the applicant on the base participation fee.

The 25 teams that attended the meeting were Aeronautical Development Establishment (Bengaluru), Air India (Mumbai), ASC Centre South (Bengaluru), Bank of Baroda (Vadodara), BSF North Bengal (Siliguri), BSF Punjab, Chennai Customs, CRPF (Punjab), CSIR -- National Institute of Oceanography (Goa), Dravastream Tech Pvt Ltd (Mumbai), Employee State Insurance Corporation (Chennai), Employee State Insurance Corporation (New Delhi), Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd (Bengaluru), Indian Navy (Kochi), Indian Railways (New Delhi), IndiaPost Karnataka (Bengaluru), JCT (Punjab), Karnataka Police (Bengaluru), Oil India Ltd -- Assam Field HQ (Duliajan), PDC Services (Alchemy Football) (Bengaluru), PFA Organization (Haryana), Punjab Police, Reserve Bank of India (Mumbai), Reserve Bank of India (Bengaluru) and Services Sports Control Board (New Delhi).

The meeting was held under AIFF's Deputy Secretary General Satyanarayan M. (PTI)

## Everton already destined for another tough season after lackluster start to EPL

**LIVERPOOL (ENGLAND), Aug 31:** Never again, they said.

Never again could Everton, a permanent fixture in England's top soccer league since the 1950s, be dragged into the kind of end-of-season relegation scrap this storied club has found itself in far too many times for comfort over the last few years. That was the widespread feeling inside Goodison Park on May 28 as Everton produced another last-day escape act -- its third in less than three decades -- to preserve its place in the Premier League and avoid slipping into the Championship and potentially financial ruin. "We need to realize the mistakes we made this season," Everton midfielder Abdoulaye Doucoure said at the time. Well, guess what? It looks to be happening again.

Three games in and Everton has no points and no goals. That hasn't happened before in the club's 145-year history. The start of the sea-



son almost went from very bad to worse on Wednesday when Sean Dyche's team entered the final 20 minutes of its English League Cup match against Doncaster -- an opponent lying in last place in the fourth division -- a goal down and posing minimal threat.

Late goals rescued a 2-1 victory, but it was hardly the kind of performance to instil confidence in supporters ahead of what already

looks to be a huge Premier League match on Saturday: Away to Sheffield United. Neither team has a point and both seem destined for a season of struggle and to be among the relegation candidates. That was to be expected of Sheffield United, a recently promoted club that lost two of its best players -- Sander Berge and Iliman Ndiaye -- during the off-season and found it hard to replace

them. But Everton? Again?

So much for this being a campaign when Dyche restored "The Toffees" -- as they are nicknamed -- into a solid, hard-to-beat team, got Everton back up toward mid-table and brought some renewed hope ahead of the club's move to a new 53,888-capacity stadium at Bramley-Moore Dock for the start of the 2024-25 season.

There was a summer overhaul of the board -- including the departure of CEO Denise Barrett-Baxendale -- and the hope of new investment, reportedly from New York-based MSP Sports Capital.

There's been no sign of progress on that front, a major blow for a club that posted losses in excess of 430 million pounds (USD540 million) over the last four years and has an outstanding Premier League charge for allegedly breaching profit and sustainability rules. (AP)

## Ruud upset by Zhang, who becomes the first Chinese man to beat a top-5 player in the ATP rankings

**NEW YORK, Aug 31:** Casper Ruud, the 2022 U.S. Open runner-up, was eliminated when Zhang Zhizhen became the first Chinese man to beat a player in the top five of the ATP rankings.

Zhang upset the No. 5 seed 6-4, 5-7, 6-2, 0-6, 6-2 to reach the third round of a Grand Slam tournament for the second time. It was his second five-set victory to open this tournament after he lost his first four five-setters.

He wasn't discouraged by those previous losses, with the breakthrough finally coming Monday when he outlasted J.J. Wolf in 4 1/2 hours.

"Try to just keep playing and keep believing yourself every single time," Zhang said. "Even in

tough moments, still try to believe yourself. In the end, you'll make it." Zhang became the first Chinese man to compete in the main draw at Wimbledon in the professional era when he qualified in 2021. He qualified last year at the U.S. Open, joining Wu Yibing as the first men from their country in the main draw of the year's final Grand Slam tournament.

