

6 WORLD
8 NATION

- An Israeli airstrike on a Gaza school kills at least 80 people
- Russia tightens security in region of Ukraine incursion
- His ideological kin have long disowned: Cong to PM
- Sisodia calls upon people to fight against 'dictatorship' in country

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Centre will provide all possible help: PM



WAYANAD(KERALA), Aug 10: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday assured the Centre will provide all possible help in the relief and rehabilitation efforts in the landslides-hit areas of Wayanad district.

Modi said everyone's prayers were with the survivors of the landslides, which he said had 'shattered' the dreams of several families. The Centre will stand together with the Kerala government on helping those who lost everything in the disaster, he said. The landslides have claimed the lives of

226 people so far, while over 130 are missing.

The PM was speaking during a meeting held at the District Collectorate here to review the situation on the ground and work out a plan for the rehabilitation of the landslide victims.

Ever since the tragedy unfolded, he has been in "touch here" and receiving constant updates.

He said he heard from the survivors what they witnessed and experienced and termed the landslides as nature displaying its "furious form." (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Himanta bats for diplomatic solution to influx Congress under fire for 'silence' over 'attacks' on Hindus in B'desh

RANCHI, Aug 10: Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Saturday criticised the Congress for its "silence" regarding the "attacks" on Hindus in Bangladesh, alleging that the party is more concerned about Gaza.

Sarma, who is BJP's election co-incharge for Jharkhand, participated in party's organisational programme in Ranchi and discussed strategies for the 'Yuva Aakrosh Rally', to be organised by the party's youth wing on August 23.



Expressing concern over the instability in Bangladesh, Sarma remarked that the situation there is dire and beyond words.

He expressed confidence that the central government would address the issue through diplomatic channels and that the situation would gradually improve.

"Right now, the situation is very bad there," Sarma told reporters at the Birsu Munda airport.

Criticising the Congress for allegedly remaining silent on the plight of Hindus in Bangladesh, Sarma said, "The party's leaders

have protested for minorities in Gaza, but how many times have they spoken out for Hindus in Bangladesh? The Congress has shown that it stands with Muslims facing issues worldwide, but not with Hindus."

Regarding the influx of people from Bangladesh, Sarma said the central government has not permitted anyone to cross the border. "This is not the solution. We can-

not allow people to cross the borders. The only solution is to use all diplomatic channels and ensure their security in Bangladesh," he said. Sarma also claimed that the Hindu population has declined across the entire eastern region bordering Bangladesh.

"The Hindu population in Assam has decreased by 9.23 per cent, while in Bangladesh, it has fallen by 13.5 per cent over the

years," he added.

Talking to reporters after the organisational programme, Sarma said the party would launch a big battle against Bangladeshi infiltrators in Jharkhand.

"The situation in Pakur is like that of Bangladesh due to infiltration. Once we form a government in Jharkhand, we will launch a big battle against infiltration in the state," he said.

"The state government had promised to provide 5 lakh jobs and unemployment allowance to youths. But, it has failed to deliver. So, youths have decided to take out an Aakrosh rally against the Hemant Soren government," he said.

Reacting to Sarma's allegations, Jharkhand Congress in-charge Ghulam Ahmad Mir said, "Sarma should not preach us. He should take care of his own state and area."

Expressing concern over the attacks on minorities in Bangladesh, he said, "It is the responsibility of the external affairs ministry to ensure security of our people in the neighbouring country." (PTI)

Jaishankar boost to deeper India-Maldives ties

MALE, Aug 10: External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar met Maldivian President Mohamed Muizzu here on Saturday and emphasised New Delhi's commitment to deepen India-Maldives ties for the benefit of the people in the two countries and the region.

Jaishankar is on a three-day official visit to Maldives to reset the bilateral relationship, the first high-level trip from India after the archipelago nation's pro-China president Muizzu assumed office last year.

"Privileged to call on President Dr Mohamed Muizzu. Conveyed greetings of PM @NarendraModi. Committed to deepening India-Maldives ties for the benefit of our people and the region," Jaishankar posted on X along with a photograph of the meeting.

Meanwhile, in a post on X, Muizzu said it was a pleasure to meet Jaishankar and join him in the official handover of water and sewerage projects in 28 islands of the Maldives. "I thank the Government of India, especially Prime Minister @narendramodi for always supporting the Maldives. Our enduring partnership continues to strengthen, bringing our nations closer through cooperation in security, development, and cultural exchange. Together, we build a brighter, more prosperous future for the region," he said, sharing some photographs of his meeting with Jaishankar.

Jaishankar's trip to the Maldives comes weeks after President Muizzu's visit to India in June to attend the swearing-in ceremony of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government. Earlier, Jaishankar met Maldivian Defence Minister Ghassan (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

HT BRIEFS

Drug bust
GUWAHATI: Special Task Force (STF) of Assam police on Saturday seized 30 grams of heroin during a raid in city's Lokhra. As per an official statement, the raid was conducted in Lalganesh-Lokhra, under Fatahshil Ambari PS jurisdiction. "25 nos of vials containing suspected 30 grams Heroin and one mobile handset was recovered in the raid", the statement added. It further said that the task force also apprehended a person identified as 24-years-old Jun Moni Bhuyan. Bhuyan a resident of Jyotikuchi has been arrested and the necessary formalities are being done, the statement concluded.

Counterfeit seized
GUWAHATI: In a significant operation, the Special Task Force (STF) recovered counterfeit Indian Currency Notes (FICN) totalling ₹ 1,02,500. As per an official statement, the raid was conducted on the residence of Abhinash Sarkar at Debkota-Nagar, Pachim Bora-gaon on Saturday morning. The operation also led to the seizure of 4 pieces of fake gold, weighing 2.86 kg and fashioned in the shapes of boats and biscuits. Additionally, two FICN printing machines and one mobile handset were confiscated from the premises. "Fake Indian Currency Notes (FICN) worth ₹ 1,02,500 was recovered in the raid."

Heroin seized
DIPHU: Heroin valued at over ₹ 2 crore was seized from an ambulance coming from Manipur and a person was arrested in this connection in Assam's Karbi Anglong district on Saturday evening, police said. During a routine search of vehicles near the State Bank of India's office in Khatkhati area, a police team intercepted the ambulance coming from neighbouring Manipur, they said. Around 265 gm of heroin was seized from 23 soap boxes hidden in the bonnet of the ambulance and the police arrested the driver.

Committed to resolve Mizoram-Assam border dispute: Lalduhoma

AIZAWL, Aug 10: Mizoram Chief Minister Lalduhoma on Saturday said his government was committed to resolve the state's border dispute with neighbouring Assam and ensure peace along the boundary.

During a brief meeting with an Assam delegation, leaders of both states must work together with a heartfelt desire for peace and to resolve the border dispute between the two northeastern states, an official statement said. His government is "desirous of resolving the interstate boundary dispute during the current term", Lalduhoma said in the statement.



Led by state Border Protection and Development Minister Atul Bora, the Assam delegation paid a courtesy call on Lalduhoma at his official residence in Aizawl on Saturday.

Lalduhoma said that sev-

eral meetings were held between the two states in the past and the "decisions were mainly adhering to status quo, which was not the right step towards establishing lasting peace but delaying the peace process and resolving the border dispute amicably".

"Official-level talks may continue between the two states. But what is important most is that leaders of both states should make collective

Assam among top states in grievance redressal: Himanta

HT Bureau
GUWAHATI, Aug 10: Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma announced that Assam is among the top states nationwide in grievance redressal of citizens.

Taking to X on Saturday, he wrote, "I am happy to share that like previous months, in July also Assam has been one of the Top States in grievance redressal of its citizens."

"In July, Assam disposed 7,430 cases, 2nd highest in the country while from Jan-Jul,

30,572 cases were resolved, third highest in the country," Sarma added.

The chief minister shared data regarding the disposal of public grievances by various states including Assam in his social media handle.

In the July month, Assam ranked second among all states on the parameter of grievance redressal while Uttar Pradesh secured the top position nationwide. 12,687 of the 16,442 grievances that Assam received in July were carried over from (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

ULFA-I planning to attack before I-Day: Assam DGP

HT Bureau
GUWAHATI, Aug 10: United Liberation Front of Asom—Independent (ULFA-I) has been active near the border between Assam and Arunachal Pradesh, and the outlawed militant group is planning to undertake an attack in the area before Independence Day is celebrated, Assam DGP G.P. Singh said on Saturday.

Singh has spent the last four days camping in what is thought to be ULFA-I's stronghold—the Upper Assam region.

He told reporters, "ULFA-I has been planning an attack to disrupt the celebration of Independence Day in Assam according to intelligence input. Along the Assam-Arunachal Pradesh interstate boundary, a troop of the banned group is active. The army, state police, and other paramilitary

groups, however, are ready to eliminate the ULFA-I leaders."

The top cop claimed that in order to thwart any potential ULFA-I strike, the state and federal governments have been acting extremely cautiously.

"In many places, the level of security has increased. We have been investigating every angle," he said.

Notably, a procession including mostly children and their mothers was placed at Dhemaji College Ground on August 15, 2004, in honor of Independence Day.

A bombing occurred at 9:30 in the morning, injuring many people and killing at least 18 children.

According to the police, the explosive was placed near the campus gate and was detonated by a remote-controlled device.

Giant tri-colour unfurled atop highest peak of African continent

India accomplishes another historic mission

NEW DELHI, Aug 10: Days ahead of the 78th Independence Day, an expedition team under the aegis of the Ministry of Defence has unfurled a 7,800 sq ft Indian national flag atop Uhuru Summit of Kilimanjaro, the highest peak of the African continent.

The defence ministry in a statement on Saturday said it aims to "inspire future generations of 'divyangjan' and other underprivileged youth to pursue their dreams, no matter how daunting they may seem".

In the run-up to the 78th Independence Day, "the 'divyangjan expedition team of Himalayan Mountaineering Institute (HMI), under the aegis of the Ministry of Defence, has unfurled 7,800 sq ft



Indian national flag atop Uhuru Summit of Kilimanjaro, the highest peak of the African continent," it said.

The team led by Group Captain Jai Kishan, including Uday Kumar and others undertook Mission Kanchanjanga National Park to Mt Kilimanjaro (Mission K2K) to

script another historic achievement, "as for the first time an amputee climber successfully completed the endeavour using crutches", the statement said.

The team started their journey from the base camp and reached Kibu Hut, situated at an altitude of 15,500 ft on August 7, where they proudly displayed the national flag, measuring 7,800 square feet, with the aid of ropes, ground nets and anchors.

Taking into account the weather conditions and the medical fitness of all members, the team "began their ascent to Uhuru Peak at 0300 hours on August 8". After a gruelling 10-hour climbing through treacherous terrain characterised by loose scree, a steep climb of 85 degree gradient and alpine desert, they successfully reached the summit of Uhuru Peak at 1300 hours, standing at an altitude of 5,895 meters (19,341 feet) and unfurled the Indian national flag over the summit of Uhuru Peak of Mt. Kilimanjaro, it added. (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)



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Banks should focus on their core business, bring innovative products to mobilise deposits: FM

NEW DELHI, Aug 10: Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Saturday exhorted banks to focus on their core business and explore new ways to attract deposits, as household savings are increasingly shifting towards alternate investment products. "Both RBI and the government have been asking banks to focus on their business activity... they should be aggressive in deposit mobilisation and then lend. That is the core activity of banks," she said.

Interacting with the media after her customary post Budget address to the central board of Reserve Bank of India (RBI), she said there is mismatch between credit and deposit growth presently.

Stressing that banks should give emphasis on collecting deposits, she said, "RBI has given them some liberty in managing the interest rates. Using that liberty, they should make deposits attractive... bringing innovative products and mobilise deposits."

She also urged bankers to shun lazy banking and focus on small savers rather than big or bulk deposits. "Trickles (small savings) are going to be your bread and butter, money to bank on... that trickle which was the emphasis long back, which kept nothing for the other side (big deposits). Now we've (banks) gone to the other side completely. Now they are chasing bulk deposits to meet their targets," she said. But the requisite small deposit mobilisation is one of the very critical jobs of a bank, she



said, adding "it might be grinding monotony, but that's where your bread and butter lies."

Echoing a similar view, RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das said "we have been witnessing about 300 to 400 basis points gap between deposits and credit growth, deposits are lower."

"So at the moment, our effort is to highlight this point. It is kind of a proactive caution for the banks' management that going forward, this may create structural issues with regard to liquidity management. As it stands today, we don't see a crisis. But it has to be attended to."

Banks should leverage their vast branch network to mobilise deposits through innovative means and products, he emphasised.

He further said interest rates are deregulated and often banks raise

deposit rates to attract funds.

Asked if any policy intervention is required to bolster deposit growth, Das said, "India has deregulated interest rates and if you back on regulating deposit and credit rate, it can be retrograde and distort the market."

RBI Governor while unveiling the bi-monthly monetary policy earlier in the week, also had expressed concern of deposit-lending mismatch in the banking sector.

He had said that banks were taking greater recourse to short-term non-retail deposits and other instruments of liability to meet the incremental credit demand.

This, he had warned, "may potentially expose the banking system to structural liquidity issues. Banks may, therefore, focus more on mobilisation of household financial savings through innovative

products and service offerings and by leveraging fully on their vast branch network."

Earlier in the day, Sitharaman addressed the central board of RBI on the sidelines of the 609th meeting of the Central Board of Directors of the Reserve Bank of India here.

She interacted with the directors in the Central Board, outlined the vision of the Union Budget 2024-25, its focus areas and the expectations from the financial sector.

The Finance Minister also underlined the priorities for Viksit Bharat.

Sitharaman was accompanied by Minister of State Pankaj Chaudhary, T V Somanathan, Finance Secretary and Secretary, Department of Expenditure; Tuhin Kanta Pandey, Secretary, Department of Investment and Public Asset Management and other senior officials.

The Board also reviewed the global and domestic economic situation and outlook, including the challenges posed by geopolitical developments and global financial market volatility.

Deputy Governors Michael Debrabara Patra, M Rajeshwar Rao, T Rabi Sankar, Swaminathan J and other Directors of the Central Board Satish K Marathe, S Gurumurthy, Revathy Iyer, Sachin Chaturvedi, Anand Gopal Mahindra and Pankaj Ramanbhai Patel attended the meeting.

Ajay Seth, Secretary, Department of Economic Affairs, also attended the meeting. (PTI)

Tourism sector could resolve 50 pc of India's employment challenges: Lemon Tree CMD

KOLKATA, Aug 10: The tourism sector has the potential to resolve 50 per cent of the country's employment challenges with the right government support, Lemon Tree Hotels Chairman and Managing Director Patanjali Govind Keswani said on Saturday.

Delivering his address at the first National Conclave on India 2047, organised by IIM Calcutta, he said India's tourism sector is on the verge of hitting the inflexion point.

Keswani pointed out that several countries have seen that the tourism sector contributes as much as 15-20 per cent to their GDP and account for 25 per cent of employment.

Expressing disappointment over the government's approach towards the tourism sector, he said, "In India, tourism contributes only

6.5 per cent to GDP and a similar share in employment. This sector holds enormous potential for creating jobs."

"If the government can leverage this opportunity effectively, it could address up to 50 per cent of our employment challenges," he said. Discussing India's current economic landscape, Keswani remarked that the country is at a critical juncture, similar to where China was during its rapid growth phase.

He highlighted that even household incomes in India grow at a rate of 6-7 per cent annually, setting the stage for a significant shift in discretionary consumption patterns.

"India has 280 million households, but currently, only 5 million households—less than 2 per cent—are active consumers of dis-

cretionary goods like SUVs and hatchbacks," Keswani said.

"However, with continued economic growth, this number could increase to 30 million households, which would represent a substantial boost in the economic activities. This is precisely the kind of transformation that occurred in China and is now happening in Vietnam," he said.

Keswani cited several positive indicators of India's economic momentum, including the expected addition of 1,500 aircraft in the next five years, the doubling of airports, the tripling of runways, and the doubling of four-lane highways over the next four years.

"This expansion in connectivity is a tremendous opportunity for tourism in India, one that we haven't witnessed in the last 75 years," he added. (PTI)

Shah urges sugar mills to diversify ethanol production, eyes 2025 blending target

NEW DELHI, Aug 10: Cooperation Minister Amit Shah on Saturday called on sugar mills to explore alternatives to sugarcane for ethanol production, pushing for a multi-dimensional approach to biofuel manufacturing.

Speaking at an event organized by the National Federation of Cooperative Sugar Factories (NFCFSF), Shah said India would achieve its 20 per cent ethanol blending target by 2025-26, ahead of the original 2030 deadline. The minister highlighted that the government's ethanol blending programme has helped reduce the country's crude oil import bill and address environmental concerns. "You need to be futuristic and look at opportunities and expand. Ethanol can be made from multiple sources," Shah said, urging cooperative sugar mills to shed their "orthodox" approach and explore alternative feedstocks such as maize and bamboo.

Shah said about 1,000 crore litres of ethanol is required for blending, and the necessary infrastructure to achieve this target is in place. He emphasised the need for sugar mills to modernise and adopt new technologies, citing potential export opportunities once the Global Biofuels Alliance is established. The minister challenged NFCFSF to expand its operations, suggesting the federation to set up one cooperative sugar mill for every three districts in four states within a year. Shah also advised NFCFSF to hire professionals to guide loss-making cooperatives and set a target of increasing mills' annual turnover by 25 per cent in two years. (PTI)

Akasa Air marks two years of success

GUWAHATI, Aug 10: Akasa Air, India's rapidly ascending airline, commemorates its second anniversary today, marking a significant milestone in the country's aviation history. Since launching its first commercial flight from Mumbai to Ahmedabad on August 7, 2022, Akasa Air has quickly established itself as a formidable player in the industry, with a focus on empathetic service, operational reliability, and affordable fares. In just two years, Akasa Air has transported over 11 million passengers, earning its place as India's most on-time airline. The company's commitment to operational efficiency and exceptional customer service has positioned it as the preferred carrier for millions of travelers across the nation. This remarkable growth, highlighted by triple-digit increases in operations, underscores the airline's ambition to become one of the top 30 global airlines by the end of the decade. Reflecting on the milestone, Vinay Dube, Founder and CEO of Akasa Air, stated, "Two years ago, we set out to redefine air travel with a commitment to reliability, service excellence, and affordability."

Contd. from Page 1...

Centre will provide all

Kerala Governor Arif Mohammed Khan, Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan, Union Minister Suresh Gopi, ministers of a cabinet sub-committee camping near the disaster site, senior bureaucrats and officials of the local administration were present in the meeting.

Earlier in the day, Modi arrived in Wayanad by helicopter from Kannur airport where he landed around 11 am on Air India One. On the way to Wayanad, he carried out an aerial survey of the landslide-ravaged areas of Chooralmala, Mundakkai, and Panchirimattam hamlets aboard an Indian Air Force helicopter. Thereafter, he landed at the SKMJ Higher Secondary School in Kalpetta here and then travelled by road to Chooralmala, where a 190-foot-long Bailey bridge had been built by the army after the disaster.

The PM walked on the bridge, while surveying the damage. He also trekked through the disaster-stricken Chooralmala to get a firsthand view of the destruction caused by the July 30 landslides. Modi also visited one of the relief camps, which is home to many of those displaced in the massive landslides, and interacted with some of the survivors, including two children who lost their loved ones in the disaster that has claimed over 200 lives. He spoke to them, heard their concerns and needs, and tried to comfort them, according to visuals shown on TV channels.

Modi placed his hands on the heads and shoulders of the victims as they broke into tears while recounting their ordeal to the PM. Modi also went to Dr Moopen's Medical College where many of those injured in the landslides are undergoing treatment, met with some of the survivors and assured them of all requisite help. After the review meeting got over, the PM left for the SKMJ Higher Secondary School in Kalpetta from where he will travel by helicopter back to Kannur airport. (PTI)

Assam among top states in

earlier months. By the conclusion of the month, 7,430 cases had been resolved, leaving 9,012 cases ongoing. 26,661 instances were resolved by Uttar Pradesh in July, while 13,752 cases remain unresolved for the state. States like Gujarat, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, and others fared worse than Assam in terms of citizen grievances resolved in July.

Delhi had 2510 cases resolved in July, placing it tenth on the list. Additionally, Sarma provided data on grievance redressals from January to July of this year. Assam maintained its top spot on the list for the entire six-month period, while Uttar Pradesh came in third. Gujarat came in second.

Jaishankar boost to deeper

Maumoon and discussed bilateral security cooperation and the "shared interest" in maintaining peace and stability in the region, amidst China's growing presence in the archipelago nation. The ties between India and the Maldives came under severe strain since Muizzu, known for his pro-China leanings, took charge of the top office in November 2023. Within hours of his oath, he had demanded the withdrawal of Indian military personnel manning three aviation platforms in the Maldives.

Subsequently, the Indian military personnel were replaced by civilians by May 10, the mutually agreed date. This is the first official visit of Jaishankar to the Maldives since assuming office for a second term in June 2024. His previous visit was in January 2023.

Jaishankar's three-day visit till August 11 comes at the invitation of his counterpart, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Maldives Moosa Zameer.

In a statement ahead of his visit, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said, "Maldives is India's key maritime neighbour and an important partner in India's 'Neighbourhood First' policy and our Vision 'SAGAR', that is, Security and Growth for All in the Region."

"The visit is aimed at strengthening the close partnership between the two countries and to explore avenues to enhance the bilateral relationship further," the MEA statement added. The Maldives is one of India's key maritime neighbours in the Indian Ocean region and the overall bilateral ties, including in the areas of defence and security, witnessed an upward trajectory under the previous government in Male. (PTI)

Committed to resolve Mizoram-

leaders also agreed to maintain peace along the inter-state border till the dispute is resolved, the official statement said. Mizoram shares a 164.6 km-long border with Assam. Delegations of both states held the fourth round of talks since August 2021 in Aizawl on Friday and agreed to continue maintaining peace along the border.

Both sides also agreed to collaborate in curbing the smuggling of area nuts from neighbouring countries and to organise joint sports and cultural events in border districts from next year. They also decided to hold the next round of ministerial-level meeting in Guwahati before 31 March 2025. (PTI)

India accomplishes another

The historic expedition serves as a beacon of hope and a reminder of what can be achieved through perseverance and support, the ministry said. (PTI)

Chartered Accountants conference wraps up in Guwahati

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Aug 10: The two-day National Conference of Chartered Accountants concluded successfully on August 10, 2024, at the Pragjyoti ITA Centre for Performing Arts in Guwahati. The event, held on the 9th and 10th of August, was inaugurated by CA Ranjeet Kumar Agarwal, President of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (ICAI), alongside other distinguished dignitaries, including Past President CA (Dr.) Debashis Mitra, Nominated Central Council Member Dr. P.C. Jain, and EIRC Chairman CA Sanjib Sanghi.

Themed "Disha – Empowering Tomorrow," the conference aimed to set the stage for discussions on the future of the accounting profession. During the opening ceremony, CA Agarwal lauded the theme, noting that it encapsulates key pillars such as Digitization, Integrity, Skills, Harmonization, and Artificial Intelligence, aligning perfectly with the contemporary needs of the industry. He also introduced ICAI's new initiative, "DRISHTI," for the fiscal year 2024-25, which

seeks to advance the Institute's efforts in areas including Digitalization, Research, Integrity, Skills, Handholding, Transparency, and Independence.

