

6 WORLD

- Putin denounces sanctions on Russia during his speech for a South Africa economic summit
- Modi, Ramaphosa discuss ways to further deepen bilateral ties

8 NATION

- Himachal: Four killed in heavy rains, MeT issues red alert for four districts
- India's space journey began in 1962 with formation of INCOSPAR: Cong

MISSION ACCOMPLISHED

Chandrayaan-3 touches down on the lunar south pole ● India joins elite club of four ● ISRO scripts history

BENGALURU, Aug 23: In a giant leap for its space programme, India's Moon mission Chandrayaan-3 touched down on the lunar south pole at 6.04 pm on Wednesday, propelling the country to an exclusive club of four and making it the first country to land on the uncharted surface.

India scripted history as ISRO's ambitious third Moon mission Chandrayaan-3's Lander Module (LM) touched down on the lunar surface on Wednesday, making it only the fourth country to accomplish the feat, and first to reach the uncharted south pole

of Earth's only natural satellite.

In a big boost to India's space prowess, the LM comprising the lander (Vikram) and the 26 kg rover (Pragyan), made the soft landing near the south polar region of the Moon at 6.04 pm, less than a week after a similar Russian lander crashed.

With this touchdown on moon in second attempt in four years, India has become the fourth country to master the technology of soft-landing on the lunar surface after the US, China and the erstwhile Soviet Union. Chandrayaan-3 is a follow-on mis-

sion to Chandrayaan-2 and its objectives are to demonstrate safe and soft-landing on the lunar surface, roving on the Moon, and to conduct in-situ scientific experiments.

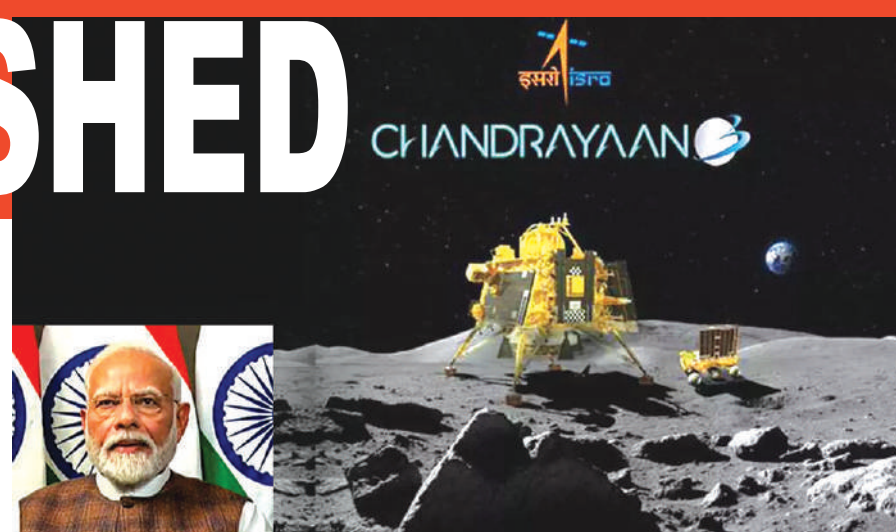
Chandrayaan-2 had failed in its lunar phase when its lander 'Vikram' crashed into the surface of the Moon minutes before the touch down following anomalies in the braking system in the lander while attempting a landing on September 7, 2019. Chandrayaan's maiden mission was in 2008. The ₹ 600 crore Chandrayaan-3 mission was launched on July 14

onboard Launch Vehicle Mark-III (LVM-3) rocket, for a 41-day voyage to reach near the lunar south pole.

The soft-landing took place days after Russia's Luna-25 spacecraft crashed into the Moon after spinning out of control.

The lander and the six-wheeled rover (with total mass of 1,752 kg) are designed to operate for one lunar daylight period (about 14 Earth days)

The lander with four legs, had multiple sensors to ensure a safe touchdown, including an accelerometer, altimeters, (CONTD ON PAGE-9)



Momentous occasion: Prez; India on Moon: PM Modi

NEW DELHI, Aug 23: Congratulating ISRO scientists on the successful landing of Chandrayaan-3 on the Moon, President Droupadi Murmu and Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday said it is a momentous occasion which has made India proud. In a video message after watching the live-telecast of Moon landing, the president said (CONTD ON PAGE-9)

Himanta plays down 'old' and 'new' BJP tussle in Assam

'The saffron party made 2 CM's in Assam and both of them were new BJP'

NEW DELHI, Aug 23: Assam chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma dismissed the "old BJP" versus "new BJP" debate and said Prime Minister Narendra Modi and party president J P Nadda have made it amply clear that anyone can join the saffron party by giving a missed call to achieve 'Congress-mukt' India.

He made the remarks on Tuesday amidst an apparent tussle between some of BJP's old guard in Assam and those who have joined the party in recent times.

Sarma asserted that he himself, his predecessor Sarbananda Sonowal, Manipur chief minister N Biren Singh, Arunachal Pradesh chief minister Pema Khandu, leader of opposition in West Bengal Assembly Suwendu Adhikari, and former Karnataka chief minister Basavaraj Bommai were the so-



called "new BJP" people.

"There is nothing called new or old BJP. Had the party thought in that way, do you think Sonowal or Himanta Biswa Sarma could have become the chief minister (of Assam)?" he told reporters here in response to a question about the

tussle within the Assam BJP unit. Sarma was part of the Congress, while Sonowal was with the Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) before joining the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).

He claimed that the "old and new BJP" is actually a Congress-

sponsored game as he recalled Union home minister Amit Shah's words that the new entrants in the BJP have blended in with the party just like sugar does with tea.

He further said that Biren Singh, Pema Khandu or Basavaraj Bommai could not have become chief ministers, or Suwendu Adhikari the leader of the opposition, if the BJP would have believed on the lines of "old or new BJP".

Both Singh and Khandu were with the Congress, Adhikari with the Trinamool Congress, while Bommai was in the Janata Dal before they shifted their allegiances.

"The saffron party made two chief ministers in Assam and both of them were 'new BJP'... BJP is such a large-hearted party," Sarma said. He reiterated that the raising of this issue was unfortunate, adding that (CONTD ON PAGE-9)

18 killed, 3 injured during bridge collapse in Aizwal



AIZWAL, Aug 23: At least 18 workers were killed and three injured after an under-construction railway bridge collapsed in Mizoram's Aizawl district on Wednesday.

Five workers were also reportedly missing after the incident that had occurred around 10 am in Sairang area, about 21 km from the state capital, police sources said.

Nearly 35-40 workers were working on the site when the incident occurred.

Most of the victims are believed to be from Pukuria, English Bazar and Manikchak in West Bengal's Malda district. "Sixteen bodies have been recovered from the debris so far, while two others are yet to be retrieved. Five workers are reported missing. Rescue and relief efforts are underway," IGP (Law & Order) Lalbiakthanga Khingte said. The Indian Railways said the accident was due to the (CONTD ON PAGE-9)

KA faces conjunctivitis; KAAC orders closure of educational institutions

HT Bureau

DIPHU, Aug 23: The dengue positivity rate has not declined, and now Karbi Anglong is dealing with conjunctivitis, which is spreading particularly among children in the Diphu municipal area. To contain the disease, the Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC) has ordered the shutting down of all educational institutions in the concerned municipal area from August 23 to August 27.

The Executive Member of KAAC, Education, Richard Tokbi, on August 22 evening posting on 'X', said, "In the wake of rising cases of conjunctivitis (eye disease) and dengue in the Diphu Municipal Board area, it is hereby directed for the closure of all educational institutions from August 23rd to August 27th, 2023. Henceforth, all schools and colleges under the jurisdiction of the Diphu Municipal Board area shall remain closed for the next 5 days."

The department of school education shall make the necessary arrangements for an online mode of learning until the resumption of

physical classes.

As of August 23, the positivity rate of dengue fever in Diphu Municipal Area stood at 46% and was not declining. The official death toll is 4. Dengue status from the health department shows that out of 140 tests (Elisa) done, 80 were found positive. At Diphu Medical College & Hospital (DMC&H), out of 97 tests done, 63 were found positive, and in the District Public Health Laboratory, out of 43 tests done, 17 were found positive. The cumulative test done is 7,106, and the cumulative positive is 3,332 with a positivity rate of 46%.

In DMC&H, the patients with dengue fever admitted on Wednesday were 16 and discharged at 14. Cumulative admission has already reached 400, and cumulative discharge is 380.

On the other hand, when contacted, the Joint Director of Health Services, Karbi Anglong, Dr. Borsing Rongpi, said conjunctivitis cases in Karbi Anglong have increased to 338. He has advised people to take the necessary measures to prevent being infected.

Anti-corruption sleuths net range officer accepting bribe

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Aug 23: The Directorate of Vigilance and Anti-Corruption arrested one Bablu Dey, AFS, range officer, Sapatgram, Dhubri Forest Division for taking bribe of ₹ 6000. As per sources, Dey demanded ₹ 30,000 from the complainant for running his legal sand mahal without any disturbance.

Unwilling to pay the bribe, the complainant approached this directorate for taking necessary legal action against the above-mentioned public servant, sources said.

Accordingly, a trap was laid on Wednesday, August 23 by a team from the Directorate of Vigilance and Anti-Corruption, Assam, in the office of the range officer, Sapatgram, Dhubri Forest Division under Dhubri district. Bablu Dey, AFS, was caught red handed in his office campus at 3:20 PM, immediately after he accepted ₹ 6,000 as a part of the demanded bribe from the complainant. The tainted bribe money has been recovered from his possession and has been seized accordingly, in presence of independent witnesses.

Five poachers apprehended in a joint operation

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Aug 23: Acting upon a reliable source input with regards to poachers in Kaziranga an operation team of Special Task Force (STF), Assam proceeded from Guwahati to Kaliabor, Dist Nagaon, in order to apprehend the perpetrators. A team from Wildlife Crime Control Board (WCCB), Assam unit also accompanied the STF team for the operation.

Accordingly, the joint operation team carried out search operations at various places under Jakhala-bandha PS and Kaliabor PS of Nagaon district, where a total of five poachers have been apprehended along with various contraband wildlife items. The apprehended poachers have been identified as Md Gafar Quresy (24 yrs), Md Okil Quresy (60 yrs), (CONTD ON PAGE-9)

Padma Beypi accused of being a contractor in WKA

HT Correspondent

KHERONI, Aug 23: The Karbi Students Association (KSA) alleged that a lady teacher named Padma Beypi is working as a contractor in West Karbi Anglong. The concerned teacher, who is working as a (CONTD ON PAGE-9)

HISTORY MADE: Scientists hail Chandrayaan-3's successful moon mission

NEW DELHI, Aug 23: The successful soft landing of India's ambitious Chandrayaan-3 mission on the Moon's enigmatic south pole has captured the attention and admiration of the scientific community.

Leading scientists and experts said this monumental accomplishment not only marks India's indelible imprint on lunar exploration but also demonstrates the prowess of human collaboration, determination, and cutting-edge technology.

Dr. Chrispin Karthick, a scientist at the Indian Institute of Astrophysics, Bengaluru, expressed his elation. "The successful landing of Chandrayaan-3 is a testament to our collective progress towards space travel. It showcases the beauty of unity in diversity as we sail the cosmic seas together," he told PTL.

"Slow and steady - reaching the goal is better than saying we won the race. I emphasise this since many are comparing it with our friendly nation programmes. It's good to say we earthlings won the race in sailing the universe in many ways," Karthick added.

The Chandrayaan-3 is a follow-on mis-

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

Aakash Sinha, Professor of Practice at the Shiv Nadar Institution of Eminence, Delhi-NCR, and CEO of Omnipresent Robot Tech, hailed ISRO's (Indian Space Research Organisation) feat as a "monumental achievement" that will inspire a new generation of aspiring scientists and explorers.

"With this unparalleled accomplishment, India has etched its name in history by becoming the first country to land in this lunar region," Sinha, who was involved in developing the software for the Pragyan rover of Chandrayaan-3, told PTL. The lander module comprising the lander (Vikram) and the 26-kg rover (Pragyan) (CONTD ON PAGE-9)

Two Assam families of ISRO scientists rejoice on Chandrayaan-3 landing on moon

TINSUKIA/LAKHIMPUR, Aug 23: Two families in Assam's Tinsukia and Lakhimpur towns were eagerly waiting for the soft landing of Chandrayaan-3 on moon as their scientist daughter-in-law and son, respectively, are involved in the Landing Control Centre of the Indian Space Research Organisation's (ISRO) mission at Sriharikota.

In Tinsukia, retired government employee Deepak Dev and his wife Sikha, the in-laws of 35-year-old senior scientist Nidhi Sharma, who is in the team helming the landing of Chandrayaan-3, are feeling proud that she is a part of this historic event about the success of the landing. "Nidhi was a part of Chandrayaan-2 too, but last time she called us in disappointment after the mission did not work

out as per plans. We are, however, hopeful that this time it will be positive and the hard work of all ISRO scientists, including my daughter-in-law, will bear fruit," Dev told PTL.

His wife said their daughter-in-law is expecting her first child and "we are very worried about her health".

"When I tell her to follow a proper diet and take care of herself, Nidhi says she is now just concentrating on this mission and will think about herself only when this landing takes place," Sikha said.

Nidhi is in the camp for the last one month and was "hardly in touch with us or our son Dibakar Dev, who works in a multinational company in Bengaluru," she added.

In neighbouring Lakhimpur district, the

family members of another ISRO scientist Chayan Dutta, who has also been a part of Chandrayaan 2, are now rejoicing on the soft landing on the moon.

Chayan's father Rajani Kumar Dutta, a crockery shop owner, said he and his wife were praying for the successful landing on the moon. "During Chandrayaan-2, I can't forget my son calling us and crying like a child to say that they failed. This time, we are keeping our fingers crossed," he told PTL. Neighbours and friends of both the families were flocking to their homes and shop and to see the live streaming of the historic event together.

Meanwhile, prayers had been offered in several temples in Golaghat, Tezpur, Guwahati and other major (CONTD ON PAGE-9)

Kataria takes stock of preparedness on Indo-Bangla border

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Aug 23: Assam Governor Gulab Chand Kataria on Wednesday discussed the operational preparedness and functioning of Border Security Force (BSF) on the Indo-Bangla international border. The Governor was on a visit to the border out post R R Kuti of BSF's 31 Battalion under Guwahati Frontier, where he interacted with Dinesh Kumar Yadav, inspector general of BSF Guwahati Frontier. Yadav apprised him of the operational preparedness and functioning of the paramilitary force on the international border. Praising the BSF, Kataria said, "The nation is indebted to the bravehearts of BSF whose dedication and commitment to (CONTD ON PAGE-9)

Hope proposal for permanent G20 membership to African Union gets support from BRICS: PM

NEW DELHI, Aug 23: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday hoped that India's proposal to accord permanent membership of the G20 to the African Union will be supported by all the BRICS nations.

In his address at the BRICS (Brazil-Russia-India-China-South Africa) summit in Johannesburg, Modi said India is according "highest priority" to the issues of countries of the Global South under its G20 presidency.

India is hosting the G20 summit on September 9 and 10. All the BRICS nations are permanent members of the G20.

"We have also proposed to give

permanent membership of G20 to the African Union. I am sure all the BRICS partners are also together in the G20 and all will support our proposal," Modi said. The African Union (AU) is an influential organisation consisting of the 55 member states that make up the countries of the African continent.

In June, Modi wrote to the leaders of the G20 countries pitching for giving the African Union full membership of the grouping at its upcoming summit in New Delhi.

The proposal was formally included in the draft leaders' declaration at the third G20 Sherpas' meeting that took place in Karnataka's (CONTD ON PAGE-9)

Reaching consensus on a 'Jaipur call for action' to help promote industry, global trade: Goyal

JAIPUR, Aug 23: A day ahead of the G20 trade ministers meeting here, Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal on Wednesday said the member countries are looking at reaching a consensus on a "Jaipur call for action" to help promote industry, MSMEs, and global trade.

Representatives of the G20 countries are gathering here for the trade and investment ministerial meeting, scheduled on August 24-25. Briefing the media about the meeting, Goyal said that the officials of the countries have been burning the midnight oil to forge consensus and build a document on the priority areas.

When asked whether disagreement among G20 member countries over the Russia-Ukraine conflict is a concern, Goyal said members are trying to build a consensus on as many issues as possible keeping in mind this reality. "...there are some realities on which there is no possibility of a consensus ... barring this we are trying to build a consensus on all the remaining priorities," he added.

In February, the meeting of finance leaders of the world's 20 biggest economies, referred to as the group of 20 or G20, in Bengaluru had ended without a joint communiqué after Russia and



China opposed any reference to the war in Ukraine. Also, no communiqué was issued after the third G20 finance ministers and central bank governors meeting at Gandhinagar in July.

The five priority areas that are being discussed are trade for growth and prosperity; trade and resilient global supply chain; integrating MSMEs in global trade; logistics for trade; and WTO reforms. Strengthening mutual cooperation in the G20 to increase transparency in the use of non-tariff measures would be discussed in the meeting.

The G20 members include

Canada, France, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, the UK, the US and the EU. Representatives from six invitee countries - Bangladesh, Egypt, the Netherlands, Oman, Singapore and the UAE -- will also participate.

G20 accounts for 85 per cent of global GDP, 78 per cent of global trade, and almost two-thirds of the world's population. India is holding the presidency for this year.

"We have been able to come up with significant consensus amongst the member countries invoking a Jaipur call for action. The Jaipur call for action will help promote industry, MSME sector, up-

grade the global trade help desk, and bridge information gaps for MSMEs to help them expand their business and trade," Goyal told reporters here.

He said that the members have deliberated on formulating high-level principles for digitalisation of trade and trade facilitation.

"We are confident that tomorrow and day after ministerial meetings will come up with a concrete actionable outcome agenda which will help the world withstand any future shocks," he said.

They have also emphasised on the rules-based, open inclusive multilateral trading system, he said adding India has increasingly become the voice of the global south.

On WTO reforms, he said that India wants the dispute settlement mechanism of the Geneva-based organisation to work smoothly.

Goyal has held a bilateral meeting with WTO Director-General Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, who is here for the meeting.

He added that though there is a need to modernise the WTO, it should take into account the level of development in developing as well as least developed countries.

"Common but differentiated responsibility (CBDR) should be there...and consensus based decision making of the WTO should continue," he said. (PTI)

Sensex, Nifty rise for 3rd day on buying in banks, firm trends in European indices

MUMBAI, Aug 23: Benchmark Sensex rose by 213 points while Nifty settled above the 19,400 level in a volatile trade on Wednesday following buying in banking counters and early gains in European stocks.

Rising for a third straight day, the BSE Sensex climbed 213.27 points or 0.33 per cent to settle at 65,433.30. During the day, it jumped 284.68 points or 0.43 per cent to 65,504.71.

The NSE Nifty gained 47.55 points or 0.25 per cent to end at 19,444 as 29 of its components ended in the green while 22 declined.

In the three days of gains, Sensex has rebounded 484.64 points while Nifty advanced by 133.85 points.

From the Sensex pack, ICICI Bank, State Bank of India, Larsen & Toubro, Maruti, Tata Steel, Kotak Mahindra Bank, Bajaj Finance, Nestle, Power Grid and HDFC Bank were the major gainers.

Jio Financial Services, Bharti Airtel, Tata Motors, Tech Mahindra, ITC, UltraTech Cement and Mahindra & Mahindra were among the laggards.

"On the domestic front, sentiments remained positive, backed



by strong demand in the banking sector, though IT and pharma limited the gains," said Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services.

Global markets have restrained from making significant moves as they await the outcome of the central bankers' gathering at Jackson Hole scheduled for Friday, Nair added.

Ajit Mishra, SVP (Technical Research) of Religare Broking Ltd, said that markets traded volatile and ended in the green in the absence of any major trigger.

Shares of companies related to aerospace and defense sectors were in the limelight ahead of the

successful touch down of Chandrayaan-3 on the lunar surface. Shares of Bharat Forge climbed 2.82 per cent, Astra Microwave Products gained 1.72 per cent and Larsen & Toubro (1.42 per cent).

Centum Electronics, which delivered more than 200 mission critical modules to the Chandrayaan-3 mission, zoomed 14.91 per cent. Paras Defence and Space Technologies Ltd jumped 5.47 per cent, MTAR Technologies rallied 4.84 per cent and Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd climbed 3.57 per cent on the BSE.

Many of these firms also hit their 52-week high levels during the day. (PTI)

Adani group Ebitda grows 42% in first quarter, reaches 23,532 crore

NEW DELHI, Aug 23: Billionaire Gautam Adani's conglomerate clocked a 42 per cent year-on-year growth in pre-tax profit, as businesses ranging from airports to power and sea ports registered impressive growth, the group said on Wednesday. All-time high EBITDA of ₹ 23,532 crore in April-June was almost equal to the full-year FY19 (April 2018 to March 2019 fiscal year) EBITDA of ₹ 24,780 crore, Adani group said in a statement.

The conglomerate that spans 10 listed companies ranging from flagship incubator Adani Enterprises Ltd to ports business (Adani Ports & SEZ Ltd), renewable unit (Adani Green Energy Ltd), power utility (Adani Power Ltd), electricity transmission firm (Adani Energy Solutions), and city gas business (Adani Total Gas Ltd), had a net debt of ₹ 18,689.7 crore after accounting for a cash balance of ₹ 42,115 crore. Core infrastructure and utility platform, which generates stable and assured cash flows, generated EBITDA of ₹ 20,233 crore, accounting for 86 per cent of the total portfolio EBITDA. "This gives a high level of stability and multi-decadal earnings predictability and visibility. The robust profits have resulted in the portfolio gaining a very strong liquidity position," it said. Adani group has been concentrating on improving operational performance as a comeback strategy after being hit by a damning report of a US short-seller in January this year. (PTI)

QIA to acquire around 1pc stake in Reliance Retail for ₹ 8,278 cr

NEW DELHI, Aug 23: Qatar Investment Authority (QIA) will acquire around 1 per cent stake in Reliance Retail Ventures Ltd (RRVL), the retail arm of billionaire Mukesh Ambani-led Reliance Industries, by investing ₹ 8,278 crore (USD 1 billion).

A QIA's wholly-owned subsidiary will make the investment in India's largest retailer at a valuation of ₹ 8,278 lakh crore (USD 100 billion). Updating about the development, Reliance Industries in a regulatory filing said: "QIA's investment will translate into a minority equity stake of 0.99 per cent in RRVL on a fully-diluted basis."

RRVL is the holding company for all retail businesses of Reliance Industries Ltd (RIL).

Through its subsidiaries and associates, RRVL operates India's largest, fastest-growing, and most profitable retail business with an integrated omnichannel network of over 18,500 stores and digital commerce platforms. Commenting over the development, RRVL Director Isha Mukesh Ambani said investment by QIA is a strong endorsement of a positive outlook towards Indian economy and Reliance's retail business model, strategy and execution capabilities.