The 26-year-old Zhang reached the third round of the French Open in June before falling to Ruud, who had been to the finals in three of the last six Grand Slam events.

"I mean, I'm not sitting here super disappointed with things that I could have done better or my level, but at the most impor-

tant moments he was the better player. He stepped up," Ruud said. "That was different from Paris. I think in Paris I was the one who really stepped up when I had to. It's a different surface, of course. But he has a great serve, beautiful backhand, and forehand, also. When it's on, it's on and really dangerous."

Ruud, who lost to Carlos Alcaraz last year in Flushing Meadows, is the highest-ranked Norwegian in the history of the ATP rankings, which date to 1973. He had reached No. 2 last year and is currently No. 5. But after dropping the fourth set in just 23 minutes, Zhang broke Ruud's serve to open the final set, adding a second for a 4-1 lead. (AP)

## Harry Brook and Dawid Malan prove points to guide England to easy T20 win over New Zealand



**CHESTER-LE-STREET, Aug 31:** Playing with points to prove, Harry Brook and Dawid Malan guided England to an easy win over New Zealand in the first of four Twenty20 internationals between the teams.

Brook (43 not out off 27 balls) and Malan (54 off 42) shared a 54-run partnership as England reached its target of 140 with six overs to spare at Chester-le-Street for a seven-wicket victory.

England's selectors surprisingly left Brook out of the squad for the 50-over World Cup in India starting in October but his form is making a mockery of that decision.

Widely viewed as one of the world's most destructive batsmen, he starred in the recently completed edition of The Hundred and was devastating against New Zealand in hitting three sixes and two fours.

Malan, meanwhile, got a much-needed big score after some patchy recent form, reaching fifty for the 16th time in T20 interna-

tionals and helping to steady the innings after the early loss of Jonny Bairstow (4) in England's reply to New Zealand's 139-9.

Liam Livingstone (10) got England over the line with a huge pull for six. Jos Buttler, England's captain and star batter, wasn't even needed to bat.

Malan and Livingstone are in England's World Cup squad and Brook is putting huge pressure on selectors to get the call, too, with the group heading for India not having to be finalized until the end of September.

Put into bat, New Zealand saw Glenn Phillips hit the team's top score of 41 off 38 balls but the tourists struggled after losing three wickets in 12 balls from 25-0. Pace bowler Brydon Carse had 3-23 off four overs on his T20 international debut while Luke Wood, who was hit for three sixes by Finn Allen (21) off the first over of the match, had figures of 3-37.

The second match of the series is in Manchester on Friday. (AP)

## 7-time French champion Lyon is in crisis amid a fight between owner Textor and former boss Aulas

**LYON, Aug 31:** There was a time when Lyon ruled French soccer. Back when the likes of Karim Benzema, Brazil midfielder Juninho and France winger Florent Malouda were helping the club win seven consecutive league titles at the start of the century.

Well, that was a long time ago. And, it doesn't look like such a dynasty can be revived soon, with the club now plunged in a sporting crisis amid a legal dispute between its current owner, American businessman John Textor, and his predecessor.

It was worth listening to Lyon midfielder Corentin Tolisso when he left the field last weekend after another worrying display from his team, a 0-0 draw at Nice that left Lyon second from last with only one point from three matches. "Today, we're the Olympique Lyonnais of 2023-2024. We're not the

Olympique Lyonnais of 2002-2003," Tolisso summed up.

"We're not going to take ourselves for others. We're not like our predecessors ... And today, the Olympique Lyonnais of 2023-24 is happy to take a point at Nice."

Nobody will blame Tolisso, a product of the club's renowned academy who returned to Lyon last year to help it back to its glory days, for speaking the truth.

But, it's unlikely his words of wisdom will have pleased Textor, who proclaimed his ambition to target the dominance of Paris Saint-Germain when he became the club's main shareholder last year.

Saying that things didn't work out as the new boss had hoped would be an understatement.

After finishing last season in seventh place and 23 points behind PSG, Lyon got off to its worst start to a season since

1966 with two consecutive losses that included a 4-1 home defeat. Still winless, coach Laurent Blanc is now under pressure ahead of Sunday's game against PSG, and Textor has made clear he wants improvement.