Over the course of the conference, attendees participated in a series of in-depth technical sessions. The first day featured a session on Direct Taxes, led by CA (Dr.) Girish Ahuja and CA G. Sekar, and a session on Information Technology, featuring CA Guru Prasad Makam and CA Anand Prakash Jangid. On the second day, discussions centered on Indirect Taxes, with insights from CA Ashok Kumar Batra and CA (Adv.) J.K. Mittal, and on Capital Markets, with a panel discussion led by experts Mr. Sandip Kumar Jain and Mr. Kunal Saraogi. In addition to the technical sessions, the conference also featured a special motivational session by Shri Amogh Lila Prabhu, which left the audience inspired. The event was capped off with a cultural extravaganza titled "Samah The Magical Night 4.0," featuring performances by CA members, students, and stand-up comedian Aashish Solanki, providing entertainment for delegates and their families.

Sovereign green bonds trading at IFSC to start in 2nd half of FY25: RBI Gov

NEW DELHI, Aug 10: Reserve Bank Governor Shaktikanta Das on Saturday said trading of sovereign green bonds can commence at the International Financial Services Centre in Gujarat during the second half of the current fiscal.

"We are in discussion with the IFSC, it will be operationalised very soon. I think in the second half (of the current financial year), it will be possible," Das said.

In April, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) had announced that it will issue a framework to enable the trading of sovereign green bonds in GIFT City.

The government has been raising funds through green bonds since 2022-23 and has raised a total of ₹ 36,000 crore in the last two years.

So far in the current financial year, the government has raised only ₹ 1,697 crore out of the stipulated ₹ 12,000 crore scheduled to be raised in the first half ending in September through green bonds as it did not find favourable bids.

Asked about the tepid response from investors to such bond issuance, Das said, "as the debt manager of the government, we are watchful of what exactly is happening and if something needs to be done we will interact with the government and deal with it."

He further said, one major announcement in this year's budget about developing a climate taxonomy.

"I think that will have a significant long-term impact on mobilisation of funds for the green sector, not only through green bonds but also overall financing of the green sector," he said. "We will develop a taxonomy for climate finance for enhancing the availability of capital for climate adaptation and mitigation."

Lenovo launches 'Back to College' campaign

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Aug 10: Lenovo, a leading global technology company, has announced its exclusive "Back-to-College" (BTC) offers, running until August 18, 2024. These promotions are tailored to equip students with high-quality technology at competitive prices, aligning with Lenovo's mission of delivering "Smarter Technology For All."

The BTC campaign is driven by insights from a recent Lenovo survey that highlighted college students' strong interest in music and the growing demand for an integrated gaming ecosystem, including monitors, headsets, and mice. Responding to these preferences, Lenovo has rolled out special discounts across its product range, designed to enhance the overall user experience for students.

Available through both retail and online channels, these offers apply to select consumer notebooks and desktops. Lenovo's Buyback Program is a key feature, providing attractive trade-in prices for popular models like Yoga, Legion, LOQ, Slim 5, and AIO. Additionally, exchange top-up offers allow students to save even more when upgrading their devices.

Among the exclusive deals, Lenovo is offering Legion accessories valued at ₹ 23,999 for just ₹ 7,999. Moreover, select models of JBL Clip 4 Eco speakers are available at special prices starting from INR 999. Lenovo is also extending services worth ₹ 1,999 for only ₹ 2,999, which includes a three-year extended warranty, premium care, and accidental damage protection (ADP).

NCLT orders insolvency trial against Coffee Day Enterprises on IDBI claims

NEW DELHI, Aug 10: Corporate dispute tribunal NCLT has ordered initiating insolvency proceedings against Coffee Day Enterprises Ltd (CDEL), the parent company of Coffee Day Group which operates Cafe Coffee Day chain of coffee houses.

The Bengaluru bench of the NCLT (National Company Law Tribunal) on August 8 admitted the plea filed by IDBI Trusteeship Services Ltd (IDBITS) claiming a default of ₹ 228.45 crore and appointed an interim resolution professional to take care of the operation of the debt-ridden company. CDEL, which also owns and operates a resort, renders consultancy services and is engaged in the sale and purchase of coffee beans, had defaulted in the payment of coupon payments of redeemable non-convertible debentures (NCDs).

The financial creditor had subscribed 1,000 NCDs through private placement and paid ₹ 100 crore towards the subscription in March 2019.

For that CDEL executed and entered into an agreement with IDBITS agreeing to appoint as the debenture trustee for the debenture holders.

However, CDEL defaulted in paying the accrued aggregate coupon payments due on various dates between September 2019 and June 2020.



Consequently, the debenture trustee, on behalf of all the debenture holders, issued a notice of default on July 28, 2020 to CDEL and approached NCLT.

CDEL opposed the move claiming that IDBITS is not authorised to initiate CIRP (Corporate insolvency resolution process) as the Debenture Trustee Agreement and Debenture Trust Deed do not grant powers to it to initiate CIRP.

It has not sought written instructions from debenture holders and only upon receipt of relevant instructions from the majority debenture holders (of the aggregate amount representing not less than 51 per cent of the value of the nominal amount of the debentures) is entitled to exercise its rights, CDEL contended.

CDEL also contended that the application has been filed by ID-

BITS on September 7, 2023 while the date of default is September 30, 2019. The application has been filed almost a year later than the deadline of September 29, 2022 as per rule.

IDBITS's counsel said clause 10.1 of the Debenture Trust Deed says it does not require any specific authorization from the debenture holders to exercise its rights.

The government through a notification issued in February 2019 has permitted debenture trustees to file applications under Section 7 of the Insolvency & Bankruptcy Code (IBC), the petition said.

Rejecting the submissions of CDEL, a two-member NCLT bench said CDEL in its annual reports for the FY20, FY21, FY22 and FY23 has acknowledged it is in default of repayment of interest of ₹ 14.24 crore, which is a clear

acknowledgement of debt and hence the issue of limitation is duly taken care of.

"Thus, this is a clear-cut acknowledgement of the debt in the name of debenture holder and satisfies the requirement of the acknowledgement of the debt for the purposes of determining the fulfilment of limitation," said NCLT.

It further said: "In view of the above discussion, we are of the considered opinion that there is a 'debt' and 'default' existing in this case; and the petition is filed within the limitation period. The threshold requirement is also fulfilled. Hence the present petition... is admitted and the moratorium is declared in terms of Section 14 of the Code."

Coffee Day Enterprises is in trouble after the death of founder Chairman V G Siddhartha in July 2019. It is piling its debts through asset resolutions and has significantly scaled down from the time the trouble started.

On July 20, 2023, the same Bengaluru bench of NCLT had admitted an insolvency plea against Coffee Day Global Ltd (CDGL), which owns and operates Cafe Coffee Day chain, over a plea filed by IndusInd Bank, claiming dues of ₹ 94 crore.

However, it was stayed by the appellate tribunal NCLAT on August 11, 2023, and later both the parties reached a settlement. (PTI)

Week-long non-cooperation movement if demands not met

Demand for provincialisation of schools under BTR Accord

HT Correspondent
GOSSAIGAON, Aug 10: The Venture Educational Institutions Coordinating Committee has reiterated its demand for the provincialisation of venture educational institutions in the BTR based on Clause 6.3 of the BTR Accord signed in 2020. During a press conference at the Kokrajhar Press Club, the committee emphasized the need for the provincialisation of venture educational institutions in the BTR by August 15 to resolve the ongoing issue.

The press conference, attended by chief convenor Jagat Ray, convenor Tapan Kumar Bhowmik, organisational secretary Ajit Goyari, treasurer Amal Basumatari, and other leaders, highlighted the inclusion of an important clause re-

garding the provincialisation of venture educational institutions in the historic peace accord signed with the central and state governments in 2020. According to the committee, all venture educational institutions in the BTR area should have been brought under provincialisation without any conditions, based on Clause 6.3 of the BTR Accord and the Sixth Schedule.

Despite the inclusion of Clause 6.3 for provincialising venture educational institutions in the 2020 BTR peace accord, five years have passed without any implementation. Thousands of distressed teachers and staff had hoped for a resolution within six months of signing the accord.

The state government's apathy and divisive policies have pushed



thousands of teachers and staff closer to despair, expressed the committee with anger. The coordinating committee warned that if the state government fails to

provincialise venture schools by August 15, a week-long non-cooperation movement will commence from August 16. Furthermore, they demanded the

inclusion of amendments to the Venture Educational Institutions Provincialization Bill-2017 and allocation of funds in the budget session starting on Aug 22. If the government ignores their demands, the committee has threatened a massive public movement in the BTR region. They expressed strong dissatisfaction with the central and state governments, stating that if people and students are forced to take to the streets, the peace accord will lose its significance.

The committee also criticized the government's lackadaisical attitude towards venture schools, inappropriate comments made at various times, and divisive politics, stating that the hidden motives behind repeatedly signing peace

accords without implementing the clauses have raised suspicions among teachers and staff. They further remarked that the failure to implement Clause 6.3 of the BTR peace accord would threaten the existence of the accord signatories and deepen public doubt about their effectiveness.

The committee further demanded immediate provincialization of 6,274 teaching and non-teaching positions across 1,363 government-recognized primary, high, and higher secondary schools in the BTR area. This includes 3,950 positions in 1,207 primary schools, 1,382 positions in 125 high schools, and 627 positions in 16 senior secondary schools, which have been long overdue for resolution.

Dilip Chutia passes away



HT Correspondent
MARGHERITA, Aug 10: Dilip Chutia, head of the Commerce department and associate professor at Margherita College, passed away on Friday morning at a private hospital in Dibrugarh after battling an illness for several days.

Born on April 2, 1967, in Dhemaji district, Dilip Chutia joined Margherita College as a lecturer in the Commerce department in 1993. He was a pioneer in the fields of art and culture, particularly in sukkumar art, painting, sculpture, and orientation, leaving behind a legacy of talent and service both at Margherita College and within the greater Margherita subdivision of Tinsukia district.

Following the news of his passing, a pall of gloom descended over Margherita College. Principal Dr Atanu Kakoty, along with teachers, students, and non-teaching staff, gathered at the college to hold a condolence meeting and pay homage to the late professor.

Dilip Chutia's death has been mourned by various organisations in Margherita, including the Margherita Journalists Association, Margherita College Alumni Association, Margherita College Teachers Association, Margherita Regional Student Union, Satra Mukti Sangram Samity, and Margherita MLA Bhaskar Sharma, among others. Dilip Chutia is survived by his wife, a son, a daughter, and a host of relatives. His passing has brought a profound sense of loss to the Margherita subdivision.

Motock leaders announce series of protests over ST issue

HT Correspondent
DIBRUGARH, Aug 10: Five prominent organisations from the Motock community have announced a series of agitations in protest against the non-grant of Scheduled Tribes (ST) status to the Motock community in the state.

The announcement was made during a press meet organised by the All Assam Motock Sammilan, All Assam Motock Yuba Chatra Sammilan, All Assam Motock Mahila Parishad, All Assam Motock Yuba Chatra Parishad and All Assam Motock Students' Union at the Motock Bhawan in Dibrugarh on Saturday.

The decision taken collectively by these five organisations includes a 5-hour sit-in demonstra-

tion in every district on August 16, followed by a 2-hour sit-in protest at Chachal in Guwahati on August 22. On August 26, a mass protest is scheduled to be organised outside the district commissioner's office in every district followed by a mass protest in New Delhi on September 6.

A rail blockade is planned for September 13 and an airport blockade on September 27. Finally, a 100-hour economic blockade is scheduled for October 4.

The Motock community, along with five other ethnic communities in Assam, including the Tai Ahoms, Morans, Koch Rajbongshis, Sooteas and Tea Tribes, have been seeking ST status in the state.

Conference on autonomous district councils under 6th schedule held in Shillong

HT correspondent
KOKRAJHAR, Aug 10: The first ever conference of all autonomous district councils under the Sixth Schedule of the constitution of India was held at the Heritage Club Tripura Castle, Shillong on Saturday in Meghalaya.

The inaugural conference of the autonomous district councils under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution of India, witnessed a grand participation from various sixth schedule councils from the different states of the northeastern region. The event brought together leaders and representatives from all the 10 Sixth Schedule councils in the northeast, including



chief executive members (CEMs), executive members, and other prominent dignitaries.

During the conference, participants have emphasized the importance of unity and cooperation among the councils. They (the autonomous councils) advocated for pre-

senting a unified voice in raising their demands with the government of India, aiming to strengthen their collective influence and address regional issues effectively. A five member's delegation team representing the Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR) under the

leadership of the chief executive member of BTR, Pramod Boro graced the event, and addressed the need of unity and cooperation amongst the autonomous district councils under the sixth schedule of the constitution of India.

The delegation team members were included

BTCLA speaker Katiram Boro, BTR EMs Nilut Swargiary, Ranjit Basumatary, Daobaisa Boro. CEM of BTR, Pramod Boro has highlighted the need of unity and cooperation amongst the autonomous district councils including Bodoland Territorial Region to render services for bringing welfare and development in the region.

Minister Patowary leads Amrit Brikshya prog

HT Correspondent
SIVASAGAR, Aug 10: Cabinet minister Chandra Mohan Patowary visited Sivasagar on Thursday and led the CM's Amrit Brikshya Andolan, at the proposed Eco Park near the Dikhow river in Phukan Nagar. The event was attended by Aditya Vikram Yadav, district commissioner; ADC Minakshi Perme; Sivasagar Municipality Board chairperson Mrinallee Kinwar; and other officials. The 'Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam Par' scheme, launched throughout the country, aims to reduce air pollution to a bearable level. Later, the minister met with district administration officials at Siu-Ka-Pha Bhawan to review the progress of government-sponsored schemes.

HT Correspondent
DEMOW, Aug 10: A student was seriously injured in a road accident that took place in Athabari Chetia Gaon Tinali near Demow on Thursday afternoon.

According to sources, Subhan Manki, a resident of 1 No Masoi Gaon and a student of Athabari Higher Secondary School, was hit by an unknown motorcycle in Athabari Chetia Gaon Tinali on Thursday afternoon while returning home after school. The impact left him seriously injured. The unknown motorcyclist fled the scene. Locals and a teacher from the school immediately took the injured boy to Athabari Hospital. From there, he was transferred to a hospital in Demow, and subsequently, he was referred to Dibrugarh for better treatment.

Peace rally against inhumanity in Bangladesh

HT Correspondent
HOJAL, Aug 10: Several organisations jointly took out a Peace rally against the killings of Humanity in Bangladesh. Hundreds of members of Kutumba Suraksha Parishad, Hindu Surakshya Sena (Assam), Bengali Jatiya Parishad (Assam), Sanatani Bir Hindu Sena (Assam) and Jagrat Prahari (Assam) together took out the rally from Guwahati Club TC School Chowk to the office of Asst High Commissioner of Bangladesh, Guwahati on Saturday.

After that, these organisations jointly submitted a memorandum to the Government of Bangladesh through the office of the Asst High Commission of Bangladesh here in Guwahati (Assam). Through the memorandum, they have vehemently condemned the 'killing of humanity' in Bangladesh. They termed the entire incident to be unfortunate, anti-Human, anti-civilization and anti-cultured. They have appealed the Government of Bangladesh, to take the needed action at an early date so that the atrocities on the innocent can be stopped, and people can live dignified lives for

Jain Shikanji inaugurated

HT Bureau
GUWAHATI, Aug 10: Jain Shikanji, a leading brand from Modinagar, Uttar Pradesh, officially inaugurated its first outlet and restaurant in Fancy Bazar on Friday. The restaurant was jointly inaugurated by Pragati Jain, Harsha Jain, Sunita Jain, and Manisha Jain. Many dignitaries were present, including Guwahati Jain Shikanji franchisee partner Ajit Jain, Paras Jain, Ajit Kumar Jain, Jain Shikanji brand head Sugandh Jain, and well-known jeweller Anil Jain.

Local franchise partner Paras Jain said that in this G+2 restaurant, which spans about 5000 square feet, approximately 125 people can sit at a time and enjoy delicious dishes such as South Indian, North Indian, Chinese, continental, hot pakodas, and various types of spicy shikanji. Partner Ajit Jain mentioned that online service will soon be available through Swiggy and Zomato.

Jain Shikanji brand head Sugandh Jain noted that the brand is very popular and well-known in North India, and this is our 16th outlet across the country.

Tea estate workers block construction over drainage issues

HT Correspondent
MARGHERITA, Aug 10: On Friday, more than 500 workers from Ledo Tea Estate, with the assistance of the Assam Chah Mazdoor Sangha, blocked the construction of the Ledo Bypass Road and shouted various slogans against the government, NHIDCL officials, the district deputy commissioner, and the Margherita sub-divisional administration (civil) for their failure to construct a drainage system along the Ledo Bypass Road. The lack of drainage has led to the destruction of more than 200 bighas of mature tea bushes.

Subhash Karmakar, garden manager of Ledo Tea Estate, expressed his disappointment, stating that despite submitting multiple applications to NHIDCL officials, the district deputy commissioner, and the Margherita sub-divisional officer (civil), requesting the construction of drains to resolve the waterlogging issue, no action has been taken. As a result, over 200 bighas of mature tea bushes have been destroyed.

Karmakar further mentioned that although the contractor completed the construction of the Ledo Bypass Road, they failed to build the necessary drainage system, causing severe waterlogging and subsequent damage to the tea bushes. He warned that if the Tinsukia district commissioner and the Margherita sub-divisional officer (civil) do not take proper action against the NHIDCL contractor and engineer, they will, with the support of Ledo Tea Estate workers, permanently halt the construction of the Ledo Bypass Road in the coming days.

Cachar DC initiates preparation for 'Har Ghar Tiranga'

HT Bureau
GUWAHATI, Aug 10: Cachar district commissioner, Rohan Kumar Jha, has been making preparations in his district for observance of the 'Har Ghar Tiranga' initiative and the upcoming Independence Day celebrations.

On Friday at the conference hall of DC's office, DC Jha held a preparatory meeting rallying key officials and stakeholders to ensure these national events are commemorated with grandeur and enthusiasm.

DC Jha emphasized the importance of a flawless execution of the Independence Day celebrations on August 15, meticulously reviewing all aspects, including stage construction, field arrangements, power supply, and drinking water facilities. The commissioner highlighted the significance of the cultural programs that will follow the official events, aiming to inspire national pride and unity among the citizens.

Central to the meeting was the 'Har Ghar

MLA Diganta Barman's mother passes away

HT Correspondent
NALBARI, Aug 10: Malati (Das) Barman mother of MLA Diganta Barman and wife of former minister Bhumidhar Barman passed away on Saturday morning at the age of 85 at around 9 am in Guwahati.

Barman was undergoing treatment at GNRC hospital in the city. Barman was a popular figure at Belsor village in Nalbari. She regularly remained in touch with villagers and participated in social gatherings like naam prasanga in around her village.

Barman is survived by her son, two daughters, grandsons daughter-in laws along with host of relatives. Her demise cast a pall of gloom in and around her native village as people in Nalbari fondly conolded her demise.

Tiranga' initiative, which encourages every household and government office to hoist the national flag from August 12 to 15. DC Jha also urged all citizens to actively participate and directed that all government buildings be illuminated during this period to amplify the celebratory spirit.

To further elevate the 'Har Ghar Tiranga' celebrations, a series of community events have been planned, including a run and bike rally on August 13 and the establishment of a special selfie point at Gandhi Bagh. Citizens are encouraged to capture and share their patriotic moments at this point. The festivities will culminate in a grand cultural concert at Gandhi Bhawan, featuring performances by renowned local artists, organized in collaboration with the Regional Office of information & public relations, Barak Valley Zone, Silchar.

During the meeting, it was informed that the Cachar Police would organize a bike rally as part of the Tiranga Rallies campaign, while the ADC (Education), Antara sen will oversee Tiranga Yatras

Freight loading over N F Railway increases by 23.2%

HT Bureau
GUWAHATI, Aug 10: NFR stated that it has been constantly progressing in freight loading. During the month of July 2024, 0.913 million tones of loading was registered of various commodities. This is an increase of 23.2% in comparison with the same period of the last year.

During the month of July, 2024 loading of few commodities have registered significant growth in comparison to corresponding period of the previous year.

During the month, food grain loading has increased by 30.5%, cement loading increased by 66.7%. POL loading has increased by 26.1% while container loading increased by 20% as compared to corresponding period of the previous year. Loading of miscellaneous commodities like timber & ballast also registered an increased by 600% and 27.2% respectively when compared to the corresponding period of last financial year.

Topcem Cement donates cricket kits

HT Bureau
GUWAHATI, Aug 10: Topcem Cement, a leading cement brand of Northeast India, on Saturday distributed cricket kits to 10 schools in Assam, benefitting a total of 3-all girls cricket teams and 7 - all boys cricket team.

This latest initiative is aimed at fostering youth sports, promoting physical fitness in the community, support the growth of cricket and ensuring that the schools have the cricket kits needed to play the sport. It will also encourage youth participation in cricket. The kits, which included bats, balls, pads, and other essential gear, are intended to provide young cricketers, boys & girls, with the tools they need to develop their skills and enjoy the game. The event was graced by renowned cricketing legend, former India cricket captain and Padma Bhushan honoree, Sunil Manohar Gavaskar, who was the chief guest. Gavaskar graciously handed over the cricketing kits to representatives of beneficiary schools in the esteemed presence of Bajrang Lohia, director, Meghalaya Cements Ltd and Anil Kapur, president, sales & marketing, Meghalaya Cements at a grand ceremony held today at Hotel Kiran-shree Grand, Guwahati. In his address, Gavaskar expressed his enthusiasm for the initiative, stating, "It's a great way to support a cause which may help these children to develop a good professional career in the field of Cricket. I appreciate the initiative taken by Topcem Cement and it's a unique way to develop a cricketing skill among the youngsters." A key highlight of the event was the emphasis on encouraging girls from schools to actively participate in cricket. In a significant step towards promoting gender equality and encouraging sportsmanship among young girl athletes, Topcem Cement has proudly distributed cricket kits to the girls' cricket team of Natun Fatisil Town High School, Jalukbari Higher Secondary School and Dharapur Higher Secondary School.

World Indigenous Day celebrated in Ledo

HT Correspondent
MARGHERITA, Aug 10: World Indigenous Day was celebrated on Friday at 1st Number Malu Gaon, Ledo, under the Margherita sub-division of Tinsukia district. The event was organised by the Asom Sanmilito Mahasangha in collaboration with the Tirap Autonomous District Council Demand Committee, Singpho Jatiyo Parishad, All Assam Tai Phakey Jatiyo Parishad, Tangsa Naga Jatiyo Parishad, and All Sema Naga Jatiyo Parishad.

The program began with the hoisting of the Mahasangha flag by Santanu Das Borhajual, president of Asom Sanmilito Mahasangha, followed by a greeting ceremony inaugurated by Matiur Rehman, working president of Asom Sanmilito Mahasangha.

An indigenous public awareness meeting was then held, presided over by Rajkumar Mung Dung Gam Singpo. Many renowned and distinguished tribal leaders were present, including Assam Sanmilito Mahasangha president Santanu Borhajual, working president Matiur Rehman, Gyanpal Mahathero, president of the All Assam Buddhist Association, Sengram Lebram, president of the Singpho National Council, Milon Sonowal, working president of the Tribal People's Confederation Assam, Aimon Chakhap, vice president of Assam Tai Phakey National Council, Kahoto Sema, president of All Assam Sema Naga Council, Tehan Hakun, working president of Tangsa Naga National Council, Nong Yongkuk, president of Tangsa Naga National Council, Naying Mossang, president of All Assam Tangsa Student Union, Nong Pion Singpho, president of Pan Singpho Student Union, Kushal Mech, advisor of All Assam Mech



Kachari Student Union, Hekiya Sema, village pradhan of Saleki village, and Hotoi Sema, general secretary of Sema Naga National Council. The entire program was moderated by Pallab Shyam Wailung, general secretary and spokesperson of the Tirap Autonomous District Council Demand Committee.

