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- Strike on Israeli Golan Heights kills 11 and threatens to spark a wider war
- Mobile internet restored in violence-hit Bangladesh

NATION


- 'Khadi, handloom sale rising, creating job opportunities in large numbers'
- Delhi coaching centre deaths: Cong calls for fixing accountability

HT BRIEFS

Law and Order

GUWAHATI: Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Saturday announced that there has been a significant enhancement in the state's law and order situation since his administration assumed office. The chief minister disclosed that more than 60% of cases were chargesheeted in 2024, demonstrating the effectiveness of proactive measures, and the crime rate has been reduced by half. Taking to micro-blogging site X, Sarma stated, "The Law and Order situation in Assam has seen a stark improvement since we assumed office due to various proactive measures of our Govt. Over 60% cases have been chargesheeted in 2024, while crime rate has halved." Sarma attributed these improvements to a variety of strategic measures aimed at strengthening law enforcement and judicial processes.

Assamese language

GUWAHATI: Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma announced on Saturday that the state government is actively endeavouring to pursue the recognition of Assamese as a Classical Language in India. Taking to micro-blogging site X, Sarma stated, "Presently there are 6 classical languages in India. We are actively taking up the matter of Assamese being also recognised as a Classical language." "We are working diligently to secure the status of a classical language for Assamese," the Chief Minister said while sharing a video on his post. The chief minister also mentioned that the Department of Culture, Government of India, recognizes languages as classical only if they meet certain fundamental criteria. Sarma further emphasised his commitment to this cause, highlighting his ongoing efforts to elevate the Assamese language.

Viksit Bharat

GUWAHATI: Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Saturday announced that the state has implemented numerous strategic initiatives that will greatly support Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of a 'Viksit Bharat'. Attending the NITI Aayog's Governing Council meeting, he mentioned that Assam is currently one of the fastest growing states in the country. The state is prioritising investments in roads, health, and education infrastructure. Assam is currently undergoing the development of water supply assets worth ₹ 35,000 crore and the establishment of 13,000 new SSA classrooms. Sarma informed on micro-blogging site X. Additionally, initiatives are being implemented to reintegrate 81,000 out-of-school students and enhance renewable energy capacity to 3,000 MW. "In my address, I stressed on the strategic initiatives by Assam that are poised to significantly contribute to Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri @narendramodi ji's vision of a 'Viksit Bharat'. Assam is today amongst the fastest growing states," the Chief Minister said. He also mentioned that Assam's GSDP has grown by 13% and the state's capex has increased by 59% since 2020.

LP Acharya new Governor of Assam

Gulab Chand Kataria replaces Banwarilal Purohit in Punjab ● Ramen Deka new First Citizen of Chhattisgarh ● Himanta hails Acharya's appointment

NEW DELHI, July 28: Lakshman Prasad Acharya has been made the governor of Assam with the additional charge of Manipur while Gulab Chand Kataria has replaced Banwarilal Purohit as the governor of Punjab under major gubernatorial appointments, the Rashtrapati Bhavan has announced.

Acharya has replaced Kataria, who has also been appointed the administrator of the Union Territory of Chandigarh, according to a communique issued by the Rashtrapati Bhavan on Saturday night.

President Droupadi Murmu has accepted the resignation of Purohit as the governor of Punjab and the administrator of Chandigarh, it said.

"Lakshman Prasad Acharya, Governor of Sikkim, appointed as Governor of Assam and has also been given additional charge of the Governor of Manipur," the statement said.

Anusuiya Uikye has been serving as the governor of Manipur since February last year.

Veteran BJP leader Om Prakash Mathur will be the new governor of Sikkim, the communique said.

Jharkhand Governor C P Radhakrishnan, who was also holding additional charge of Telangana, has been appointed as the new governor of Maharashtra, succeeding incumbent Ramesh Bais.



LP Acharya and **Ramen Deka**

Former Union Labour and Employment minister Santosh Kumar Gangwar will be the new Jharkhand governor in place of Radhakrishnan.

Former deputy chief minister of Tripura, Jishnu Dev Varma, will be the new Telangana governor.

Former IAS officer K Kailashnathan, one of the trusted aides of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, has been appointed as Lt Governor of Puducherry with effect from the date he assumes charge of his office.

Kailashnathan, chief principal secretary to Gujarat chief minister Bhupendra Patel, stepped down on June 30 after holding the post for more than a decade after his retirement.

Senior BJP leader from Maharashtra Haribhau Kisanrao Bagde has been appointed the governor of Rajasthan, succeeding Kalraj Mishra.

Former Lok Sabha member from Assam Ramen Deka has been appointed as the Governor of Chhattisgarh, and C H Vijayashankar, the former Lok Sabha member from Mysore in Karnataka, will be Meghalaya governor, the communique said.

These appointments will take effect from the dates they will assume charge of their respective offices, the statement added. Meanwhile, (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Developing heritage key to Viksit Bharat agenda: PM

NEW DELHI, July 28: Prime Minister Narendra Modi Sunday said a coordinated and strong effort by governments at the Centre and in states will ensure the goal of 'Viksit Bharat' is attained.

Both developing heritage and building a legacy of development have a special place in the idea of 'Viksit Bharat', Modi said, according to senior party leader Vinay Sahasrabudde.

The prime minister was addressing the 13 chief ministers and 15 deputy chief ministers from the BJP-ruled states on the second day of their two-day meeting -- 'mukhyamantri parishad' -- here.

Modi spoke at length about his government's agenda of making India a USD 5 trillion economy and stressed the importance of public participation in welfare measures.

Sahasrabudde, who coordinates the party's 'good governance' exercise, said the prime minister also emphasised on using social media to ensure maximum reach of government schemes targeting different

groups.

Senior BJP leaders, including Union ministers Rajnath Singh, Amit Shah and J P Nadda, who is also the party's national president, participated in the 'mukhyamantri parishad', which is organised from time to time and is largely focussed on governance issues.

Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan spoke about the New Education Policy and the role of states in its execution.

Various states made presentation on some of their signature schemes during the meeting.

In his interaction with BJP leaders, including chief ministers, Modi has often emphasised the need to ensure saturation coverage of welfare schemes and said states ruled by the party should be seen as setting an example of good governance.

"Our Party is working tirelessly to further good governance and fulfil the aspirations of the people," he said on X on Saturday.

The last such meeting was held in February this year. (PTI)

BJP-EKADC calls for patience on eviction issue of grazing reserves



DIPHU, July 28: The spokesperson for the BJP East Karbi Anglong District Committee (BJP-EKADC), Chomang Kro, has urged groups and leaders not to exert unnecessary pressure regarding the eviction issue on Professional Grazing Reserve (PGR)/Village Grazing Reserve (VGR) land in Kheroni, West Karbi Anglong.

Instead, they should support the High Power Committee's efforts to address the matter, Kro said.

In a press conference at the Hills People Cultural Forum (HPCF) office on Sunday, Kro addressed the situation and said that the PGR/VGR in Kheroni, West Karbi Anglong, was established during British rule for village cattle grazing.

"This is a long-standing issue that cannot be resolved quickly, but surely it will be addressed over time. KAAC CEM Tuliram Ronghang has taken strong initiative by himself to settle the PGR/ VGR land issue. A High Power Committee (HPC) was formed in February with consensus from political and social organisations to collectively handle the eviction process. Despite the HPC's step-by-step approach, some groups and leaders, such as 'Karbi Chingrum Amei,' Litsong Ronghang, and Angtong Intgi Kathar, have been creating

Mizoram seeks special package from Centre to implement flagship programme

AIZAWL, July 28: Mizoram has requested a special financial package from the Centre to implement its flagship programme, 'Bana Kaih' or 'Hand-holding' policy, an official from the Chief Minister's Office (CMO) said on Sunday.

During the NITI Aayog meeting chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday, Mizoram chief minister Lalduhoma announced that his government will implement the hand-holding policy to reduce economic disparity between urban and rural populations and generate more employment in the state, according to an official.

The policy aims to address the availability of institutional credit, particularly microcredit, for agricultural and small industrial endeavours. The programme will integrate various central government schemes and initiatives.

The Mizoram government has allocated ₹ 200 crore for the policy for the fiscal year 2024-25, in addition to a ₹ 110 crore corpus fund for agricultural assurance.

The policy focuses on empowering various sectors, including supporting farmers through the purchase of local agricultural or horticultural produce, food processing,



marketing agricultural and allied products, promoting entrepreneurship and skill development, creating employment opportunities for youths, and boosting small-scale and agro-based industries.

Horticulture, fisheries, veterinary and animal husbandry, and sericulture activities, which are vital for many in the state, will receive renewed attention under the hand-holding policy. During the NITI Aayog meeting, Lalduhoma noted that (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Did Manipur CM meet PM separately to discuss violence in state: asks Cong

NEW DELHI, July 28: The Congress Sunday said the people of Manipur are asking whether chief minister N Biren Singh, who attended two meetings chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi here the day before, also met him one-on-one to discuss the situation in the violence-hit state and invite him there.

Congress general secretary in-charge communications Jairam Ramesh said the Manipur chief minister attends the NITI Aayog meeting in New Delhi on Saturday presided over by "the self-anointed non-biological PM".

"Then the Manipur CM attends a meeting of BJP CMs and Deputy CMs presided over by the same deity," he said.

"The simple question that the people of Manipur are asking is this: Did Shri N. Biren Singh meet with Shri Narendra Modi separately one-on-one and discuss the situation in Manipur, which started burning on the night of May 3rd 2023?" he said.

Did Biren Singh invite Modi to visit Manipur, either before or after his trip to Ukraine, Ramesh asked.

Manipur plunged into violence between the Meitei and Kuki communities in May, 2023. Since then some 200 people have been killed and thousands displaced.

Biren Singh, who was here to attend a conference of CMs from BJP-ruled states on Saturday, said he reaffirmed his unwavering commitment to serve the nation by strengthening the party and upholding its core values and ideology.

Singh had also attended the ninth NITI Aayog Governing Council meeting during the day, and said it deliberated on various strategies aimed at expediting the nation's progress and addressing the obstacles faced by different regions. (PTI)

India's maternal mortality rates declined from 384 in 2000 to 97 in 2020

India can guide developing nations craft maternal, child healthcare strategy: PMNCH

NEW DELHI, July 28: India can guide developing nations craft effective health programmes by sharing its long history of tackling maternal, child, and adolescent health challenges, Rajat Khosla, executive director, Partnership for Maternal Newborn and Child Health (PMNCH), said.

India, as one of the prominent leaders of the Global South, can play a crucial role in sharing best practices for improving health outcomes, Khosla in an exclusive interview told PTI.

"The nation's achievements in significantly reducing maternal mortality rates (MMR) and effectively implementing the Rashtriya Kishor Swasthya Karyakram (RKSK) across its vast and diverse landscape stand as exemplary models for other countries,"



Khosla said.

India's MMR declined from 384 in 2000 to 97 in 2020, whereas the global MMR came down from 339 in 2000 to 223 in 2020.

"This success is attributed to the concerted efforts of the health workers and the effective implementation of multisectoral policies," he said.

Polycrisis (conflict, climate

change, and cost-of-living) and increasing complexity of challenges are exacerbating inequities between and within countries, specifically among the fragile (LMICS) states and poorest communities who continue to bear the biggest burden of preventable deaths among women, children, and adolescents, he said.

India like many low- and middle-income countries, or LMICS, faces significant challenges, Khosla said.

However, it has made remarkable progress through initiatives like the Ayushman Bharat scheme, the National Health Mission, and community health programmes like the ASHA initiative.

"India's experience in tackling these challenges can provide invaluable (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

SC to hear AAP leader Manish Sisodia's bail pleas today

NEW DELHI, July 28: The Supreme Court is scheduled to hear on Monday Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leader Manish Sisodia's bail pleas in corruption and money laundering cases linked to the alleged Delhi excise policy scam.

The former deputy chief minister of Delhi has sought bail contending that he has been in custody for 16 months and the trial against him has not made any progress since October last year.

According to the cause list of July 29 uploaded on the Supreme Court website, a bench of Justices B R Gavaai and K V Viswanathan is slated to hear Sisodia's pleas.

The apex court had on July 16 agreed to hear the pleas and sought responses from the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) and the Enforcement Directorate (ED).

Sisodia has also filed an application seeking revival of his bail petition in the excise policy-linked corruption and money laundering cases.

The AAP leader was arrested by the CBI on February 26, 2023 in connection with alleged irregularities in the formulation and implementation



of the now-scrapped Delhi excise policy 2021-22. The ED arrested him in the money laundering case stemming from the CBI FIR on March 9 last year. He resigned from the Delhi (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)



Sanctioned capital of ₹ 1,33,576 cr Advancing 119 projects to boost output: Coal India

KOLKATA, July 28: Coal India Ltd is advancing 119 projects with a capacity of 896 million tonne per year and a sanctioned capital of ₹ 1,33,576 crore, the world's largest miner said.

These projects, which are at various stages of implementation, are part of CIL's "proactive strategy" to increase production capacity and meet future coal demands, the company said in its latest annual report.

Though the mining major did not specify a timeline for the capex, it said the development of these projects involves substantial investments in advanced mining technologies and infrastructure, aimed at enhancing productivity and ensuring sustainable mining practices.

The Kolkata-headquartered company has set an ambitious target of achieving 1 billion tonne of production by 2025-26 to fulfill the nation's coal demand and sup-



port the goal of 'Atmanirbhar Bharat'.

In the 2023-24 fiscal, its production stood at 773.6 million tonne.

CIL said in 2023-24, one coal mining project with a sanctioned capacity of 20 million tonne and a sanctioned capital of ₹ 1,783.09 crore was completed, which

demonstrates "our ability to execute large-scale projects within the stipulated time frames".

During the financial year ended March 31, 16 coal mining projects with a total capacity of 170.46 million tonne per annum (incremental capacity of 85.66 MT) and a total sanctioned capital of ₹ 27,087.69

crore were approved, it said.

As part of its comprehensive modernisation strategy, CIL is embracing latest equipment, advanced exploration and assessment techniques, efficient mine planning and development, and optimised extraction processes, the report said.

The company plans to procure high-capacity equipment worth more than ₹ 3,700 crore in the next financial year, aiming to bolster coal production capabilities for increased efficiency.

The mining major has set a capital expenditure target of ₹ 15,500 crore for the 2024-25 fiscal. In line with its investment plans, CIL intends to allocate a significant portion of funds to diversification projects, including solar power, thermal power plants, revival of fertilizer plants, surface coal gasification (SCG) and coal bed methane (CBM) during the year. (PTI)

Tax clearance certificate only for people with tax dues: Govt

Every person is not required to obtain a tax clearance certificate



NEW DELHI, July 28: After social media outrage over a Budget proposal making it mandatory to get tax clearance certificates for going abroad, the government on Sunday clarified that the proposed amendment is not for all, and only those accused of financial irregularities or having substantial tax arrears need such clearance.

The finance ministry, in the Finance Bill, 2024, has proposed to add the reference of the Black Money Act, 2015, to the list of Acts, under which any person should clear his liabilities to obtain the tax clearance certificate.

"The proposed amendment does not require all the residents to obtain the tax clearance certificate," the ministry said in a statement.

As per section 230 of the Income-tax Act, 1961,

every person is not required to obtain a tax clearance certificate. Only in the case of certain persons, in respect of whom circumstances exist, which make it necessary to obtain a tax clearance certificate will be required to obtain such a certificate.

The ministry said that the Income Tax department through a 2004 notification has specified that the tax clearance certificate may be required to be obtained by persons domiciled in India only in certain circumstances.

These include - where the person is involved in serious financial irregularities and his presence is necessary in the investigation of cases under the Income-tax Act or the Wealth-tax Act and it is likely that a tax demand will be raised against him, or where the person has direct tax arrears exceeding ₹ 10 lakh outstanding against him, which have not been stayed by any authority.

The I-T department said that a person can be asked to obtain a tax clearance certificate only after recording the reasons for the same and after taking approval from the Principal Chief Commissioner of Income-tax or Chief Commissioner of Income-tax.

Such a certificate is required to be issued by the income-tax authority, stating that such person has no liabilities under the Income-tax Act, or the Wealth-tax Act, 1957, or the Gift-tax Act, 1958, or the Expenditure-tax Act, 1987, it added. (PTI)

UltraTech to acquire India Cement

NEW DELHI, July 28: Aditya Birla Group flagship company UltraTech Cement will acquire a 32.72 per cent stake in India Cements from promoters and their associates in a ₹ 3,954 crore deal to expand its footprint in the highly competitive and fast-growing Southern cement market, particularly Tamil Nadu.

Besides, Ultratech has also announced a ₹ 3,142.35 crore open offer to acquire another 26 per cent share of India Cements Ltd (ICL) from its shareholders.

This announcement comes a month after Adani Group, the second largest cement maker announced the acquisition of Hyderabad-based Penna Cement for ₹ 10,422 crore this month, which will add 14 MTPA, taking its capacity to 93 MTPA.

With an installed capacity of 154.86 million tonnes per annum (MTPA) of grey cement, UltraTech Cement leads the Indian cement industry. It has an ambition to become one of the largest cement companies in the world and has set a target for 200 MTPA.

However, Adani, which entered the cement business in September 2022 after acquiring Ambuja Cement from Swiss firm Holcim for cash proceeds of USD 6.4 billion (about ₹ 51,000 crore), is also pacing up.

Adani has set up a target to achieve a 140 MTPA capacity by FY28 and is aggressively expanding organically through capacity expansion at the existing units and also going for acquisitions.

Through Ambuja, it also controls ACC Ltd and acquired MyHome Industries and Sanghi Industries in 2023. The board of the Aditya Birla firm approved the acquisition of 32.72 per cent stake from promoters and their associates at ₹ 390 per share, according to a regulatory filing from UltraTech on Sunday.

It has entered into share purchase agreements for a 28.42 per cent stake from promoters - Srinivasan N, Chitra Srinivasan, Rupa Gurunath and S K Asokh Baalaje and a 4.30 per cent share from Sri Saradha Logistics.

After the completion of the ₹ 3,954 crore deal, UltraTech's stake in India Cements Ltd (ICL) will increase to over 55 per cent, mandating it to go for the open offer as per the Sebi regulations.

The board UltraTech has also approved an "open offer for up to 8.05 crore equity shares representing 26 per cent of the equity share capital of the Target, at a price of ₹ 390 per equity share from the public shareholders of Target," it said.

The price offered by UltraTech is 4.1 per cent higher than the ICL share closing price of ₹ 374.60 last Friday. If fully subscribed, the open offer would cost ₹ 3,142.35 crore to UltraTech.

"Post signing of SPA and obtaining regulatory approvals, UltraTech will pay ₹ 3,954 crore at ₹ 390/share for buying 32.72 per cent stake in India Cements from the promoters & their associates. This will trigger a mandatory open offer at ₹ 390/share. The open offer will be done subsequently after obtain-

ing all regulatory approvals," the company said in a statement.

After the acquisition of the promoter's stake and CCI approval, "the company will have sole control over ICL and become a promoter of ICL", it said.

In June, UltraTech acquired 23 per cent shares of ICL. It had acquired Damani-group's stake in India Cements Ltd (ICL) through two block deals estimated at around ₹ 1,900 crore.

"The proposed transaction is, therefore, an endeavour to extend the company's footprint and presence in the highly fragmented, competitive and fast-growing Southern market in the country, particularly Tamil Nadu, where it has limited presence," said UltraTech.

According to UltraTech, the operational efficiencies arising out of acquiring ready-to-use assets will reduce time to market vis-a-vis greenfield projects.

It will also provide UltraTech an opportunity to evaluate the optimisation of the company's existing capacity expansion plans in the Southern market, given the ready-to-use assets of the target, it added. However, UltraTech also added that the proposed transaction is subject to the approval of the Competition Commission of India.

On the expected time for completion of the acquisition, UltraTech said: "Both the primary acquisition (from promoters) and the Open Offer are expected to be consummated within six months, subject to the abovementioned regulatory approvals". (PTI)

Apple has reached its first-ever union contract with store employees



NEW YORK, July 28: Apple has reached a tentative collective bargaining contract with the first unionized company store in the country.

The International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers' Coalition of Organized Retail Employees, which represents the employees at a retail location in Maryland, announced Friday evening that it struck a three-year deal with the company that will increase pay by an average of 10% and offer other benefits to workers.

The agreement must be approved by roughly 85 employees at the store, which is located in the Baltimore suburb of Towson. A vote is scheduled for Aug. 6.

"By reaching a tentative agreement with Apple, we are giving our members a voice in their futures and a strong first step toward further gains," the union's negotiating committee said in a statement. "Together, we can build on this success in store after store."

Apple did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

The deal came after workers at the store authorized a strike in May, saying talks with management for more than a year hadn't yielded "satisfactory outcomes."

The Maryland store is one of only two unionized Apple sites in the country. Employees there voted in favor of the union in June 2022, a few months before workers at a second Apple location in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, unionized with the Communications Workers of America. The second store has not secured a contract with the tech company.

Unions have scored headline-grabbing election wins in recent years, including at an Amazon warehouse in New York City, a Chipotle store in Michigan and hundreds of Starbucks stores across the country. But many of them have not secured contracts. (AP)

DGMS focuses on mine safety

KOLKATA, July 28: With more commercial mines being auctioned, the DGMS has started discussions with captive and commercial coal block operators on mine safety, an official said on Sunday.

