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The bench took into consideration the "potential of aggravating

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"For all our complications and challenges, India is a coherent and functioning democracy. In fact, it is held together because it is a democracy because it has independent institutions because it's not just an electoral democracy but a democracy in which institutions are independent and zealously, even jealously protective of their independence and their ability to act," he said.

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The government also approved a scheme 'Apun Bahan' for its permanent employees for purchasing personal vehicles, and the programme will provide interest subvention on loans. "Male employees (are) to get two per cent interest subsidy for purchasing diesel/petrol vehicles and three per cent subsidy for electric vehicles, while women and divyang employees to get three (CONTD ON PAGE-9)

Govt imposes import restrictions on laptops, tablets, computers to boost domestic manufacturing

NEW DELHI, Aug 3 (PTI): The government on Thursday imposed import restrictions on laptops, tablets, and certain type of computers with immediate effect, a move that will curtail inbound shipments of these goods from countries like China and boost domestic manufacturing. Importers of these items would now have to seek permission or license from the government for their inbound shipments.

The Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT) in a notification, however, said certain exemptions have been given against these curbs.

"Import of laptops, tablets, all-in-one personal computers, and ultra small form factor computers, servers... is 'restricted' with immediate effect," it said.

The restrictions are also there on micro computers, large or main-frame computers, and certain data processing machines. Import of all these items would be allowed against a valid license.

It added that there is an exemption from seeking import licensing



for up to 20 items per consignment for R&D, testing, benchmarking and evaluation, repair and return, and product development purposes. These curbs are also not applicable to imports under baggage rules.

"Exemption from import licensing requirements is provided for import of 1 laptop, tablet, all in one personal computer, or ultra small form factor computer, including

those purchased from e-commerce portals, through post or courier. Imports shall be subject to payment of duty as applicable," it said.

It added that exceptions would also be there as these goods are an essential part of Capital Goods.

According to a report of think-tank Global Trade Research Initiative (GTRI), India's 65 per cent imports from China are limited to just three product groups - electronics, machinery, and organic chemicals. It has stated that India is critically dependent on China for day-to-day use and industrial products like mobile phones, laptops, components, solar cell modules, and ICs.

The government has taken several steps to boost domestic manufacturing of electronic items such as rolling out of the production-linked incentive scheme and increasing customs duties on the number of electronic components.

Leading electronic brands which are sold in the market include HCL, Samsung, Dell, LG Electronics, Acer, Apple, Lenovo and HP. India has imported personal computers including laptops worth USD 5.33 billion in 2022-23, as against USD 7.37 billion in 2021-22. Imports of certain data processing machines stood at USD 553 million in the last fiscal, against USD 583.8 million in 2021-22. Similarly, imports of micro computers/processors stood at USD 1.2 million in the last fiscal against USD 2.08 million in 2021-22.

Entities violating digital data protection norms to face penalty of up to ₹ 250 cr: DPD 2023

NEW DELHI, Aug 3 (PTI): Entities misusing or failing to protect digital data users may face penalty of up to ₹ 250 crore, according to the Digital Personal Data Protection Bill 2023 which lays down obligations of entities handling and processing data as well as rights of individuals.

The bill which was introduced in Parliament on Thursday moots creation of Data Protection Board of India and provides protection to the Centre, the board and its members, on "action taken in good faith".

The bill has relaxed penalty norms compared to the proposal made in the draft DPD 2023 that was circulated for public consultation in November 2022.

"If the board determines on conclusion of an inquiry that breach of the provisions of this Act or the rules made thereunder by a person is significant, it may, after giving person an opportunity of being heard, impose such monetary penalty specified in the schedule," the bill said.

Under the schedule, maximum of ₹ 250 crore and minimum ₹ 50 crore can be imposed on entity violating the norms.

"No suit, prosecution or other legal proceedings shall lie against the central government, the board, its chairperson and any member, officer or employee thereof for anything which is done or intended to be done in good faith under the provisions of this Act or the rules made thereunder," the bill said.

Provisions under the bill enable the Centre to block access to content in the interest of general public on getting reference in writing from the board.

Minister of State for electronics and IT Rajeev



Chandrasekar said that the bill after it is passed by Parliament, will protect rights of all citizens, allow innovation economy to expand and permit the government's lawful and legitimate access in national security and emergencies like pandemics and earthquakes etc. "It will take a lot of the concerns and lot of misuse and exploitation that is done by many of these (online) platforms. Puts a break on that once and for all. This is certainly a legislation that will create deep lasting behavioural change and create high punitive consequences for any or all platforms that misuse or exploit personal data of any Indian citizen," Chandrasekar said.

Rupee falls 6 paise to close at 82.73 against US dollar

MUMBAI, Aug 3 (PTI): The rupee fell by 6 paise to settle at 82.73 (provisional) against the US dollar on Thursday on weak domestic equities and a stronger greenback in the overseas market.

Sustained foreign fund outflows and firm crude oil prices further dented sentiments, forex traders said.

At the interbank foreign exchange, the domestic unit opened at 82.71 against the dollar and finally ended the day at 82.73 (provisional), registering a fall of 6 paise from its previous close.

During the session, the local unit touched a peak of 82.66 and hit the lowest level of 82.81. On Wednesday, the rupee had settled at 82.67 against the dollar.

"US Dollar gained on safe-haven buying and upbeat jobs data. US ADP data released Wednesday was better-than-expected at 324,000 vs the forecast of 190,000, showing a strong jobs market," Anuj Choudhary - Research Analyst at Sharekhan by BNP Paribas.

However, upbeat domestic macroeconomic data from India cushioned the downside. India's services sector growth touched a 13-year high in July. The seasonally adjusted S&P Global India Services PMI Business Activity Index rose from 58.5 in June to 62.3 in July, signalling the sharpest increase in output since June 2010.

"We expect the rupee to trade with a negative bias as the strong

dollar and risk aversion in global markets may continue to mount downside pressure on the rupee," Choudhary said.

Selling pressure by foreign investors may put further pressure on the domestic currency. However, better-than-expected domestic macroeconomic data may support Rupee at lower levels, Choudhary added.

"Traders may take cues from ISM services PMI, weekly unemployment claims, and factory order data from the US. Investors may remain cautious ahead of the Bank of England's monetary policy," Choudhary said, adding that "We expect the USDINR spot to trade in the range of 82.30 to 83.30 in the near term."

Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, rose 0.13 per cent to 102.68.

Brent crude futures, the global oil benchmark, declined by 0.23 per cent to USD 83.01 per barrel.

On the domestic equity market front, the 30-share BSE Sensex closed 542.10 points or 0.82 per cent lower at 65,240.68 points. The broader NSE Nifty fell 144.90 points or 0.74 per cent to close at 19,381.65 points.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) were net sellers in the capital markets on Wednesday as they offloaded shares worth ₹1,877.84 crore, according to exchange data.

Sensex, Nifty fall for 3rd day on weak global trends, foreign fund outflows

MUMBAI, Aug 3 (PTI): Benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty closed lower for a third straight day on Thursday in tandem with a bearish trend in global markets and continuous foreign fund outflows.

Losses in ICICI Bank and HDFC Bank also added to the ongoing weak trend in the benchmark indices.

The 30-share BSE Sensex fell by 542.10 points or 0.82 per cent to settle at 65,240.68. During the day, it slumped 819.7 points or 1.24 per cent to 64,963.08.

The NSE Nifty declined 144.90 points or 0.74 per cent to end at 19,381.65. From the Sensex pack, Titan fell by over 2 per cent after the company reported a 4.3 per cent drop in consolidated net profit at ₹ 756 crore for the June quarter.

Bajaj Finserv, ICICI Bank, Nestle, UltraTech Cement, Bajaj Finance, Maruti, Tata Consultancy Services, IndusInd Bank and State Bank of India were the major laggards. Infosys, JSW Steel, NTPC and Power Grid were the gainers.

In Asian markets, Seoul, Tokyo and Hong Kong

ended in the negative territory while Shanghai settled in the green. European markets were trading in the red.

The US markets ended lower on Wednesday after Fitch Ratings cut the US government credit rating by one level.

Foreign institutional investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth ₹ 1,877.84 crore on Wednesday, according to exchange data.

Global oil benchmark Brent crude dipped 0.46 per cent to USD 82.82 a barrel.

Meanwhile, India's services sector growth touched a 13-year high in July as a substantial improvement in demand conditions and pick-up in international sales induced the strongest increase in new business and output, a monthly survey said on Thursday.

The BSE benchmark tumbled 676.53 points or 1.02 per cent to settle at 65,782.78 on Wednesday. The Nifty fell by 207 points or 1.05 per cent to end at 19,526.55.

Maruti Suzuki Alto crosses 45 lakh sales mark

NEW DELHI, Aug 3 (PTI):

Maruti Suzuki Alto, one of the most popular cars in India, has crossed 45 lakh unit sales milestone. The Alto has been one of the longest-running nameplates in the Indian market, and the moniker has been present for around 23 years. First launched in the year 2000, the Alto was introduced to replace the Maruti 800, however, both cars co-existed for over a decade. Over the years we have seen several iterations of the Alto (Alto, Alto 800, Alto K10) and different powertrain choices (800 cc and 1.0 litre), including petrol and CNG options. Commenting on the latest feat, Shashank Srivastava, Senior Executive Officer, Marketing & Sales, Maruti Suzuki India Limited, said "The Alto has consistently set new benchmarks in the auto industry and established its dominance as India's favourite car! Given the young demographic of India, rising income levels, etc. there will continue to be immense potential for cars such as the much-adored Alto. And we are confident that brand Alto will continue to delight lakhs of more families with its undisputed legacy and exceptional ownership experience."

The first Maruti Suzuki Alto was introduced in 2000 and it was powered by an 800 cc engine. A decade later, in 2010, the company launched the first-gen Alto K10, powered by a 1.0-litre K10B engine, and the same year the company also launched the CNG version of the car.

Sonalika Tractors achieves remarkable sales in July '23

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Aug 3: Sonalika Tractors, India's leading tractor export brand, continues to make strides in the financial year 2023-24 by ensuring a progressive future for farmers. In July '23, the company recorded an impressive overall sales figure of 10,683 tractors, showcasing a remarkable 14% domestic growth, surpassing the industry's growth of 6.4%. This outstanding performance validates Sonalika's innovation-powered approach, dedicated to cultivating sustainable farmer growth in the diverse Indian agricultural market. Small and marginal farmers, constituting around 86% of India's farming community, often face challenges due to limited resources and awareness of farm mechanization. Currently, the level of mechanization in Indian agriculture stands at 47%, significantly lower than countries like the United States (95%), Brazil (75%), and China (59.5%). Sonalika Tractors is committed to supporting all farmers in adopting farm mechanization by offering a wide range of heavy-duty tractors ranging from 20 to 120 HP. These technologically advanced tractors are designed to navigate through various farm complexities with ease, providing comfort and efficiency to farmers. To further facilitate farmers, Sonalika has displayed its entire tractor price range on its official website, ensuring transparency in the tractor buying process. This initiative not only simplifies the purchasing experience but also strengthens the trust of farmers in the brand. Commenting on this achievement, Raman Mittal, Joint Managing Director of International Tractors Limited, expressed delight in receiving admiration from farmers for their heavy-duty tractor range. He attributed the success to the company's commitment to constantly strive for excellence and customize advanced farm technologies to meet the specific needs of Indian farmers. Mittal emphasized that delivering farmer happiness remains the core focus for Sonalika, and the brand will continue to prioritize creating awareness and supporting the adoption of farm mechanization to accelerate farmers' journey towards prosperity.

India's services sector growth climbs to 13-year high in July on pick-up in international sales: PMI

NEW DELHI, Aug 3 (PTI): India's services sector growth touched a 13-year high in July as a substantial improvement in demand conditions and pick-up in international sales induced the strongest increase in new business and output, a monthly survey said on Thursday.

The seasonally adjusted S&P Global India Services PMI Business Activity Index rose from 58.5 in June to 62.3 in July, signalling the sharpest increase in output since June 2010. For the 24th straight month, the headline figure was above the neutral 50 threshold. In Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) parlance, a print above 50 means expansion while a score below 50 denotes contraction.

"The resilience of the service sector underscores its vital role in fuelling India's economy, with the PMI results for July so far pointing to a notable contribution from the sector to overall GDP for the second fiscal quarter," Pollyanna De Lima, Economics Associate Director at S&P Global Market Intelligence, said.

According to survey members, the upturn was largely attributed to demand strength and new business gains. Demand for Indian services improved to the greatest extent in



over 13 years during July, with around 29 per cent of survey participants reporting higher intakes of new business.

"The broad increases in sales across the domestic and international markets are particularly welcoming news, especially in light of the challenging global economic scenario. Firms noted a widespread upturn in services exports to several nations including Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka and the UAE," Lima said.

On the inflation front, cost pressures intensified and monitored

companies signalled greater food, labour and transportation costs. Despite the rise in cost pressures, charges were raised to a weaker extent as firms were cautious about their pricing strategies.

"Looking at PMI price indices in recent months, it seems that competitive advantage continued to support demand for Indian services, with increases in output prices here modest relative to several other nations," Lima said.

Although input cost inflation ticked higher in July, service providers were again cautious in

their price-setting decisions amid efforts to not deter sales, Lima added.

On the job front, companies continued to add to their workforces by hiring a combination of part-time, full-time, permanent and temporary staff. Service sector employment expanded at a slight pace that was broadly similar to those seen in the prior two months.

On the year-ahead outlook for business activity, service providers on average were optimistic. Growth expectations stemmed from forecasts of demand strength and marketing initiatives.

Meanwhile, the S&P Global India Composite PMI Output Index -- which measures combined services and manufacturing output -- rose from 59.4 in June to 61.9 in July. "July data signalled a substantial increase in private sector activity across India, with the rate of expansion quickening to a 13-year high," the survey said.

The S&P Global India Services PMI is compiled by S&P Global from responses to questionnaires sent to a panel of around 400 service sector companies. The panel is stratified by detailed sector and company workforce size, based on contributions to GDP. Data collection began in December 2005.

Food industry impacted by high commodity prices: Britannia Ind

KOLKATA, Aug 3 (PTI): FMCG major Britannia Industries Limited said that the food sector in which it operates has been significantly impacted by high commodity prices, rising interest rates and due to the fall out of the Russia-Ukraine conflict. The long term effects of these factors continue to be felt extensively, the company said in its annual report for 2022-23. It said that although commodity prices were volatile and inflation was at unprecedented levels, the post-Covid normalisation of economic activities supported growth throughout 2022-23. During the last fiscal, the major challenge confronting the food industry was managing inflation in the cost of key inputs like wheat, milk, sugar, palm oil and crude oil, the company annual report said. The foods vertical of Britannia comprise segments like biscuits, cakes, rusks, bread and dairy. On the outlook for the foods vertical, the company said that businesses in the country are still optimistic on demand conditions despite apprehensions about global recession. The inflation trajectory during the coming year will depend on a host of domestic and global factors. The outlook for food prices and rural growth will depend significantly on the climate and adequacy of monsoon rain, it said.

Vietnam business delegates keen to invest in Greater Noida's logistics hub

NOIDA, Aug 3 (PTI): A delegation of the Vietnam Logistics Business Association, currently on a four-day visit to India, has expressed interest in investing in the logistics hub of IITGNL at Greater Noida in western Uttar Pradesh, officials said on Wednesday. The visiting delegation showed keen interest in the Multi Modal Logistics Hub (MMLH) and Multi Modal Transport Hub (MMTH), the Greater Noida Industrial Development Authority (GNIDA) said.

The Integrated Industrial Township Project has a development area of 747.5 acres that has been envisaged to be sustainable, smart and safe. Encompassing a flagship project of Delhi-Mumbai Industrial Corridor (DMIC), the township has been designed with world-class standards and envisioned as a sustainable and smart community. The Integrated Industrial Township Project Greater Noida Limited (IITGNL) is the special purpose vehicle (SPV) for the project. "A delegation of the Vietnam Logistics Business Association arrived in Greater Noida on Wednesday. GNIDA's Additional CEO Medha Rupam and Additional CEO Amandeep Dulli informed the delegation about IITGNL's Integrated Industrial Township, Multi Modal Logistics Hub (MMLH) and Multi

Modal Transport Hub (MMTH) through a presentation," the GNIDA said.

"The delegation was told that the Integrated Industrial Township is one of the smartest townships in the country. It is installed on plug and play system. Plots are allotted within a very short time to the investors willing to set up the industry. All necessary facilities have been developed for setting up industry. Entrepreneurs can set up industries as soon as the plots are allotted," it said in a statement.

The Vietnamese visitors were also apprised that apart from being close to the Indian national capital, this township is much better than other cities in terms of road, rail and air connectivity, the local authority said.

Additional CEO Amandeep Dulli informed the visitors that efforts are being made to bring MMLH and MMTH projects swiftly and tenders for the MMLH will be issued in the next two to three months.

"IITGNL's Company Secretary Patanjali Dixit informed them about the facilities like plug-and-play system, automated waste processing plant, electrical substation etc. Appreciating the infrastructure of the township, the delegation expressed willingness to invest in MMLH," the GNIDA added.



Guv chairs meeting with higher education officials



HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Aug 3: Governor Gulab Chand Kataria held a significant meeting with officials from the Higher Education department, accompanied by Prof Mihir Kanti Choudhury, the advisor to chancellor's secretariat, to review the progress of National Education Policy (NEP) implementation. The meeting took place at the conference hall of Raj Bhavan in Guwahati.

During the meeting, Governor Kataria accentuated the need for higher education institutions to effectively implement the provisions outlined in the NEP 2020. He urged the department to sensitise the faculty and management members responsible for implementing the NEP in their respective institutions. The Governor also appreciated the introduction of the Samarth portal and suggested that examination results and student attendance records should be made accessible on the portal to ensure transparency.

Addressing the issue of low Gross Enrollment Ratio of women, Governor Kataria encouraged open universities to take the lead in enrolling more female students. He suggested that district-level collaborations with P&RD and SHG should focus on result-oriented activities to inspire women to pursue higher education.

In line with UGC guidelines, the Governor stressed the importance of incorporating the essence of the Indian Knowledge System (IKS) in the curriculum during the 1st to 4th semesters.

The meeting was attended by commissioner and secretary to the Governor, SS Meenakshi Sundaram, secretary of Higher Education, Narayan Konwar, secretary of Higher Education, Banashree Nath, additional secretary of chancellors' secretariat, Kabita Deka, director of Directorate of Higher Education, Dharma Kanta Mili, and director of Directorate of Technical Education, Dhruvajyoti Borah, along with other officials from Raj Bhavan and the Higher Education department.

Social activist Mukut Chandra Bhuyan passes away

HT Correspondent

NAGAON, Aug 3: Mukut Chandra Bhuyan, an esteemed social activist, distributor of Assam Tribune, Dainik Asom, and Asom Bani in Nagaon, breathed his last at a private hospital on Thursday afternoon after a brief illness. He was 84 years old.

Born in 1939, Bhuyan pursued his studies in Shillong, Meghalaya, and later completed his degree in film editing at the Film and Television Institute of India, Pune, Maharashtra, during the '60s. He had illustrious classmates in the Indian film industry, including filmmaker Adur Gopal Krishnan, Subhash Ghai, Moni Koyl, and comedian Ashranee.

Despite having opportunities in the Mumbai film industry, Bhuyan chose to return to his hometown, Nagaon, immediately after completing his degree in film editing. He dedicated several decades of his life to serving The Assam Tribune Group until his passing. Throughout his life, he

Sonitpur District Day celebrations mark rich cultural heritage & welfare initiatives

Pijush Hazarika inaugurates main program, highlights Sonitpur's historical significance and cultural legacy

HT Correspondent

TEZPUR, Aug 3: The Sonitpur district administration marked the occasion of Sonitpur District Day with various significant events. Minister for Water Resources, I&PR, etc., and Guardian minister for Sonitpur district, Pijush Hazarika, inaugurated the main program organised on the occasion of Sonitpur District Day at Baan Theater in Tezpur on Thursday. Inaugurating the main programme at Baan Theatre, minister Hazarika recalled the rich cultural legacy and historical importance of Sonitpur district and the contributions of the great freedom fighters to the freedom movement of India. He said, Sonitpur district is one of the most advanced districts of Assam rich in mythological elements and cultural heritage which represents the age-old Sanatani culture of the district. In his address, he mentioned the contributions made by cultural doyen Rupkonwar Jyoti Prasad Agarwala, Kalaguru Bishnu Rabha and Natasurya Phani Sarma and said that Sudhakantha Dr Bhupen Hazarika also enriched his journey as an artist from Tezpur. Highlighting the importance of observing the occasion of District Day, the minister reiterated the commitment of the government of Assam under the leadership of CM Himanta Biswa Sarma towards all round development of the district.

Earlier, he inaugurated a vaccination camp organised by the Sonitpur district ad-



ministration and Rotary Club Tezpur, and Animal Welfare Club of Tezpur University with the aim of safeguarding stray animals from various diseases. He also flagged off five of the eight mobile animal ambulances granted to Sonitpur district as part of chief minister's animal welfare scheme. He also inaugurated an animal welfare shelter meant to facilitate shelter and treatment for animals.

Sonitpur district administration celebrated the District Day with a slew of important events. The main highlight of the event was the three-day Artificial Limb Fitment Camp being held at Tezpur Gov-

ernment HS School. Organised by Shree Bhagwan Mahaveer Viklang Sahayata Samiti, Jaipur in association with Sonitpur district administration, department of Women and Child Development and Indian Red Cross Society, Sonitpur district and sponsored by Beti Bachao Beti Padhao under the ministry of Women and Child Development was formally inaugurated by Tezpur MLA Prithiraj Rava. A total of 916 PwD beneficiaries were identified for the camp and they will be provided all aids and assistive devices free-of-cost. The Sonitpur district administration will organise such camps every 3-

6 months to help the PwDs and also elderly people who require assistance. Nine para-athletes who had brought laurels to the district in an all Assam Para Sports Meet held at Sarusajai recently were felicitated in the programme. The Tezpur MLA also inaugurated the newly renovated Ananda Chandra Agarwala Park maintained by Tezpur Environment Society. He also inaugurated a Yoga Camp and demonstration on the occasion. Also, an organic hub and a sale point was opened at the office premises of District Agricultural Office where local farmers have been facilitated to sell their organic produce and it will remain open throughout the year.

MLA Tezpur Prithiraj Rava, DC Deba Kumar Mishra, DDC Gaya Prasad Agarwal, ADC i/c Biswanath Neha Yadav, officials and staff of DAO office were present on the occasion which is expected to benefit the women of the district who are engaged in the production of organic food items and food products. It was followed by the opening of a Medical Mamography Awareness Camp to create awareness about breast cancer and the importance of early detection of cancer. Organised by Sonitpur district administration, Rotary Club of Tezpur, and Tezpur Cancer Centre at the conference hall of the DC's office, in association with Project Pink was inaugurated by CEO, Zilla Parishad Karabi Saikia Karan in the presence of Sujata Mishra, spouse of dis-

trict commissioner, ADC i/c Biswanath Neha Yadav, ADC Twahir Alam, and doctors from Tezpur Cancer Centre.

