CrowdStrike failure highlights fragility of globally connected technology

Despite curfew, deaths mount in Bangladesh

ISSUE INU. ITA

Nudged out owing to current controversy: Congress

individual capacity: Bombay HC

Dawood declared terrorist in

25 YEARS OF DEDICATED JOURNALISM www.thehillstimes.in

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DIPHU, KARBI ANGLONG, SUNDAY, JULY 21, 2024

LAND PORT DAWKI

40 more Assam students reach home state

Enhance vigil along India's border: Tipra Motha supremo •186 more people return from violence-hit B'desh via M'laya

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PAGES 8

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Voice of the hills people

Sitharaman to present Union Budget on Jul 23

Parliament session set to begin tomorrow

NEW DELHI, July 20: Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman will present the Union Budget on Tuesday as the Monsoon Session of Parliament gets underway next week with the united opposition set to corner the NDA government on issues ranging from the NEET paper

leak case and railway safety. The Monsoon Session begins on Monday and will have 19 sittings till August 12 when the government is

expected to present six bills, including the one to replace the 90year-old Aircraft Act, and also get the Parliament nod for the budget of Jammu and Kashmir, which is under central rule.

Sitharaman will also table the Economic Survey in Parliament on Monday.

Parliamentary affairs minister Kiren Rijiju has convened a meeting of the floor leaders of political parties in Parliament to understand issues they would want to raise during the session.

The BJD, led by former Odisha chief minister Naveen Patnaik, has declared that it would play the role of a strong opposition and aggressively raise issues of interest

> to the state in Parliament. Patnaik, who was elected as the chairperson of BJD parliamentary party, has asked his party MPs to take up the demand for special category status for Odisha.

Earlier this week, Congress leader Jairam Ramesh had said that the opposition would also resist any government move to dilute its stake in public sector banks below 51 per cent.

The government is likely to bring amendments to the Banking Regulation Act, 1949 and other laws such as Banking Companies (Acquisition and Transfer of Undertakings) Act, 1970, and the Banking (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

GUWAHATI/AGARTALA, July 20:: Altogether 186 more people, stranded in violencehit Bangladesh, returned to India on Saturday via Dawki integrated check post in Meghalaya's West Jaintia Hills district, officials said, even 40 more students reached Assam.

Ninety-eight of them are from Nepal and 88 from India, including eight students from Meghalaya, they said.

"In the past three days, a total of 856 people from India, Nepal and Bhutan, mostly students, have crossed over to the country from Bangladesh due to agitation there," a senior home department official said.

The Meghalaya government has activated a helpline number for those who have been in violence-hit Bangladesh and are seeking assistance from the authorities of the northeast-Violence escalated in Bangladesh's capital

Dhaka and elsewhere over protests by students, demanding reforms to the quota system for government jobs. The protesters are demanding an end to a quota system that reserves up to 30 per cent of government jobs for relatives of veterans

who fought in Bangladesh's war of independence in 1971 against Pakistan. Meanwhile, more than 40 students from Assam have returned from Bangladesh since

officials in Guwahati said on Saturday.

The Assam government is also in touch with the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) to ensure the safety of people from the state residing or visiting Bangladesh.

"Till 19th July, 41 students from Assam were safely repatriated from Bangladesh via Sutarkandi integrated check post amid violent protests against job quotas," a post on the Karimganj district commissioner's (DC) Facebook page said.

It added that the Kairmganj DC and the superintendent of police have visited the ICP at Sutarkandi and interacted with the students, enquiring about their wellbeing and further

Deputy Commissioner Mridul Yadav said that more students are expected to return through the border point.

"The district administration is geared up to help them. A magistrate and deputy superintendent of police have been stationed 24 hours at the border till the situation eases," he said. Yadav added that no tension is anticipated

in the border area as the ongoing problems of Bangladesh are its internal matters. Some students from Dhubri have also

reportedly crossed over through West Bengal and are expected to reach their home district by train later on Saturday, another official said.

"The state government is in constant touch with the Ministry of External Affairs to coordinate plans to help citizens return in light of the situation in Bangladesh. Those who wish to return may contact the @ihcdhaka helpline: +880-1937400591," the Chief Minister's Office had posted on X.

The state government is yet to share the number of people from Assam residing or visiting the neighbouring country, or whether people have contacted the government for safe evacuation.

Meanwhile, Tipra Motha supremo Pradyot Kishore Manikya Debbarma on Saturday urged the Centre to enhance vigil along the country's border with violence-hit Bangladesh.

Tripura shares an 856 km-long border with the neighbouring country.

"History shows us that whenever there has been unrest in East Pakistan/Bangladesh, Tripura has suffered the most. I appeal to the Govt. of India to ensure that border vigil should be at the highest alert. GoI should constitutionally secure the indigenous population for future generations," Debbarma said on

Instability in Bangladesh "immediately affects bordering northeastern states like Tripura, Assam, and Meghalaya", he said.

Families of deceased

file complaint for probe

Cachar encounter: One of three killed

was earlier arrested for terrorism: DGP

in 2019.

HTBRIEFS

Road mishap

BOKAJAN: On NH 39 at Talbalijan under Bokajan police station in Karbi Anglong a speeding bus rear-ended a Bolero SUV which in turn hit a bicycle with two riders. The two were seriously injured. The Bolero driver said he lost control after being hit by the bus and hit the bicycle. The injured bicycle riders were identified as Samir Goyari (22) of Kachari Bosti and Sonjoy Basumatary (18), a resident of Amraian Kachari Bosti. The SUV driver was not injured. Police reached the spot and took stock of the situation. The wounded were taken to hospital for treatment.

Made in Korea

KHERONI: A balloon attached to a parachute device fell from the sky in Matikhola Jeng Kro Village, West Karbi Anglong, near Kheroni police station. The balloon landed in the morning and subsequently burst. A passing mason from another village found it and took it along. Upon learning this, villagers notified the police, who then set out to locate the mason. Along the way, they encountered a severely damaged road, prompting the police to request that the villagers continue the search. Eventually, the villagers managed to find the mason, retrieved the device, and proceeded to Kheroni police station, where it was handed over.

violence erupted in the neighbouring country, Assam flood situation improves as number of affected people dips to 2 lakh

GUWAHATI, July 20: The flood situation in Assam improved as the number of affected people deceased to 2 lakh in 10 districts, official sources said on Saturday.

Two major rivers, including the Brahmaputra, continued to flow above the danger level.

The districts reeling under floods are Cachar, Dhemaji, Dhubri, Dibrugarh, Goalpara, Golaghat, Kamrup Metropolitan, Karimganj, Nagaon and Sivasagar.

A total of 2.07 lakh people are still affected, as Nagaon remained the worst hit with over 74,000 people affected, followed by Cachar (36,000) and Dhubri (20,000), the sources said.

Till Thursday, over 2.72 lakh people were affected by the floods



in 11 districts of the state. The total number of people losing their lives in this year's floods, landslides, storms and lightning

Altogether 61 relief camps and relief distribution centres are operational, catering to more than 16,600 affected people. A total of 10,228.36 (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

One held with rare fish species in Assam: Officials

GOLAGHAT, July 20: A person was arrested and a rare species of fish seized from him in Assam's Golaghat district, forest officials said on Saturday.

The arrest followed a search operation carried out on Friday night by forest personnel from Kaziranga range headquarters and Haldibari beat office, based on specific information.

During the operation, four live 'Channa Barca' fish were discovered inside a vehicle. The car and the fish were seized, and the driver was taken into custody.

The arrested person, from neighboring Nagaon district, has been charged (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

NHRC to take suo motu cognisance of the 'extrajudicial' deaths.

The encounter, which occurred on July 17, resulted in the deaths Upcoming Jharkhand assembly polls crucial for protecting tribals, Hindus: Himanta of Lallungawi Hmar (21) and Lalbikung Hmar (33) from Assam,

and Joshua (35) from Manipur. DGP GP Singh claimed that one of the deceased, Lalbikung, was previously arrested for possessing

GUWAHATI, July 20: One of the

three suspected Hmar militants

killed in an alleged encounter with

police in Assam's Cachar district

three days ago had previously been

arrested for terrorism, a top official

This assertion comes amid a po-

lice complaint filed by the families

of the deceased youths, demanding

a probe into the circumstances of

their deaths, while an apex Hmar

community body has urged the

has claimed.

arms and ammunition. "One of the terrorists who was killed in a recent exchange of fire at Assam Border in Cachar district has a previous recorded history of indulging in terrorism," Singh

posted on X. He said Lalbikung was arrested with arms and ammunition on June

deaths. Lalthavel Hmar, Lalremsang Hmar and Lalchunghnung Hmar, relatives of the three youths, filed a complaint at Lakhipur police station in Cachar district. However,

4, 2019 by Assam Rifles, and

handed over to Lakhipur police.

The DGP also shared photographs

of the copy of FIR and the items

seized from the suspected militant

Family members of the three

youths on Friday filed a police

complaint demanding a probe into

the circumstances leading to their

police have not registered an FIR The complaint requested a thorough investigation, stating that the explanation given by Cachar SP Numal Mahatta "doesn't add up" and called for punishment of the

perpetrators. Earlier, the Assam Hills Region of the Hmar Inpui, the community's apex body, termed the circumstances leading to death of the three youths as "a stark violation of human rights" and urged the NHRC to take suo motu cogni-

sance of (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

infiltration"

assembly elections are crucial for protecting tribals and Hindus in the state," Sarma said. He claimed that the Muslim population in

Assam has reached 40 per cent now. "Of these 40 per cent, the population of in-

digenous Muslims, whom we consider As-

samese, is only 4 per cent, while 36 per cent of the population is of infiltrators. If the Muslim population in Assam grows in this way. Assam will be a Muslim-majority state by 2041," he

neighbouring West Bengal has reached 26 per

10 years. After Assam, West Bengal, Kerala and

"After Assam and West Bengal, Bangladeshi RANCHI, July 20: Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Saturday said that the upcominfiltrators' next target is Jharkhand, which is a matter of concern. There are many districts in the state where Muslim infiltrators' population has reached up to 30 per cent. So, the upcoming said.

ing Jharkhand assembly elections are crucial for protecting tribals and Hindus, as the "demography of the state is changing due to Bangladeshi Sarma, who is also the BJP's election co-in-

charge for Jharkhand, was addressing party workers during the extended executive committee meeting of the party in Ranchi's Prabhat

Sarma said that the Muslim population in "It is growing at the rate of 29 per cent every

Jammu and Kashmir, (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

IIT Guwahati to investigate artificial floods in Dibrugarh: Sonowal



HT Correspondent DIBRUGARH, July 20: Union minister Sarbananda Sonowal announced on Saturday that IIT Guwahati will investigate the causes of artificial floods in Dibrugarh, leading to the formulation of a comprehensive master

Sonowal made these remarks during his visit to the Naliapool area of Dibrugarh City to inspect the drainage and sewerage system.

"The government will take corrective measures based on the findings to address the issue of artificial flooding in the city," said Sonowal, who also serves as the Lok Sabha MP for Dibrugarh LSC.

He emphasised the need

for experts and authorities to collaborate closely to develop a sustainable and practical solution to the poorly designed drainage system, aimed at mitigating the impact of artificial floods on Sonowal also discussed

the matter with Assam chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma

"The artificial floods in Dibrugarh are a significant concern, and we must take proactive steps to resolve this issue with economically viable, ecologically sound, and environmentally sustainable solutions," Sonowal stated. "IIT Guwahati will investigate the underlying causes (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)



THE HILLS TIMES

Page 2 July 21_Normal Pages 20-07-2024 21:34 Page 1

Govt to make intervention to address challenges faced by chemical industry, boost growth: Min

Chemicals and Fertilizers Minister Jagat Prakash Nadda on Saturday said the government will make necessary interventions in its policies and programmes to address challenges faced by the chemicals and petrochemicals industry and boost the sector's growth.

The minister was speaking after launching the 13th edition of the India Chem 2024 event to be held in October this year in Mumbai.

'The Prime Minister desires that we have to become a USD 5 trillion economy. If we have to become a 5 trillion economy, we have to align our programmes or policies accordingly, to see to it that this petrochemical industry chemical industry also goes in the same way and aligns itself, so that we all together contribute to that USD 5 trillion economy," Nadda said. The minister mentioned that industry representatives have talked about the challenges faced by the chemicals and petrochemicals industry and also offered various suggestions to address those

"I, as a minister, can assure you that whatever interventions are needed in policies, in programmes, whatever changes in the strategies are needed, the government is committed to it, and we will go forward with that commitment," Nadda said.

The minister also asked the industry to focus on reducing imports, research & development and



Nadda also launched the brochure for the 13th edition of India Chem

Anupriya Patel, Minister of State for Chemicals & Fertilizers, and Nivedita Shukla Verma, Secretary, Department of Chemicals and Petrochemicals, were also present on the occasion.

Nadda said the theme of India Chem 2024, "Advantage Bharat: Indian Chemicals and Petrochemicals Paving the Future" aligns well with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of making India a USD 5 trillion economy.

The 13th edition of India Chem is going to be held on 17th-19th October in Mumbai.

Nadda said the government is committed to the growth of the industry and has initiated numerous structural reforms to support industrial development in general and strengthen the chemical sector

in particular. Patel said the chemical and petrochemical sector plays a crucial role in the economic development of key sectors like automotive, construction, electronics, healthcare, textiles, and

She highlighted the increasing contribution of the chemical sector in economic development as well as the opportunities for future de-

Patel stated that India is the second largest exporter of chemical dyes and dyestuff as well as agrochemicals in the world. It also contributes about 3 per cent of global chemical sales. "With a clear focus on investment-friendly reforms. the removal of policy bottlenecks is a top priority for the govern-

India Chem 2024, the flagship

industry in the Asia-Pacific, comprising an International Exhibition and Conference.

The India Chem exhibition aims to showcase the huge potential of the Indian chemical industry and its different industry segments (including chemicals, petrochemicals, agrochemicals etc.) and to provide a platform for ground-breaking discussions, visionary ideas, and strategic collaborations among industry representatives.

The Indian chemical industry is currently valued at USD 220 billion and is expected to reach USD 300 billion by 2030 and USD 1 trillion by 2040.

Rajendra V Gogri, Co-Chairman, FICCI National Chemical Committee and Aarti Industries Chairman and Managing Director, highlighted the global chemical industry's shift towards emerging markets like India, citing advantages in costs, logistics, labour, and

He emphasised the long-standing request for a production-linked incentive (PLI) scheme in the chemical and petrochemicals sector to boost manufacturing and reduce imports, according to the FICCI statement. Gogri also stressed the importance of improving the ease of doing business, particularly in expediting projects and streamlining environmental regulations. Furthermore, he underscored the need to promote effective circularity to capitalise on opportunities

in the chemical industry. (PTI)

HDFC Bank Q1 Results: Net

profit soars 35.3% YoY

HT Bureau
GUWAHATI, July 20: HDFC Bank Limited has reported a substantial increase in its net profit for the first quarter ending June 30, 2024. The bank's net profit surged by 35.3% year-on-year to ₹161.7 billion, compared to the same period last year. Profit before tax (PBT) for the quarter stood at

₹212.8 billion. The consolidated profit after

tax also saw a significant rise of 33.2%

reaching ₹164.7 billion. The total balance sheet size as of June 30, 2024, was ₹35,672 billion, up from ₹25,017 billion a year ago. Total deposits increased by 24.4% to ₹23,791 billion, with CASA deposits growing by 6.2%. Savings account deposits were ₹5,964 billion, and current account deposits amounted to ₹2,673 billion.

The bank's net revenue for the quarter grew by 23.4% to ₹405.1 billion, compared to ₹328.3 billion in the previous year. Net interest income, which is the interest earned minus interest expended, rose by 26.4% to ₹298.4 billion from ₹236.0 billion. The core enhancing health outcomes net interest margin was 3.47% on total asthrough advanced treatments by sets and 3.66% based on interest-earning as-

Kotak Mahindra Bank reports 79% YoY surge

HT Bureau
GUWAHATI, July 20: Kotak Mahindra
Bank's Board of Directors approved the unaudited standalone and consolidated results for Q1FY25, showcasing remarkable growth. The bank's consolidated profit after tax (PAT) soared by 79% year-onyear to ₹7,448 crore, up from ₹4,150 crore in Q1FY24. This surge was significantly influenced by a landmark deal in the general insurance sector, wherein Zurich Insurance Group acquired a 70% stake in Kotak General Insurance (KGI), leaving Kotak Mahindra Bank (KMBL) with a 30% stake. This transaction boosted the consolidated PAT by ₹3,013 crore and the standalone PAT by ₹2,730 crore. Excluding the gains from the divestment, the consolidated PAT stood at ₹4,435 crore. The return on assets (ROA) for Q1FY25 (annualized) was 3.87%, up from 2.63% in Q1FY24. Excluding the divestment gains, the ROA was 2.30%. The return on equity (ROE) for Q1FY25 (annualized) was 22.04%, a significant increase from 14.62% in O1FY24.

