

Stock markets close lower on muted earnings, caution ahead of Union budget

MUMBAI, July 22: Stock markets closed lower on Monday with benchmark Sensex dropping 102 points due to selling in index heavyweight Reliance Industries and Kotak Bank on muted earnings and caution ahead of the Union Budget. Falling for the second day in a row, the 30-share BSE Sensex dropped by 102.57 points or 0.13 per cent to settle at 80,502.08. The barometer fell by 504 points or 0.62 per cent to hit an intra-day low of 80,100.65 but recovered most of the losses as Infosys and HDFC Bank advanced.

The broader Nifty of the NSE dipped 21.65 points or 0.09 per cent to 24,509.25. During the day, it dropped 168.6 points or 0.68 per cent to 24,362.30. Among Sensex shares, Reliance Industries declined over 3 per cent after the company reported a 5 per cent drop in its June quarter net profit. Kotak Mahindra Bank also fell more than 3 per cent after its June quarter earnings failed to cheer investors. ITC, State Bank of India, HCL Technologies and IndusInd Bank were the other big laggards in Sensex shares.

However, gains in HDFC Bank after its financial results, and continued buoyancy in Infosys Ltd restricted the losses. NTPC, UltraTech Cement, and Mahindra & Mahindra also advanced. HDFC Bank climbed over 2 per cent after the company's consolidated net profit grew 33.17 per cent to ₹ 16,474.85 crore in the June 2024 quarter. "The conservative economic growth forecast for FY25,



presented in the economic survey, has introduced some spikes in volatility ahead of the budget. Further, the below-estimated Q1 results from certain index heavyweights like RIL added to apprehensions of a slowdown in earnings growth in FY25. "Although the budget is anticipated to be favourable, investors will closely monitor whether it continues to tickle traction, given high valuations and the risk of a downgrade in earnings," said Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Financial Services. In the broader market, the BSE midcap gauge jumped 1.27 per cent and smallcap index climbed 0.83 per cent. Among the indices, Energy declined by 0.67 per cent, Realty by 0.53 per cent, FMCG by 0.27 per cent and Bankex by 0.27 per cent. Commodities, Consumer Discretionary, Financial Services, Healthcare, Industrials, Utilities

and Power sector indices were among the gainers. "After a sharp fall in early trades, markets were on a recovery mode and ended with marginal losses on profit-taking in banking and realty stocks. Investors traded with caution as nervousness gripped in ahead of tomorrow's Budget.

"However, markets could see volatility during the Budget announcement on Tuesday and one may see sector-based action," Prashanth Tapse, Senior VP (Research), Mehta Equities Ltd, said. "Benchmark equity indices closed lower for a second consecutive session as investors awaited updates on the final budget and corporate earnings," said Avdhut Bagkar Technical and Derivatives Analyst, StoxBox. In Asian markets, Seoul, Tokyo and Shanghai settled lower, while Hong Kong ended in the positive territory. European markets were trading

higher in the mid-session deals. US markets ended lower in overnight trade on Friday.

According to the Economic Survey, 2023-24 tabled in Parliament on Monday, capital markets are becoming more prominent in India's growth story, with an expanding share in capital formation and investment landscape on the back of technology, innovation and digitisation, according to the Economic Survey 2023-24 tabled in Parliament on Monday.

Further, Indian markets are resilient to global geo-political and economic shocks, it added. "Despite heightened geo-political risks, rising interest rates and volatile commodity prices, Indian capital markets have been one of the best performing among emerging markets in FY24," the Economic Survey said. The Survey projected India's GDP to grow at 6.5-7 per cent in 2024-25, down from a high of 8.2 per cent in the preceding financial year.

Meanwhile, global oil benchmark Brent crude dipped 0.08 per cent to USD 82.53 a barrel. Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) bought equities worth ₹ 1,506.12 crore on Friday, according to exchange data. The BSE benchmark hit its new all-time high of 81,587.76 in the initial trade on Friday but failed to carry forward the winning momentum and tanked 738.81 points or 0.91 per cent to settle below the 81,000 mark at 80,604.65.

Nifty tumbled 269.95 points or 1.09 per cent and ended at 24,530.90 after hitting its fresh record peak of 24,854.80 during the opening bell on Friday. (PTI)

Economic Survey calls for urgent agri reforms; cites growth hurdles



NEW DELHI, July 22: The pre-budget Economic Survey on Monday called for urgent reforms in India's agricultural sector, warning that the structural issues could impede the country's overall economic growth trajectory.

The survey, tabled in Parliament by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, highlighted the untapped potential of the Indian agriculture sector compared to other economies.

Chief Economic Advisor V Anantha Nageswaran called for a pan-India dialogue on the agriculture sector. The survey, presented ahead of the annual budget, emphasised that India has yet to fully leverage its agricultural sector for economic growth and job creation, unlike East Asian economies and Western developed nations.

"Indian agriculture is not in a crisis now but requires a serious structural transformation because climate change and water criticality loom large in the times to come," the survey stated.

The CEA advocated for a re-

assessment of existing policies, despite current government subsidies and support measures for farmers.

"The payoff will be immense if we untie the knots that bedevil farm sector policies," Nageswaran said in the survey's preface.

While the government provides substantial support to farmers through subsidies on water, electricity, and fertilizers, along with income tax exemptions and minimum support prices, there is room for improvement in policy implementation, he added.

The survey identified several key challenges, including balancing growth with food inflation management, improving price discovery, and addressing land fragmentation.

To address these challenges, the survey recommends multi-pronged reforms, which include: upgrading agricultural technology, enhancing marketing avenues, adopting farming innovations, reducing input wastage, and improving the agriculture-industry linkages.

The document stressed the

need to shift focus from basic food security to nutritional security, aligning with a 'demand-driven food system' that is both nutritious and environmentally sustainable.

The survey suggested that policymakers must strike a delicate balance between incentivizing farmers to increase production and keeping food prices within acceptable limits. "This dual objective requires careful policy interventions."

The survey also emphasized the need for a farmer-friendly policy framework to ensure markets function in farmers' interests.

It recommended avoiding bans on futures or options markets at the first sign of price spikes; invoking bans only under exceptional circumstances; re-examining the inflation-targeting framework; increasing the total net irrigated area, and aligning farming practices with climate considerations.

Looking ahead to 2047, the survey highlighted the potential of agriculture and allied sectors (horticulture, livestock, fisheries, dairy, and food processing) for sustained employment generation.

"To sustain growth for nearly a generation up to 2047 or more and to ensure that it makes people's lives better and fulfills their aspirations, bottom-up reforms are necessary," it noted.

It suggested that India may need to reconsider the traditional development model of transitioning from agriculture to industry and services. (PTI)

Economic Survey pitches for more FDI from China

NEW DELHI, July 22: Amidst strained ties with China, the pre-budget Economic Survey on Monday made a strong case for seeking foreign direct investments (FDI) from Beijing to boost local manufacturing and tap the export market. As the US and Europe are shifting their immediate sourcing away from China, it is more effective to have Chinese companies invest in India and then export the products to these markets rather than importing from the neighbouring country, the Survey said. India faces two choices to benefit from 'China plus one strategy' - it can integrate into China's supply chain or promote FDI from China.

"Among these choices, focusing on FDI from China seems more promising for boosting India's exports to the US, similar to how East Asian economies did in the past.

"Moreover, choosing FDI as a strategy to benefit from the China plus one approach appears more advantageous than relying on trade. This is because China is India's top import partner, and the trade deficit with China has been growing," it added. It also said that increased foreign direct investment inflows from China can help increase India's global supply chain participation and push exports.

The Survey explained how increased FDI inflows from China can help in increasing India's global supply chain participation along with a push to exports.

These economies have typically pursued two main strategies - reducing trade costs and facilitating foreign investment.

At present, the bulk of the FDI coming into India falls under the automatic approval route, however, FDI from countries sharing land borders with India needs mandatory government approval in any sector. China stands at 22nd position with only 0.37 per cent share (USD 2.5 billion) in total FDI equity inflow reported in India from April 2000 to March 2024.

Countries which share land borders with India are China, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Bhutan, Nepal, Myanmar, and Afghanistan. (PTI)

Capital markets becoming prominent in India's growth story: Eco Survey

NEW DELHI, July 22: Capital markets are becoming more prominent in India's growth story, with an expanding share in capital formation and investment landscape on the back of technology, innovation and digitisation, according to the Economic Survey 2023-24 tabled in Parliament on Monday.

Further, Indian markets are resilient to global geo-political and economic shocks, it added. "Despite heightened geo-political risks, rising interest rates and volatile commodity prices, Indian capital markets have been one of the best performing among emerging markets in FY24," the Economic Survey said.

The BSE benchmark Sensex and National Stock Exchange's Nifty 50 have given stellar returns to investors in the financial year 2023-24.

The Nifty 50 index surged by 26.8 per cent during FY24 against a decline of 8.2 per cent during FY23. Additionally, 30-share Sensex has soared around 25 per cent in FY24.

Moreover, the uptrend continued in FY25, with the 30-share index on July 3 touching the 80,000 mark in intra-day trading for the first time.

"The exemplary performance of the Indian stock market compared to the world and emerging markets over the years can be primarily attributed to India's resilience to global geo-political and economic shocks, its solid and stable domestic macroeconomic outlook, and the strength of the domestic investor base," said the document tabled by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman in Parliament.

Apart from India, all the major markets, barring

China and Hong Kong, delivered better returns in FY24 than the previous year.

The financial year 2023-24 saw stellar performances from the US, Brazilian and Japanese markets among the global markets. There was evidence of an AI-led tech stock surge, with the tech-heavy US Nasdaq index rising by 34 per cent in FY24 after delivering heavy losses in FY23.

Further, significant interest from domestic and global investors in the Indian stock market as an attractive investment destination and sustained IPO (initial public offering) activity placed the Indian market fifth in the world by market capitalisation in FY24.

India's market capitalisation to GDP ratio has improved significantly over the last five years to 124 per cent in FY24 compared to 77 per cent in FY19, far higher than that of other emerging market economies like China and Brazil.

The survey said it is imperative to strike a note of caution as market capitalisation to GDP ratio is not necessarily a sign of economic advancement or sophistication.

"Financial assets are claims on real goods and services. If equity market claims on the real economy are excessively high, it is a harbinger of market instability rather than market resilience," it added.

Indian capital markets have witnessed a broad-based expansion across various sub-markets, with the country's equity market capitalisation reaching ₹ 41.5 lakh crore or USD 5 trillion in May 2024, placing it fifth in the global rankings. (PTI)

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Rakesh Paul, 31 others convicted

public confidence by addressing these issues. "The entire interview process was a mockery. The Government of Assam is the appropriate forum to take decisions and build up public confidence by taking remedial measures", he added. The hearings will continue on Tuesday. The case emerged after a candidate, initially disqualified, filed a complaint alleging manipulation of marks through financial transactions. He had earlier filed an RTI for information related to changes in the tabulation of marks.

Paul, along with the other members and officials of the APSC, were arrested in connection with another cash-for-jobs case related to the Combined Competitive Examinations (CCE) for recruitment of civil, police and other service officials. Paul, initially arrested in November 2016 by Dibrugarh Police, was granted bail in March 2023. The CCE case is presently under investigation by a Special Investigative Team (SIT) following the Gauhati High Court's directive. (PTI)

CM briefs PM on devastating

due to floods, landslides, storms and lightning strokes was 113. The affected people are from 345 villages in 21 revenue circles, according to the Assam State Disaster Management Authority (ASDMA) bulletin. The affected districts were Morigaon, Kamrup, Dhemaji, Kamrup Metropolitan, Dibrugarh, Sivasagar, Nagaon, Golaghat, Goalpara, Jorhat and Cachar. Nagaon was the worst-affected district with 70,280 affected, followed by Golaghat (12,321) and Cachar (6,773). As of Saturday, the number of affected people was 1.30 lakh in 10 districts. Floodwaters also inundated croplands over 6,467.5 hectares. A total of 6,311 people have taken shelter in 35 relief camps. Brahmaputra was flowing above the danger mark in Dhubri while in the other affected districts it was receding and was flowing below the danger mark, the bulletin added. The state has so far faced two waves of flood, affecting all the 35 districts of the state with the first wave from May 28 to June 13 while the ongoing second wave began on June 16. (With inputs from PTI)

CPI(M), Cong delegations

delegation was stopped near Kalajari in Gomati district on the same ground. "Tipra Motha chief Pradyot Debbarma and a government team headed by Social Welfare Minister Tinku Roy were allowed to meet the affected families. Why are we not allowed? The police and administration can't adopt a partisan attitude," Congress MLA Sudip Roy Barman said. Sub-Divisional Magistrate of Gandatwisa Chandrajoy Reang said, "The political delegations were denied entry to Gandatwisa because of prohibitory orders. After 10 days of hard work, we have brought the situation under control. Now, we can't take any chance." (PTI)

SC seeks IIT-Delhi expert

material on record so far to show that the leak was widespread, the bench said there have been instances of some wrongdoing in Patna and Hazaribagh but they were not sufficient to indicate a systemic failure. The top court also questioned the grant of grace marks and grace time to certain students at examination centres in Haryana's Jhajjar. "Now show us the data. At the end of it, even if we assume that problems happened, we are looking at the whole country. Show us the data to say that it was widespread," the bench said. It asked senior advocate Narinder Hooda, appearing for some aspirants, to establish with the help of data made available by the National Testing Agency (NTA) that the leak was beyond Hazaribagh and Patna. "Show us as to how widespread is it. From CBI's third report, we know where the printing press was located. We do not want to say the location here," the CJ said.

The bench asked the NTA to give it a note on grant of grace marks and time to certain category of students in Jhajjar and other places where "wrong" question papers were distributed. Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, appearing for the Centre and the NTA, dismissed the claims of a "systemic failure" and said it was wrong to suggest that the examination process was vitiated in the entire country. "Giving some examples of some mistakes may not assist him (counsel for petitioners)," the law officer said. The bench is hearing more than 40 pleas including those filed by the NTA seeking transfer of cases pending against it in various high courts over alleged irregularities in the conduct of the examination to the Supreme Court to avoid multiplicity of litigations. More than 23.33 lakh students had taken the test on May 5 at 4,750 centres in 571 cities, including 14 overseas.

The National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test-Undergraduate (NEET-UG) is conducted by the NTA for admissions to MBBS, BDS, AYUSH and other related courses in government and private institutions across the country. (PTI)

Forest dept probing death

framework designed to protect endangered species but also reflects a concerning disregard for the ecological integrity of the region", the statement added. The organisation also urged the forest department to take immediate action and file a case against the Numaligarh Refinery Limited for violation of Section 39 and Section 9 of Wildlife (Protection) Amendment Act 2022. (PTI)

SC stays orders asking eateries

especially during the Savaan month, which starts on Monday. Extensive arrangements have been made across several states for the Kanwar Yatra that started on Monday with the beginning of the Sawan month of the Hindu calendar during which lakhs of Shiva devotees carry holy water from the Ganges in Haridwar to their homes while offering it at Shiva temples on their way. (PTI)

Convergence of efforts by Centre

importance of girls' education, its translation to economic empowerment will require better learning outcomes, employability, labour force participation and conducive infrastructure," it said. Female enrolment in higher education increased to 2.07 crore in FY 22 from 1.57 crore in FY 15 -- a 31.6 per cent increase since FY15. The growing equity in higher education implies better employment opportunities for the hitherto backward sections. The survey suggested that to better translate Gross Expenditure on Research and Development (GERD) to research output, the link between higher education, industry and research must be strengthened.

"Another challenge is low 'Land to Lab' time. Institutions in India develop technologies, but their transformation rate from the lab to the society for the benefit of the people remains low. Several efforts are underway to attract research personnel and create adequate opportunities in the research ecosystem of the nation.

"The ease of doing research is being bolstered through streamlining of patent grants, leading to a drastic reduction in the average time taken for examination of a patent application from 72 months in 2015 to between 5 to 23 months in 2022, depending upon fields of technology," the survey document said. (PTI)

Modi wants to politicise govt

His remarks come a day after Congress general secretary of communications Jairam Ramesh shared an office memorandum, dated July 9, issued by the Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances and Pension pertaining to the participation of the government servants in the activities of the RSS.

"The undersigned is directed to refer to the OM (office memorandum), dated 30.11.1966, OM No. 7/4/70-Est.(B) dated 25.07.1970 and OM No. 15014/3(S)/80-Estt. (B) dated 28.10.1980 on the above subject. 2. The aforesaid instructions have been reviewed and it has been decided to remove the mention of Rashtriya Swayam Sewak Sangh (R.S.S.S) from the impugned OMs dated 30.11.1966, 25.07.1970 and 28.10.1980," the order read.

In a post along with the picture of the order, Ramesh said on Sunday, "Sardar Patel had banned the RSS in February 1948 following Gandhi ji's assassination. Subsequently, the ban was withdrawn on assurances of good behaviour. Even after this the RSS never flew the Tiranga in Nagpur." In 1966, a ban was imposed - and rightly so - on government employees taking part in RSS activities, Ramesh said. "After June 4th, 2024, relations between the self-anointed non-biological PM and the RSS have nosedived. On July 9, 2024, the 58-year ban that was in force even during Mr Vajpayee's tenure as PM was removed," he said.

"The bureaucracy can now come in knickers too I suppose," Ramesh had said, alluding to the RSS uniform of khaki shorts which was replaced by brown trousers in 2016. BJP's IT department head Amit Malviya also shared a screenshot of the order and said that an "unconstitutional" directive issued 58 years ago has been withdrawn by the Modi government. Ramesh too shared a screenshot of the original order dated November 30, 1966, banning the association of government servants with the activities of the RSS and the Jamaat-e-Islami. (PTI)

India needs to generate 78.5 lakh jobs in non-farm sector annually till 2030: Economic survey

NEW DELHI, July 22: The Indian economy needs to generate an average of nearly 78.5 lakh jobs annually until 2030 in the non-farm sector to cater to the rising workforce, according to the Economic Survey for 2023-24.

The Survey tabled in Parliament on Monday also laid emphasis on the private sector's role to create employment in the country saying "In more than one respect, the action lies with the private sector. In terms of financial performance, the corporate sector has never had it so good."

It noted that results of a sample of over 33,000 companies show that, in the three years between FY20 and FY23, the profit before taxes of the Indian corporate sector nearly quadrupled.

"The nominal GDP grew 9.6 per cent y-o-y to ₹ 295-lakh crore. Hiring and compensation growth hardly kept up with it. But, it is in the interest of the companies to step up hiring and worker compensation," it stated.

The survey provided a broad estimate of the number of jobs (78.5 lakh per annum) that the economy has to generate.



It further said that everyone in the working age will not seek jobs. Some of them will be self-employed and some of them will be employers too.

More than jobs, the Survey added, economic growth is about generating livelihoods. Governments at all levels and the private sector will have to strive together for it. It said that the share of agriculture in the workforce will gradually decline from 45.8 per cent in 2023 to 25 per cent in 2047.

"Consequently, the Indian econ-

omy needs to generate an average of nearly 78.5 lakh jobs annually until 2030 in the non-farm sector to cater to the rising workforce," the Survey said.

The demand of 78.5 lakh jobs in the non-farm sector per year, can be met by supplementing the existing schemes of PLI (60 lakh employment generation over 5 years), MITRA Textile scheme (20 lakh employment generation) and MUDRA, etc., it suggested.

The rising employment of flexi workers through staffing compa-

nies can be a channel for ensuring social security for informal workers, it stated. It pointed out that there remains long-existing challenges of formalising a burgeoning workforce, facilitating job creation in sectors which can absorb workers shifting from agriculture, and ensuring social security benefits for those in regular wage/salaried employment. It further suggested that state governments can grease the wheels of hiring by easing the compliance burden and reforming laws on land.

Concurrently, the employment landscape is fast changing worldwide, and India, aspiring to be a developed nation by 2047, must partake in the massive reshaping of jobs that AI has and is likely to further spin off, it suggested.

The impact of automation on workers being complex and uncertain, the direction of technological change remains susceptible to forces of political economy, it noted. India thus needs to invest in research and steer the AI bandwagon towards shared prosperity, it suggested, adding that something as basic and age-old as unpaid care work needs attention too. (PTI)

Tea body protests against rampant intoxicants in Dibrugarh



HT Correspondent
DIBRUGARH, July 22: Hundreds of protesters from the Assam Tea Tribes Students' Association (ATTTSA) and Assam Chah Mazdoor Sangha on Monday took out a protest rally against the prevalence of intoxicating substances outside the Assam Medical College and Hospital (AMCH) campus.

The protesters, holding placards and banners, raised slogans to stop the spread of intoxicating substances found outside the AMCH campus and the Jalan Nagar area.

The rally started from the Jalan Nagar tea garden playground and passed through AMCH roads.

Recently, a youth named Kamolo Sonar was brutally thrashed to death by a 12-member gang in the Alubari area. The youth was attacked near an illegal liquor shop. The prevalence of illicit liquor, ganja, drugs, and other intoxicating substances has created a nuisance in the area.

"The easy availability of illicit liquor, drugs, and ganja in the Jalan Nagar tea garden area and

outside the AMCH should be stopped immediately. We urge the district administration to take strict action against the persons involved in such criminal activity," said a protester.

He added, "The atmosphere in Jalan Nagar tea garden and outside the AMCH campus has become very bad because of the easy availability of intoxicating substances. The district administration should start a massive crackdown to free the area from illegal activities."

"The place has become a den of criminal activity, and all types of illegal activities happen in the area. The criminals take advantage because there are no street lights in that particular area, and during the evening hours, the place becomes a safe haven for criminals," said Lakhindar Kurmi, secretary of Dibrugarh district, ATTTSA.

Kurmi alleged, "The police have failed to curb such illegal activity because they are involved with such criminals. The prevalence of drugs, ganja, and illicit liquor is growing in Dibrugarh due to the support of the police."

Cattle theft strikes four households in Sootea

HT Correspondent
BISWANATH CHARIALI, July 22: A total of four cattle heads were stolen from the cow sheds of four households, including Ranjit Darjee, Pushpa Dhungel, Pushpa Adhikari, and Ishwar Baskota, in the Gosain Chapari area of Sootea, Biswanath district, on Sunday night. The theft was discovered by the householders only on Monday morning. The thieves took four cows, including two pregnant ones, from the cow sheds.

In a separate incident, the house of Hemanta Barkakaty, a resident of Kachari Gaon, Sootea, was robbed on Sunday night. According to information, Hemanta Barkakaty's family had left for Guwahati at around 5:00 am on Sunday. Upon returning home at 11:30 pm the same night, they found that burglars had broken in and looted the belongings, valuables, jewels, and ornaments.

It is noteworthy that cases of cattle smuggling are on the rise in Sootea and Naduar areas as well. The police have taken prompt action to curb cattle smuggling. Both Jamuguri and Sootea police have managed to apprehend some cattle thieves and smugglers, but the problem persists.

Furthermore, every police station previously appointed a circle organiser to monitor and strengthen the Village Defence Party (VDP) operations. Each village had a VDP team to oversee and protect their locality in collaboration with their respective police stations. However, the current state government has halted the appointment of circle organisers, weakening the strength of the VDPs. It is crucial to reactivate and alert every VDP to address the growing anti-social activities.

Morigaon woman receives International Reiki Award for Best Past Life Therapist

HT Correspondent
MORIGAON, July 22: Junu Sarma Mishra, a Morigaon-based woman, was honoured with the International Reiki Award for Best Past Life Therapist in New Delhi on Sunday. The Reiki Healing Foundation and the Sriniketan Foundation, New York, USA, jointly presented the 18th International Reiki Award to Junu Sarma Mishra in recognition of her outstanding contribution to the field of Energy Healing Sciences. The award was presented at a well-attended function at Hindi Bhawan, New Delhi, on Sunday. Swami Shri Chakrapani Ji Maharaj, the president of the Hindu Mahasabha, attended the program as the chief guest. Purnima A Desai from the Sriniketan Foundation, USA, attended as the honourable guest.