But, Blanc has limited means to get things back on track, with several key players injured and only a few arrivals from the transfer window, including forwards Mama Balde and Ernest Nuamah, as well as former Arsenal midfielder Ainsley Maitland-Niles.

Blanc has been complaining about the frugal offseason purchases, but there is nothing much Textor could have been doing after a decision by French soccer's financial watchdog to monitor the club's transfer activities this season.

Because of the restrictions imposed by the DNCG, Lyon was allowed to bring in new players, but its moves in the

market have been limited under "a framework for wage costs and transfer indemnities" that hampered its recruiting.

The DNCG ruled that Lyon did not provide sufficient financial guarantees despite Textor's financial arguments.

"We lost an opportunity to be aggressive this summer, to go after targeted players that Lyon doesn't usually go after," Textor was quoted as saying in an interview with several media outlets.

"We weren't able to make that leap forward. It's a terrible feeling to be going into this 'mercato' with one hand tied behind our backs. We have the investment scale to position ourselves on players valued at 30 to 50 million euros, but we can't spend that money."

Textor, who also has stakes in Premier League club Crystal Palace, Belgian club RWD Molenbeek and Brazilian team Botafogo, was appointed chief



## With Rahul unavailable, Kishan's batting position becomes bone of contention ahead of Asia Cup opener

**PALLEKELE, Aug 31:** Ishan Kishan is set to play the wicketkeeper-batter role in the absence of K L Rahul but question remains over the left-hander's batting slot going into the Asia Cup opener against Pakistan on September 2.

The temptation will be to hand Kishan the opening position with Rahul not available for the first two games of the continental event. He had opened the innings in India's last ODI series against the West Indies along with Shubman Gill, and made a good impression.

Kishan made 184 runs in that series from three matches, averaging 61.33 and his scores read — 52, 55 and 77.

But it was a rather straightforward move as Rohit Sharma was given a rest during the ODIs against the West Indies.

Now that Rohit has returned to the side and will occupy one opening slot, the Indian think-tank will have to put in a thought as to where to accommodate Kishan.

Opening is also Kishan's most successful slot in the batting order as he had made double hundred there against Bangladesh last year.

Former Indian coach Ravi Shastri too had favoured Kishan opening saying his uninhibited striking will give India an early upper hand over their opponents.



If he opens, then Gill will have to come down to No. 3 and Virat Kohli will have to take the No. 4 slot. It also means that the re-

turning Shreyas Iyer will have to move down to No. 5. If it happens that way then Hardik Pandya

will be coming in at No.6 and there will be no place for Suryakumar Yadav in the side.

Despite his modest record, India were dabbling with the option of Suryakumar in the ODIs because of his prowess at the back-end of the innings.

If India indeed want to accommodate Suryakumar in the 11 then they might just have to put a temporary hold on Shreyas' comeback.

The other option India can explore to give Kishan a place at No. 3 — Rohit and Gill as openers — with Kohli at No. 4 and Shreyas at No. 5.

The 25-year-old from Jharkhand can also be fitted in the middle-order as he has a reasonable record at No. 4, scoring two fifties in four innings.

They can mull the southpaw at number five too as it gives a certain stability at the top but the only peril is that Kishan has not batted in that position in his 17-match ODI career. Sanju Samson is here as the travelling reserve keeping in mind the injury of Rahul, and he is not a part of the 17-member India squad.

India will not be able to use his services as a wicketkeeper batsman because one of the players, Rahul in this case, has to be ruled out of the Asia Cup for Samson to come into the equation. (PTI)

## Viacom 18 bags India's home series broadcast rights for nearly ₹ 6000 crore with 67.76 crore per match deal



**NEW DELHI, Aug 31:** Viacom 18 on Thursday created a near monopoly in Indian cricket broadcasting sphere by bagging both TV and digital rights of the national team's home series for the next five years with a cumulative bid of approximately ₹ 6000 crore, beating Star India and Sony in a three-way battle.

The BCCI had invited separate e-bids for both linear (TV) and digital for best price discovery.

"Viacom 18 paid ₹ 3101 crore (approximately) for digital and ₹ 2862 crore for linear (TV). As has been the trend, digital has fetched more.