Around 150 ASHA and Anganwadi workers were educated on the importance of early detection of breast cancer and they will subsequently be able to avail free mammography tests at TCC with the target of women above 40 years of age and all female teachers of the district bringing under the ambit of this project while MLA Bar-chala, Ganesh Kumar Limbu inaugurated a live art demonstration on the occasion at Ananda Chandra Agarwala Park wherein several local renowned artists took part. He also inaugurated an art competition among the school children on the theme 'Beti Bachao, Beti Padharao' at Cole Park and a wall painting at the office premises of the district commissioner. As part of the day Rangapara MLA, Krishna Kamal Tanti flagged off a cycle rally in the morning. Later in the day, a special lecture on 'Sonitpuror Jibon Gatha, Iyar Udbhavan, Utoron aru Udjapon' was held where the lecture was delivered by noted historian and academician Dr Rajen Saikia. The concluding event and cultural program were also held in the evening where several students and persons who have brought laurels to the district were felicitated. Later, noted dramatist Baharul Islam and his troupe, Seagull Theatre performed a play 'Akash' based on the story by Dr Bhabendranath Saikia.

Refund process for cancelled railway tickets streamlined by Indian Railways

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Aug 3: Indian Railways has implemented a streamlined refund procedure for cancelled railway tickets to ensure timely reimbursements for passengers. The occupancy pattern of trains on Indian Railways varies during lean and peak periods, leading to waiting list tickets being issued to manage accommodation effectively.

In case a ticket with all passengers on the waiting list is automatically cancelled at the time of preparing the first reservation charts, an auto refund process is initiated immediately. The refund amount is then sent to the respective bank for processing on the following day.

For instances where money is debited but the ticket is not booked, Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation (IRCTC) initiates an automatic refund process, and the refund amount is forwarded to the payment gateway or bank through which the booking amount was received.

The time taken for the actual refund to reach the passenger's account depends on the mode of the transaction. For Net banking, Wallet, and Cash Card transactions, the refund usually takes 3-4 business days, while for credit card and debit card transactions, it takes around 6-7 business days.

Additionally, passengers have the option to avail the 'Book Now Pay Later' feature in the mobile app and the EMI option available on the website for making payments more convenient.

With these measures in place, Indian Railways aims to ensure a hassle-free and prompt refund process for passengers who face cancellations or unconfirmed reservations, making their travel experience more convenient and customer-friendly.

Pijush inaugurates vaccination camp, to safeguard stray animals

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Aug 3: Assam's Social Justice & Empowerment minister, Pijush Hazarika, graced the inauguration of a special vaccination camp organised by the Sonitpur district administration, Rotary Club Tezpur, and Animal Welfare Club of Tezpur University on Thursday. The primary objective of the camp is to protect and immunise stray animals from various diseases, ensuring their well-being.

During the event, minister Pijush Hazarika unveiled a fleet of mobile animal ambulances, a remarkable addition to Sonitpur district, provided under chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma's animal welfare scheme. The introduction of these ambulances will play a pivotal role in promptly providing medical assistance to injured or sick animals in the region, bolstering their chances of survival.

Intensified Mission Indradhanush 5.0: Vaccination drive for children & pregnant women from Aug 7

HT Correspondent

HAFLONG, Aug 3: In a bid to further strengthen routine immunisation and cover unvaccinated and partially vaccinated children, as well as pregnant women, the Dima Hasao Autonomous Council conducted a meeting led by principal secretary, Thai-tsho Daulagupu, to discuss the implementation of Mission Indradhanush 5.0. The drive is set to begin on August 7 and will continue until August 12 for its first phase.

A media sensitisation meeting followed the discussion to propagate the message effectively. The Mission Indradhanush 5.0 will be conducted in three rounds, with Round-1 scheduled from August 7 to 12, 2023, Round-2 from September 11 to 16, 2023, and Round-3 from October 9 to 14, 2023.

During the media briefing, ACS Rebecca Changsan stated that this mission aims to focus on hard-to-reach and vaccine-hesitant areas. Mission Indradhanush was launched in December 2014 as a periodic immunisation intensification drive to strengthen routine immunisation. Over the past nine years, it has shown positive results in improving immunisation coverage.

However, the Covid-19 pandemic has hindered progress, with some individuals who refused Covid-19 vaccination also refusing routine immunisation. Additionally, socio-economic status, education levels, rural settings, misconceptions about vaccines, and fear of adverse effects have contributed to immunisation gaps.

Amrit Mahotsav in Guwahati: Siddhguru Sri Siddheshwar Brahmarshi Gurudev to bestow divine blessings

Guv Kataria to grace the event as chief guest

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Aug 3: The Vishwa Dharma Chetna Manch, Sri Brahmrishi Ashram, Guwahati Center of Tirupati is organising the Amrit Mahotsav in Guwahati, where devotees will receive divine blessings from Siddhguru Sri Siddheshwar Brahmarshi Gurudev. The event will be graced by Governor of Assam, Gulab Chand Kataria, as the chief guest.

Sarla Bothra, global chairperson of Sri Brahmrishi Ashram, announced that the divine blessings of Gurudev will be bestowed on August 6, 2023, at 4:15 pm at the ITA Center located in Machkhowa, Guwahati. A poster and invitation magazine

unveiling ceremony related to the Gurudev's program was held in Guwahati to mark the event.

Shubhakaran Bothra of the Amrit Mahotsav reception committee expressed gratitude for the opportunity to have such a divine presence in the form of Siddhguru, who tirelessly engages in Ahamishi Sadhna for the protection and welfare of people's lives. Siddheshwar Brahmarshi Gurudev is a great Siddhguru, with awakened Seven Kundalini and Seven Chakras since birth, and has attained the realms of Brahma Lok, Vishnu Lok, and Shiv Lok, thereby becoming a Brahmarshi.

Entry to the divine festival will be through entry passes, as in-

formed by Navratan Baid of the Mahotsav reception committee. Ravi Puglia, national media president of Sri Brahmrishi Ashram Tirupati, praised Gurudev's accomplishments, mentioning that he has attained Ashta Siddhis and Nava Nidhis, which he selflessly uses for the welfare of the world.

The event is expected to witness a large number of Guru devotees from various parts of the country, as shared by Pankaj Jalan and Subhash Surana of the reception committee. The divine darshan of Siddheshwar Brahmarshi Gurudev is considered a life-changing experience, capable of transforming the direction and condition of life, as stated by Mamal Lodha.



Dr Merina Changsan, district immunisation officer, informed that health workers have conducted a house-to-house headcount survey, listing 107 pregnant women, 496 children aged 0 to 2 years, and 116 children aged 2 to 5 years

who are due for vaccination in 132 vaccination centers in Dima Hasao. The district has also witnessed 90 refusal cases.

Rebecca Changsan, along with the attending doctors, appealed to all responsible citizens, parents, and relatives to come forward and ensure that all eligible beneficiaries receive their vaccine doses during the special sessions planned for missed and drop-out children and pregnant women during IMI 5.0.

Parents and relatives of beneficiaries are encouraged to visit the nearest health centers or contact ASHAs/ANMs or any medical personnel in their respective areas to facilitate vaccination.

Breastfeeding rooms inaugurated

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Aug 3: In conjunction with the celebration of 'World Breastfeeding Week', the State Project Management Unit POSHAN Abhiyan Assam, under the department of Women and Child Development, government of Assam, inaugurated breastfeeding rooms at the Guwahati Railway Station and Kamakhya Railway Station. The breastfeeding room at Guwahati Railway Station was inaugurated by Deba Kr Kalita - secretary to the government of Assam, Women & Child Development department, Assam. Breastfeeding plays a crucial role in ensuring the nourishment and health of children, making them the backbone of a nation. It also contributes to improving the health of mothers. As women juggle both their roles as home dwellers and bread earners, support from family and society is essential for them to effectively fulfill their responsibilities.

Handloom training workshops offer sustainable livelihoods and foster coexistence with wild elephants

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Aug 3: Aaranyak, one of India's leading biodiversity conservation organisations, in partnership with the British Asian Trust and with support from the Darwin Initiative, organised two-day handloom training workshops for women in human-elephant conflict (HEC)-affected villages of Assam. The initiative aims to provide additional livelihood options for women to offset some of the losses incurred due to conflicts with wild elephants.

The handloom training equips women with skills that reduce their dependence on traditional livelihood options like paddy cultivation and horticulture, which have become unsustainable in HEC-affected areas. By offering sustainable alternative livelihoods, this program fosters better coexistence with wild elephants, enhances community well-being, and contributes to biodiversity conservation, as stated in a communiqué from Aaranyak.

The workshops were attended by women from HEC-affected areas, and they were conducted by renowned handloom expert Nandeswar Deka. Participants learned various handloom techniques and expressed enthusiasm about the prospects of pursuing handloom as an alternative livelihood option.

"We learnt a range of handloom techniques during the two-day training. It has encouraged me to think seriously about taking up handloom as an alternative



livelihood option. In our area, we are frequently in conflict with wild elephants, which often results in extensive damage to crops, our basic and primary source of livelihood," said Joshna Taye, a woman

from Sagunpara village in Jorhat district.

Similar training workshops were held in other HEC-affected villages, including Hatishal and Bejoringa in Jorhat district, where women expressed happiness with the training experience and hoped that it would help them supplement their income.

The workshops were coordinated by Aaranyak's senior official Niranjana Bhuyan, with the assistance of village champions Sunil Taye, Makhon Kalita, and Sabita Malla, among others. Weaving emerged as a preferred means of supplementing livelihood for many women based on survey results. Traditionally, weaving is practiced in households, mostly by women, to create daily use clothes.

Aaranyak conducted a series of weaving training sessions for women affected by human-elephant conflict in various villages. These workshops took place in Majuli's Halodhibari village, Gazera, Jaborchuk Kathoni, Konwarbam, Tanti Pathar in Dibrugarh district, and Sibsagar.

During these training sessions, women were provided with 5 kg of cotton yarns at the end of the training to support their weaving endeavours. The initiatives aim to empower women with sustainable skills and create a positive impact on their livelihoods, thereby contributing to the conservation efforts and fostering peaceful coexistence with wild elephants.

Jagiroad Railway Station set to receive an airport-like facelift

HT Correspondent

JAGIROAD, Aug 3: The Jagiroad Railway Station is all set to undergo a transformation under the Amrit Bharat Project, giving it an airport-like appearance, announced Prabir Bhowmick, the station superintendent. In an effort to mark this significant development, a video conferencing program will be held at the Jagiroad Railway Station on August 6, during which Prime Minister Narendra Modi will address the audience. The news of Jagiroad Railway Station being included in the Amrit Bharat Project has sparked immense delight among the people of the region. They are hopeful that this project will not only enhance the station's infrastructure but also contribute to a healthier environment in the surrounding areas. There is a particular concern about the unplanned dry fish market near the station, which has caused an unhealthy situation. The locals have expressed their hopes that the district administration will take necessary steps to address this issue and improve the overall surroundings.

Furthermore, the closure of Nagaon Paper Mill had affected the socio-economic status of Jagiroad adversely. With the implementation of the Amrit Bharat Project at the railway station, the residents are optimistic that it will contribute to the revival of the area's socio-economic conditions to some extent.

AUCTION SALE NOTICE

Dated :- 02/08/2023

It is hereby invited from the intending bidders/purchaser in the arrangement of auction sale of unclaimed seized sand & Stone on 22nd August/2023 by 11. A.M. in the office of the Divisional Forest Officer, Baksa Forest Division, Mughalpur. In the auction sale notice dated 02/08/2023 published from this office contained details of said unclaimed seized sand & Stone along with forms and content of sale proceeds.

The auction sale notice and the auction sale form may be collected from the office of the undersigned on any working day from 10 A.M. to 4 P.M. on payment of Rs.50/- (Rupees fifty) only and Rs.5/- (Rupees five) only for each copy of auction sale notice and auction sale form respectively.

If the office does not function on the aforesaid date for any unavoidable reason, auction sale will be conducted on the next working day.

Sd/- Divisional Forest Officer,
Baksa Forest Division, Mughalpur

IPR(BTC)-2023-24391

QUOTE OF THE DAY

If we open a quarrel between past and present, we shall find that we have lost the future. - Winston Churchill

Another temple-mosque debate

In the wake of the Ayodhya dispute resolution, a new battleground has emerged in the form of the Gyanvapi mosque and Vishwanath temple issue in Varanasi. Uttar Pradesh chief minister, Yogi Adityanath, has asserted that the Gyanvapi complex was once a temple, challenging the Muslim community to acknowledge a historical error. This assertion comes amid growing lawfare seeking to establish the Hindu antecedents of the Gyanvapi complex. On August 3, the Allahabad High Court allowed the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) to conduct a survey of the Gyanvapi mosque complex. Despite the Places of Worship (Special Provisions) Act of 1991, which prohibits conversion of places of worship, lawsuits persist, advocating Hindu prayer rights at Hindu deities in the complex and calling for videography surveys and carbon dating of the "shivling". The Supreme Court, while delivering its judgment on the Ayodhya dispute, upheld the 1991 law as intrinsic to the obligations of a secular state, preventing history from being used to oppress the present and future. However, the court's intervention in the subsequent Gyanvapi masjid complex litigation remains questionable.

Opportunities for the Supreme Court to intervene were missed in May 2022 and again in July when the mosque committee approached the court. Instead of ending the proceedings based on the Places of Worship Act, the court transferred the suit to the Varanasi district judge. This pusillanimity at the highest level has led to lower courts questioning the nature of the Gyanvapi mosque and ordering videography and ASI surveys, revealing a "shivling" in the complex's pond. A similar process unfolds in the Mathura courts concerning the Idgah-Krishna Janmabhoomi issue, indicating a pattern of Hindutva forces employing lawfare to advance their interests, while lower judiciary appears complicit. To uphold secular values and prevent misuse of judicial power, the Supreme Court must act decisively and apply the 1991 law, which it endorsed unequivocally in the Ayodhya judgment. Nipping this mischief in the bud will safeguard the principles of religious harmony and prevent extrajudicial methods from altering ground realities.

In the parliamentary constituency of Narendra Modi, where these events transpire, the need for impartiality and adherence to the rule of law becomes even more crucial. The Supreme Court's intervention can set a precedent for a fair and just resolution in this highly contentious matter. It is imperative for the apex court to assert itself and put an end to the attempts to alter the status quo of religious places through litigation. By doing so, the court will reaffirm its commitment to preserving the secular fabric of the country and prevent further escalation of communal tensions. The Gyanvapi mosque and Vishwanath temple issue has the potential to stoke religious sentiments and trigger unrest. Therefore, the Supreme Court must act responsibly and swiftly, ensuring that the law remains the guiding force in resolving such sensitive matters. The nation looks to the highest judiciary for reassurance that the principles enshrined in the Places of Worship Act are upheld without compromise. A decisive and principled stand by the Supreme Court can help preserve India's cherished diversity and foster a climate of mutual respect among all religious communities. Only then can we truly embrace the spirit of unity in our rich tapestry of beliefs and traditions.

SC cannot run away from blame for deterioration of Manipur situation

By: K Raveendran

The Supreme Court last week came down heavily on the Modi government for taking "extreme stands" against non-BJP rules states while doing nothing in the case of constitutional violations by its own governments in the other states. But as one would have expected, the stricture came not in relation to Manipur, where ethnic clashes with a certain communal colour have claimed over 100 lives, but in connection with an issue concerning Nagaland.

The apex court's concern was about the failure of the Nagaland government to take steps to implement the constitutional scheme of one-third reservation for women in municipal and town council elections. A bench comprising Justice SK Kaul and Justice Sudhanshu Dhulia noted that the central government cannot wash its hand off the issue especially when the political dispensation in the state is in line with that at the Centre.

"I refuse to let your hands off. You take extreme stands against other state governments who are not amenable to you, but your own state government is violating constitutional provision and you do not want to say something," Justice Kaul said.

It is unfortunate that the Supreme Court refused to show the same sense of urgency in the case of Manipur violence. As far back as May 6, a number of public interest litigations were brought before the court seeking the protection of the fundamental rights of lakhs of citizens in the wake of a complete failure of law and order machinery. The court hesitated to act decisively, satisfying itself with the assurances made on behalf of the government. Timely action would have saved a number of lives and prevented the situation from taking the ugly turn it has taken since then. The court has since taken suo moto cognizance of the situation, but much damage has already been done.

The apex court has since taken a very serious view of the Manipur situation and concluded that there has been an absolute breakdown of constitutional machinery in the state for the past two months. Chief Justice DY Chandrachud, who is heading the bench hearing the case, said there has been a delay in FIRs being registered and statements being recorded. The court has also de-

manded the personal presence of the Manipur Director General of Police during the next hearing on Monday.

The Supreme Court stand is no doubt decisive, but it has come a bit too late. In this respect, there is a certain lack of consistency on the part of the apex court in making timely interventions. There had been much dithering in the case of the great reverse migration in the wake of the national lockdown when the court initially was content with accepting the government's arguments before finally taking the plunge and forcing a hesitant government to act and it was the court's crucial intervention that retrieved the situation. The same was the case with Covid vaccination, in which the government sought to wriggle out of its responsibilities.

The Modi government has similarly been dilly-dallying on the Manipur issue, refusing to take corrective action for the sake of political expediency, but in the process causing great damage to be done in maintaining communal harmony and national integration. Even while feigning to be concerned about the 'heinous' offences, the government had asked the Supreme Court to order the completion of trial in all the cases within a time span of six months. It is a matter of great satisfaction that the court has refused to fall for the government's bait. In fact, the Chief Justice had given the Centre and the Manipur government an ultimatum to either bring the perpetrators to book or step aside for the judiciary to take action.

The victims of the rape and naked parade had filed a petition with the top court against the Centre and the state government seeking directions to ensure a fair and impartial investigation of the case. Instead of the CBI probe, they wanted an independent special investigation team to investigate the heinous crime. In consideration of the women's demand, the court restrained the CBI from taking statements of the survivors.

It is increasingly becoming evident that there has been 'collaboration' between the Manipur police and the mob in the sexually assault and parading of the women and the viral video of the crime. It is alleged that the police, instead of taking the women away from the mob abandoned them to their fate, indicating complete breakdown of law and order. (IPA Service)

Bangladesh and India work together to counter armed Kuki infiltration into Mizoram

Bangladesh and India are worried about the disturbing news of armed insurgents infiltrating into restive Mizoram state of northeast India as refugees.

Both Delhi and Dhaka are sharing intelligence reports, browsing local newspapers, and getting updates from local sources in a bid to counter new security challenges in the region. The development has raised the eyebrows of the top brass of both countries.

Recently the spate of insurgency, the Kuki-Chin National Army (KNA) was engaged in several bouts of skirmishes with the Bangladesh Army and the elite anti-crime force Rapid Action Battalion (RAB).

During the raid, several soldiers including an officer of the Bangladesh Army where dead others were grievously injured. The troops inflicted heavy casualties on KNA combatants.

Several sources in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) confirmed that armed Kuki guerrillas have scattered and shifted to remote hill-forest terrain, where it is difficult for anti-insurgency operations.

Last year, the KNA's headquarters (HQ) and secret training location were smashed in a joint operation of the security forces.

Security forces officials declined to be identified, but privy to the operation to flush out, capture and destroy KNF hideouts said, the militants have taken refuge in no-man's-land, bordering CHT and Mizoram, along the international border of Bangladesh and India.

Hundreds of Kukis and other communities living in hill tracts have fled their hamlets after the military pounded hundreds of mortar shells to drive the KNF militants from their hideouts.

Amid conflicts, the neighbouring state of Mizoram is hosting hundreds of Kuki and other ethnic communities as displaced refugees due to anti-terror operations carried out by security forces in the southeast CHT.

Meanwhile, both the Assam Rifles and the Border Security

Force (BSF) — which guards India's border with Myanmar and Bangladesh, have issued red alerts after two alarming incidents. The Times of India newspaper on July 29 writes that KNA militants in disguise as 'refugees' have entered Mizoram and were apprehended.

The refugees from Myanmar and Bangladesh currently staying in Mizoram were issued temporary identification cards, which include details like name, place of origin and current address.

The Mizoram-based NGO, the Central Young Lai Association (CYLA) has issued a statement highlighting the incident that took place on June 26. It also expressed fear that militants possibly entered Mizoram in the guise of refugees and were indulging in gunrunning and arms training in Indian territory.

The second incident was an improvised explosive device (IED) blast in a forest in Lawngtlai district last month.

A few months ago, two KNA functionaries were apprehended by the Assam Rifles and handed over to the Mizoram Police.

Islamic outfit's name surfaced after RAB held a press conference on 6 October 2022 raiding secret hideouts of the Islamic militants and netting fresh recruits from their safe house.

The apprehension has been caused after getting confirmation that KNA has joined hands with a little-known Islamist terror outfit, the Jamaa't ul Ansar Fil Hindal Sharqiya, to help establish an operational base in CHT.

The Assam Rifles has also confirmed the link between the KNA and the Islamist terror group. It is believed that the KNA had tested the IED for use against the Bangladeshi security forces. Indian security agencies are worried because Mizoram could be used as a base to launch attacks on the Bangladesh security forces.

Earlier on 24 March 2022, six members of KNA were detained by the Indian Border Security Force (BSF) at the Mizoram bor-

der. All of them have disclosed that they were residents of the Bandarban district of Ruma Upazila.

They were detained while entering India through the Longlai district of Mizoram on the Indo-Bangladesh-Myanmar tri-border.

The names of the arrested persons have been mentioned in the news of the Mizoram-based daily 'Rauthla' published on 28 March 2022.

Former military officers of the Bangladesh Army who were deployed in restive CHT and have experience in military operations in the hill-forests, said the terrain becomes extremely difficult for patrolling and raiding hide-outs in monsoon season.

Once the monsoon is over, the military is preparing for another military campaign if the KNF does not surrender in three months, sources said.

Brigadier General Bayezid Sarwar and Major Nasim Hossain who have recently

written thought-provoking articles in leading national newspapers on the Kuki-Chin insurgency have shared their opinion with this journalist.

They opined that the security issue in CHT has been described as a fresh 'headache' for the security forces in containing the militancy.

Unfortunately, the politicians and the government, while the civil bureaucrats in the secretariat are unperturbed, said retired Major Khandakar Badrul Ahsan, who was once at the helms of affairs during the peak of anti-insurgency.

"Headmasters Operation" against the autonomy-seeking guerrillas during 1980s. KNF is headed by a young sculptor Nathan Loncheu Bawn, from the ethnic Bawn community. He was formerly in a leading role with the pro-peace deal CHT Students Council (Pahar Chattria Parishad).

He quit politics and founded Kuki-Chin National Development Organization (KNDO), a non-governmental organization

(NGO) in 2008 and is reportedly backed by Brigade Headquarters at Ruma Cantonment of Bangladesh Army.

The leaders of the organization considers Bawm, Lusa, Pangkho, Khyang, Khumi and Mro ethnic groups of the CHT as Zo people and has emerged as a formal political organization to assert the rights of the Zo people.