ATSU conference demands govt action on Tiwa issues

HT Correspondent
JAGIROAD, July 22: The All Tiwa Students Union (ATSU) organised a conference at Jagiroad Kala Mandir premises on Sunday to discuss various issues concerning the Tiwa people in Assam. Key attendees included the chief executive member of the Tiwa Autonomous Council, Assam Jeevan Chandra Konwar, ATSU advisor Rimal Amchi, executive member of Tiwa Autonomous Council Pranabjyoti Masrang, renowned writer Mileswhar Patar, and Gova Raja member Jur Singh Bordoloi.

During the conference, it was noted that the current BJP-led Assam government has been misleading in addressing the unresolved issues of

the Tiwa community. Despite demands for the inclusion of the councils in the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution, the state government has shown a lack of sincere effort to resolve these matters. Discussions highlighted that the government had previously decided to grant constitutional status to the Tiwa, Rabha, and Mising autonomous councils, sending a proposal to the central government.

The Tiwa Autonomous Council, established in 1995 with its first elections held in 2010, still faces unresolved issues regarding the inclusion and exclusion of certain villages. The conference demanded immediate government action to implement the proposals submitted by

Tiwa organisations. Additionally, the 1997 Tiwa Language Agreement, which aimed to introduce the Tiwa language in schools with 50 percent or more Tiwa students, has not seen the appointment of Tiwa language teachers by the government.

The meeting concluded with a decision to initiate a mass agitation if the government fails to address their demands soon. Planned actions include a three-hour sit-in protest in Morigaon on August 12 and a boycott of the Independence Day celebrations on August 15. Additionally, a delegation from the Tiwa Students Union will travel to New Delhi in September to submit a memorandum to the central government, urging for a resolution to the Tiwa issues.

Lions district 322G celebrates 7th District Cabinet Installation Ceremony Buniyaad

HT Bureau
GUWAHATI, July 22: The 7th District Cabinet Installation Ceremony Buniyaad of Lions district 322G was held at Hotel Kiranshree Grand on Sunday. The cabinet was installed under the leadership of Lion Seema Goenka as district governor for the Lionistic year 2024-25 by the installation officer, past international director Lion R Sunil Kumar from Hyderabad.

The entire cabinet was installed in a dignified manner, with Lion Pankaj Poddar and Lion Manoj Bhajanka taking oaths as the first and second vice district governors, respectively. Lion Dilip Saraf and Lion Bikash Agarwala took oaths as cabinet secretary and treasurer, respectively. IPDG Lion Nirmal Bhura handed over the gavel to Lion Seema Goenka during the handover ceremony, marking the transfer of power.

In his address, PID Sunil Kumar



emphasised that human life is limited, and it is essential to make our lives purposeful and impactful. He urged attendees to make genuine efforts to effect positive changes in the lives of those in need of assistance.

Prior to the installation ceremony, 30 bicycles were distributed to needy

girl students in the presence of the chief guest, international board appointee Lion Sangeeta Jatia, Lt colonel of the Indian Air Force D Doley, and other dignitaries, including the DG Team. Bijay Agarwala of Tribeni Foundation donated 100 cycles to be given to needy girls under the Lions' banner.

The Lions District Directory, edited by Lion K P Brahma, was released by the dignitaries. The LCIF coordinator announced that 60 members became MJF within the first 21 days of the Lionistic year 2024-25. The district has added one new club and 229 members to existing clubs. Clubs that started new permanent projects were also recognised with awards.

The program was attended by over 300 Lion members from Guwahati, Lower Assam, Meghalaya, Barak Valley, and Agartala, as informed in a press release by the district PRO Lion Payal Bharia.

Pappu Dutta criticises the chairman for mismanagement, poor execution of projects & alleged abuse of power

SMSS demands resignation of Margherita Municipal Board chairman

HT Correspondent
MARGHERITA, July 22: In an exclusive interview with 'The Hills Times', Pappu Dutta, president of the Satra Mukti Sangram Samity (SMSS) Central Committee, demanded the immediate resignation of Anand Kumar Sharma, chairman of the Margherita Municipal Board.

Dutta criticised Sharma for his arrogant behaviour and misuse of power, citing several issues including improper execution of works in Margherita town. He highlighted the persistent artificial flooding in front of shops, the installation of a useless clock tower at Vineer Mill Bazaar, and the inability to control traffic snarls as examples of Sharma's mismanagement.

Dutta also pointed to the ongoing multi-crore drainage project, which he claimed has been constructed unscientifically, leading to severe water logging in the town. He alleged that despite the collection of various taxes from both small shopkeepers and large businessmen, these funds have not been utilised properly for development.



"It is very unfortunate that even a little rainfall results in artificial floods in Margherita town. This reflects the gross negligence of the Margherita Municipal Board," Dutta stated. He further accused Sharma of repeatedly assaulting, humiliating, and using vulgar language

towards people seeking assistance at the Municipal Board office, without facing any consequences from higher authorities.

According to Dutta, the Margherita Municipal Board is effectively run by only two individuals: chairman Anand Kumar Sharma and a field officer with the

surname Nath. He warned that if Sharma does not resign promptly, SMSS members will gherao the offices of the Margherita Sub-Divisional Administration (Civil) and the Margherita Municipal Board.

Dutta thanked 'The Hills Times' for bringing this critical issue to light.

Himanta slams Cong over restaurant owner name display debate

HT Bureau
GUWAHATI, July 22: Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Monday lambasted the Congress party for its stance on the issue of displaying Muslim owners' names in restaurants.

Sarma dismissed the Congress's belief that such practices deter Hindu customers, labeling it as misguided. The BJP leader stressed the importance of societal introspection to identify and tackle the fundamental issues contributing to such hesitations.

"The Congress party assumes that displaying a Muslim owner's name deters Hindu customers at restaurants. But hiding the name isn't the solution. We need to ask ourselves why this hesitation exists and address the underlying reasons," Sarma wrote on micro-blogging site X.

The Kanwar Yatra ordered by the Uttar Pradesh government has created a storm as opposition parties, civil society and even some ruling alliance leaders have voiced their concerns over how it is going to affect the overall businesses of small and medium enterprises.

DLSA Jorhat concludes eight-day summer camp for juvenile inmates

HT Correspondent
JORHAT, July 22: The District Legal Services Authority (DLSA), Jorhat, organised an eight-day summer camp at the Observation Home (for Children in Conflict with Law) in Lichubari, Jorhat, from July 11 to 20. The camp aimed to enhance the personality and mental development of the inmates.

DLSA Jorhat secretary-cum-judicial officer Devojyoti Bhuyan informed that the camp was inaugurated by the District and Sessions Judge P Das, who is also the chairman of DLSA, Jorhat.

Para Legal Volunteers (PLVs) from different professions served as resource persons at the camp, teaching about 80 inmates subjects such as English, science, maths, road safety, mental health, anti-drugging, health, and martial arts.

The resource persons included Nahiram Das, Mamoni Mahanta, Eymasin Ahmed, Sweety Basfor, Suma Aich, Sweety Das, Swapmoni Saikia, Anurag Sarmah, Abhijit Kachari, Sweety Pori



Bordoloi, Ritushna Kashyap, and Rakesh Meitei, grandmaster of Muay Thai martial arts.

On the concluding day of the camp, the inmates showcased different activities they learned before distinguished guests, including P Das, District & Sessions Judge-cum-chairman, DLSA, Jorhat; Bipul Das, CEO, Jorhat Zilla

Parishad; and Rizwana Tasmin Hazarika, district child protection officer, Jorhat. A quarterly wall magazine, 'Kuhipat', of the Observation Home was unveiled on the occasion. It may be mentioned that the Observation Home of Jorhat caters to Children in Conflict with Law (CCLs) from 16 districts of the state.

Robber injured in encounter in Nalbari

HT Correspondent
NALBARI, July 22: Nalbari police arrested robber Hamid Ali on Sunday midnight after an encounter. Through Hamid, the police arrested Kangan Deka and another junior accomplice (name not mentioned), accused in the brutal robbery at Doulasal. The news of that robbery in Rampur village was previously published in 'The Hills Times', the robbers shot shoe business owner Jakir Hussain and looted a bag containing Rs 5 lakh from the day's sales.

After the publication of the news, the police continuously searched for the robbers day and night, eventually capturing three accused robbers along with one pistol and a motorcycle used in the robbery. However, the looted amount has not yet been recovered. The police were searching for the amount with Hamid Ali on Sunday night when the encounter occurred. Hamid Ali was hospitalised after sustaining a bullet injury, and two police personnel were also hurt.

The people have demanded the arrest of any robbers for a peaceful life. It is worth mentioning that two businessmen, Ebrahim Ali in Bajali and Ashok Goel in Goalpara district, lost their lives in attacks by miscreants in the past two weeks. The conscious and harmless people are now very anxious as miscreants in different parts of our state are seen to be active in robbery, looting, and other crimes, which may deteriorate the law and order situation. The people have urged the government to take necessary steps in a timely manner for a peaceful social life.

Free medical camp held at Rajmai Staff Club in Demow

HT Correspondent
DEMOW, July 22: Under the patronage of the All Adivasi Students Association of Assam (AASAA), Demow Regional Committee, and in association with the Demow Block Primary Health Centre, a free medical camp was organised at the Rajmai Staff Club house on Monday. Approximately 100 people received treatment at the camp, which was led by Dr Himangshu Neog.

The camp was attended by Mahendra Manki, vice-president of the district; Lalit Tanti, president of AASAA Demow Regional Committee; Sujit Singh; Dr Uttam Rajkhowa; and other AASAA members.

Tourist guides explore Panidehing Bird Sanctuary

HT Correspondent
DEMOW, July 22: The first annual conference of the All Assam Tourist Guides Association took place in Sivasagar on Sunday, hosted at the Sivasagar Yuva Dal auditorium. Attended by tourist guides from Assam and neighbouring states, the event also saw participants from Nagaland and Arunachal Pradesh.

On Monday, the delegates visited the Panidehing Bird Sanctuary near Demow, where they were greatly impressed. Ritutpal Dowerah, president of the All Assam Tourist Guides Association, highlighted the conference's focus on promoting responsible and community-based tourism. Dowerah also noted the significant potential for tourism development in Panidehing.

অসম লোকসেৱা আয়োগ
ASSAM PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION
 Jawaharnagar, Khanapara, Guwahati-781022.

No.146PSC/DR-48/3/2021-22

NOTIFICATION

It is for information to all concerned that the Assam Public Service Commission will hold interview/viva-voce for the posts of **Lecturer in D.I.E.Ts under the Directorate of SCERT, Assam** as per programme given below at its office at Jawaharnagar, Khanapara, Guwahati-22 as per Advt. No. 20/2022 dated Guwahati, the 13th Sept., 2022.

Sl. No.	Name of the Post & Department.	Date of Interview/viva-voce	Reporting Time
1	Lecturer, Educational Technology, D.I.E.T.s	05-08-2024	9:00 AM

Kindly note that the candidates appearing for interview/viva-voce must bring the following testimonials in original for verification/scrutiny on the day of interview.

- i. H.S.L.C. Marksheet and Pass Certificate.
- ii. H.S.S.L.C. Marksheet and Pass Certificate.
- iii. Degree Marksheet and Pass Certificate.
- iv. Masters Degree Marksheet and Pass Certificate.
- v. B.Ed. Marksheet and Pass Certificate.
- vi. M.Ed. Marksheet and Pass Certificate.
- vii. CGPA Conversion Formula of the respective universities.
- viii. NET/SLET/Ph.D Certificate.
- ix. Experience Certificate(s).
- x. Caste/PWD/EWS certificate (if applicable).
- xi. Declaration Form A.
- xii. Any other documents relevant as per advt.

The Accepted/Rejected list of candidates is uploaded in the Commission's official website. No intimation letter to the eligible candidates shall be sent separately by post. The intimation letters shall be **uploaded on 23-07-2024 in the APSC's website (www.apsc.nic.in)**. The candidates shall have to download their own intimation letter from the aforesaid website.

Sd/-
Deputy Secretary,
Assam Public Service Commission
Jawaharnagar, Khanapara, Guwahati-22

Janasanyog /D/2851/24/23-Jul-24

QUOTE OF THE DAY

Maybe this world is another planet's hell.
-Aldous Huxley

Economic Survey: A cautious optimism

The Economic Survey 2023-24 presents a cautiously optimistic outlook on India's growth trajectory. While it acknowledges the positive short-term prospects, it highlights several areas of concern requiring strategic long-term planning. The Survey emphasizes the need for comprehensive agricultural reform. Despite its central role in India's economy, the sector faces structural challenges, including food price inflation, inefficient price discovery mechanisms, and land fragmentation. Policymakers must balance incentivizing farmers to boost production with maintaining affordable food prices, necessitating nuanced policy interventions. Labour market improvements are noted, but the rise of artificial intelligence (AI) in economic activities poses challenges. The Survey calls on employers, not the government, to balance technology deployment with labour utilization, stressing the importance of steering technological choices towards collective welfare.

Regulatory hurdles, such as restrictive land use and building codes, also impede employment generation. The Survey urges reforms to unlock job creation potential, particularly in sectors and hours open to women's employment. The Survey addresses the Rupee's volatility, noting it was one of the least volatile currencies in FY24 despite depreciation pressures. However, this relative stability is viewed as cold comfort amid the US dollar's strength against major peers. The global impact of China on the economy remains significant. The Survey highlights the "China plus one" strategy, where nations like Mexico, Vietnam, Taiwan, and Korea have benefited from US trade diversion from China while also attracting Chinese FDI. This dynamic underscores that India's path to becoming a developed nation will differ from China's economic boom between 1980 and 2015. The Survey cites geopolitical stability post-Cold War, Western encouragement of China's rise, and less pressing climate concerns as factors that facilitated China's growth. In contrast, India faces significant barriers, including AI's uncertain impact on employment and climate challenges, requiring a unified effort from union and state governments and the private sector to sustain high growth rates.

On welfare economics, the Survey touts a reformed approach focusing on empowerment, universal access to necessities, efficiency, and private sector participation. However, these claims remain contentious regarding their implementation and effectiveness. India's external sector remains resilient despite geopolitical headwinds and persistent inflation. The Survey attributes food price inflation to adverse weather in recent years but anticipates normal conditions will stabilize inflation in FY25 and beyond. Achieving long-term price stability hinges on enhanced price monitoring, market intelligence, and increased domestic production of essential food items like pulses and edible oils. The Survey praises India's post-pandemic economic recovery, with real GDP in FY24 being 20% higher than FY20 levels. While strong growth prospects for FY25 and beyond are anticipated, they are contingent on geopolitical, financial market, and climate risks. The Survey warns that geopolitical conflicts in 2024 could disrupt supply chains, elevate commodity prices, revive inflationary pressures, and stall monetary policy easing, impacting capital flows and RBI's policy stances. Increased geopolitical fragmentation and protectionism could distort merchandise trade growth, affecting India's external sector. Global financial markets, riding high on economic expansion bets, could face corrections that impact household finances and growth prospects. The Economic Survey 2023-24 offers a nuanced view of India's growth prospects, emphasizing the need for strategic long-term planning and reforms to address structural challenges in agriculture, labour markets, and regulatory frameworks. Achieving sustainable growth will require coordinated efforts across government and private sectors to navigate the complex global economic landscape.

Bangladesh's surge in street protests: A growing concern for India

The latest news from Bangladesh reveals that a week-long wave of violent protests has caused a nationwide shutdown. The army has been called in to suppress the movement, which was reportedly initiated by college students opposing job reservations for the children of Mukti Joddhas, the freedom fighters who liberated the country from Pakistan in 1971.

On Sunday, the Supreme Court overturned a high court ruling from earlier this month that had implemented reservations for nearly one-third of all government jobs. The new judgement permits only 5% reservation for veteran relatives and an additional 2% for various disadvantaged groups. This decision aims to address the violence, which has resulted in over 100 fatalities.

Interestingly, the job quota, which was established following Bangladesh's war of independence, had been abolished in 2021 when Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina decided to eliminate it. How should one interpret the movement that has transformed Bangladesh into a conflict zone? And what implications might it have for South Asia, particularly for its neighbouring country, India?

The protests, initially sparked by opposition to a now-abolished quota, have long since evolved from a typical student demonstration into a nationwide movement against the ruling party, which secured a third term in office in an election earlier this year. This raises questions about whether the Supreme Court's recent judgement will be sufficient to permanently calm the unrest, especially given that over 100 people have died and many more have been affected by the crackdown.

The democracy deficit highlighted in this year's election, boycotted by the main Opposition BNP and excluding the radical Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami, which is accused of complicity in war crimes in 1971, has clearly contributed to fueling the broader protest. However, this is only part of the story.

Earlier this month, the Dhaka High Court's decision to potentially reinstate the scrapped quota system with increased reservations for veterans' children triggered spontaneous protests across nearly all universities. Efforts to defuse the tension by having Bangladesh's Supreme

Court suspend the order proved ineffective. The protests quickly escalated, drawing in discontented segments of the population and the opposition, all frustrated with the Awami League.

Upon returning from a state visit to China, Sheikh Hasina made a tactless remark about the quota issue, exacerbating the situation. She sarcastically questioned whether reservations should instead be made for the children of 'Razaakars,' the fundamentalist militia that assisted the Pakistani army in committing genocide against millions of unarmed civilians between March and December 1971. This statement only intensified the unrest.

The Awami League government has been struggling for some time with high youth unemployment, currently at 15.7%, a sluggish economy, a depreciating Taka, and a sudden decline in Bangladesh's primary export-garments.

The government's once-close relationship with China has also deteriorated. Sheikh Hasina, who had been negotiating for a US \$5 billion soft loan, returned from Beijing last week with a mere US \$139 million in loans.

China, which had previously extended over US \$7 billion in loans for ports, highways, and other infrastructure projects in Bangladesh, is now pressing for debt repayments. This has significantly strained Dhaka's foreign exchange reserves, which have plummeted by 60% from August 2021 to June 2024.

The steep decline in exports, triggered by the Red Sea crisis that has driven up transportation costs to Europe and the US, has further exacerbated Dhaka's balance of payments issues. This situation has caused the Taka to depreciate from TK 105 to the dollar in March to TK 117 currently. Meanwhile, inflation has remained above 9% over the past year.

The Opposition, viewing the student protests as a crucial opportunity in their failing attempt to unseat Hasina, mobilized their student factions.

Many of these groups, some armed, intensified the riots, transforming them into a severe existential crisis for the Awami League and demanding Hasina's resignation. Widespread frustration with



economic hardships and the ruling party's heavy-handedness quickly merged, causing the grievance over the now-abolished quota to fade into the background amidst the surge of public outrage.

When the Opposition, including Islamist groups, urged for a ramping up of the protests that had already resulted in numerous deaths, Dhaka's streets erupted into a violent conflict on Friday, leaving many more dead. In response, Hasina called in the army.

This occurred despite the fact that Hasina's party harbors deep mistrust of the military, which has a history marked by coups, counter-coups, and the assassination of leaders, including Sheikh Mujib-ur-Rahman, the founder of Bangladesh and Hasina's father. On August 15, 1975, Mujib-ur-Rahman and his entire family were murdered, except for two daughters who were abroad at the time.

The future of this latest development in Bangladesh's tumultuous political landscape remains uncertain. Social media is currently flooded with false reports claiming that junior military officers are voicing opposition to the government in support of the students. However, in South Asia, fake news has a troubling tendency to become reality over time.

While these events are certainly cause for concern in Delhi and among the international democratic community, what is even more troubling is the emergence of overtly communal and anti-India slogans and posters during the protests.

One of the more moderate posters displayed during the protests read, "Chhatra Jodi Razakaar, Desh Kar? Indiar?" which translates to, "If students are Razakaars, who owns the country-India?" This implies that

the Sheikh Hasina-led government is merely an Indian puppet, a baseless accusation that has been repeatedly made by the opposition BNP and the radical Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami for years.

In the 1990s, the Taliban recruited a significant number of fighters from Bangladesh. Upon their return from Afghanistan, these individuals became the backbone of extremist groups that have troubled Dhaka over the past two decades. The extremist factions established by these returnee Bangladeshi Taliban conducted attacks both within Bangladesh and across India.

The most dramatic attack occurred in 2016 at a café in Dhaka, where terrorists brutally murdered 22 people. Following this, Sheikh Hasina's crackdown dismantled many of these extremist cells, leading to the arrest or death of numerous jihadists.

The current protest slogan, "Amra Kara, tomra Kara, Razakaar, Razakaar" (Who are we? Who are you? Razakaar, Razakaar), bears a striking resemblance to an earlier chant used by Taliban returnees in the early 2000s during street demonstrations: "Amra sobai hobo Taliban, Bangla hobe Afghanistan" (We will all become Taliban, Bangladesh will turn into Afghanistan).

Following Mujib's assassination in 1975 and up until the 2000s, when BNP's Begum Khaleda Zia was in power, Bangladesh became a refuge not only for Islamist terror groups but also for insurgents from India's Northeast.

Ministers in the BNP-led government and military officers were implicated in the illegal arms trade, which was believed to have started in southwest China. This operation also reportedly involved the intelligence agency of another South Asian country, facilitating the

flow of weapons to militants in India's Northeast.

Bangladesh has historically had a faction of its population backing fundamentalist causes, alongside a similarly significant group supporting moderate Islam and a secular government. The majority of the population tends to remain neutral, but periodically shifts towards either end of the political spectrum, leading to significant changes in the nation's political landscape.

In 1947, the Muslim League succeeded in shaping public opinion and persuaded East Bengal to join Pakistan. However, in 1971, the majority of the population shifted their support to the left-of-center Awami League, which advocated for a secular and democratic Bangladesh.

Should the movement to oust Hasina succeed, India faces the risk that the new leadership, whether it be a BNP-Jamaat-backed coalition or a group of young military officers-might be heavily influenced by Bangladesh's growing faction of radical Islamists and pro-China supporters.

This does not imply that India should blindly support the Awami League. A genuine ally should point out errors and assist in making necessary corrections. Hasina has been making numerous mistakes in her efforts to strengthen her rule-by bypassing democratic elections, empowering corrupt party officials, marginalizing longstanding loyalists, and yielding to pro-Islamist factions by accommodating their demands.

However, both New Delhi and other major powers with interests in the region should recognize that a Bangladesh hosting Chinese interests, potentially including naval assets, would pose a direct military threat not only to India but also to the United States. The US is engaged in a crucial struggle with Beijing for control of the Indo-Pacific region. Bangladesh's Jamaat and BNP are also thought to maintain active links with Pakistan, particularly with its military intelligence agency, ISI. If Dhaka were to re-join the expanding alliance between Beijing and Islamabad, it would place South Bloc in a precarious position, facing threats from both sides of its border and a "dragon breathing fire from above." (The writer can be reached at dipakkurmiglt@gmail.com)

Karnataka's bold move on job reservations: A blueprint for Assam?

By: Mowsam Hazarika

The Karnataka Cabinet's recent decision to mandate 50% reservation for locals in management jobs and 70% in non-management positions marks a significant move in regional employment policies. This legislative initiative, aiming to prioritize local employment, echoes similar sentiments seen across various states in India. It underscores the growing emphasis on regionalism and the need to address local unemployment issues by ensuring that a substantial proportion of job opportunities within a state are reserved for its residents.

In examining the potential implications and the broader context of this decision, it's essential to draw parallels with Assam, a state with its own unique set of challenges and policies related to employment and local reservations. Assam, much like Karnataka, has grappled with high unemployment rates and the complex dynamics of local versus non-local employment.

Assam's economy, traditionally agrarian, has been undergoing a slow transition with increasing industrialization and urbanization. However, the pace of job creation has not kept up with the growing workforce. According to the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE), Assam's unemployment rate stood at 8.1% in 2023, higher than the national average of 7.2%. This disparity has often led to local discontent, with many advocating for job reservations similar to those seen in Karnataka. The state's demographics, characterized by a significant proportion of indigenous communities, add another layer to the employment debate. Ensuring job opportunities for locals in Assam is not just an economic issue but also a cultural and political one.

