

6
WORLD

8
NATION

- Moscow comes under one of the largest Ukrainian drone attacks
- Imran Khan demands open court trial of former ISI chief
- Cong jabs BJP after lateral entry U-turn
- Apni Party announces first list of 8 candidates for J-K elections

Vol .No. XXV

Issue No. 222

RNI-ASSEN/2000/12862

DIPHU, KARBI ANGLONG, THURSDAY, AUGUST 22, 2024

PAGES 12

PRICE ₹ 8

ULFA(I)'s impact is very much there in state: CM 'Paresh Barua's sovereignty demand non-negotiable'

GUWAHATI, Aug 21: Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Wednesday said ULFA(I)'s influence in the state is "very much there," though it has significantly declined over the years.

"We cannot deny its impact when there are still around 400 cadres in the Myanmar camp," Sarma told reporters, adding, "We have never claimed that ULFA (I) is absent, and we continuously urge the outfit's leadership to engage in negotiations."

Sarma clarified that neither the Union Home Minister nor the CM has ever suggested that ULFA (I) has no presence in the state, though its influence has "definitely decreased over time."

"We have never officially said the ULFA(I) has no impact or influence," he added.

"The process for talks is continuing and I do talk to ULFA(I) chief Paresh Barua. I have, however, not



talked to him since the elections," Sarma said.

"I do not call Barua but whenever he does, I pick up the phone and talk to him," he added.

The chief minister said there are

hurdles in the talks process as the ULFA(I) chief speaks about sovereignty which is 'non-negotiable'.

"Discussions take place frequently and we hope that there will be a breakthrough one day," he

added. Regarding the timing of future talks, Sarma said it depends on Barua. "If I am informed that he is ready for negotiations now, I will leave everything and sit for negotiations," he added.

Referring to ULFA's recent email claiming that the outfit had placed 24 bombs in multiple locations on Independence Day, Sarma said that the bombs did not explode, which means that police were not sitting quietly.

Police had recovered 10 'bomb-like substances' from different locations with 10 cases filed in this connection. Two of these cases will be handed over to the NIA, while the remainder will be handled by the state police. Sarma after assuming office of the chief minister on May 10, 2021 had appealed to the ULFA (I) to come forward for peace talks and resolve the more than four decades old insurgency problem in the state. (PTI)

BJP candidates file nomination papers for bypolls to two RS seats

GUWAHATI, Aug 21: BJP Rajya Sabha candidates Mission Ranjan Das and Rameshwar Teli on Wednesday filed their nomination papers for the two seats which became vacant in Assam following the recent Lok Sabha polls.

Das and Teli filed their papers in the Assembly on the last day of filing nominations in the presence of Union minister Sarbananda Sonowal, chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma and his cabinet colleagues, BJP state president Bhabesh Kalita and party MLAs.

Elections to the two seats were necessitated by Union minister Sarbananda Sonowal and Kamakhya Prasad Tasa getting elected to the Lok Sabha from Dibrugarh and Kaziranga parliamentary constituencies, respectively.

Das, a veteran BJP politician, has been a four-time party MLA from Karimganj (North) constituency in 1991, 2000, 2001 and 2006 and is currently the chairman of Assam State Transport Corporation.

Teli, a prominent face of the tea-tribe community, was the Union minister of State of Petroleum and Natural Gas and Labour and Employment in the second Modi ministry since 2012. He was first elected to Dibrugarh Lok Sabha constituency in 2014 but was replaced in 2024 by Sonowal.

The state BJP had sent a list of 10 names to the central parliamentary committee for final selection.



After filing the papers, chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma told reporters that both the BJP candidates will win the Rajya Sabha seats.

"Teli is a prominent face of the tea tribe community and had also served as a Union minister in the last term whereas Das is a senior BJP leader", Sarma said.

Moreover, Das will be the first member in the Upper House from Karimganj district, he added.

"I am certain they will be excellent and inspiring Rajya Sabha members", he added.

Sonowal also extended his best wishes to the two candidates. Bypolls for the two Rajya Sabha seats are scheduled to be held on September 3. Assam has seven seats in the Rajya Sabha, (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

HT BRIEFS

Ingiti Enterprise

DIPHU: Ingiti Enterprise, a new shop selling poultry products like eggs, broiler chicken and country chicken was opened at Rongbin Aklam near Rengpoli Hospital, here on Wednesday. Superintendent of Taxes, Mongalsing Taro and Inspector, Taxation department Khorsing Terang inaugurated the shop. The shop was set-up by a group of young entrepreneurs. The superintendent of Taxes, Taro inaugurating the shop said, "I am very happy to inaugurate a new shop which was set-up by local unemployed youths. Such endeavours by the youth in business are encouraging. At first there may be some problems, but you will learn on the job." Taro urged the educated youths to start businesses to capture the market to solve the unemployment issue. He assured the co-operation of the Taxation Department for issuance of NOC (No Objection Certificate) and other required documents.

Journalist fraternity

DIPHU: The journalist fraternity under the District Press Club of Karbi Anglong (DPCKA) expressed their resentment over misbehaviour by All Party Hills Leaders Conference (APHLC) President JI Kathar to one of the journalist fraternity, while taking an interview on Tuesday. Coming out from the DC chamber reporters asked questions to APHLC president Kathar on why the party changes its issue frequently. To this Kathar got furious with the particular reporter asking the question and charged him saying "You are Bongosena" in front of everyone. The DPCKA has called an emergency meeting in its office here on Wednesday, to discuss the arrogant behaviour of Kathar. The DPCKA has condemned Kathar for his rudeness to a media person and if any such misbehaviour by Kathar takes place in the coming days the media persons will not cooperate with APHLC programmes.

Parliament panel on Waqf Bill to hold first meeting

NEW DELHI, Aug 21: Parliament's Joint Committee on the Waqf (Amendment) Bill will hold its first meeting on Thursday and its members are scheduled to interact with representatives of the ministries of minority affairs, and law and justice.

The 31-member committee, headed by BJP member Jagdambika Pal, has been tasked by the Lok Sabha to scrutinise the contentious bill, which has drawn protests from the opposition parties and Muslim organisations.

The representatives from the minority affairs ministry are expected to brief the committee on the "amendments proposed on the Bill", the Lok Sabha secretariat said.

The Bill is the first major initiative from the BJP-led NDA government aimed at reforming the

registration process for Waqf properties through a centralised portal. It proposes several reforms, including establishing a Central Waqf Council alongside state Waqf Boards with representation to the Muslim women and non-Muslim representatives.

A contentious provision of the Bill is the proposal to designate the district collector as the primary authority in determining whether a property is classified as Waqf or government land.

The Bill was introduced in the Lok Sabha on August 8 and referred to a joint committee of Parliament after a heated debate, with the government asserting that the proposed law did not intend to interfere with the functioning of mosques and the opposition calling it a targeting of Muslims and an attack on the Constitution. (PTI)

Consider if mining can be banned in areas declared conservation, community reserves: SC

NEW DELHI, Aug 21: The Supreme Court asked the Centre on Wednesday to consider whether mining activities could be prohibited in areas that have been declared conservation reserves and community reserves.

A bench headed by Justice B R Gavai observed that the basic idea of providing community reserves and conservation reserves was to provide a corridor for free movement of wildlife from one national park or wildlife sanctuary to another. The bench, also comprising Justices P K Mishra and K V Viswanathan, said if conservation reserves and community reserves are to act as corridors, then mining activities in those areas may be detrimental to the movement of wildlife.

"However, since the basic idea of providing community reserves and



conservation reserves is to provide a corridor for the free movement of wildlife from one national park/wildlife sanctuary ... we request the Union to consider whether at least in the areas which are declared as conservation reserves and community reserves, the mining could be prohibited or not," the bench said.

The court was hearing a matter related to mining activities within a one-kilometre radius of conserva-

tion reserves and community reserves. The apex court had, in a verdict delivered on April 26 last year, directed that mining within a national park and wildlife sanctuary and within a one-kilometre area of from their boundaries shall not be permissible.

During the hearing on Wednesday, the bench said the government should promote eco-tourism.

The court noted that in February, it had asked the Centre to hold discussions with various stakeholders, including the states and Union territories, and recommend suggestions in this regard.

It said an affidavit has been filed before it by the Centre after taking into consideration the views expressed by various states at a meeting convened by the Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) in March. (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Farmers' body writes to PM Modi, LoP demanding law guaranteeing MSP

NEW DELHI, Aug 21: The MSP Guarantee Kisan Morcha (MSP GKM) Wednesday wrote to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Leader of the Opposition Rahul Gandhi, urging them to push for the enactment of a law to guarantee Minimum Support Price (MSP) for crops.

Over 250 farmer organisations from 26 states and union territories gathered for a meeting at Gurudwara Shri Rakabganj Sahib in Delhi on Wednesday, the MSP GKM said.

In their letter to PM Modi and Rahul Gandhi dated August 21, the MSP GKM requested the introduction and passage of the MSP bill in the next Parliament session to secure a guaranteed MSP for the farming community.

"Mr. Prime Minister, on one hand the government refuses to give us a law on the guarantee of MSP (Minimum Support Price) and says that, "MSP was, MSP is and MSP will

remain" and on the other hand the government has guaranteed MSP (Minimum Selling Price) for industrialists," they said in the letter.

"Sir, when the government can give protection to sugar mill owners and even government-run petroleum companies, then why cannot similar protection be given to the farmers who voted for their government," they further wrote. MSP GKM president V M Singh told PTI, "In 2011, Narendra Modi, who was then the chief minister of Gujarat, was chairman of a panel that had prepared a report on consumer affairs. The report had recommended the implementation of MSP, but the government at the time did not act on it. Now that he is the prime minister, why is he not taking action?"

Singh mentioned that in 2018, a round table conference was held at the Constitution Club of India here, where 20-22 (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Assam to introduce Muslim marriage, divorce registration bill

GUWAHATI, Aug 21: The Assam government will introduce a bill in the upcoming Autumn Session of Assembly for compulsory government registration of marriage and divorce of Muslim people, chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said.

Addressing a press conference after a cabinet meeting, Sarma said the government will table the Assam Compulsory Registration of Muslim Marriage and Divorce Bill, 2024 during the upcoming session, which will begin on Thursday.

"Earlier, Muslim marriages were registered by the Kazis. However, this new bill will ensure that all marriages of the community will be registered with the government," he added.

Sarma also claimed that marriages of minors were also registered by the Kazis earlier, but the proposed bill will prohibit any such move. (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

No impact of Bharat Bandh in Assam

GUWAHATI, Aug 21: The day-long Bharat Bandh called by some groups over community-based reservation had no impact in Assam on Wednesday.

Schools, offices and business establishments functioned normally with almost full attendance across the state.

Vehicular traffic was normal and long-distance buses operated according to their schedules. There were no disruptions to railway services, with all trains running on time. Twenty-one organisations across the country have called for Bharat Bandh against the Supreme Court's August 1 decision on the issue of SC-ST reservation.

The organisations opposed the verdict, contending that it will harm the basic principles of reservation. (PTI)

'The Chandrayaan-4 mission is expected to be launched in 2027' Indian astronaut likely to fly to International Space Station by April next year: Jitendra Singh

NEW DELHI, Aug 21: An Indian astronaut is likely to fly to the International Space Station by April next year as part of the NASA-ISRO collaborative initiative, Science and Technology minister Jitendra Singh said on Wednesday.

Two Indian astronaut-designates Group Captains Shubhanshu Shukla and Prashanth Balakrishnan Nair are undergoing training in the US for the Axiom Space Ax-4 mission. ISRO has assigned Shukla for the Ax-4 mission while Nair would be the backup candidate.

"An Indian astronaut will travel to the ISS by April next year," Singh told a press conference here ahead of the first-ever National Space Day celebrations to mark the landing of Vikram lander on the Moon on August 23 last year.



The theme for the National Space Day is 'Touching Lives while Touching the Moon: India's Space Saga'. On the occasion, ISRO will release on August 23 the scientific

data collected by the Chandrayaan-3 mission that could be used by researchers.

More than one thousand events have been organised across the

country over the last two months.

President Droupadi Murmu will participate in the National Space Day celebrations at the Bharat Mandapam here and give away prizes to the winners of the Bharatiya Antariksh Hackathon and ISRO Robotics Challenge.

Briefing reporters on the upcoming space missions, ISRO Scientific secretary Shantanu Bhatawdekar said the ISRO-NASA joint mission NISAR was expected to be launched after February next year.

The 12-meter reflector of the earth observation satellite, billed as the most expensive ever built, had developed an anomaly and was sent back to the US for corrective measures. The reflector is expected to be back in India by October and integrated with (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Rahul should clear Congress' stand on Article 370: BJP



NEW DELHI, Aug 21: Taking aim at Rahul Gandhi's visit to Jammu and Kashmir, the BJP on Wednesday asked the Congress leader to clear his party's stand on the Article 370 and Article 35A.

BJP general secretary Tarun Chugh, who is his party's organisational in-charge for the Union Ter-

ritory, said Gandhi's visit will introduce him to the "peace and development" ushered in the region by the government headed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

He alleged that three families, a reference to the Congress, the National Conference and the PDP, over the last several decades stoked em-

bers of separatism and terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir with their policies before the BJP government at the Centre turned things around since 2014.

Kashmir is now identified with tourism and not terrorism, Chugh said, adding that brisk polling was witnessed in the recent Lok Sabha elections in the erstwhile state.

The government had in August 2019 abrogated Article 35A and Article 370, which gave special rights to Jammu and Kashmir, and bifurcated it into Union Territories of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh.

The NC and the PDP, both constituents of the opposition INDIA bloc of which the Congress is the largest member, have called for restoring the two Articles. The Congress has, however, mostly stuck to the demand of restoration of the region's statehood but has not taken a categorical stand on the nullification of its special rights. (PTI)

Amazon's investment in India to make up for its losses; not to support Indian eco: Goyal

NEW DELHI, Aug 21: Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal on Wednesday questioned Amazon's announcement of USD 1 billion investment in India, saying the US retailer was not doing any great service to the Indian economy but filling up for the losses it had suffered in the country.

He said that their huge losses in India "smells of predatory pricing", which is not good for the country as it impacts crores of small retailers. Launching a report on 'Net Impact of e-commerce on Employment and Consumer Welfare in India' here, the minister lambasted the e-commerce companies, questioning their business model that has been impacting small retailers in the country.

"When Amazon says that we are going to invest a billion dollars in the country, we celebrate, and we forget that the billion dollars are not coming in for great service or investment to support the Indian economy. They made a billion-dollar loss in their balance sheet that year, they had to fill in that loss."

"And how did that loss get caused, they paid ₹ 1,000 crores to professionals. I do not know who these professionals are...I would love to know, which chartered accountants, professionals or lawyers get ₹ 1,000 crores unless you are paying all the top lawyers to block them so that nobody can fight a case against you," the minister said.

He wondered whether the Rs 6,000 crore loss in one year does not smell of predatory pricing, as they are just an e-commerce platform and those companies are not allowed to do B2C (business to consumer) business.

As per the policy, the e-commerce platform legally can not do



B2C in the country.

The minister alleged that these companies only re-route all the businesses through an entity to show that it is B2B. "How are they doing it? Should this not be a matter of concern for us," he said.

He added that the e-commerce sector has a role, but one has to think "very" carefully and cautiously about what that role is.

"How that role can be in an organised fashion. Is predatory pricing policies good for the country?" Goyal asked. He also said that e-commerce companies are eating into the small retailer's high-value, high-margin products that are the only items through which the mom-and-pop stores survive.

The minister also said that with the fast-growing online retailing in the country, "Are we going to cause huge social disruption with this massive growth of e-commerce?" Citing examples of Western countries, Goyal said Europe and America have seen the consequences of this.

"What has happened to the mom-and-pop stores there? How many do you see surviving, why did Switzerland allow e-commerce until recently (so late)," he said, adding "...I am not wishing away e-commerce, it is there to stay".

Further, he said one has to see the impact of cloud kitchens on restaurants and people buying food items online.

"We will land up becoming a country of couch potatoes, watching OTT and having food at home every day," he said.

Commenting on online pharmacies, the minister said, "We have to assess what is happening to 5 lakh pharmacies of the country".

He expressed concern over these firms selling medicines online.

"Online, you can order whatever you want...it is a matter of concern," Goyal said, adding "How many mobile stores do you see in the corner, and how many were there 10 years ago".

He pointed out that India is not a developed nation like the US and Switzerland with high per capita income, and a large section of people need affirmative action and help here.

"Of course, I do not deny that technology will play its part, technology is a means to empower, to innovate, to meet consumer requirements, probably sometimes more efficiently, but we will have to see that it grows in an orderly fashion," he said.

People have to see that this connectivity and convenience is citi-

zen-centric, he said, adding that in the race for market share of online retailers at 27 per cent a year, "we do not land up causing huge disruption for the 100 million small retailers across the country".

Amazon India is facing rising competitive intensity in India from players like Flipkart and SoftBank-backed Meesho, as well as the onslaught of firms like Blinkit, Swiggy's Instamart and Zepto that are making aggressive inroads into the market as busy consumers opt for the convenience of instant delivery of grocery and many other household items.

Last year, Amazon had talked of plans to invest USD 15 billion more in India, taking its total investment in the country to USD 26 billion. After meeting with Prime Minister Narendra Modi during his visit to the US in 2023, Amazon CEO Andy Jassy said: "I had a very good and productive conversation with Prime Minister Modi. I think we share a number of goals. Amazon is one of the biggest investors in India. We have invested USD 11 billion to date and intend to invest another USD 15 billion, which will bring the total to USD 26 billion. So, we are very much looking forward to the future of partnering".

Goyal also criticised the report, saying he does not agree with the findings of the study 'Net Impact of e-commerce on employment and consumer welfare in India'.

"I would like to completely disassociate myself from this report...I do not agree with any of these findings...I think, in the urge to show that this has not had an impact on employment in India, the researchers have lost sight of even the statistics, which EY has put out," the minister said. (PTI)

Nxtra by Airtel's FY 23-24 sustainability report highlights significant progress in ESG initiatives

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Aug 21: Nxtra Data Limited ("Nxtra by Airtel"), a subsidiary of Bharti Airtel, has released its second Sustainability Report for the financial year 2023-24, showcasing the company's growing commitment to environmental, social, and governance (ESG) principles. This report underscores Nxtra's efforts in creating a future-ready, digitized infrastructure that prioritizes sustainability, while supporting customers' needs for high-density workloads and scalable solutions.

One of the standout achievements of the year was a significant reduction of 163,408 tCO2e in emissions, a testament to Nxtra's ongoing focus on minimizing its environmental impact. Additionally, the company recorded a 41% increase in renewable energy usage, transitioning to 220,541 MWh of green power in its operations, and managed to reduce Scope 1 and 2

emissions by approximately 4% from the base year FY21, despite a 25% rise in power consumption.

Ashish Arora, CEO of Nxtra by Airtel, highlighted the importance of integrating ESG initiatives into the company's core operations. "The future of data centers lies in our ability to harmonize intelligent infrastructure with sustainability. As our sustainability report highlights, we have made consistent progress across all three sustainability parameters—environmental, social, and governance—during the year and will continue to keep it as our core focus area," said Arora.

Today, Nxtra by Airtel operates the largest network of data centers in India, with 12 large and 120 edge data centers across the country. This expansive network supports the digital infrastructure of businesses across India while maintaining a strong commitment to sustainability at its core.

OPPO F27: Combining Durability with Advanced AI Connectivity

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Aug 21: In an era where smartphones are expected to be both stylish and durable, OPPO introduces the F27—a device that blends aesthetics with resilience. Designed to withstand everyday challenges, the OPPO F27 features the proprietary Armour Body, certified with a 5-star SGS Performance Multi-Scene Protection and an IP64 Water and Dust Resistance rating. This ensures that the phone can handle drops, scratches, and liquid splashes, making it the perfect companion for any occasion.

The device is fortified with enhanced AGC Dragontrail Star 2 glass for increased durability, along with OPPO's High-strength Alloy Framework to safeguard internal components. Additionally, the innovative Splash Touch technology allows the screen to remain responsive even when wet, ensuring you can capture and share moments in any environment.

But durability isn't the only highlight of the OPPO F27. The smartphone also excels in connectivity, thanks to OPPO's AI Link-Boost technology and 360° Surround Antenna solution. These features optimize signal reception and network selection, ensuring stable connectivity even in challenging environments.

Pernod Ricard launches Seagram's Royal stag Double dark

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Aug 21: Seagram's Royal Stag introduces Royal Stag Double Dark peaty whisky, crafted for 'the gamechangers', who strive for authentic and exclusive experiences in every facet of their lives. This distinctly smoky blend is matured in dark charred double barrels and is a first in category, unique offering, strengthening the portfolio of Seagram's Royal Stag.

Consumer need states are evolving with an enhanced readiness towards experimentation. Royal Stag Double dark is targeted towards these emerging consumer taste profiles. Every drop of Seagram's Royal Stag Double Dark is an exquisite combination of selected peated malt and Scotch malt concentrate, matured in deep-charred oak barrels, all expertly blended with the finest Indian grain spirit to bring out a distinct smoky flavor and an elevated experience. These malts have been double distilled in copper pots, aged in dark charred American and European oak barrels*, backed with the promise of Mark of Purity. The new product comes in contemporary & premium packaging in a standout Ashberry colour with a burnt wood tactile finish, accentuating the smoky nature of the whisky.

In recent years, the spirits industry has witnessed a growing preference towards differentiated offerings for consumers who are looking to experiment and experience varying taste profiles. Pernod Ricard India's introduction of Seagram's Royal Stag Double Dark aligns perfectly with these evolving preferences.

On the launch of Seagram's Royal Stag Double Dark, Kartik Mohindra, Chief Marketing Officer, Pernod Ricard India, said, "Consumer taste profiles are evolving really fast. We've got to be faster than the speed of this ever-changing market. I am thrilled to introduce Royal Stag Double Dark for the young, experimental whisky enthusiast. Smoke as a taste profile ranks the highest when it comes to new category consumer preferences. Royal Stag Double Dark is crafted using the finest Indian grain spirits, peated malts and double distilled Scotch malts which are aged in dark charred oak barrels, giving the blend its distinctively smoky characteristics. Over the years, Royal Stag has distinguished itself as an icon, a lighthouse brand dedicated towards innovation, with a profound understanding of the Indian consumer's palate. This new offering will continue the proud brand tradition, encapsulating a journey of passion & dedication to redefine the whisky-drinking experience."

Rupee plunges 14 paise to 83.91 against US dollar

MUMBAI, Aug 21: The Indian rupee nosedived 14 paise to 83.91 (provisional) against the US dollar on Wednesday amid unabated outflow of foreign capital and volatile domestic equity markets.

Forex traders said a weak American currency and lower level of crude prices, however, cushioned the local unit at lower level.

At the interbank foreign exchange, the rupee opened weak at 83.79 and touched the intra-day low of 83.94 against the greenback. The unit finally settled at 83.91 (provisional) against the dollar, registering a loss of 14 paise from its previous days' closing level of 83.77. The rupee settled 10 paise higher at 83.77 against the American currency on Tuesday, a day after

gaining 8 paise.

Anuj Choudhary, Research Analyst at Sharekhan by BNP Paribas, said the rupee declined on recovery in US dollar index and US treasury yields.

"FII outflows also weighed on the rupee. However, weak crude oil prices cushioned the downside." He said the rupee is expected to trade with a slight negative bias due to recovery in the US dollar and geopolitical tension in the Middle East.

"USD-INR spot price is expected to trade in a range of ₹ 83.70 to ₹ 84.20," Choudhary added.

Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was trading higher by 0.09 per cent at 101.38. (PTI)

Contd. from Page 1.

BJP candidates file nomination

with six currently held by the BJP-led ruling alliance - the saffron party having four seats while its allies AGP and UPPL hold one each - and another is represented by an independent MP. (PTI)

Consider if mining can be banned

According to the affidavit, the states appear to be unanimous that imposing any further restrictions in conservation reserves and community reserves could be detrimental to the increase in their numbers, the bench noted.

It also noted the submissions of additional solicitor general Aishwarya Bhati, who appeared in the matter on behalf of the Centre, that national parks and wildlife sanctuaries cannot be equated with community reserves and conservation reserves.

Bhati referred to section 36A of the Wild Life (Protection) Act, which deals with declaration and management of a conservation reserve and says that a state government may, after consultations with local communities, declare any area owned by it, particularly those adjacent to national parks and sanctuaries and those that link one protected area with another, as a conservation reserve for protecting landscapes, seascapes, flora and fauna and their habitat. The bench posted the matter for further hearing in October.

While hearing the matter in February, the court had observed, "Prima facie, we are of the view that the conservation parks, reserves and community reserves are for the purpose of providing corridors which connect one sanctuary, national park to another." (PTI)

Assam to introduce Muslim

"Now, minor marriage registration will not happen at all. We want to end the menace of child marriage. So, the marriages will be registered at the Sub-Registrar's Office," he added, citing cabinet decisions.

Sarma said that there will not be any restriction on the rituals followed by Muslims during the marriage ceremonies, but only the registration by the Kazis has been restricted. (PTI)

Farmers' body writes to

political parties from both the ruling and opposition sides agreed to bring in a law guaranteeing MSP. "The Janata Dal (United) and Telugu Desam Party, which are now part of the government, supported the law during the round table conference. But these parties are not doing anything now," Singh claimed. He also said that the opposition parties including the Congress, Aam Aadmi Party, Jharkhand Mukti Morcha, Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam had also agreed to the MSP law during the 2018 conference.

"In many states, the opposition parties are in power, like the Congress in Himachal Pradesh and the AAP in Punjab and Delhi. Why do not these parties implement MSP in their states?" Singh said. (PTI)

Indian astronaut likely to fly

the satellite. "Since November to January is the period of solar eclipses, NISAR cannot be launched before February," Bhatawdekar said.

The Chandrayaan-4 mission is expected to be launched in 2027 subject to approval from the government, he said, adding the aim of the mission was to bring back samples of lunar rock and soil to Earth.

The ISRO-Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA) mission to explore the polar region of the moon has been designated as Chandrayaan-5. Bhatawdekar said. The Lunar Polar Exploration (LUPEX) project is an international cooperative project, with JAXA in charge of the lunar rover and ISRO responsible for the lander that will carry the rover. Observation instruments from NASA and the European Space Agency will also be mounted on the rover. (PTI)

Why have institutions like CCI

siphoning scandal. SEBI chairman Buch and her husband have denied the allegations levelled against them as baseless and asserted that their finances are an open book. The Adani Group has also termed Hindenburg Research's latest allegations as malicious and manipulative of select public information, saying it has no commercial relationship with the SEBI chairperson or her husband. (PTI)

NMDC Steel's hot rolled coil production hits 1 MT-mark within a year



NEW DELHI, Aug 21: State-owned NMDC Steel Limited (NSL) on Wednesday announced producing 1 million tonnes of hot rolled coil (HRC) at its plant in Nagarnagar, Chhattisgarh in a year's time.

NMDC Steel Ltd, an entity demerged and formed from mining firm NMDC, owns and operates the 3 million-tonne Nagar Steel Plant -- referred as India's youngest steel unit -- and has been set up with an investment of around Rs 23,000 crore. "NSL announces a landmark achievement of its production capabilities. Today, this ultra-modern plant has successfully produced 1 MT HRC four days ahead of the first anniversary of commencement of HR coil production," the company said in a statement. On July 21, 2024, the company had achieved the production of 1.5 MT of hot metal from its blast furnace and produced 1 MT of liquid steel from the steel making shop (SMS) on August 11.