The Directorate General of Mines Safety (DGMS) emphasises ensuring adherence to safety norms among new players.

"We see more captive and commercial mines coming into production every year. So, we are actively engaging in consultation with the mine operators so that they understand the rules and regulations that have to be followed for mine safety," DGMS Director General Prabhat Kumar said at the Mines Safety Award 2024 event.

In the last nine rounds, the Ministry of Coal has auctioned 107 blocks with a peak-rated capacity of 256 MT. So far, 11 commercial coal blocks have been operationalised.

Meanwhile, Coal India, which is diversifying into the non-coal sector, will actively participate in more auctions of critical mineral blocks, including lithium, to capi-

talise on the battery value chain.

"We have taken one mine in graphite. For lithium, we participated in the auction but did not succeed in bagging the mine. We are interested in this sector," Coal India Chairman PM Prasad said on Sunday on the sidelines of the event.

Coal India has recently won a graphite block in Madhya Pradesh, marking its first venture into the non-coal mineral mining.

In its annual report for FY'24, Coal India stated that it is diversifying into the emerging battery materials sectors—lithium, nickel, cobalt, and graphite with the challenges of a rapidly evolving global energy landscape.

Leveraging its mining expertise, operational footprint, and financial resources, the company aims at capitalising on these opportunities, enhancing long-term resilience and competitiveness.

"A deep understanding of the Indian energy and industrial landscape aids in expanding into markets for lithium-ion batteries, electric vehicles, and renewable energy technologies," Coal India said in the report. (PTI)

Trump calls for US to be 'crypto capital of the planet'



NASHVILLE, July 28: Former president Donald Trump on Saturday laid out his plans to wholeheartedly embrace cryptocurrency if elected for a second term, telling hundreds of cheering supporters of the digital tokens that he wants the U.S. to be a "bitcoin superpower" under his leadership.

In his keynote address at a bitcoin conference in Nashville, Tennessee, the Republican presidential nominee promised to make the United States the "crypto capital of the planet" and create a bitcoin "strategic reserve" using the currency that the government currently holds.

He also promised to remove Securities and Exchange Commission Chair Gary Gensler if elected and implement a crypto advisory council, teasing the crowd by asking attendees if anyone wanted to join.

"We will have regulations, but from now on the rules will be written by people who love your industry, not hate your industry," he said.

Trump's keynote address at the Bitcoin 2024 conference showed how radically his position on cryptocurrency has changed over time.

He was not always a fan of cryptocurrencies, writing on social media in 2019 that their "value is highly volatile and based on thin air."

Ulbricht created the underground drug-selling website Silk Road but was sentenced to life in prison after a judge held him responsible for six overdose deaths linked to his website. Some of the nearly 800 attendees who flocked to downtown Nashville to hear Trump speak wore "Free Ross Day One" hats, in a nod to Ulbricht's prison sentence.

Tennessee's U.S. Sen. Marsha Blackburn called Trump's announcement of a bitcoin strategic reserve a "historic moment."

Trump's remarks came a day after independent presidential candidate Robert F. Kennedy Jr. addressed the conference and also pitched launching a strategic bitcoin reserve. (AP)

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LP Acharya new governor

Chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Sunday welcomed the appointment of Acharya as the new governor, maintaining that the state will benefit from his organisational and legislative experiences.

He thanked outgoing governor Gulab Chand Kataria for his contributions during his tenure here, while also congratulating former Assam MP Ramen Deka on being named for the gubernatorial position in Chhattisgarh.

"Hon'ble Shri Laxman Acharya Ji has devoted his life empowering the poor. He has a rich organisational & legislative experience with an excellent tenure as the Governor of Sikkim," Sarma wrote in a post on X.

"I am confident he will be an outstanding Governor for our state. My best wishes on his new assignment," he added.

Recalling Kataria's contributions, Sarma maintained that the state and his government have benefited from the outgoing governor's counsel and guidance.

"He has served the state with utmost dedication. We wish him success on his appointment as the Governor-designate for Punjab," the CM added.

Sarma also congratulated Deka on his new role on the micro-blogging site.

"Many congratulations to the Vice Chairman of Assam's State Innovation and Transformation Aayog (SITA) and my colleague in @BJP4Assam, Shri @ramendeka16 on being appointed as the Hon'ble Governor-designate of Chhattisgarh. He brings with him a diverse experience in public service," he said.

These appointments will take effect from the dates they will assume charge of their respective offices.

Mizoram seeks special package from

Mizoram faces high living and project costs due to its remote location. Despite these challenges, the state government is striving to match the development levels of other states through aggressive implementation of sustainable development goals.

Lalduhoma highlighted Mizoram's need for better roads and communication infrastructure, pointing out that the state's road density is significantly below the national average. He also emphasised the state's acute shortages in water, power, education, public health, hygiene, and administrative infrastructure.

Unlike other states, Mizoram has limited industrial income sources and requires special consideration and assistance.

The chief minister requested financial aid in the form of a 'peace dividend,' noting that Mizoram has not received funds under the security-related expenditure (SRE) scheme like its neighbouring states. (PTI)

SC to hear AAP leader Manish

cabinet on February 28 last year. Sisodia's plea has said the law officer, appearing for the probe agencies, had told the top court on June 4 that the charge sheet and the prosecution complaint in the main excise policy case and the linked money laundering case, respectively, would be filed on or before July 3.

A prosecution complaint is the ED's equivalent of a charge sheet.

On June 4, the apex court had refused to entertain Sisodia's bail pleas in the two cases.

It had said Sisodia could revive his petitions for bail after the ED and the CBI file the final prosecution complaint and the charge sheet, respectively, in these cases.

The top court had added that in the event of such a bail application being filed, the same would be considered on its own merits as already observed by this court in its October 30, 2023 order.

Sisodia had earlier moved the apex court challenging the Delhi High Court's May 21 order dismissing his bail pleas. He had challenged in the high court a trial court's April 30 order rejecting his bail applications in the two cases.

On October 30 last year, the top court denied him bail in the two cases, saying the accusation of "windfall gains" of Rs 338 crore to wholesale liquor dealers was "tentatively supported" by evidence.

While dismissing the regular bail plea, the top court had given Sisodia the liberty to approach the courts for relief if there was a change in circumstances or the trial got protracted. (PTI)

India can guide developing nations craft

Lessons in policy formulation, community engagement, and sustainable health interventions. By sharing its strategies, India can guide other developing nations in crafting effective health programmes that cater to diverse populations," Khosla said.

PMNCH has a long history and relationship with the Indian government.

In addition to being one of its long-standing partners, India has been instrumental in PMNCH's genesis as a global alliance that brought together 80 organisations belonging to three partnerships focused on safe motherhood and newborn health and their survival, Khosla said.

The 'Delhi Declaration,' a landmark statement developed in 2005 in New Delhi, outlined the vision and goals of the new partnership, which came to ultimately be known as the PMNCH.

India's endorsement of the 'Adolescents and the Adolescent Well-being Framework,' alongside 29 global champions in an open letter in the BMJ, are just some examples of their support, he said.

As PMNCH approaches its 20th anniversary, its priorities include accelerating progress towards the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals, enhancing political advocacy, and mobilising resources for maternal, newborn, child and adolescent well-being, Khosla said. (PTI)

Royal Enfield Guerrilla 450 launched

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, July 28: The Royal Enfield Guerrilla 450 has been officially launched at 4Aces Retail Pvt Ltd in Guwahati. It was unveiled by managing director Chirag Gupta, COO Shalini Gupta and Satish Verma (ASM, Royal Enfield) along with other dignitaries at Zoo Road Showroom.

The Royal Enfield Guerrilla 450 available at a starting price of ₹ 2.39 lakh, but the price of this new Royal Enfield model can go up to ₹ 2.54 lakh (ex-showroom). Notably, it is the second model to be based on the Sherpa 450 platform after Royal Enfield's Himalayan. The bike will be released in three variants: Flash, Dash, and Analog. The flash variant of the model will be offered in two colours: Brava



Blue and Yellow Ribbon, whereas its dash variant will be available in Gold Dip and Playa Black. The analog variant of the bike will be available in two colours: Smoke and Playa Black.

The Guerrilla 450 has the same 452 cc single-cylinder, liquid-cooled engine that makes 39.47 bhp at 8,000 rpm and 40 Nm of peak torque at 5,500 rpm.

The bike has a 43mm telescopic

fork up front with a travel of 40 mm and a linkage-type monoshock. The newly launched model has alloy wheels at both ends. Its weight is of around 185 kg (kerb weight) and has a ground clearance of 169 mm.

The bike has a 4-inch circular TFT screen, which is available on the top two variants. The screen is also linked with Google Maps and media controls. The bike with full LED lighting also comes with a USB Type C charging port. The base variant of Royal Enfield Guerrilla has a digi-analogue instrument console. The motorcycle booking begins at 4Aces Retail Pvt. Ltd. Aay Jay tower, Opp. Dorardshan Kendra, Zoo Road in Guwahati. Most of the deliveries will likely begin in August 2024, a PR stated.

District administrations commemorated the day with tributes, competitions & cultural programs

Desh Bhakti Diwas observed across state to honour Tarun Ram Phukan

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, July 28: Along with the rest of the state, Desh Bhakti Diwas was observed to mark the death anniversary of Desh Bhakti Tarun Ram Phukan. The programme was organised by the Dima Hasao district administration in collaboration with the district information & public relations officer, Dima Hasao, at the District Library Auditorium Hall in Haf-long on Sunday.

The programme was attended by executive member of Dima Hasao Autonomous Council (DHAC), Donphainon Thaoson, principal of Haf-long Government College, Sorbojit Thaoson, additional director of Information & Public Relations Hills, DN, Loyal, additional deputy commissioner Shhaurya Sharma, ACS, ADCs, teachers, and students.

The event began with the lighting of a lamp and a floral tribute to the portrait of Desh Bhakti Tarun Ram Phukan by executive member of DHAC, Donphainon Thaoson, and other dignitaries.

In his address, chief guest Donphainon Thaoson spoke about the life of the patriot, who was a great freedom fighter of the state. He encouraged students to draw inspiration from Desh Bhakti Tarun Ram Phukan's sacrifices and contributions to the freedom struggle and to work hard towards building a better future for the nation.

ADC Shhaurya Sharma briefly discussed the life and greatness of Tarun Ram Phukan and his struggle during the freedom movement in Assam, along with the rest of India. Encouraging and motivating the students, Sharma highlighted the importance of remembering and honouring the state's heroes like Tarun Ram Phukan, who played a significant role in India's fight for independence.

As part of the programme, prizes were distributed to the winners of the quiz and essay writing competitions from various schools in Dima Hasao. The programme concluded with a vote of thanks by deputy director and DIPRO i/c, Purabi Phlong.

In like manner, the Kokrajhar district

administration, in collaboration with the district information and public relations officer, observed the death anniversary of Desh Bhakti Tarun Ram Phukan at the Science College Auditorium, Kokrajhar.

The program featured Dr Ratul Deka, associate professor of Bodoland University, as the keynote speaker. In his address, Dr Deka highlighted the life and activities of Tarun Ram Phukan, emphasising that his uncompromising stance and courage significantly impacted the Non-Cooperation Movement in Assam. He described Phukan as a symbol of patriotism, sacrifice, and bravery, noting that his writings and speeches played a crucial role in mobilising the Assamese populace, fostering unity and nationalism, and underscoring the importance of self-reliance in the struggle for India's independence.

In his introductory address, Jahangir Hussain, programme officer of SSA, Kokrajhar, remarked on Phukan's vital role in the Non-Cooperation Movement. He noted that Phukan tirelessly worked to unite people from diverse backgrounds and foster awareness about the movement, inspiring the Assamese populace to join the struggle for independence.

Zahid Ahmed Tapadar, RO cum CHD of BTC IPRD, highlighted Tarun Ram Phukan's love for the country and stated that his spirit of patriotism still inspires new generations. He further informed that, as per the decision of the Assam Cabinet led by Himanta Biswa Sarma, the death anniversary of Tarun Ram Phukan has been observed statewide as Desh Bhakti Diwas since 2021.

The programme culminated with Subhram Aditya Bora, ADC of Kokrajhar, and other esteemed guests awarding prizes to the 12 winners of the district-level essay competition held for school and college students.

The program was attended by several eminent citizens, educationists, and students from Kokrajhar, celebrating the enduring legacy of Tarun Ram Phukan and reinforcing the spirit of patriotism among the youth.



Similarly, the district administration of Cachar, in collaboration with the Regional Office of Information & Public Relations Barak Valley Zone, commemorated the death anniversary of Desh Bhakti Tarun Ram Phukan as 'Desh Bhakti Diwas' at the conference hall of the DC's office on Sunday. The event celebrated Phukan's profound contributions to India's independence and his significant literary achievements.

The ceremony commenced with the lighting of the ceremonial lamp, followed by a series of speeches highlighting Phukan's unwavering dedication to the freedom struggle and his lasting impact on Assamese literature. Dignitaries and attendees paid homage to the revered freedom fighter, whose legacy continues to inspire generations.

The event featured a special exhibition showcasing rare photographs, manuscripts, and personal belongings of Phukan, providing a glimpse into his life and times. A panel discussion on his literary contributions and a cultural program depicting the freedom struggle added depth and reverence to the occasion.

Keynote speaker Professor Ashraf Hussain, head of the department of Assamese at GC College, emphasised the importance of remembering and honouring

such icons. "Tarun Ram Phukan's life is a testament to the power of courage, intellect, and patriotism. His contributions to our freedom and cultural heritage are invaluable," he stated.

Principal Suparna Sinha of Tarun Ram Phukan School delivered an inspiring speech on the occasion of Desh Bhakti Diwas, underscoring the importance of patriotism in shaping a responsible and progressive society. She highlighted the legacy of freedom fighters like Phukan, whose dedication and sacrifice laid the foundation for the nation's independence.

Earlier, retired teacher Kusum Kalita presented a Jyoti Sangeet on the occasion, adding a soulful musical tribute to the event.

The event was also attended by additional district commissioner Van Lal Limpua Nampui, in-charge Inspector of Schools, in-charge deputy director of Information & Public Relations Barak Valley Zone Bonnkya Chetia, and other officials.

Our Sivasagar correspondent adds: As part of the state-wide celebration of Desh Bhakti Diwas to commemorate the contributions of legendary freedom fighter and patriot Tarun Ram Phukan, the Sivasagar district administration organised a meeting with an august gathering

of citizens and students in Sukapha Hall on Sunday.

Lakhikanta Mahanta, Satradhikar of Ujjanial Satra, lit the ceremonial lamp in the presence of ADC Dwatibha Bora and assistant commissioner Kankana Saikia to inaugurate the function. Addressing the gathering, Anup Gogoi, principal of Sanskrit Senior Secondary School, delivered a detailed account of Tarun Ram Phukan's life and works.

Senior journalist Manoj Kr Borthakur and Angshuman Duwori, a dibyanga student, spoke on various aspects of Desh Bhakti Tarun Ram Phukan's life.

Digbijay Devnath, Dhriti Mahanta, Asthajita Phukan, Rajnandini Bora, Pinakhi Palli Devi, Pragyaashree Saikia, Anindita Barua, Beauty Hazarika, and Anisha Dutta were awarded prizes for their achievements in a district-level essay competition on the occasion.

Our Jorhat correspondent adds: Along with the rest of the state, the death anniversary of Desh Bhakti Tarun Ram Phukan was observed as Desh Bhakti Diwas on Sunday by the Jorhat district administration, with support from the Office of the District Information and Public Relations Officer, Jorhat, in a solemn ceremony held at the conference hall of the Jorhat Circuit House.

In the function presided over by the Jorhat development commissioner and attended by Mariani MLA Rupjyoti Kurmi, several district administration officials, and a number of noted people, tributes were paid to the great patriot, starting with the offering of flowers before the portrait of Phukan.

Kurmi, in his address, spoke about the life of the patriot who was one of the great freedom fighters of the state, mentioning the initiatives taken by the state government to honour the freedom fighters and to keep alive their contributions among the upcoming generations.

In the program, winners of the district-level essay competition on the life of Desh Bhakti Tarun Ram Phukan were given prizes by the Mariani MLA and other noted citizens.

Our Tezpur correspondent adds:

Along with the rest of the state, Desh Bhakti Diwas was observed in Sonitpur district on Sunday to commemorate Desh Bhakti Tarun Ram Phukan on his death anniversary. The programme was organised by the Office of the District Commissioner, Sonitpur, in association with the Office of the District Information and Public Relations Officer, Sonitpur, and was held at the conference hall of the district commissioner's office.

The programme commenced with the district commissioner of Sonitpur, Deba Kumar Mishra, paying his respects to the luminary freedom fighter and patriot of Assam by lighting a lamp and presenting floral tributes at Desh Bhakti's portrait. He was accompanied by chief executive officer of Zilla Parishad Karabi Saikia Karan, additional district commissioner (Education) Kabita Kakati Konwar, additional district commissioner (Health) Twahir Alam, Inspector of Schools Mridul Kumar Nath, district information and public relations officer Anika Gogoi, along with invitees, students, their guardians, and teachers of various schools of Tezpur in paying floral tributes to the great leader.

This was followed by a formal meeting organised on the occasion where district commissioner Deba Kumar Mishra welcomed all present and enumerated the contributions of the great leader to our nation and society. He also added that by observing this day, we are not only honouring the legacy of the great patriot but also shedding light on the ideals practised by him, which he hoped would inspire the future generation.

Attending the programme as the invited keynote speaker, Dr Sanjay Kumar Deka, associate professor of Botany at Darrang College, Tezpur, reiterated the ideals of Desh Bhakti Tarun Ram Phukan and urged everyone present to imbibe them in their daily lives.

The prizes for the winners of the District Level Essay Competition, which had been organised earlier by the government of Assam in collaboration with the district administration as part of the celebration of the day, were also presented in the meeting.

Amar Sankolpo Seva Committee celebrates 75 weeks of meal distribution



HT Correspondent

HOJAI, July 28: Amar Sankolpo Seva Committee, a Hojai-based social organisation, celebrated its 75th week of meal distribution on Sunday. To mark this noble mission, a program was organised with Dr Ashok Bagchi gracing the event as chief guest. Social activist Pramod Ranjan Das and many other dignitaries were present as guests of honour. The guests appreciated the social service rendered by Amar Sankolpo Seva Committee.

"Our social service began on February 26, 2022, and we are extremely happy to have successfully completed 75 weeks," said Happy Singh, joint secretary, while talking to this correspondent. He mentioned that every Sunday, they set

up a stall near Kali Mandir, in the railway station campus in Hojai, where they distribute pure vegetarian meals to over 450 needy people for a nominal charge of Rs 1 each.

Singh provided details about the committee members, including Mandip Kr Saha, president; Tapobrata Saha, vice-president; Kaustabh Bhattacharjee, secretary; Happy Singh, joint secretary; Swarup Roy, Cashier; and Manojit Malakar, sports and cultural secretary, along with fifty-plus members. The committee members expressed their gratitude to everyone who directly or indirectly supported their endeavours.

Notably, along with free meal distribution, the committee organises blood donation camps and conducts plantation drives.

Workshop on Bhupendra Sangeet and Bishnu Rabha Sangeet concludes

HT Correspondent

MORIGAOON, July 28: A 10-day summer workshop on Bhupendra Sangeet and Bishnu Rabha Sangeet, initiated by Sonaiparia Kala-Krishti Bikash Kendra, Gerua, commenced on July 18, 2024, and concluded on Saturday evening at Gerua. The event was organised by the director of Cultural Affairs, Assam, and supported by the Jagiroad Culture Centre.

The All Assam competition for Bhupendra Sangeet and Bishnu Rabha Sangeet was held amongst 75 aspirants participating in the workshop. The summer workshop was formally inaugurated by senior reporter Nayan Goswami. The competition was held in two categories, 'A' and 'B', for 120 selected songs of both music legends, Dr Bhupen Hazarika and Kalaguru Bishnu Rabha. The judging panel included noted musician Surya Goswami, Tanseng Timung (teacher at Jagiroad Sur Deul Sangeet Vidyalaya), and Prasanna Kr Medhi (principal of Morigaon Sankari Sangeet Vidyalaya).

During the workshop, Surya Goswami recalled his twenty years of experience with Dr Bhupen Hazarika at musical events across the country, mesmerising everyone in attendance.

A meeting in connection with the closing ceremony of the workshop was held, presided over by Gyan Muhan Deka, president of Sonaiparia Kala-Krishti Bikash Kendra, Gerua. DCO Morigaon Angshuman Dutta attended as the chief guest.

NTPC Bongaigaon Salakati champions sustainable power & community empowerment

HT Correspondent

KOKRAJHAR, July 28: NTPC Bongaigaon Salakati, a prominent power generation unit with an installed capacity of 750 (3x250) MW, continues to shine as a beacon of sustainable power generation and inclusive stakeholder engagement.

In a media interaction held on Saturday, the senior management of NTPC, led by Akhilesh Singh, head of project, NTPC Bongaigaon, shared significant operational and plant performance highlights.