The introduction of job reservations in Karnataka could serve as a blueprint for Assam. If Assam were to implement a similar policy, it would need to consider several factors unique to its socio-economic landscape. Firstly, the demographic composition of Assam, with its diverse ethnic groups, would necessitate a nuanced approach to job reservations. The policy would need to balance the interests of various indigenous communities and other resident groups to ensure inclusivity and avoid potential conflicts. Furthermore, Assam's economy is significantly different from Karnataka's. While Karnataka boasts a strong industrial and IT sector, Assam's economy is still heavily reliant on agriculture, tea plantations, and oil. This economic structure means that job reservations in Assam would need to focus not only on emerging sectors but also on traditional industries that form the backbone of the state's employment.

Another critical aspect to consider is the role of education and skill development. In both Karnataka and Assam, the success of any job reservation policy

hinges on the availability of a skilled workforce. Assam has made strides in improving educational infrastructure, but there is still a significant gap in vocational training and higher education tailored to meet industry needs. A reservation policy must be accompanied by robust measures to enhance local employability through targeted education and skill development programs.

The implementation of job reservations in Karnataka also raises questions about the legal and constitutional framework governing such policies. While the Indian Constitution allows for affirmative action to address social inequalities, the extent and nature of job reservations have often been subjects of judicial scrutiny. Assam would need to navigate this complex legal landscape to ensure that its policies are both effective and compliant with constitutional mandates. Moreover, the economic impact of job reservations cannot be overlooked. Critics of reservation policies argue that they may deter investment and affect the competitiveness of industries by imposing restrictions on hiring. For Assam, attracting investment is crucial for economic growth and job creation. Therefore, any reservation policy would need to strike a balance between promoting local employment and maintaining a conducive environment for business and investment.

Public opinion and political will are also decisive factors in the implementation of such policies. In Karnataka, the move to introduce job reservations has been met with both support and opposition, reflecting the diverse views on regionalism and employment. In Assam, a similar policy would likely generate significant debate, given the state's history of ethnic and political movements. Building a consensus through dialogue and stakeholder engagement would be essential for the successful implementation of job reservations.

In conclusion, the Karnataka Cabinet's decision to mandate job reservations for locals presents a compelling case study for Assam. While the underlying objective of addressing local unemployment is common to both states, Assam's unique socio-economic context necessitates a tailored approach. Implementing a similar policy in Assam would require careful consideration of the state's demographic diversity, economic structure, educational landscape, legal framework, and investment climate. By learning from Karnataka's experience and adapting it to local needs, Assam can work towards a more inclusive and equitable employment policy that benefits its residents while fostering economic growth and development. (The author is a poet and people's science activist, a former Director, Assam Seed and Organic Certification Agency & Former Joint Director of Agriculture (Pulse), Department of Agriculture)

By: Asad Mirza

Last week, thirty-four out of 53 Gambian lawmakers voted to maintain the FGM ban, which was introduced in 2015, aid workers told the Guardian. The remainder voted to repeal it. There was certainly an air of jubilation amongst the anti-FGM activists and workers of the world bodies, like the WHO, UNICEF, UN Women who have continuously waged an advocacy campaign against this barbaric practice.

Jaha Dukureh, an FGM survivor and founder of Safe Hands for Girls, said: "Today we stood on the right side of history one more time. We have shown that even if they burn down this country, we will rebuild to protect our women and girls. Today, we won for Gambia."

According to the UN, Gambia has the ninth-highest rate of FGM in the world. Almost three-quarters of Gambian women between 15 and 49 have undergone FGM, which involves the partial or total removal of the external female genitalia. Nearly two-thirds of them were cut before the age of five.

The bill was tabled in March by Almameh Gibba, who said he did so to "uphold religious loyalty and safeguard cultural norms and values" in the Muslim-majority state. It was initially approved by a majority of MPs, which forced human rights campaigners to intensify lobbying against the move.

The law's repeal was backed by Muslim clerics, who hold much sway in the Gambia, a conservative country of 2.7 million people.

The vote was taken following the bill's second reading after being referred to a parliamentary committee for consultation. A third and final reading had been tabled for next week.

Fabakary Tombong Jatta, the

Gambia bans FGM

speaker of parliament, said: "(We) cannot be engaged in such a futile exercise as to allow the bill to proceed to a third reading. The bill is rejected and the legislative process exhausted."

Judy Gitau, coordinator for Equality Now's Africa office, applauded last Monday's vote for setting a precedent. She said: "Repealing the FGM law was going to set a new low in the pushback against women's rights."

While welcoming the move to uphold the law, human rights campaigners warned that more needed to be done to improve the lives of women and girls in the West African country.

Binta Ceasay, women's rights manager at ActionAid Gambia, said: "Since FGM was banned nearly a decade ago, we have made encouraging strides in ending the practice, but it has not been enough."

The World Health Organisation estimates that about 230 million women and girls have undergone this traditional procedure, in which not only the clitoris but often also the inner and outer labia are cut away by a knife or razor, usually without anaesthetics, antiseptics or antibiotics. Infections, some of them fatal, are commonplace. Most girls are "circumcised" in this way in Egypt, Sudan and the Horn of Africa, in the Muslim countries of West Africa, and in Indonesia, usually under the age of five.

It is less common in the eastern Arab countries (e.g., Iraq, Saudi Arabia and Yemen), and rare in Iran, Turkey and Pakistan, but the victims are overwhelmingly Muslims. So are the perpetrators.

This poses a real problem for the anti-FGM campaigners, because most of the people who do this to their girl children are convinced that it is an Islamic practice, or even a religious obligation.

It particularly appeals to men

who are obsessed about female "chastity".

These attitudes are common even in the farthest reaches of the Islamic world, like the Muslim-minority parts of Russia. When a 2016 report revealed the practice is widespread in the mountain villages of Karachayev-Cherkessia.

Samira Daoud, Amnesty International Regional Director for West and Central Africa, said: "We welcome with great relief the rejection of the bill aimed at reversing the ban on FGM in Gambia. In 2015, the adoption of the Women's (Amendment) Act, which criminalises and sets out punishments for performing, aiding and abetting the practice of FGM, represented a significant milestone in the country's efforts to safeguard girls' and women's rights. It was essential that this progress be protected."

In a joint statement UNICEF Executive Director, Catherine Russell, UNFPA Executive Director, Natalia Kanem, WHO Director-General, Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, UN Women Executive Director, Sima Bahous, and UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Volker Türk said: "The decision to maintain the FGM ban aligns with the Gambia's international and regional commitments to prevent harmful practices against girls and women, consistent with the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, and the Maputo Protocol protecting African women's rights."

Islam and FGM There is no mention of female circumcision in the Holy Qur'an, and only five hadiths (reports of what Prophet Mohammed actually said) refer to it. None of them states that it is a religious duty, and there is no

evidence that the Prophet (PBUH) had any of his wives or daughters circumcised.

Why do the hadiths mention it at all? "It is as if Islam deemed it necessary to regulate this practice which was already performed by the Arabs prior to the advent of Islam," suggests Egyptian Islamist scholar Dr Mohamed Selim Al-Awa, founding General Secretary of the International Union of Islamic Scholars.

Senior Muslim religious authorities agree that FGM is neither required nor prohibited by Islam. The Qur'an does not mention FGM or male circumcision.

FGM is praised in a few hadiths as noble but not required, and moreover the authenticity of these hadiths has been questioned.

Several Muslim leaders have called for an end to the practice. In 2004, after CNN broadcasted images of a girl in Cairo undergoing FGM, the then Grand Mufti of Egypt Muhammad Sayyid Tantawi declared that hadiths on FGM as unreliable. A conference at Al-Azhar University in Cairo in 2006 saw prominent Muslim clergy declare it unnecessary.

Sheikh Ali Gomaa, the then Grand Mufti of Egypt, stated: "It's prohibited, prohibited, prohibited." Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu, Secretary-General of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation said in 2012 that FGM was "a ritual that has survived over centuries and must be stopped as Islam does not support it."

Indeed, it would be much preferable if international Islamic organisation like the OIC join hands with world bodies like the UNICEF, UN Women etc. to put a complete ban on this inhuman practice in today's modern world. (The author is a Delhi-based senior political and international affairs commentator and a media consultant)

Adapting change: Tailoring the education system to specific needs

By: **Muhammad Salman Shah Al-Irfani**

In today's educational landscape, the imperative for systemic adaptation has become increasingly evident. Educational institutions must evolve to maintain their relevance and effectiveness amidst rapid technological advancements, shifting economic conditions, and changing societal values. As these dynamics converge, it is clear that a fundamental reevaluation and reform of traditional educational paradigms are essential. This necessity for change goes beyond merely keeping up with current trends; it is about reimagining education in a way that thoroughly prepares students for an increasingly complex and interconnected world.

Technological advancements play a crucial role in driving this need for reform. The digital age has transformed how we access, process, and utilize information. Traditional learning methods, which relied heavily on static textbooks and passive absorption of knowledge, are being complemented—and often replaced—by interactive, multimedia-rich experiences.

Technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI), virtual reality (VR), and augmented reality (AR) are becoming integral to educational settings. AI can customize educational content to meet individual student needs, adjusting difficulty levels and providing personalized feedback. This not only caters to diverse learning styles but also enhances overall student engagement. Similarly, VR and AR offer immersive simulations of historical events, scientific phenomena, or complex concepts, making abstract ideas more tangible and understandable.

The integration of these technologies into the classroom requires substantial investment in infrastructure and teacher training. Educators must be adept not only at using these tools but also at incorporating them into pedagogical strategies that enhance learning outcomes. As technology continues to evolve, schools must remain adaptable, continually updating their approaches to leverage new tools and methods that can benefit students.

Economic shifts further highlight the urgency of educational reform. The rise of a globalized economy and the gig economy has reshaped job markets, creating a demand for a diverse set of skills beyond traditional academic knowledge.

In today's workforce, competencies such as critical thinking, problem-solving, and adaptability are increasingly valuable. This shift calls for a move away from rote memorization and standardized testing towards a more skills-based educational approach.

Curricula should emphasize project-based learning, which encourages students to tackle real-world problems and collaborate across disciplines. For example, a project focused on sustainable development might involve researching environmental issues, designing innovative solutions, and presenting findings—integrating science, economics, and social studies in a practical context.

Partnerships with industry and community organizations can enhance this skills-based approach. By providing internships, apprenticeships, and mentorship programs, schools can offer students practical experiences and insights into current trends and emerging fields. These experiences not only bridge the gap between academic learning and real-world applications but also prepare students for a variety of career paths.

As societal values continue to evolve, so too must educational systems. There is a growing emphasis on inclusivity, equity, and social justice within educational contexts. Schools are tasked with reflecting these values by addressing diverse learning needs and promoting equitable opportunities. This means revising curricula to include a broader range of perspectives, fostering culturally responsive teaching practices, and tackling systemic dis-

parities that affect educational outcomes.

Creating inclusive classrooms involves more than just incorporating diverse perspectives; it requires creating an environment where every student feels valued and supported. Implementing policies and practices that address biases and ensure equitable access to resources is crucial. Professional development for educators should focus on building cultural competence and understanding how to effectively support diverse learners. By fostering an inclusive and supportive environment, schools can enhance engagement, motivation, and overall achievement for all students.

A vital aspect of modern educational reform is guiding students towards a focused approach to their interests and talents. In an era of rapid change, encouraging students to specialize in areas they are passionate about can lead to greater fulfillment and success. Specializing allows students to develop deep expertise and enthusiasm, which can enhance their motivation and engagement.

However, this focus on specialization should be balanced with a well-rounded education. Students should still have the opportunity to explore a broad range of subjects while pursuing their passions. Schools can support this by offering diverse electives, advanced placement courses, and enrichment programs that allow students to delve deeply into their interests while maintaining a broad educational base.

Career exploration and guidance should be integral parts of the curriculum, helping students identify and cultivate their strengths early on. Opportunities such as mentorship programs and internships related to students' interests can provide practical experiences that reinforce their commitment to their chosen fields.

In addition to academic and career-focused goals, educational reform should emphasize the holistic development of students. Education must extend beyond academic achievement to include personal growth, social responsibility, and lifelong learning. Schools should aim to develop well-rounded individuals equipped with the skills and mindset needed to navigate a complex world. Integrating social-emotional learning into the curriculum can support this holistic approach by teaching students how to manage their emotions, set goals, and build positive relationships. Fostering a culture of curiosity and exploration encourages students to take ownership of their learning and pursue their passions, while also developing a sense of purpose and responsibility.

Addressing these challenges requires a collaborative effort from educators, policymakers, families, and communities. Reforming education is not solely the responsibility of schools; it necessitates a collective vision and action. Policymakers must support innovation through funding, policy changes, and research. Educators need resources and training to implement effective practices. Families and communities play a critical role in advocating for and supporting educational reform, ensuring that students have the opportunities and support they need to succeed.

Ultimately, the goal of systemic adaptation in education is to cultivate a generation of learners who are not only knowledgeable but also equipped with the skills and mindset needed to thrive in a dynamic and interconnected world. This vision of education encompasses not only academic achievement but also personal growth, social responsibility, and lifelong learning. By embracing a comprehensive approach, we can ensure that educational systems are responsive to current needs and proactive in shaping a brighter future for all students. This requires a united effort to drive meaningful change and prepare students for the opportunities and challenges of the 21st century, fostering an environment where every learner can reach their full potential. (Courtesy: Youth Ki Awaaz)

Eating ultra-processed foods may raise risk of death by 10%

By: **Robby Berman**

People who consumed significant amounts of ultra-processed foods were 10% more likely to die during the study's long follow-up period than those who did not.

The study drew on data from the US NIH-AARP Diet and Health Study, which tracked the diet and health of over a half million older people. The new analysis included adults ranging in age from 50 to 71 at baseline in 1995-1996, with a median 22.9-year follow-up period.

The researchers scored their diets using the NOVA system, which classifies foods according to the degree and type of processing used in their preparation. They looked at Healthy Eating Index (HEI)-2015 scores, and not just NOVA processing, and noted that people with higher UPF intake tended to have lower diet quality and a higher BMI.

What makes this study noteworthy, in particular, is the two approaches the researchers used to further validate the food frequency questionnaires (FFQ): expert consensus and an alternative and novel food-based approach to define UPF intake (grams per day), which was broken down into food codes, then ingredient codes, then classified via NOVA.

The researchers also used two 24-hour diet recalls in a subgroup to calibrate their FFQ risk estimates, which is not standard practice and adds to the potential rigor of the study's findings.

The research was presented this week at the American Society for Nutrition's NUTRITION 2024 conference.

What is the definition of ultra-processed foods?

According to the NOVA system, natural, processed, and ultra-processed foods are defined as the following:

Unprocessed, or natural, foods come directly from plants or animals without any alteration or processing, apart from transport to the location where they are sold. Minimally processed foods are similar, except that they have been cleaned and inedible or undesirable parts removed. They may be cut into portions, ground, dried, fermented, pasteurized, cooled, or frozen en route to the table. However, no oils, fats, sugar, salt, or other substances have been added to them.

NOVA also includes a category called Processed Culinary Ingredients, which are substances that have been extracted from natural foods. These include oils, fats, salt, and sugar, and are ideally used in small amounts to season and cook foods without nutritionally degrading the overall quality of the diet.

Processed foods are foods that have

been manufactured for consumption using sugar, salt, and oil added to natural foods for flavor, and to help extend their shelf life. They typically have no more than two or three ingredients.

Ultra-processed foods, or UPF, are industrial creations shaped mostly from substances, including oils, fats, sugars, and proteins derived from natural foods, along with modified starch and hydrogenated fats, with added coloring, and flavor enhancers. They are inexpensive for the consumer and convenient, and may contain five or (many) more ingredients.

What is new about the study

It is already widely known that a diet heavy in ultra-processed foods can be damaging to one's health. However, the large number of people in this study - 318,889 men and 221,607 women - and the extended follow-up time are unusual.

Dietitian Kristin Kirkpatrick, MS, RDN, who was not involved in the research, said, "The very long follow-up period is interesting; however, the researchers also note that it's unclear what was done between the time the data was taken and the follow-up. Did these people make dietary changes? Were there other activities that were risky to overall health? We are unclear on the details."

Compared to the lowest amount of processed food consumption, the highest amount was associated with increased risks of death from heart disease and diabetes but not death due to cancer.

"This research shows that higher consumption of ultra-processed foods is associated with increased mortality risk independent of other factors like smoking, obesity, and diet quality," said Michelle Routhenstein, MS, RD, CDCES, preventive cardiology dietitian at EntirelyNourished.com, who was also not involved in the research.

"This suggests that the detrimental effects of ultra-processed foods on health may persist regardless of overall lifestyle factors," said Routhenstein.

"Ultra-processed foods are typically higher in added sugars, unhealthy fats, and additives, while lacking essential nutrients such as fiber and vitamins, which can negatively impact cardiometabolic health. These foods contain higher levels of advanced glycation end products (AGEs) due to their processing methods, which may increase oxidative stress and inflammation in the body. AGEs may also raise cystatin C levels, associated with decreased kidney function and heightened cardiovascular disease risk." - Michelle Routhenstein, MS, RD, CDCES.

An older cohort

Given the extended follow-up pe-

riod, participants were aged from roughly 73 to 94 at the time of follow-up. "Research on the impact of ultra-processed foods specifically in older adults is limited but growing. The specific long-term impact on mortality in older populations is still an area of active study," said Routhenstein.

"It's never too late to make beneficial dietary changes," said Kirkpatrick. "Previous research has found similar results to lifespan, such as a study which assessed UPF in ages 57-91."

She noted that much of the research she sees involves younger people, and focuses on prevention of later problems through better nutrition.

The younger side of older

The researchers found that younger members of their study population tended to consume UPF more than older members.

"Younger participants - particularly middle-aged individuals - may consume more ultra-processed foods due to factors such as convenience, affordability, and advertising. These foods are often widely available, require minimal preparation, and are heavily marketed, making them appealing to busy lifestyles," Routhenstein said.

It may also be the case, noted Kirkpatrick, that "younger individuals who are generally healthy and have not had symptoms of/or serious illness may not be thinking of what the future holds in relation to their diet today."

Is processed food necessarily bad?

The American diet typically contains a substantial number of foods that span the processing spectrum. "Some of these foods such as breakfast cereals, for example, may even help to fill some nutritional gaps via fortification," said Kirkpatrick.

However, she said, "Consuming a lot of these foods means not having the opportunity to feed the body with [more] nutrient-dense options." The result may be a high consumption of calorie-dense foods lacking in nutrition.

Kirkpatrick expressed concern regarding an over-dependence on the NOVA classification system for assessing the impact of processed foods.

"The NOVA scale is strictly related to the degree of processing and has nothing to do with the foods' nutritional value, so it doesn't account for things like added sugar, protein, or fiber content," she explained.

"Lumping all processed foods together risks oversimplifying nutritional science, so limiting UPF should go alongside education for individuals as well," Kirkpatrick said.

"There is no one-size-fits-all dietary approach, so each and every patient may deserve a personalized approach to their dietary needs and goals," she said. (Courtesy: Medical News Today)

How the Indian freedom struggle inspired a future Sri Lankan president

By: **Ajay Kamalakaran**

In the late 1920s, when the British Empire's authority seemed almost unchallenged in what was then called Ceylon, the colonial authorities were alerted about an act of defiance challenging their rule: a student of the Ceylon Law College had hung a portrait of Mahatma Gandhi in the main parlour.

That rebel, Junius Richard Jayawardene, was no ordinary student. The son of a Colombo lawyer, the young man would win a gold medal for his oratory skills and a special prize for his legal research, before going on decades later to become the president of Sri Lanka.

"This sensational episode gained me much publicity at that time, for it amounted to a challenge thrown at the British Raj," Jayawardene wrote in his biography *Men and Memories*.

Although he began practising law after his graduation, Jayawardene found himself increasingly attracted to politics and the Indian independence movement.

"The masses were either apathetic or showed total indifference to national problems," he said about Ceylon of the 1920s and '30s. "But in the neighbouring subcontinent of India, a mass movement was in full swing. Mahatma Gandhi, the frail ascetic, was the general who planned the Swaraj Movement, and his technique of Satyagraha or the power of truth was the basis of the Indian freedom struggle. I was much impressed by the role played by Pandit Nehru for whom I developed a great affection."

Jayawardene would get a chance to meet both Gandhi and Nehru when he went to India for sessions of the Indian National Congress, which made sure to invite delegates from Ceylon and Burma as well.

Buddha's footsteps

A trip to Ramgarh in 1940 for the 53rd session of the Congress left a deep impression on Jayawardene's mind.

"It was a pretty countryside that we passed through on our way, for over a hundred miles to the west of Calcutta," he wrote. "Ramgarh itself is very similar to Diyatalwa, undulating valleys, large plains and mountain streams abounding."

Rajendra Prasad's words that "every particle of dust" was "sanctified by the touch of the feet of Gautama, the Buddha" really resonated with Jayawardene. The countryside of Bihar, Jayawardene said, had a history that was "unequaled in the world" since the founders of both Buddhism and Jainism spent large portions of their life there.

As a 34-year-old with a long political career ahead of him, Jayawardene observed the key figures of the Indian freedom struggle. Nehru, he said, was "quick of temper" and Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan "over six feet in height".

From his time in Ramgarh, Jayawardene took away some astute learnings. "Two facts were clear," he said. "First, India was united in her demand to be free and she wanted her freedom outside the British Commonwealth of Nations. Secondly, Mahatma Gandhi was still the unquestioned leader of India. There was no opposition to his leadership."

He noted that Subash Chandra Bose had organised a counter-show with his "anti-compromise" and "Forward Bloc" ideals. "These meetings were attended by the Kisan (peasant) organisations and had the support of over a lakh of people," he wrote. "The opposition was not, however, to Gandhi's leadership; it was his refusal to begin the fight."

He said Ceylon could learn many things from the way Indian politicians conducted themselves in their struggle against the British, especially the absence of racial or personal feelings.

"No man or woman we met, be he/she leader or the follower, talked except in terms of ideals

of social and economic construction, of a new world order based not on exploitation, but according to a planned economy," he wrote. "In the field of politics, the masses were trained to think not in terms of race or personalities, but in terms of social equality, equal opportunity for all and anti-imperialism."

The Ramgarh session marked the beginning of a decades-long friendship between Nehru and Jayawardene. Delegates from Ceylon and Burma were invited to stay with Nehru in Allahabad, an invitation that the Sri Lankan politician gladly accepted.

"We were treated with the greatest kindness and hospitality, as if we were old friends," Jayawardene wrote. "Mrs Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit, as Nehru's sister as the hostess, used to sit down for morning breakfast with us to a typical Western breakfast with bacon and eggs, toast and marmalade. The host presided and sat with us."

Jayawardene treasured his brief stay in Allahabad. "We had long discussions with Pandit Nehru though we were far removed from his activities which covered almost 20 years of direct and indirect non-violent campaigns, to free India from foreign rule," he said. Nehru's role in the freedom movement was discussed as well.

Correspondence with Nehru

"Like all other youths of our generation throughout the British Empire, we hero-worshipped Jawaharlal Nehru and his leader, Mahatma Gandhi," Jayawardene wrote. "The friendship formed thus enabled me to correspond with him." The two regularly exchanged letters until Nehru's incarceration.

Jayawardene released the correspondence in July 1971 after reading an appeal from Indira Gandhi to anyone possessing letters from her father to make them available to the Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Fund.

The letters make for interesting reading.



In 1940, there was a genuine fear that Ceylon may be bartered away to a rival power by the British if they lost the war. This led people like Jayawardene to look at what can only be described as a political union between Ceylon and India.