The KNDO in 2015 demanded the government take steps for the development of the living standards of the Zo people in the CHT and allocate a separate budget for the Zo people.

The organization also demanded that the government recognize Zo people inhabitants of 9 Upazilas (sub-districts) of the three hill districts as Kuki-Chin states. The Bawm in Bandarban is one of the 11 ethnic communities in Bangladesh with a population of nearly 12,000 people. The majority of the Bawn have converted to Christianity from animist, and speak in their local dialect.

During Nathan Bawn's stint with the NGO, the KNDO has been transformed into a political organisation called the Kuki-Chin National Front (KNF) in 2019. He began recruiting youths to join the KNA, also popularly known as Bawm Party.

KNF aims to establish a separate autonomous state for the Bawm people with nine upazilas (sub-districts) of Rangamati and Bandarban districts.

Nathan Bawn, chairman of KNA has no experience in guerrilla warfare. Many are curious to know how he organized an insurgent force with recruits from the smaller ethnic communities.

According to Bangladesh law enforcement agencies, KNF received weapons from the Kachin State of Myanmar and also has ties with Karen rebels.

His greed for cash was after he met his old Dhaka University friend Shamim Mahfuz, founder of the Islamic militant outfit Jamaa'tul Ansar Fil Hindal Sharqiya. Mahfuz studied at Rangpur Cadet College and while studying at Dhaka University he was

radicalized.

Mahfuz was twice arrested on charges of Islamic militancy in 2011 and 2014. After he was released on bail in 2017, he decided to launch a new militant outfit with its headquarters in remote Bandarban hills.

In a secret collaborative dialogue at Cox's Bazar sea resort town in 2019, where Mahfuz assured Bawn that their outfit would provide money for training their militants, supply weapons and provide a safe area for establishing his HQ. An agreement was signed in 2021 between the radical Islamic outfit and KNA.

Anti-terror unit of police and security experts know very little about the jihadist outfit Jamaa'tul Ansar Fil Hindal Sharqiya's hierarchy, leadership structure, and fundraising sources.

Additional Commissioner Mohammad Asaduzzaman, the Chief of Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime (CTTC) does not know much about both outfits.

However, a former member of Parbatya Chattagram Jana Samhati Samiti (PCJSS) high command believes that Jamaa'tul Ansar Fil Hindal Sharqiya by its nomenclature does not exist. The name was given by security forces, he argues.

The member of the PCJSS high command which signed a peace accord with the Bangladesh government in 1997 said his source claimed that KNF has relocated to Mizoram after a massive combat operation by the military and para-military forces after an IED blast by the KNF killing and wounding several government soldiers.

With the best of the best security cooperation, Delhi does not want to see Islamic militants prowling in the northeast. Simultaneously India will not allow KNA to use Mizoram for launching attacks on Bangladesh security forces. (The author is an award-winning independent journalist based in Bangladesh. Views expressed are personal. He can be reached at salem-samad@hotmail.com)

As Italy and Greece burn, government leaders obsessed about immigrants

By: Nathan Akehurst

Europe is burning. Hitting almost 110°F, Rome has broken its heat record, set only last year, and some Italian hospitals have reported inpatient numbers reaching COVID-era levels. Special flights headed to Corfu and Rhodes to evacuate tourists from fires rolling across the Greek islands, while the locals are stuck with the consequences. Even the Alps are pushing 100°F. Across the Mediterranean, Algeria recorded the hottest night in African history.

This is a global crisis, requiring global leadership: extreme temperatures and flooding have struck from the United States to China, Brazil, and the Asian sub-continent. Existing supranational political structures like the European Union (EU) could — and should — be heading up the response. And yet as the earth cracks, the trees blaze, and supplies run out, Europe is looking squarely in the wrong direction.

While emergency warnings ordered Romans to stay indoors during daytime, far-right prime minister Giorgia Meloni hosted an international conference in the city to call for urgent cooperation across Europe and Africa — not to tackle the climate crisis, but to control migration. Italian media chose to fiddle while Rome quite literally burned, preferring to report the alarmed coverage abroad than what was actually happening.

It's common to hear opponents of migration claim they have to focus on people at home rather than help foreigners. Yet the worst climate-stricken European states like Italy and Greece devote more resources and political time to persecuting, detaining, and attacking people on their shores than to protecting those whose homes are ablaze. Compare, for instance, Greece's shining new detention camps to its weak record on emergency response.

It would be wrong, however, to pin this problem of inaction solely on Europe's Border States, themselves wracked by a decade of crisis in which EU-enforced austerity has played no small part. Their governments argue, not entirely unreasonably, that richer northern European states push the responsibility to respond to migration emergencies onto poorer frontier states. Meanwhile, European institutions publicly castigate the human rights records of frontier states (whether EU members, or Libya and Tunisia) while continuing to in practice collaborate in and even encourage abuses.

For those suffering and dying at the world's most lethal border, the situation is extreme. But at a statistical level, migration is very far from the existential crisis

it is usually presented as in European politics. By comparison, in Colombia — a much poorer country than any EU member state, and one that has absorbed millions of people seeking asylum in the last years — migration still does not hold the existential death grip it does on European politics.

Indeed, Europe was perfectly capable of absorbing several million Ukrainians fleeing Russia's invasion last year. The so-called migration crisis has always been a confected problem. Now, it is an even more dangerous one that robs political focus from the conflagration threatening lives and livelihoods on both sides of the Mediterranean.

People seeking safety are also the first victims of the climate emergency. Firstly, disaster has brought new risks of displacement across the Euro-Mediterranean region — forest fires northwest of Athens have torn into residential communities, while climate shocks have impacted people caught up in conflicts across North Africa. The effects of this year's weather be they on the Greek tourism industry or Algerian crop yields, may become a much longer-term contributor to people having to move. Its consequences for people already displaced have been brutal; at the US border, bodies of people who collapsed from heatstroke are being recovered.

Across the Euro-Mediterranean region, detention centers, refugee camps, and informal settlements will be stalked by shortages and health risks, and the sun on a warming ocean will give little quarter to the people expected to make desperate Mediterranean and Aegean crossings this summer. Yet this emergency is manageable. With a coordinated effort across countries — and the EU would be strongly positioned to play a leading role, here — people could be fully supported to stay home where they can and leave where they must.

Resources can and should be made available on this basis, including investment to protect livelihoods and industry, provide effective disaster relief, and facilitate journeys to short- and longer-term resettlement. Such efforts sit neatly within the project of bringing global temperatures under control in this generation while managing the existing damage.

Politics is about priorities, and Europe's choices have been clear. Meloni's twenty-country migration conference did mouth old platitudes about the importance of development cooperation. This project, labeled "Team Europe," is an invented and unaccountable structure, as one member of European Parliament pointed out, in

which Meloni stands side by side with European Commission president Ursula von der Leyen. Their two outings this summer aimed at "cooperation" with Tunisia over migration control first and foremost. This is the same Tunisia that in the last few months, following its president's racist speech against "ethnic replacement" by black migrants, saw numerous attacks on migrants, whose attempts to flee resulted in two hundred deaths at sea in one ten-day stretch.

The Tunisia deal is just the latest iteration of Europe's long mission to force states at the bloc's periphery to act as border police. This has had brutal consequences, from drownings and enslavement in Libya, to the 2022 Melilla massacre at the Spanish-Moroccan border, and the grim EU deal with Turkish president Recep Tayyip Erdoğan.

Such "externalized" border control is pursued across the political mainstream — the pact with Turkey was spearheaded by current center-left candidate for Dutch prime minister Frans Timmermans. It is frequently framed as an issue of development. The EU provided biometric services to African states ostensibly for voter registration, yet these in fact provided a fingerprint database for EU migration control; it also funded the Rapid Support Forces to prevent migration across North Africa, which have amassed an abysmal human rights record that is being reprised in Sudan's new civil conflict. Migration control by any means necessary has been the North Star of European foreign policy for nearly a decade now, and its stranglehold is only worsening.

Even from the perspective of Europe's own security, the primacy of migration control in foreign policy is deeply damaging. When Morocco briefly relaxed its role as Europe's border guard in anger at a perceived Spanish foreign policy slight, a humanitarian crisis occurred at Ceuta in 2021. That winter, Russia and Belarus were accused of "weaponizing" migration flows at the Polish border to destabilize Europe. Turkey's recently reelected president Erdoğan has repeatedly attempted to use migration control as a bargaining chip in international affairs.

Europe has been locked in a near-decade-long struggle between more pro-EU neoliberals and more critical right-wingers, regenerated in the Trump era of conservative insurgencies. The Left has largely failed to break into and supplant this divide. The Right's approach is easy enough to understand: blend racialized paranoia about migration with genuine grievances about the way EU authorities have treated the bloc's own

poorer citizens, in order to build a nationalist bloc.

Comparing migration to the climate may seem arbitrary. But politics is often a zero-sum game. And as time is consumed by the never-ending migration debate, always conducted on terms that empower the Right, attention is sapped from climate diplomacy. The EU has been a significant global leader (compared to the meager competition) on climate targets, but those achievements are not secure, and there is much, much more that can be done.

This is an urgent task for governments across the world. In Europe, it means building a conception of solidarity larger than the EU itself, one that does not deal with Africa by throwing up walls. Rather, it must see both continents as part of a shared region, bound rather than separated by water, its recent history of colonial bloodshed contrasted by a longer history of interdependence.

In practice, this means both rapid decarbonization in the richer countries and financing a just transition in those who cannot afford it. It means applying the finite resources of political capital and diplomatic pressure against carbon giants, not people seeking safety. It means using the green transition to achieve economic justice, not simply to extend neocolonial relations. It means a concerted effort, from the English coast to Greek islands to the Sahara, to put in place flood and drought defenses and emergency relief measures under well-resourced Euro-Mediterranean institutions that can coordinate both incident response and long-term planning.

Such longer-term action includes safeguarding the food supplies and resources people depend on; it also includes rethinking our attitude to migration as we support both the right to stay and the right to move. Most people will not want to leave their homes, much less their countries, but Europe can channel the better part of its heritage — its contribution to the development of the Refugee Convention in the chaos following World War II — to address the needs of those who do.

None of this is straightforward. It will require a delicate balance of patience and urgency; of solving complex problems and simplifying them; and of single-minded diplomacy and engagement across political traditions. It's a process for communities and campaigns and grassroots movements, as much as politics and big institutions. But the moment demands nothing less. This summer of fires and floods can presage further disasters, food shortages, and threats to life and livelihood — or it can mark the moment that we changed course. (IPA Service)

Pakistan can no longer control its monster

By: Harsh V. Pant

Hours before Chinese Vice Premier He Lifeng landed in Islamabad for an event marking a decade of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), another reminder came about the perpetual abyss that Pakistan has been staring at for the past several years. At least 45 people were killed and more than 200 injured in a suicide bombing at a political rally earlier this week.

The rally was called by the Islamist Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F) in the tribal district of Bajaur, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, near the border with Afghanistan. JUI-F is part of the governing coalition in Pakistan, the Pakistan Democratic Alliance, and Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif underlined his government's commitment to eliminate terrorists "from the face of existence" as they have "targeted those who speak for Islam, the Quran and Pakistan".

While the Pakistan Taliban, or TTP, have been carrying out a spate of attacks across the country after ending their cease-fire with the Pakistani government in November, they were

quick to respond after the latest attack and said it was aimed at setting Islamists against each other.

The Afghan Taliban also criticised the bombing. It is the Islamic State Khorasan in Pakistan (ISKAP) that finally took the responsibility for the attack, which it said was part of an "ongoing war against democracy." The ISKP has been quite active in the region and has targeted JUI-F's officials in the past.

The challenges are mounting for Pakistan on multiple fronts and the latest attack, one of the worst in north-western Pakistan since 2014, underscores that the country that was quite blasé about using terrorism as an instrument of state policy in the past is today struggling to confront a rising terrorism challenge. Pakistan's state institutions, be it the military or the government, do not seem capable of managing internal security threats.

At a time when the economic situation in Pakistan remains precarious, this state weakness can be particularly damaging.

While China has helped Pakistan in avoiding its debt default, a Pakistan perpetually on the brink is not a

healthy sign for the China-Pakistan partnership. In his message to celebrate a decade of CPEC, Chinese President Xi Jinping said, "No matter how the international landscape may change, China will always stand firmly with Pakistan."

While he suggested that the project is a "vivid testament to the all-weather friendship between China and Pakistan", and provides "an important underpinning for building an even closer China-Pakistan community with a shared future in the new era," it has been clear for quite some time that the internal security challenge facing Pakistan is also impacting the pace of CPEC. In fact, there has been hardly any movement on various projects over the last few years.

The northwestern region of Pakistan has been opposing CPEC, with Chinese nationals also targeted in recent years. In an attempt to deflect responsibility, Pakistani authorities have been blaming Afghanistan and its Taliban regime for providing safe havens to insurgents targeting their country. This is a remarkable turnaround for a nation that has been at the forefront of exporting terrorism to its neighbour-



ing states. Pakistan's ties with the P regime in Afghanistan have also suffered because of this challenge.

The visit by Chinese Vice Premier He Lifeng saw Pakistan and China sign six more pacts to enhance cooperation and to give a new momentum to CPEC projects. In the absence of state capacity in Pakistan to tackle internal security challenges more effectively, how the signing of new pacts helps the CPEC is anybody's guess. However, Beijing has also been asking

Islamabad directly to protect its nationals and assets, which have been repeatedly targeted by the insurgents.

The absence of political consensus in the country at a critical moment remains Pakistan's biggest vulnerability. Political polarisation has made it almost impossible for Pakistan's security establishment to forge a national approach on countering terrorism. The lack of effective domestic governance by the ruling coalition has engendered widespread disenchantment, espe-

cially among the youth, making them gravitate towards extremist ideologies and tactics.

For the Pakistani military intelligence complex, the assets that they thought could be used effectively against external actors are now effectively targeting their own. The Frankenstein's monster can no longer be managed, let alone controlled. Pakistan is lurching from one crisis to another with no sense of direction and the political elite seems clueless about getting the nation back on track. If during the Cold War, it was the US that was viewed by Islamabad as the last report option, it is China that has taken on the mantle today.

A nation that at one time dreamt of challenging India for regional leadership today finds itself at the margins of regional development discourse. Globally, the interest in Pakistan is at its minimum, further aggravating the challenge for the crisis-infected nation to get its act together. With the impending general elections in Pakistan, the security situation is only likely to deteriorate. India and the world should be prepared for the worst. (Courtesy: ORF)

Kamal Nath to host 'Bageshwar Baba': Courting godmen tried & tested method in MP

By: Amrit Prakash Pandey

As the Madhya Pradesh Assembly election approaches, the state's political landscape is witnessing a new horizon – the growing influence of self-proclaimed godman and prominent Hindutva figure Dharendra Krishna Shastri. With both the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and Congress taking notice, Shastri's influence has become a significant factor in the electoral calculations of the parties.

The man and his message
Dharendra Krishna Shastri popularly known as Bageshwar Dham Sarkar is a religious preacher and the head of the Bageshwar Dham Ashram in the Chhatrapur district of MP. He has a significant following in MP and slowly across other parts of the country where his rallies have been drawing large crowds. Shastri's message is centred around encouraging Hindutva and the Hindu way of living. His speeches are replete with references to Hindu scriptures and teachings, and he advocates for a return to a more traditional and conservative way of life. Both the Congress and BJP have turned MP into an experimental ground for Hindutva politics as both parties are prioritising this agenda over other vital developmental issues. As a result, even religious figures are trying to gauge the potential impact of the current political climate on their interests.

New Hindutva proponent gaining ground in MP

The BJP has been in power in MP for more than 15 years, and it has promoted a Hindutva agenda through its policies and programmes. The influence of Hindutva on the electoral fortunes of political parties is well-known, and the BJP has been successful in using it to its advantage. The Congress

party resorted to a soft Hindutva strategy using tactics such as installing 108 Hanuman idols in former chief minister and senior leader Kamal Nath's family stronghold of Chhindwara before the November 2018 Assembly election.

After securing a victory in the election, the Kamal Nath government wasted no time setting up the Adhyatma department which seems to be nothing more than a thinly-veiled attempt to push spiritual propaganda. Shastri is the founder of the Bajrang Sena, a right-wing group that has been involved in several controversial incidents in the Chhatrapur district of MP where he is based. He has been accused of making hate speeches and inciting violence and has been involved in clashes with the police and other groups. Shastri's influence in MP is growing, and it is becoming a significant factor in the state's electoral politics. He has a considerable following in his home district of Chhatrapur where the BJP won one seat and the Congress three seats in the 2018 Assembly elections. He has been seen with many senior leaders from both parties, including Kamal Nath. While Shastri may have the most influence in his home district, his rallies are drawing crowds from across the state, making him a significant player in the upcoming elections.

Media promotion of Shastri's ideology raises concerns

It is concerning to see the media actively promoting individuals like Shastri who espouse questionable and controversial views. The media's extensive coverage of Shastri's rallies and speeches as well as his appearances on television programs raises concerns about the kind of messaging and ideologies being promoted by the self-proclaimed godmen and babas.

While the media has a duty to report on events and individuals of public interest, they must also consider the potential consequences of amplifying certain voices and views. In the past, other spiritual leaders such as Asaram Bapu, Baba Ramdev, and Sadhguru Jaggi Vasudev have also played a significant role in shaping the political landscape. They have been able to amass a considerable following due to their spiritual teachings which resonate with many in the country.

In some cases, their influence has been so strong that political parties have sought their endorsement or formed alliances with them to secure votes. However, their involvement in politics has not been without controversy, and some have faced criticism for their views on sensitive issues such as caste, religion, and gender. Overall, the influence of self-proclaimed godmen and babas on Indian politics is a complex and contested issue. While they can mobilise a significant base of support, their involvement in politics raises questions about the separation of religion and state and the role of spiritual leaders in the public sphere.

Can 'god's messengers' govern states?

As MP heads to the polls, the influence of Hindutva and its various political implications will be keenly watched. The outcome of the elections will shape the future of politics in the state and beyond. While the rise of Dharendra Krishna Shastri is a new phenomenon, the influence of self-proclaimed godmen and babas in Indian politics is not. The impact of such figures on Indian democracy and society is complex and multifaceted, and it is a matter that requires careful consideration. It remains to be seen how much of an impact Shastri will have. (Courtesy: The Quint)

Majoritarian politics and the plight of Dalits

By: Ram Puniyani

Despite the Bharatiya Janata Party's (BJP) claims of 'Sabka Sath, Sabka Vikas' (development for all), the plight of the weaker sections of society is worsening by the day. While Muslims are regarded as the primary target of majoritarian politics, an equally major aspect of this politics is to subjugate Dalits as well. We are witnessing a paradoxical phenomenon where, on one hand, the social and economic conditions of Dalits has worsened, while the BJP's electoral reach within the community has increased. There is also a rising impact of the fountainhead of majoritarian politics, the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) with its goal of co-opting Dalits into the Hindu nationalist discourse.

The term 'Dalit' was coined by Mahatma Jyotirao Phule, a major reformer, who took giant leaps for education and other rights of the oppressed communities within the Hindu fold in the mid 19th century. Interestingly, a large section of these communities had also converted to Islam earlier due to the oppression of the caste system, as pointed out by Swami Vivekananda in his lecture titled "The future of India".

The struggles for social equality and economic justice were taken a few notches up by the relentless struggles of B.R. Ambedkar through movements like Chavdar Talab (access to public drinking water), Kalam Temple (right to entry to temples) and formation of the Independent Labor Party (1935) among others. The efforts culminated in the provision for affirmative action for Dalits through reservations in education, jobs and the electoral arena. While this did have some impact on Dalit lives, the changes were small and progress at a snail's pace.

Their conditions have dramatically worsened during the last few decades. Various economic, social and political indices illustrate this downside. As per the data of National Coalition for Strengthening SCs and STs, "The report revealed that atrocities or crimes against Scheduled Castes (SCs) have increased by 1.2% in 2021 with Uttar Pradesh reporting the highest number of cases of atrocities against SCs accounting for 25.82% followed by Rajasthan with 14.7% and Madhya Pradesh with 14.1% during 2021." The BJP, guided by the agenda of Hindutva, has been raising identity issues to polarise the community and bypass the central issues facing the marginalised. While cow vigilantism targeted the Muslim community and led to lynchings becoming a common phenomenon, these lynchings also targeted Dalits who faced the wrath of instigated mobs. While such violence disproportionately affects Muslims, a substantial number of Dalits have also been lynched. The horrific incident of Una shows just the tip of what has been happening.

Reservations for Dalits have been instrumental in correcting historical wrongs but ever since BJP's ascent to power, it has tried to dilute the same by introducing reservations on economic grounds. According to sociologist Sukhdev Thorat, only 5% of the working Dalits population benefits from reservation. On top of this, reservation for non-Dalit communities based on vague economic criteria will further dilute their entitlements. The introduction of 'creamy layer' and clubbing of individual incomes in households will further deprive a section from the provisions of reservations. In 2018, the University Grants Commission (UGC) issued a circular with 700 vacancies across colleges, with only 2.5% of them reserved for applicants from the Dalit community and none from the Scheduled Tribes (ST). Such moves are bound to worsen the economic plight of this community.

The RSS's plans
It is clear that, at every step, the BJP has been trying to undermine the rights and provisions for the Dalit community. To understand this, let us take a brief look into the history of its parent organisation, the RSS, and the circumstances in which it was formed. As the process of social reform picked up in India during colonial period, Phule's efforts for promoting education among Dalits followed by Ambedkar's remarkable initiatives for social equality led to greater awareness among the Dalit community which led to the 'Non Brahmin movement' in the Maharashtra's Vidarbha in the 1920s. The upper caste was upset due to such changes and was one of the contributing factors in the establishment of the RSS. Its agenda of Hindu Rashtra, on one hand, talked of Muslims and Christians as 'foreigners' and on the other, it harped on the golden period when the laws of Manu Smriti ruled the roost and Dal-

its were treated as slaves with full contempt. The upper caste communities were opposed to any movements towards equality in society. When the Indian Constitution was formed, RSS and its support base opposed the provisions of reservations.

Due to the implementation of reservations and the opening up of jobs in the public sector in large numbers, Dalits started coming up in the social space. In the 1980s, the Dalit community's journey towards equality was opposed and anti-Dalit violence took place in Ahmedabad. With the implementation of the Mandal Commission's report in 1990, the Rath Yatra got a tremendous boost, leading, in due course, to the demolition of the Babri mosque in 1992. Through all this, the path for electoral domination opened up for the BJP in a big way.

At the same time, the BJP's majoritarian politics wanted to ensure that the Dalit community, while kept in subjugating positions, were also wooed at a social, political and economic level. The RSS floated 'Samajik Samrasta Manch' (Social Harmony Forum), to work among the Dalits. This organisation gave the message of 'Hindu unity' while retaining the caste hierarchy. In contrast to Ambedkar's 'caste annihilation', it worked among the Dalits promoting harmony among different castes. Through social engineering and co-option, it won over a chunk of the community. To woo Dalits, it also began putting up Dalit icons like Suhel Dev in Uttar Pradesh (UP), giving these icons an anti-Muslim tilt. This was like killing two birds with one stone. The BJP's efforts to appease Dalits by eating in Dalit households won over a section of the community through the process well known as 'sanskritization'.

