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DIPHU, KARBI ANGLONG, TUESDAY, AUGUST 27, 2024

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AIUDF seeks safety of Muslims in Upper Assam

Threats are directly in violation to fundamental rights, says memo to Gov

GUWAHATI, Aug 26: The AIUDF on Monday submitted a memorandum to Governor Lakshman Prasad Acharya, seeking action by the state government against several organisations which have issued threats against a section of the Muslim community asking them to leave the Upper Assam districts or "face the consequences".

Upper Assam, comprising nine districts, is an administrative division of the northeastern state.

The opposition party also sought a public statement from the BJP-led state government, condemning the stand taken by these organisations against a section of Muslims.

A number of organisations recently asked the 'Miyas' to leave the upper Assam districts immediately, claiming it as a step to protect the indigenous people and their culture.

'Miya' is originally a pejorative term used for Bengali-speaking Muslims in Assam and the non-Bengali speaking people generally identify them as Bangladeshi immigrants. In recent years, activists from the community have started



adopting this term as a gesture of defiance.

In a memorandum to Governor Lakshman Prasad Acharya, the AIUDF said, "It has come to our notice that some unknown organisations and fundamentalist groups have publicly issued threats against a section of the Muslim community demanding that they should leave upper Assam immediately or face dire consequences."

Such statements are not only alarming but also create a serious threat to communal harmony and safety of the community in the re-

gion, it said. A recent incident in Sivasagar where members of Marwari community knelt down and offered public apology for an incident of alleged assault of a 17-year-old girl by a local businessman belonging to their community has "deepened the magnitude" of the threat against the Muslims, the memorandum said.

The AIUDF noted that such threats are directly in violation to fundamental rights as enshrined in the Constitution, and also against the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of the United Na-

tions. Urging the governor's intervention in the matter, the party also asked the state government to take strict legal action against those organisations, including initiating legal proceedings.

It requested the state government to deploy adequate security forces in the upper Assam areas to ensure the safety and security of the people.

The memorandum also asked the state government to issue a public statement condemning such threats issued by the organisations and reassure all communities that their safety and rights will be protected.

The AIUDF also urged the government, in collaboration with civil society, to initiate programs and campaigns to promote communal harmony and unity among the different communities.

"We, the members of AIUDF, remain committed to upholding the values of fraternity, peace, unity and justice and we believe that your timely intervention will help prevent escalation of tension and ensure the continued harmony of our state," the memorandum added. (PTI)

12 houses set on fire after idol defaced at Tripura temple

AGARTALA, Aug 26: At least 12 houses and a few vehicles were set on fire by unidentified persons after an idol was found defaced at a temple in Ranirbazar area in West Tripura, police said on Monday.

Prohibitory orders under Section 163 of BNSS were imposed in Jirania subdivision under which Ranirbazar falls. Heavy security deployment has also been made in the area to defuse tension.

"Around 12 dwelling houses were set on fire at Ranirbazar by miscreants late on Sunday after an idol of Goddess Kali was found defaced in Kaiturbari. A few motorcycles and pick-up vans were also gutted in the blaze," assistant inspector general (Law and Order) Ananta Das told PTI.

No human casualties were reported in the incident.

Eyewitnesses said that the residents fled their dwellings upon seeing the raging mob.

Das said heavy deployment of security forces have been made to defuse tension and director general of Police, Intelligence, Anurag Dhankar and West Tripura superintendent of Police Kiran Kumar



have visited the area.

"Police will register a suo moto case once the assessment of loss of properties is completed. The situation is under control," he said.

Following apprehension of breach of peace, prohibitory orders under Section 163 of BNSS have been imposed in Jirania subdivision of West Tripura district from August 26 to 28, district magistrate Vishal Kumar said in an order.

Under the prohibitory orders, assembly of five or more people will be prohibited due to violent activities in the subdivision, it added.

Tipra Motha supreme Pradyot Kishore Manikya Debbarma on Monday expressed concern over the incident and appealed to everyone to maintain law and order.

"Last night incident in Ranirbazar Kaiturbari area is a worrying sign with reports of communal clashes. I appeal to those who are responsible for maintaining law and order to follow the rule of law," he wrote on Facebook. "When our state is reeling under a natural disaster and so much of stress is there, some elements are only playing religious (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Relief Fund

DIPHU: MLA of Diphu, Bidyasing Englung distributed cheque of ₹ 5,000 each to 80 students of Taralango here under Chief Minister's Relief Fund (CMRF) in a formal ceremony held at Longmirjeng Open Stage at Karbi People's Hall, Taralango on Monday. The MLA said, "Under Mukhya Mantrir Nijut Moira Asoni (MMNMA) scheme, girl students who have passed Class 10 and have enrolled in Class 11 will get ₹1,000 per month. After completing Class 12 board exam and enrolled in degree courses will get a monthly stipend of ₹1,250 for the next three to four years till they complete their graduation. Those girls who have enrolled in post-graduate courses will get ₹ 2,500 per month till they complete their courses. Also under the state government's initiative both boys and girl students of Class-IX have received bicycles. Besides these, in Prayag Bharati Scheme all girl students securing 60% or more marks and boys securing 75% or more marks in Class 12 board examination will get a scooter. There are many schemes introduced by the state govt to help the students." He urged the students who received the scholarship to make proper use of the money given by the State. MLA Englung urged the people of Taralango to be hospitable as it is the seat of Karbi cultural festival.

Shops inspection

DIPHU: District Commissioner, Karbi Anglong, Nirola Phangchopi along with superintendent of police, Sanjib Kumar Saikia visited Diphu market to inspect shops and business establishments to take stock of the grievances of the shopkeepers. The DC urged the shopkeepers and business community to maintain hygiene and cleanliness in the Diphu market and to be polite with the customers. The president of the greater Diphu Market Committee, Bidyasing Tisso showed DC the choked drain in narrow passage passing through the dry fish market which emanates foul odour. Tisso urged for a suitable place to relocate street food vendors. The DC held a meeting with the shopkeepers which was largely attended.

Railway tracks

GUWAHATI: Railway tracks in Hailakandi district have been severely damaged due to erosion, leading to the complete disruption of rail connectivity between Assam and Mizoram, a news bulletin informed on Monday. As per reports, the affected stretch of the railway line has made it impossible for trains to pass, causing a major inconvenience to passengers and disrupting transportation between the two states. Subsequently, railway authorities are closely monitoring the situation and have dispatched teams to assess the extent of the damage. Additionally, efforts to restore the damaged tracks are underway, but it is expected that the rail connectivity between Assam and Mizoram will remain suspended for several days. Furthermore, the disruption of rail services is expected to have a significant impact on the movement of goods and passengers, especially in the border areas between Assam and Mizoram.

Assam: 32 deaths reported due to JE, malaria in June, July

GUWAHATI, Aug 26: Nearly 1,100 cases of Japanese Encephalitis, malaria and dengue have been reported across Assam in June and July this year and of the patients, 32 have died, officials said.

According to state Health and Family Welfare Department's data, a total of 424 Japanese encephalitis cases were detected in June and July across the state.

"Out of that, 48 cases were detected in June and 376 were reported in July. One patient died in June and 28 lost their lives in July," an official of the department said, citing the data.

In case of malaria, 166 cases were reported in June and 187 in July. In June, three people died due to the disease, as per the records.

In June, 80 people tested positive for dengue across the state, while 214 cases of the disease were detected in July. There was no report of any death due to dengue.

As per official records, the Health Department is undertaking several steps to control the spread of the disease, caused by mosquito bites.

The government has conducted fogging across the



state, especially in the targetted areas. Also, larvicidal spraying has been carried out, while larvivorous fishes were released in different drains to contain breeding of the mosquitoes. (PTI)

Rameswar Teli, Das elected unopposed to RS from Assam

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Aug 26: Two Rajya Sabha candidates of BJP in Assam were elected unopposed on Monday as the opposition refrained from fielding candidates against two vacant berths in the upper house of the parliament.

The ruling party fielded former Union minister Rameswar Teli and ex-MLA Mission Ranjan Das in the two vacant seats of Rajya Sabha last week. Since there were no candidates from the opposition camp, both Teli and Das were declared elected to the Rajya Sabha unopposed by the election officials.

The two BJP nominees collected their certificate of winning the election unopposed. The seats got vacant after Sarbananda Sonowal and Kamakhya Prasad Tasa fought the Lok Sabha elections and they became

MPs in the lower house of the parliament.

Sonowal won from the Dibrugarh Lok Sabha seat and Tasa defeated the Congress candidate Roselina Tirkey in the newly formed Kaziranga parliamentary constituency. To recall, in the delimitation exercise, the Kaliabor constituency was scrapped by the Election Commission and a Kaziranga Lok Sabha seat was introduced. This had forced Congress leader Gaurav Gogoi to shift to Jorhat parliamentary constituency.

"Congratulations to @BJP4Assam candidates, Shri Mission Ranjan Das and Shri @Rameswar Teli on being elected unopposed to the Rajya Sabha from Assam. My gratitude to our legislators and valued NDA partners for their unequivocal support to their candidature,"

Samra wrote on (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)



Government announces 5 new districts in Ladakh

Locals welcome decision as fulfilment of long pending demand

LEH/NEW DELHI, Aug 26: Union Home Minister Amit Shah announced Monday the creation of five new districts in Ladakh, raising their number to seven in a decision welcomed by local people as fulfilment of their long-pending demand.

The new districts are: Zaskar, Drass, Sham, Nubra, and Changthang.

However, the Leh Apex Body, which along with the Kargil Democratic Alliance (KDA) is fighting for their four major demands including granting of statehood and extension of sixth schedule of the Constitution, said they will continue their peaceful struggle.

In a post on X, Shah said the Union Home Ministry has decided to create the five new districts in pursuit of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision to build a developed and prosperous Ladakh.

"The new districts, namely Zaskar, Drass, Sham, Nubra and Changthang, will take the benefits meant for the people to their doorstep by bolstering governance in every nook and cranny," he said.

Leh and Kargil were the only two districts in Ladakh, the largest union territory in terms of area but the second

least populous. It has an expanse of 86,904 square kilometers bordering China and Pakistan, with a population of 2.74 lakh according to the 2011 census.

The home minister said the Modi government is committed to creating abundant opportunities for the people of Ladakh.

Ladakh was carved out of the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir and declared a UT after the state was divided into two UTs on August 5, 2019.

On that day five years ago, Article 370, which gave special status to the erstwhile state, was also abrogated. Being a UT, Ladakh comes under the direct administrative control of the union home ministry.

Prime Minister Modi hailed the creation of the new districts as a step towards better governance and prosperity. Zaskar, Drass, Sham, Nubra, and Changthang will now receive more focused attention, bringing services and opportunities even closer to people, he said, congratulating them.

He said on X, "Creation of five new districts in Ladakh is a step towards better governance and prosperity." (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Tepong Hanse passes away

HT Bureau

DIPHU, Aug 26: Tepong Hanse, the editor and publisher of The Arlung Daily, a Karbi vernacular daily, passed away on Monday at around 2:30 AM at Diphu Medical College and Hospital following a prolonged illness.

Hanse was a pioneering figure in local journalism, being the first to publish a daily in Karbi. The Arlung Daily was launched on June 9, 2004, and has been published from Diphu.

His passing has been mourned by intellectuals, litterateurs, cultural bodies, social organisations, and the journalism community.

Throughout the morning, people from all walks of life visited Hanse's residence in Rongnihat No 2 to pay their respects. Elected members of the Karbi Anglong Au-

tonomous Council (KAAC), MLAs, as well as presidents and secretaries of social organisations, intellectuals, well-wishers, and journalists attended to honor his memory. Tuliram Ronghang, chief executive member (CEM) of the KAAC, visited the residence to offer his condolences.

"I am deeply saddened by the passing of TP Hanse, the editor of The Arlung Daily. His contributions to local journalism and his steadfast commitment to the Karbi community will be profoundly missed. May his soul rest in peace," Ronghang stated in his message.

Richard Tokbi, executive member (EM) of the KAAC, also expressed his sorrow, saying, "I am deeply saddened by the sudden demise of TP Hanse, Editor and owner of the (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)



Over 1,500 samples can be tested in one single run

Affordable TB testing technology developed by ICMR's regional centre

NEW DELHI, Aug 26: An affordable tuberculosis testing technology that can detect the disease using a patient's sputum for just ₹ 35 has been developed by apex medical research body ICMR's regional centre in Assam's Dibrugarh.

The 'A CRISPR case-based TB detection system' is light, portable and involves three steps of testing. Over 1,500 samples can be tested in one single run in around two-and-half hours, ICMR sources said. Conventional diagnostic techniques for TB commonly rely on culture, which requires 42 days to confirm as TB negative, microscopy, and nucleic acid-based methods. These are also time-consuming and may require sophisticated equipment.

An official said, "Tuberculosis

(TB) remains a global health challenge, necessitating the development of accurate and rapid diagnostic tools for effective disease management. Current diagnostic methods often exhibit limitations in terms of sensitivity, specificity, speed and cost, emphasising the need for innovative approaches."

Additionally, some molecular diagnostic methods, while offering improved sensitivity, may lack the desired specificity or face challenges associated with cost and ease of handling.

"Considering these problems, the CRISPR-Cas12a-based molecular diagnostic system 'GlowTBPCRKit' coupled with an amplification step (using thermal cycler) and the 'RapidGlow device' provides a promising solu-



tion," the official said.

The Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) has now invited Expression of Interest (EoI) from eligible organisations, companies, manufacturers for undertaking

'Transfer of Technology' for commercialisation of the 'A CRISPR case-based TB detection system' for the detection of Mycobacterium tuberculosis.

The ICMR-RMRCNE institute

will provide expert guidance and technical support for the production of 'A CRISPR Cas based TB detection system' in all phases.

Such technical oversight by the institute would accelerate the development of the product and its commercialisation.

The ICMR would also provide technical support through its team of experienced scientists in study, planning, product development, development of study protocol, results or data analysis, outcome assessment, safety and efficacy assessment, product improvement, etc., if deemed fit upon the mutual understanding between ICMR and collaborative company.

The apex health research body through its institutes would provide support and facilitation to conduct the (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Markets extend winning momentum on US Fed rate cut hopes; Sensex rallies 600 pts

MUMBAI, Aug 26: Stock market benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty surged nearly 1 per cent on Monday, propelled by intense buying in metal, IT and consumer durable stocks amid hopes that the US Federal Reserve will start cutting interest rates soon.

Renewed Foreign fund inflows and buying in frontline stocks HDFC Bank and Reliance Industries further bolstered investor sentiment, traders said.

Rising for the fifth straight day, the 30-share BSE Sensex jumped 611.90 points or 0.75 per cent to settle at 81,698.11. During the day, it surged 738.06 points or 0.91 per cent to 81,824.27.

A total of 2,189 stocks advanced, while 1,860 declined and 148 remained unchanged on the BSE.

The NSE Nifty soared 187.45 points or 0.76 per cent to 25,010.60, registering gains for the eighth session in a row.

Among the 30 Sensex firms, HCL Technologies, NTPC, Bajaj Finserv, Tech Mahindra, JSW Steel, Titan, Mahindra & Mahindra, Tata Steel, Larsen & Toubro and Tata Consultancy Services were the biggest gainers.

On the other hand, Kotak Mahindra Bank, IndusInd Bank, Maruti and Hindustan Unilever were among the laggards.

In the broader market, the BSE



midcap gauge jumped 0.66 per cent and the smallcap index soared 0.20 per cent.

"US Fed has signalled a rate cut in September, reflecting in the decline in US treasury yields and the dollar index, which has led to a rally in global markets despite there being no indication of the size of cuts. Indian markets hit a new high led by a change in FII stance to positive from negative, along with continued strong DII inflows.

"Although the overall trend was positive, large caps outperform on account of healthy earnings and relatively fair valuation compared to broader markets. IT, Realty, FMCG and Consumption gained

on account of improved outlook," Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Financial Services, said.

Among the indices, metal surged 2.03 per cent, realty (1.69 per cent), consumer durables (1.43 per cent), IT (1.37 per cent), tech (1.11 per cent) and commodities (0.91 per cent).

Telecommunication and services were the laggards.

In Asian markets, Shanghai and Hong Kong settled in the positive territory while Seoul and Tokyo ended lower. European markets were trading mostly lower. The US markets ended with significant gains on Friday.

"Markets kicked off the week on a positive note, gaining over half a

per cent, driven by a dovish stance from the US Fed," Ajit Mishra - SVP, Research, Religare Broking Ltd, said.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) bought equities worth Rs 1,944.48 crore on Friday, according to exchange data.

Global oil benchmark Brent crude climbed 1.08 per cent to USD 79.87 a barrel.

"Optimism was the order of the day as dovish statements by the Fed Chair last week sparked positivity across the globe and also at Dalal Street. Markets shrugged off the recent sluggish trading sessions, as the US Fed chairperson, last week, pointing towards a likely rate cut fuelled a major rally that saw Nifty close above the crucial 25k mark.

"While simmering tension in West Asia may continue to keep investors on the edge, India, relatively better off compared to other major economies, could continue to attract investor flows in the medium term," said Prashanth Tapte, Senior VP (Research), Mehta Equities Ltd.

Rising for the fourth straight session on Friday, the BSE benchmark ended 33.02 points or 0.04 per cent higher at 81,086.21. The NSE Nifty edged up 11.65 points or 0.05 per cent to close at 24,823.15, registering gains for the seventh session in a row. (PTI)

First vegetarian restaurant inaugurated at Sharabhathi 'AURUM' opens its 3rd outlet in Guwahati

HT Bureau GUWAHATI, Aug 26: 'AURUM,' renowned for its delectable cakes and bakery products, has expanded its presence with the opening of its third outlet in the heart of Guwahati. After the success of its cafes in Kumarpara and Fatasil, AURUM inaugurated its first pure vegetarian restaurant near Shine Tower in Sharabhathi on Monday.

The inauguration ceremony was graced by Babulal Chouhan and Binla Devi Chouhan, who lit the

ceremonial lamp. AURUM founder and young entrepreneur Arti Chouhan, along with Vishal Chouhan and other dignitaries, were present to mark the occasion.

Arti Chouhan shared that the new restaurant, spanning 2,000 square feet, offers a pure vegetarian menu. It features a spacious dining area accommodating 50-60 guests and serves a variety of Indian, South Indian, North Indian, and Chinese dishes. Since its inception two years ago, AURUM

has gained popularity for its eggless cakes and bakery items. The new restaurant will continue to offer a wide range of these products. Additionally, the venue includes a party hall suitable for hosting birthdays, anniversaries, naming ceremonies, engagements, corporate meetings, and kitty parties. Chouhan expressed her enthusiasm for the new restaurant, hoping it will provide an enjoyable dining experience for families and friends in Guwahati and beyond.

Bajaj Allianz life reports 26% growth in Q1 FY25 IRNB

HT Bureau GUWAHATI, Aug 26: Bajaj Allianz Life Insurance Company has announced a robust 26% growth in its Individual Regular New Business (IRNB) for the first quarter of the fiscal year 2025, said an official statement on Monday.

The company's latest financial results underscore a strong performance and an optimistic outlook for the ongoing fiscal year. "The Company's Individual Rated New Business (IRNB) growing 26% and reaching ₹1,294 crore as compared to Q1FY24 when it stood at ₹1,028 crore," the statement added.

Speaking on the same, Tarun Chugh, MD & CEO, Bajaj Allianz Life, said, "With our focus on ensuring we are available for all our customers, across the country, we commenced a journey on increasing our footprint in a strategic manner. Today, with over 545 branches, 1.53 lakh agents, 35 trusted bank partner-

ships, 25 thousand employees and a robust digital presence, we are reaching to existing and new customers in an effective manner."

The statement further claimed that the market share grew and remained fastest-growing private life insurer in 3-year CAGR on full year FY24 basis. "Healthy growth across distribution channels," it added.

The Individual Rated New Business (IRNB) increased by 26%, reaching ₹1,294 crore from ₹1,028 crore in Q1 FY24. The Gross Written Premium (GWP) registered a growth of 24%, reaching ₹5,018 crore compared to ₹4,058 crores in Q1 FY24. Profit After Tax (PAT) was reported at ₹97 crore, it said.

The New Business Value (NBV) increased by 11% to ₹104 crores from ₹94 crores in Q1 FY24. The Assets Under Management (AUM) grew by 23%, totalling ₹116,966 crore. The private market share grew to 9.0% on IRNB basis.

Asian stocks mixed after Wall Street rallies as 'time has come' for rate cuts

HONG KONG, Aug 26: Asian stocks were mixed Monday after U.S. stocks rallied close to their records on the expectation the Federal Reserve will start cutting interest rates soon to help the economy.

US futures edged lower. Oil prices rose after Israel and the Lebanese militant group Hezbollah traded heavy fire early Sunday, triggering potential supply worries among the markets.

On Friday, Fed Chair Jerome Powell said the time had come to lower the main interest rate from a two-decade high. "The time has come for policy to adjust," Powell said. "The direction of travel is clear, and the timing and pace of rate cuts will depend on incoming data, the evolving outlook, and the balance of risks."

The dovish stance lifted the yen against the dollar, and the dollar-yen rate fell 0.30% to 143.95 on

Monday's early trading.

The Bank of Japan's governor had hinted Friday that more hikes in interest rates may be coming if inflation stays on course to sustainably hit the 2% target. He also mentioned the bank was closely monitoring the recent gyrations in stock prices and currencies.

Japan's benchmark Nikkei 225 slipped 1.1% in morning trading to 37,944.68 due to the stronger currency. (AP)

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12 houses set on fire after

politics. Miscreants regardless of their faith must be dealt with firmly -- law has to be neutral to all. I ask for Tripura to unite in these tough times and not fight with each other," he added. At least 26 persons have died and 1.17 lakh people have been rendered homeless in Tripura due to devastating floods since August 19. (PTI)

Assam CM bats for stringent

and daughters is the country's priority. I have repeatedly raised this issue from the Red Fort. Be it any state of the country, I understand the pain and anger of my sisters and daughters," he said. (PTI)

Rameswar Teli, Das elected

micro-blogging site X. "I am confident that both the veteran leaders will represent the aspirations of the tea tribes community and Barak Valley with renewed vigour in the Upper House," he added. Teli represented Dibrugarh Lok Sabha seat twice in the parliament; however, he was dropped after Sonowal was projected as BJP candidate in Dibrugarh. It was common apprehension that Teli would be given Sonowal's vacant seat in the Rajya Sabha.