"Some of us - the number is increasing - think that our future lies with India, and we are endeavouring to arrange for the sending of a representative deputation from Ceylon to meet the Indian leaders," Jayawardene wrote in a letter dated July 20, 1940. "Federation or closer union between a free India and a free Ceylon would certainly be a subject we wish discussed."

In his reply, Nehru said, "It is too much to hope that a real World Federation of free nations will emerge out of this terrible conflict." He suggested that various types of federations could exist with or without Britain and then added: "Personally I should like India to be closely associated in a future order with China, Burma and Ceylon, as well as other countries which fit in."

Their correspondence exhibited a prodigy-mentor relationship. "The 21st session of our Congress party was held in December and it was modelled on the lines of the Indian Congress with Swadeshi exhibitions, open air mass meetings etc," Jayawardene wrote in a May 1941 letter. "Our visit to Ram-

gar enabled us to use many of the features we saw there." The letter also spoke of the victory of the party in the Colombo municipal elections.

In response, Nehru wrote, "In the thoughts that fill my mind, Ceylon often recurs and the difficulties of the present day do not worry me that much. My good wishes to you and the people of Lanka."

Although their correspondence stopped after Nehru's arrest, the two would regularly meet after both countries attained independence. During his visits to Ceylon on occasions such as the Colombo Powers Conference, Nehru dined at Jayawardene's posh Ward Place house.

Apart from his relationship with Nehru, Jayawardene was particularly proud of his interaction with Mahatma Gandhi in 1942 when he went to Bombay for the Congress Session where the Quit India movement was launched.

"At our request, he included Ceylon too in the resolution demanding freedom for Asiatic nations," Jayawardene wrote. When he met Gandhi, the Mahatma said, "My love for Ceylon is even greater than my love for Burma."

Jayawardene heaped praise on Gandhi: "In spite of the bitterness that had arisen as a result of this conflict between Britain and India, it was true that in the mind of India's great leader there was no hate whatever to-

wards his adversaries."

After independence

A few months before Ceylon attained independence in 1948, Jayawardene was appointed the country's minister of finance. Over the next few decades, he was either in government or in opposition.

The country was renamed Sri Lanka in 1972, and in 1977, he became prime minister. He then amended the constitution to make the presidency an executive post and served as the president from 1978 to 1989.

While he continued to express admiration for Gandhi and Nehru, his actions and inactions belied their ideals. His legacy was tainted by the way his government mishandled the island's ethnic problem. It was under his watch that anti-Tamil pogroms took place in the country in 1977, 1981 and 1983, and a civil war broke out.

Jayawardene did develop a friendship with Rajiv Gandhi. In 1987, the two signed the Indo-Sri Lanka Accord, which was seen as a genuine effort to solve the ethnic problem and maintain the territorial integrity and unity of Sri Lanka.

While India's interference in the island's affairs and support of violent separatist groups like the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, or LTTE, created acrimony between the countries, Jayawardene maintained he was a follower of Gandhi and Nehru. In his autobiography, he wrote about how even at the time of signing the Indo-Lanka Accord, he thought of Nehru.

"I kept in mind throughout the words of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, 'If your enemy extends a hand, however dishonestly, you grab it. If there is good faith, you have responded. If not, then at least you have one of his hands immobilised,'" Jayawardene wrote.

JN Dixit, who as India's High Commissioner to Sri Lanka held regular meetings with Jayawardene, praised him for his economic policies but had mixed feelings about his presi-

dency and approach to the ethnic problem.

"Had Jayawardene genuinely structured a compromise with Tamil citizens of his country, instead of indulging in political ambiguities aimed at perpetuating Sinhalese domination of Sri Lankan politics, the country's history would have been different and not as tragic as it is now," Dixit wrote in his book *Assignment Colombo*.

Dixit had plenty of praise for Jayawardene, though. "He was the last generation of South and South Asian leaders who witnessed the emergence into independence of Asian and African countries," Dixit wrote.

"Sri Lanka in general and South Asia in particular are poorer with his passing from the scene."

Dixit mentioned that Jayawardene took great pride in his relationship with India's freedom fighters: "Jayawardene was deeply convinced that among all the leaders of the countries neighbouring India, he was the most knowledgeable about India."

The Indian diplomat was always reminded by Jayawardene of his links with the Indian freedom struggle. "He had a photograph on his drawing room mantelpiece, where he appeared sitting on the dais between Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru," Dixit wrote. "He invariably drew the attention of his important Indian visitors to this photograph in his Ward Place residence."

It is clear from Jayawardene's autobiography published in 1992 that he continued to have affection for India, despite the bad blood of the early 1980s. Dixit summed it up best: "I always felt that he had had an almost emotional feeling for India both in terms of the civilisational connections between India and Sri Lanka and his personal linkages with the freedom movement of India."

JR Jayawardene died in 1996 of colon cancer, at the age of 90. (Courtesy: Scroll.in)

Biden said he will speak to the nation later this week in more detail about his decision

Honoured by Biden's endorsement, aim to defeat Trump in November: Kamala Harris

WASHINGTON, July 22: US Vice President Kamala Harris, endorsed by Joe Biden to be a new Democratic presidential nominee, has said that she intends to "earn and win" the nomination of the party and "do everything in my power" to unite the nation to defeat her Republican rival Donald Trump in November.

Harris, who received Biden's support to become the next Democratic presidential nominee after he quit the race for the White House, is poised to become the first Black woman and first Asian American to lead the ticket of a major American political party.

Harris, 59, said she was "honoured" to receive Biden's endorsement and intends to "earn and win" the nomination of the Democratic Party.

"I am honored to have the President's endorsement and my intention is to earn and win this nomination," she said in a statement. The historic endorsement came after Biden, 81, announced Sunday that he is dropping out of the race following weeks of disarray within the Democratic Party. Biden's disastrous first presidential debate with his Repub-



lican rival and former president Trump called into question his ability to win a second term and govern for another four years. Despite Biden's backing, it remains unclear whether Harris will become the nominee, or what process the Democratic Party would take to select an alternative.

Democratic National Committee chairman Jaime Harrison said in a statement that in the coming days the party will "undertake a transparent and orderly process to move forward as a united Democratic Party with a candidate who can defeat Donald Trump in November."

Though Biden's endorsement almost seals her position as the presidential nominee of her party, Harris still needs to get elected by the party's delegates during the Democratic National Convention in

Chicago next month. Biden has won 3,896 delegates as against 1,976 required to win the party's presidential nomination.

In a move that would give her access to the campaign funds, the Biden-Harris campaign amended filings with the Federal Election Commission to rename its principal committee and declare Harris a candidate for president. "I am honoured to have the President's endorsement and my intention is to earn and win this nomination," said Harris, who has been serving as US' first female, first Black and first South Asian vice president since 2021.

Harris immediately secured the endorsement of former president Bill Clinton, thus making it a bit easier for her to win the delegate battle during the Democratic National Con-

vention beginning on August 19. "On behalf of the American people, I thank Joe Biden for his extraordinary leadership as President of the United States and for his decades of service to our country," she said. Harris said over the past year, she has travelled across the country, talking to Americans about the clear choice in this momentous election.

"And that is what I will continue to do in the days and weeks ahead. I will do everything in my power to unite the Democratic Party -- and unite our nation -- to defeat Donald Trump and his extreme Project 2025 agenda... We have 107 days until Election Day. Together, we will fight. And together, we will win," she said. Meanwhile, the "overwhelming majority" of state Democratic Party chairs have announced their support for Vice President Harris as their nominee for president, the Association of State Democratic Committees (ASDC) said in a statement on Sunday.

"I am proud that state party chairs, vice-chairs, and executive directors across the country are overwhelmingly uniting behind Vice President Kamala Harris," ASDC Presi-

dent Ken Martin said in a statement.

Bill Clinton and former secretary of state Hillary Clinton quickly endorsed Harris to be the nominee. "We've lived through many ups and downs, but nothing has made us more worried for our country than the threat posed by a second Trump term," they said in a joint statement. "He has promised to be a dictator on day one, and the recent ruling by his servile Supreme Court will only embolden him to further shred the Constitution. Now is the time to support Kamala Harris and fight with everything we've got to elect her," the Clintons said.

However, former president Barack Obama and ex-House Speaker Nancy Pelosi have not yet endorsed Harris as the Democratic Party's nominee for the November 5 general elections.

"We will be navigating uncharted waters in the days ahead. But I have extraordinary confidence that the leaders of our party will be able to create a process from which an outstanding nominee emerges," Obama said in a statement. (PTI)

Israel orders evacuation of part of Gaza humanitarian zone



DEIR AL-BALAH, July 22: The Israeli military on Monday ordered the evacuation of part of an area in the Gaza Strip it has designated a humanitarian zone.

The military said it is planning to begin an operation against Hamas militants who have embedded themselves in the area and used it to launch rockets toward Israel. The area includes the eastern part of the Muwasi humanitarian zone, which is located in the southern Gaza Strip. Many Palestinians have been uprooted multiple times in search of safety during Israel's punishing air and ground campaign.

Earlier this month, Israel said it estimates at least 1.8 million Palestinians are now in the humanitarian zone it declared covering a stretch of about 14 kilometres (8.6 miles) along the Mediterranean. Much of that area is now blanketed with tent camps that lack sanitation and medical facilities and have limited access to aid, UN and humanitarian groups say. Families live in the midst of mountains of trash and streams contaminated by sewage.

The announcement came during delicate negotiations seeking a cease-fire in Gaza, with US and Israeli officials expressing hope that an agreement is closer than ever. A negotiating team will be sent to continue talks on Thursday, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office said. Egypt, Qatar and the United States are continuing to push Israel and Hamas toward a phased cease-fire deal that would stop the fighting and free the hostages.

Netanyahu left Monday morning on a much-anticipated trip to the United States to meet with President Joe Biden, who announced Sunday that he will not seek another term, and address Congress.

Netanyahu said that regardless of who becomes the next US president, "our enemies must know that Israel and the United States stand together tomorrow and always." He said he will thank Biden for more than 40 years of friendship, while also pushing him for more support on certain issues.

Also on Monday, Israeli police said a Canadian citizen was killed after threatening Israeli security forces with a knife near the Gaza border. The Israeli military said the man drove to

the entrance of an Israeli town close to the border, left his vehicle and approached the security forces with a knife. The forces opened fire and killed the man. There were no other injuries.

The attack took place at the entrance of the Israeli town of Netiv HaAsara, which is just 300 metres (yards) north of the Gaza border. On October 7, Netiv HaAsara was attacked and 20 residents were killed after gunmen passed over the concrete border wall using paragliders, according to Israeli military officials. Israel has experienced a wave of stabbing attacks across the country during the nine-month war in Gaza.

The war in Gaza has killed more than 38,900 people, according to the territory's Health Ministry, which doesn't distinguish between combatants and civilians in its count. The war began with an assault by Hamas militants on southern Israel on October 7 that killed 1,200 people, most of them civilians, and took about 250 hostages. About 120 remain held, about a third of them believed to be dead, according to Israeli authorities.

The Israeli military said on Monday that it is continuing to operate in central and southern Gaza. On Sunday, Israeli airstrikes killed at least 15 people, including women and children, in Gaza, according to hospital officials and a body count by an Associated Press journalist. The already precarious humanitarian conditions inside besieged Gaza have worsened with the discovery of the polio virus as water and sanitation services have deteriorated for the territory's 2.3 million people, most of them displaced. Traces of the virus were found in sewage samples in Gaza. The World Health Organisation has said no one has been treated for symptoms caused by the disease.

Israel's military said soldiers would be vaccinated and it would work with organisations to bring in vaccines for Palestinians.

Netanyahu has vowed to wipe out Hamas' military and governing capabilities and secure the return of the remaining hostages. Families of hostages and thousands of other Israelis have held weekly demonstrations to urge the prime minister to reach a cease-fire deal that would bring their loved ones home. (AP)

Israel's Netanyahu walks political tightrope on Washington trip following Biden's exit from race

JERUSALEM, July 22: Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu left for Washington on Monday, leaving behind a brutal war to make a politically precarious speech before Congress at a time of great uncertainty following Joe Biden's withdrawal from the presidential race.

Before stepping on the plane, Netanyahu said that regardless of who will be the next president, "our enemies must know that Israel and the United States stand together tomorrow and always." He added that he intended to meet with President Biden and thank him for more than 40 years of friendship, while pushing him on certain issues where Netanyahu wants to receive more support.

With efforts ongoing to bring about a cease-fire between Israel and Hamas, rising concerns about the war spreading to Lebanon and Yemen, and the US in the midst of a dizzying election campaign, Netanyahu's speech has the potential to cause disarray on both sides of the ocean. The risks only increased with Biden's decision Sunday to drop out of the race for president, especially since the choice of a replacement Democratic nominee - and the potential next American leader - are still up in the air.

A person familiar with Biden's schedule confirmed Sunday that the president will host Netanyahu at the White House. The official, speaking on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to comment publicly, said the exact timing of the meeting has not been established because Biden is recovering from COVID-19.

Netanyahu is scheduled to address Congress on Wednesday. He is also expected to meet with Vice President Kamala Harris, who is seeking the

Democratic Party's presidential nomination.

An official in Netanyahu's office confirmed that the Israeli leader was set to travel to Washington on Monday. The official also spoke on condition of anonymity pending a formal announcement.

Netanyahu will deliver his congressional address with an eye on several audiences: his ultranationalist governing partners, the key to his political survival; the Biden administration, which Netanyahu counts on for diplomatic and military support; and Donald Trump's Republican Party, which could offer Netanyahu a reset in relations if he is reelected in November.

His words risk angering any one of those constituencies, which the Israeli leader cannot afford if he hopes to hold on to his tenuous grip on power.

"There are a few land mines and pitfalls on this trip," Eytan Gilboa, an expert on US-Israel relations at Israel's Bar-Ilan University, said before Biden's withdrawal. "He is thought of as a political wizard who knows how to escape from traps. I am not sure he still knows how to do that."

It is Netanyahu's fourth speech to Congress - more than any other world leader. During his address, his far-right governing partners will want to hear his resolve to continue the war and topple Hamas.

The Biden administration will look for progress toward the latest US-backed cease-fire proposal and

details on a postwar vision. Republicans hope Netanyahu besmirches Biden and bolsters the GOP's hoped-for perception as Israel's stalwart supporter.

Upon receiving the invitation, Netanyahu said he would "present the truth about our just war against those who seek to destroy us". The war, which was sparked by Hamas' Oct 7 attack on southern Israel, has tested Israel's ties with its top ally as never before.

The Biden administration has stood staunchly beside Israel. But it has grown increasingly alarmed about the conduct of the Israeli military, the continued difficulties of getting humanitarian aid into Gaza, especially after the short-lived US military pier off Gaza coast, as well as Israel's lack of postwar plans and the harm to civilians in Gaza. Similar concerns will likely persist if Americans elect a new Democratic president.

Biden earlier this year froze the delivery of certain bombs over fears they would be used in Israel's incursion into the southern Gaza city of Rafah, which at the time sheltered more than half of Gaza's population of 2.3 million. The US abstained from a United Nations Security Council vote in March that called for a cease-fire and the release of hostages but did not link the two. Netanyahu called the decision a "retreat" from a "principled position" by Israel's ally. (AP)



Rescuers search for dozens missing after flooding and a bridge collapse in China kill at least 25

BEIJING, July 22: Rescuers on Monday were searching for dozens missing after heavy rains caused flash flooding and a bridge collapse in different parts of China, killing at least 25 people.

Flash flooding tore through a village in southwestern Sichuan province in the middle of the night Saturday, and rescuers said 10 people died and they were searching for another 29 missing.

Days of heavy rain swelled the river that runs through the village of Xinhua in Hanyuan county. The water swept away 40 houses on the riverbank, according to local media, while also breaking bridges and cutting off roads.

In northwestern Shaanxi province, vehicles fell into a rushing river when part of a highway bridge collapsed on late Friday, and state broadcaster CCTV reported at least 15 deaths confirmed as of Monday.

A photo released by China's Xinhua news agency showed a section of the bridge snapped and folded at almost a 90-degree angle into the rushing brown water below.

Rescuers said Saturday some 20 cars and 30 people were missing.

The collapse raised more questions about the safety of China's road and bridge infrastructure, which was built rapidly in recent decades. A similar collapse in May in Guangdong province killed 36 people.

Heavy rain and flooding pose a special risk to mountain roadways and highway bridges because of erosion, debris flows and landslides.

With climate change, the world is likely to face more extreme weather and climate events such as record heat and rainfall. This year, in just the first five days of May, 70 countries or territories broke heat records. (AP)

Internet is down in B'desh despite apparent calm following protests



DHAKA, July 22: Bangladesh remained without internet for a fifth day and the government declared a public holiday on Monday, as authorities maintained tight control despite apparent calm following a court order that scaled back a controversial system for allocating government jobs that sparked violent protests.

This comes after a curfew with a shoot-on-sight order was installed days earlier and military personnel could be seen patrolling the capital and other areas.

The South Asian country witnessed clashes between the police and mainly student protesters demanding an end to a quota that reserved 30% of government jobs for relatives of veterans who fought in Bangladesh's war of independence in 1971. The violence has killed more than a hundred people, according to at least four local newspapers. Authorities have not so far shared official figures for deaths. There was no immediate violence reported on Monday morning after the Supreme Court ordered, the day before, the veterans' quota to be cut to 5%.

On Sunday night, some student protesters urged the government to restore internet services. Hasnat Abdullah, a coordinator of the Anti-Discrimination Student Movement, told the Associated Press that they were withdrawing their calls for a complete shutdown, which they attempted to impose last week.

"But we are issuing an ultimatum for 48 hours to stop the digital crackdown and restore internet connectivity,"

he said, adding that security officials deployed at various universities should be withdrawn, student dormitories reopened and steps taken so students can return to their campuses safely. Abdullah also said they wanted the government to end the curfew and ensure the country was back to normal within two days. Students have also demanded some university officials to step down after failing to protect campuses.

Sarjis Alam, another coordinator of the Anti-Discrimination Student Movement, said that they would continue with their protests if all their demands weren't met. "We cannot step back from our movement like a coward," he added. Another key organizer of the student protests, Nahid Islam, told reporters that the internet shutdown had disrupted their ability to communicate and alleged that authorities were trying to create divisions among protesters. "I am mentally traumatized... our unity is being destroyed," he said.

The US Embassy in the capital Dhaka described Sunday the situation as "extremely volatile" and "unpredictable," adding that guns, tear gas and other weapons have been used in the vicinity of the embassy. They said the Bangladeshi army had been deployed and urged Americans to be vigilant, avoid large crowds and reconsider travel plans.

The protests have posed the most serious challenge to Bangladesh's government since Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina won a fourth consecutive term in January elections that the main opposition groups boycotted. Universities have been closed, the internet has been shut off and the government has ordered people to stay at home.

Protesters had argued the quota system was discriminatory and benefited supporters of Hasina, whose Awami League party led the independence movement, and wanted it replaced by a merit-based system. Hasina has defended the quota system, saying that veterans deserve the highest respect regardless of political affiliation. (AP)

Pak Army says 'organised political mafia' spreading misinformation about new military operation against militants

ISLAMABAD, July 22: The Pakistan Army on Monday said that an "organised political mafia" was spreading misinformation about a planned new counter-terrorism operation, 'Azm-e-Istehkam', aimed to flush out militants and foster economic growth and stability.

Army spokesperson Lt Gen Ahmad Sharif addressing a press conference in Rawalpindi talked about various pressing issues, including the launch of the operation.

"A massive illegal, political mafia rose to sabotage the operation and the first move of that mafia was to make the operations controversial through false and fake arguments," he said. Referring to Pakistan's earlier major military operations, Operation Zarb-e-Azb and Operation Radd-ul-Fasaad, which resulted in large-scale displacements, a reporter inquired if similar displacements would occur during the current operation, Azm-e-Istehkam.

"This is not a military operation but a comprehensive counter-terrorism initiative aimed at fostering economic growth and stability," he said. He referred to the previous military

operations and said, "Our issue is that we make every important issue... a joke because of our politics".

The army spokesperson said the problem is that "we are sacrificing even very important issues on the altar of politics and Azm-e-Istehkam is one such example of this".

He also clarified that it was only for the purpose of "reinvigorating the already in-place National Action Plan (NAP)", which was launched in 2014 to eliminate militancy. He said efforts already underway would be "augmented" by law enforcement agencies empowered by effective legislation, as per the original announcement of the operation.

The spokesperson said a "very strong lobby" did not want the objectives of the NAP to be fulfilled "because the stakes in (sabotaging) operation are very high and it's not based on any ideal-

ogy but involves a lot of money".

Pointing to the National Action Plan's 14 points, he said kinetic operations were "underway in a splendid manner" with "four to five operations underway every hour".

Sharif said the NAP decided in 2014 to set up Counter-Terrorism Departments at the provincial

levels and they would be responsible for leading operations against terrorism.

He said it was also decided to register all the religious seminars but only 16,000 out of about 32,000 seminars have been registered so far.

Providing updates on the counter-terrorism operations so far this year, he said 22,409 intelligence-based operations were conducted against terrorists and their facilitators.

He said over 112 operations were being conducted daily by the military and law enforcement agencies against terrorism. (PTI)

Assailant kills and wounds several people at a care home in central Croatia

ZAGREB, July 22: An assailant entered an elderly care home on Monday in central Croatia, killing and wounding several people, Croatian police said. Media reports said five people were killed. The Index news portal said five people died immediately, while others were still receiving medical assistance.

The suspect fled the scene, but the police soon caught him in a cafe near the facility in the town of Daruvar, the report said.

Police said they were informed after 10 am Monday that a man using firearms killed and wounded several people at the nursing home.

The suspect is "under police supervision," said a statement by the regional police office.

The NI regional television reported that the shooter was born in 1973, that he was a former fighter from the 1991-95 war in Croatia and a relative of one of the nursing home's residents.

Daruvar is a spa town and municipality in Slavonia, with a population of 8,500 people.

Authorities are investigating the motive behind the attack. (AP)

Arunachal CM assures equitable distribution of funds

In a bid to foster inclusive development of state

ITANAGAR, July 22: Arunachal Pradesh chief minister Pema Khandu on Monday reiterated his commitment to ensuring equitable distribution of development funds across all districts.

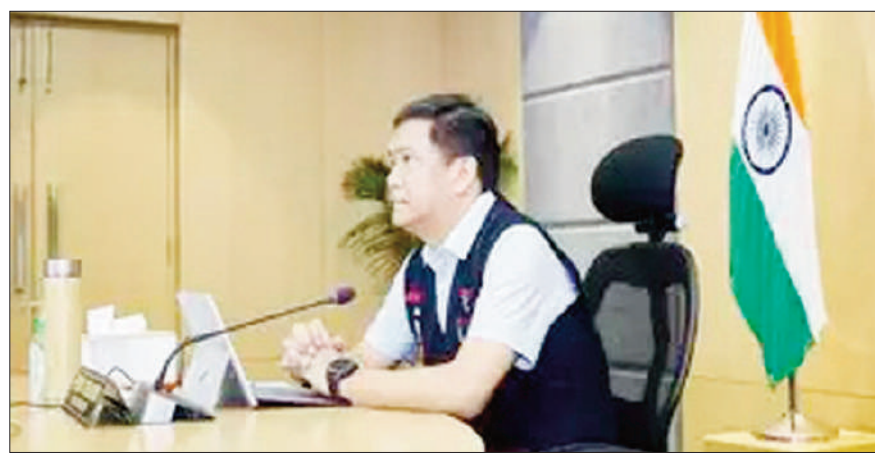
Participating in the 'motion of thanks' to the Governor's address delivered in the first session of the Eight Legislative Assembly on June 15, the CM said suggestions put by various members irrespective of party affiliations would be honoured by the state government.

He emphasised the crucial role of connectivity in the state's development journey, aiming to achieve a 'Viksit Arunachal' by 2047, aligning with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision for a prosperous India.