Singh emphasised the station's ongoing efforts to mitigate pollution through the implementation of Flue Gas Desulfurization (FGD) technology. He also highlighted NTPC Bongaigaon's dedication to environmental stewardship, noting that since 2006, the station has planted over 1.93 lakh trees in and around the facility.

As part of its societal commitment, NTPC Bongaigaon has successfully conducted NTPC's flagship Girl Empowerment Mission (GEM) program for three consecutive years. This initiative, which trains 40 girls annually in education, holistic growth, and life skills, reflects the station's dedication to girl empowerment and community development. The media persons vis-

ited the GEM venue and interacted with the GEM girls and praised the infrastructure of the community hall.

Singh expressed gratitude towards the Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) and district administration for their continuous support in all initiatives. He also outlined various sustainable measures undertaken by the station to enhance operational efficiency and community welfare.

During the media interaction, Paresh Mathur, head of TS, provided insights into the operational and maintenance parameters and the genesis of NTPC Bongaigaon. Onkar Nath, AGM (HR), highlighted the diverse HR and CSR initiatives and NTPC Bongaigaon's efforts towards community development.

The event was attended by senior officials including Induri S Reddy, GM (O&M); Asutosh Biswas, GM (Operation); Roshan Ddung; Madhurjya S. Lahkar, senior manager (Corporate Communication); Abdul Aziz, manager HR; and Smt. Aditya Thakuri, CSR executive.

NTPC Bongaigaon Salakati remains committed to its mission of generating sustainable power while fostering community development and environmental sustainability.

New leadership takes charge at Dibrugarh Press Club

HT Correspondent

DIBRUGARH, July 28: The Dibrugarh Press Club, one of the oldest and most prestigious press clubs in the state, formed a new executive committee during its triennial conference held on Saturday at the Asom Sahitya Sabha office in Dibrugarh. Senior journalist Manash Jyoti Dutta has been appointed as the new president, while Ripunjoy Das takes on the role of general secretary. The outgoing president, Prabir Kumar Chakravorty, and general secretary, Anil Poddar, handed over the responsibilities in a ceremonious transition.

The new vice presidents include Ajoy Dutta, Debojit Chutia, and Rajib Dutta, while Jyotish

Patir, Avik Chakravorty, and Manoj Pandey were appointed as assistant general secretaries.

Poresh Aind has been appointed as the treasurer responsible for managing the club's finances, while a panel of advisors, including Ron Duarah, Sarat Neog, Lakhi Kanta Mazindar Baruah, Dr. Alakh Niranjan Sahay, Lohit Deka, Saurav Duarah, and Lalit Sharma, will provide guidance and support to the new committee.

The committee also features a robust lineup of executive members, including Jyoti Khakholia, Sanjib Biswas, Javed Hussain, Haren Sonowal, Pronib Das, Surajit Gogoi, Swopnoshree Goswami, Arindam Gogoi, and Ramesh Hazarika, ensuring a well-rounded representation of the

media community in Dibrugarh. The event saw a gathering of local journalists and dignitaries, including Dibrugarh MLA Prasanta Phukan and mayor Dr Saikat Patra, among others. Outgoing president Prabir Kumar Chakravorty reflected on his tenure, saying, "It has been an honour to lead this club, and I am confident that the new committee will take it to greater heights."

Speaking about his new role as the president of the Dibrugarh Press Club, Manash Jyoti Dutta said, "I am honoured to have been chosen as the president of the Dibrugarh Press Club. I am committed to serving the members of the press club and ensuring that we continue to uphold the principles of journalism."

Second edition of 'Butterfly and Biodiversity Trail' concludes successfully

HT Correspondent

MARGHERITA, July 28: The second edition of the 'Butterfly and Biodiversity Trail' successfully concluded on Sunday, with enthusiastic participation from 32 individuals representing Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, and Uttarakhand. The event was held at Soraipung, Dehing Patkai National Park, and the Lakhipather forest reserve area under the Digboi Forest Division of Tinsukia district.

The program was organised by the Wings of Nature Conservation Society in collaboration with Bagpackgo Adventures and Dehing Patkai Krishna Dorik Homestay, and co-powered by the Assam Forest Department, Dehing Patkai National Park, Northeast Birding Tours, and Green Buds Society. This initiative aims to raise awareness and promote sustainable eco-tourism through butterfly and biodiversity conservation. Awareness, North-east Expedition, Camp Dibrugarh Saikhowa, Discover India's Northeast Magazine, Discover FarEast, and Infinity Studio were the official partners of the event.

On the first day of the trail at Soraipung, a total of 153 species of butterflies were documented, including 12 rare and uncommon species, with five species still under identifi-



cation. Notable species include the brown hat, Indian awliang, blue scarce tiger, banded yamefly, white dragontrail, moore ace, orange albatross, orchid tit, golden birdwing,

and green awlet.

Roshan Upadhaya, the Butterfly Man of Arunachal Pradesh, Devajit Moran, a renowned environmentalist involved in snake

and wildlife rescue and conservation, and Madhab Gogoi, a renowned birding guide from Merbil, known for his expertise in Dehing Patkai National Park and Dibrugarh Saikhowa National Park, participated in the event as guest resource persons.

The initiative aims to develop a sustainable eco-tourism model that benefits local forest villagers and young enthusiasts through butterfly and biodiversity conservation and guiding.

Bird species recorded during the event included the sultan tit, grey pheasant, long-tailed broadbill, brown hornbill, red-headed trogon, pilled falconet, common green magpie, black-naped monarch, and blyth's black paradise flycatcher. Additionally, elephants and hoolock gibbons were also sighted.

The event highlighted the rich biodiversity of the region, with tropical rainforest species such as hollong, nahor, rudraksha, and elephant apple trees, along with 19 varieties of orchids.

The organisers extended their gratitude to TC Ranjith Ram, divisional forest officer of Digboi Forest Division, and Utpal Borah, forest range officer of Soraipung Forest Range Office, for their unwavering support in making this initiative a success.

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QUOTE OF THE DAY

The unexamined life is not worth living. -Socrates

Threat to secular governance?

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's decision to lift the 44-year-old ban on government employees joining the Rashtriya Swayam-sevak Sangh (RSS) and participating in its programs is more than a mere political manoeuvre to appease RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat. It signifies a deeper, more troubling shift in the governance and secular fabric of India.

The recent order, therefore, raises significant concerns. The state administration, which once had to maintain a façade of neutrality, can now openly engage with the RSS. This shift could embolden officials to follow directives from the RSS headquarters in Nagpur without fear of repercussions, leading to a dangerous erosion of impartial governance.

The military, known for its multicultural ethos, is also at risk. Efforts to integrate religious texts into military training and the politicization of military achievements are part of a broader strategy to align the armed forces with the RSS's ideological goals.

The military, known for its multicultural ethos, is also at risk. Efforts to integrate religious texts into military training and the politicization of military achievements are part of a broader strategy to align the armed forces with the RSS's ideological goals. Modi's controversial Agniveer scheme, which leaves the majority of short-term military recruits without long-term employment, could contribute to the formation of a militarized social force loyal to the RSS.

The involvement of senior bureaucrats with RSS leanings, exemplified by officials participating in RSS events, further illustrates the deepening nexus between the state and the RSS.

Bangladesh curfew and internet blackout were an overkill

The helms of affairs of government and security agencies during the rage of countrywide student protests in the last seven days, in panic, overreacted. The advisers who are small 'g' gods of lesser version hurriedly advised the authorities to clamp down with an indefinite curfew and blackout of the internet to contain the student's protest, which local rioters joined.

Crackdown In a crackdown, police arrested and detained nearly 1500 suspects. Among them are shopkeepers, delivery boys, returning home from work, and of course bystanders. Police in their dragnet have hardly been able to arrest the looters, rioters, and hooliganism.

Well, the police arrested scores of leaders from the opposition Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) and Islamist party Jamaat-e-Islami (JeI) blaming them for instigating the riots in a bid to topple the government.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has squarely blamed BNP and JeI for vandalism and arson causing havoc on government Key Points Installations (KPIs), including two stations of Metro Rail, a pride of Hasina's mega project. The Shetu Bhaban, houses the Bangladesh Bridge Authority, Bangladesh Road Transport Authority building and several other government buildings.

The government claims that the widespread destruction was pre-planned by the opposition and terrorists, which had planned to destabilise the government-a valid argument for a curfew and shutdown of the internet to foil the plan.

Dr Asif Nazrul, a law professor at Dhaka University in an OpEd urged the government to provide at least one evidence of opposition and Islamist conspiracy, which was foiled.

Timeline The student protests



which began on 1 July marched from the Dhaka University campus. The following days the students blocked the Shahbag Square, where historic protests were held and the government accepted the demands in the past.

The apex court on 4 July did not support the High Court verdict that invalidated the 2018 circular on cancellation of quota.

From 5 July, the protest spread to other university campuses and blocked roads and highways in their call for reforms of quota for government jobs.

Soon the road blockade was joined by private universities and also colleges of the country.

On 10 July, the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court imposed a status quo on quota for four weeks. Demand to reform quota system for government recruitments under all grades.

Awami League general secretary Obaidul Quader said the quota protesters are flexing muscle against the highest court of the country, which is unwarranted and illegal.

He made a stern warning if the protesters do not stand down, the Chattr League is prepared to face the agitators. While the Home boss Asaduzzaman Kamal said the protesters are 'crossing their limits'.

The blood spilt in the streets has itself turned into violence against the citizens of the country. Coupled with thousands of wounded reported in media has caused irksome among tens of thousands of 'mango people'.

For the first time, Bangladesh witnessed that sound grenade and tear gas shells were charged from hovering helicopters. The flying machines owned by the anti-crime force Rapid Action Battalion (RAB) and the police.

Rights group Prime Minister Hasina, who won a fourth consecutive term after January elections that were not free or fair, had previously imposed and then withdrawn the quota. She has called for dialogue and promised an inquiry into the July 15 deaths.

Tragedy Shafkat Samir (11), a fifth-grade student, was closing a window of his home to stay safe from the rampant firing of tear gas shells during massive clashes at Kafrul in the city's Mirpur area on Friday afternoon. In the blink of an eye, a bullet pierced his head, entering through his eye and killing him instantly.

Later the harassment and legal threats by law enforcement officers, Samir's father Sakibur followed their advice and signed a form stating that "I have no complaints over the incident, and I don't want to file a case. After taking my son's body, I will go to bury it."

"Bangladesh has been troubled for a long time due to unfettered security force abuses against anyone who opposes the Sheikh Hasina government, and we are witnessing that same playbook again, this time to attack unarmed student protesters," said Meenakshi Ganguly, deputy Asia director at Human Rights Watch.

Parleys Hasina earlier had par-

DEGREE OF THOUGHT By: Saleem Samad

Why so much fuss about just telling 'My name is Khan' Under Neoliberalism, permanent employment is being replaced by flexible work regime

By: Er. Rajesh Pathak

Trilokteerth Dham of Jain community lies in Bagpat town of UP. Few years back when on the occasion of 'Moksh Kalyanakparv' of bhagwan Parshvath some pilgrims made visit to the place for 'Darshan'. After having paid visit inside the temple performing customary rituals, they came out in the open close to the temple premise. There they saw a mobile-shop named 'Jain Shikanji' - a kind of juice Jains prefer - written on the plain paper stuck on a board.

Now it was not difficult for them to know that it was actually non-veg shop run by a Muslim. On objection from the pilgrims the shopkeeper grew so enraged that he fled from the spot only to come back with his 70-80 aides of his community. Now what, they began to pound upon unleashing their fury upon whoever came before them. And, not appeased with this alone, they began to vent their anger upon the bus; even set upon burning it by pouring petrol over it.

Meantime those belonging to the committee of the trust somehow made the contact with the police and even called the people of the village. Only then the situation could be brought under control. Such incidents are now no more an uncommon matter, nor gets to be the nature of some particular places.

What Yogi Adityanath wants of mentioning the name of owner belonging to his or her enterprise in UP, therefore, needs to be done entire country. It is not the cause of concern for one isolated faith, but for entire Sanatana Dharm. When the commander of Qutubiddin Aibek invaded Delhi in 1104 he spared none of the 'Kafirs'. Before his eyes all were equally sinful, the idol worshippers. And he razed down 20 Jain temples without discrimination. It is therefore when the matter of CAA was hot at the time of its introduction that the Jain Muni Pranam Sagar came in support of it.

Non-political, one above the pleasure and pain of physical world, and an austere, Pranam Sagar Maharaj said in the programme organised for the journalists at Bhopal four years back that-'Country needs not religious fanaticism but deep faith in Indian culture. In my view CAA should have been introduced 50 years

back. Rising above political thinking we should hold national interest above everything.'

Buddhists have been no less tormented by the flag bearer of establishing the rule under one doctrine of faith. This historical fact was attested by none other than BR Ambedkar, himself having adopted 'Buddhism'. How Buddhism met its nemesis, none could tell better than Babasaheb Ambedkar: 'When Muslim king Bakhtiyar Khilji invaded Bihar, he killed more than 5 thousands Buddhist monks, and razed far a more Bodha-dharma peetha (Buddhist religious shrines) to the dust. Only they remained safe who could manage to have escaped away to China, Nepal and Tibet'. ('Dr Ambedkar and samajik krantikee yatra': Dattopant Thenгри, translated in Hindi by Shridhar Paradkar).

When country had seen partition, his views were - 'I want to tell Dalit community got struck into Pakistan to escape from there and come to India by whatever path or mean they get. Relying on Pakistan, Hyderabad's Nizam or Muslim League will only lead to the destruction of Dalit community'. Buddhists have been no less tormented by the flag bearer of establishing the rule under one doctrine of faith. This historical fact was attested by none other than BR Ambedkar, himself having adopted 'Buddhism'.

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The way the sons, Jorawar and Fateh Singh, of King Guru Govind Singh were brutally killed for the refusal of adopting Islam, that could make us imagine how the common man would be treated then. And it was because of which many of them choseto adopt the option of retreating inside the forest, hiding from Islamists' out for hunting them into their trap. They only today we know as schedule tribe folks.

By: Sanjay Roy

The radical shift in labour relations from regimes of standard employment to fragmented and flexibilised labour force under neoliberalism is signified by a radical shift of responsibilities of their production of labour force from the capitalist employer to the State through the denial of indirect wage payments to workers.

One of the major achievements of labour movement in the past was the recognition of elements as constituents of wage and benefits that ensured the reproduction of labour force in its totality. The underlying spirit was wages should not only cover the immediate needs of the worker but also should at the minimum be enough to maintain the intergenerational supply of a healthy workforce and the labour force not currently absorbed at work. This was required by capitalism to ensure the supply of workers in future.

In other words, wage determination should include apart from the necessities of direct workers, expenses to sustain other non-working family members, unemployed, including children and old parents. At a societal level this means the wages and salaries of active workers should be enough to take care of the unemployed, children, diseased and elderly members of the society.

Under neoliberalism this accepted rationale for wage determination is turned upside down and the idea of permanent employment is being replaced by the notion of flexibilised work regime. Besides few core workers there would be a vast periphery of unprotected or even unrecognized workers contributing paid or unpaid work to the process of accumulation.

The wage determination is reformed in a way that payments to workers should at least cover the immediate necessities of the labour for a short period of time. Calculation of wages, in this case, neither factor in the long-term sustenance of the employed worker nor the maintenance of their family members. The workers are in a continuous state of flux, they move from one place to another, they work with different employers and also with the same employer but with intermittent contracts.

In some cases, the contract between the employer and the employee are not only temporary but instantaneous. To many, as in the case of platform work, the worker is employed through a network on a piece rate basis and the employer might be a multinational corporation operating through some opaque technological Economic Policy and Labour algorithm which is completely inaccessible to the worker.

The radical shift towards the new regime of contractualisation and casualisation of workforce operationalised through domestic and global value chains not only increases the control of capital over the labour process but also drastically reduces capitalist's cost of sustaining an overinflated reserve army of labour. The payment to the worker in the point of production completely denies the claims of indirect wages. Such payments in addition to covering immediate requirements of the working population could have actually helped in reproducing the inter-generational stream of labour and also maintaining the reserve army of labour.

True, that every capitalist crisis not only alters the composition of fixed capital but also redistributes the existing reserve army of labour by sectors, regions and occupations. But there is also a continuous process of replacing active workers by machines embedded in new technology which also recreates the reserve army of labour. This recreation of structural unemployment is important in capitalism to contain wages in periods of high growth because as the labour market approaches full employment the bargaining power of workers increases which tend to reduce capitalists' profits. The question now is the cost of maintaining the reserve army of labour.

More importantly with rising capital intensity, increasingly labour being replaced by machines, the number of labour required for production declines. This does not however mean that capitalism would be moving towards a state of zero use of labour, a chimera that capitalists would very much like to realise but that is actually a state of extinction of capitalism altogether because all source of surplus value is living labour and without that capitalism cannot exist.

The reserve army of labour was earlier maintained by the wages and security benefits paid to existing workforce. With contractualisation and flexibilisation of labour process and rising outsourcing and offshoring, the employers have been able to deny the responsibility of bearing the cost of subsistence of the unemployed, old and children. But because capitalist development is always uneven the pace of technological development and hence the pace of labour substitution in different sectors is not uniform and the dynamics of the aggregate reserve army of labour varies with the relative labour requirement of sectors and related distribution.

Now the cost of reproducing the potential labour force is being shifted to the workers. There might be some transfer of accumulated surplus to people mediated by the State through various micro-welfare schemes but the decline of the labour's share in the aggregate pie across countries show that the reserve army of labour expands with a reduced share of wages and salaries. Also, government revenue includes indirect taxes which is a deduction from the consumption fund of the working people.

The contradictory processes of capitalist accumulation accelerated through technological development gives rise to a contradictory division between the active and reserve labour

force. It is a dual process which on the one hand makes a huge labour force redundant with increased use of machines and platforms and on the other hand for the existing workforce both hours of work and intensity increases. So, it is a bipolar outcome: vast mass of jobless and those who work have to produce more both physically and intellectually. The simple reason being, in capitalism, work or employment is meaningful only when it produces surplus for the property owners. A more rational and humane society could have resolved the impact of new technology in a radically different way. Machines allow humans to produce more with the same inputs, if that is the case, logically, use of technology should generally reduce direct labour time. In other words, the same GDP can be produced with less direct labour time or all should actually work less while all would be employed at the same time. If the time necessary to produce our needs declines due to use of technology, human beings would be spending more time according to their choice and hence would be more productive. But this does not happen in capitalism as all the means of production are owned by the few capitalists who use technology to reduce the value of labour in order to generate higher amounts of surplus. Technology instead of making vast number of labour redundant, in a different social setting, could have employed them for lesser hours of work and enhanced social disposable time which could have generated much more output for the society as a whole. In capitalism, on the contrary, use of technology and fragmentation of work process would reduce the value of labour power, will increase the number of jobless people, will shift the burden of maintaining the augmented reserve army of labour to the workers and finally intensify the rate of exploitation for the employed workforce. But this also creates the objective condition necessary to bringing together various segments of the working population: worker, unpaid workers and the redundant population in becoming a class against capitalist exploitation. (IPA Service)



Is stage 3 breast cancer curable? What causes upper stomach pain?

By: Dr Pritam Kataria

While advanced stages of cancer may not be completely curable, with timely awareness, appropriate diagnosis and medical intervention, you can try to tackle the symptoms and prolong your life span, points out Dr Pritam Kataria, consultant, medical oncology at the Sir H N Reliance Foundation Hospital. Breast cancer is one of the most common types of cancer in India, with more women being diagnosed with it than men. Globally too, the incidence of breast cancer is rising.

Self-examination, early diagnosis and mammography are some of the ways to detect and confirm if you have underlying symptoms. However, in most cases, women do not seek help until the cancer reaches its later stages.

In 2002, veteran actor Mumtaz was diagnosed with breast cancer. She was 54 and was able to recover after multiple rounds of radiation and chemotherapy.

In September 2018, actor Ayushman Khurrana's wife Tahira Kashyap, was diagnosed with Stage 0 breast cancer (this is in the pre-cancer stage, affects the milk duct and is non-invasive). She underwent a mastectomy (removal of the breast) and later wrote a book documenting her journey to recovery.

Last week, actor Hina Khan - who is just 36 years old - announced that she has been diagnosed with Stage 3 breast cancer. While the news came as a shock, there were many who wondered why her cancer remained

undetected for so long.

More importantly, people want to know: Is breast cancer curable at Stage 3?

While advanced stages of cancer may not be completely curable, with timely awareness, appropriate diagnosis and medical intervention, you can try to tackle the symptoms and prolong your life span. Dr Pritam Kataria, consultant, medical oncology at the Sir HN Reliance Foundation Hospital, answers some of the most frequently asked questions about breast cancer:

What are the warning signs of breast cancer that women should not ignore?

The most common symptom of breast cancer is a new lump or mass in the breast; however, not all such lumps are signs of cancer. A painless, hard mass that has irregular edges is more likely to be cancer. But breast cancers can be also soft, round, tender or even painful.