We are delighted to welcome QIA as an investor in RRVL. We look forward to benefitting from QIA's global experience and strong track record of value creation as we further develop Reliance Retail Ventures Limited into a world-class institution, driving transformation of the Indian retail sector.

QIA CEO Mansoor Ebrahim Al-Mahmoud said: "QIA is committed to supporting innovative companies with high-growth potential in India's fast-growing retail market. We are looking forward to Reliance Retail Ventures Limited, with its strong vision and impressive growth trajectory, joining our growing and diverse portfolio of investments in India."

Earlier in 2020, RRVL had raised ₹ 47,265 crore (around USD 6.4 billion) from global private equity funds for a 10.09 per cent stake, valuing the company at more than ₹ 4.2 lakh crore.

This was the largest fundraising exercise in the sector at that time.

The company had raised funds from Silver Lake, KKR, Mubadala, Abu Dhabi Investment Authority,



GIC, TPG, General Atlantic and Saudi Arabia's Public Investment Fund at a valuation of around USD 57 billion at that time.

RRVL is aggressively expanding its business here by acquiring the companies and getting the franchise rights of leading international brands for the In

In its latest annual report, RIL had said Reliance Retail had achieved a significant milestone of crossing a billion transactions and its registered user base has grown to 249 million.

In FY23, Reliance Retail's digital commerce and new commerce businesses contributed to 18 per cent of its revenue, which stood at ₹ 2.60 lakh crore. Its board had on July 4, 2023, approved the proposal in which shares held by such shareholders shall stand cancelled and extinguished as per the capital reduction plan.

Besides, Reliance Retail which had forayed into the FMCG, relaunching the iconic beverage brand Campa and its own brand 'Independence', has plans to expand it. Its beauty business also launched the digital commerce platform 'Tira' and opened its flagship store in Mumbai. "These businesses will be ramped up progressively in the coming period," the annual report had said.

The business also expanded its product basket through acquisitions and partnerships at both local and global levels like Metro, Campa Cola, GAP, Pret A Manger, Lotus, Soso, Maliban and Toffeeman. (PTI)

Ready to meet any demand surge, BCCL first subsidiary to be listed: CIL Chairman

KOLKATA, Aug 23: Coal India Limited (CIL) Chairman and Managing Director P M Prasad on Wednesday stated that there is sufficient coal stock available in the country, and the company is prepared to address any sudden increase in demand.

In this endeavour, the company is actively pursuing several initiatives to boost its production capacity including the development of new mines and the expansion of existing ones, Prasad told shareholders at the 49th AGM.

Regarding the listing of subsidiaries, Prasad informed shareholders that progress has been made in this connection, and the first listing will be that of Bharat Coking Coal Ltd (BCCL), followed by Coal Mine Planning and Design Institute of India Ltd (CMPDI). No further details on the timeline were shared.

"CIL is committed to meeting the country's growing demand for coal and is ready to address any sudden surge in demand," Prasad said. In a meeting with senior officials on Tuesday, the coal ministry reviewed dry fuel production and offtake due to the surge in power demand across the country.

Coal Minister Prahlad Joshi had earlier mentioned that the country possesses ample coal stocks, with nearly 80 million tonnes available with thermal power plants and Coal India. Regarding the progress of fertiliser plants, the chief of the world's largest miner stated that the ₹ 1,700 crore fertiliser unit in Talcher, Odisha, is expected to be commissioned in the October-December period of 2024-25, and approximately 25 per cent of the

work has been completed. In relation to its JV company Hindustan Urvarak & Rasayan Ltd, Prasad anticipates that it will break even and possibly turn profitable in the next 1-1.5 years. Discussing the performance of FY23, Prasad revealed that CIL achieved a record coal production of 703.2 million tonnes (MT) in the fiscal year 2022-23. Additionally, the company attained a record coal offtake of 694.7 million tonnes during the same period. The CIL CMD noted that the growth momentum remained robust in the first quarter of the current fiscal year.

"CIL achieved a 10 per cent growth in coal production, 30 per cent growth in overburden removal, and 5 per cent growth in offtake during the quarter compared to the corresponding quarter of FY23. We supplied the highest-ever quantity of 186.95 million tonnes for the Q1 period of any year. The total revenue from operations for the first quarter of FY'24 is ₹ 35,983 crore," Prasad said. Discussing CIL's efforts to reduce its carbon footprint, Prasad stated that the company is committed to a clean energy future. He mentioned that the company is investing in renewable energy projects and adopting cleaner technologies in its mining operations. Over the next three years, the Maharatna company plans to generate 3,000 MW of solar power, creating a new revenue stream. According to Prasad, coal demand is projected to continue growing for the next 20-25 years, despite the increasing adoption of renewable energy, which might slow down coal demand in the future. (PTI)

Gold rises ₹ 90; silver zooms ₹ 800

NEW DELHI, Aug 23: Gold prices rose ₹ 90 to ₹ 59,500 per 10 grams in the national capital on Wednesday amid a jump in precious metal prices in global markets, according to HDFC Securities. The yellow metal had finished at ₹ 59,410 per 10 grams in the previous trade. Silver also zoomed ₹ 800 to ₹ 75,300 per kilogram. "Gold gained for the second consecutive day on Wednesday, with spot gold prices in the Delhi markets trading at ₹ 59,500/10 grams, up by ₹ 90, taking positive cues from overseas markets," Saumil Gandhi, Senior Analyst - Commodities at HDFC Securities, said. In the international markets, gold and silver were up at USD 1,903 per ounce and USD 23.75 per ounce, respectively. "Gold and silver continue to inch higher, amidst a slight pullback in US dollar and treasury yields ahead of a central bankers' gathering that could provide cues on interest rates outlook," Navneet Damani, Senior Vice President - Commodity Research at Motilal Oswal Financial Services, said. (PTI)

HIRING OF VEHICLE

E-Tender Notice No. LMV/Engg/81 of 2023. E-Tenders are invited by the undersigned for the following works: **Brief Description of Item:** Hiring of 5 (Five) numbers light motor vehicle (Renault Duster/Mahindra XUV500, TOYOTA/INNOVA or similar) for use in inspection by Sr. DEN/C/Lumding, Sr. DFM/Lumding, ADEN/III/Lumding, DEN/III/Lumding & DEN/III/Lumding for a period of 2 (two) years. **Tender Value:** ₹ 61,50,636.70/- **Bid Security:** ₹ 11,23,000/- **Date of closing of E-tender:** 15:00 hrs. of 13-09-2023 **& opening at 15:00 hrs. of 14-09-2023.** The complete information with tender documents of above e-tender will be available upto 15:00 hrs. of 13-09-2023 in website www.ireps.gov.in **DRM (W), Lumding** **NORTHEAST FRONTIER RAILWAY** *Serving Customers With A Smile*

Rupee rises 28 paise to close at 82.71 against US dollar

NEW DELHI, Aug 23: The rupee strengthened for the second consecutive session and appreciated by 28 paise, registering the highest single-day gain in nearly two months, to close at 82.71 (provisional) against the US dollar on Wednesday. Forex traders said IPO-driven inflows and positive tone in the domestic markets supported the upward move. Softening of crude oil prices also supported the domestic unit.

However, FIJ outflows and a strong US dollar capped sharp gains.

At the interbank foreign exchange market, the local unit opened at 83.02 against the US dollar and moved in a range of 82.68 to 83.02 in the day trade. The rupee finally settled 28 paise higher at 82.71 (provisional) against the previous close. Earlier, the Indian currency had witnessed the highest single-day gain of 35 paise on June 16 this year.

On Tuesday, the rupee had recovered from its all-time low levels and settled higher by 14 paise at 82.99 against the US dollar. (PTI)

Singapore's BOC Aviation signs financing pact for 10 Airbus aircraft with IndiGo

SINGAPORE, Aug 23: Singapore-headquartered BOC Aviation Limited and India's largest airline IndiGo have entered into a finance lease transaction involving 10 Airbus A320NEO aircraft to further expand its fleet, officials said on Wednesday.

All 10 aircraft powered by CFM LEAP-1A engines are scheduled for delivery in 2023, said BOC Aviation.

"We are delighted to be embarking on another transaction with our long-time customer IndiGo, to enable the airline to expand its fleet with the latest technology aircraft," said Steven Townend, Deputy Managing Director and Chief Financial Officer, BOC Aviation.

"This showcases our ability to deploy alternative financing structures, to continue our long-term sustainable

growth," he said.

"We are pleased to enhance our partnership with BOC Aviation with the lease agreement for these 10 aircraft," said Riyaz Peer Mohamed, Chief Aircraft Acquisition and Financing Officer, IndiGo.

This extended collaboration with BOC Aviation is part of IndiGo's expansion strategy across domestic and international markets.

India is currently among the fastest-growing civil aviation markets in the world and these aircraft will help IndiGo consolidate its position in the region," he said.

BOC Aviation is a leading global aircraft operating leasing company with a fleet of 652 aircraft owned, managed and on order. (PTI)

Global shares are mixed ahead of Fed Chair Powell's speech and Nvidia earnings

TOKYO, Aug 23: Global markets were trading mixed Wednesday ahead of Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell's highly anticipated speech later in the week. France's CAC 40 edged up 0.3 per cent in early trading to 7,261.76. Germany's DAX added 0.3 per cent to 15,753.86.

Britain's FTSE 100 rose 0.5 per cent to 7,309.13. US shares were set to drift higher with Dow futures up 0.3 per cent at 34,444.00. S and P 500 futures gained 0.4 per cent to 4,418.00.

"With the Jackson Hole event just around the corner, markets are understandably lacking some conviction given the interest rate implications which could stem from this eagerly awaited get-together of central bankers,"

said Tim Waterer, chief market analyst at KCM Trade.

Japan's benchmark Nikkei 225 added 0.5 per cent to finish at 32,010.26. Australia's S and P/ASX 200 gained 0.4 per cent to 7,148.40.

South Korea's Kospi slipped 0.4 per cent to 2,505.50. Hong Kong's Hang Seng gained 0.3 per cent to 17,845.92, while the Shanghai Composite dropped 1.3 per cent to 3,078.40.

Powell is set to speak Friday at an event in Jackson Hole, Wyoming, the site of several major policy announcements by the Fed. The Fed has already hiked its main interest rate to the highest level since 2001 in hopes of grinding high inflation down to a 2 per cent target.

High rates work by slowing



the entire economy bluntly and hurting prices for investments. Inflation has come down considerably from its peak above 9 per cent in the summer of 2022, but economists say getting the last percentage point of improvement may be the most difficult.

The hope among traders is that Powell would indicate the

Fed is done hiking interest rates for this cycle and that it could begin cutting them next year. But strong reports on the economy recently have hurt such hopes. A solid job market and spending by US households could be feeding more fuel into pressures that push upward on inflation.

Robert Carnell, ING's head

of research for the Asia-Pacific region, noted attention is also on what the People's Bank of China might do next on monetary policy.

Earlier this month, the central bank unexpectedly cut a key interest rate in a sign of growing official urgency about shoring up economic growth. "The tug of war between markets and the PBoC will remain a focus in Asia today," he said.

Analysts say trading in Asia remains subdued as investors are also waiting for US chipmaker Nvidia's earnings report later in the day.

Nvidia, one of Wall Street's most influential stocks, swung from an early gain to a loss of 2.8 per cent Tuesday.

Nvidia has been at the centre of Wall Street's frenzy

around artificial intelligence technology, which investors believe will create immense profits for companies.

Nvidia's stock has already more than tripled this year, and it likely faces a high bar to justify the hype move.

Analysts expect Nvidia to say on Wednesday that its revenue swelled by nearly USD 4.5 billion to USD 11.19 billion during the spring from a year earlier. In energy trading, US benchmark crude fell 37 cents to USD 80.35 a barrel. Brent crude, the international standard, lost 50 cents to USD 83.53 a barrel.

In currency trading, the US dollar edged down to 145.38 Japanese yen from 145.85 yen. The euro cost USD 1.0827, down from USD 1.0848. (AP)

EXTENSION OF PERIODICITY SPECIAL TRAINS					
For the benefit of passengers, it has been decided to extend the services of 05638/05637 between Silchar & Naharlagun and 05628/05627 between Agartala & Guwahati special trains upto November, 2023 as per details given below:					
Train No. 05638 Silchar-Naharlagun Special from 04-09-2023 to 27-11-2023 (13 Trips)			Train No. 05637 Naharlagun-Silchar Special from 05-09-2023 to 28-11-2023 (13 Trips)		
ARR.	DEP.	STATION	ARR.	DEP.	
---	13:50	Silchar	05:20	---	
17:13	17:18	New Haffong	01:30	01:35	
20:10	20:20	Lumding Jn.	21:45	22:00	
21:35	21:40	Dimapur	20:11	20:16	
00:40	00:45	Mariani	17:48	17:53	
03:10	03:20	New Tinsukia	14:50	15:00	
04:10	04:20	Dibrugarh	13:30	13:40	
06:48	06:50	North Lakhimpur	11:20	11:22	
08:40	---	Naharlagun	---	10:00	
Other Stoppages: Badarpur Jn., New Harangajao, Maibang, Diphu, Sarupathar, Furkating, Simaluguri, New Sisibargaon, Dhemaji, Gogamukh & Harmuti.					
Composition: AC-2 Tier (One), AC-3 Tier (Four), Sleeper Class (Thirteen) & GSLR (Two)=20 Coaches.					
Train No. 05628 Agartala-Guwahati Special from 07-09-2023 to 30-11-2023 (13 Trips)			Train No. 05627 Guwahati-Agartala Special from 08-09-2023 to 01-12-2023 (13 Trips)		
ARR.	DEP.	STATION	ARR.	DEP.	
---	19:00	Agartala	04:10	---	
21:42	21:44	Dharmanagar	00:30	00:32	
23:20	23:35	Badarpur Jn.	22:40	22:50	
01:32	01:34	New Haffong	20:05	20:07	
05:00	05:10	Lumding Jn.	16:40	16:50	
08:45	---	Guwahati	---	13:15	
Other Stoppages: Teliamura, Ambasa, New Karimganj, Maibang, Hojai & Chaparmukh Jn.					
Composition: AC-3 Tier (Five), Sleeper Class (Ten), General Second Class (Three), GSLRD (Two), Pantry Car (One) locked condition=21 Coaches.					
General Manager (Operations)					
NORTHEAST FRONTIER RAILWAY					

QUOTE OF THE DAY

I divide all readers into two classes: those who read to remember and those who read to forget. - William Lyon Phelps

Inclusive democracy

Politics, as astutely noted by figures ranging from Otto von Bismarck to John Kenneth Galbraith and even President Joe Biden, is often described as the “art of the possible.” This philosophy emphasizes realism, pragmatism, and inclusivity as essential components for the greater good, even if it means compromising lofty idealism or occasionally contradicting one’s own core constituents. Nowhere is this principle more pertinent than in India, a nation characterized by unparalleled diversity in terms of religion, region, race, ethnicity, and caste giving rise to political ideologies of immense divergence. One prominent practitioner of this accommodating spirit was Atal Bihari Vajpayee, a statesman who, despite facing insinuations of being a mere “mask” or the “right man in the wrong party,” succeeded in forging the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) through his civilizational secularism, approachability, and affability. It’s noteworthy that, apart from Vajpayee’s own Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), none of the other major parties from his NDA coalition remains a part of it today. The dynamics in the political landscape have shifted, rendering the BJP less reliant on coalitions for numerical strength. However, this shift has also had a discernible impact on the tone and culture of politics.

Beyond the mathematical calculations that once necessitated coalition-building, Vajpayee’s leadership was characterized by individuals like Jaswant Singh, Yashwant Sinha, Brijesh Mishra, Arun Shourie, and Sushma Swaraj - figures of moderation and restraint whose influence might seem out of place in today’s political climate. Moreover, many regional parties within the NDA during Vajpayee’s era held distinct regional and ethno-cultural ideologies. Still, their inclusion within the broad contours of the Indian Constitution demonstrated a restorative and inclusive approach, leading to a thawing of societal tensions. The remnants of this “Vajpayeeism” persisted during the early years of the BJP’s third term at the Centre (from 2014 onwards). Even when forming an “unnatural alliance” with the People’s Democratic Party in Jammu and Kashmir, they demonstrated the art of the possible. Contentious issues such as Article 370 and the Armed Forces Special Powers Act were discussed under a “Common Minimum Programme,” echoing Vajpayee’s call for “Kashmiriyat, Jamhooriyat, Insaniyat.”

However, this experiment had a short life span as the contradictions inherent in the alliance became untenable. Fissures that had once been managed erupted into irreparable divisions, with long-standing allies like the Akali Dal and Shiv Sena breaking away. The current government’s approach, characterized by a perceived “muscularity,” has fostered majoritarianism and exclusion of those who don’t align with a predetermined template. Consequently, polarization has intensified in India. It’s essential to question whether this approach has constrained the government’s ability to engage with diverse perspectives, as mandated by the Indian Constitution and its own historical precedent. The foundational principles of the “Idea of India” emphasize inclusivity over exclusion. Recent events in Manipur highlight the consequences of intransigence. The grievances of the Kuki-Zo communities, bordering Mizoram, underscore the necessity of accommodation and co-optation to foster peace and unity. Notably, the government in Mizoram, formed through an alliance between the BJP and Mizo National Front, managed to mainstream a secessionist organization that had once taken up arms against India. The issue transcends electoral mathematics; it’s about the consequences of normalizing intransigence and majoritarianism at the expense of the larger “Idea of India.” In diverse democracies like India, the “art of the possible” is a testament to strength, not weakness, as it is often misconstrued to be. It’s time for a return to the principles of inclusivity and accommodation that defined India’s democratic spirit.

Agricultural challenges: Onions and tomatoes to rice and policy reform

The federal government has declared its intention to acquire an additional two hundred thousand tonnes of onions within this year. Consequently, the buffer stock goal for the current year has been raised to five hundred thousand tonnes, marking a shift from the earlier aim of three hundred thousand tonnes. Notably, this proclamation follows just one day after the implementation of a 40 percent export duty.

In simple terms, the government has bolstered the local onion supply by effectively restricting exports. This strategy has led to a sharp decline in prices, allowing the government to acquire larger quantities of onions at a lower cost for its buffer stock. Does this action raise concerns about interference with the natural market mechanism? Could it be interpreted as a tactic to pressure onion farmers into selling their produce to the government at reduced prices? One might even argue that this constitutes an abuse of authoritative power. These actions have not escaped criticism, even from a respected former agriculture minister. This minister’s objections to the export tax are rooted in the belief that it will inevitably inflict harm upon the farmers. It’s worth noting that this minister hails from a state responsible for supplying a third of the nation’s total onion production.

Despite the protests by farmers against the export tax, their efforts have, so far, yielded little result.

Farmers have grown accustomed to facing such capricious interventions within the agricultural product market. The current

onion inflation rate, which stands at 19 percent this week, has triggered concerns for the government. This is true even though onions constitute only a fraction of household expenses.

However, the volatility in onion prices has the potential to deeply affect politicians and has even led to the downfall of governments in the past. Let’s not forget the proposed farm laws that were introduced in Parliament back in September 2020.

Among the trio of laws, one aimed to completely liberate prices, eliminate stocking constraints, and remove the arbitrary bans on imports and exports. Interestingly, during that very week when these farm laws were being presented, a number of trucks en route to Bangladesh were halted at the border. Their cargo consisted of exported onions. Evidently, the notion of farmers benefitting from the upswing in onion prices was not welcomed. These actions, characterized by the halting of exports on one side and the simultaneous push for agricultural market deregulation on the other, project a contradictory and insincere message.

Perhaps the current imposition of an export tax on onions can be seen as a precautionary step, particularly in light of the recent distressing surge in tomato prices. The National Cooperatives Consumer Federation of India (NCCF) and the National Cooperative Marketing Federation of India (NAFED) have already amassed a stockpile of over 1.5 million tonnes of tomatoes. These



tomatoes are being sold at subsidized rates due to their exorbitant price escalation to Rs 200 per kilo. The question arises: where do these subsidies originate?

DEGREE OF THOUGHT

By: Dipak Kurmi

Additionally, India has engaged in the importation of unspecified quantities of tomatoes from Nepal, and possibly other nations as well, as a means to quell the flames of inflation. The ongoing retail inflation currently stands at 7.5 percent, surpassing the Reserve Bank of India’s tolerance threshold of 6 percent.

As such, tomatoes have emerged as one of the primary contributors to inflation. It’s important to note that while vegetable price inflation tends to be seasonal and famously unpredictable, it disproportionately dominates media attention.

In July, India enacted a ban on the export of non-basmati white rice and broken rice, constituting a collective 45 percent of all rice exports. This decision has raised concerns among our trading partners and has cast doubts on India’s reliability as a supplier.

Certain nations in

Africa and Asia, heavily reliant on rice imports from India, now face potential threats to their food security due to this action. Despite appearances, the government’s motive does not appear to be food security. What then could be the underlying reason for this export prohibition? At first glance, it seems to align with the interests of ethanol producers. An estimated 3 million out of the total 5 to 6 million tonnes of broken rice are channeled into ethanol production.

Consequently, this export ban amplifies the supply available for fueling car engines, but it does so at the expense of rice farmers’ earnings. On a global scale, rice prices are currently at their highest in a decade, offering a lucrative opportunity for substantial profits. Unfortunately, the history of the agricultural sector reveals that farmers have consistently borne the brunt of anti-profit measures like bans on agricultural product exports.

The recent accounts of policy interventions regarding tomatoes, onions, and rice underscore the persistent difficulty and incompleteness of agricultural reforms. Primarily, there exists an inherent

urban bias in policies, leading to a prioritization of urban consumer welfare (ensuring low food inflation) over the interests of farmers.

Consequently, any agricultural policies that aim to reform markets and favor farmers are susceptible to arbitrary reversals or limitations. Secondly, in order to offset the losses incurred by farmers due to price controls, ongoing input subsidies such as free water and electricity, affordable fertilizers, and exemption from agricultural income tax persist. Unfortunately, this practice generates substantial and avoidable fiscal strain.

Thirdly, the exploration of alternative market mechanisms like forward markets, which could potentially replace the heavy involvement of the government, remains unexplored. Forward markets are often dismissed as speculative and accused of contributing to price volatility. However, this assumption lacks empirical evidence. As a result, the government persists in heavily intervening in the market through the procurement, storage, and trading of agricultural goods.