On the other hand, Das is a Hindu Bengali leader and an old loyalist of the BJP. Das was elected to the state assembly four times and was one of the few leaders who reaped the seeds of the BJP in Assam when the saffron fold was a weak force in the state. Notably, Das earlier also sought a Rajya Sabha berth but he was denied.

Government announces

Former BJP MP Jamyang Tsering Namgyal termed the centre's announcement a 'Janmashtami' gift for the people of Ladakh. "In 2018, the BJP granted Ladakh a separate division and also fulfilled the demand for UT next year besides enhancing the budget to Rs 6,000 crore. We welcome the decision which is in accordance with the aspirations of the people," he said, highlighting his role for raising the issue with the government during his tenure between 2019 and 2024.

He also praised the Ladakh Lt Governor Brig (Retd) B D Mirsha for his efforts in granting the five new districts to the region. "I am thankful to home minister and Modi government on behalf of the people of Ladakh for announcing five new districts to Ladakh which was a long pending demand of the people, especially Zaskar region," said Sonam Wangchuk, a climate activist and a member of the Leh Apex Body.

He said the decision is in accordance with the promise made by the BJP to the people of these areas but "we have to see whether these are just administrative districts or democratic units wherein they have autonomous district councils like Leh and Kargil". Wangchuk reminded the BJP of its promise of extending sixth schedule of the Constitution to the region and said the government must address the primary demand of the people for safeguards otherwise the struggle of the locals would continue.

The Congress' Ladakh president Nawang Rigzin Jora also welcomed the Centre's decision but said just creating administrative districts would not save environment, culture and identity of the people of Ladakh for which they are on the streets for the last over four years.

"Creating five more districts further strengthens our demand for statehood because the UT of Pondicherry with only four districts has a legislative assembly. Ladakh is strategically located and the demands of its people are justified," Jora, whose party is also part of the LAB, said, adding the LAB will continue its struggle in support of its four-point agenda. He also demanded democratically elected autonomous hill councils for the newly created districts and a separate budget for the new districts.

Ladakh Buddhist association president Chering Dorje Lakrook, who is also co-chairman of the LAB, said the government's decision fulfilled the justified demand of the people. "This decision will benefit the people especially living in far-flung areas by getting all facilities at their doorstep," he said.

He said there will be no impact of the decision on the ongoing struggle in support of their four demands. "The creation of new districts is not the demand of the LAB and KDA, so we stand by our decision to undertake foot march from Leh to Delhi beginning September 1." (PTI)

Affordable TB testing technology

research and development or clinical study of new technology or product in India through its affiliates or institutes, in collaboration with the company and institutions in a professional and mutually agreed upon manner and timelines. (PTI)

Tepong Hanse passes away

premier Karbi daily The Arlang Daily, published from Diphu, Karbi Anglong." The District Press Club of Karbi Anglong (DPPCA) extended its condolences.

Rameswar Chauhan, editor and publisher of The Hills Times, a prominent English daily, visited Hanse's residence to offer his respects and express grief with the bereaved family. Chauhan reflected on Hanse's impact, stating, "Hanse was one of my closest friends in the media fraternity. We frequently met in Diphu market to discuss media in Karbi Anglong. As the pioneer of The Arlang Daily, he gave a voice to the voiceless. His untimely passing is a significant loss to the media community of Karbi Anglong. May his soul rest in peace."

Tepong Hanse was born on February 28, 1980, in Betkhal, Jiribam, Manipur. He was the eldest son of Bajong Hanse and Mary Teronpi and had two brothers, Mukur Hanse and Eliza, and two sisters, Kache Hansepi and Rebecca Hansepi.

Hanse completed his matriculation in 1996 from Ebenezer Academy, New Lamka, Manipur, and graduated in 1998 from Churachandpur Government College under Manipur University. He married Jeni Moi Tonsing Teronpi, a Paite woman from Manipur, on February 28, 2003. He is survived by two sons, Harsing Timothy Hanse and Atur Sang Hanse, and a daughter, Faith Serjir Hansepi.

The funeral service was held in the evening at Hanse's residence. Church Elder Sundersing Timung led the service, while Reuben Terang, Secretary of the Karbi Anglong Evangelical Baptist Convention (KAEB), read Hanse's life history. Hanse's father, Bajong Hanse, also spoke about his son.

Pastor Manthang Hanse of the Bithlangso area delivered a short Bible message, and a condolence message from KAEB was presented by executive secretary Rev. Jemson Bey. Following the service, Hanse's mortal remains were taken in a procession and laid to rest at Matipung burial ground.

Avg housing prices up 90 pc in Bengaluru's Bagaluru since 2020; 79 pc at Dwarka Expressway

NEW DELHI, Aug 26: Housing prices in Bengaluru's Bagaluru rose highest by 90 per cent since 2020, while Dwarka Expressway in Delhi-NCR ranked 4th with 79 per cent average appreciation, according to Anarock.

Real estate consultant Anarock analysed price trends in the top 3 micro-markets of the 7 major cities, based on the maximum new supply seen in the last five years.

As per the data, Bengaluru's Bagaluru recorded the highest price appreciation of 90 per cent between 2019-end and June this year.

"Average residential prices at Bagaluru jumped from ₹4,300 per sq ft in 2019 to ₹8,151 per sq ft in H1 2024," Anuj Puri, Chairman at Anarock, said.

Hyderabad's Kokapet is ranked second with 89 per cent price appreciation. Prices rose from ₹4,750 per sq ft in 2019 to ₹9,000 per sq ft in H1 2024.

Bengaluru's Whitefield ranked third, with an 80 per cent rise in residential prices during the period.

Average prices increased to ₹8,600 per sq ft in H1 2024 from ₹4,765 per sq ft in 2019.

NCR's Dwarka Expressway is in the 4th position with a 79 per cent price appreciation. Average prices increased from ₹5,359 per sq ft in 2019 to ₹9,600 per sq ft in H1 2024. Bengaluru's Sarjapur Road stood at 5th position with a 58 per cent price jump. The average prices here rose from ₹5,870 per sq ft in 2019 to ₹9,300 per sq ft in H1 2024.

Hyderabad's Bachupally ranked 6th with average prices increasing by 57 per cent to ₹5,800 from ₹3,690 per sq ft. Hyderabad's Tellapur ranked 7th with a 53 per cent jump in average prices to ₹7,350 from ₹4,819 per sq ft. Parnel in Mumbai Metropolitan Region ranked 8th with a 50 per cent price rise to ₹8,300 from ₹5,520 per sq ft.

Delhi-NCR's New Gurugram is at 9th spot. Average prices rose 48 per cent to ₹9,000 per sq ft from ₹6,100 per sq ft.

MMR's Dombivli ranked 10th. The rates grew 40 per cent to ₹9,300 per square feet from ₹6,625 per sq ft in 2019-end. (PTI)

Over 23 lakh govt employees under NPS get option to choose unified pension scheme

NEW DELHI, Aug 26: The just-announced Unified Pension Scheme for central government employees will be available only for those who are currently subscribers of the New Pension Scheme (NPS), including retirees. The new scheme guarantees employees 50 per cent of their average basic pay over the last 12 months before retirement as a pension for a minimum qualifying service of 25 years against a market returns linked payout under the NPS.

According to the scheme approved by the Union Cabinet, the pension will be proportionate for a lesser service period of up to a minimum of 10 years. Also, assured pension of ₹10,000 per month on superannuation after a minimum of 10 years of service.

The scheme has been brought out to address the concerns of government employees over NPS, which came into effect from January 1, 2004.

Under the old pension scheme (OPS), effective before January 2004, employees got 50 per cent of their last drawn basic pay as pension. Unlike the old pension scheme, UPS is contributory in nature, wherein employees will be required to contribute 10 per cent of their basic salary and dearness allowance while the employer's contribution (the central government) will be 18.5 per cent.

Under the NPS, the employer contribution is 14 per cent, and the employee contribution is 10 per cent. However, the eventual payout depends on the market returns



on that corpus, mostly invested in government debt.

Employees, under the OPS, were not required to make any contribution. They, however, contributed to the General Provident Fund (GPF). The accumulated amount, along with interest, was paid to the employee at the time of retirement.

As the NPS was less attractive than the OPS, several non-BJP-ruled states decided to go back to the old pension scheme, which offered a DA-linked benefit. This prompted the Centre to constitute a committee in April 2023, under former Finance Secretary and now Cabinet Secretary-designate TV Somanathan to suggest improvement in the NPS architecture.

Fulfilling the long pending demands of government employees ahead of assembly elections in Haryana and Jammu and Kashmir, the Union Cabinet on August 24 approved the UPS, which will provide assured pension to 23 lakh eligible central government

employees. Those opting for the UPS will not be able to switch back. The UPS will put an additional burden of ₹6,250 crore on the exchequer per year. The expenditure will vary every year according to variations in the number of employees.

In addition, there will be an arrear of ₹800 crore that has to be paid under the National Pension System (NPS) to employees retiring before March 31, 2025. If these retirees opt for UPS, they will receive arrears.

"UPS is being implemented by the Central Government, benefiting 23 lakh central government employees," Information & Broadcasting Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said on X on Sunday.

If states also adopt the UPS architecture, a total of over 90 lakh government employees, who are presently on NPS, would be benefited, he added.

On Sunday, Maharashtra, where assembly elections are due later in the year, became the first state to

announce the adoption of the UPS for its employees.

RSS-affiliate Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh (BMS) said though the government has attempted to overcome the shortcomings of the NPS, there are still some issues compared to OPS. BMS will decide its future course of action only after a detailed study of the UPS after it is notified.

All India Trade Union Congress (AITUC) said it is nothing but an extension of the existing NPS.

The trade union expressed apprehensions that UPS will have a lot of aberrations once implemented. AITUC reiterated that it will continue to fight for the restoration of the non-contributory OPS. Ica Chief Economist Aditi Nayar said assured pensions will add to the government's committed expenditure in the future while reducing the uncertainty for employees.

"This will have to be built into the fiscal consolidation roadmap going ahead," Nayar added.

The UPS reflects a thoughtful approach to long-term social security, addressing concerns about the adequacy and sustainability of pension benefits in a rapidly changing economic landscape, said Shardul Amarchand Mangaldas & Co Partner Dorothy Thomas. "This move signals the government's commitment to providing robust support for its workforce, enhancing financial stability for millions of government employees across the country," Thomas said. (PTI)

BTR chief Pramod Boro lays foundation for new infrastructure in Kokrajhar

800-seat Town Hall and state-of-the-art guest houses set to enhance civic amenities

HT Correspondent

KOKRAJHAR, Aug 26: In a significant development for infrastructure in the Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR), Pramod Boro, chief executive member (CEM) of BTR, laid the foundation stones for the construction of two state-of-the-art guest houses in Kokrajhar on Monday, in the presence of government officials and local residents.

CEM Boro laid the foundation stone for a Town Hall cum Auditorium at Habrubari in Kokrajhar town, with the presence of EM of BTR Wilson Hasda, senior government officials, and local citizens. The Town Hall will be constructed with an allocation of ₹ 24 crore under the Urban Infrastructure Development Fund (UIDF) of the Department of Housing and Urban Affairs, government of Assam.



Additionally, CEM Boro laid the foundation stone for a state-of-the-art guest house at Haloadal village under the Kokrajhar development block, aimed at enhancing community welfare services and hospital-

ity in the region. The guest house will be built with an allocation of ₹24 crore under the grant to BTC for infrastructure development for the financial year 2022-23, under the Public Works Department,

government of BTC (Assam). The proposed Town Hall, featuring an 800-seat capacity auditorium, will be a valuable addition to Kokrajhar's civic infrastructure, enhancing the city's reputation as the 'City of Peace'.

CEM Boro stated that the BTR government has been dedicated to the welfare and development of the region since its inception. He highlighted the recent upgrade of the SAI Stadium in Kokrajhar to FIFA standards and noted that the new guest houses will address the need for high-quality accommodation in the area. He extended his sincere thanks to the people of Habrubari and Haloadal Bangaladoba Thalguri for allowing the construction of these facilities. He expressed hope that these infrastructural developments will be beneficial to the local population.

Police conduct road march to ensure public peace in Sivasagar



HT Correspondent

SIVASAGAR, Aug 26: Apprehensive of potential public unrest following two recent incidents in Sivasagar and Dhing, and the resulting widespread reaction, the Sivasagar district administration conducted a road march in Sivasagar town on Monday. District commissioner Aditya Vikram Yadav and SP Sivasagar Subhrajyoti Bora led the march, which covered the main roads of the town. The district commissioner told The Assam Tribune that this is a normal procedure to maintain public peace. When asked about the bond-signing by several leaders of organisations calling for a mass public democratic movement against attacks on indigenous people, the district commissioner stated that it is part of the administrative procedure under Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Samhita (Dhara 126) and CrPc 107 to maintain law and order. He noted that the leaders of the organisations have cooperated with this procedure.

Reacting strongly against the administration's bond-signing tactics, Shrinkhal Chaliha, leader of Bir Lachit Sena, said he would never sign such bonds. He added that the narrative of Hindu Bangladeshi supporters being aligned with the BJP and Muslim Bangladeshi supporters with the Congress must change. In Sivasagar, no one speaks of discrimination on religious lines; the focus is on resisting outsiders who exploit local resources.

Partha Pratim Gogoi, secretary of ATASU's Sivasagar unit, stated that the move to silence the spontaneous movement against illegal land grabbers and to protect indigenous people, led by student and youth organisations, has been applauded by the people

of the state for its discipline. He asserted that bond-signing is absolutely irrelevant and unjust.

ATASU leader Basanta Gogoi criticised the administration's bond-signing of leaders from indigenous people's organisations as an anti-people move. He warned that such coercive steps to deter indigenous Assamese from voicing their grievances would only aggravate the situation. Gogoi claimed that the administration seems more concerned about the security of non-Assamese traders and Bangladeshi Miyans than about the Assamese people. He emphasised that the recent democratic movement in Sivasagar was peaceful and did not involve any illegal activities.

There is an undercurrent of apprehension among certain sections of society, particularly among migrated Muslims from other districts. Hundreds of Miyans disappeared from the crowded Sunday market (Krishak Bazar), and many e-rickshaw drivers went into hiding overnight in Sivasagar, Nazira, Sonari, and Mahmora. Activists from indigenous organisations like ATASU and TAYPA have launched door-to-door searches for suspected Bangladeshi nationals, creating an atmosphere of fear and anxiety among certain groups.

In Moran, Debajit Gogoi, executive president of the central committee of ATASU, threatened supporters of Congress (I) MLA Abdul Rashid Mandal for allegedly supporting Bangladeshi Miyans in connection with the Dhing incident. Gogoi stated that Mandal and his supporters would not be allowed to enter Upper Assam, and other party leaders who have remained silent over Mandal's comments must prove that they support the rights of indigenous people in the future.

AIYCP to hold mid-term session in Nagaon

HT Correspondent

NAGAON, Aug 26: The central committee of Assam Jatiyatadabi Yuba Chatra Parishad (AIYCP), in association with the Nagaon district committee, is organising its mid-term session at the Nagaon District Library Auditorium with a three-day program from August 30, 2024.

Pragiyotish Bania, president of the Nagaon district committee, and Devabrata Das, general secretary, stated in a press release that the session will commence with the hoisting of the flag on the morning of August 30.

Thousands of delegates from the central committee, all district committees, Anchalik, as well as the Sakha committees of the Parishad, will participate in the session, which will feature three significant delegate sessions.

On August 31, a grand cultural procession will be organised from Nehrubari in Nagaon town, showcasing the cultural heritage of various ethnic groups of Assam.

The district committee has also arranged to publish a souvenir on the occasion. The final delegate session will be held on September 1. The district committee has appealed to the people of Nagaon to extend their cooperation in making the session a success.

Aaradhyaa Dhanuka sets dual Guinness World Records in hula hooping

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Aug 26: Aaradhyaa Dhanuka, a 10-year-old prodigy from Guwahati and daughter of Swati and Dr Ghanshyam Das Dhanuka, and granddaughter of Kusum and Dr Ashok Kumar Dhanuka, has etched her name in the esteemed Guinness World Records, earning the title of 'Officially Amazing'. Aaradhyaa accomplished this remarkable feat by hula hooping for an incredible 21 minutes and 2 seconds around one arm at a 90-degree angle, surpassing the previous record set by Viha Gedia from the United States.

In addition, she set a second record by spinning 3 hula hoops around her neck simultaneously for 4 minutes and 2 seconds.

These records were set on May 19, 2024, in the presence of official witnesses, adhering to the stringent guidelines of the Guinness World Records. Aaradhyaa's extraordinary achievement is a testament to her unwavering dedication, relentless hard work, and fervent passion for hula hooping.

Aaradhyaa has been honing her hula hooping skills

for the past several months and has already garnered recognition for her exceptional talents. She holds numerous records, including seven state records, three national records, and three world records, in addition to an honorary doctorate in sports.

"I am thrilled and honoured to have my name in the Guinness World Records. Chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma has been my motivator. After witnessing him achieve a Guinness World Record for the state with the largest Bihu Dance Performance and the largest performance by folk musicians with instruments on April 13, 2023, I aspired to achieve one myself," said Aaradhyaa. "I hope to inspire others to pursue their passions and never give up on their dreams."

Aaradhyaa's achievement has been lauded as a remarkable feat, garnering congratulations from dignitaries and citizens alike. Her record-breaking performance has brought immense pride to the state of Assam and serves as an inspiration to the entire nation.

100 people rejoin Hinduism after converting from Christianity

HT Correspondent

JAGIROAD, Aug 26: In a significant development, 100 members from 20 families of an ethnic tribe re-embraced Hinduism on Sunday after previously converting to Christianity. The ceremony took place in Amsoi, near Jagiroad. Reports suggest that there is an ongoing, covert effort to convert simple tribal people to Christianity in Assam through various enticements. Many tribal people living across Jagiroad have been drawn into this movement by Christian missionaries. However, those who had converted are now regaining awareness of their cultural roots. Recognising the importance of preserving their ancestral traditions, they have returned to Hinduism. The All Hindu Religion and Culture Protection Committee is actively assisting these reconversions. The formal return to Hinduism was marked by a ceremony organised by the Sadao Hindu Dharma-Sanskriti Suraksha Samiti at Amsoi.

Three-day 'Junior Rangers' nature training concludes in Jorhat

HT Correspondent

JORHAT, Aug 26: A three-day nature connect residential training programme for students from three Kendriya Vidyalayas in Jorhat, organised by the Indian Council of Forestry Research and Education (ICFRE)-Rain Forest Research Institute (RFRI), Jorhat, concluded recently at the institute's Sotai outskirts campus. The training began on August 21.

The programme, titled 'Junior Rangers-Connecting Students with Nature', was sponsored by the Union Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change. It included activities such as bird watching, which fosters a connection between nature and humans, and promotes aware-

ness and empathy towards other living beings.

An ICFRE-RFRI official reported that 20 students from Kendriya Vidyalaya CSIR-NEIST, Kendriya Vidyalaya AFS Rowrah, and Kendriya Vidyalaya ONGC Cinnamara participated in the training. ICFRE-RFRI director Dr Nitin Kulkarni, who inaugurated the event, emphasised the importance of the programme in motivating students to connect with nature and develop compassion towards it.

RK Kalita, course coordinator and head of the Extension Division at ICFRE-RFRI, provided a detailed outline of the training programme and its benefits for future generations. Dr DJ Das, head of the Forestry Ecology and

Climate Change Division of the institute, delivered the vote of thanks, and Francis Nath, library assistant at the institute, conducted the inaugural session. On the first day, Dr DJ Das sensitised the students about the LiFE Mission, focusing on lifestyle for the environment and its role in preventing natural hazards. He encouraged students to integrate the positive actions of the LiFE Mission into their daily lives.

During the training, students explored various aspects of forestry, including studying different bamboo species at the Bambusetum and Bamboo Nursery, visiting the Tissue Culture Lab, Bamboo Composite Centre, and Bamboo Treatment Unit.

Sensitisation workshop on 'Cancer and Palliative Care' in Dibrugarh

HT Correspondent

DIBRUGARH, Aug 26: A sensitisation workshop on 'Cancer and Palliative Care' will be organised for media persons by Pratishruti Cancer and Palliative Trust on September 8, 2024, at Hotel Little Palace in Dibrugarh. The workshop will be held under 'Project Sanskaar', supported by the Assam Science Technology and Environment Council.

"We are an organisation that works on cancer awareness for early diagnosis among the general public and provides comprehensive assistance to cancer patients. Our trust has been dedicatedly providing free palliative care for cancer patients and their families, particularly in palliative home care, with a holistic approach," said Panna Bharali, secretary of Pratishruti Cancer and Palliative Trust.

Pratishruti Cancer and Palliative Trust, Dibrugarh, is a nonprofit foundation dedicated to serving the field of cancer and palliative care with the objective of empowering the community with a scientific approach to combat and fight cancer.

Pratishruti was established on December 15, 2017, by a team of doctors and a group of dedicated individuals. "Our vision is to improve the lives of those living with cancer and maintain their quality of life until the last breath and beyond through palliative care," said Bharali.

Krishna Janmashtami celebrated

HT Correspondent

DEMOW, Aug 26: Krishna Janmashtami was celebrated with religious fervour and devotion in Demow and its surrounding areas on Monday. The festivities included celebrations at Demow Kusal Path Naam Ghar, Santipur Naam Ghar, and other local venues, where Naam Prasanga was performed. Earthen lamps were lit, and bhog (offerings) were made. bThe Janmashtami celebrations were also observed at Radha Krishna Mandir in Demow, where Naam Prasanga was organised, and prasad was distributed among the devotees.

Ali Hussain arrested for attempted rape & assault

HT Correspondent

TEZPUR, Aug 26: Amidst recent reports of rape and molestation cases across the state, another shocking incident of a rape attempt was reported on Monday afternoon from the Dhekiajuli area.

According to police sources, one Ali Hussain of Naharbari-Bangali area under Dhekiajuli PS in Sonitpur district attempted to rape a girl. When she tried to defend herself, he severely injured her by hitting her with a piece of timber. Neighbours, hearing her distress calls, rushed to the scene, caught Ali Hussain red-handed, and later handed him over to the police. Based on the complaint lodged at Dhekiajuli PS by the victim's family, police arrested Ali Hussain and sent him to jail.

Condemning the incident, AATTSA and the Assam Chapter of the Sonatani Bir Hindu organisation have demanded that the police award exemplary punishment to the culprit.