In his speech, Matiur Rehman, working president of Asom Sanmilito Mahasangha, stated that World Indigenous Day is celebrated annually on August 9. He mentioned that in 2008, Asom Sanmilito Mahasangha began celebrating World Indigenous Day to advocate for the rights and power of Indigenous people living throughout Assam.

Matiur Rehman highlighted that 60 percent of the Tirap Tribal Belt in the Margherita con-

stituency has been encroached upon by outsiders. He expressed concern that neither the state nor the union government is addressing this issue adequately and warned that a major revolt could occur if it is not resolved soon.

He also pointed out that Northeastern Coalfields Coal India Ltd in Margherita is dumping residues at Malu Gaon. Rehman called on the general manager of NEC CIL Margherita, the Margherita sub-divisional administration (civil), and the Tinsukia district commissioner to take urgent measures to protect this historically significant village. He emphasised that the Tai Phakey, Tai Aiton, Singpho, Sema Naga, and Tangsa Naga are the aboriginal tribes of the Tirap Tribal Belt with a long history in the region.

Editor's pick

Hasina's ouster: A blow to India

By: Kumardeep Banerjee

A full-fledged crisis has been lobbed in India's court, with the ouster of PM Sheikh Hasina earlier this week. India's already troubled neighbourhood has now three countries under the firm grip of the armed forces. Pakistan, Myanmar and now Bangladesh, are now the army-ruled trioka, on a slippery slope of getting too close to China. Out of the two, it was Bangladesh which has been the crown jewel of India's neighbourhood first policy, having had a visibly pro-India government for the past decade and half. Pakistan has been China's proxy state acting against Indian interests, while Myanmar due to the army rule, has also slipped closer to China. Meanwhile, a pro-China (read anti-India) leader in the Maldives, a not-too-Delhi-friendly regime in Nepal, presents Indian diplomacy as one of its biggest challenges in recent history.

Former PM Sheikh Hasina, despite her dictatorial governance style, enjoyed bipartisan support in India. She used her relations with Narendra Modi and the opposition leaders in India, to come out heavily on extremist forces operating on Bangladeshi soil against India's interests.

It is no coincidence that former PM Hasina has travelled to New Delhi thrice in a year. PM Modi, lauded her efforts in upgrading the bilateral relations when she came for a state visit, a first under the new government in the centre. Indo-Bangladesh bilateral grew from strength to strength during Sheikh Hasina's decade and a half-regime, with important long-term infrastructure projects being operationalised by India and increasing new transit and trade corridors between the two neighbours.

India shares, nearly 4000 km of land border with Bangladesh, bringing its 5 states in unique proximity to the neighbour. This land border, the fifth largest land border in the world, acts as a porous conduit for the movement of goods and people during times of bonhomie, as governments maintain strict vigil keeping in mind each other's interests. This was visible during Sheikh Hasina's tenure when cross-border smuggling and terrorism had nearly vanished. This has built a very comfortable position for Indian diplomats, as they have trusted a friendly regime to keep Indian interests in mind. However, with Sheikh Hasina, gone and chances of her never being back in the political arena of Bangladesh looking extremely certain, things are about to change. India has not built bipartisan support for itself in the local Bangladeshi politics.

It has chosen to be cosy with Sheikh Hasina's government and dealt with overtures from the principal opposition party in Bangladesh with nonchalance. The fear was, that showing any affinity to Bangladesh's opposition party may not be taken kindly by Sheikh Hasina. Therefore a public diplomacy narrative emerged, that Sheikh Hasina was 'too close to be comfortable', with India and acting against her nation's interests. A caged opposition in Bangladesh managed to get external support from China, and Pakistan's intelligence agency, both of whom have a huge interest in keeping India under constant stress in the geopolitical affairs of the region. The on-ground situation in Bangladesh currently is against India.

The current interim regime has allies who may be infiltrated with extremist elements, with whom India has had bitter experiences in the past. The nature of the protests and subsequent ouster of Sheikh Hasina ensured that any of her policies, including being pro-India would not be taken too kindly by the Bangladeshi citizens. An anti-Sheikh Hasina mood could easily be swayed to anti anti-India mood, which would be detrimental to the long-drawn deep bilateral relationship. It would be a challenge for India to work new bunch of leaders in Bangladesh and remain a crucial strategic allies for the eastern neighbour. (Courtesy: The Pioneer)

PM's move to send Waqf (Amendment) Bill to JPC is a big victory for Opposition

Lok Sabha referring the controversial Waqf (Amendment) Bill, 2024, to a joint parliamentary committee (JPC) on August 8 is the first major defeat of Narendra Modi during his long ten year rule it also underlines that he cannot dictate the parliamentary proceedings suiting his whims and wishes. The big rise in the Lok Sabha strength of the opposition members is another reason for the Prime Minister abiding by democratic norms.

Currently, waqf boards control 8.72 lakh properties spanning 9.4 lakh acres across India, with an estimated value of Rs 1.2 lakh crore. At the same time, there are, according to government sources, around 40,951 waqf-related cases pending in waqf tribunals.

It was only last year that at his behest 146 members were expelled from the Lok Sabha to ensure that he succeeds in his mission to replace the IPC and CrP through three draconian laws. He used his big majority in Lok Sabha to muzzle the system of democratic functioning and parliamentary laws and procedures. He even ignored the persistent demand of opposition to refer Adani's financial deal to JPC for a detailed probe. But regrettably for Modi, the man who resorted to ruthless authoritarian machinations to deny the opposition and gag their voice could not have his way this time. He has finally been forced to test the peoples' power.

The Waqf Amendment Bill which has been introduced in parliament is omnious and simply aimed at taking away the rights of the Muslims to make decisions about their religious affairs. Amendments are not so rosy as are being made out by Modi's colleagues and partymen. These are quite pretentious. The Bill proposes to protect government properties

from being declared waqf, empowers DMs to survey waqf land & play arbiter in disputes, while also limiting powers of waqf tribunals. It also proposes sweeping changes such as like major say to the Centre in waqf matters and inclusion of non-Muslims in waqf boards, among others.

The grant is known as mushrut-ul-khidmat, while a person making such dedication is known as Wakif.

It cannot be denied that the managing committees of the waqf boards are having some inherent problems. It also cannot be ruled out that the members running the board are having vested interest. But on the plea of solving these problems it is not proper that the authority and rights of the waqf boards should be curtailed and snatched. The proposed Bill in fact on the plea of carrying out amendments intends to completely rewrite the existing law, else there is no reason that it should suggest 44 amendments for "effective management" of waqf properties and to "enhance efficiency" of waqf administration. Curiously Modi government also intends to rename the current Act to 'Unified Waqf Management, Empowerment, Efficiency and Development Act, 1995'.

Modi government instead of ensuring that the waqfs strictly adhere to the laws, has been planning to take away waqfs from the control of Muslims. Else there is no reason to renew definition of the Centre's power to frame rules, protection for government properties from being declared waqf (even prior to notification of the new amendments) and making district collectors arbiters in waqf-related disputes. Bill also proposes to make the Limitation Act of 1963 applicable to waqf properties. If implemented, it would

prevent waqf boards from seeking legal recourse to remove alleged encroachers who have occupied waqf properties for 12 years or more.

As the laws and rules of waqfs make explicit that only practising Muslims can get involved in the affairs of waqfs, then how Modi could go against this tenet and allow non-Muslims to become members of waqf boards. It is something similar to Modi's machination that he resorted to in the case of Kashmir. He brought changes in the domicile rule and as a result of this, non-Kashmiris from any part of India can purchase land in Kashmir.

Till enactment of the law non outsider was allowed to purchase land as it would severely affect the demographic character of the valley. Modi government is resorting to same tactics in the case of waqfs. If once it allows non-Muslims to be members of the waqf boards and councils, it would open the flood gate for major manipulation.

Whatever explanations Modi government may place in public for justifying its actions, it is absolutely clear that it is the part of the deep rooted conspiracy of the saffron ecosystem to deny Muslims their rights and make them lose their identity. Significantly the bill proposes to omit section 107 of the Act and to bring waqf properties under the ambit of the Limitation Act of 1963. This is simply a tacit design to prevent waqf boards from seeking legal recourse to remove alleged encroachment on its property.

The Waqf Act of 1954 was the first post-Independence legislation to govern waqf properties. It was replaced by a new Waqf Act in 1995. The UPA government introduced amendments in the Act in 2013 giving waqf boards in states and UTs powers to manage waqf properties. Waqf properties, though, have been involved in their share of disputes. Obviously question arises what prompted Modi to bring about changes in the existing law? His colleague Kiren Rijiju is known for coming out with irrelevant and illogical explanation. While justifying the amendment bill he said since the colonial era legislation has become obsolete, it is imperative to repeal the Mussalman Wakf Act, 1923. Astonishing how could he describe an Act that was passed in 1995 as colonial era legislation? Who is trying to fool?

Protagonists of the Hindutva have been quite vocal against the waqfs and madarasas. They perceive these bodies as the financial source and strength of the Muslims. Once these two bodies are taken out of the control of the Muslims, they would be rendered ineffective. This is also a cunning move to deprive them of their rights. The Bill seeks to omit Section 40 of the current law relating to the powers of the board to decide if a property is Waqf property.

If Modi feels that the waqfs are not functioning as they should have, he should have summoned the top Muslims clerics, religious and political leaders and held a detailed discussion to evolve a consensus.

But he did not follow this. Modi plans to omit section 40 and empower the district collector to inquire into any cases where a government property is identified or declared as Waqf property. Section 40 of the Waqf Act, 1995, gives Waqf boards the power to decide if a property is Waqf property.

The All-India Muslim Personal Law Board's (AIMPLB) is certainly not compatible. Mere objecting to the BJP government's move would not help the Muslims. The perception that the waqfs are source for making illegal money would continue to haunt even a larger section of Muslims, especially Sunnis. Naturally to alleviate any wrong perception and notion and more for the compulsion to not to allow the communal and fundamental organisations to indulge in divisive politics, the AIMPLB must carry out thorough audit of the functioning of these bodies.

Their exhortation that any interference with the legal status and the powers of the Waqf boards will not be tolerated, will simply turn it more suspicious in the eyes of the Muslims and provide opportunity to the communal forces to vitiate the social relations. There are many dargahs and mosques in our country which BJP-RSS claim are not dargahs and mosques. There is no denying that Modi has brought this Bill without any discussion with the concerned Muslim organizations and the stakeholders with the pure aim of political gain or polarize the Hindus before the upcoming elections. (IPA Service)

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Spying: Can death sentence put a halt?

By: R.K. Sinha

Bills are passed by two Houses of parliament which become Acts after Presidential nods. The government of the day implements them for the benefit of the people and the country. The intention is good. But some of them are often misused by greedy persons in the country. The Right To Information or the RTI, ACT is a case in point. Information useful for enemies have been, many a time, collected through this and passed on to them.

A new case related to spying has gone unheard in a noise raised by the opposition over the "victory" in the Lok Sabha elections. It's a major story. A life imprisonment for spying for Pakistan has been ordered by the Nagpur District Court to a former engineer, Nishant Agarwal, who worked for BrahMos Aerospace Private Limited. He was convicted under the Official Secrets Act for supplying information to Pakistan's intelligence agency ISI.

In addition to rigorous imprisonment, he was fined Rs 3000. It should be a lesson to others enemies of the country who have no love and can do anything for money. All other traitors of the country should get equal punishment. Six years ago, in 2018, this case had created a stir because this was the first case of espionage related to BrahMos Aerospace.

Agarwal was suspected to have contacts with Pakistani intelligence agency through two Facebook accounts of Neha Sharma and Pooja Ranjan. These accounts were operated from Islamabad, believably by Pakistani intelligence agents. Agarwal was arrested by Uttar Pradesh and Maharashtra ATS and Military Intelligence on charges of leaking information about Brahmos missile.

The investigating agencies claimed that his computers and other digital devices were examined and it was found that sensitive data was transferred. Jaichands and Mir Jafars who spy on the army may be present in many places in our country. They may be working in the army in government offices as well as newspapers and agencies. The modus operandi is simple: collect information through RTI and pass that to masters for a handsome amount of money. They have no love for the nation. Nor have they any conscience left.

The intention was good. The Right To Information Act was implemented for a good purpose. But, under the guise of a genuine information seeker some anti-national elements have tried to collect information about the preparations of the Indian Army.

It has been observed that some elements have also started collecting most sensitive and important information. A meeting chaired by the Union Cabinet Secretary was held on April 28, 2022 in which serious concern was expressed over it. This meeting was held just two days before the retirement of Army Chief Manoj Mukund Naravane.

There are limits to the rights of citizens of the country to get information under the RTI Act. Through the Right to Information, the nation makes its citizens, its work and the

system of governance public. In a democracy, the people of the country give the opportunity to rule to their elected person and expect that the government will fulfill its responsibilities with full honesty and dedication. But, the general public cannot be given this right to demand information about the preparations being made for the security of the country and to fight the enemy.

Pakistan and China, however, have often tried to get information about our defence preparations. The story of Madhuri Gupta is relevant in the connection. She was a "Group B" category officer of the Indian Foreign Service. In her 27 years long service, Madhuri worked in Iraq, Liberia, Malaysia, Croatia and Pakistan. Madhuri, who had a good command over Urdu and had a Sufi temperament, was also active in literary circles. She had an open mind. A few years ago, during her posting as Second Secretary in the High Commission of India in Islamabad, Madhuri was assigned the task of monitoring the Pakistani media due to her good command over Urdu.

Barely six months after her posting in Pakistan, Madhuri was contacted by Jamsheed, whose code name was Jim. When the Indian government officials came to know about it, false information was deliberately sent through her for confirmation. As a result, Madhuri's leaking of intelligence information were confirmed. Madhuri Gupta was called back to India on the pretext of preparations for the SAARC Summit to be held in Bhutan. As soon as she landed at Delhi airport on April 22, 2010, the intelligence agency people caught her.

Interrogation revealed that she used to supply intelligence input to two ISI spies - Munnawar Raza Rana and Jamsheed alias Jimmy. On the basis of all this, Madhuri was arrested on July 20, 2010 and was kept in judicial custody. On May 18, 2018 Delhi's Additional Sessions Judge Siddarth Sharma sent her jail for three years for espionage.

A few years ago, a "senior journalist" from the capital, Rajeev Sharma, was arrested on charges of spying for China. It was revealed later that Rajeev Sharma used to get information through the RTI and supply it to China. He was arrested under the Official Secrets Act. He had given many secret documents related to the army to China. He used to get a huge amount in exchange for providing sensitive information.

Many people keep asking questions, some unintelligent ones including. Therefore, it has to be ensured that this right is not misused. Some aspects should be also looked into in the light of the recent case. Agarwal had the opportunity to study in a top educational institute like IIT. He did mechanical engineering from there. After this, he started working as an engineer in BrahMos Aerospace. Due to his expertise, he was promoted to important posts in BrahMos Aerospace in a very short time and was made an important member of the team working on missile projects. The same person acted as a country's enemy. How to deal with such persons? Can capital punishment be a deterrent? (The writer is a senior editor, columnist and former MP)

India's money laundering industry has only 0.76 per cent conviction rate

By: Dr. Gyan Pathak

India's money laundering industry, though illegal, remains the foundation of the parallel black economy of the country, notwithstanding the draconian Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA). PM Narendra Modi's vow of action against it, and Enforcement Directorate's (ED's) shows of strict actions, especially against opposition leaders who happens to be strongest critics of the ruling establishment. The reality is, as has been revealed in the Parliament of India on August 6, that conviction rate in PMLA cases is merely 0.76 per cent.

The Union Minister of State for Home Affairs Nityanand Rai informed the Lok Sabha that in the past 10 years (i.e. in the entire Modi's regime) as many as 5297 cases were registered under the PMLA while conviction was secured in 40 cases. It should be noted that the reply did not contain the number of cases under trial.

The very next day on August 7, the Supreme Court bench comprised of Justices Surya Kant, Ujjal Bhuyan, and Dipankar Datta happened to hear a PMLA case during which the bench made a stinging observation about the ED saying that there had been only 40 convictions in 5000 cases and therefore the agency needs to look at the quality of prosecution based on scientific evidence rather than relying only on the statements of witnesses.

Back in Parliament, Union Minister of State for Home Affairs, Nityanand Rai was responding to a question by AIMIM MP Asasuddin Owaisi. The data provided by the minister shows that between 2014 and 2019, Union Government registered less than 200 cases every year - which stood at 195 (in 2014), 148 (in 2015), 170 (in 2016), 171 (in 2017), 146 (in 2018) and only 188 (in 2019).

It is worth recalling that PM Modi had resorted to demonetisation in November 2016 to stop the flow of black money in the Indian economy, which miserably failed. In July 2017, GST regime was launched, which also could not stop the parallel black economy of the country.

Before going in further details, one should also recall the way of functioning of the Modi government against corruption. First, CBI files cases against corruption, and then ED comes into picture by registering cases in relation to same CBI cases against corruption with accusation that the money ill-gotten were laundered. Thus, in many of the

cases, both the CBI and ED cases run parallel, especially against the opposition leaders and critics of the Modi government. Therefore, failures of ED in securing convictions also tell us about the bad quality of investigation by CBI. Modi government has been accused of misusing these two agencies to settle scores with its political opposition.

The data tabled in the parliament shows that in the second term of PM Narendra Modi, when BJP returned to power by winning 303 seats in the Lok Sabha, having little or no check of the opposition in both the houses of the parliament, stepped up action under the PMLA. In 2020, ED more than tripled the registration of the cases to 708, compared to the previous year. The number of cases registered in 2021 were 1166. It should

be noted that both the years were the years of COVID-19 crisis. Millions of people were dead without medical help, on road, without medicine, and without oxygen. There was also the historic farmers agitation against the three controversial farm laws. Protests against CAA, NRC, and controversial labour codes were also rampant. No wonder criticism against the Modi gov-

ernment reached its peak. There was also proportionate rise in ED cases and arrests, which Modi detractors allege were efforts to silence the critics of the government. Other cases were also registered against critics under sedition and other laws too.

ED registered 1074 cases in 2022 under PMLA and 934 cases in 2023 in the pre-election year. In 2024, ED registered a total of 397 PMLA cases. Since 2016, as many as 373 persons have been arrested under the Act, with most arrest from Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Kerala, Maharashtra, West Bengal and Delhi, the states which are most politically sensitive states for the fate of BJP. There were only two acquittals so far, one in 2017 and one in 2024. If we take the conviction on

only 40 cases, the picture becomes clear that government's intention was a chief to keep attested persons in jail without

trial for unspecified time under the draconian provisions of the PMLA. In addition to PMLA, there is also another draconian law named Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) under which, Rai said 8,719 cases were registered between



POST BAG

Concerns regarding hotel construction in Kaziranga National Park

Dear Chief Minister,

We seek clarity on several pressing issues regarding the proposed five-star hotels by Hyatt and Taj Group. Are these developments inside or outside the Eco Sensitive Zone of Kaziranga National Park? Has your government secured all necessary permissions from the Union Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change? Was a public hearing conducted?

Additionally, were the World Heritage Site regulations duly followed, and why has the UNESCO consultancy ICOMOS's advice been overlooked? We urge you to define your stance: tourism for Kaziranga or Kaziranga for tourism?

We implore you to reconsider prioritizing environmental preservation over transient luxury, as Kaziranga's ecological balance is irreplaceable. The focus should remain on safeguarding this natural treasure for future generations.

Mowsam Hazarika
Bharalumukh, Guwahati
9435103685 or mowsam2000@yahoo.co.in

How India's digital public infrastructure is enabling the emergence of state-backed 'alt big tech'

By: Smriti Parsheera

The global quest for digital transformation has found a new champion in the form of digital public infrastructure. The United Nations has identified digital public infrastructure – digital building blocks operating at a societal scale in fields like digital identity and digital payments – as a high-impact initiative for achieving the sustainable development goals.

"First-mover" countries and donor groups are rallying to spread digital public infrastructure among other nations through initiatives like the 50-in-5 campaign that seeks to encourage adoption in 50 countries in five years – by 2028. Toolkits and playbooks on the subject abound.

As an early adopter and vociferous campaigner of digital public infrastructure, India has played no small part in this story. Its G20 presidency in 2023 nudged the world's leading economies to come to a consensus on the meaning of digital public infrastructure and its role in fostering resilience, innovation, and inclusive growth.

Much of what was described as digital public infrastructure in this context flowed from India's experiences with projects like Aadhaar for digital identification, the Unified Payments Interface for digital payments, and more recently, the account aggregator framework for data management in the financial sector. A host of such interventions built around the idea of standardisation of "open" application programming interfaces, or APIs, are collectively described as the "India Stack".

In a recent paper, "Stack is the New Black?: Evolution and

Outcomes of the 'India-Stackification' Process", I trace the evolution of India Stack from an idea promoted by an industry think tank to becoming the dominant model of digital transformation in India. This stack is commonly described as consisting of four layers – presence-less, paper-less, cash-less and consent – with each layer containing multiple digital public infrastructure solutions.

Besides the examples cited above, the *indiastack.global* portal, which is a part of India's pitch for the internationalisation of its digital public infrastructure, lists applications like DIKSHA (online education), DigiLocker (document certification and management), and Aarogya Setu (Covid-19 contact tracing) as some of the other components of India Stack.

The global discourse on digital public infrastructure underlines expectations of inclusiveness, safety, resilience, trust and accountability in the design of such interventions. The interpretation of these values – and assessment of their satisfaction – is, however, left largely to domestic implementing agencies, often without independent regulatory oversight.

In India's case, the use of state coercion in the proliferation of digital infrastructure has proved to be a pain point for citizens. Examples range from official diktats for the denial of services and welfare benefits to those without Aadhaar to local campaigns by panchayat officers and community health workers to compel enrollment for the new digital health IDs under the Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission.

Projects like Aadhaar, Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission, Aarogya Setu, and DigiLocker, illustrate one type of digital

public infrastructure governance model, where the infrastructure is owned and managed directly by the government. Private sector involvement in such projects comes from interactions with select individuals and businesses in the technical development process and subsequent adoption as users of the system.

For instance, the use of Aadhaar-based authentication application programming interfaces for know-your-customer checks by financial businesses or proposed data exchanges between hospitals and diagnostics labs under the Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission.

In the second model, the government acts as a promoter or endorser of the digital public infrastructure, but its ownership lies with a separate industry-owned corporate entity. The National Payments Corporation of India, which owns the UPI system among several other payment initiatives, illustrates this structure.

The shareholding of the National Payments Corporation of India is held by a consortium of banks and payment entities, which includes public sector undertakings but the government itself is not a shareholder. The Open Network for Digital Commerce, created to increase e-commerce penetration in the country, follows a similar model.

Promoted by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, the ownership of Open Network for Digital Commerce vests in a mix of banks and financial institutions with a quality standardisation body and a digital solutions entity as its founding members.