Highlighting significant strides in overcoming communication challenges such as road, air, railway, and digital connectivity, Khandu credited these advancements to sustained attention from the central government.

He acknowledged connectivity as a historical impediment to development and noted that since assuming office in July 2016, his administration has prioritised enhancing infrastructure.

Looking ahead, Khandu outlined ambitious



plans to connect all remaining villages in Arunachal Pradesh with road and mobile networks within the next five years.

He cited a nine-fold increase in road construction pace over the past eight years and a 143 per cent expansion of the state's national highway network due to initiatives spearheaded by Modi.

In terms of tourism, Khandu reported a re-

markable 141 per cent rise in domestic tourist visits and a 36 per cent increase in foreign tourist arrivals.

In healthcare, over 7 lakh people have benefited from the Chief Minister Arogya Arunachal Yojana (CMAAY), while one lakh women have been connected to various schemes through self-help groups. Additionally, more than 20,000 farmers have been supported under

schemes promoting self-reliant agriculture, he added.

Advocating for a development framework anchored in transparency and accountability, Khandu encouraged proactive participation from legislators across party lines to achieve a robust Gross State Happiness Index.

Taking part in the discussion, lone Congress member Kumar Waii suggested a change in the state's land policy by giving ownership to people so that seeking finance to start business from banks by people could be made easier.

PPA legislator Nabam Vivek suggested the government for prioritising the health and education sectors while Independent member Laisam Simai suggested for including the Indo-Myanmar border under the Centre's ambitious vibrant village programme in the state.

During the day, the Assembly passed the Balipara, Tirap, Sadiya Frontier Tract Jhum Land Regulation bill in its amended form through voice vote.

State Urban Development and Land Management Minister Balo Raja had introduced the Bill on July 19, the first day of the Budget session of the state Assembly. The Bill will deal with land compensation procedures in the state. (PTI)

Action against illegal issue of ILP in Manipur



IMPHAL, July 22: Manipur chief minister N Biren Singh informed that raids were conducted at five locations where there was widespread illegal issue/sale of Inner Line Permit (ILP).

Addressing a press briefing today at his office, the Chief Minister said that so far nine persons have been arrested including one LDC in the Labour department in this connection.

N Biren Singh said that on investigation, so far it has been revealed that around 3500 number of ILPs have been prepared through the said 5 outlets in Imphal.

A Special Investigating Team (SIT) led by an Additional SP rank officer shall be instituted for further investigation of the case, he added.

During the raid, certain items were seized including computers and laptops, the chief minister said.

The State Government views the issues of ILP very seriously, he said,

adding that Prime Minister Narendra Modi had granted the implementation of the ILP in the State to save the indigenous population.

He further called on all the officers and officials involved in its implementation to act with sincerity, dedication and nationalism.

The chief minister also clarified that only the concerned deputy commissioners and the Labour Commissioner are the ILP card issuing authorities and that they cannot authorize their subordinate officials to issue these cards.

Stressing that anyone with fake ILP cards should surrender before the police or concerned authorities at the earliest, the Chief Minister said that the government has already implemented the ILP Facial Recognition System to identify ILP defaulters.

He further warned of stringent actions as per the law of the land against anyone found misusing the ILP. He said steps have also been taken up to strengthen all ILP monitoring cells.

Further stating that the base year for ILP has been adopted as 1961, he said that steps will be taken up to verify all ILP holders through the issuing authorities and Labour department. (NNN)

Deplorable condition of Imphal-Silchar road irks drivers



HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, July 22: Following a steering down strike launched by drivers plying their vehicles between Silchar (Assam) to Imphal (Manipur) and vice-versa, over 100 goods-laden trucks and liquefied petroleum gas tankers are stranded at Jiribam, Manipur's last border town with Assam on the west.

The agitation started on Monday under the aegis of the All Jiribam Road Transport Drivers' Union (AJRTDU) and will continue till July 24.

This was stated by the president of the AJRTDU, Sadananda Meitei while talking to the newsmen on Monday.

Sadananda said that the road condition of the NH-37 connecting Imphal to Jiribam dis-

trict headquarters has turned from bad to worse during this rainy season despite the Road Transport and Highways being responsible for construction, periodic repairing and maintenance of this road, the lifeline of the mendicant Manipur state.

In this regard, the AJRTDU urged the National Highways and Infrastructure Development Corporation Limited (NHIDCL) to complete the road repair works by July 24.

The president also stated that the Government of Manipur ought to supervise construction and maintenance as Manipur is the beneficiary State of NH-37.

Because of the dilapidated road condition, the plying of vehicles on the distance of around 222 km from Imphal to Jiribam takes around four to five days, the president added.

Abu Metha from Nagaland nominated delegate for Paris Olympics



DIMAPUR, July 22: Associate vice president, Athletics Federation of India (AFI), Abu Metha from Nagaland, has been nominated by the Athletics Federation of India as a delegate for the forthcoming Paris Olympics Games 2024 to be held from July 26

to August 11, 2024.

In a letter, secretary of AFI, Ravinder Chaudhry stated that Metha's expertise and experience will significantly contribute to the success of the Indian delegation.

Chief minister, Neiphiu Rio also

congratulated Metha on his nomination and stated that his experience will greatly benefit games and sports in India, especially Nagaland.

Abu Metha, who is the associate vice president of the Athletics Federation of India is also the working president of the North East Olympic Association.

He was also the Team Leader of the Indian Team at the World Under 22 Athletics Championships held in Nairobi, Kenya.

Under his leadership, India hosted the South Asian Cross-Country Championships in Kohima, Nagaland.

He is also the Convenor of the National Mountain Running Committee under Athletics Federation of India and World Athletics.

Nagaland had recently hosted the North East Olympic Games under his Convenorship, where the state team finished 2nd in the overall medals tally. (NNN)

Army recovers arms and ammunition in Manipur

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, July 22: The Indian Army launched a joint operation with Manipur Police and CRPF on Monday in general area Phougachak Ikhai, in Bishnupur district of Manipur.

The operation was carried out acting on specific information regarding the presence of substantial quantity of arms and explosives.

After carrying out extensive search of the area the operation lead to successful recovery of one 9mm Carbine Machine Gun, one Single barrel 12 bore rifle, ammunition and explosives.

The recoveries have been handed over to the Manipur police for further investigation and disposal, Army stated.

Skill development programme in Nagaland

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, July 22: Minister for Women Resources Development and Horticulture, Salhoutuonuo Kruse on Monday flagged-off the skill development programme for Rural Women through Mobile Skill Moring programme at Sechi-Zubza, Kohima.

Kruse highlighted the transformative potential of the programme. She also emphasised that the training would equip the participants with skills to create garments and source of livelihood.

She expressed confidence in the participants' potential impact, stating that the skills acquired would empower them through their work.

Secretary and ex-officio director employment, skill development and entrepreneurship Kovi Meyase, underscored the urgent need to address workforce participation disparities between rural and urban women.

He emphasised the significance of the skill development programme in Nagaland, where despite a relatively higher female workforce participation rate, rural women are predominantly engaged in agriculture.

Security beefed up at India-Bangladesh border in Meghalaya: BSF



SHILLONG, July 22: Security was beefed up at the India-Bangladesh border in Meghalaya to prevent illegal immigration in view of the ongoing unrest in the neighbouring country, a BSF official said on Monday.

Named 'Ops Alert', it is an exercise to ensure effective border domination and management, Inspector General (IG) of BSF's Meghalaya Frontier Harbax Singh Dhillon said. "So far, the BSF has facilitated the entry of 574 Indian students, 435 Nepal students, and eight students from Bhutan through the Dawki Integrated Check Post (ICP) in East Khasi Hills district," he said.

"Additionally, 18 students entered

today through the Kilapara ICP in West Garo Hills district," he added. Dhillon said BSF personnel have been directed to extend all possible assistance to the students at the border, by providing them with drinking water, food and medical assistance, besides help to travel home.

More students are expected to cross over as the unrest in Bangladesh is unlikely to subside soon, he said.

He also said that all nationalities entering India from Bangladesh through proper channels were being provided with assistance.

"Security along the border has been beefed up to ensure that illegal entry is thwarted," the IG said. (PTI)

HYC continues to crack down on drug menace

SHILLONG, July 22: The Hynniewtrep Youth Council, in its ongoing drive against the drug menace afflicting the local youth in Shillong, conducted a raid in public spaces last night which continued into the wee hours recently. This raid was led by HYC Secretary Isaac Basaiawmait in the presence of Vice President Domboklang Kharlyngdoh.

In the raid, about 20 local youths as well as individuals from outside the state were apprehended along with 15 containers used to store drugs, cash, marijuana, alcohol and knives.

The raid started from Polo area to Motphran,

Them Iew Mawlong and Stand Bhoi.

After the seizure, the drugs were set aflame in front of the apprehended.

Out of 20 apprehended drug users, three minors were shifted to rehabilitation centers in Assam after the consent of the parents.

Isaac Basaiawmait said that despite the summons of the law enforcement agencies to the leaders of the HYC, the council party will not be afraid and will continue to raid, as it is clear that if there are fewer drug users and dealers, there are fewer crimes in the state. (NNN)

Arunachal Assembly pays tributes to former minister Talo Mugli

ITANAGAR, July 22: The Arunachal Pradesh Assembly on Monday paid tributes to former minister Talo Mugli, who died recently after prolonged illness.

Mugli held his last at his residence at Raga in Kamle district on July 18. He was 68.

Assembly Speaker Tesam Pongte led the House in making obituary reference for Mugli, who served as a minister in various capacities in the Gegong Apang and Mukut Mithi governments in the northeastern state.

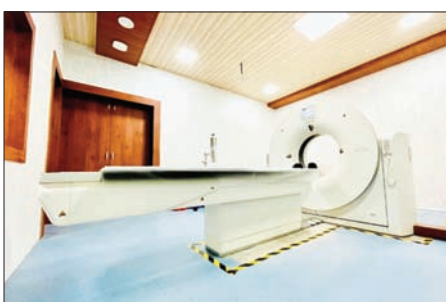
Mugli was first elected to the as-



sembly in 1990 and later served as minister for the PWD and rural development departments.

"With his demise, the state has lost a dynamic leader... His death is an irreparable loss for the state," the Speaker said.

Hi-tech CT Scan Machine installed at PIMC



HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, July 22: The PA Sangma International Medical College and Hospital (PIMC), a dream project under the University of Science and Technology Meghalaya (USTM), is rapidly progressing with state-of-the-art infrastructure facilities. Today, another hi-tech CT scan machine has been installed at PIMC, enhancing the hospital's diagnostic capabilities.

In this context, Mahbul Hoque, chancellor of USTM stated, "PIMC will be ready soon to face any critical situations of healthcare emergency and treatment using the latest technology under the guidance of competent and expert teams of doctors." Now the people of Meghalaya and other North Eastern states can avail of the facilities at PIMC at a very cheap rate. PIMC is working aggressively to collaborate with most of the outstanding hospitals of the country to attract expert doctors

and to offer doorstep services to patients of NE", he added.

The hospital is already equipped with basic x-ray and imaging equipment to advanced medical devices including Endoscopy, FibroScan, CT scan, etc. Soon, two MRI machines, Spectral and higher-end CT for cardiovascular imaging, digital mammography, Cath and vascular lab for both diagnostic and intervention procedures, and other hi-tech equipment will also be incorporated into the Radiology and Imaging Sciences department of the institution. This will shape the department not only for disease diagnosis but also for minimally invasive image-guided treatment, follow-up, and response evaluation, he said.

The chancellor further stated, "500 super speciality beds will be added to the existing 605-bed modern teaching hospital. At present 20 numbers of modular OTs are under construction, in addition to the existing 5 OTs". The super speciality section is equipped with advanced technological facilities for cutting-edge research. In addition, the blood bank is also operational now. Mobile Operation Theatre will also be launched very soon. All super speciality branches including heart, kidney, and liver transplant centers will be made functioning from the next year.

Consistent with its mission, this hospital is providing completely free medical care to all poor patients. The institution also aims to attract patients and students from ASEAN countries.

Bhairabi - Sairang new line achieves 93% progress

Advancing towards seamless rail connectivity in Mizoram

HT Bureau
GUWAHATI, July 22: The NFR has stated that the Bhairabi-Sairang New Line Railway Project to connect the capital of the North-eastern state of Mizoram to the rest of the country is at an advance stage of completion.

This project once completed will be a game changer project in terms of communication and commerce for the people of Mizoram.

The economical and environment friendly railway services will have a positive impact on almost all development works in the state, NFR stated.

The 51.38 Km new line between Bhairabi and Sairang is divided into four sections, namely Bhairabi-Hortoki, Hortoki-Kawnpui, Kawnpui-Mualkhang and Mualkhang-Sairang. The project has



already achieved physical progress of 93%.

Construction of the Bhairabi - Sairang railway project involves multiple tunnels and bridges in tough terrains.

The total length of tunnels

in this project is 12853 meters out of which 12807 meters tunneling works has already been completed. The project will have total 55 major bridges and 89 minor bridges, out of which work for 47 major bridges and 87 minor

bridges have been completed so far.

The work of construction of the tallest pier of the project i.e Pier P-4 of bridge no. 196 in the approach of Sairang station has also been completed.

Height of this pier is 104 meter which is 42 meter taller than the Qutub Minar. The project also includes 5 Road Over Bridges & 6 Road Under Bridges. There will be four stations in this project; Hortoki, Kawnpui, Mualkhang, and Sairang.

Though there are many challenges in execution of this project like very less working season due to very heavy and prolonged monsoons, very tough and hilly terrain through deep forests, poor accessibility, non-availability of construction materials and skilled labor in

Mizoram etc., Northeast Frontier Railway is making all efforts for fulfilling its commitment of earliest commissioning of the project.

The new rail project will provide enhanced connectivity to the people of the Mizoram, help grow small scale industries in the area and boost tourism of the state.

This project will ensure substantial cost reduction on transportation of passengers and various materials & commodities to this hilly state to cater to the needs of the local population.

Travel time between the capital of Mizoram and nearby places of Assam will reduce significantly.

People of the region will get long distance access across the country and uninterrupted supply of essential goods, NFR further stated.

Oppn MPs welcome SC's interim stay on Kanwar eatery order

NEW DELHI, July 22: Trinamool Congress MP Mahua Moitra and other opposition MPs on Monday welcomed the Supreme Court's decision imposing interim stay on directives passed by the Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand governments that stipulated eateries along the Kanwar Yatra route must display names of owners.

Moitra, one of the petitioners in the case, called the two governments' decision unconstitutional, and called the court order a victory for all Indians.

"We have just got a stay on the completely illegal and unconstitutional Kanwar Yatra order which UP had started... Muzaffarnagar Police, and then extended it to the whole of UP and parts of Uttarakhand," Moitra told PTI.

"It was requiring all shops and establishments along the Kanwar Yatra route to say the names of the owners and staff of the establishment. This was leading to religious discrimination," she said.

"We had filed against it. The Supreme Court had just stayed it completely, and there is no requirement for any eatery to have to display the names of their owners... It is a great victory for the Constitution, and for all people of India," Moitra added.

Samajwadi Party Chief Akhilesh Yadav alleged that the directive for eateries, as well as decision to allow government servants to participate in RSS activities, indicate the BJP's desperation. (PTI)

Undemocratic attempt made to scuttle voice of PM: Modi slams opposition

NEW DELHI, July 22: Asserting that Parliament is not for 'dal' but for 'desh', Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday hit out at the opposition, saying that some parties have practised "negative politics" and "misused" Parliament to hide their political failures.

Speaking with the media ahead of the start of Parliament session, Modi said the Union Budget, which will be presented on Tuesday, will set the direction for the journey of the next five years and lay the foundation for fulfilling the dream of 'Viksit Bharat' in 2047.

Modi said people have given their verdict in the Lok Sabha polls and now all political parties must fight together for the country for the next five years.

"I want to tell all MPs, they may be of any party, that from January onwards we fought a pitched electoral battle, we conveyed to the people what we wanted to convey, some showed the way while others misled, but that period is over now. The people have given their verdict," he said.

"Now it is the responsibility of all elected representatives and that of all political parties that we have fought for our respective parties and now for the next five years, we have to fight for the country and strive for it," Modi said.

The prime minister urged political parties to rise above party lines and make use of the platform of Parliament for the next four to four-and-a-half years.

"In January, 2024, when it will be an election year, then you can go into the poll field, even make use of Par-



liament for it. Play the games you want to for those six months but till then, work for empowering the poor, farmers, youth and women by building a movement of people's participation to fulfil the dream of 2047," Modi said.

"I say with a lot of sadness that after 2014, some MPs were elected for 5 years, some for 10 years, but many MPs did not get a chance to talk about their constituency and share their views in Parliament because of the negative politics of some parties that misused Parliament to hide their political failures," he said. Modi urged all parties to give a chance to first-time MPs to speak in Parliament and give opportunities to them.

"You would have seen that in the first session of this Lok Sabha. An undemocratic attempt was made to scuttle the voice of the government that had been ordered by 140 crore

Indians to serve. For two-and-a-half hours, attempts were made to scuttle the voice of the prime minister and such a thing has no place in democratic traditions. They have no remorse over it," Modi said.

His remarks were an apparent reference to the incident in the last session when Modi delivered his reply to the debate on the Motion of Thanks on the President's address amid vociferous protests and sloganeering by the opposition that was demanding that both MPs from Manipur be allowed to speak.

"People have sent us here for desh not dal. This Parliament is not for 'dal (party)' but for 'desh (country)'. This Parliament is not limited to MPs but it is for 140 crore people of the country," he asserted.

Modi hoped that all MPs will contribute to the debate.

He said there was nothing wrong with opposing views but it was the

negative views that are wrong. The country does not need negativity, he said.

"We have to take the country forward with the ideology of development and progress," Modi said.

He also said that the Monsoon session is an important destination in our democracy's proud journey.

"It is a matter of immense pride for me personally as well as for all of our colleagues that after nearly 60 years a government has come back for the third time and has got the privilege of presenting the first budget of the third term. The country is seeing this as a very proud event in the glorious journey of Indian democracy," he said.

Modi said his government is moving forward to implement on the ground the guarantees he has given to the people.

"We are moving ahead with the aim of gradually realising the guarantees that I have been giving to the people of the country. This budget is an important budget of Amrit Kaal. We have got an opportunity of five years and this budget will determine the direction of our work for those five years and also lay a strong foundation for fulfilling our dream of a 'Viksit Bharat' in 2047, when we will celebrate 100 years of independence," he said.

He highlighted that India is the fastest growing country among the major economies with about eight percent growth in the last three consecutive years.

Today, opportunities are at the peak due to positive outlook, investment and performance, he said. (PTI)

Cong's 'raj dharma' jibe at PM, BJP after SC stays Kanwar Yatra directive

Large number of devotees travel from various places with 'kanwars' carrying holy water from Ganga to perform 'jalabhishek' of Shivalings

NEW DELHI, July 22: The Congress Monday welcomed the Supreme Court stay on Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand governments' orders asking eateries on the Kanwar Yatra routes to display the owners' names, and said the party hopes Prime Minister Narendra Modi makes BJP chief ministers aware of their 'raj dharma'.

The Supreme Court on Monday ordered an interim stay on the directives issued by the two BJP-ruled states. They had asked eatery owners along the Kanwar Yatra routes to display the names of their owners, the staff and other details, a move the opposition has claimed is intended to promote religious discrimination.

Issuing notice to the governments of Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand and Madhya Pradesh, where the Ujjain municipal body has issued a similar directive, a bench of Justices Hrishikesh Roy and SVN Bhatti, however, said eateries may be required to display the kind of food they are serving like they are vegetarian or non-vegetarian.

Reacting to the development, Congress' media and publicity department head Pawan Khera said, "We welcome the stay given by the Supreme Court on the completely unconstitutional orders by the Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand and Madhya Pradesh governments wherein they have asked all shopkeepers, eateries and street vendors to put their name and identity on boards outside especially during the Kanwar Yatra. This was unconstitutional and the Congress along with the entire opposition opposed it."

"We are very happy that the Supreme Court has given such a strong order and we hope that the prime minister makes his chief ministers aware of their 'raj dharma (solemn duty)'. Unfortunately, he is the same PM, who when he was the chief minister of Gujarat, then prime minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee asked him to follow 'raj dharma' but he defied Atal ji," Khera said in his video statement.

"We hope his CMs don't defy him. Although the prime minister's position in his party is considerably weakened, we hope he retrieves that position and asserts himself and stops his chief ministers from indulging in such unconstitutional measures," he said.

A large number of devotees travel from various places with 'kanwars' carrying holy water from the Ganga to perform 'jalabhishek' of Shivalings during the Hindu calendar month of 'Shravan'. Many believers shun consuming meat during the month they consider holy.

The significant order comes amid an escalating row over the directives, with even BJP ally Rashtriya Lok Dal (RLD) joining the chorus for their withdrawal and opposition parties resolving to raise the issue in Parliament.

The opposition has alleged that the orders were "communal and divisive" and intended to target Muslims and Scheduled Castes by forcing them to reveal their identity, but the BJP maintained that the step has been taken keeping in mind law and order issues and the religious sentiments of pilgrims. (PTI)

Displaying names not mandatory for shopkeepers along Kanwar Yatra route: MP govt

BHOPAL, July 22: The BJP government in Madhya Pradesh has clarified that it has not issued any instructions requiring shop owners to display their names along the Kanwar Yatra route in the state, and there is no such compulsion.

Amidst a row in Uttar Pradesh over a directive to highlight shop owners' names on eateries along the Yatra route, the MP government has asked urban bodies to refrain from spreading any confusion.

A statement was issued by the Urban Development and Housing Department (UDHD) on Sunday night, days after the Ujjain mayor claimed shop owners had been directed to display their names and phone numbers on boards.

No instructions have been issued at the state government level regarding writing the names of shop owners on boards of their establishments along the Kanwar Yatra routes in urban areas, the UDHD stated.

Ujjain mayor Mukesh Tatwal last week cited a purported decision of the mayor-in-council

dated September 26, 2002, and claimed a proposal asking shopkeepers to display their names had been approved.

He claimed the approval was forwarded to the state government for objections and all formalities have been completed.

Stating that such reports are inaccurate, the UDHD instructed urban bodies to avoid spreading confusion regarding directives to shop owners along the Kanwar Yatra route, emphasising that Madhya Pradesh Outdoor Advertisement Media Rules, 2017, do not compel shop owners to display their names on boards.

"Boards can be put up on shops under the Madhya Pradesh Outdoor Advertisement Media Rules, 2017. There is no compulsion to display the name of the shop owner on these boards," the UDHD stated.

Following the mayor's comments, the Ujjain Municipal Corporation also confirmed that no proposal is in place to mandate the display of names and phone numbers on shop boards in the city.

Separately, BJP MLA Ramesh Mendola had written to Chief Minister Mohan Yadav, expressing support for shop owners to proudly display their names. Mendola argued that the display of names is a matter of personal pride and customer right, and not something to be mandated or discouraged.

"Every small and big trader, businessman, and shopkeeper in Madhya Pradesh will experience a sense of pride in telling their names," the MLA stated.

In Uttar Pradesh, the controversy began when Muzaffarnagar police ordered eateries along the Kanwar Yatra route to display owners' names to avoid confusion. This directive has faced criticism from opposition parties and some ruling alliance members who argue that it unfairly targets Muslim traders.

The BJP government in UP extended this order statewide on Friday, while Uttarakhand Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami said similar instructions are already in place in his state. (PTI)

Modi suppressed voice of country for 10 years: Cong hits back at PM for his criticism of Oppn

NEW DELHI, July 22: The Congress hit back at Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday over his remarks criticising the opposition, alleging that it was he who "suppressed the voice" of the country for 10 years and for which people "punished" him in the Lok Sabha polls.

Talking to reporters ahead of the start of a Parliament session, Modi said in the first session of this Lok Sabha, "an undemocratic attempt was made to scuttle the voice of the government that had been ordered by 140 crore Indians to serve".