Excise raid in Margherita

HT Correspondent

MARGHERITA, Aug 26: An excise raid was carried out on Sunday evening by the excise staff from Digboi and Margherita circles, along with an armed party from Digboi Police Station. The operation took place at Powai Centre and Powai Bongaon under Digboi Police Station. During the raid, two cases were detected, and the excise team seized and destroyed 500 litres of fermented wash, 2 DA sets, and 50 litres of illicit distilled liquor.

Balidan Divas observed in Biswanath by All Assam Gorkha Sammelan

HT Correspondent

BISWANATH CHARIALI, Aug 26: The Balidan Divas convened by the Biswanath district committee of All Assam Gorkha Sammelan (AGS) was held in the conference hall of the district office at Golia, with Hari Prasad Sarma, the district president, in the chair on Sunday.

The day-long programme began with the offering of floral tributes in front of the portrait of Saheed Major Durga Malla by Mahendra Basnet. Basnet highlighted the

life and contributions of Gorkha martyr Durga Malla in India's freedom struggle and his role as a major in the INA (Indian National Army). He also detailed how Malla was arrested by the British army and hanged in Delhi on August 25, 1944. Malla had joined the INA and served in its intelligence cell. The Gorkha community observes August 25 as Balidan Divas in his honour.

The programme continued with an executive meeting of the district committee. Ro-

hini Koudinya, secretary in charge, explained the objectives, while Hemanta Bhattarai read out the proceedings. A series of resolutions were adopted to strengthen the organisation, and the nominated members were administered the oath. The meeting was addressed by Chabilal Sarma, Joy Kumar Sutar, and Dipak Gajurel. It was attended by central executive members, as well as presidents and secretaries of various branch committees under the Biswanath committee of AGS.

Marwari organisations demand enhanced protection for women

HT Correspondent

SIVASAGAR, Aug 26: Marwari organisations in Moran have demanded the security and protection of women during a public meeting. The meeting, organised jointly by Marwari Yuva Manch, North Eastern Provincial Marwari Sammelan, and Marwari Mahila Sammelan at Radhakrishna Vivah Bhawan, Moran on Sunday, expressed deep concern over the increasing atrocities against women in the state and strongly condemned the perpetrators of the Sivasagar incident, namely Arun Lahati and Manish Poddar. The speakers at the meeting urged the two businessmen to refrain from such anti-social activities in the future and to involve themselves in developmental activities alongside the Assamese society. The meeting also discussed incidents of violence against women in various parts of Assam, including the Dhing rape case. The Marwari community demanded that the government identify the perpetrators of violence against women in the state and impose exemplary punishment. The meeting was attended by prominent members of the Marwari community from various places. A minute of silence was observed to mourn the tragic death of the trainee doctor in Kolkata.

Moran Commerce College hosts freshmen social event

HT Correspondent

SIVASAGAR, Aug 26: Moran Commerce College, one of the leading institutions of commerce education in the state, held its freshmen's social with a day-log program on Saturday. Inaugurating the event, Dr Jatun Chutia emphasised that today's students must build not only their own futures but also the future of the country. He encouraged newcomers to focus on character building alongside skill development. The meeting was chaired by the principal of Moran Commerce College, Aivilata Chutia, and the keynote address was delivered by the secretary of the College Development Committee, Trailokya Chetia. The event was attended by several teachers, staff, and students of the college who shared their thoughts, recited poems, sang songs, and performed dances.



Education Minister Ranajit Pegu attending the Sri Krishna Janmashtami Celebration where over 2000 children presented an enthralling programme at Dhemaji. UB Photo

Extension of weekly special trains between Guwahati & Anand Vihar Terminal

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Aug 26: To accommodate the extra rush of passengers, it has been decided to extend the services of one pair of weekly special trains No 05671/05672 (Guwahati - Anand Vihar Terminal - Guwahati) for two additional trips in both directions from August 28 to September 6, 2024. These trains will operate on the existing days of service, with the same timings and stoppages.

Accordingly, Train No 05671 (Guwahati - Anand Vihar Terminal) Special will depart from Guwahati on August 28 and September 4, 2024 (Wednesday) at 15:00 hours, reaching Anand Vihar Terminal at 8:50 hours on Friday.

In the return direction, Train No 05672 (Anand Vihar Terminal - Guwahati) Special will depart from Anand Vihar Terminal on August 30 and September 6, 2024 (Friday) at 23:45 hours, reaching Guwahati at 14:15 hours on Sunday.

The special train will run via Kamakhya, Rangiya, New Bongaigaon, Kokrajhar, New Alipurdwar, New Coochbehar, New Jalpaiguri, Kishanganj, Malda Town, Bhagalpur, Jamalpur, Gaya, Pt Deen Dayal Upadhyaya, and Prayagraj in both directions. The train will have one AC 3-tier, eight sleeper class, and ten general second class coaches for passengers. The extension of this train service



will benefit waitlisted passengers on other trains on these routes.

Details of stoppages and timings are available on the IRCTC web-

site and the social media platforms of NF Railway. Passengers are requested to verify the details before undertaking their journey.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

The best way out is always through.
-Robert Frost

Malayalam film industry at crossroads

The recent release of the Hema Committee report on the Malayalam film industry has laid bare its dark, exploitative underbelly. Sexual harassment, wage disparity, illegal bans, drug and alcohol abuse, and inhumane working conditions are rampant. The findings, released five years after the report was submitted to the Kerala Government, demand immediate attention and action. At the heart of this toxic environment is a powerful cabal of male producers, directors, and actors. A prominent actor labelled them as a "mafia" controlling the industry. Their dominance extends to blacklisting those who refuse to comply with their demands, with the Committee confirming the prevalence of the notorious "casting couch" culture. Disturbingly, sexual exploitation begins even before women are hired, with prominent figures demanding sexual favours in exchange for roles. Numerous women have come forward with evidence of these casting couch attempts, including audio and video clips. However, their testimonies also reveal a pervasive fear of retaliation, deterring many from speaking out or even informing their families. The situation is especially dire for junior artists, who face exploitation and deplorable working conditions. They are often forced to work up to 20 hours a day without proper compensation, and intermediaries siphon off much of their pay. One of the most alarming revelations is the lack of basic facilities for women on set, such as toilets and changing rooms, leading to health issues like urinary infections. Adding to the horror, drunken men often harass women in their accommodations, even attempting forced entries.

One case highlights the trauma of an actress forced to perform with her abuser the day after the assault. Despite the gravity of these issues, the internal complaints committees within the industry remain powerless, often manipulated by those in power. The Hema Committee has recommended the establishment of a Tribunal and new laws to address these concerns. Meanwhile, the Kerala High Court has taken notice. A public interest litigation (PIL) has been filed seeking criminal proceedings against those guilty of sexual exploitation. The Court has asked the Government to submit the full Hema Committee report, parts of which remain unreleased due to concerns for the victims' safety. The Court has also stressed the need to protect vulnerable women and hold perpetrators accountable, urging the Government not to ignore the report. The Advocate General argued that victims could approach the police or courts, but this fails to address the fear and intimidation many women face.

In 2022, the Women in Cinema Collective (WCC) secured a significant victory when the Kerala High Court ordered the formation of Internal Complaints Committees (ICC) on film sets. While the formation of the WCC and the Hema Committee report have led to some improvements, much more remains to be done. Opposition leader V D Satheesan has called for an all-women team of IPS officers to investigate the Committee's findings, and Congress MP Shashi Tharoor has labelled the documented criminality as a stain on the industry, long overdue for cleansing. The intervention of the High Court has rekindled hope among victims, and the Government must act decisively on the Court's directives. The Malayalam film industry is at a crossroads—either it can continue to protect the powerful at the expense of the vulnerable, or it can seize this moment to cleanse itself and ensure justice for all. The choice is clear.

Assam's identity crisis: Balancing indigenous rights and communal harmony



South Kamrup and Mangaldai in Darrang are often cited as glaring examples of such violence.

The Recent Developments: Fear and Insecurity: Fast forward to the present, Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma has expressed concern over the safety and security of indigenous communities in the state. According to Sarma, these communities, particularly in areas where they are minorities, are living under the constant shadow of fear. He has pointed out that crimes against indigenous people, especially women, have seen a disturbing rise, allegedly encouraged by a section of the population post the Lok Sabha elections.

The Historical Context: Immigration and Demographic Shifts: The roots of this situation can be traced back to the early 20th century when Assam was clubbed with the newly created Bengal province in 1905 by Lord Curzon. This period saw the first major influx of "land-hungry" Muslim peasants from East Bengal into Assam. Over time, these migrants settled in various parts of Assam, leading to significant demographic changes in the region. The tension between the indigenous Assamese communities and these migrants has persisted since, with several flashpoints marking the relationship between the two groups.

The Assam Movement (1979-1985) was a significant chapter in this ongoing conflict. Led by the All Assam Students' Union (AASU) and other local organizations, the movement aimed to stop the influx of illegal immigrants and protect the rights of the indigenous population. However, this period was also marked by violence, with several incidents where immigrants were accused of attacking villages of indigenous communities. These attacks often involved looting, arson, and heinous crimes such as rape and kidnapping, further deepening the divide between the two communities.

The cases of Chamaria in

The Sibsagar Incident: A New Dimension to the Conflict: While the issue of indigenous versus migrant communities continues to simmer, a new dimension to the conflict emerged recently in Sib-sagar, another town in Assam.

Here, a community was compelled to apologize for the actions of a few individuals who were accused of assaulting a minor female arm wrestler. The incident, which took place on 13 August, sparked outrage as the entire community (in this case, the Marwari community) was held accountable for the crime of a few. What made this incident particularly controversial was the fact that the apology was extracted in the presence of a state minister, leading to allegations of communal bias and further stoking tensions between different communities in Assam.

This incident was seen by some as an example of "Asomiyagiri," a term used to describe the domination of the Assamese community over others. It highlighted the deep-seated resentment that exists among some sections of the Assamese population towards non-Assamese residents, whom they view as outsiders. However,

Over a period of about twenty years, the local indigenous population was reportedly driven out by immigrants through a systematic campaign of thefts, burglaries, kidnappings, rapes, and threats. Today, only a small portion of land remains where the naamghar (prayer hall) of the Satra stands, with the surrounding areas now dominated by the migrant population.

This pattern of demographic invasion, as some call it, is not

isolated to Dhing alone but is seen across various parts of Assam and the broader northeastern region. The fear is that such incidents are part of a larger design to push out the remaining indigenous populations, thereby altering the demographic and cultural landscape of Assam.

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this attitude was quickly condemned by a large number of Assamese intellectuals and social media users, who argued that such divisive ideologies were harmful to the social fabric of Assam. They called for a more inclusive approach that respected the cultural diversity of the state while also addressing the genuine concerns related to illegal immigration.

The Dhing Rape Case: A Test of Justice: As if to underscore the volatile situation in Assam, another horrific incident occurred in Dhing, where a minor girl was allegedly gang-raped by suspected migrants on 22 August. This incident sent shockwaves across the state, leading to widespread protests and demands for justice. The All Assam Students' Union (AASU) led the charge, organizing a bandh (shutdown) in Dhing to protest against the increasing crimes against women in the region.

The AASU president, Utpal Sarma, expressed deep concern over the failure of law enforcement agencies to protect the indigenous population and called for stringent action against the perpetrators.

In response to the public outcry, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma directed the state police to take swift action against the accused. However, the situation took a dramatic turn when one of the accused died under mysterious circumstances while in police custody. According to reports, the accused drowned while trying to escape from custody, raising questions about the circumstances of his death and whether it was a case of extrajudicial killing.

The Way Forward: A Call for Rational Discourse: The situation in Assam is a complex and sensitive issue that requires a balanced and rational approach. On the one hand, there is a genuine concern about the changing demographics of the state and the threat it poses to the cultural iden-

ity of the indigenous population. On the other hand, there is a need to ensure that justice is not compromised in the name of protecting cultural identity. The recent incidents in Sibsagar and Dhing highlight the dangers of communalism and the importance of upholding the rule of law.

The Patriotic People's Front Assam (PPFA), a forum of nationalist citizens in northeast India, has called for a more nuanced approach to the issue. They have urged the Assamese population to support a corrected National Register of Citizens (NRC) with the base year of 1951, to ensure that all illegal immigrants can be identified and dealt with according to the law. The PPFA has also criticized the tendency among some Assamese leaders to be overly lenient towards illegal immigrants while being harsh on other non-Assamese communities, such as Hindi-speaking residents. They argue that this double standard only serves to weaken the Assamese cause and alienate potential allies in the fight to protect Assam's cultural identity.

Navigating a Complex Reality: Assam stands at a crossroads, grappling with issues of identity, immigration, and communal harmony. The state's history is marked by a continuous struggle to protect its cultural and demographic integrity against external influences. However, in doing so, it must also navigate the complex realities of a diverse society, where different communities co-exist and contribute to the state's rich cultural mosaic.

The incidents in Dhing and Sibsagar are stark reminders of the challenges that lie ahead. The path forward requires not just strong leadership but also a collective commitment to justice, inclusivity, and the rule of law. Only by addressing the root causes of these conflicts and fostering a spirit of mutual respect and understanding can Assam hope to overcome the divisions that threaten to tear it apart. (The writer can be reached at dipakurmigpltd@gmail.com)

DEGREE OF THOUGHT
By: Dipak Kurmi

Mother tongue and our consciousness

By: Himangshu Ranjan Bhuyan

A nation is formed by people living in unity, harmony and harmony within a certain geographical boundary while maintaining their own social and cultural standards and the identity of the nation is revived through the sense of national consciousness of those people. In fact, every person can love his country and nation unconditionally, sacrifice his vested interests and develop the mentality of working for the greater interests to establish the nation in a higher position and this creates the history of a better nation.

As a part of India, the largest democratic country in the world, have the people of our state of Assam really been able to identify themselves as a healthy and strong Assamese nation with their own language, culture and social system? This is seen as a big question nowadays. It has been seen that the people of the developed nations of the world have always been conscious of the honor and dignity of their nation and they have been able to establish themselves on the world stage by sincerely accepting the ideals of national consciousness. But no one seems to have time to bring our nation into the open air.

There is a government formed by the people in the state - but they are busy playing games of fraud, deception and mud-slinging and do not seem to have time to pay attention to the welfare of the people. There is corruption all around. What can a nation expect from corrupt ministers and bureaucrats? What have the Assamese of Assam got in our state full of resources? Plundering the resources of the state is the main religion of the Centre. The own Mother tongue of the Assamese is also a source of collapse.

Despite the widespread agitation in the state in 1972 demanding that the medium of instruction be made Assamese, the Asom Sahitya Sabha has recently taken steps to introduce the Assamese language. The subject is positive. But there is no need to explain how satisfying or unfortunate the situation of the people who are going to agitate for the protection of the mother tongue in the mother-

land.

In fact, a language is the first and foremost identity of a nation. So the Assamese language is the main component of the Assamese nation. Only when every person, every child is deeply familiar with both the spoken and written forms of the mother tongue will our state and our nation truly have the strength to raise its head. In fact, the study and practice of language enriches the vocabulary.

The role of our schools is also essential in this regard. It seems that just as the government has been reluctant to use our state language in offices and courts of Assam, there are also many shortcomings in the field of education.

Therefore, it is necessary to take measures to ensure that the children are enrolled in private schools. Therefore, it is necessary to take measures to ensure that the children are enrolled in private schools. On the other hand it has become a natural thing for a section of our upcoming generation to lack knowledge of Assamese written language and extreme reluctance towards Assamese language. This can be said to be a downward movement and it is certain that this movement will have a negative impact on learning the Assamese language.

There is no doubt that the Assamese nation is a mixture of different ethnic groups. There is also a need to learn Assamese as well as other regional languages of the country, English, Hindi, French, Arabic etc. There is also a need to master the indigenous languages of Assam like Boro, Karbi, Tiwa, Missing, Adivasi, Konch Rajangshi etc. equally and all indigenous languages and cultures must be developed. But our prime identity is Assamese. There is no doubt that the Assamese nation will survive only if this Assamese language survives. But we have to think about what we are doing for the development of our mother tongue. Have we taught our own children to respect the language? After birth, some Assamese today think that they will become suitable citizens only if they send their children to English medium schools and they have done so in practice. Many Assamese children do not know how to answer questions

in their own mother tongue. When we asked a child in Assamese, what your name is, the answer comes - "My name is ..." These new generations have not even learned the social customs, Etiquette, Politeness, Humility etc. This is just an example that everyone is seeing.

It is true that - no matter how much we say, the government departments have not paid any attention to the successful implementation of the Official Language Act of Assam. Therefore, the neglect of the Assamese language in government departments has put people of all walks of life in danger and the language has been forced to become lame. After the passage of the Assam Official Language Act in 1960, it was amended several times but in 1985 it was officially directed to use the Assamese language in all offices in Assam.

On the other hand, according to the Act passed in 1970, people of all classes had the right to express their grievances in any language spoken in the state. In contrast, the Act, which required the government to answer people's petitions in Assamese in the Brahmaputra Valley, Bengali in Kachar district and English in the autonomous districts, was amended about 30 years ago.

Everyone knows how much difficulty the People faced when they have to submit their applications in English. Now there is an ingrained belief that speaking or writing in Assamese is a matter of shame and those who use English can maintain a respectable position in all respects.

The issue is worth thinking about. The most regrettable thing is that public opinion has to be created to make the teaching of Assamese language compulsory in English medium schools in Assam. The Karnataka government made Kannada compulsory in more than

400 English medium schools in the state ten years ago. Why can't the Assam government do it in Assam? We must not forget - first we are Assamese then we are Indian citizens. We should know - we can never identify ourselves with a limited knowledge of your mother tongue. The state government has recently recognized the Boro language as an associate language of the Boro-populated areas. Naturally, this is welcome and acceptable. We are sure that this appropriate step of the state government will provide enough material in protecting the dignity of the Assamese nation nourished by the coordination of the Bodo society as well as various ethnic groups.

It cannot be denied that - English is now the world's communicative language and is considered essential at all levels of daily life. So you really need to have a good command of this language to adapt to different levels of the world.

Until a decade ago, English did not gain a special status in Japan, China and other countries, but due to the pressures of circumstances and environment, these countries have to embrace English. Therefore, everyone must acknowledge that the English language has spread to the very depths of social life in different countries of the world and that is why it is essential to acquire etymology in learning English. There is no denying the need to learn other languages including English in order to work abroad, to travel, to get along in any environment anywhere in the country, to pursue higher education, etc.

It's sure that we have to go outside Assam and establish ourselves in different fields of the world. We have to learn different languages, we have to acquire etymologies, but it can never be acceptable to ignore our mother tongue and give priority to English and not know how to speak or write As-

samese.

The government has announced that science and mathematics will be taught in English from class III in schools. It definitely arises various questions about how acceptable it is. The question is, will our students become proficient in science or mathematics only if they study science in English medium? Or has no one who studied science in his mother tongue made progress in these two subjects? From Dr. Bhavendra Nath Saikia, Dr. Dinesh Chandra Goswami, Dr. Shivnath Barman, many scientists and researchers of today's generation have not been able to establish themselves by studying these two subjects in their mother tongue? Then why do you want to ignore the mother tongue and teach these two subjects in English language - these questions have shaken the conscious circles today. In this context, I want to quote the words of the great scientist C.V. Raman. He said - "We should teach science in mother tongue medium. Otherwise, science will remain a matter of a handful of people. Where the common man will not be able to participate"

It may be recalled that Dr. Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan has stood up for the mother tongue as unreasonable from the point of view of pedagogy to make a foreign language a medium for acquiring knowledge. The 1953 Report of the Secondary Education Commission emphasized on mother tongue education and said that "Learning the mother tongue does not only mean reading the writing or increasing the vocabulary. Are we currently doing a fair assessment of our mother tongue."

We need to be strong - no matter what language we learn in the world, the mother tongue is above all and neglecting it will not be tolerated for any reason. Because the mother tongue is the director of tools, pleasures, tastes and knowledge sources, interests and feelings. That is why we have to give up the desire to become fake sahibs and accept responsibility towards the nation and the language. This is the call of the hour right now. (The writer is CRCC of Nalbari Cluster, Biswanath Education Block, Education Department, Assam)

Prospects of a Left-wing prime minister in France brighten after talks

By: Satyaki Chakraborty

The prospects of the appointment of left wing Prime Minister in France have brightened after President Emmanuel Macron had talks on Friday with the Prime Minister nominees of the New Popular Front and the right wing National Rally. Sources said that the President may take a final decision next week after discussions with his party colleagues.

The final round of national elections were held on July 7 and the results were announced the same night. The New Popular Front, the coalition of the left wing parties got the highest number of seat sat 183, followed by President Macron's coalition at 163 and the rightwing National Rally (RN) of Marie Le Pen at 143.

There are other smaller parties also. Since no combination got majority on its own, the New Popular Front staked the claim for the PM's position and nominated a veteran socialist Lucie Castets. President Macron had detailed discussions with this former civil servant and environment activist about the formation of the new Government.

Lucie Castets told the President that she was ready to form the Government and she would discuss the programme with Macron's party about the need for making some changes, if needed. Castets gave the impression that she would not be rigid about the official programme of the New Popular Front and she would take into account the need for keeping out the far Right National Rally from power.

President Macron had talks with the National Rally leaders also during the day, but this was not conclusive. President will be meeting the two to pleaders of the RN Marie Le Pen and their PM candidate Jordan Bardella on Monday.

The RN is not keen on forming the ministry as both Macron's neo liberal coalition and NFP have more seats in the national assembly and both are committed not to have any truck with RN. Marie Le Pen feels that even if the Macronites and the Left unite to form the government, it will not last. That will help Le Pen in the Presidential elections in 2027. Le Pen is more interested in preparing for 2027 polls.

Macron's office said he would name a prime minister based on these consultations, which are aimed

at "moving towards the broadest and most stable majority possible."

In effect, there should not have been any problem in ministry formation soon after July 7 results were out, if President Macron's party supported the Left, the largest group to keep the far right out of power.

But in the assembly presidents' election, Macron's party defeated the communist candidate by only seven votes by organizing votes from other parties. Now, it has to be seen whether President Macron abides by the July 7 mandate or resorts to some manipulative tactics to retain power and deny the Left the post of their due Prime Ministership. Castets said that in her meeting with Macron, he "recognised that a message was sent by the French during the elections" but seemed reluctant to allow an opposition party to form a government.

Marine Tondelier, the national secretary of the Green Party said "We need a response by Tuesday. There are urgent issues and leaving weeks rolling by without facing them is grave and even irresponsible"

The New Popular Front, which includes the French Communist Party (PCF), France Unbowed, the Socialists and the Greens, has insisted that the prime minister should come out of their ranks as the largest group.