Total assets under management (AUM) as of June 30, 2024, reached ₹636,311 crore, a 36% year-on-year increase from

Sakra World Hospital strengthens healthcare in Nagaland



GUWAHATI, July 20: Sakra World Hospital, renowned as Bengaluru's first healthcare facility with 100% Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), has expanded its reach by opening the SAKRA World Hospital Associate office in Nagaland. This significant development for the region stems from a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Dentique, Heaven Delight building, of Nagaland. The inauguration ceremony was graced by the Hospital, presence of prominent digni- "Healthcare in India is vital due

The collaboration between Sakra World Hospital and Nagaland ensures that patients receive comprehensive care through outreach OPD, Video consultations, and Second-opinion clinics. Those patients need surgical interventions will be allowed special packages for further treatment for the patients of Nagaland

Lovekesh Phasu, Group Chief Operating Officer, Sakra World tively impact the lives of pa-

and non-communicable diseases. This launch marks a significant step in expanding our presence in the Northeast, aiming to provide top-tier healthcare to the region's residents."

to its large and diverse popula-

tion facing both communicable

Dr. Lorance Peter, Director of Gastroenterology & Hepatology, Sakra World Hospital said,"We recognize that each patient's path is unique, and we are committed to customizing treatments to meet their individual needs. Our unwavering goal is to provide every patient with the highest quality of care possible."

Dr. Arjun Srivatsa, Director and Head of the Institute of Neurosciences, Sakra World Hospital said, "We are committed to Senior trained medical profes- sets. sionals and compassionate care. The department is eager to posi-Bengalurusaid, tients in this dynamic

Bajaj Auto launches the highly anticipated pulsar NS400Z

GUWAHATI, July 20: Bajaj Auto, the world's most valuable two-wheeler and three-wheeler company, has unveiled the Pulsar NS400Z, the

flagship model of its renowned Pulsar series. Since its inception in 2001, the Pulsar brand has been a trailblazer in the sports motorcycling segment in India, offering enthusiasts a distinctive combination of sporty design and high performance. Following the recent upgrade of the NS series in March 2023, which saw the introduction of new features such as LED headlamps, a digital instrument console, and Bluetooth connectivity, the launch of the Pulsar NS400Z marks the arrival of the alpha of the Pulsar range.

The Pulsar NS400Z carries forward the dynamic and muscular design ethos of the NS DNA, enhanced with modern floating panels. A signature lightning bolt DRL sets off the aggressive new front fascia, while premium features like champagne gold USD forks and carbon fiber graphics add to its aesthetic appeal. The sleek 'NS400' callout on the bikini fairing and the sporty tail section

with underbelly exhaust complete its visually striking and aerodynamic design

Equipped with a 373.27cc engine delivering 40 PS and 35 Nm of torque, the Pulsar NS400Z is the most powerful Pulsar ever. Its performance is further enhanced by ride-by-wire technology, offering precise throttle response and smoother handling. The inclusion of ride modes and a slipper clutch facilitates effortless gear changes, improving acceleration and deceleration for a seamless riding

Safety is paramount with the Pulsar NS400Z. which includes dual-channel ABS with Combined ABS technology for exceptional stopping power and prevention of wheel lock-up. Switchable Electronic Traction Control (ETC) enhances grip in Sport and Off-Road modes. Adjustable levers, large disc brakes, and wide tires contribute to a comfortable and responsive feel, while the long wheelbase ensures agile maneuvering. The Hydroformed tubular Streetfighter handlebar offers reduced vibration, increased stiffness, and a stylish design, ensuring precise control and a comfortable ride.

Union Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia Unveils 'The Future is Now' as Theme for India Mobile Congress 2024

HT Bureau GUWAHATI, July 20: Union Minister Jyotiraditya M. Scindia, Minister for Communications and Development of North Eastern Region, unveiled the theme for the India Mobile Congress 2024, "The Future is Now," in New Delhi today. This theme underscores India's pivotal role in the global technological revolution, with the IMC 2024 set to bring together global leaders, visionaries, pioneers, and innovators to collaborate and shape the technologies that are transforming our world.

During the event, Minister Scindia also launched the India Mobile Congress 2024 application and website, introducing a unique



interactive app for registration. With his inaugural registration and keynote address, the Indian Mo-

bile Congress announced the opening of registrations for delegates, visitors, academia, government, and media. In his keynote address, Minister

Scindia emphasized the unifying power of technology, stating, "Technology is best when it brings people together. There can be no better example than our country Bharat." He highlighted the role of technology in bridging divides across the nation, aligning with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision. Scindia remarked, "It is technology and communications that will provide a platform of opportunities. Communications and networks will bring together people from the first village of India to the central villages.

as a global melting point, expressing hope for India's continued prominence in such events. He noted that the theme 'The Future is Now' reflects both India's current capabilities and the possibilities of the future. Highlighting the transformative changes in the telecom sector over the past decade, he praised India's transition from a consumer to a supplier of technology. He also lauded various telecom initiatives, such as the Telecom Act 2023, the Production Linked Incentive (PLI) Scheme, and the rapid 5G rollout. Additionally, Scindia committed to notifying the rules of the Telecom Act 2023 within the next 180 days.

Tea industry seeks higher RoDTEP rates to make exports competitive

KOLKATA, July 20: The tea industry has sought higher rates under the RoDTEP scheme to make exports more competitive in the overseas markets.

Leading industry body Indian Tea Association (ITA), in its pre-budget memorandum, said that the present RoDTEP rate for bulk tea is 1.7 per cent (free on board) subject to a cap of ₹ 6.70 per kilogram.

The association urged the government to increase the reward base rate under the Remission of Duties and Taxes on Exported Products (RoDTEP) for black tea in bulk to remain competitive in the international

The RoDTEP scheme ensures that exporters receive refunds on embedded taxes and duties that were previously non-recoverable

Another industry body Tea Association of India (TAI), in its pre-budget proposal submitted to the government, said the RoDTEP rate for tea should be higher than the earlier MEIS (merchandise exports incentive scheme) of five per cent to enable Indian tea to retain its competitiveness in the global market.

Since its inception in January 2021, the RoDTEP scheme has already provided support amounting to ₹ 42,000 crores to more than 10,500 export items, an

official statement said in March. The association has also sought for imposition of an anti-dumping duty on imports of Nepal tea.

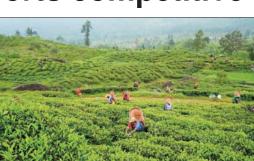
The TAI said that this measure would prevent the dumping of cheap and duty-free tea from Nepal and boost exports of genuine Darjeeling tea.

Such a measure would also thwart the passing off of Nepalese tea as a geographical indication (GI) tag

The ITA said that the government should exempt tea from levy on TDS on cash withdrawals due to a lack of banking infrastructure in the tea-growing areas

in the country.

The association has sought concessional customs



duty on imports of specified machinery required for tea production.

In its pre-budget memorandum, ITA said that the modernisation of the plantation sector is dependent on the upgradation of machinery which is not available within the country.

The government should grant a concessional import tariff on specified tea machinery items, the industry

The association also said in the memorandum that the government should increase fund allocation for tea development and promotion scheme for the period

According to ITA, the Tea Board's new promotion and development scheme for the 2021-26 period has discontinued plantation development and factory upgradation incentives for big growers.

The "lack of financial support" from the government has "incapacitated the tea producers' ability to bring about improvement in quality and productivity leading to long-term impact on viability", the associ-

The ITA also sought that the fund allocation for the period 2021-26 be enhanced to enable restoration and implementation of the erstwhile incentive schemes for

Tomato prices soar to ₹ 100 per kg in Delhi

NEW DELHI, July 20: Tomato prices soared to ₹ 100 per kg in retail markets of the national capital on Saturday as adverse weather conditions in various parts of the country continue to affect supplies of the essential kitchen staple. Tomatoes are available at ₹ 100 per kg at Mother Dairy's retail outlets, Safal, in the national capital.

According to the data compiled by the Department of Consumer Affairs, retail prices of tomatoes in Delhi are ruling at ₹ 93 per kg on

Saturday, July 20.
The all-India average price of tomatoes on July 20 is ₹ 73.76 per kg as per the government data. A senior official from the de-

partment had last week attributed the sharp rise in prices to disruption in supplies caused by extreme heat followed by spells of excess

"Prices of tomato, potato and onion are ruling high in Delhi and some other cities. Extreme heat followed by spells of excess rain-

fall disrupted supplies, causing a spike in prices in consuming areas," the official had told PTI.

At Mother Dairy store in West Delhi, onions are being sold on Saturday at ₹ 46.90 per kg, and potatoes at ₹ 41.90 per kg.

The government data shows, the rate of onions is ₹ 50 per kg and potatoes ₹ 40 per kg in the national capital. The all-India average price of onion is ₹ 44.16 per kg and potatoes ₹ 37.22 per kg.

Contd. from Page 1...

Parliament session set to

Companies (Acquisition and Transfer of Undertakings) Act, 1980 in the Budget Session due to which the government's shareholding in PSBs can go down below 51 per cent. Besides the Finance Bill, the government as also listed The Disaster Management (Amendment) Bill for introduction, consideration and passing. The proposed legislation aims to bring more clarity and convergence in the roles of different organisations

working in the field of disaster management, a Lok Sabha bulletin issued Thursday said. The Bhartiya Vayuyan Vidheyak, 2024 seeks to replace the Aircraft Act of 1934 to provide enabling provisions for ease of doing business in the civil aviation sector.

The session beginning July 22 will conclude on August 12.

The other bills listed for introduction and passage during the session are the Boilers Bill to replace the pre-Independence era law, the Coffee (Promotion and Development) Bill and the Rubber (Promotion and Development) Bill. Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla has also constituted the Business Advisory Committee (BAC), which decides the parliamentary agenda.

The committee chaired by the Speaker has Sudip Bandyopadhyay (TMC), P P Chaudhary (BJP), Lavu Sri Krishna Devarayalu (TDP), Nishikant Dubey (BJP), Gaurav Gogoi (Congress), Sanjay Jaiswal (BJP), Dileshwar (Shiv Sena-UBT), Kodikunnil Suresh (Congress), Anurag Thakur (BJP) and Lalji Verma (SP) as members. (PTI) Kamait (JD-U), Bhartruhari Mahtab (BJP), Dayanidhi Maran (DMK), Baijayant Panda (BJP), Arvind Sawant

Assam flood situation improves as

hectares of cropland remained inundated. The Brahmaputra was flowing above the danger mark at Dhubri, and Disang at Nanglamuraghat. Damage to infrastructure such as embankments, houses, roads and bridges has been reported from various affected districts, the sources added. (PTI)

One held with rare fish species

under relevant sections of the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972, and the Wildlife Protection (Assam Amendment) Act, 2009. Channa Barca, also known as 'Cheng Garaka' in Assamese, is a rare species of snakehead fish endemic to the upper Brahmaputra river basin in India's Northeast and Bangladesh.

This fish typically resides in metre-deep vertical burrows along wetlands' peripheries. During monsoon, when the groundwater table rises, the fish emerges to hunt and breed, but it is also targeted by poachers. Due to its attractive appearance and high ornamental value, Channa Barca is sought after by specialist aquarists both nationally and internationally. (PTI)

Upcoming Jharkhand assembly polls

the Muslim population is increasing swiftly in Jharkhand," he said. The infiltrators are coming to Jharkhand and marrying tribal girls with only aim to grab their lands, he said. "The Jharkhand CM is himself a tribal but he doesn't take any action against infiltrators to save tribals," Sarma alleged.

He alleged that in Jharkhand, permission is given for Muharram processions but not for Ram Navami rallies. During recent Muharram processions, the minority community "created an uproar" in at least 12 places including Barkagaon, Saraikela, Jharia, Dhanbad, Pakur, Dumka, Ramgarh and Jamshedpur, he alleged. "In many places, Palestinian flags were hoisted but the Hemant Soren-led government did not take any ac-

"The Congress and JMM speak about the Constitution. Does the Constitution allow hoisting of Palestinian flags? When the BJP forms the government in Jharkhand, strict action will be taken against those who had hoisted Palestinian flags," Sarma said.

He alleged that if the JMM-led government returned to power, more Palestinian flags would be seen and infiltration would rise, Ram Navami processions would be stopped, youths would not get jobs and atrocities on women would rise.

"The current government has cheated the youths by promising them five lakh jobs. The government had also claimed that if jobs were not provided, they (youths) would be given unemployment allowances. But, they (state government) did not give either jobs or unemployment allowances to the youths," Sarma said. He exuded confidence that the BJP would form the next government in Jharkhand.

"We won nine Lok Sabha seats in the state and took a lead in over 51 assembly segments. To form a government in Jharkhand, only 42 seats are required," he said. Of the 14 Lok Sabha seats in the state, the BJP won eight seats, while its ally AJSU party one. The ruling

JMM won three seats and the Congress two in the parliamentary polls. (PTI) Families of deceased file complaint

the "extrajudicial" deaths. Addressing a press conference after the shootout on Wednesday, Mahatta had claimed that the deceased youths were part of a larger group, which was preparing to carry out "subversive activities" along the Assam-Manipur inter-state border areas.

Assam chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma too had termed the three youths as militants and said in a post on X, "In an early morning operation, @cacharpolice killed 3 Hmar militants from Assam and neighbouring Manipur. Police also seized 2 AK rifles, 1 other rifle and 1 pistol." (PTI)

IIT Guwahati to investigate artificial

of artificial flooding in the city, which have severely disrupted life in Dibrugarh. Once identified, a team of experts will draft a master plan for government execution. We are committed to implementing this plan effectively to eliminate the menace of artificial flooding," he added.

Sonowal directed officials to promptly take action to alleviate public suffering and emphasised the role of civic bodies in addressing various issues, including encroachment He urged officials to expedite efforts towards finding a permanent solution to these challenges, incorporating expert opinions and suggestions into their plans.

Accompanying Sonowal were Dibrugarh Municipal Corporation Mayor Saikat Patra, district commissioner Vikram Kairi, and other senior state government officials.

Unable to digest 'moral defeat', BJP resorting to 'communal politics': Gaurav Gogoi

GUWAHATI, July 20: Congress's deputy leader in Lok Sabha, Gaurav Gogoi, on Saturday alleged that the ruling BJP was resorting to its "old brand of communal politics", as it was "unable to digest the moral defeat" in the parliamentary

He claimed that this was being manifested in instances such as the order in Uttar Pradesh to owners of eateries to display their names during the Kanwar Yatra and chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma targeting a specific community over population figures.

"The BJP has not been able to digest the moral defeat it suffered in the 2024 Lok Sabha elections, that is why in every state, they are back to their old brand of communal politics," Gogoi said here.

He cited the instances of the Uttar Pradesh government asking owners of eateries along the route of Kanwar Yatra to display their names and in Assam, the "politics over the population of a specific community

Sarma had on Friday claimed



that the decadal growth of Muslims in Assam was around 30 per cent and they will become a majority by 2041, with Muslims already becoming 40 per cent of the state's population "as per statistical sam-

In Uttar Pradesh, the Muzaffarnagar Police have asked all eateries Hitting out at the UP order, Gogoi said, "What type of society are they (BJP) trying to form? Will we decide which shop we will go into on the basis of the owner's

Pointing out that a person's caste, religion and tribe can be deduced from his or her name in India, the Congress MP said, "The BJP wants to form a society where caste, religion, tribe of the owner will determine who goes there and who doesn't. Will there be peace and harmony in such a society?"

Gogoi, who represents Assam's Jorhat constituency in the Lower House of Parliament, claimed that the public have "rejected Prime Minister Narendra Modi's politics of mangalsutra" in the elections.

"The issues raised by PM Modi during the election, be it population of a specific community, mangalsutra, Congress's manifesto... people have rejected those. In the same way, the country will not tolerate communal politics of the BJP, be it in UP or Assam," he added. (PTI)

District Health Society kicks off 'Stop Diarrhea Campaign 2024' in Dima Hasao

HT Bureau GUWAHATI, July 20: The District Health Society Dima Hasao launched the Stop Diarrhea Campaign 2024 with the theme 'Practice Hygiene and Take ORS, Get Rid of Diarrhea' at the office chamber of the Joint Director of Health Services, Haflong on Satur-

The meeting was chaired by joint director of Health Services, Dr Duleshwar Gogoi, in the presence of SDM&HO in charge of Urban Health Centre (UHC), Dr Leena Hakmaosa, and DPM, Dima Hasao, Rukmini Difoesa.

Dr Gogoi welcomed all attendees and stated that the campaign aims to achieve zero child deaths due to childhood diarrhea. He explained that the campaign, which will run for two months (July-August), was previously known as Intensified Diarrhea Control Fortnight (IDCF).

Dr Hakmaosa provided a briefing on diarrhea, emphasising the prevention of childhood diarrhea through continuous breastfeeding, timely introduction of safe and appropriate complementary feeding,

use of safe drinking water, proper hand-washing, and sanitation. She

urged ASHAs and Anganwadi workers to conduct door-to-door visits to raise awareness about the dangers of diarrhea, educate on prevention, and provide guidance on what to do if it occurs, including distributing ORS packets. She further emphasised the importance of ORS and zinc tablets in prevent-

ing and managing childhood diar-

The campaign aims to engage various departments and stakeholders to make the district free of diarrheal deaths. Dr Hakmaosa appealed for cooperation from all line departments to achieve this

The meeting was attended by Aspirational Blocks Fellows, Department of Social Welfare, Education, PHE, DPMU staff, media persons, ASHA supervisors, ASHAs, and medical officials.

JE claims life in Morigaon

HT Correspondent
MORIGAON, July 20: The out-

break of Japanese Encephalitis

(JE), dengue, and malaria has

caused serious concern in the dis-

trict. A 7-year-old girl from Gagal-

mari area of Mayang in Morigaon

district succumbed to the virus

while undergoing treatment at a

So far, a total of 10 people have

been diagnosed with Japanese En-

cephalitis in Morigaon district. Six

individuals are currently recover-

ing, while four, including two chil-

dren, are undergoing treatment at

Guwahati Medical College. There

are also 10 cases of dengue fever

in the district, though those af-

fected are reported to be out of

danger. Meanwhile, five people

have been infected with malaria

fever in the district so far, accord-

ing to district malaria officer

private hospital in Nagaon.