Other possible symptoms of breast cancer include:

- Swelling of all or part of a breast (even if no lump is felt)
- Skin dimpling (sometimes looking like an orange peel)
- Breast or nipple pain
- Nipple retraction (turning inward)
- Nipple or breast skin that is red, dry, flaking or thickened nipple discharge (other than breast milk)
- Swollen lymph nodes under the arm or near the collarbone (Sometimes this can be a sign of breast cancer spreading even before the tumour in the breast is large enough to be felt.)

Breast cancer: How to do a self-examination

• Begin with a visual examination of your breasts.

• Sit or stand shirtless and braless in front of a mirror with your arms at your sides.

To inspect your breasts visually, do the following:

- Face forward and look for puckering, dimpling or changes in size, shape or symmetry.
- Check to see if your nipples are turned in (inverted).
- Inspect your breasts with your hands pressed down on your hips.
- Inspect your breasts with your arms raised overhead and the palms of your hands pressed together.
- Lift your breasts to see if ridges along the bottom are symmetrical.

If you have a vision impairment that makes it difficult for you to visually inspect your breasts, ask a trusted friend or a family member to help you.

Palpation of the breast

• With the flat of the hand, try to palpate (touch) the breast.

• Next, check for breast lumps or abnormalities by feeling your breasts while lying down, using your right hand to feel your left breast and then your left hand to feel your right breast.

• Use a firm, smooth touch with the first few finger pads of your hand, keeping the fingers flat and together.

What is a mammogram?

A mammogram is an X-ray examination of the breast. It is used to detect and diagnose breast disease in women who have breast problems,

such as a lump, pain or nipple discharge, as well as for women who have no breast complaints. The procedure allows the detection of breast cancers, benign tumours and cysts before they can be detected by palpation.

Can breast cancer be treated/cured?

Yes, it can. There are typically five different stages of breast cancer, depending on the size and severity of the tumour. The risk of treatment and survival increases with each stage.

Stage 0 is one of the most difficult to detect due to poor symptoms. In stages 3 and 4, the tumour has probably grown in terms of size but may or may not have spread to other organs. In advanced stages, the tumour may have spread to other organs including the lungs, liver and the brain.

Based on the severity of symptoms and size of the tumour, there are two types of treatment -- local therapy and systemic therapy.

Local therapy includes radiation therapy and surgery. Systemic therapy includes chemotherapy, targeted therapy, immunotherapy and hormonal therapy.

In most cases where women are diagnosed with stage 1, 2 or 3 of breast cancer, it can be cured with surgery and radiation therapy.

A few points to remember

Breast cancer can affect young and old alike. It affects men and women. In younger and middle-aged patients, the cause is mainly hereditary even in the absence of a positive family history. Younger patients can take the BRCA 1 & 2 mutation hereditary test. (Courtesy: Rediff.com)

What causes upper stomach pain?

By: Zawn Villines

Stomachaches are a common complaint. While many issues responsible for upper stomach pain, such as gas or a stomach virus, are not cause for concern, others may require medical treatment.

In this article, learn about ten possible causes of upper stomach pain, as well as treatment options and when to see a doctor.

Gas

Gas occurs naturally in the intestines and digestive tract. When this gas accumulates, it can cause feelings of pressure, bloating, or fullness.

Gas usually goes away without treatment within a few hours. If it occurs with a fever, uncontrolled vomiting, or intense pain, it is best to see a doctor.

Gas pain is not usually serious, and over-the-counter (OTC) medications can help. A person can also try eating more slowly to avoid swallowing air and prevent the gas from getting worse. Some people notice that certain foods are more likely to cause gas pain.

Indigestion

The medical term for indigestion is dyspepsia. It usually appears when there is too much acid in the stomach, which can happen after eating highly acidic foods. It can cause a burning feeling in the upper stomach and sometimes in the mouth or throat. The pain may also feel like it stems from the chest.

Less commonly, indigestion can result from a stomach ulcer, acid reflux, or even stomach cancer.

OTC medicines are highly effective at managing temporary indigestion. Identifying the triggers, such as certain foods, can help a person make healthful lifestyle changes.

Gastritis

Acute gastritis occurs in the short term and comes on quickly, usually because of a bacterial infection, such as with *Helicobacter pylori* bacteria. Gastritis causes the stomach lining to become swollen and painful.

Causes of chronic gastritis include:

- Crohn's disease
- autoimmune diseases
- sarcoidosis
- allergies
- viruses in people with weakened immune systems
- alcohol consumption

NSAID use

Antibiotics can usually treat bacterial infections. When gastritis is chronic, diagnosing and treating the underlying cause can help.

Stomach viruses

Gastroenteritis is a stomach virus that can cause nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea, in addition to upper stomach pain. Some people call gastroenteritis the stomach flu, but it is not actually a type of flu.

For most people, symptoms go away on their own within a few days. Avoiding heavy meals and drinking only clear liquids can help a person stop vomiting.

It is vital to avoid dehydration, so consider drinking something that restores electrolytes until the symptoms pass.

Muscle pain

Many muscles extend to the upper stomach. Pain from a mild muscle injury or spasms can cause temporary pain in the upper abdomen.

The pain often gets better with gentle massage and rest. Some people also find relief by using cold and hot packs.

Appendicitis

Appendicitis is an infection of the appendix. Without treatment, it can cause the appendix to rupture, and the condition can become life threatening.

In the early stages of appendicitis, a person may notice a dull ache around their belly button, but this pain can radiate to the upper stomach. As the infection gets worse, the pain moves to the lower-right side.

Gallstones

Gallstones are hard formations of cholesterol or bilirubin that can develop in the gallbladder. They do not always cause problems, but sometimes they block a biliary duct.

A blockage from a gallstone can cause intense pain in the upper-right stomach, as well as vomiting, fatigue, and exhaustion.

In some cases, surgery is necessary to resolve problems from gallstones. For example, if gallstones block the cystic duct, then a doctor will remove the gallbladder.

If gallstones block the common bile duct, then an Endoscopic retrograde cholangio-pancreatography (ERCP) may be needed to help extract them. This involves inserting a thin camera and other implements down your throat to manipulate and resolve the blockage.

Liver or pancreas issues

The liver, pancreas, and gallbladder work together to support digestion. All three organs are in the upper-right side of the stomach.

Sometimes, untreated gallstones block biliary ducts, causing pain in the liver or pancreas.

Liver diseases, such as hepatitis, can cause liver pain. Pancreatitis, which is inflammation of the pancreas, may also cause pain. Some other causes, such as liver or pancreatic cancer, are less likely.

The right treatment depends on the underlying cause. People with pancreatitis may need to stay in the hospital for fluids and observation. Liver diseases require medication, and a liver transplant can treat advanced liver disease.

Bowel obstruction

A bowel obstruction blocks the intestines, making it difficult or impossible for anything to pass through. This can cause intense pain, constipation, and difficulty digesting and absorbing food.

A bowel obstruction is a medical emergency, as the bowel can tear or become seriously infected. Medications, fluid, and pain relievers often help. In some cases, a surgeon may need to remove the blockage.

Diverticular disease

Small pouches called diverticula can appear in the intestines, especially in the colon. Trusted Source. The presence of these pouches is known as diverticulosis.

When these pouches become inflamed or infected, a person can develop intense abdominal pain. Inflammation of the diverticula is known as diverticulitis.

The location of the pain depends on where the diverticula are. While diverticula are more common in the lower intestines, they can also appear in the upper intestines, causing pain in the upper stomach.

Probiotics and a high fiber diet often help treat diverticulitis. Antibiotics have been traditionally used to treat diverticulitis, but

emerging recommendations suggest supportive care only in uncomplicated diverticulitis.

If the infection worsens or does not go away, a doctor may perform surgery to remove the diverticula or a part of the intestines.

When to contact a doctor

In most cases, it is safe to wait and see if upper stomach pain goes away without treatment. If the pain persists or gets worse, it is best to see a doctor.

See a doctor within 24 hours if:

- Vomiting lasts longer than 12 hours.
- There is a fever along with abdominal pain.
- Abdominal pain occurs following an injury, such as a blow to the stomach.
- A person develops abdominal pain after taking a new medication.

• Stomach pain occurs in someone with a weakened immune system due to HIV, chemotherapy, or immunosuppressants.

Go to the emergency room or seek urgent care if:

- There is severe pain in the upper-right abdomen.
- The stomach pain is unbearable.
- There is stomach pain and white or pale stool.
- A pregnant woman develops severe abdominal pain.
- A person develops signs of severe dehydration, such as not urinating, chapped lips, very dry skin, confusion, dizziness, or sunken eyes.
- A newborn has persistent vomiting or a high fever.

Frequently asked questions

Below are frequently asked questions about the causes of abdominal pain.

Why does my stomach hurt at the top?

Pain in the upper part of the abdomen can have many causes, including:

- trapped gas
- indigestion
- muscle strains
- infections
- appendicitis
- gallstones
- pancreas or liver issues

What does upper gastric pain feel like?

Different causes of upper gastric pain produce different symptoms. However, this pain may feel like a dull ache, a burning sensation, or an intense expanding pressure pain.

When should I go to the ER for upper abdominal pain?

Seek immediate medical help if upper abdominal pain becomes severe, long lasting, or follows a direct injury to the area. If upper abdominal pain accompanies changes in stool color, fatigue, or severe dehydration, it is also essential to visit an emergency room.

How can I relieve my upper stomach pain?

Treatments to relieve upper abdominal pain depend on the cause. For example, a person can often relieve the pain from indigestion with OTC antacids, while pain from viral infections requires hydration and rest.

Summary

Abdominal pain can be a minor inconvenience or so intense that it makes functioning difficult. It is important to pay attention to other symptoms before deciding whether medical attention is necessary. In many cases, especially those due to minor infections or gas, upper stomach pain will disappear in a few hours or days. (Courtesy: Mediacal News Today)

How is digital technology affecting our kids' sleep

By: Simon Smith

Parents have been worried about their kids' sleep since time immemorial. And for valid reasons — good sleep is an essential part of a healthy childhood. Sleep is critical for physical growth, but also for many other aspects of brain development, learning and the development of important social skills. Children observe, experience or are taught things during the day, but they really only 'learn' overnight while they're asleep. In an increasingly digital world full of ubiquitous devices, the impact of technology on kids' sleep is of particular concern.

More children are using devices, and at an earlier age. This raises many questions about the costs and benefits of technology for healthy development. On one hand, parents and carers want children to learn as much as they can, be up-to-date and competent with technology, and be connected in new and meaningful ways with their families and friends.

On the other hand, increased screen time seems to be linked with decreased physical activity, poorer overall health, an increase in mental health and wellbeing concerns and poorer sleep.

Poor sleep has many costs. In the short term, tiredness can lead to irritability, meltdowns and poor concentration, and in the long term it can lead to increased risks for a range of health, social and wellbeing challenges. It is still not clear exactly how technology can impact kids' sleep, but researchers have some ideas to test out.

What role does technology play in your home?

Technology is not a new visitor to our homes. It has been evolving over time — at least from the advent of artificial lighting to radio, television, gaming consoles and podcasts. Even more traditional activities such as reading might have sometimes carried on into the night.

Kids' sleep has been a concern of parents right across this period. Children's sleep can be perplexing because it changes so much from birth through to the teenage years. The development from the almost 24-hour, anytime sleep of babies, through to regular naps in toddlers, then the end of daytime naps happens at different times for different children.

Children need a lot more sleep than adults do, and getting enough sleep at the right time can be challenging when there are a lot of demands on the time of children and their families.

Children and young people grow up in all sorts of different environments, places and circum-

stances. They also have their own individual personalities and preferences. At the same time, very significant global challenges - from pandemics to wars to climate change - will have impacts on their lives. This means it can be difficult to know if technology is 'good' for a particular child, let alone every child.

Instead, it might be important to first focus on the 'ingredients of life' such as good nutrition, plenty of activity and skills building, strong social relationships and regular and sufficient sleep. After that, the role of technology in relaxation, learning and connection might be easier to see.

Using technology to support healthy childhoods

Researchers are trying to understand the role of technology in a healthy childhood. Scientists are studying the way sleep changes across the early years, and the major family and social factors that interact with sleep, so that they can explain to parents and carers what to expect.

They are examining family routines at home in great detail to understand exactly what is happening in the hours before bedtime. For example, technology could be used as part of 'family time', it could be used alone or with siblings. Parents may find it relaxes their children or alternatively wakes them up. Researchers are also looking very carefully at the type and timing of light emitted by digital devices used by children, in the context of the rest of their day.

While the light emitted by screens may be a concern, the role of bright artificial lighting in the home and other light sources such as TVs and street lighting also needs to be considered.

Parents and carers also need to think about light during the day: in the home, early education settings or at school. It is possible that some children aren't getting enough light at the right times. The timing of light sends important signals to our bodies.

We expect relatively bright days and dark nights. It is more common now to experience relatively dim days, with little outdoor light, and artificial lighting in the home or from the street extended well after sunset.

How technology can make kids' sleep worse

There are three main theories about the ways technology might make kids' sleep worse.

The first is increased exposure to light in the evening. Most screens emit light and some devices are held quite close to our eyes. Our internal body clocks, or circadian rhythms, more or less depend on bright days and dark nights to keep time. Light at night, even in small doses, can surprise this sys-

tem. Children have strong body clocks, but are also very sensitive to light. The type of light emitted by devices, often quite blue light, seems especially powerful in its effects. This can lead to later sleep times, disruption of the body clock and increased risk of health problems.

The second theory is about displacement. Using technology at night is an additional, and often very engaging, activity. Spending time on screens makes it harder to fit in dinner, a bath, reading time or a regular bedtime wind-down routine. This can mean that sleep is pushed later just to fit everything else in.

This is hardly a new idea - it's likely today's parents were yesterday's children reading books by torchlight under the covers. The third theory is about the conflict between the technology-based activity itself and the need to relax and drift off to sleep. Some digital content can increase attention and focus. Some of it can be distressing, confusing or upsetting. If this is happening in the hours before bedtime, then it is another signal to delay sleep time. The challenge here is to measure and understand these emotional aspects of digital content, how it is used and how it is experienced by children.

How to help your kids get a better night's sleep

It's now understood that sleep is just as important as diet and exercise for children's development and wellbeing. And research has revealed some of the fundamentals of good sleep: a safe and secure bedroom environment, not too hot or cold, not too noisy, and nice and dark is a good starting point. A regular wake-up time and a regular bedtime routine help set and reinforce our body clocks. Researchers are also thinking of ways to use technology to help rather than hinder kids' sleep.

For example, technology could include alerts about bedtime and winding down time for children. It could suggest 'pro-sleep' content that isn't going to hype them up or upset them just before they need to fall asleep.

Technology could interact with smart homes and adjust lighting levels to reinforce sleep and wake times automatically. It could also be used to connect networks of young 'sleep champions' together or it could involve new programs for children to learn experiment and collaborate in developing better sleep habits.

There's never going to be a one-size-fits-all answer to helping our kids get a better night's sleep but there are things parents can do to help that don't involve ridding their homes of all digital devices. (Courtesy: Down To Earth)

Understanding brain stroke: Essential strategies for prevention and treatment

By: Dr Amit Shrivastav

Stroke, often termed a "brain attack," ranks as the second most common cause of mortality after heart attacks and stands as the leading cause of disability. It affects one in every four person once in their lifetime.

This medical emergency occurs when blood flow to part of the brain is disrupted, depriving brain tissue of oxygen and nutrients. Without immediate medical attention, brain cells can begin to die within minutes. Therefore, a thorough grasp of stroke prevention, diagnosis, and treatment is crucial in reducing both the frequency and impact of this critical health emergency.

Prevention

Stroke prevention primarily involves addressing risk factors and adopting a healthy lifestyle. Many strokes can be prevented through modifications in diet, exercise, and managing medical conditions. Adopting a healthy lifestyle is fundamental to stroke prevention. This includes a balanced diet rich in fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and lean proteins while limiting salt, sugar, and saturated fats to maintain healthy blood pressure and cholesterol levels.

Regular physical activity like brisk walking, swimming, or cycling helps keep a healthy weight and improve cardiovascular health. Quitting smoking significantly reduces stroke risk by preventing blood vessel damage and high blood pressure. Moderation in alcohol consumption is also important.

Medical management is vital for stroke prevention. Controlling blood pressure through regular monitoring and medication is crucial. Managing diabetes by keeping blood sugar levels under control also reduces stroke risk. Additionally, lowering high LDL cholesterol levels, which can lead to plaque buildup in arteries, is important.

Diagnosis

Prompt diagnosis of a stroke is critical for effective treatment and improving outcomes. The quicker a stroke is identified and treated, the better the chances of minimizing brain damage. The acronym "BEFAST" helps remember the sudden signs of a stroke: B for balance problems, E for eye vision or double vision issues, F for facial asymmetry, A for arm weakness,

S for speech disturbances, and T for time. If any of these symptoms are noted, it is crucial not to delay and to immediately transfer the patient to a stroke-ready facility. The golden period for effective medical therapy has been extended to 4.5 hours from onset of symptoms, and for clot retrieval procedures, it can extend up to 24 hours. Acting swiftly within these time frames significantly enhances the chances of minimizing stroke-related damage and improving patient outcomes.

Assessment of different types of strokes

Strokes are broadly categorized into two types based on their underlying causes: ischemic strokes, which account for approximately 80% of cases and occur due to blockage or narrowing of blood vessels supplying the brain; and haemorrhagic strokes, constituting about 20% of cases, which result from the rupture of a blood vessel in the brain.

Imaging tests, such as CT scans or MRIs, are used to determine the type of stroke and assess the extent of brain damage. Blood tests can identify conditions that increase stroke risk, like high cholesterol, elevated blood sugar levels, and blood clotting issues. An electrocardiogram detects heart conditions that may have contributed to the stroke.

Treatment

For an ischemic stroke, treatment includes clot-busting medications or mechanical thrombectomy. Thrombolytics, such as tissue plasminogen activator, can dissolve the clot if given within a few hours of symptom onset. Mechanical thrombectomy involves using a catheter to remove the clot from the blocked artery, typically within six hours of symptom onset.

For a haemorrhagic stroke, treatment approaches differ. Surgery, such as aneurysm clipping or arteriovenous malformation repair, can help stop the bleeding. Medications to lower blood pressure, control bleeding, and prevent seizures may also be administered. While strokes remain a significant health threat, understanding and managing risk factors, recognizing symptoms, and seeking immediate treatment can improve outcomes. A commitment to a healthy lifestyle and regular medical check-ups is key to prevention, and rapid response is essential for effective treatment. (The author is the Director and Head of Department, Neurology, Yatharth Hospital, Greater Noida)

Strike on Israeli Golan Heights kills 11 and threatens to spark a wider war

Hezbollah denies role

TEL AVIV, July 28: A rocket strike Saturday at a soccer field killed at least 11 children and teens, Israeli authorities said, in the deadliest strike on an Israeli target along the country's northern border since the fighting between Israel and the Lebanese militant group Hezbollah began. It raised fears of a broader regional war.

Israel blamed Hezbollah for the strike in the Israeli-controlled Golan Heights, but Hezbollah rushed to deny any role. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu warned that Hezbollah "will pay a heavy price for this attack, one that it has not paid so far." The Israeli military's chief spokesman, Rear Adm. Daniel Hagari, called it the deadliest attack on Israeli civilians since the Hamas attack on October 7 that sparked the war in Gaza. He said 20 others were wounded.

"There is no doubt that Hezbollah has crossed all the red lines here, and the response will reflect that," Israeli Foreign Minister Israel Katz told Israeli Channel 12. "We are nearing the moment in which we face an all-out war."

Hezbollah chief spokesman Mohammed Afif told The Associated Press that the group "categorically denies carrying out an attack on Majdal Shams." It is unusual for Hezbollah to deny an attack.

The strike at the soccer field, just before sunset, followed earlier cross-border violence on Saturday,



when Hezbollah said three of its fighters were killed, without specifying where. Israel's military said its air force targeted a Hezbollah arms depot in the border village of Kfar Kila, adding that militants were inside at the time.

Hezbollah said its fighters carried out 10 different attacks using rockets and explosive drones against Israeli military posts, the last of which targeted the army command of the Haramoun Brigade in Maaleh Golan with Katyusha rockets.

In a separate statement, Hezbollah said it hit the same army post with a short-range Falaj rocket. It said the attacks were in response to Israeli airstrikes on villages in southern Lebanon.

The office of Netanyahu, who was on a visit to the United States, said he would cut short his trip by

several hours, without specifying when he would return. It said he will convene the security Cabinet after arriving.

Far-right members of Netanyahu's government called for a harsh response against Hezbollah. But an all-out war with a militant group with far superior firepower to Hamas would be trying for Israel's military after nearly 10 months of fighting in Gaza.

Footage aired on Israeli Channel 12 showed a large blast in one of the valleys in the Druze town of Majdal Shams, in the Golan Heights, which Israel captured from Syria in the 1967 Mideast war and annexed in 1981. Some Druze have Israeli citizenship.

Many still have sympathies for Syria and rejected Israeli annexation, but their ties with Israeli society have grown over the years.

Video showed paramedics rushing stretchers off the soccer field toward waiting ambulances.

Ha'il Mahmoud, a resident, told Channel 12 that children were playing soccer when the rocket hit the field. He said a siren was heard seconds before the rocket hit, but there was no time to take shelter.