"For two-and-a-half hours, attempts were made to scuttle the voice of the prime minister and such a thing has no place in democratic traditions. They (opposition) has no remorse over it," he said.

Hitting back at Modi over his remarks, Congress's media and publicity department head Pawan Khera said the person who "throttled the country and suppressed its voice" for 10 years, today looked "very weak and was seen weeping" when the opposition raised its voice.

The prime minister started the Monsoon session by making a comment on the opposition that was not befitting of his post, Khera said.

"He said the opposition throttled the voice of the prime minister for two-and-a-half hours. It is important to remind Prime Minister Modi that during his unjust rule of the last 10 years, the entire country was suffocated, for which the public has punished him," he said in a post in Hindi on X.

"Prime Minister Modi has forgotten that he is not the prime minister of a majority government, but the 'one-third' prime minister of an NDA government run with the support of two parties," he added.

He should also avoid using the term Modi government and prove himself to be democratic, the Congress leader said.

"It would be appropriate to remind Prime Minister Narendra Modi that when he was giving this speech, the Supreme Court was hearing a case against suppressing the voice of 32 lakh students of the country and the injustice done to them by his government," Khera said, referring to the National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test (NEET) issue.

"When you were giving your speech full of arrogance and lies, it is important to tell you that more than 15 Agniveers of the country have been forced to commit suicide with the dream of sacrificing their



lives for the country in their hearts," the Congress leader said.

Every hour, 19 farmers and labourers in the country are forced to commit suicide by hanging themselves, he claimed.

"You are right prime minister, Parliament is for the country. It is not the court of any king. Therefore, the opposition is forced to raise the voice and the pain of youngsters, farmers, soldiers, labourers, women, backward, Dalits, tribals and the poor people of the country in Parliament," Khera said.

"It is our parliamentary duty to repeatedly interrupt and stop you so as to raise the voice of the country. You too must understand that it is important to leave everything aside and listen to the questions related to the immediate needs and problems of the country," the Congress leader said.

"The country has now given you a third chance to speak its mind. Run the country's Parliament, do not create a royal court of Sengol," he added.

Congress's deputy leader in the Lok Sabha Gaurav Gogoi hit out at the prime minister, saying the NEET issue was listed as the second topic in Monday's Question Hour, but Modi stood up and walked away before that.

"Why did he go? Was it not his responsibility to give an answer on the issue? When we demanded the education minister's resignation, he (Dharmendra Pradhan) arrogantly said why would he resign when he has been appointed as the education minister by Prime Minister Modi," Gogoi told reporters outside Parliament.

Hitting out at Modi for his remarks, the Congress's whip in the Lok Sabha, Manickam Tagore, said the prime minister should practise what he preaches by doing positive things.

"He says something else outside and does something else inside the House," Tagore alleged. (PTI)

SC dismisses plea to allow arrested political leaders to campaign virtually

NEW DELHI, July 22: The Supreme Court on Monday junked a plea seeking its direction for allowing arrested political leaders to campaign during elections virtually.

A bench of Justices Surya Kant and Ujjal Bhuyan refused to interfere with the Delhi High Court order which had dismissed the petition. "This petition has been filed with mala fide intent. It is concentrated on one politician (Arvind Kejriwal) who is every day before this court with a battery of the best lawyers. We do not deem it necessary to entertain this petition purportedly filed in public interest. Dismissed," the bench said. The top court was hearing a plea filed by Amarjeet Gupta, a law student, seeking permission for arrested political leaders to campaign through the virtual mode. (PTI)

BENGALURU, July 22: Karnataka labour minister Santosh

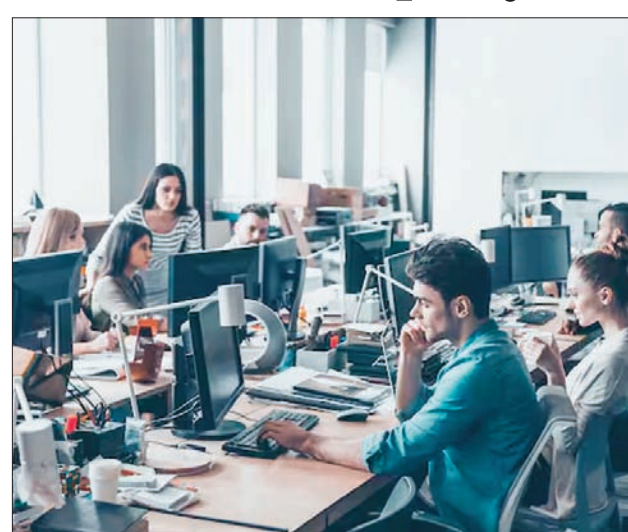
Lad on Monday said the proposal to extend the working hours of employees in the IT/ITeS/BPO sector has come from the IT industry, and the government will take a decision after looking into opinions shared by all stakeholders including leaders in the field and employees.

Stating that the IT employees union has expressed their dissent, he urged industry veterans and captains to also come out and share their views.

The proposed Karnataka Shops and Commercial Establishments (Amendment) Bill 2024 seeks to normalise a 14-hour work day. The existing act only allows a maximum of 10 hours work per day including overtime.

"It is not the minister who has brought himself (the proposed bill). The industry is pressurising. (They) are asking and they want it. Since there is pressure from the industry, the bill has come to us. We are still evaluating it at the Labour department. The question is for all the heads of the industry to discuss this," Lad said.

Speaking to reporters here, he said: "The matter is in open do-



main, people are free to discuss this. They (industry leaders) express (opinion) for everything, so I want all the big heads (of the industry) to debate and express their view. There is dissent from IT employees. I want people to have their opinion. Based on that as a department we will look into what has to be done."

Karnataka State IT/ITeS Employees' Union (KITU) that has urged the Siddaramaiah-led government to reconsider the plans to extend the working hours,

strongly opposing the proposed amendment which, it said, poses an "attack on the basic right of any worker to have a personal life."

This amendment will allow the companies to go for a two shift system instead of the currently existing three shift system, and one third of the workforce will be thrown out from their employment, it claimed.

To a question on the impact of this proposed extended workers on the health, social and personal

IT industry exerting pressure on govt to extend working hours of employees, says Santosh Lad

life of the employees, the Minister said: "Let the IT heads, the so-called big heads of the country, discuss. For everything they come out. I want the IT heads, IT company owners, Directors -- let them come and share their opinion, whether it is required or not.

The dissent is coming from the union, let the IT industry people, the heads have to speak about it positive or negative, and the government will look into what has to be done."

The IT industry is pressuring the government to go ahead with the proposal, he said. "Without their consent why would we do it suo moto. It is not done by any department, nor by the IT Minister. The pressure is from the IT industry itself, and that's how the proposal has come to us."

Asked as to why the government cannot say that they will not act on the proposal, considering the adverse impact it will have on the employees, the Minister said: "the government has done nothing. The proposal has come from the IT industry, it is good that it is in the public domain, definitely the government and my department in its wisdom will definitely take a call, but let people give their opinion."

Suhans Adiga, General Secretary of the Karnataka State IT/ITeS Employees Union, citing various reports regarding health implication of this proposed move, said as per the current understanding the employees might have to work 80-85 hours in a week.

"This cannot be accepted under any circumstances. We call upon all IT/ITeS Employees and their dependents or family members to come out and resist this," he added.

Targeting the government on the issue, state BJP President B Y Vijayendra said the Congress government in Karnataka has not only made a mockery of themselves but is "leaving no stone unturned to destroy everything in its way."

"While the Siddaramaiah govt itself is in a sleeping mode, it plans to propose a bill that will force the IT sector to work 14 Work Hours A Day, 70 A Week," he posted on 'X'.

"The Congress government (should) better worry about its own under-performing productivity, the collapsing state economy and degrading infrastructure before setting policies for a sector that's efficient & thriving," Vijayendra added. (PTI)

Since 2014, imports from China have risen from 11 per cent of the overall imports to 16 per cent, the former Union minister said, adding that the uncontrolled dumping of these imports has rendered domestic MSMEs uncompetitive, forcing them to shut down.

"Housing, a critical sector, has also done poorly. In 2023, residential real estate sales in India are only now reaching back to the levels witnessed in 2013," he said.

Ramesh claimed that the Economic Survey virtually admits the failure of the Centre's policymaking with regard to generating private investment.

"The Modi government's approach to the corporate sector has been to give generous handouts -- like the Rs 1.5 lakh crore corporate tax cut and the Rs 2 lakh crore PLI -- without directly incentivising investment or hiring," he said.

Thus, while the sops have contributed to record profit-making, private investment has not risen, Ramesh said.

"According to the economic survey, private sector GFCF in machinery and equipment and intellectual property products has grown cumulatively by only 35 per cent in the four years to FY23.... This is not a healthy mix," he said.

The Congress leader said the Economic Survey has flagged India's "slow pace of investment in M&E and IP Products" affecting manufacturing growth and formal employment growth.

Even research and development, essential for long-term growth and investment, has flat-lined, he claimed.

It is lower as a percentage of the GDP today than in 2014, when Manmohan Singh left the Prime Minister's Office, Ramesh said.

"Recall that CMIE data shows private investment plans at their lowest level in 20 years," he added.

Similarly, the Economic Survey is forced to acknowledge the unemployment situation -- "the greatest failure of the Modi government" -- Ramesh said.

"The Economic Survey has flagged that we must create nearly 80 lakh jobs each year for the next 20 years. The survey also points out that 'manufacturing sector employment creation has been subdued in the past decade', despite the hype and hoopla of Make in India," he said. (PTI)

Raising massive financial resources for net-zero goal unprecedented challenge: Economic Survey

NEW DELHI, July 22: India requires an investment support of USD 1.4 trillion -- an average of USD 28 billion per year -- to become a net-zero economy by 2070 and raising financial resources for adaptation and mitigation action of this scale is an "unprecedented challenge", according to the Economic Survey 2023-24 tabled in Parliament on Monday.

Reaching net zero means achieving a balance between greenhouse gas emissions and the amount of these gases removed from the atmosphere by either natural processes, such as photosynthesis, or by other methods of carbon capture and storage. The consolidated report on the state of the economy in the previous year said India's climate action has been largely financed through domestic resources and the flow of international finance has been "very limited".

Citing the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) data, the report said bridging the "substantial funding gap" necessitates allocating 2.5 per cent of India's annual Gross Domestic Product (GDP) to green finance.

"Preliminary estimates indicate that the aggregate investment support re-

quired by India to achieve its 2070 net-zero target will be USD 1.4 trillion at an average of USD 28 billion per year. Raising financial resources for climate change adaptation and mitigation actions of this scale is an unprecedented challenge," the document read.

A 2022 report by the Climate Policy Initiative found that domestic sources accounted for the majority of green finance in India, at 87 per cent and 83 per cent in financial years 2019 and 2020 respectively.

While international sources are increasing from 13 per cent in FY 2019 to 17 per cent in FY 2020, the economic survey said they are still insufficient to meet India's net-zero target.

"Mobilising substantial capital from traditional sources presents multifaceted challenges in emerging economies like India. The perceived sovereign risks associated with emerging market and developing economies (EMDEs) and the capital-intensive nature of such projects, coupled with lengthy gestation periods and evolving regulatory frameworks, can create misalignment between investor expectations and project timelines," the government said.



The economic survey also noted that the flows of global capital to developing countries have been impeded by high costs of capital.

Despite securing a good rating on its green-bond framework, Indian sovereign green bonds have hardly received any "greenium" from private investors. It is more a "wall of capital" than a "flood of capital" that is waiting to fund energy transition in EMDEs. It is just not mobile. All of these together have severely hampered the flow of finance for green-transition projects, the survey said.

"Greenium" or green premium refers to the savings an issuer of a green bond realises on the associated coupon payment because the bond is green.

Financial support to help middle-income and poor countries fight climate change will be at the centre of this year's UN climate conference in Baku, Azerbaijan, where the world will reach the deadline to agree on the New Collective Quantified Goal (NCQG) -- the new amount developed nations must mobilise every year starting 2025 to support climate action in developing

countries.

But achieving consensus will not be easy, given the disappointing progress made on major conflict points at the mid-year UN climate talks in Bonn, Germany.

At the 2009 UN climate conference in Copenhagen, rich nations pledged to provide USD 100 billion annually from 2020 to help developing countries mitigate and adapt to climate change. However, delays in achieving this goal have eroded trust between developed and developing nations and have been a continual source of contention during annual climate negotiations.

In May, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) claimed that developed countries had met the long-standing USD 100 billion-a-year promise by providing nearly USD 116 billion in climate finance to developing countries in 2022, with nearly 70 per cent of the money given in the form of loans.

However, international non-profit organisation Oxfam last week said climate finance provided by rich countries in 2022 totalled no more than USD 35 billion. (PTI)

Muslim groups welcome devotees as Braj Mandal Yatra moves through Nuh

NUH (HARYANA), July 22: The Braj Mandal Jalabhishek Yatra that was marred by violence last year began here on Monday amid tight security arrangements, with members of both Hindu and Muslim communities welcoming the procession at different points.

Spiritual leader Mahamandeshwar Swami Dharamdev said this year's yatra conveyed a powerful message of Hindu-Muslim brotherhood across the country.

Chanting "Har Har Mahadev" and "Jai Sri Ram", devotees started the yatra from Nalhar Mahadev Mandir and later proceeded to Jhir Mandir in Ferozpur Jhirka here.

The yatra, which spans over nearly 80 km, will end at Singar via the Jhir temple later in the day.

Nuh Deputy Commissioner Dharendra Khadgata said the yatra was being carried out smoothly amid stringent security and other arrangements for the devotees.

In the morning, many devotees taking part in the yatra gathered at Radha Krishna temple in adjoining Gurugram's Sector 10 before leaving for the Nalhar temple.

Before the yatra began around 11 am, a large group of women also reached the Nalhar Mahadev temple from Bhuteswar temple here.

They were accorded a warm welcome by members of the Muslim community at the Tiranga Chowk.

Several groups of Muslims also welcomed the saints and other devotees part of the yatra with garlands at various places.

Imam Umer Ahmed Ilyasi, chairman of All India Imam Organization, visited Nalhar Mahadev Temple in Nuh on Sunday to appeal for peace.

Swami Dharamdev said this year's yatra conveyed a big message of Hindu-Muslim brotherhood across the country and congratulated both the communities for the achievement.

Six people, including two home guards and a cleric of a Gurugram mosque, died in the clashes that erupted when a mob attacked a Vishva Hindu Parishad procession in Nuh on July 31 last year. According to officials, over 2,000 personnel from police and paramilitary have been deployed in the district to ensure foolproof security for the yatra this time.

The Haryana government has beefed up security for the yatra and ordered suspension of mobile internet and bulk SMS services in Nuh district for 24 hours with effect from 6 pm Sunday. (PTI)

Heavy rain in Mumbai, NDRF teams deployed; local train services partially hit

MUMBAI, July 22: Heavy rains continued to lash Mumbai on the second consecutive day on Monday, with some areas receiving up to 34 mm of rainfall in just one hour in the morning, affecting local train services during the rush hour between Kalyan and Thakurli stations of the Central Railway network.

In the last 24 hours ended at 8 am, the island city recorded an average of 135 mm of rainfall, eastern Mumbai 154 mm, and western Mumbai 137 mm, officials said.

Three teams of the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) have been deployed in Mumbai to tackle any situation amid the forecast of a high tide and heavy rains in the city and its suburbs.

In its forecast for the next 24 hours starting at 8 AM on Monday, the Indian Meteorological Department (IMD) has predicted "heavy to very heavy rain in the city and suburbs, with the possibility of extremely heavy rainfall at isolated places." According to the civic body, a high tide of 4.59 meters is expected at 12.59 PM.

Malabar and Mulund Hill recorded 34 mm of rainfall between 6 am and 7 am, followed by Bhandup with 29 mm, Wadala East with 24 mm, and Versova with 20 mm.

Western Railway stated that local train services were running normally on Monday morning, however, commuters claimed trains were running late by 5 to 10 minutes.

Central Railway also stated that local services on all four corridors were normal. Commuters, however, said train traffic was affected between

Kalyan and Thakurli stations in the morning rush hour due to a signal problem.

"Many commuters are walking on the tracks as trains are halted for a long time," a passenger said.

A civic official said buses of Brihanmumbai Electric Supply and Transport (BEST) were not diverted.

A day earlier, heavy downpours pounded Mumbai and suburbs, inundating roads in many areas, diverting flights, and briefly affecting local train traffic between Dadar and Matunga stations.

The Mithi River, which originates in Sanjay Gandhi National Park and meets the Arabian Sea at Mahim, swelled due to continuous rainfall in Mumbai since Sunday. It was flowing at 1.5 meters on Monday morning, but its flood level reached 2.26 meters Sunday night.

In other parts of Maharashtra, Konkan and Vidarbha regions have been receiving heavy rainfall since the weekend, causing rivers to swell and low-lying areas to submerge. As a result, National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) teams have been deployed in Mumbai and other parts of the state.

"We have deployed NDRF teams at Vasai (Palghar district), Thane, Ghatkopar and Powai (in Mumbai), Mahad (Raigad), Khed and Chiplun (Ratnagiri), Kudal (Sindhudurg), Kolhapur, Sangli, Satara due to the monsoon season as pre-positioning, apart from three teams in Mumbai and one team in Nagpur as regular deployment," an NDRF official said. (PTI)

Terror attack on Army post, VDG's house foiled in J&K's Rajouri; search ops underway

RAJOURI/JAMMU, July 22: Army troops thwarted a terrorist attack on a security post and house of a village defence guard (VDG) in Jammu and Kashmir's Rajouri district early Monday morning, officials said.

A cordon and search operation was launched to track down the terrorists, triggering gunfire, they added.

A terrorist has been killed and a jawan and a civilian, kin of the VDG whose house was attacked, suffered injuries, according to sources.

"Terrorists attacked the house of a VDC (member) at Gunda, Rajouri at 03.10 hours. A nearby Army column reacted and a firefight ensued," White Knight Corps said on X.

"Operations are continuing," it added.

It further said that the Indian Army acted on intelligence, anticipating the threat to a VDG in a remote area in Rajouri-Reasi.

"Tactical teams swiftly in-



tervened, ensuring no harm to the VDC member and his family", it said.

The operations are continuing and the firefight is in progress, the Corps said.

According to officials, the terrorists fired on the house of the VDG and ex-sergeant Parshottam Kumar, who is also a Shourya Chakra awardee, in Gundha area of Khawas tehsil.

The security personnel retaliated after the terrorists

village of Rajouri was thwarted. Firing is underway and operation is in progress," an Army spokesperson said.

The attack has triggered fear in the area due to the threat of the presence of the terrorists in the region.

"We are terrorised over this attack, which took place in the area after several years. It was a peaceful area. Firing started around 3 am and kept continuing," a local woman said.

Another villager said that it is time to rearm VDGs with modern weapon and communication technology to take on the terrorists operating in the hills of Jammu.

Today's terror attack is the 14th incident in Jammu region in which 10 security personnel including two officers, 9 pilgrims lost their lives and 58 others were injured. Five terrorists were neutralised during the period. (PTI)

Over 170 contractual, outsourced staff at NTA; setting up of question papers not outsourced: MoE

NEW DELHI, July 22: Over 170 employees at the National Testing Agency (NTA) are either contractual or outsourced staff, the Ministry of Education (MoE) informed the Parliament on Monday.

The ministry, however, clarified that "all core activities involving setting up of question papers" for the exams conducted by the agency are not outsourced.

Union Minister of State for Education Sukanta Majumdar shared this information in response to a written question in the Lok Sabha asked by Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) Member of Parliament (MP) Kanimozhi Karunanidhi.

The DMK MP asked about number of permanent staff, employees on deputation and contractual employees working at the NTA.

"Director General (DG) of NTA is appointed by Central Government under the Central Staffing Scheme. In addition, the number of employees working on deputation in NTA are 22 at present. The number of contractual employees are 39 and

outsourced staff or employees are 132. One employee is absorbed in NTA from his parent department," the minister said.

Asked about details regarding the tasks that have been outsourced by the NTA to other entities, Majumdar said that considering the sensitivity involved in competitive examinations, various operational and security measures are undertaken for their smooth and fair conduct.

"Such measures involve engagement of specialised or experienced agencies for providing services like capturing of biometric, frisking, CCTV surveillance, AI analytics with a view to identify any potential impersonation, exam delivery, etc."

"However, it is pertinent to mention that all core activities involving setting up of question papers are not outsourced," the minister said.

The NTA is under scanner over alleged irregularities in various competitive examinations including paper leaks. The Centre had last month set up a high-member panel to review functioning of the NTA and suggest examination reforms. (PTI)

All airport operators to conduct third party audit of structural stability of buildings



DELHI, July 22: The government on Monday said all airport operators have been directed to carry out a third party audit of structural stability of airport buildings and associated infrastructure.

Besides, they will conduct a thorough evaluation of all civil, electrical and technical aspects of the buildings before the onset of monsoon every year. The directives came in the wake of roof collapse incidents at three airports last month. During heavy rain, forecourt canopy collapsed at Terminal 1D of the Delhi airport on June 28. Also, the kerb area canopy made of tensile fabric, a non-structural element, was damaged at Jabalpur and Rajkot airports on June 27 and 29, respectively.

In 2023-24, an amount of Rs 795.72 crore has been spent on Repair and Maintenance (R&M) works at 121 airports of the Airports Authority of India (AAI), as per official data submitted to the Rajya Sabha on Monday.

Meanwhile, Civil Aviation Minister K Rammoan Naidu told the Upper House that the ministry has constituted a high-level expert committee consisting of structural engineers from IIT Delhi to assess the incident at the Delhi airport and submit its report.

"Further, all the airport operators have been directed to carry out a third party audit of structural stability of airport buildings and associated infrastructures through a reputed government institution/body such as IITs, NITs, CBRI, EIL, etc."

"All the airport operators have

also been directed to carry out a thorough evaluation of all civil, electrical and technical aspects of the building, including the design, specifications and workmanship of the roof sheeting structure before the onset of monsoon every year," the minister said in a written reply.

Aviation regulator DGCA carries out regular audits in the form of surveillance inspections/spot inspections to ensure compliance to these standards.

In a separate written reply, Minister of State for Civil Aviation Murlidhar Mohol said the Airports Authority of India has initiated investigations to determine the root cause of incidents at Jabalpur and Rajkot airports.

Barring the Covid years, expenditure on Repair and Maintenance (R&M) activities in absolute terms at the airports has increased, Mohol said in another written reply while providing expenditure details for R&M activities at AAI airports.

"Expenditure on repair and maintenance as a percentage of revenue is not an appropriate metric to assess movement of the expenditure over a period of time since revenue can increase owing to various factors which have no bearing on the R&M expenses."

"... alternatively, R&M expenses can also increase due to various factors (i.e. life of the assets, normal wear & tear, annual maintenance contract/ comprehensive maintenance contract costs charged by vendors etc) which may not affect revenue," the minister said. (PTI)

After missing man's photo appears on govt scheme ad, son asks cops, govt to trace him

PUNE, July 22: A man from Pune has approached police after finding the photo of his father, who has been missing for the past three years, on a poster of the Maharashtra government's Mukhyamantra Teerth Darshan Yojana that was recently uploaded on a social media account linked to the ruling Shiv Sena.

Bharat Tambe of Shikrapur here said the police and the state government must look into the details of this advertisement that appeared on Instagram and the circumstances under which his 68-year-old father Dnyaneshwar Tambe's photo was taken so that the latter can be traced and reunited with his family.

"One of my friends saw this advertisement and alerted me by sending a screenshot. My father is missing for the past three years. I have filed a missing person complaint at Shikrapur police station. The authorities and the state government must trace my father. The social media post featuring the advertisement has now been deleted," Bharat Tambe, an eatery owner, told PTI on Monday.