Over ₹ 5 lakh looted from businessman in Nalbari

HT Correspondent

NALBARI, July 20: More than ₹ 5 lakhs were looted from a businessman on Friday evening. The incident occurred when the businessman was traveling to his residence on a motorcycle in Dousal village, Nalbari. According to reports, Jakir Hussain, who owns a shoe business, was returning home with the day's earnings in a money bag.

In Dousal village, a group of three youths on a motorcycle chased the businessman and fired at his leg. The miscreants then stole the money bag and fled in the evening sunlight.

The police from the Dousal Outpost are investigating the incident but have not yet achieved any success. The superintendent of police, Nalbari, was also present at the scene. The concerned and frightened local residents are demanding the arrest of the criminals involved in

Inauguration of 2nd edition of novel 'LILA' in Nalbari

HT Correspondent

NALBARI, July 20: The second edition of 'LILA', a novel published in 1924 by the late Bhabadeb Bhagawati, a renowned Sanskrit pandit and national awardee teacher, was inaugurated on Friday by Prof Sanjib Sarma, head of the department of English at Dispur College. The event took place in an attractive literary function held at the auditorium of Uttardharmapur Higher Secondary School.

Dr Abani Kr Bhagawati, retired professor of Gauhati University, explained the aims of the meeting in his welcome address, referring to the observation of the 36th memorial day of the renowned teacher Bhagawati. The session was managed by journalist Uddhad Thakuria.

Another significant book, 'Kanaikhunda', written by Dr Abani Kr Bhagawati, was also inaugurated at the meeting. The event was attended by notable personalities including Dr Dinamoni Bhagawati, Dr Gunaviram Sarma, educationist Pratap Bhagawati, journalist Kamal Kumar Bhagawati, retired principal Hemanta Bhagawati, among others. A good number of people attended the meeting.

Central team visits Nagaon to assess flood damage

HT Correspondent

NAGAON, July 20: With a day-long agenda, a high-level central team led by Mihir Kumar, joint secretary, Ministry of Home Affairs, government of India, visited Nagaon to assess the flood damages and also visited several flood-affected areas under Kampur revenue circle.

During its visit to flood-affected areas, the high-level central team was accompanied and assisted by ADC and chief executive officer of the District Disaster Management Authority (DDMA), Nagaon, Philish VLH Hangshal; district programme manager of DDMA, Nagaon; circle officer of Kampur Revenue Circle, Anannya Lahkar; and officials from PHE, Health Department, and District Agriculture Office.

Earlier, the flood assessment team also participated in a meeting at the DC's conference hall, where the team received reports from all the district heads of the concerned departments on flood damages caused by the two waves of floods in the district so far. District commissioner, Nagaon, Narendra Kr Shah screened an audio-visual report on the damages caused by the recent waves of floods. Ananta Kr Gogoi, CEO. Nagaon Zila Parishad; Leeza Talukder, ADC and sub-divisional officer, Kaliabor sub-division; assistant district commissioner Silpirekha Pandit; and other heads of concerned departments participated in the meeting, as stated in an official press note.

Dhing College celebrates 59th foundation day

HT Correspondent

NAGAON, July 20: The historic Dhing College, the only pioneering institute of higher education in the greater Dhing area, celebrated its glorious 59th foundation day at the college campus here on Saturday.

On the occasion, an open session was held at its Srimanta Sankardev Auditorium, where noted journalist of the state and current chancellor of Nagaland University, Dr Samudra Gupta Kashyap, was present as the chief guest and delivered the keynote speech. Additionally, Dinesh Chandra Nath, president of the College Management Committee, alumni Jatin Ch Nath, and Abdul Kadir, former vice principal of the college, attended the session as special guests and invitees.

The programme began with a welcome address by Dr Biman Hazarika, principal of the college. While addressing the occasion, Dr Samudra Gupta Kashyap briefed the history of the Assamese nation as well as its centuries-long growth and formation since the rule of Ahom emperors in this beautiful part of the nation.

Referring to the first entry of Ahom emperors into Assam, Dr Kashyap asserted that the Ahom entered Assam without any major bloodshed, except for a brief conflict with some local rulers. The Ahom emperors, by including all local inhabitants irrespective of castes, tribes, and communities, formed a greater Assamese nation in this beautiful land. The Ahom ensured mutual understanding among all tribes and communities of neighbouring provinces of the entire northern region, which enabled the Ahom emperor to repel the unbeaten Mughal emperors.

During the event, the college fraternity presented the 'Teachers Achiever Award, 2024' to Dr Sanjeeb Kr Nath, associate professor and head of the department of Botany, in recognition of his achievement of a design patent. Additionally, meritorious students who secured good marks in graduation and in the Higher Secondary Exam' 24 in both science and arts streams were also ceremonially felicitated by the college fraternity.

Field staff in Goalpara Forest Division trained on solar fence operation



HT Bureau
GUWAHATI, July 20: Forest field staff from

along the Kanwar Yatra route to

display the owner's name, claiming

that its advisory was aimed at

duration of the yatra, has been

slammed by Opposition parties and

some members of the ruling al-

The order, to be in force for the

avoiding any "confusion".

all ranges of the Goalpara Forest Division received hands-on training on the installation, operation, and functioning of solar-powered fences as a tool for mitigating human-elephant conflict (HEC) to facilitate coexistence. A resource team from Aaranyak conducted a

day-long training workshop attended by about 50 frontline forest staff from the six ranges: Goalpara Sadar, Rangjuli, Krishnai, Lakhipur, Protection Range, and Consolidation Range under Goalpara Forest Division.

The workshop included classroom sensitisation and practical training on handling all components of a solar-powered fence, explaining their functions and operational procedures to achieve maximum effectiveness.

The workshop, held at Habraghat College in Krishnai, Goalpara district, was organised by Aaranyak in collaboration with the Goalpara Forest Division. It was inaugurated by the principal of the college, Mantu Das, in the presence of forest range officers Shibani Doley and Dhar-

Senior conservation biologist of Aaranyak, Dr Alolika Sinha, explained the various dimensions of HEC and different tools and strategies adopted to mitigate the problem and facilitate coexistence. She highlighted Aaranyak's experience working with grassroots communities in mitigating HEC and underscored the key role played by forest personnel in community-centric HEC mitigation efforts.

Aaranyak's expert in solar-power fence installation and operation, Anjan Baruah, gave a de-

tailed presentation on various types of solar fences used for HEC mitigation, explaining the functioning of every major and minor component. During a practical session, Baruah demonstrated the installation and operation of a solar-powered fence, providing hands-on experience to the participants

Senior Aaranyak official Bijay Sankar Bora set the workshop in motion by highlighting Aaranyak's 35-year effort in aiding biodiversity conservation in the region, complementing Forest Department efforts and working with the community on the ground.

Aaranyak staff Swapan Das emphasised the importance of establishing close rapport with community members by forest field staff for achieving HEC mitigation goals. Anjan Baruah and Dr Alolika Sinha also explained the procedure to help community members claim compensation for crop damages due to HEC. Aaranyak staff Ripunjoy Nath, Nipul Chakma, and Pankaj Das made sincere efforts to make the workshop possible.

The workshop concluded with a Q&A session and discussion between forest officials/field staff and the Aaranyak resource team on various aspects covered in the training workshop and les-

Aaranyak and the Goalpara Forest Division have been working closely to implement an HEC mitigation program under the division through community participation by adopting Aaranyak's successful model of low-cost, single-strand solarpowered fences supported by angular posts.

Unidentified body found HT Correspondent JORHAT, July 20: An unidenti-

fied male body, estimated to be around 35 years old, was discovered at Nirmal Chariali on the AT Road on Saturday. The body showed no visible injuries, and no identification papers were found. The police have sent the body for

Dr Mineswar Hazarika to chair XII IMSA national

a post-mortem examination.

symposium

HT Correspondent
NAGAON, July 20: Considering

his immense contribution towards the growth of the Indian meat industry, Dr

Mineswar Hazarika, retired professor of the College

of Veterinary Science, AAU, has been invited to act as chairman of the XII Indian Meat Science Association and National Symposium. The event, themed 'Green and Sustainable Meat Sector: Global Game Changer', will be held at the College of Veterinary Science & Animal Husbandry, Pandit Deen Dayal Upadhyay Pashu Chikitsa Vishwavidyalaya Evam Go-Anusand-Sansthan (DUVASU),

DISHA Cachar and ASACS conduct training for CWC members

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, July 20: DISHA Cachar, ASACS, in collaboration with DLSA, Cachar, successfully organised a training session for the members of the Child Welfare Committee (CWC) in Cachar district, adhering to the provisions of Chapter VII and Chapter XI of the HIV/AIDS Act, 2017. The event took place at the Conference Hall, District Legal Services Authority, Silchar.

The training session witnessed active participation from the members of the CWC, officials from the District Child Protection Unit (DCPU), and other relevant personnel. The training was conducted in the presence of the secretary, District Legal Services Authority, Cachar, and the District AIDS Control Offi-

The primary objective of the session was to provide a comprehensive understanding of the directives stipulated in the HIV/AIDS Act, 2017. This training ensures that the CWC members are well-equipped to address any incidents reported under the provisions of the Act efficiently and effectively.

The session emphasised the importance of protecting the rights and welfare of HIV-infected orphans and ensuring proper guardianship for siblings under 18 years of age. The training is a significant step towards enhancing the capabilities of the CWC members in handling sensitive cases and promoting the well-being of affected individuals in the district.

Cachar shines in healthcare with national-level certifications for multiple institutions

GUWAHATI, July 20: Cachar district has achieved significant milestones in healthcare quality benchmarks, with multiple health institutions receiving national-level certifications. Harinagar BPHC has become the first Primary Health Centre (PHC) in Cachar and



Barak Valley to achieve the NQAS certification. Additionally, five Ayushman Arogya Mandirs (AAMs) under various BPHCs in Cachar district have also received the NQAS certification. SM Dev Civil Hospital in Silchar has been awarded the LaQshya Certificate for its labour room and operating the-

atre, improving maternal and newborn care. Furthermore, the Blood Centre at SM Dev Civil Hospital is the first in Assam to achieve the NABH certification.

These achievements were made possible under the dynamic leadership of Rohan Kumar Jha, IAS district commissioner, and regular monitoring by

Dr Khaleda Sultana Ahmed, ACS, ADC (Health), along with Dr Ashutosh Barman and other health officials. NQAS and LaQshya certifications involve rigorous assessments at district, state,

and national levels to ensure high standards of cleanliness, docu-

mentation, and service quality. Notably, in Assam, five PHCs and 33 subcentres are NQAS certified, with Cachar contributing one PHC and five sub-centres to this total. Additionally, 22 labour rooms in Assam, including one in Cachar, are LaQshya certified.

Mathura, Uttar Pradesh, from September 26 to 28, 2024.

C Bongaigaon Salakati conducts joint mega mock drill for emergency prej

HT Correspondent
KOKRAJHAR, July 20: In a proactive

step towards enhancing emergency response capabilities, NTPC Bongaigaon Salakati successfully conducted a Joint Mega Mock Drill on Saturday.

The extensive drill, supervised by GM Thangzom, commandant, CISF, focused on earthquake, chlorine leakage, and flood scenario preparedness. The drill commenced at the New Administrative Building outside the plant premises, simulating a major earthquake scenario with Assam as the epicenter. This exercise was part of NTPC Bongaigaon Salakati's Disaster Management Plan.

It involved realistic scenarios, including the simulation of a magnitude 7 earthquake, leading to significant structural impacts at the simulated site. The drill began at 10:00 am and was conducted under the vigilant eye of chief incident controller Akhilesh Singh, head of project, NTPC Bongaigaon Salakati, along with Induri S Reddy, GM (O&M), Ashutosh Biswas, GM (Operation), and other senior officials.

The CISF, along with the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF), State Disaster Response Force (SDRF), and local police,



promptly informed employees and initiated rescue operations within 15 minutes of the simulated earthquake. The response teams demonstrated exceptional coordination and efficiency, showcasing surface casualty recovery, rope rescue techniques, and other strategic recoveries.

MS Kandari, assistant commandant, CISF (Fire) at NTPC Bongaigaon Salakati, briefed the team on the incident and ensured the smooth coordination of the drill, effectively managing the dynamics of the emergency

Following the earthquake drill, the teams

conducted a mock drill for a chlorine leakage disaster. This scenario involved the search and rescue of workers who were simulated to be trapped and unconscious. Finally, a flood-like situation was also simulated at the NTPC reservoir, where the NDRF and SDRF practiced underwater search and rescue operations, including the recovery of simulated casualties.

Akhilesh Singh provided valuable insights on improvement areas during the debriefing session held at the fire station, emphasising the importance of readiness and rapid response in disaster scenarios.

The drill concluded successfully at 12:30 pm, with a comprehensive debriefing by Ashish Kumar, deputy commandant, and MS Kandari, AC/Fire. The exercise not only tested the preparedness of NTPC Bongaigaon's emergency response teams but also reinforced the safety protocols and readiness measures essential for dealing with potential disasters.

NTPC Bongaigaon Salakati remains committed to maintaining the highest safety standards and ensuring the well-being of its personnel and the surrounding community through rigorous training and preparedness

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Editor's pick

Fallout of Trump's assassination attempt

By: Kumardeep Banerjee

week is a long time on the volatile chessboard of global affairs; however, the recent assassination attempt of former United States of America President Donald Trump would leave a deep impact on future courses of action. While several European leaders and some in the Middle East have been subjected to violent life-threatening attempts in the recent past, the bullet grazing past former president Trump's ears has left a shrill range of questions for world leaders. It may be too early to predict whether the assassination attempt would translate into a landslide victory for Donald Trump who is facing a rematch with current President Joe Biden in the November polls.

The Democrats in the US are a divided lot, with many leaders, internally questioning President Joe Biden's pitch for a second shot to the Oval Office, given his several public gaffes related to his age. Most of the public debates in the US and several other think tank zones across the world, have been debating President Biden's mental alertness and, if elected for a second time he would be able to complete his full four-year term. Any midway change due to a severe illness, which is being anticipated, would be a dampener for the US President's bid for a second run. Much like in every significant democracy, including India, the electorate in the US is a divided lot, with a deep gorge running right through the middle of the supporters of Trump and Joe Biden. The Democrat's attack on Trump and his supporters has been on the lines similar to what the opposition parties in India rallied around, during the recently concluded parliamentary elections.

The key message to their voters is to save the country from dictatorial forces (Trump/PM Modi), who will upend the constitution under their larger-than-life cult status leaders. This created a rift in the electorate, in an already ruptured society, constantly fed with an ocean of information primarily on social media, sending conflicting versions of the same events. Politics and rhetoric apart, it would be an interesting prism to watch the social messaging playing out with Trump coming back to the battlefield (election campaigns). after, he left the stage in Pennsylvania, with an iconic raised fist, and the US flag flying in the background. The picture is likely to define the resilience of the US democracy for a long time to come. Trump in his few interviews, seems to have humbled down from the life-altering event, where he almost ended up being in the coffin rather than the Oval Office. It would be worthwhile to watch out if the former President sobers down on some of his key manifesto items such as immigration and freedom to choose (including the right to possess firearms for self-protection).

Immigration would be a closely watched topic from a global perspective, including India, where the largest chunk of immigrants land on US shores through legal or illegal routes.

Donald Trump's Vice President choice J D Vance has a spouse who is a PIO. His wife's parents are immigrants from Andhra Pradesh and in a way; the choice defines the pluralistic nature of American Society. It would be a long shot to assume that if Trump gets a second term, his views and policies on immigration would be sobered due to his VP. Similarly, a Trump comeback could have a far-reaching impact on bilateral trade relations especially with

One may argue that India has bipartisan support in Washington DC on several defence and technology partnerships, carefully nurtured over a decade by PM Modi. PM Modi is perhaps the only PM, who has worked with three US Presidents in the last decade and is likely to see one of his former friends either Trump or Biden coming back in November. It may be uncertain times, however, the past relationships and promise for securing the future of the Indo-Pacific should be a super glue to hold India's US relationship under a new regime. (Courtesy: The Pioneer)

No subordinate judiciary should be afraid of granting bail after hearing

Constitution plays a crucial role in ensuring justice for all citizens and attaining the main objectives stated in the Preamble of the Indian Constitution. The subordinate judiciary is indispensable as the primary fact-finder and essential component in the execution of the fundamental constitutional principle of the rule of law and the administration of justice.

Recently, special judge Niyay Bindu of Rouse Avenue Courts granted bail to Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal in the liquor policy scam case. Due to this, she had to face heavy criticism from the public as well as in the Delhi High Court. Many individuals used social media handles to criticise the judge and raise objections regarding the judge's objectivity.

Later on, the decision was overturned by the Delhi High Court. The High Court raised an objection to the trial court's observation and remarked that the trial court had not applied its mind to the material submitted by the ED.

Through a series of judgments, the Supreme Court has constantly reminded that the role of a judge in a bail hearing is to consider the necessity and justification of granting bail instead of delving into the specifics of a case which would be much more appropriate during the trial.