PCF general secretary Fabien Roussel said that the president agreed during the meeting that the New Popular Front is the only one to have formally made the proposal for nominating their Prime Minister. The NFP is the biggest group and the leader of the largest component Jean Luc Melenchon has urged the President to respect the verdict and invite the Left to form the government.

French unbowed the party of Melenchon has 74 seats followed by the Socialists 59 the Greens 28 and the Communist Party 9.

In fact, President Macron made it clear after July 7 elections that Jean Luc Melenchon who heads the largest party of the NFP, does not represent the French republican values and his programmes cannot be accepted by him. It's clear that the NFP candidate may be asked by President Macron to bring out more changes in the programme to make that acceptable to him. Jean Luc Melenchon has to agree to that. In all, the situation is still fluid for NFP. If Melenchon takes dilutes his headline, the NFP's task will be easier. (IPA Service)

Importance of mental health awareness in education



By: Neha Kumari

Mental Health is a pressing issue in today's world. Not that these problems just came to exist now, but primarily during the Covid lockdown phase, the talk around Mental Health took a great leap. More and more people are taking a stand and contributing to its destigmatization, increasing awareness and positivity.

Mental Health is basically about how an individual functions in her daily life. It is judged based on her emotional, Psychological, and social well-being. Though simple it may sound, ignorance can sometimes be fatal as statistics say that 1 in 5 individuals in India is suffering from some form of mental illness symptoms.

When one talks about Mental Health, It is quite unfair to leave children and adolescents excluded from the topic of discussion. In India, 50 million children are suffering from mental disorders (Hossain & Purohit, 2019). Disorders like Anxiety, Depression, ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder), Stress etc are most prevalent.

Children and Adolescents coming from underprivileged backgrounds are undeniably a more vulnerable population in the Mental Health Care System. Often overlooked, It is sometimes the discrimination itself that comes from belonging to the weaker economic section of society, that impacts the mental health of these children, ranging from low self-esteem to trauma.

Mental Health Issues among the Underprivileged Students

Poverty can take a toll on one's mental health. Children and Adolescents coming from poor backgrounds are least likely to get quality mental health care. There are still many loopholes in accessing Mental Health Care in India. We still need more awareness, more inclusion, and more affordability.

Many people think that Poverty is only generational and that the people living under it are just used to it. This is a very biased opinion. Though Poverty is most seen as generational, there can also be other reasons for it. Reasons like Needing emergency funds, bills on long-term medical care, the burden of family's income on only one individual (with insufficient earnings), Debts, Sudden unemployment or even failed business ventures can push one towards Poverty.

Millions of Children in India spend more than half of their childhood living in poverty. Longitudinal research indicates that, compared with children of higher socioeconomic status (SES), children of low SES experience higher rates of parent-reported mental health problems and higher rates of unmet mental health needs.

Children from tribal backgrounds, immigrants, or low castes often face discrimination, bullying, and harassment.

Physical Health issues like Malnutrition, can impact cognitive development, leading to issues like Stunting.

Not being physically fit, can also lead to low self-esteem, body image issues, and low confidence.

Moreover, children from impoverished backgrounds often lack access to quality education and extracurricular activities, which are crucial for holistic development. This can result in lower academic performance and limited future opportunities.

Inadequate housing conditions, such as overcrowded living spaces and exposure to environmental hazards, can contribute to chronic stress and mental health issues. These conditions make it difficult for children to find a quiet space for studying or relaxing, further exacerbating their stress.

Limited access to nutritious food can lead to food insecurity, which has been linked to higher levels of anxiety and depression among children. Hunger can also affect their ability to concentrate in school, impacting their academic performance.

Lack of access to recreational facilities and safe outdoor spaces can prevent children from engaging in physical activities, which are essential for mental and physical well-being. This lack of physical activity can contribute to a sedentary lifestyle, increasing the risk of obesity and related health problems.

Children in poverty-stricken areas often witness substance abuse and criminal activities in their communities, which can lead to a sense of hopelessness and fear. These experiences can normalize violence and crime, potentially influencing their behavior and mental health.

Yoshikawa and colleagues discuss three levels of factors affecting children: individual (like nutrition), relational (like family relationships), and institutional (like schools).

1. Individual Level: Poverty is linked to stress responses, such as changes in blood pressure and cortisol levels. Longer exposure to poverty can lead to serious health issues by affecting brain function and causing physiological problems. Stress from poverty can also alter DNA, potentially affecting future generations.

2. Family and Community Level: Poverty can harm children's mental health due to stressors like food insecurity and housing issues. These stressors can increase parents' mental health problems and substance abuse, leading to less effective parenting and a higher risk of child abuse. Poor communities often have bad housing, limited resources, inadequate schools, and high crime, which all negatively impact mental health.

3. Impact of Timing and Duration: The length and timing of poverty exposure matter. Long-term and childhood poverty are linked to worse outcomes, indicating that early intervention might be most beneficial.

How can we improve the situation?

Introducing Programs that help students with Emotional Regulation, Stress Management Conflict Resolution, etc.

Increasing the number of social workers in schools to meet the rising demand for mental health services.

Utilizing school hours to offer necessary mental health services, and addressing potential distractions in the classroom.

Creating an inclusive school environment where students feel valued and welcome enhances engagement and performance.

Encouraging positive interactions among students, staff, and families to build a supportive community.

Implementing anti-bullying programs and providing staff training to identify and resolve bullying issues.

Create a safe space for students to discuss their mental health concerns without stigma.

Regularly assessing stu-

dents' mental health needs and providing ongoing support and interventions as necessary.

Benefits of Mental Health Awareness in Educational Programs

According to the National Center for Mental Health Checkups at Columbia University, "High depression scores have been associated with low academic achievement, high scholastic anxiety, increased school suspensions, and decreased ability or desire to complete homework, concentrate, and attend classes."

Improvement in Academics:

A happy student feels safe and content, is more likely to show engagement in class, and socialize well. She will show better problem-solving and decision-making skills, along with better cognitive abilities.

Social skills:

Human beings are social animals and thus, Social Skills are very important in different aspects of life. Whether it's about making friends or connecting with likeminded people for your professional growth, social skills play a crucial role in one's personality development.

Emotional Regulation Skills

The teenage period is the most chaotic of all. It is not uncommon to notice that one's emotions and thoughts run like wild horses. It is a period of both Physical and emotional changes. Mental health awareness can help them be more aware about these changes and they can navigate this phase more confidently.

Self Awareness

Knowing oneself is a deep voyage that takes a lot of time. So many of us base our values on extrinsic ideas, and mental health awareness can encourage us to know ourselves better.

Healthy Relationships

Underprivileged Children often come from dysfunctional families. Children from poor families can witness sexual and domestic abuse in their families or neighborhoods. This can take a huge toll on their mind and impact the relationships they form in the future.

Dealing with Stress, anxiety, and depression

Students' life is often filled with Stress and Anxiety, especially during the exam season, for underprivileged children, education can be their one chance to move on to a better environment. Exams can put more pressure on them as they may be fulfilling different responsibilities. MHA can help them to navigate this pressure and perform well.

Many students suffering from anxiety can procrastinate studies, leading to bad grades. They can have this fear of failure and suffer from imposter syndrome which can impact their performance.

Improving Self Esteem

Acknowledging mental health issues and being aware of them can give rise to a more confident child. Their self-esteem will improve and they will participate more actively in not just studies but also extracurricular activities.

Conclusion

In conclusion, addressing mental health issues among children and adolescents, particularly those from underprivileged backgrounds, is essential. Poverty and associated stressors can lead to significant mental health challenges, including anxiety, depression, and poor academic performance. Implementing mental health programs in schools, increasing the number of social workers, and creating supportive environments can greatly benefit these children. Mental health awareness and support can improve academic outcomes, social skills, emotional regulation, and self-esteem, helping children from all backgrounds to thrive. Prioritizing mental health education and services ensures every child has the opportunity to succeed.

(Courtesy: Youth Ki Awaaz)

What a Bioluminescent Petunia had to teach me

By: Rachel Ehrenberg

Petunias have never done much for me. If you had told me that one day, I'd fork over more than \$50 for a single petunia plant; my eyes would have rolled out of my head. But this plant was special. This petunia glowed in the dark.

My plant was one of 50,000 shipped around the United States in April by the Idaho-based biotech start-up Light Bio. Called the "Firefly" petunia, it contains genes from bioluminescent mushrooms that make it constantly glow. A news release announcing the petunia's arrival included a photo of a woman gazing serenely at a mass of flowers lit up like oversized glow-in-the-dark stars.

Well, that's a neat trick, I thought.

I also wondered whether the Firefly petunia was more than just a trick. Though it seemed inconsequential, perhaps there was some implication I hadn't thought of. At the very least, the plant might make me – a great admirer of plants (but a bit of a botanical snob) – think differently about petunias, those go-to ornaments for gas stations and mansions alike.

I decided to learn more. So I paid my \$53 (\$29 for the plant, \$24 for shipping) and placed an order.

Behold, bioluminescence

Bioluminescence is the emission of light by living things. It is generated by a chemical reaction within the organism (unlike the phosphorescence of glow-in-the-dark stickers, which need to be charged up with light before emitting it). Bioluminescence is widespread, especially in the oceans: There are bacteria, sea snails, shrimp, fish and squid that glow. Terrestrial glowers include some insects and worms as well as fungi.

Scientists have worked out the precise chemical compounds involved for only a handful of bioluminescent organisms. But for the most part, the basics of the light-producing reaction are the same: It requires fuel, oxygen and a catalyst to get the reaction going. In the parlance of bioluminescence research, the fuel is called the luciferin and the catalyst is called the luciferase. The luciferase helps to add oxygen to the fuel, transforming it into a very reactive, high-energy compound. As this overexcited luciferin relaxes, it emits light.

This ability to produce light has been documented in hundreds of genera across the tree of life. Scientists think it evolved independently in various lineages, perhaps more than 94 different times.

Organisms use bioluminescence in a variety of ways. For fireflies, it's a come-hither signal that attracts mates. Some fish use it to lure prey. Other animals, such as the vampire squid, which can expel a cloud of glowing mucus, use it to distract or confuse predators.

In many lineages, giving off light may have arisen as a detoxi-

fication strategy. When oxygen is in a reactive state, it can ricochet through cells and damage molecules. This suggests that many luciferins were antioxidants first; their primary role was to mop up damaging oxygen that had been generated during metabolism.

Hunting for the fungal glow

Bioluminescent fungi have long grabbed people's attention. In the fourth century BCE, Aristotle noted that fungi could be "fiery and glittering" in the dark. A few centuries later, Pliny the Elder, in his encyclopaedic Natural History, mentions the "brilliant light" emitted by a mushroom that grows on trees. But until recently, no one knew exactly what fungi were using as the fuel or catalyst, or even whether all glowing fungi light up in the same way.

The hunt for fuel and catalyst molecules culminated in 2017 after more than a century of research and a yearslong international race between a scrappy team from the Americas and a well-connected lab in Russia. Yet even before then, scientists had been trying to unravel the mysteries of bioluminescence.

In the 1880s, French physiologist Raphaël Dubois was investigating a click beetle of the genus Pyrophorus, among the brightest of bioluminescent insects. Dubois ground up the glowing parts of the beetle in cold water. They glowed and then faded to nothing. Then he did the same in boiling water: no glow. But when he added the hot mixture to the cold, the mixture glowed.

Dubois (who would go on to coin the terms luciferin and luciferase) realised that the reaction required a catalyst and fuel. Only the cold water contained working catalyst – boiling destroyed it. But both hot and cold extracts contained the fuel, which survived boiling. Adding the hot extract to the cold extract provided fresh fuel to the extract with functioning catalyst – and so it generated light.

Decades later, scientists would conduct this hot/cold experiment with bioluminescent fungi, but the identity of the fuel and the catalyst still eluded them.

Roughly 130 fungus species are bioluminescent, says mycologist Dennis Desjardin, emeritus researcher at San Francisco State University, who has described several of those species. Fungi spend most of their lives as webs of thread-like filaments called mycelia, and the mycelia of the bioluminescent fungi give off light, though it's often hidden within the decaying wood in which many of them grow. In species that bear mushrooms, the mushrooms may glow too.

In 2005, Desjardin began working with chemist Cassius Stevani of the University of Sao Paulo, Brazil, who was looking into how fungi generated their glow. Stevani, along with then-graduate student Anderson Oliveira, had refined Dubois's hot/cold experiment, adding various cellular chemicals to grease the reaction.

After perfecting the protocol, Stevani wanted to perform the

hot/cold experiment using different species of fungi, one species for the cold and another species for the hot.

These cross-species experiments showed that the different fungi used the same catalyst and fuel, suggesting that bioluminescence had evolved just once in the fungal lineage, Stevani and Desjardin reported in 2012.

"This was very important," says Stevani. "It was saying, Oh, if you have a fungus in Russia or in Asia, you can use it to study the mechanism, because it's the same in all fungi."

Meanwhile, biochemist Ilia Yampolsky, who now heads a lab at the Russian Academy of Sciences in Moscow, was also hot on the fungal-light trail. Stevani got wind of this development. "I got crazy, of course, because, I was studying this for 15 years," he says. He wrote to Yampolsky in 2015, suggesting that they collaborate. But the Russians had beaten Stevani to the luciferin punch; their discovery just hadn't been published yet.

The fungal fuel turned out to be made from an antioxidant called hispidin. Hispidin is found not only in fungi, but also in many plants as well. "The molecule I was searching for, for 15 years – I look out of my window, I see plants that have this molecule," Stevani says.

Since then, the two teams have collaborated. ("We colluded with the Russians," Desjardin jokes.) They nailed down details of the biochemical assembly line that leads up to the light-emitting reaction and published the results together in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences in 2018. Stevani got to name the fungal catalyst. He called it luz, the Portuguese word for light.

Out of fungi and into the petunia

A key discovery in the creation of the glowing petunia was the source of the luciferin fuel in the fungi. It's made from a precursor compound called caffeic acid that is common in fungi and in plants. The fungal assembly line for making light forms a tidy loop – caffeic acid gets converted to hispidin, hispidin gets converted to the fuel, the fuel gives off light and the remaining compound gets converted back into caffeic acid – restarting the loop.

Stevani realised that if plants also made that precursor compound, then practically any plant might be engineered to glow. He said as much to Yampolsky. "I said, 'Man, we have a system that uses caffeic acid. We can transform any plant!'"

Yampolsky replied, "What do you think I am doing?"

Russian synthetic biologist Karen Sarkisyan led the careful work of sorting out the various genes involved in the light-emitting reaction. Then the team stuck those genes – from the bioluminescent fungus *Neonothopanus nambi* – into a tobacco plant. It worked: The shoots, buds, flowers and even roots – they all glowed. "Plants and fungi, they speak a

similar biochemical language," says Sarkisyan, a cofounder of Light Bio who now runs his own lab at Imperial College London. "And because they speak that similar biochemical language, it was relatively easy to translate the metabolic pathway from the fungus to the plant."

With a bit more genetic tinkering, Sarkisyan, Yampolsky and their collaborators managed to coax other plants – chrysanthemum, poplar, Arabidopsis and petunia – into glowing. By September 2023, the US Department of Agriculture had approved Light Bio's request to make and sell glowing petunias, determining that the plants posed no great risks. Five months later, I placed my order.

Oh, Petunia

My petunia looked like an ordinary white garden petunia when it arrived. It was a bit dishevelled; I transplanted it into a new pot and gave it some water and a spot by a sunny window. After a few weeks it perked up. When I brought it into a dark closet, its flowers faintly glowed – dimmer than a candle, but glowing nonetheless.

I had intended to look into whether the petunia could wreak any ecological havoc – what if it interbred with wild species and the glowing genes escaped? Might our outdoor spaces be transformed into (very quiet) botanical raves? But the petunia's light seemed too dim to interfere with much of anything.

Elsa Youngsteadt, who co-authored an article in the 2023 Annual Review of Ecology, Evolution, and Systematics on how constant light in urban environments may influence pollination, basically agreed with me.

She explained that there aren't any wild native petunias in the United States, which is the only place where the Firefly petunia is currently available. The ubiquitous common garden petunias are all hybrids, the result of a long history of crossing the white-flowered and moth-pollinated *Petunia axillaris* with a pigmented, bee-pollinated species.

These hybrid petunias already present a crazy mix of signals that might confuse a pollinator, says Youngsteadt, a pollination ecology expert at North Carolina State University. And none of them have proved to be invasive in the United States.

So – the Firefly petunia? "I'm not immediately alarmed by it," Youngsteadt says. But, she adds, "Why would we put time, money and potential risk into making something glow for fun?"

Why indeed. In fact, the more I thought about it, the more I wondered whether popping the fungal genes into the petunia was just the whimsical icing on a cake. The cake – the real marvel – was all the years of gumshoe detective work that went into figuring out precisely how the fungi got their glow. And that made me look at my petunia with a fondness that surprised me. (Courtesy: The Wire)

When your first start-up fails... 7 things to do

By: Vikram Bhandari

Statistically, about 90 per cent of all start-ups fail to survive in the first few years of their operation and are forced to shut down. Nearly 10 per cent of start-ups fail in the first year, while a staggering 70 per cent fail within five years.

While there are numerous reasons that lead to such failure, there are insights available to entrepreneurs on what should be done after they are forced to abandon their aspirations. The road does not end with the shutdown of their businesses.

Start-ups are often defined by their workforces, whose dedication and innovation lead to eventual success. However, failure remains a part of the journey. This begs the question - what should be done by an entrepreneur upon the failure of their first start-up?

Here is some advice that can help.

1. Measure the critical factors
When entrepreneurs fail to sustain their first start-up, the first thing they must do is to go back to the drawing board.

They need to analyse every minute detail that led to the breakdown. Based on the findings of the analysis, entrepreneurs need to tweak their approach and address critical issues. For example, a multinational American company offering homestay services almost failed before it was relaunched by its founder following meticulous analysis of certain critical factors. Presently, the company operates in over 190 countries around the world.

Additionally, entrepreneurs also need to prioritise their mental well-being at this point.

Sustaining a resilient mindset during trying times like these shapes entrepreneurs for the long run, enabling them to make sound decisions that lead them to establish potential unicorns.

2. Survey market demand

One of the primary contributing factors behind the premature shutdown of first-time start-ups is a limited understanding of market sentiments and demands.

Founders need to gather valuable data through surveys/interactions with prospective

customers, industry professionals and other relevant stakeholders to establish a feedback loop. They can thus identify demand gaps which will help them to evolve their products/services accordingly.

3. Repurpose the analysis
Upon completion of the in-depth analysis and customer surveys, they need to determine their next course of action.

Usually, there are two ways forward from this point. The first is to use the analysis to re-launch the old start-up while the other is to launch a new entity using the new data and ideas that address the old problems.

Founders who decide to re-launch their old start-ups often opt for a complete rebranding keeping in mind the challenges they faced the first time. This allows them to keep in touch with their prior consumer community with renewed promises and strategies.

Entrepreneurs opting to launch a new entity must keep a keen eye on addressing the challenges faced in the past.

However, the experience from the initial venture is often integrated within the second organisation, which may operate in a different industry but can, because of the founder's past experience, offer significant advantages over peers and competitors.

4. Build a stronger team

A competent founding team is vital for start-ups at any stage. Highly qualified, capable founding team members, working passionately towards a shared goal often become the deciding factor for start-ups.

Entrepreneurs need to focus on building a strong team for their next venture to ensure its success.

This team also needs to be versatile so that it can identify opportunities and risks well before time to avert crises that might lead to failure.

5. Craft a robust marketing strategy

Entrepreneurs who have failed their first-time start-ups need to focus on creating a robust marketing strategy for their second term.

Marketing strategies help businesses create meaningful interactions with prospective clients and drive growth.

Statistically, more than half of the start-ups (56.9 per cent) employ a full-fledged marketing team while 20 per cent rely on a single individual to spearhead the marketing initiatives.

This highlights the importance of marketing strategies for start-ups as they can create a unique selling point that helps the brand to stand out.

6. Focus on technological upgrades

The development of new-age technologies such as artificial intelligence has changed how customers are served and how organisations run.

For example, many companies provided after-sale customer care services to big corporations but after AI chatbots were introduced, organisations used them to automate customer service.

Several companies that decided to continue manually interacting with customers were forced to shut down soon after because of the lack of agility when it came to integrating technological upgrades in their business models.

7. Proactive networking

Aspiring entrepreneurs need to initiate and maintain a productive relationship with prospective investors, industry veterans and other stakeholders.

This approach leads to numerous benefits, such as brainstorming ideas, ensuring critical funding, industry insights and valuable advice.

Furthermore, robust networking also translates into a community that will support you and help you grow.

While the popular narrative suggests otherwise, failing start-ups are more common than unicorns – which has been proved by statistics numerous times.

For example, while India boasted of at least 1.24 lakh start-ups in April 2024, only 114 of them were unicorns.

Entrepreneurs need to understand that failing their first start-up is not necessarily the end of the line of their entrepreneurial journey.

Going back to the board, analysing mistakes and efficiently addressing them can lead to a successful start-up in the future. (Courtesy: Rediff.com)

12 insurgents were killed by security forces in various parts of the province in the past 24 hours

Gunmen kill at least 31 people in 2 separate attacks in restive southwestern Pakistan

QUETTA, Aug 26: Gunmen in southwestern Pakistan killed at least 31 people in two separate attacks on Monday, with reports of other shootings and unrest across the same province, police and officials said.

Twenty-three people were fatally shot after being identified and taken from buses, vehicles and trucks in Musakhail, a district in Baluchistan province, senior police official Ayub Achakzai said. The attackers burned at least 10 vehicles before fleeing.

In a separate attack, gunmen killed at least nine people, including four police officers and five passersby, in Qalat district also in Baluchistan, authorities said.

Insurgents blew up a railway track in Bolan, attacked a police station in Mastung and attacked and burned vehicles in Gwadar, all districts in Baluchistan. No casualties were reported in those attacks.

Baluchistan has been the



scene of a long-running insurgency in Pakistan, with an array of separatist groups staging attacks, mainly on security forces.

The separatists have been demanding independence from the central government in Islamabad. Although Pakistani authorities say they have quelled the insurgency, violence in Baluchistan has persisted.

The attack in Musakhail came hours after the outlawed Baluch Liberation Army separatist group warned people to stay away from highways as they launched attacks on security forces in various parts of the province.

But there there was no

immediate claim of responsibility for the latest killings.

Separatists often ask people for their ID cards, and then abduct or kill those who are from outside the province. Many recent victims have come from neighboring Punjab province.