Through the vast network of its swayamsevak (cadre), it built an electoral base among the Dalit community. Prior to elections, this 'RSS combine' also picks up campaigns, which present Dalits as Hindus and projects other parties as appeasers of Muslims. This was witnessed in UP elections where house to house propaganda among Dalits was that BJP is the only party not appeasing Muslims and is the upholder of Hindu interests. Through this strategy it was successful at electoral level in winning a chunk of Scheduled Caste (SC) reserved seats. In the 2014 general elections it could win 44 of the 84 seats in UP, with these strategies in operation.

The Dalit Muslim question

Another debate gaining prominence is whether Dalits who have converted to Islam should be considered for reservations or not. 'Dalit Muslims' as such have to face double wrath. As Muslims they face the brunt of communal violence and as Dalits they are not able to get the benefit of reservations. The argument of many Dalit writers and intellectuals is that since Islam does not have a caste system and believes in equality of all, why should reservation be extended to them. They also point out that the Quran has no such sanction for caste hierarchy. Dilip Mandal and Suraj Yengde, both prominent Dalit intellectuals, are opposing the reservation for Dalits; who are Muslims. They roughly argue that Islam, according to its holy scriptures, does not have caste hierarchy so Dalit Muslims should not be considered for reservations. The flaw in their argument is that societies don't run by reading scriptures. Communities adapt to the prevalent social systems, and the community's elites ensure the subordinate position of the downtrodden on one pretext or another. Caste is an overarching reality of South Asian communities; Muslims are no exception to that. One recalls that even when the efforts for modern education for Muslims were initiated, the lower caste Muslims were not considered for such a provision on the ground that their low caste occupation does not require any modern education.

Dalit Muslims are as much Dalit as others are, depriving them of this minimum affirmative action will be an injustice to a large section of this population. The problem is, if there are more claimants for the cake, its size has to be increased. The reservation on economic grounds is reducing the provisions of SC reservations severely, that's where the problem lies. Some intellectuals also argue that reservation for Dalit Muslims will also affect the electoral reservations for Muslims and will increase their electoral provisions. As far as electoral reservation for Muslims is concerned, the representation of Muslims in the electoral arena has already dropped to dismal levels, far less than their representation in the population. This in no way should come into consideration while extending reservation to Dalit Muslims. (Courtesy: The Wire)

Haryana violence: The tale of a mosque and a temple

By: Arunabh Saikia

Mohammad Saad was supposed to be on a train on Tuesday afternoon, going back home to Bihar's Sitamarhi. Instead, an ambulance set out for Sitamarhi on Tuesday with the 22-year-old's corpse.

Saad died Monday night when a mob attacked and set on fire the Anjuman mosque in Gurugram, where he used to work as an imam. Hours before the mosque had come under attack, violence had broken out in Nuh, 60 km away. Muslim residents threw stones at a Vishva Hindu Parishad procession, setting off clashes that left four dead.

Initial reports of the violence had suggested that for several hours, Hindu devotees participating in the procession were stranded in a temple complex, surrounded by a violent mob. Haryana Home Minister Anil Vij told the Indian Express that 3,000-4,000 people were being held hostage in the temple. Media reports added that the police had rescued the devotees by late evening.

However, when Scroll visited the temple on Tuesday, the head priest, Deepak Sharma, said that although the atmosphere was tense on Monday afternoon, the police had managed to keep the mob "at least a kilometre away". "There was no harm done to the temple," Sharma said.

In contrast, despite police presence outside the mosque in Gurugram, the mob was able to enter and kill Saad. Another person, Khurshid Alam, was shot in the leg during the attack. Alam is currently recovering in

the intensive care unit of a private hospital.

The attack on the mosque

Barely an hour before the mosque came under attack, Saad had spoken to his elder brother, Mohammad Shadab, who lived a few kilometres away in the same neighbourhood.

Speaking to Scroll at the morgue as a postmortem was being conducted on his brother's body, Shadab said Saad had brushed aside his concerns that he should perhaps not spend the night at the mosque.

Shadab said he was concerned as there had been communal clashes earlier in the day in adjoining Nuh, which had spilled over to the outskirts of Gurugram. "But he told me there was nothing to worry as the police had been deployed outside," he said. The police report detailing the incident confirms their presence inside the mosque at the time of the attack. According to the complaint filed by a sub-inspector of the Gurugram police who was present at the site when the attack happened, a mob comprising "90-100 people" overpowered the police.

The mob threw stones and fired at the police party deployed outside the mosque when they tried to intervene, the complaint states.

"They were armed with sticks and guns and were chanting slogans of Jai Shri Ram even as they surrounded the mosque from all sides," the complaint notes. Once inside the mosque, the mob resorted to more firing and arson, the complaint adds.

Mohammad Shadab, Saad's elder brother, said his body bore

several bullet injuries. "There are cut marks on his neck too," he said.

Scroll has not seen the post-mortem report. A First Information Report has been filed on the basis of the complaint in the Gurugram Sector 56 police station. The police have named 10 people in the FIR – eight from the village of Tigri and two from Nathupur – in addition to 90-100 "unknown people".

Charges of murder and rioting, among others, have been pressed against the accused. Five people had been arrested, said Deepak Gahlawat, a deputy commissioner of the Gurugram police.

The violence in Nuh

The clashes in Nuh mirrored a pattern seen in Delhi and other places in recent years: of Hindutva groups leading processions through Muslim-dominated areas, chanting incendiary slogans, leading to retaliation by Muslims.

According to reports, though, there may have been another layer to the violence on Monday. Monu Manesar, a cow-vigilante and member of the radical Hindutva outfit Bajrang Dal, who is among 30 suspects in the murder of two Muslim men in the state's Bhiwani district in February, had purportedly posted a video expressing his intent to take part in the procession. The video elicited angry responses from Nuh's Muslim youths, warning Manesar against the idea.

The procession began from Gurugram's Civil Lines and was headed to Punhana in Nuh. One of the pit stops was the Nalhar Mahadev temple, nestled in the foot of the Aravali range.

According to head priest, Deepak Sharma, the procession reached the sprawling temple complex at around 1.30 pm-2 pm. Around 3.15 pm-3.30 pm, when some people set out to resume the yatra after lunch, they came under attack from Muslim residents on the road leading to the temple.

"The atmosphere was very tense and around 2,500 people were taking shelter in the temple," said Sharma.

However, Sharma said the mob did not attack the temple. "They were at least a kilometre away," he said.

The police arrived shortly after and dispersed the mob after a couple of hours. "By 6 pm-6.30 pm everyone could go back home or wherever they were headed safely," said the priest.

Usha Kundu, additional superintendent of the Nuh police, said the mob was at considerable distance from the temple. "We were at the spot, but the mob was quite far away from the temple," said Kundu.

Dharmender Singh, the officer in charge of the Nalhar police outpost, said Nuh's Muslims residents fired from the hillock towards the "public on the road leading to the temple". "On the road, there were mainly the gau rakshaks," he said, using the Hindi word for cow vigilantes. Singh said the mob also burnt down several vehicles, part of the procession, parked on the road leading to the temple.

By Tuesday afternoon, the charred vehicles had been cleared but the road bore signs of soot and shreds of glass were strewn on it. (Courtesy: Scroll.in)

Gen Tchiani, promised to create the conditions for a peaceful transition to elections following his ouster of Prez Mohamed Bazoum

Niger's civil society mobilizes the nation to fight for freedom from foreign interference

NIAMEY (NIGER), Aug 3 (AP): Niger's ruling junta and civil society groups called on the nation to mobilize in the capital on Thursday to fight for the country's freedom and push back against foreign interference.

"We are talking about the immediate departure of all foreign forces," Mahaman Sanoussi, interim coordinator for the M62 civil society group that's organizing the protest, told The Associated Press. "(We'll mobilize) against all forms of threats to continue the struggle for the sovereignty of the people. The dignity of the Nigerian people will be respected by all without exception."

The march falls on the West African nation's Independence Day from its former colonial ruler, France, and as anti-French sentiment spikes, more than one week after mutinous soldiers ousted the country's democratically elected president. Protests are expected throughout the capital, Niamey, to push back against foreign meddling.

The coup has been strongly condemned by Western countries, many of which saw Niger as the last reliable partner for the West in efforts to battle jihadists linked to al-Qaida and the Islamic State group in Africa's Sahel region. Russia and West-

ern countries have been vying for influence in the fight against extremism.

France has 1,500 soldiers in Niger who conduct joint operations with its military, and the United States and other European countries have helped train the nation's troops. In an address to the nation on Wednesday, the new military ruler, Gen. Abdourahmane Tchiani, lashed out at neighbouring countries and the international community and called on the population to be ready to defend the nation. Tchiani said Niger will face difficult times ahead and that the "hostile and radical" attitudes of those who oppose his rule provide no added value. He called harsh sanctions imposed last week by the West African block known as ECOWAS illegal, unfair, inhuman and unprecedented.

ECOWAS has also threatened to use force if ousted President Mohamed Bazoum, who remains under house arrest, is not released and reinstated by Aug. 6. In a closed door meeting on Wednesday, dozens of people from civil society organizations, professional groups and trade unions spoke with the coup leaders about their vision for the country. Sanoussi, from M62, was at the meeting and said the junta talked about their priorities for the nation, including secur-



ing it from violence. But another civil society member at the same gathering who did not want to be named for security reasons told the AP they left feeling concerned. They had a strong impression that the French military was going to be ousted soon and that members of civil society groups would help the junta do it.

During the meeting, Tchiani spent a long time speaking about the history of foreign military presence in the region, discussing France's involvement without naming it specifically, and asked those present to help maintain the country's integrity. Tchiani also didn't seem concerned that ECOWAS would intervene or that President Bazoum would resign — which he has yet to do — noting he was no longer in power, the civil society members said.

Even if the junta demands the withdrawal of French troops — as they did in neighbouring Mali and Burkina Faso, both of which are run by military leaders — it wouldn't make a difference, said Anne-Claire Legendre, a spokesperson for the French foreign minister during a press briefing on Wednesday. "We don't answer to the putschists. We recognize one constitutional order and one legitimacy only, that of President Bazoum," she said.

Ahead of Thursday's demonstration, the French Embassy in Niamey asked Niger's government to take all measures to ensure the security and protection of its premises after it was attacked by protesters last week and a door was set on fire.

Demonstrators in Niger are openly resentful of France and have been waving Russian flags

during protests. Some see Russia and its Wagner mercenary group, which operates in a handful of African countries, including Mali, as a powerful alternative. The new junta leaders have not said whether they intend to ally themselves with Moscow or stick with Niger's Western partners. As tensions grow in the capital and the region, many European countries announced the evacuations of their citizens.

By late Wednesday night, nearly 1,000 people had left on four flights and a fifth evacuation was underway, France's Ministry of Foreign Affairs said.

The State Department on Wednesday ordered what it said was the temporary departure of nonessential embassy staff and some family members from Niger as a precaution. It said its embassy would remain open. Pentagon press secretary Brig. Gen. Pat Ryder said late Wednesday that the State Department had not requested U.S. military assistance for the departure. Nigeriens are now bracing for what's ahead. The sanctions announced by ECOWAS included halting energy transactions with Niger, which gets up to 90% of its power from neighbouring Nigeria, according to the International Renewable Energy Agency.

Pak Cabinet approves signing of security pact with US: Report

ISLAMABAD, Aug 3 (PTI): Pakistan's Cabinet has quietly approved the signing of a new security pact with the US, a move that indicates a fresh start in defence cooperation after years of distrust between the two nations and may open avenues for Islamabad to get military hardware from Washington, a media report said on Thursday. Through a circulation summary, the Cabinet gave its seal of approval to sign the Communication Interoperability and Security Memorandum of Agreement, known as the CIS-MOA, between Pakistan and the US, The Express Tribune newspaper reported.

However, there was no official announcement from either side about the signing of the agreement. According to the report, Federal Minister for Information Marriyum Aurangzeb was approached but did not respond.

The development comes days after Pakistan and the US agreed to further enhance their bilateral relations, including in the defence field, at a meeting between US Central Command (Centcom) chief General Michael Erik Kurilla and Pakistan's Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Asim Munir.

CIS-MOA is a foundational agreement that the US signs with its allies and countries with which it wants to maintain close military and defence ties. It also provides legal cover to the US Department of Defence for ensuring the sale of military equipment and hardware to other countries. The signing of the CIS-MOA means that the two countries are keen to maintain the institutional mechanism.

The agreement, first signed between the Joint Staff Headquarters of Pakistan and the US Department of Defence in October 2005 for 15 years, expired in 2020. The two sides have now renewed that arrangement which covers joint exercises, operations, training, basing and equipment.

The signing of the CIS-MOA indicates that the US might sell some military hardware to Pakistan in coming years, a source in Washington was quoted as saying in the report. However, a retired senior Army officer who previously dealt with the US played down the development and said it was not easy for Pakistan to buy military hardware from the US despite this agreement.

Referring to the growing strategic ties between the US and India, the officer said Washington's long-term interests are not aligned with Islamabad. Nevertheless, the US needs Pakistan in some critical regions, and hence this agreement serves the purpose of both, he said. Pakistan was once a major recipient of military and security assistance from the US, but with the Cold War ending and China challenging US supremacy, things changed.

The situation prompted Washington to seek closer cooperation with India to counter China, and meanwhile, Pakistan lost its decades of significance in the eyes of the US, the report said. Pakistan and the US maintained close defence cooperation, but their ties came under strain due to differences over the issue of Afghanistan. The killing of former al-Qaeda chief Osama bin Laden by US Navy Seals in Pakistan's Abbottabad, close to a military training school in 2011, deteriorated the situation.

In the same year, the US forces bombed a Pakistani military outpost on the Afghan border, killing 24 soldiers and prompting Islamabad to block the land routes used by the allied forces to carry vital supplies to Afghanistan. The issue was later resolved, but the relations could not escape the shadow of Afghanistan. Former US President Donald Trump had repeatedly accused Pakistan of not doing enough to route out militants. He also accused Islamabad of giving nothing to the US other than "lies and deceit" in return for American aid.

Canadian PM Justin Trudeau and his wife announce their separation



TORONTO, Aug 3 (AP): Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and his wife, Sophie Gregoire Trudeau, announced on Wednesday that they are separating after 18 years of marriage.

The two said in statements posted on Instagram that they made the decision after "many meaningful and difficult conversations". A statement from the prime minister's office said they both have signed a legal separation agreement.

Trudeau, the 51-year-old scion of one of Canada's most famous politicians, was sworn into office in 2015. Sophie Trudeau is a former model and TV host. The couple were married in 2005. Together, they brought star power to the prime minister's office and appeared in the pages of Vogue magazine.

They have three children, 15-year-old Xavier, 14-year-old Ella-Grace and nine-year-old Hadrien. "As always, we remain a close family with deep love and respect for each other and for everything we have built and will continue to build," the two said on Instagram.

An official familiar with the matter said Trudeau will continue to live at Rideau Cottage in Ottawa, where he has lived since 2015, and the children will primarily live there to maintain stability. The official said she has moved to a separate Ottawa home, but will spend time at Rideau Cottage at times, including when he is travelling. The official spoke on the condition of anonymity because they were not authorised to speak publicly.

She has played a less visible role in recent years, rarely travelling with the prime minister on official trips. The two were seen together publicly at Canada Day events in Ottawa last month.

"They remain a close family, and Sophie and the prime minister are focussed on raising their kids in a safe, loving and collaborative environ-

ment," the statement from Trudeau's office said. "The family will be together on vacation, beginning next week." His office requested respect for their privacy. Justin Trudeau and Sophie Gregoire met as children when she was a classmate of his youngest brother, Michel, and they reconnected as adults when they co-hosted a 2003 charity gala.

Trudeau is the second prime minister to announce a separation while in office. His father, Pierre Trudeau, and mother, Margaret Trudeau, separated in 1979 and divorced in 1984 during the elder Trudeau's final year in the prime minister's office.

Margaret Trudeau wrote in her memoir that she had a romance with Senator Ted Kennedy. During a 1977 visit to Washington, DC with Pierre, she sat listening to her husband's speech before Congress while feeling "torn between an intense need for him and a longing for Ted Kennedy". Margaret wrote she became infatuated with Kennedy after meeting him a few years earlier. She told Kennedy that he "had not destroyed my marriage but that I had used him to help me destroy a marriage that was already over".

Just weeks later, Margaret, who had then-undiagnosed mental illness, left her husband to party with the Rolling Stones in Toronto. The marriage ended soon after that.

Justin, who was a child when his parents separated, wrote in his 2014 book "Common Ground" that public life took its toll. "I knew, even then, that the demands imposed by the life my parents were leading affected them far more than the ordinary stress of parenthood," he wrote. Justin Trudeau channelled the star power of his Liberal icon father when he first won office in 2015. Scandals, voter fatigue and economic inflation have taken a toll on his popularity after eight years in power.

Just a few months ago, Trudeau posted a picture of himself holding hands with his wife on their anniversary and wrote, "Every mile of this journey together is an adventure. I love you, Soph. Happy anniversary!"

Nelson Wiseman, a political science professor at the University of Toronto, had thought that Trudeau would seriously consider stepping down sometime next year or early in 2025.

"The separation may have been partially driven by an ultimatum from Sophie that Trudeau not contest the next election," Wiseman said. "I now think he is more likely to stick in the political arena."

US supports direct dialogue between India and Pakistan on issues of concern

WASHINGTON, Aug 3 (PTI): The US supports direct dialogue between India and Pakistan on issues of concern, a senior Biden administration official has said.

There has been continued strain in ties between India and Pakistan on a number of issues including Islamabad's continued support to cross-border terrorism and the Kashmir issue.

India has been maintaining that it desires normal neighbourly relations with Pakistan while insisting that the onus is on Islamabad to create an environment that is free of terror and hostility for such an engagement. India has also asserted that Jammu and Kashmir "was, is and will" always be part of the country.

"As we have long said, we support direct dialogue between India and Pakistan on issues of concern. That has long been our position," State Department Spokesperson Matthew Miller told reporters on Wednesday at his daily news conference.

Miller's remarks came two days after Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif offered to hold talks with India to address all serious and outstanding issues.

Bilateral relations between Islamabad and New Delhi have been tense since August 2019 when India changed the special status of Jammu and Kashmir. On India's ties with Pakistan, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar has said that it is not possible for India to have normal relations with the neighbouring country until the policy of cross-border terrorism is abrogated.

"We can't allow terrorism to be normalised; we can't allow that to become the basis for getting us into discussions with Pakistan. To me it is a fairly common sense proposition," he said in June.

Pope Francis blasts 'scandal' of clergy sex abuse in Portugal and meets with survivors

LISBON, Aug 3 (AP): Pope Francis met with survivors of clergy sexual abuse in Portugal on Wednesday and blasted members of the country's Catholic hierarchy for their response to the long-ignored scandal, which he said had marred the Catholic Church and helped drive the faithful away.

Francis dove head-on into the crisis roiling the Portuguese church on the first day of a five-day visit to Lisbon for the Catholic Church's World Youth Day festival. His trip comes at a delicate moment for the Portuguese church; a panel of experts hired by Portugal's bishops reported in February that priests and other church personnel may have abused at least 4,815 boys and girls since 1950.

The Vatican said Francis met with 13 abuse victims for more than an hour at the Vatican Embassy and characterised the pope's role in the meeting as one of "intense listening". The victims were accompanied by church personnel in charge of child protection programmes.

The encounter, which had been expected since Francis met with survivors on previous trips abroad, was aimed at trying to help the Portuguese hierarchy and faithful come to terms with the church's own legacy of abuse and cover-up after many other European countries have gone through similar reckonings.

The response by Portugal's bishops to the expert report's findings, however, in some ways added to the problem. Prior to the report, Portuguese church officials had insisted there were only a handful of child sex abuse cases. After the document's release, the bishops initially refused to remove named abusers from ministry and said they would only compensate victims if courts ordered them to.

The meeting with victims took place after Francis presided over a vigil service for Portuguese clergy and nuns at the capital's iconic Jeronimos Monastery, where in February hundreds of people gathered to brave for victims of sex abuse after the experts' report was released.



Speaking in his native Spanish, Francis acknowledged many clergy and nuns in countries with once-thriving Catholic parishes feel weary about their vocations because the faithful are increasingly detached from their faith.

"It is often accentuated by the disappointment and anger with which some people view the church, at times due to our poor witness and the scandals that have marred her face and call us to a humble and ongoing purification, starting with the anguished cry of the victims, who must always be accepted and listened to," he said.

Bishop Jose Ornelas, the head of the Portuguese Bishops' Conference, promised in a speech to Francis to devote "our special attention to the protection of the welfare of children and the undertaking to protect them from all kinds of abuse".

Although critics have chided church officials for their sluggish response, the bishops' conference later said the pope's meeting with abuse survivors was evidence of "the path of reconciliation that the Portuguese church has been following in this area".

Portugal's bishops are committed to "putting the victims first" and "working together" with the victims on reparations and their recovery, a conference statement asserted.

The Portuguese Catholic Church also promised in March to build a memorial to victims that would be unveiled during World Youth Day, but organisers scrapped the plan a few weeks ago.

In its place, victims' advocates launched a campaign called "This is our memorial". Hours before the pope arrived, they put up a billboard in central Lisbon reading "4,800+ Children Abused by the Catholic Church in Portugal." They said it was paid for through a crowdfunding campaign that was so successful the organisers can put up more billboards around the city, though none was located along planned routes for his visit.

Reaction to Francis' comments on abuse were mixed: some pilgrims outside the Jeronimos Monastery said the World Youth Day gathering was not the time or place to raise the issue.

Giovanni, a 47-year-old pilgrim from Italy who declined to give his last name, said it was clear that people who come from around the world to attend the event "do not like bad things. We definitely hope whatever is clear that is wrong will be stopped and cancelled".

But he noted that the pope had requested forgiveness for the church's legacy of child sex abuse "and it also shows his commitment to solve this issue as well".

Francis came to Lisbon to participate in his fourth World Youth Day, the raucous Catholic jamboree launched by St John Paul II in the 1980s to invigorate the next generation of Catholics in their faith. More than one million (10 lakh) young people from around the world were expected to attend the events in Lisbon, which run through Sunday.

As he was travelling to Portugal, the pope said he would continue urging young people to "make a mess" -- a reference to his now-famous exhortation during his first World Youth Day as pontiff, in Rio de Janeiro in 2013.

It was a call for young people to shake things up in their parishes and has come to symbolise Francis' own revolutionary reforms that have shaken up the Catholic Church at large.

Israel's SC hears case against a law protecting Netanyahu from being removed from office

JERUSALEM, Aug 3 (AP): Israel's Supreme Court heard a petition on Thursday against a law that protects Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu from being removed from office over claims of a conflict of interest due to his ongoing corruption trial.