"We had not filed a complaint

earlier as my father had the habit of going to homes of relatives without informing anyone. He used to return in a few days. There is a possibility this photograph has been taken from the wari (foot march of Lord Vitthal devotees) from Alandi to Pandharpur," he said.

Shikrapur police station senior inspector Deeppratan Gaikwad said two teams have been formed to trace Dnyaneshwar Tambe after the missing person complaint was lodged.

"Our focus is on Pandharpur and Alandi since the family suspects the photograph was taken during wari. We will also check how the photo appeared on the advertisement for more leads," Gaikwad said.

After reports of the missing man appeared in a section of the media, the state government issued a clarification claiming the advertisement was not released by it nor was it posted through any government linked social media account.

The Mukhyamantra Teerth Darshan Yojana announced recently aims take senior citizens belonging to all communities on pilgrimages. (PTI)

Nipah: Contact list of deceased boy updated, more tests being conducted

KOZHIKODE, July 22: The number of people at risk for contracting Nipah in the contact list of the 14-year-old boy who lost his life to the rare infection, has been increased to 350, out of which 101 are in the high-risk category, health minister Veena George said on Monday.

The Kerala Health Department is waiting for the test results of 13 people, whose samples were sent to the Kozhikode Medical College virology laboratory and the Advanced Virology Institute at Thiruvananthapuram for testing.

"Out of the samples sent for testing, six of the persons have symptoms. Three of them are on the secondary contact list. Even though the parents of the deceased boy do not have symptoms, we have sent their samples also for testing to rule out all possibilities," she said.

The health department said two of the persons on the contact list are from Palakkad, while four are from Thiruvananthapuram.

The two from Palakkad are working in a private hospital, while the four from Thiruvananthapuram have reached Perinthalmanna for treatment.



The minister added that the friends of the deceased child have informed them that he had consumed a fruit from a nearby property in Pandikkad panchayat, where the presence of bats has been detected.

The 14-year-old boy from Kerala's Malappuram who was under treatment here for Nipah infection died on Sunday morning.

Minister George said that counselling will be given to the friends of the deceased child to help them cope with his loss, and that their classes will be held online.

The department has released a detailed route map of the boy's movements and has asked the people who are suspected to have come into contact with him to contact the health department and seek treatment.

"As of now, that locality is the primary source of infection, but it can be confirmed only after scientific examination. A team from the NIV, led by Dr Balasubramanyam will reach Kerala today (Monday) to observe the bats and their habitat in the areas," George said.

Meanwhile, a team from ICMR has already reached Kerala.

A total of 224 fever surveillance teams have been deployed, the health minister said, adding that they were conducting surveys across the houses in Pandikkad and Anakkayam panchayats.

"Eighty teams are in Anakkayam, while 144 are in Pandikkad panchayat. A team of the Animal Husbandry Department is conducting a field survey and observing the health condition of pets and livestock," the minister said.

In a statement, chief minister Pinarayi Vi-

jayan had exhorted everyone to work together to combat the Nipah virus and implored citizens not to destroy the natural habitats of bats.

He had also cautioned people against eating fruits half-bitten by animals and those found abandoned and also to avoid consuming the nectar found in plantain flowers.

In case humans have had any contact with bats, their excreta, have been bitten, he said should wash their hands with soap or use sanitiser immediately. They should contact the Nipah control room for clarification if needed, the CM added.

The state government had announced recently that a special action calendar was being prepared for the prevention of a Nipah outbreak, which has haunted the state on four occasions in the past.

Nipah outbreaks have been reported in Kozhikode district in 2018, 2021 and 2023 and in Ernakulam district in 2019. The presence of Nipah virus antibodies had been detected in bats in Kozhikode, Wayanad, Idukki, Malappuram and Ernakulam districts. (PTI)

BSF opens 'special help desks' to facilitate return of students from violence-hit Bangladesh

KOLKATA, July 22: The BSF South Bengal Frontier has set up "special help desks" at Integrated Check Posts (ICP) along the India-Bangladesh border to facilitate the safe return of students from the violence-torn neighbouring country.

Officials said it is in touch with the Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) to coordinate the safe evacuation of students, even during night-time operations.

The BSF has successfully assisted in the return of 572 Indian students, 133 Nepalese students and four Bhutanese students so far, the border guarding force said in a statement.

"Amid this unrest, many Indian, Nepalese and Bhutanese students studying in various educational institutions in Bangladesh are being sent back to their countries. The BSF South Bengal Frontier has set up special help desks at ICP Petrapole, LCS Gede, Ghojodanga, and Mahadipur to facilitate the safe return of these students," a BSF statement said.

"The BSF is in constant touch with BGB. This coordination has ensured the safe evacuation of students even during nighttime operations. To further enhance the efficiency of the process, the immigration desk at ICP Petrapole will now be open 24/7, ensuring uninterrupted and safe passage for all students returning home," BSF DIG A K Arya said.

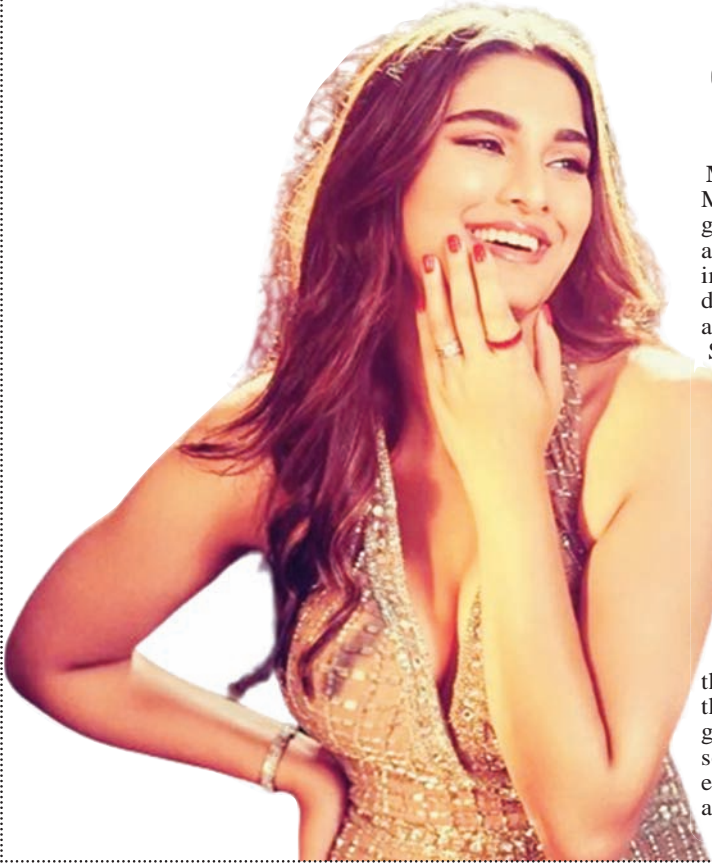
Bangladesh has been reeling under deadly clashes, with protesting students demanding that the Sheikh Hasina-led government scrap a controversial job quota system.

The protesters have been 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.

More than 100 people have been killed in the clashes that broke out weeks ago, according to reports from Dhaka, though the exact number of deaths is not yet clear.

On Sunday, the Supreme Court of Bangladesh scrapped most job quotas that caused deadly unrest in the country, scaling down government jobs for veterans' descendants to 5 per cent, ruling that 93 per cent be allocated on merit. (PTI)

Till I can bank on girl-next-door roles I would do that, says Saiee Manjrekar



MUMBAI, July 22: Saiee Manjrekar is comfortable playing girl-next-door characters as the actor says she will shed the image with time and by taking on diverse roles. The 22-year-old actor made her debut with Salman Khan's "Dabangg 3" and then went on to feature in movies such as Telugu film "Ghani", "Major" and "Skanda".

Her upcoming movie is "Auron Mein Kahan Dum Tha", in which she plays the younger version of Tabu's character. The film also stars Ajay Devgn and Shantanu Maheshwari.

"The whole girl-next-door thing comes purely on the basis that I'm too young, naive, gullible, and probably it shows somewhere (on my face). As I experience things in life, it will automatically start showing, or

people will see something different in me and cast me in different roles. "So, till I can bank on the girl-next-door role I would love to do that. When the time comes, I'll break out and do something else. I'm pretty open to things. I'm happy with the work I'm doing," the actor told PTI.

In an industry known for its unpredictability, Saiee – daughter of noted actor and filmmaker Mahesh Manjrekar – said the journey of every actor is unique.

"Roadblocks are there in everything one does today. I look at it as a race;

though it is probably not the best way to look at it. Everyone is running towards the finish line. I feel the end goal for everyone is the same, but someone might be running downhill or uphill.

"Everyone has a different journey but you have to live through them and experience things and see where you want to be," she said. "Auron Mein Kahan Dum Tha", directed by Neeraj Pandey, revolves around a couple, played by Ajay Devgn and Tabu, who separates when the former is jailed for murder. They cross paths after 20 years when he is released from prison.

On her experience of working with Tabu, Saiee said, "I feel Tabu ma'am's ease with which she goes about a scene is really inspiring. She is so easy and natural in front of the camera and that inspires me a lot."

Also starring Jimmy Shergill, "Auron Mein Kahan Dum Tha" is set to be released in theatres on August 2.

The film is presented by NH Studioz and a Friday Filmworks production. It is produced by Narendra Hirawat, Kumar Mangat Pathak (Panorama Studios), Sangeeta Ahir and Shital Bhatia. (PTI)

DILJIT DOSANJH'S 'SARDAAR JI 3' TO RELEASE IN JUNE 2025



NEW DELHI, July 22: Actor-musician Diljit Dosanjh on Sunday announced the third part of his Punjabi horror comedy franchise "Sardaar Ji".

Titled "Sardaar Ji 3", the movie will be released in theatres worldwide on June 27, 2025, the actor wrote in a post on Instagram.

"SARDAAR JI 3' Releasing Worldwide 27th June 2025," Dosanjh posted alongside an announcement poster of the film.

The movie will be produced by Gunbir Singh Sidhu and Mannord Sidhu of White Hill Studios alongside Story Time Productions.

The franchise started with the 2015 film "Sardaar Ji", which featured Dosanjh as a ghost hunter named Jaggi. The movie also starred actors Mandy Takhar and Neeru Bajwa. It was followed by a sequel, titled "Sardaar Ji 2", starring Dosanjh in a triple role alongside Monica Gill,

and Sonam Bajwa.

The two films were directed by Rohit Jugraj Chauhan.

Dosanjh currently stars in "Jatt & Juliet 3", co-starring Neeru Bajwa. The film, which was released in theatres on June 27, has amassed over Rs 100 crore at the box office.

Dosanjh was also seen in Imtiaz Ali's musical biopic "Amar Singh Chamkila" and "Crew", co-starring Tabu, Kareena Kapoor Khan and Kriti Sanon. (PTI)

Rohit Shetty wraps 'Singham Again' with Ajay Devgn

MUMBAI, July 22: Director Rohit Shetty on Monday shared behind the scenes photographs and video from the wrap of Ajay Devgn-starrer "Singham Again" and reflected on the beginning of the movie franchise 13 years ago.

Shetty, 50, has helmed two previous installments of the franchise, "Singham" (2011) and "Singham Returns" (2014). The movie launched the filmmaker's ambitious cop universe that also include characters played by Akshay Kumar and Ranveer Singh in "Sooryavanshi" and "Simmba".

In a video post that had a montage of videos and pictures of Shetty and Devgn over the years, the filmmaker said his as-

sociation with Devgn is over three decades old and still going strong. "Today we complete 13 years of 'Singham' and look at the magic of destiny. Today we also wrap 'Singham Again' with Ajay sir. This is my 13th film with him as a director but the journey began back in the 90s when I was working under him. 33 years later and we are still going strong. See you at the cinemas this Diwali."

"13 years of 'Singham', 33 years of brotherhood @ajaydevgn #SinghamAgain," Shetty captioned the post.

Devgn, 55, featured in all the installments and stars in the latest part "Singham Again" alongside Kareena Kapoor Khan, Akshay Kumar, Tiger Shroff, Arjun

Kapoor and Deepika Padukone.

The film was previously slated to hit the big screens on Independence Day, August 15 but later, the makers shared a poster on their social media handles stating that the release has been postponed to Diwali. Shetty worked with Devgn as an assistant director on the actor's debut film "Phool Aur Kaante" when he was 17. He also worked on Devgn's films such as "Suhaag", "Haqeeqat", "Zulmi", "Pyaar To Hona Hi Tha" and "Hindustan Ki Kasam".

When he made his directorial debut with "Zameen" in 2003, it starred Devgn, Abhishek Bachchan and Bipasa Basu in main roles. (PTI)

Raghav Juyal says he knew his character in 'Kill' will 'open doors' for him

NEW DELHI, July 22: "Kill" star Raghav Juyal says he knew that "Kill" was going to open doors for him in the industry when he first auditioned for the action movie, directed by Nikhil Nagesh Bhat.

Touted as India's most violent film ever by its makers, the movie continues to enjoy a theatrical run in the third week. Also starring Lakshya and Tanya Maniktala, it has earned over Rs 20 crore at the box office. Juyal, 33, who is famous for his dancing skills as well as comic timing as a host on several dance reality shows, plays the antagonist in the movie.

"While watching the auditions, I realised this character is going to open doors for me as an actor in this industry and it did. Everyone loved it and I got amazing reviews," the actor told PTI in an interview.

"Kill" follows the story of Army commando Amrit, who boards the train in which his girlfriend and her family are also travelling. However, things go awry when Fani (Juyal) and his gang enter the train and begin to mercilessly kill its passengers. (PTI)



If you liked 'The Diplomat', you're going to love season two: actor David Gyasi

MUMBAI, July 22: Actor David Gyasi, who starred opposite Keri Russell in "The Diplomat", says the show writers are working on creating a great season for viewers who loved the Netflix series.

Gyasi plays Austin Dennison, UK Foreign Secretary, to Russell's Kate Wylde, the newly appointed US ambassador to the UK. They must work closely to find those responsible behind the attack on a British aircraft carrier in the Persian Gulf that has killed 41 sailors in the series, which premiered in April last year to great reviews.

Asked about the pressure to do better in the next season, Gyasi told PTI, "We are fortunate that the writers are in the writing room so the pressure would be with them but we obviously get to see the scripts and I'm like, 'Oh my lord, this is really good!'"

The actor, 44, said while he cannot reveal much, he is looking forward to the second season like the fans of the show.

"I'm just excited for people to see season two, if you liked season one, you're going to love season two," he said.

Gyasi, who featured in films like "Cloud Atlas", co-directed by the Wachowskis and Tom Tykwer, Christopher Nolan's "Interstellar", Alex Garland-helmed "Annihilation", has worked as a voice actor for

audio series, "Impact Winter" season three.

The series, a dystopian drama about survival, is set in a near future where a comet impact has blotted out the sun, enveloping the Earth in perpetual winter. Vampires have emerged from the shadows to rule supreme. Season two came out in 2023 while the third season premiered on Audible on July 18.

The actor said he has always liked how "science fiction allows for metaphor" to talk about situations in the world without alarming people.

"If you get it right, maybe you can incite discussion and debate and think about how that relates to our world, and what can we do in our world to make it better or peaceful or prevent that sort of hate or exclusion from happening."

"Through studying, reading, and meeting different types of people, I've often found that (I) often searched for work that somehow taps into what I'm experiencing as I walk around the world and what I see and weirdly science fiction kind of does that a lot."

Giving the example of "Interstellar", Gyasi said the film talked about environmental neglect and the potential consequences of our actions.

"Interstellar" was about 'How are we going to save the people

on Earth?' It starts with a sort of crop destruction and focuses on the environment and how we've not treated the planet so well. So, we're in a situation where a group of professionals must travel to find a solution."

As the world grappled with COVID-19, the dystopian theme of "Impact Winter" resonated deeply with audiences, said the actor.

"If we're not careful we could head to environmental issues, and then people hating one another, wars creeping up all over the place, and rise of segregationist rhetoric that is around. 'Impact Winter' taps into that sort of zeitgeist at the moment and perhaps it's a testament to that timing," he said, crediting writer Travis Beacham for creating an interesting series.

The actor said working on 2012's "Cloud Atlas" was a dream job and a "real affirmation" from Hollywood that he could be a part of the industry.

But just before his next big project, "Interstellar", came out, he was without any work for a year as he was recovering from an injury.

"(Then) This kind of juggernaut of a movie comes out and does really well and I get to experience that and work with one of the greatest filmmakers of our time. To get up close and personal with his (Nolan) work

ethic, with his approach to family, which I found really key and interesting because his work ethic professionally is so high... I don't think I've seen it before," he said of his experience working on the 2014 movie.

Gyasi said as someone who is very close to his family, it was a learning to meet a person like Nolan, who is focused on work while also being close to his family.

"... I thought that was an interesting set of priorities. I learned that and it was encouraging. I'm a huge fan of my family and I want to go on adventures, and do all of these things. I'm dedicated to my work as well. So, it was nice to see the two things run alongside each other and complement one another," he said.

The actor, who also has a production company, hopes to get behind the camera in the near future.

"I've not directed yet. We've produced a couple of things but I've not directed yet largely because I haven't had the time and also there's been some stimulating acting projects that I've been involved with recently and currently involved. I don't have the space in my head to direct just yet, but I could see it coming over the next couple of years," he said. (PTI)



Dominant India Women face Nepal, eye semifinal berth in Asia Cup

DAMBULLA, July 22: Buoyant India will look to extend their winning run and seal a semifinal berth when they face Nepal in their final Group A Women's T20 Asia Cup match here on Tuesday.

India registered convincing wins in their first two matches of the continental tournament, beating traditional rivals Pakistan and United Arab Emirates by seven wickets and 78 runs respectively to put one foot in the semifinals.

Minnows Nepal hardly have any time to recover from the thrashing they received at the hands of Pakistan in their previous outing on Sunday, the same day when the tournament's overwhelming favourites and defending champions India bulldozed the hapless Emirates side. While India are primed to enter the last-four, Pakistan improved their net run rate with the comfortable win over Nepal lifting them to the second spot in Group A.

India will, however, not be bothered by how the other teams are doing and will look to sustain the momentum they have gained with two convincing victories heading into the semifinals. India have flexed their muscles in both batting and bowling so far in the tournament, and are likely to continue in the same vein come Tuesday.

If the swashbuckling opening duo of Smriti Mandhana and Shafali Verma fired with the bat in the victory over Pakistan, after the bowlers' excellent display, skipper Harmanpreet Kaur and Richa Ghosh led the show in the middle-order in the hammer-



ing of the UAE.

The big-hitting Ghosh, especially, was in destructive mood as she carted 64 in just 29 balls while Kaur compiled 66 in 47 deliveries.

While Kaur played the anchor's role to perfection, it was Ghosh's blazing knock which helped India score their first-ever 200-plus total in T20Is.

As far as the Indian bowling is concerned, the likes of Renuka Singh, Pooja Vastrakar and

Deepti Sharma have been doing a wonderful job of both containing runs and taking wickets.

Even Tanuja Kanwar, who was roped in as a replacement for injured off-spinner Shreyanka Patil, performed her duty with aplomb, giving away only 14 runs while taking a wicket in her full quota of four overs.

The Indu Barma-led Nepal, which started the tournament with a historic six-wicket victory over the UAE, is well

aware of the task.

They will certainly take confidence from their first-ever win in the event but the Himalayan nation will need a lot more than that to even come close to challenging a dominant India.

Teams:

India (from): Harmanpreet Kaur (C), Smriti Mandhana, Shafali Verma, Jemimah Rodrigues, Richa Ghosh (wk), Uma Chetry (wk), Pooja Vastrakar, Deepti Sharma, Arund-

hati Reddy, Renuka Singh, D Hemalatha, Asha Sobhana, Radha Yadav, Tanuja Kanwar, Sajana Sajeewan.

Nepal (from): Indu Barma (C), Kajol Shrestha, Rubina Chettri, Sabnam Rai, Sita Rana Magar, Rajmati Airee, Puja Mahata, Bindu Rawal, Roma Thapa, Mamta Chaudhary, Kabita Joshi, Kabita Kunwar, Dolly Bhatta, Kritika Marasini, Samjhana Khadka. Match starts at 7 PM IST. (PTI)

Wehrlein crowned Formula E champion after thrilling finale in London

LONDON, July 22: Pascal Wehrlein of Porsche withstood relentless pressure from Mitch Evans and Nick Cassidy of Jaguar to win his maiden Formula E world championship at the season-ending London E-Prix here.

The dramatic conclusion unfolded on Sunday when Wehrlein's triumph exemplified Season 10's year of intense racing.

The season finale saw three contenders — Wehrlein, Evans, and Cassidy — entering the final round separated by just seven points. Cassidy, who led the championship going into the weekend, demonstrated remarkable resilience, rebounding from a disappointing performance in Portland and a challenging Saturday qualifying session in London.

Starting 15th in the first race, he managed to finish seventh, before earning pole position for the second race on Sunday morning.

Cassidy led the field as teammate Evans overtook Maximilian Gunther (Maserati) for second place at Turn 1.

An early Safety Car period allowed Wehrlein to pass Gunther, placing all three title contenders in the top-three positions by Lap 6.

Jaguar seemed to dominate, with their drivers battling for the championship.

However, internal tensions surfaced during Cassidy's Attack Mode activations, with Evans and Cassidy jostling for position and Wehrlein capitalising on their discord. Oliver Rowland, starting from ninth, surged to fourth by Lap 29 and overtook Cassidy for third, triggering a collision with Gunther that ended Cassidy's race

with a puncture.

This left the championship fight to Wehrlein and Evans as the Safety Car reappeared.

With less than eight laps to go, both Evans and Wehrlein needed to activate their remaining Attack Mode boosts. An invalidated attempt during the caution period handed Rowland the lead, but a Safety Car infringement forced him to relinquish it to Evans.

The Kiwi's subsequent Attack Mode activation failed, returning the lead to Rowland.

On Lap 34, Evans successfully activated his boost, but Wehrlein's strategic Attack Mode activation allowed him to overtake, leaving him a clear run to the finish and secure the drivers' title.

Evans, unable to maintain his pace, finished as the championship runner-up once again.

Rowland comfortably claimed the final race victory of Season 10, while Wehrlein's second-place finish secured his maiden title by a seven-point margin over Evans.

Cassidy finished third in the standings. Despite the setback for the drivers' championship, Jaguar celebrated their first top-tier motorsport title since 1991 by lifting the team trophy.

In a double victory for Jaguar, the British team also secured the inaugural manufacturers' trophy, narrowly edging out Porsche by four points. "It feels good. I don't know what to say, it's definitely not expected. You turn up, you have a chance. But I always believed in it. The last couple of weeks, every day before my day was starting and my day finished, I said, I can do this. (PTI)

Journey won't be easy, Stimac warns newly-appointed football head coach Marquez

NEW DELHI, July 22: Smarting from his unceremonious exit, former Indian football team head coach Igor Stimac on Monday warned his successor Manolo Marquez that the journey ahead "won't be easy" but backed the Spaniard to deliver the goods.

Stimac, who was part of Croatia's run to the semifinals of the 1998 World Cup, was sacked last month after India's failure to qualify for the third round of the 2026 FIFA World Cup Qualifiers despite getting a relatively easy draw. "Dear Manolo, Congratulations on being named the new India head coach. The journey won't be easy, but your experience with Indian players speaks for itself and you are best suited to take the Blue Tigers to the next level! Good luck my friend," Stimac tweeted.

The association between Stimac and AIFF ended on a sour note. Describing his termination as "unilateral" and "unjust", Stimac issued a warning that he would take the AIFF to the FIFA Tribunal if his outstanding debts

were not paid within 10 days, while blaming the national federation for the team's poor run in international football.

In a statement on Saturday, the AIFF said the 55-year-old Marquez will perform the dual role of managing the national team as well as the ISL franchise FC Goa in the 2024-25 season before taking up the India job on a full-time basis. The tenure of Marquez, who is a UEFA Pro License holder, was not disclosed by the AIFF.