Both milestones were reached in less than a year from the commencement of production, the company said. The company's CMD Amitava Mukherjee said, "Achieving 1 MnT of Hot Rolled Coil (HRC) ahead of schedule is a testament to the dedication, expertise, and hard work of our entire dedicated team. This achievement not only sets a new standard within the PSU sector, but also stands strong against industry benchmarks. We remain focused on sustaining this momentum and continuing to lead with quality and efficiency." (PTI)

Markets extend gains on buying in FMCG, consumer stocks; Sensex rises 100 pts

MUMBAI, Aug 21: Equity benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty closed higher on Wednesday, helped by gains in FMCG, consumer durables and healthcare stocks amid strong buying support from domestic institutional investors.

However, foreign capital outflows amid a cautious trend in global equities ahead of the release of US Fed minutes restricted the gains in domestic markets, traders said.

In a range-bound trade, the 30-share BSE Sensex gained for the second day in a row, rising 102.44 points or 0.13 per cent to close at 80,905.30. During the day, it rose 149.97 points or 0.18 per cent to hit an intra-day high of 80,952.83.

Rising for the fifth straight session, the NSE Nifty went up by 71.35 points or 0.29 per cent to end at 24,770.20.

"The Indian market traded on a tight range with a positive bias supported by strong DII flows. While defensive sector outperformed due to a continued shift in portfolio towards FMCG, consumer, commodities, and pharma."

"Global markets exhibited a mildly cautious tone ahead of the release of the FOMC minutes later today. Currently, the expectation of a rate cut remains high, given the fall in US inflation and moderation in overall growth," Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Financial Services, said.

Among the Sensex firms, Titan, Asian Paints, ITC, Hindustan Unilever, Nestle India, Bajaj Finserv and Bharti Airtel were among the gainers.

In contrast, UltraTech Cement, Tech Mahindra, Tata Steel, Power Grid, HDFC Bank, HCL Technology, State Bank of India and ICICI Bank were the laggards.

Shares of FSN E-Commerce Ventures, beauty and personal care brand Nykaa, bounced 9.42 per cent on Wednesday. During the day, it rallied 18.6 per cent to hit its 52-week high of ₹ 228.50.

GE T&D India stocks fell 5 per cent -- its lower circuit limit -- after the company said its promoters are considering selling a minority stake to simplify its holding structure.

Meanwhile, the scrip of NHPC fell 0.88 per cent after a major landslide in East Sikkim caused significant damage to the 510-MW hydroelectric project on the Teesta River.

In the broader market, the BSE smallcap gauge jumped 0.87 per cent, and the midcap index climbed 0.43 per cent.

Among the indices, Consumer Durables surged by 1.56 per cent, FMCG by 1.33 per cent, healthcare by 0.94 per cent, metal by 0.73 per cent, Telecommunication by 0.66 per cent, Commodities by 0.58 per cent and Consumer discretionary by 0.55 per cent.

Realty, Power, Bankex and Utilities were the laggards.

"The Indian markets showed mixed signals as key indices traded in a narrow range on Wednesday."

"Investors are now focusing on the minutes from the Federal Reserve's most recent monetary policy meeting and Fed Chair Jerome Powell's speech at the Jackson Hole Economic Symposium for clues on the US interest-rate cuts this year," Avdhut Bagkar, Technical and Derivatives Analyst at StoxBox, said.

The European markets were trading higher on Wednesday.

In Asian markets, Tokyo, Shanghai and Hong Kong were closed in the negative territory, while Seoul ended higher on Wednesday.

The US stock markets settled lower in overnight trade on Tuesday.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) again turned sellers on Tuesday as they offloaded equities worth ₹ 1,457.96 crore, according to exchange data.

Domestic Institutional Investors (DIIs) bought equities worth ₹ 2,252.10 crore on Tuesday. Global oil benchmark Brent crude rose 0.28 per cent to USD 77.42 a barrel.

The 30-share BSE Sensex rebounded 378.18 points or 0.47 per cent to settle at 80,802.86. Rising for the fourth consecutive session, the NSE Nifty surged 126.20 points or 0.51 per cent to 24,698.85. (PTI)

Global shares trade mixed after Wall Street snaps winning streak Y

TOKYO, Aug 21: Global shares were trading mixed Wednesday following a slip on Wall Street that snapped an eight-day winning streak, the longest of the year.

France's CAC 40 gained 0.3 per cent to 7,505.17 in early trading. Germany's DAX rose 0.3 per cent to 18,404.26, while Britain's FTSE 100 edged up 0.1 per cent to 8,284.94. US shares were set to drift higher with Dow futures up 0.1 per cent at 40,998.00. SandP 500 futures were little changed, inching up slightly to 5,621.75.

Japan's benchmark Nikkei 225 lost 0.3 per cent to finish at 37,951.80. Australia's SandP/ASX 200 reversed course and rose 0.2 per cent to 8,010.50. South Korea's Kospi edged up 0.2 per cent to 2,701.13. Hong Kong's Hang Seng slipped 0.7 per cent to 17,391.01, while the Shanghai Composite shed nearly 0.4 per cent to 2,856.58.

In Tokyo, Japan's Finance Ministry reported a 621 billion Yen (USD 4.3 billion) trade deficit in



July, as surging global prices pushed imports higher, growing nearly 17 per cent from the previous year. Robust imports underlined better consumer spending amid rising wages. Japan's exports also grew, rising 10 per cent, to destinations like the US and China.

Market watchers have their eyes on Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell's speech later this week at

an economic symposium in Jackson Hole, Wyoming.

Expectations aren't high that he will announce anything dramatic now, with nearly everyone expecting the Fed to cut interest rates next month. But markets are looking for signs of how big that cut might be.

We might get a read on how confident or otherwise the Fed is

that inflation has been tamed, and from this, markets may project the size and scope of rate cuts we might expect to see, said Tim Watter, chief market analyst at KCM Trade. The Fed chairman's take on the health of the jobs market will also be interesting to watch.

In energy trading, benchmark US crude fell 33 cents to USD 74.04 a barrel. Brent crude, the international standard, lost 4 cents to USD 77.24 a barrel.

In currency trading, the US dollar rose to 146.01 Yen from 145.13 Yen. The Euro cost USD 1.1123, down from USD 1.1132. Rate raises by Japan's central bank helped set off losses for markets around the world because they forced hedge funds to abandon a popular trade, where they borrowed Japanese Yen cheaply and invested it elsewhere. That included the worst day for Japan's stock market since the Black Monday crash of 1987. The Bank of Japan since then has allayed market jitters by signaling future moves will be gradual. (AP)

BTC chief Pramod Boro launches Bodoland Youth Employment Mission

New initiative aims to enhance employability and academic support across BTR



HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Aug 21: In a significant move to boost academic and employment opportunities in the Bodo Territorial Region (BTR), chief executive member (CEM) Pramod Boro launched the 'Bodoland Youth Employment Mission' at the BTCLA Auditorium, Kokrajhar on Wednesday. A website for the mission

was also unveiled during the event. Addressing the gathering, CEM Pramod Boro stated that the mission aims to bridge skill gaps for the youth of the region and enhance employability. He noted that, despite their hard work, some students struggle to achieve their goals due to a lack of proper guidance, motivation, and information. This initiative is

designed to address these issues. Boro emphasised the importance of raising awareness about the mission to ensure maximum benefit for students. He also announced plans to establish at least 2 or 3 smart classrooms in every college in the region to support students' educational endeavours.

Education secretary of BTC, Amar Jyoti Barman, highlighted that the Youth Employment Mission will include weekend coaching sessions in 25 colleges and higher secondary schools across Kokrajhar, Chirang, Baksa, Tamulpur, and Udalguri. These sessions will provide subject-specific guidance for various central and state government job opportunities, including grade III and grade IV positions, as well as roles in banking, railways, and defence. Expert professors and government sector specialists will lead the coaching sessions.

The event was attended by Speaker of BTCLA Kati Ram Baro, EM Wilson Hasda, political secretary to HCEM, and MCLA Madhab Ch Chetry, among other dignitaries and officials. The program saw enthusiastic participation from students across various colleges.

'Entrepreneurship, innovation & employment key to youth development'

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Aug 21: BTC chief Pramod Boro underscored the significance of entrepreneurship, innovation, and employment in fostering the development of youth in the Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR).

Speaking at a two-day entrepreneur's workshop held at the Bodoland Administrative Staff College, Kokrajhar, he remarked, "We now have an environment of peace and security that should be leveraged to explore individual opportunities in all areas of human activity. Pre-

vious generations provided a solid foundation through their knowledge of indigenous production practices and traditional economies. This foundation needs to be enhanced with modern technology, innovation, and market linkages. The focus of the youth and future entrepreneurs must be directed toward this goal. Entrepreneurship is a pathway to rapid growth."

The workshop covered topics such as startups, digital marketing, market linkages for local produce, and government of India schemes for various beneficiar-

ies.

Organised by the Department of Industries, BTC, the event featured resource persons from the government of Assam, Central Institute of Technology, BB Engineering College, and others. Notable attendees included BTC executive member Ranjit Basumatary, Prof Pranab Singh, Medalsong Ronghang, startup specialist Naba Kr Boro, managing director of Bodoland Trade & Industrial Development Corporation Ltd. Pami Brahma, and additional director of Industries Nirmal Kumar Dey.

Gamkharu NGO provides financial aid



HT Correspondent

MANGALDAI, Aug 21: An NGO called Gamkharu, established by Assamese women in Mumbai, has been holding Assamese cultural events like Bihu-husori in the month of Bohag and Naam-prasanga in the month of Bhada at Mumbai-based Assamese homes as well as in public halls.

Such customs are organised by the NGO with the intention of conserving and advancing Assamese tradition within the local Assamese community.

They also raise money through these events, which they use to annually support two Assamese cancer patients financially.

The organisation has been performing 'Bhada Mahiya Naam-Prasanga' at Mumbai's Jodh Akbar Bhawan this year.

On the first day of the program, the NGO provided financial assistance of ₹ 35,000 to each of the two patients, Hiya Gogoi (10) of Dhemaji district and Jamuna Devi (28) of Udalguri district, Assam.

Both have been afflicted with cancer.

Rigorous imprisonment for sexual offenders

HT Correspondent

NAGAON, Aug 21: A special POCSCO court in Nagaon on Tuesday sentenced two individuals to three years of rigorous imprisonment in separate cases of sexual assault on minors.

According to Swaraj Saikia, the government prosecutor, Lakhinandan Hazarika (26), a resident of Dighalidari village under Raha Police Station in Nagaon district, attempted to sexually assault a minor in 2018 during a local Bihu function.

In another case, Tuleswar Basumatary, a resident under Kachua Police Station, raped his daughter. The abuse, which began in early 2019 and continued for three months, came to light on April 2, 2019, when the child confided in her mother, leading to a complaint being filed.

The special POCSCO court sentenced both accused to three years of rigorous imprisonment and imposed a fine of ₹ 20,000 each.

Do not politicise apology by some Marwaris over assault of teenage girl: CM Himanta

GUWAHATI, Aug 21: Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Wednesday urged all "not to politicise" the apology extended by some Marwaris for allegedly assaulting a teenage girl by a person belonging to the community in Sivasagar district.

A 17-year-old arm wrestler was allegedly assaulted on August 13 by a businessman from the Marwari community, triggering protest by social and political organisations against 'non-Assamese' business owners in Sivasagar, and a public apology was demanded from the community. After cabinet minister Ranajit Pegu reached the town, a meeting was held on Tuesday to resolve the issue.

A group of Marwari community leaders knelt and offered 'paan-tamul' (betel leaves and areca nut), a traditional Assamese custom, as a part of seeking a public apology for the incident.

"The incident was related to the assault of a girl, which cannot be tolerated. The people and different organisations protested against the incident with Education and Sivasagar Guardian Minister Ranajit Pegu trying to resolve the issue", Sarma told reporters here.

The incident of tendering public apology by kneeling was criticised by some sections of people who claimed that the law should have taken its course.

The chief minister said it was the issue of the honour of a girl and the people of Sivasagar rose to protest against the incident.

"The people of Sivasagar had also protested unitedly when a daughter of the Marwari community was killed in Assam Medical College and Hospital, Dibrugarh a few years ago.

The issue of apology by the community should not be politicised," he said.

AAMSU submits memorandum to Prime Minister & stages protest in Hojai

HT Correspondent

HOJAI, Aug 21: The All Assam Minority Students' Union (AAMSU), Hojai District Committee, on the direction of its Central Committee, submitted a memorandum to the chief minister through the district commissioner, Hojai, on Tuesday.

According to reports, they also staged a two-hour sit-in protest in front of the Hojai District Commissioner's Office at Sankardevnagar. Hundreds of AAMSU members strongly demanded several actions, including: Halting the installation of smart meters by the electricity department and restoring the old meters to alleviate the burden of increased electricity bills on consumers; providing adequate compensation and rehabilitation to families affected by recent floods in Assam,



which have left many people homeless; finding a permanent solution to the erosion problem caused by the Brahmaputra and Barak rivers, which has resulted in the loss of homes and livelihoods; providing land to all landless and evicted families, including those displaced by government

projects, and ensuring their proper rehabilitation; arresting and punishing those responsible for the brutal murder of fishermen Abdul Jalil and Samir Uddin in Nagaon district on June 21, 2024, and providing ₹ 10 lakh in compensation to their families; arresting and punishing those responsible for the heinous murder of Jahangir Alam and providing ₹ 10 lakh in compensation to his family, while also uncovering the mystery surrounding the mastermind behind Jahangir Alam's murder, Sunil Gogoi.

The protest was attended by over 400 members and supporters of AAMSU, including central committee members Giyasuddin Tapadar and Monowar Hussain, and Hojai district president Kabir Ahmed Laskar.

Aryabhata Science Centre hosts seminar for National Space Day

HT Correspondent

NAGAON, Aug 21: To mark National Space Day, Aryabhata Science Centre, Nagaon, under the aegis of the Society for Socio-Economic and Environmental Protection (SSEAP), organised a series of events including a seminar, interaction program, and competition at Maruwar Hindi High School on Tuesday.

The event featured Prof Namita Ojha and Prof Bhargav Deka from Nowgong Girls' College, along with over 22 students from various schools. The seminar and competitions focused on the theme 'Artificial Intelligence: Possibilities and

Concerns'. Professor Dr B P Sharma from Tezpur Central University and Sumit Das, accounts officer at the Office of Inspector of Schools, Nagaon, served as keynote speakers, providing detailed explanations on the topic.

Additionally, a student competition was held, with Priyabrata Yogi from Fulaguri Higher Secondary School and Shahin Ahmed from Nagaon Government Girls' Higher Secondary School emerging as winners. They will represent Assam in the state-level competition, which will be held at the Nehru Science Centre, Mumbai, on November 20, a press note added.

Dulen Bora arrested for misbehaviour & fraud

HT Correspondent

NAGAON, Aug 21: Dulen Bora, a journalist with a Guwahati-based satellite TV news channel, was arrested by Nagaon police on Wednesday for misbehaving with a female physician at Nagaon BP Civil Hospital.

Sources said that the arrested journalist was presented before a local court immediately after his arrest, with the police seeking five days of custody. However, the court granted him three days of police remand, sources added.

The sources also claimed that the arrested TV journalist had taken Rs 6 lakhs from the female doctor, promising to invest it in the stock or share market and refund it with a profit. When the physician sought her money back after a few months, the journalist reportedly began threatening her and avoiding contact, sources further stated.

RPF of NF Railway nab 225 illegal migrants

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Aug 21: Continuing the fight to detect illegal Bangladeshi and Rohingya migrants, the Railway Protection Force (RPF) of Northeast Frontier Railway has nabbed 225 illegal migrants and 16 Indian agents during checks across various stations of N.F. Railway from January 1 to August 15, 2024.

In the present month itself till August 15, the RPF of N. F. Railway has detained 22 illegal migrants.

In an incident on August 1, 2024, the RPF team of Agartala jointly with GRP/Agartala conducted a routine drive at Agartala Railway Station. While checking they detected 10 suspicious persons at the station premises (3 females & 7 males).

On interrogation, they could not provide any information about their travel nor produce any valid documents. Afterwards, they confessed that they entered India illegally from Bangladesh and were planning to proceed to Delhi via train.

Later, all the illegal migrants were handed over to the Officer In-charge/Government Railway Police/Agartala for further legal action. Earlier on July 2 and 23, 2024, 11 and 4 illegal migrants respectively were nabbed from Agartala station. Several steps are taken by RPF of N. F. Railway regularly to keep a close eye on illegal migrants, Rohingyas and suspected persons at stations and trains. RPF staff deployed are very vigilant at different levels to detect any such kind of suspicious activities.

BTC chief launches 'Bodoland Calling...' book in Kokrajhar



HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Aug 21: BTC chief Pramod Boro formally inaugurated the book 'Bodoland Calling... A Journey Through Tradition, Heritage, and the Spirit of the Durand Cup' at a ceremonial event held at SAI Stadium, Kokrajhar, on Wednesday.

The book marks a significant milestone in documenting the rich cultural and natural heritage of the Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR).

It vividly portrays the breathtaking landscapes, diverse ecosystems, and unique wildlife found in the national parks and wildlife sanctuaries of BTR. Additionally, it delves into the vibrant traditions and cultural practices that define the region, while capturing the exhilarating moments of the Kokrajhar leg of the 133rd Edition of the Durand Cup. This historic tournament, Asia's oldest football event, is depicted as a unifying force that embodies the true spirit of sportsmanship.

During the inauguration, BTR chief Pramod Boro remarked, "This book not only celebrates the spirit of sportsmanship but also highlights the cultural richness of BTR, reflecting our region's growing prominence in the world of sports."

Edited by BTC principal secretary Akash Deep, BTC secretary Dithakanda Hazarika, RO cum council head of the Department of Information and Public Relations Zahid Ahmed Tapadar, and Sports CHD Swndwn Muchahary, the book features beautiful illustrations and photographs that capture the essence of BTR's natural beauty and the vibrant energy of the Durand Cup.

The launch event was attended by several dignitaries, including BTC Legislative Assembly Speaker Kati Ram Boro, BTC executive member for Sports Daobaisa Boro, GOC of 21 Division General Vishal Singh, and Brigadier Akshay Chandran of the Indian Army, along with numerous officials and football enthusiasts from across BTR.

33rd Nepali Language Recognition Day celebrated

Biswanath District AGS commemorates the day with cultural events, speeches & certificate distribution

HT Correspondent

BISWANATH CHARIALI, Aug 21: The 33rd Nepali Language Recognition Day was observed at the Shiva Mandir premises, Borbheti, Sootea, on Tuesday. The event was convened by the Biswanath District All Assam Gorkha Sammelan (AGS) in collaboration with the Borbheti branch of AGS.

The day-long program commenced with the hoisting of the institutional flag by Agni Bahadur Chetry, president of the branch committee, followed by a smriti tarpan offered by Narayan Acharya, secretary of the branch. This was followed by a plantation drive inaugurated by Ishwar Timsina, vice president.

The open session featured a chorus performed by local ladies and was chaired by Hari Prasad Sarma, president



of the Biswanath District Assam Gorkha Sammelan. Birendra Adhikari delivered the welcome address. Dr Tilak Sarma, assistant professor at THB College, highlighted the Nepali language movement and its inclusion in the 8th Schedule of the Indian Constitution on August

20, 1992.

The program was addressed by Dr Sanjib Upadhyaya, assistant professor at THB College, and Anjan Baskota, recipient of the Sahitya Akademi's Yuva Puraskar, as guests of honour. Joy Sutar, secretary of the central committee of AGS,

Arun Upadhyaya, retired professor of Biswanath College, Binod Khanal, eminent artist, and Prakash Khanal, secretary of the Biswanath District All Assam Gorkha Students' Union also spoke on the occasion.

Local artists performed a series of cultural programs throughout the day. The proceedings of the open session were conducted by Hemanta Bhattarai of the Biswanath District Committee, AGS, and Rohini Koundinya, secretary in-charge of the Biswanath District AGS. A total of 120 Gorkha recommendation certificates were distributed to the aspirants.

Nepali language received constitutional recognition on August 20, 1992, and since then, August 20 has been observed as Language Recognition Day by the Gorkha community.

SBI and Symbiotic Foods forge partnership to boost pork production

HT Correspondent

KOKRAJHAR, Aug 21: A memorandum of understanding (MoU) was signed between the State Bank of India (SBI), Regional Business Office, Tezpur, and Symbiotic Foods Private Limited, Ghoramari, Tezpur, at the DC Office Conference Hall in Udalguri on Tuesday.

The MoU signing ceremony was held in the august presence of Pramod Boro, the chief executive member of Bodoland Territorial Region; deputy CEM Gabinda Chandra Basumatary; and SBI officials of the Regional Business Office, Tezpur, including Naresh Kumar Jha.

Notably, the MoU will give a significant boost to the production of pork in Udalguri district, strengthen the local economy, generate grassroots employment, and accelerate efforts under the flagship initiative of Bodoland Pig Mission towards making BTR the 'Pig & Pork Hub' of the North East.

He said that the signing of the MoU is paving the way for bringing healthy welfare and economic development to the region. He added that the initiative of signing the MoU will significantly boost pork production in Udalguri district, strengthen the local economy, and generate grassroots employment.

"The MoU will give a significant boost to the production of pork in Udalguri district, strengthen the local economy, generate grassroots employment, and accelerate efforts under our flagship initiative, Bodoland Pig Mission, towards making BTR the 'Pig & Pork Hub' of the North East," CEM Boro said.

The MoU signing ceremony was attended by BTR EMs Dr Nilut Swargiary and Rakesh Brahma; MCLA Dipak Mour; Javir Rahul Suresh, IAS, DC Udalguri; S Subramanian, DGM, ABU, SBI, LHO, Guwahati; and senior representatives of Symbiotic Foods Pvt. Ltd.

Form No. 3 (See Regulation-15 (1)(a)) / 16(3)	
DEBTS RECOVERY TRIBUNAL GUWAHATI Suwama Bhaawan, House No. 12, New Town Path, Near Hanuman Mandir, G.S. Road, Uilbari, Guwahati- 781007 (Assam)	
Case No.: DA/152/2024	Ext. No.: 4295
Summons under sub-section (4) of section 19 of the Act, read with sub-rule (2A) of rule 5 of the Debt Recovery Tribunal (Procedure) Rules, 1993.	
YES BANK LTD	
VS	
MR. ANUJ SAIKIA & Anr	
To, (1) MR. NILANJAN BORUAH D NO (2) S/O-NOBIN CHANDRA BORUAH R/O 10 CHINAKI PATH OPPOSITE WIRELESS RUKMINI NAGAR ASSAM SACHINWALA KAMRUP METRO GUWAHATI ASSAM- 781006	
SUMMONS	
WHEREAS, DA/152/2024 was listed before Hon'ble Presiding Officer/Registrar on 02/08/2024.	
WHEREAS this Hon'ble Tribunal is pleased to issue summons/ notice on the said Application under section 19(4) of the Act, (OA) filed against you for recovery of debts of Rs. 93.91.745.30/- (application along with copies of documents etc. annexed).	
In accordance with sub-section (4) of section 19 of the Act, you the defendants are directed as under:	
(i) To show cause within thirty days of the service of summons publication thereof as to why relief prayed for should not be granted;	
(ii) To disclose particulars of properties or assets other than properties and assets specified by the applicant under serial number 3A of the original application;	
(iii) You are restrained from dealing with or disposing of secured assets or such other assets and properties disclosed under serial number 3A of the original application, pending hearing and disposal of the application for attachment of properties;	
(iv) You shall not transfer by way of sale, lease or otherwise, except in the ordinary course of his business any of the assets over which security interest is created and/or other assets and properties specified or disclosed under serial number 3A of the original application without the prior approval of the Tribunal;	
(v) You shall be liable to account for the sale proceeds realised by sale of secured assets or other assets and properties in the ordinary course of business and deposit such sale proceeds in the account maintained with the bank or financial institutions holding security interest over such assets.	
You are also directed to file the written statement with a copy thereof furnished to the applicant and to appear before Registrar on 11/08/2024 at 11:30 A.M. failing which the application shall be heard and decided in your absence.	
Given under my hand and the seal of this Tribunal on this date: 05/08/2024.	
Seal	Signature of the Officer Authorised to issue summons Registrar Debt Recovery Tribunal, GUWAHATI
Note: Strike out whichever is not applicable.	

QUOTE OF THE DAY

I shut my eyes in order to see.
-Paul Gauguin

Rahul Gandhi's Strategic Win

The Modi government's sudden retreat on its lateral entry proposal, allowing private sector professionals to take up senior roles in government, marks a significant political victory for Congress leader Rahul Gandhi. While the withdrawal is largely seen as a response to pressure from Chirag Paswan's Lok Janshakti Party (LJP), it is clear that Gandhi's early and vocal opposition played a key role in shaping the outcome. At the heart of the debate was the fear that the lateral entry policy would dilute the representation of backward classes in senior government positions. Rahul Gandhi was among the first to raise concerns that this policy could undermine the existing quota system, which is designed to uplift marginalized communities. His intervention came at a critical time, leveraging growing apprehension among backward classes and their political allies. Gandhi's critique did not go unheard. It set off a chain reaction, rallying other opposition parties and emboldening the LJP to take a stronger stance against the proposal. Paswan's LJP, despite its limited electoral strength, wields considerable influence within the current political landscape. The party's opposition to the lateral entry plan amplified the concerns raised by Gandhi and helped build a broad-based resistance to the proposal.

For the ruling BJP, the timing of this controversy could not have been worse. With state assembly elections on the horizon and the memory of its recent electoral setbacks still fresh, the party was wary of alienating backward class voters. The fear that Gandhi and other opposition leaders could turn this issue into a rallying point against the government was a significant concern. The BJP's anxiety was further fueled by the perception that any erosion of support from backward classes could have far-reaching implications for its political fortunes. In response, the BJP attempted to counter the narrative by accusing the Congress of seeking to reallocate quotas from backward classes to Muslims. This claim was part of a broader strategy to deflect criticism and recast the debate in communal terms. However, this approach carried its own risks. Many perceived it as a divisive tactic, designed to inflame communal sentiments rather than address the substantive issues at hand. The BJP's strategy highlighted the complex dynamics at play in Indian politics, where policy decisions are often deeply intertwined with electoral calculations. The party's attempt to shift the narrative underscored the high stakes involved, particularly in the lead-up to key elections. However, the backlash against the lateral entry proposal demonstrated the sensitivity of social justice issues and the potential electoral consequences of missteps in this area.

Ultimately, the Modi government's decision to backtrack on the lateral entry policy reflects the power of public sentiment and political strategy. Rahul Gandhi's early intervention and the subsequent alignment of opposition forces against the proposal forced the BJP into a defensive position. The retreat serves as a reminder of the volatile nature of Indian politics, where policy initiatives can be swiftly reversed in the face of strong opposition and shifting public opinion. As the political landscape continues to evolve, the episode underscores the importance of social justice issues in shaping electoral outcomes. Rahul Gandhi's success in mobilizing opposition to the lateral entry plan has positioned him as a key player in the ongoing debate over quotas and representation, offering a glimpse into the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead for both the ruling party and the opposition.