Uzma Bukhari, a spokesperson for the Punjab provincial government, denounced the latest killings on Monday, saying the "attacks are a matter of grave concern" and urging the Baluchistan provincial government to "step up efforts to eliminate BLA terrorists."

Authorities in Baluchis-

tan said they responded to the latest attacks on Monday and that they would provide details on their operations later in the day. Local media said at least 12 insurgents were killed by security forces in various parts of the province in the past 24 hours.

Pakistani President Asif Ali Zardari and Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi in separate statements called the attack in Musakhail "barbaric" and vowed that those who were behind it would not escape justice.

Later, Naqvi also condemned the killings in Qalat.

In May, gunmen fatally shot seven barbers in Gwadar, a port city in Baluchistan.

In April, separatists killed nine people after abducting them from a bus on a highway in Baluchistan, and the attackers also killed two people and wounded six in another car they forced to stop. BLA claimed responsibility for those attacks at the time.

Syed Muhammad Ali, an

Islamabad-based security analyst, said the latest killings of non-Baluch people are an attempt by separatists to harm the province economically.

Ali told The Associated Press that most such attacks are carried out with the aim to economically weaken Baluchistan, noting that "the weakening of Baluchistan means the weakening of Pakistan."

He said insurgent attacks could hamper development work being done in the province.

Separatists in Baluchistan have often killed workers and others from the country's eastern Punjab region as part of a campaign to force them to leave the province, which for years has experienced a low-level insurgency.

Most such previous killings have been blamed on the outlawed group and others demanding independence from the central government in Islamabad. Islamic militants also have a presence in the province.

(AP)

Russia unleashes a massive drone and missile attack on Ukraine; At least 3 people are killed

KYIV, Aug 26: Russia unleashed a massive drone and missile barrage throughout Ukraine on Monday, targeting energy infrastructure. At least three people were reported killed, and power cuts were reported across the country.

The barrage began around midnight and continued beyond daybreak in what appeared to be Russia's biggest attack against Ukraine in weeks.

Russian forces fired drones, cruise missiles and hypersonic ballistic Kinzhal missiles at 15 Ukrainian regions — more than half the country, Ukraine's Prime Minister Denys Shmyhal said Monday morning.

"The energy infrastructure has once again become the target of Russian terrorists. Unfortunately, there is damage in a number of regions," Shmyhal said, adding that Ukraine's state-owned power grid operator, Ukrenergo, has been forced to implement emergency power cuts to stabilize the system.

He called on Ukraine's allies to provide Kyiv with long-range weapons and permission to use them on targets inside Russia.

"In order to stop the barbaric shelling of Ukrainian cities, it is necessary to destroy the place from which the Russian missiles are launched," Shmyhal said. "We count on the support of our allies and will definitely make Russia pay."

According to Ukraine's air force, there were multiple groups of Russian drones moving toward eastern, northern, southern, and central regions of Ukraine, followed by multiple cruise and ballistic missiles.

Explosions were heard in the capital, Kyiv. Power and water supplies in the city have been disrupted by the attack, Kyiv Mayor Vitali Klitschko said.

At least three people were killed — one in the western city of Lutsk, one in the central Dnipropetrovsk region and one in the partially occupied Zaporizhzhia region in the southeast, according to local officials. Thirteen others were wounded — one in the Kyiv region that surrounds the Ukrainian capital, five in Lutsk,

three in the southern Mykolaiv region and four in the neighboring Odesa region.

Blackouts and damage to civilian infrastructure and residential buildings were reported across the country, from the region of Sumy in the east, to the Mykolaiv and Odesa regions in the south, to the region of Rivne in the west.

In Sumy, a province in the east that borders Russia, local administration said that 194 settlements were in a full power blackout, while 19 others had a partial blackout.

Ukraine's private energy company, DTEK, introduced emergency blackouts, saying in an online statement that "energy workers throughout the country work 24/7 to restore light in the homes of Ukrainians."

In the wake of the barrage and the power cuts, regional officials all across Ukraine were ordered to open "points of invincibility" — shelter-type places where people can charge their devices and get refreshments during energy blackouts, Prime Minister Shmyhal said. Such points were first opened in Ukraine in the fall of 2022, when Russia targeted the country's energy infrastructure with weekly barrages.

In neighboring Poland, the military said Polish and NATO air defenses were activated in the eastern part of the country as a result of the attack.

In Russia, in the meantime, officials reported a Ukrainian drone attack overnight and on Monday morning.

Four people were injured in Russia's central region of Saratov, where drones hit residential buildings in two cities. One drone crashed into a residential high-rise in the city of Saratov, and another hit a residential building in the city of Engels, home to a military airfield that had been attacked before, local officials said.

Russia's Defense Ministry said that a total of 22 Ukrainian drones were intercepted overnight and in the morning over eight Russian regions, including the Saratov and Yaroslavl regions in central Russia. (AP)

Greek-flagged tanker is burning after Houthi attacks, but no sign of oil spill

DUBAI, Aug 26: A Greek-flagged tanker repeatedly attacked by Yemen's Houthi rebels in the Red Sea remains ablaze but hasn't sprung a major oil leak in the waterway, a European Union naval command said on Monday.

The attack on the Sounion marks the most serious assault in weeks by the rebels, who continue to target shipping through the Red Sea corridor over the Israel-Hamas war in the Gaza Strip.

The attacks have disrupted the \$1 trillion in trade that typically passes through the region, as well as halting some aid shipments to conflict-ravaged Sudan and Yemen.

Images published by the EU's Operation Aspidos, whose mission is to protect shipping in the area, showed smoke rising from multiple points along the Sounion's deck and its bridge Sunday.

Fires could be seen burning in at least nine different locations on the deck of the vessel, which had been loaded with 150,000 tons of Iraqi crude oil — roughly 1 million barrels. Some flames appeared near hatches of the tanker's oil tanks.



"So far there are no obvious signs of an oil spill," the EU mission said. The Sounion "is both a navigational and an imminent environmental hazard. This situation underlines that these kinds of attacks pose not only a threat against the freedom of navigation but also to the lives of seafarers, the environment, and subsequently the life of all citizens living in that region."

The U.S. State Department similarly warned about the ecological danger to the Red Sea, home to coral reefs and other natural habitats and wildlife. Footage showing explosions on board the Sounion released earlier by the Houthis and later analyzed by The Associated Press suggested that

the rebels again boarded an abandoned vessel and rigged it with explosives in an attempt to sink it. "While the crew has been evacuated, the Houthis appear determined to sink the ship and its cargo into the sea," State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller said in a statement Saturday.

"Through these attacks, the Houthis have made clear they are willing to destroy the fishing industry and regional ecosystems that Yemenis and other communities in the region rely on for their livelihoods, just as they have undermined the delivery of vital humanitarian aid to the region through their reckless attacks."

For their part, the Houthis' al-

Masirah satellite news channel highlighted the EU's photographs and described the Sounion as being targeted for "punishment to the company that owns the ship for violating the decision to ban access to the ports" of Israel.

The Sounion came under repeated attack last week by the Houthis. A French destroyer operating as part of Operation Aspidos later rescued the Sounion's crew of 25 Filipinos and Russians, as well as four private security personnel, and took them to nearby Djibouti.

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 sank two in the campaign that also killed four sailors. Other missiles and drones have either been intercepted by a U.S.-led coalition in the Red Sea or failed to reach their targets.

The rebels maintain that they target ships linked to Israel, the U.S. or the U.K. to force an end to Israel's campaign against Hamas in Gaza. However, many of the ships attacked have little or no connection to the conflict, including some bound for Iran. (AP)

China is conducting military patrols near the Myanmar border as civil war rages on the other side

BEIJING, Aug 26: China's military is carrying out armed patrols near the Myanmar border this week, where the government is concerned about potential fallout from fierce fighting in a civil war on the other side.

Troops were deployed to Yunnan province in southwestern China on Monday to test their ability to maintain security in border areas, the military's Southern Theater Command said. An alliance of ethnic militias has dealt a series of setbacks to Myanmar's military in the country's northeast, which is near China.

Five people were injured on the Chinese side in January by a stray artillery shell. Live-fire drills will be held from Tuesday to Thursday in four locations including two in Ruili city, the Yunnan government said. The units will carry out armed patrols and joint air-ground patrols

to test their ability to mobilize quickly, block and control and strike together, the southern command said in a statement. The military previously held live-fire drills near the Myanmar border in November.

China's foreign minister, Wang Yi, said earlier this month that his country "opposes chaos and war in Myanmar," according to Chinese state media.

Beijing helped broker a ceasefire in January, but that fell apart in June when one member of the Three Brotherhood Alliance launched new attacks.

Senior Gen. Min Aung Hlaing, the leader of the military govern-

ment, alleged recently that foreign countries were backing the ethnic militias, a likely reference to China, which has long ties to the groups.

Wang, who was on a visit to Myanmar, told Min Aung Hlaing that China opposes the attacks in



Shan state, according to Myanmar state television.

China's top diplomat also expressed hope that Myanmar "will effectively safeguard the safety of Chi-

nese personnel and projects" in the country. The Chinese Embassy in Myanmar issued a reminder this month to citizens in Shan state to strengthen their security precautions and stay away from conflict zones or return to China. (AP)

North Korea shows new drone attacking a target as Seoul and US hold large military exercises

SEOUL, Aug 26: North Korean leader Kim Jong Un supervised a demonstration of new exploding drones designed to crash into targets, state media said on Monday, as the U.S. and South Korea engage in joint military drills. North Korean test photos showed a white drone with X-shaped tails and wings supposedly crashing into and destroying a target resembling South Korea's main K-2 battle tank. Most combat drones stand off from targets and fire missiles.

The North's official Korean Central News Agency said Saturday's test involved various types of drones built to fly different ranges to attack enemy targets on land and sea and flew along various routes before accurately hitting target targets.

The North's official Korean Central News Agency said Saturday's test involved various types of drones built to fly different ranges to attack enemy targets on land and sea and flew along various routes before accurately hitting target targets.

After the test, Kim pledged to spur the development of drones that explode on impact, conduct reconnaissance or attack targets underwater to boost his country's war readiness, saying the North's military should be equipped with advanced drones "as early as possible," KCNA said.

The drone test came as the U.S. and South Korean militaries conduct the large-scale Ulchi Freedom Shield drills, which continue through Thursday. The exercises focus on enhancing their readiness against North Korean threats and include computer-simulated war games and live-fire training, with a combined aerial drill involving 60 warplanes that began its three-day run on Monday.

South Korea's air force said the drill, which



kicked off with precision-bombing demonstrations that included South Korean F-35 and F-16 fighter jets, is aimed at coping with North Korean threats posed by drones, cruise missiles and artillery.

The United States and South Korea also began Monday a separate amphibious landing drill involving dozens of aircraft and vessels from their navies and marines, including U.S. F-35 fighters and amphibious assault ship USS Boxer. South Korea's military said the Ssangyong Exercise, which will continue through Sept. 7, is aimed at sharpening combat interoperability.

Lee Chang Hyun, spokesperson of South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff, said during a briefing that South Korea's military was closely examining North Korea's drone capabilities and that the South's military is equipped with systems to detect and intercept them, without providing further details.

Some analysts suggest the North Korean drones shown in state media photos resemble Russia's Zala Lancet-3 drones, and Lee said the South was looking into the possibility Russia had helped North Korea acquire its drone capability.

"We are aware that during the past exchanges between North Korea and

Russia that some (drones) were given (to North Korea) as gifts," Lee said.

"We would need to analyze various aspects, including whether (North Korea) would have modified to improve their capabilities or other possibilities," North Korea and Russia have been aligning closely in the face of their separate confrontations with the U.S. Kim Jong Un and Russian President Vladimir Putin held summits this June and in September last year.

Washington and its allies have accused the countries of expanding an alleged arms arrangement in which North Korea provides Putin with badly needed munitions to prolong Russia's fighting in Ukraine in exchange for economic aid and technologies to upgrade Kim's nuclear-armed military.

Animosity on the Korean Peninsula is high as Kim uses Russia's war against Ukraine as a distraction while he strengthens his nuclear-armed military and issues verbal threats of conflict toward Washington and Seoul. While most of the international attention has been focused on his long-range missiles designed to reach the U.S. mainland, Kim has also been expanding weapons targeting rival South Korea, most notably

short-range missiles and artillery systems the North has described as nuclear-capable.

Earlier this month, Kim staged a huge ceremony in the capital, Pyongyang, to mark the delivery of 250 nuclear-capable missile launchers to frontline military units and called for a ceaseless expansion of the military's nuclear program. This added to concerns as he demonstrated an intent to deploy battlefield nuclear weapons along the North's border with South Korea and claimed his military could react with preemptive nuclear strikes if he perceived the leadership was under threat.

In a closed-door briefing to lawmakers on Monday, South Korea's spy agency said it's unclear whether North Korea is currently capable of producing enough missiles to fill up those launch vehicles, which are each designed to fire multiple missiles with potential range to cover most of South Korea's greater capital area and central regions.

The agency said the North has been focusing its manufacturing capacities on producing missiles and other military equipment that are being supplied to Russia, according to the office of lawmaker Park Sun-won, who attended the briefing.

Analysts say Kim may seek to dial up pressure in a U.S. election year as he advances his long-term goals of forcing Washington to accept the idea of the North as a nuclear power and negotiate economic and security concessions from a position of strength. (AP)

Bangabandhu to toppled statue Mujibur Rahman's contested legacy post B'desh upheaval



DHAKA, Aug 26: When a popular uprising in Bangladesh brought down the Sheikh Hasina-led government, college student Alif Hossain felt the deposed prime minister got what she deserved, but the toppling of the Dhaka statue of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman by protesters on August 5 left him deeply disturbed.

"It was just wrong. He fought for the liberation of our country, he is the Father of the Nation, our Bangabandhu, how could he be so disgraced in the fit of anger," the Dhaka-based student rued.

The legacy of Rahman or Mujib, as he was popularly called, lives on in the names of streets, institutions, public landmarks, his fiery speeches made during the struggle for independence, the face of Bangladeshi currency, and till recently in statues and murals.

The unprecedented protests precipitated the fall of the previous government as Hasina fled to India on August 5 leaving behind a country in political turmoil.

In the wake of her departure, she courted even more public opprobrium, and her father's legacy too became a prime target as anti-government protesters vented their ire

on Rahman's towering statue at Bijoy Sarani in the heart of Dhaka and pulled it down, with images being broadcast on local and international media channels.

Public murals depicting Bangabandhu ("Friend of Bengal") — a sobriquet that characterized the legacy of Bangladesh's first president — were defaced, and his house in Dhanmondi where he and most of his family members were assassinated on August 15, 1975 and which was later turned into a memorial, was badly damaged by protesters.

In the Dhaka University area, a series of wall panels on the front side of the building of the famous Teacher Student Centre (TSC) bears old mosaic panels depicting legendary personalities and historic moments like the signing of the Instrument of Surrender of Pakistani forces in Dhaka on December 16, 1971, which led to the birth of the new nation of Bangladesh.

The mosaic panel depicting Rahman has been defaced, his face blackened.

On the Dhaka University campus, a huge mural on a wall depicting Bangabandhu was defaced with graffiti scrawled all over the artwork. Many artworks made on

public walls in the university area after August 5 mock Hasina and her fleeing to India and extol the public resistance culminating in what many Bangladeshis now call the 'Victory Day' of '36 July'.

From being revered by countrymen to his images and memorials being disgraced, Rahman's legacy is now much contested in the post-upheaval society of Bangladesh.

The 'Gen Z' as the young protesters are being labelled by many, were born after the Liberation War of 1971, and political observers say their idea of Bangladesh is "different" from what the pre-1971 generations may have had.

Hasina, 76, resigned as the prime minister on August 5 amid mass protests against her government. The protests, which started last month initially with a demand to end the quota system that reserved 30 per cent of government jobs for the families of veterans who fought in Bangladesh's War of Independence against Pakistan in 1971, later turned into anti-government demonstrations.

Abdul Moyeen Khan, a senior leader of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) and a former Cabinet minister of Bangladesh criticised Hasina and accused her of "destroying" the several institutions of the country which resulted in this "revolt by students" that was later supported by the general masses.

"If she was a real leader, she wouldn't have led the country to drive to that stage," Khan told PTI in an interview in Dhaka on Thursday. (PTI)

Taiwan drills with anti-amphibious landing missiles to deter China

PINGTUNG, Aug 26: Taiwan drilled on Monday with anti-amphibious landing missiles as part of strategy to remain mobile and deadly in an attempt to deter an attack from China, which claims the democratically ruled island as its own territory to be brought under its control by force if necessary.

Troops fired tube-launched, optically tracked, wire-guided missiles known as TOW 2A missiles mounted on M1167 Humvees at floating targets off a beach in Pingtung County during the two days of exercises. The area on Taiwan's southern tip faces both toward the Taiwan Strait and China, and toward the Pacific Ocean.

The missiles are among the most effective and popular anti-tank weapons in the world and a key component in what some experts say is Taiwan's best strategy to resist a potential Chinese invasion. China has ramped up its military threat in recent years based on its vast edge in numbers of warplanes, ships and missiles.

Taiwan bought 1,700 units of the newer TOW 2B system from the U.S., the last of which are due to be delivered by the end of the year. The two days of testing will also gauge the more sophisticated TOW 2B's interoperability with the TOW 2A and its ability to acquire targets at night, the Defense Ministry said.

Advocates of such weaponry argue that these more mobile systems stand the best chance in an asymmetric battle against a much larger Chinese force. China has the world's largest standing military, but most of Taiwan is composed of steep mountains, mud flats and heavily built-up urban areas poorly suited to such a conventional force. Others have argued Taiwan needs more warplanes and surface ships.

China sends warplanes and warships near Taiwan on a near-daily basis in an attempt to intimidate its citizens and degrade the island's defenses. In response, Taiwan has extended the period of national military service to one year, building its own submarines and importing sophisticated new equipment from the U.S.

The vast majority of Taiwanese favor the current status of de-facto independence for their island, which separated from mainland China amid civil war in 1949. (AP)

Looking forward to sunnier days

ENPO demand will be resolved soon, says Nagaland BJP chief

HT Correspondent

DIMAPUR, Aug 26: With five party office bearers of BJP from eastern Nagaland by his side, Nagaland BJP president Benjamin Yephthomi on Monday asserted that the demand of the Eastern Nagaland People's Organisation (ENPO) would be resolved soon.

The ENPO has been demanding a separate Frontier Nagaland Territory carved out of Nagaland since 2010, citing lack of development and discrimination in eastern Nagaland, comprising six districts, by successive state governments.

The six tribes of eastern Nagaland, under the banner of ENPO, boycotted this year's Lok Sabha election and urban local body elections in the state to press for its demand, besides holding various other forms of protests in the region.

Addressing media persons at his Thakhekhu village residence here, Yephthomi said PM Narendra Modi and home minister Amit Shah assured that it was the responsibility of the BJP-led NDA government to bring an amicable solution to the ENPO's



demand which is more than a decade old.

"We are confident that the solution concerning the ENPO issue is not far from now, and it is only under the leadership of home minister Amit Shah, that the ENPO issue will be

solved very soon," he said.

Calling the ENPO's demand genuine, long-standing and legitimate, the state BJP chief said the party stands in solidarity with the ENPO. He added that their long-standing demand deserves a quick resolution

and that the issue is affecting all the Nagas.

"We look forward to sunnier days soon," Yephthomi added.

The state BJP president also briefed the media about the party's membership drive to be undertaken in Naga-

land from September 2.

He said though the party's membership drive will commence all over India on September 1, the state unit would launch the drive on September 2 as September 1 falls on Sunday, a day of worship and prayer for the Christian state.

Stating he would be undertaking a statewide tour to engage directly with "our people" from September 3, Yephthomi said the aim is to connect directly with the people at the grassroots level and encourage them to join "our party."

He said the state BJP is committed to ensuring that the membership process is transparent and authentic, focusing on genuine participation rather than mere numbers.

He said the party would highlight the numerous initiatives and schemes introduced by the NDA government under the leadership of PM Modi.

"Our focus is on raising awareness about these achievements and inviting people to join us in our country's journey towards Viksit Bharat by 2047, marking the centenary of our nation's independence," he said.

PM Modi, HM Shah speaks with Tripura CM Assures help in flood relief



HT Correspondent

AGARTALA, Aug 26: Tripura chief minister Dr Manik Saha on Monday spoke with Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah and informed them about the present flood situation in the State.

During the conversation, PM Narendra Modi assured the people of Tripura of full support during this hour of crisis.

On X, Dr Saha wrote, "Spoke to Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri @narendramodi Ji spelling out all the details of the flood situation in the State. He assured of full support to the people of Tripura in this hour of crisis. We are extremely grateful to the Hon'ble Prime Minister for his kind gesture to the people of Tripura."

Dr Saha further informed that Union home minister Amit Shah during the conversation informed that the Union Government would be sending a team to Tripura immediately to take stock of the situation.

"Spoke to Hon'ble Union Home Minister Shri @AmitShah Ji and apprised him of the latest situation arising out of the unprecedented natural calamity of the flood in the State. He assured of the continued all-out support to the State Government. He also informed that the Union Government would be sending a team to Tripura immediately to take stock of the situation. Grateful to Hon'ble Home Minister for his instantly coming to the aid of the people of Tripura in this hour of crisis," the post of Dr Saha said.

Tripura CM donates one month's salary

HT Correspondent

AGARTALA, Aug 26: In a generous move to support the on-going relief efforts for flood-affected people across Tripura, chief minister Prof. Dr. Manik Saha on Monday contributed his one month's salary to the Chief Minister's Relief Fund (CMRF). This gesture comes as the state battles the aftermath of severe flooding, with the Chief Minister urging everyone to step forward and contribute to the cause. On X, Dr Saha said, "I hereby contribute my one month's salary to the Chief Minister's Relief Fund for the purpose of providing relief to the people affected by the floods." On Monday, Dr Saha handed over a cheque to Additional Secretary Dr Samit Roy Chowdhury.

3 KYKL militants arrested

IMPHAL, Aug 26: Three cadres of proscribed militant outfit Kanglei Yawol Kanba Lup (KYKL) have been arrested for their alleged involvement in extortion, a police statement said. The arrests were made in Uchekon area in Imphal West district on Saturday, it said. The arrested persons have been identified as Oinam Milan Singh (52), Yumnam Ranbir Singh (51) and Khaidem Dhanabir Meitei (24), the statement said, adding they were involved in extortion activities in and around Imphal. (PTI)

Prioritised renovation of markets & ponds: Agartala Mayor

HT Correspondent

AGARTALA, Aug 26: Mayor of Agartala Municipal Corporation and BJP MLA Dipak Majumder announced on Monday that the corporation has decided to prioritize the renovation of the market alongside the renovation of the pond across Agartala city.