Netanyahu's governing coalition passed a law in March that limits removing a prime minister from office to cases of medical and mental incapacitation.

It would protect Netanyahu from being deemed unfit for office because of his ongoing corruption trial and claims of a conflict of interest. Critics say the law is tailor-made for Netanyahu and encourages corruption.

A few dozen people protested outside Israel's Supreme Court in Jerusalem as judges heard the petition by the Movement for Quality Government in Israel.

The law passed earlier this year stipulates that a prime minister can only be deemed unfit to rule for health or mental reasons and that only the premier or the government can make that decision, not the attorney general.

Netanyahu is on trial for charges of fraud, breach of trust and accepting bribes in three separate cases.

The hearing came as Netanyahu and his allies are trying to pass a series of judicial overhaul bills that aim to curtail the power of the

Supreme Court and give the ruling coalition control over the appointment of judges.

It remained unclear when the court would issue a decision in the matter.

The judicial overhaul plan has triggered months of mass protests in an increasingly divided Israel as opponents say the measures would concentrate power in the hands of the executive and erode the limited checks and balances.

Netanyahu and his allies, who took power in December after the country's fifth election in under four years, say that these changes are necessary to curb what they see as an overly activist court made up of unelected judges.

Typhoon Khanun forecast to turn back to Japanese islands

Khanun, which means jackfruit in Thai, had sustained surface winds of 162 kph with higher gusts on Thursday

TOKYO, Aug 3 (AP): The typhoon that damaged homes and knocked out power on Okinawa and other Japanese islands this week was slowly moving west on Thursday but is forecast to make a U-turn and dump even more rain on the archipelago.

Typhoon Khanun, now in the waters between China and Japan's southwestern islands, is expected to slow to nearly stationary movement before a weakening high pressure system nearby allows it to turn east Friday, the Japan Meteorological Agency said.

That forecast would largely spare China, where rain from an earlier typhoon caused deadly flooding and damage this week around the capital, Beijing. Khanun, which means jackfruit in Thai, had sustained surface winds of 162 kph (100 mph) with higher gusts on Thursday morning.

Up to 20 centimeters (7.8 inches) of rainfall were expected in the Okinawa region by midday on Friday, JMA said.

China's weather authorities issued rainstorm alerts for the eastern coast, from Jilin province, near the border with North Korea, to Zhejiang province, south of Shanghai. Ships were called into port and passenger ferry services halted in Zhejiang province.

Light rain was falling in the Taiwanese port city of Keelung, near Taipei, and coast guard personnel were warning people to stay off the beaches. The island shut its financial markets Thursday, some of its northern cities shut offices and schools, and offices closed in anticipation of worsening weather on the northeastern coast.

In Okinawa, the typhoon injured 41 people, three of them seriously, according to the prefectural government. A 90-year-old man was found under a collapsed garage in Ogimi village, and his death is being investigated as possibly caused by the typhoon's high winds.

The storm at one point left nearly



220,000 homes, or about 30%, of those in Okinawa, without power, according to the Okinawa Electric Power Company. Also, some 7,000 homes on Amami, an island northeast of the Okinawan islands and part of Kagoshima prefecture, were without power, according to the Economy and Industry Ministry.

Most were still without power on Thursday as the storm hampered

restoration work. Hospitals that lost power were only receiving emergency cases. Wind warnings for the main Okinawa Island were lifted on Thursday, though moderate winds and rain were affecting the island.

Public transit systems that closed during the storm resumed operations, and some flights in and out of the Naha Airport are expected to resume later Thursday.

M'laya CM inaugurates Meghalaya State Education Commission office

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Aug 3: Meghalaya chief minister Conrad Sangma inaugurated the office space of the Meghalaya State Education Commission (MSEC) at the MBOSE office in Lower Lachumiere. The inauguration ceremony was attended by Meghalaya education minister Rakkam A Sangma and members of the Commission.

In his address, chief minister Conrad Sangma emphasized the vision behind establishing the MSEC, which aims to introduce crucial reforms in the education sector. He expressed the importance of aligning the state's development goals with the aspirations and future of the youth.

The education sector in Meghalaya has encountered numerous



challenges over the years, and the chief minister believes that the col-

lective efforts of the Meghalaya State Education Commission, con-

sisting of some of the finest minds in the state, can devise practical solutions to overcome these obstacles.

Conrad Sangma further expressed his satisfaction in attending the Commission's first meeting, where he provided insights into the current state of the education system. He laid down the government's vision and encouraged the members to work collaboratively as a team to bring about tangible and practical results.

The chief minister conveyed his best wishes to the Meghalaya State Education Commission, expressing confidence in their abilities to address the challenges and drive positive transformations in the education sector for the betterment of the state's youth.

8.38 lakh voters in Mizoram: State election department

AIZAWL, Aug 3 (PTI): There are over 8.38 lakh voters, including 4.31 lakh female voters, in Mizoram, according to the draft voters' list published on Wednesday, officials said.

Female voters outnumbered their male counterparts again by 24,545.

As per the draft rolls published by the state election department, out of 8,38,039 electorates, 4,06,747 are males and 4,31,292 females, officials said.

There are 5,021 service voters, including 89 females in the state, they said.

The draft electoral rolls were prepared for special summary revision of the voter list to include people attaining 18 years of age on October 1, 2023, they said.

Aizawl district with 12 assembly constituencies has the highest number of voters at 2,81,192 followed by south Mizoram's Lunglei district at 98,516 and Lawngtlai at 89,749.

There are six assembly constituencies in Lunglei district.

Nhathial district, which was created in 2019, has the least electorates at 15,875.

The last date for filing claim (inclusion) and objection is August 31. There are 40 assembly constituencies and 1,276 polling stations in Mizoram. Elections



to the 40-assembly seats are due later this year.

In the present assembly, the ruling Mizo National Front (MNF) has 27 members, main opposition Zoram People's Movement (ZPM) has 6 members, Congress-5 and BJP has 1 member.

Dr. K. Beichhua, who resigned as minister in December last year, was expelled from the MNF for 'anti-party activities' in January.

Recently, he announced that he will join the BJP before the state assembly polls.

Protests in Manipur's Bishnupur dist against conversion of Torbung Bangla into mass grave

IMPHAL, Aug 3 (NNN): A significant number of women in strife-torn Bishnupur district, Manipur, gathered at the DC office to protest against the conversion of Torbung Bangla, a police bordering Churachandpur district, into a mass grave. Torbung Bangla is at the center of the ongoing violence in the state, and its residents have been displaced since the outbreak of violence on May 3.

The Coordinating Committee on Manipur Integrity (COCOMI) objected to the alleged attempt to bury the slain narco-terrorists in the area. This move was seen as provocative and could lead to further violence in the conflict-torn state.

The womenfolk from across Bishnupur district demanded action against the Kuki-based organizations behind the alleged move. While security forces prevented them from entering the DC office premises, some leaders were allowed to meet with the DC and SP of the district. After a patient hearing, the officers assured the women of taking ap-



propriate action.

The displaced residents of Torbung Bangla, who were currently residing in relief camps in Imphal, declared that they will not allow their village to become a mass grave. They announced their intention to return to their homes by August 4, urging the state authorities to drive out the armed miscreants occupying the village by August 3.

Loitongbam Surchand of Social Welfare Club, Torbung Bangla, emphasized their strong opposition to converting any place within the jurisdiction of Torbung Gram Pan-

chayat into mass graves. He warned of serious consequences if their village becomes a cemetery for the slain "narco-terrorists."

Rajkumari Babita Devi, a representative of the local women's body (Meira Paibi) of Torbung Gobindapur, recalled how they became the first victims of the violence and emphasized their determination to return to their village by August 4. Any untoward incidents upon their return would be the responsibility of the state and central governments, she asserted.

Kohima dist admin tells village councils, wards not to deal with ILP issues

HT Correspondent

DIMAPUR, Aug 3: The Kohima district administration has directed all village councils and wards to adhere to the Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation (BEFR), 1873, and abstain from any activities related to the issuance or enforcement of inner line permit (ILP), or any other form of permit issuance that goes against this mandate.

In a notification on Thursday, deputy commissioner Shanavas C said the directive has been issued following an order from the office of the commissioner, Nagaland.

According to the BEFR 1873, the DC said issuing, enforcing and regulation of ILPs fall exclusively under the purview of the district administration. Any actions or dealings contrary to this regulation are considered "illegal", he said.

As per the regulation, it is obligatory for anyone, both Indian citizen and foreigner, who is not an



indigenous inhabitant of Nagaland, to obtain an ILP in such form, and with such conditions, as may be prescribed by the Nagaland government, to enter the state for a limited period.

Meanwhile, the DC, as per the national clean air programme (NCAP), has undertaken an initiative on checking fuel adulteration,

enhancing public hygiene facilities, ensuring fire safety measures, and conducting random checks on fuel quality and quantity data at fuel stations within the Kohima municipality area and other regions of the district with an aim to improve air quality in Kohima city.

The exercise, conducted from July 15 to July 29, adhered to guidelines set by the Central Pollution Control Board, Shanavas, who is also the chairperson of the NCAP for Kohima city, said in a circular on Thursday.

The circular said a number of departments, including the district administration, Kohima police, legal and metrology, consumer protection, health and family welfare department, Kohima Municipal Council, and fire and emergency services across north and south Kohima, Chiephobozou, Khuzama, Zubza, Jakhama and Kezocha collaborated on this endeavor.

Sikkim govt requests citizens to hoist National Flag in houses, offices from August 13-15

GANGTOK, Aug 3 (PTI): The Sikkim government on Thursday asked all its citizens to hoist the national flag at their houses and offices from August 13-15 as part of the nationwide 'Har Ghar Tiranga' campaign.

"In this nationwide campaign, an appeal is made to all citizens of Sikkim to join in the celebration of the Har Ghar Tiranga campaign by hoisting the national flag at their houses, offices, etc, from August 13 to 15," a culture department release said.

It said all government, private sector enterprises, educational/commercial establishments, non-governmental organisations, restaurants, shopping complexes, police stations will take part in this campaign and hoist the tricolour at their respective spaces to pay befitting respect to the nation.

'Dengue spreading from Bangladesh': Tripura starts tests at border checkpoints

AGARTALA, Aug 3 (PTI): Tripura has registered 92 cases of dengue over the past few days, and most of them were detected in the Sepahijala district along the Bangladesh border, an official said on Thursday. There has been no death due to dengue in the state yet, but all precautionary measures are being taken, Director of Family Welfare and Preventive Medicine Supriya Mallik told PTI.

Eighty-four of the total 92 cases were detected in Dhanpur and Melagharh in Sepahijala, while the rest were found in Kanchanmala in West Tripura district, he said.

A six-member Rapid Response Team with specialist doctors has been set up for conducting special screenings in the potential dengue pockets, he said, adding that tests are also being done at the three immigration check posts at the Bangladesh border. Mallik claimed that dengue was spreading from neighbouring Bangladesh, where the situation has already become alarming. "Mosquitoes can cross the fence along the international border, and bite the people living in the border areas. We strongly believe that dengue mosquitoes are coming from Bangladesh and spreading in the bordering areas of Sonamura subdivision," he said.

ANSAM reiterates support for 'Framework Agreement' to resolve Indo-Naga political issue

SENAPATI, Aug 3 (NNN): The All Naga Students' Association, Manipur (ANSAM) has reaffirmed its unwavering support for the "Framework Agreement" signed between the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN) and the Government of India on August 3, 2015. This agreement aims to bring an end to the long-standing political struggle of the Nagas and recognizes their inalienable rights to the Naga Flag, Naga Constitution, and integration.

In a recent statement, ANSAM expressed its admiration for the visionary and selfless sacrifices made by the collective leadership of NSCN to pave the way for a logical and unique settlement of the Indo-Naga issue. The association also acknowledged Prime Minister Narendra Modi's role in signing the "historic" Framework Agreement with NSCN-IM, appreciating his visionary statesmanship and determination to resolve the longstanding political issue.

However, ANSAM expressed deep concern over the delay in implementing the provisions of the Framework Agreement, despite eight years having passed since its signing. After 26 years of Naga

political talks, the student association urged the Government of India to expedite the impending Indo-Naga settlement based on the agreed Framework Agreement.

While the Naga people eagerly await a peaceful solution, ANSAM called on Naga elected representatives, intellectuals, and civil society leaders not to support any resolution that goes against the spirit of the Framework Agreement. The association emphasized the importance of respecting the unique history and situation of the Nagas in finding a lasting solution.

ANSAM firmly stated that any settlement not adhering to the principles of the Framework Agreement will not address the genuine political aspirations of the Nagas. The student body urged the Government of India to focus on a mutually negotiated solution and avoid pursuing a "piece meal-imposed solution" that may not lead to lasting peace.

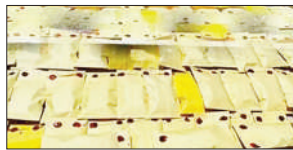
As the Indo-Naga issue remains a crucial matter, ANSAM's reaffirmation of its support for the Framework Agreement reflects the continued dedication of Naga students to seek a peaceful and meaningful resolution for their community.

Heroin worth over ₹ 17 lakh seized in Arunachal, two arrested

ITANAGAR, Aug 3 (PTI): Security forces have recovered 500 grams of heroin worth ₹ 17 lakh and arrested two drug peddlers in Arunachal Pradesh's Namsai district, police said on Thursday.

Based on inputs, a joint team of police and CRPF personnel led by Namsai SDPO Chera Saban raided a house at Bogamur Pahargaon village under Namsai police station in the wee hours of July 30, Namsai SP Sange Thinley said.

During the raid, the team arrested drug peddlers Bhaskar Gogoi (32) and Putulon Gogoi



(28) and recovered 49 soap cases containing the contraband in addition to ₹ 30,500 cash, suspected to be sales proceeds, the SP said.

The current market value of the drugs is approximately ₹ 17.15 lakh, he said, adding a case under NDPS Act was registered at Namsai police station.

Arunachal takes stride towards energy sustainability with launch of GIS power substation



HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Aug 3: In a momentous step towards energy sustainability and development, Arunachal Pradesh achieved a groundbreaking achievement by launching its first 133/32 KV Gas Insulated Substation (GIS). The inauguration of this state-of-the-art substation, which took place at Nirjuli, was graced by deputy chief minister Chowna Mein.

The GIS power substation, boasting an impressive capacity of 100 MW, is poised to meet the region's energy demands for the next 20-25 years, marking a significant leap forward in the power sector. Spearheaded by the Power Grid Corporation of India Limited (PGCIL), the largest transmission system construction company, this remarkable endeavor also includes the execu-

tion of over 2000 Km of transmission lines in Arunachal Pradesh.

Deputy chief minister Chowna Mein emphasized that a major focus of this transformative project is to reduce transmission losses, which currently stand at 45% in the state. PGCIL's initiatives will not only enhance power transmission efficiency but also elevate the overall quality of life for the residents of Arunachal Pradesh.

The state government has adopted progressive policies to facilitate the drawing of transmission lines through forests and private lands, effectively mitigating potential hindrances and ensuring smooth execution of the project. This commitment underscores the government's determination to bring about positive change in the region.

Furthermore, the recent decision to sign a Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) with Central Public Sector Undertakings (CPSUs) is expected to attract a staggering investment worth Rs 1,30,000 crore to Arunachal Pradesh. This infusion of capital will not only stimulate economic growth but also reinforce the state's position as a promising investment destination.

Upon completion of these ambitious projects, the state government anticipates an annual revenue of around Rs 5000 crore. Additionally, the upcoming completion of the 2800 MW Dibang Multipurpose Project (DMP) is set to elevate Arunachal Pradesh to the distinguished status of the highest power generator in the region, solidifying its role as a powerhouse of energy production. The state government remains steadfast in realizing these ambitious goals and looks forward to a future empowered by its new-found energy prowess.

The event witnessed the presence of other dignitaries, including Advisor to Power Balo Raja, MLA Doimukh Tana Hali, SP Papum Pare Taro Guchar, SP Naharlagun Nirjuli, executive director Power Grid Adesh Kumar Gupta, CGM in charge Power Grid Upananda Kotoki, CE Power Bar Takum, Gumdo Doji & Ginko Linggi, and director NER-IST Prof Manapuram Muralidar.

USTM signs pact with International University of Libreville

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Aug 3: The University of Science and Technology Meghalaya (USTM) has taken a significant step towards fostering inter-cultural activities and projects by signing a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the International University of Libreville (UIL), Gabon. The MoU, signed at an official ceremony in Libreville, Africa, last Monday, aims to promote collaboration and exchange opportunities among students and faculty members of both institutions.

Prof. GD Sharma, Vice Chancellor of USTM, expressed the university's pleasure in accepting the invitation of the Gabonese government to visit different universities in Libreville. The MoU is a result of this visit and aims to enhance the quality of education by providing students and teachers with opportunities for joint research and academic collaboration on global issues. The recognition of USTM's quality education by the Hon'ble Minister of Education and the President of the Hon'ble Supreme Court played a pivotal role in fostering this academic collaboration.



The collaboration seeks to promote international understanding, development, and friendship. It will stimulate and support various educational, professional, and intercultural activities and projects among the students and staff of both universities.

The MoU outlines numerous activities to be undertaken, including student and faculty

exchange programs, cultural exchanges, visiting scholars, collaborative research projects, joint degree programs, training programs, seminars, and much more.

The agreement will remain operational for five years and can be renewed for further periods. The universities will consult annually to discuss programs and explore opportunities for improvement. The termination of the MoU will not impact ongoing activities of faculty, staff, or students already engaged in cooperative endeavors.

The collaboration will facilitate full-time student exchanges on a one-for-one basis between the institutions, fostering academic growth and cultural enrichment for both undergraduate and graduate students. The selection procedure for exchange students will be the responsibility of the respective institutions.

The MoU marks a significant milestone for USTM and UIL, opening doors to a world of inter-cultural learning and research opportunities, and reinforcing the institutions' commitment to providing top-notch education to their respective student communities.

Missing minor from Arunachal found in Manipur

ITANAGAR, Aug 3 (PTI): A minor boy, who went missing from Arunachal Pradesh's East Siang district, was recovered from Churachandpur in Manipur, police said on Thursday.

The 16-year-old, a resident of 2 Mile area in Pasighat, the district headquarters, who went missing on July 29 from his home allegedly because of family issues, was found on August 1, following an intensive search and inter-state coordination between police and security forces, East Siang SP Sumit Kumar Jha said. A missing report was filed at Pasighat police station on Monday, based on which the district police swung into action.

The SP said the case took a significant turn when Churachandpur SP Karthik Malladi contacted him regarding recovery of a juvenile by Churachandpur police.

"He was found roaming around in Moirang by village defence force



(VDF) personnel Md Hussain. He escorted the boy to the nearest security post at Kangvai, manned by 9 Assam Rifles," the SP said quoting his Churachandpur counterpart.

Based on inputs, a team was constituted consisting of sub-inspector AK Mehta and head constable Onuk Pertin along with the boy's guardian to recover the minor from Churachandpur.

"We are immensely grateful for the efforts of all those who were involved in this operation," the SP said. The boy, who has now been handed over to his family, reached Churachandpur via Dimapur and Imphal.

AAP oppn to Delhi services bill aimed at hiding corruption: Shah

Gudha releases 3-pages of 'red diary'

Can't be more authentic proof of Raj govt's corruption: BJP

NEW DELHI, Aug 3 (PTI): Union home minister Amit Shah on Thursday asserted the power of Parliament to make laws for the national capital, saying the AAP was opposing the Delhi services bill with the sole intention of hiding its corruption and asked other opposition parties to think of people's welfare and not of the new alliance.

Initiating the debate in the Lok Sabha on the Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi (Amendment) Bill, 2023, Shah said the BJP and Congress had ruled the national capital without any confrontation, but problems arose only in 2015 when a government came that had no intention to serve but only to fight with the Centre.

The AAP-led Delhi government has been at loggerheads with the Centre over the control of Group-A officers in the National Capital Territory administration.

In May, the Centre promulgated the Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi (Amendment) Ordinance, 2023 that overturned the Supreme Court



judgment handing over control of "services" in the NCT administration to the Delhi government.

The lone AAP member in Lok Sabha, Sushil Singh Rinku, was heard saying that the intention of the party was not to pick up fights with the Centre but to save the Constitution from being "subverted".

With opposition questioning the power of Parliament to make laws for the Delhi government, Shah asserted that the Constitution, under Article 239AA, granted such powers.

Shah also invoked first Prime

Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, Babasaheb Ambedkar and Congress leaders Sardar Patel, C Rajagopalchari and Rajendra Prasad opposing the proposal for full statehood to Delhi.

"The problem with the Bill is not about control of transfer and postings of officers, but to hide the truth of the bungalow worth crores by gaining control over vigilance and to hide the truth about the corruption that has taken place," Shah said.

Shah was referring to the renovation of Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's bungalow

which had triggered a war of words between the AAP and the BJP.

The Home Minister also cautioned the opposition, which is building a coalition against the BJP-led NDA for the 2024 Lok Sabha elections, saying that bills and laws were for the benefit of the people and should be supported or opposed solely for that purpose.

"It is my request to all the parties not to indulge in politics of supporting or opposing legislation just to win elections or gain the backing of some party. There are many ways to build new alliances. Bills and laws are for the benefit of the people. These should be supported or opposed keeping in mind the welfare of the people of Delhi," Shah said.

The lawmaker from Gujarat's Gandhinagar constituency also asserted that the efforts of the opposition to build an alliance against the BJP was an exercise in futility as Prime Minister Narendra Modi was set to return to power with a massive majority.

"Don't sacrifice the interests of the people for the sake of this alliance. The people are watching

everything. You think that by entering into an alliance you will gain the trust of the people. You got the mandate, but you are sitting there (opposition) because of the manner in which the UPA ran the government for 10 years, indulged in corruption worth 12 lakh crore," Shah said.

"The entire nation is watching you support the Delhi government's corruption for the sake of the alliance. The entire nation will settle the scores in the elections," he said.

"I wish to say this to the Congress that these people (AAP) will not be joining the alliance after the passage of this Bill," the BJP leader said.

Opposing the GNCTD Bill, Congress leader Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury cited that Supreme Court judgment which empowered the Delhi Assembly to make decisions regarding civil services in Delhi.

He claimed that if the Bill was allowed to pass, then the Centre would overrule elected Assemblies in other states and make decisions for them.

NEW DELHI, Aug 3 (PTI): A day after sacked Rajasthan minister Rajendra Gudha released three pages of the "red diary" alleging graft in the cricket association election, the BJP on Thursday said there cannot be a more authentic proof of the Congress government's corruption in the state.

Gudha on Wednesday made public three pages of the purported red diary which he has claimed contains the details of financial misdeeds of the Congress government and cited their contents to allege corruption in the Rajasthan Cricket Association election.

Gudha alleged that the three pages contain details of financial transactions between chief minister Ashok Gehlot's son Vaibhav Gehlot and Rajasthan Cricket Association secretary Bhawani Samota and others. Vaibhav Gehlot is presently chairman of the RCA. Reacting to the development, BJP national spokesperson Sudhanshu Trivedi told a press conference here at the party headquarters, "There cannot be a more authentic proof of the Rajasthan government's corruption

than these pages of the red diary which have come to fore."