A few months ago, the Chief Justice of India Dr D.Y. Chandrachud has also flagged this concerning issue regarding how subordinate court judges are reluctant to grant bail even in cases where bail should ordinarily be granted. He highlighted that there remains a sense of fear among the judges of the lower courts due to which they refrain from exercising their functions effectively. Speaking about the issue, the CJI remarked:

The subordinate judiciary is fearful of granting bail because, over a period of time we have a culture of subordination between the high courts and district judiciary. We have not created a footing of equality between the district judges and the high courts.'

This statement reflects how lower court judges find themselves under the pressure of the higher courts to which they are subordinate. This could be due to multiple reasons such as fear of transfer, adverse remarks in the annual confidential report (ACR), compulsory retirements and complaints in the vigilance cell.

It is only possible to faithfully implement the law and DEGREE OF THOUGHT admin-

ister

justice

impartially if individuals entrusted with executing these duties are free, fearless, independent and impartial. Ensuring the judiciary's independence from external organs such as the legislature and the executive is often talked about, but there is little discussion about the various kinds of internal pressure the subordinate court

judges might face from the

higher courts.

There are various constitutional and statutory provisions that empower the high courts to supervise the functioning of subordinate courts. Article 227 of the Constitution of India gives the power of superintendence over all courts to high courts. Article 235 of the Constitution states that control over subordinate courts in matters relatto postings and promotions shall be vested in high courts.

There are other statutory provisions that grant supervisory powers to high courts such as Section 397 and Section 401 of the Criminal Procedure Code, and Section 115 of the Civil Procedure Code that give power of revision to

high courts. Hence, high courts are empowered to exercise disciplinary powers over the subordinate

An ACR of a judicial officer is a document maintained in compliance with court rules and practice. It serves as the basis for future considerations about

the of-

ficer's

tion to higher position and any other service-related issues. It acts as a crucial yardstick in the assessment and evaluation of judicial officers, specifically, in

matters relating to discipli-

nary or administrative ac-

By: Bhaskar Upadhyay

tion against such officers. When the Supreme Court was established, it was to hear a particular class of cases involving the interpretation of constitutional provisions or important questions of law but over the decades, it has become a regular court of appeal and is flooded with bail applications.

In recent times, it has been a trend that litigants file bail applications in the trial courts only to get them dismissed so that they may instantly file them in a higher court because they have a higher chance of getting bail in a high court than a trial court

Although lower courts do have sufficient authority to grant bail, the reason why they are hesitant to do so is that the judges of subordinate courts are more prone to departmental inquiries and actions than the judges of high courts.

Therefore, subordinate court judges are more fearful of adverse remarks in the ACRs because they might act as a hurdle in their career progression. It has been reiterated by higher courts through judicial pronouncements that bail is the rule and jail is the exception, but this principle is not actually implemented in reality (especially in cases alleging terrorism activities) due to such fear.

In Krishna Prasad Verma versus State of Bihar, the Supreme Court held that: "The appropriate action which the high court should take is to record such material on the administrative side and place it on the service record of the judicial officer concerned. These matters can be taken into consideration while considering career progression of the concerned judicial officer."

The division Bench further held, "Once note of the wrong Order is taken and they form part of the service record, these can be taken into consideration to deny selection grade, promotion, etc., and in case there is a continuous flow of wrong or illegal Orders then the proper action would be to compulsorily retire the judicial officer, in accordance with the Rules.

The subordinate court judges can also be ordered for compulsory retirement by high courts. There have been multiple instances where high courts have ordered compulsory retirement to district court judges for granting bail. Recently, in Yogesh M.

Vyas versus Registrar, High Court of Gujarat, the Supreme Court ordered ₹20 lakh as compensation to a judicial officer who was given compulsory retirement as a punishment for granting bail. In another recent case,

Nand Kumar Verma versus State of Jharkhand and Ors, the Supreme Court quashed an Order of compulsory retirement of a chief judicial magistrate passed by the High Court of Jharkhand for granting bail to an accused in an offence under Section 302 of the Indian Penal Code.

The court stated, "The greater importance is to be given to the opinion or remarks made by the immediate superior officer as to the functioning of the judicial officer concerned for the purpose of his compulsory retirement." Hence, subordinate judges are quite hesitant to grant bail in heinous offences as they might face some strict action such as compulsory retirement or adverse remarks in their ACR.

Several malicious litigants attempt to put pressure on judges subordinate courts by threatening to file false allegations and to prosecute these false accusations in court. These litigants attempt to create an environment of blackmail to get their favoured decision.

There is no bigger menace to the judiciary's independence than the judges' susceptibility to fraudulent allegations that lead to never-ending investigations. Subordinate court judges are often scared

that they may face if they grant bail in a liberal manner. This is due to an underlying assumption that subordinate court judges are easily approachable because a majority of litigants initially interact with the judicial system at the district level.

Additionally, subordinate court judges are also fearful that they may get transferred or if their decision is overturned by high courts, they might face severe issues in their career growth. A nation that follows the rule of law regards the judiciary's independence as inviolable. Without a robust, courageous and independent judiciary, neither the rule of law nor democracy can exist.

Not only are the superior courts supposed to operate independently and fearlessly, but the same is also expected from the district judiciary. A judge of a subordinate court must always be accountable but should never be susceptible to any fear or pressure.

Judicial officers can effectively carry out their duties without fear, favour, affection, or malice only in an environment that supports them. For this reason, it is quite imperative to shield the subordinate court judges from the threat of baseless and fabricated accusations.

By establishing a system of deterrence and repercussions, judicial officers must be protected against false and malicious complaints. It is essential to establish a deterrent regime, which may involve imposing fines and costs on the complainant who maliciously filed the complaint to put pressure on the

The higher courts are also equally responsible for protecting honest judicial officers and ensuring there is no kind of pressure on them so that the judges of the subordinate court may dispense their duties effectively in a positive en-

Instead of gloating over 'record' job generation, Guru Purnima- Reminder of a glorious tradition Modi govt should do some retrospection

By: Krishna Jha

n India today, the number of unemployed especially in the working age has gone up to more than forty crore out of the population of one billion. The demon of deprivation stares at every unit of families. With occasional employment, life is barely sustained. The ruling circle never gets tired of claiming that unemployment rate has been falling. Even the government's Periodic Labour Force Survey data showed unemployment rate had fallen to 3.1 per cent during 2022-23. However, the real time private data of CMIE shows unemployment has been hovering around 7-8 per cent.

However, at the launch of the "India Employment Report 2024: Youth Employment, Education and Skills", a joint publication of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and the Institute for Human Development (IHD), in New Delhi, it was pointed out that it was incorrect to expect that all the issues can be resolved by the state, especially something like unemployment.

Unemployment has gripped the labour power of entire working age people. Significantly, approach of the Modi government on employment generation was quite revealing. It clearly shows that resolving the unprecedented unemployment crisis was not a priority for Modi government.

During the campaign for the Lok Sabha Election 2024, when the unemployment became a key issue among the electorate, a statement came from the Secretary of the Union Ministry of Labour and Employment that said that as many as 30 million jobs had been generated in 2022-2023 and more than 110 million jobs were added in the last five years. It meant that Modi government had already solved the unemployment crisis of the country, since only about 20 million people enter Indian Labour Market every year. It also implied that the Modi government did more than required by generating 30 million jobs in one

The statement had cited the provision figures from the Reserve Bank of India's KLEMS database for 2022-23, that tracks employment generation and productivity levels in capital, labour, energy, material and services sectors. It should be noted that the official claim was not supported by even the yearly PLFS data of the Union Ministry of Labour and Employment. It may be relevant to mention here that Narendra Modi had promised 20 million jobs a year during his election campaigns in 2014, but never even tried to meet the promise.

During the election campaign, PM Narendra Modi said in one of the meetings in New Delhi that India's "youth have opted to become job creators more than job seekers". The sarcasm was not lost. wounds. The lack of employment is a debilitating fact in the life of not only those of working age but all

Even children start toiling since they are four or five and reach the mature age of eighty or even above. What Dr Kaushik Basu has said recently has to be noted here now. Pointing out that India's youth unemployment rate is among the highest in the world at 45.4 per cent, he urged the government to take corrective measures to deal with this

By 2017-18, India's unemployment had risen to a level that was highest in last 45 years. Now India Employment Report 2024 has portrayed a grave picture on the job front especially for Indian Youth. With this publication the country knows that millions of youths could never find jobs at all, many of them have become overage during the last 10 years of Modi rule, and even 90 per cent of those who somehow managed to find a job are informally employed, with 82 per cent in the informal sector. Self-employment remained the primary source of employment for 55.8 per cent in 2022, while casual employment was at 22.7 per cent and regular employment at 21.5 per cent. Unemployment crisis has re-

mained frightening both in the urban and rural areas of the country, a proof of a jobless growth model Modi government has been pursuing since 2014. Election results denying Modi a majority in the Lok Sabha should serve a lesson to him, and also NDA allies in the government. Unemployment is likely to remain a key problem for the government.

In this context, it is revealing to see what the Annual Survey of Unincorporated Enterprises (ASUSE) has discovered. It was found that the number of employed workers in the informal sector in 2023 dropped by 16.45 lakh or about 1.5 percent to 10.96 crore compared to 11.13 crore in 2015-16. What is more, the data available for the first time It was like rubbing salt on live since 2015-16, provides an understanding of the impact of the three major exogenous shocks, that was demonetisation in November 2016, roll out of goods and services tax in July 2017, and the Covid-19 Pandemic in March 2020, on the growth of unincorporated enterprises and employment in these enterprises.

Much of the brunt of the three shocks of demonetisation, which were sudden withdrawal of cash from the system, GST that involved regulatory compliances and inclusion in the tax net, and Covid-19 that prompted the government to impose a national lockdown, all these catastrophes were born by the informal sector.

Among the top ten states that account for nearly three quarters of the informal sector labour emploved in India, five states, Maharashtra, Bihar, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh and Odisha recorded only marginal increase in the informal employment in the period between 2015-16 and 2022-23. The data for these non-agrarian sector enterprises present an indicator of jobs since the informal sector is closely watched for its capacity for job generation. And absorption of Labour force. (IPA Service)

By: M. R. Lalu

uru Purnima is a reminder. It comes every year reviving our understanding of the cherished values of the Guru-Shishya tradition. Remove this ideal transition of knowledge from one generation to the next, India as a nation would cease to exist. In its entirety, India can be defined as a landscape that idealized this great tradition that existed and passed on to generations from the ages of sages. In principle and practice India's spiritual inheritance survived through

And whenever there had been a decline of values in the Indian society, there appeared a person to light a million lamps of spiritual effulgence. The first lamp goes on shining for centuries with undiminished light. This, with the brightness of supreme spiriexuberance is the Guru and the lamp that is lighted from it is the disciple. This remained a profound way for transmitting the great knowledge that India possessed for centuries.

Many enlightened masters came and illuminated the minds of people on various subjects. Guru, according to our scriptures, is someone who removes the darkness in us. This needs to be understood with clarity. 'GU' means darkness and 'RU' means who removes it. Darkness is mostly internal and by removing it the disciple is all set to fine-tune his essential self with the supreme and thus relieved from all perennial contradictions of life. So we are supposed to pay our obeisance to the Guru on the day of Guru Purnima.

In the West, this idea of Guru was never prominent to the extent it existed in India. West admired spiritual luminaries as teachers who gave intellectual knowledge. India treated Gurus with reverence

and admired them for the spiritual current they were able to set in motion. The tradition existed as the Gurus transmitted their power to their immediate disciples and the disciples carried the light of knowledge further. From the days of the Vedic wisdom to those we admire today as Gurus all have admittedly continued this process. We will see such links and lineages of Gurus exist in scriptures as well.

The greatest aspect of the Guru-Shishya tradition is that even the incarnations of God had to be a part of this lineage. Lord Rama and Lord Krishna are known to have gained their knowledge under great masters who were eminent Gurus of those days. The political system that existed then had provided profound examples of rulers being servile to

the spiritual power and knowledge their Gurus, who in turn advised the Kings when the country a flooded with adver-

sities. An ideal desire in every aspirant of knowledge was that a Guru must teach him and lead him to light, lead from death to deathlessness and lead him from untruth to truth. The ancient Gurukula system provided platforms to this aspiration for gaining knowledge to flourish in the inner depth of a person and help him receive it from an accomplished Guru

Experiential learning was the path that the intellectual luminary in the Guru would put the disciple through. This was an excellent aspect of preserving knowledge and keeping the education system intact. Down the line, the pe-

riod of external invasion that lasted for centuries could dismantle this firm establishment of spiritual lineage. But to revive it did happen occasionally. How deep and practical was the practice of Guru-Shishya tradition can be understood from Swami Vivekananda's words. Once, a Christian friend Vivekananda asked him if he believed in Christ.

Since Vivekananda admired Jesus the Christ, his friend told him to get baptized. But Vivekananda made him sense the reality as to what true baptism was. He said mere sprinkling of water on a person would not bring any spiritual transformation in him. That would happen only when a living illumined soul passes his power to transform a person's life. Vivekananda's quest for finding a Guru ended in

> Ramakrishna. Guru Purnima is again an occasion to rememb e r Bhagwan Ved

Vyas. He is known to have rearranged the Vedic knowledge in an admiring way and the one who penned down one of the greatest epics, the Mahabharata. He is known for the incredible essence of the Vedic wisdom that he codified and ever since got promulgated through various generations. Lord Shiva is known as the Adi Guru, the one from whom the knowledge system began to make its

Interestingly, there are instances in which he is known to have shown his respect to the Guru Tattva, the essential aspect of a Guru centric learning. Why did we value this tradition of passing knowledge as the best? The impact

of having a Guru in a person's life is known to bring tremendous transformation. This, according to the scriptures and testimonies of great masters, is proof for the master delving into the depth of the supreme reality while helping the disciple to take strides experiencing sparks of realization bit by bit. This intervention of the Guru ultimately takes the disciple to experience the abundance of knowledge dawn in him. Gradually, the darkness diminishes and various talents of spiritual rejuvenation manifest in the disciple.

Even today, India is known for the global presence of its enlightened masters, who, with great involvement continue to disseminate the knowledge of yoga, meditation and India's traditional spiritual wisdom for the universal good. They cover a variety of aspects of life on a global level and cover subjects such as spirituality, environmental conservation. education and many other aspects for the betterment of humanity. India's emergence as a global power has also been a contributory factor.

'Mother India', according to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, is still truly potential to once again establish her past glory. He wanted India to become the 'Vishwa Guru'. His government has consistently been putting its efforts to see this dream materialize. And in actuality, it is a matter of time; that India, with its ethical imperatives of Dharma (righteousness), has been exemplifying its ancient values across the world. "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam" (world is one family) was an inspiring theme that India echoed as its march towards accomplishing its global vision of becoming a Vishwa Guru, a global teacher. (The author is a freelance journalist who can be

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The evolution of newspapers: Tracing the journey from antiquity to the digital age

By: Dipak Kurmi

The concept of a newspaper indeed has deep historical roots, dating back to ancient civilizations. The earliest known example is the "Acta Diurna", which emerged in the Roman Empire around the 1st century BC. These were handwritten compilations of government pronouncements, legal notices, and public news, posted in public places such as the Roman Forum. The Acta Diurna served as a government-sanctioned gazette, providing citizens with important information about the happenings within the Roman world. This practice of disseminating news to the public can be seen as a precursor to modern newspapers, laying the foundation for the structured and periodic delivery of news that characterizes newspapers today.

The history of newspapers in India is rich with lessons that are especially pertinent in today's digital era. The struggle for a free press was deeply intertwined with the larger struggle for independence. Pioneering publishers like James Augustus Hicky, who endured censorship and persecution, showcased the formidable power of the press to question authority and stimulate public debate. Their steadfast dedication to truth and accountability continues to inspire journalists today, guiding them through the challenges of online manipulation and misinformation.

By the 8th century in China, the concept of a printed newspaper had taken shape. The Chinese introduced a groundbreaking technique that involved carving individual characters onto wooden blocks, enabling them to produce the world's first printed newspaper. This innovation, coupled with advancements in printing ink and paper, set the stage for the widespread dissemination of news. Shortly thereafter, the Koreans embraced this printing method, furthering the reach and impact of printed news.

In Europe, the widespread adoption of printing technology led to an explosion of affordable books and, importantly for our discussion, the emergence of popular newspapers. This democratization of communication allowed a broader audience to access

information that was once reserved for a privileged few.

American journalism began to take root in 1690 with the publication of 'Publick Occurrences Both Foreign and Domestic.' This pioneering effort by British journalist Benjamin Harris was the first attempt at creating a newspaper in the nascent American colonies. However, it was John Campbell who earned the distinction of founding the first American-run newspaper with the debut of the 'Boston News-Letter' in 1704. The practice of daily news consumption in America began in 1783 with the launch of Pennsylvania's first daily newspaper.

The journey of newspapers extends far beyond American borders. Russia entered the world of print journalism in 1703 with the release of its first journal. In India, the evolution of print journalism tells a unique story. The fight for a free press was closely linked to the struggle for independence, creating a compelling tale of resilience, innovation, and the relentless pursuit of free speech. Amidst the backdrop of colonialism, the printing press emerged as a powerful weapon for those advocating for liberty and justice.

A Historical Look at Print Journalism in India: Print media in India has a rich history that intertwines with the country's struggle for independence and its evolution into a democracy. From their inception, the earliest newspapers in India served as vital platforms for discussion and information dissemination during British rule. As time progressed, print media became instrumental in rallying the populace, promoting nationalist sentiments, and nurturing a sense of unity among Indians.