In 2011, the Technical Advisory Group for Unique Projects headed by India Stack propo-

nent, Nandan Nilekani, articulated the idea of vesting the ownership of digital infrastructures in "private companies with a public purpose." The adoption of a "not-for-profit" structure for entities like the National Payments Corporation of India and Open Network for Digital Commerce has become one of the ways to emphasise their public purpose. This implies that the profits earned by these entities cannot be distributed to their members and must be re-invested into the company's activities.

Besides keeping a check on the incentives of shareholders, this ownership model can facilitate better efficiency in decision-making and flexibility in recruitment and procurement processes compared to a government-run setup. These advantages are, however, accompanied by various competition and governance concerns emanating from this structure.

India's digital public infrastructure encounters in market-related contexts have generated two types of competitive effects. The first, and widely publicised, positive effect is that of enabling competition through interoperability among system participants.

It is this interoperability that enables an ICICI bank account holder using GooglePay to make an instant UPI payment to a Paytm user with a State Bank of India account. Similarly, the Open Network for Digital Commerce is trying to unbundle the e-commerce value chain into multiple smaller transactions that can be performed by a diverse set of actors. Its goal is to break the silos that lock users into specific networks, such as those run by large e-commerce marketplaces like Amazon and Flipkart, and facili-

ate interoperability and competition in the process.

However, the digital public infrastructure deployment experience also raises an important second-order question – can such competition-inducing interventions also end up harming competition due to infrastructural monopolies?

The discussions that follow draw upon a 2022 paper in which I argued that India's digital infrastructure choices could point to the emergence of a new "alt big tech". This term is designed to capture the state-backed monopoly of these infrastructures, their data aggregation advantages, gatekeeping functions, and control over technical standards to be followed by all network participants. Several of these features are reminiscent of the concerns posed by the big tech industry even though the two groups are very different in terms of their business objectives.

The Technical Advisory Group for Unique Projects committee had observed that digital infrastructure operators, which they labeled as national information utilities, essentially operate as natural monopolies due to "upfront sunk-cost, economies of scale, and network externalities from a surrounding ecosystem."

The committee, accordingly, recognised a role for having competing information utilities, with interoperability among them. The realpolitik of digital public infrastructure implementation has, however, prevented this from happening. The failed attempt to introduce a competitor to the National Payments Corporation of India demonstrates this.

As of now, the National Payments Corporation of India is the only entity authorised by the Reserve Bank of India to

operate as a payment umbrella entity. In 2019, the Reserve Bank initiated a move to create one or more competitors to the National Payments Corporation of India. This was meant to act as a check on the concentration of payment operations in a single entity, which could pose systemic and operational risks and create monopolistic trends.

However, five years hence, the Reserve Bank of India is yet to act on this plan. The Reserve Bank has attributed its inaction to the fact that none of the applications that it received were sufficiently innovative enough to merit further consideration. Popular commentary has, however, presented several other arguments, including the threat to National Payments Corporation of India's powers and concerns about big tech presence in digital payments, as grounds for resistance.

Indeed, the National Payments Corporation of India has achieved many milestones with UPI. The system has grown tremendously in terms of popularity and transaction scale. It has also witnessed new features like the recurring payments mandate and interoperability with the National Payments Corporation of India-owned RuPay credit cards. Furthermore, there have been notable moves toward the cross-border integration of UPI with payment systems abroad, including through its latest tie-up with Google Pay.

Yet, it would be erroneous to view UPI as the pinnacle of India's payments innovation. There is still much work to be done in addressing issues of rural penetration, consumer fraud, bank server outages, network failures, and indeed, product innovation. Bridging these gaps will require competitive forces within UPI to coexist

with viable competitive challenges to the National Payments Corporation of India's own dominance.

Actions like preferential dealings among National Payments Corporation of India's product offerings and commercial arrangements with market participants like Google must be seen through the same lens as they would for a big tech entity. The same holds true for National Payments Corporation of India's other market interventions like specifying market caps for UPI apps, the implementation of which has been deferred multiple times, and deciding the pace at which a new entrant can scale its business.

Furthermore, the lack of public accountability and due process guarantees cast a shadow of doubt on the fairness credentials of such infrastructures. Keeping entities like the National Payments Corporation of India out of the purview of the public transparency obligations under the Right to Information Act, 2005, is a case in point.

These concerns are not about private digital public infrastructure ownership per se but the lack of suitable competition, governance, and accountability safeguards, particularly in light of the new power structures fostered by these monopolies.

Rather than assuming the public-spiritedness and pro-competitive outcomes of digital public infrastructure, these features have to be appropriately demonstrated, in law and practice. The responsibility of thinking through these steps lies upon the implementing domestic agencies but also, in part, on the international organisations and donor community that is fueling the global rush toward digital public infrastructure. (Courtesy: Scroll.in)

The future of AI and ethics: Navigating a brave and new world

By: Muhammad Salman Shah Al-Irfani

In the precipice of a new technological period, artificial intelligence (AI) is poised to revolutionize nearly every aspect of our lives. From healthcare to finance, education to entertainment, AI's potential to transform industries and society is immense. However, with this potential come significant ethical challenges. The future of AI is not just being a matter of technological advancement; but serves also as a question of moral and ethical responsibility.

AI systems, defined broadly as machines capable of performing tasks that typically require human intelligence, are already deeply embedded in our daily lives. From voice assistants like Siri and Alexa to complex algorithms that predict consumer behavior, AI is shaping our world in ways both visible and unseen, be it ChatGPT or Gemini.

The promise of AI is vast. In healthcare, AI can help diagnose diseases with unprecedented accuracy, potentially saving countless lives. In agriculture, AI-driven tools can optimize crop yields and reduce waste, contributing to food security. In the realm of climate science, AI can model and predict environmental changes, aiding in the fight against climate change.

However, alongside these benefits are significant ethical concerns. One of the most pressing issues is the potential for AI to exacerbate existing inequalities. For example, AI algorithms used in hiring or lending decisions can unintentionally perpetuate biases present in the data they are trained on. This can lead to discriminatory outcomes, even if the creators of the AI did not intend for this to happen.

Another critical ethical concern is the issue of privacy. As AI systems become more advanced, they are able to collect and analyze vast amounts of data about individuals. This raises questions about who has access to this data, how it is used, and how it can be protected. In an era where personal data is often referred to as "the new oil," the implications of AI for privacy are profound.

Transparency and accountability are central to addressing the ethical challenges posed by AI. One of the primary concerns with AI systems is their "black box" nature. Often, these systems make decisions in ways that are not easily understood by humans, even by the engineers who designed them. This lack of transparency

can lead to a lack of trust in AI systems, particularly when they are used in high-stakes areas like healthcare or criminal justice.

To address this, there is a growing call for AI systems to be explainable. Explainable AI (XAI) is an area of research focused on making the decision-making processes of AI systems more transparent and understandable to humans. By providing clear explanations of how decisions are made, XAI can help build trust and ensure that AI systems are used ethically.

Accountability is another crucial issue. When an AI system makes a mistake, it can have serious consequences. For example, an error in an autonomous vehicle's navigation system could result in a fatal accident. In such cases, it is essential to determine who is responsible—the developers, the operators, or the AI system itself? Establishing clear lines of accountability is essential to ensuring that ethical standards are upheld and that there is recourse for those affected by AI-related decisions.

As AI continues to evolve, there is an urgent need for ethical guidelines and regulations to govern its development and use. Currently, there is a patchwork of regulations and guidelines in place, varying significantly from one country to another. While some regions, like the European Union, have been proactive in developing comprehensive AI regulations, others have taken a more laissez-faire approach.

A key challenge in developing ethical guidelines for AI is striking the right balance between innovation and regulation. Overly restrictive regulations could stifle innovation and prevent the realization of AI's full potential. On the other hand, a lack of regulation could lead to the unchecked development of AI systems that pose significant ethical risks.

International cooperation will be crucial in developing effective AI regulations. AI is a global technology, and its impact transcends national borders. Therefore, there is a need for international standards that ensure AI systems are developed and used ethically worldwide. This includes addressing issues such as data privacy, bias and discrimination, and the use of AI in military applications.

Another critical component of ensuring the ethical development and use of AI is education and public engagement. As AI systems become more prevalent, it is essential that the general public has

a basic understanding of how these systems work and the ethical issues they raise. This is not just a matter of technical education but also involves fostering a broader understanding of the societal and ethical implications of AI.

Educational institutions have a vital role to play in this regard. Universities and colleges should incorporate AI ethics into their curricula, not just in computer science and engineering programs, but also in humanities and social sciences. This interdisciplinary approach is crucial for developing a well-rounded understanding of AI's impact on society.

Public engagement is also essential. Policymakers, industry leaders, and academics must engage with the public in discussions about the ethical implications of AI. This includes being transparent about the capabilities and limitations of AI systems, as well as the potential risks and benefits. By involving the public in these conversations, we can ensure that the development of AI reflects the values and concerns of society as a whole.

As we look to the future, it is clear that AI will continue to play an increasingly significant role in our lives. The ethical challenges associated with AI are complex and multifaceted, requiring a thoughtful and collaborative approach. By prioritizing transparency, accountability, and public engagement, we can ensure that AI is developed and used in ways that align with our ethical values.

Moreover, it is essential to recognize that the ethical challenges of AI are not static. As the technology evolves, new ethical issues will emerge. For example, as AI systems become more autonomous and capable, questions about the rights and responsibilities of AI entities may arise. Similarly, as AI is integrated into more aspects of daily life, the potential for social and economic disruption will need to be addressed.

Shortly, it can be said the future of AI and ethics is not just a technological question; it is a moral and societal one. By engaging in thoughtful and proactive discussions about the ethical implications of AI, we can guide the development of this powerful technology in ways that benefit all of humanity. The decisions we make today will shape the future of AI and, by extension, the future of our society. It is incumbent upon us to ensure that this future is ethical, equitable, and just. (Courtesy: Youth Ki Awaaz)

Deepfakes and potential implications for online identity verification



By: Anulekha Nandi

Deepfakes have predominantly captured headlines for impersonation, reputational damage, and misinformation and disinformation. The World Economic Forum identifies the latter as the most significant short-term risk facing the world today. Indeed, 96 percent of deepfake content online are non-consensual pornographic simulations of female celebrities. As countries around the world grapple with this near 100 percent increase in deepfake content since 2018, there is another threat that lurks in the background i.e. deepfakes and undermining of online know-your-customer (KYC) compliance processes undertaken by banks and financial institutions for identity verification of their customers.

Security firm, Sensity, released the Deepfake Offensive Toolkit (DOT) for penetration testing of the online identity verification systems of the top 10 vendors and found nine of them extremely vulnerable to deepfake attacks. It involves controllable deepfakes for virtual camera injection, which do not require additional training and can be used in real time on a photo that becomes the target for facial impersonation. DOT was able to manipulate ID images and bypass security protocols mandated by regulators for financial institutions.

Sensity used deepfakes to manipulate an ID card to be scanned with the target's face and then used the same face for a video stream to pass the vendor's liveness tests. Liveness tests generally ask people to look into the camera, blink, turn their head or smile so that it can be proved that they are a real person and to compare them to the identification presented. Other studies have found how deepfakes can bypass facial recognition systems from Microsoft and Amazon with a success rate of approximately 78 percent.

Deepfakes rely on deep learning, autoencoders, and artificial neural networks and have gained momentum

with evolution in underlying technologies like GAN (Generative Adversarial Networks). GANs, first developed by Ian Goodfellow and colleagues in 2014, involve two competing neural networks wherein the first network is fed data that is representative of the content that is to be produced. The first network learns from the data and produces new content exhibiting the same characteristics as the original data. This new content is then presented to the second network, which is trained to identify flaws representing those that it determines as unrepresentative of the original content. This is then returned to the first network so that it can learn from its mistakes and so proceeds the recursive process of self-learning.

While GANs represent sophisticated machine learning methods, as the technology evolved so did the ability to package it in websites and software where anyone, even with limited computer skills, can generate synthetic content manipulated by artificial intelligence.

Trust and transaction costs

e-Governance and digitalisation of public services has led to the management of citizen identity and identification with newer forms of management enabled by digital technologies. e-KYC or electronic identity verification has gone a long way in reducing transaction costs in the financial sector, helping in the easy onboarding of customers. As an illustrative example, in India, this has brought down the cost of KYC to INR 3 from INR 700, with 75 percent reduction in the cost of loan processing.

However, DOT testing highlights the potential of undermining trust in such practices. Trust is an important aspect of technology deployment, implementation, and adoption and can be conceptualised across two axes: Technical (technical modes of enhancing system security) and institutional (modes of governance for risk management). With these two axes working in tandem, operationalising trust becomes a relational process, occurring between people or entities and within a given context. This

includes a three-place relation between say A (trustor) who trusts B (trustee) to fulfil C (task). As a result, it contains risk and vulnerability on the part of the trustor (A). Societies with optimum levels of trust witness lower transaction costs.

Systems like DOT and its ability to spoof identity introduces vulnerabilities and widens the relational operation of trust. Individuals and entities at the risk of harm involve not just those whose identity is being spoofed for malicious intent but also the financial institutions vis-à-vis regulators and their ability to detect these emerging forms of risks. It shakes multiple layers of interdependency within financial systems and necessitates rethinking existing compliance structures.

The introduction of newer forms of vulnerabilities has the potential to undermine consumer trust in online identity verification systems, thereby raising transactions costs of enforcement and detection. The inability to detect authenticity of a proposed applicant within financial systems institutes the potential for systemic risks that can undermine a crucial pillar of financial services and reverse gains of e-KYC systems.

Developing technical and institutional trust

Anticipating and mitigating emerging attack scenarios like DOT involve developing capacities for technical and institutional trust. ISO/IEC 30107-3, presentation attack detection (PAD) standard does not contain deepfakes as one of the attacks covered. Techniques used by PAD systems like 3-D motion detection and texture analysis can detect deepfakes that are usually applicable to video replay attacks.

However, it cannot detect virtual camera injections like the type DOT is capable of since these attacks present more than one attack vector. While artificial intelligence techniques can, to some extent, detect aspects in deepfakes like blinking detection, occlusion, or image forensics, virtual camera injections present a looming and credible threat.

The use of deepfakes has been more readily recognised in reputational damage or undermining democracy. Jurisdictions around the world have been working to develop laws and regulations for deepfakes in response. However, it is important to understand the emerging risks presented by DOT level functionalities and how it manifests in specific sectors. Similar to laws and regulations governing deepfakes in areas where it has gained more prominence, regulators and policymakers need to work towards enhancing institutional capacity towards addressing sector specific vulnerabilities. (Courtesy: ORF)

The Israeli military acknowledged the strike, claiming it hit a Hamas command centre within the school

An Israeli airstrike on a Gaza school kills at least 80 people, Palestinian health officials say

DEIR AL-BALAH, Aug 10: An Israeli airstrike hit a school-turned-shelter in Gaza City early on Saturday, killing at least 80 people, Palestinian health authorities said, in one of the deadliest strikes in the 10-month-old war between Israel and Hamas.

The Israeli military acknowledged the strike, claiming it hit a Hamas command centre within the school. Hamas denied that. The strike on the Tabeen school in central Gaza City also wounded 47 people, the Health Ministry said. The facility, like almost all of Gaza's schools, has been used as a shelter for people who have been forced to flee their homes by the war.



Video from the scene showed walls blown out on the ground level of a large building. Concrete chunks and twisted metal lay atop the blood-soaked floor, along with clothing, toppled furniture and other debris. A blackened car with the windows blown out was covered in rubble.

Fadel Na'em, director of the al-Ahli hospital in Gaza City, told The Associated Press that the facility received 70 bodies of those killed in the strike and the body parts of at least 10 others.

The strike hit without warning in the early morning before sunrise as people were praying at a mosque inside the school, according to Abu Anas, a witness who worked to rescue people.

"There were people praying, there were people washing and there were people upstairs sleeping, including children, women and old people," he said. "The missile fell on them without

warning. The first missile, and the second. We recovered them as body parts." Three missiles ripped through the school and the mosque inside, where about 6,000 displaced people were taking shelter from the war, said Mahmoud Bassal, a spokesperson for the Civil Defense first responders who operate under the Hamas-run local government.

Many of the dead were unrecognisable, he said, adding that he expected the death toll to rise. Many of the casualties were women and children, he said.

According to the United Nations, 477 out of 564 schools in Gaza had been directly hit or damaged in the war as of July 6. In June, an Israeli strike on a school sheltering displaced Palestinians in central Gaza killed at least 33 people, including 12 women and children, according to local health officials.

On Thursday Israel's military hit two schools sheltering displaced people in eastern Gaza City, killing at least

15 people, according to hospital officials.

Israel has blamed civilian deaths in Gaza on Hamas, saying the group endangers noncombatants by using schools and residential neighbourhoods as bases for operations and attacks.

Israeli intelligence indicated about 20 militants from Hamas and Islamic Jihad, including senior commanders, were using the Tabeen school compound to plan attacks on Israeli forces, Lt. Col. Nadav Shoshani, an Israeli military spokesman said in a statement on the social media platform X.

Izzat al-Rishq, a top Hamas official denied there were militants in the school. Shoshani also questioned the casualty numbers issued by the Palestinian Health Ministry.

Israel said the targeted school was located next to a mosque serving as a shelter for Gaza City residents. A cameraman working for The Associated Press said, however, that the mosque and the classrooms were in one build-

ing, with the prayer hall on the ground floor and the school above it. A missile appeared to have penetrated through the floor of the classrooms to the mosque below and then exploded, according to the cameraman.

The strike came as American, Qatari and Egyptian mediators renewed their push for the two parties to achieve a cease-fire agreement that could help calm soaring tensions in the region following the assassination of top Hamas political leader Ismail Haniyeh in Tehran and a senior Hezbollah commander in Beirut. Egypt, which borders Gaza and serves as a key mediator, said the strike on the school showed Israel had no intention of reaching a cease-fire deal and ending the war.

Neighboring Jordan also condemned the attack, calling it a "blatant violation" of international law.

Israel's campaign in Gaza has killed more than 39,600 Palestinians and wounded more than 91,700 others, according to the enclave's Health Ministry. The war was triggered by Hamas' Oct 7 attack, in which militants from Gaza stormed into southern Israel, killing around 1,200 people and abducting 250 others.

More than 1.9 million of Gaza's pre-war population of 2.3 million have been driven from their homes, fleeing repeatedly across the territory to escape offensives. Most are now crowded into ramshackle tent camps in an area of about 50 square kilometres (19 square miles) on the Gaza coast. (PTI)

Russia tightens security in region of Ukraine incursion, fighting persists

KYIV, Aug 10: Russia on Saturday announced what it called a counterterrorism operation to increase security in the border region where an incursion this week by Ukrainian forces caught Russian troops off-guard and exposed its military vulnerabilities in the 2 1/2-year-old war.

The Russian Defence Ministry said fighting was continuing in the Kursk region and that the army has conducted airstrikes against Ukrainian forces, including using a thermobaric bomb that both causes a blast wave and creates a vacuum that suffocates its targets.

The measures announced for Kursk and for the neighbouring Belgorod and Bryansk regions that border Ukraine allow the government to relocate residents, control phone communications and requisition vehicles.

The raid that began on Tuesday is the largest cross-border foray of the war and raises concerns about fighting spreading well beyond Ukraine.

In neighbouring Belarus, where Russian troops are deployed but which has not sent its own army into Ukraine, President Alexander Lukashenko said Saturday that its air defences shot down unspecified objects launched from Ukraine that were flying over Belarussian territory.

"I do not understand why Ukraine needs this. We need to figure it out. As I said before, we made it clear to them that any provocations will not go unanswered," Lukashenko said, according to state news agency Belta.

A Russian plane-launched missile slammed into a Ukrainian shopping mall on Friday, killing at least 14 people and wounding 44 others, authorities said Saturday that its air defences shot down unspecified objects launched from Ukraine that were flying over Belarussian territory.

"This is another targeted attack on a crowded place, another act of terror by the Russians," Donetsk regional head Vadym Filashkin said in a Telegram post.

It was the second major strike on the town in almost a year. Last September, a Russian missile



hit an outdoor market there, killing 17.

July saw the heaviest civilian casualties in Ukraine since October 2022, the UN Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine said Friday. Conflict-related violence killed at least 219 civilians and injured 1,018 over the month, the mission said. Russia's Defence Ministry said reinforcements are being sent to Kursk to counter Ukraine's raid, with Russia deploying multiple rocket launchers, towed artillery guns, tanks transported on trailers and heavy tracked vehicles.

The ministry reported fighting in the outskirts of Sudzha, about 10 kilometres (6 miles) from the border. The town has an important pipeline transit hub for Russian natural gas exports to Europe.

There has been little reliable information on the daring Ukrainian operation and its strategic aims are unclear. Ukrainian officials have refused to comment on the incursion, which is taking place about 500 kilometres (320 miles) southwest of Moscow.

Asked about Ukraine's incursion, White House national security spokesman John Kirby said Friday the United States was "in touch with our Ukrainian counterparts" but that he would not comment until "those conversations are complete".

"There's been no changes in our policy approaches," Kirby said when asked about US policy on use of weapons. "They're using it in an area where we had said before that they could use US weapons for cross-border strikes. The end goal here is to help Ukraine defend itself." (AP)

Philippine military says Chinese air force jets endangered its patrol plane with risky manoeuvre

MANILA, Aug 10: The Philippine military chief condemned Saturday what he said was the provocative actions of two Chinese air force aircraft that executed a dangerous manoeuvre and dropped flares in the path of a Philippine air force plane on routine patrol in the South China Sea.

All those aboard the Philippine air force NC-212i light transport plane were unharmed and returned safely to Clark Air Base north of Manila after Thursday morning's incident over the Scarborough Shoal, Gen Romeo Brawner said without providing other details.

There was no immediate reaction from Chinese officials in Manila or Beijing, which dispute sovereign control over the rich fishing atoll.

"The incident posed a threat to Philippine air force aircraft and its crew, interfered with lawful flight operations in airspace within Philippine sovereignty and jurisdiction and contravened international law and regulations governing safety of aviation," Brawner said in a statement.

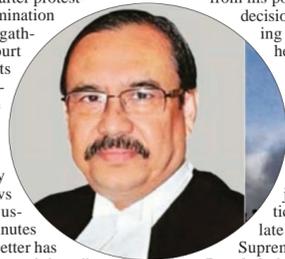
The incident has been reported to Manila's Department of Foreign Affairs, which has filed numerous diplomatic protests against China's increasingly aggressive actions in the disputed waters.

Brawner suggested the incident would not stop the Philippines from undertaking such patrols in the contested region. (AP)

Bangladesh Chief Justice resigns amid student protest demanding restructuring of country's judiciary

DHAKA, Aug 10: Bangladesh's Chief Justice Obaidul Hassan on Saturday tendered his resignation, five days after the fall of Sheikh Hasina's regime amid massive street protests and students marching towards the apex court demanding a revamp of the judiciary.

The 65-year-old top judge revealed his decision around 1 pm after protesters of the Anti-Discrimination Student Movement gathered at the apex court premises. The students had issued an ultimatum to him and the judges of the Appellate Division to resign by 1 pm.



"I feel it is necessary to share a special news with you. Our chief justice resigned a few minutes back. His resignation letter has already reached the law ministry," law adviser, equivalent to the minister of the newly-installed interim government, Prof Asif Nazrul said in a Facebook video message.