"This is going to be the Bofors moment for the Rajasthan government," he said, demanding that the Congress give a reply to the revelations made by Gudha. Trivedi said Congress leaders should have been left red-faced after Gudha released some of the pages of the red diary.

"But it is unfortunate that the Congress and its government in Rajasthan are shamelessly ignoring it," he charged.

The BJP spokesperson raised the issue of women's safety in Rajasthan and hit out at the ruling Congress, claiming that at least 15-20 cases of crime against women are registered in the state "every day" and the government has failed to ensure that effective action is taken against the accused.

"Is it because of vote bank politics, no effective action is taken against the accused of such," he asked. Trivedi said the people of Rajasthan are closely watching the misdeeds of the state government and its failure in ensuring the safety of women in the state.

AAP holds demonstration over 9,000 women missing from J&K

8,617 women and 1,148 girls went missing in J&K in 3 years between 2019-21: NCRB

SRINAGAR, Aug 3 (PTI): Local Aam Aadmi Party workers on Thursday held a demonstration over 9,000 women going missing from the Union Territory, as revealed recently by the National Crime Records Bureau.

The protest was held at Press Colony here by dozens of AAP workers, who held placards bearing the question "Why? Who? Where? Missing 9765."

AAP media committee Chairman Nawab asked Jammu and Kashmir Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha to give answers on all the missing women.

"We are asking why this happened and what is the flaw in your system? Who are these 9,765 and what is the reason behind their going missing? And where are those missing women? Are you doing anything to trace those missing people?" he asked.

Nawab also asked Sinha about 'human trafficking' allegedly taking place in the Union Territory.

"Is there any department that can protect the honour and safety of the women of Jammu and Kashmir? This is not a political issue, this is about security and integrity," he said.

According to the NCRB, 8,617 women and 1,148 girls went missing in Jammu and Kashmir in three years between 2019 and 2021. The data of the Union Home Ministry was tabled in Parliament recently.

BJP MPs welcome HC order allowing ASI survey at Gyanvapi mosque

NEW DELHI, Aug 3 (PTI): BJP leaders on Thursday welcomed the Allahabad High Court decision allowing the ASI survey at the Gyanvapi mosque in Uttar Pradesh, saying that the "truth" about the temple at the site will now come out.

The high court dismissed a petition filed by the Gyanvapi committee challenging a district court order directing the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) to conduct a survey to determine if the mosque located next to the Kashi Vishwanath temple is built upon a temple.

It said the district court order is just and proper, and no interference from this court is warranted.

Reacting to the verdict, BJP MP Pragya Singh Thakur said the decision of the high court is according to the Constitution.

"It is a good verdict. For us Indians, it is one that gives hope. Truth always comes out, it takes time but the truth comes out."

Gyanvapi, the manner in which a structure was erected during the Mughal era by destroying the temple... we can't call it a mosque. It is a temple and will remain so," she told reporters outside Parliament.

"There is just the need for the temple to appear. When the survey is done it would be clear our symbols are there... the temple is there," Thakur said.

BJP MP Mahant Balaknath also hailed the verdict, saying it was based on facts. "Some people who used lies to hide the facts for a long



time, now the truth will come out," he said.

Echoing similar views, BJP's Rajya Sabha member from Uttar Pradesh, Harnath Singh Yadav, also welcomed the court's decision.

"The Muslim community should accept this verdict. Now through this survey everything will become clear.... 'doodh ka doodh aur paani ka paani ho jayega'. All kinds of illusions will be over," he told reporters outside Parliament.

Speaking on the issue, BSP MP from Amroha Danish Ali said the Places of Worship Act, 1991, should be implemented in toto.

"Otherwise this will keep happening, people will look for a temple in a mosque and someone will look for a monastery in a temple. One can keep digging every day. Some political parties in order to divert attention from real issues of

the people will keep taking political advantage," he said.

Samajwadi Party MP from Moradabad ST Hasan said, "We will abide by the court verdict. We expect the ASI to carry out an honest survey like it had done in Babri masjid where it had given a report that there were no signs of a temple there. What decisions come, only time will tell," Hasan said.

"But today we need to foster communal harmony and increase brotherhood between the two large populations of the country," he said.

Hasan argued that prayers are going on in that mosque for 350 years, and therefore, if not a mosque what else would it would be called.

"Are Allah and Ishwar not the same thing? We are dividing that also," he said appealing for promoting communal harmony.

The Varanasi district court had on July 21 directed the ASI to conduct a "detailed scientific survey" - including excavations, wherever necessary -- to determine if the Gyanvapi mosque is built upon a temple.

The Anjuman Itteazamia Masjid committee, which manages the mosque, had moved the high court on July 25, a day after the Supreme Court halted the ASI survey till 5 pm on July 26, allowing time for the committee to appeal against the lower court's order.

Allahabad High Court Chief Justice Pritinker Diwaker had reserved the order on the mosque committee's petition on July 27 after hearing arguments from both sides.

Mosque set on fire in Haryana's Nuh

GURUGRAM, Aug 3 (PTI): A mosque was set on fire while a short circuit apparently triggered a blaze in another in Haryana's Nuh district, police said on Thursday. No one was injured in the incidents that took place around 11:30 pm on Wednesday, they said.

While one of the mosques is located near Vijay Chowk, the other is near a police station. Both mosques suffered some damage. Superintendent of Police (Nuh), Varun Singla, said, "Light arson has been done in one mosque while short circuit seems to be the reason for the fire in the other. The police took control of the situation and are conducting raids to nab the suspects".

Soon after information was received about the incidents, fire brigades were rushed to the two mosques and the fire was doused, police said. A senior police officer said they are trying to identify the accused with the help of CCTV cameras of nearby areas. Earlier, police had said that Molotov cocktails were hurled at the two mosques. Curfew, meanwhile, has been relaxed in Nuh on Thursday.

"People can buy daily essentials from 10 am to 1 pm", said Prashant Panwar, deputy commissioner of Nuh. Curfew was clamped in Nuh after communal violence erupted on Monday after a mob tried to stop a Vishva Hindu Parishad procession. Prohibitory orders have been clamped in Palwal. Mobs killed a cleric, torched an eatery and vandalised shops as communal violence that began in Nuh spilled over into neighbouring Gurugram on Tuesday. Six people have died so far in the violence, 116 people have been arrested and 90 detained, according to the Haryana government.

Centre relaxes rules to give one-year extension to Cabinet secretary Rajiv Gauba

NEW DELHI, Aug 3 (PTI): The Centre on Thursday relaxed key rules to give a one-year extension to Cabinet Secretary Rajiv Gauba beyond August 30, 2023, according to a Personnel Ministry order.

With the completion of this third extension, he will become the longest serving cabinet secretary of the country.

Till now, B D Pande had been the longest serving cabinet secretary from November 2, 1972, to March 31, 1977.

Gauba, a former Union home secretary, was in 2019 appointed to the country's top bureaucratic post for two years. He was given one-year extensions in 2021 and then in August last year.

The Appointments Committee of the Cabinet (ACC) has approved extension in service to Gauba, a 1982-batch Indian Administrative Service (IAS) officer of the Jharkhand cadre, for a further period of one year beyond



30.08.2023, in relaxation of AIS or All India Services (Death-cum-Retirement Benefits or DCRB) Rules, 1958 and and Rule 56 (d) of the Fundamental Rules, it said.

The rules allow the central government to give extension in service to the cabinet secretary, in the public interest "provided that the total term of the cabinet secretary, who is granted such extensions of service, shall not exceed four years".

The latest extension will allow Gauba to stay in the post during the general elections due early next year.

Gauba is said to be the key architect of the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Act, 2019, under which the erstwhile state was bifurcated into union territories of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh following the abrogation of the special status given to it under Article 370 of the Constitution. He had also served as secretary in the Union urban development ministry and additional secretary in the home ministry, looking after the crucial left-wing extremism division, among other responsibilities.

Born in Punjab, Gauba had graduated in Physics from the Patna University. He had served in Jharkhand as the chief secretary for 15 months before returning to serve in the central government in 2016.

India to have its first polar research vessel in five years: Rijiju

NEW DELHI, Aug 3 (PTI): India aims to have its first Polar Research Vessel (PRV) in the next five years in order to sustain its bases in Antarctica, union earth sciences minister Kiren Rijiju said on Thursday.

Replying to a query in the Rajya Sabha, he said a proposal regarding the ship is expected to go for Cabinet approval during the current financial year.

He noted that in 2014, the Cabinet had approved ₹ 1,051 crore to acquire the vessel. A tender was also floated for the same.

The government later abandoned the project as the company

which had got the order to build the ship raised certain conditions that were not part of the tender process.

"However another effort was initiated and now, we are ready with the proposal to be moved by the EFC (Expenditure Finance Committee)," Rijiju said. The cost of the vessel is now estimated to be ₹ 2,600 crore, he noted.

"I am hopeful that in this financial year, we should be ready to propose this estimate and move in the Cabinet. In the next five years, we should be ready with the ship," Rijiju stated. He noted that the government is in talks with other

countries which have expertise in making such ships.

Rijiju, however, noted that the government would like to manufacture the ship in the country itself.

"I am hopeful that in the next five years, we should be able to build the ship, hopefully in India," he said. India currently has three research base stations in the polar region. Rijiju said the country needs ice breaker ships to have continuous access to the research stations which are required for various reasons, especially to have a better understanding of climate change and other research matters.

India should go for younger cheetahs habituated to human presence: African experts tell govt

NEW DELHI, Aug 3 (PTI): Younger cheetahs that are habituated to management vehicles and human presence are preferred candidates for re-location to India, international experts involved in Project Cheetah have told the government based on lessons learnt from the initial experience in Madhya Pradesh's Kuno National Park.

In a status report submitted to the government recently, the experts emphasised that younger cheetahs are more adaptable to their new environments and have higher survival rates compared to older cheetahs.

Younger males display "lower aggression" towards other cheetahs, reducing the risk of intraspecific competition mortality, commonly known as cheetah infighting.

Considering the costs associated with relocating cheetahs to India, the experts highlighted that younger cheetahs have a longer life expectancy post-release, offering higher conservation value and breeding potential.

The experts said younger cheetahs "habituated to management vehicles and humans on foot" allow easier monitoring of health-related issues, simplify stress-free veterinary and management intervention, which is crucial considering the recent cases of radio collar-induced infections in some cheetahs. Additionally, they will enhance tourism value. Kuno, where two batches of cheetahs from Namibia and South Africa have been introduced, is set to open for tourism and these qualities in cheetahs can enhance the park's appeal to visitors, they said.

The African experts have also shortlisted 10 young, suitable cheetahs aged between 19 months and 36 months that can be made available for relocation to India in early 2024.

They emphasised that although the cheetah



mortalities recorded at the Kuno National Park are unfortunate and have attracted negative media attention, they are within the normal parameters for wild cheetah reintroduction.

Six of the 20 adult cheetahs relocated to Kuno from Africa have died since March this year -- the latest being on Wednesday.

The experts drew the government's attention to the initial difficulties faced during cheetah reintroduction attempts in South Africa, where nine out of 10 attempts failed. These experiences led to the establishment of best practices for wild cheetah reintroduction and management.

"In South Africa, it took us 26 years to perfect the cheetah reintroduction and we lost 279 wild cheetahs in the process. We cannot expect India to get this right with just 20 cheetahs. Although such high losses are unlikely in India, Project

Cheetah will undoubtedly experience similar growing pains," South African wildlife expert Vincent van der Merwe said.

Based on previous reintroduction experiences in Africa, the India founder population of 20 individuals will further decline to approximately five to seven individuals before population recovery is initiated, the report read.

The experts said the first litters with realistic prospects of survival to adulthood are likely to be born in 2024.

However, cheetah cub mortality is expected to be high initially as reintroduced female cheetahs adapt to the different birthing intervals in Asia.

The report also underscored the importance of "supermothers" -- highly successful, fit and fertile female cheetahs that sustain wild cheetah populations in Southern Africa.

Out of the seven wild females relocated to India, only one is likely to be a "supermom", the experts said.

They also said the natural process of cheetahs developing thick coats of fur in anticipation of African winter appears to be proving fatal in India's wet and hot conditions and suggested treatment with long-acting medicine to deal with fatal infections and prevent any more deaths.

The experts said that the thicker coats, high parasite load and moisture create a perfect recipe for dermatitis with fly strike on top of it compounding the infection and compromising the skin's integrity. Infections can spread and the contaminated fluids can run down the spine when the cheetahs sit up on their haunches.

The experts said that adapting on an "evolutionary timescale" might be the only permanent solution if there's a genetic link to the development of winter coats.

They emphasised that the relocation of at least 50 more founder cheetahs from the South African metapopulation over the next decade will be crucial for stabilising the Indian population. Continuous swaps between the Southern African and Indian metapopulations will also be necessary for long-term genetic and demographic viability.

The experts strongly advised Indian authorities to identify alternative sites for reintroduction, suggesting that Kuno may be a sink reserve.

Sink reserves are habitats that have limited resources or environmental conditions that are less favourable for the survival or reproduction of a species. Sink reserves are reliant on dispersing animals from source reserves -- habitats that provide optimal conditions for population growth and reproduction of a particular species -- to maintain their population numbers.

The experts recommended having at least two additional reintroduction sites available by the end of 2024, with an area of above 50 square kilometres and preferably fenced as unfenced systems worldwide have not seen successful cheetah reintroduction.

Talking to PTI, Union environment ministry officials had earlier rejected the idea of having fenced reserves, saying it goes against the basic tenets of wildlife conservation.

In a letter to the Supreme Court last month, the international experts had expressed serious concerns about the management of the project.

The experts expressed frustration that they were not being given timely information and were excluded from decision-making processes. They claimed that their involvement has been minimised since a key project leader, Y V Jhala, retired.

Some of the cheetah deaths could have been prevented with better monitoring and timely veterinary care, they had told the apex court.

The National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) told the Supreme Court that there is no reason to believe that cheetah deaths were caused by any inherent unsuitability at Kuno.

According to the NTCA, cheetahs, in general, have low survival rates, with only 50 per cent of adult cheetahs surviving even in non-introduced populations. For introduced populations, the survival rates are even lower.

While the mortalities are troubling, the NTCA assured that they are not unduly alarming.

Sharing its plans with the apex court for the introduction of cheetahs in other areas, the NTCA said it is preparing the Gandhi Sagar Wildlife Sanctuary and the Nauradehi Wildlife Sanctuary in Madhya Pradesh for this purpose.

Is there no mechanism to abrogate Article 370 even when everyone in J&K wants it: SC

NEW DELHI, Aug 3 (PTI): Is there no mechanism to abrogate Article 370 even when the people of Jammu and Kashmir want it, the Supreme Court asked on Thursday and wondered if the now repealed provision can't be touched will it not amount to creating a "new category" beyond the basic structure of the Constitution. Hearing for the second day a clutch of petitions challenging the Centre's 2019 decision to abrogate Article 370 of the Constitution that accorded special status to Jammu and Kashmir, a five-judge constitution bench headed by Chief Justice DY Chandrachud wanted to know how the provision could be revoked in the absence of a constituent assembly.

The bench, also comprising Justices Sanjay Kishan Kaul, Sanjiv Khanna, BR Gavai and Surya Kant, told senior advocate Kapil Sibal, appearing for National Conference leader Mohd Akbar Lone, there are only two highly debatable issues - whether Article 370 acquired a permanent status with the cessation of the constituent assembly of Jammu and Kashmir and whether the procedure adopted for its abro-



gation was valid. Sibal submitted there was an understanding between the Constitution framers and then Maharaja of Jammu and Kashmir Hari Singh who, while in favour of independence of his state, signed the instrument of accession to India due to the trouble caused by Pakistani infiltrators, under which Article 370 was inserted and no process can now be followed to abrogate it. "The Constitution is a live document and it is not static. Can you say that there is no mechanism to change it (Article 370) even when everyone wants to change it? Then you are saying that this can't be changed even if all of

Kashmir wants it," Justice Kaul told Sibal. Supplementing the views of Justice Kaul, the CJI asked Sibal, can Parliament, having powers under Article 368 to amend the Constitution, not change or abrogate Article 370. "You are saying that there is a provision of the Constitution which lies even beyond the amending powers of the Constitution. So, if we accept your submission, we will be creating a new category apart from the basic structure of the Constitution," Justice Chandrachud said. Article 368 says, Power of Parliament to amend the Constitution and Procedure therefore: (1) Notwithstanding anything in this Constitution, Parliament may in exercise of its constituent power amend by way of addition, variation or repeal any provision of this Constitution in accordance with the procedure laid down in this article. In the landmark Kesavananda Bharati verdict of 1973, the top court had propounded the basic structure doctrine of the Constitution and held that certain fundamental features such as democracy, secularism, federalism and rule of law cannot be amended by Parliament.

PCI chief to head 10-member panel to recommend chief, members of Lokpal

NEW DELHI, Aug 3 (PTI): The Centre has appointed Press Council of India (PCI) chairperson Justice Ranjana Prakash Desai as chairperson of a 10-member search committee to recommend the chief and members of anti-corruption ombudsman Lokpal. Former head of Research and Analysis Wing (RAW) Samant Kumar Goel and Information Commissioner Heera Lal Samariya are among the members of the committee.

The Lokpal is working without its regular chief after Justice Pinaki Chandra Ghose completed his term on May 27 last year. Justice Pradip Kumar Mohanty, a judicial member of Lokpal, is currently the "acting chairperson".

At present, there are five members in the Lokpal. Two posts of judicial members and one post of non-judicial member are lying vacant.

The Lokpal is headed by a chairperson and can have eight members -- four judicial and the rest non-judicial. The prime minister-led selection committee has constituted a search committee for the purpose of recommending the panel for consideration of the positions of chairperson and members of the Lokpal, an order issued by the Personnel Ministry said.

The search committee's nine members include

Justice Kalpesh Satyendra Jhaveri, former chief justice of Orissa high court; Samant Kumar Goel, ex-chief of RAW; Heera Lal Samariya; A S Kiran Kumar, former head of Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO); A Surya Prakash, ex-chairperson of Prasar Bharati; and Arundhati Bhattacharya, former chief of State Bank of India (SBI), according to the order dated August 2.

Besides them, former Indian Administrative Service (IAS) officers Otem Dai and Rajiv Yadav and former Mumbai Police Commissioner Ahmed Javed are also appointed as the members of the search committee. The Lokpal and Lokayuktas Act, which envisages the appointment of a Lokpal at the Centre and Lokayuktas in states to look into cases of corruption against certain categories of public servants, was passed in 2013.

A Lokpal chief and its members are appointed by the President after obtaining the recommendations of a selection committee headed by the prime minister and comprising the speaker of the Lok Sabha, the Leader of Opposition in the Lower House, the Chief Justice of India or a Judge of the Supreme Court nominated by him, and an eminent jurist as recommended by the chairperson and members of the selection panel.

Jamiat calls for high-level probe into train killings, Haryana violence

NEW DELHI, Aug 3 (PTI): Prominent Muslim organisation Jamiat Ulema-e-Hind (Arshad Madani faction) on Thursday called for a high-level investigation into the Maharashtra train killings and the Haryana violence, demanding that those found guilty be punished without discrimination.

In a statement, Jamiat chief Maulana Arshad Madani expressed deep sorrow over the "brutal killing of three innocent Muslim passengers and a policeman" by a Railway Protection Force (RPF) constable in a moving train and the communal violence in Haryana's Nuh district.

Madani alleged the violence in Nuh was a "planned conspiracy".

He claimed there are political motives behind what is happening in Nuh.

"Religious extremism is being fuelled by hatred to win the 2024 parliamentary elections," he alleged.

Madani demanded a fair and high-level investigation into the train incident and the Haryana violence and that those found guilty be punished without discrimination.

Rajya Sabha passes Advocates (Amendment) Bill, 2023

NEW DELHI, Aug 3 (PTI): The Rajya Sabha on Thursday passed the Advocates (Amendment) Bill, 2023, which aims to regulate the legal profession by a single Act and seeks to target "touts". The amendment would help to regulate the legal profession through a single Act, the Advocates Act, 1961, according to statement of objects and reasons of the legislation.

Replying to a debate on the Bill in the Rajya Sabha, Union Law and Justice Minister Arjun Ram Meghwal said the legal profession is a noble profession and unlawful practices should be dealt with firmly. The Bill was passed by a voice vote, following which the House adjourned for the day.

The Bill provides that every high court and district judge can frame and publish lists of touts (those who procure clients for legal practitioner in return for any

payment).

As per the provisions, such persons named in the list of touts will be excluded from entering the court premises. Any violation of this provision will entail punishment with imprisonment up to three months and a fine.

In keeping with the Centre's policy of repealing all obsolete laws or pre-independence Acts which have lost their utility, the government in consultation with the Bar Council of India has decided to repeal the Legal Practitioners Act, 1879, and to amend the Advocates Act, 1961, by incorporating the provisions of section 36 of the Legal Practitioners Act, 1879, in the Advocates Act, 1961.

This will reduce the number of superfluous enactments in the statute book. Also it will help to regulate the legal profession by a single Act, the Advocates Act, 1961, the

statement of objects and reasons of the legislation said.

BJD member Sajeet Kumar said there should be a single database to carry details about all the practicing advocates in the country, saying it will help in bringing a social welfare scheme for them.

He demanded to bring advocate's protection act to enable them practice fearlessly.

"Advocates are the officers of the court. Advocates are the most important stakeholders in the administration of justice," Kumar said. BJP member Vijay Pal Singh Tomar said the Bill has provision that will end touts from courts.

AIADMK's M Thambidurai asked the government to change the name of Madras High Court to Tamil Nadu High Court, and similarly, the names of all high courts in the name of the state and not in the names of cities.

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17 injured in burial-linked

with various stakeholders late in the night, the ITLF concluded that it would consider the request of the MHA provided "they give us a written assurance on five demands", Vualzong said.

The legalisation of the burial site in Churachandpur and the withdrawal of state forces comprising personnel from the Meitei community from the hill districts of Manipur were among the five demands made by the Kuki-Zomi organisation. An appeal has also been made to the Coordinating Committee on Manipur Integrity (CO-COMI), a platform of Meitei groups to similarly maintain peace.

Earlier, additional central security forces had rushed to the Bishnupur-Churachandpur district boundary following the call by the ITLF. Two persons including a Manipur Rifles policeman were also injured in a gunfight at Senjam Chirang in Imphal West district on Thursday morning, police said.

In another development, miscreants looted arms and ammunition from the 2nd Indian Reserve Battalion outpost at Naranansa in Bishnupur district, official sources said.

Another group of miscreants also attempted to loot arms and ammunition from the 2nd Manipur Rifles complex at Imphal but security personnel deployed at that camp foiled the attempt by firing several rounds of tear gas shells. More than 160 people lost their lives and several hundred were injured since the ethnic clashes broke out in Manipur on May 3, after a 'Tribal Solidarity March' was organised in the hill districts to protest against the Meitei community's demand for Scheduled Tribe (ST) status.