In this process, it sometimes resorts to anti-com-

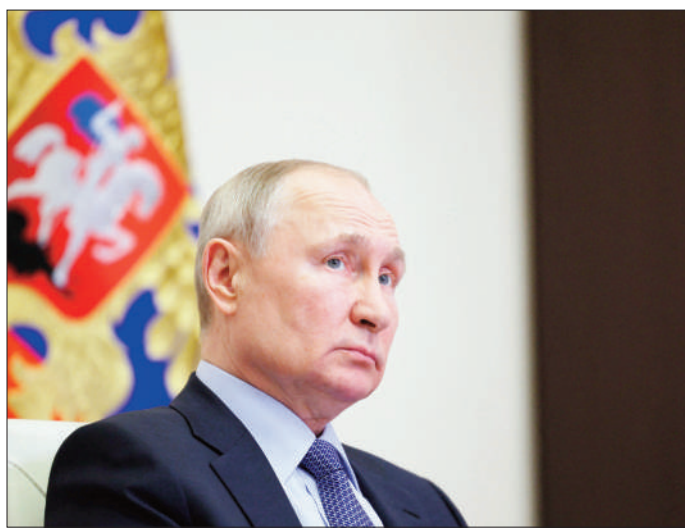
petitive monopoly practices. The question arises: who will hold the government accountable for its abuse of dominance through anti-competitive actions? Agriculture remains ensnared by a complex web of constraints, encompassing price controls, storage limitations, arbitrary restrictions on imports and exports, and frequently shifting policies.

Despite its technically being a state-level concern, there’s substantial interference from both the central government and state authorities. Consequently, farmers often find themselves reliant on heavy and distorting subsidies. These subsidies not only trigger fiscal challenges, manifesting as loan waivers, non-performing assets, and fiscal deficits, but also contribute to environmental crises.

Notably, the excessive utilization of chemically subsidized fertilizers has led to soil degradation and salinity issues in Punjab, among other regions. Adding to the intricacies, approximately half of the farmers are excluded from subsidies due to their status as landless or tenant farmers—individuals who lack a direct connection to the land they cultivate.

The intricate threads woven into agricultural policy have left us entangled, with the prospect of disentanglement proving exceedingly challenging. What’s urgently required are extensive reforms aimed at enhancing market functionality, reducing state intrusion, and granting farmers greater agency to engage in the market process and reap its benefits. (The writer can be reached at dipaknewslive@gmail.com)

Putin’s Russia is a poor edition of once powerful Soviet power in science & technology



By: Anjan Roy

What a dump Russia is in. It is a pity to see the country in this shape. Once, only the other super power in the league of the United States, today Russian president, Vladimir Putin, is unable to attend the BRICS leaders’ summit in South Africa.

This all, because of Vladimir Putin. He has dragged his country Russia with him, has fallen victim to an irrelevant view of history. Putin dreams of an Imperial Russia which spanned a greater part of eastern Europe in some distant past. He wanted to see old Russian empire in the twenty-first century as well.

In pursuit of that long forgotten past, Putin launched his Ukraine invasion to include that country into the perceived Russian Empire of twenty-first century. As if, his country is not already unmanageably large, spanning eleven time zones. He wanted more, most immediately Ukraine.

Since then, as they say, it is history. Putin has been sidelined in the international arena, and now stands isolated with increasingly fewer options for diplomatic links. He has jeopardised his own standing as well as those of the young men and women of his country.

The South African president, Cyril Ramaphosa, has announced that Putin and himself have “mutually agreed” to the latter’s absence in the summit. Instead of his personal presence, Putin will address virtually. On ground, the Russian foreign minister, Sergey Lavrov, will stand in for Putin. His absence might have been an ordinary event, but for the ignominious reason for which he had to opt out, though the Russian foreign ministry irascibly denies it.

Behind his absence lies the story of an indictment by the International Criminal Court.

South Africa is a signatory to the agreement establishing the International Criminal Court and the country is under obligation to arrest Vladimir Putin the moment he steps on the South African soil. The International Criminal Court had issued an arrest warrant against Putin for war crime in connection with Russia’s decision of sending some Ukrainian children to Russia forcibly.

The South African president, Cyril Ramaphosa, had confidentially admitted to the possibility of such a dilemma before his government in case the Russian president decided to land. He had reportedly admitted in private conversation that such an action against their president would be considered a “declaration of war”

by Russia.

This is not idle talk. Earlier, in 2017, the Sudanese president was declared guilty of genocide and deliberate killing of people in his country, particularly in Darfur. The International Criminal Court had similarly passed a judgment against him and ordered his arrest.

When President al Bashir of Sudan had landed on South African soil, he was just about a few hours away from formal arrest by South African police while a local court was hearing the application for his immediate arrest from the ICC. Sudan president could escape by a hair’s breadth as the court was hearing the appeal for his arrest.

The indication of the decline of the country and its capabilities came in the last two days in another area. While Russian ruling elites are bogged down with their crazy ideas of national greatness, the actual achievements of the Soviet Union had been all allowed to fizzle away.

Soviet Union could land on the moon’s surface and place its roar with precision fifty years back. But last weekend, when its Luna 25 moon lander was to softly touchdown, the craft control was lost and it crashed on moon surface.

Fifty years back, in many ways, Soviet Union was ahead of America in space. Its achievements had spurred America to take up space seriously and resulted in the Apollo Missions which culminated in the first step of a man on the moon.

Today, Russia could not properly manage even a simple job (for them some fifty years back) of landing softly on the moon. That inability captures how far the country has lost its earlier achievements and capabilities. Instead of trying to expand its bloated size, the Russians would have done far better pursuing their sterling achievements in science and technology in the Soviet days. Wrong priorities had landed the country in such a collapse. (IPA Service)

Assam delimitation move upsets major communities and ethnic groups

By: Ashis Biswas

As with the controversial and eventually inconclusive NRC operations in Assam, the Election Commission-sponsored (ECI) delimitation of Assembly and Lok Sabha seats too, has deepened existing ethnic divides, generating fresh political tensions.

Now that the ECI delimitation proposals have received Presidential assent, only the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) seems to be happy with the territorial redefinition of 140 LS/Assembly constituencies. State Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, former Congressman-turned BJP hardliner, has been an active supporter of the ECI initiative.

The BJP-run administration’s objective, as admitted directly and otherwise, was apparently to ensure a comfortable majority in both houses for parties supposedly representing Assamiya interests and aspirations - Bhumiputras, in local parlance. Judging by the statements issued by various parties or the sizable body of reports/analyses on the issue, this end has been adequately achieved.

In the process it has been alleged, interests/sentiments of major ethnic groups including the Bodos in upper Assam as well as tribals in the Barak Valley and large number of Bengali-speaking Hindus and Muslims, have been ignored. There have been protests and bandhs against the changes proposed in the three Barak valley districts, while mass organisations and groups have approached the Supreme Court for relief.

Bodo leader Sansuma Khunger Bwismitary, former MP from Kokrajhar, has also opposed the delimitation proposals and announced plans to approach the Apex court if needed. The tribals have been let down badly, he alleged.

The realignment of Assembly and Parliamentary seats have altered their demographic character drastically from area to area:



The BJP-run administration’s objective, as admitted directly and otherwise, was apparently to ensure a comfortable majority in both houses for parties supposedly representing Assamiya interests and aspirations - Bhumiputras, in local parlance. Judging by the statements issued by various parties or the sizable body of reports/analyses on the issue, this end has been adequately achieved

there are constituencies with over 400,000 voters in some places, while in most seats this number would not exceed 120,000 or so, according to ground level reports.

Physical boundaries of constituencies too have been changed substantially, with an apparent intention to favour in terms of numbers, a particular community/group over others! Negatively impacted groups such as those already mentioned have strongly criticised the ECI and the State Government for sponsoring such ‘politically motivated changes,’ as they put it.

The ECI arranged for special hearings for disadvantaged parties and groups, but the procedures followed left most parties disillusioned. For instance, Barak valley protestors alleged that while they had hundreds of complaints, they received little more than 30 minutes of time to present their case - similar views came from smaller tribal communities.

Minority leader Badruddin Ajmal MP representing the All India United Democratic Front (AIUDF) earlier alleged that the ECI recommendations had plainly targeted the Muslims as a community. The provisions wrought havoc in the name of redrawing constituency boundaries to leave Muslims as smaller voting communities than before! He threatened to move court against such manoeuvres.

Bengali-speaking Barak Democratic Front (BDF) leaders who have already approached the

Apex court alleged that the number of assembly seats in three districts had been reduced from 15 to 13!

Again, Bwismitary alleged that the number of seats reserved for tribes had been reduced from 15 to only 6. Such a move, made without any prior discussion with concerned political parties and other stakeholders, not only discriminated against tribals. It took away many of their basic rights by Constitution-enshrined, from both the centre and different states, violating their legally defined status as a scheduled, protected group.

Sarma as chief Minister had vigorously defended the proposed changes, claiming that they sought to protect the interest and status enjoyed by ‘Bhumiputras’ whose future had come under a threat from illegal migration from Bangladesh in recent years. Tribal interests too had been taken into account and no one really had grounds for complaints.

Broadly, what has been the extent of the changes proposed and how many seats are involved?

An answer of sorts has been available from comments and revelations made by state BJP leaders. The ruling party has been strongly attacked of late by former Union Minister and 4 times BJP MP from Nagaon, the veteran Rajen Gohain. Currently he is a senior cabinet Minister of Assam.

He is expected to contest from the Nagaon parliamentary seat in 2024. No more. The delimita-

tion provisions, he alleged, had totally changed the demographic profile of Nagaon Parliamentary. This he saw as a direct gift made by the BJP, his own party, to the AIUDF!

His Ministerial colleagues Jayanta Mallah Barua and Pijush Hazarika rejected his allegation. As widely reported in various Assam-based media, Barua applauded the ECI for ensuring that the interests of ‘Bhumiputras’ would be protected in at least 102 Assembly seats out of 126 in Assam. This would be a happy contrast from earlier times, when votes of immigrants decided the electoral outcome of 40/50 seats! Similarly, the status and future of indigenous communities would be effectively protected by the delimitation provisions in 11 out of 14 Lok Sabha seats!

As for Gohain’s grievances, well, as a veteran politician who had been amply rewarded during a long political career, he might as well retire gracefully now and help the BJP politically.

Given this backdrop, it comes as no surprise to learn reports that the Barak Valley-based parties have revived their slogan for a separate autonomous ‘Purbachal’ state, to ensure minimum security, safety and progress for the people living three traditionally neglected districts. Especially under the BJP, BDF leaders alleged, it had become clear that the common people in lower Assam would not receive even minimal justice from the state administration. (IPA Service)

'Gods are nature, they are angry': Climate devastation in the Himalayas is changing religious belief

By: David L Haberman

The famous pilgrimage site of Kedarnath, located in the central Himalayas, is believed to be a sacred land. It has been referred to as "deva bhumi," or the "land of the gods," for centuries.

Millions of people visit this region each year in search of divine blessings and other religious benefits as part of what is known as the Char Dham Yatra, or the pilgrimage to four sacred mountain abodes devoted to different gods and goddesses. Situated at the base of 20,000-foot snowy peaks, Kedarnath is one of these four major destinations.

The mighty god Shiva is believed to have manifested in the middle of a meadow in Kedarnath as a conical rock formation that has long been worshipped as a lingam, an embodied form of the deity. A stone temple has stood over the lingam for at least a thousand years, at an altitude of about 12,000 feet.

I visited this area in 2000, 2014 and 2019 as part of research I've been conducting for decades on religion, nature and ecology; I have spent numerous summers in the Himalayas. Many in the vast crowds of people on the Char Dham Yatra told me that they believe it is important to undertake this pilgrimage at least once in their lifetime, often identifying it as the most significant journey they will ever perform.

But climate change now threatens the sacred sites of this region. As global temperatures rise, glaciers on the 20,000-foot peaks above Kedarnath that are key sources of the Mandakini River, a major tributary of the Ganges, are melting and retreating at alarming rates. In turn, as I argue in my book, Understanding Climate Change through Religious Lifeworlds, climate change disasters are acting as powerful drivers of religious transformations, reshaping religious ideas and practices.

Threats to Himalayan region

Glacial deterioration is happening worldwide, but sub-tropical glaciers in high mountainous areas such as the Indian Himalayas are more vulnerable because of their low latitudes. Many climate scientists believe that climate change is affecting the Himalayas more than almost any other region of the world.

Melting glaciers leave massive amounts of water in lakes held in place by unstable natural dams formed of rubble heaped up when the glaciers were healthy and pushing down a slope. The expanding lakes left behind by shrinking glaciers are increasingly prone to glacial lake outburst floods.

Another serious danger threatening high mountainous areas as a result of global warming is the shift from snow to extreme rain at increasingly higher altitudes.

Snow clings to hillsides and melts gradually, while rain rushes down slopes immediately, causing destructive erosion, landslides and deluges. The combination of extreme rain and glacial lake outburst floods can lead to deadly flooding, as demonstrated by a catastrophe in Kedarnath in 2013.

Kedarnath disaster Himalayan researchers determined that in June 2013, more than a foot of rain fell within 24 hours near Kedarnath at elevations never previously recorded. The entire watershed above Kedarnath was filled with raging water. Additionally, the Mandakini River burst out of its banks, causing landslides and devastating flooding.

To make matters worse, the rubble dam that had held back the glacial lake formed by the melting Chorabari Glacier above Kedarnath suddenly breached, releasing a high wall of crashing water. In a matter of 15 minutes, the entire content of the lake was emptied, cresting over three-story buildings with a pounding flow that University of Calcutta scientists estimated was half the volume of Niagara Falls.



Fortunately – or, according to pilgrims, miraculously – a 30-foot oblong boulder rolled down the mountain and stopped just before the ancient temple, parting the powerful waters and protecting the temple so that it remained standing without major damage. Every other building in the town of Kedarnath was demolished.

Government figures claim over 6,000 people died, but those involved in the rescue operations set the figure much higher. Most of the dead were pilgrims.

'Gods are angry' The destructive flooding is changing people's beliefs. The gods of this region are closely associated with the land itself; and these gods, nature and humans are intimately connected. People living in this region understand the dramatic changes taking place here in terms of this triad.

A resident of Gangotri explained, "The gods are angry with us because of how we are now acting." When I said to him that I thought this area is where people have been coming for a long time to receive the blessing from the gods, he responded, "Yes, but now they are angry with us. That is why this [Kedarnath disaster] has happened. And more will come if we do not change our ways."

I found this to be a common view – weather-related disasters were being understood as a result of the immoral actions of

human beings, particularly the disregard for the environment.

One significant theological change that appeared to be underway within Himalayan Hinduism as a result of climate change was the transformation of the primary conception of the gods from those who bless to those who punish. "There is so much sin in the world today," a resident of Uttarkashi told me. "People are making a lot of pollution. Because of this, the climate is changing and the gods are beginning to punish us."

In some ways there is nothing new in the assertion that human morality and the environment are intimately linked, but the degree of change that is now happening has introduced a new level of concern.

Wandering holy men in this region are witnessing firsthand the dramatic changes in the Himalayas during their years of travel. One holy man living in this area explained, "The gods are nature. When we disrespect nature, we disrespect the gods. They are now angry because of what we are doing to nature. This is why the destructive storms are increasing."

Conditional hope All is not lost, however, and there remains some hope for a better outcome. There is a sense that things can still be turned around and the worst avoided if humans are willing to change their ways. Specifically, many articulated this as a return to a more respectful relationship

with the gods of the land.

When asked how to please the gods and turn things around, a man in Kedarnath put it simply: "To once again respect the land and nature." There is no great difference between treating the gods with respect and nature well. A woman I spoke to in Uttarkashi elaborated on this: "The gods and the land are the same. And we are mistreating both. The floods are like a warning slap to a child. They are a wake-up call telling us to change our ways. ... If not, we will be finished."

Human behavior remains a major factor in the holistic worldview that connects humans, gods and environment, and a return to respectful relationships is the key to a sustainable future.

Many Himalayan residents say that humans have the choice to return to a more mutually beneficial relationship with the natural world, but if the gods' stormy warnings are not heeded, then massive destruction and a gruesome end is near.

Uncertain future Destructive floods continue to happen in the central Himalayas with increasing force and frequency. Since the 2013 disaster at Kedarnath, more than 800 people have been killed in flash floods in the Char Dham region.

The Kedarnath pilgrimage was suspended in 2022 because of deadly landslides and flooding, but the Indian government has also heavily promoted religious tourism in this area. The year 2022 saw a record number of pilgrims visiting Kedarnath and the three other Char Dham sites in the central Himalayas, which only puts more stress on the land, with additional buildings, crowded roads and polluting vehicles.

With vehicles, factories and other human activities continuing to pump excessive amounts of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere, warming the planet, experts fear disasters like Kedarnath saw in 2013 will become only more common. (Courtesy: Scroll.in)

Embarking on a green journey: Nurturing our climate and environment

By: Aanchal

Hey there, eco-warriors and planet enthusiasts! Welcome to a captivating journey into the heart of our delicate ecosystem. In a world that's buzzing with activities, it's crucial for us to pause and reflect on the state of our climate and environment. Together, let's explore the wonders of nature, understand the challenges we face, and uncover the empowering actions we can take to make a positive impact.

The Marvels of Our Environment: Picture a world filled with vibrant forests, crystal-clear rivers, and awe-inspiring wildlife. Nature isn't just beautiful; it's our life-support system. Our environment provides us with clean air to breathe, fresh water to drink, and nutritious food to eat. From the smallest bug to the grandest mountain, every living thing has a role to play in maintaining this delicate balance.

The Changing Climate: Imagine wearing a cozy sweater on a chilly day – that's Earth's atmosphere, keeping us warm. But just like a sweater can get too hot, our planet's climate is getting warmer too. This is called global warming, and it's mainly caused by human activities like burning fossil fuels (think of cars and factories emitting smoke) and deforestation. This warming leads to unpredictable weather patterns, melting ice caps, and rising sea levels.

Tiny Changes, Big Impact: Now, you might be thinking, "What can I do? I'm just one person!" Well, don't underestimate the power of small actions. Just like a puzzle, when we all contribute our unique pieces, we create a bigger picture of change. Simple things like turning off lights when not needed, using reusable bags, and planting trees can make a huge difference.

Championing Renewable Energy: Imagine if we could power our world without polluting it. That's where renewable energy comes in. Sunlight, wind, and water – these sources are like Mother Nature's clean energy factories. Solar panels and wind turbines are like super-

heroes, fighting climate change by producing energy without harmful emissions.

Protecting Our Biodiversity: Think of biodiversity as a buffet of life forms on Earth. From cuddly pandas to sneaky chameleons, every creature has a unique role. Unfortunately, activities like deforestation and pollution threaten this buffet. But we can be biodiversity protectors by supporting wildlife conservation efforts and making sustainable choices in our daily lives.

Sustainable Superstars: There are people, communities, and even countries that are shining examples of sustainability. Bhutan, a small Himalayan country, measures its success not just by wealth but by happiness and environmental conservation. They even have a national policy that keeps their forests untouched! These sustainable superstars remind us that a harmonious relationship with the environment is not only possible but essential.

Our Green Footprints: Imagine we're leaving footprints wherever we go – not just on sandy beaches but on the planet too. These are called ecological footprints, and they show how much nature we use to support our lifestyles. The bigger the footprint, the more resources we're using. By reducing our footprint, we're giving the Earth a breather.

Conclusion: Let's be Earth's Allies! Our planet is like a precious gift, and it's up to us to keep it safe and sound. From the tiniest pebble to the vast oceans, every part of nature is intertwined. By understanding, appreciating, and caring for our environment, we're not just saving the planet – we're ensuring a better future for ourselves and the generations to come. So, let's take the first step on this green journey and become true allies of the Earth!

Remember, every action, no matter how small, counts in creating a healthier planet. Whether you're planting a tree, picking up litter, or simply spreading awareness, you're making a difference. So, go out there and be a part of the solution. Happy Earth-saving, adventurers! (Courtesy: Youth Ki Awaaz)

Is the Great Barrier Reef Reviving or Dying? The Truth Is More Complex

By: Mike Emslie, Daniela Ceccarelli & David Wachenfeld

The Great Barrier Reef is not dead. Nor is it in good health. The truth is complex. To understand what's going on takes more than a headline.

For the last 37 years, our organisation has monitored the health of the world's largest reef. Each year, we add our findings to our dataset, the Reef's longest running and largest coverage. This lets us produce annual updates for the northern, central and southern regions of the Reef. That makes us perhaps the team best qualified to answer the question many people have – how is the Reef going?

Released on August 9, this year's update paints a complex picture. It wasn't long ago the Great Barrier Reef was reeling from successive disturbances, ranging from marine heatwaves and coral bleaching to crown-of-thorns starfish outbreaks and cyclone damage, with widespread death of many corals especially during the heatwaves of 2016 and 2017.

Since then, the Reef has rebounded. Generally cooler La Niña conditions mean hard corals have recovered significant ground, regrowing from very low levels after a decade of cumulative disturbances to record high levels in 2022 across two-thirds of the reef.

The Reef has shown an impressive ability to recover from widespread disturbances, when it gets a chance – it's not all just bleaching and death. But it's also true we're heading towards a future where hotter water temperatures will likely cause bleaching every year, along with ongoing threats of cyclones and coral-eating starfish. Recovery requires reprieve – and those opportunities will diminish as climate change progresses.

Last year, for instance, parts of the Reef experienced bleaching in the middle of La Niña – the first time that's happened on record.

What's happening on the Reef? To take the pulse of the Great Barrier Reef, one indicator we use is hard coral cover. It's a widely used, robust indicator of reef health, but it doesn't tell the whole story. We also collect detailed data on coral and fish populations, diversity, structural complexity, and abundance of juvenile corals. And we take digital photographs and convert them into 3D photogrammetry models so we can analyse what's happening in more depth than ever before.

Here's what our analysis shows. Over the last few years, the Reef was mostly in La Niña conditions. That gave the hard-hit northern and central parts of the reef

a chance to begin recovery. Many reefs had a high proportion of Acropora corals, of which the best known are the staghorn and plate corals. These species have been a vital part of the reef over 37 years of monitoring – and probably for millennia.

These corals are the most common on many reefs, and grow fast. Because of that, they tend to dominate trends in hard coral cover.

Does this mean the Great Barrier Reef's recovery in 2022 relied on "weedy" corals which are taking over? Yes and no. The natural ecological niche of Acropora corals has always been to rapidly fill empty space, which means it tends to dominate trends in coral recovery.

Again, the story is more complicated than the headlines. Some reefs have recovered strongly, some very little. Some reefs are recovering with less Acropora than before, some with more. Each reef is charting its own course on the journey from impact to recovery and back again.

Overall, the record high hard coral cover seen last year was welcome news, representing recovery across much of the Reef in the absence of common coral killers.

But what about recent heating? This year, the rapid coral rebound paused. Some reefs continued to recover, but these were offset by others which lost coral. Coral loss came from effects of the 2022 bleaching event in northern and central regions, crown-of-thorns starfish predation in the northern and southern regions, damage from Tropical Cyclone Tiffany in the north and coral disease in some areas of the south.

While the recovery we reported last year was welcome news, there are challenges ahead. The spectre of global annual coral bleaching will soon become a reality.