A code for all: Modi's call for Secular Civil Code resonates

By: Dipak Kurmi

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, during his Independence Day speech from the Red Fort, decisively put to rest any doubts or speculations surrounding the stability of his coalition, making it clear that he maintains firm control over the government. His address reaffirmed that his objectives remain steadfast and unchanged. As expected, his speech was delivered with the characteristic vigor and unwavering resolve that have come to define his leadership.

He emphasized the need for the Secular Civil Code (SCC), pointing out that the Supreme Court has repeatedly addressed and issued rulings on the Uniform Civil Code (UCC). According to him, a significant portion of the population rightly believes that the current civil code is both communal and discriminatory, and such codes have no place in a modern society.

The call for a Secular Civil Code (SCC) has become increasingly urgent. Notably, the Prime Minister chose to use the term "Secular Civil Code" instead of the more common "Uniform Civil Code" (UCC), likely to garner broader support from opposition parties. The idea of a Uniform Civil Code was first introduced by Dr. B.R. Ambedkar in the Constituent Assembly on November 23, 1948, as draft Article 35, and it was passed without opposition.

Article 44 of the Constitution now declares, "The State shall endeavour to secure a Uniform Civil Code throughout the territory of India for the citizens." During the debates in the Constituent Assembly, amendments were proposed by Hussain Imam and others, suggesting that no group, section, or community should be forced to abandon its personal laws and that any changes to such laws should only occur with the community's prior approval.

In his response to the debate, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar highlighted that India already possesses a Uniform Code of Laws addressing nearly all areas of human relations. He pointed out that the nation has a consistent and thorough criminal code applied uniformly across the country, as laid out in the Penal Code and Criminal Procedure Code.

Dr. Ambedkar further noted that India already has a uniform framework in place with laws such as the

Transfer of Property Act, which governs property relations nationwide. Similarly, the Negotiable Instruments Act, along with other legislation, demonstrates that the country essentially operates under a unified civil code.

In the Constituent Assembly, Dr. Ambedkar argued that the Uniform Civil Code should be seen as a secular law applicable to everyone. This perspective was echoed by former Chief Justice of India, Y.V. Chandrachud, in the 1985 'Shah Bano' case.

The case centered on Shah Bano Begum, a Muslim woman who sought maintenance following her divorce by invoking Section 125 of the Code of Criminal Procedure.

The initial ruling was in Shah Bano Begum's favor, but her husband, Mohammed Ahmed Khan, challenged it by appealing to the Supreme Court. He argued that Section 125 of the Code of Criminal Procedure should not apply to Muslims as it conflicted with Muslim Personal Law.

However, the Supreme Court rejected this argument, stating that Section 125 is applicable to all individuals, regardless of their religion or personal law, and dismissed his petition. Prominent Muslim jurists, including Chaudhary Haider Hussain and former Bombay High Court Chief Justice M.C. Chagla, also strongly supported Article 44 and the Uniform Civil Code.

In the 2003 case of John Vallamattom vs Union of India, the Supreme Court once again voiced its disappointment that Article 44 of the Constitution had not been put into effect. The Court also questioned the government on whether it was prepared to implement the Uniform Civil Code.

As we approach January 26, 2025, marking the 76th Republic Day, we must reflect and ask ourselves: "Are we content to remain in a time where our laws are dictated by religion, gender, or any other class or community?"

If the answer is NO, then the implementation of the Secular Civil Code (SCC) becomes essential. Enforcing the Uniform Civil Code (UCC) would honor Dr. B. R. Ambedkar's vision, as laws should be codified without ties to any particular religion. Today's era demands a secular civil code, paving the way for liberation from religious discrimination. *(The writer can be reached at dipakkurmigpltd@gmail.com)*

Mass upsurge in Bangladesh and riots in Britain have some common factors

Can we find similarities in the antecedents to the disturbing scenes of violence frequently surfacing in different parts of the world? As has been widely reported, the recent incidents of mob violence in Bangladesh began with protests by young people, mostly students, opposing certain quotas in government jobs.

The protests then escalated into a nationwide scene of rioting, which ultimately led to the overthrow of the regime of the Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina.

Almost in the same week, we also witnessed a similar outbreak of violence and arson by 'anti-migrant and anti-immigration' groups in Britain. It started in Rotherham, where a hotel was attacked due to its supposed ownership by, or provision of refuge to, immigrants.

The protesters were reacting to fake news on social media about the death of three young girls by a young man rumoured to be a Muslim immigrant.

The violence in Britain, supported by the far-right anti-immigrant lobby, had its appeal and spread to various cities and towns, including London, Hartlepool, Middlesbrough, Liverpool, Belfast and Leeds.

The situation turned rather grave and difficult for the ruling government to control. Although these two events seem to have nothing in common except violence, can we find other similarities between them?

In Bangladesh, the initial student protests, mostly peaceful, were against the 30 percent reserved quota for descendants of freedom fighters in the 1971 Liberation War (who are usually linked to the Awami League).

The nature of the protests quickly changed, with massive gatherings of protesters, mostly young, targeting individuals and properties associated with the government and the Awami League.

They did not spare the residence of Hasina or a statue of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the

founding father of Bangladesh and arguably its most revered figure. They destroyed the Parliament House, probably viewed as a symbol of the regime they were protesting against.

Departing from the secularism upheld by the discredited previous government, the masses began attacking the minority Hindu community. The attack on Hindus was consolidated by the resurfacing of the fundamentalist Muslim organisation Jamaat-e-Islami, Bangladesh, which had been marginalised under Hasina's rule.

The Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), led by Khaleda Zia, which was in Opposition, also came to the forefront. Notably, the BNP has historically been aligned with Islamic ideals while remaining opposed to India.

By distancing itself from Bangladesh's history of liberation and India's role in its freedom movement, symbolised by the overthrowing of Mujibur Rahman's statue and similar attacks, the movement indirectly seems to have dissociated itself from the previous government's relations with India, sending a diplomatic signal.

As facts continue to emerge, it has become clear that Hasina's rule had morphed into a one-party regime, characterised by rampant corruption and effectively sidelining parliamentary democracy. Significantly, the protests and mass violence in Bangladesh reflect a combination of forces, comprising livelihood issues related to job opportunities and the revival of Islamic fundamentalism, which was suppressed under the Hasina regime.

While the revoking of the ban on Jamaat may signify the erosion of Bangla culture and language, which was fiercely protected during the historic Bhasha Andolan (language movement) on February 21, 1952, this issue will remain a challenging and contentious one for Bangladeshi citizens.

Let us explore further why students in Bangladesh took to the streets over the issue of 30 percent job reservation and how it spread as a mass movement. The students viewed the job quota as a threat to their future opportunities, which implies that there is a lack of employment opportunities, despite the official claims of a prosperous and high-growth economy.

As explained by a researcher, exports contributed more than one-fifth of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth between 2000 and 2010. The major share of exports came from the garments industry, providing 85 percent of aggregate exports in 2022-23.

In Bangladesh, garments happen to be a cheap labour industry (as well as outsourcing for foreign companies) where workers are consistently underpaid, both with the monopoly power exercised by foreign buyers and the wage compression exercised by domestic employers.

The same researcher reveals that the unemployment rate in Bangladesh in 2022 was the highest among those with advanced education, reaching 12.2 percent, while individuals with intermediate and basic education faced unemployment at 8.1 percent and 4.5 percent rates respectively during the same year. This by itself explains the resentment among young people.

While actual unemployment levels would be significantly higher if one considers the informally engaged workforce, the data above reflects the frustration of people, particularly of young students, who feared the prospect of further unemployment under the newly instituted quota regime.

The large numbers of mostly young people who joined the mob violence came with a sense of bitterness and a desire for retribution, as evident in their acts of looting and destruction of property owned by Awami League leaders and their sympathisers, which also included minority Hindus.

The mood was also prevalent in

Economic deprivation is common for many in the country, including those employed in the export-oriented garment industry. The economic deprivation provided the foundation for mobilising protests, expanding the quota-related student movement to encompass broader themes, including religion.

The damage extended beyond property, with the death toll nearing 500 due to army firing, and numerous fatalities resulting from attacks on targeted individuals and groups, particularly those labelled as 'the other'. Can we draw a parallel between the uprising in Bangladesh and the disturbing riots in Britain?

As already mentioned, the initial wave of protests in Britain came from anti-immigration groups. Their agenda was already set in terms of the desired goal of exclusion of the 'other' who do not qualify as the 'white-skinned' majority of British citizens.

In recent years, there has been an expansion of exclusionary norms adopted by British hyper-nationalists, which now encompasses not only dark-skinned African people, many of whom are Muslims, in search of sanctuary and better opportunity but also brown-skinned Muslims from the Middle East. This substantially broadens the range of those sought to be deported or attacked by the protestors, thus extending the notion of the 'other'.

Thus is born a potent mix of colonial nostalgia and White ethnonationalism and fears that the people they used to rule will now make them a minority in their own country. Racial divides were also prominent in the large-scale migration of Europeans to North America and the Pacific, nearly killing all 'aborigines' and indigenous populations of such places.

In Britain, the urge to get back the lost glory of the empire under colonialism is now visible in the prevailing attacks on immigrants from the rest of the world, mostly with skin colour darker than the White British.

The mood was also prevalent in

the nationalist desires leading to Brexit, which led to disruptions in many economic advantages for the country.

Finally, the protests are also impacted by the current wave of Islamophobia in Western countries, which has been especially fuelled by the unstable regimes leading to the flow of migrants from the Middle East. This explains the targeting of Muslims and all individuals with dark skin, who are collectively branded as the 'other' and deemed unwanted.

As it turned out, the 17-year-old boy who killed the three girls was neither a Muslim nor an African immigrant. He was born in Cardiff. His parents are of Rwandan descent. So it is pertinent to ask whether the current cycle of hatred and violence in Britain is linked to the livelihood issues faced by the protestors. In May 2024, the unemployment rates for new job seekers were 36.4 percent and 18.8 percent respectively for the 16-17 and 18-24 age groups.

Furthermore, with prices skyrocketing, Britain's inflation rate surged to 9.1 percent in 2022, a significant increase from the previous two years, which saw rates around 1 percent, and 2015, when the rate was near zero.

Additionally, living has become more expensive due to privatised transportation and cuts to the National Health Scheme.

The above facts and circumstances in Britain and Bangladesh confirm an erosion of the opportunities to sustain livelihood at basic levels of subsistence.

This has been of primary importance in instigating the pervading agitations in Bangladesh calling for the exclusion of sections of the minority population in the country and those seeking immigration in Britain. To avoid a repeat of such upheaval in other countries, there is a need to avoid situations where people reach a sub-subsistence level of livelihood. This can only be attained through governance that ensures full employment, high growth and a fair distribution of output. *(IPA Service)*

British govt's order to treat extreme misogyny as terrorism is welcome

By: Asad Mirza

In a welcome and novel move, the United Kingdom government is planning to treat extreme misogyny as a form of terrorism. However, the approach to handle the issue raises concern as relating it to terrorism, may lead to further complications.

The UK Home Secretary Yvette Cooper issued an order last week to review the country's counter-terrorism strategy to address violence against women, identify gaps in the current laws, and study emerging ideologies. According to the daily The Telegraph this move will put violence against women in the same bracket as far-right extremism. Under the proposal, it would be compulsory for school teachers to refer students they suspect of extreme misogyny to the government's counter-terrorism program. The local police will assess anyone who is referred to the program to see if they display signs of radicalisation and need to be de-radicalised.

Speaking with The Telegraph, Cooper criticising the policy adopted by the previous Conservative government's on Prevent strategy stated, "For too long, governments have failed to address the rise in extremism, both online and on our streets, and we've seen the number of young people radicalised online grow. Hateful incitement of all kinds fractures and frays the very fabric of our communities and our democracy."

Cooper further added, "Action against extremism has been badly hollowed out in recent years, just when it should have been needed most. That's why I have directed the Home Office to conduct a rapid analytical sprint on extremism, to map and monitor extremist trends, to understand the evidence about what works to disrupt and divert people away from extremist views, and to identify any gaps in existing policy that need to be addressed to crack down on those pushing harmful and hateful beliefs and violence." This comes after a senior police official warned last month that social media influencers like Andrew Tate could radicalise youth into extreme misogyny in the same way terrorists draw in their followers.

Earlier last month, the UK's National Police Chiefs' Council released a report on violence against women and girls, calling it a "national emergency." The review could mean teachers will be legally required to refer pupils they suspect of being radicalised to Prevent, the government's counter-terror programme, amid concerns that online influencers could radicalise teenage boys in extreme misogyny. According to the Cambridge Dictionary, misogyny refers to showing feelings of hating women or a belief that men are much better than women.

Prior to existing as a legal duty, Prevent was introduced in 2005 by the then Labour government as a policy targeting the Muslim community in the wake of 9/11 two years earlier. The strategy took on a more formal form in 2005, post-7/7. Cooper has previously said the last government's counter-extremism strategy was nine years out of date. She believes the review will lay the foundations for Labour to deliver on its manifesto promise of preventing people from being drawn towards hateful ideologies.

It comes after a decade of warnings from the police and former government advisers about the need to address the rise of hateful extremism and the proliferation of dangerous material online.

Last week Dame Sara Khan, who was Rishi Sunak's independent adviser on social cohesion and resilience until May this year and acted as a counter-extremism commissioner under Theresa May and Boris Johnson, told the Guardian last week said that the Tory government had left the UK wide open to far-right violence by ignoring red flags and stoking fires with a culture war agenda.

Now here rises the question that whether the government is focussing on spread of misogyny or spread of terrorist ideologies or the increasing menace of social media, used to incite hate. All three issues require different approaches to tackle them, and by clubbing them together the Home Secretary might be adopting the same approach as was used by the Conservatives to strengthen the Prevent strategy. And further there are chances that instead of making the society more cohesive it may lead to further disintegration and spread of hate.

The Guardian reports that since riots broke out across England, last month, after disinformation circulated about the stabbings in Southampton that left three girls dead, at least 72 people under the age of 18 are believed to have been charged with related offences. By the end of Thursday last, at least 460 people had appeared in magistrate's courts in connection with the disorder.

Officials will assess "the rise of Islamism and far-right extremism" alongside "ideological trends" that have gained traction including extreme misogyny. The scheme also aims to assess the causes and conduct of radicalisation of young people online and offline. BBC reported that it is not clear how long this "rapid review" will take. It is one of several policy reviews Labour has announced since coming to power in July, including the Strategic Defence Review, spending review and a review of the National Curriculum.

Critics argue that some reviews are a proxy for actual action, but Labour has pointed out that there has been no new Counter Extremism Strategy since 2015, and that an assessment of new and emerging threats is overdue.

For some years there has been concern around "Incel culture", an online movement of mainly young men who describe themselves as "involuntarily celibate" and blame women and "alpha males" for their problems. Though the Labour move is welcome, yet the approach adopted towards 'misogyny' does not look well thought out. Correlating misogyny to terrorism or radicalisation looks taking the matter, rather too far and the approach to handle it also becomes questionable. Prevent critics have long been saying that the strategy focuses on just one community i.e. Muslims alone and further no tangible benefit seems to have accrued from adopting this approach, rather it has siled the Muslim community much more.

Further, the spread of misogyny is a sociological problem and the main culprit for its spread is the online platforms. So, it would have been better if the government had taken a rather holistic view of the problem and instead of taking the reported cases to the police, they would have been dealt through counselling efforts at the school level itself. Further the government needs to handle the rising menace of social media's influence rather more seriously and make efforts to bring-in a law regulating it sooner and make it tougher for hate spreaders to use the medium for the spread of their nefarious ideologies. *(IPA Service)*

Thailand's new leadership can contribute to agreement on Myanmar

By: Arun Kumar Shrivastav

Recent developments offer hope that Myanmar could move towards a settlement between the military regime and the resistance forces.

These developments also hint that the imprisoned democratic leader Aung San Suu Kyi could be released to facilitate the peace process. These recent developments include Chinese foreign minister Wang Yi's sudden visit to Myanmar and meeting with Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, head of Myanmar's ruling military council, on August 14. Next, Yi headed to Thailand, where the incumbent Prime, Srettha Thavisin, was sacked by a Constitutional Court for appointing a minister with criminal background. A new Prime Minister, the 37-year Paetongtarn Shinawatra, has been appointed to the post. Paetongtarn Shinawatra is the daughter of Thaksin Shinawatra, a two-time former Prime Minister and the founder of The Pheu Thai Party. The appointment of a young female Prime Minister in Thailand has a bearing on the political developments in Myanmar.

Thailand is the gateway to international humanitarian aid and its military is believed to have a soft corner for Myanmar's military regime and it impacts the country's policies. The Chinese foreign minister's unscheduled visit to Myanmar ahead of his scheduled visit to Thailand has set rumour mills abuzz. In the last few weeks, unexpected regime change has taken place in Nepal and Bangladesh, with analysts wondering if there is a foreign hand in these developments. Now, Thailand is added to the list. In recent weeks, the Myanmar military regime has seen severe setbacks, including the capture of a regional military headquarters by the resistance. Ever since, Myanmar's military government has been talking about foreign forces interfering in the country's internal affairs, hinting at China's involvement.

China sells military hardware and ammunition, as do India and Thailand, to the Myanmar regime. At the same time, all these three countries also sympathise with the resistance forces fighting the regime. China has made significant investments in Myanmar and has ambitious plans for the country under its Belt and Road programme. In an environment where the Myanmar military is fast losing its control over the country, all these countries so far working with the Myanmar military regime are recalibrating their strategies. In this context, the sudden visit of the Chinese foreign minister to Myanmar ahead of his Thailand visit is likely having more to it than meets the eyes.

Thailand can convince the Myanmar military to strike a compromise. It's because of Thailand's say in the ASEAN, where China is often seen as too powerful, who is better kept at bay. Thailand is also the country from where essential goods enter Myanmar. Under various sanctions, air cargo to Myanmar is not an option. In recent weeks, UN agencies revealed that Thai financial system was helping sanctioned institutions in Myanmar receive funds. For Myanmar to see a turnaround in its current civil war, Thailand has to play a crucial role. It can assert its leadership for regional peace and stability and pressure the Myanmar regime to let a civilian government come and clear the mess they have created over the past three years. If a regime change is not effected through mediation, Myanmar can take longer to return to normalcy due to all the violence and bad blood if the resistance captures power by force.

There is one more reason why Thailand at this stage is more likely to assert its influence for peace in Myanmar. The 72-year-old Thai monarch Maha Vajiralongkorn is under intense pressure from the people to make the laws involving the royalty less strict. He is also believed to be weighed down by succession plans that he has yet not chalked out. In a recent interaction with the media, Vajiralongkorn said that Thailand is all about compromises, hinting he may be ready for a compromise on the strict royal laws. The Thai King controls the Thai military, and it might succeed if he comes on board with a peace plan for Myanmar.

Given the emerging power equations in Thailand, where Queen Suthida and Prime Minister Paetongtarn Shinawatra are expected to wield considerable power in the next three to five years, the presence of Aung San Suu Kyi in neighbouring Myanmar will be another layer of support for them. China doesn't open its cards, but what the world knows about them is they care about their investments and business interests. In the changing ground reality in Myanmar, China would need to tweak its policies and be seen as a facilitator rather than a roadblock for peace in Myanmar. This alone would help its business and investments in Myanmar. *(IPA Service)*

Guwahati: A sanctuary of biodiversity and ecosystem in the global landscape

By: Mowsam Hazarika

Guwahati, often referred to as the gateway to Northeast India, is more than just a bustling city. It is a vibrant ecosystem teeming with life, a rich tapestry of biodiversity, and a unique topography that sets it apart on the global stage. The common perception of Guwahati is one of urban challenges - congestion, pollution, and rapid, unplanned growth. However, to view the city solely through this lens is to miss the deeper, more profound significance of this ancient land. Guwahati, with its hills, rivers, and plains, is a place where the natural world thrives alongside human civilization, offering a unique blend of nature and culture that is rare in today's rapidly urbanizing world.

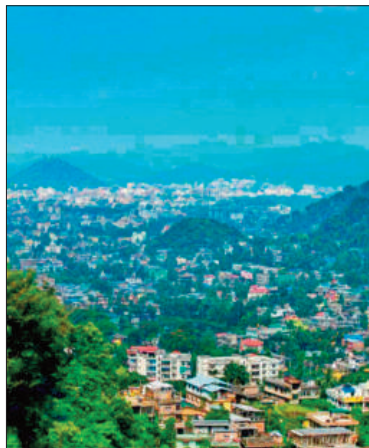
Nestled along the banks of the mighty Brahmaputra River, Guwahati is a city that has flourished for centuries. Its strategic location has made it a hub for trade, culture, and spirituality. Yet, beyond the hustle and bustle of daily life, lies a rich and diverse ecosystem that is critical not only to the region but to the world. The city is surrounded by hills that are home to a wide array of flora and fauna, some of which are found nowhere else on Earth. The Brahmaputra River, one of

the world's major rivers, supports a myriad of aquatic species, and its floodplains are a haven for migratory birds and other wildlife.

One of the most remarkable aspects of Guwahati's biodiversity is its incredible variety of plant life. The city is located in one of the world's biodiversity hotspots, the Eastern Himalayas, which means it is home to an extraordinary number of species. The hills surrounding Guwahati, such as the Nilachal, Narakasur, and Sarania hills, are covered with dense forests that are rich in medicinal plants, rare orchids, and other flora that have significant ecological and economic value. These forests are not just important for their biodiversity; they also play a critical role in regulating the climate of the region, preventing soil erosion, and maintaining the water cycle.

The presence of such rich biodiversity in and around Guwahati is a testa-

ment to the city's unique topography and climate. The city's location at the confluence of the Brahmaputra River and its tributaries creates a variety of habitats that support a wide range of species. The wetlands, grasslands, and forests of Guwahati are interconnected in a delicate balance, each playing a role in sustaining the overall ecosystem. For instance, the Deepor Beel, a Ramsar site located on the outskirts of the city, is one of the most important wetlands in Assam and serves as a crucial stopover for migratory birds. The wetland is also home to several endangered species, including the greater adjutant stork, and plays a vital role in flood control and groundwater. (The author is a poet, freelance



science journalist and People's Science Activist. He is the former Director, Assam Seed and Organic Certification Agency & Former Joint Director of Agriculture (Pulse), Department of Agriculture, Assam)

Madhai: Where Tigers roam free & conservation efforts

By: Lakshya Bhagnani

Nestled in the heart of India, Madhai is a hidden gem for wildlife enthusiasts and conservationists alike. This pristine region, part of the larger Satpura Tiger Reserve in Madhya Pradesh, is a testament to India's robust conservation efforts. Home to a significant population of tigers, Madhai stands as a beacon of hope in the battle to preserve these majestic creatures. This blog delves into the conservation efforts that have made Madhai a safe haven for tigers and highlights some of the remarkable success stories that underscore its importance.

The Heart of Tiger Conservation

A vital component of the Satpura Tiger Reserve, a hotspot for biodiversity recognized for its abundant flora and animals, is Madhai. The reserve covers a sprawling area of approximately 1427 square kilometers, providing an extensive habitat for tigers. The dense forests, interspersed with rivers and streams, create an ideal environment for these big cats to thrive. The landscape of Madhai is a perfect blend of rugged terrain and serene water bodies, offering both prey and shelter for the tigers.

Key Conservation Efforts Anti-Poaching Measures

One of the significant threats to tiger populations globally is poaching. In Madhai, stringent anti-poaching measures have been implemented to curb this menace. Forest guards are equipped with modern surveillance tools, including drones and camera traps, to monitor tiger movements and track potential poachers. Regular patrols and the establishment of anti-poaching camps have significantly reduced illegal activities in the region.

Community Involvement

Successful conservation cannot happen in isolation. In Madhai, local communities play a pivotal role in protecting tigers. Conservation programs have been designed to involve the indigenous populations, providing them with alternative livelihoods to reduce their dependence on forest resources. Ecotourism is one such initiative that has gained momentum, offering locals employment opportunities while educating visitors about the importance of wildlife conservation.

Habitat Restoration

Habitat degradation is another critical issue addressed by the conservation efforts in Madhai. Reforestation projects and the rehabilitation of degraded lands have been undertaken to en-

sure a sustainable habitat for tigers and other wildlife. These efforts include planting native species and restoring natural water bodies, which are essential for maintaining the ecological balance of the region.

Success Stories from Madhai Tiger Population Growth

One of the most remarkable success stories from Madhai is the steady increase in the tiger population. From just a handful of tigers a decade ago, the population has shown a significant rise, thanks to the concerted conservation efforts. Today, the Satpura Tiger Reserve is home to a sizable tiger population, making it one of India's most important tiger habitats.

Human-Tiger Coexistence

Madhai has also set a precedent in fostering human-tiger coexistence. Through continuous awareness programs and community engagement, incidents of human-tiger conflict have drastically reduced. The locals now view tigers as an integral part of their ecosystem, leading to a harmonious coexistence that benefits both humans and wildlife.

Technological Integration

The integration of technology in conservation practices has yielded impressive results in Madhai. The use of camera traps and GPS collars has provided valuable data on tiger movements and behavior, aiding in more effective management of the reserve. This technological approach has also helped in swift action against poaching and in ensuring the safety of both tigers and the forest staff.

Madhai Jungle Resort offers a comfortable stay amidst the serene wilderness, making it one of the best Madai resort in MP for wildlife enthusiasts

Conclusion

Madhai stands as a testament to what can be achieved through dedicated conservation efforts and community involvement. The success stories from this region highlight the importance of protecting our natural heritage and the crucial role that tigers play in maintaining ecological balance. As we look towards the future, Madhai's model of conservation offers valuable lessons and hope for tiger conservation efforts worldwide.

By prioritizing sustainable practices, leveraging technology, and involving local communities, Madhai has created a sanctuary where tigers can roam free and thrive. This amazing area not only highlights the value of protecting our animals but also the possibility of peaceful coexistence between people and the natural world. (Courtesy: Youth Ki Awaaz)

Unfolding crisis: Darjeeling's growing floating population poses water, waste challenges

By: Tanva Ahmed & Sachin Sahani

The scenic hill town of Darjeeling is famous for its 3T's - Tea, Timber, and Tourists. Originally established as a British sanatorium, it quickly earned the nickname 'Queen of Hills' and has become a popular tourist spot. The charming town welcomes visitors with stunning landscapes, drifting clouds, and pleasant weather, along with forested ridges adorned with numerous hotels, guesthouses, and homestays that cater to every luxury a tourist desires.

However, the other side of this hill station is marked by the struggles of Darjeeling's residents, who face challenges with basic water and sanitation services.

Darjeeling has become synonymous with water scarcity, still depending on the water supply system set up by the British government between 1910 and 1915 for just 10,000 residents. However, the city's current population is around 118,805 (Census of India, 2011). This unexpected growth has posed a major challenge in the proper planning and installation of crucial municipal services like water and sewage systems.

The city presents a dual effect, offering increased options for accommodating tourists, while also raising concerns about the capacity of the city to absorb this rampant growth and the pressure it exerts on municipal services.

The pristine beauty of the city (top) stands in stark contrast with the harsh reality of waste mismanagement.

Darjeeling is located on a landscape with uneven layers, leading most homes to depend on stacked stairs and narrow, slippery paths for access. The electric wires and water pipelines are intertwined, demonstrating a harmonious coexistence that highlights a symbiotic relationship between fire and water elements.