Nazrul added that the resignation letter would be sent to President Mohammad

Shahabuddin "without delay for taking necessary measures" and he was expecting the process to be completed very soon.

"We have received only the resignation letter of the chief justice. There is no update about (resignation) of others," Nazrul added. Chief Justice Hassan earlier on Saturday said he had decided to step down from his position. "I have made a decision to resign after speaking with Dr Asif Nazrul," he said.

Earlier, the full court meeting of the Supreme Court got cancelled as students issued a two-hour ultimatum for the resignation of the chief justice and other justices of the apex Appellate Division of the Supreme Court of unitary Bangladesh.

In the face of student protest, Chief Justice Hassan postponed the meeting and later said that he would step down.

Hasnat Abdullah, a coordinator of the Anti-Discrimination Student Movement, issued the ultimatum at 11 am, asking the

CJ and other justices to leave their posts within 1 pm today. Bangladesh Army personnel were deployed at the Supreme Court premises as hundreds of protesting students gathered. Around 1 pm, army personnel were stationed in the main building, annex building, and other areas around the Supreme Court. They urged the protesters to maintain peace and called on them to avoid damaging government properties. The ultimatum came when students marched towards the Supreme Court premises, demanding the resignation of the chief justice, other judges "loyal to (Hasina's) Awami League" and a restructuring of the country's judiciary.

Chief Justice Hassan told journalists at the apex court premises that he has decided to resign considering the safety of the judges of the Supreme Court, High Court and lower courts across the country amid the emerging situation. The Daily Star newspaper reported.

"There are some formalities for the resignation. Completing those, I will send my resignation letter to President Mohammed Shahabuddin by this evening," he added.

Asked whether other judges of the Supreme Court will also resign, the Chief Justice said, "It's their decision." (PTI)

King Charles praises 'community spirit' in call for unity after UK's violent riots

LONDON, Aug 10: Britain's King Charles III has praised the "community spirit" of the peaceful counter-protesters in a call for unity after the "aggression and criminality" of the far-right riots that broke out across different cities in the country and have resulted in over 700 arrests.

According to Buckingham Palace, the 75-year-old monarch had several phone calls on Friday evening to express his thoughts, including a call with Prime Minister Keir Starmer and the police chiefs tackling the response to the violent clashes.

A palace spokesperson said the King spoke to Starmer and held a joint call with the chair of the National Police Chiefs' Council, Chief Constable Gavin Stephens, and UK Gold Commander Ben Harrington, Chief Constable of Essex.

The disorder initially began in the wake of a mass stabbing attack in Southport that killed three little girls on July 29 and injured several others after misinformation about the immigration status of the suspect spread across social media.

"In these calls, His Majesty was updated on the current situation and expressed his heartfelt thanks to the police and emergency services for all they are doing to restore peace in those areas that have been affected by violent disorder," the spokesperson said.

"Additionally, the King shared how he had been greatly encouraged by the many examples of community spirit that had countered the aggression and criminality from a few with the compassion and resilience of the many.

"It remains His Majesty's hope that shared values of mutual respect and understanding will continue to strengthen and unite the nation," the spokesperson added. It emerged that the monarch has also been holding private calls to be kept updated on the situation and expressed his "heartfelt" gratitude to the police and emergency services for their work to restore peace in the areas that have been affected by violent disorder. (PTI)

Kamala Harris makes an immigration pitch in Arizona as she fights to gain ground in the Sun Belt

GLENDALE, Aug 10: Vice President Kamala Harris drew on her prosecutorial background to make her first expansive pitch on immigration to border-state voters as she and her new running mate, Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz, attracted thousands to a campaign rally in Arizona during their tour of battleground states.

Harris, the former attorney general of California, reminded the crowd that she, as a law enforcement official, targeted transnational gangs, drug cartels and smugglers.

"I prosecuted them in case after case, and I won," Harris said in front of a crowd of more than 15,000 in Glendale, a suburb of Phoenix.

"So I know what I'm talking about," Harris promoted a border security bill that a bipartisan group of senators negotiated earlier this year, which Republican lawmakers oppose.

"Do not let Trump do what he wants to do to fix this problem," Harris said. "Be clear about that: He has no interest or desire to actually fix the problem. He talks a big game about border security, but he does not walk the walk."

Her effort to address immigration - a political liability that has dogged Harris for most of her vice presidency - head-on in the critical battleground state is part of a broader push from her campaign to make gains in Sun Belt states that had become increasingly out of reach with Joe Biden at the top of the ticket.

Trump and his allies, who had long hammered Biden over the influx of migrants during his term,

are now shifting their attacks to Harris. Kari Lake, who is running against Democratic Rep. Ruben Gallego for the open Senate seat in Arizona, bashes Gallego in a recent ad for supporting Biden's and Harris' "radical border agenda," featuring repeated clips of the vice president chortling.

"It's very easy for us to segue and switch our sights and focus on her," said Dave Smith, Pima County's Republican party chairman. But Harris has been courting the state's fast-growing Latino population and released a new ad for her own, highlighting how Harris, the daughter of immigrants from India and Jamaica, rose to the highest echelons of American politics. (AP)



Ethnic armed group suspected of deadly attack in Myanmar on Rohingya trying to flee fighting

BANGKOK, Aug 10: At least 150 civilians from Myanmar's Muslim Rohingya minority may have been killed this week in artillery and drone attack in the western state of Rakhine that survivors suspect was carried out by a major force in the resistance to military rule.

The Arakan Army, the military wing of the state's Rakhine ethnic group, denied responsibility for the assault Monday on Rohingya trying to flee fierce fighting in Maungdaw town by crossing the Naf River into Bangladesh.

A statement issued on Friday by an international medical assistance group, Doctors Without Borders, said that in the past week, it has been treating increasing numbers of Rohingya people with violence-related injuries who managed to cross the border into Bangladesh. The statement said some patients "reported seeing people bombed while trying to find

boats to cross the river into Bangladesh and escape the violence. Others described seeing hundreds of dead bodies on the riverbanks."

Two self-described survivors contacted by The Associated Press blamed the Arakan Army, as did Rohingya activists and Myanmar's military government. The attack, if confirmed, would be one of the deadliest involving civilians in the country's civil war. Guesstimate videos circulating on social media purport to show dozens of bodies of adults and children strewn along a road near the riverside. Neither the video nor details of the attack can be easily verified due to tight restrictions on travel and ongoing combat in the area. Pro-democracy guerrillas and ethnic minority armed forces have been attempting to oust the country's military rulers since they seized power in 2021 from the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi. (AP)

Brazilian authorities are investigating the cause of the fiery plane crash that killed 61



VINHEDO, Aug 10: Brazilian authorities worked Saturday to piece together what exactly caused the plane crash in Sao Paulo state the prior day that killed all 61 people on board.

Local airline Voepass' plane, an ATR 72 twin-engine turboprop, was headed for Sao Paulo's international airport in Guarulhos with 57 passengers and 4 crew members when it went down in the city of Vinhedo.

Images recorded by witnesses showed the aircraft in a flat spin and plunging vertically before smashing to the ground inside a gated community, and leaving an obliterated fuselage consumed by fire. Residents said there were no injuries on the ground.

Rain drizzled down on rescue workers as they recovered the first bodies

from the scene in the chill of the Southern Hemisphere's winter. Some residents of the condominium silently left to spend the night elsewhere.

It was the world's deadliest airline crash since January 2023, when 72 people died on board a Yeti Airlines plane in Nepal that stalled and crashed while making its landing approach. That plane also was an ATR 72, and the final report blamed pilot error.

A report on Friday from Brazilian television network Globo's meteorological center said it "confirmed the possibility of the formation of ice in the region of Vinhedo," and local media cited experts pointing to icing as a potential cause for the crash.

An American Eagle ATR 72-200 crashed on October 31, 1994, and the

United States National Transportation Safety Board determined that the probable cause was ice buildup while the plane was circling in a holding pattern.

The plane rolled at about 8,000 feet and dove into the ground, killing all 68 people on board. The US Federal Aviation Administration issued operating procedures for ATRs and similar planes, telling pilots not to use the autopilot in icing conditions.

But Brazilian aviation expert Lito Sousa cautioned that meteorological conditions alone might not be enough to explain why the plane fell in the manner that it did on Friday.

"Analysing an air crash just with images can lead to wrong conclusions about the causes," Sousa told the AP by phone. "But we can see a plane with loss of support, no horizontal speed. In this flat spin condition, there's no way to reclaim control of the plane."

Speaking to reporters Friday in Vinhedo, Sao Paulo Public Security Secretary Guilherme Derrite said the plane's black box had been recovered, apparently in a preserved state. Marcelo Moura, director of operations

for Voepass, told reporters Friday night that, while there were forecasts for ice, they were within acceptable levels for the aircraft.

Likewise, Lt. Col. Carlos Henrique Baldi of the Brazilian air force's centre for the investigation and prevention of air accidents, told reporters in a late afternoon press conference that it was still too early to confirm whether ice caused the crash.

The plane is "certified in several countries to fly in severe icing conditions, including in countries unlike ours, where the impact of ice is more significant," said Baldi, who heads the centre's investigation division.

In an earlier statement, the centre said that the plane's pilots did not call for help nor say they were operating under adverse weather conditions. There has been no evidence that the pilots tried to contact controllers of regional airports, either, Ports and Airports Minister Silvio Costa Filho told reporters Friday night in Vinhedo.

Brazil's Federal Police began its own investigation, and dispatched specialists in plane crashes and the identification of disaster victims, it said in a statement. (AP)

Mars and Jupiter get chummy in the night sky. The planets won't get this close again until 2033

CAPE CANAVERAL, Aug 10: Mars and Jupiter are cozying up in the night sky for their closest rendezvous this decade.

They'll be so close on Wednesday, at least from our perspective, that just a sliver of moon could fit between them. In reality, our solar system's biggest planet and its dimmer, reddish neighbor will be more than 350 million miles (575 million kilometers) apart in their respective orbits.

The two planets will reach their minimum separation - one-third of 1 degree or about one-third the width of the moon - during daylight hours on Wednesday in most of the Americas, Europe and Africa.

But they won't appear that much different hours or even a day earlier when the sky is dark, said Jon Giorgini of NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory in California.

The best views will be in the eastern sky, toward constellation Taurus, before daybreak.

Known as planetary conjunctions, these comic pairings happen only every three years or so.



"Such events are a rare beauty for those watching the sky, wondering what the two bright objects so close together might be," he said in an email. "The science is in the ability to accurately predict the events years in advance."

Their orbits haven't brought them this close together, one ahead, the year 2348 will be almost as close.

This latest link up of Mars and Jupiter coincides with the Perseid meteor shower, one of the year's brightest showers. No binoculars or telescopes are needed. (AP)

'Imposed night curfew in Pherzawl and Jiribam districts to check the influx' Influx from Bangladesh cause for concern: Manipur CM

IMPHAL, Aug 10: Manipur chief minister N Biren Singh on Saturday said the influx of people from Bangladesh in the wake of unrest in the neighbouring country is a cause for concern, and his government has imposed night curfew in some districts to check infiltration.

"I am in touch with the external affairs ministry. As for our security, we have imposed night curfew in Pherzawl and Jiribam districts to check the influx," Singh told reporters here.

Over 230 people were killed in Bangladesh in the incidents of violence that erupted across the country following the fall of the Hasina government on Monday, taking the death toll to 560 since the anti-quota



protests first started in mid-July. The chief minister was speaking at a function to mark the Centre's 'Har Ghar Tiranga' initiative.

"I appeal to all legislators to organise lunch at different relief camps across Manipur on Independence Day, as well as interact with the inmates to address their problems and grievances," Singh said.

"Har Ghar Tiranga is the brainchild of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to instill a sense of nationalism and belongingness. We will be holding motorbike rallies and every house will hoist the tricolour," he said.

People are encouraged to display the national flag at their homes and other establishments during the run-up to Independence Day on August 15 as part of the 'Har Ghar Tiranga' campaign. (PTI)

155 ILP violation cases detected in Arunachal



ITANAGAR, Aug 10: Arunachal Pradesh Police have detected 155 people who have violated the Inner Line Permit (ILP) regulations in the state capital area, an officer said. A special ILP violation drive was launched on Friday, Capital Superintendent of Police Rohit Rajbir Singh said.

During the drive, the SP said a total of 155 individuals were detected from Ganga village, Chimpu, and Ganga market area, who have violated the ILP regulations.

Following due process, the violators were exempted from Hollongi and Gumto check gates, he said.

The SP said the ILP checking will be intensified in the coming days.

The SP appealed to the general public to cooperate with the police in the drive to curb illegal immigration and encourage citizens to report any information related to such violations to the police.

An inner line permit is required for Indian nationals to enter Arunachal Pradesh. An ILP for temporary visitors is valid for 15 days and can be extended, while one for those taking employment in the state and their immediate family members is valid for a year. (PTI)

LOST

I lost my original University Registration Card (bearing Regd. No.18007142 of North-Eastern Hill University (Meghalaya) at Birla market from my safe custody on 8 August, 2024 under Diphu Police Station. If anyone is found may kindly contact at the address and mobile number mentioned below.

Name:

Raphaela Lalsanhim,
D/o Henry Lalropui

Address:

Hebron Children
Home of Thong
Teron Gaon, Birla
P.O. & P.S., Diphu.
Pin Code 782460

District :

Karbi Anglong, Assam

Mobile no:

9774064060

NAME CHANGE

I have Changed my name from Mohammed Arif Uddin to Arif Uddin & My Fathers name from Intaj Ali to Intaj Uddin by swearing a notarial affidavit at Sankardevnagar Hojai (Assam)

MBOSE to hold exams for those failed from 2025



SHILLONG, Aug 10: The Meghalaya Board of School Education (MBOSE) is all set to conduct a second examination for failed students within two month's time starting from 2025.

The objective is to allow unsuccessful students to reappear for the board exam within one-two months' time after they failed the examination.

This major decision of the Education department by amending the Meghalaya Board of School Education Regulation for Secondary School Leaving Certificate Examination, 2011 was approved during a cabinet meeting chaired by the chief minister Conrad K Sangma here recently.

"With this decision, MBOSE will be having two board examinations in a year starting from next academic year 2025 onwards," Education Minister Rakkam A Sangma said while addressing the media after the meeting.

"The first board examination will be held in the month of February or early of March and the second examination is for those who failed in all subjects or one or two-three subjects. They will be allowed to reappear for the board exam within one-two months' time meaning by the month of May," he said.

He said that the government's decision is in line with the National Education Policy (NEP).

"This has been done to support the students because now supplementary examinations used to be held after a gap of one year but now the supplementary examination will be held within the same academic year to save the one year lost to the class X students," the minister added. (NNN)

Tripura setting new milestone in development: Telangana Guv

AGARTALA, Aug 10: Telangana Governor Jishnu Dev Varma said on Saturday that the Tripura government has set a new milestone on the development front by reaching out to the last-mile people.

"The Tripura government has brought money from the World Bank for the development of the tribal people for the first time. The northeastern state is witnessing all-round development from infrastructure to road connectivity to the welfare of last-mile people since 2018," he said after receiving a civic reception for being appointed the Governor of Telangana at Mandwai in West Tripura district.

It took 75 five years for a son of soil from a tribal community to become governor of a state. It is not only an honour for me but also for the people of the state, Dev Varma said. "This is for the first time that President Droupadi Murmu and Prime Minister Narendra Modi picked a tribal person as a governor for a big state like Telangana. I thanked both of them for this," he said.

Asserting that he is the ambassador of Telangana, the former deputy chief minister of Tripura said he will do his best to share the best practices of both states Telangana and Tripura.



"I am the ambassador of Telangana although I belong to Tripura. Like my home state, tribals reside in Telangana as well," he said. Dev Varma said following the successful implementation of the bio village-2.0 programme, a project to ensure sustainable livelihood and food security, it may be implemented in Telangana.

Chief minister Manik Saha, while speaking on the occasion, hailed Dev Varma for his contribution as the deputy chief minister of Tripura from 2018 to 2023.

"As the deputy chief minister, he used to oversee the departments like finance, power, rural development and science & technology," he said. (PTI)

BSF IG emphasises on riverine gaps along Tripura-Bangladesh border

HT Correspondent

AGARTALA, Aug 10: The IG of BSF in Tripura has reviewed the command and control centre and directed to intensify the security in riverine gaps of the Indo-Bangladesh border in the state.

As per BSF sources on August 9 and 10, IG BSF Patel Piyush Purusottam Das, IPS, embarked on a two-day visit to the border areas of North Tripura and Unakoti districts of Tripura.

"The IG arrived at Bagbasa helipad in BSF Helicopter and was received by DIG BSF Panisagar and other officers. The IG then visited various Border outposts under District Unakoti and North Tripura" said a BSF official. He informed that during the visit, he interacted with Unit Commandant, Company Commanders and troops deployed on the border, reviewing the operational preparedness keeping in view the ongoing unrest in Bangladesh.

"The IG commended the BSF officers and troops for their unrelenting efforts in



preventing transborder crimes and illegal entry of Bangladeshis. He also reviewed the functioning of recently established command and control centre (C3) as BSF has been installing high tech AI enabled cameras in the border to augment the domination", he said.

The official said that the IG further visited the riverine gaps and was briefed by the field commanders on the measures being taken to plug them.

"During interaction with commanders at border, IG emphasised upon use of non-lethal weapons to prevent the trans-border smuggling and sensitized them about the current situation. He also briefed the troops about the incident of Jail break in Qasimpur,

Bangladesh and exhorted the troops to maintain high vigil to prevent any infiltration attempt", said the BSF personnel.

The IG further had a meeting with District Magistrate and Superintendent of Police of Unakoti at DM office in which he was briefed about the current situation in Bangladesh and various security measures being jointly undertaken by the civil administration with BSF.

"The IG BSF further halted for night at one of the Border Out Posts and reviewed the night domination also. The IG and other senior officers of BSF Tripura are actively monitoring the current border situation and the troops are in a state of high alert", said the BSF personnel.

Nagaland initiates measures to prevent impact from Bangladesh

KOHIMA, Aug 10: The Government of Nagaland has started taking up measures to address any impact in Nagaland from the situation of Bangladesh.

In this regard, Nagaland home commissioner, Vyasan R and Commissioner KS Anden Konyak held a press conference at the Commissioner's Office in Kohima recently after holding a video conference with deputy commissioners across the state this afternoon. The meeting was convened to address the likely impact of the ongoing political instability in Bangladesh on Nagaland, particularly concerning the issue of illegal immigration.

During the press conference, Vyasan R emphasized the importance of preparedness in the face of likelihood of cross-border issues. "We must not be caught off guard by the situation in Bangladesh," he stated. The Home Commissioner also said

that district administrations have already implemented measures to address these concerns. The District Security Coordination Committees have been activated, ensuring that each district is on high alert, he added.

The discussions also focused on tightening the Inner Line Permit (ILP) checks, activating village councils to monitor and report any unusual movements, and reinforcing communication channels. The Home Commissioner highlighted the decision to establish cross-border coordination with Assam counterparts, enabling early warnings.

Some districts have already initiated surprise checks, and vulnerable points along the border are being thoroughly monitored. "The district administrations are our first responders, our antennas and communication channels are being activated," Vyasan R added. (NNN)

OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT HEALTH SOCIETY, KARBI ANGLONG NATIONAL HEALTH MISSION

Karbi Anglong, Diphu. Tele- 03671-273038 Email: nhm.karbianglong@gmail.com

No NHM/K-Ang/ Inviting Quotation/Firm/Party/2019-20/Part-1/227

Dated: 08/08/2024

SHORT NOTICE INVITING QUOTATION

Sealed quotation affixing court fee of Rs.8.25 (Rupees Eight and Twenty-five paise) only or Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council cash receipt of Rs. 10.00 (Rupees Ten) only are invited for supply of non-perishable food for pregnant women under JSSK Diet (SAMAHAR) for various Hospitals in the District. The quotation will be received in the office of the undersigned up to 2.00 PM on 16th August 2024 and if the office is closed on this day due to Govt. Holiday or any other bandh, the next working day of the office will be the date of receiving and opening of quotation.

The undersigned reserve the right to reject any of the quotation.

Particulars/Items to be supply:

Sl No	Items	Description	Unit Rate	Unit (Inclusive GST)	Rate
1	Rice Flakes	500 grm			
2	Butter	30 grm			
3	Jiggery/Sugar	250 grm			
4	Green gram	250 grm			
5	Milk	500ml (Amul Taaza)			
6	Date Palm (Dry food)	250 grm			

Incomplete and late Quotations are liable to be rejected summarily.

Terms and Conditions:

- Each supplier shall submit only ONE quotation.
- The supplier/firm shall have Licensing and Registration of Food Business. (As per food safety & standards regulation Act 2011).
- The firm will submit GST/PAN, Trading license along in the tender form.
- Location of Delivery will be at various Hospital in the District. (details will be inform in the work order)
- The Purchaser will award the contract to the bidder whose quotation has been determined to be substantially responsive and who has offered the lowest evaluated quotation price.
- Notwithstanding the above, the Purchaser reserves the right to accept or reject any quotations and to cancel the bidding process and reject all quotations at any time prior to the award of contract.
- Payment shall be made as per availability of fund and delivery of goods and successful installation at destination as per the contract.
- The Bidder shall indicate the name of the Bank, address and account number Bank's Information. Name of the Bank Account number
- All legal disputes shall be subject to the jurisdiction of the Courts of Law of Karbi Anglong district.

Sd/-

Joint Director of Health Services
Cum Member Secretary

District Health Society, Karbi Anglong

No NHM/K-Ang/ Inviting Quotation/Firm/papt-2/227rty/2019-20/70139-145 Dated: 01/03/2024

'Plasma Technologies for Entrepreneurship' concludes

80 participants including students, faculties and entrepreneurs had participated in the awareness programme

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Aug 10: North East Centre for Technology Application and Reach (NECTAR) conducted a one-day awareness programme recently for students and startups on "Plasma Technologies for Entrepreneurship" in collaboration with AIC - IPR Plasmatech Innovation Foundation, IPR, Gandhinagar (An Atal Incubation Centre of Institute for Plasma Research, DAE, supported by AIM-NITI Aayog and National Institute of Technology (NIT), Meghalayain Shillong. A total of 80 participants including Students, Faculties and Entrepreneurs had participated in



the awareness programme.

The program was graced by Prof Pinakeswar Mahanta, director of NIT Meghalaya;

Arun Kumar Sarma, director general of NECTAR and Nirav Jamnpara, Head, AIC - IPR Plasmatech Innovation

along with other officials and experts from NECTAR and CPP-IPR, Sonapur. The program enlightened the opportunities and prospects of using Plasma Technology for a successful technology-based enterprise. It covered topics related to Plasma Technology and case studies on how these technologies can be game changer in several areas. It also introduced the participants with the role of Intellectual Property and how Patenting could help them safeguard innovations. The access to Plasma Technology and applications in the North Eastern region was also elaborately discussed.

His ideological kin have long disowned: Cong to PM

Congress takes a swipe at PM's 'Har Ghar Tiranga' campaign

NEW DELHI, Aug 10: The Congress on Saturday took a swipe at Prime Minister Narendra Modi over his appeal to people for the "Har Ghar Tiranga" campaign, alleging that he is attempting to appropriate a national symbol "his ideological kin have long disowned".

Prime Minister Modi on Friday asked people to make the "Har Ghar Tiranga" campaign a memorable mass movement as he replaced his profile picture on X with the national flag and urged everyone to do the same.