Jihan Sfadi, the principal of an elementary school, told Channel 12 that five students were among the dead: "The situation here is very difficult. Parents are crying, people are screaming outside. No one can digest what has happened." Israel's military said its analysis showed that the rocket was launched from an area north of the village of Chebaa in southern Lebanon.

The White House National Security Council in a statement said the US "will continue to support efforts to end these terrible attacks along the Blue Line, which must be a top priority. Our support for Israel's security is iron-clad and unwavering against all Iranian-backed terrorist groups, including Lebanese Hezbollah."

Lebanon's government, in a statement that didn't mention Majdal Shams, urged an "immediate cessation of hostilities on all fronts" and condemned all attacks on civilians.

Israel and Hezbollah have been trading fire since October 8, a day after Hamas militants stormed into southern Israel. In recent weeks,

the exchange of fire along the Lebanon-Israel border has intensified, with Israeli airstrikes and rocket and drone attacks by Hezbollah striking deeper and farther away from the border.

Majdal Shams had not been among border communities ordered to evacuate as tensions rose, Israel's military said, without saying why. The town doesn't sit directly on the border with Lebanon.

Officials from countries including the United States and France have visited Lebanon to try to ease the tensions but failed to make progress. Hezbollah has refused to cease firing as long as Israel's offensive in Gaza continues. Israel and Hezbollah fought an inconclusive war in 2006.

Saturday's violence comes as Israel and Hamas are weighing a cease-fire proposal that would wind down the nearly 10-month war in Gaza and free the roughly 110 hostages who remain captive there. Hamas' attack on October 7 killed some 1,200 people and took 250 other hostages. Israel's offensive has killed more than 39,000 people, according to local health authorities.

Since early October, Israeli airstrikes in Lebanon have killed more than 450 people, mostly Hezbollah members, but also around 90 civilians and non-combatants. On the Israeli side, 44 have been killed, at least 21 of them soldiers. (AP)

Mobile internet restored in violence-hit Bangladesh

BTRC is responsible for regulating all matters related to telecommunications in Bangladesh



DHAKA, July 28: The mobile internet connection was restored in Bangladesh on Sunday, 10 days after it was restricted by the authorities across the country to stop the spread of fake news on social media amidst the deadly nationwide violence over reforms in the quota system in government jobs.

Addressing a press conference here, Minister of State for Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Zunaib Ahmed Palak announced that 5GB internet will be given for free to all users for three days after the connection is restored, the Dhaka Tribune newspaper reported.

The mobile internet connectivity was restored at around 3:00 pm local time.

Users of Robi, Grameenphone, Banglalink and other operators in Dhaka said they could access the internet through their phones around 3 pm, the report said.

On July 18, the government shut down mobile internet following the escalation of violence across the country.

At the time, Palak said the decision was made "in light of the current crisis in the country and to stop the spread of fake news on social media", The Daily Star newspaper reported.

The next day, amid escalating violence, the Department of Disaster Management building was set on fire, adjacent to which was a data centre. While Internet Service Providers Association of Bangladesh (ISPAB) officials said that the fire might cut 30-40 per cent of the bandwidth supply, broadband internet connection for the entire country was disrupted within an hour.

Bangladesh stayed disconnected from both broadband and mobile internet between July 18 and July 23, when broadband internet was restored in stages.

However, mobile internet remained unavailable until Sunday.

Regarding access to social media platforms, Palak said the Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC) has sent letters to authorities of social media platforms, including Facebook, Tiktok and YouTube.

"Their representatives have to come to Dhaka by July 31 to give explanations. Then, after discussing it with them, we will make a decision," he said.

The BTRC is responsible for regulating all matters related to telecommunications in Bangladesh.

Bangladesh witnessed violent clashes between the police and mostly student protesters demanding an end to a controversial quota system that reserved 30 per cent of government jobs for relatives of veterans who fought in Bangladesh's War of Independence in 1971.

The internet and mobile services were snapped following the countrywide violence.

On Monday last, the apex court slashed the veterans' quota to just 5 per cent. Thus, 93 per cent of civil service jobs will be merit-based while the remaining 2 per cent reserved for members of ethnic minorities, transgender and physically challenged people.

The violence has reportedly killed more than 100 people, according to local newspapers. However, there are no official figures available for deaths.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on Tuesday defended her decision to enforce a curfew with a shoot-on-sight order following the clashes, asserting that tough measures were taken to ensure the security of the lives and properties of the people.

Bangladesh crawled back to normalcy on Wednesday with rush hour traffic returning to streets in the capital, and limited reopening of banks, garment factories and internet services. (PTI)

Ultra-liberal Kamala Harris will deliver crime, chaos, mayhem and death to US: Trump

WASHINGTON, July 28: Kamala Harris will deliver crime, chaos, mayhem, and death to the US, Donald Trump has said, intensifying his attacks on his Democratic rival

as the 2024 presidential election campaign entered a critical final 100 day stretch.

Vice President Harris, 59, is the new presidential candidate of the Democratic party after incumbent President Joe Biden, 81, withdrew from the race.

Trump, a former US president and the 2024 Republican presidential candidate, painted his new chief rival, Harris, as worse than President Biden at a rally in Minnesota on Saturday along with his running mate Senator J D Vance.

"Ultra-liberal Kamala Harris will deliver crime, chaos, mayhem, and death to our country. I will restore law and order, justice in America," Trump, 78, said.

Trump said on his very first day back in the White House, that he would terminate every single open border policy of the Biden-Harris Administration.

"And we will seal the border and we will stop the horrible invasion into our country... No person in American politics has been more of an open border zealot than Border Czar Harris," he said.

He slammed Harris' political record, saying that she "destroyed San Francisco" as county district attorney.

"Kamala Harris was the original Marxist district attorney. She destroyed San Francisco and she will destroy our country," he alleged.

"This November, the American people are going to reject Kamala Harris's crazy liberal extremism in a massive landslide... We're not going to let her turn the United States into communist San Francisco," he said.

"Harris is so extreme and uninged that she has even declared the terms 'illegal alien' and 'radical Islamic terror-

ism' to be forbidden and unacceptable," he alleged.

Describing her as a 'radical left lunatic' Trump alleged that Harris is "the most incompetent, unpopular, and far-left vice president in American history, probably the most far-left person in American history."

Trump went after Harris on topics that included abortion, gun policy, climate change, entitlement programs and inflation.

In a less substantive dig, he also mocked Harris' laugh, claiming that the media was trying to portray her as a "Margaret Thatcher," referring to the late British prime minister, but that "it's not gonna happen," because "Margaret Thatcher didn't laugh like that."

A Kamala Harris presidency means four more years of extremism, weakness, failure, chaos, and probably World War III, he claimed.

"Kamala wants to be the president for criminals and illegal aliens. I want to be the president of law-abiding Americans of every race, religion, colour, and creed. Harris is so extreme and uninged that she has even declared the terms illegal alien and radical Islamic terrorism to be forbidden and unacceptable. You're not allowed to use those terms, but that's what it is," he said.

If Harris is elected, she will flood our country with refugees from the Hamas-controlled terrorist epicentre in Gaza, he said.

"Kamala Harris' deadly destruction of America's borders is completely and totally disqualifying for her to be president. You can't have a person like this as president. No person who deliberately releases these kinds of savage criminals to prey on our youth and our people, not just youth, elderly people too, are tremendous targets, should ever be trusted with power. She has no clue. She has no clue. She's evil," Trump said. (PTI)

Russia-US divide was on display during Moscow's monthlong presidency of the UN

UNITED NATIONS, July 28: Whether it's Gaza, Ukraine, Syria or a new world order, it's been Russia versus the United States and the West during Moscow's presidency of the Security Council this month, with the growing divide on vivid display.

The tension was hardly new. Since Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 in violation of the UN Charter, which stresses the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all 193 members of the world organisation, the West has been lashing out at Moscow.

But this month, with Russia in charge of the Security Council agenda, the animosity was more public, even down to how frosty the formalities were.

The US deputy ambassador, Robert Wood, has refused to call the Russian foreign minister or any other Russian diplomat "Mr. President", as is standard for any man presiding over the council — a further sign of the icy state of US-Russian relations.

In return, Russian diplomats have added an edge to the customary response to speakers with whom Russia is at odds, especially Americans.

"As the president of the Security Council, I am compelled to thank the United States for his statement," a clearly angry Dmitry Polyanskiy, Russia's deputy ambassador, said in response to critical remarks from Wood about Russia at a meeting Monday on Syria.

The teeth-clenching has reinforced the sense of a Security Council that's often been at cross-purposes in recent years, but is able to be somewhat diplomatic and adopt resolutions on some world hot spots.

"It has been a month of petty diplomatic point-scoring rather than any really major meltdowns," said Richard Gowan, UN director of the International Crisis Group, a think tank. (AP)

US-Japan security talks focus on bolstering military cooperation

TOKYO, July 28: Japanese and US defence chiefs and top diplomats agreed to further bolster their military cooperation by upgrading the command and control of US forces in the East Asian country and strengthening American-licensed missile production there, describing the rising threat from China as "the greatest strategic challenge". Japan is home to more than 50,000 US troops, but the commander for the US Forces Japan headquartered in Yokota in the western suburbs of Tokyo, tasked with managing their bases, has no commanding authority. Instead, instructions come from the US Indo-Pacific Command in Hawaii. The plans will give the USJF greater capability while still reporting to INDOPACOM. Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin joined their Japanese counterparts, Yoko Kamikawa and Minoru Kihara, at the Japan-US Security Consultative Committee in Tokyo, known as "2+2" security talks where they reaffirmed their bilateral alliance

following President Joe Biden's withdrawal from the November presidential race. "We are standing at a historic turning point as the rules-based, free and open international order is shaken to the core," Kamikawa said. "Now is a critical phase when our decision today determines our future." Austin, in his opening remarks, said China is "engaging in coercive behaviour, trying to change the status quo in the East and South China Seas, around Taiwan and throughout the region", adding that North Korea's nuclear program and its deepening cooperation with Russia "threaten regional and global security".

In the joint statement issued after the talks, the ministers said China's foreign policy "seeks to reshape the international order for its own benefit at the expense of others" and that "such behaviour is a serious concern to the alliance and the entire international community and represents the greatest strategic challenge in the Indo-Pacific region and beyond". (AP)

EAM Jaishankar holds talks with US Secretary of State Blinken in Tokyo

TOKYO, July 28: External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Sunday held "wide-ranging" talks with his American counterpart Antony Blinken against the backdrop of an uneasy in India-US ties following Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Russia three weeks back.

Both Jaishankar and Blinken are in Tokyo to attend a meeting of foreign ministers of four nations grouping Quad or Quadrilateral coalition. The talks between the external affairs minister and the US secretary of state also came amid Washington consistently seeking accountability from New Delhi in the case relating to the alleged foiled plot to kill Sikh extremist Gurupatwant Singh Pannun in New York.

It is not immediately clear whether Prime Minister Modi's visit to Russia and the murder-for-hire plot figured in the Jaishankar-Blinken talks. In a post on 'X', Jaishankar said he and Blinken had a wide-ranging discussion on regional and global issues.

"Great to catch up with @SecBlinken in

Tokyo today," he said.

"Our bilateral agenda progresses steadily. Also had a wide ranging discussion on regional and global issues," Jaishankar added.

It is learnt that the Russia-Ukraine conflict and the overall situation in Gaza figured in the talks. The US and several of its allies were outraged over the timing of Modi's July 8 to 9 visit to Moscow as it coincided with the NATO summit in Washington. Some Western capitals were also learnt to be peeved over Modi choosing Russia for his first bilateral trip in his third term.

US Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asia Donald Lu told a US Congressional hearing on Tuesday that the US was disappointed by the "symbolism" and "timing" of Modi's visit to Russia.

The Biden administration official especially highlighted that the Indian prime minister paid the visit to Moscow when Washington was hosting a summit of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO).

New Delhi on Thursday rejected Lu's comments and asserted that all countries have the "freedom of choice" in a multipolar world and everyone should be mindful of such realities.

Meanwhile, India and Ukraine are planning a visit to Kyiv by the Indian prime minister next month. The India-US ties also came under some uneasy following the alleged murder-for-hire plot.

In November last year, US federal prosecutors charged Indian national Nikhil Gupta of working with an Indian government employee in the foiled plot to kill Pannun in New York.

Pannun, wanted in India on terror charges, holds dual citizenship of the US and Canada.

Gupta, who was arrested in the Czech Republic in June last year, was extradited to the US last month. Following the allegations by the US, India appointed a high-level inquiry committee to look into the inputs provided by the US on the plot. In April, The Washington Post named an Indian official for the alleged plot. (PTI)

Venezuelan election could lead to seismic shift in politics

Sunday's ballot also features eight other candidates challenging Maduro

CARACAS, July 28: Polls have opened in Venezuela, where people are voting Sunday in a presidential election whose outcome will either lead to a seismic shift in politics or extend by six more years the policies that caused the world's worst peacetime economic collapse.

Whether it is President Nicolás Maduro who is chosen, or his main opponent, retired diplomat Edmundo González, the election will have ripple effects throughout the Americas. Government opponents and supporters alike have signalled their interest in joining the exodus of 7.7 million Venezuelans who have already left their homes for opportunities abroad should Maduro win another term.

Polls open at 6 am local time. The number of eligible voters is estimated to be around 17 million.

Authorities set Sunday's election to coincide with what would have been the 70th birthday of former President Hugo Chávez, the revered leftist firebrand who died of cancer in 2013, leaving his Bolivarian revolution in the hands of Maduro. But Maduro and his United Socialist

Party of Venezuela are more unpopular than ever among many voters who blame his policies for crushing wages, spurring hunger, crippling the oil industry and separating families due to migration.

Maduro, 61, is facing off against an opposition that has managed to line up behind a single candidate after years of intraparty divisions and election boycotts that torpedoed their ambitions to topple the ruling party.

González is representing a coalition of opposition parties after being selected in April as a last-minute stand-in for opposition powerhouse María Corina Machado, who was blocked by the Maduro-controlled Supreme Tribunal of Justice from running for any office for 15 years.

Machado, a former lawmaker, swept the opposition's October primary with over 90% of the vote. After she was blocked from joining the presidential race, she chose a college professor as her substitute on the ballot, but the National Electoral Council also barred her from registering. That's when González, a political newcomer, was chosen.



Sunday's ballot also features eight other candidates challenging Maduro, but only González threatens Maduro's rule.

Venezuela sits atop the world's largest proven oil reserves, and once boasted Latin America's most advanced economy. But it entered into a free fall after Maduro took the helm. Plummeting oil prices, widespread shortages and hyperinflation that soared past 130,000% led first

visiting rural areas where he had not set foot in years. His pitch to voters is one of economic security, which he underscores with stories of entrepreneurship and references to a stable currency exchange and lower inflation rates.

The capital, Caracas, saw an increase in commercial activity after the pandemic, bolstering an economy the International Monetary Fund forecasts will grow 4% this year - one of the fastest in Latin America - after having shrunk 71% from 2012 to 2020.

"They tried to subjugate our people," Maduro said of the United States during his closing rally Thursday in Caracas, "but today we are standing tall and ready for victory on the 28th of July."

But most Venezuelans have not seen any improvement in their quality of life. Many earn under \$200 a month, which means families struggle to afford essential items. Some work second and third jobs. A basket of basic staples - sufficient to feed a family of four for a month - costs an estimated \$385.

The opposition has tried to seize to social unrest and then mass emigration.

Sanctions from US President Donald Trump's administration seeking to force Maduro from power after his 2018 reelection - which the US and dozens of other countries condemned as illegitimate - only deepened the crisis.

In recent days, Maduro has crisscrossed Venezuela, inaugurating hospital wards and highways and

on the huge inequities arising from the crisis, during which Venezuelans abandoned their country's currency, the bolivar, for the US dollar.

González and Machado focused much of their campaigning on Venezuela's vast hinterland, where the economic activity seen in Caracas in recent years didn't materialize. They promised a government that would create sufficient jobs to attract Venezuelans living abroad to return home and reunite with their families.

An April poll by Caracas-based Delphos said about a quarter of Venezuelans were thinking about emigrating if Maduro wins Sunday. The poll had a margin of error of plus or minus 2 percentage points.

Most Venezuelans who migrated over the past 11 years settled in Latin America and the Caribbean. In recent years, many began setting their sights on the US.

Both campaigns have distinguished themselves not only for the political movements they represent but also on how they have addressed voters' hopes and fears.

Maduro's campaign rallies fea-

tured lively electronic merengue dancing as well as speeches attacking his opponents. But after he caught heat from leftist allies such as Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva for a comment about a "bloodbath" should he lose, Maduro recoiled. His son told the Spanish newspaper El País that the ruling party would peacefully hand over the presidency if it loses - a rare admission of vulnerability out of step with Maduro campaign's triumphalist tone.

In contrast, the rallies of González and Machado prompted people to cry and chant "Freedom! Freedom!" as the duo passed by. People handed the devout Catholics rosaries, walked along highways and went through military checkpoints to reach their events. Others video-called their relatives who have migrated to let them catch a glimpse of the candidates.

During a rally in mid-May, González, 74, asked supporters to imagine "a country in which our airports and borders would be filled with our children returning home". (AP)

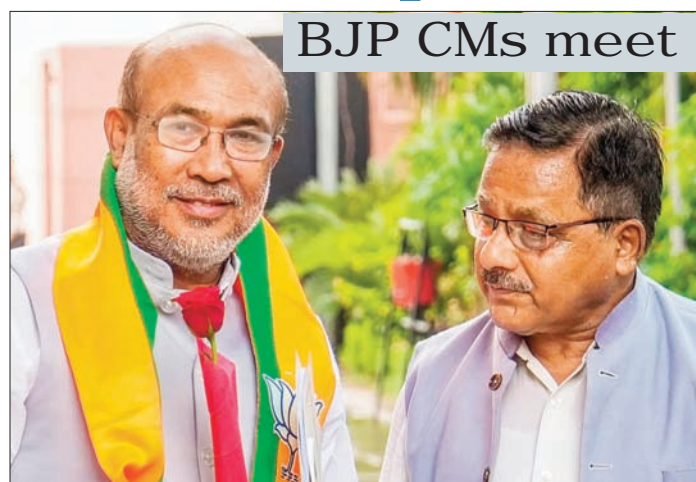
Reaffirmed commitment to serve nation: Manipur CM

NEW DELHI, July 28: Manipur chief minister N Biren Singh, who was here to attend a conference of CMs from BJP-ruled states on Saturday, said he reaffirmed his unwavering commitment to serve the nation by strengthening the party and upholding its core values and ideology.

Singh also attended the ninth NITI Aayog Governing Council meeting during the day, and after participating in it, he said it deliberated on various strategies aimed at expediting the nation's progress and address the obstacles faced by different regions.

At the meeting, Prime Minister Narendra Modi called for setting zero poverty targets starting at the village level. Modi emphasised the need to tackle poverty on an individual basis rather than just at a programme level.

On the conference of chief ministers



BJP CMs meet

and deputy chief ministers of BJP-ruled states, Singh said that "we reaffirmed our unwavering commitment to serve the nation by strengthening the party and upholding its core values and ideology."

During this meeting, Prime Minister Modi held deliberations over a host of issues, with focus on ensuring that benefits of numerous welfare schemes fully cover the targeted beneficiaries. (PTI)

RPF apprehend 47 illegal migrants



HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, July 28: The Railway Protection Force (RPF) of Northeast Frontier Railway has apprehended 47 illegal migrants and 5 Indian agents during checks across various stations of NF Railway during the month of June 2024.

In the present month i.e. July 2024 till July 23, RPF of N F Railway has detained 41 illegal migrants.

On July 2, 2024, RPF team of Agartala conducted a routine drive at Agartala Railway Station. While checking they detected 11 persons of doubtful nationality (09 females & 02 males). On interrogation they could not produce any valid documents and later confessed that they

entered India illegally from Bangladesh. In a recent incident at the Agartala station 4 male Bangladeshi nationals were detained on July 23 by RPF.

The Bangladeshis were planning to proceed for Kolkata via train. Later, all the illegal migrants were handed over to Officer In-charge/Government Railway Police/Agartala for further legal action.

Similarly, other illegal migrants were detained from Badarpur & New Jalpaiguri stations during regular checks conducted by RPF. RPF staff deployed at stations and trains are very vigilant and keep a close eye on illegal migrants, Rohingyas and suspected persons.

Newly appointed SC judge meets Governor in Manipur

GUWAHATI, July 28: Newly appointed Judge of the Supreme Court of India, Justice Nongmeikapam Kotiswar Singh, called on the Governor of Manipur, Anusuiya Uikey, on Sunday (July 28, 2024) at Raj Bhavan in Imphal.

Justice N Kotiswar Singh is the first Supreme Court judge from Manipur, a Raj Bhavan communiqué stated.

The Governor congratulated Justice N Kotiswar Singh and commended him on his outstanding work. She extended her best wishes for his new role, emphasizing the importance of his appointment for the state of Manipur.

The Governor also encouraged Justice N Kotiswar Singh to continue his efforts to support and uplift the people of Manipur.