Early Attempts and the Struggles **Against Censorship:** The first attempt to establish a newspaper in India occurred in 1776 when William Bolts, a former East India Company employee, sought to publish a critical paper. However, the company swiftly silenced him, signaling the beginning of a long and challenging fight for press freedom that Indian journalists would

In 1780, James Augustus Hicky defied the odds by launching "The Bengal Gazette," also known as the "Calcutta General Advertiser." This venture marked the birth of India's first successful newspaper and was groundbreaking in many respects. Hicky's publication played a crucial role in shaping public discourse and challenging colonial authority. However, his sharp criticisms of Governor-General Warren Hastings and his administration led to Hicky's arrest and the closure of the paper in 1782.

The British Raj, fearing dissent, introduced several laws to control the press. The Censorship of Press Act of 1799 and the Licensing Regulation Ordinance of 1823 restricted the publication of materials considered harmful to the British administration. Despite these measures, influential figures like Raja Ram Mohun Roy resisted. Roy used his newspaper, "Mirat-ul-Akbar,"

to advocate press freedom, demonstrating the persistent struggle for journalistic independence colonial India.

> The Fight for Freedom

and the Rise of Nationalist Voices: A significant turning point came in 1835 when Governor-General Charles Metcalfe abolished the Licensing Regulation, ushering in a brief era of press freedom. This led to a proliferation of newspapers, especially those published in Indian languages. However, this newfound freedom was short-

The Sepoy Mutiny of 1857 brought about stricter press controls with the introduction of the Licensing Act of 1857. Despite these constraints, the late 19th and early 20th centuries witnessed the rise of the Indian nationalist movement, with newspapers becoming a powerful instrument for its leaders. Influential publications like "Kesari" by Bal Gangadhar Tilak and "The Indian Opinion" by Mahatma Gandhi provided platforms to challenge British rule and advocate for self-governance. These publications, among others, frequently faced scrutiny and censorship from British authorities, who enacted laws such as the Newspaper (Incitement to Offense) Act of 1908 and the Indian Press Act of 1910 to suppress seditious content.

Throughout history, press regulations in India have involved a series of legislative measures designed to control and manage the dissemination of information across various media. Each law, introduced during different periods, served specific purposes in its context, reflecting the ongoing struggle between control and freedom of the

Press Act or the Metcalfe Act: The

n a m e d after Charles Metcalfe. marked a significant shift towards a more liberal approach to oress regulations.

Metcalfe

Unlike its predecessors, this act relaxed many of the stringent measures previously imposed, thereby granting greater freedom to the press. Charles Metcalfe is often lauded for creating a more open and supportive environment for journalism in India, paving the way for a more robust and independent press.

Vernacular Press Act: The Vernacular Press Act, passed in 1878, directly aimed at Indian-language newspapers. Its primary objective was to suppress criticism of British policies voiced through vernacular publications, which had become increasingly vocal. Under this act, the government gained authority to seize printing presses and halt the publication of newspapers

Registration Act: The Registration Act mandated that all newspapers and publications register with the government. Its purpose was to oversee and monitor all media outlets, ensuring compliance with legal standards and government regulations. This measure aimed to maintain control and accountability within the media landscape by establishing a system to track and regulate operating publications.

Indian Press Act: The Indian Press Act consolidated existing regulations and introduced new measures aimed at regulating the press comprehensively. It encompassed provisions for licensing, registration, and censorship, granting the government extensive authority over the media industry. This act was pivotal in establishing a framework for controlling and overseeing the press, ensuring adherence to governmental standards and policies across the media landscape.

Newspaper Act: The Newspaper Act was implemented to oversee the publication and circulation of newspapers, incorporating requirements for registration, licensing, and adherence to legal norms. Its goal was to enforce compliance with ethical and professional standards, ensuring newspapers operated within legal boundaries.

These legislative initiatives mirror the dynamic interaction between the press and the government in India. While certain acts sought to enhance press freedoms, others aimed at tightening control. Balancing freedom of expression with governmental oversight has remained a complex and contentious issue throughout the history of Indian journalism.

Press After Independence: Challenges of a New Era: India's independence in 1947 marked a transformative phase for print journalism. The press landscape underwent profound changes, mirroring the dynamic political, social, and economic realities of the newly formed nation. Established English dailies such as "The Times of India" and "The Hindustan Times" continued to exert significant influence, while regional language newspapers like "Anandabazar Patrika" (Bengali) and "Eenadu" (Telugu) catered to the linguistic diversity

The 1950s and 1960s witnessed the ascendance of the vernacular press as literacy rates surged, expanding the readership of newspapers in regional languages. The government also shaped the media landscape through initiatives like the establishment of the Press Trust of India (PTI) in 1947, a national news agency providing comprehensive coverage across the coun-

The adoption of offset printing technology in the 1970s revolutionized the industry, enabling faster printing and wider distribution of newspapers. However, the latter half of the 20th century posed new challenges. Reports from the Press Commission in 1954, 1962, and 1977 sought to regulate the press and uphold journalistic standards while navigating the delicate balance between freedom of expression and social responsibility.

The Past Informs the Digital Future: The historical struggle between press freedom and government control serves as a vital lesson for the digital era. While social media has democratized information sharing, it has also facilitated the spread of fake news and created echo chambers. Newspapers, with their dedication to fact-checking and editorial integrity, remain crucial for providing reliable information in today's digital landscape. Additionally, the rise of the vernacular press in India underscores the significance of addressing diverse audiences. In the digital age, this means ensuring that news outlets are available in various languages and formats, thereby broadening their reach and fostering a more inclusive information ecosystem.

The journey of Indian newspapers stands as a powerful testament to the enduring impact of journalism. As we navigate the constantly changing digital terrain, the lessons from the past-championing press freedom, prioritizing fact-checking, and embracing inclusivity-are more vital than ever. By steadfastly upholding these principles, journalists can continue to inform and empower citizens in a world overwhelmed with information. (The writer can be reached at dipakkurmiglpltd@gmail.com)

SHORT STORY

Fulfil if you promise

By: Dr. Suman Bharali

(...continued from the previous edition)

ll of them sat down in a flat ground inside the forest. Wilson was silent for some time. The trauma they faced was not easy to recover from. The visions were coming in his eyes and the screams in his ears.

Wilson did not reply. And lied down on the ground. All of them rested there till the sunrise. With the new sun their lives took a new turn. They formed a band and pledged to take revenge. The forest became their new home. They made temporary huts and started to live there. They roamed here and there to collect the food, fire wood and necessary items. They made plans and started training hard every day. After a few weeks they turned into tough warriors. They developed skills of fighting with different weapons as well as empty handed.

They named the forest "The Green Heaven." They led a hard life there. They had to eat wild fruits sometimes. Hunted small animals and caught fishes. Drank water from streams and slept on tree branches many days. All these along with the determination and anger inside them made them stronger instead of weakening them.

A few months later they started executing their plans. Whenever there was any news of exploitation by the Royal men, the band immediately responded. They would ambush the convoys and kill the Royal soldiers and officials. They save the innocent citizens from the cruelties of the Royal people and helped them with whatever they could. They collected money by robbing the Royal people and distributed it among the poor villagers. They also looted arms from the soldiers and gathered a lot of it.

Once they got information that the Royal minister with whom Wilson fought and who burnt their village, is going to visit 'The Moon Temple' on the full moon night. Wilson and the band got alert and planned to assassinate the minister to avenge death of their villagers.

The night came and the minister was going to the temple in his chariot along with his guards. The road passed through the forest for some distance. Wilson and his fellow warriors were waiting there for the minister to ambush them. The warriors aimed at the neck of the soldiers with their arrows. The bow strings were pulled up to their ears. Wilson was holding his sword firmly. All of them were waiting for the right time and spot to attack. As the convoy reached the mark they made for ambush. The warriors released their arrows. Most of them pierced the neck of the soldiers between the helmet and the chest armour. All fell from their horses like bags of sand. The remaining soldiers got alert and surrounded the chariot to save the minister. The warriors jumped into them to fight with their swords and spears. Wilson's target was the minister. After fighting and slaying the guards, Wilson reached the minister. But he saw that it was not the minister he targeted. The minister had already fled the place with one of guards in a horse. But the minister recognized Wilson and his fellow men be-

fore leaving. Next day there was notice everywhere that Wilson and his band is national enemy and they will be killed wherever they are seen. Anybody who catches them or gives information about their whereabouts will be rewarded handsomely. Trying to assassinate a Royal minister is an unforgivable

offence and is punished with death only. Since the citizens were saved and helped by Wilson and his band, nobody responded to the Royal notice. Wilson and his band members remained silent for a few days. They disappeared in the forest and changed their residence frequently. They were alert and keeping an eye on what the Royal authorities were doing.

One afternoon, Wilson and his band members were lying on the silky grass in the forest, near a stream. Suddenly, they heard a voice.

"Help, please help me." "Can you hear it?" Wilson asked to his fellow

"Yes, we can. It's a female voice." Replied a

"Let see." Wilson stood and proceeded towards "Oh! It's a girl. She is drowning in the stream."

Wilson said and jumped into the stream without thinking of anything

He brought the girl out of the water and scolded "If you don't know how to swim, why did you

She was frightened and shy. She did not reply. She was standing stiff shivering and looking at ilson. Wilson has not looked into the eyes of any girl so deeply. And she was a beautiful girl of about sixteen years. Her eyes were big and shining. Lips fresh like rose petals. Her long, blonde and curly hairs were wet. Wilson got hypnotized by her in-

Just then his friends approached and broke the

"Hey! From where have you come here?" On hearing the voice, the girl reacted as if she

woke up from a dream. "I, I... came here accidently." She replied with

saw a beautiful butterfly and chased it. Following

a broken voice. "How?" asked one of the men "I was plucking flowers in the garden. Then I

it, I came near the bank of the stream and slipped of the edge accidently. I was carried by the water here as I don't know top swim well." Replied the Wilson plucked a wild flower nearby and sticks

it into her hairs. He smiled and spoke.

"Come, I will show you the road and then you go to your home. Next time don't roam alone "I will be grateful to you," replied the girl and

followed him. After leaving her on the highway, Wilson re-

turned and joined his band.

Wilson could not stop thinking about the girl. Unknowingly, unprepared he fell in love with the girl on first sight. He started sitting alone under the trees plucking grass. His friends noticed the change in him. They planned to meet the girl again. But they did not have to go anywhere. It was destined to happen. The girls along with her friends came again to pluck flowers there. Actually, she

also wanted to see Wilson again. When Wilson saw her, he ran towards her and stood in front of her breathing fast, smiling and looking into her eyes. He wanted to say a lot but his voice freeze in his throat.

She greeted first

"Hi. What are you doing here?" Wilson replied "Searching the flower you put on my hairs last time we met. It was beautiful." She said

'Oh! Nice. Come I will show you where it is." Wilson shied and spoke.

As they walked together Wilson asked, "Last time I was a bit rude. I did not even ask your name. Would you mind telling me your

"Jasmine" She replied with a smile and asked his name

"Wilson" He replied.

Then their friends went towards another direction seeing them talking with each other. They sat on a rock at the bank of the stream watching the sparkling water. They talked till the sun was about to set. Then the girl returned back with the flower she was searching for.

(... To be continued in the next edition)

Quick and seamless ITR

s the deadline July 31st for the date of filing of Income Tax Return (ITR) is approaching rapidly, tax consultants are working until midnight to help to cater for salaried individuals and other taxpayers. On the other hand, for corporates and other taxpayers, who are required to get their accounts audited, the due date is October 31st of the Assessment Year. However, taxpayers are on the move for collection of their income statement such as Form 16A, 16B, and other interest earned certificates from deductors/ financial institutions and their days are passed being dragged from pillar to post.

Although new tax regime attempts to demystify various tax structures with lower rates but with relative to the old tax regime, taxpayers are not happy with TDS at source, especially for those with higher income tax slab above 15 Lakh. A closer look at India's tax

people paid income tax in 2022-23. Why India's smaller taxpayers bear heavier burden? Some of the facts were not only revealing but shocking too. Should taxing the untaxed is now necessary?

Chanakya in 'Arthashastra' advises rulers to collect taxes from the citizens as honeybees collect nectar from flowers – gently and without inflicting pain. Individuals hope that the upcoming Budget would provide reasonable tax changes so that the government collects right quantum of taxes in an efficient manner so that taxpayers are empowered in nation building. India's middle class is angry on

the talk of inequality while the tax rate for individuals at 30% for over Rs 15 Lakh income is far higher than that for corporate tax at 22%. spend more on health, education and social safety. Should the finance minister listen for the citizen's call?

And I rushed to my tax consult-

ant for ITR in the last weekend. The computation of total income was displayed at once and it was accomplished on the laptop before submiting mytotal income and other data, like the last ITR. The amount payable on interest u/s 234 A/B/C is especially worrisome as I saw heavy penalty imposed for interest calculated up to July after deduction of Advance Tax.

The TDS on fixed deposit is 10%, if your interest for the entire Financial Year exceeds Rs. 40,000 (Rs. 50,000 for senior citizen). Shockingly the tax department doesn't consider total interest earnings from all the banks and income from salary with interest from Fixed Deposits that finally imposed heavy penalties during ITR. I had to pay finally three fourth of its penalty fordue of few thousands.

days gone by, Advance Taxpayers are also offered wide range of modes for payment, including Net Banking, Debit card and Credit card. In the new functionality, taxpay-

ers are given the option to use RTGS/NEFT & Payment Gateway modes to make payments through a challan form over the bank counter. This facility needs to be availed only after generating a challan (CRN) using e-Pay Tax service on -Filing portal. Now this year, there is another

mode of tax payment through UPI. Sujan pointed me to scan the OR code on his laptop. I did it almost instantly and the challan receipt generated. The ITR was electronically transmitted and verified with Aadhaar OTP. It seemed to me filing ITR was such without a hassle and there were pages of printout of my ITR Return acknowledgement stapled. Hope this end of July, this Tax/Self-Assessment Tax/Tax on would be an all-time high when Regular Assessment Taxes were compared to a total of 7.78 crore paid at banks by filling manual ITRs filed in FY 2022-23. Paying forms on Challan No. ITNS 280. taxes matters. Let's join a commit-

POETRY

Words Get Exchanged, **Conveying Love**

By: Bipul Chandra Kalita

Words get exchanged conveying, love hidden behind my

To help an untutored artist like me free heart's burden In this world of told and untold stories of failure or suc-

I remain dumb behind my talkative mood And you become vocal behind your vast silence Whenever we exchange our outer looks in casual encoun-

We are so close that we hear each other's breathings, An unseen distance makes everything between us ambigu-

Our sweetest words seem to shower the ugliest meanings If they are uttered in traditional manners As we are thrown upon the thorns of recognized wellness.

Let us be content with our silent understandings, The air is content with our squeezed discontentments; Let words lose their meanings, Not loosing traditional knots

But choosing our unfulfilled desires; Mutual understandings will change the dictionaries of love.

Soldiers: Nation's Pride

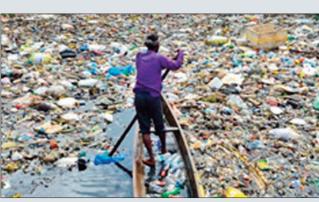
By: Maharshi Dubey

We proud of our soldiers Who guard country's borders, They fight with bravery, And kill country's enemy, They flow their blood for nation, They walk and run for nation But never get tired, They play with fire, Soldiers are nation's pride Who live for nation and die? They never off their duty, In every condition perform it honestly, Everyday they fight with enemy, face new challenges and

cross many hurdles,

We proud of our soldiers.

light.



Elegy for the Bharalu

By: Mowsam Hazarika

Once a river, crystal clear, Where laughter echoed, far and near Children played along its banks,

In joy and peace, we gave our

thanks.

We walked its paths, fished its Bharalu held our childhood

dreams. But now its waters, dark and grim, Choked by waste, a sight so dim.

Men with carelessness and greed, Have turned its flow to one of need. Garbage, filth, and toxic blight, Have stolen Bharalu's gentle

No more the splash of childhood feet, Nor whispers where the waters meet. The river mourns, a silent

To cleanse, revive, and set it free. Remembering days of pure

delight. When Bharalu sparkled in the light. We must revive, restore, re-

claim. For future hearts to feel the same

Let's heal the wounds, make amends. So Bharalu's song of life ex-

tends. With love and care, it can revive, And once more, in its waters,

thrive.

CrowdStrike failure highlights fragility of globally connected technology

Cybersecurity industry analyst, said this was a historic mistake by CrowdStrike

globally connected technology

ecosystem is nothing new. It's

what drove fears in the 1990s of a

technical glitch that could cause

chaos at the turn of the millen-

all worried about with Y2K, except

it's actually happened this time,"

wrote Australian cybersecurity

consultant Troy Hunt on the social

Across the world Friday, af-

fected computers were showing

the "blue screen of death" — a

sign that something went wrong

with Microsoft's Windows operat-

But what's different now is "that

these companies are even more en-

trenched," Falco said. "We like to

think that we have a lot of players

available. But at the end of the day,

platform X.

ing system.

"This is basically what we were

WASHINGTON, July 20: Airlines, banks, hospitals and other risk-averse organizations around the world chose cybersecurity company CrowdStrike to protect their computer systems from hackers and data breaches.

6 THE HILLS TIMES

But all it took was one faulty CrowdStrike software update to cause global disruptions Friday that grounded flights, knocked banks and media outlets offline, and disrupted hospitals, retailers and other services.