Right now, marine heatwaves are sweeping through ocean basins in the northern hemisphere. Sea surface temperatures are far above long term averages.

At least eight countries are reporting coral bleaching, including the United States and Belize. This summer, it looks likely we'll see our first El Niño on the Great Barrier Reef since 2016, bringing higher sea surface temperatures. That last El Niño – coupled with global heating – was the direct cause of the 2016-17 mass bleaching and mass death of corals.

The prognosis is, in short, extremely concerning. Yes, the Reef has rebounded beyond our expectations. But now the heat is back on. If we get mass bleaching like 2016 – or even worse – it could undo all the recent recovery. (Courtesy: The Wire)

Fewer ribbits in Western Ghats? Erratic, deficit rainfall hits breeding cycles of frogs

By: Himanshu Nitnaware

Erratic and deficit rainfall in monsoon 2023 in the Western Ghats have affected the breeding cycles of amphibians, according to scientists. Animals usually found abundantly in the region during the season have been absent, showed recent visits by researchers.

Coastal Karnataka in the Western Ghats has recorded a 13 per cent deficit in rainfall since June, according to the India Meteorological Department. Most parts of Kerala have also seen over 50 per cent of rainfall deficit this year.

Jithin Vijayan, research fellow at Bengaluru-based Nature Conservation Foundation recently visited the rock outcrops of Ratnagiri, in the northern Western Ghats.

"We have carried out a study on amphibians and reptiles during the last monsoon. A striking difference compared to last year is the increased number of dried rock pools, which are very critical for many threatened and endemic amphibians in the region," said Vijayan.

Rainfall results in the formation of temporary rock pools and replenishment of the permanent water bodies where frogs breed, he explained. "The temporary pools require water to last for a few days depending on species' larval period to enable frogs to breed and give birth to the newer generation," Vijayan said. However, in the northern Western Ghats, water remains in some pools for only two to three days under short-duration rainfall.

Frogs lay eggs in this period but they desiccate or dry up before the tadpoles metamorphose into adults, as the pools lose water and moisture essential to complete the breeding cycle. The details of Vijayan's last visit are not comprehensive and the absence of the amphibians was not the focus of that specific study.

"Usually on average, in a square kilometre area, we can find around 1,000 pools. At least one third of



these pools have dried this year. But these are very crude estimates and need to be studied in detail," Vijayan told Down To Earth. Primary streams in Coorg (Kodagu), Karnataka seem to be drying too, Madhusri Mudke found after a recent visit earlier this year. Mudke is a PhD candidate at Ashoka Trust for Research in Ecology and the Environment and Zoological Society of London's EDGE Fellow.

"The frogs don't seem to be breeding for as long as they used to. Coorg has not received rainfall in August this year. The flow in primary streams, which the amphibians heavily depend on for breeding and releasing eggs, is low," she observed. Mudke found certain species of frogs to have completed one breeding cycle as some sub-adult frogs were seen.

"The breeding process usually begins at the onset of monsoon and continues until November, which in some cases is disturbed, as it's not raining that much," she said. "There is no study or data that can back the claim. Research in this direction is important to understand how climate change will impact these animals," she added.

Species such as bull frogs, cricket frogs breed during the beginning of monsoon, while night and dancing frogs breed in late monsoons, Mudke explained. "With erratic rainfall, the breeding patterns are mixing and they are not getting enough time to complete the cycles," she said. The researcher has also noticed numbers

of Malabar gliding frogs dwindling. "The Malabar gliding frogs were seen breeding abundantly about five years ago. Only a few pairs were found breeding and very few eggs were laid this year."

These amphibians create nests on tree branches to lay eggs, but the dry and hot temperatures with humidity are desiccating them, she further said. These eggs are laid over ponds or a waterbody so that when the tadpoles hatch, they fall in water and eventually develop into frogs. However, if the ponds dry up, these tadpoles die prematurely, Mudke explained.

Herpetologist and head scientist at Reliance Foundation, a non-profit, Varad Giri, said such erratic rainfall, which may become common in coming years, owing to climate crisis, will greatly impact the breeding patterns of frogs, especially the endemic ones.

"Certain species of frogs follow different strategies for breeding. Some species complete it in 2-3 days while others continue for 2-3 months. For example, Indirana species endemic to Western Ghats start breeding early. They lay eggs in moisture laden or damp conditions," he explained. The tadpoles feed on algae, which helps them develop and fully grow.

Another species Xanthophryne tigerina or the Amboli toad breeds only for two to three days in a year and lives in lateritic rock, commonly found in tropical regions.

"These frogs lay eggs in already water scarce areas. But the species

have evolved and adapted themselves with the monsoons considering there will be continuous rains for months. But with erratic patterns, the rocks dry desiccating their eggs," he said.

It also breeds only once a year. If the breeding is disturbed for consecutive years, the population will drop significantly, he noted. Another factor to consider is that rock pools or water ponds where eggs develop need a certain ecosystem.

"Though temporary, these ponds have a certain pH level of water, have optimum temperatures, life-supporting oxygen and other parameters ideal for eggs to hatch and eventually for tadpoles to survive. If the rainfall stops for a long period, the water remains stagnant, changing all the above mentioned parameters," he said. Even a slight rise in temperature and polluting of water can impact the survival of these small creatures, Giri said.

Erratic rainfall, which is sudden and heavy, along with long breaks, is unsuitable for these species. "They require less but consistent rainfall over months to survive," he said, adding a dearth of frogs may impact the population and survival dynamics of reptiles dependent on them for food.

Other than core habitat or Western Ghats, the amphibians are threatened in urban areas too, said Robin Panjikar, faculty assistant professor in department of environmental science at SB College of Science and Technology, Delhi.

"Last year, Delhi received good rains owing to cyclones in May, but June and July were dry and didn't rain as much. The tadpoles may have not survived with such short time rainfall. If the new recruitment each year gets affected, the amphibians will decline as they are already threatened with habitat loss," he said. Animals like birds and reptiles that prey on frogs will get affected directly if the life cycle of frogs gets disturbed. "Such food chain links will be broken in the long run," he said. (Courtesy: Down To Earth)

Russian Prez has taken multiple shots at the West on the opening day of an economic summit in South Africa

Putin denounces sanctions on Russia during his speech for a South Africa economic summit

JOHANNESBURG, Aug 23: Russian President Vladimir Putin took multiple shots at the West on the opening day of an economic summit in South Africa, using a prerecorded speech that was aired on giant screens on Tuesday to rail at what he called "illegitimate sanctions" on his country and threaten to cut off Ukraine's grain exports permanently.

Putin, the subject of an International Criminal Court arrest warrant related to the war in Ukraine, did not travel to Johannesburg for the summit of the BRICS group of emerging economies.

Instead, he plans to participate remotely in the three-day meeting of the bloc that encompasses Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa.

His 17-minute speech recorded in advance centered on the war in Ukraine and Russia's relationship with the West — even though South African officials had said East-West frictions should not dominate the first in-person BRICS summit since before the COVID-19 pandemic and hoped to guide the conversation away from the deteriorating geopolitical climate.

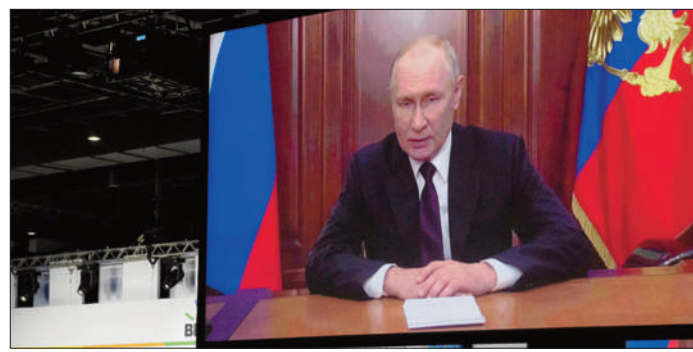
Sitting at a desk with a white notebook in front of him and a Russian flag behind, Putin said a wartime deal to facilitate Ukrainian grain shipments that is critical for the world's food supply would not

resume until his conditions — the easing of restrictions on Russian food and agricultural products — are met.

The West's attempts to punish and isolate Russia financially for sending troops into Ukraine are an "illegitimate sanctions practice and illegal freezing of assets of sovereign states," the Russian leader asserted.

Moscow pulled out of the Black Sea Grain Initiative in July and stepped up drone and missile attacks on the city of Odesa in southern Ukraine, home to one of the ports the controlled passage agreement covered. The initiative was credited with helping reduce soaring prices of wheat, vegetable oil and other global food commodities. Putin maintained that even with Russian exports of grain and fertilizer being "deliberately obstructed," his country has "the capacity to replace Ukraine in grain, both commercially and in free aid to needy countries," according to an official translation of his speech at the summit.

The United States and other Western nations have not directly targeted Russian agricultural exports, but moves to restrict Russia's access to international financial payment systems under some sanctions have made it difficult for the



country to get food, fertilizer and other products to market. "With these facts in mind, since July 18 we have refused to extend the so-called deal," Putin said. "We will be ready to get back to it, but only if all the obligations to the Russian side are truly fulfilled."

Chinese President Xi Jinping also brought an air of confrontation to the Johannesburg summit, saying in a speech read on his behalf by a Chinese government minister minutes after Putin's address that "some country, obsessed with maintaining its hegemony, has gone out of its way to cripple the emerging markets and developing countries."

"Whoever is developing fast becomes its target of containment. Whoever is catching up, becomes its target of obstructions," Chinese Commerce Minister Wang Wentao said while delivering Xi's speech.

It was a clear reference to the

United States and the growing economic friction between the US and China. Xi is in South Africa for the summit and met with South African President Cyril Ramaphosa earlier on Tuesday. He didn't attend the opening-day business forum where the other three BRICS leaders gave their addresses in person and Russia, India and China formed the bloc in 2009. South Africa was added in 2010.

"I am glad to note that over 20 countries are knocking on the door of BRICS. China hopes to see more joining the BRICS cooperation mechanism," Wang said while giving Xi's speech. Overall, around 1,200 delegates from the five BRICS nations and dozens of other developing countries are in South Africa's biggest city, and more than 40 heads of state were expected to take part in some of the summit meetings, according to Ramaphosa. (AP)

summit's main day of talks on Wednesday.

The five BRICS countries are already home to 40 per cent of the world's population and responsible for more than 30 per cent of global economic output, and more than 20 nations have applied to join, according to South African officials, including Saudi Arabia, Iran and the United Arab Emirates.

Saudi Arabia's foreign minister, Prince Faisal bin Farhan, and Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi planned to attend the summit. The five current member countries will have to agree on the criteria for new members before any countries are admitted, but a bigger BRICS is seen as a policy favored by China and Russia amid those deteriorating relations with the West. Brazil, Russia, India and China formed the bloc in 2009. South Africa was added in 2010.

"I am glad to note that over 20 countries are knocking on the door of BRICS. China hopes to see more joining the BRICS cooperation mechanism," Wang said while giving Xi's speech. Overall, around 1,200 delegates from the five BRICS nations and dozens of other developing countries are in South Africa's biggest city, and more than 40 heads of state were expected to take part in some of the summit meetings, according to Ramaphosa. (AP)

Russia launches 3-hour drone attack on Odesa as Ukrainian drones target Moscow again

KYIV, Aug 23: Russia and Ukraine traded drone attacks on early Wednesday, officials said, with Kyiv apparently targeting Moscow again and the Kremlin's forces launching another bombardment of Ukrainian grain storage depots in what have recently become signature tactics in the almost 18-month war.

A three-hour nighttime Russian drone attack in Ukraine's southern Odesa region overnight Tuesday caused a blaze at grain facilities, Odesa Regional Military Administration Head Oleh Kiper wrote on the Telegram messaging app. Ukrainian air defence systems downed nine Shahed drones, Kiper said.

"Unfortunately, there are hits on production and transshipment complexes," he said, adding that no casualties had been reported.

Russia zeroed in on Odesa last month, crippling significant parts of the port city's grain facilities, days after President Vladimir Putin broke off Russia's participation in the Black Sea Grain Initiative. That wartime deal enabled Ukraine's exports to reach many countries facing the threat of hunger.

Russian officials, meanwhile, claimed to have downed Ukrainian drones in Moscow and the surrounding region early Wednesday, the defence ministry and the mayor said.

No casualties were reported in

the drone attack, which has become almost a daily occurrence in the Russian capital.

Moscow Mayor Sergey Sobyannin said one drone smashed into a building under construction in Moscow City, a prestigious business complex hit by drones twice before. Several windows were broken in two buildings nearby and emergency services responded to the scene. Russia's Ministry of Defence said the drone had been electronically jammed.

It blamed the attack on Ukraine and said two other drones were shot down by air defense systems in the Mozhaik and Khimki areas of the Moscow region. Kyiv officials, as usual, neither confirmed nor denied Ukraine was behind the drone attacks. Moscow airports briefly closed but have now reopened, according to Russian state media.

Ukraine has since early this year sought to take the war into the heart of Russia. It has increasingly targeted Moscow's military assets behind the front lines in eastern and southern Ukraine and at the same time has launched drones against Moscow.

Though drone attacks on Russian soil have occurred almost daily in recent weeks, they have caused little damage and no victims. Ukraine hasn't acknowledged responsibility for the attempted drone strikes. (AP)

PM Modi, South African Prez Ramaphosa discuss ways to further deepen bilateral ties

JOHANNESBURG, Aug 23: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday said he had an excellent meeting with South African President Cyril Ramaphosa and discussed a range of issues aimed at deepening the bilateral ties and also working jointly to strengthen the voice of the Global South.

Prime Minister Modi, who is on a three-day visit to South Africa and Greece, reached here on Tuesday at the invitation of President Ramaphosa to attend the 15th BRICS Summit being held under the South African Chairmanship from August 22-24.

"Had an excellent meeting with President @Cyril-Ramaphosa," Modi tweeted after the meeting held ahead of the BRICS Summit.

"We discussed a wide range of issues aimed at deepening India-South Africa relations.

Trade, defence and investment linkages featured prominently in our discussions. We will keep working together to strengthen the voice of the Global South as well," he said, sharing some photographs of the meeting.

The Global South is generally seen as home to Brazil, India, Indonesia and China, which, along with Nigeria and Mexico, are the largest Southern states in terms of land area and population. "BRICS has been pursuing a strong cooperation agenda across various sectors. We value that BRICS has become a platform for discussing and deliberating on issues of concern for the entire Global South, including development imperatives and reform of the multilateral system," Modi said in New Delhi before his departure for Johannesburg. The Summit, he said, will



provide a useful opportunity for BRICS to identify future areas of cooperation and review institutional development. This is the first in-person BRICS Summit after three consecutive years of virtual meetings because of the Covid-19 pandemic.

On Tuesday, Modi attended the Leaders' Retreat along with his counterparts from China, South Africa and Brazil. Russian President Vladimir Putin has not travelled to Johannesburg for the annual summit of the BRICS nations comprising

Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa.

"The Retreat which took place in closed format, was an opportunity for the leaders to discuss global developments and ways for leveraging the BRICS platform to find solutions to global challenges," the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said in a press release.

The prime minister also participated in the BRICS Business Forum Leaders' Dialogue on Tuesday, the MEA said in another press release.

During the meeting, Modi highlighted the various reforms being undertaken by India to improve the ease of doing business, including technology-based solutions to address the social and economic challenges, it said. He also invited BRICS business leaders to participate in India's developmental journey. (PTI)

Pak will not surrender to radicalism and intolerance: Caretaker PM

KARACHI, Aug 23: Pakistan's caretaker Prime Minister Anwaarul Haq Kakar on Wednesday said the war on terror will continue and it will not surrender to radicalism, extremism and intolerance, a day after outlawed TTP militants killed six soldiers.

Addressing a press conference in Karachi, he said, "Those who have misconceptions that such attacks will tire us should know that we will never forget our martyrs or their sacrifices and won't refrain from such sacrifices in future," the Dawn newspaper quoted him as saying.

Kakar's statement comes a day after six Pakistani soldiers were killed during an attack by Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) terrorists on a convoy of security forces in the restive Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province.

The attacks on security forces have seen a rise in the country after the truce between the Pakistan government and TTP ended in November last year.

"Pakistan will not surrender in front of radicalism, extremism and intolerance ... this is our home and we will run

the country on our terms," Kakar stressed.

The first-time Senator from Balochistan province pointed out that Pakistan was spending its own money, collected through taxes on the country's law enforcement agencies.

"We are not fighting on donations," the premier said.

Referring to the suicide bombers as "the dogs of hell", Kakar said, "Do they think that my soldiers sitting in Waziristan, Balochistan or any other corner of the country don't know what God has in store for them."

He said that all the law enforcement personnel, whether they were combating external aggression or were playing their role for internal security, were honoured and respected by the entire nation.

Kakar said that the government will relentlessly pursue the terrorists and they will be taken to task as per the law.

He went on to assert that Pakistan had a clear message for those who are spreading violence: "We will keep fighting against the misguided." (PTI)

Thaksin moved from prison to a hospital less than a day after he returned to Thailand from exile

BANGKOK, Aug 23: Thailand's divisive former Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra was transferred from prison to a hospital early Wednesday, less than a day after he returned from an extended exile and started serving an 8-year sentence.

He had returned to Thailand after 15 years abroad on the same day a party linked to him won a parliamentary vote to form a new government. Thaksin was then sent to prison to serve sentences from several criminal convictions made in absentia that he had decried as politically motivated.

The prison reported Thaksin had high blood pressure and low oxygen, he could not sleep and felt tightness in his chest, according to a statement from Sithi Sutivong, deputy director-general of the Corrections Department.

Doctors at the prison's hospital said he should be transferred to prevent life-threatening risks, the statement said. Corrections officials previously had said Thaksin, 74, was considered vulnerable due to his age and chronic conditions of his heart and lungs, high blood pressure, and back problems.

Hours after Thaksin's return to Thailand, Pheu Thai party candidate Srettha Thavisin secured enough votes to become prime minister, ending over three months of suspense, legal wrangling and horse trading that followed May elections. The party had entered a coalition with military parties linked to a coup that removed it from power in 2014, and excluded the progressive Move Forward Party that won the most votes in the elections. Srettha is expected to receive a royal endorsement as prime minister later Wednesday, according to Thai media.

Pheu Thai is the latest in a string of parties affiliated with Thaksin, who was ousted in a 2006 military coup. The coup that ousted him triggered nearly two decades of deep political divisions that pitted a mostly poor, rural majority in the north that supports Thaksin against royalists, the military and their urban backers.

A Pheu Thai government led by Thaksin's sister, Yingluck Shinawatra, was ousted in the 2014 coup by then-army chief Prayuth Chan-ocha, who is now the outgoing prime minister. (AP)

Polls open in Zimbabwe as the president known as 'the crocodile' seeks a second and final term

HARARE, Aug 23: Polls opened in Zimbabwe on Wednesday as President Emmerson Mnangagwa seeks a second and final term in a country with a history of violent and disputed votes. These are the second general elections since the ouster of longtime repressive ruler Robert Mugabe in a coup in 2017.

Twelve presidential candidates are on the ballot, but the main contest is expected to be between the 80-year-old Mnangagwa, known as the "the crocodile", and 45-year-old opposition leader Nelson Chamisa. Mnangagwa narrowly beat Chamisa in a disputed election in 2018.

Chamisa hopes to break the ruling ZANU-PF party's 43-year hold on power. Zimbabwe has known only two leaders since gaining independence from white minority rule in 1980.

A runoff election will be held on October 2, if no candidate wins a clear majority in the first round. This election will also determine the makeup of the 350-seat parliament and close to 2,000 local council positions.

In several poor townships of the capital, Harare, some people were at polling stations two hours before voting opened, fearing long lines.

"It's becoming tougher to survive in this country," said Basil Chendambuya, 50, an early voter in the working-class township of Kuwadzana in Harare.

"I am hoping for change. This is my third time to vote and I am praying hard that this time my vote counts. I am getting desperate, so God has to intervene this time round."

The father of three said his two adult children are working menial jobs and surviving "hand to mouth."

The southern African nation of 15

million people has vast mineral resources, including Africa's largest reserves of lithium, a key component in making electric car batteries. But watchdogs have long alleged that widespread corruption and mismanagement have gutted much of the country's potential.

Ahead of the election, the opposition and human rights groups including Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International accused Mnangagwa of seeking to silence dissent amid rising tensions due to a currency crisis, a sharp hike in food prices, a weakening public health system and a lack of formal jobs. Mnangagwa was a close ally of Mugabe

and served as vice president before a fallout ahead of the 2017 coup.

He has sought to portray himself as a reformer, but many accuse him of being even more repressive than the man he helped remove from power.

Zimbabwe has been under United States and European Union sanctions for the past two decades over allegations of human rights abuses, charges denied by the ruling party.

Mnangagwa has in recent years repeated much of Mugabe's rhetoric against the West, accusing it of seeking to topple his regime.

Ahead of elections, observers from the EU and the US have come under criticism from officials and state-run media for allegedly being biased against the ruling party.

The Carter Centre, invited by the government to observe the polls, has said 30 members of its 48-member observer team were yet to be accredited on the eve of the elections and any further delay will "hinder its ability to observe polling, counting, and tabulation in many locations." (AP)

Iran sentences 8 to prison over paramilitary's death

DUBAI, Aug 23: Iran sentenced seven men and a woman to prison after their convictions over allegedly aiding two men who were earlier executed for killing a paramilitary volunteer during the nationwide protests last year that followed Mahsa Amini's death in police custody, state media reported on Wednesday.

The sentences come just ahead of the one-year anniversary of Amini's Sept. 16 death, as authorities have been rounding up activists and others in an apparent attempt to tamp down on any dissent ahead of it.

The report by the judiciary's Mizan news agency offered the first official confirmation of the sentences apparently handed

down earlier by a Revolutionary Court in the city of Karaj, where the November slaying happened. The report said the country's Supreme Court upheld the sentences handed down following an appeal by the lawyers for those convicted.

The defendants were found guilty of committing "warfare" and of "corruption on Earth," a term often used to describe attempts to undermine the Iranian government, Mizan said.

Iran's foreign minister visits Saudi Arabia's powerful crown prince as tensions between rivals ease. Iran's Revolutionary Court conducts closed-door hearings and has long been criticized by activists and other na-

tions for their harsh sentences against opposition figures and those with Western ties. The tribunals don't allow those on trial to pick their own lawyers or see the evidence against them. Among those sentenced, Dr. Hamid Qarabaznalu received a 15-year sentence, while his wife Farzaneh received a five-year sentence, Mizan said. The two must serve that time in a prison far from their homes, as must the others sentenced in the case. It's not clear exactly what the doctor and his wife did. However, during the protests, doctors who treated those taking part in the demonstrations faced harassment and arrest.

Their sentencing comes as

part of the case that saw two men identified as Mohammad Mehdi Karami and Mohammad Hosseini executed in January.