High Court Bar Association of Manipur (HCBAM) and All Manipur Bar Association (AMBA) felicitated Justice N Kotiswar Singh at the City Convention Cen-



tre, Imphal, on Saturday. Speaking on the occasion Justice Kotiswar lamented over the loss of lives and properties due to the conflict between two communities and the displacement of people forcing them to seek shelter in relief camps.

He also categorically stated that Manipur has all the potential to bounce back from months of uncertainty and herald a new era of peace and harmony.

Pro-ILP activists arrested for trying to prevent tourists

'It was a surprise not only for the tourists but also for us as for the first time'

SHILLONG, July 28: At least 10 pro-ILP activists were arrested after they tried to prevent tourists from visiting Sohra and Dawki in Meghalaya's East Khasi Hills district, police said.

Tourist inflow to Sohra and Dawki was briefly affected on Friday when the pro-ILP activists belonging to Hynniewtrep National Youth Front (HNYF) tried to prevent some tourists coming from Assam from visiting these places.

"The district authorities have beefed up security arrangements for tourists intending to travel to Sohra and Dawki and security personnel have been deployed at specific locations along the route to prevent any disruption in tourists' visits," Superintendent of Police Sylvester Nongtyngter told PTI.

"We have arrested 10 members of the HNYF at Umtyngar town for unauthorisedly preventing tourists from visiting Sohra and Dawki," he said.

Deputy chief minister Prestone Tynsong condemned the incident, saying, "It was very unfortunate. People are visiting Meghalaya to enjoy the nature. We will not let such things happen again."

Tynsong, who is also the home minister, said that the law will take its own course.

The Hynniewtrep National Youth Front seeks implementation of the Inner Line Permit in the state.

HNYF president Sadon Blah said the group has called for such an action to force the government



to implement a policy restricting the movement of tourist vehicles coming from outside the state.

Tynsong said the state government is aggressively following up with the Centre for implementation of ILP in the state.

Various tourism associations in Meghalaya strongly condemned the HNYF for its decision to prevent tourists from visiting Sohra and Dawki.

Speaking to reporters, Tourism Operators Association of Meghalaya president Banlum Blah said that they will write to the tourism minister to demand strong action against such individuals who try to jeopardise the industry of the state.

Blah said that after the incident, various tourism associations in Meghalaya had called for an emergency meeting to discuss it.

"It was a surprise not only for the tourists but also for us as for

the first time, we heard that tourists were being stopped and sent back," Blah said.

He claimed it took years for all stakeholders in Meghalaya to build up the tourism foothold that the state is witnessing at the moment.

He said the tourism sector is one of the biggest employment generators in Meghalaya and it has benefited hundreds of youths.

Blah said the incident that happened in Umtyngar has painted a bad picture of Meghalaya.

"From all the tourism associations of Meghalaya, we want to apologise to all the tourists who have been affected today. From the tourism stakeholders' side, we appeal to all the tourists to come back to Meghalaya as such incident will not happen again," he added.

Meanwhile, Assembly Speaker Thomas A Sangma also expressed regret that illegal checking conducted by pro-ILP activists for

documents of migrant workers has led to a labour shortage.

He said around 200 labourers used to work at the construction site of the new assembly building but now the number has dipped to around 50-60.

"Yesterday, I paid a surprise visit to the site of the new assembly building to ensure that the work is going on smoothly and I am happy that the work is going on smoothly despite fewer labourers," he said.

"However, I feel that after the recent incidents, some of the contractors and labourers have disappeared and this has affected the pace of work," he added.

The speaker said that about 95-96 per cent of the work on the left and right wings of the building has been completed.

Another pro-ILP group, the Khasi Students Union, has in the last three weeks, sent back over 2,500 unregistered migrant labourers from construction sites across the state.

Chief minister Conrad K Sangma said the state government has made it compulsory for migrant labourers to register themselves with the Labour Department under various sections of the Interstate Workmen Act 1979 and the Meghalaya Identification, Registration (Safety & Security) of Migrant Workers Rules 2020.

He, however, said that although registration is required for all migrant labourers, no individual or organisation is authorised to check their papers. (PTI)

Protests in Manipur against growing extortions in educational institutes



IMPHAL, July 28: Amid the reports of the growing cases of extortions in educational institutions in the valley districts of Manipur, mass sit-in protests were organized at educational institutions for the last three consecutive days.

The protests which were organized under the aegis of the Coordinating Committee on Disturbance Free Educational Zone Demand were part of the "17th Disturbance-free Education Zone Demand Day" which was held on July 5 last.

Extending support to the campaign, large numbers of students and teachers of many government and private educational institutions in Thoubal district, Kachching district and Jiribam district staged sit-in protests in front of their respective gates, held a peace rally on the street and poster campaigns today.

During the events, placards and banners which read "Stop making exorbitant monetary demands in educational institutions", "Don't politicize in educational institutions", "Stop corruption, favoritism and nepotism in educational related

affairs", "Formulate a policy to conduct classes not less than 220 in a year" and "Make education sector disturbance free" were displayed.

Some of the educational schools in Kakching district where the sit-in-protests have been held were Martin Grammar School, MMS Genius Academy, PR English School, Grace Cottage Academy, Victory High School, Langmeidong Higher Secondary School among others.

In Jiribam district, sit-in-protests and poster campaign on the same issue have been organized at Jiri College, Jiribam Higher Secondary School, RK Sanatombi Vidyalaya, Katurba Girls' High School, ZEO Office and Iratob Complex in Jiribam District.

Demanding to make the education sector free from every kind of threat and pressure, students and teachers of Memorial Model School, Yairipok held peace rallies in and around the Yairipok Bazar of Thoubal district this afternoon.

Speaking on the sideline of the rally, a student appealed to all concerned to stop giving harassment

and disturbance to schools, teachers and students, adding that students need a conducive environment for education.

Mentioned may be made that similar protests were held at Imphal West, Imphal East and Bishnupur District on July 25 and 26.

Speaking in this connection, Coordinating Committee on Disturbance Free Educational Zone Demand convener Mayengbam Somorjit conveyed that authorities of many educational institutions in the Manipur valley have expressed fear that they may soon be compelled to close their institutions owing to the exorbitant monetary demands made by certain groups in the midst of the unrest in the state.

He further said that the education sector of the state is also greatly hampered by the wrongful conducts of the government authorities, like negligence in educational affairs and irrational transfer and postings of teachers while citing the fiasco at Dhanamanjuri University as an example.

"If we do not stop this kind of disturbances at the earliest, our education sector may collapse and the students' careers may land in trouble soon. Hence, we organize poster campaigns, discourses and sit-ins among other activities to save our education sector", Somorjit added.

Informing that around 400 educational institutions in the five valley districts have endorsed the campaign, the Coordinating Committee's convener stated that every section of the society, be it the students' organizations, armed groups or government should create a conducive environment. (NNN)

Tableau reminiscent of Leonardo da Vinci's 'The Last Supper'

Meghalaya CM 'deeply disappointed' over tableau at Paris Olympics



SHILLONG, July 28: Meghalaya chief minister Conrad K Sangma on Sunday said he is "deeply disappointed" over a tableau reminiscent of Leonardo da Vinci's 'The Last Supper', featuring drag queens and other performers, at the Paris Olympics opening ceremony.

This segment of the performance has drawn significant attention and attracted criticism from some quarters.

"Deeply disappointed by the drag act depicting the 'Last Supper' at the Paris Olympics. Religious sentiments must be respected. Strongly Condemn such act," Conrad said in a post on X.

Held along the Seine River, the spectacular four-hour event on Saturday featured global stars such as Celine Dion and Lady Gaga.

Among the performances was a scene that seemed to evoke Leonardo da Vinci's 'The Last Supper', featuring the drag queens and other performers in a configuration reminiscent of Jesus Christ and his apostles. (PTI)

Four UNLF militants arrested in Manipur



IMPHAL, July 28: Manipur Police arrested four militants of United National Liberation Front (Pambei) from Imphal West district, an official statement said.

The four were arrested from the Chingmeirong area of the district on Friday and were involved in a firing incident, assault of civilians, and outraging the modesty of a woman, the statement issued by the police control room said.

The police also arrested one active member of proscribed outfit Kangleipak Communist Party (Taibangnanba) from Tejpur IVR in Kakching District on Saturday.

The arrested person was involved in extortion activities, it said. (PTI)

River Ranching in Manipur to address depleting fish stock

'Target for river ranching is about 30 lakh fingerlings in major rivers'

IMPHAL, July 28: The directorate of fisheries, Manipur, has taken up River Ranching programme in 12 major rivers viz, Imphal, Nambul, Thoubal, Nambol, Barak, Chakpi, Iri, Irang, Makru, Khuga, Maha and Sekmai in 7 districts of Manipur by liberating Indian Major carp (Rohu, Mrigal and Catla) and indigenous fish species (Pengba, Ngaton and Khabak).

The National Fisheries Development Board (NFDB), Hyderabad has sponsored the programme which is a component of PMMSY scheme. River Ranching is conducted with the objective of addressing the depleted fish stocks in rivers and improvement of livelihood of fishers of the State.

The first ranching was commenced from July 20, 2024 in Imphal River and Nambul River in Imphal East and Imphal West districts.

Local MLA of Chandel assembly constituency, SS. Olish conducted the river ranching programme at Chakpi River on July 21 in the presence of District



Level Officers and tribal chiefs of various hill villages.

In Ukhrul district, IMC and indigenous fish species have been liberated in Thoubal River originating from Ukhrul district on July 24.

Similar programmes were also organised at Barak River and

other river rivers in Senapati district and Khuga River in Churachandpur district on July 25 respectively. As on date, more than 10 lakh fish fingerlings have been liberated.

Speaking about the programme, State fisheries director, H.

Balkrisna Singh said that the target for river ranching is about 30 lakh fingerlings and is being continued in major rivers located in Imphal East, Bishnupur, Thoubal, Kakching, Chandel and Tamenglong districts and culminate by the end of July, 2024. (NNN)

Tireless effort for all-round development of Arunachal: CM

NEW DELHI, July 28: Team Arunachal Pradesh is working relentlessly to transform every sector and maintain the state's pace of development to realise the goal of a developed India by 2047, chief minister Pema Khandu has said.

He said this after attending a conference here of chief ministers and deputy chief ministers of BJP-ruled states last night.

Khandu said that at the conference, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah shared their vision and roadmap for realising the goal of 'Viksit Bharat' by 2047.

He said Union Health Minister and BJP President J P Nadda also guided the chief ministers and deputy chief ministers to accelerate the pace of all-round development of their respective state.

"Team Arunachal is working day in and day out to transform every sector and maintain the state's pace of development and contribute significantly to realise the goal of developed India," Khandu wrote on 'X'.

During the conference, the Prime Minister discussed with the chief ministers and deputy chief ministers a host of issues, with focus on ensuring that benefits of numerous welfare schemes fully cover the targeted beneficiaries.

Modi, sources said, noted the efforts of the BJP-run governments to help different sections of society, especially the poor.

"Our party is working tirelessly to further good governance and fulfil the aspirations of the people," Modi said. The "mukhyamantri parishad" organised by the BJP at regular intervals is aimed at reviewing key schemes in states, following the best governance practices and the delivery of central government welfare initiatives. (PTI)



Delhi coaching centre deaths: Owner and coordinator arrested, officials say norms flouted

NEW DELHI, July 28: The owner and the coordinator of a coaching centre where three civil services aspirants died due to rain-induced flooding in the basement were arrested on Sunday even as protests erupted in the area over the incident.

According to officials, the coaching institute had permission to use the basement as a store room, but it was being used as library which is a violation of the rules.

Delhi Mayor Shelly Oberoi directed MCD commissioner to take strict action against institutes that are using basements for commercial purposes in violation of building bye-laws and against any officers responsible for the incident.

Delhi Fire Service chief Atul Garg said the institute was functioning in violation of the norms of the fire department.

"The building has fire NOC, but in the NOC they had shown the basement will be used as store room. The management of the institute was using the same room as a classroom or library which is a violation of the NOC," Garg told PTI.

The arrested accused have been identified as Abhishek Gupta, owner of the coaching centre, and



Deshpal Singh, the centre's coordinator.

Protests erupted at Rajinder Nagar over the incident with former DCW chief Swati Maliwal also visiting the incident site. Delhi Congress chief Devender Yadav also visited the site.

Searches by agencies at the coaching centre continued past the midnight and ended after seven hours.

Shreya Yadav of Ambedkar Nagar in Uttar Pradesh, Tanya Soni

from Telangana and Navin Dalwin from Ernakulam in Kerala were identified to have died in the incident, police said.

Dharmender Yadav, uncle of Shreya Yadav, said he learnt about the incident through news channels.

"I tried to call her but her phone was switched off. Even the coaching centre's number was not reachable. I left from Ghaziabad and reached the place where she stayed but her room was locked.

"I went to the coaching centre

where I met the DCP and he asked me to go to RML Hospital. At the hospital, I was not allowed to see her body. However, they confirmed receiving her body," he said.

At the RML Hospital, there was anger among the relatives of the victims, who claimed they were not being allowed to see the bodies even though they have been waiting since morning.

Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi condoled the death of three IAS aspirants and said common people are paying the price for unsafe construction, poor town planning and irresponsibility of institutions at every level.

Congress leader Pawan Khara termed the incident "a man-made disaster".

"The students had come from far-off places to study in Delhi. But what is the system of filtering out illegal structures from legal structures? Is the MCD looking into it? What about the drainage system? All these questions plague these controversies around these deaths," Khara said.

"Last week, a student died after touching a live wire. Is this how we should treat students coming to Delhi? Action has to be taken, ac-

countability has to be fixed, and Delhi cannot be seen as such an insensitive city," he said.

Delhi BJP chief Virendra Sachdeva called the incident a "murder" and said students who came to build their future in Delhi have "become victims of corruption".

"Nobody is answering how the library was established in the basement. There was an incident in Mukherjee Nagar, the Delhi govt had launched the investigation. What has happened to the investigation? Delhi Minister (Atishi) has still not reached the spot. The locals were asking for cleaning of drainage. Whoever is responsible should be punished. What is the fault of students?" he said.

Following the incident, Mayor Oberoi directed the MCD commissioner to take strict action against all such coaching centres across Delhi which are under the jurisdiction of MCD and running commercial activities in basements. This, she said, are in violation of building bye-laws and are not as per norms.

She also called for an inquiry to identify if any MCD officers were responsible in the incident. (PTI)

Will go on 28-day fast from Aug 15 if govt doesn't initiate talks on our demands: Sonam Wangchuk

NEW DELHI, July 28: Climate activist Sonam Wangchuk announced on Sunday that he will launch another 28-day fast on Independence Day if the government does not invite Ladakh authorities for talks on demands for statehood and constitutional protection for the union territory.

In an interview with PTI, Wangchuk said that the Apex Body, Leh (ABL), and the Kargil Democratic Alliance (KDA) from Ladakh submitted a memorandum of demands to Prime Minister Narendra Modi during his visit to Dras on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the Kargil Vijay Diwas last week.

"We did not want to push the government too much during the elections; we were hopeful that the new government would take some concrete steps. If they do not heed our request, if they do not call us for talks, we will launch another round of protest from August 15," he told PTI.

In March, Wangchuk went on a 21-day fast, surviving only on salt and water, to demand statehood for Ladakh and its inclusion under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution to help protect the ecologically fragile region from "greedy" industries.

After the abrogation of Article 370, Ladakh became a separate union territory "without legislature". The Buddhist-dominated Leh district had long demanded union territory status due to alleged neglect by the erstwhile Jammu and Kashmir government. However, with the region now

entirely administered by bureaucrats, many in Ladakh demand that the union territory be included in the Sixth Schedule, which provides for the formation of Autonomous District Councils (ADCs) with legislative, judicial and administrative autonomy within a state.

These councils administer areas under their jurisdiction, making laws on specific matters with the governor's assent. They can establish village councils or courts for dispute resolution and manage facilities and services within their areas, including education and healthcare. They also have the authority to impose taxes and regulate certain activities.

Wangchuk had previously said that statehood and constitutional protection under the Sixth Schedule would not impact defence and national security-related projects in Ladakh.

Ladakh's former MP, Jamyang Tsering Namgyal of the BJP, had also demanded that the region be included in the Sixth Schedule to safeguard the land, employment and cultural identity of the local population.

In 2019, Union Tribal Affairs Minister Arjun Munda promised to do "whatever is required from a constitutional perspective to protect them".

In September 2019, the National Commission for Scheduled Tribes (NCST) wrote to Home Minister Amit Shah and Munda, recommending that Ladakh be declared a tribal area under the Sixth Schedule. (PTI)

Delhi coaching centre deaths: Students voice safety concerns

NEW DELHI, July 28: The deaths of three civil services aspirants at a coaching institute here have sparked outrage among students and demand for accountability from the Delhi government.

Shreya Yadav of Ambedkar Nagar in Uttar Pradesh, Tanya Soni from Telangana, and Navin Dalwin from Ernakulam in Kerala died after the basement of the building housing the coaching centre Rau's IAS Study Circle was flooded following heavy rain in central Delhi's Old Rajinder Nagar area on Saturday evening, officials said.

Students of Rau's IAS Study Circle and other institutes have expressed voiced their anger over the incident, highlighted safety violations at coaching centres across the city, and raised questions over the "negligence" of the Delhi government. Students held a protest and raised slogans against authorities outside the coaching centre over the deaths in the basement, which according to preliminary probe houses a library.

"The biggest responsibility of the incident lies with Rau IAS Study Circle as the incident took place there," a student, who did not wish to be named, said.

He said Delhi authorities showed "negligence" when there were similar incidents in Mukherjee Nagar and did not take any strict action even then. He also highlighted last week's incident in Patel Nagar, where a civil services aspirant got electrocuted in a waterlogged street following heavy rain in the national capital. Another student highlighted the safety concerns at the city's coaching centres. "There is a systemic problem in these coaching centres with a lack of interest in safety measures," she said.

"There are no fire exits or emergency exits. Those with a bright future are at risk. We want to serve the nation by joining the bureaucracy, and if the system doesn't work for us, we will lose faith in it," the civil services aspirant said, as she urged locals and fellow students to join the cause. (PTI)

Culture Ministry to host State Museum Conclave from Aug 1-3 in Delhi

NEW DELHI, July 28: Curators, administrators of museums and domain experts will gather next week in Delhi for a three-day conclave to foster collaboration between the Centre and states in pursuance of the proposed 'Yuge Yugeen Bharat National Museum' project.

The State Museum Conclave, to be hosted by the Ministry of Culture, will be held from August 1-3 at the Bharat Mandapam where the 46th session of the UNESCO World Heritage Committee (WHC) is currently underway.

The upcoming 'Yuge Yugeen Bharat National Museum', billed to be the largest museum in the world, will have eight thematic segments telling the story of India spanning over 5,000 years. The new museum, to be housed in the North Block and South Block in the heart of the country's capital, will be spread over 1,54,000 sqm, making it the largest museum in the world.

"This three-day gathering aims to foster collaboration among state museums and the central government in realising Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision for the 'Yuge Yugeen Bharat Museum' that aims to exemplify global best practices," the ministry said in a statement.

"To foster a comprehensive understanding of India's artefact wealth for the 'Yuge Yugeen

Bharat Museum', the states have been invited to provide detailed insights into their respective state's collections at the forthcoming state conclave," it said.

Master classes will also be held with experts from India and abroad spanning various topics such as the architecture and materiality of the North and South Block, global best practices in conservation, fine arts handling, collections management, curation and museum management, officials said.

The conclave will bring together a diverse group of stakeholders, including resident commissioners, directors of museums, superintendents, curators and researchers from across the country. Senior officials of the ministry, including joint secretary of the GLAM (Galleries, Libraries, Archives and Museums) Division of the ministry as well as the Union Culture Secretary, will also be in attending the event, the officials said. Union Minister of Culture and Tourism Gajendra Singh Shekhawat will address the gathering, the ministry said.

The State Museum Conclave marks the third phase in a series of capacity-building initiatives undertaken by the GLAM Division of the Ministry of Culture.

Building upon the success of the inter-ministerial consultation held in June and the subsequent collaborative workshop with museum professionals (directors, curators, education officers, and conservators) in partnership with France Museums last month which culminated in a session chaired by the Union Minister of Culture and Tourism, this conclave aims to "further strengthen the museum ecosystem in India", the officials said.

Through a series of capacity-building workshops led by renowned Indian and international museum professionals, the ministry "aims to equip state-level personnel with essential skills in collection management, archiving, and museum administration".

Beyond theoretical knowledge, the three-day forum will offer hands-on training and opportunities to network with potential collaborators for the 'Yuge Yugeen Bharat National Museum' project.

Additionally, the Ministry of Culture will present an overview of available funding schemes, including the recently updated Museum Grant Scheme and the Scheme for Promotion of Culture of Science, to support state-level museum development initiatives. (PTI)

Hirakud Dam authorities release water

Odisha govt asks collectors to be on high alert

BHUBANESWAR, July 28: With the Hirakud Dam authorities releasing the season's first flood water in the river Mahanadi, the Odisha government on Sunday asked collectors of seven downstream districts to be on high alert and tell people not to go near the riverbank, officials said.