Mayor Majumder made this announcement while attending a Bhumi Puja ceremony for the renovation of the market lake in Ujan Abhayanagar in Agartala city of the capital on Monday.

Mayor Dipak Majumder of Agartala Municipal Corporation, Councilor of Ward No. 11 Hiralal Debnath, Corporation Commissioner Shailesh Kumar Yadav, and other officials were present at the event.

The mayor mentioned that for a long time, the residents of the area have been request-

ing the renovation of the lake and the market.

"On July 8, Chief Minister Dr Manik Saha inaugurated three projects under the Amrut 2.0 initiative. One of these projects includes the renovation of this pond, for which a work order has already been issued. Today's Bhumi Puja marks the beginning of this renovation. Along with the pond, the Agartala Municipal Corporation has decided to prioritize the renovation of the market as well," said the Mayor.

He further stated that the renovation of the pond would cost more than 3.75 crores. Additionally, the Corporation is focusing on renovating all the ponds within Agartala to make them more suitable for public use. The mayor expressed confidence that this initiative would greatly benefit the residents.

KBPF against partial upliftment of ban Long-term consequences awaits

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Aug 26: The Kohima Baptist Pastors' Fellowship (KBPF) slammed the state government over the partial lifting of the Nagaland Liquor Total Prohibition (NLTP) Act, 1989.

KBPF stressed that the NLTP Act has protected the people of the State since its official enactment.

The law brought in 1989 by the Nagaland Legislative Assembly, was the result of vigorous prayers and significant efforts by believers, including mass protests and public rallies led by the NBCC and Naga Mothers' Association (NMA), among other civil societies.

However, the recent decision by the Cabinet to re-analyse the law and partially lift it has left the KBPF deeply concerned as they expressed strong opposition against the decision. The fellowship suggested that the upliftment is a violation of God's precepts and a dangerous step backwards.

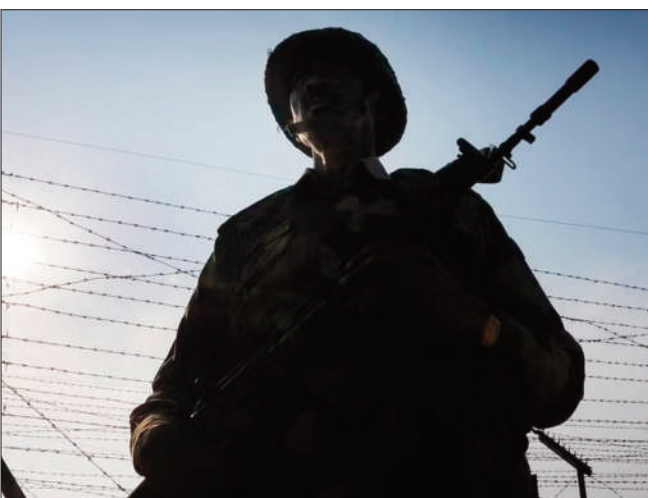
They further mentioned that alcohol abuse leads to a plethora of problems, ranging from health complications to moral and spiritual degradation to family and domestic violations.

The Neiphui Rio-led government predicts that the partial upliftment will boost the State's revenue through increased sales and tax. However, the Fellowship maintained on their argument by stating that the short-term gains will only lead to severe long-term losses.

They argued that the NLTP Act has not failed but rather that its implementation has been lacking. The Fellowship urged the government to strictly enforce the Act through proper consultation, rather than relaxing it for revenue purposes.

The KBPF affirmed its position with the NBCC against the proposed partial lifting of the Act and called upon all believers and responsible citizens to take a similar stand.

443-km India-Bangladesh border in Meghalaya is fully secure: BSF



SHILLONG, Aug 26: The Border Security Force (BSF) on Monday said the 443-km India-Bangladesh border in Meghalaya is fully secure and denied claims of illegal entry by Bangladeshi nationals.

The paramilitary force issued a statement after the media in the neighbouring country reported that Awami League leader Ishak Ali Khan Panna died of heart attack while climbing a hill in Meghalaya's Dawki in an attempt to flee his country. Dawki, in Meghalaya East Khasi Hills, is located close to Bangladesh.

A BSF spokesperson told PTI,

"There is no illegal entry of Bangladeshi nationals in the area of responsibility of the Meghalaya Frontier BSF along the Indo-Bangla border. The story of Panna's death being circulated is entirely fabricated. Any attempt at illegal infiltration or activities that compromise the security of our nation will be dealt with firmly."

The BSF increased vigil along the border following the August 5 violence in Bangladesh, successfully thwarting several illegal

entry attempts and arresting those involved.

The BSF has contacted the assistant high commission of Bangladesh in Assam regarding the matter. "The assistant high commission of Bangladesh has confirmed that they have not received any official information concerning Panna's death near the border area as of now," the BSF spokesperson added.

Local sources in Dawki, including villagers, have denied the claims of Panna's death while climbing a hill in Meghalaya.

An elder from Dawki said, "If a Bangladeshi tried to enter India, our relatives from across the border would have informed us, and we would relay the information to the BSF and police. There is no such incident, and several attempts by Bangladeshi nationals to cross the border have been thwarted."

Another source at the border claimed that Panna died around 400 metres away from the international border, well within Bangladeshi territory.

The source added that Panna was travelling with few people he trusted and had come close to the Bangladesh border when he was attacked. (PTI)

Manipur CM expresses admiration for Lakhpati Didi

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Aug 26: Manipur CM N. Biren Singh took to X to express his admiration for the Lakhpati Didi self-help group (SHG) launched by PM Narendra Modi in 2023.

Writing on X, Singh said, "Lakhpati Didi has been a significant step in empowering women and fostering economic growth at the grassroots level."

Thanking PM Modi for his ambitious vision to empower the women of the nation, he further added, "We are grateful for the Prime Minister @narendramodi Ji's vision and guidance. Together, we are building a future where every woman has the chance to thrive and achieve her dreams."

Meanwhile, the Lakhpati Didi SHG was launched by PM Modi on Independence Day in 2023. A Lakhpati Didi is a Self-Help Group member who earns an annual household income of Rupees One Lakh (Rs. 1,00,000) or more. This income is calculated for at least four agricultural seasons and business cycles, with an average monthly income exceeding Rupees Ten Thousand (Rs. 10,000) for it to be sustainable.

Besides being an inspiration to the community, the Lakhpati Didi group has also proved to be a transformative journey through adopting sustainable livelihood practices, effectively managing resources, and achieving a decent standard of life.

HPC appeals for extension



SHILLONG, Aug 26: The Harijan Panchayat Committee (HPC) today appealed to the Meghalaya state government for an extension of the time to respond to the blueprint for the relocation of 342 families from Them lew Mawlong in Shillong. This came after the 15 days' time granted by the state government to the HPC for communicating its final decision on the proposal has expired on Monday.

In a statement, HPC Secretary Gurjit Singh said that following a recent meeting where the deputy Chief minister suggested that the committee convey its final decision within two weeks, the Harijan Panchayat Committee has emphasized that the short period is insufficient for them to consult with the highest authorities of the Sikh community.

"We intend to seek the counsel of the Jathedar of Sri Akal Takht Sahib, the Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee in Amritsar, the Delhi

Sikh Gurdwara Management Committee, and other senior community organizations and leaders. Their guidance is crucial," Singh said.

"Given the current engagements and prior commitments of the Sikh religious leadership, they have indicated that they will not be available for consultations for the next two to three weeks."

The letter suggested that in light of these circumstances, the Harijan Panchayat Committee earnestly requested that the next meeting on this issue be scheduled around the last week of September. The committee is hopeful that by that time, they will be able to present a well-considered response that reflects the consensus of the broader community."

The Harijan Panchayat Committee has politely sought the cooperation of the Government of Meghalaya in this matter of great importance, Singh stated. (NNN)

Multiple bomb attacks in Imphal

IMPHAL, Aug 26: A hand grenade went off while two others failed to explode in multiple bomb attacks at the residences of three individuals who are working as members of the Board of Directors of Salai Holdings Private Limited in Imphal West district late Sunday.

According to police sources, the bomb went off on Sunday around 11 pm just outside the residence of Akoijam Dipa Anand (45) at Kwakeithel Akham Leikai under Lamphel Police Station.

Fortunately, no one was hurt in the bomb blast although it damaged some parts of the residential gate and the wall.

In another incident, two bike-borne persons reportedly hurled a hand grenade inside the residential gate of Mayengbam Toljenao Mangang (55) at Lamboikhong-nangkhong Veterinary Road at around 12.30 pm.

Fortunately, the hand grenade failed to explode and was later picked up by a team from Lamphel Police Station at around 1.20 pm.

Regarding the third incident, miscreants planted a hand grenade at the residence of Yumlembam Brojendro of Lalambung Makhong Takhellamb Leikai in Imphal West under Imphal West Police Station at around 9.30 pm on Sunday. (NNN)

Tripura requests for Inter-Ministerial Central Team



HT Correspondent

AGARTALA, Aug 26: The Tripura government has formally requested the Government of India to dispatch an advance Inter-Ministerial Central Team to assess the damage caused by the recent floods. This team will assist the state in preparing a detailed memorandum to seek additional support for restoration efforts from the Centre.

The flood situation in Tripura has shown signs of improvement, with a significant reduction in the number of people living in relief camps. At the peak of the crisis, around 1.2 lakh individuals were displaced and sheltered across 471 camps; currently, the number has dropped to 70,000.

According to the Relief, Rehabilitation & Disaster Management Department, rainfall has been lighter over the past three days, with the highest recent rainfall recorded at 38 mm in Panisagar over the last 24 hours. However, the water level in the Gomati River at

Sonamura remains above the danger mark.

"The situation is under constant monitoring at the highest level. The state has sought an advance Inter-Ministerial Central Team for on-ground damage assessment to facilitate the submission of a formal memorandum to the Centre, requesting additional aid for restoration," stated an official report.

Relief operations are ongoing, with three teams from the State Disaster Response Force (SDRF) and five teams from the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) actively working in Gomati and Sepahijala districts. Around 500 Civil Defense and Aapda Mitra volunteers are also aiding in relief efforts.

The district administration is operating 471 relief camps, providing shelter, food, drinking water, and medical assistance to over 70,000 displaced residents. Additionally, clothing has been distributed to 150 people in the Amarpur of Karbook Sub-Division.

The floods have claimed 26 lives, left two individuals injured, and one person remains missing. Preliminary assessments suggest significant damage to infrastructure, including roads, buildings, power lines, embankments, agricultural crops, homes, and livestock.

District Disaster Management Authorities, led by respective District Magistrates and Collectors, have been tasked with conducting a comprehensive assessment of the damages. The assessment work is already underway.

The state government remains committed to working closely with central agencies to mitigate the disaster's impact on its citizens. Meanwhile, the Indian Meteorological Department (IMD) has issued a yellow alert, warning of heavy rainfall in some parts of South Tripura over the next two days.

Kisama village gears up for Hornbill Festival



HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Aug 26: As the state of Nagaland passionately awaits the Hornbill Festival, tourism minister Temjen Imna Along announced that the Naga

Heritage Village in Kisama has upgraded significantly.

He said that the festival grounds are undergoing renovations, including the construction of a new amphitheatre with

a capacity for over 7,000 people.

The Hornbill Festival, which will turn 25 this year, highlights Naga culture and traditions, promoting unity among the tribes and their heritage globally. He credited chief minister Neiphui Rio for the festival's growth and acknowledged former CM SC Jamir's contributions.

The ten-day event that attracts international tourists is named after the hornbill, a large and colourful bird that finds its place among the culture and folklore of Nagaland.

Moreover, to address traffic concerns, Along said new regulations and improved coordination between traffic and home departments will be put in place. He urged the public to carpool and use public transport during the festival.

The tourism department aims to exceed last year's attendance record and attract over 150,000 visitors this year. The festival's appeal will also be enhanced by the involvement of a country partner for the anniversary.

JK polls: BJP releases first list of 44 candidates, trims it to 16 amid internal rumblings

Ten former MLAs, including ex-deputy chief minister Nirmal Singh and ex-Jammu and Kashmir BJP chief Sat Paul Sharma dropped

NEW DELHI/JAMMU, Aug 26: The BJP on Monday named 16 candidates for the first phase of elections to the 90-member Jammu and Kashmir Assembly to be held on September 18.

The party had earlier released its first list of 44 candidates but put out a revised one a few hours later, withdrawing names for the second and third phases, amid disquiet among a section of party cadre over a few names in the original list.

While Jammu and Kashmir BJP president Ravinder Raina downplayed the resentment over the initial list, a group of party workers held a protest at its headquarters in Jammu and claimed "parachute candidates" were picked over hardworking workers.

The list of 16 candidates for the first phase includes three former MLAs and a woman candidate, Shagun Parihar, whose father Ajeet Parihar and uncle Anil Parihar were gunned down by terrorists in Kishtwar district in November 2018. The Parihar brothers were affiliated with the BJP.

The initial list covered 36 segments in the Jammu region and eight in the Kashmir Valley. It included nearly a dozen prominent leaders, including several former ministers who have joined the party in the last five years.

Ten former MLAs, including ex-deputy chief minister Nirmal Singh and ex-Jammu and Kashmir BJP



chief Sat Paul Sharma, have been dropped.

Sharing the revised list of candidates, the BJP said the names for the second and third phases should be considered withdrawn.

In the Jammu region's Chenab Valley, the BJP has fielded former ministers Sunil Sharma (Padder-Nagseni constituency) and Shakti Raj Parihar (Doda-West), former MLA Daleep Singh Parihar (Bhadrawah), Shagun Parihar (Kishtwar), Tariq Keen (Inderwal), Gajay Singh Rana (Doda), Rakesh Thakur (Ramban) and Salim Bhat (Banihal).

The BJP's Neelam Kumar Langhe had won the Ramban constituency in the 2014 elections but was dropped this time.

In the Kashmir Valley, the BJP has fielded its vice president Sofi Yousof (Srigufwara-Bijbehara), Syed Showkat Gayoor Anandri (Pampore), Arshid Bhat (Rajpora), Javed Ahmad Qadri (Shopian), Mohd Rafiq Wani (Anantnag West), Syed Wazahat (Anantnag), Veer Saraf (Shangus-Anantnag East) and Choudhary Roshan Hussain Gujjar (Kokernag-ST).

Some angry BJP workers from different assembly constituencies staged a protest at the party headquarters over the leadership "ignoring" hardworking workers and giving the mandate to "parachute candidates".

"I have been associated with the party for the last 18 years and have worked day and night to strengthen

it but the mandate was given to a person who joined the party only a few days back," said BJP Scheduled Caste Morcha president Jagdish Bhagat.

Welcoming the withdrawal of the initial list, he said, "We hope that party leaders would be given the mandate instead of those who have done nothing for the party."

"If they ignore us, there will be serious consequences. We will not allow any wrongdoing and will protest against this injustice within the party," Bhagat said.

Jammu and Kashmir BJP president Raina, however, said the party is like a family where it does not matter who gets the mandate as "we believe in nation first, party second and self last".

Speaking to reporters at the BJP headquarters, he said the list of the 16 candidates for the first phase was released by the Central Election Committee after a long discussion and subsequent lists for the second and third phases will follow shortly.

"The BJP is fully prepared for the elections. We work like a family and thousands of our workers are ready to make their contribution to the success of our candidates," he said.

"Our mission is the victory of our party... there are many types of discussions and issues within a party. The last date for filing nominations for the first phase is August 27 and so the list of 16 candidates was re-

leased," he added.

Earlier, BJP chief spokesperson Sunil Sethi said party leaders and workers are united and will work tirelessly for the success of all candidates.

"There is no heartburn or confusion. We should not make any presumptions and wait for the fresh lists," he said.

So far, 14 candidates have filed their nomination papers for the first phase of elections which will cover 24 assembly segments -- 16 in Kashmir and eight in Jammu. The last date for filing nominations is August 27.

The process of filing nominations for the second and third phases will begin from August 29 and September 5 respectively.

The BJP's Central Election Committee had met on Sunday evening to finalise the candidates for the polls. The second and third phases of elections in the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir will be held on September 25 and October 1. The counting of votes will be taken up on October 4.

In the last assembly elections held in Jammu and Kashmir in 2014, when it was a full-fledged state, the BJP had won 25 seats. The party is making all-out efforts to fend off the challenge from a resurgent Congress, which has tied up with the National Conference, especially in the Jammu region, a BJP bastion since 2014. (PTI)

Satheesan accuses Kerala govt of 'shielding' perpetrators of sexual abuse in Malayalam film industry



KOCHI, Aug 26: Leader of Opposition in the Kerala Assembly, V D Satheesan, on Monday alleged that the Left government was trying to shield the perpetrators of sexual abuse against women in the Malayalam film industry by not initiating an investigation based on the Justice Hema Committee Report.

A day after the state government formed a special team to probe the sexual atrocities faced by female actors, Satheesan questioned why male officers were appointed above the woman IPS officer in the investigation team.

"The opposition had demanded that a team led by senior women IPS officers should investigate based on the statements given by the victims to the Hema Committee. However, the press release issued by the Chief Minister's office regarding the investigation does not even mention the Hema Committee," the Congress leader said at a press conference at his constituency North Paravur near here.

The government on Sunday formed a seven-member team headed by IG Sparjan Kumar, which includes four senior women IPS officers.

The LoP alleged that the government has taken the stance that they will not investigate the official statements and evidence provided by the victims before the committee constituted by the government.

"The government's stand is unacceptable," Satheesan said.

The Leader of Opposition pointed out that even the court had asked what the obstacle was in investigating the Hema Committee report.

"Those associated with the government are saying that if the victims stand firm in their statements, we can investigate. In which sexual harassment case have the victims been asked to stand firm in their statements? The government's effort is to protect the perpetrators," Satheesan

argued.

He added that asking the victims to give their statements again was humiliating to them.

The government's stance is to humiliate the victims and protect the perpetrators, the LoP added.

Satheesan also criticised state Cultural Minister Saji Cheriyan on the matter, accusing him of expressing different opinions on the issue since the beginning.

He alleged that even in the Hema Committee report, the government had engaged in manipulation.

"The number of pages in the Hema Committee report has been decreasing. According to Section 199 of the Indian Penal Code, it is a criminal act to be aware of offences against women and still fail to take action. This is exactly the crime that Cultural Minister Saji Cheriyan has committed."

"By tampering with the report, protecting the culprits, and humiliating the victims, Cheriyan has committed a serious breach of oath, making him unworthy of continuing as a minister. If he is not prepared to resign, the Chief Minister should demand his resignation," Satheesan said.

The Congress leader added that the series of crimes that took place is clearly outlined in the Hema Committee report.

"It is the government's legal responsibility to investigate and bring the culprits to justice. Despite this, the government has concealed the fact that a series of crimes occurred over four and a half years," the LoP said.

Satheesan also criticised actor Dharmajan Bolgatty, a fellow Congress member, who allegedly personally insulted a female journalist during a TV show.

"If a mistake is made, we won't justify it like the CPI(M). Our stance is that we do not justify those who make mistakes," he said. (PTI)

BJP disagrees with Kangana Ranaut's remarks on farmers' protests

NEW DELHI, Aug 26: The BJP on Monday expressed disagreement with its MP Kangana Ranaut's controversial remarks on the farmers' protest and said she has been directed to not make such remarks in future.

This came after Ranaut stoked a controversy by suggesting that the farmers' protests could have led to a Bangladesh-like situation in the country if the top leadership was not strong enough.

In a video shared by the Mandi MP on X, she alleged that "bodies were hanging and rapes were taking place" during the farmers' protest against the now-repealed three farm laws.

"The statement made by BJP MP Kangana Ranaut in the context of the farmers' movement is not the opinion of the party. The Bharatiya Janata Party expresses its disagreement with the statement made by Kangana Ranaut," the BJP said in a statement.

On behalf of the BJP, Ranaut is neither permitted nor authorized to make statements on the party's policy issues, it said.

"On behalf of the Bharatiya Janata Party, Kangana Ranaut has been directed not to make any such statements in future," the statement said.

"The Bharatiya Janata Party is committed to follow the principles of 'Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas, Sabka Vishwas and Sabka Prayas' and social harmony," it added. (PTI)

Mayawati recalls 1995 guest house incident to slam SP, Congress

LUCKNOW, Aug 26: BSP chief Mayawati on Monday referred to the 1995 Lucknow 'state guest house incident' to attack the Samajwadi Party for the "deadly assault" on her, and the Congress for not coming to her aid despite being in power at the Centre at that time.

The fresh salvo comes three days after the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) chief expressed her gratitude to Samajwadi Party (SP) president Akhilesh Yadav for his stance on the "objectionable comments" made by a BJP MLA against her during a TV debate.

"The SP had carried out a deadly attack on me on June 2, 1995, after the BSP withdrew its support, then why does Congress never speak on this? The Con-

gress government at the Centre during that time also did not fulfil its responsibility on time," the former Uttar Pradesh chief minister said in a post on X.

"Even when Kanshi Ram ji was in a serious condition and hospitalised, the home minister had to be reprimanded and the opposition also gheraoed the Parliament, only after that did the Congress government take action," she said in Hindi.

"Because at that time the central Congress government's intentions had also become bad, which after some untoward incident wanted to run its government from behind the scenes by imposing president's rule in Uttar Pradesh, whose conspiracy was foiled by BSP," Mayawati further

claimed.

On June 2, 1995, after she announced her decision to withdraw support from the Mulayam Singh Yadav government, SP leaders and workers reached the guest house where Mayawati was scheduled to meet her party leaders and allegedly attacked her.

She was rescued from the guest house by BJP leaders. Later, the governor sacked the Mulayam Singh Yadav dispensation and invited Mayawati to form the government.

Mayawati said the entire opposition, including the BJP, had fulfilled its duty to save her from criminal elements of the SP in the name of humanity. "So why does the Congress keep having trouble with this from time to time? Peo-

ple should be aware of it."

"Apart from this, the BSP has been putting full pressure for a caste census for years, first on the Congress at the Centre and now on the BJP," Mayawati said.

"But after the caste census, will the Congress be able to ensure the rightful rights of Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs) and Other Backward Classes (OBCs)? Those who are still silent on the issue of classification and creamy layer in SC/ST reservation should answer," she added.