During our field-based study for developing the city sanitation plan for Darjeeling, an interview with Bandana, a sanitation worker, or Nirmal

Bandhu where bandhu literally translates to friend or brother and is the state equivalent of the Swachh Saathi under the Swachh Bharat Mission, conveyed a notable emphasis on the challenges of managing household solid waste during the monsoon. "Sab log kachara jhora mai dal dete hain." (People usually throw household waste into the drains going down the hill, which we learned was a



common practice).

In Darjeeling, jhoras are local stormwater drains or flood harvesting systems that play a vital role in managing excess water during storms. Similar to the Aahar Pynes in Bihar and Nullahs in the northern regions, these systems help to prevent flooding and protect the local environment.

This drain, among others, leads to one of the most visited sites, Rockville Garden, a picturesque tourist location known for its natural waterfall. The mismanaged disposal of waste has further exacerbated the problem of solid waste, creating a mountain of waste amid the scenic Eastern Himalayan mountain range.

Many public and community toilets throughout the city are out of order and missing essential facilities like clean toilet seats, septic tanks, steady water supply, hand-washing stations and electricity. This results in human waste directly entering open drains that flow into downstream water bodies, and in some instances, waste is left unflushed, posing a serious public health risk.

The city relies on natural springs, rainwater collection and an inconsistent municipal water supply, with the administration completely relying on the British-based water supply systems which have reached their utmost potential.

The floating population has quadrupled in the recent time, and Darjeeling has struggled with severe traffic congestion for several years, particularly during the tourist season.

The traffic jams due to the tourist influx during peak season are causing significant problems on roads, even after adhering to the local government's directives, the traffic issue remains consistent. - Pasang Sherpa, president of the Himalayan Transport Coordination Committee.

Implementing central schemes such as Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation (AMRUT) 1.0 and 2.0 and Swachh Bharat Mission is anticipated to generate positive changes

regarding water supply and sanitation practices.

However, there is room for further improvement, especially since current water sources, like Senchal Lake and natural springs, need to be augmented to effectively cater to the burgeoning population.

The condition of the community toilets and public toilets in the city also reflects the lack of awareness about safe hygiene practices among residents, raising questions about the effectiveness of the investments.

The efforts made by state-aided schemes 'Jal Dhoro-Jal Bhoro' to build citizens' awareness of rainwater harvesting and its usage have shown the potential Darjeeling holds towards addressing water scarcity with almost every household practising rainwater harvesting.

Samaj, a community-based organisation that functions at the grassroots level, has emerged across wards in recent years making water everybody's business irrespective of caste, religion or community.

Each household connected with the Samaj contributes a yearly fee for maintaining the perennial source and can fill the daily quota of 60 litres of water. To sustain life in such difficult terrain, communities must adopt nature-based systems, which are scientifically tested, scalable, replicable and cost-effective in the long run.

A more decentralised approach for handling both liquid and solid waste will uplift the longevity of the natural springs, and cleanliness of stormwater drains while mitigating the chances of any potential outbreaks of sanitation-based diseases.

The hardships faced by the city of Darjeeling in providing hospitality services to the tourists are also resonated by other prominent hill stations and rapidly urbanising cities of the Indian Himalayan Region.

Considering these gaps in service deliveries, there lies great potential for knowledge sharing on safe sanitation practices from other hill cities and towns located in the In-

dian Himalayan region. A few recommendations towards making the city water-wise are as follows:

1. Promotion of sound water and waste governance practices will require alignment of policies, guidelines, and goals at local, state and central levels encouraging stakeholder participation for effective policies to create an informed decision.

2. It is necessary to create innovative financing through acquiring knowledge about and implementing PPPs using models from other sectors; providing incentive-based funding provisions under state / central governments; tied funds mentioned for water and sanitation in the 15th Finance Commission can also be leveraged to enhance the city's need for infrastructural integrity for both sanitation services and building the resilience of municipal service deliveries.

3. Innovation and technologies will need to improve data accuracy with state-of-the-art monitoring tools aligned with the Internet of Things; adopt and scale existing innovations to improve the reachability of service deliveries; adopt circularity whenever it is feasible for the longevity and sustainability of inter-dependable income groups.

4. Planning and evaluation will require metrics and an explicit feedback loop to guide policy planning and advocacy; profit from alliances that increase its capability to withstand inflation and develop resilience against loopholes such as corruption.

5. Research and capacity building will require investment in human resources through continuous investment in training to improve competencies; equity and gender considerations in capacity development activities; peer-to-peer knowledge sharing of successful models depicting similar living conditions; and information, education and communication campaigns on sanitation, water and hygiene, to bring about behavioural change toward safe sanitation in the long run. (Courtesy: Down To Earth)

Climate change intensified rainfall that triggered Wayanad landslides

By: Aathira Perinchery

Climate change made the rainfall that triggered the recent Wayanad landslides in north Kerala 10% heavier, as per a rapid study published by scientists of the World Weather Attribution (WWA) group on Wednesday (August 14). More such landslides are likely to occur, per the report. It also added that minimising deforestation and quarrying, while also improving early warning and evacuation systems, will help protect people in northern Kerala from future landslides and floods.

The multiple landslides in Meppadi panchayat in Wayanad district on July 30 claimed the lives of at least 231 people as per a recent statement by a state minister. More than 100 people are still missing, and rescue teams have retrieved 205 body parts from the area, including from the waters and banks downstream of rivers that flow through here.

Signatures of climate change in Wayanad landslides

In the aftermath of this tragedy, scientists with the WWA conducted a preliminary, rapid study of whether human-induced climate change had worsened the rainfall that triggered the landslides. The WWA is an initiative by scientists across the world to study if recent extreme weather events were caused or made more probable by it. They have also provided such preliminary immediate studies for several extreme weather events in India and Asia, including the heatwaves of 2023 and 2024.

The team of 24 researchers, including six scientists from India, studied North Kerala (districts north of Ernakulam, including Wayanad), and analysed the one-day maximum rainfall during the monsoon season here from June to September. For this, the team used a combination of both observation data across years (including data provided by the

India Meteorological Department and the US's National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration) and climate modelling (25 models across three separate modelling experiments).

Their report, published on August 14, found that climate change - a warming of 1.3°C since the pre-industrial era - has made single-day monsoon downpours in Wayanad about 10.8% heavier. This may sound small, but it marks a significant contribution of climate change to the event, the authors clarified.

Heavy rainfall is not uncommon during the monsoon season in Wayanad, noted Mariam Zachariah, one of the authors of the study, but "what set this time apart is the very heavy rainfall that fell on July 29 and 30," she said, at the team's virtual press conference on August 13. Zachariah is a researcher at the Grantham Institute, Climate Change and the Environment at Imperial College London, UK.

The IMD's data shows the rainfall in north Kerala during this time was the third highest after the 1924 floods that the state witnessed, and in 2019. It even surpassed the rainfall that led to the 2018 floods in Kerala, she added.

Several factors may have contributed

Moreover, the heavy rain that fell on the already-saturated soil in the area - characterised by "loose, erodible soils" according to the study - was another crucial factor.

"The soils in Wayanad were highly saturated, which is common in the region during the rainy monsoon season, meaning the meteorological cause of the landslide was the heavy rainfall on the preceding day of the event," the report summary said.

The report also highlighted the roles that deforestation and quarrying - the latter still continues in the district, the report quoted references as saying - may have caused in the event.

"While the linkage between land

cover, land use changes and landslide risk in Wayanad is mixed in the limited existing studies, factors such as quarrying for building materials, and a 62% reduction in forest cover, may have contributed to the increased susceptibility of the slopes to landslides when the heavy rain fell," the report said.

As per a study published in 2020, this sharp decrease in forest cover in Wayanad district occurred between 1950 and 2018; area under tea plantations increased by around 1800%. Incidentally, the area where the landslides occurred - including the village of Mundakkai, which was among the villages that bore the brunt of the landslides - is adjacent to tea estates.

"In today's climate, which is 1.3°C warmer than it would have been at the beginning of the industrial period, an event of this magnitude is expected to occur about once every 50 years," the report noted. Over the last 45 years - when the climate has warmed by 0.85°C - such heavy one-day rainfall events have become about 17% more intense, the study also said.

The need for better early warning systems

More such landslides can occur, the rapid study by the WWA has warned.

According to the report, such one-day bursts of monsoon rainfall will continue to become even heavier, risking even deadlier landslides. With Wayanad being one of the districts in Kerala that studies show is among the most susceptible to the risk of landslides, this calls for developing better early warning systems so that people can be quickly evacuated out of harm's way, the authors said at the press conference. However, the report also noted how "notoriously difficult" landslides are to predict, and that India's early warning systems are still in their infancy.

"While early warning of extreme rainfall and the potential for landslides was shared by the IMD, the information was not tailored or specific to the places

that would eventually see the landslides," the report added. "These state-level warnings are often ineffective because they do not specify which particular slopes are most at risk and cover thousands of people, making it difficult to encourage early action."

Though India's Union minister for home affairs Amit Shah said that the IMD had warned Kerala would witness heavy rainfall, Kerala's chief minister Pinarayi Vijayan has refuted the claim. The IMD's press releases also show that even on July 29 (the landslides occurred between 1 and 6 am on July 30), it only gave an orange alert for Kerala which translates to "Be Prepared". The red "Take Action" alert for the state came after the landslides occurred, Vijayan said. IMD press releases also confirm this. Interestingly, all press releases on weather updates provided by the IMD after August 1 say that "Action may be taken based on ORANGE AND RED COLOUR warnings" (stressed in capitals in the press releases) and that "Vulnerable regions likely urban and hilly areas action may be initiated for heavy rainfall warning".

The WWA report highlighted that the Wayanad disaster shows the "need for a more robust and localised early warning system that can provide accurate, timely, and actionable alerts". These warnings should also be "understandable to all and contain precise advice on actions to take" after receiving the warning, the report noted. "This requires not only technological enhancements but also improved coordination between government agencies and local communities to ensure that early warnings translate into effective early actions, ultimately saving lives."

Towards a system that works

Attribution is an important component of climate change studies and the WWA report is interesting, said Jagdish Krishnaswamy, Dean of the School of Environment and Sustainability at the Indian Institute for Human Settlements,

Bengaluru. Krishnaswamy was not involved in the WWA rapid study.

"I really appreciate that the attribution to climate change study also gave a nice summary of the factors that go into landslide generation," he told The Wire.

However, it would have been nice to have an integration of rainfall intensity related to climate change with the measured hydrologic response (such as the way water flows and circulates) which eco-hydrologists in the Western Ghats, working in instrumented catchments, have studied, he added.

For example, it would have been good to integrate the knowledge about water infiltration rates in soils in the Western Ghats ecosystems in relation to rain intensities, how headwater streams (streams, even really small ones, at higher elevations) respond to high rainfall intensities, and build up of soil moisture - types of data and evidence published from the Western Ghats, he said.

Krishnaswamy and his colleagues have worked for more than three decades on different aspects of the hydrology of the Western Ghats, and have long-term monitoring stations.

A study by Krishnaswamy and other scientists in 2017 found that subsurface watershed residence time - a measure that provides information about the storage, flow pathways, and source of water under the earth's surface, including the average time that rainwater falling in a catchment takes to reach a stream - decreases in specific ways as mean rainfall intensity rises. Current model systems, however, do not capture this well, per the study, and the predicted increases in rainfall intensity (as climate change science predicts will happen in future) could make river floods in such areas more likely.

"So shallow subsurface flow pathways [water flowing immediately below the ground] are an important part of the hydrology of the Western Ghats,

and very specifically responds to high rainfall intensity," Krishnaswamy told The Wire.

Additionally, attribution of landslides to land use change has to be done cautiously and with evidence, Krishnaswamy added.

"Of course the impact is much higher downstream because of the type of land use...we are exposing a lot of people and infrastructure to the hazard by building houses or expanding infrastructure in particular locations. But you can have some landslides originating in forested areas, even in this particular case, the landslide started in a forested area. A few years ago, the forested sites his team worked in, in the Upper Nilgiris - not far from Wayanad - was also affected by a landslide."

"Adaptation has to be very local," he told The Wire. For example, in the wet seasons, authorities in collaboration with civil society may want to consider evacuating people from certain high risk areas and have them come back to the region in the non-monsoon months to eke a livelihood out of those places, he said. This is something Krishnaswamy also spoke about in detail during an interview he gave to Asianet News after the Wayanad landslides.

"That is something that needs to be thought of very creatively," Krishnaswamy said. "Also in terms of temporary shelters for people who can move out of these areas during the monsoon and come back later."

Odisha is a good example to consider in this context, said Krishnaswamy. After the 1999 super cyclone in Odisha, responses to subsequent cyclones have improved greatly; early evacuation systems have been in place and there has hardly been any mortality.

"However, the conditions and the terrain in the Western Ghats are different so we have to design it accordingly. But we can come up with a system which will work," he said. (Courtesy: The Wire)

Putin's slow response to the Kursk attack could test the patience of some of his backers in Russia

MOSCOW, Aug 21: A year ago this week, President Vladimir Putin strode onto a stage in the Kursk region to commemorate the 80th anniversary of one of the Soviet army's proudest moments in World War II.

Addressing a rapt audience that included soldiers fresh from fighting in Ukraine, Putin called the decisive victory in the Battle of Kursk "one of the great feats of our people."

Now, as Russia prepares to celebrate the 81st anniversary of that 1943 battle on Friday, Kursk is again in the news — but for a very different reason.

On Aug. 6, Ukrainian forces made a lightning push into the region, seizing villages, taking hundreds of prisoners and forcing the evacuation of tens of thousands of civilians. Russia was caught unprepared by the offensive and reportedly is drafting conscripts to repel some of Ukraine's most battle-hardened units.

Putin has a history of responding slowly to various crises in his

tenure, and he has so far played down the attack. But 2 1/2 years after launching a war in Ukraine to remove what he called a threat to Russia, it is his own country that seems more turbulent.

He appeared uneasy at an Aug. 12 televised meeting of his security staff about Kursk, cutting off the acting regional governor who had started listing the settlements seized by Ukraine. The president and his officials referred to "the events in the Kursk region" as a "situation," or "provocation."

State media fell into line, showing evacuees queuing for aid or donating blood, as if the events in Kursk were a humanitarian disaster and not the largest attack on Russia since World War II.

In his 24 years in power, Putin has portrayed himself as the only person who can guarantee Russia's security and stability, but that image has suffered since the war began.

Russian cities have come under drone attacks and shelling from Kyiv's forces. Mercenary chief



Yevgeny Prigozhin launched a brief uprising last year to try to oust his military leaders. Gunmen stormed a Moscow concert hall and killed 145 people in March.

The Kremlin has given tacit approval to a wide-ranging purge of Defense Ministry officials, with many facing corruption charges. Lower-level officers also are being arrested on fraud charges, including Lt. Col. Konstantin Frolov, a decorated airborne brigade commander. "I would rather be in Kursk ... than here," he said while being marched in handcuffs into a Moscow police station.

While state TV drives the still-strong support for Putin despite setbacks like the Kursk incursion, it's harder to gauge the opinions of his key constituency — Russia's elites.

Putin is dependent on their acquiescence, said Ekaterina Schulmann, a nonresident scholar at the Carnegie Russia Eurasia Center in

Berlin.

"The calculation that's going on in their heads 24/7 is whether the status quo is to their advantage or not," she said.

Since the war began, life for those elites — Putin's inner circle, top bureaucrats, security and military officials, and business leaders — has gotten worse, not better. While many have been enriched by the war, they have fewer places to spend their money because of Western sanctions.

The question they are asking themselves about Putin, Schulmann said, "is whether the old man is still an asset or already a liability."

Russia's elites could be described as being in a state of "unhappy compliance," said Nigel Gould-Davies, senior fellow at the International Institute for Strategic Studies in London. They are discontented with the status quo, he said, but fearful about who would win if there were to be a leadership struggle.

They could be hoping, the ana-

lysts said, that Putin's reaction to the events in Kursk fits a pattern in which he is initially slow to respond to a crisis before eventually managing to prevail.

It's something seen since his earliest days in power — starting with the sinking 24 years ago of a nuclear submarine that was named for the Battle of Kursk.

On Aug. 19, 2000, less than a year after Putin became president, the Kursk sank in the Barents Sea after one of its torpedoes exploded, killing all 118 sailors aboard. Putin stayed on vacation early in the crisis — setting off widespread criticism — and waited five days before accepting Western offers of help that might have saved some sailors who initially survived the explosion.

Putin also appeared sluggish in responding to the June 2023 uprising by Wagner chief Prigozhin in what became the most serious challenge to his authority yet.

After the mutiny fizzled, Prigozhin initially was allowed to remain free, but Schulmann said

Putin eventually "got the last laugh" when the mercenary leader was killed a month later in a still-mysterious crash on his private plane.

As the Ukrainian offensive enters its third week, Putin sought to keep to his schedule and even embarked on a two-day trip to Azerbaijan, without mentioning the crisis. On Tuesday he briefly referred to it, promising "to fight those who commit crimes in the Kursk region."

With domestic dissent stifled and with the media firmly under his control, Putin can afford to make the "absolutely cynical" decision to ignore what is happening in the Kursk region, Schulmann said.

Still, Putin's hold on power "is unlikely to be weakened as a result of this humiliation," wrote Eugene Rumer, senior fellow and the director of the Carnegie Russia and Eurasia Program, in a commentary. "The entire Russian political and military establishment is complicit in his war and responsible for this disaster." (AP)

Israel-Hamas war latest Hezbollah fires more than 50 rockets hitting Israeli-annexed Golan Heights



JERUSALEM, Aug 21: Lebanon's Hezbollah has launched more than 50 rockets, hitting a number of private homes in the Israeli-annexed Golan Heights.

The attack on Wednesday came a day after US Secretary of State Antony Blinken met with fellow mediators Egypt and Qatar as he pressed ahead with the latest diplomatic mission to secure a cease-fire in the war in Gaza, even as Hamas and Israel signaled that challenges remain.

Hamas in a new statement called the latest proposal presented to it a "reversal" of what it agreed to previously and accused the US of acquiescing to what it called "new conditions" from Israel. There was no immediate US response.

First responders in Golan Heights said they treated a 30-year-old man who was moderately wounded with shrapnel injuries in Wednesday's attack. One house was engulfed in flames, and fire fighters said they prevented a bigger tragedy by stopping a gas leak.

Hezbollah said the attack was in response to an Israeli strike deep into Lebanon on Tuesday night that killed one and injured 19. On Tuesday, Hezbollah launched more than 200 projectiles toward Israel, after Israel targeted a Hezbollah weapons depot some 80 kilometers from the border, a significant increase in the daily skirmishes.

Israel and Hezbollah have traded near-daily strikes for more than 10 months against the backdrop of Israel's war against Hezbollah's ally, Hamas, in Gaza. The exchanges have killed more than 500 people in Lebanon — mostly militants but also includ-

ing around 100 civilians and non-combatants — and 23 soldiers and 26 civilians in Israel.

Israel captured the Golan Heights from Syria in the 1967 Mideast war and later annexed it, saying it needs the strategic plateau for its security. The United States is the only country to recognize Israel's annexation, while the rest of the international community considers the Golan to be occupied Syrian territory.

Defense Minister Yoav Gallant says Israel's military is shifting its attention from Gaza to the border with Lebanon.

Touring northern Israel on Tuesday, Gallant said Israel has scaled back its activities in Gaza, where it has been fighting a war against Hamas for nearly a year, and turned its focus to Hezbollah militants in Lebanon.

"Our strongholds are moving from the south to the north, we are gradually changing, we still have a number of missions in the south," Gallant told troops.

Hezbollah began striking Israel almost immediately after Hamas' October 7 attack. The sides have been engaged in almost daily fighting since then, raising fears of a broader region-wide war. Those fears have grown as Hezbollah has vowed retaliation for an Israeli strike in Beirut last month that killed a top Hezbollah commander.

Hezbollah launched more than 120 projectiles towards northern Israel on Tuesday, causing damage to a home and sparking a number of fires. Israel said it was striking the source of the launches. More than 500 people have been killed in Lebanon, including at least 100 civilians. In Israel, 23 soldiers and 26 civilians have been killed. (AP)

Russia downed 45 Ukrainian drones overnight, the Ministry of Defense said

Moscow comes under one of the largest Ukrainian drone attacks but destroys them all

MOSCOW, Aug 21: Moscow came under one of the largest attacks yet by Ukrainian drones since the start of fighting in 2022, Russian authorities reported on Wednesday, saying they destroyed all of those headed toward the capital.

Russia downed 45 Ukrainian drones overnight, the Ministry of Defense said. It said 11 were destroyed over the Moscow region, 23 over the Bryansk region, six over Belgorod, three over Kaluga and two over Kursk.

"This was one of the biggest attempts of all time to attack Moscow using drones," Moscow Mayor Sergey Sobyanin said on his Telegram channel. He said strong defenses around the capital made it possible to shoot down all the drones before they could hit their intended targets.

Some Russian social media channels shared videos of drones apparently being destroyed by air defense systems, which then set

off car alarms.

Alexander Bogomaz, the governor of the Bryansk region, which borders Ukraine, reported a "mass" attack on his region but that 23 drones were destroyed.

While Ukraine has been bogged down in a land conflict in eastern Europe in which the Russians have been driving forward slowly at a heavy cost to both sides, Kyiv has also been attacking Russia with drones.

Ukraine has targeted oil refineries and airfields in an attempt to weaken Russia's fighting potential, and also has targeted the capital several times.

The drone attacks come as Ukrainian forces are continuing to push into Russia's western Kursk region.

The daring incursion into Russia has raised morale in Ukraine with its surprising success and changed the dynamic of the fighting. But it's uncertain how long Ukraine will be able to hold the



territory it has seized in Kursk.

It has also opened up another front in a fight where Ukrainian forces were already badly stretched. The gains in Kursk come as Ukraine continues to lose ground in its eastern industrial region of Donbas.

The Institute for the Study of War, a think tank based in Washington, said in its daily report late Tuesday that the Ukrainians had made additional advances in their incursion, now in its third week.

The Russian state news agency

Ukrainian border. Already they appear to be slowing down Russia's response to the Kursk incursion.

Ukrainian forces appear to be striking Russian pontoon bridges and pontoon engineering equipment over the Seym in an area west of the Ukrainian advance point, the Washington think tank said.

Though few details are available, Ukraine appears to be actively seeking to hinder Russians from crossing the river.

Satellite photos from Planet Labs PBC analyzed Wednesday by The Associated Press showed a significant fire on the Seym near the village of Krasnookhtybskoe.

The blaze appeared on the northern bank of the river on Tuesday, with another fire seemingly in the village itself. Such fires are common after strikes and often signify where ongoing front-line combat is taking place. (AP)

Commercial ship 'not under command' after repeated attacks target it in Red Sea British say



DUBAI, Aug 21: A commercial ship traveling through the Red Sea came under repeated attack on Wednesday, leaving the vessel "not under command" in an assault suspected to have been carried out by Yemen's Houthi rebels, the British military said.

Few details were immediately available about the attack, though it comes during the Houthis' months long campaign targeting ships over the ongoing Israel-Hamas war in the Gaza Strip.

The attack saw men on small boats first open fire with small arms some 140 kilometers west of the rebel-held Yemeni port city of Hodeida, the British military's United

Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations center (UKMTO) said.

Three projectiles also hit the ship, it added. It wasn't immediately clear if that meant drones or missiles.

"The vessel reports being not under command," the UKMTO said, likely meaning it lost all power. "No casualties reported."

The Houthis did not immediately claim the attack, though it can take them hours or even days before their knowledge one of their assaults. The Houthis have targeted more than 80 vessels with missiles and drones since the war in Gaza started in October. They seized one vessel and sunk two in the campaign that also killed four sailors.

Other missiles and drones have been either intercepted by a US-led coalition in the Red Sea or failed to reach their targets.

The rebels maintain that they have targeted ships linked to Israel, the United States or the UK to force an end to Israel's war against Hamas in Gaza. However, many of the ships attacked have little or no connection to the conflict, including some bound for Iran.

The Houthis have also launched drones and missiles toward Israel, including an at-

tack on July 19 that killed one person and wounded 10 others in Tel Aviv. Israel responded the next day with airstrikes on the Houthi-held port city of Hodeida that hit fuel depots and electrical stations, killing and wounding a number of people, the rebels say.

After the strikes, the Houthis paused their attacks until August 3, when they hit a Liberian-flagged container ship traveling through the Gulf of Aden. A Liberian-flagged oil tanker came under a particularly intense series of attacks, beginning August 8, likely carried out by the rebels. A similar attack happened August 13 as well.

As Iran threatens to retaliate against Israel over the assassination of Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh in Tehran, the US military told the USS Abraham Lincoln aircraft carrier strike group to sail more quickly to the area. America also has ordered the the USS Georgia guided missile submarine into the Mideast, while the USS Theodore Roosevelt aircraft carrier strike group was in the Gulf of Oman.

Additional F-22 fighter jets have flown into the region and the USS Wasp, a large amphibious assault ship carrying F-35 fighter jets, is in the Mediterranean Sea. (AP)

Iran's hard-line parliament approves all members of president's Cabinet first time since 2001

TEHRAN, Aug 21: Iran's hard-line parliament on Wednesday approved all members of reformist President Masoud Pezeshkian's Cabinet, the first time in over two decades a leader has been able to get all of his officials through the body. All 19 officials won approval in an afternoon vote, the first time that's happened in Iran since 2001. Among those officials is Abbas Araghchi, 61, a career diplomat who will be Iran's new foreign minister.

Araghchi was a member of the Iranian negotiating team that reached a nuclear deal with world powers in 2015 that capped Tehran's nuclear program in return for the lifting of sanctions. In 2018, then-President Donald Trump pulled the US out of the deal and imposed more sanctions on Iran. Pezeshkian said during his presidential campaign that he would try to revive the nuclear deal. The candidate who received the most support from lawmakers was the country's new defense minister, Aziz Nasirzadeh, who received 281 votes out of 288 present lawmakers. (AP)

Bus carrying Shiite pilgrims from Pak to Iraq crashes in Iran, kills 28

TEHRAN, Aug 21: A bus carrying Shiite pilgrims from Pakistan to Iraq crashed in central Iran, killing at least 28 people, an official said Wednesday.

The crash happened on Tuesday night in the central Iranian province of Yazd, said Mohammad Ali Malekzadeh, a local emergency official, according to the state-run IRNA news agency.

Another 23 people suffered injuries in the crash, 14 of them serious, he added. He said all the bus passengers hailed from Pakistan.

There were 51 people on board at the time of the crash outside of the city of Taft, some 500 kilometers (310 miles) southeast of the Iranian capital, Tehran.

Iranian state television later broadcast images of the bus, turned upside down on the highway with its roof smashed in and all its doors open. Rescuers stepped gingerly through the broken glass and debris littering the road. In the state TV report, Malekzadeh blamed the crash on the bus brakes failing and a lack of attention by its driver.

In Pakistan, authorities described those on the bus as coming from the city of Larkana in Pakistan's southern Sindh province. Pakistan's Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif said he was "deeply saddened" by the crash and that diplomats were providing assistance to those affected. "My thoughts are with the bereaved families," Sharif said on the social platform X.