Meiteis account for about 53 per cent of Manipur's population and live mostly in the Imphal Valley. Tribals -- Nagas and Kukis -- constitute little over 40 per cent and reside in the hill districts. Tension has been brewing since morning in Bishnupur district as hundreds of locals came out on the streets to go towards the burial site and to block the movement of security forces. Locals led by women tried to pass the barricade put up by the Army and RAF personnel, demanding that they be allowed to go to Tuibung, the burial site.

The security forces fired tear gas shells to disperse the mob, resulting in injuries. Fearing the spread of violence, the district magistrates of Imphal East and West issued separate orders, reimposing the day curfew.

Earlier this week, curfew hours had been relaxed as the situation had improved in Imphal Valley.

KKHSOU only open university

such as GU or DU. He emphasised the commitment to maintaining the quality of education in the university. Minister Pegu encouraged students who have not secured admission to regular undergraduate courses to consider applying to the state open university. KKHSOU operates 276 study centers and a regional center in Jorhat, offering a diverse range of 44 academic programs at present, according to university officials. (With inputs from PTI)

Arms, warlike materials

sections of the Indian Penal Code and the Arms Act. Sources indicate that on July 31, individuals disguised in camouflage attire and carrying firearms had visited the residence of Promude Hasnu in Walingdisa near Daldai under the Diphu police station in Karbi Anglong, demanding a sum of Rs 7 lakh. The miscreants issued threats of severe consequences if their demands were not met.

AASU stages protest

and seeking prompt resolution. In attendance were prominent figures like Arnab Kakoti, president of AASU, Bokajan Regional Committee, and Sorjun Hanse, vice president of AASU, among others, who actively participated in the protest to draw attention to the pressing matters affecting the region.

Poachers nabbed

This continued crackdown on tiger poaching is part of the forest department's ongoing efforts to protect and preserve the biodiversity of the national park. The illegal trade in tiger parts poses a significant threat to the survival of these majestic creatures, and the authorities remain vigilant in their pursuit of those engaged in such illegal activities.

Incessant rains, traffic snarls

system. Although the department concerned constructs roads in every ward, they refrain from digging up drains adjacent to these roads. Faulty and unscientific construction of roads and drains results in flash floods every year," said Ramen Gogoi, a local resident. The road leading to Banipur that acts as the lifeline of the town, was also inundated with rain water following the heavy spell of thunder showers.

Govt mulls making Sanskrit

per cent interest subsidy for purchasing any kind of vehicle," the cabinet note added. The government will sign an MoU with Tata Power for setting up EV Charging Solution Ltd, and 14 charging stations in Guwahati will be constructed in the first phase, it said. The cabinet also approved the allotment of 15 bigha (five acres) land at Hojai of Nagaon district for the construction of a charitable hospital. It further said, "Zonal valuation of tea garden land in Assam in 21 districts (is) to be placed for public consultation and finalisation for 2023 to determine the near accurate valuation of tea garden land."

Govt reaches out to oppn

a discussion to begin any which way, whether the Prime Minister replies or the home minister, but opposition leaders said their demand for the Prime Minister's statement was "non-negotiable". "The opposition is not particular on the rule under which a discussion on Manipur should be held, but it should be a full-fledged discussion without any time restraints," an opposition leader said.

"INDIA parties have offered a middle-path solution to the leader of the House to break the logjam and get a discussion on Manipur going in an uninterrupted manner in the Rajya Sabha. Hope the Modi government agrees," Congress chief whip in Indian High Commission and party general secretary Jai Ram Ramesh tweeted after the meeting.

Sources said the opposition parties were proposing a discussion neither under Rule 267 or Rule 176 but under a different rule to which both sides agree.

Another opposition leader said the MPs want to tell the story of Manipur after their visit there and want the country to know what is happening in the state. "It is not about ego but the prime minister must speak about Manipur and about the people of the country of which Manipur is a part," the leader said. The opposition bloc leaders in Rajya Sabha have said a statement by the Prime Minister and a comprehensive discussion on Manipur are non-negotiable. They are also demanding a discussion on the situation in the northeast under Rule 267, which allows for the suspension of the listed business for the day to discuss an issue. The government, however, has agreed to hold a short-duration discussion under Rule 176 of the Rajya Sabha. The Upper House has been witnessing repeated disruptions over the issue of violence-hit Manipur ever since the beginning of the Monsoon session on July 20.

India probably world's most

followed by Kathak and Bharatanatyam performed depicting the freedom struggle and concluding with the national anthem 'Jana Gana Mana'. The cultural centre's chairman, Subhanu Saxena, revealed that the Bhavan would be collaborating with the Indian High Commission and the Nehru Centre in London for a special poetry event in the autumn. "I think we're also entering an era where the teachings and values of ancient India are becoming very relevant to the world," said Saxena.

The Mayor of the local borough of Hammersmith where the Bhavan is located, Councillor Patricia Quigley, described it as a hub of Indian culture in the heart of London and British Indian peer Lord Raj Loomba spoke of its illustrious history for over half a century.

The Bhavan registered as the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan with the Charity Commission in England, operates a series of classes to teach Yoga, Sanskrit and other Indian languages, besides classical Indian music and dance. As pointed out by Doraiswami, it was created within the premises of an old church building.

"What could be a better sign of the (inclusive) spirit of the Bhavan in that it takes that which is sacred, and it continues to flourish, even if it is a different tradition," said the High Commissioner.

The High Commission of India's celebration to mark the 77th Independence Day on August 15 is planned as a community celebration on August 26, in collaboration with the Indians in the UK diaspora group, at the Navnata Centre in west London.

Cong top brass holds strategy meet for Kerala

NEW DELHI, Aug 3 (PTI): The Congress' top brass on Thursday held a strategy meeting with party leaders from Kerala to discuss the preparations for the 2024 Lok Sabha elections.

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge chaired the meeting and former party chief Rahul Gandhi was also present there, besides state Congress president and CLP leader. A number of party MPs from Kerala in both Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha participated in the meeting, besides senior state leaders.

"The strategy meeting of Kerala Congress leaders in Delhi, began with a silent prayer remembering former chief minister, late Shri Oommen Chandy and former governor and minister (Kerala government), late Shri Vakkom Purushothaman," Kharge said after the meeting. He said in the 2019 Lok Sabha polls, Kerala had blessed the Congress with 19 of the total 20 MPs.

"In the 2024 Lok Sabha elections, we are extremely positive that the people of this progressive state shall once again give a resounding mandate to the Congress party," he said.

Manish Tewari says Data Protection Bill being classified as money bill, govt refutes charge

NEW DELHI, Aug 3 (PTI): Hours after Congress leader Manish Tewari on Thursday said the government might get the Digital Data Protection Bill classified as a money bill, Union IT Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw refuted the charge and termed it a "normal bill".

Tewari earlier in the day suggested that the Data Protection Bill should be considered a regular bill while noting that it should again go to a Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC).

But as the bill was moved in the Lok Sabha, union minister for electronics and information technology (MeitY) Vaishnaw rejected the suggestions that it was a money bill and called it a "normal bill".

The bill aims to make entities such as internet companies, mobile apps, and business houses more accountable and answerable about the collection, storage and processing of data of citizens as part of the Right to Privacy.

"How Did the Digital Data Protection Bill get classified as a Financial Bill suddenly," Tewari tweeted.

"It needs to be considered as a regular bill and go to a JPC again," he said.



"If this bill on passage is certified as a money bill by Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla which seems to be the intent of getting it classed as a Financial Bill then Rajya Sabha can not vote on it. It can only recommend non binding changes to Lok Sabha," the Congress MP from Punjab said.

He also shared a copy of the presidential order classifying the bill as a money bill, and said, "The latest iteration of this Bill mocks the efforts put in by the Joint Committee of Parliament on the Data Protection Bill led by two BJP members P P Chaudhary and Meenakshi Lekhi respectively."

Government sources said the President's assent had been sought as funds will be earmarked under

India summons German envoy; seeks return of baby Ariha

NEW DELHI, Aug 3 (PTI): India summoned German Ambassador Philipp Ackermann this week and asked for the early return of an Indian baby girl, who has been living in a foster care in Berlin for over 20 months.

Ariha Shah was placed in the custody of Germany's Youth Welfare Office (Jugendamt) on September 23, 2021 after the then seven-month-old baby suffered an accidental injury. She has been in foster care since then. At his weekly media briefing, External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Arindam Bagchi said Ackermann was summoned earlier this week and India's concerns on Ariha were clearly conveyed to him. India has been pressing for her early return to India arguing that it is important for the child to be in her linguistic, religious, cultural and social environment.

"We have accorded high priority to this case. We believe that the child's cultural rights and her rights as an Indian are being infringed upon by her being placed under German foster care." The German ambassador to India was summoned earlier this week and our concerns were clearly conveyed to him. We have also asked for early return of the child to India," Bagchi said.

wide," he added. The SII programme is a flagship project introduced by the Ministry of Education (MoE) in 2018. The programme seeks to endorse India as a prime education hub for international students by inviting them to pursue their higher education in the country and explore valuable educational opportunities enabled by top Indian universities. Study in India Portal is a dedicated website that will provide comprehensive information about the Indian Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). The website will illustrate academic programmes covering but not limited to undergraduate (UG), postgraduate (PG), doctoral level programmes as well as courses in Indian Knowledge System like Yoga, Ayurveda and classical arts. The website-portal will present information about the academic facilities, research support, and related information. The new website will now have the provision for students to apply in more than one institute or course of their choice. The new portal will provide an integrated one-stop solution for student registration and visa application process.

Study In India portal launched for international students

NEW DELHI, Aug 3 (PTI): The government on Wednesday launched the Study In India (SII) portal, a one stop platform to simplify the journey of international students in the country. The portal was launched by union external affairs minister S Jaishankar and education minister Dharmendra Pradhan. "The launch of this portal is aimed at making India a hub of global education by welcoming students from diverse backgrounds. It will also help us establish a strong international footprint of brand India in the education sphere. I note the integrated approach of the portal which enables user friendly application processes for international students from registration to visa approval. This simplifies...their entire journey, facilitating the choice of desired courses and receiving offers from relevant institutions," Jaishankar said at the launch. From an Indian perspective, there is no doubt that the presence of international students will be to the benefit of domestic students. It will connect the students more closely, to globalising world and prepare them better for global workplace. Having stu-



dents from other countries studying with you creates a better understanding of their cultures, habits, traditions and even thinking, he said. "When such students go back to their societies of origin, they truly become ambassadors of goodwill for India, sometimes even more so," he added. The education minister said the vision for the portal is guided by the new National Education Policy (NEP). "Guided by the NEP, the SII portal reflects our commitment to make India a preferred education destination as well as to blur academic boundaries for shaping a prosperous future. The portal is going to be a pivotal step in making India a preferred destination for higher education among students world-



BLENDING GENRES

Had lot of fun creating 'Guns & Gulaabs': Raj Nidimoru

NEW DELHI, Aug 3 (PTI): Filmmaker Raj Nidimoru on Wednesday said he and his writing partner Krishna DK love blending genres together and they got an opportunity to do just that with their first Netflix series "Guns & Gulaabs", which is set in the 1990s.

Raj, one-half of the acclaimed writer duo Raj & DK known for hit titles such as "Street", "The Family Man", and "Farzi", said they let themselves free for the upcoming show.

"We completely let ourselves loose on something we always have loved, this genre mashup. We had a lot of fun creating it," Raj said at the trailer launch of "Guns & Gulaabs" here.

laabs" here.

The event was also attended by DK, co-writer Suman Kumar, as well as actors Rajkumar Rao, Gulshan Devaiah, and Dulquer Salmaan.

"This is also a throwback to our initial films like '99', 'Shor in the City'. That kind of genre and energy. In a way, it's us going back to our own early sensibilities," added DK, who serves as co-creator on the show with Raj.

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

Set in the 1990s, "Guns & Gulaabs" follows the story of

a lovestruck mechanic Paana Tipu (Rajkumar), a reluctant heir to a ruling gang Chhota Ganchi (Adarsh Gourav), an honest officer-turned-agent-of-chaos Arjun Verma (Dulquer), and a killer called 4-cut Atmaram (Gulshan).

Asked who defined the '90s era for him, Rajkumar said it has always been superstar Shah Rukh Khan.

"The one and only Mr Shah Rukh Khan sa'ab. The most handsome 'jawan' of all," he said, referencing Shah Rukh's upcoming film.

Dulquer also mentioned Shah Rukh as an inspiration as he talked about his hit Telugu film "Sita Ramam" (2022) was an ode to the su-

perstar's romance films from the 1990s.

"No matter how hard I try, the romantic tag always finds me. It became stronger with 'Sita Ramam'. I think 'Sita Ramam' was my 'DDLJ' ('Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge' starring Shah Rukh)," he added.

From the time period, music to fashion, the force of nostalgia is strong in "Guns & Gulaabs" and the creator duo said it is because the '90s were a "simpler" era.

"Life is too easy now and quick. (In the '90s), there was a lot more effort... you had to work hard at everything and so the results were also sweeter in every single aspect of life. I think it's in our na-

ture to look back at the time we were in. Nostalgia is a part of us and there is always a charm. As soon as you think about the past, there's a charm to it. It brings a smile to your face," said Raj.

DK said the concept of nostalgia will differ from generation to generation.

"Of course, that's what we feel today. Thirty years from now, there will be a generation of people saying 'Oh 2020's were an amazing period with social media.' I read this somewhere a while back that 'nostalgia is roughly 30-40 years before your time'. People like us, who bring out films and series and studios, can relate," he added.

'Rocky Aur Rani Kii Prem Kahani' is now a love story benchmark: Karan Johar

MUMBAI, Aug 3 (PTI): Nothing can compare to the pairing of Shah Rukh Khan and Kajol when it comes to romance but with time, there has to be an evolution, says filmmaker Karan Johar, who believes his latest directorial "Rocky Aur Rani Kii Prem Kahani" has set a "love story benchmark".

Starring Alia Bhatt and Ranveer Singh as the lead pair, the movie has turned out to be a critical and commercial success with its global box office collection already crossing Rs 100 crore since its release last Friday.

At the film's success press conference, the filmmaker was asked about chronicling love stories, right from Shah Rukh's Rahul and Kajol's Anjali from his 1998 debut "Kuch Kuch Hota Hai" to the titular pair of his new film.

The filmmaker called Shah Rukh and Kajol "romance icons" who will remain unmatched in the way they represented love on the screen.

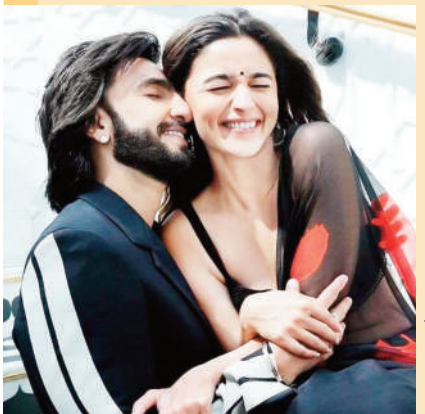
"Shah Rukh is love. He is a superstar, an emotion. The way he sings a love song or portrays a love scene... When he says 'aur paas', you want to go completely paas (close). When he says 'kuch kuch hota hai, tum nahi samajhogi', even we don't know what he means but we still go with the flow because Shah Rukh Khan is Shah Rukh Khan. Similarly, there will never be another pairing like Shah Rukh and Kajol," Johar told reporters.

But with time, there has to be an evolution, he said.

"And evolution has to bring the syntax of today. When we represent Rocky and Rani through the song 'Tum Kya Mile', we take a leaf out of the glorious book of SRK and Kajol and their love songs. But you have to change the tonality of love and romance to match our times today.

"And Rocky and Rani may be rooted and embedded in the heartbeat of the family but we brought something new. I don't think we can compare the two. I do know that this is now a love story benchmark."

"Rocky Aur Rani Kii Prem Kahani" follows the love story of the titular couple, played by Ranveer and Alia, who belong to contrasting backgrounds and cultures.



Rani Mukerji to deliver masterclass at Indian Film Festival of Melbourne

MUMBAI, Aug 3 (PTI): Bollywood star Rani Mukerji will deliver a masterclass detailing her career and life as an actor at the upcoming Indian Film Festival of Melbourne (IFFM).

The special event will take place on August 10, a day ahead of the 14th edition of the film festival. Mukerji will talk about some of her iconic roles and films, and share insights into her craft and experiences as an actor, a press release stated.

"I'm honoured to have been invited to the 14th Indian Film Festival of Melbourne. As an actor, I have been fortunate enough to receive incredible love from people in Australia and I'm looking forward to sharing my journey in Indian cinema through a masterclass that I have been invited to conduct," the 45-year-old actor said in a statement.

Mukerji made her debut at

the age of 18 with the 1996 drama "Raja Ki Aayegi Baraat", and made a name for herself with films such as Aamir Khan-starrer "Ghulam" and Karan Johar's "Kuch Kuch Hota Hai", co-starring Shah Rukh Khan and Kajol.

Over the years, she starred in many critically and commercially successful movies such as "Saathiyaa", "Hum Tum", "Veer-Zaara", "Black", "Bunty Aur Babli" and "Mardani".

"It will be a beautiful experience to connect with my fans and cinephiles during this event. I'm ready to delve into some of the most memorable characters from my filmography and try to peel off layers of emotions and nostalgia attached to those characters and scenes.

"I'm humbled that the film festival feels such roles and films have had an everlasting im-

pact in the history of Indian cinema and that they should be discussed with audiences, fans and media in Australia," Mukerji added.

At the 14th edition of the IFFM, Mukerji is nominated for the best actress for her performance in "Mrs Chatterjee Vs Norway".

The film gala will run from August 11 to 20.



'Fauda' actors Tsahi Halevi, Amir Boutrous join Nushrratt Bharuccha's 'Akelli'



MUMBAI, Aug 3 (PTI): Israeli actors Tsahi Halevi and Amir Boutrous, best known for featuring in series "Fauda", are set to appear in their first Hindi-language movie "Akelli", fronted by Nushrratt Bharuccha.

Set in Iraq, the upcoming drama thriller showcases how a person realises her own capabilities in adverse situations like being trapped in the desert land, according to a press release. Halevi, who played the pivotal role of Naor in "Fauda", said he is thrilled to be a part of an Indian film.

"It is a great opportunity to be a part of such a colorful world of Indian cinema! I'm super excited and was amazed with the script when I first

heard it! It was truly nice working with the entire cast and crew in 'Akelli' and I'm sure it is going to be an impactful and unforgettable movie," the actor said in a statement.

Boutrous said "Akelli" is an appropriate project for him to make his debut in Indian cinema.

"I think 'Akelli' is just the right kind of film to make my debut in Indian films. It has a great storyline and the perfect message. It is also armed with the most amazing cast. I am super delighted to be a part of something this awesome," Boutrous said.

"Akelli" is directed by debutant filmmaker Pranay Meshram, who earlier served as an assistant director on

projects such as "Queen" and "Commando 3". Meshram said it was a great experience working with the two international actors.

"Having Tsahi and Amir in the cast was a fantastic experience as it brought together two beautiful worlds of Indian and Israeli cinema industries. All thanks to the producer Ninad Vaidya, who successfully brought them on board, adding some amazing actors to our 'Akelli' team," the director said.

"Akelli" is produced by Nitin Vaidya, Ninad Vaidya, and Aparna Padgaonkar along with Vicky Sidana and Shashant Shah. It is set to release on August 18.

Anupam Kher on 'The Kashmir Files': There is no interpretation of truth



NEW DELHI, Aug 3 (PTI): Terming his film "The Kashmir Files" an "internal truth", veteran actor Anupam Kher on Thursday said there should not be any problem in speaking what is right.

During a session at the 2023 Jaipur Film Festival (JFF) here, the actor was asked to comment on how the 2022 film was unfairly criticised by a section of society.

In his response, Kher said: "'The Kashmir Files' is our internal truth... I talk candidly and I do that because there should not be any problem in telling the truth. There

is end to truth. There is no interpretation of truth."

The 68-year-old said filmmakers often try to play to the gallery to please others, something he believes should not be done.

"Don't try to be popular with the whole world. First be popular with yourself. If you're not popular with yourself, there is something wrong with you. We often try to make something (film) wondering 'Will the others like it?' No, what is important is if I like it or not," he added.

"The Kashmir Files", directed

by Vivek Agnihotri, depicts the exodus of the Kashmiri Pandit community from the Kashmir Valley in the 1990s. It emerged as one of last year's biggest Hindi hits of with reported earnings of over Rs 200 crore but was also tagged a "propaganda" film.

Kher, whose career spans almost 40 years, said he doesn't like being called a "veteran or legend". The National School of Drama graduate made his debut with 1984's "Saaransh" and has worked in movies such as "Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge", "Karma", and "A

Wednesday".

"I'm not competing with my contemporaries. I'm competing with the Tiger Shroffs of the world. I'm competing with Varun Dhawan.

"So, don't call me a legend, veteran or thespian because these (tags) mean you have worked a lot, please take retirement. There are still 30-40 years to go for my retirement," he added.

The JFF opened Thursday with the Adil Hussain-starrer "Footprints on Water", directed by Nathalia Syam.

Brazil coach Sundhage criticised over the team's lack of flair after Women's WC exit

SAO PAULO, Aug 3 (AP): Brazil coach Pia Sundhage faced widespread criticism in the South American nation after the team was eliminated in the group stage at the Women's World Cup.

Commentators and fans complained about the team's lack of flair and Sundhage's tactics following a 0-0 draw Wednesday against Jamaica, a team Brazil beat 3-0 in the previous Women's World Cup four years ago. The 63-year-old Swedish coach previously led the United States to two Olympic titles and has been in charge of Brazil since 2019. But her team lost in the quarterfinals of the Tokyo Olympics in 2021 and finished third in their World Cup group behind France and Ja-

maica. It is the first time since 1995 that Brazil didn't reach the knockout stage of the Women's World Cup.

The hashtag ParabensPia (Congratulations Pia in Portuguese) flooded social media channels in Brazil after the game, with many fans complaining that the team lacked creativity and that Sundhage was too cautious in making her substitutions. The 37-year-old Marta started for the first time in the tournament and played until the 81st minute but failed to add to her record tally of 17 career World Cup goals.

Eduardo Meneguetti, 35, came to Sao Paulo's Paulista Avenue early so he could have breakfast at a bakery as he watched the

women's national team. He brought a green and yellow vuvuzela — the horn instrument that became popular during the 2010 World Cup in South Africa — that he threw away after the match.

"This team was no fun to watch. Players don't dribble, don't decide for themselves," said Meneguetti, who works as a clerk at a local office. "Brazil needs to be Brazil again, both in women's and men's soccer."

Ana Thais Matos, one of the main soccer analysts for TV Globo, also criticized Sundhage's style of coaching but added that the players lacked the personality to go beyond the coach's advice and trust their skills. "I have said this team had problems over the



last four years. And all we heard was about renovation. The new thing Brazil brought was the mediocre soccer at the latest Olympic Games and now at the World Cup," Matos said. "What Brazil showed in this World Cup was disappointing. But our history is big and no coach should be bigger than Brazil."