The men had been convicted of killing Ruhollah Ajamian, a member of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard's volunteer Basij force, in the city of Karaj, some 40 kilometers (25 miles) northwest of Tehran, on Nov. 3. The Basij were deployed in major cities during the demonstrations, attacking and detaining protesters who in many cases fought back.

More than 500 people were killed and 22,000 others arrested in the security crackdown that followed the demonstrations. (AP)

Franklin is the seventh named storm of the Atlantic hurricane season, which runs from June 1 to Nov 30

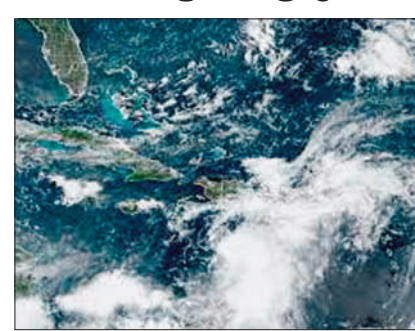
Tropical Storm Franklin nears Haiti and the Dominican Republic bringing fears of floods, landslides

SANTO DOMINGO, Aug 23: Tropical Storm Franklin roared toward the island of Hispaniola shared by the Dominican Republic and Haiti early Wednesday, bringing fears it would trigger deadly landslides and heavy flooding in both countries.

Franklin was expected to swirl above the island for most of Wednesday, with forecasters warning the storm could dump up to 10 inches (25 centimeters) of rain, with a maximum of 15 inches (38 centimeters) in isolated areas.

By early Wednesday morning, the storm was centered about 145 miles (235 kilometers) southwest of Santo Domingo, the capital of the Dominican Republic, according to the National Hurricane Center in Miami. It had maximum winds of 45 mph (75 kph) with higher gusts and was moving northward at 9 mph (15 kph).

Meanwhile, Tropical Storm Harold weakened into a tropical depression Tuesday night after making landfall in South Texas, bringing strong winds, rain and leaving thousands of homes without power.



Haiti and Dominican Republic warn of floods and landslides as Tropical Storm Franklin nears

In the Caribbean, officials were most concerned about Franklin's impact in Haiti, which is vulnerable to catastrophic flooding given the country's severe erosion.

Prime Minister Ariel Henry had urged Haitians on Tuesday to stock up on water, food and medication as authorities checked on some of the more than 200,000 people displaced by gang violence, with some liv-

ing on the street or in makeshift shelters.

Some recalled how a powerful thunderstorm that unleashed heavy rains one day in June left more than 40 people dead across Haiti.

In the Dominican Republic, officials shuttered schools, government agencies and several airports with at least 24 of the country's 31 provinces under red alert.

Flooding already was reported on Tuesday in the capital of Santo Domingo and beyond, where residents prepared for heavy rainfall.

"We're scared of the river," said Doralisa Sánchez, a government employee who lives near the Ozama River that divides the capital and has had to flee her home three times during previous storms.

She hoped Franklin wouldn't force her to seek shelter and temporarily abandon her home because she said people steal belongings left behind.

Others, like businesswoman Albita Achangel, worried they had nowhere to go if the waters started rising.

"We are hoping for God's will," she

said, adding that her patio already was flooded.

The storm worried thousands of Dominicans who live in flood-prone areas.

"When two drops of water fall here, this suddenly becomes flooded," said Juan Olivo Urbáez, who owns a small business in a community near the Ozama River.

A tropical storm warning was in effect for the entire southern coast of the Dominican Republic and Haiti, as well as the entire northern Dominican coast. A tropical storm watch was posted for the Turks and Caicos Islands.

Franklin is the seventh named storm of the Atlantic hurricane season, which runs from June 1 to Nov. 30. An eighth named storm, Gert, dissipated on Tuesday.

On Aug. 10, the National Ocean and Atmospheric Administration updated its forecast and warned that this year's hurricane season would be above normal. Between 14 to 21 named storms are forecast. Of those, six to 11 could become hurricanes, with two to five of them possibly becoming major hurricanes. (AP)

MIZORAM BRIDGE COLLAPSE

Mallikarjun Kharge, Rahul Gandhi
‘deeply saddened’ by loss of lives



NEW DELHI, Aug 23: Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge and former party chief Rahul Gandhi on Wednesday said they were saddened at the loss of lives of several people in a railway bridge collapse in Mizoram and urged the authorities to speed up the rescue and relief work.

“Deeply saddened to learn about the terrible tragedy in Sairang area, in Mizoram, where an under construction railway bridge collapsed, resulting in the loss of lives of several people, including construction workers.”

“Our heartfelt sympathies and thoughts are with the families of the bereaved. We hope for the speedy recovery of the injured,” Kharge said on X, formerly Twitter.

“We urge the authorities to expedite the rescue and relief work, so that precious lives can be saved,” he also said.

Rahul Gandhi also said he was deeply saddened by the tragic news of the death of several people due to the collapse of an under-

construction railway overbridge in Mizoram.

“My deepest condolences to the bereaved families. Wish a speedy recovery to those injured. I urge Congress workers to provide all possible help in relief and rescue efforts,” Gandhi said on X.

At least 17 workers were killed and several others are feared trapped after the under-construction railway bridge collapsed near Sairang area of Mizoram on Wednesday, police said.

Nearly 35-40 workers were present at the site, about 21 km from Aizawl, when the incident occurred around 10 am, they said.

“Seventeen bodies have been recovered from the debris so far... many others are still missing,” a police officer said.

Rescue and relief efforts are underway, he said.

In a post on X, Prime Minister Narendra Modi condoled with the family members of the deceased, and announced an ex gratia of Rs 2 lakh each for the next of kin of the victims. (PTI)

Pre-fabricated houses for violence-hit people temporary measure: Manipur CM

IMPHAL, Aug 23: Manipur chief minister N Biren Singh on Wednesday said that the pre-fabricated houses built for those affected by violence are not a permanent arrangement and was constructed to ease the hardship faced by those living in relief camps.

He also said that the situation in the northeastern state is gradually improving.

Singh was speaking at a programme where temporary shelter homes were handed over to over 300 families at Sajiwa Jail Complex in Imphal East district. They have been staying in various relief camps in the same area.

“These are temporary measures. Our first priority is to rehabilitate the affected people in both hills and the valley. Pre-fabricated houses are being built at eight sites,” the chief minister said.

Prefabricated houses are ready-made structures that are constructed off-site and assembled at



the place where the homes will be set up.

Singh said that 320 houses have been built at Kwakta in Bishnupur district, 400 at Sajiwa and 200 at Sawbung in Imphal East, while 400 such houses were constructed at Yaithibi Loukol in Thoubal district.

“In the valley, shifting will be done in the next 10-15 days. We

have also started a survey for the construction of permanent structures in several localities,” he said.

The chief minister said there will be a little delay in Kangpokpi and Churachandpur districts.

“Two sites have been considered for 700 families in Kangpokpi district. One site has been identified and ground levelling is almost done there. For Chu-

rachandpur too, a site for construction is almost identified,” Singh said.

He said the situation in the state is improving.

“The apprehension that there might be gun attacks is mostly gone now. We believe normalcy will be restored. This has been possible because of the collective efforts,” the chief minister said.

The violence in the state erupted in early May after a ‘Tribal Solidarity March’ was organised in the hill districts to protest against the Meitei community’s demand for Scheduled Tribe (ST) status.

Since then, more than 160 people have died and several hundreds were injured in ethnic clashes in Manipur.

Meiteis account for about 53 per cent of Manipur’s population and live mostly in the Imphal Valley, while tribals, which include Nagas and Kukis, constitute 40 per cent and reside mainly in the hill districts. (PTI)

Police solves two burglary cases in Sikkim within 30 hours, two arrested

GANGTOK, Aug 23: Police solved two burglary cases in Sikkim’s Pakyong district within 30 hours, an official said on Wednesday.

A case of burglary was reported from a resort and a petrol pump from Pakyong town in Pakyong district, 27 km from the capital Gangtok on the intervening night of August 20 and 21.

The burglars had entered the restaurant of the resort at night and looted cash and valuables. It was also reported that the same persons had also committed theft in a nearby petrol pump during the same night, the officer said.

Under the direction of SSP Pakyong a team consisting of ASP Pakyong, along with SHO Pradeep Chettri was put on the job to trace the burglars.

The main accused Sonam Sherpa aged was arrested from Rangpo while he was planning to flee to Nepal on August 22.

The stolen valuables and cash was recovered from his possession. (PTI)

Feeding monkeys in Sikkim will invite a fine of ₹ 5,000



GANGTOK, Aug 23: The Sikkim government’s Forest, Environment and Wildlife department has said that feeding of monkeys or improper disposal of food waste will be treated as an offence and violators will be fined ₹ 5,000.

It said that monkey (Macaque species) is a protected species, and feeding it is strictly prohibited under the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 and the Environment (Protection) Act 1986.

The Chief Wildlife Warden of Sikkim, Sandeep Tambe in a public notice dated August 19 said “This is to highlight an important matter that concerns the safety and well-being of all of us. Human feeding of monkeys (Macaque species) and improper management of food waste has resulted in unnatural growth in their population.

“As a result, residents in urban and rural areas are faced with increased instances of human-monkey conflict, which has now grown into a public health and safety issue. It is essential to recognize that feeding them and improperly disposing food waste process risks and concerns.”

The notice also said that monkeys fed by humans lose their sense of fear and have now learnt to “associate food with people” and they are attracted and slowly become aggressive.

Monkeys are wild animals and their behaviour can be unpredictable, feeding them encourages them to approach humans, increasing the risk of bites or injuries, especially to women and children. Also, transmission of zoonotic disease from primates to humans and vice versa is another risk.

Feeding monkeys can create an unsanitary environment, leading to the accumulation of waste and attracting pests, which can adversely affect the hygiene, the notice said.

It said when food becomes readily available, instead of spending their time foraging in forests, these macaques visit offices, homes, religious places, supermarkets and shops hoping to get food from humans.

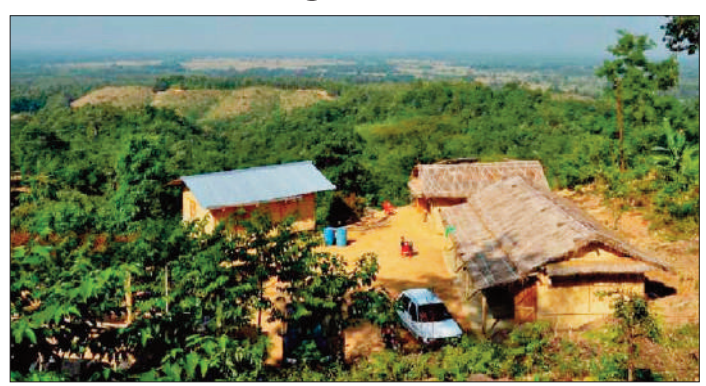
Human food products are calorie-rich and an easily digestible source of food, however, these foods elevate stress levels and increase inter-group aggression. Hence, providing food to monkeys can disrupt their natural feeding patterns and behaviour. (PTI)

A hilly Arunachal village where littering invites steep penalty

ITANAGAR, Aug 23: Roads and other public places littered with garbage are often found in various urban and rural areas across the country, but a non-descript village atop a hill in Arunachal Pradesh is spick and span always, thanks to the efforts of the residents who are fined if caught throwing wastes outside their homes.

For a first-timer to Kugi Pomte, situated about 12 kilometres from West Siang district headquarters Aalo, it looks like a typical Garo community village. However, it stands apart from others as villagers ensure that no garbage is left unattended for more than a day.

The villagers developed the habit of keeping their village clean since the ‘80s, much before the launching of the central government’s sanitation programmes - the Nirmal Bharat Abhiyan in 1999 or the Swachh Bharat Mis-



sion in 2014.

“The outbreak of malaria and other diseases in the ‘80s was the main cause that prompted us to adopt cleanliness and sanitation in the village. We sensitised the villagers about keeping our surroundings clean and maintaining personal hygiene to keep diseases at bay.

“Initially, it was tough, but people have realised the benefits of cleanliness, and it has helped in maintaining the tempo,” Village secretary Jomgam Ete said.

None will find polythene bags, plastic bottles, dead animals and littered trash in the village.

All non-biodegradable items are dumped at a designated place out-

side the village from where a government agency collects them and takes them somewhere else. Dead animals and poultry birds are buried at a particular site.

“There are some rules and regulations which have to be followed by all. Breaching the rules invites a penalty to the tune of ₹ 500. Besides, those who violate the rule will have to lift the garbage immediately,” the village secretary said.

Open defecation will also invite a heavy penalty. All fine amounts go to the Village Council.

With nearly 30 households and a population of over 183 adult members, the village achieved 100 per cent sanitation by constructing individual household toilets in November 2003, Ete said.

The village received a trophy from the West Siang district administration for its sanitation drive in 2004. It was also conferred with

the Nirmal Gram Puraskar by the then state Governor, Gen (Retd) J J Singh five years later.

The villagers conduct cleanliness drives twice a year - sometime in August and October 2. The date in August is decided by the villagers according to their convenience.

“Every year, we discuss ways to improve sanitation and hygiene,” Dege Ete, a villager said.

Interestingly, smoking is strictly prohibited during major public gatherings or ceremonies in the village. Serving of Indian Made Foreign Liquor (IMFL) is prohibited on any occasion, though locally-made alcoholic beverages are allowed.

“We indulge in these things when we are away, but once we are in the village, we have to accept them. Rules are rules,” smiled villager Kirnya Ete. (PTI)

Restriction order regarding African swine fever

HT Bureau
GUWAHATI, Aug 23: In response to the identification of cases of African swine fever in multiple locations within the Kohima district, deputy commissioner Kohima, Shanavas C, has issued a restrictive order.

The order designates Sechū Zubza as an infected zone, encompassing a radius of 1km from the infected premises. Additionally, a Surveillance Zone has been established, covering a 10 km radius from the infected premises.

The order stipulates several restrictions, including prohibition on the slaughter of pigs within the designated zones, ban on the import and export of pigs and piglets within the affected areas and transportation of pigs and pork products within the specified locations.

These restrictions are to be strictly adhered to in the identified areas until further notice.

Rio mulls to regulate handloom and textile sector in Nagaland

HT Correspondent
DIMAPUR, Aug 23: Nagaland chief minister Neiphiu Rio proposed to regulate the handloom and textile sector in the state.

Addressing an inter-departmental meeting on the promotion of handloom, textiles, and Naga designs at the chief minister’s residential complex in Kohima on Wednesday, Rio called for establishment of a structured framework to regulate the textile industry within the state, with government facilitation of logistical support, expertise through training, and coherent marketing policies.

Proposing the creation of a state-level body for the purpose, he emphasised its role in approving and overseeing the use of traditional designs for commercial purposes while ensuring quality control.

Rio highlighted the significance of the Naga culture, traditions, and vibrant traditional attire.



Stressing the necessity to safeguard and advance these elements, he underlined the distinctiveness of cultural and traditional designs that adorn Naga attire, garnering global intrigue.

While preserving cultural heritage is pivotal, Rio stressed the importance of aligning with modern demands and adapting products to market needs. He also called for professionalism in production to maintain competitive-

ness in terms of quality and pricing across the nation.

Minister for women resource development and horticulture Salhoutuonuo Kruse called for creating an environment conducive to designer creativity.

Adviser to industries and commerce department Hekani Jakhalu stressed the need for a comprehensive textile policy and a digital portal for weaver data. She also underscored the need for skill de-

velopment, infrastructure enhancement for marketing, and collaboration with textile experts.

Chief secretary J Alam raised concern over low weaver wages, suggesting a wage policy with a minimum wage determination. He said technical support groups and experts are essential for development of the sector, along with generic branding to protect and promote Nagaland’s unique identity.

Arunachal Governor asks BRO to integrate remote border villages



ITANAGAR, Aug 23: Arunachal Pradesh Governor Lt Gen KT Parnai has encouraged the Border Roads Organisation (BRO) to expedite the integration of remote border villages under the vibrant village programme and foster inclusivity and development in border areas of the state.

The governor, who is on a two-day visit to East Siang district, during a meeting with BRO’s Project Brahman chief engineer AK Mishra at Pasighat, underscored the need to keep the road maintained so as to cause least discomfort to villagers.

Parnai stressed on timely completion of roads and ensuring proper quality of work, an official statement informed here on Wednesday.

The BRO chief engineer provided a comprehensive briefing on the ongoing projects under Project Brahman, focusing on enhancing regional connectivity and local development.

The governor, while recognising the paramount im-

portance of robust road communication, underlined the need to accelerate the pace of road construction to ensure timely completion of nationally significant projects and the uplift of local communities.

The governor added that improved road infrastructure would have a far-reaching positive impact on the socio-economic conditions of rural population.

Parnai, while highlighting enhanced access to education and healthcare services as a significant benefit due to good roads, pointed out the potential for increased tourism given the state’s natural beauty.

He urged the BRO and all individuals associated with the premier road construction agency to actively participate in the developmental trajectory of Arunachal Pradesh.

The governor complimented the BRO, Project Brahman and all its personnel for their dedicated and committed efforts to progress strategic roads in difficult terrain and conditions. (PTI)

Noklak youth creates environment-friendly woodstove for cooking

HT Correspondent
DIMAPUR, Aug 23: A village youth of Noklak district in Nagaland has created an environment-friendly woodstove that can be used for cooking and various other purposes.

Besides the woodstove created under the brand name ‘Made in Noklak Woodstove’, Tumong of Noklak village had also created an electric bike and dryer machines in recent years.

Tumong, in his 20s, won the runner-up prize in the Nagaland Start-Up Green Innovation Challenge held at Dimapur YouthNet office on August 16, 2023.

Noklak deputy commissioner Arikumba launched the ‘Made in Noklak Woodstove’ at White Hall in Noklak village on August 22. The Thang Students’ Union promoted the ‘Made in Noklak Woodstove’ initiative and organised the launching programme.

The DC commended Tumong for his strong determination to create an environment-friendly woodstove. He advised Tumong to

consider obtaining patent rights for his innovative invention with guidance from the relevant department.

Calling him an asset for Noklak district, Arikumba expressed hope that Tumong’s innovative ideas would benefit the district as a whole. The DC urged him to maintain the same zeal and interest for his innovative ideas in the future.

He assured that the district administration would provide all possible assistance Tumong in the future.

During the launching programme, Tumong explained the various uses of the woodstove, including cooking. He said the woodstove will be made available in the market in the state.

Tumong expressed his gratitude to all who had assisted him in the process of creating the woodstove. He specifically thanked former Nokla DC Noklak Reny Wilfred, former SP Dr Pritpal Kaur and the industries and commerce department who had contributed to making his dream a reality.

CPI (M) seeks support from Tipra Motha, Cong to defeat BJP

AGARTALA, Aug 23: In a bid to consolidate the anti-BJP votes for the September 5 bypolls in the two Assembly constituencies in Tripura’s Sepahijala district, CPI(M) state secretary Jitendra Chaudhury held another round of meeting with the main opposition party, Tipra Motha, and Congress, a senior party leader said on Wednesday.

However, the meeting held on Tuesday night remained inclusive as Tipra Motha and Congress are yet to confirm their joint support for CPI(M) candidates in Boxanagar and Dhanpur.

“I had a meeting with opposition leader Animesh Debbarma and Congress state president Asish Kumar Saha to discuss the issue of preventing division of anti-BJP votes. They assured us of extending help but the final decision will be taken within the next 48 hours,” said a senior party leader. Debbarma claimed the CPI(M) has sought help from Tipra Motha, which has 13 MLAs in the 60-member House. “We told them that the CPI(M) unilaterally fielded candidates in both Assembly constituencies without our consent,” he said.

Asserting that Tipra Motha won’t support the ruling party in the bypolls, Debbarma said he assured the CPI(M) that they would discuss the issue of joint campaign within the party and let him know in 48 hours.

Debbarma said the party wanted to know the CPI(M)’s stand on Tipra Motha’s core demand of greater Tipraland before taking a final call of supporting the joint campaign. Although eight candidates are in the fray, the stage is set for a direct battle between the ruling BJP and CPI(M) in both the seats. Neither the Tipra Motha nor the Congress has fielded candidates for the bypolls. (PTI)



Himachal: Four killed in heavy rains, MeT issues red alert for four districts including Shimla

SHIMLA, Aug 23: Heavy overnight rains triggered landslides in Himachal Pradesh, claiming four lives and blocking over 200 more roads besides damaging some houses, officials said on Wednesday.

The meteorological office on Wednesday issued a red alert predicting "heavy to very heavy rainfall with isolated spells of extremely heavy" rains in four of the state's 12 districts for the next 24 hours. A total of 530 roads in the state are now shut following three major spells of heavy rains this Monsoon that have left a trail of death and destruction.

Shimla town was the most hit, with landslides and uprooted trees blocking the main cart road, the lifeline of the town as well as the Shimla-Mehli bypass at several points. Many houses have also developed cracks and people have been evacuated as a precautionary measure.

A migrant identified as Jhalo and his wife Rajkumari were found dead in their makeshift house in Baldeyan area of Shimla district, Superintendent of Police, Shimla, Sanjeev Kumar Gandhi told PTI.

The police officer also appealed to residents to avoid unnecessary travel. Two persons, Parma Nand (62) and his grandson Gopi (14), were killed in a landslide at Dagol



village of Seraj in Mandi district.

About 80 people have died in rain-related incidents in the state this month while a total of 227 people have died while 38 are still missing since the onset of monsoon in Himachal Pradesh on June 24. The red alert warning was issued in the afternoon for parts of Kangra, Kullu, Mandi and Shimla districts. The Met Department also issued an orange warning of heavy to very heavy rains on August 24.

All schools and colleges have been closed for two days beginning Wednesday in Shimla, Mandi and Solan districts.

The landslides also left some houses damaged in Solan district.

Deputy Commissioner, Solan, Manmohan Sharma told PTI that some houses have been damaged in Shakal village on the outskirts of Solan city as gushing waters entered the premises.

There are also reports of damage to a few houses and vehicles in Sabathu area following a landslide.

The roads that have been affected include National Highway NH 21 (Mandi-Kullu road) and NH 154 (Mandi-Pathankot), according to the data of the State Emergency Operation Centre.

Cracks have also developed in some houses in Shimla city. As a safety measure, houses were vacated in Panthaghati and Sanjauli

areas of Shimla city and landslides and uprooting of trees have been reported in some parts of the city, Deputy Commissioner, Shimla, Aditya Negi said.

Fearing danger, several people in Shimla city have left their houses and moved to other places.

Videos of people running to save their lives following landslides appeared on social media. A parked bus near the inter-state bus terminal in Shimla was buried following a landslide while several other vehicles were damaged in landslides near Navbahar, Himnand and other places. Many Shimla residents had a sleepless night as the city witnessed thunderstorms and lightning till 3 am.

Commuters also had a hard time as buses were not plying due to the risk of landslides and falling trees.