'This is a function of the very homogenous technology that goes into the backbone of all of our IT infrastructure," said Gregory Falco, an assistant professor of engineering at Cornell University. "What really causes this mess is that we rely on very few companies, and everybody uses the same folks, so everyone goes down at the same time.

The trouble with the update issued by CrowdStrike and affecting computers running Microsoft's Windows operating system was not a hacking incident or cyberattack, according to CrowdStrike, which apologized and said a fix was on the way.

But it wasn't an easy fix. It required "boots on the ground" to remediate, said Gartner analyst Eric Grenier.

"The fix is working, it's just a very manual process and there's no magic key to unlock it," Grenier said. "I think that is probably what



companies are struggling with the

While not everyone is a client of CrowdStrike and its platform known as Falcon, it is one of the leading cybersecurity providers, particularly in transportation, healthcare, banking and other sectors that have a lot at stake in keeping their computer systems working.

"They're usually risk-averse organizations that don't want something that's crazy innovative, but that can work and also cover their butts when something goes wrong. That's what CrowdStrike is," Falco said. "And they're looking around at their colleagues in other sectors and saying, Oh, you know, this company also uses that, so I'm gonna need them, too."

Worrying about the fragility of a

the biggest companies use all the

Founded in 2011 and publicly traded since 2019, CrowdStrike describes itself in its annual report to financial regulators as having "reinvented cybersecurity for the cloud era and transformed the way cybersecurity is delivered and experienced by customers." It emphasizes its use of artificial intelligence in helping to keep pace with adversaries. It reported having 29,000 subscribing customers at the start of the year.

The Austin, Texas-based firm is one of the more visible cybersecurity companies in the world and spends heavily on marketing, including Super Bowl ads. At cybersecurity conferences, it's known for large booths displaying massive action-figure statues representing different state-sponsored hacking groups that CrowdStrike technology promises to defend

CrowdStrike CEO George Kurtz is among the most highly compensated in the world, recording more than USD 230 million in total compensation in the last three years. Kurtz is also a driver for a CrowdStrike-sponsored car racing

After his initial statement about the problem was criticized for lack of contrition, Kurtz apologized in a later social media post Friday and on NBC's "Today Show." "We understand the gravity of

BEIJING, July 20: At least 11 peo-

ple were killed and more than 30

went missing when a bridge on a

highway collapsed partially due to

flash floods in China's Shaanxi

province, authorities said on Satur-

The bridge, located in Zhashui

County in Shangluo City, collapsed

on Friday evening due to a sudden

downpour and flash floods, the state-

run Xinhua news agency reported,

quoting the provincial publicity de-

Eleven people were confirmed

dead as of Saturday morning, while

more than 30 went missing after the

The collapse caused some vehi-

cles to plunge into the Jinqian River

below the bridge, it said. The exact

number of vehicles involved in the

It added that rescue teams recov-

ISLAMABAD, July 20: Pakistan's election com-

mission will implement the Supreme Court's order

on Saturday, a decision which will allow the Pak-

istan Tehreek-e-Insaf to become the largest party

ruled that 71-year-old Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-

served for women and minorities in the National

The PTI will become the largest party in the Na-

tional Assembly as its seats will soar from 86 to

109 after it gains 23 seats reserved for women and

In a statement released on Friday, the Election

Commission of Pakistan (ECP) said the decision

to implement the apex court's order was taken

after the electoral body held two meetings on

Thursday and Friday to deliberate on the reserved

seats case verdict, Geo News reported.

Assembly and provincial assemblies.

minorities.

collapse is still being determined.

collapse, the report said.

the situation and are deeply sorry for the inconvenience and disruption," he said on X.

Richard Stiennon, a cybersecurity industry analyst, said this was a historic mistake by CrowdStrike.

"This is easily the worst faux pas, technical faux pas or glitch of any security software provider ever," said Stiennon, who has tracked the cybersecurity industry for 24 years.

While the problem is an easy technical fix, he said, it's impact could be long-lasting for some organizations because of the handson work needed to fix each affected computer. "It's really, really difficult to touch millions of machines. And people are on vacation right now, so, you know, the CEO will be coming back from his trip to the Bahamas in a couple of weeks and he won't be able to use his computers.

Stiennon said he did not think the outage revealed a bigger problem with the cybersecurity industry or CrowdStrike as a company.

"The markets are going to forgive them, the customers are going to forgive them, and this will blow over," he said.

Forrester analyst Allie Mellen credited CrowdStrike for clearly telling customers what they need to do to fix the problem. But to restore trust, she said there will need to be a deeper look at what occurred and what changes can be made to prevent it from happening again. (AP)

11 dead, over 30 missing as bridge collapses in northwest China

Rescue operations underway

Despite curfew, deaths mount in Bangladesh student protests over government jobs quota

DHAKA, July 20: Police imposed a strict curfew across Bangladesh and military forces patrolled parts of the capital Saturday to quell further violence after days of clashes over the allocation of government jobs left several people dead and hundreds injured. The curfew follows what was likely the deadliest day yet in the weeks of protests despite a ban on public gatherings. Reports vary on the number of people killed Friday, with Somoy TV reporting 43. An Associated Press reporter saw 23 bodies at Dhaka Medical College and Hospital, but it was not immediately clear whether they all died on Friday.

Another 22 people died Thursday as protesting students attempted to impose a "complete shutdown" of the country. Several people were also killed Tuesday and Wednesday.

The protests, which began weeks ago but escalated sharply when violence erupted Tuesday, represent the biggest challenge to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina since she won a fourth consecutive term in office after elections in January that were boycotted by the main opposition groups.

Police and protesters clashed in the streets and at university campuses in Dhaka and other cities across the south Asian country. Authorities moved to block online communications by banning mobile and internet services. Some television news channels also went off the air, and the websites of most Bangladesh newspapers were not loading or were being updated.

Authorities could not be reached immediately to confirm figures for the overall deaths, but the Daily Prothom Alo newspaper reported 103 people were killed since Tuesday.

The United States Embassy in Dhaka said Friday that reports indicated "hundreds to possibly thouwere injured across Bangladesh. It said the situation was "extremely volatile."

Local media also reported that some 800 inmates fled from a prison in Narsingdi, a district north of capital Dhaka, after protesters stormed the iail facility and set it on fire Friday. Meanwhile, ome key government websites, including that of Bangladesh's central bank and the prime minister's office, appeared to have been defaced by hackers.

The curfew began at midnight and is set to relax from noon to 2 p.m. to allow people to buy essentials before being put back in place until 10 a.m. Sunday, A "shoot-at-sight" order was also in place, giving security forces the authority to fire on mobs in extreme cases, said lawmaker Obaidul Quader, the general secretary of the

ruling Awami League party.



Bangladesh's governance and economy and the frustration of youths who lack good jobs upon graduation.

The protesters are demanding an end to a quota system that reserves up to 30% of government jobs for relatives of veterans who fought in Bangladesh's war of independence in 1971 against Pakistan. They argue the system is discriminatory and benefits upporters of Hasina, whose Awami League party led the independence movement, and they want it replaced with a merit-based system.

Hasina has defended the quota system, saving that veterans deserve the highest respect for their contributions to the war, regardless of their political

Representatives from the both sides met late Friday to find a resolution. At least three student leaders were part of the meeting in which they demanded a reform in the quota system, an opening of student dormitories across the country and the stepping down of university officials for failing to prevent violence on the campuses. Law Minister Anisul Huq said the government was open to discussing the student leaders' demands.

The protests are also backed by the main opposition Bangladesh Nationalist Party that has vowed to organize its own demonstrations with many of its supporters joining in the students' protests. A BNP statement Friday said its supporters were not responsible for the violence and the party does not support any sabotage for political reasons. The Awami League and the BNP have often accused each other of fueling political chaos and violence, most recently ahead of the country's national election, which was marred by a crackdown on several opposition figures while Hasina's government accused the party of attempting to disrupt the vote.

Earlier, Hasina's government had halted the job quotas following mass student protests in 2018. But in June, Bangladesh's High Court nullified that decision and reinstated the quotas after relatives of 1971 veterans filed petitions. The Supreme Court suspended the ruling, pending an appeal hearing, and said in a statement it will take the issue up Sunday.

Hasina has called on protesters to wait for the court's verdict. (AP)

US says Iran moving forward on a key aspect of developing a nuclear bomb

ASPEN, July 20: Iran is talking more about getting a nuclear bomb and has made strides in developing a key aspect of a weapon since about April, when Israel and its allies overpowered a barrage of Iranian airstrikes targeting Israel, two top Biden administration officials said Friday.

Secretary of State Antony Blinken and national security adviser Jake Sullivan, speaking at separate panels during a security forum in Colorado, said the United States was watching closely for any signs that Iran had made a decision to pursue actual weaponization of its nuclear pro-

However, Sullivan said, "I have not seen a decision by Iran to move" in a way that signals it has decided to actually develop a nuclear bomb right now.

"If they start moving down that road, they'll find a real problem with the United States," Sullivan said at the Aspen Security Forum, which draws Û.S. policymakers, journalists and others.

Iran resumed progress on its nuclear program after the Trump administration ended US cooperation with a 2015 deal that gave Iran relief from sanctions in return for allowing tougher oversight of the program.

Iran says its nuclear program is for civilian purposes. The US and others in the international community believe Iranian Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei long has held off from giving any final go-ahead for Iranian scientists to develop a nuclear

But Iran's poor performance with conventional weapons on April 13, when it launched its first-ever direct attack on Israel as part of a dayslong exchange of strikes, has had ob-

servers watching for any increased Iranian interest in pushing forward with a nuclear weapon.

At the time, Israel said it, the United States and other allies shot down 99% of about 300 missiles and drones launched by Iran following an alleged Israeli strike that killed two Iranian generals.

weeks and months is Iran is actually moving forward" on developing fissile material, Blinken said Friday. Fissile material could be used to fuel

the nuclear agreement. Trump called the deal "defective at its core" when he ended U.S. participation in 2019.

"Instead of being at least a year away from having breakout capacity to produce fissile material for a nuclear weapon, they're probably one or two weeks away from doing that," Blinken said, adding that "where we are now is not a good place."

The United States was watching ther effort, Blinken said.

Meanwhile. Sullivan said, the U.S. has noted "an uptick of public commentary from Iranian officials musing about that possibility" since the April attacks and counterattacks between Iran and Israel and its allies.

"What we've seen in the past

He blamed the decision by the Trump administration to pull out of

"Now, they haven't produced a weapon itself, but ... you put those things together, fissile material, an explosive device, and you have a nuclear weapon," he said.

"very, very carefully" for any sign that Iran was working on the weapon side of producing a bomb, he said. The U.S. is also working on the diplomatic side to contain any fur-

"That was new. That was something that got our attention," he

Trump pledges to end Ukraine-Russia war during call with Zelenskyy

WASHINGTON, July 20: Donald Trump has pledged to end Ukraine's war with Russia after its President Volodymyr Zelenskyy reached out to the former US president to congratulate him on his Republican presidential nomination. The two leaders spoke on Friday over the phone.

"President Zelenskyy of Ukraine and I had a very good phone call earlier today. He congratulated me on a very successful Republican National Convention and becoming the Republican nominee for President of the United States," Trump said in a post on Truth Social, a social media post.

The call gains significance as this is his first conversation with a foreign leader after officially becoming the Republican Party's presidential nominee. It also reflects the growing realisation among the international community of his electoral chances in the November 5 elections. "I appreciate President Zelenskyy for reaching out because I, as your next President of the United States, will bring peace to the world and end the war that has cost so many lives and devastated countless innocent families. Both sides will be able to come together and negotiate a deal that ends the violence and paves a path forward to prosperity," Trump wrote.

Trump said during the call Zelenskyy condemned the heinous assassination attempt on him last Saturday and remarked about the American people coming together in the spirit of Unity during these times.

In his post on X, Zelenskyy said that he spoke with Trump to congratulate him on the Republican nomination and condemn the shocking assassination attempt in Pennsylvania.

"I wished him strength and absolute safety in the future. I noted the vital bipartisan and bicameral American support for protecting our nation's freedom



the river, and rescue operations were underway. According to the Ministry of Emergency Management, a team was dispatched to guide rescue ef-

The China National Comprehensive Fire and Rescue Team sent 736 people, 76 vehicles, 18 boats and 32 drones to carry out rescue efforts, it said.

Chinese President Xi Jinping urged all-out rescue and relief efforts to "safeguard people's lives and property after the bridge's collapse," the report said. (PTI)

The chaos highlights cracks in Pak election commission to implement SC order on reserved seats to Imran Khan's party Directives were issued to the electoral watch-

dog's legal team to immediately "identify" any ob-

stacle in the verdict's implementation so that the

on allotting reserved seats to jailed former prime minister Imran Khan's party, a media report said apex court could be approached for guidance, the "Moreover, the commission strongly conin Parliament. Last week, a 13-member full bench demned and rejected the undue criticism of the of the Supreme Court, in a key 8-5 judgment, chief election commissioner and honourable members by a political party," it said, in a veiled Insaf (PTI) party was eligible for the seats reremark against the PTI.

"Demanding the resignation [of CEC and members] is ridiculous," the statement added.

The PTI, including its chief, Khan, have frequently reiterated its demand for the resignation of Chief Election Commissioner Sikandar Sultan Raja and other ECP members.

After the July 12 verdict of the Supreme Court that ruled that the party was eligible for the seats reserved for women and minorities, the PTI raised its demand again.

"The commission will not succumb to any kind of pressure and will continue to work according to the constitution and law," the ECP statement said. Candidates backed by the PTI, who had contested and won the February 8 elections as independents after their party was stripped of its election symbol, had joined the Sunni Ittehad Council (SIC), a political alliance of Islamic political and Barelvi religious parties in Pakistan, to form a coalition of convenience.

The dispute about the reserved seats was related to the rejection of a SIC plea by the ECP to award its share in the 70 reserved seats in the National Assembly and another 156 in the four provincial

The ECP rejected the SIC plea on the pretext that it had not contested the elections as a party. It said the party only got strength when the PTIbacked independently elected candidates joined its ranks after winning the elections. Its appeal against the ECP decision in the Peshawar High Court was also turned down in March, forcing the party to file a challenge in the Supreme

Myanmar's civil war has seen a devastating increase in attacks on schools: Researchers

BANGKOK, July 20: An intensification of fighting in Myanmar's civil war has brought a sharp increase in destructive attacks on schools, a group that monitors armed conflict in the Southeast Asian nation said in a report Satur-

Myanmar Witness said the attacks have further strained Myanmar's already fractured school system, taking away education for millions of children who have also been forced to flee their homes, miss vaccinations and suffer from inadequate nutrition.

The group, a project of the United Kingdom-based Centre for Information Resilience, identified a total of 174 attacks on Myanmar schools and universities since the military seized power from the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi three years ago. It said the count came from evidence in social media and news reports.

Other groups have suggested higher numbers of attacks. The Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack, an advocacy group based in New York, counted over 245 reports of attacks on schools and 190 reports of military use of educational facilities in 2022-23.

The 2021 military takeover was met with widespread nonviolent demonstrations for democracy, but those were crushed with lethal force. Many opponents of military rule then took up arms, and large parts of the country are now embroiled in conflict. The military government is estimated to control less than half the country.

"Education underpinned the democratic movement in Myanmar, but today Myanmar's youth are witnessing their schools — and life opportunities — reduced to rubble.' said Matt Lawrence, project director at Myanmar Witness. "If education is not protected throughout Myanmar, the next generation's view of the world risks being driven by factionalism and war, rather than

hope and reason." Student enrollment in Myanmar dropped 80 per cent from the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 through 2022, a year after the army's takeover, according to the humanitarian group Save the Children. By mid-2022, about half the country's children, or 7.8 million, were not attending schools, it said.



Myanmar Witness said it documented reports of 64 fatalities and 106 injuries associated with the 176 attacks on schools, though most could not be verified.

Myanmar's shadow National Unity Government, which leads the pro-democracy struggle against military rule, estimated in January that more than 570 children under age 18 had been killed in various circumstances by security forces. Upwards of 8,000 civilians have been killed in the conflict, according to the multinational Armed Conflict Location & Event Data

Myanmar Witness put most of the responsibility for the destruction of schools on airstrikes conducted by the Myanmar military. Air attacks have become more frequent as pro-democracy forces and ethnic minority armed groups allied with them have made gains on the battle-

The military "has had to resort to more and more airstrikes, often with less and less appropriate aircraft, as they lose effective access to the ground" as a result of offensives by the resistance, Lawrence told The Associated Press.

The military government has consistently denied targeting civilians or using disproportionate force.

The report said resistance forces also have attacked schools, but much less frequently and less destructively, often using drones with small explosive loads.

Education is also being disrupted by other factors. Many young people, including older students, have taken a greater role in the resistance. Thousands of teachers left their jobs after the army seized power and joined a civil disobedience movement aimed at disabling military control over government institutions. And the conflict's shifting front lines make it difficult for teachers to provide lessons on a re-

liable basis. Some teachers have established or joined schools outside the reach of the military's control.

"What we see is almost a dual system that's developing in Myanmar, where there are state-sponsored schools and then schools sponsored by other parties and retribution for participating in either system," said Lisa Chung Bender, executive director of the Global

Coalition to Protect Education from Attack.

"It puts children and educators in an impossible position where they have to go through checkpoints and say where they're going, and if it's determined that they're going to an enemy school, whichever enemy that is, they can be harassed, detained, or physically punished," she

The lack of proper access to education is only part of a deepening humanitarian crisis in Myanmar. More than 3 million people have been displaced from their homes by fighting, most since the military's seizure of power in 2021, and the country suffers from a deepening economic crisis.