Former Brazil player Formiga, now a TV analyst, said she feels "the frustration of every one of these girls, because it is very painful to go out like this."

The disappointment was painful for Brazilian children, too, especially girls.

A group of 16 girls and young women gathered in Rio de Janeiro's working-class Mangui-

hos neighborhood to watch the match and pray for a win. When the final whistle blew, many of the girls sank their heads into their hands. One of the attendees in Manguihos was Kauany de Paula Souza, a 16-year-old who plays in the so-called Favela Cup that pits teams from different low-income neighborhoods across the nation against one another. Souza hopes to one day play for the Brazilian national team, and still believes that her country will some day lift the World Cup trophy. "It didn't happen now, but we have to continue with our lives and hope for the next time," she said, adding that she also thought Brazil should have been more attack-minded against Jamaica.

"Continue and persist, until we win." Nine-year-old Clarice Acayaba Moraes woke up early at her downtown Sao Paulo apartment, dressed in Brazil colors and bought chocolate truffles with green and yellow sprinkles. She expected to eat one for each goal her team scored against Jamaica. She watched Brazil fail again and again to score against their rivals and went more and more silent as the match approached the final whistle. At the end, Clarice ate the truffles in disappointment.

"I am upset that Marta will remain with her 17 goals," said Acayaba, who started her Women's World Cup sticker book weeks before the tournament began.

IT IS HIS 1ST WIN SINCE 2018

Andy Murray wows the crowd with vintage play to win in Washington

WASHINGTON, Aug 3 (AP): Andy Murray thanked fans for taking off — or skipping — work to watch him play in the DC Open on a Wednesday afternoon. His vintage performance made it worth it.

Cheered loudly and vociferously by the crowd at stadium court, the three-time Grand Slam champion and former top-ranked men's player rallied to win the first-set tiebreak and beat American Brandon Nakashima 7-6(5), 6-4. It's his first win in Washington since 2018, a low point of Murray's career when fatigue caused him to withdraw and he didn't want to play tennis anymore.

The British star has no such issues now and showed clearly that at 36 he's still got it.

"It's nice to be back and not having any of those issues and being pain-free and still competing at a high level," Murray said. "It's been a long journey these last four or five years, but I'm happy to still be going."

Murray is still going at this hard-court tune-up for the U.S. Open after coming back from down 5-2 in the tiebreak. He sliced shots per-



fectly over the net and returned some strong volleys that Nakashima couldn't handle.

Fans yelled, "I love you Andy!" and chanted, "Let's go, Andy, let's go!" to boost him throughout the match, which he took over by breaking Nakashima to start the second set.

"I wanted to try to get off to a quick start put the pressure on him right at the beginning of the second," Murray said. "You've got to work very hard for the win, and I did that today."

Next up for Murray is top-seeded Taylor Fritz, who defeated fellow American Zachary Svajda 6-3, 6-3.

On stadium court following Murray's victory, the women's side of the draw took center stage with seventh-ranked Coco Gauff beating Washington native Hailey Baptiste. In what she calls a rebuilding period after adding coach Brad Gilbert to her team, Gauff grinded through some tough stretches to win 6-1, 6-4.

Gauff said she has known Baptiste since she was 10 years old and was happy to face her in a matchup of two young, Black women who

hadn't played each other as professionals. "Growing up, there wasn't a lot of us, and we obviously gravitated to people that had the similar experiences as each other, so I gravitated to being friends with her," Gauff said. "I told her at the net, Hopefully we can have many more opportunities like this in the future."

Gauff, 19, spent most of her on-court interview following the match praising Baptiste, who's just 21. "I've been telling her she's really talented," Gauff said. "I was playing good tennis, but I think she could be top 50, at least, and even higher by the end of next year."

Gauff advanced to the quarterfinals, where she'll face 15th-ranked Belinda Bencic, who beat American Lauren Davis 6-1, 6-4.

Ukraine's Elina Svitolina improved to 8-0 against Russia's Daria Kasatkina, beating her 6-2, 6-2 in their first matchup since the French Open. Just as she has against players from Russia and ally Belarus since the invasion in February 2022, Svitolina did not shake hands after the match, despite Kasatkina speaking out against the war.

Manager of 2007 World T20-winning team Sunil Dev dead

NEW DELHI, Aug 3 (PTI): Former Delhi & Districts Cricket Association (DDCA) secretary Sunil Dev passed away on Wednesday after a prolonged illness.

He was 75 and is survived by his wife and children.

Dev, who was synonymous with DDCA from late '70s till 2015, also served in various BCCI sub-committees during his tenure as sports administrator.

However Dev's moment of glory came when he became administrative manager of the Indian team that won the inaugural 2007 T20 World Cup in South Africa.

He also served as an administrative manager on India's tour of South Africa in 1996 and the 2014 tour of England.

A born raconteur, Dev typified the good, bad and ugly of the DDCA.

He could polarise opinions with his contrarian view points on vari-

ous policy issues in the DDCA, which earned him both friends and foes in equal measure.

There was a time between 1990 till the first decade of the new millennium when no Ranji Trophy or age-group team could be released without his seal of approval.

In fact, renowned journalist James Astill, who is the Asia Editor of 'Economist', in his critically acclaimed book 'The Great Tamasha', had mentioned about his meeting with Dev and how his explanation and theatrics around ticket sales of a particular game at the Kotla amused him.

There were many stories about the style of working of Dev but a few became urban myths with the passage of time.

If he was in a relaxed mood in the company of scribes, he would narrate stories about how a 17-year-old named Virat Kohli learnt driving on his SUV.

Trials for wrestling World C'ships likely after elected body takes charge

NEW DELHI, Aug 3 (PTI): The IOA-constituted ad-hoc committee for wrestling will likely leave the job of organising trials for the World Championships to the elected WFI office-bearers, and is planning to "issue a directive" in a day or two. The Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) will elect its new office-bearers on August 12, which would leave only four days for them to organise the World's trials and send the entries, which close on August 16.

The World Championships will be held in Belgrade from September 16-24 where 90 quota places for the 2024 Paris Olympics will be at stake.

The ad-hoc panel was initially planning to organise the trials around August 10 and issue a notification between August 1-3.

However, a source close to the ad-hoc committee members said on condition of anonymity on Thursday that most of the panel members want the elected WFI

office-bearers to organise the trials "to avoid more controversy".

"The ad-hoc panel is planning to hand over the task of organising trials to the elected body. The thinking is that, the new office-bearers will still have 3-4 days to organise the trials and send the entries before the August 16 deadline," said the source. "The (ad-hoc) panel is planning to issue a directive in this regard in a day or two."

The trials for the Asian Games held at the KJ Jadhav Indoor Hall at the Indira Gandhi Stadium in New Delhi on July 22-23 had received a lot of attention with wrestlers, their coaches and parents protesting the exemption given Olympic medallist Bajrang Punia (65kg freestyle) and Asian Games gold medallist Vinesh Phogat (53kg).

The IOA ad-hoc committee was criticised for sending the names of the winners of the trials — Antim Panghal and Vishal Kaliraman — as standbys, while Bajrang and Vinesh were the first-choice

names. Antim and Vishal had also approached the high court against the ad-hoc committee's decision but their appeal was turned down. Anticipating another controversy, the "ad-hoc committee wants the elected body to conduct the trials and take selection calls," said the officials.

The mandate of the ad-hoc panel will end the day the elected office-bearers take charge on August 12, and there is talk that the new governing body could alter the selection criteria of the ad-hoc panel.

"They (new office-bearers) might say that the ad-hoc panel made two wrong selection calls (regarding giving preference to Bajrang and Vinesh for the Asian Games). The ad-hoc body might get more criticism if it announces the selection criteria for the World Championships. So, in order to avoid more controversies, the panel members want to pass on the baton and just say goodbye," said the source.

Four Indian javelin throwers qualify for World C'ships but not all going as one is injured

NEW DELHI, Aug 3 (PTI): In a rare instance in Indian athletics, four men's javelin throwers from the country have qualified for the World Championships in Budapest, Hungary, later this month, but injury to one member of the quartet meant that all of them will not take part in the big-ticket event.

Olympic champion Neeraj Chopra has already qualified for the August 19-27 showpiece as wild card by virtue of being the Diamond League champion and Kishore Jena also made the cut in the world ranking quota.

Rohit Yadav and DP Manu also made it to the 36 javelin throwers' list to compete in the world championships. But Rohit had recently undergone a surgery on his throwing elbow and he will miss the World Championships.

World Athletics (WA) on Wednesday updated its Road to Budapest list after the qualification period ended on July 30. Jena, who won gold in the Sri Lankan National Championships on July 30 with a personal best of 84.38m, took the 36th spot.

A country can have three athletes in each event but the number can be increased to four if one makes the cut through wild card. In India's case, Chopra qualified as wild card and so the country can have another three javelin throwers if they qualify.

But it is up to the Athletics Federation of India (AFI) to decide the Indian team and it may not send a particular player to compete in an event. Qualification can be achieved through breaching entry standard as well and through world ranking quota and WA has earmarked specific numbers for each head. The men's 20km race walk

event also has three Indians in Akshdeep Singh, Vikash Singh and Paramjeet Bisht qualifying through entry standard.

In women's 20km race walk, Priyanka Goswami has qualified by breaching the entry standard, while Bhawna Jat made the cut in world ranking quota.

In men's triple jump, three Indians — Praveen Chithravel, Abdulla Aboobacker and Eldhose Paul — have made the cut.

Chithravel breached the entry standard, while Aboobacker and Paul qualified through world ranking quota.

India's newest Diamond League medallist, long jumper Murali Sreesankar and ace 3000m steeplechaser Avinash Sable have already qualified through entry standard.

Jeswin Aldrin has also qualified in men's long jump through breaching entry standard. Asian record holder shot putter Tajinderpal Toor also qualified via entry standard.

Jyothi Yarraji and Parul Chaudhary have qualified in women's 100m hurdle and 3000m steeplechase respectively as Asian champions. Long jumper Shali Singh and javelin thrower Annu Rani also made the cut in the world ranking quota.

Kishan Kumar (800m), Ajay Kuar Saroj (1500m), Sarvesh Anil Kushare and Tejaswin Shankar (high jump) and Ram Baboo (men's 35km race walk) also qualified in the world ranking quota, so as Santhosh Kumar (men's 400m hurdles) and K M Chanda (women's 800m).

In the relay events, only the men's 4x400m team made the cut.

Tom Brady enters the world of soccer as minority owner of English club Birmingham

BIRMINGHAM, Aug 3 (AP):

NFL great Tom Brady has become a minority owner of English second-tier soccer team Birmingham and wants to bring a winning mentality to an underperforming club.

The seven-time Super Bowl champion has partnered with the club's holding company, U.S.-based Knighthead Capital Management, and becomes chairman of a new advisory board, Brady and Birmingham said Thursday.

"Maybe you are asking, What do you know about English football, Tom?" Brady said in a club video. "Well, let's just say I've got a lot to learn. But I do know a few things about winning." Birmingham said Brady will "apply his extensive leadership experience and expertise across several components of the club." That includes working alongside the sports science department to advise on health, nutrition and recovery programs. "Birmingham is an iconic club with so much history and passion and to be part of the Blues is a real honor for me," Brady said.

Birmingham last played in the Premier League in 2011, the same year it won the English League Cup — one of two major trophies the club has captured in its 148-

year history.

Brady joins a number of other American sports stars to invest in English soccer clubs.

Former NFL player J.J. Watt recently became a minority investor in Burnley, which has just been promoted to the Premier League, while PGA Tour golfers Jordan Spieth and Justin Thomas have said they will be minority owners of Leeds after investing in 49ers Enterprises, which is in the process of taking over the second-tier team.

Basketball star LeBron James has been a part-owner of Liverpool since 2011 because of a small stake in the club.

Brady has partnered with Knighthead Capital on several other ventures and the club's new chairman, Tom Wagner, is looking forward to Brady's "direct impact." "Tom Brady joining the Birmingham team is a statement of intent. We are setting the bar at world class," Wagner said. "Tom is both investing and committing his time and extensive expertise."

"The goal," Wagner added, "that Tom has committed to own is to make Birmingham a respected leader in nutrition, health, wellness, and recovery across the world of football."

With Broad retiring, Anderson's experience will be required in India: Nasser Hussain

LONDON, Aug 3 (PTI): Former England skipper Nasser Hussain expects pace bowler James Anderson to tour India for the gruelling five-Test series early next year, saying that with pacer Stuart Broad and all-rounder Moeen retiring, the experience of the 41-year-old will come in handy in sub-continental conditions.

Anderson, the highest wicket-taking quick in Test cricket, would be more than keen to tour India for the series, scheduled to commence in January next year, after an ordinary bowling effort during the recently concluded Ashes.

"Jimmy's (Anderson) got a very good record against India... and you need a balanced attack. You need that experience for younger players to come in," Hussain said on The ICC Review on Thursday.

Anderson has a good record against India, with six of his 32 five-wicket hauls in Tests coming against them. His average in the

Asian country (29.32) is decent in comparison to other places he has played in.

"Listen, Jimmy's had a bad or an average couple of months, but you are a fool if you're writing off Jimmy Anderson. I spoke to him in an interview and he was like, the hunger is still there. He's already thinking about how to get back to his best," added Hussain.

Hussain added that with the Ashes now history, Anderson was looking ahead to newer challenges and aiming to hit the nets soon.

"He's already thinking about going back in the nets and working hard at his game and that's a good sign for me that he's still got that hunger. He's, what, 10 wickets away from 700 (Test wickets), and that will keep him going for a while yet."

England have been hit by a spate of retirements, notably by all-rounder Moeen Ali and pacer Broad. But Hussain felt that while



the absence of the two stalwarts will be felt, the team has depth in their bowling ranks to perform well in India. "I think especially with Broad going, I would like that experience (of Anderson in India)."

"(All-rounder) Chris Woakes has stated that he's not that keen anymore of playing away from

home and his record's not great away from home. We'll see, he (Woakes) might change his mind. There's been a lot of mind changes recently. But if you don't have Woakes and you don't have Broad, you will need that experience of someone like Jimmy Anderson," added Hussain.

Hussain added that tour of India

will pose then next biggest challenge to "Bazball", a term which has come to be associated with England's aggressive style of play under coach Brendon McCullum and skipper Ben Stokes.

"(Spinner) Jack Leach will (hopefully) be back and Rehan Ahmed is a very good second spinner, as we saw in Pakistan," Hussain said. "(Pacer) Josh Tongue has bowled really well. (Pacer) Ollie Robinson is a very skilful bowler. Unfortunately, someone like Ollie Stone is injured and obviously Jofra Archer is injured."

"You need that extra pace as well in India. So England have got...they've got that lad (Gus) Atkinson at Surrey, who has a lot of good things being said about him. So England have options. It's (India) the next test for Bazball. They said Bazball will work against one side, then they moved on to the next side."

Manoj Tiwary announces retirement from all forms of cricket

KOLKATA, Aug 3 (PTI): Former India batsman Manoj Tiwary on Thursday announced his retirement from all forms of cricket, drawing curtains to a very unique career.

Tiwary, who played 12 ODIs and three T20Is between 2008 and 2015, ventured into politics even while he remained an active cricketer, and became a minister of state for sports and youth affairs in West Bengal CM Mamata Banerjee's state cabinet.

But during the 2022-23 domestic season, the 37-year-old returned to play for Bengal and guided the team to the final where they went down to Saurashtra at the Eden Gardens. It was also Tiwary's last First-Class game.

"Goodbye to the game of cricket," Tiwary wrote in an Instagram post while announcing his retirement.

"This game has given me everything, I mean every single thing which I had never dreamt of, starting from the times when my life was challenged by different forms of difficulties.

"I will always be grateful to this game and to the GOD, who has always been by my side throughout," said Tiwary.

The right-handed batsman made 287 runs from 12 one-dayers that includes a hundred against West Indies at Chennai in December 2011.

Tiwary finished his First-Class career just 92 runs shy of the 10,000-landmark (9908 runs) and averaged 48.56 with 29 centuries in a glittering 19-year career. He made his debut under Deep Dasgupta in 2004



against Delhi at the Eden Gardens.

He scored 5581 runs from 169 List A games at an average of 42.28.

An aggressive middle-order batter, Tiwary faced selection blues with the India think tank under MS Dhoni preferring a left-hander in Suresh Raina, who was also his protegee in Chennai Super Kings.

As fate had it in store for him, Tiwary was dropped for 14 ODIs after scoring the century against the Windies.

Tiwary made 65 runs and took four wickets in two matches when he made his return but he was dropped

again. Injuries also took a toll on his career.

He was also a member of the Kolkata Knight Riders' maiden IPL triumph in 2012 and struck the winning runs in the last over to seal a 191-run chase against the CSK.

Tiwary also represented Delhi Daredevils, Kings XI Punjab and Rising Pune Supergiants in the IPL. Overall, he has played 183 T20s, scoring 3436 runs at a strike rate of 116.43.

Tiwary also thanked his childhood coach Manabendra Ghosh, his former teammates and his family.

"Manabendra Ghosh, my father figure like coach, has been the pillar in the cricketer's journey. If he had not been there then I would have not reached anywhere in the cricketer's circle. Thank you Sir and wish you a speedy recovery, as your health is not keeping well.

"Thank you to my Dad and Mom, they both never put pressure on me to focus on my studies rather they encouraged me to continue in cricket. Big thank you to my wife, @roy_susmita7 who has always been on my side from the time she came into my life," he wrote.

Tiwary first gave up captaincy in 2018 but played for Bengal despite battling with injuries. He made a foray into politics when he joined the ruling Trinamool Congress in 2021 ahead of the Assembly polls in Bengal.

He was then handed a ticket from Shibpur constituency from where he won and went on to succeed his former Bengal captain Laxmi Ratan Shukla as the MoS sports.

Kokrajhar gears up to host Durand Cup amid much anticipation and fanfare



HT Correspondent

KOKRAJHAR, Aug 3: The Sports Authority of India (SAI) stadium in Kokrajhar is all set to host the prestigious 132nd edition of the Durand Cup 2023, which is scheduled to begin here on August 5.

A mock drill for the preparation, including the final touches on all field decorations and a multi-cultural dance rehearsal, was carried out on Thursday in the presence of the Chief Executive Member of Bodoland Territorial Region and senior officials from the Army at the SAI stadium.

Kokrajhar will witness a total of nine matches of the Durand Cup, attracting sports enthusiasts from across the Bodoland region. To accommodate the large audience, a well-decorated gallery has been erected at the stadium, with a seating capacity of over ten thousand.

The mega football event is being organised by the Indian Army in association with the governments of Assam and Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR). Senior Army officials have arrived at the stadium venue to monitor all preparations and arrangements, ensuring a smooth and successful event in a disciplined manner.

The Chief Executive Member of Bodoland Territorial Region, Pramod Boro, along with officials from the BTR government, is closely overseeing the venue preparations and arrangements.

Recently, CEM Pramod Boro inau-

gured the newly constructed Iron Gallery at the SAI stadium in the presence of BTR executive members Daobaisa Boro, Reo Reoa Narzihary, MLA Lawrence Islay, GOC Red Horns Division Maj. Gen. S. Murugesan, and several dignitaries.

The opening match in SAI stadium in Kokrajhar will witness Bodoland FC facing off against Rajasthan FC on August 5.

CEM Pramod Boro expressed his delight, stating that Kokrajhar is fully prepared and arranged to host the mega football event in a grand manner. He emphasized that the Durand Cup in Bodoland region is set to be a historical moment, as people from different communities are eagerly waiting to witness the event on a grand scale.

He also mentioned that all necessary preparations and arrangements have been completed. With just two days remaining for the Kokrajhar leg of the historic Durand Cup 2023 to begin, he was pleased to inaugurate the newly built "Iron Gallery" at the SAI Stadium in Kokrajhar. Boro believes that the Iron Gallery will significantly enhance sports infrastructure and inspire talented young sports persons to excel in their chosen sporting disciplines.

Union Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, Assam chief minister Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma, and several other dignitaries are expected to grace the opening match of the Durand Cup in Kokrajhar.

Moeen Ali not to travel to India next year for Test series, confirms retirement

LONDON, Aug 3 (PTI): Confirming that the fifth Ashes Test against Australia was the last traditional format match of his career, England all-rounder Moeen Ali said he will not travel to India next year for a Test series. India will host England for a five-match Test series across January and March 2024.

"There is no way I am going (to India). It is nice to finish like this. Test cricket is the best cricket. I wish I could rewind time," Moeen was quoted as saying by the Guardian.

Moeen has played 68 Tests for England making 3,094 runs with five hundreds and 15 fifties. The off-spinner also has taken 204 wickets in Test cricket.

Despite the fine record, Moeen accepted the fact that his Test career would have hit a higher note.

"Although my Test career has been a bit up and down, I wouldn't change it. I've loved it. I would have regretted (not accepting England's recall) later in life.

"It was quite daunting because I've never done well against Australia. I had nothing to lose -- it was a free hit," he said.

The 36-year-old, though, has no plans to move away completely from cricket as he wants to concentrate on franchise cricket.

Moeen has done well for Chennai Super Kings in the IPL, while making his presence felt in other leagues like the PSL and the Hundred.

Indian women's compound team shocks champions Colombia, enters final

BERLIN, Aug 3 (PTI): India's compound women's team comprising Jyothi Surekha Vennam, Parneet Kaur and Aditi Swami jolted defending champions Colombia 220-216 to enter the final of the ongoing archery World Championships on Wednesday.

However, Indian hopes in the compound men's and mixed team events ended after tight defeats. In the men's event, Abhishek Verma, Ojas Deotale and Prathamesh Jawkar went down in the quarterfinals to Netherlands 230-235. In the mixed category, Deotale and Jyothi Surekha were pipped by the USA 154-153 in the round of last-eight.

Earlier, Indian archers failed to secure Paris Olympics team quota places after making quarterfinal exits in both men's and women's recurve events.

The tournament offers first tickets to the next year's Olympics for the top-three finishers in team and individual events.

The men's recurve team of Dhiraj Bom-

madevara, Rajat Chauhan and Tushar Shelke lost to India's nemesis Korea 1-5 (49-55, 57-57, 53-55).

The women's recurve triumvirate of Bhajan Kaur, Ankita Bhakat and Simranjeet Kaur lost to the Netherlands 2-6 (49-48, 52-53, 48-50, 54-57). They took the opening set to go 2-0 up, but only to lose the next three.

India's next hope to make the cut from the ongoing tournament will be in the individual section that gets underway on Thursday.

Army man Bommadevara will be the biggest hope, having grabbed the second seeding from the qualification round of men's individual recurve section.

India also disappointed in the recurve mixed team event, despite a favourable draw because of their fourth-place finish in the qualification.

The duo of Bommadevara and Ankita, who got a bye into the last-16, lost out to lower-ranked Italy 4-5 (35-37, 36-35, 39-37, 34-36) (16-17) in the shoot-off.




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