"I have walked for nearly six km to reach my office as buses were not plying. We were scared all night as loss of life in recent landslides have triggered fear," said resident Jagat Ram.

Heavy rains lashed several parts of the state overnight, with Bilaspur receiving 181 mm of rain followed by Bherthi 160 mm, Shimla 132 mm, Mandi 118 mm, Sundernagar 105 mm, Palampur 91 mm, Solan 77 mm.

Heavy rains are still continuing in several districts. (PTI)

India's space journey began in 1962 with formation of INCOSPAR: Cong

NEW DELHI, Aug 23: The Congress on Wednesday said India's space journey began in 1962 with the formation of INCOSPAR which was the result of the farsightedness of Homi Bhabha and Vikram Sarabhai, along with enthusiastic support from the country's first prime minister Jawaharlal Nehru.

With Chandrayaan-3 set to touch down on the lunar surface, the opposition party said former prime minister Manmohan Singh started the Chandrayaan programme which was taken forward by the next government. The Congress hoped for the success of the lunar mission.

The ISRO on Wednesday said it is all set to initiate the automatic landing sequence for its ambitious third Moon mission Chandrayaan-3's lander module to touch down on the lunar surface this evening.

In a post on X, Congress general secretary Jairam Ramesh said, "India's space journey began on February 23, 1962, with the formation of INCOSPAR (Indian National Committee for Space Research)—thanks to the farsightedness of Homi Bhabha and Vikram Sarabhai, along with the enthusiastic support of Nehru."

The committee comprised top scientists from premier scientific institutions across the country who came together in a spirit of collab-



oration and team work, he said.

Ramesh also shared a newspaper report on the formation of INCOSPAR.

In another post, Ramesh said that on December 25 1971, 52-year-old Vikram Sarabhai died suddenly and ISRO faced a serious crisis.

"What happened in the weeks that followed — and that gave ISRO a whole new momentum with Satish Dhawan's entry — is described in these excerpts from my book, 'Intertwined Lives: P N Haksar & Indira Gandhi'," he said in the post, sharing screenshots of paragraphs from his book.

Addressing a press conference at the AICC headquarters, Congress

leader Rajeev Shukla said the Chandrayaan programme was started under the Manmohan Singh dispensation and the next government took it forward.

"This is the effort of scientists and we want it to be successful," he added.

Responding to a question on BJP claiming credit for Chandrayaan, Shukla said there was an India before 2014 as well and there were contributions from all prime ministers.

The BJP people do not even acknowledge the contribution of Atal Bihari Vajpayee, he alleged.

"So there are efforts by all governments. We hope for the mission is successful," he said. (PTI)

Cong should not politicise natural disasters: BJP's Himachal in-charge

NOIDA, Aug 23: BJP's Himachal Pradesh in-charge Avinash Rai Khanna on Wednesday said a major effort is required to rebuild the state after the recent natural disasters and asserted that the Congress-led government should not politicise the issue. The BJP leader also demanded the Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu-led government should come out with a policy to minimise the loss of lives and properties in the event of natural disasters.

"The state government needs to come out with a good policy so that loss of lives and properties due to such natural calamities is minimised. The biggest responsibility lies with the state government. First of all, they should compensate the people for the loss incurred. There should be efforts to prevent loss of lives, damage to properties. The tragedy is huge and everyone should make efforts in rebuilding the state," Khanna told PTI during a private visit here.

"The state's Congress government should not politicise the issue. Often a demand comes that this disaster should be declared as a 'national calamity'. But there's a parameter for declaring any tragedy as a 'national calamity'. It has been declared as state calamity and our people, including LoP (Leader of Opposition) Jairam Thakur, our state president, MLAs and leaders are working in the state to extend whatever relief is possible," he added. Khanna said the priority right now is also rebuilding road connectivity since this is the season for apple.

"We are also making efforts for that. A lot of farmers there grow



apples and the intention is to prevent damage to their produce," he added. Khanna said the BJP, which is now in opposition in Himachal Pradesh, responded immediately to the calamity, which had a devastating effect on life and property in the state.

He said his party MLAs in the state immediately donated their one month's salary for relief while Prime Minister Narendra Modi also provided help and BJP national president JP Nadra also visited the state to oversee relief operations. Nadra assured all possible help from the Centre, the former Rajya Sabha MP noted.

Khanna also said a large part of the adjoining state of Punjab is also facing difficulties in the wake of the natural disaster in north India.

"Punjab is an agriculture-driven state. When the floods occurred, the rivers also brought with it a lot of sand which now remains accumulated in farmlands. The standing crop in farms was destroyed while the farms are not ready for future farming because of the sand," the BJP leader said.

"I have written a letter to Punjab

Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann and met with Governor Banwarilal Purohit. I have also written to Punjab government's Chief Secretary (Anurag Verma) that sand should be immediately removed from the farms or farmers be allowed to remove the sand on their own and the government should provide compensation for it to them," he added.

Citing the example of his own usage of the MPLAD funds as the Rajya Sabha MP from 2010 to 2016, Khanna called on the legislators to help in rebuilding the affected regions in the two states. "I had used my MPLAD funds to develop a bus stand in a panchayat area in Nurpur Bedi near Ropar. The bus stand was built for ₹ 26 lakh and its primary aim was to provide relief to local people. However, this bus stand is now leased out on an annual basis and generates a tax of ₹ 10 lakh every year. It has become profitable," he said.

Meanwhile, the Congress demanded that the Centre announce a ₹ 10,000 crore special package for Himachal Pradesh and declare the devastation there due to rains as a 'national disaster'.

Congress' Himachal Pradesh in-charge Rajeev Shukla on Wednesday urged Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla and Rajya Sabha chairman Jagdeep Dhankhar to allow all the MPs, in both Houses of Parliament, to provide relief to the hill state out of the MP Local Area Development Fund. Terming the crisis in Himachal Pradesh as unprecedented, the Congress leader said the hill state is not getting the national attention required as it has never suffered so much devastation in its history. (PTI)

Tussle between Nitish Kumar govt and Raj Bhavan escalates over appointment of VCs



PATNA, Aug 23: The ongoing tussle between the Nitish Kumar government and the Raj Bhavan further escalated with the Bihar education department inviting applications for the post of vice-chancellors (VC) in different universities days after Governor (Chancellor) Rajendra Vishwanath Arlekar's secretariat issued a similar advertisement.

The chancellor's secretariat earlier invited applications for the post of VCs in Patna University, Lalit Narayan Mithila University (Darbhanga), Kameshwar Singh Darbhanga Sanskrit University, Babasaheb Bhimrao Ambedkar Bihar University (Muzaffarpur), Jai Prakash University (Chapra), BN Mandal University (Madhepura) and Aryabhata Knowledge University (Patna), while the education department on Tuesday invited applications for only five, leaving the last two. The terms and conditions for the posts are almost the same in both advertisements, except the last date for submission of applications. According to a circular by the chancellor's secre-

tariat, the date for submission of applications for the post in seven universities is between August 24 and 27 while the last date in the education department's advertisement is September 13.

It may be recalled that the Nitish Kumar government and the Raj Bhavan have already locked horns over the freezing of bank accounts of the VC and pro-VC of Babasaheb Bhimrao Ambedkar Bihar University, Muzaffarpur.

The education department refused to withdraw its earlier order on freezing the bank accounts of the top officials of the university as directed by the Raj Bhavan. The state education department on August 17 stopped the salaries of the vice-chancellor and pro-VC for their alleged failure in inspecting the educational institutions under their jurisdiction and also for not attending a review meeting convened by the department.

A day later, Robert L Chongthu, principal secretary to the governor, sent a letter to the bank concerned, directing it to defreeze the accounts of the two officials and the

university with immediate effect.

These developments have triggered a political slugfest between the ruling alliance partners of Mahagathabandhan government and the opposition BJP.

Coming in support of the governor, Bihar BJP spokesperson Nikhil Anand told PTI, "The governor's office has invited applications for the appointment of VCs and when the due date was about to get over, the state education department has notified appointment of same VCs from its own end."

He added, "It is quite obvious that Bihar chief minister Nitish Kumar deliberately wants to create a scene of showdown with the governor-cum-chancellor of universities in the state. Basically, Nitishji wants universities and colleges in Bihar to be run like already defunct government schools and their teachers treated like the secretariat staff."

"The Bihar government has already failed to implement the new education policy forcing students of Bihar to take admission in universities in other states. The tragedy is that from 1990 to 2005, it was Lalu Prasad and now from 2005 to till date, it is Nitish Kumar who is solely responsible for the collapse of higher education in Bihar."

Commenting on the governor's move, RJD spokesperson Mrityunjay Tiwari told PTI, "Steps taken by the state education department for the appointment of VCs as per the law. BJP should not politicise the matter of appointment of VCs...they (BJP leaders) should not give it a political colour." (PTI)

Ace cricketer Sachin Tendulkar is EC's national icon

NEW DELHI, Aug 23: As the Election Commission battles urban and youth apathy towards voting, cricketing legend Sachin Tendulkar was on Wednesday appointed as a "national icon" of the poll panel to encourage greater voter participation in elections.

Tendulkar was made the national icon as the EC gears up to hold assembly polls in five states sometime in October-November and Lok Sabha elections in 2024.

A memorandum of understanding was signed between Tendulkar and the poll panel. As part of the three-year agreement, the cricketer will spread voter awareness.

Addressing the gathering, Tendulkar said India is the biggest democracy in the world and it is our prime responsibility to exercise our voting rights. He reminded the gathering that he had said that in his second innings, he will continue to bat for India.

Election Commissioner Anup Chandra Pandey said the "pitch" on which EC plays to encourage voters to come out and exercise their franchise is "tough". But he expressed confidence that Tendulkar will come out with flying colours. Election Commissioner Arun Goel said the voter turnout was the maximum at 67 per cent in the 2019 LS polls. He said more needs to be achieved in enhancing voter turnout.

He said in spite of extending the best of facilities at polling stations for voters, some pockets have seen poor voter turnout.

The poll panel has recognised urban and youth apathy as one of the prime reasons for poor voter turnout in certain cities. (PTI)

Anti-Sikh riots: Delhi court frames charges against ex-MP Sajjan Kumar

NEW DELHI, Aug 23: Calling Congress leader Sajjan Kumar the "principal abettor" in a case related to the burning of a Gurudwara during the 1984 anti-Sikh riots, a Delhi court on Wednesday framed charges against the former MP, paving the way for his trial.

Special Judge M K Nagpal said he was of "prima facie" view that oral and documentary evidence placed on record by the prosecution was sufficient to hold that an unlawful assembly or mob consisting of hundreds of people armed with dandas, iron rods, bricks and stones etc. had gathered near the Gurudwara in Gulab Bagh in the national capital's Nawada area on November 1, 1984 at around 11 am.

"Accused Sajjan Kumar was also a part of the said mob and common object of the said mob was to put the above said Gurudwara on fire and to burn and loot the articles lying therein and also to burn and destroy the houses of Sikhs situated in the said locality, to damage, destroy or loot their articles or property and to kill the Sikhs residing in that locality, in order to avenge killing of the then Prime Minister Smt. Indira Gandhi," the judge said.

The judge, however, discharged Kumar of the charge of murder under Section 302 of IPC in another case of riots that took place on November 2, 1984 that left two men—Sohan Singh and Avtar Singh—dead and several others injured outside the Congress party office in Uttam Nagar.

While ordering framing of the charges in the case related to the November 1 incident, the judge noted that Kumar had "prima facie" instigated others in the mob, who remained unknown and could not be identified during the investigation, to achieve the above illegal objectives including burning down the Gurudwara.

The mob damaged or looted the articles lying there, burnt the house of a man named Nath Singh and his truck and scooter, along with articles and properties of other Sikhs, the court said.

The mob also attempted to kill Gurcharan Singh by throwing him on a burning truck and inflicted injuries on Jaspal Kaur, Sohan Singh and Nath Singh.

The court said a prima facie case was made out against the accused for commission of the offences punishable under various sections of IPC, including those for rioting, attempt to murder, dacoity, promoting enmity between different groups on grounds of religion, race etc., outraging religious feelings of any class by insulting its religion or religious beliefs and causing grievous hurt. It said Sajjan Kumar was the "principal abettor" at the scene of the crime. (PTI)

Over 90 % doctors say absence of guidelines a major cause behind low adoption of adult vaccination in India

NEW DELHI, Aug 23: Only 16 per cent of the people aged 50 and above have taken any adult vaccine even though 71 per cent of those in the age group are aware of it, with a majority of doctors citing the absence of formal guidelines as a major cause for the lack of adoption of adult vaccination, according to a survey.

The survey was conducted recently by the Association of Physicians in India (API) and Ipsos, a global market research and polling firm, in 16 cities among those aged 50 years and older, their caregivers and doctors. It yielded compelling insights into why there is a low adoption of adult immunisation in India, they said.

The survey was conducted among 1,950 adults above 50 years of age, 409 caregivers and 345 doctors from February to March 2023. The qualitative part of the survey was conducted with 30 adults above the age of 50 years and their caregivers and 30 doctors from January to February 2023.

The second part of the survey was conducted with shingles patients to understand the level of awareness and impact of this condition on the lives of patients.

The survey shows that although 71 per cent of adults aged 50 years and above are aware of adult vaccination, only 16 per cent have taken any adult vaccine. Patients

and doctors have provided significantly different reasons for low adoption. Ninety per cent of the doctors surveyed state that a lack of formal guidelines results in a lack of interest and adoption of vaccination by patients, the study showed.

Doctors also hesitate to discuss adult vaccination with their patients because they have limitations of time and they also feel patients are less receptive to vaccination recommendations due to cost as well as prioritisation of treatment over prevention.

Patients said that since they do not receive a firm recommendation from their doctors, they have not proactively taken adult vaccination. Many adults aged 50 years and above (69 per cent) and their caregivers (76 per cent) do not ask doctors about adult vaccination because they believe that if they needed it, their doctors would recommend it.

When asked about how to improve adult vaccination uptake, adult respondents (55 per cent) and their caregivers (48 per cent) said that measures such as those implemented for COVID-19 vaccination awareness can increase the adoption of adult vaccination.

In New Delhi, 63 per cent of those surveyed were aware of adult vaccination, but only two per cent have taken any adult vaccine.



Doctors in New Delhi have recommended adult vaccines to only 10 per cent of ageing adults and only to those who ask for them.

Dr Agam Vora, secretary of the Association of Physicians of India, said measures need to be taken to increase the confidence of doctors in recommending vaccination for adults aged 50 years or older.

"This is possible if formal guidelines on adult immunisation are set and widely shared. Programmes that address concerns, debunk myths, and remind patients and their caregivers frequently to ask doctors about adult vaccines can also drive adoption.

Our survey also reveals that awareness of vaccine preventable diseases such as shingles is very low in India. We believe that only

when adults aged 50 years and above are given complete information about the negative impact of VPDs (vaccine preventable diseases), will they take immunisation seriously," he said.

He also stressed on acknowledging the role that caregivers can play in improving the uptake of adult vaccination and create awareness programs that target them.

Certain misconceptions about adult vaccination also hold back adults from getting vaccinated.

More than half of those surveyed (58 per cent) and their caregivers (62 per cent) feel that there are better ways than vaccination to protect themselves or their parents/in-laws from diseases. Fifty per cent of them also believe that multiple doses of vaccines can

make them dependent on vaccines. In Delhi, 69 per cent adults aged 50 years or older feel the same and 63 per cent believe that diseases other than Covid-19 are not severe enough to require vaccination.

Since shingles is an important vaccine-preventable disease (VPD) amongst adults aged 50 years or older and there is low awareness about its prevention through vaccination, the second part of the survey was conducted with shingles patients to understand the level of awareness and impact of this condition on patients.

The shingles survey shows that awareness about the condition is low in the country.

It showed 72 per cent were unaware of shingles before they got it. Even after they got it, 73 per cent of patients were not aware that they can get shingles again.

Chronic conditions such as diabetes and hypertension were reported by 66 per cent of patients surveyed which made them more vulnerable to getting shingles and reinforced the need for such patients to get vaccinated.

The cities in which the survey was conducted were Delhi, Kolkata, Mumbai, Ahmedabad, Bengaluru, Chennai, Hyderabad, Lucknow, Jaipur, Chandigarh, Varanasi, Surat, Bhopal, Vijayawada, Thiruvananthapuram and Raigarh. (PTI)

Success of Chandrayaan-3 is collective success of every Indian: Oppn

NEW DELHI, Aug 23: After Chandrayaan-3 touched down on the Moon, the Congress on Wednesday said it is a collective success of every Indian and ISRO's achievement today reflects a saga of continuity and is truly fantastic.

The opposition party said an elated nation with 140 crore aspirations today witnessed yet another achievement in its six-decade-long space programme.

It said the entire world is looking up to the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) which is a matter of special pride for all Indians.

"The success of Chandrayaan-3 is the collective success of every Indian. An elated nation with 140 crore aspirations witnessed today yet another achievement in its six-decade long space programme.

"We are deeply indebted to the remarkable hard work, unparalleled ingenuity and unflinching dedication of our scientists, space engineers, researchers and everyone involved in making this mission a triumph for India," Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge said.

Congress general secretary, communications, Jairam Ramesh said ISRO's achievement today reflects a saga of continuity and is



truly fantastic.

"ISRO's accomplishments have always been anchored in self-reliance. They reflect phenomenal team work, partnerships and enterprise. The entire world is looking up to ISRO today, acknowledging its achievements, and for us Indians, it is a matter of special pride," Ramesh said in a video message.

In a giant leap for its space programme, India's Moon mission Chandrayaan-3 touched down on the lunar south pole at 6:04 pm on Wednesday, propelling the country to an exclusive club of four and making it the first country to land on the uncharted surface.

India scripted history as ISRO's

ambitious third Moon mission touched down on the Moon's surface.

The lander module comprising the lander (Vikram) and the 26-kg rover (Pragyan) made the soft landing near the south polar region of the Moon at 6:04 pm, less than a week after a similar Russian lander crashed.

With this touchdown on the Moon in second attempt in four years, India has become the fourth country to master the technology of soft-landing on the lunar surface after the US, China and the erstwhile Soviet Union.

Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal joined the country in congratulating the scientists of ISRO on the successful landing of Chandrayaan-3's lunar module on the moon's surface and called it a "historical" moment.

"This is historical. It is a big achievement for the country. It is a matter of pride for all of us. Many congratulations to all the countrymen, scientists, engineers and employees of ISRO for the success of Chandrayaan-3. Bharat Mata Ki Jai," the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) national convenor said in a post on X.

AAP Rajya Sabha MP and national spokesperson Raghav Chadha said the successful landing was a "triumph unmatched".

"We're over the moon!" he said on X. This feat is a testament to the Indian Space Research Organisation's (ISRO) "indomitable spirit", he said, adding that their commitment and hard work has made every Indian's heart swell with pride.

"Chandrayaan3 imprints our identity on the Moon's southern frontier, a triumph unmatched," Chadha said.

This "historic leap" is a clarion call to aim for the stars and serves as a resounding reminder that "the sky is not the limit, it is our launchpad", the AAP leader added. (PTI)

Contd. from Page 1...

MISSION ACCOMPLISHED

Doppler velocimeter, inclinometer, touchdown sensor, and a suite of cameras for hazard avoidance and positional knowledge. The lander carries the rover in a compartment with a ramp for deployment onto the surface. NASA chief congratulates India & ISRO : NASA Administrator Bill Nelson on Wednesday congratulated India on being the 4th country to successfully soft-land a spacecraft on the Moon and said the US space agency was glad to be India's "partner" on this mission. "Congratulations @isro on your successful Chandrayaan-3 lunar South Pole landing! And congratulations to #India on being the 4th country to successfully soft-land a spacecraft on the Moon. We're glad to be your partner on this mission!" Nelson posted on X.

India's third Moon mission Chandrayaan-3 touched down on the lunar south pole at 6:04 pm after a flawless 41-day voyage. With this touchdown on the Moon in its second attempt in four years, India has become the fourth country to master the technology of soft-landing on the lunar surface after the US, China and the erstwhile Soviet Union. (PTI)

Momentous occasion: Prez;

scientists have made history with the landing of Chandrayaan-3 which is an event that happens once in a lifetime. "I congratulate ISRO, everybody involved in the Chandrayaan-3 mission and wish them greater accomplishments ahead," she said. In a separate message, Modi said that India is now on the moon and the success belongs to all humanity.

Addressing ISRO scientists virtually from Johannesburg, he said India made a resolve "on the Earth and fulfilled it on the Moon". "This is a moment to cherish forever," Modi said, noting that India has reached the South Pole of the moon, where no country had ventured so far. "India is now on the moon and now is the time to walk on the 'Chandra Path'," the Prime Minister said. The Chandrayaan-3's landing on the moon is a historic moment and sounds the bugle for a developed India, Modi said. "We are witness to the new flight of new India. New history has been written," the Prime Minister said. Modi, who is in the South African city to attend the five-nation BRICS Summit, waved the tricolour the moment Chandrayaan-3 landed on the moon. (PTI)

Himanta plays down 'old' and

"media likes to highlight it, while a few of our own people when they get emotional, sometimes say something on it." "This issue does not have any relevance. The BJP wants that no one should be left in the Congress. If there is a Congress-Mukt India, new people will have to join the BJP from there. We in BJP want the Congress to have no existence in India," he said.

The Assam chief minister added that if new people keep coming to the BJP, 'sanatan dharma' will be strengthened and civilisation will get bolstered. "Narendra Modi and Nadda have made it clear that anyone can join the BJP after giving a missed call so that India becomes Congress-Mukt," he said, adding that after Modi came to the national scenario, the issue of "old and new BJP" has come to an end.

"If the issue is raised, the Congress feels happy as no one from the Congress will join the BJP and there will be people to contest elections under the Congress banner," he said. Former Union minister Rajen Gohain, a four-time BJP MP from Assam, former BJP state unit president and former minister Siddhartha Bhattacharya, former party MLA Ashok Sarma are some of the senior leaders who had spoken about the alleged neglect of the old BJP guard in the state. Besides Sarma, his ministers Pijush Hazarika, Jayanta Malla Baruah and Ajanta Neog, and several MLAs were earlier associated with the Congress, while a few MLAs and minister Chandra Mohan Patowari were with the AGP before joining the BJP. (PTI)

18 killed, 3 injured during

collapse of a gantry, which was being launched on the under-construction bridge over the Kurung river. West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee said she has instructed officials to coordinate with the Mizoram government for assistance in the rescue operation.

"Shocked to learn about the tragic collapse today of an under-construction railway bridge in Mizoram, leading to loss of lives of several site workers, including some belonging to our Malda district," she wrote on X. Banerjee also instructed the chief secretary to her government to coordinate with the Mizoram government for rescue operations. Malda district administration has been asked to reach out to the bereaved families for extending all possible help. The West Bengal government will offer compensation to the next of kin of the affected at the earliest.