A report in June by the United Nations Children's Fund on global child food poverty said 35 per cent of Myanmar's children live in food poverty, defined as having access to half or fewer of the eight food groups children need daily for healthy growth and development.

According to the UN Development Programme, over half of Myanmar's children now live in poverty as the country's nascent middle class has disappeared. (AP)

Ukrainian former lawmaker killed in suspected assassination

KYIV (UKRAINE), July 20: A Ukrainian former lawmaker best known for her crusade to promote the Ukrainian language has died after being shot in the street by an unknown assailant.

Iryna Farion, 60, initially survived the assault in the western city of Lviv on Friday, but later died from her wounds in a hospital. A manhunt is currently underway for her attacker, who fled from the scene. Ukrainian officials said an investigation is being carried out and that the attack is being treated as an assassination.

"All available surveillance cameras are being worked on, witness interviews are ongoing and several districts are being surveyed. All leads are being investigated, including the one that leads to Russia," Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said on his official Telegram channel Saturday.

"All necessary forces from the National Police of Ukraine and the Ukrainian Security Service have been deployed to search for the criminal.

Farion served as a member of the Ukrainian parliament between 2012 and 2014, and was best known for her campaigns to promote the use of the Ukrainian language

by Ukrainian officials who spoke Russian. She controversially criticized Russian-speaking members of Ukraine's Azov regiment who defended the port city of Mariupol in the first days of the full-scale invasion. Police are considering "personal animosity" toward the former MP due to her social and political activities as a likely motive behind the attack, said Interior Minister Ihor Klymenko, who will oversee the investigation in Lviv.

Elsewhere in Ukraine, at least two people were killed and three more injured after a Russian missile strike on infrastructure in the country's northeastern Kharkiv region, Gov Oleh Syniehubov said Saturday. (AP)

Railway Protection Force cracks down on touts and thieves in NF Railway Zone



HT Bureau GUWAHATI, July 20: In a concerted effort to curb illegal activities within the N.F. Railway zone, the Railway Protection Force (RPF) has undertaken a series of rigorous operations targeting touts and thieves.

From July 1 to July 16, 2024, RPF teams conducted extensive checks resulting in significant apprehensions

During this period, the RPF apprehended a total of 9 touts across various locations within the zone. These operations led to the recovery of railway tickets valued at over ₹ 2.21 lakh from the possession of these individuals

Additionally, the RPF nabbed 10 persons involved in thefts of passenger belongings, recovering twelve mobile phones worth more than ₹ 1.91 lakh

The drives were carried out in collaboration with the Government Railway Police (GRP) as required, ensuring a coordinated effort to maintain railway security.

A total of 84 railway tickets, amounting to ₹ 2,21,851, were seized during these joint operations.

Highlighting specific incidents, on July 2, the RPF, alongside the CIB team of New Jalpaiguri, conducted a raid at the PRS counter of New Jal-

This operation resulted in the seizure of 18 E-Tickets worth approximately ₹ 48,383, and the apprehension of one tout

A case has been registered under section 143 of the Railways Act at New Jalpaiguri for further legal pro-

Similarly, on July 4, a joint operation involving the RPF, CPDS, and GRP of New Jalpaiguri led to the apprehension of two individuals at New Jalpaiguri railway station.

Four stolen mobile phones, valued around ₹ 1 lakh, were recovered from their possession. The apprehended persons, along with the recovered items, were handed over to the GRP for further legal action.

In addition to cracking down on illegal ticketing and theft, the RPF of N.F. Railway remains committed to providing assistance and ensuring the security of passengers.

The authorities urge all railway users to travel with valid tickets and remind them that any issues during their journey can be reported by calling the

NEW DELHI, July 20: The Conmedical certificates seemed to have gress on Saturday said "multiple duped a 'foolproof' system," Kharge scandals" that have plagued the said in a post on X.

UPSC is a cause of national concern This is a direct affront to the genand claimed that its chairman Manoj uine aspirations of lakhs of aspirants, Soni, who resigned citing personal including SC, ST, OBC, EWS candireasons, has apparently been dates who work hard, burning mid-"nudged out" given the current connight oil in preparing for the Civil troversy in which the Commission is Services Examinations, he said.

"It is disconcerting how the UPSC Chairperson has resigned prematurely, five years before his term ends. Why was his resignation kept secret for a month? Is there any connection between the numerous scandals and the resignation?" Kharge

"This 'blue-eyed-gem' of Modi ji was brought in from Gujarat and promoted to being the Chairperson of UPSC "he said

Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel had referred to the civil servants as the 'Steel frame of India', but the Modi government's desperate attempt to control every aspect of governance has punched holes in the same, Kharge alleged.

"This needs to be thoroughly investigated at the highest level so that such cases of fraudulent malpractices in UPSC admissions don't happen in the future," he said.

Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra said the



Kharge alleged the BJP-RSS is systematically indulging in an institutional takeover of India's constitutional bodies

UPSC is the most reputed exam in the country and the people who come out of it are the most important pillars of the governance system.

"The trust of crores of people of the country and the functioning of our day-to-day governance is linked to the professional system of this institution," she said. "I have personally seen how hard

the youth prepare for this exam, with lots of dreams in their eyes and passion in their hearts," Priyanka Gandhi said in a post in Hindi on X. The news of irregularities in the

prising, she said. Even a single irregularity in this

processes of the UPSC is very sur-

and faith of lakhs of youth, Priyanka Gandhi said. "It is important that the public and

big questions and hurts the dreams

the youth preparing for the UPSC get answers to these questions. Are the people who have come to the higher posts of the UPSC through political appointments responsible for this? If ves, then when will action be taken against them?" she said.

In a system in which there is high level competition for every single mark, is it right to wash one's hands off by just conducting a superficial investigation, Priyanka Gandhi

The system of fake certificates hurts the opportunities available to the candidates of SC, ST, OBC, handicapped and EWS category, she

Can't a solid institutional mechanism for checking certificates be developed? she asked.

There is a dire need for changes to make the UPSC system more transparent and authentic, Priyanka Gandhi said and asked whether this should be considered.

"Questions related to the UPSC are questions related to trust in the government and administration of this country and the dreams of crores of our youth.

It is important to get an answer from the government on this," she asserted.

Congress general secretary incharge communications Jairam Ramesh also slammed the government, saying the sanctity and autonomy of all constitutional bodies have been badly damaged since 2014 --

the year Narendra Modi became the

prime minister. Reacting to the development, Ramesh said, "The sanctity, character, autonomy, and professionalism of all constitutional bodies have been badly damaged since 2014. But at times even the self-anointed non-biological PM is forced to say enough

He said, "Mr Modi brought in one of his favourite 'academics' from Gujarat as a UPSC member in 2017 and made him chairman in 2023 with a six year term. But this so-called distinguished gentleman has now resigned five years before the expiry of his term.

"Whatever the reasons that may be given, it appears clear that he had to be nudged out given the current controversy in which the UPSC is involved." Ramesh added.

Many more such characters have populated the system, he said and ondered why the chairman of the NTA remains untouched so far.

"The UPSC chairman had tendered his resignation citing personal reasons over a fortnight back. It is yet to be accepted," a source said.

Eminent educationist Soni, 59, took over as a member of the Commission on June 28, 2017. He took oath as the UPSC chairman on May 16, 2023 and his term was to end on May 15, 2029.

Sources said Soni was not keen on becoming the UPSC chairman and had requested to be relieved. However, his request was not accepted

They said Soni has now desired to devote more time to "socio-religious

Will scrap Dharavi redevelopment project tender, won't let Mumbai turn into Adani city: Uddhav

MUMBAI, July 20: Shiv Sena (UBT) chief Uddhav Thackeray on Saturday said the Dharavi slum redevelopment project tender awarded to industrialist Gautam Adani's firm will be scrapped if his party comes to power in Maha-

Soni has resigned citing personal

reasons before the expiry of his

tenure in May 2029, official sources

His resignation is "not in any way

connected to controversies and alle-

gations surrounding the Union Pub-

lic Service Commission (UPSC)

after probationary IAS officer Puja

Khedkar issue came to the fore,'

Congress president Mallikarjun

Kharge alleged the BJP-RSS is sys-

tematically indulging in an institu-

constitutional bodies, thereby dam-

aging their reputation, integrity and

plagued the UPSC is a cause of na-

tional concern. PM Modi and his

Minister of Personnel, Public Griev-

ances and Pensions must come

clean. Numerous cases of unquali-

"The multiple scandals that have

takeover of India's

said on Saturday.

they said.

Addressing a press conference, Thackeray said his party will ensure Dharavi residents and businesses are not uprooted, adding that people staying there must be given 500 square feet houses in the locality itself.

"We will scrap Dharavi slum redevelopment project tender after coming to power. The government should give an answer as to why it should not be scrapped now itself. We will not allow Mumbai to be turned into Adani city,' the former chief minister said.

Additional concessions that are not specified in the contract are being given to the Adani Group in the project to redevelop Dharavi, one of the world's densest urban sprawls, Thackeray

"We will not give additional concessions. We will see what is good for residents of Dharavi and if need arises we

will issue a fresh tender," he asserted. Thackeray also took a dig at the government, and asked if it was planning to start a 'Ladka Mitra' (dear friend) scheme on the lines of 'Mukhyamantri Ladki Bahin Yojana', which aims to give women a measly sum of ₹ 1,500 per month.

The Shiv Sena (UBT) and the Congress had made the Dharavi redevelopment project a major poll issue in the 2024 Lok Sabha polls. The Shiv Sena (UBT) candidate Anil Desai had secured a lead of 36.857 against Shiv Sena's sitting MP Rahul Shewale from Dharavi assembly segment. He went on to defeat Shewale by a margin of

Thackeray said every home is being

given a number, adding that the government wants to get Dharavi residents into a trap of eligibility and ineligibility

and then drive them away. Thackeray said the government was trying to procure land under the slum rehabilitation scheme for rehabilitating the residents of Dharavi.

The government has initiated the process of procuring 20 such plots in the city, which are meant for infrastructure works or development related plans, the former chief minister said. This will in turn lead to imbalance in

the city as many the places where the residents are to be relocated will witness stress on existing infrastructure, the Shiv Sena (UBT) chief pointed out.

The Dharavi project, which reportedly has a revenue potential of Rs 20.000 crore, involves rebuilding the massive slum sprawl in central Mumbai, located near the BKC business dis-

The tender was awarded to Adani Properties in November 2022 after a competitive bidding that also saw realty major DLF and Naman Developers tak-

'Bihari itna aage hai to Bihar itna pichhe kyon', asks Chirag Paswan

NEW DELHI, July 20: Union minister and Lok Janshakti Party "This definitely shows that (Ram Vilas) leader Chirag Paswan has asked the Bihar government to set a precedent by taking stringent action in cases of crime and the recent spate of bridge collapses, asserting that the state needs a vision to move up the development lad-

Once a sharp critic of Bihar Chief Minister and JD(U) president Nitish Kumar before both allied with the BJP, Paswan said the ruling National Democratic Alliance (NDA) will fight the next assembly elections under Kumar's leadership but flagged a host of issues which, he suggested, has stymied the state's growth.

The assembly elections in Bihar are due to be held in 2025-end.

"Bihari itna aage hai to Bihar itna pichhe kyon? (If Biharis are doing so well, then why is Bihar so behind?) We need to find an answer to this question," Paswan told PTI, highlighting how people from the state in different fields, from elite government jobs to the private sector, have done well after migrat-

"The problem is that a vision needs to be there and it needs to be implemented," he said, stressing that efforts should be made to stop

migration from the state. Ahead of the Union budget presentation on July 23, Paswan said he supported the demand for special category status for Bihar.

However, he noted that the NITI Aayog's recommendations go against granting the demand and said an alternative like a special package should be given to the

Asked about the collapse of nearly 15 bridges in Bihar in recent months, a development which raised questions about the quality of development work and made the state a magnet for jokes and said it is a serious issue.

somewhere corruption has taken place. Compromises were made. I don't want to get into the politics of who was in the government then. We are in the government now. It is our responsibility to make sure this does not get repeated. Whosoever is responsible should be held accountable and punished so that a precedent is set for the future," he said. Asked about his change of stand

on Kumar, he said if he is part of an alliance, then he needs to be there wholeheartedly. "I can't be part of an alliance and have apprehensions also. Because that could have just damaged the alliance and would have affected our performance." Paswan added.

The NDA won 30 of the state's 40 Lok Sabha seats, with Paswan's party achieving a 100 per cent strike rate by bagging all five seats it contested.

He added that Kumar as chief minister has done "really well" compared to the way the state was run under the previous RJD governments. "There is always a scope for improvement," he said.

Curbing the crime rate can boost tourism, especially religious tourism, in the state, as people need to feel safe before visiting Bihar. A grand temple in Sitamarhi for Lord Ram's wife Sita and connecting the town, where the devout believe she was born, with Ayodhya can be a huge boost to tourism,

He rued the lack of education infrastructure in cities of Bihar, noting that a large number of students from the state enroll in Kota's coaching centres, many of whom are owned by Biharis.

A good number of teachers there are also from Bihar, Paswan said, wondering why such a model cannot be replicated in Patna, Muzaf-

BJP will bring out 'White Paper' on demography in Jharkhand to protect tribal lands, rights: Shah

RANCHI, July 20: Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Saturday claimed that rampant infiltration has led to the shrinking of the tribal population in Jharkhand, and said that if the BJP forms the government in the state, it will bring out a 'White Paper' on demography to protect their lands and rights.

The BJP is confident of forming a government in Jharkhand as the lotus has already bloomed in 52 of 81 assembly segments in the 2024 Lok Sabha polls, Shah said while addressing party workers at Prabhat Tara Ground here during the saffron party's extended executive com-

"After forming a government in Jharkhand, we will bring out a 'White Paper' on demography to protect tribal people. their lands, reservation and rights," Shah

Without naming Hemant Soren, he alleged that Jharkhand's tribal CM was instrumental behind "Love Jihad" and "Land-Jihad" in the state due to his "vote bank and appeasement policy", causing demographic changes.

He alleged that infiltrators were entering Jharkhand, marrying tribal women, obtaining certificates and buying land.

He also attacked INDIA bloc and Congress leaders, including Rahul Gandhi, for "showing arrogance" despite losing the Lok Sabha polls as "they are unable to accept defeat".

"INDIA bloc and Congress leaders are showing arrogance for indulging in scams worth ₹ 12 lakh crore, appeasement, dynastic politics and playing with national security," he alleged. "The BJP got more seats in this Lok

Sabha election than Congress's combined numbers in 2014, 2019, 2024 polls," he said, adding that the JMM-led alliance was one of the most corrupt governments in the country and it was time to show it the exit door.

BJP leaders including Union minister Annapurna Devi, Laxmikant Bajpai and Arjun Munda were also present on the

Dawood declared terrorist in individual capacity: Bombay HC

Court grants bail to two UAPA accused

MUMBAI, July 20: The Bombay High Court has said fugitive gangster Dawood Ibrahim has been declared a terrorist in his individual capacity under Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA) and, hence, any association with him or his gang would not attract provisions of the stringent law. A division bench of Justices

Bharati Dangre and Maniusha Deshpande, in an order of July 11, details of which were made available on Friday, granted bail to two persons held by the Maharashtra Anti Terrorism Squad in August 2022.

The ATS had claimed Faiz Bhiwandiwala, from whom it seized 600 grams of ganja, and Parvez Vaid, were members of Dawood Ibrahim's gang. The duo was booked under UAPA for being members of a terrorist organisation, committing terrorist acts and collecting funds for commission of an offence as well as under Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act provisions.

In its judgment, the HC said the Union government had issued a notification on September 4, 2019, notifying "Dawood Ibrahim Kaskar as

a 'Terrorist' under the UAPA". The bench said UAPA has segregated the activities of an individual, which would amount to a terrorist act on one hand, and the activities by

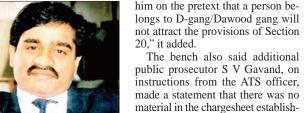


ization on the other.

"In our view, prima facie, the offence of Section 20 of the UAPA (being member of a terrorist organisation) would not be attracted, as Dawood Ibrahim Kaskar has been declared as a terrorist in individual



capacity," the court said.



ing funds for commission of an offence. The HC also said the contraband allegedly seized from one of the accused was a small amount. The court released the duo on furnishing a per-

ing the accusations under UAPA sec-

tions 17 and 18, which pertain to

committing a terror act and collect-

the terrorist gang and terrorist organsonal bond of ₹ 50,000 each. (PTI) Heavy rains lash Nagpur, people from low-lying areas shifted; red alert for Chandrapur

The observatory at the Nagpur airport recorded 90.6 mm rainfall in the 24-hour period ending 8.30 am on Saturday

NAGPUR, July 20: Heavy rains lashed Maharashtra's Nagpur city and parts of the district on Saturday morning, disrupting normal life as water entered low-lying areas, prompting the authorities to move people to safer places and declare a holiday for schools and colleges for the day as a precautionary measure.

Around 50 students were stuck in their college in Hudkeshwar Nagar area of the city due to flooding, but were rescued later, officials said.

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) on Saturday predicted heavy rainfall, with the possibility of extremely heavy showers at isolated places in Nagpur and other districts of Vidarbha region over the next two days and advised people not to step out of their homes unless necessary.