Iran has one of the world's worst traffic safety records with some 17,000 deaths annually. The grave toll is blamed on wide disregard for traffic laws, unsafe vehicles and inadequate emergency services in its vast rural areas. (AP)

Imran Khan demands open court trial of former ISI chief

ISLAMABAD, Aug 21: Jailed former prime minister Imran Khan on Wednesday demanded an open court trial of former Pakistan spy-master Lt Gen (retd.) Faiz Hameed if his links with the May 9 violence were established as then "it would not be an internal military affair."

These remarks came just two days after Khan on Monday expressed his fear that authorities were coercing the arrested former spymaster to become a state witness against him (Khan) in the May 9, 2023 riots.

After Khan was arrested in an accountability case last year, hundreds and thousands of his followers and workers of his party Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) vandalised a dozen military installations, including the Jinnah House (Lahore Corps Commander House), Mianwali Airbase and the ISI building in Faisalabad on May 9.

The Army headquarters (GHQ) in Rawalpindi too was attacked by the mob for the first time.

The arrest of Hameed, the for-

mer chief of Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), was disclosed by the military last week.

During an informal conversation with journalists at the Adiala Jail at Rawalpindi, where he has been lodged since last year, Khan said that if Hameed is "indeed the mastermind behind the May 9 conspiracy, then the trial should be held openly," adding that the incident was a local issue rather than a matter of national security.

Earlier in one of the similar informal talks with the media soon after Hameed was arrested, Khan had said it was an internal matter of the army.

"They'll make Faiz Hameed turn state witness against me," he told reporters and added, "The army chief should facilitate a transparent trial for Faiz Hameed."

Hameed, who served as director general of the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) from 2019 to 2021 when Khan was the prime minister, was arrested following action in the complaint of a private property developer over alleged misuse of official authority. (PTI)

Another case filed against former PM Hasina, her aides in B'desh

DHAKA, Aug 21: A case was filed on Wednesday against Bangladesh's deposed prime minister Sheikh Hasina and 86 others on charge of attacking a procession in Sylhet city which left several people shot and injured during the recent mass protests on August 4, taking the number of cases against her after her ouster to 33. Juber Ahmed, acting president of Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal's Sylhet city unit, filed the case with the court of Sylhet Metropolitan Magistrate Suman Bhuiya.

Hasina's sister Sheikh Rehana is also an accused in the case. According to the case statement, the accused attacked a peaceful rally, brought out by Bangladesh Nationalist Party and its associate organisations in Sylhet City's Bandarbaraz area on August 4, which left several shot and injured, The Daily Star newspaper said.

Awami League's general secretary and former road transport minister Obaidul Quader, former home minister Asaduzzaman Khan, former foreign minister Hasan Mahmud, former law minister Anisur Rahman, and former advisor to the prime minister Salman F Rahman were among people named in the case.

With this case, Hasina is now facing 33 cases against her, including 27 for murder, four for crimes against humanity and genocide, and one for abduction, the paper said.

Hasina fled to India on August 5 after resigning from her post amidst unprecedented anti-government student-led protests. The Hasina-led government was replaced by an interim government, and 84-year-old Nobel laureate Muhammad Yunus was named its Chief Adviser.

Bangladesh's interim government has said it will try those involved in the killings during the recent mass movement of the students against the Hasina-led government in the International Crimes Tribunal.

Over 230 people were killed in Bangladesh in the incidents of violence that erupted across the country following the fall of the Hasina government, taking the death toll to more than 600 since the massive protest by students against a controversial quota system in government jobs first started in mid-July.

On Tuesday, she along with five other was implicated in a case lodged over the murder of private company employee Firoj Talukder in indiscriminate shooting from a helicopter by Rapid Action Battalion (RAB) during recent anti-discrim-

ination students' movement.

Earlier Hasina, her son Sajeeb, daughter Saima and sister Rehana and 17 others were sued in a case filed over the killing of a fruit seller in the capital's Jatrabari on August 5. The victim's father, Sultan Miah, filed the case with the court of Dhaka Metropolitan Magistrate Md Shakil Ahmed. Another case was filed against Hasina and 49 others over the death of Md Omar Faruque, a student of led government in the International Crimes Tribunal.

Kabi Nazrul Government College, at Laxmibazar of Sutrapur on July 19.

Hasina and 24 others were sued for the death of 18-year-old garment worker Sohel Rana in the city's Adabor area on August 5.

In Savar, Hasina and 75 Awami League men were sued over the murder of a barber shop worker on August 5. In Narayanganj, a case was filed against Hasina, seven former ministers and lawmakers and 179 others for killing a bus helper in the Kanchpur area of Sonargaon upazila. In Rangpur, Hasina, her sister and 49 were sued over the killing of a vegetable trader during the quota reform movement on July 19. (PTI)



7,999 internally displaced people from Manipur also took refuge in the state Mizoram yet to collect biometric data of refugees in state: Minister

AIZAWL, Aug 21: The Mizoram government is yet to collect biometric data of refugees from neighbouring countries taking shelter in the state, Home Minister K Sapdanga told the assembly on Wednesday.

In a written reply to a query of opposition Mizo National Front (MNF) MLA Robert Romawia Royte, the Home minister said that the matter is being discussed with the Centre. "The state government is currently in talks with the Ministry of Home Affairs over the collection of biometric data of the refugees," the Home minister said.

Sapdanga said that 33,724 Myanmar nationals and 2,014 Zo ethnic people from Bangladesh took shelter in the state as per the record of state home department, as of August 13.

Besides, 7,999 internally displaced people from Manipur also took refuge in the state, he said.

The Myanmar people mostly from the Chin state, who share eth-



nic ties with the Mizo, have been taking shelter in Mizoram since the military takeover in February 2021, while the Bawm people, one of the Mizo tribes, from Bangladesh's Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) migrated to the northeastern state in November 2022, officials said. The Kuki-Zo people from Manipur, who also share ethnic ties with Mizos, have been taking shelter in

Mizoram since May 2023 due to ethnic violence in neighbouring Manipur, they said.

Earlier, Chief Minister Lalduhoma had said that biometric enrollment portal has been in place for collection of the data and it will be utilised in near future.

He had said that the biometric enrollment portal was prepared in accordance with the advice of

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home minister Amit Shah.

In April last year, the Union Ministry of Home Affairs had directed the governments of both Mizoram and Manipur, which share borders with Myanmar, to capture the biometric and biographic details of "illegal immigrants" in their states. In June, it directed the states that the campaign be completed by the end of September and directed both to prepare a plan and initiate the process.

Although the Mizoram government had initially processed the initiative towards the Centre direction by conducting training and appointing nodal officers, the Council of Ministers in its meeting held in September last year decided not to conduct biometric and biographic enrollment for refugees citing it is not advisable to undertake biometric and biographic preparation due to the state assembly polls to be held in November that year. (PTI)

Nagaland to cover 70% population under NFSA

HT Correspondent

DIMAPUR, Aug 21: The Nagaland government has identified 70.95% population of the state to provide food and nutritional security free of cost under the National Food Security Act (NFSA), 2013. The remaining 29.05% population is not covered under the Act as per the 2011 census.

In a notification on Wednesday, the state government said 2,37,434 households with 11,93,922 beneficiaries under the priority household (PHH) scheme and 47,500 households with 2,09,657 beneficiaries under the Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY) will be covered.

The notification said the food and civil supplies department was endeavouring to maximize coverage of non-NFSA beneficiaries by streamlining tide-over allocation.

The state government notified the guidelines for distribution of the tide over foodgrains through the targeted public distribution system (TPDS).

There are a total of 1852 fair price shops in the state - 459 in urban areas and 1,342 rural areas. Foodgrain (rice) under the NFSA



will be given free of cost only to PHH and AAY ration card holders till December 2028 as per the Government of India directive.

The government said there is an additional allocation of foodgrains to protect the annual average off-take of the last three years under normal TPDS as tide-over allocation which can be issued on payment at the government approved rate to the public on need basis through the government-appointed stockiest-cum-handling agent of the respective districts.

As per the guidelines, the beneficiaries with an annual income of Rs 2.5 lakh and above, who are not covered under AAY and PHH scheme and issued general household (GHH) ration cards, will be covered from the allocation of tide-over rice.

The notification said the GHH beneficiaries' data will be digitised and ported to the department's website to maintain transparency and accountability in the public distribution system, the notification added.

Tripura CM seeks additional NDRF, HM informed

HT Correspondent

AGARTALA, Aug 21: The Tripura government has called for the deployment of additional National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) personnel as the flood situation in the state continues to deteriorate due to incessant heavy rainfall.

As a precautionary measure, all schools, anganwadis, and colleges have been closed temporarily.

Tripura chief minister Manik Saha, addressing the gravity of the situation, spoke with Union home minister Amit Shah on Wednesday morning, urging for more NDRF teams to assist in flood response and rescue operations. Saha took to X to inform the public of his discussions with the Home Minister, stating: "Spoke to Hon'ble Union Home Minister, Shri @AmitShah Ji and briefed him on the current situation arising out of the severe flood. I also requested additional NDRF teams to support our response efforts."

The chief minister expressed his gratitude, mentioning that Home Minister Shah assured him of full support during the crisis. "I am grateful to him for providing all possible support to us at this hour," Saha added.

Since August 19, Tripura has been hit by continuous heavy rainfall, resulting in a severe flood crisis. The devastating situation has claimed the lives of seven individuals due to landslides, and more than 32,000 people have been displaced, seeking shelter in relief camps.

In light of the worsening conditions, the chief minister announced the closure of all government schools and colleges. On Facebook, Saha shared the following message: "Important Announcement: Due to the current situation and heavy rainfall, the government has declared a two-day closure for all schools on August 21st and 22nd. Additionally, all colleges will remain closed on August 21st. All students, teachers, and staff are requested to stay safe and follow the instructions."

Tripura flood: Over 32,000 in relief camps; Death toll climbs to 9

HT Correspondent

AGARTALA, Aug 21: The devastating floods triggered by incessant rainfall in Tripura have forced 32,754 people to seek shelter, with the death toll reaching 9. A report from the State Emergency Operation Centre reveals that 887 homes have sustained damage, with 17 houses destroyed, 250 severely damaged, and 620 partially affected.

To assist the displaced, the government has established 331 relief camps across the state. In the North District, 269 people are being housed in 8 camps, while 6,626 people are seeking shelter in 48 camps in Agartala District. Dhalai District has opened 33 relief camps, sheltering 2,057 people. Sepahijala District has 5 relief camps with 109 people in them, and West District has accommodated 7,549 people across 26 camps. In Khowai District, 46 camps have been set up, housing 7,138 people, while Gomati District has opened 132 camps for 6,759 people. South District has also set up 35 camps, sheltering 2,333 people. Tragically, the floodwaters claimed the life of a four-year-old boy, Ritik Debbarma, who drowned in West Koromura under Bismarjanja, West District. In a separate incident, a woman named Milani Debbarma lost her life after a mud wall collapsed on her in Boxanagar, Sepahijala District. On 20th August, seven other individuals lost their lives, while two remain missing.

All major rivers, including the Howrah and Feni, are flowing above critical levels, while the Gomati and Manu rivers have exceeded the extreme danger mark. The Muhuri River is also flowing above the high flood level. The India Meteorological Department (IMD) in Agartala has issued a Red Alert for the districts of West Tripura, Khowai, and Sepahijala, warning of continued heavy rainfall and the risk of further flooding.

UDP to work at grass root level ahead of assembly elections

SHILLONG, Aug 21: United Democratic Party (UDP) leader and former Home minister Lahkmen Rymbui recently said the 12 legislators would work towards strengthening the party at the grassroot level ahead of the 2028 Assembly elections.

His statement came a day after three Congress legislators merged with the ruling National People's Party (NPP). "The UDP is the oldest and largest regional party in the state. So every party is trying to strengthen their own base and is trying to strengthen their own numbers in the Assembly. So as a party, we are 12 of us (in the Assembly) so we will also try to work to strengthen our party at the grassroot so that we will see in the next election how it is," Rymbui told reporters.

On the measures taken to prevent any at-

tempt to poach the UDP MLAs, the Amlarem legislator said, "I will not use the word poaching as whoever joins any other party it is up to his own conscience, it is his own judgement as he is the best person to judge."

"For us, as of now, we are 12 of us and we won the election from UDP and we stick to the ideology of the party and we will try to do our best not only to strengthen the party but we try to analyze also as you said also why most of the MLAs join other parties but if you recall in the last term before the election, we have few MLAs who joined the party, we will not lose hope, we will continue to work and attract," he said. Rymbui however said that the main challenge before the UDP is to strengthen its base in the Garo Hills region. (NNN)

NSCN (Khango) withdraws capital punishment to contractor

HT Correspondent

DIMAPUR, Aug 21: The NSCN (Khango) agreed to unconditionally withdraw its imposition of capital punishment to contractor K Rulho, proprietor of M/s KKB Rulho, with immediate effect. The decision was taken at a meeting, facilitated by the Ceasefire Monitoring Board (CFMB), between the Angami Youth Organisation (AYO) and the NSCN (Khango) held to deliberate on the current imbroglio between the two organisations over the issue in Kohima on Tuesday. On August 6, the AYO organised a public protest rally in Kohima to voice their protest against unabated illegal taxation, harassment, intimidation and death threats to the common people. The NSCN (Khango) also agreed to retract its directive given to the Angami Naga contractors to cease activities and demobilise their manpower and machinery currently deployed across Nagaland with immediate effect, a joint statement issued by AYO president Kesoul Christopher Ltu and general secretary Neidilhouuo Sechu and NSCN (Khango) kilo kilonser (home minister) Visheto Yephtho and CFSB supervisor A Imyapangba Ao said after the meeting.



had gone to his in-law's house in Comilla, Bangladesh, in 1988. During his visit, police raided his relative's home and arrested him for illegally entering the neighbouring country, officials said.

"At the age of 25, I was sentenced to 11 years in prison by a court in Comilla. Despite completing my sentence, I was not released and spent an additional 26 years in custody, totaling 37 years before I was allowed to return home," Shahjahan told reporters.

The injustice faced by Shahjahan came to light a few months ago through media reports. His plight attracted the attention of the Zara Foundation, an organisation dedicated to helping immigrants who be-

come trapped in foreign countries, his family said. Mousahid Ali, the chairman of the Zara Foundation, took swift action to secure Shahjahan's release. Following numerous legal proceedings, Shahjahan was finally handed over to BSF personnel at Srimantapur LCS on Tuesday, they added.

Now 62 years old, Shahjahan left home when he was young and his wife was pregnant. His son saw him for the first time physically upon his return.

"I can't express my happiness in words. I feel like I am in heaven. This is like a rebirth for me. I never thought I would return to my birthplace in this lifetime. It is the Zara Foundation that brought me back home. I will remain indebted to the organization for the rest of my life," Shahjahan said. He also alleged that he endured brutal torture during his initial 14 days in police custody. "After serving 11 years in Comilla Central Jail, I was transferred to other prisons under false charges and spent an additional 26 years there," he recounted. (PTI)

No. TDB/15th FC/78/2021-22/740

Date: 21/08/2024

Tender No. 09 OF 2024-25 INVITATION FOR BID (IFB)

The Block Development Officer, Tamulpur Development Block, Dist-Tamulpur, BTC, Assam invites bid affixing non-refundable Court fee Stamp of Rs.8.25(Rupees Eight and Twenty Five Paisa) only from the approved and eligible contractor Class-I (A,B,C), Class-II or Class-III category registered with Assam PWD (R&B)/Irrigation Deptt. for the following work under P&RD Deptt, under 15th FC (Tied Grant) for the year 2022-23 during 2024-25. Tender Box will be available for dropping tender in the Office of the Block Development Officer, Tamulpur Development Block from 22/08/2024 up to 2.00 PM on 16/09/2024 (if any holidays or Bandh falls then the subsequent day) and the tender box will be opened at the same day on 3.00 PM in same office.

Sl. No.	Name of work	Tender value (in Lakh)	Time of Completion	Tender Cost & Earnest Money & Date of offer
1.	Construction of Community Toilet at Ulubari Chowk near Banguri Rajohiwa Moncho	11.00	180 days from the date of issue of final work order.	1. Tender cost @0.03% of A/A amount to be pledged by Bank draft in favour of Principal Secretary, BTC. 2. Earnest money @2% (in case of SI/SC 1%) of estimated value to be pledged by demand draft/FDR in favour of B.D.O Tamulpur Development Block. 3. Bidders are specifically requested to inspect the field and study the working condition before submitting their offer/bid.
2.	Construction of Community Toilet at Kumarikata near Durga Mandir			
3.	Construction of Community Toilet at Bomagor Mandir			

Details NIT may be seen at Office of the B.D.O Tamulpur Development Block, Tamulpur, Dist- Tamulpur, Sd/- Block Development Officer, Tamulpur Dev. Block, Tamulpur

IPR(BTC)/C/2024-25/351

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

KarbiAnglong, 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 Rate (Inclusive GST)
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
Dist. Health Society, Karbi Anglong

No. NHM/K-Ang/Inviting Quotation/Firm/papt-2/227 rty/2019-20/70139-145

Dated: 01/03/2024

'At the age of 25, I was sentenced to 11 years in prison by a court in Comilla' Tripura man returns home after spending 37 years in Bangladesh jails

AGARTALA, Aug 21: A man from Tripura's Sepahijala district returned home after spending 37 years in Bangladesh jails. Shahjahan returned to India through the Srimantapur land customs station with the assistance of BSF personnel.

Shahjahan, a resident of Rabindranagar, a border village in Sonamura subdivision,

AFFIDAVIT

My actual name is Muzamil Hussain, which is recorded in Adhaar card, vide no 7970 -7484-2584 & Pan card number AHHPH9336G. But my name has been wrongly recorded in my HSLC vide Roll N6-091, No-0019, in as "MD. Muzamil Hussain. That, as a matter of fact Muzamil Hussain and MD. Muzamil Hussain are the names of one and single person.

Muzamil Hussain, Dhaniabhetti Pather, Batadraba, Nagaon, 782122.

7,999 internally displaced people from Manipur also took refuge in the state Mizoram yet to collect biometric data of refugees in state: Minister

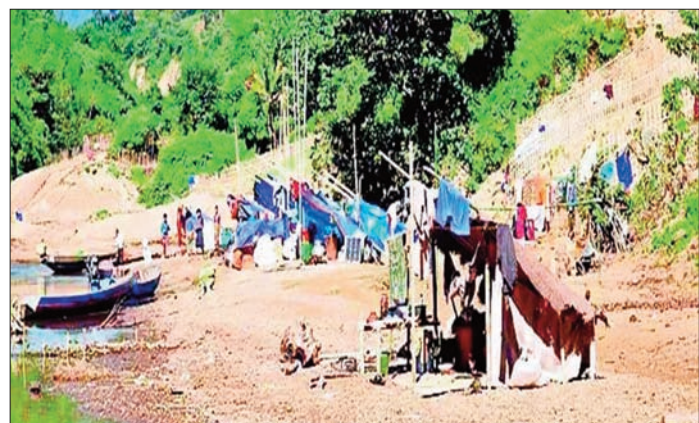
AIZAWL, Aug 21: The Mizoram government is yet to collect biometric data of refugees from neighbouring countries taking shelter in the state, Home Minister K Sapdanga told the assembly on Wednesday.

In a written reply to a query of opposition Mizo National Front (MNF) MLA Robert Romawia Royte, the Home minister said that the matter is being discussed with the Centre. "The state government is currently in talks with the Ministry of Home Affairs over the collection of biometric data of the refugees," the Home minister said.

Sapdanga said that 33,724 Myanmarese nationals and 2,014 Zo ethnic people from Bangladesh took shelter in the state as per the record of state home department, as of August 13.

Besides, 7,999 internally displaced people from Manipur also took refuge in the state, he said.

The Myanmarese people mostly from the Chin state, who share eth-



nic ties with the Mizo, have been taking shelter in Mizoram since the military takeover in February 2021, while the Bawm people, one of the Mizo tribes, from Bangladesh's Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) migrated to the northeastern state in November 2022, officials said. The Kuki-Zo people from Manipur, who also share ethnic ties with Mizos, have been taking shelter in

Mizoram since May 2023 due to ethnic violence in neighbouring Manipur, they said.

Earlier, Chief Minister Lalduhoma had said that biometric enrollment portal has been in place for collection of the data and it will be utilised in near future.

He had said that the biometric enrollment portal was prepared in accordance with the advice of

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home minister Amit Shah.

In April last year, the Union Ministry of Home Affairs had directed the governments of both Mizoram and Manipur, which share borders with Myanmar, to capture the biometric and biographic details of "illegal immigrants" in their states. In June, it directed the states that the campaign be completed by the end of September and directed both to prepare a plan and initiate the process.

Although the Mizoram government had initially processed the initiative towards the Centre direction by conducting training and appointing nodal officers, the Council of Ministers in its meeting held in September last year decided not to conduct biometric and biographic enrollment for refugees citing it is not advisable to undertake biometric and biographic preparation due to the state assembly polls to be held in November that year. (PTI)

Nagaland to cover 70% population under NFSA

HT Correspondent

DIMAPUR, Aug 21: The Nagaland government has identified 70.95% population of the state to provide food and nutritional security free of cost under the National Food Security Act (NFSA), 2013. The remaining 29.05% population is not covered under the Act as per the 2011 census.

In a notification on Wednesday, the state government said 2,37,434 households with 11,93,922 beneficiaries under the priority household (PHH) scheme and 47,500 households with 2,09,657 beneficiaries under the Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY) will be covered.

The notification said the food and civil supplies department was endeavouring to maximize coverage of non-NFSA beneficiaries by streamlining tide-over allocation.

The state government notified the guidelines for distribution of the tide over foodgrains through the targeted public distribution system (TPDS).

There are a total of 1852 fair price shops in the state - 459 in urban areas and 1,342 rural areas. Foodgrain (rice) under the NFSA



will be given free of cost only to PHH and AAY ration card holders till December 2028 as per the Government of India directive.

The government said there is an additional allocation of foodgrains to protect the annual average off-take of the last three years under normal TPDS as tide-over allocation which can be issued on payment at the government approved rate to the public on need basis through the government-appointed stockiest-cum-handling agent of the respective districts.

As per the guidelines, the beneficiaries with an annual income of Rs 2.5 lakh and above, who are not covered under AAY and PHH scheme and issued general household (GHH) ration cards, will be covered from the allocation of tide-over rice.

The notification said the GHH beneficiaries' data will be digitised and ported to the department's website to maintain transparency and accountability in the public distribution system, the notification added.

Tripura CM seeks additional NDRF, HM informed

HT Correspondent

AGARTALA, Aug 21: The Tripura government has called for the deployment of additional National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) personnel as the flood situation in the state continues to deteriorate due to incessant heavy rainfall.

As a precautionary measure, all schools, anganwadis, and colleges have been closed temporarily.

Tripura chief minister Manik Saha, addressing the gravity of the situation, spoke with Union home minister Amit Shah on Wednesday morning, urging for more NDRF teams to assist in flood response and rescue operations. Saha took to X to inform the public of his discussions with the Home Minister, stating: "Spoke to Hon'ble Union Home Minister, Shri @AmitShah Ji and briefed him on the current situation arising out of the severe flood. I also requested additional NDRF teams to support our response efforts."

The chief minister expressed his gratitude, mentioning that Home Minister Shah assured him of full support during the crisis. "I am grateful to him for providing all possible support to us at this hour," Saha added.

Since August 19, Tripura has been hit by continuous heavy rainfall, resulting in a severe flood crisis. The devastating situation has claimed the lives of seven individuals due to landslides, and more than 32,000 people have been displaced, seeking shelter in relief camps.

In light of the worsening conditions, the chief minister announced the closure of all government schools and colleges. On Facebook, Saha shared the following message: "Important Announcement: Due to the current situation and heavy rainfall, the government has declared a two-day closure for all schools on August 21st and 22nd. Additionally, all colleges will remain closed on August 21st. All students, teachers, and staff are requested to stay safe and follow the instructions."

'At the age of 25, I was sentenced to 11 years in prison by a court in Comilla' Tripura man returns home after spending 37 years in Bangladesh jails

AGARTALA, Aug 21: A man from Tripura's Sepahijala district returned home after spending 37 years in Bangladesh jails. Shahjahan returned to India through the Srimantapur land customs station with the assistance of BSF personnel.

Shahjahan, a resident of Rabindranagar, a border village in Sonamura subdivision, had gone to his in-law's house in Comilla, Bangladesh, in 1988. During his visit, police raided his relative's home and arrested him for illegally entering the neighbouring country, officials said.

"At the age of 25, I was sentenced to 11 years in prison by a court in Comilla. Despite completing my sentence, I was not released and spent an additional 26 years in custody,



totaling 37 years before I was allowed to return home," Shahjahan told reporters.

The injustice faced by Shahjahan came to light a few months ago through media reports. His plight attracted the attention of the Zara Foundation, an organisation dedicated to helping immigrants who become trapped in foreign coun-

tries, his family said.

Moushahid Ali, the chairman of the Zara Foundation, took swift action to secure Shahjahan's release. Following numerous legal proceedings, Shahjahan was finally handed over to BSF personnel at Srimantapur LCS on Tuesday, they added.

Now 62 years old, Shahja-

han left home when he was young and his wife was pregnant. His son saw him for the first time physically upon his return. "I can't express my happiness in words. I feel like I am in heaven. This is like a rebirth for me. I never thought I would return to my birthplace in this lifetime. It is the Zara Foundation that brought me back home. I will remain indebted to the organization for the rest of my life," Shahjahan said.

He also alleged that he endured brutal torture during his initial 14 days in police custody. "After serving 11 years in Comilla Central Jail, I was transferred to other prisons under false charges and spent an additional 26 years there," he recounted. (PTI)

Tripura flood: Over 32,000 in relief camps; Death toll climbs to 9

HT Correspondent

AGARTALA, Aug 21: The devastating floods triggered by incessant rainfall in Tripura have forced 32,754 people to seek shelter, with the death toll reaching 9. A report from the State Emergency Operation Centre reveals that 887 homes have sustained damage, with 17 houses destroyed, 250 severely damaged, and 620 partially affected.

To assist the displaced, the government has established 331 relief camps across the state. In the North District, 269 people are being housed in 8 camps, while 6,626 people are seeking shelter in 48 camps in Agartala District. Dhalai District has opened 33 relief camps, sheltering 2,057 people. Sepahijala District has 5 relief camps with 109 people in them, and West District has accommodated 7,549 people across 26 camps. In Khowai District, 46 camps have been set up, housing 7,138 people, while Gomati District has opened 132 camps for 6,759 people. South District has also set up 35 camps, sheltering 2,333 people. Tragically, the floodwaters claimed the life of a four-year-old boy, Ritik Debbarma, who drowned in West Koromura under Bismarjanja, West District. In a separate incident, a woman named Milani Debbarma lost her life after a mud wall collapsed on her in Boxanagar, Sepahijala District. On 20th August, seven other individuals lost their lives, while two remain missing.

All major rivers, including the Howrah and Feni, are flowing above critical levels, while the Gomati and Manu rivers have exceeded the extreme danger mark. The Muhuri River is also flowing above the high flood level. The India Meteorological Department (IMD) in Agartala has issued a Red Alert for the districts of West Tripura, Khowai, and Sepahijala, warning of continued heavy rainfall and the risk of further flooding.