"With IPL digital rights being bought by Viacom for ₹ 26,000 crore plus, they now have almost all the high profile cricket properties save IPL linear (TV) and ICC events," a broadcasting industry source, tracking developments closely, told PTI on conditions of anonymity.

The rights will come into effect with India's three-match home series against Australia beginning September 22 and end on March 31, 2028.

"Congratulations @viacom18 for winning the @BCCI Media Rights for both linear and digital

for the next 5 years. India Cricket will continue to grow in both spaces as after @IPL and @wpt20, we extend the partnership @BCCI Media Rights as well," BCCI secretary Jay Shah said on 'X', formerly twitter.

India will be playing 88 international games across three formats including 25 Tests, 27 ODIs and 36 T20Is with per match value of the deal standing around ₹ 67.76 crore. This is nearly ₹ 7.76 crore more than last cycle's ₹ 60 crore per match value.

However BCCI is getting ₹ 175 crore less than ₹ 6138 crore it received during last cycle which had more games, specifically 102.

If one looks at the prevailing market sentiments, it is not a bad price to fetch as the per match valuation has increased. One needs to factor in that only marquee Test matches and series versus England and Australia will fetch a decent advertisement revenue. For matches against other nations, it is only the T20 which is the cash cow.

India will play Australia in 21 games and will be pitted against England in 18 matches across three formats during the next five years. (PTI)

## Australia thrashes South Africa by 111 runs in Durban T20

**DURBAN, Aug 31:** (AP) Australia turned the highest Twenty20 total at Kingsmead into a 111-run win over South Africa.

Made to bat first, Australia put up 226-6 then bowled out South Africa for 115 in 15.3 overs.

New captain Mitch Marsh led with a 22-ball fifty in an unbeaten 92, and was supported by Tim David's 28-ball 64.

All four debutants contributed, especially leg-spinner Tanveer Sangha with 4-31 and fast bowler Spencer Johnson's 2-33.

South Africa never got going. It was 69-5 and lost its last five wickets for nine runs.

Marsh walked in after only three deliveries and plundered 20 runs in the game's second over bowled by Lungi Ngidi.

Matthew Short went after Marco Jansen and the 50 partnership was raised in less than four overs.

Marsh hit medium-paceer Lizaad Williams out of Kingsmead in the fifth over and achieved his fastest T20 fifty — off 22 balls — in the ninth over.

David slapped Tabraiz Shamsi for sixes over long on and midwicket, and sent a delivery by new medium-paceer Gerald Coetzee over midwicket. After his 24-ball half-century, David had one more six in him, pulling Shamsi, before he was out to a great catch by Temba Bavuma on the boundary.

David and Marsh combined for 97 runs.

Marsh was losing steam but finished unbeaten after 13 boundaries and two sixes.

South Africa's reply was a bust.

Bavuma inside-edged Marcus Stoinis in to his stumps in the first over. Stoinis was tagged for 15 runs by Rassie van der Dussen, and new fast left-arm Johnson went for 17 straight after. But Van der Dussen fell to Sean Abbott on 21 and Sangha's introduction decisively ended the contest. Sangha's first over netted captain Aiden Markram, who cut straight to Stoinis at backward point. (PTI)

## Big win over Nepal will give us confidence ahead of India game, says Babar Azam



**MULTAN, Aug 31:** Pakistan skipper Babar Azam on Wednesday said the massive 238-run win over Nepal in the Asia Cup opener will give his side confidence ahead of their blockbuster clash against arch-rivals India on Saturday.

Pakistan crushed minnows Nepal by a huge margin of 238 runs here in a Group A match to make a winning start to the Asia Cup.

Pakistan will now travel to Sri Lanka for the much-anticipated match against India to be played in Pallekele.

"This game was good preparation for the India game because it gave us confidence. We want to give 100 per cent every match, hope to do that there as well," Babar said after the end of the match.

Babar smashed 151, his 19th ODI century while Ifthikhar Ahmed (109 not out) hit his maiden ODI ton to power Pakistan to an imposing 342 for six after opting to bat.

Babar was involved in two crucial partnerships after a sedate start — first stitching 86 runs with Mohammad Rizwan (44 off 50) and then sharing a whirlwind 214 runs for the fifth wicket with Ifthikhar.

In reply, Nepal were bowled out for just 104 in 23.4 overs with Shadab Khan taking four wickets and Shaheen Shah Afridi and Haris Rauf claiming two each.