Noting Modi's "Har Ghar Tiranga" campaign, Congress general secretary in-charge communications Jairam Ramesh shared on X what he said is a "short history of the RSS's relationship with the Tiranga".

"M S Golwalkar, the second chief of the RSS, in his book Bunch of Thoughts had criticised the Congress' decision to adopt the Tricolour as the national flag, labelling it 'communal' and 'a case of drifting and imitating'," Ramesh said.

"The RSS mouthpiece, Organiser, in 1947 wrote that the Tricolour 'will never be respected and owned by Hindus. The word three is in itself an evil, and a flag hav-



ing three colours will certainly produce a very bad psychological effect and is injurious to a country," he said on X.

Ramesh further said that in 2015, the RSS said that "safran should have been the only colour on the national flag as other colours represented a communal thought".

The RSS did not regularly hoist the Tiranga at its headquarters till 2001, when three youth forcibly hoisted the flag on its premises, a "crime" for which they were booked, he said.

"The non-biological Prime Minister is attempting to appropriate this national symbol, one that his ideological kin have long dis-

owned, because his organization has no history and symbols that India can accept as its own," Ramesh said.

Especially so on a day when India and the Indian National Congress could celebrate the anniversary of the Quit India Movement, in which the RSS refused to participate, he said.

In a post on X on Friday, Modi said, "As this year's Independence Day approaches, let's again make Har Ghar Tiranga a memorable mass movement. I am changing my profile picture and I urge you all to join me in celebrating our Tricolour by doing the same. And yes, do share your selfies on harghartiranga.com." (PTI)

Rahul Gandhi has become synonymous with politics of deception: BJP



NEW DELHI, Aug 10: The BJP on Saturday hit out at Rahul Gandhi, alleging non-fulfillment of his party's poll promises in Karnataka and Himachal Pradesh, and said the Congress leader has become synonymous with politics of deception, lies and deceit.

Addressing a press conference at the party headquarters here, BJP national spokesperson Gaurav Bhatia claimed the Congress government in Karnataka has fulfilled just two out of a total of 59 promises that the party made during the state assembly elections.

"People of Karnataka are feeling cheated. Wherever the Congress is in power, people of the state are feeling cheated. People of Himachal Pradesh are feeling cheated. Rahul Gandhi has become synonymous with politics of deception, propaganda, lies and deceit," he said.

Bhatia also hit out at Gandhi while raising the issue of farmers suicide in Karnataka as he accused the Congress leader of pursuing "politics of pretense" to win votes.

"He has time to meet the farmers delegation in Delhi but there are media reports that as many as 1,200 farmers have committed suicide in Karnataka. Why couldn't Rahul Gandhi spare even a minute to meet them or direct the Karnataka chief minister to take cognizance of these cases," he said.

"It's because Gandhi's priorities are different. That's why it becomes worrisome when he gives the people of Karnataka a chief minister who is himself promoting corruption. We all know about the MUDA scam in which SC and ST community members' land has been allotted to the chief minister's wife," he added. (PTI)

Cong's 'silence' on SC's verdict on SCs, STs creamy layer questioned

LUCKNOW, Aug 10: BSP chief Mayawati on Saturday questioned the "silence of the Congress" on the August 1 judgment of the Supreme Court directing the states to evolve a policy for identifying the creamy layer among the SCs and STs.

She also said the reservation which has been rendered "ineffective", should be made "effective" and for this, a session of Parliament should be convened soon.

Speaking to reporters in Lucknow, the BSP chief said the BJP government and the rest of the parties should clear their stand on this issue.

On August 1, four out of the six Supreme Court judges who agreed that states are empowered to make sub-classifications wrote in their separate judgments that those in the creamy layer must be excluded from enjoying the benefits of reservation.

Justice B R Gavai had said the states must evolve a policy for identifying the creamy layer even among the SCs and STs, and deny them the benefit of reservation.

"Why is the Congress silent till now over the August 1 judgment of the Supreme Court on SC-ST reservation. Why is the Congress not making its stand clear in the states, where it has its government? In other words, why is this party (Congress) sitting silent even there? Or should this be said that the Congress party accepts this decision, and implements this?" Mayawati said.

She also asked the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), which has governments in Delhi and Punjab, to clear its stand on the issue.

Urging the people of the SC and ST communities to be cautious about the hidden agenda of these parties, Mayawati said, "Those (parties), which in the name of saving the Constitution and reservation, garnered the votes of these communities in the 18th Lok Sabha elections, and gained most of the seats, and damaged the only party (BSP), which is their (SCs and STs) well wisher.

"I request all the parties to clear



their stand about the decision in front of crores of SCs and STs of the country, so that the correct situation emerges before these sections," she said.

Apparently hitting out at Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, who used to show a copy of the Constitution during his election rallies, Mayawati said, "They used to speak big during the elections about saving the Constitution and reservation. Now, they are not showing the Constitution to anyone. Now the Congress party and company are not talking about reservation."

Attacking the BJP, she said, "An assurance has come from the BJP. An assurance has come from the prime minister. Assurance will not work. They should take a stand on the losses that the SC-ST people will have to face because of this decision.

"Yesterday, they adjourned the Parliament session sine die. It would have been better if the session had continued, and after five-six days present an amendment Bill in Parliament in this matter after full preparation, but it was not brought."

"I would like to tell the prime minister that if your intention is clear about these sections, then you had convened the House on other issues before time. You can convene the House anytime, prepare for it. Make the August 1 decision of the Supreme Court null and void. Call the House, and it will be known in the House the stand of all the parties," she said. (PTI)

'Caught napping at the wheels': Cong slams govt

NEW DELHI, Aug 10: The Congress on Saturday hit out at the Centre over the issue of trade deficit with China and said that while other countries around the world had taken measures to restrict uncontrolled Chinese imports, "our government has been caught napping at the wheels".

Congress general secretary in-charge communications Jairam Ramesh said the data revealed by the government in the Rajya Sabha shows that India's trade deficit with China has surged by about 16% over the last two years from USD 73,306.2 million in FY22 to USD 85,079.03 million in FY24.

"Governments across the world are taking note of China's industrial overcapacity and its dumping of goods overseas. However, unlike most governments that have taken proactive measures to restrict uncontrolled Chinese imports, our government has been caught napping at the wheels," Ramesh said in a post on X. (PTI)

OFFICIAL MEET



Governor of Jharkhand Santosh Kumar Gangwar calling on the Union minister for defence, Rajnath Singh, in New Delhi on Saturday.

Sisodia calls upon people to fight against 'dictatorship' in country



NEW DELHI, Aug 10: AAP leader Manish Sisodia on Saturday called upon party workers and people to fight against "tyranny" in the country and said if all opposition parties stand united against "dictatorship", Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal will come out of prison within 24 hours.

Addressing AAP workers at the party headquarters here a day after his release from Tihar jail on bail, he said party workers need to start working hard immediately to ensure the BJP loses the Assembly polls in Haryana, Delhi and elsewhere.

The former Delhi deputy chief minister urged the new allies of the BJP-led NDA as well as the opposition INDIA bloc parties to unite against "dictatorship", not just to save their leaders from being imprisoned but most importantly in the interest of the country.

The Aam Aadmi Party is part of the INDIA bloc. In the recently concluded Lok Sabha polls, the AAP and another INDIA bloc constituent Congress fought the elections together.

"If the whole opposition gives a call (against dictatorship) with full force, Arvind Kejriwal will come out of jail within 24 hours," Sisodia said. The Delhi chief minister is in Tihar Jail in connection with an excise policy scam case.

He is the "symbol of honesty" in the country, Sisodia said and termed the entire case against the chief minister a "web of conspiracies" spun by the ED and CBI to "tarnish" his image.

The former deputy chief minister claimed that while in jail, he was pained to see hundreds of businessmen being put in prison in "fake cases just because they did not donate money

to the BJP".

Sisodia, a trusted lieutenant of AAP supremo Kejriwal, walked out of jail on Friday after spending 17 months behind bars in connection with the excise policy case.

On Saturday, he posted a picture of him having tea with his wife and wrote, "First tea of an independent morning... after 17 months".

The AAP leader visited the Hanuman Temple in Connaught Place here along with AAP leaders, including MP Sanjay Singh and Delhi ministers Atishi and Saurabh Bharadwaj, and offered prayers there.

Scores of party workers gathered on the temple premises to greet him and raised slogans. Later, Sisodia paid tributes to Mahatma Gandhi at Rajghat.

Addressing party workers at the AAP headquarters, he said the BJP leaders are not more powerful than the Constitution. Every person has to fight this "dictatorship" that is putting leaders in jail and also harassing citizens, Sisodia said.

Asserting that he could come out of jail with the blessings of Lord Hanuman and because of the Constitution, Sisodia expressed hope that Kejriwal too will be out of prison soon.

"Our charioteer is still in jail. He has immense blessings of Lord Hanuman and he will be out very soon," Sisodia said and described the AAP as a chariot while he and other party leaders were horses.

Terming Kejriwal a "nemesis of corruption", Sisodia raised the slogan "Bhrashtachar Ka Ek Hi Kaal, Kejriwal".

In an apparent reference to wrestler Vinesh Phogat, he said, "Our daughter from a village raised the banner of India in the world of sports. When she said that a leader of your party (BJP) harassed us, he (accused) was not even arrested."

"We saw what happened to that daughter under the extreme form of this tyranny. Everybody knows what was done and who did it. If she sheds tears, something is certainly amiss," Sisodia charged.

Phogat was disqualified from the Paris

Olympics before her gold medal bout for being found 100 grams overweight. She was at the forefront of a lengthy protest last year, alleging government inaction against former Wrestling Federation of India head Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh, who was accused of sexually harassing women wrestlers.

About his bail, Sisodia said the Supreme Court used the power of the Constitution to "trample dictatorship". He appreciated the team of lawyers, including senior advocate Abhishek Manu Singhvi, who is also a Congress leader, for their hard work in securing his release from jail.

The senior AAP leader said that he hoped to get justice in seven to eight months, but it took 17 months. But in the end, truth triumphed, Sisodia said.

"This proved that there can delay but not darkness in God's house," he said and added that while in jail he derived strength from the pain and tears of his party workers and supporters.

Sisodia said that in jail he read around 300 books, including the Bhagavad Gita and those on the education systems around the world.

"I got my answers from those and realised that India can become a developed country by 2047 if we ensure good quality government schools, healthcare and employment. If any leader says otherwise then he is just resorting to gimmicks and he can not be a visionary," he stressed.

The senior AAP leader lauded the AAP leaders and volunteers for remaining united and accused the BJP of resorting to "threats" and imprisonment to intimidate opposition leaders.

"We are unbreakable because we are formed of the soil on which Bhagat Singh's sweat fell, Mahatma Gandhi was shot," he said and appealed to party volunteers to fight against "dictatorship".

AAP's Rajya Sabha MP Sanjay Singh, ministers Gopal Rai, Atishi, Saurabh Bharadwaj and other leaders along with scores of party workers were present during Sisodia's visit to the party headquarters after getting out of jail. (PTI)

Women's welfare, development and poverty alleviation NCP's agenda, says Ajit Pawar

SHIRDI, Aug 10: Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar on Saturday said women's welfare, development and poverty alleviation were the planks of his Nationalist Congress Party and asserted he was getting good response from people.

Talking to reporters after offering prayers at the revered Sai Baba temple here on the third day of his party's 'Jan Sanman Yatra', he sidestepped questions on ally BJP's 'bhakti aatma' and 'ringleader of corruption' comments on opposition stalwart Sharad Pawar and said his aim was to highlight welfare schemes announced in the budget tabled by him in the assembly last month.

"Women's welfare, development and poverty alleviation are the major planks of the NCP. I am getting good response from people," he said.

Asked about the BJP's attack on NCP founder and current NCP (SP) chief Sharad Pawar and whether these could backfire on the ruling alliance in the state, the deputy CM said there was no need to rake up the past, adding "we will discuss when we sit and talk internally".

"These need not be spoken in public. As far as I am concerned, I am moving ahead with the agenda of development," said Pawar, who joined the ruling alliance comprising the Eknath Shinde-led Shiv Sena and the BJP in July last year.

The "bhakti aatma" comment was made by Prime Minister Narendra Modi during the Lok Sabha poll campaign, while Union Minister Amit Shah had called Sharad Pawar the "ringleader of corruption" during a BJP conclave in Pune. The NCP chief also rubbished claims from some quarters that he went to Delhi in disguise to meet Shah and other BJP leaders in the run up to his decision to split the Sharad Pawar-founded party and ally with the Shinde-BJP dispensation. (PTI)

Gujarat celebrates World Lion Day

World Lion Day is a true celebration of compassion towards animals

GIR SOMNATH, Aug 10: Gujarat marked World Lion Day on Saturday with programmes to spread awareness about the conservation and protection of the big cats.

The state forest department marked the day by spreading awareness through SMSes and emails to citizens, and school students participated in rallies, drawing competitions, etc., in 11 districts with a lion population.

Chief minister Bhupendra Patel addressed a gathering at Sasan Gir in Gir Somnath district, an abode of the Asiatic lions.

"Along with development, we should conserve nature. It is our collective responsibility to conserve our heritage," he said.

The true celebration of World Lion Day is the celebration of efforts to make Gujarat's pride (Asiatic lions) thrive, he said.

"We gather once a year for such an event, but the forest department keeps working for the protection and conservation of lions, and the government is offering all technical help. We say, 'Live and let live.' We should make efforts to let animals live and thrive," he said.



The chief minister said global warming was a result of reduced green cover.

"We should take care of trees. In the context of global warming and rising intensity of rains and summer heat...The only solu-

tion is to conserve nature and plant more trees," he said.

He also expressed his commitment to the development of Gujarat while preserving its heritage to realise Prime Minister Narendra

Cong's swipe at PM: Hopefully he'll find time to also visit Manipur

NEW DELHI, Aug 10: The Congress on Saturday said it is good that Prime Minister Narendra Modi is in Wayanad and hoped that he would "find the time and the inclination" to also visit Manipur "which has been experiencing pain" for more than 15 months now. The opposition party's remarks come on a day Modi is in Kerala's landslides-hit Wayanad.

"It is good that the non-biological PM is in Wayanad today. It was a devastating tragedy," Congress general secretary in-charge communications Jairam Ramesh said in a post in Hindi on X. "After this, he (Modi) is scheduled to visit Ukraine to stop the war once again. Hopefully he will find the time and the inclination before then to also visit Manipur which has been experiencing so much pain, anguish, and agony for over 15 months now," Ramesh said. (PTI)

Modi's vision of a developed India by 2047. World Lion Day is a true celebration of compassion towards animals, he said.

"Herdsman in Gir and forest dwellers have saved and protected the pride of Gujarat over the years, due to which the population of the big cats has increased," Patel said.

State Forest and Environment Minister Mulubhai Bera said the forest department marked the occasion by sending out text messages to 75 lakh people and emails to three lakh people to spread awareness.

Apart from this, school students were spreading awareness about lion conservation through rallies, drawing competitions, etc., in 11 districts that are home to lions, he said.

As per the 2020 census, Gujarat has a population of 674 Asiatic lions.

The chief minister also released the books, "Conservation of Asiatic Lion: Integrated Radio Telemetry for Enhanced Ecological Monitoring", "Population Status of Wild Prey in Gir Protected Area" and "Reintroduction and Satellite Telemetry of Indian Gray Hornbill in Gir" on the occasion. (PTI)

As kid never knew dad was IPS, still don't know what he does: Shaurya about NSA Ajit Doval

NEW DELHI, Aug 10: Shaurya Doval, the son of National Security Advisor and India's most distinguished spymaster Ajit Doval, said that as a kid he never knew that his father was an IPS and was of the knowledge that he was in the foreign service.

During an interaction with PTI editors, Shaurya, a BJP leader and founder of the think-tank India Foundation, said he learnt about his father's covert operations much later in his life.

"As a child, I didn't even know that he was an IPS officer... It was much later when I came back to India," the banker-turned-political thinker said in response to a question.

He humorously added that he once questioned one of his father's colleagues about the lack of news regarding the Intelligence Bureau's (IB) activities compared to Pakistan's ISI.

The response highlighted the secretive nature of IB's work: "Since you do not hear anything about it, we are able to do it".

Ajit Doval, recognised as one of India's most distinguished spymasters, is currently serving his third term as NSA, making him the first person to hold the position for more than one term.

A member of the 1968 IPS batch from the Kerala cadre, Doval is also the first policeman to receive the Kirti Chakra,



India's second-highest peacetime gallantry award.

Doval's career is marked by several intelligence successes, including infiltration operations against the Mizo National Army and significant missions related to Myanmar and China.

His contributions were pivotal during Operation Black Thunder, which followed the controversial Operation Blue Star. He also played a critical role during the Indian Airlines Flight 814 hijacking incident.

Reflecting on his father's secretive career, Shaurya remarked, "I had no idea about this... It's obvious that if a super spy's children knew about his work, then what kind of super spy would he be?"

"To date, I don't know what he

does; there is no culture of discussing work at home. But he asks me everything and perhaps he knows what I do," he chuckled.

Shaurya's candid remarks provided an insight into the life of the Doval family and the complexities of balancing a high-profile career in national security with family life.

US ambassador to India Eric Garcetti last year lauded Doval, calling him an "international treasure".

Highlighting Doval's humble origins as a village boy from Uttarakhnad, the envoy had said, "India's NSA has not only become a national treasure but an international treasure".

Shaurya Doval, who studied at Delhi University's Hindu College

holds a joint MBA Degree from London Business School and University of Chicago. He left his plum investment banking job and went back to India in 2009 to set up the India Foundation.

"It was a good start in a country which did not have a culture of political think tanks. Commercial pursuits were not the only thing that I wanted in life so it was my little way of trying to do something for the country," he said.

Asked about how India Foundation distinguishes itself from other think tanks, Shaurya said, "Firstly, we do not claim ourselves to be neutral. It is obvious that we have a certain viewpoint about India and we go by it. How India should bring it is civilisational wisdom to its policy formation? To that extent, we are different from other think tanks."

Responding to a question about India Foundation's relationship with the government and the think tank's funding model, Shaurya said, "Our relationship is not so much with the government and more with the party (BJP) and that also is an informal relationship."

"Our funding is like that of any think tank, sometimes we get it from private organisations, sometimes from government to host functions etc and we write research reports... so a bunch of things contribute to our funding," Shaurya added. (PTI)

CJI Chandrachud emphasizes on strengthening infra in courts to deal with pendency in cases



CHANDIGARH, Aug 10: Chief Justice of India D Y Chandrachud on Saturday emphasised on strengthening infrastructure in the courts to deal with pendency in cases even as he said different mediums like the Lok Adalats were being adopted to reduce the number of court cases.

He said modern technology like Artificial Intelligence was being used to translate the court verdicts in regional languages for the convenience of people.

The Chief Justice of India (CJI) was speaking to reporters on the sideline of the 37th convocation of the Postgraduate Institute of Medical Education and Research (PGIMER) here.

Replying to a question on pendency of cases, CJI Chandrachud said like in hospitals, people have faith in the courts which is also one of the reasons for the increase in number of cases.

"If you see in a hospital, the number of patients go up and similarly in courts, the number (of cases) rises. What is the reason behind it? People have 'aastha' (faith) in hospitals that is why the number of patients increases. People have 'aastha' and trust in courts and that is why number increases," the CJI said.

"For this, we have to increase infrastructure. Like

infrastructure in the hospitals has to be increased and similarly, infrastructure in the courts has to be increased," he added.

And we also have to adopt new mediums, the CJI stressed as he said that a special Lok Adalat was held last week in which around 1,000 cases were decided in five days.

CJI Chandrachud said as many as 21 benches of the Supreme Court worked and heard around 4,000 cases during the summer vacation this year.

Out of 4,000 cases, 1,170 cases were disposed of, he said.

"Through different mediums we can reduce the number of cases," the CJI said.

Commenting on another issue, the CJI said it has been observed that the language used in courts is English.

To make common people easily understand about their cases, he said with the help of Artificial Intelligence, the court verdicts are being translated in regional languages.

"From 1950 till 2024, there are around 37,000 SC verdicts and out of which, 22,000 judgements have been translated into Punjabi. More than 36,000 verdicts have been translated into Hindi. We are translating verdicts in all languages," he said.

The CJI further said live streaming of hearings in the Supreme Court is being undertaken.

"Through technology we have taken many initiatives," he said.

Replying to a question on shortage of judges, CJI Chandrachud said there are many reasons behind it.

There are many states like the Allahabad High court where the strength of judges is 160 and it is not easy to create infrastructure for 160 judges, he said.

He said there is no vacancy in the Supreme Court and 34 judges were working during his tenure.

The CJI, however, laid emphasis on filling vacancies in the district judiciary.

CJI Chandrachud said it is important for the high courts and the state governments to fill those vacancies in the district judiciary, he stressed. (PTI)

HC asks Delhi govt, NIA to reply to plea against circular stopping prisoner's telephone facilities



NEW DELHI, Aug 10: The Delhi High Court has sought the Delhi government and the NIA's response on a plea by a terror funding case accused seeking quashing of a circular not allowing e-mulakat and telephone facilities to prisoners without a no-objection certificate from an investigating agency.

The audio-cum-video e-mulakat is an extension of the inmate phone call facility.

The circular, which was issued by prison authorities in April this year, deals with prisoners covered under Rule 631 of the Delhi Prison Rules, 2018. Those covered by the Rule include people charged in offences against the State, for terrorist activities and heinous crimes, and under laws such as the Maharashtra Control of Organized Crime Act, the National Security Act and the Public Safety Act.

Justice Sanjeev Narula issued notice to the Delhi government and the National Investigation Agency (NIA) on the petition filed by Masasong AO seeking to set aside the circular and direct the authorities to restore or allow the facility of e-mulakat and telephone facilities to him.

Advocate M S Khan, representing Masasong, submitted that the petitioner, arrested in February 2020 and lodged in Tihar jail, was granted permission to make phone calls to his minor sons and daughter for five minutes every day from the prison.

He said the petitioner has aged parents who are at the fag-end of their lives and are struggling to cope with their age-related ailments. He is deeply concerned about the welfare of his parents and children,

and communication facilities were the only solace available to him, Khan said.

"Discontinuation of the communication facilities provided to the petitioner is in sheer contravention of not only the provisions of Delhi Prison Rules, 2018 but also the impugned circulars, moreover, no reason given on the part of the respondents to withdraw/stop the facilities which is otherwise available to the petitioner and introduced with the pious objective of allowing the inmates to communicate with their near and dear ones," the plea said.

It said the circular infringes the fundamental right to life and personal liberty guaranteed under Article 21 of the Constitution as the right of an under trial to communicate with his family and counsel is an essential component of fundamental rights. The plea said the circular and the consequent action on the part of the authorities discriminate against inmates without any reasonable classification or justification.

According to jail rules, prisoners covered under Rule 631 are not eligible for communication facility in the interest of public safety and order.

However, the jail superintendent will be empowered to take appropriate decisions on an individual case to case basis with the prior approval of Deputy Inspector General (Range), the rules stated.

According to the circular, the inmate phone call facility can be permitted to prisoners covered under Rule 631 of Delhi Prison Rules, 2018, and also for those who are lodged in high security ward, only after obtaining no-objection certificate (NOC) or approval from the concerned prosecuting agencies.

The jail superintendent shall provide the landline/mobile numbers furnished by the inmate to the prosecuting agency for their NOC/approval of such facility from jail, it said.