UDP to work at grass root level ahead of assembly elections

SHILLONG, Aug 21: United Democratic Party (UDP) leader and former Home minister Lakhmen Rymbui recently said the 12 legislators would work towards strengthening the party at the grassroot level ahead of the 2028 Assembly elections.

His statement came a day after three Congress legislators merged with the ruling National People's Party (NPP). "The UDP is the oldest and largest regional party in the state. So every party is trying to strengthen their own base and is trying to strengthen their own numbers in the Assembly. So as a party, we are 12 of us (in the Assembly) so we will also try to work to strengthen our party at the grassroot so that we will see in the next election how it is," Rymbui told reporters.

On the measures taken to prevent any at-

tempt to poach the UDP MLAs, the Amlarem legislator said, "I will not use the word poaching as whoever joins any other party it is up to his own conscience, it is his own judgement as he is the best person to judge."

"For us, as of now, we are 12 of us and we won the election from UDP and we stick to the ideology of the party and we will try to do our best not only to strengthen the party but we try to analyze also as you said also why most of the MLAs join other parties but if you recall in the last term before the election, we have few MLAs who joined the party, we will not lose hope, we will continue to work and attract," he said. Rymbui however said that the main challenge before the UDP is to strengthen its base in the Garo Hills region. (NNN)

NSCN (Khango) withdraws capital punishment to contractor

HT Correspondent

DIMAPUR, Aug 21: The NSCN (Khango) agreed to unconditionally withdraw its imposition of capital punishment to contractor K Rulho, proprietor of M/s KKB Rulho, with immediate effect. The decision was taken at a meeting, facilitated by the Ceasefire Monitoring Board (CFMB), between the Angami Youth Organisation (AYO) and the NSCN (Khango) held to deliberate on the current imbroglio between the two organisations over the issue in Kohima on Tuesday. On August 6, the AYO organised a public protest rally in Kohima to voice their protest against unabated illegal taxation, harassment, intimidation and death threats to the common people. The NSCN (Khango) also agreed to retract its directive given to the Angami Naga contractors to cease activities and demobilise their manpower and machinery currently deployed across Nagaland with immediate effect, a joint statement issued by AYO president Kesoul Christopher Ltu and general secretary Neidilhouuo Sechu and NSCN (Khango) kilo kilonser (home minister) Visheto Yephtho and CFSB supervisor A Imyapangba Ao said after the meeting.

Mizoram to launch new healthcare scheme

AIZAWL, Aug 21: Mizoram health minister Lalrinpui on Wednesday announced plans to launch a new healthcare scheme which will cover the general population, including government employees and pensioners. The scheme, 'Universal Health Care System', is set to be intro-

duced following the signing of a loan agreement with the Asian Development Bank (ADB), which will provide Rs 1,000 crore in funding. Lalrinpui informed the state assembly that the current Mizoram Health Care Scheme, introduced by the previous Mizo National

Front (MNF) government, is being effectively implemented. However, medical bills amounting to over Rs 9.8 crore is still outstanding for 2,921 beneficiaries. Additionally, Lalrinpui said at least 243 villages in the state lack health centres or clinics. (PTI)

No. TDB/15 th FC/78/2021-22/740		Tender No. 09 OF 2024-25 INVITATION FOR BID (IFB)		Date: 21/08/2024
The Block Development Officer, Tamulpur Development Block, Dist-Tamulpur, BTC, Assam invites bid affixing non-refundable Court fee Stamp of Rs.8.25(Rupees Eight and Twenty Five Paisa) only from the approved and eligible contractor Class-I (A,B,C), Class-II or Class-III category registered with Assam PWD (R&B)/Irrigation Deptt. for the following work under P&RD Deptt, under 15 th FC (Tied Grant) for the year 2022-23 during 2024-25. Tender Box will be available for dropping tender in the Office of the Block Development Officer, Tamulpur Development Block from 22/08/2024 up to 2.00 PM on 16/09/2024 (if any holidays or Bandh falls then the subsequent day) and the tender box will be opened at the same day on 3.00 PM in same office.				
Sl. No.	Name of work	Tender value (in Lakh)	Time of Completion	Tender Cost & Earnest Money & Date of tender
1.	Construction of Community Toilet at Ulubari Chowk near Bangur Rajohiwa Moncho	11.00	180 days from the date of issue of final work order.	1. Tender cost @0.03% of A/A amount to be pledged by Bank draft in favour of Principal Secretary, BTC. 2. Earnest money @2% (in case of SI/SC 1%) of estimated value to be pledged by demand draft/FDR in favour of B.D.O Tamulpur Development Block. 3. Bidders are specifically requested to inspect the field and study the working condition before submitting their offer/bid.
2.	Construction of Community Toilet at Kumarikata near Durga Mandir			
3.	Construction of Community Toilet at Bomagor Mandir			
Details NIT may be seen at Office of the B.D.O Tamulpur Development Block, Tamulpur, Dist- Tamulpur, Sd/- Block Development Officer, Tamulpur Dev. Block, Tamulpur				
IPR(BTC)/C/2024-25/351				

OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT HEALTH SOCIETY, KARBI ANGLONG NATIONAL HEALTH MISSION KarbiAnglong, 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 paisa) 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 16 th 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 Rate (Inclusive GST)
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:				
1. Each supplier shall submit only ONE quotation.				
2. The supplier/firm shall have Licensing and Registration of Food Business. (As per food safety & standards regulation Act 2011.				
3. The firm will submit GST/PAN, Trading license along in the tender form.				
4. Location of Delivery will be at various Hospital in the District. (details will be inform in the work order)				
5. 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.				
6. 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.				
7. Payment shall be made as per availability of fund and delivery of goods and successful installation at destination as per the contract.				
8. The Bidder shall indicate the name of the Bank, address and account number Bank's Information: Name of the Bank: Account number:				
9. 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 Dist. Health Society, Karbi Anglong				
No. NHM/K-Ang/Inviting Quotation/Firm/papt-2/227 rty/2019-20/70139-145 Dated: 01/03/2024				

Apni Party announces first list of 8 candidates for J-K elections

SRINAGAR, Aug 21: Jammu and Kashmir Apni Party on Wednesday released its first list of eight candidates for the upcoming assembly elections in the union territory, according to a party spokesperson.

The list was recommended by Mohammad Dilawar Mir, chairman of the party's parliamentary affairs committee, and was approved by party president Syed Mohammad Altaf Bukhari, the spokesperson said. Earlier in the day, the Apni Party released its manifesto for the assembly elections, promising to press the Centre for constitutional guarantees to preserve culture and special identity of Jammu and Kashmir, and to work for the restoration of statehood of the Union Territory.

The manifesto was released at a press conference here by the party's general secretary Rafi Mir, who will contest from Pahalgam constituency, along with other senior leaders.

Other nominees fielded by the party for the Lok Sabha polls include Hilal Ahmad Shah who will try his luck from Anantnag, Tariq Shah Veeri from Bijbehara, and Abdul Majed Padder from D H Pora, the spokesperson said.

Party leader Riyaz Ahmad Bhat will contest from Devsar, Gowher Hassan Wani from Zainapora, Mir Altaf from Pampore, and Owais Khan from Shopian, he added.

All these seats are from south Kashmir which is going to polls in the first phase of the three-phased elections on September 18. (PTI)

Cong jabs BJP after lateral entry U-turn

'Due to strong criticism from opposition and voice raised from all over country, within just three days government had to abandon the plan of recruiting its favourite people in bureaucracy'

NEW DELHI, Aug 21: A day after the Centre withdrew the advertisement for lateral entry in bureaucracy, the Congress on Wednesday said those who were calling the Lok Sabha poll results a victory for the BJP may now be realising the true meaning of the mandate with the NDA government "forced to take a step back" four times in just two months.

Congress general secretary Jairam Ramesh said the public has halted "the non-biological prime minister" by the power of their votes.

"Those who were calling the Lok Sabha election results a victory for the BJP may now be realising the true meaning of the mandate. The NDA government has been forced to step back four times in just two months," Ramesh said in a post in Hindi on X.

"The latest example is the cancellation of the proposal of lateral entry for IAS posts.



Due to strong criticism from the opposition and the voice raised from all over the country, within just three days the government had to abandon the plan of recruiting its favourite people in the bureaucracy," the Congress leader said.

Earlier, the government had to withdraw the draft of the Broadcasting Services (Regulation) Bill, 2024 due to criticism, Ramesh said.

"The government, which has been forcibly passing bills by ignoring Parliament for 10 years, was forced to send the Waqf (Amendment) Bill to Parliament's joint committee. And in view of the huge resentment of the middle class, the government also had to restore the indexation benefit on the sale of property," he said.

Ramesh's remarks came after the Centre on Tuesday asked the UPSC to cancel the

latest lateral entry recruitment, amid a row over reservation in the advertised posts. Later, the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) cancelled the advertisement.

The opposition on Tuesday claimed that the Centre's move to withdraw the advertisement for lateral entry into bureaucracy was due to pressure exerted by it and the power of the Constitution, even as the government asserted that Prime Minister Narendra Modi has always shown his commitment towards social justice.

The Congress also claimed that the Centre's move to withdraw the advertisement for lateral entry into bureaucracy was due to the campaign by party chief Mallikarjun Kharge, Rahul Gandhi and INDIA bloc parties, and said this shows that only the power of the Constitution can defeat the "arrogance of a dictatorial regime". (PTI)

Karnataka CM accuses Gov of discrimination while approving prosecution sanction requests

Chief Minister said he has not said anywhere that Kumaraswamy would be arrested

BENGALURU, Aug 21: Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Wednesday charged the Governor Thaaawarchand Gehlot with indulging in discrimination while approving prosecution sanction requests.

He noted that the Lokayukta's Special Investigation Team has once again submitted a proposal to the Governor on Monday seeking permission to file a charge-sheet against Union Minister H D Kumaraswamy in an alleged illegal mining lease case.

The SIT had first requested Gehlot's nod in November last year to prosecute the Union Minister for Heavy Industries and Steel, who had allegedly granted mining lease to Sri Sai Venkateshwara Minerals when he was the Chief Minister in 2007 in violation of law.

Speaking to reporters at Ganigera in Koppal district, Siddaramaiah said the Governor issued show-cause notice to him on July 26, the same day he received a petition seeking sanction for his prosecution, while in Kumaraswamy's case, Gehlot has not taken any action. "Has he (the Governor) not discriminated?" the Chief Minister questioned.

Gehlot on August 16 granted sanction permitting investigation against Siddaramaiah under 17A of the Prevention of Corruption Act and prosecution under Section 218 of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023, in connection with the Mysuru Urban Development Authority (MUDA) site allotment 'scam'.

"We have not sought (the Governor's) sanction (for prosecution of Kumaraswamy) or private (individual). Sanction was sought by Lokayukta SIT. They have investigated, collected evidence, and thereafter they have sought (sanction), that means there is evidence against him (Kumaraswamy)," the Chief Minister said.

"In my case, no police officer has sought (sanction). Lokayukta

has also not sought (sanction). There is no preliminary inquiry. Despite that, sanction was given. In his case, after Lokayukta conducted investigation, they have requested for sanction (but it was not given). Is it discrimination or not? Siddaramaiah said.

Responding to questions, the Chief Minister said he has not said anywhere that Kumaraswamy would be arrested.

"If there is a circumstance (in connection with the case) to arrest him, we will arrest him without any hesitation. Such a circumstance is not there now. He is now scared that the Governor will give sanction," the Chief Minister said.

On Tuesday, Siddaramaiah had also said the Governor did not give permission to the Lokayukta to prosecute former BJP ministers Shashikala Jolle, Murugesha Nirani and G Janardhana Reddy.

Siddaramaiah has termed as "trumped-up" the allegations of irregularities in the allotment of sites to his wife Parvathi by the MUDA.

In his writ petition challenging the Governor's order in the High Court on Monday, the Chief Minister submitted that it was issued without due application of mind, in violation of statutory mandates, and contrary to constitutional principles, including the advice of the Council of Ministers, which is binding under Article 163 of the Constitution of India.

Siddaramaiah, who has vehemently denied any wrongdoing, said the Governor's decision is legally unsustainable, procedurally flawed, and motivated by extraneous considerations.

On the petition filed by him, the High Court passed interim orders directing the trial court to defer proceedings on complaints against him and further instructing that no precipitative action be taken pursuant to the sanction till August 29.

The BJP has demanded the Chief Minister's resignation to pave way for a transparent and unbiased investigation. (PTI)

WB BJP demands CM Mamata Banerjee's resignation



KOLKATA, Aug 21: The BJP West Bengal unit on Wednesday demanded the resignation of Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, alleging that the law and order situation in the state has reached its nadir under her rule.

The state BJP unit is holding a five-day demonstration to protest

the alleged rape and murder of a woman postgraduate trainee doctor at R G Kar Medical College and Hospital.

"The Chief Minister should resign as soon as possible," state BJP president Sukanta Majumdar told reporters at the demonstration venue at Shyambazar, about half a kilometre away from R G Kar Medical College and Hospital.

The Calcutta High Court on Tuesday allowed the state BJP to stage the demonstration for five days to protest the alleged rape and murder of the woman postgraduate trainee doctor.

The state had prayed that the demonstration be allowed for only one day, claiming that a five-day sit-in would affect the convenience of the general public. (PTI)

Delhi Cong to protest for SEBI chief resignation, JPC probe into Adani issue

NEW DELHI, Aug 21: Delhi Congress on Wednesday said it will stage a demonstration over the allegations of Hindenburg Research against SEBI chief Madhabi Buch, demanding her removal and constitution of a joint parliamentary committee (JPC) to probe the Adani issue.

The protest will be held at the Jantar Mantar on Thursday.

Addressing a press conference, Delhi Congress chief Devender Yadav, and Congress spokesperson Supriya Shrinatne demanded the formation of a JPC for an impartial investigation into the matter.

The Congress had said it will hold 20 press conferences across



the country on Wednesday to highlight the need for a joint parliamentary committee probe into the matter which has "widespread ramifications for the economy".

The opposition party has stepped up its attack on the government after Hindenburg Re-

search launched a fresh broadside against market regulator SEBI chairperson Madhabi Buch, claiming she and her husband had stakes in obscure offshore funds used in the alleged Adani money siphoning scandal.

SEBI Chairperson Buch and her husband have denied the allegations levelled against them as baseless and asserted that their finances are an open book.

The Adani Group has also termed Hindenburg Research's latest allegations as malicious and manipulative of select public information, saying it has no commercial relationship with the SEBI chairperson or her husband. (PTI)

Adityanath targets Akhilesh over his 'PDA' slogan

LUCKNOW, Aug 21: Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Wednesday hit out at Akhilesh Yadav over his 'PDA' slogan, accusing the Samajwadi Party president of showing disrespect towards OBC leader and former CM Kalyan Singh.

Speaking at the 'Hindu Gaurav Divas' event on the third death anniversary of Singh, Adityanath targeted Yadav for not paying tributes to Singh, a major figure in the Ram Temple movement, "instead mourning the death of gangster Mukhtar Ansari". Singh, who was the chief minister when the Babri mosque in Ayodhya was attacked by 'karsevaks' on December 6, 1992, passed away on August 21, 2021. He was posthumously awarded the country's second highest civilian honour Padma Vibhushan.

"The SP chief (Akhilesh Yadav) did not pay tributes to Babu Ji (Kalyan Singh) upon his demise, but went to offer prayers at the grave of a notorious mafia don (Mukhtar Ansari) whose hands were stained with the blood of hundreds of Hindus. Is this what PDA stands for? This is the true character of PDA," Adityanath said. He further said that the SP's actions reveal its true nature. "To understand their character, look at the incidents involving girls in Ayodhya and Kannauj. That's their character. Unless we confront them unitedly, they will continue to deceive

and mislead the people of this state," he said.

The PDA (pichhde, Dalit, alpsankhyak) slogan, introduced by SP president Yadav before the recent Lok Sabha elections, aimed to unite backward, Dalit and minority communities.

The SP and its ally Congress won 43 out of 80 Lok Sabha seats in Uttar Pradesh in the elections, posing a significant challenge to the BJP. Adityanath emphasised the importance of Hindu unity. "Hinduism is not a caste, sect, or religion. It is the guarantee of India's security, unity and integrity. As long as Sanatan Dharma remains unbroken, India will remain intact. If it disintegrates, the country will be shattered piece by piece. We must not allow this to happen," he said.

Without naming anyone, Adityanath said, "Those who attempt to divide are different in their character and face. Whenever they have had the opportunity, they have harmed Sanatan Dharma." Recalling Kalyan Singh's contributions to the Ram Janmabhoomi movement, Adityanath praised him for standing firm against the pressure of the time.

"On December 6, 1992, when the central government pressured to shoot at the karsevaks in Ayodhya, then Chief Minister Babu Ji (Kalyan Singh) refused and said he would resign if necessary. He chose the path of struggle over holding onto his position," he said. (PTI)

War of words breaks out between CM Siddaramaiah & Union Minister Kumaraswamy

BENGALURU, Aug 21: A war of words has broken out between Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and Union Minister H D Kumaraswamy over the Lokayukta's Special Investigation Team (SIT) seeking Governor's sanction to prosecute the latter in an alleged illegal mining lease case.

Siddaramaiah told reporters at Ganigera in Koppal district on Wednesday that he has not said anywhere that Kumaraswamy would be arrested in connection with the case. But the Chief Minister added: "If there is a circumstance (in connection with the case) to arrest him, we will arrest him without any hesitation. Such a circumstance is not there now.

He is now scared that the Governor (Thaaawarchand Gehlot) will give sanction," the Chief Minister said. "If he is not scared, he would not have held a press meet today."

Hitting back at the Chief Minister, Kumaraswamy told reporters here: "100 Siddaramaiahs should come (to arrest him). Do you think so (I am scared) when you see me?" Responding to this, the Chief Minister said: "It's not 100 Siddaramaiahs...It's the police who arrest Kumaraswamy...not me...one constable is enough to arrest him. Even if 100 Siddaramaiahs come, arrest can't be made. I am not arresting... arrest is done by police." (PTI)

Will resign willingly if need arises: Kumaraswamy

BENGALURU, Aug 21: Union Minister H D Kumaraswamy on Wednesday said he will willingly resign if the need arises unlike Chief Minister Siddaramaiah who found fault with Governor Thaaawarchand Gehlot's permission to investigate and prosecute him in the Mysuru Urban Development Authority land allotment 'scam'.

Reacting to the Chief Minister's allegation that the Governor was not giving consent to prosecute him, Kumaraswamy asked what stops Siddaramaiah from approaching the Supreme Court against him in connection with the alleged scam related to Sri Sai Venkateshwara Minerals.

Lokayukta's Special Investigation Team has once again submitted a proposal to the Governor on Monday seeking permission to file a charge-sheet against Kumaraswamy in the alleged illegal mining lease case.

The SIT had first requested Gehlot's nod in November last year to prosecute the Union Minister for Heavy Industries and Steel, who had allegedly granted mining lease to the private firm when he was the Chief Minister in 2007 in violation of law.

The Chief Minister on Wednesday reiterated that the Governor sanctioned in haste investigation and prosecution against him.

Accusing the Governor of discriminating against him, Siddaramaiah said Lokayukta's recommendation to prosecute Kumaraswamy has been pending with Gehlot since November 2023. (PTI)

India ready to face challenges, take advantage of fourth industrial revolution: Murmu

FARIDABAD, Aug 21: President Droupadi Murmu on Wednesday said India is ready to face the challenges posed by the fourth industrial revolution and take advantage of the opportunities that arise from it. At the 5th convocation of the J C Bose University of Science and Technology here, Murmu said technology should be used for proper and sustainable development and public interest.

Today the world is in the era of the fourth industrial revolution. India is also ready to face the challenges of this revolution and take advantage of opportunities arising from it, she said.

In achieving this national goal, the role of institutions like J C Bose University of Science and Technology will be very important, she noted.

The president noted that the university has entered into agreements with many industrial and academic institutions over the past few years. Many multinational

companies have also established Centres of Excellence on the university campus to train students.

Today, several avenues of progress have opened up due to the development of technology, she stated.

For example, access to the internet in remote areas has created online employment opportunities. But we should remember that technology should be used for proper and sustainable development and public interest. Its wrong use can be disastrous, she said.

The president appreciated the university for playing an important role in making the youth skilled and self-reliant.

The President said the university is named after great scientist and pioneer of modern science Jagadish Chandra Bose who was probably the first scientist in the world to prove scientifically that even trees and plants have feelings.

His revolutionary discovery



changed the way we look at the botanical world, the president said, while urging students to take inspiration from his life and bring positive change in society through technology. The convocation was presided over by the Haryana Governor and University Chancellor Bandaru Dattatreya.

The president conferred 13 PhD degrees and awarded two medals

and certificates to the students. A total of 1,536 students and researchers who completed their degrees in 2023 were conferred degrees, including 998 graduates, 525 postgraduates, and 13 PhDs.

Among the recipients, there were 874 male and 662 female students. With 43 per cent of the degree recipients being female students, Murmu lauded the signifi-

cant representation of women and expressed her desire to see the ratio improve further.

The president praised the university's efforts to promote research, including the introduction of the J C Bose Young Scientist Award and provisions for seed money for research.

Murmu said that the new National Education Policy focuses on promoting research and a scientific approach, with an emphasis on holistic education, the inclusion of research and internships in graduate courses, and the establishment of the National Research Foundation to promote quality research.

The president appreciated the university's initiative to implement the NEP and provide education aligned with its goals.

She also acknowledged the contribution of the Institution in making the youth skilled and self-reliant for over five decades and highlighted the impressive list

of alumni who are excelling in various fields and supporting students financially and through mentorship.

Speaking on the occasion, Dattatreya commended the significant participation of women researchers in the convocation, highlighting their growing presence and contributions in the field of technology.

He emphasised the crucial role that technology plays in elevating the nation's standing on the global technological landscape.

Vice Chancellor Sushil Kumar Tomar said the university currently offers more than 60 diverse courses, reflecting its commitment to comprehensive education.

He said the university has taken proactive steps to implement the NEP, effective from the academic year 2023-24. This includes a special focus on fostering research work, encouraging startups, promoting innovation, and enhancing placement activities, he said. (PTI)

Bharat Bandh evokes mixed response in Rajasthan

Rallies and protest march taken out in all the districts

JAIPUR, Aug 21: The Bharat Bandh called by some groups against a recent Supreme Court order on reservation for Scheduled Castes (SCs) evoked a mixed response in Rajasthan where markets remained closed and public transport services were partially affected.

"Barring two-three minor incidents that took place at different places, the bandh was peaceful across the state," Director-General of Police (DGP) U R Sahoo said.

In the last 10 days, police officials held multiple meetings at various levels with market and transport associations to ensure the bandh was observed peacefully and law and order situation remained under control, DGP Sahoo said.

Many markets across the state remained closed in view of the bandh call.

In Jaipur, the SC ST Sanyukt Sangharsh Samiti held a rally against the August 1 Supreme Court order



on the sub-classification of SCs. The rally started from Ram Niwas Garden and passed through different walled markets in the city before culminating at the garden.

"During the rally, the markets remained closed and opened after 3 pm. The bandh was peaceful,"

Suresh Saini, general secretary of Jaipur Vyapar Mahasangh, said.

He said market associations in the city voluntarily decided to keep shops closed to avoid any inconvenience to shopkeepers and customers due to the protests.

While essential services were kept

out of the bandh, public transport remained unaffected in the morning. Later, the movement of city buses in Jaipur was stopped.

Elaborate security arrangements were made across the state to maintain law and order.

Many other markets in areas like Tonk Road, Bajaj Nagar, Jhotwara, Khaitapuri and Malviya Nagar were also closed.

Some shops, however, were open. A Home Department official said police officials across districts have been instructed to ensure public safety and law and order during the bandh.

Additional police teams were deployed to prevent any untoward incidents.

Jaipur Police Commissioner Biju George Joseph issued an advisory for maintenance of law and order in all police station areas of the commissionerate.

Rallies and protest march were

taken out in all the districts.

The Rajasthan State Road Transport Corporation (RSRTC) has issued orders for safe operation of all its buses.

RSRTC Chairman and MD Sreya Guha said that in view of the Bharat Bandh, all chief managers, managing directors and traffic managers have been directed to remain present at the headquarters.

Twenty-one organisations across the country have called for the Bharat Bandh against the Supreme Court order, which they have said will harm the basic principles of reservation.

The August 1 Supreme Court order held that states are constitutionally empowered to make sub-classifications within SCs, which form a socially heterogeneous class, for granting reservation for the uplift of castes that are socially and educationally more backward among them. (PTI)

SC resumes hearing on issue of LMV driving licence

NEW DELHI, Aug 21: The Supreme Court on Wednesday decided to resume its hearing on the legal question of whether a person holding a driving licence for a light motor vehicle is also entitled to drive a transport vehicle with an unladen weight not exceeding 7,500 kg.

A five-judge Constitution bench headed by Chief Justice D Y Chandrachud took the decision after Attorney General R Venkataramani, appearing for the Centre, said though the consultations to amend the Motor Vehicles (MV) Act 1988 were "almost complete", but the proposed amendments are yet to be tabled before Parliament.

The top most law officer said the amended Bill can be presented before Parliament in the Winter session and suggested the bench either defer the hearing till it is cleared by the House or proceed with the matters.

The bench, also comprising justices Hrishikesh Roy, P S Narasimha, Pankaj Mishra and Manoj Misra, said as it has already heard the matter for some time and hence, it will proceed with the hearing without waiting for Parliament to clear amendments in the MV Act.

The legal question has given rise to various disputes over payment of claims by insurance companies in accident cases involving transport vehicles being driven by those having licences to drive LMVs.

Earlier on April 16, the bench had deferred the hearing on the issue after the attorney general submitted a note indicating that the consultations carried out by the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways have culminated in proposals for amending the MV Act that will be put before the newly-constituted Lok Sabha following general elections.

"By its communication dated April 15, 2024, the Ministry has placed on record the details of the proposed amendment to the statute. "In view of the impending General Elections, the Attorney General for India requests that these proceedings may be deferred until the last week of July 2024 so as to enable the Union government to bring forth a proposal for the amendment of the Motor Vehicles Act 1988 before the newly constituted Parliament following the General Elections," the bench had said. The impact, if any, of the amendments which are proposed

on the reference will be decided in the course of the hearing, it had said while deferring the hearing.

Prior to this, the apex court had asked the Centre if a change in law is warranted on the legal question of whether a person holding a driving licence for a light motor vehicle is entitled to legally drive a transport vehicle of a particular weight. It had also sought the assistance of the attorney general in dealing with the legal question.

Observing that these are policy issues impacting "the livelihood of lakhs of people", the court had said the government needs to take a "fresh look" at the matter, which needs to be taken up at the policy level.

"Whether a person holding a driving licence in respect of a light motor vehicle (LMV) could, on the strength of that licence, be entitled to drive a transport vehicle of light motor vehicle class having unladen weight not exceeding 7,500 kg," reads the legal question being dealt with by the court.

The bench had said ascertaining the position of the union ministry will be necessary after it was told that the apex court's 2017 verdict in the case of Mukund Dewangan versus Oriental Insurance Company Limited was accepted by the Centre and rules were amended to align those with the judgment.