The 1995 incident had strained ties between the SP and the BSP for years before the two parties briefly formed an electoral alliance for the 2019 Lok Sabha elections. (PTI)

He wants to become PM: Akhilesh on Adityanath's remark on Bangladesh

LUCKNOW, Aug 26: In a jibe at Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath's remarks on Bangladesh, SP chief Akhilesh Yadav on Monday said he wants to become the prime minister but should not be already interfering in foreign affairs decisions that are taken by New Delhi.

Speaking at a programme in Agra earlier in the day, Adityanath reiterated the need for "unity" and "avoid the mistakes" that happened in Bangladesh.

"Aap dekh rahe hain Bangladesh mein kya ho raha hai? Wo galtiyan yahan nahi honi chahiye. Batenge to katenge! Ek rahenge to nek rahenge, surakshit rahenge aur samridhi ki parakasha jo pahuchenge. (Are you seeing what is happening in Bangladesh? Those mistakes should not take place here. If divided, we will be cut. If divided, we will be cut. If we remain united, we will be good, secure and reach the pinnacle of

prosperity)," Adityanath said.

During an interaction with mediapersons here on Janmashtami, when asked about the chief minister's remarks on strife-torn Bangladesh, Yadav said, "He (Adityanath) wants to become the prime minister but at least he should not play the role of prime minister. This is the job of the prime minister, the government of India to decide the relations India wants with which country of the world.

"This is not the first time that the chief minister has done something like this. He has done it in the past too. I hope 'Delhi-wale' will make him understand that he should not interfere in the decisions that are taken by Delhi," the former UP chief minister said.

The Samajwadi Party (SP) president said the wheel of politics has reached a point today that every party is talking about caste census. (PTI)

Congress MP Vasant Chavan passes away; irreparable loss, says party

NANDED, Aug 26: Congress MP from Maharashtra's Nanded constituency, Vasant Chavan, passed away on Monday at a private hospital in Hyderabad after a prolonged illness, party sources said.

Chavan (69) breathed his last at the hospital at around 4 am, the sources said. He had been undergoing treatment for renal issues since the last week. Notably, Chavan became a member of Lok Sabha for the first time in his political career in 2024 by defeating BJP strongman and MP Pratap Patil Chikhlikar from the Nanded constituency in Marathwada region.

The Congress veteran won the electoral contest despite his ill health and big desertions, including that of former CM Ashok Chavan, who joined BJP ahead of the polls.

Vasant Chavan's victory stood out as he overcame personal health issues and organisational challenges following Ashok Chavan's defection, which was believed to have weakened Congress in Nanded.

Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi, Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge and AICC general secretary Priyanka Gandhi-Vadra expressed condolences.

"The news of the demise of senior Congress leader, Nanded Lok Sabha MP Shri Vasantrao Chavan ji is extremely sad. While paying my heartfelt tribute to him, I express my deep condolences to the bereaved family. A popular grassroots leader, Shri Chavan supported and expanded the ideology of Congress throughout his life. His demise is an irreparable loss for the Congress family," Rahul Gandhi

tweeted. "My heartfelt condolences on the passing away of Shri Vasantrao Chavan, Member of Parliament from Nanded, Maharashtra. A senior leader, who started his politics from the grassroots as a Gram Panchayat member and served the people in various elected positions, he protected the Congress ideology in his region till his last breath. Our thoughts and prayers are with his family, friends and followers," Kharge tweeted on X.

Gandhi-Vadra also expressed profound grief. "The news of the demise of Shri Vasant Chavan ji, MP from Nanded, Maharashtra and senior Congress leader is extremely sad. May God grant peace to the departed soul. My deepest condolences," the Congress leader stated.

The grand old party termed Chavan's death an irreparable loss for the Congress family.

"The news of the demise of senior Congress leader and Nanded Lok Sabha MP Shri Vasantrao Chavan ji is extremely painful. Shri Chavan dedicated his entire life to supporting and propagating the ideology of Congress," the Congress@INCIndia posted on X.

Born in Naigaon in Nanded district, Vasant Chavan started his political journey as a gram panchayat member before becoming a zilla parishad member in 1990 and 2002.

He was elected to the Maharashtra Legislative Council in 2002 and later to the state legislative assembly from Naigaon assembly seat. He was an MLA from 2009 to 2014.

Chavan also served as the chairman of Nanded District Central Cooperative Bank from 2021 to 2023. (PTI)

Will there be elected hill development councils for new Ladakh districts: Cong asks govt

NEW DELHI, Aug 26: With the government announcing the creation of five new districts in Ladakh, the Congress on Monday asked whether there will be elected Autonomous Hill Development Councils for each of the new districts and they have a much more meaningful and relevant say in how budgets are spent.

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Monday said that his ministry has decided to create the five new districts in pursuit of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision to build a developed and prosperous Ladakh.

"The new districts namely Zaskar, Drass, Sham, Nubra and Changthang will take the benefits meant for the people to their doorsteps by bolstering governance in every nook and cranny," he said.

Reacting to the development, Congress general secretary in-charge communications Jairam Ramesh said, "The elected Autonomous Hill Development Council for Leh was established in 1995. The elected Autonomous Hill Development Council for Kargil was set up in 2003."

"Now five new districts have been formed in Ladakh in addition to Leh and Kargil. Will there be elected Autonomous Hill Development Councils for each of the five new districts as well?" he asked.

Presently, the two existing elected Autonomous Hill Development Councils have control over less than 10% of the total expenditure allocated to Ladakh and the balance 90% is being under the control of the lieutenant governor and the bureaucracy, he said.

Will the elected AHDCs have a much more meaningful and relevant say in how budgets are spent? Ramesh asked.

Earlier, the home minister said the Modi government is committed to creating abundant opportunities for the people of Ladakh. (PTI)

CII to host its 20th Innovation Summit in Bengaluru



BENGALURU, Aug 26: The Confederation of Indian Industry on Monday announced the 20th edition of its flagship India Innovation Summit - 'Innoverge 2024' and its theme "India@100: Building for a Resilient, Sustainable, and Inclusive India" here.

The summit will delve into creating an innovation ecosystem essential for a developed India by 2047, they said.

According to officials, Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) Innoverge 2024 is scheduled on September 4 and 6 at Hotel

Shangri-La in Bengaluru.

With the government of Karnataka being the partner state for 2024, the summit will be addressed by key stakeholders from Department of Electronics, Information Technology, Biotechnology and Science and Technology and Large and Medium Scale Industries and Infrastructure Development, Government of Karnataka.

"CII Innoverge 2024 builds upon its earlier editions and includes an innovation showcase through the Innoverge 2024 ex-

hibition. This will provide participants with the opportunity to experience the demos of leading innovations across various sectors," the CII said in a statement.

Kris Gopalakrishnan, Mentor CII India Innoverge 2024 said, "Innoverge 2024 is the ideal forum for exploring how we can transform business processes, embrace new technologies, and create value through innovation. As we engage key stakeholders and spotlight emerging regions, we pave the way for a future defined by economic prosperity, social equity, and environmental sustainability."

According to CII, the 2024 edition of Innoverge will bring together essential components of a thriving innovation ecosystem—universities, major corporations, startups, policymakers, and multi-stakeholder collaborations—emphasising the pivotal role of institutions and accelerators from emerging regions in fostering inclusive and scalable innovation.

It said the three-day event will host thought leadership addressing an inclusive ecosystem in 10 sectors: Manufacturing and Industry 4.0, Mobility-Automotive and Transportation, Semiconductors, Tourism and Hospitality, Healthcare and Med Tech, Energy Transition/Sustainability, Education and Skilling, Space sector, Agri and Food, Retail and E-Commerce.

The summit will be addressed by CEOs, industry experts and distinguished academia. (PTI)

TENDER NOTIFICATION

Sealed tenders are invited from registered & reputed firms/shops for purchasing of condemned items of JNV, Diphu, under following departments, Hostel Equipment, Utensil, Furniture, Computer and accessories, Museum Corner, laboratories, Library, Musical items

The list of the items will be available at the office on dated 27.8.2024 to 2.9.2024 . tenders will open in the chamber of Principal JNV-Diphu, Karbi Anglong, Assam on 3-09.2024 at 11.00 AM.

Sd/
Principal.

CBI names RG Kar Hospital ex-principal Sandip Ghosh in corruption FIR, slaps non-bailable sections

KOLKATA, Aug 26: The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) has named Sandip Ghosh, former principal of RG Kar Medical College and Hospital, in the FIR the agency has filed in connection with its probe into the alleged financial irregularities at the institution during his tenure.

The agency has slapped Section 120B of IPC (criminal conspiracy) read with Section 420 IPC (cheating and dishonesty) and Section 7 of Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988 (amended in 2018) which covers unlawful acceptance of gratification by a public servant.

The cases read together account for cognisable offences and are non-bailable in nature, a senior Calcutta High Court lawyer said. Besides Ghosh, the CBI has also registered cases against one M/s Ma Tara Traders of Madhya Jorehat, Banipur, Howrah, M/s Eshan Cafe of 4/1, H/1, JK Ghosh Road, Belgachhia, Kolkata and one M/s Khama Louha. The FIR was lodged on the basis of a written complaint lodged by Debal Kumar Ghosh, special secretary to the state health department. PTI retains a copy of the FIR.

The FIR was lodged on Saturday after the CBI took over the



probe from a state-constituted Special Investigation Team (SIT) following directions of the Calcutta High Court which the West Bengal government had initially formed following the alleged rape and murder of a woman medic on August 9.

The order was issued on a petition by former deputy superintendent of RG Kar Hospital, Akhtar Ali, who requested a probe by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) into alleged financial misconduct at the institution.

Ali had moved the high court after fervent speculations in the public domain on whether the al-

leged rampant corruption at the institution was in any way connected to the medic's death with possibilities of the victim remaining privy to those and threatening exposure.

Ali had also alleged that his complaints before the state vigilance commission and anti-corruption bureau filed a year ago against Ghosh yielded little results and, instead, led to his own transfer from the institution. In his plea before the high court, Ali accused Ghosh of illegal sale of unclaimed corpses, trafficking of biomedical waste and passing tenders against the commission paid by medicine and medical equipment suppliers.

Ali also alleged that students were pressured to pay amounts ranging between Rs 5 and 8 lakh to pass exams.

Ghosh served as principal of RG Kar Hospital from February 2021 to September 2023. He was transferred from the medical establishment in October that year but inexplicably returned to that position within a month. He held his position at the hospital till the day the doctor was found murdered.

Ghosh, who was removed from his chair at RG Kar Hospital after the crime came to light and reinstated in the same position at the Calcutta National Medical College and Hospital within hours by the Mamata Banerjee government, has subsequently been asked to go on an indefinite leave in the wake of massive resistance from CNMC students and pending the corruption inquiry. The CBI on Sunday conducted a day-long search operation at Ghosh's Beliaghata residence in Kolkata in connection with the corruption cases.

Ghosh has also been examined by the agency for 10 days at a stretch and it was conducting a polygraph test on him on Monday in connection with the rape and murder probe. (PTI)

Tractor-trolley swept away in flooded river amid rain; 10 rescued, 7 missing

MORBI, Aug 26: A search operation by NDRF is underway in Gujarat's Morbi district to trace seven persons swept away along with their tractor trolley while crossing a flooded causeway on a river amid heavy rains, an official said on Monday.

Ten out of 17 persons on board the tractor-trolley were rescued in an overnight operation near Dhavana village.

"The tractor-trolley carrying 17 persons swept away when it was passing through a causeway (over a river) near Dhavana village in Halvad taluka of Morbi district at around 9 pm on Sunday. Ten persons were rescued while seven others are missing," said Morbi fire officer Devendrasinh Jadeja.

State Disaster Response Force (SDRF) and National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) personnel are conducting a search operation, he said.

Several parts of Gujarat were battered by heavy to very heavy rains in the last 24 hours till 6 AM on Monday, forcing authorities to shift hundreds of people to safe places after low-lying areas in Navsari and Valsad districts were inundated due to a rise in the water level of monsoon rivers.

At 356 mm, Khergam taluka in Navsari district recorded the highest rainfall in the last 24 hours ending 6 AM on Monday, the State Emergency Operation Centre (SEOC) data showed. During this period, Dang-Ahwa taluka of the Dang district received 268 mm of rainfall and Kaprada (Valsad district) 263 mm.

Parts of Narmada, Sirendranagar, Rajkot, Tapi, Mahisagarand Morbi, Dahod and Vadodara were among other districts that received over 100 mm of rainfall.

Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel spoke over the phone to collectors of Morbi, Kutch, Rajkot, Suren-

dranagar and Bhavnagar districts of the Saurashtra region, and Bharuch and Dang districts in south Gujarat late Sunday to review the situation.

Patel instructed the collectors to remain alert and ensure the safety of people and their livestock by constantly monitoring the rainfall situation, the Chief Minister's Office (CMO) stated.

Amid forecasts for more rains in the state, Chief Secretary Raj Kumar chaired a review meeting on Sunday evening.

The India Meteorological Department has predicted heavy to very heavy rains in Gujarat over the next week.

"Based on this (forecast), the Chief Secretary instructed the various district administrations to make all necessary preparations. He instructed the officers and employees of the district and taluka administrative system to be present on duty at the headquarters considering the prevailing rain situation," stated an official release.

The chief secretary said the administrations should remain especially vigilant in places where people are likely to gather in large numbers considering the upcoming festivals during Shravan month to avert any rain-related tragedy.

Local administration should also ensure that roads closed due to flooding are restored immediately and electricity supply is not disrupted for long. With the current spell of rains, districts in south Gujarat have received over 105 per cent of the average annual rainfall so far, the highest in the state.

Eight districts of south Gujarat and Saurashtra have received more than 100 per cent of their average annual rainfall. All other districts recorded more than 50 per cent of the average annual rainfall so far this season, the SEOC data showed. (PTI)

Cow slaughter suspect drowns to evade arrest

HARIDWAR, Aug 26: A man suspected of being involved in illegal cow slaughter drowned in a pond after he jumped into it while trying to run away from the police.

The incident happened in Madhopur area near Roorkee late on Saturday night, Haridwar's Senior Superintendent of Police Pramendra Dobhal said on Monday.

The Cattle Protection Squad (CPS) of the local police was patrolling in Madhopur area after receiving information that some people in the village were involved in cow slaughter. The CPS saw a man coming on a scooter. As he tried to stop him, the man named Wasim alias Monu left his scooter and ran away. While trying to escape, he jumped into the pond, the SSP said. A search was launched but he could not be found as it was dark.

The body of Wasim was recovered from the pond on Sunday morning. A crowd of locals gathered at the spot and clashed with the CPS in protest refusing to hand over the body to the police for a post mortem. The crowd alleged that the man was beaten up and pushed into the pond by the police.

The police had to finally chase away the crowd to take the body into custody for autopsy. Wasim's body was handed over to his family after autopsy, the SSP said. On the basis of a complaint lodged by the CPS, a case was lodged against one Alauddin and 100-150 other unidentified persons under sections 190, 191(2), 189(5), 132, 115(2), 352, 351(3), 238, 126(2) and 121(1) of the BNS and section 5/11 of the Cattle Protection Act for rioting and preventing public servants from performing their official duty, the SSP said. (PTI)

CBI conducts second round of polygraph tests on RG Kar hospital ex-principal, others

KOLKATA, Aug 26: The CBI on Monday started a second round of polygraph tests on former RG Kar Medical College and Hospital (RGKMCH) principal Sandip Ghosh and five others as part of their investigation into the rape-murder of a woman doctor at the institution.

According to an officer, over the last 10 days, Ghosh provided inconsistent answers during questioning, prompting officers to conduct another round of polygraph tests.

The CBI initially conducted the lie-detection tests on Ghosh and

five others on Saturday, followed by a test on arrested accused Sanjay Roy at the Presidency Correctional Home on Sunday.

Additionally, Ghosh and former medical superintendent and vice-principal Sanjay Vashisth are also being investigated for alleged financial irregularities within the institute. The case centres on the rape-murder of a postgraduate trainee woman doctor in the seminar hall of the hospital on August 9. A civic volunteer was arrested in connection with the crime the next day. The gruesome crime resulted in nationwide protests by doctors

and citizens.

On Sunday, the CBI searched Ghosh's and Vashisth's homes, with Ghosh presenting files and documents at the central agency's office in Salt Lake on Monday morning. Vashisth appeared at Nizam Palace, where a forensic medicine department professor was also questioned. The agency also searched 13 other locations in Kolkata, including residences and offices of people involved in patient care and management supplies connected to the hospital. "After yesterday's search operations, we have several questions

9 prison officials, including chief superintendent suspended

BENGALURU, Aug 26: Nine prison officials, including Chief Jail Superintendent V. Seshumurthy and Jail Superintendent Mallikarjun Swamy were suspended on Monday for allegedly giving special treatment to Kannada actor Darshan Thogudeepa, who is currently in judicial custody in the Renukaswamy murder case.

The action came a day after an inquiry was conducted after a photo of the actor smoking with a coffee mug in hand in the Central Jail at Parappana Agrahara in the city emerged on social media on Sunday sparking a row.

The picture shows Darshan sitting leisurely on a lawn on the jail premises along with three others, including two alleged rowdy-sheeters. Others who have been suspended are jailers Sharan Basappa Aminagad and Prabhu S Khandelwal, assistant jailers L S Kuppeswamy, Srikanth Talwar, head warders Venkappa, Sampath Kumar and warder K Basappa, Karnataka Home Minister G Parameshwara told reporters here on Monday. "Already seven officers have been suspended. After gathering more information after visiting the place, the Chief Jail Superintendent Sheshumurthy and Superintendent Mallikarjun

Swamy have been suspended as it was a lapse on their part," the Minister said. He added that if more officers are found involved in this case then they could be either suspended or dismissed from the service.

The investigation will also follow to find out who provided cigarette, tea and chairs to the actor, he added. "Three FIRs have been registered against him (Darshan) since he has violated the prison manuals. Action will be started against him," Parameshwara said. He said he has given instruction to carry out further investigation. Senior IPS officials will carry out further investigation. Action will follow based on the report, he added. To a question, Parameshwara said presently discussions are on regarding shifting Darshan.

The Additional Director General of Police (Prisons and Correctional Services) Malini Krishnamoorthy said the three FIR pertains to the usage of mobile phones and cigarette on the jail premises and smuggling these items inside the jail. "Darshan is a party in it. The FIR includes the prison officers and those who used these items as accused. A senior IPS officer will investigate it," Krishnamoorthy told reporters.

Asked whether it requires an incident like this to "wake up," she said: "We have been monitoring but when we have black sheep it becomes difficult to keep a track. That's the reason we are insisting on CCTV cameras. We are also mulling over using artificial intelligence and purchasing it (device)."

According to her, the preliminary inquiry suggested that the incident happened on August 22 evening. "We did not have any information about any such incident. If we knew it then we would have taken action. There was a lapse in monitoring the CCTV footage," Krishnamoorthy said.

Noting that the Prisons department is committed to enforce the jail manuals, she said the government has taken this incident seriously. Meanwhile, addressing media in Belagavi, Chief Minister Siddaramaiah admitted that there was a lapse on the part of Prison officials.

"There has been a lapse on the part of the officers concerned. We have already suspended seven officers. A few more will also be suspended. I have told the Home Minister G Parameshwara to visit the place and remove those who facilitated," the CM said. (PTI)

25 Naxalites, surrender in Bijapur



BIJAPUR, Aug 26: Twenty-five Naxalites, five of them carrying a cumulative bounty of ₹ 28 lakh on their heads, surrendered in Bijapur district in Chhattisgarh on Monday, a senior police official said.

The 25 ultras, who were active in Gangloor and Bhairamgarh area committees of the outlawed Communist Party of India (Maoist), include two women, the official added. "The two women, Shambati Madkam (23) and Jyoti Punem (27), and Mahesh Telam were active in company no. 2 of the Maoists and carried rewards of ₹ 8 lakh each on their heads. Madkam was active in the movement since 2012 and was allegedly involved in the 2020 Mimpa ambush in Sukma in which 17 personnel lost their lives. She was also involved in the Tekalgudem (Bijapur) attack in which 22 security personnel were killed in 2021," said Bijapur Superintendent of Police Jitendra Kumar Yadav. "Punem and Telam were allegedly involved in an encounter in Pidia village in Bijapur

in May this year in which 12 Naxalites were gunned down. Vishnu Kartam alias Monu (29), section deputy commander of platoon no. 16 'B', and Jaidev Podiam (18), Mirtur LOS (local organization squad) PLGA member, were carrying rewards of ₹ 3 lakh and ₹ 1 lakh, respectively," the SP informed.

Two others who surrendered, Guddu Kakem (20) and Sudru Punem (32), were carrying rewards of ₹ 10,000 each on their heads, the official added. They surrendered citing disappointment with the hollow Maoist ideology and atrocities on tribal by leaders of the outlawed movement, he said, adding those who laid down down arms were provided assistance of ₹ 25,000 each and will be further rehabilitated as per the government's policy. "With this surrender, 170 Naxalites have so far quit violence in the district this year. Besides, 346 Maoists have been arrested in the district during the same period," the SP said. (PTI)

3.95 lakh cusecs water discharged into Narmada river

BHARUCH, Aug 26: As many as 280 people were shifted to safer places from the low-lying area in Gujarat's Bharuch city after nearly 4 lakh cusecs water was released into the Narmada river from Sardar Sarovar Dam, officials said on Monday.

Following a huge inflow of water from Omkareshwar dam in Madhya Pradesh upstream of Narmada, the Sardar Sarovar's water storage on Monday touched a height of 135.20 meters, just 3.48 meters less than its full capacity of 138.68 meters, a release by the state government stated.

The dam, situated near Kevadia in Narmada district, is receiving 3.68 lakh cusecs (cubic feet per second) water and 3.95 lakh cusecs were released in the river, it said.

Of 30 gates of the dam, 15 were opened on Sunday night, and eight have been opened since morning. At present, these 23 gates are open up to the height of 2.2 meters to allow discharge of 3.95 lakh cusecs water directly into the river, the release stated. With such a huge discharge coupled with incessant rains, the Narmada river is now flowing just below the danger level of 24 feet near Bharuch town, prompting the authorities to shift 280 people living in low-lying areas, Bharuch collector Tushar Sumera said. (PTI)

IMD warns of intense rains in Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Gujarat, Maharashtra

NEW DELHI, Aug 26: A depression over northwest Madhya Pradesh and adjoining Rajasthan has intensified into a deep depression, the India Meteorological Department said on Monday and warned of heavy to extremely heavy rainfall in parts of the two states and Gujarat, Goa and Maharashtra over the next two to three days.