His first assignment as India head coach will be the Tri-Nation tournament in Vietnam in October. Lebanon is the third team.

Born in Barcelona, Marquez has been coaching in India since 2020. He has managed two ISL clubs so far. His first stint was with Hyderabad FC (2020-23), before he switched over to FC Goa (2023-present). He guided Hyderabad FC to the ISL Cup title in 2021-22.

Under him, FC Goa finished third in ISL league standing in the last season (2023-24). (PTI)

Veteran Indian goalkeeper P R Sreejesh to retire after Paris Oly

NEW DELHI, July 22: Celebrated India hockey goalkeeper P R Sreejesh on Monday announced that he will bid adieu to the game after the Paris Olympics, ending a career that spanned 18 years during which he was a pivotal figure in some historic moments for the side. The 36-year-old, a veteran of 328 International caps, including three Olympic Games, and multiple Commonwealth Games and World Cups, will be playing in his fourth Olympics in Paris beginning July 26.

"As I prepare for my last dance in Paris, I look back with immense pride and forward with hope," Sreejesh said in a Hockey India press release.

"This journey has been nothing short of extraordinary, and I am forever grateful for the love and support from my family, teammates, coaches, fans and Hockey India. Thank you for believing in me. My teammates have stood beside through the tough and the ardent times. We all want to give our absolute best here in Paris and certainly, the desire is to change the colour of our medal," he added, referring to perhaps the biggest moment of his career -- a



bronze in the 2020 Tokyo Olympics.

After making his debut at the 2006 South Asian Games, Sreejesh was a part of various memorable wins for India, including a gold in the 2014 Asian Games and a bronze medal in the 2018 Asian in Jakarta-Palembang.

He was also there in the Asian Champions Trophy-winning side in 2018, and the 2019 FIH Men's Series Finals champion team in Bhubaneswar.

The affable keeper had a crucial role in the silver medal-winning team of the 2022 Commonwealth Games as well.

Sreejesh was one of the main architects of India's historic bronze medal win at the Tokyo Olympics and captain Harmanpreet Singh said the team will look to secure another medal at the Paris Games this time to make Sreejesh's last tournament a memorable one.

"Paris 2024 will indeed be a

special tournament. We have decided to dedicate our campaign to the legend PR Sreejesh," said Harmanpreet.

"He has been an inspiration for all of us and I still remember his mentorship in 2016 Junior World Cup when we lifted the title. It was the beginning of many of our careers in International hockey and he has shaped each one of our careers in his own way.

"We want to 'Win it for Sreejesh' and we are all the more encouraged to stand on the podium once again."

The man from Kerala, who had also played a vital role in India's third-place finish at the Hockey Pro League 2021/22, was awarded the Major Dhyan Chand Khel Ratna Award in 2021.

He is only the second sportsperson from India to win the award of World Games Athlete of the Year in 2021. Besides, he won consecutive FIH Goalkeeper of the Year awards in 2021 and 2022.

Last year, Sreejesh stood tall in India's gold medal-winning campaign at the Asian Games that sealed the team's berth for Paris Olympics. (PTI)

LeBron James selected as Team USA male flagbearer for Paris Olympics opening ceremony

NEW YORK, July 22: LeBron James wasn't totally sure what the opening ceremony was all about when he was picked for his first Olympics in 2004.

This time, he'll be one of the stars of the show.

James has been picked by his fellow U.S. Olympians to serve as the male flagbearer for the Americans in Friday night's opening ceremony for the Paris Games. He becomes the third basketball player — and the first men's player — to carry the U.S. flag at the start of an Olympics, joining Dawn Staley for the Athens Games in 2004 and Sue Bird for the Tokyo Games that happened in 2021.

The 39-year-old James got word of the honor Monday in London, a few hours before the U.S. men's team was scheduled to play its final pre-Olympics exhibition game against World Cup champion Germany.

"There's obviously the utmost respect for who he is as a person and a player and how good he is," fellow U.S. star and first-time Olympian Stephen Curry said earlier this month of James, someone he's faced off against four times in the NBA Finals and is now teaming up with for the first official time.

The female U.S. flagbearer will be revealed in the coming days.

The International Olympic Committee decided in 2020 that national delegations would have two flagbearers — one male, one female — at the opening ceremony at an Olympics, a move to promote gender parity. The U.S. is expected to have nearly 600 athletes in the Paris Games, about 53% of them female.

James — a global icon, a four-time NBA champion and the league's all-time leading scorer set to go into his record-breaking 22nd NBA season — is set to play in the Olympics for the fourth time, after he was part of U.S. teams that won bronze in 2004, gold at Beijing in 2008 and gold again in London in 2012.

He walked in the opening ceremony at each of his three previous Olympics. (AP)

From India to the world stage: Athletes of Indian heritage look to shine at Paris Games

NEW DELHI, July 22: India would not be limited to the Indian contingent in the upcoming Paris Olympics.

PTI takes a look at some Indian-origin athletes who will be representing their adopted countries at the Paris Games:

Rajeev Ram (Tennis, USA)
Perhaps the most well known athlete on the list. The 40-year-old was born in Denver, USA to parents who migrated from Bangalore.

Stepped in academics, Ram's father Raghav, who passed away in April 2019, due to pancreatic cancer, was a botanist while his mother Sushma worked as a scientific technician. But Ram chose to break tradition and pursue tennis.

"I am very proud to be of Indian heritage and represent the community in any way I can. In tennis, there are not many of us from the community. Any success that we can achieve as a closed group can inspire the next generation to excel," Rajeev had once said.

Playing for the USA, Rajeev has achieved considerable suc-

cess. The tennis doubles specialist won five Grand Slams titles including four men's doubles and one mixed doubles.

He teamed up with Venus Williams to clinch the mixed doubles 2016 Rio Olympics. He will compete in the men's doubles event.

Prithika Pavade (Table Tennis, France)

Prithika's father was born and raised in Puducherry. In 2003, he migrated to Paris after getting married. A year later, Prithika was born in the French capital.

A TT player himself, Prithika's father introduced her to table tennis when she was six.

At only 16 years old, she participated in her first Olympic Games in Tokyo.

The 19-year-old is studying chemistry and environmental science and will compete in women's singles, where she has been seeded 12th, the women's doubles and mixed doubles events.

Kanak Jha (Table Tennis, USA)
Another Indian origin athlete competing at the Paris Games will be USA table tennis player Kanak



Jha.

Jha's mother Karuna is from Mumbai while father Arun was raised in Kolkata and Prayagraj. Both are IT professionals.

Jha's fascination with table tennis started at the India Community Centre in Milpitas, California. He and his elder sister Prachi, also a TT player, immediately wanted to try out the sport.

In no time he started beating players twice his size. To keep him close to his roots, Jha's mom enrolled him in a Jainshala and

Hindishala, centres where he could learn Hindi and about Jainism.

The 24-year-old is a four-time U.S. National Champion (2016, 2017, 2018, 2019) and two-time Olympian (2016, 2020).

He was USA's youngest athlete at the 2016 Rio Olympics and also the first American to win a medal at the Youth Olympics in Argentina in 2018. He will be competing in the men's singles event at Paris.

Shanti Pereira (Singapore, Ath-

letics)

Known as Singapore's Sprint Queen, Veronica Shanti Pereira has her roots in Kerala. Her grandparents hailed from Vettukad near Thiruvananthapuram.

But after Shanti's grandfather got a job in Singapore, the couple migrated from India.

Last year, Pereira ended Singapore's 49-year-long wait for a track and field medal at the Asian Games, after she clinched a silver in women's 100m.

Awarded the 'Sportswoman of the Year' at the Singapore Sports Awards, Pereira will be one of the Lion City's two flag-bearers at the Paris Olympics opening ceremony.

She also has a children's book - 'Go Shanti Go!' -- based on her life, written by her two elder sisters. She will compete in the women's 100m race in Paris.

Amar Dhesi (Wrestling, Canada)

Amarveer was born in Surrey, British Columbia, a small province on the western coast of Canada to Balbir Dhesi.

A former Greco Roman na-

tional champion, Amar's father belongs to village Sanghwal in district Jalandhar in Punjab. Balbir had trained at the NIS Patiala and even got a job with the Punjab Police but moved to Canada in search of greener pastures in 1979.

Once there, he worked in a sawmill factory and started the Khalsa Wrestling Club for youth in Surrey in 1985.

Amar would attend practice with his dad and older brother Paramveer since he was five and entered his first competition as an eight-year-old.

Amar, who loves to watch London Games bronze-medallist Yogeshwar Dutt's wrestling videos, made his Olympic debut at Tokyo 2020 where he finished 13th in the men's 125kg freestyle event.

He won his first senior gold medal a year later at the Pan American Championships and then captured 125kg gold at the Commonwealth Games in Birmingham.

The 28-year-old will compete in the men's 125kg freestyle event. (PTI)

Gambhir wants Rohit and Kohli to be available for most games, aim for 2027 ODI World Cup

MUMBAI, July 22: India head coach Gautam Gambhir on Monday said he expects senior batters Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli to be available for most of the ODIs and Tests after retiring from T20 Internationals, expressing hope that they would "keep their fitness" to be in the reckoning for the 2027 50-over World Cup.

Both Rohit and Kohli announced their retirement from the T20I format after India's World Cup win earlier this month and were expected to miss the upcoming tour of Sri Lanka.

However, they both were named in India's squad for next month's three ODIs in the island nation keeping in mind the Champions Trophy, which is slated for the first quarter of the next year.

Speaking to the media for the first time after being named India's head coach, Gambhir highlighted the importance of workload management for ace fast bowler Jasprit Bumrah but expected the regular presence of Rohit and Kohli going forward.

"I've said it before that workload management for someone like Jasprit Bumrah is important. For a batter, if they can play consistently, if they're in good form, might as well just play all the games," he said.

"With Rohit and Virat are not playing T20 cricket, we only have two formats to look after. I'm sure they're going to be available for most of the games," he added.



But for Bumrah, Gambhir said the "one rare kind of a bowler" deserves to be handled with more care due to injury concerns that are a regular nuisance for fast bowlers.

"It's our responsibility to try and have him fresh for most of the important games (and) that's why workload management, not only for Jasprit Bumrah, but for most of the fast bowlers becomes very, very important," he said.

Gambhir also said he expects Rohit and Kohli to focus on their fitness keeping in my mind the

2027 ODI World Cup, slated to be held in South Africa.

"They have shown what they can deliver on the big day...in the T20 World Cup, in the 50-overs World Cup as well," he said.

"One thing I can be very clear of is that both of those guys have a lot of cricket left in them. More importantly with the Champions Trophy and a big tour of Australia coming up they will be motivated.

"Because then, hopefully, if they can keep their fitness to make 2027 World Cup as well but this is

a very personal decision. I can't say how much cricket is left in them," Gambhir said.

Gambhir did not rule out having three different teams for respective formats but said it is imperative for the Indian team to show consistency, even though the T20I side is in transition following the retirements of Rohit, Kohli and all-rounder Ravindra Jadeja.

"See, eventually going forward, these things happen. For example, Virat and Rohit and Ravindra are not there in T20Is. But (I) can't say right now that

there are going to be three different teams," he said.

"I think T20I (team) will obviously go through a transition with three seriously good players, world-class players, retiring from the format.

"But yes, in 50-overs and Test cricket, the more consistent we can be, the better it is going to be. The more players in both the formats, it is always better for any team," he said.

Gambhir said he would try to ensure a happy dressing room as international cricket can produce situations of pressure and insecurity.

"My experience or my learning has been very simple. In a sport, it's all about winning, so I don't deviate from something like that," he said while talking about the lessons he learnt as mentors of IPL teams Lucknow Super Giants and Kolkata Knight Riders.

"...we try and play hard and more importantly, we try and come back in a winning dressing room.. A happy dressing room is a winning dressing room. I think I don't like complicating things and that's the kind of profession I'm in," he asserted.

"Sometimes, international cricket can be tough and it can be insecure as well because only 15 can play. But it's the job of the support staff to try and keep them in a happy state and that is going to be one thing which we definitely will be working for," he added. (PTI)

I am not going to make mistakes of Tokyo in Paris: Manika Batra



NEW DELHI, July 22: Wiser after her maiden Olympics appearance in Tokyo, Indian table tennis star Manika Batra on Monday said she is focused on taking one match at a time in the upcoming Paris Games and a medal will not be in her mind in the initial rounds.

Preparing for the Paris Olympics along with her teammates, Batra said she has learned from her Tokyo Games experience.

"I have learned many things from the last Olympics, and I am not going to make those mistakes again. My mindset has changed since then, I am calmer and have more confidence in myself," said Batra during an interview with Ultimate Table Tennis (UTT).

"I have been working on my stamina and my agility, and my ultimate aim is to challenge for a medal.

"But I will go slowly. I will try to be in that zone and give my best. I will go round by round and not think of a medal too early. I will give my best for my country," Batra, who represents PBG Bengaluru Smashers in UTT, added.

Batra played an instrumental role in the women's team qualifying for the Paris Olympics, a first for Indian table tennis.

She also reached the quarter-finals of the WTT Saudi Smash in May beating World No. 2 and former world champion Wang Manyu of China and World No. 14 Nina

Mittelham of Germany.

"India qualified for the first time (for the Olympics), this is a huge achievement. I am really happy with how we are working together (at the camp). I think we have a shot at the medal and we should give our best," Batra said.

"The growth of women's table tennis in India is really inspiring. I see many of my fellow players playing really well. Everyone in the team is motivated and training very hard. Women's table tennis in India will only grow further," she said.

Speaking about the growth of women's table tennis in India, the world No. 28 Batra credited UTT, which has provided young players a platform to rub shoulders with foreign stars and get exposure.

"UTT really helped us because we get to practice with foreign players, play matches (against them). We get good match practice," Batra said.

India will compete in the individual as well as team events of table tennis in Paris.

After the Olympics, star Indian paddlers, including Batra, Sharath Kamal, Sreeja Akula, and Sathiyam Gnanasekaran, will be joined by the world's top players such as World No. 10 Bernadette Szocs and Nigerian legend Quadri Aruna in the UTT 2024, scheduled to take place in Chennai from August 22 to September 7. (PTI)

GOOD FOR TRP BUT MY RELATIONSHIP WITH KOHLI IS PERSONAL, DECLARES GAMBHIR

MUMBAI, July 22: India's newly-appointed head coach Gautam Gambhir on Monday declared that his much talked about relationship with batting mainstay Virat Kohli "is between the two of us and not for TRPs", asserting that they are going to be "on same page" in the coming times. Gambhir and Kohli had not been the best of friends, something which was evident from the multiple confrontations between the two in the IPL. However, the duo will now be working together starting with the white-ball tour of Sri Lanka from July 27.

"Good for the TRP, but my relationship is not public. What kind of a relationship I share with Virat Kohli... I think it's between two mature individuals," Gambhir said.

Gambhir was addressing a press conference along with chief selector Ajit Agarkar ahead of India's tour of Sri Lanka where they will play three T20 Internationals and as many ODIs.

In the context of Kohli, Gambhir added, "On the field, everyone has got the right to fight for their own jersey and come back to a winning dressing room.

"But at the moment, we're representing India, representing 140 crore Indians and I'm sure we're going to be on the same page and try and make India proud."

Kohli, who recently announced retirement from the T20 International format, is part of India's ODI squad against the island nation and ahead of that, the former India skipper has apparently communicated to the BCCI that he's ready to begin this new phase with a clean slate. (PTI)

Kerala, Tamil Nadu score easy wins

KOLLAM (INDIA), July 22: Hockey Kerala and the Hockey Unit of Tamil Nadu registered convincing wins in the second Hockey India Sub-Junior Men & Women South Zone Championship here on Monday.

In the men's section, Tamil Nadu defeated Telangana Hockey 11-1. Renjith (38', 40', 54', 55') led the attack for TN. Gowtham (4', 41', 52') scored a hat-trick whereas Nithish J (25', 45') scored a brace.

Krishna Mukil (12') and Nithish M (13') also scored a goal each. Sairam Chouhan (27') scored the consolation goal for Telangana.

Kerala defeated Le Puducherry Hockey 7-0. Bahala Suraj (21', 26', 50', 56'), Aditya Lakra (52', 57') and Dinesh Minz (28') were their goal-scorers.

Hockey Andhra Pradesh and Hockey Karnataka played out a 3-3 draw.

In the women's section, Tamil Nadu defeated Telangana 8-0. Captain Jovian Defny Mj (9', 32', 44') led from the front. Kowsica S (8', 51'), Subika M (11'), Gopika R (41') and Harita J (59') also scored.

Hockey Andhra Pradesh defeated Karnataka 3-0. For the winners, Patan Mujiya Begum (29', 59') and Lakshmi Pariki (12') found the target.

Kerala outclassed Le Puducherry Hockey 11-0. Parameswari Pinapothula (22', 34', 37', 46'), Abhay Jyothi A S (19', 48', 57') Reshma Samad (28', 52'), Sabitha (41') and Kaushika (43') scored for Kerala. (PTI)

ICC forms three-member committee to review conduct of T20 WC

COLOMBO, July 22: The International Cricket Council (ICC) on Monday formed a three-member committee to "review the delivery" of the T20 World Cup which was co-hosted by the USA and the West Indies last month.

The committee features former New Zealand batter Roger Twose and two other directors Lawson Naidoo and Imran Khwaja, who is the deputy chair of the ICC.

"The ICC Board confirmed that there will be a review into the delivery of the ICC T20 World Cup. This will be overseen by three directors, Roger Twose, Lawson Naidoo and Imran Khwaja who will report back to the Board later in the year," an ICC release stated.

It is understood that ICC incurred losses in excess of USD 20 million for conducting matches in New York, Florida and Dallas.

It is learnt that the allocated budget for the US leg of the tournament was around USD 150 million and it was found that the budget had overshot by a fair distance which was red-flagged by certain influential board members of the global body.

Poor quality of drop-in pitches, ticketing system and the logistical issues added to the ICC's woes. A close look at how various tenders were handed out also raised concerns.

It is understood that the role of some top ICC executives will also be thoroughly looked into by the committee.

Already, head of events Chris Tetley has tendered his resignation although the official reason given was that an ICC flagship event every year (men and women) was taking its toll.

The governing body for cricket in the United States, popularly known as USAC, has been formally put on notice and given 12 months to comply with ICC's Associate Membership criteria.

As per ICC's Associate Membership Criteria, USAC has fault on two counts 2.2 b (i)



governance 2.2b (ii) administrative and executive structure.

It is learnt that USAC has not complied with the norms of the USA Olympic and Paralympic Committee (USOPC), which is mandatory to get recognition as National Governing Body (NGB) to be a part of Los Angeles Games in 2028 where cricket is one of the medal events.

In case, USAC, in its current form, fails to comply with USOPC guidelines, the LA Games organisers would be forced to de-recognise the former and form a new NGB.

The second reason is believed to be non-appointment of CEO, which is a must for any cricket board.

"USA Cricket and Cricket Chile have been formally put on notice and have 12 months to rectify their current non-compliance with the ICC Membership Criteria," the release stated.

"Neither Member is considered to have in place a fit for purpose detailed governance and administrative structure and systems."

We wanted someone who was likely to be available more often: Agarkar on Surya as T20 captain

MUMBAI, July 22: Fitness, feedback from the dressing room and consistent availability swung the pendulum in Suryakumar Yadav's favour when it was decided to appoint him captain of the Indian T20 team ahead of Hardik Pandya, chief selector Ajit Agarkar said here on Monday.

Agarkar was addressing a media conference along with newly-appointed head coach Gautam Gambhir ahead of India's tour of Sri Lanka where the team will play three T20 Internationals and as many ODIs against the hosts starting July 27.

"Why Surya was made captain? Because he is one of the deserving candidates. The one we know has been around the dressing room over the last one year, you get feedback from the dressing room a lot. He has got a good cricketing brain and he is still one of the best T20 batters in the world," Agarkar said during the joint press conference.

"You (would) want a captain that's going to be more likely to play all the games. We think he's a deserving candidate and hopefully we'll see over time how he develops into the role."

The chairman of selectors said they wanted a captain with a proven fitness record and not someone who was prone to injuries as Pandya is believed to be.

"But in regards to Hardik (Pandya), he's still a very important player for us and that's what we want him to be that player that he can be because those sorts of skill sets are very difficult to find

what he has," Agarkar said.

"Fitness, obviously, has been a challenge for him over the last few years and then it becomes a little bit more difficult for him and even as selectors," he said.

"We're trying to now, we've got a bit more time till the next T20 World Cup when we can look at a few things. It's not rushed at the moment."

"We want him to be, you know, as I said, he's an important player for us and hopefully his performances are more important to that was the thought behind it. The fitness is a clear challenge and we want someone who's likely to be available more often than not," Agarkar said.

As regards to former vice-captain KL Rahul being overlooked, he retorted, "I wasn't there when KL was superseded; I wasn't the selector firstly."

"We've got a little bit more time now till the T20 World Cup, almost followed by the T20 World Cup. Fitness is a concern, not just that, we also feel that Surya has the necessary qualities to be a good captain."

"Two years is a long time, so at least it gives us a bit more of a chance to try and look at some things differently. The main thing is we want guys who are available all the time. In this way, we also feel we can manage Hardik a little bit better," he said.

Agarkar admitted the selection committee should have clarified that senior all-rounder Ravindra Jadeja, who also retired from T20Is



after the World Cup, was not "dropped".

"It would have been really pointless to take both him and Akshar for this short series. We know what Jaddu has done. He's had a terrific World Cup (T20). So, no, not at all dropped," he said.

"All options are open. But there was (a chance that) either of them would have played all three games if we'd taken both. There's a big test season coming up where he's (Jadeja) likely to feature in a lot of the Tests. I don't think three games would have mattered."

"We probably should have clarified that after the selection that he's not getting dropped. He's still within the scheme of things and very important as a player," said the former India pacer.

Agarkar said the door is not shut for the former deputies like KL Rahul, Rishabh Pant and even Pandya as far as leadership role is concerned.

"We need to get him (Pant) back playing, that's the first thing. He's going to be a key to us as a player; hasn't had a lot of cricket. We'll see what he can do," he said.

"We don't want to burden somebody again who's just coming back after over a year out of the game. KL has not been part of T20 now for a little while," he said.

"We've got a chance to reset the button a little bit. We've got a bit more time to plan. We want to try and see if I mean, this time (in) T20 (against Afghanistan), frankly, when Hardik did get injured was a little bit of a challenge."

"At that point, Rohit wasn't playing but was still around (and) made our life a lot easier that he could come and play. We don't want that situation going forward again," he continued.

Agarkar said the selectors wanted vice-captain Shubman Gill to learn from the experience as well as from the senior players.

"Shubman is a guy that we feel is a three-format player and seems to have shown a lot of quality over the last year or so that we hear from the dressing room," he said.

"You try and have somebody who can also learn from a couple of the senior guys that are there."

"Surya in this instance or Rohit who's still around so we don't face the same challenges (that) suddenly (you are) trying to look for a captain in case there are injuries or loss of form somewhere," he explained.

"He's shown some decent leadership qualities. We want to try and get him the experience that he can put forward. There are no guarantees in life but at this point, that's the thought," he said.

Agarkar admitted that while playing Tests in India the team may not need three seamers but going forward they will be discussing the fast bowling lineup too.

"Some of the guys, some of the fast bowlers are at the NCA. We hope that for the next month or so, they'll be back up playing," he said.

"I think he has (Mohammed Shami) started to bowl which is a good sign for us. (The) 19th September is the first Test. That was always the goal," he added.

"We don't quite know whether that's the timeline at the moment. That I have to speak to the guys at the NCA but that's the aim."

"There are so many Tests coming in India; maybe you don't play three seamers in the eleven. But, going forward, there's a lot of cricket or Test cricket that's coming. We need some conversation around it," he said. (PTI)