In the Mukund Dewangan case, a three-judge bench of the top court had held that transport vehicles, the gross weight of which does not exceed 7,500 kg, are not excluded from the definition of an LMV. "There may be lakhs of drivers across the country who are working on the basis of the Dewangan judgment. This is not a constitutional issue. It is purely a statutory issue," the bench had said. "This is not just the question of law, but also the social impact of the law... Road safety has to be balanced with the social purpose of the law and you have to see if this causes serious hardships. We cannot decide issues of social policy in a Constitution bench," it had said. On July 18 last year, the Constitution bench commenced hearing as many as 76 petitions to deal with the legal question.

The lead petition was filed by M/s Bajaj Allianz General Insurance Company Limited.

The Motor Vehicles Act provides for different regimes for the granting of driving licences for different categories of vehicles. (PTI)

Over 65 lakh students failed class 10, 12 exams in 2023: MoE

NEW DELHI, Aug 21: Over 65 lakh students did not pass class 10 and 12 board exams across the country last year with the failure rate being higher in state boards than the central board, according to Ministry of Education (MoE) officials.

An analysis of class 10 and 12 results of 59 school boards, including 56 state boards and three national boards, revealed that more girls appeared in class 12 exam from government-managed schools but it is opposite in private schools and government-aided schools.

"Around 33.5 lakh students of class 10 are not reaching next grade. While 5.5 lakh candidates did not appear, 28 lakh failed. This is one of the cause for low retention rate and Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) at higher secondary level," a senior MoE official said.

Similarly, around 32.4 lakh class 12 students did not complete the grade. While 5.2 lakh did not appear, 27.2 lakh failed. In class 10, the student failure rate in central board stood at 6 per cent while that of state boards was much higher at 16 per cent. In class 12, the failure rate at central board is 12 per cent while that of state boards is 18 per cent. The ministry officials noted that the open school performance was poor in both the classes.

The highest number of student failure in class 10 was in Madhya Pradesh board followed by Bihar and UP. While in class 12, the highest student failure was reported from Uttar Pradesh followed by Madhya Pradesh. "Overall performance of students in 2023 declined in comparison with previous year. This could be due to larger syllabus for examination," the official said. More girls appeared for class 10 and 12 board exams from government schools than boys. "This may reflect gender bias while spending on education by parents. However, girls dominates in pass performance across government, aided and private schools," the official said. (PTI)

Protection of adolescent girls from cervical cancer WHO calls for providing lifesaving vaccines to all kids

NEW DELHI, Aug 21: The World Health Organisation on Wednesday called on the countries in its South-East Asia Region to accelerate action to protect all children with life-saving vaccines being offered under the childhood immunisation programme, focusing on those who have missed all or some doses, and protect all adolescent girls from cervical cancer.

"We should aim for a big catch-up to vaccinate all zero-dose and partially-vaccinated children, and restore the immunisation progress lost during the (COVID-19) pandemic, protect all adolescent girls from cervical cancer and accelerate efforts to eliminate measles and rubella from WHO South-East Asia by 2026," said Saima Wazed, Regional Director, WHO South-East Asia, in her inaugural address to the 15th meeting of the WHO South-East Asia Regional Immunisation Technical Advisory Group (SEAR-ITAG).

Wazed acknowledged and thanked all experts, national programme managers, immunisation champions and partners, including the vaccinators and community workers and the communities themselves, on the expanded immunisation programme completing 50 years this year.



"We can proudly say, in the last 50 years, together, immunisation programmes have helped hundreds of millions of people in our region live healthier, longer, more productive and prosperous lives," she said. "Today, the South-East Asia region continues to be free of wild polio virus transmission and has maintained elimination of maternal and neonatal tetanus as a public-health problem. Five countries have eliminated measles and rubella, and six have controlled hepatitis B through immunisation."

"Seven countries consistently reach over 90 per cent of children with three doses of diphtheria, pertussis and tetanus (DTP3) vaccines," Wazed said.

However, the region missed the target to eliminate measles and rubella by 2023. The WHO-UNICEF Estimates of National Immunisation Coverage data released last month shows slow progress and no meaningful change in childhood-immunisation coverage last year compared to 2022, and the coverage is yet to be restored to the pre-pandemic 2019 levels.

"Nearly 2.7 million (27 lakh) children in our region did not get any vaccine and another 0.6 million (six lakh) children were partially vaccinated in 2023. We need to understand where and why these children were missed and prioritise reaching them as soon as possible. No child should ever fall sick or die of any vaccine-preventable disease, when safe and effective vaccines exist to protect them," Wazed said.

The stagnation in post-pandemic recovery highlights the need to innovate, she added.

"We need to find locally-impactful approaches and most critically, enhance the political and social leadership that are the basis for intensified actions needed to meet our regional targets," Wazed said.

One of the priorities in the regional director's Regional Roadmap for Results and Resilience is "reaffirming investment in women, girls, adolescents and vulnerable populations".

"Against this, we must ensure that all adolescent girls in our region are protected and get at least one dose of HPV vaccine to protect them from cervical cancer," Wazed said.

Revitalising immunisation programmes, strengthening community-centred health systems, ensuring vaccine supply and boosting demand through community engagement are critical components for success. Policy and resources should urgently prioritise routine immunisation, particularly for measles, and focus on reducing zero-dose and partially-vaccinated children, she said. (PTI)

Internet suspended, schools remain shut in Badlapur

THANE, Aug 21: In the wake of a massive protest at Badlapur in Maharashtra's Thane district over the alleged sexual abuse of two kindergarten girls, internet services in the town were suspended while most schools remained shut on Wednesday, officials said.

At least 17 city police personnel and around eight railway cops were injured in the incidents of stone-pelting at the railway station and other parts of Badlapur during the protest on Tuesday and the investigators have arrested 72 persons in connection with the violence, they said.

According to officials, additional police force has been deployed in the town to maintain law and order, and the situation in the town is limping back to normalcy.

Entire Badlapur town virtually came to a standstill on Tuesday after thousands of protesters blocked railway tracks at the station and stormed a local school building after the alleged sexual abuse of two girls by the school sweeper in the washroom last week.

The protesters hurled stones at police personnel and vandalised the school building over the sexual abuse incident. The police cane-charged the protesters to disperse them and clear the tracks for train movement.

Talking to PTI, DCP Sudhakar Pathare said on Wednesday that internet services in the town have been suspended in the wake of the protest and subsequent violence.

"The internet services will be restored after taking a review of the situation in the town," he said. Most schools in the town remained shut on Wednesday, local people said.

"At least 17 city police personnel, including two officers, were injured as an angry mob attacked them with stones during the protest in Badlapur on Tuesday over the sexual abuse of two girls. We have registered three FIRs on charges of violation of prohibitory orders, armed unlawful assembly, assault, damage to public property, among others against the miscreants," a senior police official in Badlapur said.

The injured police personnel are being treated at different local hospitals, he said.

"A total of 40 persons have been arrested so far in connection with stone-pelting and other crimes. Attempts to identify other offenders are on. CCTV footages and video news clip-pings are being examined," he added.

Commissioner of Government Railway Police (GRP) Ravindra Shive said one FIR has been registered in connection with the violence at Badlapur railway station and 32 persons have been arrested.

"Seven to eight railway police personnel, including officials, were injured in the stone-pelting," he said. "The situation is normal and under control today," he said.

Police on August 17 arrested an attendant at the school for sexually abusing the two girls of the kindergarten. As per the complaint, he abused the girls in the toilet of the school. In the wake of the incident, the school management has suspended the principal, a class teacher and a female attendant. The state government on Tuesday ordered

the suspension of three police officials, including a senior police inspector, for alleged dereliction of duty in probing the sexual abuse of the two girls. Angry parents of the school children and local citizens, including several women, gathered outside the school on Tuesday morning and also resorted to a 'rail roko' protest at the railway station, blocking the path of local trains from around 8.30 am.

Some of the protesters, including women, later damaged the school property by breaking its gate, window panes, benches and doors.

The school where the incident happened belongs to a close relative of a BJP leader from Badlapur, sources said. Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Devendra Fadnis on Tuesday said he has ordered the formation of a special investigation team headed by senior IPS officer Arti Singh, while Chief Minister Eknath Shinde said action will be taken against the school. He said the case will be fast-tracked and the guilty won't be spared. Talking to a news channel, senior lawyer Ujjwal Nikam, who has been appointed as the special public prosecutor in the sexual abuse case, condemned the inordinate delay by the police in lodging an FIR in the case.

"This is a sensitive case. It is shameful why the police officers did not take up the matter seriously. Why the senior police officials ignored the complaint will definitely be probed and those found guilty will be punished. The most important thing is that during such cases, if the police delay in taking cognisance, then crucial evidence is lost," he said.

Opposition parties have targeted the Mahayuti government over the issue. (PTI)

28 children died of Chandipura virus since July in Gujarat: Patel

GANDHINAGAR, Aug 21: Chandipura virus has claimed the lives of 28 children under the age of 14 in Gujarat since the first case was reported in July, the state legislative assembly was informed on Wednesday.

Responding to a 'short notice question' by AAP MLA Umesh Makwana, health minister Rushikesh Patel told the House that Gujarat has so far reported 164 cases of viral encephalitis, caused by certain pathogens including the Chandipura virus, with 101 children succumbing to the infection.

Of these 164 cases detected so far, 61 were caused by the Chandipura virus, he said.

Chandipura virus causes fever, with symptoms similar to flu, and acute encephalitis (inflammation of the brain). It is transmitted by vectors like mosquitoes, ticks and sandflies.

He said the sandfly, which carries the Chandipura virus, lives in the cracks of mud houses that are very common in the hinterland.

"So far, 101 children under the age of 14 have died due to acute encephalitis. Of these, 28 have died due to Chandipura virus infection, while 73 succumbed to encephalitis caused by other viral infections," said Patel.

The minister said 63 children were discharged after treatment, while four were still under medical care. The situation is under control, he said and stressed that no new case has been reported in the past week and no death has been reported for the last 12 days.

According to the minister, the government has launched a drive across the state for vector control and containment of the Chandipura virus. (PTI)

ENGAGEMENT UNDER SAMAGRA SHIKSHA AXOM

No. SSA/Esst/Engagement/SMO/151/2023/1700

The Samagra Shiksha, Axom invites online applications from Indian Citizens (as defined in Articles 5 to 8 of the Constitution of India) for the under mentioned positions under Samagra Shiksha, Axom on contractual basis. The online applications will be received from **21.08.2024 to 04.09.2024**. The posts are temporary in nature and the selected candidates will be initially engaged for a period of 11 (eleven) months only. The contractual engagement will neither be regularized under Samagra Shiksha, Axom nor will be absorbed under any job/programme of Government of Assam in future and no person (s) so engaged shall have any right (s) to claim for permanent abortion in any post (s) in the government or in the Samagra Shiksha, Assam.

Age for categories of post : The candidate should not be less than 18 years of age and not more than 62 years of age as on 01-01-2024.

The age limit of the candidates will be calculated on the basis of the Matriculation/HSLC Admit Card or Pass Certificate issued by a recognized Board/ Council and no other document shall be accepted in lieu of the mentioned documents.

Sl No	Name of the Post	Essential Qualification and Experience	Pay in Pay Band in Rs.	Grade Pay in Rs.	No. of Post	Place
1	Officer In-charge (Research & Evaluation)	• Post Graduate Degree with 5 years of relevant experience at District or State level position in any Govt. Deptt., Society, University, College, Reputed Research Organization or, 4 years of experience as Reader, SCERT or, 5 years of experience as Lecturer, SCERT/DIET or, 10 years of experience as Instructor of BTC/ Normal School, Higher Secondary level.	30,000/- to 1,10,000/-	13300/-	01	State Mission Office
2	Officer In-charge (Special Training)	• Post Graduate Degree with 5 years of relevant experience at District or State level position in any Govt. Deptt., Society, University, College, Reputed Research Organization or, 4 years of experience as Reader, SCERT or, 5 years of experience as Lecturer, SCERT/DIET or, 10 years of experience as Instructor of BTC/ Normal School, Higher Secondary level.	30,000/- to 1,10,000/-	13300/-	01	State Mission Office

N.B.-

- The link of the recruitment portal will be available in the Samagra Shiksha website <https://ssa.assam.gov.in>
- Read the User Guidelines carefully which is available on the recruitment portal on how to submit the online application form.
- Claims for any correction will not be entertained after submitting the online registration and online application.
- Before filling the on-line application, applicant has to go through the User Guidelines for online registration and online application.
- Candidate must upload the supporting document of educational qualification, experience and others through portal.
- Only eligible candidates will have to appear in test/interview, the exact date of which will be communicated separately.
- A candidate must be in good mental and bodily health and free from any physical defect likely to interfere with the efficient discharge of his/ her duties as an Officer of the service.
- The exact date & time of the Test/ Interview will be communicated to the shortlisted candidates separately.
- Marking pattern will be on General Awareness, Personality & Aptitude, Subject matter in relevant field, Relevant Experience, etc. for the post. The applicant has to obtain minimum 50% of the total marks on the above in the interview and only then the candidates will be short-listed.
- The office will not be responsible for any non submission of online application due to any error or other problem.
- The decision of the Selection Committee in all aspects and all respects pertaining to the application and its acceptance or rejection as the case may be, conduct of test and at all consequent stages concluding in the selection or otherwise of any candidate shall be final in all respects and binding on all concerned. The Mission also reserves its right to alter and modify time and conditions laid down in the notification for conducting the various stages up to selection or withdraw the Notification at any time, duly intimating details thereof to all concerned, as warranted by any unforeseen circumstances arising during the course of this process, or as deemed necessary by the Mission at any stage.

Janasanyog /DF/847/24/22-Aug-24



Sd/-Mission Director,
Samagra Shiksha Axom
Kahilpara, Guwahati-19

Karan Johar says success of 'Stree 2' validates strength of solid storytelling, rooted content

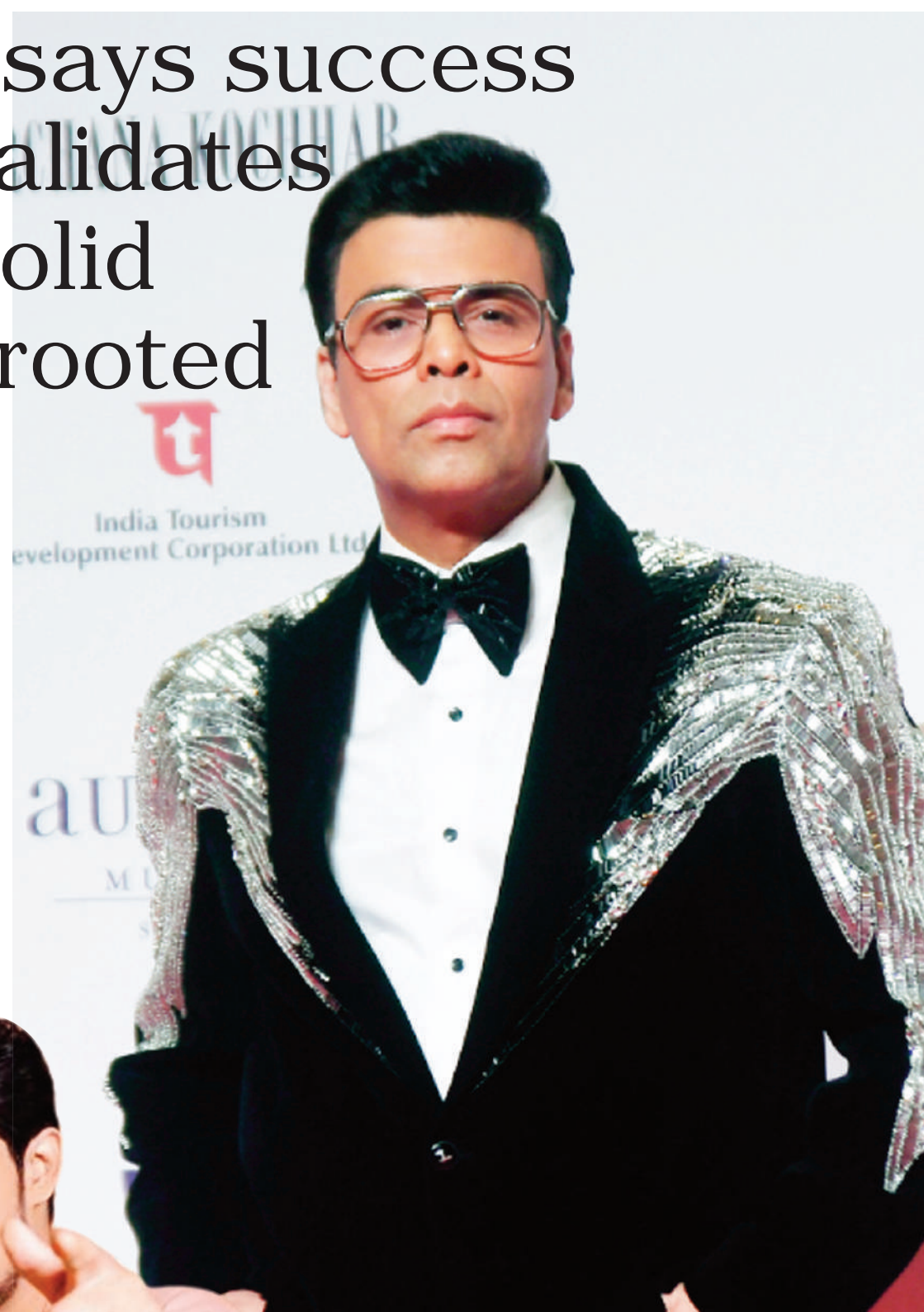
MUMBAI, Aug 21: Filmmaker Karan Johar on Tuesday said the blockbuster success of horror comedy "Stree 2" is a celebration of both Hindi and Indian mainstream cinema, which in the last few years has been under "scrutiny for combatting" challenges at the box office. Karan Johar says success of 'Stree 2' validates strength of solid storytelling, rooted content Karan Johar says success of 'Stree 2' validates strength of solid storytelling, rooted content Directed by Amar Kaushik and produced by Maddock Films, "Stree 2" released in theatres on August 15 alongside other films such as "Khel Khel Mein", "Vedaa", "Thangalaan" and "Double iSmart".

The Rajkummar Rao and Shradha Kapoor-starrer, a sequel to 2018's "Stree", is nearing the ₹300 crore-mark globally in gross box office collections.

In a lengthy Instagram post, Johar said "Stree 2" has validated the strength of solid storytelling and rooted content.

"The JUGGERNAUT MEGA BLOCKBUSTER SUCCESS of STREE2 is not just a celebration for @maddockfilms but must be viewed as celebration of Hindi cinema and Indian mainstream cinema... in the past few years Hindi cinema has been under scrutiny for combatting box office challenges... the post pandemic audience has been evolving and many times difficult to assess ...

"But the mega success of STREE 2 has not only validated the strength of a solid storytelling and rooted content but also affirmed that humorous conviction, bravado and focus on concept, story and a deep rooted connect with an audience will pay rich dividends at the ticket window!" the filmmaker wrote. (PTI)



RANDEEP HOODA JOINS SUNNY DEOL IN UPCOMING ACTION FILM

MUMBAI, Aug 21: Actor Randeep Hooda is the latest addition to Sunny Deol's upcoming action film with filmmaker Gopichand Malineni.

Produced by Mythri Movie Makers and People Media Factory, the film stars Deol in the lead. Saiyami Kher and Regina Cassandra also feature in pivotal roles.

Hooda, 48, announced the news on his official social media handles.

"Excited to be a part of this action feast - #SDGM. Cannot wait to get on sets with @iamsunnydeol Paaji and the entire team. As promised, this will be a MASS FEAST," Hooda posted on X.

Malineni is best known for directing Telugu action films such as "Don Seenu", "Bodyguard", "Balupu", and "Veera Simha Reddy".

The actor most recently directed "Swatantra Veer Savarkar", which was released in March. (PTI)



I recorded the moment Amitabh Bachchan walked on the set of 'Section 84' Abhishek Banerjee

NEW DELHI, Aug 21: "Stree 2" star Abhishek Banerjee says he still remembers the day Amitabh Bachchan walked on the set of "Section 84", a moment that brought a flashback of all those movies of the megastar that he grew up watching.

"I recorded it because I didn't want to forget it ever," Banerjee told PTI.

"That walk took me to that nostalgic era of him in all those films... (His) dialogues and action scenes flashed in front of my eyes. He is an institution. Everybody wants to work with him," the actor said.

The Ribhu Dasgupta-directed "Section 84" was the quickest he had agreed to do a film, said the actor, who had two successful releases in "Stree 2" and "Vedaa" last week.

"They called me and said, 'There is this film with Mr Bachchan and I said, 'Yes'. I didn't hear the next two lines. They were like, 'Arre, first hear what kind of film...I was like, 'No need'. Ribhu Dasgupta has imagined me in a character which is almost like being Bachchan in front of Mr Bachchan. It was a huge deal for me."

Banerjee, who also runs Casting Bay, a casting agency with Anmol Ahuja, admits that he was under a lot of pressure to have Bachchan as his co-star.

"I am someone who likes spontaneity but Mr Bachchan remembers everybody's lines, my lines and four other actors' lines. I had to memorise because I realised, I can't go 'a, a, a' in rehearsals with him. I was very disciplined those days and enjoyed that," he added.

Banerjee, 39, said he next wants to work with his other childhood heroes -- Shah Rukh Khan and Aamir Khan.

"I also wanted to work with Irrfan sir but unfortunately he left us. Fortunately, he has left so much of knowledge for us so he will always be very close to actors like me and we will keep learning from him," he added. (PTI)

Assamese musician's song touches No 1 spot on iTunes US pop charts

NEW DELHI, Aug 21: New Delhi-based multi-instrumentalist Baba's latest English single "Hold Me Tonight" reached the number one spot in the iTunes US pop charts.

The singer-songwriter and producer also made waves on the world indie charts, where the song climbed to the 13th spot on the music streaming app.

"The song 'Hold Me Tonight' explores the experience of anxiety and how it often distances a person from loved ones, deepening the sense of misery. It's about recognising this pattern and making a change to improve life and relationships," Baba, who hails from Assam, told PTI.

With deeply reflective lyrics that explore "personal demons" and the "pursuit of change", the song, which soared to the top on iTunes on August 15, is more than just a catchy tune, he said, adding it is a "raw, emotional experience".

He has directed the music video for the single himself. Produced independently, the video features artistic projections symbolising hope emerging from rock bottom.

Baba, whose real name is Abhiruk Patowary, developed a passion for music early on and began playing various instruments and experimenting with different musical styles, eventually forming a signature sound blending multiple genres.

Few years into piano and he expanded his skillset by picking up the drums at the age of 12 and guitars at 14 years. Asked the reason why he chose the name Baba, he says, "My mother calls me Baba and my inner monologue also calls myself that hence the name seemed fit for this journey."

Baba's mother is noted litterateur Rita Chowdhury, who was former director of National Book Trust, and his father Chandra Mohan Patowary is a minister in the Assam cabinet.

Over the years, Baba has released several albums and singles under various artiste names that have gained immense popularity among fans and critics alike. At the age of 17, he released his first album "Aerial" under the artiste name Gaia. (PTI)



MY NEW FILM, LIKE MY EARLIER ONES, LOOKS AT LIFE WITH A SMILE: SHOOJIT SIRCAR

NEW DELHI, Aug 21: Filmmaker Shoojit Sircar says his yet-untitled Abhishek Bachchan-starrer is a story that looks at everyday life with a smile, much like his previous films. Sircar, who has worked with megastar Amitabh Bachchan on multiple films including "Piku" and "Gulabo Sitabo" and "Pink", which he produced, has teamed up with his son Abhishek Bachchan for the first time.

Set to release in theatres on November 15, the film will once again explore a father-daughter relationship, similar to 2015's "Piku".

It was a collaboration long in the making and is one of Abhishek Bachchan's finest works so far, he said.

"It's a very simple observation of life with a little smile. When I watch the film, its post-production, it brings a smile (to my

face). And, I can guarantee that it is one of the finest of Abhishek Bachchan films. We always wanted to work together but we were not getting the right kind of script," the filmmaker told PTI in an interview.

Asked about the long gap this time between his stories considering "Gulabo Sitabo" (2020) and "Sardar Udham" (2021) released on streamers during the pandemic, Sircar said he did not have a script.

"When I have a script and when I know that this script is ready to move on to the floor, that's when I do it. Because of the Covid and 'Gulabo Sitabo' and 'Sardar Udham Singh' releasing back-to-back, I didn't have the time to focus on a script," he said.

The director said he normally takes a year and sometimes more to finalise a story. His last big-

screen release was 2018's "October", starring Varun Dhawan and Banita Sandhu.

"I make very few films and my subjects are very offbeat but it's usually stories of everyday life that I see. Some love them and some don't but I am okay with it. I'm thankful to those who appreciate them," he said.

Despite the slice-of-life nature of his films, Sircar has managed to strike a balance between commerce and story with his releases, which he believes is important for any director to stay in the business for the long run. "I try because somewhere these films are expensive and they need recovery. As a director, I have to take that responsibility. That recovery lies on me. I can't go absolutely offbeat, where I know that this film is not going to recover... I have to be responsible for it," Sircar, who studied

in Delhi and formed his own theatre group called Act One before shifting to Mumbai to pursue filmmaking, believes his non-film influences may be responsible for the kind of stories he tells which don't necessarily follow the typical film formula.

"My understanding of cinema, theatre and art was quite fragmented. I didn't know that I would become a director, or that I'd even reach Mumbai. Sitting in Delhi, I used to think about going to Mumbai - it was a dream. But when I landed in Mumbai, it was, in itself, like an achievement. What I'd do or not was far too much," he said, recalling his early years.

The filmmaker, who made his debut in 2005 with romantic war film "Yahaan", said when he was in Delhi he worked in theatre across departments like music, art and direction. (PTI)



Leverkusen's league: Bundesliga starts with Bayern Munich in unaccustomed role of challenger

BERLIN, Aug 21: For the first time in 12 years, Bayern Munich is not the defending champion going into a new Bundesliga season.

Bayer Leverkusen stayed undefeated last season to snap Bayern's 11-year reign as German champion and completed a domestic double by winning the German Cup to underscore its credentials as the country's best team. The question is how long Xabi Alonso's team can keep its remarkable run going — Leverkusen defeated Stuttgart on penalties to win the German Supercup on Saturday, when there was little sign of any easing off or drop in intensity.

How will a wounded Bayern

team react and can it reassert its status as Germany's No. 1?

And what about the other contenders who will hope to build on their achievements last season?

Runner-up Stuttgart finished ahead of Bayern on 73 points — its best-ever total — and saw a host of its players graduate to the German national team for the European Championship.

Leipzig finished fourth thanks in part to Dutch forward Xavi Simons — who's staying another year after rebutting interest from Bayern — and Borussia Dortmund hit the reset button after a disappointing fifth place finish in the Bundesliga. Edin Terzic's team

reached the Champions League final, showing it can compete at the highest levels. His successor, Nuri Sahin, is tasked with improving Dortmund's domestic standing.

Here are five things to know before Leverkusen starts its title defense at Borussia Mönchengladbach on Friday:

Repeating its success is the biggest challenge for Leverkusen. Xabi Alonso's team played 53 competitive games last season and only lost one — 3-0 to Atalanta in the Europa League final. The Champions League will provide a tougher challenge this season, potentially with knock-on effects in the Bundesliga. Summer trans-

fer activity has been relatively quiet with much of the focus on defender Jonathan Tah's transfer to Bayern. The player wants to go with just a year left on his contract, but Bayern and Leverkusen are yet to reach final agreement on a fee.