"When I went in, I played a couple of balls. The ball wasn't coming on, pitch was two-paced. (Mohammad) Rizwan and I built the partnership and see what happened. Sometimes, Rizwan gave me confidence and vice-versa," he said.

"When Ifthikhar came, the tempo changed. He played well too. After two-three fours, he was comfortable, he smacked it after 40 overs.

"I'm satisfied. A couple of overs we were not up to the mark. Pacers did well, spinners struck too," Babar added. (PTI)

## It's Mohun Bagan vs East Bengal in Durand Cup final on 'Super Sunday'

**KOLKATA, Aug 31:** Albanian Armando Sadiku shrugged off his poor form to inspire Mohun Bagan to a come-from-behind 2-1 win over FC Goa in the Durand Cup semifinal here on Thursday.

The win paved the way for a fairytale Durand Cup finale on 'Super Sunday' as it set up Mohun Bagan's derby showdown against arch-rivals East Bengal in a repeat of 2004 final.

A compact and defence-heavy FC Goa drew the first blood with their Moroccan midfielder Noah Sadaoui's 23rd minute strike.

Mohun Bagan took the penalty route to restore parity with Jason Cummings scoring from the spot in the 42nd minute in what appeared to be a contentious call by referee Ashwin.

Four minutes after he replaced Hugo Boumous, Armenian substitute Sadiku overcame criticism to score the most-important goal of his career at the Mariners. He capitalised on a Sandesh Jhingan howler to strike home the lead — and eventual winner — in the 61st minute. Ferrando bolstered his defence in the final minutes, bringing in Brendan Hamill and Liston Colaco to stave off the wave of attacks from the Goans. Goalkeeper Vishal Kaith also should be credited for saving a sure-shot goal when he thwarted a Jay Gupta header in the 90+2nd minute.

This was Mohun Bagan's first Durand Cup final after 2019 when they lost to Gokulam Kerala.

In 2004 also, Mohun Bagan had lost to East Bengal 1-2. They are yet to win the silverware since 2000 when they had defeated Mahindra United via golden goal.

Both Mohun Bagan and East Bengal have won the Durand Cup 16 times each.

The Manolo Marquez-coached



Gaurs looked far superior both in the midfield and defence, dishing out a compact play.

The FC Goa coach had a defence-heavy tactic against the home side, pressing five in the backline with Spaniard Odei Zabalza, Seriton Fernandes seamlessly helming together the defence with Jhingan, Jay Gupta and defensive midfielder Car McHugh. Juan Ferrando, on the other hand, went in for a 4-1-4-1 formation with Jason Cummings upfront.

Ashish Rai returned to replace Manvir Singh, while Sadiku was benched, making way for a fit-again Dimitri Petratos.

FC Goa also piled on the pressure early on and looked to go one up with Victor Rodriguez's measured freekick. However, Mohun Bagan defence managed to clear the ball.

Mohun Bagan's first chance came in the 17th minute when Petratos' well-directed shot from a Boumous square-pass was

thwarted by Goa goalkeeper Dheeraj Singh.

The impressive Boumous turned out to be the villain as his misplaced pass from the midfield gave the Gaurs the early opening.

Sadaoui seized the opportunity with utmost calm as he surged ahead, with Mohun Bagan defence putting up a half-hearted effort, before slotting past Kaith.

Goa could have easily gone 2-0 up in the 38th minute when Subhassish Bose appeared to have handed the ball inside the box from a Sadaoui strike but the penalty appeal was declined. Moments later luck smiled on the Mariners as the referee gave a penalty in favour of the home side in what appeared to be a dubious decision.

Ashique Kuruniyan was tackled by Jay Gupta just outside the box before the Mohun Bagan midfielder tumbled inside the box and the referee awarded the penalty.

Cummings, with his left-footed strike, made no mistake to slot it

## Pathirana didn't copy slinging action from Malinga, it's natural: Coach Bilal Fassy

**PALLEKELE, Aug 31:** Matheesha Pathirana's sling-shot action immediately brings Lasith Malinga to mind but the young Sri Lankan did not deliberately copy his illustrious senior, his childhood coach Bilal Fassy said on Thursday, insisting that the much talked-about bowling style came naturally to the pacer.