Meanwhile, Union railway minister Ashwini Vaishnaw has also announced a compensation of ₹ 10 lakh for the families of the workers and ex-gratia of ₹ 50,000 for those who suffered minor injuries. "Grieved by the unfortunate incident in Mizoram. NDRF, state administration and railway officials are at the site. Rescue operation on war footing. Ex-gratia compensation: ₹ 10 Lakh in case of death, ₹ 2 Lakh towards grievous and ₹ 50,000 for minor injuries," the minister said in a post on X. A high-level committee has also been constituted to probe the incident involving the under-construction bridge, one of the 130 bridges in the Bhairavi-Sairang New Railway Line project.

In a post on X (formerly Twitter), Prime Minister Narendra Modi condoled the family members of the deceased, and announced an ex gratia of ₹ 2 lakh each for the next of kin of the victims.

"Pained by the bridge mishap in Mizoram. Condolences to those who have lost their loved ones. May the injured recover soon. Rescue operations are underway and all possible assistance is being given to those affected. An ex-gratia of ₹ 2 lakh from PMNRF would be given to the next of kin of each deceased. ₹ 50,000 would be given to the injured," the Prime Minister's office said on X.

Mizoram Chief Minister Zoramthanga said he was deeply saddened over the loss of lives in the incident, and expressed gratitude to all those who helped in the rescue operation. "Under construction a railway over bridge at Sairang, near Aizawl collapsed today; at least 17 workers died; Rescue under progress. Deeply saddened and affected by this tragedy. I extend my deepest condolences to all the bereaved families and wishing a speedy recovery to the injured. Sending gratitude to the people who have come out in large numbers to help with rescue operations," he posted on X. (PTI)

'History made': Scientists hail

made the soft landing near the south polar region of the Moon at 6:04 pm, less than a week after a similar Russian lander crashed. "ISRO's Chandrayaan mission, which was the pioneer in discovering water on the moon, continues to break barriers and set new standards. Beyond its immediate scientific impact, this mission holds the promise of inspiring a new generation of young minds to join the realms of space exploration and science," he added. Sinha highlighted that the mission's accomplishments will "break barriers and set new standards," positioning India as a frontrunner in lunar research.

"Our team worked relentlessly with ISRO to develop the software for the navigation of the Pragyan rover. We are delighted to see our work and research reach the Moon," he added. Astrophysicist Sandip Chakraborty noted that the significance of Chandrayaan-3's soft landing cannot be overstated. (PTI)

Padma Beypi accused of

Karbi Language teacher in Kheroni Dikreng ME School, is also a contractor and is presently constructing a paver block road in Kheroni Weekly Market in West Karbi Anglong. The KSA asked that when Beypi is a teacher, i.e., has a government job, how can she be a contractor? She is the wife of the chairman of the Kapili Village Development Committee, and maybe because of that, she can do whatever she likes since she is politically connected. Expressing dissatisfaction with the development, KSA demands that the Chief Executive Member (CEM) of Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC) give a reply on this and take immediate action.

Five poachers apprehended

Md Safique Islam (39yrs), from Jakhlabandha, Ujjal Bharali (20yrs) of Rowta and Aditya Sarma (23yrs) of Khanpara, Guwahati. During the joint operation 12 ivory tusks, 2 tiger canines, 15 rhino hooves, one deer antler, 1,031 kg of pangolin scales and 5 mobile phones have been recovered and seized from their possession. The apprehended five poachers and the recovered and seized items had been handed over to Jakhlabandha PS by the STF team for initiating legal actions against the perpetrators and for further investigation. Accordingly, a case has been registered vide Jakhlabandha PS Case No 122/2023 U/S 9/39/44/48(A)/49(B)/51 of WLP Act 1972 for initiating legal action.

Two Assam families of ISRO

towns of the state for the success of the mission. Schools across the state have also made arrangements for the live streaming of the event.

The department of school education had issued a letter to the director of elementary education, secondary education, State Council of Education, Research and Training (SCERT) and the managing director of Adarsh Vidyalaya have been directed to organise special assemblies in all the schools of the state in coordination with the Sarba Shiksha Abhiyan, Assam, to facilitate viewing of the event by all school students. ISRO had announced live coverage which was accessible on various platforms, including the ISRO website, YouTube channel, Facebook, and DD National TV. (PTI)

Kataria takes stock of preparedness

duty still confers confidence and pride among the people of the county. I assure that the Assam government will provide all necessary support to the BSF and also aid it in collaborating with the local police to prevent cross-border crimes." He also interacted with the Border Guard Bangladesh troops near Boundary Pillar No 1001/M and handed packets of sweets to them. Moreover, the Governor also interacted with other field commanders, Seema Praharis and representatives of local border population. He also planted sapling and asked the public to do the needful to protect the environment.

Hope proposal for permanent

Hampi from July 13 to 16. Last month, India's G20 Sherpa Amitabh Kant told PTI that Prime Minister Modi's proposal to make the African Union a permanent member of the G-20 has received an overwhelming response from the grouping.

In his address, Modi also referred to India's hosting of the Voice of Global South summit in January. "125 countries participated in the Voice of Global South summit held in January this year, sharing their concerns and priorities," he said.

The Prime Minister also complimented South Africa for giving special importance to countries of the Global South under its presidency of BRICS.

"The countries of the Global South under the chairmanship of South Africa have been given special importance in BRICS. We heartily welcome it," Modi said.

"This is not only the expectation of the present time, but also the need. India has given top priority to this subject in its G-20 chairmanship," he said. (PTI)

CBI books AIIMS-Rishikesh professor in equipment purchase scam



NEW DELHI, Aug 23: The CBI has booked a professor of AIIMS-Rishikesh and two private companies for alleged irregularities in purchasing advanced vessel sealing equipment used for sealing blood vessels during surgery, officials said on Wednesday.

The CBI has registered the FIR against Professor Balram Ji Omar as well as private companies Arogya International and Riya Agencies, and others for allegedly causing wrongful loss to AIIMS-Rishikesh to the tune of more than ₹ 6.57 crore in the purchase and corresponding undue advantage to themselves, they said.

According to the FIR, the technical tender for Advanced Vessel Sealing Equipment was opened on October 12, 2018, in which private firm Arogya International had qualified and also emerged as the lowest bidder in financial bids opened on January 5, 2019.

"Dr Balram Ji Omar, Procurement Officer, vide his note dated January 10, 2019, recommended for purchase of 7 vessel sealing equipment at a highly exorbitant price of over ₹ 55.38 lakh per unit totalling ₹ 3.87 crore from Riya Agencies, Jodhpur, instead of the qualified bidder Arogya International," the FIR alleged.

The CBI alleged that the conditions of the tender were "openly flouted" by Omar in the procurement process and other tender committee members to show undue favour to Arogya International and Riya Agencies.

In their bid documents, the equipment cost with accessories supplied to AIIMS Delhi by Arogya International and other hospitals was deliberately masked by it, the FIR alleged.

"This vital fact was deliberately ignored by procurement officer Dr Balram Ji Omar and other members of the tender evaluation committee," it alleged.

The CBI had detected the irregularities during a surprise check at AIIMS-Rishikesh.

The FIR alleged that Omar recommended Riya Agencies despite knowing fully well that the company, which had only traded in medicine, was neither the bidder, manufacturer, authorized distributor or equipment dealer nor it had ever supplied any such equipment previously to any government or reputed private organization.

"Seven advanced vessel sealing equipment were procured at the highly exorbitant price of ₹ 54.82 lakh per unit from Riya Agencies, Jodhpur, against the price of ₹ 19.92 lakh at which AIIMS-Rishikesh had purchased the same equipment from India Meditronic Pvt. Ltd, Gurugram, on October 23, 2018. Balram Ji Omar, being the procurement officer, was well aware of this fact," the FIR alleged.

The CBI alleged that in the conspiracy to cheat AIIMS-Rishikesh, Omar sought the benchmark price from Arogya International to justify the exorbitant price he recommended.

"The facts prima-facie disclose that the accused public servant and other unknown public servants entered into a criminal conspiracy with partners of Arogya International and Riya Agencies.

"By abusing their official position as public servants, they showed undue favour to Arogya International and Riya Agencies in the purchase of advanced vessel sealing equipment at a highly exorbitant price and thereby caused wrongful loss to AIIMS-Rishikesh to the tune of more than ₹ 6.57 crore and corresponding undue advantage to themselves," the FIR alleged. (PTI)

MP elections will see pro-incumbency wave like Gujarat: Hardik Patel

INDORE, Aug 23: Madhya Pradesh will also see a "pro-incumbency" wave during upcoming assembly elections like the one witnessed in Gujarat last year, BJP leader Hardik Patel said here on Wednesday.

The Bharatiya Janata Party retained power in Gujarat by winning the 2022 elections with a record tally of 156 seats in the 182-member House.

Patel was responding to a query from reporters on the claims of Congress that there is an anti-BJP trend among people in MP.

"You (media) used to say this for Gujarat also, but we proved that there was a pro-incumbency wave in the elections there. There will be a pro-incumbency wave here (Madhya Pradesh) as well," said Patel, who represents Viramgam constituency in Gujarat.

Patel, who had spearheaded the reservation campaign for Patidars in his home state, avoided a direct reply to a query on Congress chief Mallikarjun Kharge's announcement that a caste census will be conducted if his party forms government in Madhya Pradesh.

"What Kharge says is a different matter. But Madhya Pradesh in-charge of Congress (Randeep Singh Surjewala) has said that people who vote for BJP are Ravana (demon). In such a situation, why should the public elect that party?" he asked.

Patel, who is entrusted with the responsibility of the Sanwer assembly constituency in Indore district, said as a "vistarak" of BJP, he is studying the local situation and the ground effect of the government's welfare schemes and will send a report to the party's central leadership.

The Vistarak' campaign is aimed at establishing direct contact with the people ahead of the forthcoming Assembly elections.

Sanwer seat is reserved for Scheduled Caste candidates. This seat is currently represented by state water resources minister Tulsiram Silavat. (PTI)

Andhra Pradesh CM lays foundation for three renewable energy projects worth over ₹ 25,000 crore



AMARAVATI, Aug 23: Andhra Pradesh chief minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy on Wednesday virtually laid the foundations for three renewable energy projects worth ₹ 25,850 crore in Nandyal district that would generate 5,314 MW of power through solar, wind and pumped energy storage modes.

In total, the three projects are expected to create employment for around 5,300 people.

solar and wind sources," said Reddy at his camp office while laying the foundations.

Likewise, the chief minister laid the foundation for a 1,014 MW renewable energy project by Arcelor Mittal at Kandikayapalle village in Panyam mandal, which includes a 700 MW solar power plant and 314 MW wind power facility with an investment of ₹ 4,500 crore. This project is expected to employ 1,000 people.

The third project, a 2,000 MW one by Ecoren at Muddavaram village in Bethamcherla mandal involves an investment of ₹ 11,000 crore. This project is equally split between solar and wind power generation modes at 1,000 MW each, which will employ 2,000 people.

Besides these three projects, the Andhra Pradesh Power Generation Corporation (APGENCO) has also entered into an agreement with NHPC Ltd to build a 1,000 MW pumped storage project at Yaganti

and another 950 MW project at Kapalapadu, 2,000 MW in total at an investment of ₹ 10,000 crore.

The Andhra Pradesh government and NHPC will execute these projects together, sharing the costs equally.

According to the chief minister, AP inked a deal with Solar Energy Corporation of India (SECI) to source 7,200 MW of power over 25 years at ₹ 2.4 per unit to provide free power to farmers.

Further, he emphasised that the state government has identified 37 locations to explore the possibility of setting up 41,000 MW of pumped storage power projects.

Out of these, the feasibility studies for projects in 29 locations have been completed for 33,240 MW while detailed project reports (DPRs) are ready for projects with a capacity of 20,900 MW.

These steps are in line to make AP a role model in the country for green energy, added Reddy. (PTI)

NAWAZUDDIN SIDDIQUI'S 'HADDI' TO DEBUT ON ZEE5 IN SEPTEMBER

MUMBAI, Aug 23: OTT platform ZEE5 on Wednesday announced that "Haddi", starring Nawazuddin Siddiqui, will premiere on its platform on September 7. The revenge drama is directed by first-time filmmaker Akshat Ajay Sharma, who has also co-written the film with Aditya Bhalla.

"Haddi" explores a gritty and twisted revenge drama that skillfully exposes the intricate nexus of the criminal underbelly operating throughout the capital city", a press release stated.

Set against the backdrop of modern ruins in the NCR, the film delves into the life of Haddi, a rookie transgender, portrayed by Siddiqui, who comes from Allahabad to Delhi to join a gang of transgenders and climbs up to the top of the criminal food chain to avenge his family who was wronged by a mighty powerful gangster-

turned-politician.

"Haddi" also features filmmaker-actor Anurag Kashyap in a pivotal role. "Akshat has assisted me as an AD (assistant director) for many years, and I was lucky enough to get a front row seat as an actor in his debut film as a director.

"Haddi" is racy, passionate, full of revenge and drama, intense and unlike anything you have ever seen before. Also, fans are going to love Nawaz in this unrecognisable but moving part as he has outdone himself yet again," Kashyap said in a statement. Ila Arun, Mohammed Zeeshan Ayyub, Saurabh Sachdeva, Shridhar Dubey, Rajesh Kumar, Vipin Sharma, and Saharsh Shukla also round out the cast of the film.

It is produced by Zee Studios, Sanjay Saha and Radhika Nanda's Anandita Studios. (PTI)



Kriti Sanon commences shooting for maiden production venture 'Do Patti'

MUMBAI, Aug 23: Actor Kriti Sanon has started filming for her upcoming movie "Do Patti", co-starring Kajol. Sanon, who is turning producer with "Do Patti", shared the news on Instagram on Tuesday evening. She is backing the project through her banner Blue Butterfly Films. "Day 1 of shoot for me on #DoPatti Time to Reinvent! Wearing 2 caps this time..

Actor-Producer. Lots of Blue Butterflies dancing in my stomach as I start this very special journey. "Probably my MOST challenging role so far.. a story that touched me so deeply that it had to be the first for @bluebutterflyfilmsofficial! #DoPatti," the 33-year-old actor wrote alongside a series of photos from the film set.

Billed as a captivating mystery thriller set in the hills of north India, the movie is directed by Shashanka Chaturvedi, popularly known as BOB. The film marks the second collaboration between Kajol and Sanon after Rohit Shetty's 2015 film "Dilwale". "Do Patti" is also the maiden production venture for writer Kanika Dhillon and her newly-launched banner Katha Pictures.

The film will have a direct-to-OTT release, and will stream exclusively on Netflix. (PTI)



SUNNY DEOL'S 'GADAR 2' CROSSES ₹400 CRORE MARK AT BOX OFFICE

MUMBAI, Aug 23: As "Gadar 2" crossed the ₹400 crore mark at the domestic box office, actor Sunny Deol on Wednesday thanked the audience for making his latest release a success.

In a press note, production banner Zee Studios said "Gadar" 2 collected ₹12.10 crore on Tuesday that took its box office numbers to ₹400.70 crore net. The mak-

ers claimed "no other Indian film has amassed over ₹10 crores net on second week-days". Directed by Anil Sharma, the film is a sequel to the 2001 blockbuster "Gadar: Ek Prem Katha". Deol and Ameesha Patel reprised their characters Tara Singh and Sakeena, respectively, in the follow-up.

In a video shared on his official Instagram page, Deol

said he hopes the film continues to earn more at the box office.

"Thank you everyone that you liked 'Gadar 2'. I never thought this would happen. We have crossed ₹400 crore and will go further.

"It was possible only because of you. You all liked the film. You all liked Tara Singh, Sakeena and the whole family. Thank you," the 65-year-

old said.

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

Also featuring Manish Wadhwa and Gaurav Chopra, the movie released in theatres on August 11. The first film was set during the Partition. (PTI)

NETFLIX RELEASE FIRST TRAILER OF ZACK SNYDER'S 'REBEL MOON'

FIRST PART TO COME OUT IN DEC 2022

LOS ANGELES, Aug 23: Streamer Netflix has unveiled the first trailer of filmmaker Zack Snyder's two-part cinematic epic "Rebel Moon".

Titled "A Child of Fire", the first part of the Snyder's space opera will make its debut on Netflix on December 22, followed by the second part, "The Scargiver", on April 19, 2024, the streamer announced on social media.

"Rebel Moon" follows the story of a peaceful agrarian colony on the edge of the galaxy that finds itself threatened by the armies of the Im-

perium and its dark leader, the tyrannical Regent Balisarius.

The citizens of the under-threat colony dispatch Kora, played by Sofia Boutella, a young woman with a mysterious past, to seek out warriors from neighbouring planets to take a stand.

The film's star cast also includes Charlie Hunnam, Djimon Hounsou, Anthony Hopkins, Doona Bae, Ray Fisher, Fra Fee, Stuart Martin, Cary Elwes, Corey Stoll, Michiel Huisman, Alfonso Herrera, Ed Skrein, Cleopatra Coleman, Rhian Rees, Jena Malone, E. Duffy, Charlotte

Maggi, Sky Yang, and Staz Nair.

Snyder, who earlier directed "Army of the Dead" for Netflix, has written the script of "Rebel Moon" with Shay Hatten and Kurt Johnstad, having adapted it from his story written with Johnstad.

The filmmaker and his wife Deborah Snyder have produced the project through their banner The Stone Quarry, along with Eric Newman for Grand Electric.

Bergen Swanson serves as executive producer alongside Hatten, Johnstad, and Sarah Bowen for Grand Electric. (PTI)

PRIME VIDEO SETS SEASON THREE OF 'UPLOAD' FOR OCTOBER 20 DEBUT

MUMBAI, Aug 23: Sci-fi comedy series "Upload" will return with its third season on Prime Video on October 20, the streamer announced Wednesday.

The series is created by Emmy-winning writer Greg Daniels, best known for his work on hit shows "The Office" and "Parks and Recreation".

In a press release, Prime Video said the third season of "Upload" will consist of eight episodes, with two episodes premiering every week on its platform.

Starring Robbie Amell as Nathan and Andy Allo as Nora, the series is set in a technologically advanced future where holographic phones, self-driving vehicles, AI assistance, and 3D food printers are the norm. Most uniquely, humans can choose to be uploaded into a virtual afterlife.

Season Three will see Nora and freshly downloaded Nathan as they navigate their relationship, while racing to stop the mysterious conspiracy that threatens to destroy millions of lives. "Can they shut down

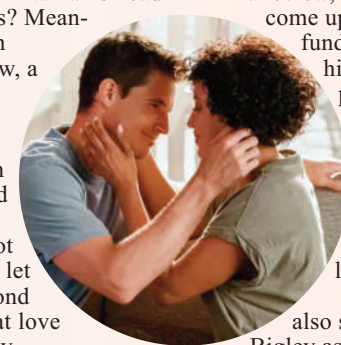
Freelyond, and finally have a real life together? Or is it just a matter of time until Nathan's head explodes? Mean-

while, in Lakeview, a backup copy of Nathan has been activated and Ingrid's not about to let this second chance at love slip away.

"Back in the real world, Aleesha rises through the ranks of Horizon by managing AI

education, and falls into a new romantic relationship. And Luke, all alone in Lakeview, is forced to come up with the funds to pay for his stay in paradise, driving him to work in The Grey Zone," the season three log-line read.

"Upload" also stars Kevin Bigley as Luke, Allegra Edwards as Ingrid, Zainab Johnson as Aleesha, and Owen Daniels as AI Guy. (PTI)



SPECTACULAR SHOW

'Shiv Shakti - Tap Tyag Tandav' enters the Top 4 HGEC shows

HT Bureau GUWAHATI, Aug 23: COLORS, one of India's leading GEC, known for its diverse and compelling content that is adored by viewers, has yet again delivered a stellar show - "Shiv Shakti - Tap Tyag Tandav".

In a short span of time, the mythological drama which premiered on 19th June 2023 has ascended to become one of the most acclaimed shows as it enters the top 4 spot in the Hindi GEC space. The magnum opus boasts an impressive reach of 38 million on COLORS as per Broadcast Audience Research Council (BARC) week 32 data. Created and produced by Siddharth

Kumar Tewary's Swastik Productions, the show features Ram Yashvardhan in the divine role of Lord Shiv and Subha Rajput as the embodiment of Goddess Shakti with a stellar star cast in pivotal characters. Shital Iyer, COLORS, Viacom18

said, "At COLORS, our unwavering commitment to deliver diverse and groundbreaking content has consistently remained our priority, and the success of Shiv Shakti - Tap Tyag Tandav is an outcome of this. The meticulously crafted narrative of the show has taken the art of storytelling to newer heights, captivating the audiences across generations. The show has etched a special place

in the hearts of the viewers, and our endeavour is to persistently bring forth more such impactful stories."

Siddharth Kumar Tewary, Founder and Chief Creative of Swastik Productions, expressing his happiness said, "This achievement is a testament to our dedication in delivering engaging content. Through 'Shiv Shakti - Tap Tyag Tandav,' we have not only crafted an engaging narrative, but also offered a compelling window into the mythological brilliance and storytelling expertise of Swastik Productions. We extend our sincere thanks to COLORS for their trust in our storytelling abili-

ties and unwavering support. This milestone is a result of a collaborative effort, and we are thrilled to see our show resonating with audiences so profoundly. I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to the viewers for their enthusiasm and love for the show."

"COLORS" is Viacom18's flagship brand in the entertainment space in India. A combination of 'emotions' and 'variety', COLORS, launched on 21st July 2008, offers an entire spectrum of emotions to its viewers. From fiction shows to format shows to reality shows to blockbuster movies - the basket contains all "Jazbaat Ke Rang".

World C'ships: Jyothi Yarraji fails to qualify for 100m hurdles semis

BUDAPEST, Aug 23: National record holder 100m hurdler Jyothi Yarraji failed to qualify for the semifinals of the World Athletics Championships as she finished seventh in her heat in yet another disappointing performance for India here on Tuesday. The 23-year-old Yarraji clocked 13.05 seconds -- well below her national record of 12.78s -- to finish seventh in heat number four and 29th overall.

The first four finishers in each of the five heats and the four other fastest athletes (24 in total) qualified for the semifinals.

The last semifinals qualifier

clocked 12.92s.

Tokyo Olympics silver medallist Kendra Harrison of USA led the semifinal qualifiers with world season leading time of 12.24 seconds.

Krishan Kumar also failed to make it to the men's 800m semifinals after finishing seventh in his heat with a time of one minute 50.36 seconds. He has a personal best of 1:45.88.

The first three finishers in each of the seven heats and the three other fastest athletes (24 in total) qualified for the men's 800, semifinals.

Reigning Asian champion Yarraji was expected to at least qualify for



the semifinals, but she failed to live up to the expectations in her first World Championships.