Vincent Kompany was eventually appointed Bayern coach in the summer to replace Thomas Tuchel, who had a fraught season after taking over from Julian Nagelsmann the season before. Continuity is an issue at the Bavarian powerhouse, which has endured upheaval at boardroom level in recent years. Powerbroker Uli Hoenes still maintains considerable influence, part of the rea-

son Tuchel's tenure did not go to plan. A summer shakeup of the squad was expected, but so far only Portugal midfielder João Palhinha, French winger Michael Olise and Japanese defender Hiroki Ito have arrived. Defenders Matthijs de Ligt and Noussair Mazraoui have re-joined Erik ten Hag at Manchester United. Bayern was chasing Rennes attacker Desiré Doué but the 19-year-old has reportedly opted to join Paris Saint-Germain instead.

Like Leverkusen, Stuttgart exceeded expectations last season under coach Sebastian Hoeneß, the nephew of the Bayern powerbroker. Stuttgart, which survived a relegation

playoff the season before, finished second, a point ahead of Bayern in the Bundesliga. But top-scorer Serhou Guirassy and defender Waldmar Anton have left for Dortmund, and defender Hiroki Ito has joined Bayern. Stuttgart was able to sign German forward Deniz Undav on a permanent basis from Brighton and Hove after his outstanding season on loan. Undav scored 18 goals in 30 Bundesliga appearances.

The question is how he will do without Guirassy at his side.

Dortmund had been Bayern's main challenger in recent seasons, but inconsistency has been a consistent issue and last season's fifth-place finish was a

more accurate reflection of where the team stands than its remarkable run to the Champions League final. Veterans Mats Hummels and Marco Reus departed over the summer, as did Germany forward Niclas Füllkrug after just one season. New signings Pascal Groß, Waldemar Anton, Yan Couto and Maximilian Beier all made their debuts in the 4-1 win over Phönix Lübeck in the German Cup on Saturday. Dortmund will need to wait before Guinea star Serhou Guirassy can play after he arrived from Stuttgart with an injury.

St. Pauli returns after a 13-year absence after winning Germany's second division. (AP)

KIYAN NASSIRI NAMED AS NEW FACE

No Jhingan among India probables for Intercontinental Cup



NEW DELHI, Aug 21: Influential centre-back Sandesh Jhingan's name was missing as Chennaiyin FC forward Kiyan Nassiri, son of East Bengal's Iranian legend Jamshid, on Wednesday inched closer to his maiden India selection after being named among new head coach Manolo Marquez's 26 probables for the Intercontinental Cup preparatory camp.

Mohun Bagan SG right-back Ashish Rai and East Bengal goalkeeper Prabhukhan Singh Gill, who are yet to play for the senior India team, also received call-ups for the camp in preparation for the three-team annual tournament that will be held from September 3-9 in Hyderabad.

It is understood that key defender Jhingan, who sustained a right knee injury during India's Asian Cup group match against Syria in January, is yet to recover from the injury.

Jhingan, the 31-year-old central defender, also missed out on selection for the team's camp ahead of the FIFA World Cup 2026 preliminary joint qualification round 2 matches against Kuwait and Qatar, in May. Syria, placed 93rd in the latest FIFA rankings and Mauritius, who stand at 179, are the other two teams in the competition. India are currently ranked 124th. The preparatory camp will start in Hyderabad from August 31.

The fourth edition of the Intercontinental Cup will be the first full tournament after the retirement of the legendary Sunil Chhetri and the first assignment for Marquez who was named India head coach last month. India have won the tournament twice in the past.

The 23-year-old Kiyan, who grew up in

Kolkata and whose mother was born and brought up in Shillong, has been excelling upfront while playing for Indian Super League side Chennaiyin FC.

His father has been an East Bengal legend and currently lives in Kolkata, having represented the Iranian U-20 team in the 1977 FIFA World Youth Championship.

Announcing the probables, Marquez said: "We are very excited about our first preparatory camp and I know it will be the same for the players."

"We face two different teams and the rankings are not very important. We need to work all together in the same direction to find the correct group of players and their predisposition will be very good, something I am completely sure about."

"I know all of us are in pre-season with nice challenges in front of us. Is a big honour to wear the jersey of the national team and we need to show it for all our fans."

The list of probables: Goalkeepers: Gurpreet Singh, Amrinder Singh, Prabhukhan Singh Gill.

Defenders: Nikhil Poojary, Rahul Bheke, Chinglensana Singh Konsham, Roshan Singh Naorem, Anwar Ali, Jay Gupta, Ashish Rai, Subhasish Bose, Mehtab Singh.

Midfielders: Suresh Singh Wangjam, Jeakson Singh, Nandhakumar Sekar, Naorem Mahesh Singh, Yasir Mohammad, Lalengmawia Ralte, Anirudh Thapa, Sahal Abdul Samad, Lalhathanga Khawlhing.

Forwards: Kiyan Nassiri Giri, Edmund Lalrindika, Manvir Singh, Liston Colaco. (PTI)

Indian batters have fallen back a bit in playing spin: Asstt coach Doeschate

NEW DELHI, Aug 21: Assistant coach Ryan ten Doeschate was candid in his admission that the desire to do well overseas has dented Indian batsmen's ability to play spin and his immediate task is to make them adept in it again ahead of an important season that features five Tests at home.

Indian batters have fallen back a bit in playing spin: Assistant coach Doeschate

Traditionally strong against spin, India lost 27 wickets against Sri Lanka tweekers in the three-match away ODI series earlier this month, which they lost 0-2.

It was India's first bilateral ODI series defeat against the Lankans in 27 years. "We got undone against Sri Lanka. The mindset of India has been such that they've been so desperate to do well overseas," Doeschate told Talksport Cricket.

"The focus has moved to doing well in Australia and England. We've kind of let playing spin, which was always a strength of the Indian team, fall back a little bit. "That's one thing I'm looking forward to helping with, getting to that position where Indians are the best players of spin in the world again," said Doeschate.

India is scheduled to face Bangladesh and New Zealand at home across five Test matches in September and October. Both these sides have handy spinners in their ranks. Doeschate, a former Netherlands all-rounder with considerable coaching experience around the world, said playing spin is about making a mental shift rather than bringing about major technical changes. "I don't think much of what we're going to bring is technical knowledge. It's more about mindsets, situational awareness,

and how we think they can control certain phases of the game.

"We need to throw ideas out there... de-briefing and keeping the mental space really good. That's going to be really important," he elaborated.

The 44-year-old Dutchman, who will be assisting head coach Gautam Gambhir along with Abhishek Nayar, said the team is also desperate to win the Champions Trophy next year. "There's the Champions Trophy. With only three ODIs left in preparation, it's going to be really challenging to switch between the formats and get the team ready for that, which again is something they're desperate to win," he said.

Doeschate said qualifying for the World Test Championship final in June next year is another important goal for Team India.

Currently, India are leading the WTC table with Australia in close pursuit, and Doeschate wanted to use the 10 Tests that India are scheduled to play to cement that position of strength.

"In terms of what we're looking forward to... qualifying for the WTC final... there's a great opportunity with 10 Tests left. "We have five in India and then we are going to Australia, which is going to be great."

Doeschate said walking into the Indian cricketing establishment was a daunting task, particularly after them winning the T20 World Cup in June. "In terms of timing, it's quite difficult to walk into a team that's just come back with the World Cup."

"But in terms of what's ahead of us for the next 18 months, it's all mouth-watering as a coach. It's the series you want to be involved in and all the challenges you want to come up against," he said. (PTI)



DURAND CUP: NEUFC BEAT INDIAN ARMY 2-0

HT Correspondent

KOKRAJHAR, Aug 21: North East United FC secured a victory in the quarter-finals of the Durand Cup by defeating Indian Army FT 2-0 at the SAI STC Stadium in Kokrajhar on Wednesday.

The first half saw both teams playing enthusiastically, yet the score remained goalless.

In the second half, North East United FC took control, scoring two goals against Indian Army FT with impressive momentum. Although Indian Army FT made strong efforts to close the gap, they were unable to score and eventually lost the match 0-2.

With this victory, North East United FC

has advanced to the semi-finals of the ongoing 133rd edition of the Durand Cup, defeating Indian Army FT. Chief Executive Member (CEM) of the Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR), Pramod Boro graced the occasion as the chief guest and inaugurated the quarter-final match held at the SAI STC Stadium for the Kokrajhar leg of the Durand Cup. He was accompanied by BTCLA Speaker Katiram Boro, BTR Executive Member Daobaisa Boro, and senior Indian Army officials.

The CEM Boro also unveiled a commemorative book titled "Bodoland Calling - A Journey Through Tradition, Heritage, and the Spirit of the Durand Cup," published in connection with the Kokrajhar



leg of the 133rd Durand Cup. The book highlights the exquisite natural heritage and vibrant cultural diversity of the BTR, traces the rich football legacy of the region and the Northeast, and showcases the 133-year history of the Durand Cup. It also focuses on the excitement and fanfare surrounding the first-ever hosting of the Durand Cup in Kokrajhar in 2023. "It was a thrill to attend the quarter-finals match of the Durand Cup today in Kokrajhar—the city of peace—between North East United FC and Indian Army FT at the SAI STC Stadium. The football match saw enthusiastic participation from sports lovers across the Bodoland region," said CEM Boro.

Priyansh Arya leads South Delhi Superstarz to six-wicket win over Central Delhi Kings

NEW DELHI, Aug 21: Priyansh Arya's scintillating 82 off 51 balls powered South Delhi Superstarz to a six-wicket win over Central Delhi Kings in the Delhi Premier League. Fifties from Dhruv Kaushik (56) and Yash Dhull (52) guided Central Delhi Kings to 176/7 after they were asked to bat on Tuesday.

However, South Delhi Superstarz chased down the target with five balls to spare, courtesy a solid 101-run partnership between Arya and Ayush Badoni (42). After the early loss of Sarthak Ray (0 off 1) in the first over, Badoni and Arya approached the run chase with composed batting. By the end of the powerplay, they took the score to 45/1 and went on to consistently score more than 10 runs per over. Arya brought up his fifty in 32 balls, while Badoni contributed a vital 42 off 36 balls before being caught at mid-wicket, thus missing out on his half-century. By the strategic time-out, SDS were firmly in control, thanks to the free-flowing stroke play of Arya and Tejaswi Dahiya. Arya, who smashed seven sixes

and three fours, was dismissed in the 17th over. Tejaswi followed in the next over, contributing 22 off 14. Despite these quick wickets, the South Delhi Superstarz were still in a commanding position, needing just 17 runs from 16 balls.

Vision Panchal and Dhruv Singh then sealed the victory with two sixes and a four in the 19th over, securing the South Delhi Superstarz' second consecutive win of the tournament. Earlier in the contest, Hiten Dalal (10 off 9) fell cheaply to Divij Mehra in the third over. However, skipper Yash Dhull led from the front, keeping the scoreboard ticking alongside Dhruv Kaushik as they stitched together a solid 91-run partnership off 65 balls.

Kaushik was then dismissed in the following over after scoring 56 off 33 balls. Brief Scores:

Central Delhi Kings: 176/7 in 20 overs (Dhruv Kaushik 56 off 34, Yash Dhull 52 off 44, Kuldeep Yadav 2/37) South Delhi Superstarz: 177/4 in 19.1 overs (Priyansh Arya 82 off 51, Ayush Badoni 42 off 36, Money Grewal 2/22). (PTI)

Why wasn't Jannik Sinner suspended after two positive steroid tests? What do other players think?

WASHINGTON, Aug 21: (AP) No. 1-ranked men's tennis player Jannik Sinner will be playing in the U.S. Open — which begins in New York next week — even though word just emerged that he tested positive twice in March for a banned anabolic steroid.

It's a case that no one knew about until Tuesday and one that has drawn all sorts of questions — and, in some instances, criticism — from other players who wonder whether there was a double standard at play because of Sinner's success, are confused about why this was all kept under wraps, and want to know why Sinner was allowed to keep competing before there was a resolution.

"I will now put this challenging and deeply unfortunate period behind me," Sinner said in a statement posted on social media.

"I will continue to do everything I can to ensure I continue to comply with the (sport's)

anti-doping (program) and I have a team around me that are meticulous in their own compliance."

Not everyone is completely ready to just move forward. And it will be interesting to see how much scrutiny Sinner receives — from other athletes, from spectators, from the media — during the year's last Grand Slam tournament, where he will be the top-seeded man.

"Different rules for different players," 2021 Wimbledon semifinalist Denis Shapovalov wrote on social media.

Here is a look at some of the issues connected to what happened with Sinner:

Who is Jannik Sinner?

Sinner is a 23-year-old Italian who moved up to No. 1 in the ATP rankings for the first time in June and is considered one of the leaders of the next group of male tennis stars who will succeed the Big Three of Roger Federer, Rafael Nadal and Novak Djokovic.



Sinner's first Grand Slam trophy came in January at the Australian Open, where he eliminated Djokovic in the semifinals before erasing a two-set deficit in the final to beat Daniil Medvedev.

He is 48-5 with a tour-leading five titles; his most recent championship came at the Cincinnati Open on Monday.

What is Clostebol, the drug Sinner tested positive for? Clostebol is an anabolic

steroid that can be found in ointments and sprays sold over-the-counter in some countries, such as Italy, and used to treat cuts or scrapes.

It is considered a performance enhancer, and several athletes in various sports have been suspended after testing positive; one high-profile example was San Diego Padres star Fernando Tatis Jr., who received an 80-game ban from Major League Baseball in 2022.

Sinner submitted a urine sample that showed traces of Clostebol during the Indian Wells tournament in California in March; an out-of-competition sample eight days later also tested positive.

Why was Sinner allowed to continue competing?

Sinner was provisionally suspended for the two positive results, but he appealed those bans, saying that he inadvertently was exposed to the steroid. He argued that one member of his team purchased a spray that contained Clostebol in Italy, then gave it to another team member — a physiotherapist — who cut a finger. Sinner said the physiotherapist then gave him a massage, which transmitted the substance to Sinner.

The International Tennis Integrity Agency (ITIA), which handles anti-doping and anti-corruption investigations for the sport, accepted his explanation, as did an independent tribunal,

After silver at Olympics, Chopra takes field in Lausanne in bid for Diamond League title

LAUSANNE, Aug 21: Two weeks after winning his historic silver medal at the Paris Olympics, star Indian javelin thrower Neeraj Chopra will resume action at the Lausanne Diamond League meeting on Thursday, seeking to reclaim the DL trophy at the season-ending finale next month.

Nursing a long-standing groin injury, Chopra claimed a silver in the Paris Olympics on August 8 with a 89.45m throw, having won a historic gold in the Tokyo edition of the Games three years ago.

The 26-year-old double Olympic medalist Indian on Saturday confirmed his participation at the Diamond League meeting in Lausanne, leaving a decision on a possible surgery after the end of the season.

Chopra was the Diamond League champion in 2022 and finished second behind Jakub Vadlejch of Czech Republic in the winner-takes-all DL final in Eugene, USA, last year. This season's DL finals will be held in Brussels on September 14. He needs to finish in the top-six of the Diamond League meetings series standings to qualify for the season finale.

There is another DL meeting -- in Zurich on September 5 -- which has men's javelin throw event in its roster.

He is currently at fourth spot with seven



points he has garnered after finishing second behind Vadlejch in the Doha Diamond League on May 10.

After a busy couple of days post the Olympic final on August 8, Chopra started training in Switzerland and is determined to lead the season on a high despite being restricted by the injury. "I came to Switzerland for training ahead of the Diamond League. Luckily, I did not aggravate my injury as I took extra care of that."

"I thought of continuing my season like most other athletes. There is one month to go until the season ends. I will go to the doctors in my free time," he had said last week.

Chopra will be up against a top-class field in Lausanne with five of the top-six finishers in Paris Olympics final competing. Only Pakistan's Arshad Nadeem, who stunned the athletics world by winning the gold with an

Olympic record throw of 92.97m, is missing. Nadeem had finished fourth in the Paris Diamond League on July 7 with a throw of 84.21m. That was the only DL meeting -- as well as the lone event apart from the Olympics -- he had taken part this season. He is currently at sixth spot in the standings with five points.

Having pushed to the fourth spot with a throw of 88.50m in Paris after winning a silver in Tokyo, Vadlejch would be looking to maintain his form in his bid to defend the DL title.

Two-time world champion Anderson Peters of Grenada, who took the bronze in the Paris Olympics with 88.54m, has been on the ascendancy after a poor last season, and he is capable of pulling off big throws, having already gone past the 90m mark in his career. Chopra has been the most consistent javelin thrower in the last couple of seasons, before Nadeem pulled off the heist in Paris, and the Indian will start as favourite in Lausanne on Thursday.

He has been managing his groin injury since winning the gold in the Budapest World Championships last year. "The final treatment will be after the season ends. I will try to take care of it as much as possible and consult the doctors later," he said. (PTI)

Border Gavaskar Trophy on par with Ashes for Australia: Mitchell Starc



SYDNEY, Aug 21: Australia pace ace Mitchell Starc believes that with the upcoming Border-Gavaskar Trophy against India becoming a five-Test affair for the first time in over three decades, it would be "right on par" with the esteemed Ashes series for his team. The marquee series between India and Australia, set to begin in November, was extended by a match this year for the first time since the 1991-92 season.

"Being five matches now it's probably right on par with an Ashes series," Starc told Wide World of Sports.

Since 2014-15, Australia have failed to lay their hands on the Border-Gavaskar Trophy, with India winning four consecutive series including the historic triumphs Down Under in 2018-19 and 2020-21.

Starc is not only intent on reversing this trend but also harbours aspirations of a clean sweep, particularly as the series forms a crucial part of the World Test Championship.

"We always want to win every game at home and we know India are a very strong team," he said.

Currently, India leads the World Test Championships table with

Australia in second place.

"As we're placed at the minute we're the top two teams on the Test ladder... so a very exciting series coming up for the fans and certainly the players. "Hopefully when we're sitting there on the 8th of January we have that trophy back on our shores."

The 34-year-old is just 11 matches shy of reaching a milestone 100 Tests and has no plans to quit red-ball cricket.

The left-armers said he is scaling back his white-ball commitments to prolong his Test career for as long as possible. "...every time I get to wear the baggy green cap it feels very special. Hopefully it's five times through the summer with five wins and we can sing that song five times, then we move on from there."

"If it does come to a point where I'm lucky enough to get past that 100 number then it's obviously going to be pretty special as well," he said.

Starc is scheduled to fly to England next month for a white-ball series following which the left-armers intends to play domestic cricket for New South Wales ahead of the Border-Gavaskar Trophy. (PTI)

Indian para-athletes eye 12 medals at Paralympics

NEW DELHI, Aug 21: Eyeing an unprecedented five gold and a dozen medals in total, the first batch of the Indian athletics team, including star javelin thrower Sumit Antil, left for the Paris Paralympics in advance to get acclimatised to the conditions.

The 16 para-athletes will stay at hotels in Paris for a few days before entering the Games Village on August 25, three days before the Opening Ceremony. The likes of Antil, who is bidding to become the first Indian to defend his Paralympics gold, will train at facilities near the French capital to acclimatise with the weather conditions there. Para athletics events will be held from August 30 to September 8, the closing day of the Paralympics, at Stade de France, the same venue where the able-bodied athletes competed during the Paris Olympics. "Sumit Antil and some other para-athletes will train at Nelson Mandela Sports Complex for a few days before entering the Games Village," para-athletics head coach Satyanarayana told PTI. Nelson Mandela Sports Complex is around 5km from Stade de France. It has state-of-the-art training facilities for athletics, rugby, tennis, wheelchair tennis and swimming.

"Some will stay at hotels near the Games Village and they can use the training facilities there during day time," he added. Asked about Indian para-athletics team's medal prospects at the Paris Games, he said, "We are aiming for at least five gold and 12 medals in total. (PTI)

TT ace Sharath Kamal eyes administrative role while charting 'roadmap' ahead

CHENNAI, Aug 21: Achanta Sharath Kamal might have appeared in his last Olympics, but the veteran Indian table-tennis player wants to stay connected to the sport as an administrator and said he will soon have a sit-down with powers that be to chalk out a "roadmap."

Sharath Kamal suffered a shocking opening round exit in the men's singles at the Paris Games, losing to Deni Kozul of Slovenia 2-4. In the team event Sharath, alongside Harmeet Desai and Manav Thakkar, went down 0-3 against China in the pre-quarterfinals.

"Still haven't decided clearly what will be my roadmap ahead. But, I'll sit down and have a talk with the federation and decide with my family as well about what exactly has to be done ahead," Kamal told PTI on the sidelines of the Ultimate Table Tennis (UTT) launch here on Wednesday. "But, I'll be staying around with the game and probably taking up positions in the federation or the SAI and trying to help the sport," he added. Talking about his Olympics outing, Sharath said he gave it his all in the showpiece, and there are no "regrets."

"The only difference was the mindset since I knew it was going to be my last Olympics. I put in everything that I had in Paris," said Kamal. "Preparation-wise, I did everything possible, and there are no regrets. Overall, really happy with the way I played."

The UTT gets underway here on Thursday and Sharath credited the event for helping upcoming Indian players showcase their talent.

"These leagues give us the right platform, especially the youngsters, to stand up against the best competition in the world, train with and against them and try to beat them," Sharath, who will be representing Chennai Lions, said.

"Playing at home does not allow you to get intimidated, and that attitude helps you grow at the international level. So, after every season, we have identified great talents. We hope it

U-20 SAFF Championship: Indian team forced to train indoors due to heavy rain

KATHMANDU, Aug 21: Incessant rain came in the way of the Indian team's preparations and forced its players to train indoors ahead of a vital match against Maldives in the U-20 SAFF Championship here on Friday.

The Indians were set to train at the ANFA Complex here on Wednesday, but rain played spoilsport and they had a training session at their hotel instead, with head coach Ranjan Choudhuri not willing to risk his players getting injured. Team captain Ricky Meetei Haobam took in his stride the forced change in plans.

"Such things are never in your control, so there's no point dwelling on them. If something does not go according to plan, we just have to keep positive and prepare for the next day, or the next activity. It's all in the mind," said Ricky. India began their campaign with a 1-0 victory against Bhutan despite being reduced to nine men on Monday. However, Group B has been thrown wide open after a 10-man Bhutan defeated Maldives 2-1 on Wednesday.

The Blue Colts now have to avoid defeat against the Maldives to seal their semi-final spot. The India U-20 captain preferred to dwell on the positives.

"Of course, we are here to be champions of SAFF. This is the first time I'm playing at the U-20 level, so things are a little different. Every country is improving bit by bit, but we are a strong side as well," he said.

"We have also improved so much since last year. Every player here is playing at some club with senior players in domestic football, which means everyone here comes with a certain level of experience," said Ricky. (PTI)

Over-reliance on coaches can stop players from finding own solutions: Ashwin

NEW DELHI, Aug 21: Ravichandran Ashwin doesn't like "latching on to people" and that's one reason why he has never warmed up to the idea of banking on coaches in the traditional sense as he believes that such dependence makes players dogmatic.

In his 14-year international cricket career, spanning 281 games and 744 wickets across formats, Ashwin's sense of agency and his ability to time and again rediscover himself, have helped him survive the grind.

"A lot of players are heavily dependent on coaches or mentors, or one person which I think is a very dangerous trend because latching on to people and over-dependency can cause you to not be able to open to new ideas," the 37-year-old off-spinner told PTI in a telephonic interview recently.

It is not that Ashwin never had a sounding board. His first state team coach WV Raman, one of the respected names in Indian cricket, and Tamil Nadu legend and former India batter S Badrinath, have been guiding forces for him.

But his equation with them never turned into the kind of dependence that would take away his own ability to search for solutions.

"See very often the challenge of a coach is to be able to offer you several solutions. This is because what works for one (particular player) might not work for the other," he explained.

"One modern-day coaching philosophy which I totally disagree with is the fact that they try to copy-paste the same technique (solution) that's worked for another cricketer," Ashwin, who recently



made his debut as an author with 'I Have The Streets: A Kutti Cricket Story', added. While he is completely aware that some players get results by surrendering to the vision of their coaches, he also feels that such dependence can lead to a closed mind. "Because as a cricketer, you constantly are thrown up with new challenges, so you must be able to find your own answers," the tweaker, who is behind only the legendary Anil Kumble in the list of India's highest Test wicket-takers, pointed out.

To Ashwin, Raman has been that catalyst, who helped him focus his intuitive mind. "People can give you a helping hand. But they cannot guide you through in your career, you will have to be open to fresh ideas. "For me, WV allowed me the freedom to express, and, you know, try new things. He also taught me how and on what path I need to travel, but he never said, 'This is the path you need to travel upon'."

"So in a way, in my early days, guidance from WV ensured that I was never really over-reliant on anybody," Ashwin said getting a second opinion is never a bad idea but cricket primarily is a self-

taught sport.

"If you don't have awareness of your own game and if you can't teach yourself, I think you are always going to be dependent on someone which I think is a very dangerous part."

"I am not saying people with coaches or people who are dependent don't do well in life but there is a chance of selling yourself short," he asserted.

He is gearing up for a big 10-Test season and the Bangladesh series next month will be his first under new head coach Gautam Gambhir, someone with whom he has also played a lot.


Ashwin also admires him as one of the "heroes" of Indian cricket.

"Gautam is someone I still share a very, very good relationship with. Because of the fact that he is a very straightforward and an honest guy. "I think Gautam is also one of those guys that we should always be backing. He's a hero of Indian cricket," he said of the new coach, who took charge in the recent tour of Sri Lanka.


The best in the world have struggled to read his signature 'carrom ball' but Ashwin, who first saw Ajanta Mendis bowl it during an age-group camp in Chennai, said that it took him nearly three years before he was satisfied with its execution.

For the uninitiated, a carrom ball is a delivery which turns the other way and is released with a flick of the middle finger. In case of a right hander, it will turn away from the bat.

"I started bowling those balls in the nets 2006 or 2007 onwards, which was probably the second season for me in first-class cricket. (PTI)



সংস্কৃতিক পৰিক্ৰমা বিভাগৰ উদ্যোগত



বহু কালজয়ী গীতৰ স্ৰষ্টা নিৰুদ্দিষ্ট শিল্পী
শ্ৰদ্ধাৰ শ্ৰীৰমেন বৰুৱাদেৱলৈ
তেখেতৰ এমুঠি গীতেৰে
উভতি আহিবলৈ আহুন

সময় : সন্ধ্যা ৬:৩০ বজা
তাৰিখ : ২২ আগষ্ট ২০২৪
স্থান : শ্ৰীশ্ৰী মাধৱদেৱ আন্তৰ্জাতিক প্ৰেক্ষাগৃহ, পাঞ্জাবী, গুৱাহাটী

অনুষ্ঠানত ৰাইজৰ উপস্থিতি আন্তৰিকতাৰে কামনা কৰা হ'ল।

সঞ্চালক
সংস্কৃতিক পৰিক্ৰমা বিভাগ, অসম

তথ্য আৰু জনসংযোগ সঞ্চালকালয়, অসমৰ দ্বাৰা প্ৰাৰ্থিত

Connect with us

assam @diprassam dipr.assam.gov.in

অসম দ্বাৰা আয়োজিত কৰিবলৈ ৭৬০৬৮০৪৯৪০ ত Assam দিখি বাটভাগ কৰক