The circular said e-mulakat facility is an extension of inmate phone call facility which is at a higher pedestal, and therefore, more scrutiny or precaution is required for keeping in view of security threat or any other misuse of such facility by the inmate or by his/her visitor through e-mulakat.

Later an addendum was issued to the circular and it stated that for prisoners who are already availing the facility of e-mulakat/telephone facility on or before April 22, 2024, the facility will remain in force till the NOC from the investigating agencies is obtained. (PTI)

Police release sketches of 4 terrorists in J-K's Kathua, massive search operation underway



JAMMU, Aug 10: A massive search operation was launched in a forest area of Jammu and Kashmir's Kathua district where police on Saturday released sketches of four terrorists spotted in 'dhoks' (mud-houses) and announced a cash reward of ₹ 20 lakh for credible information on them, officials said.

Kathua in Jammu region witnessed a deadly ambush by terrorists on an army patrol in a remote forest belt of Machedi on July 8, resulting in the killing of five soldiers, including a Junior Commissioned Officer (JCO).

Despite a massive search operation, terrorists affiliated with Kashmir Tigers, a shadow group of

Pakistan-based Jaish-e-Mohammad outfit, who have recently infiltrated into the country, remain untraced.

In a post on X, J-K Police released sketches of four terrorists who were last seen in 'dhoks' of Malhar, Bani and Seojdhar forests in the upper reaches of the district.

"...a reward of ₹ 5 lakhs (has been announced) on each terrorist for actionable information. Anyone with credible information on terrorists will also be suitably rewarded," Kathua police said in its post.

Officials said police assisted by Army and CRPF have already launched a massive search opera-

tion in the area to hunt down the terrorists.

An army helicopter was also seen hovering over the area to air-drop paratroopers, while drones and other latest equipment have been employed to assist the forces in the combing operation, they said, adding there was no contact with the terrorists so far.

District police urged the general public to provide information regarding the whereabouts of the terrorists.

"The identity of the informer will be kept secret so that more and more people come forward to assist the police, as the public's help is crucial in preventing potential threats to national security," a police spokesperson said.

Let's work together for a safer community, he said.

The ambush in Kathua was followed by another attack by a separate group of terrorists in Desa forest in Doda district on July 15, resulting in the killing of four army personnel including a captain.

Police in Doda district had also released the sketches and cash reward of ₹ 5 lakh each on four terrorists involved in the attack as efforts are continuing to hunt them down. (PTI)

Agniveer scheme golden opportunity for youths: Navy chief

BHUBANESWAR, Aug 10: The Agniveer scheme is a golden opportunity for the youths to serve the nation, the Chief of Naval Staff (CNS) Admiral Dinesh Kumar Tripathi has said.

A total of 1,389 Agniveers, including 214 women, joined the service on Friday following 16 weeks of training, he said.

"It is a golden opportunity for the Indian youths to join Agniveer. This provides at least four years to

serve the nation by joining the service in the Indian Navy, Army and Air Force," he said.

Tripathi, who was present at INS Chilika in Odisha's Khurda district for the night passing out parade of Agniveers, on Friday said: "It is a matter of pride for all to join the Agniveer. Four years later, if you decide not to continue, you can go outside and one can opt for several other options available in the society. (PTI)

NIDM explores GIS, AI for disaster risk assessment, crop insurance

NEW DELHI, Aug 10: The National Institute of Disaster Management (NIDM) is exploring the use of GIS, artificial intelligence (AI), and machine learning for improving disaster risk assessment and crop insurance, a government statement said Saturday.

The institute, operating under the Ministry of Home Affairs, on Friday celebrated the inaugural National Space Day with a workshop focused on 'Space Technology in Disaster Management' where presentations were given on the use of geographic information system (GIS) and AI in handling of disasters, it said.

The event which was attended by Vivek Shrivastava, Director General of Fire Services, Civil Defence and Home Guards, and Rajendra Ratnoo, Executive Director of NIDM, had panel discussions on the critical role of government-private sector collaboration in advancing technological innovations for disaster resilience, it added.

K H V Durga Rao, Group Director of the Department of Space (NRSC), Chandrashekhar S, Deputy Director of LBSNAA, and Surya Parkash, Head of the GMR and CRBN Division at NIDM also participated in the national workshop, which drew over 300 attendees.

Addressing the gathering, Shrivastava underscored the importance of risk reduction, citing the zero casualties achieved during Cyclone Biparjy as a model of success, it said.

Ratnoo highlighted the value of learning from past disasters and conducting thorough post-disaster evaluations to enhance future preparedness.

"The workshop featured technical sessions on the use of GIS, artificial intelligence (AI), and machine learning in disaster risk assessment and crop insurance," the release stated.

A discussion chaired by Saffi Ahsan Rizvi, Advisor at NDMA, focused on improving data collection and integrating AI/ML tools for more accurate crop yield predictions and insurance assessments.

In the valedictory session, Lieutenant General Syed Ata Hasnain, an NDMA member, emphasised the disciplined application of space technology in disaster management. (PTI)

Massive waste management operation underway in landslides-hit region in Wayanad

WAYANAD (KERALA), Aug 10: After the devastating landslides that hit the hilly Wayanad district of Kerala on July 30, an unprecedented waste management operation is underway setting a model for the country with the process being seamlessly integrated into the ongoing rescue operations.

The Sutchitwa Mission, Clean Kerala Company and dedicated workers including thousands of Haritha Karma Sena members and others under the state Local Self-Government Department (LSGD) have so far removed 81.64 tonnes of solid waste and 106.35 kilolitres of toilet waste.

State LSGD Minister M B Rajesh said around 2,850 people including Haritha Karma Sena workers, officials and volunteers have participated in the clean-up so far.

Rajesh said the government has effectively intervened in the waste management and resolved the garbage issues in the landslide area and the relief camps.

"Effective garbage collection and disposal in landslide-hit areas and relief camps has helped Kerala



set a new precedent in waste management in disaster zones," Rajesh said.

The Minister said the solid waste consists of 10.6 tonnes of biodegradable waste, 49.47 tonnes of non-biodegradable waste which include plastics, 0.3 tonnes of sanitary waste, 2.64 tonnes of biomedical waste, and 18.63 tonnes of textile waste.

The LSGD has been engaged in scientific disposal of biodegradable and non-biodegradable waste, toilet waste, management of sanitary and bio-medical waste by effectively complying with the Green protocols, Rajesh said.

He also said cleaning drives are organised in the disaster-hit area and relief camps in which 150 volunteers participate.

The LSGD has been using windrow compost units of the Kalpetta Municipality to process the organic waste from relief camps. It has also been handing over the waste to three licensed swine farmers.

Two vehicles are being used for collecting biodegradable waste and around 50 Haritha Karma Sena volunteers are handling the same everyday.

Rajesh said in order to process the solid biodegradable waste, a

100kg-capacity compost tank was constructed near the camps.

The minister said 46 bio-toilets were installed in the disaster-hit regions of Mundakkai and Chooralmala for rescue workers.

"Till now, 106.35 kilolitres of toilet waste was scientifically processed using Faecal Sludge Treatment Plant (FSTP) of the Kalpetta Municipality and two septage treatment units," Rajesh said. The bio-toilets are cleaned by the volunteers every two hours, he added.

Meanwhile, the sanitary waste including napkins and diapers are being collected in chlorine-free yellow covers.

He further said that community incinerators and double chamber incinerators have been installed in the relief camps for scientific disposal of sanitary waste.

Around 2.64 tonnes of bio-medical waste and 18.63 tonnes of textile waste were also scientifically disposed of by the LSGD, he said.

As many as 226 people have lost their lives and over 130 remain missing in one of the worst calamities to have struck Kerala in the early hours of July 30. (PTI)

UP cop demands 5 kg potatoes as 'bribe'



KANNAU (UP), Aug 10: A sub-inspector has been suspended here after an audio of him demanding potatoes to allegedly settle a case went viral on social media, a senior police officer said on Saturday.

Additional Superintendent of Police Ajay Kumar said it appeared from the audio that Sub-inspector Ramkripal, in-charge of Chapanna outpost of Saurikh police station here, was allegedly trying to take bribe, regarding which a report was sent by the Circle Officer of Chhibramau.

Taking cognisance in the matter, Kannau Superintendent of Police Amit Kumar Anand has suspended the outpost in-charge Ramkripal with immediate effect, the ASP said.

In the audio, a person was heard saying that he can give only two kilograms of potatoes for the case settlement, while Ramkripal expressed displeasure saying a deal of five kilograms of potatoes was fixed earlier, the officer said.

The man was then heard saying he would not be able to meet the SI's demand due to poor income from his business. He reiterated that he would give only two kilograms of potatoes, whereas Ramkripal insisted that he gave him the remaining 3 kg later.

The preliminary investigation for departmental action has been given to the Circle Officer (City) Kamlesh Kumar. (PTI)

ENGINEERING, PROCUREMENT AND CONSTRUCTION CONTRACT AGREEMENT FOR DOUBLING OF TRACK

Tender Notice No.: CON/2024/AUG/03
 Dated: 05-08-2024. E-Tender are invited by the undersigned for the following work: **Tender No. : CE/CON/LTD/EPC/2024/09. Name of work : Engineering, Procurement and Construction (EPC) contract Agreement for Doubling of Track between Dhansiri (including) (km 241.000) to Naojan stations (Excluding) (km 285.860) (excluding) Dimapur Yard from km 259.062 to km 260.782=1.72 Km (Total Length - 43.140 kms) including Electrification & Signalling works in connection with Lumding -Tinsukia Jn - Dibrugarh doubling project of Northeast Frontier Railway in the state of Assam on EPC mode. Approx. Value: ₹540.94.85.735/- Date & time of closing of tender at 14:30 hrs. on 18-09-2024 and opening at 11:30 hrs. on 25-09-2024. For details of tender and corrigendum No. 1, please visit in website www.irreps.gov.in.**

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CAN'T ACT IN ALL FILMS, WANT TO GIVE A PLATFORM TO NEW TALENTS: AAMIR KHAN

NEW DELHI, Aug 10: Superstar Aamir Khan says his decision to produce "Laapataa Ladies" was driven by the realisation that he can't act in every exciting story and now he wants to create opportunities for emerging talent.

The Kiran Rao-directed film was screened at the Supreme Court on Friday evening for judges, their families and officials. Both Khan and Rao were welcomed by Chief Justice D Y Chandrachud.

Speaking at a session post the screening, Khan said during the COVID-19 pandemic, he had ample time for contemplation about his career.

"I was 56 at the time and I thought I might have 15 more years of active work left. I'll work till the age of 70, who knows what will happen after that?" the actor said.

Khan added that "Laapataa Ladies" is the first project which he has backed with the idea of providing an opportunity to newer talent.

"When I was thinking about this, I thought, as an actor, I've had one film release in three years. So, whatever I've learned in the past so many years, I wanted to give back to the people because the industry, society, and country have given me so much. I

thought that I could do one film a year as an actor, but as a producer, I can produce many more films.

"I want to bring out stories that touch my heart. I won't be able to act in all films but I can produce them. I want to give a platform to new talents. I want to be a platform for new writers, directors, artists, and others. So, 'Laapataa Ladies' is the first project in that sense. I want to promote this kind of talent," the actor said, adding, he intends to back four to five films a year," he said.

Released in March to glowing reviews, "Laapataa Ladies" is a heart-warming and empowering take on two brides in rural India who accidentally get swapped during a train journey.

Starring Nitanshi Goel, Pratibha Ranta, Sparsh Srivastav, and Ravi Kishan, the film is produced by Jio Studios, Rao's Kindling Productions and Khan's Aamir Khan Productions.

Rao said Khan has been working with new and first-time directors since the beginning of his acting career.

To this, the superstar said, "My films as an actor release once in three years, I'm trying to do this more often (releasing more films)." (PTI)

Uorfi Javed's Prime Video series 'Follow Kar Lo Yaar' to come out on Aug 23

MUMBAI, Aug 10: Streaming service Prime Video on Saturday announced that its upcoming reality series "Follow Kar Lo Yaar", featuring social media influencer Uorfi Javed, will premiere on August 23. The nine-episode series is produced by Sol Productions' Fazila Allana and Kamna Menezes and directed by Sandeep Kukreja.

The series has been described as "an unfiltered and immersive viewpoint into the vibrant and captivating life of Javed, India's biggest viral sensation", according to a press release. "Follow Kar Lo Yaar" will immerse the audience in the enigmatic world of Uorfi, constantly pursued by the limelight, while also providing an unfiltered glimpse into all the drama behind

the scenes. "Beyond the glitz and glamour, beyond the filters on the gram, beyond the bizarre social posts and stories, the unscripted series bares the raw, unvarnished truth about her life outside of social media, her arduous journey, overcoming countless hurdles, her rise to fame, her relentless pursuit of fame and fortune, and the intricate dynamics of her dysfunctional family life," read the official description. Nikhil Madhok, Head of Originals, Prime Video, India, said "Follow Kar Lo Yaar" is a compelling and captivating reality-follower series that will definitely appeal to a global audience.

"Stories of resilience and ambition will always find resonance with the audience, and Uorfi's jour-

ney from an ordinary girl in Lucknow to one of the most recognisable faces of the country is nothing short of inspiring. "Her story is defined by her unwavering determination and passion to carve her unique path in the world of fashion and entertainment as she ascends from her humble beginnings to becoming a social media sensation and a serious entrepreneur," he added. (PTI)



Todd Haynes' new movie no longer in development after Joaquin Phoenix's exit



LOS ANGELES, Aug 10: Oscar winner Joaquin Phoenix's sudden departure from filmmaker Todd Haynes' upcoming film has led to the project's cancellation.

According to American news outlet Variety, Phoenix dropped out of the gay drama film, about two men in love and fleeing to Mexico, just five days before filming was set to begin in

Guadalajara.

A source close to the production told the outlet that the "Joker" actor got "cold feet" over the project, for which he had developed the screenplay with Haynes and Jon Raymond.

Phoenix was scheduled to co-star with "Top Gun: Maverick" actor Danny Ramirez in the 1930s-set love story featuring "explicit sexual content." The film was intended to receive an NC-17 rating due to its graphic sex scenes.

The role will not be recast for the movie. During the press tour for his 2023 Netflix film "May December", director Todd Haynes told IndieWire that Phoenix was the driving force behind the project. "The whole experience was prompted by Joaquin. It was prompted by his daring, his desire to push through barriers and to really get into the uncomfortable places about this relationship. And yet it felt like a very organic process," the filmmaker had said. Phoenix, 49, will next feature in "Joker: Folie à Deux", the sequel to his 2019 movie "Joker", which had earned him a maiden Oscar trophy for best actor. Also starring Lady Gaga, the movie is directed by Todd Phillips and will be released worldwide in October this year. (PTI)

Noted Marathi actor Vijay Kadam passes away

MUMBAI, Aug 10: Veteran Marathi theater and film actor Vijay Kadam died here on Saturday, family sources said. Kadam (66) was battling cancer for the last one and a half years. He started his career as a child actor in theater and earned fame in comedy roles in the 1980s.

Kadam, who considered yesteryear actors Sharad Talwalkar and Raja Gosavi as his idols, went on to do diverse roles on stage as well as in television serials and films in the next two decades. "Rathchakra", "Vichecha Majhi Puri Kara", "Tur Tur", "Sahi Re Sahi" were some of the hit plays where he made his mark. He also featured in Marathi films including "Irsal Karti", "Vasudev Balwant Phadke" and "Halad Rusli Kunku Hasla". Kadam was also seen in a few Bollywood films such as "Ghar Ek Mandir" and "Aflatoon". Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde, in a message on X, offered a tribute to Kadam for his natural style of acting, comic timing and the ability for extempore repartee while performing on stage. "Marathi theater has suffered a great loss due to the death of this versatile actor who enriched Maharashtra's entertainment world," Shinde said. (PTI)



I don't take load of fame as it impinges my performance, says Kay Kay Menon

MUMBAI, Aug 10: Seasoned actor Kay Kay Menon doesn't let fame or external pressures affect his performance as he says that it can hinder an artiste's ability to deliver a genuine performance.

Script is the 'summum bonum', the Latin phrase which means the ultimate goal, for Menon, who is coming out with his series "Shekhar Homes", inspired by the literary works of British writer Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, best known for creating the detective character of Sherlock Holmes.

"As an actor, I don't take the load of fame or of anybody for that matter because that impinges on your performance. For me, the truth lies in what is there as a text in front of me. That is my 'summum bonum' as far as acting is concerned.

"And of course, the director's

inputs and writer's inputs. That's my world and I don't really go beyond that," Menon told PTI in an interview.

The actor, known for delivering memorable performances in films such as "Hazaaron Khwaishein Aisi", "Black Friday", "Sarkar", "Life in a... Metro", "Honeymoon Travels Pvt Ltd", "Shaurya", "Gulaal" and "Haider", stressed that going beyond the script and the director's vision introduces unnecessary pressure.

"I don't really care as to where it's taken from or what inspiration, unless it's specific that something needs to be added on because of that, then it's a different issue. Otherwise, the script does it for me. That makes my life easier as an actor and I have all the facilities of just being there and performing," Menon added.

In "Shekhar Home", Menon essays the titular detective character who is both eccentric and brilliant.

Fate makes him cross paths with a middle-aged bachelor, named Jayvrat Sahni (Ranvir Shorey), who goes on to become an unexpected ally, and together, they embark on a journey of solving mysteries.

The show marks yet another OTT outing for the actor after he previously appeared in series such as "Special Ops", "The Railway Man" and "Farzi".

He believes the digital space has provided scope for many actors to display their skills.

"OTT definitely has provided a scope for actors to kind of display their skills. All that stuff has helped. There are so many actors who have come in suddenly because of OTT, and they become

stars. That's one thing. Secondly, most of it is in the format of a series. You have the additional benefit of juicing out the screenplay. It's a different medium altogether in terms of a craft," Menon said.

However, the actor also believes that small-budget movies still find it difficult to access the OTT space.

"It has not really helped small films because they are still finding it hard to release on OTT. That disparity still exists. But otherwise for actors, it's been quite a boon," he added.

Directed by Srijit Mukherjee and Rohan Sippy, "Shekhar Home" also features Rasika Dugal and Kirti Kulhari in pivotal roles. Produced by BBC Studios Productions India, the show will release on JioCinema on August 14. (PTI)



A chess club for kids thrives in a Congo refugee camp; It's about more than the game

KANYARUCHINYA (CONGO), Aug 10: Children sit on the dirt, their clothes ragged and torn, their shoes punctured with holes, but their eyes bright and fixed on what's playing out in front of them.

In a corner of a refugee camp in conflict-racked eastern Congo, about a dozen chess games are going, each one with its own fascinated audience.

The Soga Chess Club for children doesn't have enough tables and chairs. The "boards" are squares of paper with green and white blocks marked on them and are lined with plastic to pro-

tect them from the wear and tear coming their way. Irritatingly, the pieces sometimes topple over if players haven't found a flat enough stretch of ground to lay their game out on.

But the chess club founders say it's good enough to try and take these kids' minds away from what they've seen and experienced so far: fighting and killing, hunger and fear. They've all lost their homes. Some have lost fathers, mothers or siblings in one of the world's worst humanitarian crises.

Chess is "a therapeutic escape from the stress and horrors these

children have endured," said Gabriel Nzaji, one of the club's instructors. He said the game encourages the children to be quiet and to focus, a way of calming their minds.

More than 5 million people have been displaced by decades of conflict in eastern Congo, where dozens of armed groups fight each other over land and control of areas rich in sought-after minerals. An increase in fighting in recent months has led to a new surge of refugees, and there's no end in sight for a displacement disaster that dwarfs many others that get more global

attention.

Hundreds of thousands of people forced to escape the attacks that destroy their towns and villages have ended up in vast displacement camps like Kanyaruchinya, where the Soga Chess Club operates. The United Nations Children's Fund says around a quarter million children live in the camps, ripped away from their homes and their schools, and sometimes their families. Soga has around 100 children signed up to its club. One of them is 9-year-old Heritier, who is still learning the game, but confident enough al-

ready to hand out his own lesson. "Here," he said, his fingers flicking across the board. "I'm doing everything to protect my king on the chessboard. I have to sacrifice this queen. You see that?" "I like this game," Heritier said. "It relaxes me."

The trauma suffered by children in eastern Congo is incalculable as aid agencies battle to provide food and shelter to as many of the millions that have been displaced as possible. Some of the children in the chess club have been living in the Kanyaruchinya camp for almost two years, their lives in limbo.

But in Heritier's grin and his newfound delight in a game — a given for so many kids — the club organizers see a sign of hope. "The perspective of these children has changed drastically," said Nzaji. "(They) approach life with a different mindset."

The organizers said they noticed that most of the children would spend their days engaged in rough, war-like games, sometimes involving sticks they'd swing at each other. They hope chess offers them something other than a mimicking of the conflict they've grown up

around. Akili Bashige, president of the Soga Chess Club, said parts of the camp have been transformed into sites of optimism by children playing chess. "Despite their limited resources, their passion persists," he said of his club's recruits.

Soga has also taken the game to orphanages in the region, and Bashige said he wants to start clubs for children who live on the streets in nearby towns.

The club can also be uplifting to parents, who worry for their children and their future — which they see slipping away. (AP)

Sreejesh is a legend of hockey, will inspire next generation of players, say teammates

NEW DELHI, Aug 10: Just-retired India goalkeeper PR Sreejesh is a legend of the game and will inspire the next generation of hockey players in the country, said his teammates on Saturday, after returning from Paris Olympics with a second successive bronze medal.

Eight-time Olympic champions India clinched a bronze medal in Paris, beating Spain 2-1 in the play-off match. The last of India's Olympic hockey golds came in 1980.

"Sreejesh is the best person, a legend, and India calls him the 'Great Wall', amazing, that is all I can say he played his best hockey, and he has contributed to the country by playing hockey, and the standard he has set as a goalkeeper, it will inspire the next generation," forward Lalit Upadhyay said during a felicitation ceremony here.

"I would like to thank the entire country because of the overwhelming support you have given to hockey, like the last time but even more so now, hockey is still in the hearts of people, they continue to love the sport and continue to support."

Lalit was also full of praise for inspirational skipper Harmanpreet Singh, who scored 10 goals to emerge as the highest scorer of the tournament.

"The country has given him (Harmanpreet) a new nickname (Sarpanch). I am glad that the country gave him this nickname,



the ones who love hockey, as a great captain, he has shown his character and to be the top scorer of the Olympics is a big achievement.

"He is a legend, there is much more to do now, and our vision is that we move forward and we can change the colour of the medal and achieve our dream."

Lalit recollected the fighting spirit shown by the side against Great Britain in the quarterfinal

when they were down to 10 men for more than 40 minutes of the match but eventually came out winners.

"I would like to thank the coaching staff and all the players, we played like a cohesive unit and showed the character of the team, we had to give it our all, because in that moment we had no option to back down. That was the match and I cannot say more," he said. Defender Jarmanpreet Singh

wished Sreejesh luck following his retirement from hockey.

"I do not need to say anything about Sreejesh, the entire country praises him and has seen him play, they all call him the 'Wall', he is a legend and a great player. I had a lot of fun playing hockey with him, and I wish Sreejesh continues to do good work for hockey," he said.

He also praised skipper Harmanpreet's effort in the tourna-

ment. "Harmanpreet is a goal machine of the team and we receive a lot of help from him he is the 'Sarpanch'."