She had become the first Indian to win gold in women's 100m hurdles in the Asian Championships last month.

Indian athletes have disappointed so far in the world championships here. On the opening day on Saturday, national record holder 3000m steeplechaser Avinash Sable failed to qualify for the final round after finishing a disappointing seventh in his heat race.

Three Indians brought up the rear in the men's 20km race walk final

while young Shaili Singh also failed to make it to the women's long jump final.

Ajay Kumar Saroj ran his personal best of three minutes 38.24 seconds in men's 1500m heats but that was not enough to qualify for the semifinals, while none of the three Indians in the men's triple jump -- Praveen Chithravel, Eldhose Paul and Abdullah Aboobacker -- made it to the final round. On Sunday, Santhosh Kumar Tamilarasan and Sarvesh Anil Kishore had crashed out in the 400m hurdles heat race and high jump qualification round respectively. (PTI)

US OPEN 2023

WITH SERENA AND FEDERER RETIRED, ALCARAZ-DJOKOVIC SYMBOLIZES A TRANSITION IN TENNIS

WASHINGTON, Aug 23: Based on the reactions on social media, it seems everyone in the world of tennis was riveted by Novak Djokovic's victory over Carlos Alcaraz in the final of the last tournament for both ahead of the U.S. Open.

It was a titanic, 3½-hour-plus showdown between the two titans of the men's game at the moment -- the third time they've played each other in Djokovic's past three events, each on a different surface -- and set the stage for what will be an expected meeting to determine the champion at Flushing Meadows, where play begins Monday and finishes on Sept. 10.

Last weekend's contest at the hard-court Cincinnati Masters, in which Djokovic, who is 36, saved a championship point in the second set and Alcaraz, who is 20, saved four in the third before succumbing 5-7, 7-6 (7), 7-6 (4), also served to symbolize the state of change the sport currently finds itself in, a year removed from Serena Williams' farewell match in New York and Roger Federer's retirement announcement soon thereafter.

Alcaraz is The Next Big Thing, the winner of the 2022 U.S. Open who grabbed his second Grand Slam title last month at Wimbledon by beating -- yes, that's right -- Djokovic. And Djokovic, the owner of 23 major trophies, is the only member of The Big Three competing nowadays, what with Federer (who has 20) done and Rafael Nadal (22) out since January with a hip problem but eyeing a return for one last hurrah in 2024.

"For so many years, the game has been dominated by legends of the sport, but Father Time is undefeated. Everyone has to kind of go on to their next stage and they have to put the rackets down. We're seeing that unfortunately with Serena, with Roger, with Rafa. There is going to be a bit of a transition period," said Chris Eubanks, a 27-year-old from Atlanta who reached the Wimbledon men's quarterfinals. "It leaves a lot of opportunities for other players in the men's and women's games to kind of make a name for themselves."

No. 1-ranked Iga Swiatek, who is 22, No. 2 Aryna Sabalenka, 25, and No. 4 Elena



Rybakina, 24, appear poised to stay near the top of the women's game -- Swiatek already has won four Slam titles, including the 2022 U.S. Open; the others

have one apiece -- and No. 6 Coco Gauff, just 19, might be ready to etch her name on one of the four most prestigious trophies in tennis.

Still, none has established herself as a definitive heir to Williams.

"There is a shift," said France's Caroline Garcia, who

reached the semifinals in New York a year ago. "There are young players coming, like Alcaraz and Iga."

The sport's leaders hope someone will step forward.

"For those of you who have long wondered about the future of tennis as we transition out of a golden age where you have had some of the best men and women of all-time competing against each other simultaneously," said Lew Sheer, the CEO and executive director of the U.S. Tennis Association, the national federation that runs the U.S. Open, "we saw 2022 as a year of emerging stars."

Perhaps. It's true there were 10 first-time Masters 1000 champions on the men's side over the past three seasons, a group that includes Alcaraz, of course, but also another 20-year-old, Holger Rune, and Jannik Sinner, 22.

"We're starting to see new faces at the Grand Slams and Masters. It's kind of the last step to dethrone players like Djokovic and Nadal -- and it's coming," said Felix Auger-Aliassime, a 23-year-old Canadian who was a U.S. Open

semifinalist two years ago. "Carlos probably is beginning a bit of a switch of the guard. But Djokovic probably hasn't said his last word."

That certainly appeared to be Djokovic's message in Cincinnati, where he ripped off his shirt and roared after finally dispatching Alcaraz.

All in all, it was perfect preparation for Djokovic as he returns to the U.S. Open after being unable to travel to the United States last year because he isn't vaccinated against COVID-19.

Djokovic said facing Alcaraz reminded him of taking on Nadal in their primes -- which was quite some time ago.

"Boy, you never give up, man. Jesus Christ," Djokovic said, drawing a laugh from Alcaraz not long after the Spaniard was crying into a towel.

"I mean, I love that about you, but sometimes I wish that you'd maybe play a few points just like this, you know?" Djokovic continued, waving his right hand without purpose.

Alcaraz offered nice words, too. "I learned a lot," he told Djokovic, "from a champion like you." (AP)

India pick up Gold and Bronze at Shooting Worlds

BAKU, Aug 23: Amanpreet Singh won the men's 25m standard pistol to give India their fifth gold medal in the ongoing ISSF Shooting World Championship here on Wednesday, even as the women's standard pistol trio picked up a bronze in the team competition. The country has so far won five gold and four bronze medals, moving back up to second position on the medal tally behind China, who leads with 24 podium finishes, 13 of them being gold. Amanpreet shot 577 in the men's standard pistol, a clear three points ahead of silver-winning Korean Lee Gunhyeok, who shot 574.

Kevin Chapon of France won

bronze with the same score as Lee's but with lesser inner 10s than the Korean.

The Indian team comprising Harsh Gupta (fourth with 573) and Akshay Jain (545) and Amanpreet, however, narrowly missed a team medal, finishing fourth behind China, Germany and Korea, with a combined total of 1695.

In the women's 25m standard pistol, while none among Tiyyana (11th with 538), Yashita Shokeen (12th with 536) and Kritika Sharma (14th with 527) could win individually, they did bag the team bronze with a combined score of 1601. China won gold and the host nation got silver. (PTI)

India to play against England and Netherlands in World Cup warm-ups

DUBAI, Aug 23: India will play two official warm-up matches against England and the Netherlands, ahead of their ODI World Cup opener against Australia, the ICC said on Wednesday.

The two-time winners India will face defending champion England in the first warm-up game on September 30 at the Barsapara Cricket Stadium in Guwahati, after which they will travel to Thiruvananthapuram to face the Netherlands on October 3.

A total of three venues -- Guwahati, Thiruvananthapuram and Hyderabad -- will host the official warm-up matches for all the 10 teams before the World Cup opener in Ahmedabad on October 5

between New Zealand and England. "The 10 teams will each play two official 50-over contests during the week leading up to the start of the World Cup on October 5, with matches to be held in three different cities across India," the ICC said in a release.

"The matches will be held in Guwahati, Hyderabad and Thiruvananthapuram between Friday 29 September and Tuesday 3 October and will provide teams with the perfect opportunity to acclimatise to the conditions they are expected to face during the World Cup." All matches in the warm-up round will start in the afternoon. "All games will commence at 2:00pm IST and teams will be allowed to field

all members of their 15-player squads during the matches," the ICC said.

Schedule: September 29: Bangladesh vs Sri Lanka (Guwahati), South Africa vs Afghanistan, (Thiruvananthapuram), and New Zealand vs Pakistan (Hyderabad).

September 30: India vs England (Guwahati), Australia vs Netherlands (Thiruvananthapuram).

October 2: England vs Bangladesh (Guwahati), New Zealand vs South Africa (Thiruvananthapuram).

October 3: India vs Netherlands (Thiruvananthapuram), Afghanistan vs Sri Lanka (Guwahati), Pakistan vs Australia (Hyderabad). (PTI)

Shubman Gill reaches fourth spot in ODI batting rankings

DUBAI, Aug 23: India batter Shubman Gill on Wednesday moved up one spot to reach the fourth position in ICC rankings for batters in ODI cricket, while pacer Jasprit Bumrah and spinner Ravi Bishnoi also made gains in the shortest format. In the latest ODI rankings released by the ICC after the first ODI between Pakistan and Afghanistan, Gill has now got 743 rating points and is placed as India's top-ranked batter.

Comeback man Bumrah, India's captain for Ireland series, moved up seven places to reach the 84th position, Bishnoi has jumped 17 spots to reach 65th.

Following his 58 in the second T20I against Ireland, Ruturaj Gaikwad moved up 143 places to reach the 87th position.

Despite missing the Ireland series, Suryakumar Yadav remains on the top spot in the T20I rankings for batters.

In ODIs, while Pakistan's Babar Azam and Imam Ul Haq occupy the first and third spots respectively, there has been no change for Indian mainstays Virat Kohli (ninth) and captain Rohit Sharma (11th).

In Tests, Indian spin duo of Ravichandran Ashwin and Ravindra Jadeja are world's No 1 bowler and all-rounder, respectively. (PTI)

Women's WC final was most watched in US that did not include American team

LOS ANGELES, Aug 23: Spain's 1-0 victory over England on Sunday was the most-watched Women's World Cup final on American television that did not include the United States.

La Roja's 1-0 victory had a combined English- and Spanish-language audience of 2,059,000 on Fox and Telemundo.

While that was a sizable increase over the last time a final did not feature the U.S. -- the 2007 final between Germany and Brazil in China averaged 664,000 on ESPN2 -- it wasn't close to the last three finals, which exceeded 13 million.

The 2019 final between the U.S. and the Netherlands in France had a combined audience average of 16.9 million on Fox and Telemundo.

This year's final in Australia marked an 87.8% decline over four years ago. The previous record for a non-U.S. final was in 2003 when 1.2 million watched on ABC as Germany beat Sweden. The tourna-

ment took place for the second straight time in the U.S. The early start time and the Americans' early exit translated to steep declines in the finals and tournament numbers.

Sunday's match in Sydney kicked off at 6 a.m. EDT.

Australia and New Zealand are 14-to-16 hours ahead of New York and 17-to-19 hours ahead of Los Angeles. Most of the matches during the tournament, including everything beginning with the quarterfinals, started during overnight hours in the United States. Even if the U.S. had made a run to a third straight title, the ratings would have been down from 2019 in France and 2015 in Canada. The tournament's 64 matches averaged 669,000 viewers on Fox and FS1, a 60% decrease from 2019 (1.66 million).

The Spanish-language average of 167,000 across Telemundo, Peacock, Universo and Telemundo streaming platforms was down 44% from four years ago (302,000). (AP)

NZ employ Fleming, Foster, Bell as part of coaching staff ahead of World Cup

AUCKLAND, Aug 23: New Zealand have roped in the services of former skipper Stephen Fleming and the English duo of Ian Bell and James Foster as part of their coaching staff in the lead up to the ODI World Cup in India.

Both Fleming and former wicketkeeper Foster come with IPL coaching experience that may help the Black Caps during the World Cup, starting October 5.

Fleming has been coaching the Chennai Super Kings for over a decade and has guided the MS Dhoni-led side to five IPL titles. He will join the Black Caps for the ODI series against England after finishing his duties with the Southern Brave men in The Hundred next month.

"I think Flem will be great for players on that side of it and also good for the staff as well," New Zealand head coach Gary Stead was quoted as saying by ESPN-Cricinfo.

"He's got immense amount of knowledge in that part of the world [India] and has coached in the IPL right from the start of the



competition, so he's coached in all those areas where we're going to play in.

"So, it might just be the little one-two percenters you can get from that information that could

tip the results on your side as well. If things go well you can pick up on some of those small things."

On the other hand, Foster is the current assistant coach of Kolkata

Knight Riders. The former wicketkeeper has coached in T20 leagues all around the world.

He will link up with the Black Caps for the ODI series against England next month before rejoining the squad for the World Cup.

"James will come to the World Cup; he's got a lot of experience in the IPL with the KKR side and in an assistant coach role there he's worked with video analysts, so will give us a lot of information and knowledge for us to consider when we approach all the different venues in the World Cup," Stead said.

Former England batter Bell will join the BLACKCAPS as assistant coach for the upcoming T20I series against England starting later this month.

He will then step into Luke Ronchi's position as batting coach for the four-game ODI series and continue in the role for the three ODIs in Bangladesh next month, at which point, Ronchi will relieve head coach Stead who will have a short break ahead of the

World Cup.

Post the World Cup, former Pakistan coach Saqlain Mushtaq will serve as New Zealand's spin coach for the Bangladesh Test series in December.

Ronchi will once again take over as head coach for the series as Stead is set to return home to New Zealand to prepare for the start of the BLACKCAPS home summer on December 16.

"The well-being of our players and staff is of vital importance with the sheer amount of cricket being played these days," New Zealand manager Simon Insole said.

"Following the T20 team's departure to the UAE (Aug 12), the team will be on the road right through until December 16 when the Test team returns, ahead of a busy home summer."

"That period of time playing, working and simply being away from home is not sustainable and we've worked really hard this winter to ensure everyone from players to staff will receive adequate rest." (PTI)

World Cup final: Second game between Praggnanandhaa, Carlsen ends in draw



BAKU, Aug 23: In an anticlimax of sorts, the second game of the Chess World Cup final between Indian teen sensation R Praggnanandhaa and Magnus Carlsen failed to throw a winner, as it ended in a draw after 30 moves here on Wednesday.

The two players settled for a quiet draw in the second classical game after one-and-a-half hours of play.

The champion will be decided via two tie-breaks on Thursday.

Five-time world champion Carlsen played a solid game with white pieces against Praggnanandhaa. The Indian did not face any trouble with black pieces, with the players agreeing to a draw after 30 moves in an equal Bishop ending.

The first game on Tuesday had ended in a stalemate after over four hours of play and 70-plus moves, following which Carlsen said he was a bit under the weather.

The 18-year-old Praggnanandhaa has been enjoying an incredible run in the tournament, having already beaten

world No.2 Hikaru Nakamura and world No.3 Fabiano Caruana to set up a final date against the Norwegian Grandmaster.

The results in the ongoing tournament also helped Praggnanandhaa qualify for Candidates 2024 tournament, which will be held in Canada.

Praggnanandhaa, thus, became the third youngest player after the legendary Bobby Fischer and Carlsen to qualify for the Candidates tournament.

After the match, Carlsen said, "Praggnanandhaa has already played a lot of tie-breaks against very strong players... I know he is very strong. If I have some energy, if I have a good day, obviously I will have good chances."

"I am very grateful to the organisers, FIDE and the doctors and nurses, who got me some good treatment. Today, I am feeling a bit better but I still didn't feel like I had the energy for a full fight, so I thought, let's get one more day of rest."

"Hopefully, I will have more strength

tomorrow," the Norwegian world No.1 added.

The two tie-break games in rapid format will be played with a time control of 25 minutes for each player plus 10 seconds increment per move, starting from move 1.

If those two games also fail to throw a winner, two more games with time control of 5 minutes for each player will be played. There will be 3 seconds increment per move, starting from move 1.

Praggnanandhaa is only the second Indian after the legendary Viswanathan Anand to reach the World Cup final.

Posting on social media platform X (formerly Twitter) during the game, former world champion Anand wrote, "Wow, did not expect this opening! Is Magnus repeating his game 12 strategy of 2016 and aiming for a tiebreak?"

"If so, Magnus has spent the day thinking of the tiebreak whilst Prag can only start to do so after the game." (PTI)

Indian cricketers celebrate Chandrayaan-3's landing on moon

NEW DELHI, Aug 23: Current and former India cricketers on Wednesday celebrated the successful landing of Chandrayaan-3's lunar module on the moon's surface, hailing the feat as "historic" and "extraordinary". In a video shared by the BCCI, the Indian team was seen celebrating while following on TV the updates of the landing of the lunar module, just a couple of hours before their final T20I against Ireland in Dublin.

"Witnessing History from Dublin! The moment India's Vikram Lander touched down successfully on the Moon's South Pole," the BCCI wrote on X, formerly Twitter.

India became the fourth country to land a spacecraft on the moon and first on its south pole. Cricket icon Sachin Tendulkar hailed ISRO for the extraordinary achievement.

"@ISRO represents the best of India. Humble, hardworking women & men, coming together, overcoming challenges, and making our tricolour fly high," he wrote.

"India must celebrate and congratulate the Chandrayaan-2 team, which was led by Shri K Sivan, along with Shri S Somanath's #Chandrayaan3 team. Every hard landing has lessons which take us closer to a soft landing - on the moon, and in life," he added.

Star batter Virat Kohli wrote on X, "Many congratulations to the #Chandrayaan3 team. You have made the nation proud.. Jai Hind!" "History. Congratulations @isro for this extraordinary accomplishment. #JaiHind," wrote spin stalwart Ravichandran Ashwin.

Former pacer Venkatesh Prasad said, "We have created History. Congratulations @isro for giving joy to all of us. It is truly a great moment. Bharat Mata ki Jai #Chandrayaan3."

Former India opener Virender Sehwag wrote, "As we were approaching Sunset, Moon ke South Pole par hum set. What a glorious moment. Just proves, after every setback is a stronger comeback. (PTI)

World Championships: Satwik-Chirag, Treasa-Gayatri pairs enter round 3

COPENHAGEN, Aug 23: Star Indian men's doubles pair of Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty advanced to the pre-quarterfinals with a comfortable straight-game win over Australian duo of Kenneth Zhe Hooi Choo and Ming Chuen Lim in the World Championships here on Wednesday.

Indian women's doubles pair of Treasa Jolly and Gayatri Gopichand also produced a solid performance to enter round 3 with a straight-game win over Chang Ching Hui and Yang Ching Tun of Chinese Taipei.

World No. 2 pair of Satwik and Chirag, who had won a maiden bronze in the last edition, produced a clinical display to see off their Australian rivals 21-16 21-9 in 30 minutes.

The reigning Commonwealth Games champions, who have won four titles this season, will face Indonesia's 10th seeds Leo Rolly Carnando and Daniel Marthin next.

Earlier, world number 19 Gayatri and Treasa, who reached the semifinals of the All England Championships in the last two editions, beat Chang and Yang, ranked 37th, 21-18 21-10 in 38 minutes. The Indian pair, who had received a bye in the first round, will face an uphill task against top seed Chinese duo of Chen Qing Chen and Jia Yi Fan in their next round.

Satwik and Chirag hardly broke any sweat



as they zoomed to 7-3 before entering the break with a four-point lead. The match hardly witnessed any long rallies as the Indians were cut above their rivals.

Satwik and Chirag maintained the lead after resumption, moving to 15-11 and then 17-13. Chirag eventually sent one down the middle to grab four game points and Satwik sealed the game with a return on the backline.

After 4-4 scoreline in the second game, Satwik and Chirag again moved ahead with their superior play. The duo entered the in-

terval with a six-point cushion following a fast net exchange and a smash from Satwik.

Choo and Lim tried to put pressure on the Indians but they lacked the wherewithal to trouble Satwik and Chirag, who soon grabbed 11 match points with a precise return from the Mumbaikar.

The Australians then went long to a return of serve to end the contest.

Treasa and Gayatri, the Commonwealth Games bronze winners, trailed 2-5 early on but soon started rotating the strike and extending the rallies to draw out errors from

their opponents to turn it around, reaching 8-6.

Chang and Yang clawed their way back at 8-8 but the Indian pair managed an 11-9 lead at the break with the Taiwanese duo spraying into the net thrice.

Gayatri stepped up after the resumption, showing great anticipation at the front court as Indians led 14-11.

Treasa committed a few errors but the Indian duo still managed to keep its nose ahead.

A service error from Chang and Yang gave the Indian pair four game points. Treasa sent one wide and then hit the net to squander two of them before sealing it when Yang sprayed into the net.

After the change of sides, Gayatri and Treasa continued the momentum, leading 8-5 at one stage. A powerful return to serve handed the Indians a three-point cushion at the interval.

Gayatri and Treasa stepped up the pace after resumption to move to 14-8.

The Indian pair was called for a service fault due to height but it had absolutely no affect as the two rode on their rivals' series of errors to soon move to 19-10.

A good rally ended with Yang's forehand at the net as the Indians had 10 match points and they sealed the deal after their rivals went wide again. (PTI)

Ministry of Ports, Shipping & Waterways
Government of India

PM GATISHAKTI GIVING BOOST TO INDIA'S ACT EAST POLICY

IWAI & NRL ARE JOINING HANDS TO USE IBP ROUTE FOR EXPORT OF PETROLEUM PRODUCTS TO BANGLADESH & OTHER SOUTH EAST ASIAN COUNTRIES

HIGHLIGHTS

- NRL to transport around **10,000 MT** of Petroleum & Petrochemical Products per month
- Promoting use of **Indo-Bangladesh Protocol Route** for Bangladesh & other South East Asian countries
- NRL to set up **POL Oil terminal** at **Jogighopa Logistic Park** with **Rail connectivity**
- Fulfilling the '**Hydrocarbon Vision 2030 for Northeast**'

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN

Numaligarh Refinery Limited

AND

Inland Waterways Authority of India

FOR

TRANSPORTATION OF PETROLEUM PRODUCTS CARGO OF NUMALIGARH REFINERY USING INLAND WATER TRANSPORT

Date: 24th August 2023 | Time: 12:00 hrs onwards | Venue: Hotel Radisson Blu, Guwahati

ON GOING IWAI PROJECTS IN NER

- Alternative Road to Pandu Port (on NW-2)
- Ship repair facilities at Pandu (on NW-2)
- Construction of IWT Terminal at Jogighopa (on NW-2)
- Construction of IWT Terminal at Bogibeel (on NW-2)
- Construction of Boundary wall at IWT Terminal, Jogighopa (on NW-2)
- Construction, supply & installation of 2 nos. of floating Jetties at Bogibeel and Gujjan (on NW-2)
- Construction of 4 nos. of floating Jetties at Jogighopa, Pandu, Biswanath Ghat and Neamati (on NW-2)
- Construction of IWT Terminal at Sonamura (on Protocol Rout -10)
- Renovation of Terminal at Badarpur & Karimganj (NW- 16)

IN THE AUGUST PRESENCE OF

Sh. Sarbananda Sonowal
Hon'ble Union Minister for Ports, Shipping & Waterways and Ayush; Govt. of India

Sh. Rameswar Teli
Hon'ble Minister of State for Petroleum & Natural Gas and Labour & Employment; Govt. of India

Sh. Parimal Suklabaidya
Hon'ble Minister of Transport, Fisheries & Excise Department; Govt. of Assam

Shri Bimal Borah
Hon'ble Minister of Industries & Commerce and Public Enterprises, Cultural Affairs; Govt of Assam

Sh. Sanjay Bandopadhyaya
Chairman, IWAI

Dr. Ranjit Rath
Chairman, NRL

Sh. Bhaskar Jyoti Phukan
Managing Director, Numaligarh Refinery Limited