It issued a red alert for Chandrapur, and an orange alert for Nagpur, Amravati and Wardha districts for Saturday.

Nagpur received a spell of heavy rainfall for around three hours on Saturday starting around 8.30 am, but its intensity reduced drastically after

IMD's Regional Meteorological



Centre (RMC) in Nagpur recorded 135.6 mm rainfall from 8.30 am to 11.30 am and 0.3 mm rainfall from

11.30 am to 2.30 pm. The observatory at the Nagpur airport recorded 90.6 mm rainfall in the 24-hour period ending 8.30 am on Saturday, officials said.

In view of the downpour, the Nagpur district collector declared a holiday for all schools and colleges in the city and rural area on Saturday, they

Around 50 students of Antalika College in Hudkeshwar Nagar in the city, were stuck inside the college due to waterlogging on the premises. They were rescued by the fire brigade personnel of the Nagpur Municipal Corporation (NMC) and the police.

Incessant rains led to waterlogging in several areas of Nagpur city. Two bridges in rural parts of the district got submerged, they added.

Fadnavis, who hails from Nagpur, directed the district administration to ensure that citizens do not face any inconvenience due to rains. Taking to social media platform X,

he said, "Heavy rains have disrupted

life in Nagpur city and district. I am in constant touch with the Divisional Commissioner, Collector and local administration and the Collector himself is visiting the places in the city." A holiday has been declared for

schools and residents of low-lying areas, where water has entered, have been shifted to safer places, he said. Some places in Gadchiroli have lost connectivity with other parts of the district, the Nagpur divisional commissioner is in contact will all the col-

lectors in Nagpur division and they

have been told to keep all the neces-

sary system on alert, he said. In its warning for the next three hours starting 4 pm, Nagpur RMC said intense rainfall is very likely to occur at isolated places in Bhandara, Nagpur, Gondia districts of Vidarbha in the

next three hours. It also issued a moderate flash flood

Deputy Chief Minister Devendra warning over few "watersheds' (catchment areas and reservoirs) and neighbourhoods in Amaravati, Bhandara, Chandrapur, Gadchiroli, Gondia and Nagpur districts that is valid for the next few hours.

> The RMC predicted thunderstorm, lightning and heavy to heavy rainfall with isolated extremely heavy rainfall in next 24 to 48 hours in Nagpur, Bhandara, Chandrapur, Wardha, Gadchiroli, Gondia, Yavatmal districts of Vidarbha, and advised people to stay indoors. It also issued a red alert for Chandrapur and an orange alert for

Nagpur, Amravati and Wardha. A red alert indicates heavy to extremely heavy rain of over 20 cm in 24 hours, while an orange alert means very heavy rain (6 cm to 20 cm). A red alert requires authorities to "take action" in view of an extreme weather event, while an orange alert signifies a preparedness advisory for authorities due to the potential for severe weather

conditions In Gadchiroli district, eight roads were shut due to flooding, including the Allapalli-Bhamragad stretch of a national highway, the officials said. (PTI)

BSF officer, jawan die due to extreme heat exposure during Pak border patrol

AHMEDABAD, July 20: A Border Security Force officer and a jawan died during patrol due to "extreme" weather exposure at the 'Harami Nallah' creek area along the India-Pakistan international front in Gujarat, the force said Saturday. The incident, in which Assistant Commandant Vishwa

Deo and Head Constable Dayal Ram are stated to have suffered a heat stroke and dehydration, took place on Friday along the border, the sources said. The officer belonged to the 59th battalion of the BSF.

Officials said the two BSF men were rushed to a health facility in Bhuj by the evening but could not be

A similar incident of extreme weather and heat stroke had claimed the life of a BSF jawan posted to guard the same front along Jaisalmer (Rajasthan) in May this year.

A spokesperson for the BSF's Gandhinagar-based Gujarat frontier said the two men along with other members of the force were undertaking a "long-range border patrol in remote and inaccessible terrain along international borders to the north of Harami Nala, known for its treacherous terrain, when they were caught in extreme weather conditions and suffered medical exigencies.'

"They were immediately evacuated to nearest medical facilities but they succumbed to critical health situation,"

The current temperatures in the Rann of Kutch and Harami Nallah areas is ranging from 34-36 degrees with humidity levels as high as 80-82 per cent.

The spokesperson said despite their extensive training and experience, the "severity of the situation" proved overwhelming

The two BSF personnel exemplified the highest standards of bravery and dedication. Their commitment in safeguarding our nations sovereignty, even in the face of extreme danger, will never be forgotten, the force said in a statement. (PTI)

Denied accreditation, India's Korean archery coach says he won't continue after contract expiry

denied accreditation for the Paris Games, India's Korean archery coach Baek Woong Ki on Saturday said he would not continue after his contract expires on August 30, and lashed out at the Indian Olympic Association (IOA) for "poor and hasty administration". Woong Ki, who reached the French capital with the Indian team after overseeing its preparation in Marseille, said he was removed from the Olympic

PARIS, July 20: Livid at being coaching role at a critical time" and will now be flying back to India with his return ticket al-

ready booked. "I am a Korean coach who signed a contract to prepare (the Indian archers) for the Paris Olympics. But at a critical time, I was removed from the Olympic coaching role and my flight schedule told me to return home," the renowned coach said.

He has been staying in a Paris hotel and was awaiting his

"I have a contract until August 30th and I signed it for the purpose of the Olympics. I plan to arrive at Sonipat and calmly prepare for the formalities of entering Korea," he added, making it clear that he will not renew his contract. Woong Ki, who guided archery heavyweights South Korea to two gold medals at the 2012 London Olympics, questioned the logic behind investing on him if he is not to be accom-

"I have been training them (In-

dian archers) for two years to win a medal at the Paris Olympics. However, foreign coaches were excluded due to the IOA's poor and hasty administration. "Then I don't know why they invested money to appoint a Korean coach. More importantly, it's hitting a major notch just days before the Olympics. I can't stay near the Olympic practice or competition

The Paris Olympics will be held from July 26 to August 11, and India will be represented by six archers. The IOA has cleared several personal coaches and support staff in disciplines such as wrestling, table tennis and

badminton. Woong Ki said his presence would have surely boosted India's prospects of winning a medal in archery in Paris and termed the Koreans as the strongest opponents.

archers are strong in competition. If Korea and India play in the final, there is a 90% chance they will lose, but if I enter the coach's box, the Korean archers will feel more tension and pressure because of me.

'Therefore, India's chances of vinning increase.

Woong Ki, who has been in charge of the archery team for more than a year, is contracted by the Archery Association of India

Spaniard Manolo

Marquez named

Indian men's

football team

head coach

"I can't guarantee it. Korean (AAI) and funded by the Sports Authority of India (SAI).

During his stint in India, he has played a key role in shaping the team. "While preparing for the Olympics, I instilled in my archers the practice of avoiding and dealing with situations that may arise during competition. I have experience in the Olympics, having won four gold medals and one silver medal at the 2004 Athens Olympics and the 2012 London Olympics." (PTI)

India eye UAE scalp, women's Asia Cup semifinal berth



July 20: Dominant India will be eager to perfect their tactics further while warding off United Arab Emirates which also can push them firmly towards the semifinals of the women's Asia

Cup here on Sunday. Defending champions India's supremacy was evident in their facile seven-wicket victory over arch-rivals Pakistan on Saturday, and the UAE will require a giantsized miracle to stop Harmanpreet Kaur's side.

India currently have two points and a Net Run Rate of +2.29, and a win over the Emirates will take them to four points, which will also have a positive reflection on their NRR.

It would not be an exaggeration to say that India will look more inwards in their match against the UAE, than fretting over the rivals.

There were excellent spells from Deepti Sharma, Renuka Singh and Pooja Vastrakar, who though was slightly on the expensive side, against Pakistan, and their effort would have pleased the management to no

spinner Radha Yadav, who returned to the India fold during the home series against South Africa recently, too can join the

wicket-takers' list on Sunday.

"It was a good spell and there was some assistance from the weather as well. Of course, I could execute all the plans that I have been working on at nets," said Renuka in the post-match press meet. To top it, the Indian batters were ruthless in hunting down a non-challenging target with 35 balls to spare.

Openers Shafali Verma and Smriti Mandhana gave the team a flying start adding 85 runs in just 9.3 overs and the loss of three wickets from that position was a minor aberration.

Hence, India would hope that there would be a matching effort from the middle-order batters in the upcoming matches, starting with the UAE.

The Asia Cup also presents India with a wonderful opportunity to prepare for the T20 World Cup to be held in Bangladesh later this year.

Kerala's Anilkumar Prabhakaran

"The Asia Cup is important for us because after this we don't have many matches (ahead of T20 WC) and we will have to

rely on practice. "So, this is a learning experience for us, and the conditions (in Bangladesh) could be similar. So, this is a good chance for us to get ready for the World Cup," she said.

That said, India would do well not to lose focus on the present assignment and the UAE have the ability to give some tight moments as they showed against Nepal on Friday despite a sixwicket defeat.

In the day's second match, Pakistan will look to bounce back with a win when they face a tricky Nepal.

Teams (from):

INDIA: Harmanpreet Kaur (C), Smriti Mandhana, Shafali Verma, Jemimah Rodrigues, Richa Ghosh (wk), Uma Chetry (wk), Pooja Vastrakar, Deepti Sharma, Arundhati Reddy, Renuka Singh, D Hemalatha, Asha Sobhana, Radha Yadav, Renuka said India are treating Shreyanka Patil, Sajana Sajee-

Spaniard Manolo Marquez, currently in charge of Indian Super League side FC Goa, was on Saturday named as the Indian men's football team head coach in place of the sacked Igor Stimac. The All India Football Federation's (AIFF) executive committee, which met here on Saturday, appointed Marquez

side FC Goa.

'The Committee, in the first order of the day, deliberated on failed to make it to the third the appointment of the new round of the 2026 FIFA World head coach for the Senior Men's Cup qualifiers. (PTI)

NEW DELHI, July 20: London

Olympics bronze winner Yogesh-

war Dutt is confident that

wrestling will yet again fetch India

a medal at the Olympic Games

and the number could be more

than one if the grapplers get a

favourable draw. India will have a

six-member wrestling contingent

in Paris where the mat competition

Only Aman Sehrawat (57kg)

could qualify in the men's section

but the women put up a strong

show by qualifying in five of six

will begin on August 5.

National Team, and selected Manolo Marquez for the job, effective immediately," the AIFF said in a statement.

"During the 2024-25 season, Mr. Marquez will continue his role as the head coach of first team at FC Goa, handling both responsibilities concurrently before assuming the national coaching role on a full-time

The 55-year-old Marquez is currently head coach of ISL not disclosed by the AIFF. The tenure of Marquez was

Stimac was sacked as head coach on June 17, after Indian

Nayar, Doeschate likely to join India in SL as assistant coaches

NEW DELHI, July 20: Ab- Dilip, who was part of Rahul hishek Nayar and Ryan ten Doeschate are set to join the support staff of newly-appointed head coach Gautam Gambhir during India's white ball tour to Sri Lanka, starting from July 27.

Nayar, who has played three ODIs for India, and Doeschate, who was a hard-hitting all-rounder for Netherlands, have worked closely with Gambhir at the Kolkata Knight Riders and are likely to come in as assistant coaches, the PTI has learned.

Navar comes with a high reputation as a sharp cricket mind and a lifestyle/motivational coach who have worked with the likes of Dinesh Karthik and Rinku Singh.

Doeschate is currently working with LA Knight Riders in the ongoing Major League Cricket (MLC) and Gambhir has openly expressed his admiration for the team-first attitude of the Dutchman. While there was no clear view on the appointment of the bowling coach, it seems that T Dravid's regime, will continue in the role of the fielding coach.

BCCI the names of former India seamers R Vinay Kumar and L Balaji and former South African pacer Morne Morkel for the role of bowling coach.

The PTI had reported on July 10 in 2014.

World Cup in India.

The Indian team is scheduled to travel to Colombo from Mumbai

Gambhir had suggested to the

that Morkel could get the role ahead of Vinay and Balaji. While Vinay and Balaji have associated with Gambhir at the KKR, Morkel worked alongside him at the Lucknow Super Giants. If indeed Morkel gets the nod, he could be the first foreign bowling coach after Australian Joe Dawes, who did the duty under Duncan Fletcher until the tour of England

Morkel was also the bowling coach of Pakistan until the 50-over

in a chartered flight on July 22.



on an interim basis following the sacking of Shaji Prabhakaran. The AIFF took this decision

during its executive committee meeting on the recommendation of president Kalyan Chaubey.

"Based on the recommendation of the AIFF President Shri Chaubey, the Executive Committee of the AIFF has resolved today to appoint Mr. Anilkumar Prabhakaran as the Secretary General of the AIFF," the national federation said in a state-

"The Executive Committee has also accepted the resignation of Mr. Anilkumar from the AIFF Executive Committee and all other sub-committees he was a

"Mr. Anilkumar's appointment shall be subject to the internal protocols and induction proce- post in November last year.



dures as required by the AIFF Constitution and he shall take charge upon the completion of the same," it said in the state-

While removing Shaji from the

Chaubey, the president of the AIFF, cited resentment about his functioning among state bodies as the reason for the move.

responsible and part of a conspir-

Olympic weight divisions. Only 62kg is missing from the list. India have not missed a wrestling medal since 2008 Bei-Shaji termed the termination ir-

jing Games where the legendary Sushil Kumar won a bronze. "A lot will depend on the draw.

If India get a favourable draw, then I am expecting three medals," Yogeshwar Dutt told PTI Videos on the sidelines of an AIFF event.

"In the last four consecutive Olympics, we got medals from Wrestling. So I hope, wish & pray the fifth time in a row, wrestling will bring medal for the nation. I wish all the wrestlers all the very best. I think they are well- prepared," said Yogeshwar.

"After hockey, wrestling has given India the most number of medals. It has given seven medals ahead of all other Olympic sports. Wrestling is without doubt the number one individual Olympic sport for India."

The former India wrestler, who is also a BJP leader now, feels that India will return with its best ever show in Olympics.

"I am expecting Indian contingent to win more than 10 medals,'

We will pick a coach who can bring results, won't go by big names: AIFF president Chaubey

India Football Federation (AIFF) president Kalyan Chaubey said the new head coach of the national team will be picked based on the ability to bring in right results, and a high-profile candidate

will not be selected blindly. The AIFF Executive Committee is due to meet soon to decide the successor of Igor Stimac, who resigned as head coach after India lost nine matches and drew two in

his last 12 games in charge. "I believe the result matters a lot. We will be looking at someone who can develop Indian football. And whoever gets appointed as chief coach, we want him to add a lot of potential to the national team's performance,"

terview.

The incoming head coach will have some important assignments such as a tri-nation tournament in October that also involves hosts Vietnam and Lebanon.

Chaubey hoped the new coach can bring in some desired results from these events.

"We are looking to utilise all the FIFA windows which we have in the month of September, October, November and March next year," he said.

These tournaments, Chaubey said, will give Indian players more international exposure. "No matter whether we play

against a lower-ranked team or higher-ranked team, the aim is to



win. It will also create more match time for players. Yes, these matches will also give more international exposure to the players,"

Chaubey said there was an overwhelming response to the advertised position of the head coach of the Indian men's football

"We have received a total of 291 applications and we have shortlisted 17 names from them. There are Indian and foreign names. We will have a detailed discussion about them in the Executive Committee meeting," he noted.

Chaubey said former Indian captain IM Vijayan, who is now the head of the technical committee, will also be consulted.

"We are in touch with the technical committee. As Vijayan is overseas now, he will be con-

sulted through a virtual meeting," he said. Chaubey said players like Lallianzuala Chhangte have the potential to step in for former

skipper Sunil Chhetri, who re-

cently retired from international

Chhangte was adjudged the Best Men's Player during the AIFF awards on Friday. "Who is after Sunil

Chhetri? This question comes to everybody's mind. I think Chhangte, who has won the player of the year award this year, has a lot of potential. He can

definitely make a long career. Such awards will inspire a player to put in an even bigger effort." he said. (PTI)

India advance in style in World Junior squash team event

Wrestlers will continue

medal-winning trend in

Paris: Yogeshwar

HOUSTON, July 20: India continued their fine run at the World Junior Squash Championships with both the boys' and girls' team winning their respective matches

While the boys blanked Brazil 3-0 to top the three-team Group F, the girls beat Brazil and Australia by an identical 3-0 margin to assure themselves of a quarterfinal berth on Friday.

The boys will now meet Canada in the pre-quarterfinals, while the girls face Hong Kong in their concluding Group D league

India results: Boys (Group F):

India beat Brazil 3-0 (Yuvraj Wadhwani beat Caio Paiva 11-1,11-4,11-7; Shaurya Bawa beat Isaias Silva 12-10, 11-7, 6-11, 5-11,11-8; Ayaan Vaziralli beat Lucas Carlson 11-4, 11-7,11-6). Girls (Group D):

India beat Brazil 3-0 (Nirupama Dubey beat Gabriella El-Masry 11-3, 11-2, 11-4; Anahat Singh beat Laura Da Silva 11-5, 11-2,11-3; Unnati Tripathi beat Alix Borges 11-4, 11-5, 11-3).

India beat Australia 3-0 (Shameena Riaz bt Emily Lamb 11-6,11-13,11-4,11-3; Anahat beat Hannah Slyth 11-4, 11-1, 11-3; Nirupama beat Joanne Joseph 11-5, 11-3,11-5). (PTI)

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