Jarmanpreet was happy with his own performance in his maiden Olympics.

"I enjoyed myself at this year's Olympics, this was my first Olympics, and my target was to perform well for my team and the country. (PTI)

Reetika Hooda shows promise in quarterfinal defeat against top seed

PARIS, Aug 10: Indian wrestler Reetika Hooda put up a stout defence against top seed Aiperi Medet Kyzy before losing the women's 76kg quarterfinal bout, which turned into an intense power struggle at the Paris Olympics here on Saturday.

Up against the Asian Games champion and World Championship silver medallist, Reetika managed to restrict her formidable rival to standing wrestling but eventually lost the bout on criteria after it ended 1-1.

If the two wrestlers end with the same score, the one who scores the last point is declared winner.

The 21-year old Reetika had become India's female U23 world champion last year. A little more experience of battling quality senior wrestlers would have helped her get an upset win.

"You can't win bouts by just defence," India coach Virender Dahiya fumed.

"Yes, she fought well but what's the point if your strong defence does not get you win. Reetika did not let her attack but she herself did not attack. You lose by one point, or 10 points, you lose. Reetika could have won this bout," he said.

The Kyrgyzstan wrestler began on an aggressive note with a double leg attack but Reetika, using her immense upper body power, held her ground. Had it not been for a strong defence, Reetika could have been flipped by Aiperi for a takedown.

Reetika got the first point on

Aiperi's passivity in the first period but she was also put on the clock in the second period and lost the lead for lack of attacking move.

The Kyrgyz wrestler got hold of Reetika's right leg but the Indian again did well and wriggled out of her rival's grip. After getting the equaliser, Aiperi just needed to defend and she did that by using all her experience, keeping Reetika in a head-lock position.

Reetika's fate would now depend on Aiperi's result in the next bout. If she reaches the final, Reetika will get the repechage round to get into bronze play-off.

Reetika is the last of the five Indian women in fray. Antim Panghal (50kg), Anshu Malik (57kg) and Nisha Dahiya (68kg) have already exited the competition.

Vinesh Phogat is awaiting a verdict on her appeal against her disqualification from the women's 50kg final for being overweight by 100gm.

Aman Sehrawat won a bronze in men's 57kg weight-class on Friday.

India have so far won six medals, and need Reetika to win one more to match the Tokyo tally of seven.

Earlier, Reetika displayed power and skill in equal measure while outclassing Bernadett Nagy of Hungary to enter the quarter-finals, which she won by technical superiority.

She needed only 29 seconds to gain a decisive 10-point lead over the Hungarian, winning 12-2. (PTI)

Sparring, treadmill run, 5 sessions of Sauna: How Sehrawat lost 4.6 kg in 10 hours

PARIS, Aug 10: To gain something, Aman Sehrawat firstly needed to lose something.

When the scales of the weighing machine showed 61.5 kg on Thursday after his semi-final defeat to eventual champion Rei Higuchi, Aman had a bigger job at hand before taking the mat for the bronze medal play-off.

India's youngest Olympic bronze medal winning grappler had to shed 4.5 kilograms of bodyweight in a stipulated time of 10 hours before mandatory second day weigh-in to qualify for the 57 kg bout.

By the time Aman was up on the weighing machine on second morning, he along with his coaches Jagminder Singh and Virender Dahiya had accomplished the mission -- reduced 4.6 kgs to be eligible for the fight at 56.9 kg.

It was case being exactly 100 gram less than critical limit. If 100 gram became tragedy for Vinesh Phogat, it was a case of relief for Aman.

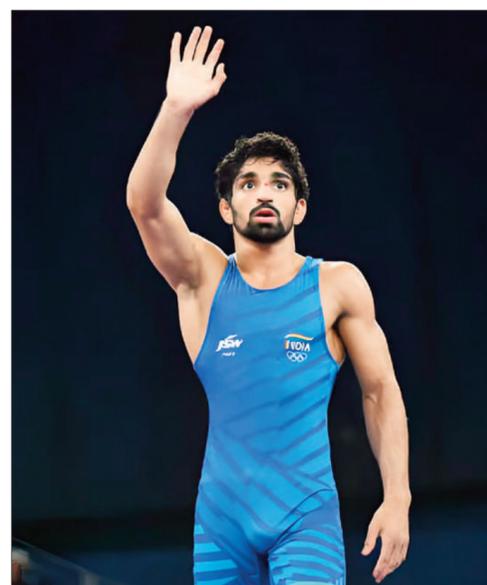
On Thursday, Aman had lost his semifinal bout against Japan's Rei Higuchi around 6:30 pm.

There was no time to waste. The 'mission' began with a one-and-a-half-hour mat session during which the two senior coaches engaged him in standing wrestling and it was followed by a one-hour hot-bath session.

At 12:30 they hit the gym, where Aman had a non-stop one-hour run on the treadmill.

The sweating would help in cutting weight. He was then given a 30-minute break, followed by five sessions of 5-minute sauna bath.

By the end of the last session,



Aman was still weighing 900g more. He was given a massage and then the coaches asked the Chhtrassal trainee to do light jogging.

It was followed by five 15-minute running sessions. By 4:30am, Aman was weighing 56.9kg -- 100g less. The coaches and the wrestler heaved a sigh of relief.

In between these sessions, Aman was given lukewarm water with lemon and honey and a bit of coffee to drink.

Aman would not sleep after that. "I watched videos of

wrestling bouts, the whole night."

"We kept checking his weight every hour. We didn't sleep the whole night, not even during the day," said coach Dahiya.

"Weight cutting is routine, normal for us but there was tension, a lot of tension due to what happened the other day (with Vinesh). We could not let slip another medal," said Dahiya.

All the hard work came to a fruition when Aman won the bronze medal, beating Puerto Rico's Darian Cruz on Friday to become India's youngest ever Olympic medallist. (PTI)

With participation of over 500 players Jr Badminton C'ship 2024 concludes in Guwahati



HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Aug 10: In a dazzling showcase of badminton talent, over 500 young players from every corner of Assam took centre stage at the 8th edition of the PNB MetLife Junior Badminton Championship 2024. This eagerly anticipated sporting spectacle culminated on Saturday in a thrilling finale at the prestigious Kanaklata Indoor Stadium where 9 budding badminton champions emerged victorious in their respective categories.

The audience witnessed exceptional games across various age groups. In the Boys Singles Under 9 category, Mayur Nirban Kashyap triumphed over Borkan Terang with a score of 21-14 & 21-9 while in the Girls Singles Under 9, Saikia Abhiruchi defeated Nandika Sonowal with a score of 21-7 & 21-5.

In the Boys Singles Under 11 category, Prayan Migom Mili emerged victorious against Ansuman Khanikar with a score of 21-13 & 24-22 and in the Girls Singles Under 11 category, Abhiruchi Saikia outperformed Tanvee Pradhan with a score of 21-9 & 21-15.

The Boys Singles Under 13 category saw Evon Gogoi defeating Harshit Gogoi in a thrilling match with a score of 21-19 & 21-16. In the Girls Singles Under 13 category, Varnikas Kashyap secured a commanding win against Netra Kalita with a score of 21-13 & 21-12, establishing herself as a force to be reckoned with.

In the Boys Singles Under 15 category, Nidhish Buragohain continued his impressive run, overcoming Prakritish Kaushik in

a competitive match with a score of 17-21, 21-11 & 21-12. Meanwhile, Sumaya Ahmed emerged victorious in the Girls Singles Under 15 category with a strong performance against Anesha Dowari with a score of 21-13 & 21-15.

The Boys Singles Under 17 category featured Vernan Mahanta who claimed victory over Nidhish Buragohain with a score of 21-12 & 21-15, while Tanzim Ahmed in the Girls Singles Under 17 category beat Anesha Dowari with a score of 21-19 & 21-18.

The closing ceremony was graced by esteemed dignitaries including Chittaranjan Prusty, Zonal Manager, Guwahati Zonal Office, Punjab National Bank, Bikas Das, DGM, Zonal Office, Guwahati, Punjab National Bank, Pramod Singh, Senior Regional Head, PNB MetLife, Badan Ch Bora, Vice-president, Assam Badminton Association, & Imtazur Rahman, Executive Member of Assam Badminton Association & PS to Secretary ABA.

They presented the victorious young athletes with the prestigious JBC Trophy, acknowledging their remarkable achievements. Sameer Bansal, MD and CEO at PNB MetLife, enthused, "Sports has true power to change lives, not least in helping children build confidence and develop mentally and physically. That's what drives our commitment to the PNB MetLife Junior Badminton Championship, and on behalf of PNB MetLife, I congratulate the winners and all the players for their enthusiasm and dedication to excellence in badminton."

Institutions in Pakistan taking credit for Arshad Nadeem's Olympic success

KARACHI, Aug 10: Achieved in the backdrop of systemic failure and administrative apathy, only Arshad Nadeem knows about the struggles he faced and sacrifices he made on his way to winning a historic Olympic gold medal in Paris.

But back home in Pakistan, the ones who were supposed to provide him with way more than what he eventually got are busy taking credit for his landmark success. The list includes the Pakistan Sports Board, Inter Provincial Coordination Ministry (sports), and the government.

The attempts to take credit come despite the fact that just a few months before the Paris Olympics, Nadeem had to request that he be provided with a new javelin as his old one had become worn out after years of use.

Compared to the other athletes who took part in the Paris Olympic javelin throw finals including Indian superstar Neeraj Chopra, Nadeem did not get to train under the best coaches or compete consistently in international events because of shortage of funds. Prior to the Olympics, he also underwent a knee surgery and was left with

no option but to train in oppressive heat at the Punjab Sports Complex with dozens of other amateur athletes.

But that has not stopped the government, the state-run Pakistan Sports Board, the Pakistan Olympic Association, and even Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif from taking credit for his success.

The premier was the first to congratulate Nadeem but what has left Pakistanis surprised is the claim that it was his vision which allowed him to be groomed for the ultimate medal.

A video, released immediately after the javelin throw finals by the PMO, shows the premier jumping up and clapping after Nadeem's success with the minister for sports in Punjab telling him, "Sir yeh aap ka vision tha, aapne isko chance diya" (Sir this was your vision, you gave him a chance)."

He was referring to the Punjab games being held during the time when Shahbaz was chief minister of the province.

The PSB was far behind in taking credit, claiming it provided every support to Nadeem and even spent 10 million rupees on his surgery besides giving cash awards. (PTI)

Smiles and garlands as hockey team returns to warm reception; skipper says overwhelmed



NEW DELHI, Aug 10: Hundreds of fans lined up to garland and cheer for them as members of the Indian men's hockey team, including captain Harmanpreet Singh, touched down in the national capital on Saturday after fetching a second successive Olympic bronze medal in Paris.

The Indian team extended its record overall Olympic medal haul in the sport to 13 with a 2-1 victory over Spain in the third place match in Paris.

However, not all members of the winning team made their way back home as a few vital cogs remained in the French capital for the closing ceremony on Sunday.

Celebrated goalkeeper PR Sreejesh, who retired at the end of India's campaign, is the

joint flag-bearer for the ceremony along with double-medallist Manu Bhaker.

He remained in Paris along with Amit Rohidas, Raj Kumar Pal, Abhishek, Sukhjeet Singh and Sanjay. This batch is slated to return after the closing ceremony.

Harmanpreet and team members were greeted with garlands and celebratory dhol as they made their way out of the arrivals at the Indira Gandhi International airport in the morning.

"We have received all the support, and all our requirements were fulfilled. I really want to thank... We are very happy and proud," Harmanpreet, who scored a brace in the medal match, told the media on his arrival.

"It is a big achievement for hockey. The

love that is being showered upon hockey doubles our responsibility. We will also try that whenever we enter the field, we come back with a medal," he added.

Harmanpreet said the warm welcome has left him quite overwhelmed.

"It is very heart-warming to see Indian fans come out to receive and congratulate us for the bronze medal. The team left no stone unturned to prepare for the Olympics and to see your efforts bear fruit, to see the whole country rejoice in our victory, is an inexplicable feeling," he said.

The team played scintillating hockey during the Games with the highlight being a 3-2 win over Australia in the group stage after a gap of 52 years in the Olympics.

They pulled off another miraculous win in the quarterfinals against Britain, where the team defended with a man down for over 40 minutes to force a penalty shootout and win by 4-2, courtesy of heroics from Sreejesh.

India vice captain and first-time bronze medallist Hardik Singh said the players were rewarded for trusting each other completely during the Games.

"...the unshakeable belief that a teammate will step right up to cover up if you miss a step, is what pushed us to always give our best on the field," he said.

"The match against Great Britain was when it really shined through. The mid-fielders had the forwards' back, the defenders supported the mid-fielders, and if all else failed we had the big man, PR Sreejesh, between the sticks who bailed us out on numerous occasions."

It is for the first time since 1972 that India clinched a second consecutive medal in the Olympics.

India had beaten Spain 2-1 in the bronze medal match at the Yves-du-Manoir Stadium in the French capital, following goals from skipper Harmanpreet (30th, 33rd minutes).

With his twin strikes Harmanpreet took his goals tally to 10 and finished as the tournament's highest goal-scorer in the men's category.

"...we will cherish these memories for some time to come. With this Bronze medal, the Team has proved that Indian Hockey is back on track. We are a force to be reckoned with and on our day, we can really be unstoppable," Harmanpreet said.

"All that we need is belief in our Team and the unwavering support of Indian hockey fans. So, I request them to continue loving hockey, continue supporting us and we will win it all for you," he signed off. (PTI)

Chopra, Nadeem look to popularise javelin throw while maintaining healthy competition



PARIS, Aug 10: With their "healthy competition" on the field and "strong friendship" off it, javelin superstars Neeraj Chopra and Arshad Nadeem have set out to fulfil their common mission of inspiring youngsters of India and Pakistan and getting them hooked on the sport.

Nadeem won the men's javelin gold in the ongoing Paris Olympics with a stunning 92.97m throw -- which was also an Olympic record -- while Chopra, who was defending his title, took the silver with a season's best effort of 89.45m.

"It's already grown a lot. We're already seeing more talented javelin throwers in India. The same is happening in Pakistan," Chopra said when asked whether their success will lead to a boom in athletics in both India and Pakistan.

"When we went to the Asian Games and Arshad couldn't compete due to a knee injury, his replacement, Yasir Sultan, threw very well. The medal Arshad just won will inspire more kids to follow, which is great," Chopra said on Jio Cinema.

He was referring to last year's Asian Games in Hangzhou, China, where he had won a gold.

Asked whether the India-Pakistan rivalry will switch from cricket to javelin, Chopra said, "That'll be possible if we had more competitions like in cricket. We have two major competitions: the Olympics every four years and the World Championships every two years."

"If we had more competitions, more people would watch, like the Diamond League and

some others," said the 26-year-old from Khandra village near Panipat.

The 27-year-old Nadeem also spoke about the significance of Pakistan and India winning gold and silver in Paris Olympics.

"I'm really happy. Out of the hundreds of countries participating, Pakistan and India have performed really well. Neeraj won gold at the (2023) World Championships in Budapest, and this is a golden moment for me," he said.

"Our friendship is really strong, and I wish it continues for a long time."

Asked how many times he's watched the clip of his Olympic record throw that fetched him the gold, he said, "I've watched it a few times, and I feel I have the capacity to do even better. One day I hope I can showcase this capacity."

Chopra hoped that the competition with Nadeem would continue to grow.

"It was a very healthy competition, with Arshad doing a great job and breaking the Olympic record. Big congratulations to him. I wish our competition continues to be this strong."

"We will keep working hard and give javelin support in our countries while motivating kids who may want to take up the sport."

On his efforts to breach the elusive 90m mark, Chopra said, "I've wanted to cross that mark since the 2018 Asian Games where I threw 88m. I feel like I'll cross 90m, but there are technical and injury reasons behind why I'm struggling to hit my maximum reach."

"I have to work harder for that and keep myself fit." (PTI)

We aimed to play in the finals but happy with bronze too: Manpreet

NEW DELHI, Aug 10: Senior India hockey player Manpreet Singh on Saturday said it was disappointing not to win a gold in the Olympics but a second consecutive bronze medal is not too bad either.

Eight-time Olympic champions India clinched a second consecutive bronze medal at Paris, beating Spain 2-1 in the play-off match. The last of India's Olympic hockey golds came in 1980.

"Feeling really good, last time we won the bronze and we won bronze this time as well, the mindset of the team was to play in the finals but that slipped out of our grasp, but we won the bronze and feel really good receiving all this love," the halfback told PTI Videos.

The 32-year-old also lauded the mental fortitude of the side as it defended with 10 players for close to 42 minutes against Britain in the quarterfinal after Amit Rohidas was shown a contentious red card.

The team won in a tense penalty shootout before going down to Germany in the semifinals.

"We train for these kind of moments, if someone gets a green card or a yellow card, how to defend, but we did not think that we would get the red card, it was not the fault of Amit Rohidas."

"But unfortunately, he got the red card, the defensive mindset of the team was good, and the way everyone defended was brilliant. We did not allow them to create easy opportunities, they took penalty corners and we defended those as well," he said.

Manpreet, who was captain of the Tokyo Olympics bronze medal-winning side, was full of praise for veteran India goalkeeper PR Sreejesh, who drew curtains on his 18-year career in Paris. (PTI)

Boxer Imane Khelif wins gold to cap an Olympics marked by scrutiny over her sex

PARIS, Aug 10: Algerian boxer Imane Khelif has won a gold medal Friday at the Paris Olympics, emerging a champion from a tumultuous run at the Games where she endured intense scrutiny in the ring and online abuse from around the world over misconceptions about her womanhood.

Khelif beat Yang Liu of China 5:0 in the final of the women's welterweight division, wrapping up the best series of fights of her boxing career with a victory at Roland Garros, where crowds chanted her name, waved Algerian flags and roared every time she landed a punch.

After her unanimous win, Khelif jumped into her coaches' arms, one of them putting her on his shoulders and carrying her in a victory lap as she pumped her fists and grabbed an Algerian flag from the crowd.

"For eight years, this has been my dream, and I'm now the Olympic champion and gold medalist," Khelif said through an interpreter. Asked about the scrutiny, she told reporters: "That also gives my success a special taste because of those attacks."

"We are in the Olympics to perform as athletes, and I hope that we will not see any similar attacks in future Olympics," she said.

Fans have embraced Khelif in Paris even as she faced an extraordinary amount of scrutiny from world leaders, major celebrities and others who have questioned her eligibility or falsely claimed she was a man. It has thrust her into a larger divide over changing attitudes toward gender identity and regulations in sports.

It stems from the Russian-dominated International Boxing Association's decision to disqualify Khelif and fellow two-time Olympian Li Yu-ting of Taiwan from last year's world championships, claiming both failed an eligibility test for women's competition that IBA officials have declined to answer basic questions about.

"I'm fully qualified to take part in this competition," Khelif said Friday. "I'm a woman like any other woman. I was born as a woman, I live as a woman, and I am qualified."

The International Olympic Committee took



the unprecedented step last year of permanently banning the IBA from the Olympics following years of concerns about its governance, competitive fairness and financial transparency. The IOC has called the arbitrary sex tests that the sport's governing body imposed on the two boxers irretrievably flawed.

The IOC has repeatedly reaffirmed the two boxers' right to compete in Paris, with President Thomas Bach personally defending Khelif and Lin while calling the criticism "hate speech."

Khelif noted that she has boxed in IBA competitions since 2018 but now "they hate me, and I don't know why."

"I sent them a single message with this gold medal, and that is that my dignity and honor are above all else," she said.

The IBA's reputation hasn't stopped the international outcry tied to misconceptions around the fighters, which has been amplified by Russian disinformation networks. It also hasn't slowed two boxers who have performed at the highest levels of their careers while under the spotlight's glare.

Khelif was dominant in Paris at a level she had never reached before: She won every

round on every judge's scorecard in each of her three fights that went the distance.

Khelif's gold medal is Algeria's first in women's boxing. She is only the nation's second boxing gold medalist, joining Hocine Soltani (1996) while claiming the seventh gold medal in Algeria's Olympic history.

While Khelif drew enthusiastic, flag-draped fans in Paris, she also has become a hero in her North African country, where many have seen the world's dissection of Khelif as criticism of their nation.

Dubbed "The Night of Destiny" in local newspapers, Khelif's fight was projected on screens set up in public squares throughout Algeria and other cities. In the city of Tiaret in the region where Khelif is from, workers braved scorching summer heat to paint a mural of Khelif on the gym where she learned to box.

"Imane has managed to turn the criticism and attacks on her femininity into fuel," said Mustapha Bensaou of the Tiaret gym. "The slander has given her a boost. ... It's a bit of a blessing in disguise."

Khelif won the first round over Yang on all five judges' cards despite showing a bit less aggression than earlier in the tournament. Khelif then knocked Yang back against the ropes with a combination early in the second, although Yang responded with a flurry of shots and fought gamely.

Khelif won the second round and cruised through the third, doing a triumphant boxer's shuffle in the final seconds of the bout before the boxers hugged. When the verdict was announced, Khelif saluted and pumped her arm with glee.

During the medal ceremony, she grinned and waved to the crowd before kissing her gold medal. The four medalists — boxing gives out two bronze — then posed for a podium selfie, clasped hands and raised them together.

The gold medal fight was the culmination of Khelif's nine-day run through an Olympic tournament that began bizarrely. Khelif's first opponent, Angela Carini of Italy, abandoned their bout after just 46 seconds, saying she was in too much pain from Khelif's punches. (AP)

Upton and boot camp with Mike Horn toughened us mentally before Olympics: Harmanpreet

NEW DELHI, Aug 10: From conceding goals under pressure to becoming mentality monsters, who pulled off clutch moments in the Olympics for a second successive bronze.

The Indian men's hockey team has come a long way and captain Harmanpreet Singh credits mental conditioning coach Paddy Upton and a three-day boot camp camp with Swiss adventurer Mike Horn for the fortitude that his players displayed during the campaign in Paris.

"Yes, definitely, the mental toughness of this side is totally different. We are a united bunch and we backed each other and motivated each other when chips were down," Harmanpreet told PTI after returning to the country on Saturday.

"From first to last (game), we played as a unit and backed each other in search of the gold medal. Definitely Paddy Upton has a big role to play in this. Even the three-day camp with Mike Horn before the Olympics made our bond more strong. So mentally we were in a good space," he added.

Upton, who has previously also worked with the 2011 World Cup-winning Indian cricket team, came on

board in June last year.

It was his idea to have a camp with Horn before the team made its way to Paris. The three-day stay in Switzerland included activities like walking on a glacier with harnesses, cycling, climbing and rappelling down waterfalls.

The exercises were meant to foster team spirit and build a strong bond of trust among players.

Harmanpreet said all of it helped when the team was faced with nervy situations like the quarterfinal against Britain in which it played with 10 men for more than 40 minutes after Amit Rohidas was red-carded for dangerous play.

The team didn't just manage to hold Britain to 1-1 in regulation time, it went on to win the shootout with star goalkeeper P R Sreejesh coming up with a brilliant performance.

It was a refreshing outcome for a side which had the reputation of being a late conceder.

Harmanpreet and his men managed to completely shed that image with the gritty show in Paris and Sreejesh could take a lot of credit for it thanks to his inspiring and reassuring presence in front of the goal-post.



The 36-year-old Keralaite retired at the end of India's campaign after another memorable performance in the bronze playoff which India won 2-1 against Spain, another high-pressure game.