His Malinga-like action has also earned Pathirana sobriquets like Podi (Little) Malinga in Sri Lanka and Baby Malinga among Chennai Super Kings (CSK) fans.

Pathirana had a breakout season for IPL champions CSK. He snared 19 wickets from 12 matches and was Mahendra Singh Dhoni's go-to bowler in crunch situations.

While Dhoni is grooming the 20-year-old as CSK's designated death overs specialist, the Sri Lankan cricket establishment should handle him with utmost care, feels Fassy.

"Seeing his action, a lot of people think that he has modelled it after seeing Malinga. Pathirana also trained under Malinga. But he came to me with this action from day one, and we just worked on it a bit, considering it can put a lot of stress on his young body," Fassy told PTI.

Despite a rising profile, Pathirana still seeks the guidance of Fassy, who runs a cricket training centre in the Trinity College here.

Fassy was impressed with Pathirana's genuine ability to generate pace when he first joined his camp five years back.

"He (Pathirana) was naturally quick. He did not have to put in a lot of effort to get pace unlike some other boys. On top of it,



he was very accurate too as you might have seen while he was bowling in the IPL. He has a fast and accurate yorker that can trouble even the best. His arm speed is just outstanding," he said.

Fassy cautioned against burdening the young man with expectations.

"He has talent and he will go a long way

if supported properly. But he is just beginning, so don't compare him with legends like Malinga or (Chaminda) Vaas."

"Let him be his own and allow him to work on his skills and make a mark. He is important for Lanka as we have two World Cups in two years (50-over in 2023, T20 WC in 2024)," he noted.

Eric Simons, the former India bowling coach, who now works with CSK in a similar role, too was an impressed man.

"I have worked with Pathirana over two seasons (2022, 2023) in the IPL. He has shown tremendous improvement. He is a quick learner. Yes, at times he can be a bit erratic," the South African told PTI.



But what impressed him more is his temperament, considering that he is barely out of his teens.

"But for someone who has started top level cricket a couple of years back, he has shown a good temperament to handle a tough task like bowling at death in T20s. I feel he is going to be a big part of Sri Lanka and CSK for a long time," Simons said.

With the ODI World Cup approaching fast, Sri Lanka are racing against time to make their first-choice bowling unit battle ready, as three pacers are nursing injuries.

Dushmantha Chameera, Lahiru Kumara and Dilshan Madhushanka are out of the Asia Cup 2023, and the trio is battling to get in for the quadrennial big show.

Hence, Sri Lanka is hoping that a 20-year-old prodigy will be ready for a bigger role sooner than later.

"His strength is his unorthodoxy. He has shown that in the IPL, and he has good pace as well. We can gradually hand him more responsibility, and he has a good attitude as well. We are looking at him as a long-term option, and hopefully, he can be someone like (Lasith) Malinga for us," said Sri Lankan captain Dasun Shanaka.

Former India skipper Dhoni had an advise for Sri Lanka cricket establishment during the 2023 IPL.

"I feel he should not play red-ball cricket, not even get close to it, he can play only ICC tournaments. He is young and he would be a great asset for Sri Lankan cricket," Dhoni had said. (PTI)

## I don't have any ego. I can bowl with new ball or at death: Shami

**PALLEKELE, Aug 31:** Mohammed Shami won't mind if he is asked to bowl with a worn-out Kookaburra instead of a shiny white in the ODIs, saying he does not have an ego and would purely go by the team's requirements.

With Jasprit Bumrah back in the mix for the Asia Cup, it will be interesting to see who will be the Gujarat slinger's new ball partner in the match against Pakistan on Saturday.

In Bumrah's absence, Shami and Mohammed Siraj shared the new ball in the ODI series against Australia in March this year.

"I don't have any hesitancy to bowl with the new ball or the old ball. I don't have an ego like that. All three of us (Bumrah, Shami & Siraj) are bowling very well, so it depends on the management on who will play," Shami told Star Sports ahead of Asia Cup.

"Depends on whether I have the new ball or whether the team requires me at any stage during the match, I'm always on," said India's best exponent of swing bowling in current times.

For someone, who has 162 wickets from 90 games with an economy rate of 5.60, Shami doesn't get too fussy about the format and colour of the ball. (PTI)