After customary puja, the dam authorities opened sluice gate number seven followed by others. A total of 20 gates will be opened in three phases - 7 gates at 9.30 am, another 7 at 12.30 pm and the remaining 6 gates at 2.30 pm, to flush out excess water amid heavy rainfall in the upper catchment areas and the inflow of water into the reservoir.

The water level of Hirakud stood at 616.93 ft against its full reservoir capacity of 630 feet, at 6 am. While the inflow of water into the reservoir was 3,16,000 cusec, the out-

flow was 40,126 cusec.

The state government in a release said that due to the opening of 20 gates, the Khairam discharge would be around 4.50 lakh cusecs by 8 am on July 29 and the Mundali discharge will be around 5 lakh cusecs by 11 am on July 30.

"Collectors of Sambalpur, Sonepur, Nayagarh, Puri, Cuttack, Jagatsinghpur and Kendrapada have been asked to alert the people downstream not to enter to the Mahanadi riverside. Animals will also not be allowed to gaze close to the river. Collectors are also requested to remain alert and monitor the situation," it said.

The District Emergency Operation Centre will also be manned by senior officers so that no untoward incident happens, the Special Relief Commissioner (SRC) said in a letter to collectors. (PTI)

Defence ministry to plant 15 lakh trees on I-Day as part of 'Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam' campaign

NEW DELHI, July 28: The Ministry of Defence on Sunday said it will undertake a massive tree plantation drive across the country on the occasion of Independence Day on August 15 under which 15 lakh saplings will be planted as part of the 'Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam' campaign.

This will be the country's 78th Independence Day.

"The plantation drive is part of the 'Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam' (A Tree in the Name of Mother) campaign, and will be conducted through the three Services, and associated organisations such as DRDO, defence PSUs, CGDA, NCC, Sainik Schools, ordnance factories," the defence ministry said in a statement.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi had launched the campaign on the occasion of World Environment Day on June 5 and urged everyone in India and across the globe to plant a tree as a tribute to mothers.

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh had recently participated in the campaign and planted a tree in memory of his mother.

He had called upon people to join the campaign to protect nature and contribute actively to make the movement more effective and dynamic, the statement said. (PTI)

Judges should use a sense of robust common sense in bail petitions: CJI D Y Chandrachud



BENGALURU, July 28: Chief Justice of India D Y Chandrachud on Sunday said the trial judges prefer playing safe by not granting bail on important issues of crime when it is looked at with a degree of suspicion.

The Chief Justice underlined the need for a 'sense of robust common sense' to look at the nitty-gritty of each case.

"People who should be getting bail in the trial courts and not getting it there, as a result of which, they have to invariably move the high courts. People who should be getting bail in the high courts will not necessarily get it, as a result of which, they have to move to the Supreme Court. This delay compounds the problem of those who are facing arbitrary arrests," Justice Chandrachud said.

He was replying to a question at the end of a keynote address during the 11th Annual Conference of the Berkeley Centre on Comparative Equality and Anti-Discrimination. The question was on the arbitrary arrests.

The questioner said we seem to live in a society where one acts first and seeks forgiveness later. This has become particularly true for public authorities acting in a politically motivated manner by detaining activists, academics, journalists and even politicians, including the chief ministers of opposition parties, he said.

According to him, all of these actions are taken with deep trust in the face of justice coming very slowly.

In reply, Justice Chandrachud said the Supreme Court has been constantly trying to convey that part of the reason for it is that there is an inherent distrust in the institutions within the country.

"I think it's important that we learn to

trust people who may be in a hierarchical legal system, like much below, which are the trial courts. We have to encourage trial courts to be more receptive to the need for accommodating concerns of people who are seeking liberty," the CJI said.

"Unfortunately, the problem today is this, that we look at any grant of relief by trial judges with a degree of suspicion. That means that the trial judges increasingly are playing it safe, not granting bail on important issues of serious crimes," he explained.

According to the CJI, judges have to look at the nitty-gritties and see the fine prints of each case.

"You (judges) have to have a sense of robust common sense. Now, unless we, therefore, separate the grains from the chaff in criminal jurisprudence, it's very unlikely that we will have just solutions and to allow for decision makers to separate the grain from the chaff, it's important that we also place a great deal of trust," Justice Chandrachud noted.

"I think that's my concern that you can't render courts as in the hierarchy as you go up dysfunctional, just by the number of very small cases that are placed before us".

According to him, most of the cases should not have come to the Supreme Court at all.

"The reason why we are prioritising bail is to send this message across the nation that those at the most incipient levels of the decision-making process have to do their duties without this feeling that I've been disgusted that my career will be on the line," the CJI underlined. (PTI)

Majority school students across globe do not have access to minimum physical education: UN report

NEW DELHI, July 28: The majority of the world's schoolchildren still do not have access to the minimum required physical education, according to the first-ever Global Status Report on Quality Physical Education.

The report, "Global State of Play", published by UNESCO's education team, revealed that only 58 per cent of the countries have made physical education compulsory for girls and that only 7 per cent of schools worldwide have established equal physical education time for boys and girls.

Two-thirds of secondary school students and more than half of primary school students worldwide are not taught the required minimum weekly physical education.

An expert from the team told PTI that less than one in two primary school teachers has received specialist training in physical education. The team also flagged major differences in funding for physical education between countries - two-thirds devote less than 2 per cent of their education budget to it while one country in 10 allocates more than 7 per cent.

"Physical Education (PE) has been a subject of extensive discussion among health and education professionals worldwide due to its potential to support learning and contribute to the holistic development of students. Opportunities for professional development are scarce due to budgetary constraints and/or insufficient time allocated in teacher schedules to attend training.

"For instance, only 33 per cent of countries reported providing in-service training (INSET) and continuous professional development (CPD) to their PE workforce



every five years, which significantly deviates from the recommended annual frequency," the report said.

Regarding the inclusion of girls and students with disabilities in physical education, 58 per cent of the countries worldwide report their participation in mainstream settings, yet significant disparities still exist between regions.

"A concerning issue is the discrepancy between policy and practice. For instance, while 54.5 per cent of countries report policies, strategies, guidelines or plans to provide equal amounts of PE time for boys and girls, in practice, only 7.1 per cent of schools report that equal PE time is actually implemented for boys and girls," the report said.

"This equates to a 47.4 per cent difference between policy and practice, a result that is observable across all regions. Similarly, one in three students with disabilities still

has no access to PE," it said.

UNESCO developed the concept of Quality Physical Education (QPE) to distinguish it from traditional PE and highlight the importance of core factors such as frequency, variety, inclusivity and value content.

"There is a need for subjects like physical education to consider future orientations and curriculum developments to ensure continued relevance and effectiveness in relation to meeting student needs and learning outcomes," the report said.

"A teacher's delivery of a PE curriculum is a central aspect to be considered to ensure practice is meaningful, inclusive and meets the needs of a diverse range of learners. This clearly relies on a well-educated workforce with access to continuous professional development opportunities," it added.

UNESCO has called upon countries to work towards increasing investment in this area.

Improving the training of sports teachers and educators, increasing investment in infrastructure, developing physical education programmes that are resolutely inclusive, particularly for girls and young people with disabilities, increasing the number of hours of physical education in school curricula and placing the values of sport at the heart of educational programmes are among the recommendations made by the team for countries.

The report provides 10 indicators, including giving a good, moderate or poor score, to help local and national authorities assess the quality of physical education in their country and identify priority areas for improvement. (PTI)

PM MODI A GREAT ORATOR, HAS MAGNETIC CHARM: ACTOR RANBIR KAPOOR

NEW DELHI, July 28: Bollywood star Ranbir Kapoor has praised Prime Minister Narendra Modi for his oratory skills and "magnetic charm" but ruled out himself from taking the political plunge.

The "Animal" actor was in conversation with Zerodha co-founder Nikhil Kamath on his "People by WTF" podcast.

While he doesn't think much about politics, Ranbir said he remembers his first acquaintance with the prime minister back in 2019 when he and other industry colleagues, including now wife Alia Bhatt, "Sanju" co-star Vicky Kaushal and producer Karan Johar, met Modi in New Delhi.

"When I first went to meet our prime minister four-five years ago along with other young actors and directors... You see him on television, you see how he talks.

"He's a great orator. But I remember the moment when we

were sitting and he walked in... He's got this magnetic charm about him," the actor said during the podcast which aired on Saturday.

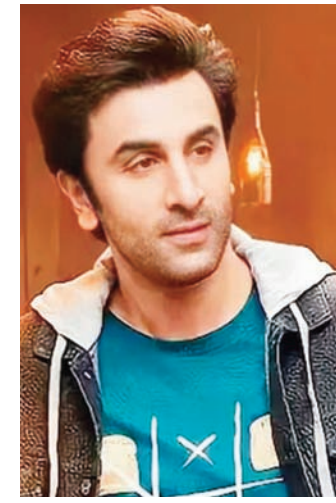
Ranbir was part of the star-studded delegation in 2019 that met Modi and also included Ranveer Singh, Bhumi Pednekar, Ayushmann Khurrana, Sidharth Malhotra, Ekta Kapoor, Rajkumar Rao, Varun Dhawan, Ashwiny Iyer Tiwari, and Rohit Shetty.

At what was described as a "courtesy meeting", Ranveer had clicked a group selfie with the prime minister which soon went viral on social media.

Ranbir, whose late actor father Rishi Kapoor was undergoing treatment for leukaemia at the time, said the prime minister spoke to each member of the delegation about something "personal".

"My father was going through treatment at the time. He asked about how the treat-

ment was going and all of that. He talked to Alia about something else, Vicky Kaushal about something, Karan Johar about something. Everything was



very personal. You see that kind of effort in great men. He doesn't need to... That says a lot

about that person," he said, adding superstar Shah Rukh Khan is one of such "achievers".

Would he like to join politics?

"Politics? No. I think I like the world of being an artist, creation," Ranbir said, adding he doesn't have the skill set to be a politician.

The actor said he wants to direct movies and would like "to die trying creating things".

"I know I'm not cut out to be a producer. I tried producing one film called 'Jagga Jasoos' which didn't do well at the box office at all. But I realised it's a skill set I don't have.

"It's easy to say 'You can join politics or any other profession', because you are kind of successful in the field that you are in. But everything requires a skill set. I'm not a people person. In politics, you have to be a people person, I'm not that," he added. (PTI)

It's like a film: Rohit Shetty on working on 'Fear Factor: Khatron Ke Khiladi'



MUMBAI, July 28: Filmmaker Rohit Shetty believes hosting a show like "Fear Factor: Khatron Ke Khiladi" is similar to making a feature film as he says the reality stunt series brings its own unique challenges. Shetty returns with the 14th season of the Colors TV show, which will feature 12 contestants. "It is a stunt-based show, which only Colors has the format for, and it is not like any other dance or singing show that you can see on every channel, and that's what makes it unique.

"At the same time, it's a difficult show, it's not like you are shooting in a studio every week, you shoot for 45 to 50 days in one go, it's like a film," the filmmaker told PTI.

Every season, the contestants pull off 60 to 80 stunts over the course of a month or two, he said. "The audience doesn't realise (this). In two days, you are showing them six to seven stunts, and it goes on for three months. At the same time, there are unforeseen conditions which come in, especially for the unit and team, like weather and a lot of other things," Shetty said.

The filmmaker took on the hosting duties of "Khatron Ke Khiladi" from the fifth season onwards. Before him, Bollywood stars Akshay Kumar and Priyanka Chopra Jonas had served as hosts of the popular reality show.

When he was first offered the gig, Shetty said he was worried whether the audience would accept him as a host. "When they approached me first, I was like it's a challenge because I was replacing stars, and I'm just a director. When I went to shoot the first season, I was anxious, all I could do was work hard. I was worried whether the audience would like me as a host or not with such a big show. I'm so grateful to them that they loved it."

Shetty, who is known for presenting over-the-top action sequences in his films, said no stunt is a "cakewalk". (PTI)



Dulquer Salmaan's next film titled 'Aakasam Lo Oka Tara'

NEW DELHI, July 28: Malayalam star Dulquer Salmaan will next be seen in "Aakasam Lo Oka Tara", the makers said on Sunday. Pavan Sadineni, known for the film "Prema Ishq Kaadhal" and web series "Dayaa" starring J. D. Chakravarthy, will direct the upcoming Telugu language movie.

Production house Swapna Cinema made the announcement on the actor's 41st birthday.

"Wishing a blockbuster birthday to our STAR @Dulquer who will enchant us all with a story that makes your heart SOAR.

#AakasamLoOkaTara @pavansadineni @Lightboxoffl @GeethaArts @SwapnaCinema @sunnygunnam @Ramya_Gunnam @SwapnaDuttCh @sujithsarang," the banner said in an X post. Besides Telugu, "Aakasam Lo Oka Tara" will also be released in Malayalam, Tamil and Hindi. Sandeep Gunnam and Ramya Gunnam are attached as producers on the film.

Dulquer is awaiting the release of his latest Telugu film "Lucky Baskhar" on September 7. He most recently had a cameo in Nag Ashwin's pan India blockbuster "Kalki 2898 AD". (PTI)

I WANT TO PLAY A HARD-CORE VILLAIN: ACTOR SUMONA CHAKRAVARTI

MUMBAI, July 28: Actor Sumona Chakravarti says she wants to explore characters ranging from an antagonist to an intelligence officer in her new creative journey.

The actor, known for TV serial "Bade Acche Lagte Hain" and sketch comedy and celebrity chat shows like "Comedy Nights with Kapil" and "The Kapil Sharma Show", said she is craving to do fiction.

"I want to do hardcore action, a thriller or psychological thriller because I love watching crime and gore on digital. I would love to explore that. I would love to play a hardcore villain or an intelligence officer," the 36-year-old actor told PTI in an interview here.

"Actors are never satisfied fully because we always want to do more and different work. I've decided that I want to satiate my craving for fiction and different kinds of work. There's a lot of good work happening on OTT. I hope people are open to exploring it with me," she said. Going forward, Chakravarti said she would like to be part of projects in the same vein as acclaimed international shows such as "Homeland", "Fauda", and "Killing Eve". "I like the role of the antagonist named Villanelle in 'Killing Eve', and the role played by Claire Danes in 'Homeland'. These are really good shows. I also loved Kiran Rao's film 'Laapataa Ladies' and Konkona Sen Sharma's in 'Lust Stories 2'. It's the kind of work that I would love to do." (PTI)



Impasse over technicians' boycott of director remains unresolved, Artists Forum offers to mediate

KOLKATA, July 28: Amid the ongoing impasse over technicians' refusal to work under a film director, the West Bengal Motion Pictures Artists Forum on Sunday offered to mediate for ending the impasse.

Voicing apprehension that the boycott of the director by technicians and protests by other directors may snowball into a major crisis affecting shoots of films, serials, web series in Bengali film industry, forum president and veteran actor Ranjit Mallick and secretary Santilal Mukherjee requested all sides to sit for talks immediately and thrash out the differences. "Any disruption of shooting will affect actors, directors, technicians, producers - every stakeholder in the industry - which will do not good.

"We therefore call upon every side to sit for talks for the interest of industry and iron out differences. If required the artist's forum can mediate to resolve the

issue. Let's not allow the situation to snowball into a major crisis that will only affect everyone in the industry as well as the audiences," the forum said.

The forum, the apex body of actors in the entertainment industry in Bengal, also stressed nothing should be done which will tantamount to showing its respect to anyone including directors.

On Saturday, despite the clean chit given to film maker Rahool Mukherjee by the Directors' Guild allowing him to work as creative producer in an upcoming film, no technician turned up at a Kolkata studio on the first day of shooting of the movie produced by a big production house.

The development comes despite the Federation of Cine Technicians and Workers of Eastern India (FCTWEL) on July 26 clarifying that Mukherjee is free to work as a creative producer of the film but not as a director for three

months. Federation president Swarup Biswas said Mukherjee was being debarred from directing films for three months for violating norms by visiting Bangladesh for shooting another movie without intimation to the federation and taking the help of technicians in Dhaka. "Neither the federation nor the Directors' Guild was informed by Mukherjee about his visit to Bangladesh for shooting a film, which is against the rule," he had said on Friday.

In fresh development after an urgent federation meeting on Saturday evening, Biswas told reporters that while it had been amicably decided earlier that Mukherjee would be the creative producer of the film to be shot from July 27, the call sheet given to them for the shoot referred to Mukherjee as the director and he was seen taking every initiative during the shoot as the de facto director.

"This was seen as violating the spirit

of our agreement and we technicians don't want to work under the instruction of Mukherjee who had not taken any technician from Kolkata to complete 10 days of shooting of another film 'Lohu' in Bangladesh. Mukherjee himself had admitted his mistake at the first meeting with the federation and guild earlier in July but now retracting," Biswas said. "We also don't wish to stop work in Tollygunge studios as the livelihood of 7,000-8,000 technicians revolve around shootings for films, serials and web series. We had never failed in our commitment. But the fact remains that someone must not undertake shootings in a clandestine manner keeping the local technicians of his project in dark and hiring crew from outside the country," another senior federation member said about the controversy revolving another film Lohu shot in Bangladesh creating all problem. (PTI)



Swiatek, Alcaraz and Djokovic start the Olympics with wins; Osaka loses

PARIS, July 28: Iga Swiatek and Carlos Alcaraz got the Paris Olympics tennis competition started with first-round victories under closed roofs at Roland Garros, the site of their French Open titles less than two months ago.

Novak Djokovic also won in straight sets as he, like Swiatek and Alcaraz, opened a bid for a first Olympic gold medal. Djokovic's second-round opponent could be longtime rival Rafael Nadal, who was scheduled to play his opening singles match Sunday — but said he isn't sure whether he will remain in that event.

"Tomorrow, I don't know what's going to happen," Nadal said Saturday. "I don't know if I'm going to play or not."

In Saturday's last match, Angelique Kerber defeated Naomi Osaka 7-5, 6-3 in a contest between two women who have been ranked No. 1 and own multiple Grand Slam titles.

Kerber has said she will retire after representing Germany at these Games; Osaka was hoping for a deeper run than her third-round exit at the Tokyo Olympics three years ago after lighting the cauldron during the opening ceremony in her native Japan.

Nadal, the Spaniard who won a record 14 of his 22 Grand Slam titles at the French Open and owns two Summer Games golds, was a surprise torch carrier during the rain-soaked opening ceremony along the Seine River on Friday night. He won his doubles opener alongside Alcaraz on Saturday night.

Nadal has not made entirely clear whether or not these Sum-



mer Games will be the final event of his career.

He is 38 and has been dealing with injuries for much of the past two seasons. Nadal and Alcaraz never had played doubles together, but they got past the sixth-seeded Argentine duo of Maximo Gonzalez and Andres Molteni 7-6 (4), 6-4.

The No. 1-ranked Swiatek claimed four of her five career major championships in Paris and grabbed the last four games

to beat Romania's Irina-Camelia Begu 6-2, 7-5, while reigning French Open and Wimbledon champ Alcaraz defeated Lebanon's Hady Habib 6-3, 6-1.

Serbia's Djokovic, who is seeded No. 1 in the men's field after Jannik Sinner pulled out with tonsillitis, needed less than an hour for a 6-0, 6-1 win against Australia's Matthew Ebden — a doubles player participating in a four-level singles match for the first time in two years. Ebden got

into the singles bracket because he was in Paris to play doubles and thus available when 16th-ranked Holger Rune of Denmark withdrew with an injured wrist.

Ebden's lone game came after he was already down 6-0, 4-0 — and he celebrated by pulling the front of his yellow shirt over his head and baring his chest to roars from the flag-dotted crowd.

The last time Djokovic was in Paris, early last month, he needed surgery for a torn meniscus in his

right knee after getting injured during the French Open. He managed to not only play at Wimbledon but also reach the final before losing to Alcaraz.

"I do feel more ready now than I was before Wimbledon and I really do feel better prepared," Djokovic said Saturday. "Olympics, from the beginning of the year, was one of the highest goals and objectives and priorities for this year. So let's see how it goes." (AP)

Simone Biles says she has calf discomfort during Olympic gymnastics qualifying but keeps competing

PARIS, July 28: Simone Biles briefly left the floor and said she has discomfort in her left leg but continued her quest to return atop the Olympic podium Sunday.

The 27-year-old American and the five-woman U.S. gymnastics team took the floor at a packed, star-studded Bercy Arena during the second qualifying subdivision for the Paris Games on Sunday. The Americans are heavily favored to win the team gold after finishing runner-up to Russia three years ago in Tokyo.

Biles dazzled during her opening beam routine, then briefly left the floor with USA team doctor Marcia Faustin. She returned a short time later and spent several minutes sitting and watching her teammates.

Biles was heard on camera saying she felt something in her calf but stepped onto the competition floor with the leg taped. She appeared just fine when Taylor Swift's "Ready for It" began playing and her routine — the hardest in the world — was solid. She walked gingerly off the floor and sat off to the side for a moment before receiving a hug from longtime coach Laurent Landi.

She received a 14.600, assuring her a spot in the event finals next week.

The stands were buzzing and filled with celebrities. Tom Cruise posed for selfies while waiting for Biles to emerge. Snoop Dogg had front-row seats, and Ariana



Grande, Jessica Chastain, John Legend and Anna Wintour were also on hand.

Biles arrived in Paris as the face of the U.S. Olympic movement and maybe the Olympics themselves. The buzz around her return to the Games has been palpable, with NBC leaning heavily into her star power by splashing Biles' face on countless promotions in the lead-up to Paris.

Her gravitational pull is real. Athletes across the Olympic spectrum have said they want to make it a point to catch the most decorated gymnast of all time in what could be the final competition of her unparalleled career. Among them: LeBron James and the U.S. men's basketball team, which was busy Sunday with Olympic qualifying.

Biles and teammates, starting on balance beam, wore blue-gray uniforms with nearly 3,000 sequins sewn into the top. Jordan Chiles went first, giving an emphatic fist bump after nailing the dismount to end her routine. (AP)

We will remember this day and work hard: Harmanpreet Kaur

DAMBULLA, July 28: A distraught India captain Harmanpreet Kaur admitted that there is room for a lot of improvement before the upcoming T20 World Cup and her team won't easily forget the eight-wicket humbling at the hands of Sri Lanka in the Asia Cup final here on Sunday.

India scored a decent 165 for 6 but rival skipper Chamari Athapaththu (62) and Harshitha Samarawickrama (69 not out) were severe on the visiting bowlers, finishing the match in 18.4 overs.

The women's T20 World Cup will be held in Bangladesh later this October.

"We are looking to improve in some areas. We will definitely work hard and remember this day. They have played such good cricket for so long and they played good cricket throughout this tournament," Harmanpreet said at the post-match presentation ceremony on Sunday.

She admitted that her side's bowling didn't work as per plans with hardly any breakthroughs to show for their efforts.

"We played good cricket throughout the tournament and, no doubt, we made a lot of fumbles today and that cost us.

"It was a decent total, we were looking for breakthroughs in the powerplay but it didn't go according to plan and Sri Lanka batted really well," the India skipper added.

Her Lankan counterpart Athapaththu was delighted after the island nation's first major success in women's international cricket.

"I am really happy about our team performance, especially the batting performances, especially Harshitha and Dilhari.

"We have played really good cricket in the last 12 months and we want to continue it. Never saw such a crowd, so special thanks go to the Sri Lankan people who came out to watch the game.

"This win is good not only for the team but the whole Sri Lanka because we have to inspire the next generation," Chamari said.

Athapaththu played the most important knock of her life while anchoring the chase.

"I have to lead from the front, that's my duty for my country. We always talk about positive things in the dressing room, for which the credit goes to the head coach and the support staff. Our next target is the (T20) World Cup," she concluded. (PTI)

PARIS, July 28: Relegated to obscurity for fifty years, the storied Yves-du Manoir stadium — where Harold Abrahams and Eric Liddell's 'Chariots of Fire' moment unfolded — has sprung back to life, now abuzz with Olympians in the serene suburb of Colombes, northwest of Paris.

It was the epicentre of the 1924 Games, hosting the opening ceremony and several competitions during the eighth edition of the Olympics.

Remarkably, it remains the sole venue in Paris from the 1924 Games to be utilised a century later as it hosts the hockey competition at the ongoing edition.

Also known as the "Chariots of Fire" stadium, it was the backdrop for the legendary sprint races involving the British duo of Abrahams and Liddell, famously depicted in the 1981 film.

This very site also served as an internment camp during the Second World War when the Germans occupied the territory. It was a camp for German and Austrian internees, who were sent to other internment camps in France form here. Among those interned here were refugees such as Jew-



ish philosopher Walter Benjamin and German novelist.

The stadium underwent multiple renovations and remained a premier sports facility in Paris until the establishment of Parc des Princes (football stadium) in 1972. After that, Yves-du Manoir gradually faded into obscurity.

Parc des Princes reigned as the primary sports center until the emergence of Stade de France, the colossal venue now home to France's national football team and host to international rugby

matches. Yet, Yves-du Manoir, named after the rugby legend who died in a plane crash, continued to survive on minimal maintenance.

"I don't know why its existence was lost on the people who run the show but I am glad that it's getting back on its feet. It has such great legacy," said Armand, who is a data analyst and a passionate hockey lover.

"Football is huge in Paris but hockey is there. It is not as popular as it is in India but hockey is

making progress in France," he added.

The stadium hosted nearly 250 national and international athletics, rugby, football and boxing competitions, including the World Championship in 1972, in the last century.

Following the Paris 2024 Games, Yves-du Manoir will become the headquarters for the French Hockey Federation, the Ile-de-France League, the departmental hockey committee, and eventually house a resident club in one of its new buildings.

Two synthetic turfs, one for competition with a 1,000-seat stand and one for training, will be dedicated to the federation's National Training Center.

"The stadium will become the new home of French football club Racing CFF. Top 14 French rugby union clubs, Racing 92 are scheduled to make the stadium their new home in 2025," informed the venue media manager.

In the last two years, massive work has been done both inside and outside the facility. The stadium has been remodelled for with the turf being laid with recycled waste. (PTI)

Return of Olympics paves way for revival of 'Chariots of Fire' stadium in Colombes

I want to break barriers: Racer Atiqa Mir after becoming first female to win in Max Challenge Trophy

NEW DELHI, July 28: Merely nine years of age but Atiqa Mir has already etched her name in motorsports history by becoming the first woman racer to win a race in the Rotax Challenge International Trophy, held at the prestigious Le Mans Kart International circuit.

Driving for the Dan Holland Racing Team in the Micro Max category, Atiqa won the Race 2 of the Heats, outpacing her competitors for a landmark win last week in the event.

"I feel really proud of it, and I'm thrilled to have won a heat because it's a significant event," Atiqa, who hails from Kashmir, told PTI Videos.

"I'm very happy to be the vice champion of the Iami Mini Rookie Series in UAE."

From a young age, Atiqa has been enamoured by racing.

"I've always loved cars, so it's not like I ever stopped looking at cars and switched to dolls or something," she explained. "I don't have dolls in my house; I've always had cars."

Looking ahead, Atiqa wants

to break another glass ceiling by becoming the first woman racer in Formula One in future.

"My dream is to keep pushing, break barriers, and strive to be the first woman in F1 someday," she said.

"I want to win as many races as possible. I know I have to train really hard to achieve that."

As she prepares for future challenges, Atiqa is focused on her next endeavour, the upcoming Iron Dames, which is an all-female event.

"I really hope to be selected by them. If I do, it could change my whole career," she said optimistically.

Balancing her racing aspirations with her education, Atiqa is thankful for the support she has received from her school.

"We have an app to easily catch up if we miss any learning," she noted.

"Right now, it's summer holidays, and school restarts for us in September. So, we don't have to do any work right now; we can just relax."

Reflecting on her journey, Atiqa credited her father, Asif Mir, for shaping her with his unwavering support and encouragement.

"My dad really inspired me. Since I was three or four years old, I used to watch my dad's races, and he often stood on the podium," she said.

Asif, himself a former national champion and vice champion in professional racing, shared his perspective on Atiqa's growing career.

"I think she's made us proud. But it's only the beginning, and there's a long way to go," he remarked.

Highlighting the challenges and aspirations for Atiqa in a male-dominated sport, Asif said he is determined to see his daughter succeed.

"What I'm aiming for is to have the first female in Formula One," he stated.

"In India, we've had two drivers in Formula One already, so it's possible," he said, referring to Narain Karthikeyan and Karun Chandhok. (PTI)



Australian cyclist undergoes abdominal surgery after fall during Olympic time trial

PARIS, July 28: Australian cyclist Lucas Plapp underwent abdominal surgery overnight at a Paris hospital following a hard crash on rain-slicked roads during the Olympic time trial on Saturday, the Australian team said.

AusCycling, Australia's cycling governing body, confirmed the procedure early Sunday. No other details were available.

Plapp was among the last riders to start on the 32.4-kilometer (20-mile) course and was laying down a medal-worthy ride at the first time check, trailing then-leader and eventual bronze medalist Wout van Aert by just two seconds. But when Plapp reached a technical portion of the course, his bike slid out under him and he crashed hard onto the pavement.

The crash was not shown on the race broadcast, but AusCycling said Plapp was conscious and moving afterward. He was lifted into the team vehicle and taken to the hospital for precautionary scans, and later he required the abdominal procedure.

"Plapp slid under a barrier fence shortly after passing the first checkpoint approximately 14 kilometers into the 32-kilometer course," AusCycling said. "His parents and an Australian team doctor were at the hospital with him." The 23-year-old Plapp, who won bronze at the Tokyo Games as part of the Australian pursuit team, is the reigning national time trial and road race champion. He was supposed to ride alongside Simon Clarke in support of teammate Michael Matthews in the Olympic road race next Saturday.

Remco Evenepoel won the time trial, giving Belgium two riders on the podium, while Filippo Ganna of Italy finished second. But both the women's and men's races were marred by a series of crashes on a course made treacherous by the rain. Among those who fell was American rider Chloe Dygert, the reigning time trial world champion, who remounted her bike and rallied to finish third behind gold medalist Grace Brown of Australia and Anna Henderson of Britain.

"If we were in Britain, these (conditions) would be absolutely perfect. The roads are better to take corners on. When we're in Spain, France or Italy, I feel like it's a little more icy," said Dygert, who still plans to compete in the road race and team pursuit this Olympics. (AP)

Manu becomes first Indian woman shooter to win Olympic medal with 10m air pistol bronze



CHATEAUROUX (FRANCE), July 28: A resilient Manu Bhaker became the first Indian woman shooter to claim an Olympic medal by snaring a bronze in the 10m air pistol event here on Sunday, a triumph that opened the country's account in the Paris Games and ended a 12-year wait for its much-hyped shooters.

The last time India won shooting medals at the Olympics was in 2012 London edition where rapid-fire pistol shooter Vijay Kumar and 10m air rifle marksman Gagan Narang clinched silver and bronze respectively. Narang is the chef de mission of the Paris contingent right now.

The 22-year-old Bhaker, who hails from Jhajjar in Haryana, fought hard to get the bronze with a score of 221.7 here.

Korea's Kim Yeji claimed the silver with a total of 241.3 while her compatriot Jin Ye Oh bagged the gold with a Games record of 243.2.

Bhaker was competing in her second Olympics after drawing a blank in the previous edition.

"After Tokyo I was very disappointed and it took me a very long time to overcome that. Frankly speaking, I really can't explain how good I am feeling today," Bhaker, whose Tokyo campaign had ended in tears after her pistol malfunctioned during the qualification of the same event, said with a wide smile on her face.

"I was fighting with all the energy I have. Really grateful that I could win the bronze. I read Bhagwat Gita and always tried to do what I am supposed to do, left everything else to god.

"We can't fight destiny," added the world champion in 25m pistol event. (PTI)

India set for double-digit medal haul at Paris Olympics, says Nita Ambani



PARIS, July 28: After the highs of Tokyo Olympics where India secured their best ever medal haul, the country is poised to get medals in double digits in Paris, sports administrator and IOC member Nita Ambani has said.

Talking to PTI in an exclusive interaction on the sidelines of the opening of 'India House' at La Villette, she also said the day India hosts the Olympics is "not far".

In October last year, Prime Minister Narendra Modi had announced India's bold intent to bid for the 2036 Olympics, pledging to spare no effort to fulfil the dream of 1.4 billion people in the country.

"We are going to do very well. Forty seven per cent of our athletes are girls. All for women power and all for our young boys and girls, we are rooting and cheering for them. I hope we can see double digits in medals for the first time. Go India go, make India proud," Nita said.

A day after the Paris Olympics began with a glimmering opening ceremony that had the attention of the world, the India House, the first-ever country house at the Olympics, had a star-studded opening ceremony attended by BCCI secretary Jay Shah and IOC officials and administrators.

"India has arrived. It is time that the flame that was first lit in Athens must light the sky in our ancient land — Bharat. The day is not far when India will host the Olympic Games. Let this be our collective resolve at the opening of the India House," she added.

"For the first time, India has its own house at the Paris 2024 Olympics. It's a place where we are going to honour our athletes, celebrate their achievements, and wish them well.

"We will celebrate our heritage and our culture, with many of our artisans present and cultural programs scheduled. This is going to be a home away from home for our athletes.

Asked how this idea came to her mind, she said: "When I went to Brazil, Korea Winter Olympics, and then Tokyo, we didn't have an India House.

"I just felt that India, with its 1.4 billion people, needed a house of its own. So that's when I started thinking about having an India House at the Olympics for our athletes and everyone to see what the spirit of India really is.

"Envisioned as a symbol of India's Olympic aspiration, we hope that it becomes a home away from home for our athletes where we honour them and salute their achievements," she added. (PTI)

Sindhu opens campaign with dominant win over Fathimath Abdul Razzaq

PARIS, July 28: Two-time Olympic medallist Indian shuttler PV Sindhu began her Paris Olympics campaign with a resounding straight games win over Maldives' Fathimath Abdul Razzaq in the women's singles group stage match, here on Sunday.

The gulf of class between the two players was evident as Sindhu, who is vying for a third Olympic medal, took just 29 minutes to dispatch her lower-ranked opponent 21-9 21-6 in the Group M fixture.

"It was a good start, I am happy. I was able to get used to the court and the atmosphere. It has been a long time, coming back after three years, it's a very special one. 2016 (Olympics) was different and 2020 (2021) was completely different. It is a sort of mixture of both," said Sindhu about her Olympic journey.

"I am enjoying and looking to the second match."

After a couple of unforced errors, Sindhu was quick to assess the condition and took control of the proceedings, racing to a 11-4 lead. The world No 111 Fathimath was no match against the former world champion who finished the first game in a mere 13 minutes.

The second game followed a similar manner with Sindhu claiming the first four points in the blink of an eye to take an early lead.

However, Razzaq capitalised on Sindhu's error to bridge the gap to make it 3-4. But it became a one-sided contest once again as the Indian increased the gap to 10-3.

In the end, Sindhu had as many



as 14 match points but the world No 13 needed only one to seal the tie.

The 10th seeded Indian, who won the silver medal in the Rio Games in 2016 and a bronze in the last edition in Tokyo, will take on World No 75 Kristin Kuuba of Estonia in her second group match on Wednesday.

Sindhu has been mentored by the legendary Prakash Padukone in the past few months, and she said the association has been beneficial to her.

"I have been with Prakash sir for more than six months now and it's going on very well. Everything is coming together. We have to know each other very well to work together," she said.

"Prakash sir is a legend, he is very experienced and he will come and tell me what is required, what I need to change."

Asked about the aspects of her

game which has improved since she started working with Padukone, she said, "Overall, it has not changed the way I feel but there have been add-ons.

"When after I got injured it was getting difficult to move well on court and it was at times getting hard to get the momentum back. We worked on that, we worked on strokes, not just on net and defence but on overall game. You need to be at your 100 percent in every big tournament or on every stroke."

She said mental strength is very important for players, especially during a big event like the Olympics.

"It is very important to be mentally strong. You at times don't know what is happening, everything gone from you, we worked on the mental things also. I tried to be positive, keep myself calm and do yoga." (PTI)

Asia Pacific Tchoukball Championship concludes



HT Correspondent KOKRAJHAR, July 28: The 10th edition of the Asia Pacific Tchoukball Championship, 2024, concluded on Sunday with a three-day programme held in Hong Kong, China. A 14-member

squad for the men's category from India, led by Ashok Goyary, treasurer of the Indian Tchoukball Federation (ITBF), participated and presented an attractive sporting display to the audience.

A total of eight teams partici-

pated in the event, including India, Hong Kong, Nepal, Thailand, Macau, Chinese Taipei, Singapore, and Malaysia. The event was organized for both men's and women's categories, where participating teams showcased impressive performances.

In the men's category, Chinese Taipei, Singapore, and Macau secured the first, second, and third positions, respectively. India finished in the sixth position, with a ranking of fifth.

In the women's category, Hong Kong, China, Chinese Taipei, and Singapore were adjudged first, second, and third, respectively.

Small town comes to life for Olympics but with fair share of organisational hurdles

CHATEAUROUX (FRANCE), July 28: Norway shooting coach Tore Brovold, the silver medallist at the 2008 Olympics, is being forced to stay away from skeet shooters in the national team as there are not enough rooms available at the Athletes' Village here.

Chateauroux, a quiet town in central France with a population of less than 50,000, is hosting all the shooting events of the Paris Olympics. It is a two-and-a-half hour train ride from the bustling French capital, leaving 340 Olympians pretty much cut off from the Games hub.

After completing the 270km long journey from Paris, one would struggle to commute within Chateauroux due to limited public transport, which is free for everyone.

For athletes, coaches, officials and media staying outside the Village, the only way to commute between the Games' ven-



ues is via the transport provided by the Organising Committee.

"These Games have been a disaster on the transport front. I went to the bus stop

India look to continue winning run against unpredictable Argentina in Paris Olympics men's hockey



PARIS, July 28: Their campaign off to a winning start, India would eye a consistent performance when they take on unpredictable Argentina in their second match of the Olympic men's hockey competition here on Monday.

India beat New Zealand 3-2 in a tense opening match on Saturday with captain Harmanpreet Singh scoring the winner in the dying minutes from a penalty stroke.

It was not an easy outing against New Zealand who were initially leading 1-0 before the Harmanpreet-led side made a recovery.

Monday's match against Argentina is also expected to be a tough one as the South Americans are famous for man-to-man marking and hard play, which the Indian midfield will have to withstand.

The Indians are placed in a tough Pool B alongside reigning champions Belgium, mighty Australia, Argentina, New Zealand and Ireland.

The first three matches against New Zealand, Argentina and Ireland are crucial for India to garner maximum points before squaring against Belgium and Australia.

A win on Monday will more or less ensure India's entry into the quarterfinals of the Paris Games.

India's talismanic goalkeeper PR Sreejesh, playing his last international tournament, once again rose to the occasion and denied the Black Sticks on numerous occasions on Saturday, standing like a wall in front of the goal as usual.

India are currently placed second in Pool B behind Belgium but ahead of third-placed Australia but these are initial stages and at the end of the day, everything will boil down to the next two matches against Argentina and Ireland.

In the 12-team competition divided into two pools, four sides from each pool will qualify for the quarterfinals.

Argentina are known for their hard-tackling and power game, and the Indian defence will have to be on its toes to deny any easy opening for the Argentines as they did against New Zealand on Saturday.

The likes of skipper Harmanpreet, Amit Rohidas and Sumit will have to be at their best to make life simple for Sreejesh.

The midfield, manned by Manpreet and vice-captain Hardik Singh, looks to be in the safe hands and they will like to continue in the same flow.

The forwardline, led by Mandeep, also looks settled but the likes of Abhishek, Gurjant Singh and Sukhjeet Singh will have to be more proactive to create goal-scoring chances.

Going by rankings, there is hardly anything to separate between the two sides as Argentina are placed sixth, while India are a rung below in the seventh position. (PTI)

Suryakumar Yadav is a bowlers' captain, says Axar Patel



PALLEKELE, July 28: India all-rounder Axar Patel says new T20I skipper Suryakumar Yadav is a bowlers' captain who allows them the freedom to execute their plans. The spin all-rounder also said that the team will look to maximise its batting combinations in the ongoing series against Sri Lanka.

Suryakumar and India made a winning start to the three-match series here on Saturday when they crushed hosts Sri Lanka by 43 runs in a high scoring opening T20I. "I played in the last Australia series with Surya bhai (as captain). I know that he is a bowlers' captain. He gives you free hand (in a way) that you decide first," Axar said at the post-match press conference on Saturday.

"Whenever you get hit, he comes and says that it was a good ball. He keeps giving you inputs. As a player, there is a good bond with him."

Axar recalled the experience of playing under Suryakumar in the five-match T20I series against Australia in India late last year which the hosts won 4-1.

"As a captain, I have also played with him in the last five matches (against Australia) and when I was playing today, I didn't feel much change," he said.

"In the first three overs when we were going for runs, he was telling me that we can do this or do that and how we can take a wicket. There is no problem if a four or six goes in it. As a bowler, you get confidence from that if the captain is backing you and telling you that you can do this."

Axar said India's batting line-up in the opening T20I which did not feature Rishabh Pant at the top was formulated with the idea that the team maximises its left and right-hand options.

In the last assignment, the T20 World Cup which India won, Pant batted at No 3 whereas on Saturday skipper Suryakumar came out at the coveted spot and the wicketkeeper-batter dropped down to No 4.

"Our team has four lefties and four righties. If there is a left-right combination (in the middle), it becomes very hard for the bowlers to maintain the line and lengths consistently especially with rotations with singles." "Now if there are four lefties, how can you use them? If you have that chance (to ensure) that there are no two lefties or two righties (in the middle) at the same time."

"If you have that chance, if you have those players in batting, then why not use them? You also have to keep changing the batting order as per the bowling options that the opposition has got," he added.

The spinner said the message from India's new staff under head coach Gautam Gambhir has been that the team will not experience a major overhaul in the way it operated. While fielding coach T Dilip has continued in his role, Abhishek Nayar, Sairaj Bahutule and Dutchman Ryan ten Doeschate are now a part of Gambhir's support staff for this tour of Sri Lanka as positions will be finalised after the tour ends.

"I have been playing for 10 years. I have played with different coaches and captains. I don't think a lot will change in the team," he said.

"When we were talking in the team meeting, they also said the same thing that the coach and captain keep changing but the team remains the same and the 11 or 15 players who stay, they have to do it," he said. (PTI)