At 11:30 pm on August 25, the deep depression lay centred near 70 km south-southeast of Chittorgarh, Rajasthan. This system is expected to move west-southwest, affecting South Rajasthan, and Gujarat, and reaching Saurashtra, Kutch, and parts of Pakistan by August 29, the IMD said in an update issued at 2 am.

The weather department said another low-pressure area is located over Bangladesh and adjoining Gangetic West Bengal. It is likely to intensify further and move towards Gangetic West Bengal, north Odisha, and Jharkhand over the next two days.

Issuing a red alert, the IMD said heavy to extremely heavy rainfall is expected in West Madhya Pradesh on August 26. Similar conditions are forecast for east and south Rajasthan, Gujarat, Saurashtra and Kutch from August 26 to 29.

Konkan, Goa, Madhya Maharashtra, Odisha, Gangetic West Bengal, and Jharkhand are also expected to receive heavy to extremely heavy rainfall over the next two days.

The IMD has warned of strong winds reaching up to 50 kmph in Madhya Pradesh on Au-



gust 26 and up to 60 kmph in south Rajasthan on August 26-27.

In Gujarat, nearby Pakistan, north Maharashtra, and the northeast Arabian Sea, strong winds gusting up to 55 kmph are expected on August 26, increasing to 60 kmph on August 27 and 28.

Rough to very rough sea conditions are anticipated off the coasts of Gujarat, Pakistan, and north Maharashtra until August 30. Rough seas are also expected in the North Bay of Bengal on August 26.

The IMD has advised fisherfolk to avoid venturing into the Arabian Sea and Bay of Bengal, especially around the coasts of Gujarat, Pak-

istan, and Maharashtra, until August 30. Small ships and exploration and production operators have been asked to monitor weather developments and take necessary precautions.

People are advised to avoid areas prone to waterlogging and check for traffic advisories before travelling. Farmers in the affected areas should ensure proper drainage in fields and provide support to crops, according to the IMD.

The IMD has also warned of potential localized flooding, road closures, and waterlogging, particularly in urban areas. There is a risk of landslides and damage to horticultural crops due to inundation in the affected regions. (PTI)

US-based doctor from Kolkata demands accountability over RG Kar medic's rape-murder

KOLKATA, Aug 26: A US-based doctor who has contributed immensely to India's polio elimination efforts and measles surveillance initiatives has criticised the brutal rape and murder of a doctor at RG Kar Medical College and Hospital and slammed the West Bengal government for failing to ensure safety of frontline health workers.

Speaking to PTI from Seattle, deputy director of the polio team at the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, Dr Ananda Sankar Bandyopadhyay, pointed out a significant lack of accountability, expressing deep shame and sadness over the violence inflicted on the woman medic.

Bandyopadhyay, who grew up in Kolkata and studied medical science at one of its premier colleges, said, "I am infuriated, ashamed, and saddened. I have spent sleepless nights in shock and horror over what happened at RG Kar Hospital. My heart and soul are with Kolkata and those rising against this heinous crime against a female frontline health professional." A gold medalist from Calcutta National Medical College & Hospital (CNMC),

Bandyopadhyay recalled his time working there, saying he and his colleagues, including women health professionals, spent countless hours and nights in makeshift rooms with-

out ever feeling unsafe.

"I was born and raised in Kolkata. The city and its inclusive, forward-looking culture shaped me. I never felt unsafe in Kolkata, and I believe this was true for my female classmates and colleagues, at least from my perspective," he said.

"I, along with my batch mates and colleagues -- many of whom were women -- worked round-the-clock in the hospital. This included spending nights in seminar rooms as we did not always have dedicated places to rest. But we never felt unsafe on the hospital premises," he added.

Reflecting on his days at CNMC, the global health professional criticised the administration for failing to ensure the safety of frontline health workers and pointed out a lack of accountability.

"The inadequacy of safety for frontline health workers has long been an issue, with violent assaults occurring in the past. However, this incident surpasses all forms of barbarity. Equally glaring is the failure of authorities to prevent such a heinous crime within hospital premises. If we cannot protect those who save lives, especially women frontline professionals, we have failed as a society," he said.

Regarding the ongoing strike by junior doctors that has paralysed

healthcare services across West Bengal for the past 17 days, Bandyopadhyay expressed solidarity with them and hoped for a resolution soon. "No one understands the suffering of patients more than doctors, nurses, and paramedical staff. I stand in solidarity with those demanding safety and dignity at their workplace. I am saddened by the suffering of people and hope the situation improves soon," he stated. Asked whether he felt Kolkata was no longer safe for women, Ananda, as he is known among his peers, replied in negative.

"I hope that is not the case. Even though it may feel like we are in desperate times, let us not succumb to despair. The peaceful protests are a mark of courage and hope. We should contribute positively -- through our behaviour at home, at work, by raising children with values of empathy, equity, and inclusion, and by speaking out against injustice. I hope this apparent decline is transient, and Kolkata will regain its status as a safe, vibrant, and lively city," he said.

Regarding measures to address the issue, Bandyopadhyay called for accountability and transparency from law enforcement and health authorities to uncover the failures that allowed this crime to occur on hospital grounds. (PTI)

Parvathy on similarity between Irrfan Khan and Vikram: It's definitely the generosity

MUMBAI, Aug 26: Malayalam star Parvathy Thiruvothu on Monday said greatness is all about how people feel when you are around, and not about mere words, and that's something common between the late Irrfan Khan and her "Thangalaan" co-star Vikram. The actor, who is paired opposite Vikram's Thangalaan in the Tamil period drama, made her Hindi film debut with 2017's romcom "Qarib Qarib Singile" in which she shared the screen with Irrfan. At the press event of "Thangalaan", Parvathy was asked whether there are any similarities between her two colleagues. "It's definitely the generosity I see in both of them. Irrfan used to help me out with things because Hindi is not my native language. He used to help me get into that space..." "You are as good as the other person on set... I find that greatness comes from that saying about people who don't remember what you might have said or given them. It's about how you make them feel. That's the similarity in Irrfan sir and Vikram," she told reporters here.

Parvathy, who plays Gangamma in the Pa Ranjith directorial, recalled how Vikram would make everyone's day on set when he would share 'kamarkattu', a traditional South Indian candy. "It's called kamarkattu. It has jaggery palm sugar... He'd just be walking around, he'd shake hands and suddenly you have a toffee in your hand. He just brightens the mood for everybody... I miss getting all the toffees," she added. Both on screen and off screen, Vikram was like a true leader, said the actor. "Everybody's like 'Have you eaten or not?' But (he would ask) genuinely. There's a concern about how everyone is doing. Our shooting location was very difficult. It was one of the harshest locations. It was all real locations that they shot in. He had everyone's back. In that sense, he was our Thangalaan. He was leading the pack." Set in the 19th century, "Thangalaan" is based on the real story of the Kolar Gold Fields (KGF) during its discovery by the British, who exploited and looted it for their own gain.

The film, which released in the South on August 15, is set to have a north India release with the Hindi version arriving in theatres on August 30. (PTI)



'THANGALAN' STAR VIKRAM CALLS INCIDENTS OF CRIME AGAINST WOMEN 'DISGUSTING'

MUMBAI, Aug 26: Women need to feel safe at any odd hours or place and the onus on men to give them their space, says South star Vikram, who termed the recent incidents of crime against women in the country "disgusting".

The 58-year-old actor's remarks come in the wake of the alleged rape and murder of a female doctor in Kolkata and the Justice Hema Committee report on women's exploitation in Malayalam cinema.

"All women need to feel protected. They should be able to walk the streets at 3.00 in the morning and feel they can walk, go home, and that nobody will do anything. That every man is there to protect them, to give them their space. It's disgusting what's happening," Vikram told PTI.

The actor, whose Tamil film "Thangalaan" is releasing in North India with the Hindi version arriving in theatres on Friday, said he has often wondered about tackling the issue of women's safety in his films.

"We get affected by most things that happen... I've always thought that if I was creative, would I address it more in my movies? Will I do something?" he said.

Vikram said perhaps inspiration needs to be drawn from "Thangalaan" director Pa Ranjith whose films' recurrent theme is about changing the entire system.

"It's something that I'm trying to figure out. 'What do we do? What does the nation need to do? Do we start young? Do we start inculcating these things in children?' As Pa Ranjith says, 'Change the whole system and start from scratch'. I don't know, something has to be done," he added.

A postgraduate trainee woman doctor was allegedly raped and murdered in the seminar hall of Kolkata's RG Kar Medical College and Hospital on August 9, following which a Kolkata Police civic volunteer was arrested. (PTI)

'ARM' starring Tovino Thomas to release on September 12

NEW DELHI, Aug 26: Tovino Thomas' upcoming film "ARM" will hit the big screen on September 12 in Malayalam, Hindi, English, Tamil, Telugu, and Kannada.

The trailer of the pan-India fantasy drama, which will see Thomas play three distinct characters across three timelines, was released on Sunday.

Billed as a visual spectacle with a compelling story, "ARM" is directed by debutant Jithin Lal and written by Sujith Nambiar.

Listin Stephen of Magic Frames and Dr Zakaria Thomas of UGM Motion Pictures are attached as producers on the project.

Set in northern Kerala across three timelines of 1900, 1950 and 1990, "ARM" will see Thomas play the characters of Maniyan, Kunjikkelu, and Ajayan, each trying to protect a treasure of land through different generations. It also marks the 50th project for Thomas, one of the top Malayalam cinema stars known for "Uyare", "Minnal Murali", "2018", and "Anveshippin Kandethum".

Kriti Shetty, Aishwarya Rajesh, Surabhi Lakshmi, Basil Joseph, Jagadish, Harish Uttaman, Harish Peradi and Pramod Shetty and Rohini also star in "ARM".

The film will be distributed by Hombale Films in Kannada, Mythri Movie Makers in Telugu and AA Films in Hindi. (PTI)



DON'T WANT TO JUST ENTERTAIN PEOPLE BUT ALSO ENLIGHTEN THEM, SAYS FILMMAKER PA RANJITH

MUMBAI, Aug 26: Director Pa Ranjith on Monday said he wants to use cinema as a medium to address caste divide in the country and his latest offering "Thangalaan" is a step in the same direction.

The acclaimed filmmaker, who belongs to the Dalit community, said he has been a longtime follower of social reformer Dr BR Ambedkar, a key architect of India's constitution, whose teachings have helped him over the years.

"The caste problem is everywhere in India. I (was) affected by the system. I understood (the problem) in my childhood and what Babasaheb Ambedkar wanted to tell (about) modern India.

"I followed him and I got (to learn) a lot from him. I wanted to discuss (this) through my art. I don't want to only entertain people, I want to try to enlighten them through (my films). We need to address (this issue)" Ranjith, known for "Kaala" and "Sarpatta Parambarai", told reporters here.

He was speaking at the Hindi trailer launch of "Thangalaan", starring Vikram in the title role. Vikram, popular for roles in "I", "Ponniyin Selvan I & II", and "Raavanam", said

every time he decides to embark on a project, he aims to pick characters that are nothing like his real self.

"Cinema has always been my passion, my dream. Every time I do a role, I try to do something that's very far (away) from me. I think 'Thangalaan' is just another (result) of that want. I want to work on great characters with great directors like Pa Ranjith... All my directors have inspired me through all my characters," he said.

Set in the 19th century, "Thangalaan" is based on the real story of the Kolar Gold Fields (KGF) during its discovery by the British, who exploited and looted it for their own gain.

The actor, known for undergoing extreme physical transformations for his roles, said he grew his hair and lost weight to em-

body the character of Thangalaan.

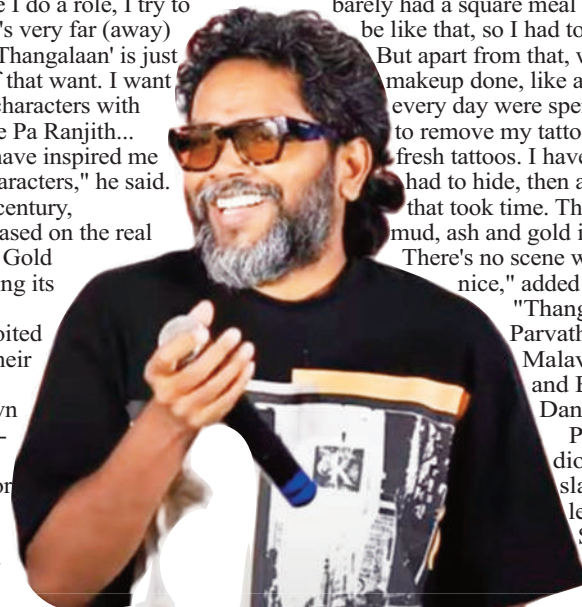
"I realised I can't look like a hero. I should look like a labourer. I'm actually part of the oppressed. I had to be someone who just barely had a square meal a day. I needed to be like that, so I had to shrink a little.

But apart from that, we had a lot of makeup done, like almost five hours every day were spent on that. I had to remove my tattoo, then put on fresh tattoos. I have a scar which I had to hide, then add scars. All of that took time. Then, we had blood, mud, ash and gold in every scene.

There's no scene where we look nice," added Vikram.

"Thangalaan" also stars Parvathy Thiruvothu, Malavika Mohanan, and British actor Daniel Calgagione.

Produced by Studio Green, it is slated to be released in Hindi on September 6. (PTI)



Nabeel Khan pursuing his grandfather's dream of making sarangi famous worldwide

DUBAI, Aug 26: Musician Nabeel Khan says he is leaving no stone unturned in making his late grandfather and legendary sarangi maestro Ustad Sabri Khan's dream a reality: helping the sound of the Indian classical instrument sarangi reach every corner of the world.

Nabeel Khan, who belongs to a traditional family of Moradabad Sainia Gharana of sarangi players, performed at a spectacular candlelight concert here on Sunday. "My aim is to pursue my grandfather, the legendary sarangi maestro and Padma Bhushan awarded Ustad Sabri Khan Sahab's dream to spread Indian classical sarangi all over the world.

"I am trying my best to make it more famous and always try to show the people about the peaceful and soulful sound of sarangi and this is my belief that I will make this dream real," he told PTI after the concert.

The 25-year-old musician said he is happy promoting Indian classical music in the United Arab Emirates and other Gulf countries. "I am the first sarangi player who pioneered this instrument in this region, and I'm very happy at the way the audience are responding and loving my music here and in western countries as well," he added.

Nabeel Khan belongs to a gharana that traces its musical roots from Mian Tansen, the great vocalist in the court of Mughal emperor Akbar. Alongside education, he was soon initiated into the rare art of the instrument sarangi. Growing up in a family of great sarangi players, Nabeel Khan grasped the techniques of sarangi swiftly under the tutelage of his grandfather and soon emerged as a sarangi prodigy.

He started learning the stringed instrument at the age of seven from his grandfather. The Moradabad Sainia Gharana has produced many legendary sarangi players since the 15th century in India.

"I believe gharanas like mine are unique, but we have also evolved in a unique way. We have embraced the many benefits of the digital race, the technology that it has offered yet using them to only preserve our classical roots. This has been tremendously helpful in making our music and art accessible to more people across the planet," said Nabeel Khan, the eight generation sarangi artist in his family.

"Whenever I go abroad like to the United Kingdom or European countries, I find more international audience, but this is the nice thing about the UAE that you find different people from different countries and yes, it is their love towards our

Indian classical music, which is so beautiful, not from today since many years," he said, adding that he has grown up seeing international students from different countries.

"I used to see all the foreigners coming to my home and learn sarangi from my father Ustad Nasir Khan and my grandfather Ustad Sabri Khan. That's how I learnt how to teach sarangi, and we have more than 100 international students all over the world. That's why they learn and listen to our Indian classical music."

On the attention span challenge posed by social media, Nabeel Khan said gone are the days when people used to listen to two-three hours of Indian classical music.

Unfortunately, today that time is reduced to one hour, he added.

"There are even 30 minutes, 20 minutes, sometimes 40 minute-concerts. However, it is still better than listening to 30-second short videos. At the moment, people seem to be focusing more on social media reels and short videos. "However, there are some talented Indian classical musicians, especially youngsters who are performing great. So it is here to stay, and I am sure people will continue to enjoy live concerts of sarangi and Indian classical music." (PTI)



Prannoy takes break to recover from impact of chikungunya

NEW DELHI, Aug 26: Seasoned Indian shuttler HS Prannoy on Monday said he is taking a break from the sport to allow his body to fully recover from the effects of chikungunya, which had adversely impacted his performance at the Paris Olympics.

The 32-year-old, a 2022 Thomas Cup title winner and a world and Asian Games bronze-medallist, had been laid low by a week-long bout of the mosquito-borne viral disease that causes severe pain in the joints just ahead of the Paris Olympics.

"Unfortunately, the battle with chikungunya has taken a toll on my body, leaving me with persistent pains that make it impossible to compete at my best," Prannoy wrote on X.

"After careful consideration with my team, I've decided to withdraw from some of the upcoming tournaments to focus on recovery. Thank you for your understanding and support during this challenging time. I'll be back stronger," he added.

Prannoy, however, did not provide a time line for his recovery or mentioned the tournaments he has withdrawn from.

The Kerala shuttler, who won the world championship bronze in 2023, had been ravaged by a spate of illnesses, including a chronic stomach disorder and a nagging back injury.

At the Paris Games, despite not being fully fit, Prannoy won both his Group matches to progress to the round of 16. He, however, went down to compatriot Lakshya Sen in the pre-quarterfinal. (PTI)

Chhetri's Bengaluru FC to take on Mohun Bagan SG



KOLKATA, Aug 26: Charismatic former India captain Sunil Chhetri will be pivotal to Bengaluru FC's chances of making it to the Durand Cup summit clash when they take on Mohun Bagan Super Giant in the last-four con-

test at the iconic Salt Lake Stadium, here on Tuesday.

As Asia's oldest football tournament enters the final stages of the competition, Bengaluru FC have their task cut out against the defending champions. Mogan

Bagan have not only scored 10 goals but also stoutly defended their citadel, conceding just three goals.

Bengaluru FC too have shown great promise in the tournament,

scoring 11 goals and conceding only two in the four games they have played.

They overcame Kerala Blasters in the quarterfinals through a Jorge Diaz goal in extra time and would be leaning heavily on national players goalkeeper Gurpreet Sandhu, Rahul Bheke Suresh Wangjam and former India skipper Chhetri.

It will be a 'homecoming' for Chhetri as he was first spotted by Mohun Bagan and invited for the trial at the iconic club after a sterling performance in the 2002 edition of the Durand Cup.

On the other hand, MBSG would have been toughened by their clash against Punjab FC, whom they beat via a penalty shootout. They would be relying on Greg Stewart, Manvir Singh and Jason Cummings to get it past Bengaluru FC. The three played a key role in the game against Punjab FC.

The other semifinal, scheduled to be played later on Monday, pits Northeast United FC against Shillong Lajong FC. (PTI)

Durand Cup

US Open 2024 begins, best to compete

NEW YORK, Aug 26: Tennis fans unable to decide who has the best shot at doing well at the US Open have company as the year's last Grand Slam tournament is set to begin Monday.

Even the players themselves aren't sure what to expect.

"We've seen people, all the time, surprise us every single week, every single tournament, every Slam. Sometimes there's no rhyme or reason why someone maybe does well," said Jessica Pegula, a six-time major quarterfinalist. "Sometimes it doesn't make any sense."

There is the usual uncertainty that comes in New York, thanks to the vagaries of injuries and the grind of a long season. One additional factor this time could be all of the surface-switching: Tennis at the Summer Olympics was played on courts at Roland Garros, also the French Open site. So players went from clay in Paris to grass at Wimbledon, then back to clay, before shifting to hard courts before the U.S. Open.

"It's a strange year," British player Dan Evans said. "That's for sure." Pegula, for one, handled that last transition just fine, going from the Olympics to a title at Toronto and a runner-up showing at Cincinnati. Her doubles partner in Paris, 2023 U.S. Open champion Coco Gauff, played in three Olympics events, exiting early in each, then lost her second match in Toronto and her first in Cincinnati.

"Changing surfaces, it's tough, not just on your body, but mentally. ... But it's part of the job, and we'll adjust," said Tommy Paul, who won a bronze medal in doubles with Taylor Fritz for the U.S. in Paris and had a 1-2 record in Montreal and Cincinnati.

"Maybe there's one player or two players that are burned out from the (Olympic) experience. But other than that, for the most part, everyone is pretty adjusted by now." The woman who defeated Pegula in the Cincinnati final, No. 2 Aryna Sabalenka, skipped the trip back to France for the 2024 Games but said she isn't all that convinced that having — or not having — normal preparation necessarily will dictate results the next two weeks.

"Everyone who came here, they think they are ready to win. I think it's not about who is ready. You can be ready better than the rest of the group," said Sabalenka, a two-time champion at the Australian Open and runner-up to Gauff at last year's U.S. Open, "but at the end of the day, it's all about how hard are you ready to fight for it — especially on those days when you don't feel your best."

Another player not at the Olympics, Frances Tiafoe, reached the Cincinnati Open title match before losing to No. 1 Janik Sinner, whose two positive steroids tests in March came to light less than a week ago.

Tiafoe, a 26-year-old from Maryland, finds the home crowds and high attention of the U.S. Open bring out his best, so he wanted to concentrate on getting ready for the site of his first Grand Slam semifinal in 2022. "It's open for a lot of guys this year, for sure. ... It's always different in a Slam. The lights are a little brighter," he said. "We'll see what ends up happening. Personally, I just like where I'm at."

Then there are those such as defending U.S. Open champion Novak Djokovic, who won a gold medal at the Paris Games but didn't play a single hard-court tuneup event, or Carlos Alcaraz, the silver medalist whose only recent match on a hard court was a loss in Cincinnati.

"Obviously, I (would) have loved to have more matches (under) my belt on hard courts before the U.S. Open," said Alcaraz, who twisted his right ankle Saturday but seemed fine when he practiced Sunday. "But, I mean, it doesn't affect me at all."

Perhaps of more interest to someone such as Gauff or Djokovic is this statistic: It's been at least a decade since any woman or man won consecutive championships in Flushing Meadows. Some figure predictions are hard to come by, generally.

"At the moment ... any given Sunday, anybody can win," said Bianca Andreescu, who beat Serena Williams to win the 2019 U.S. Open. "That's honestly the beauty of it, because it does bring that variety." (AP)

Praggnanandhaa holds Liren

Gukesh draws with Vachier-Lagrave

ST LOUIS (USA), Aug 26: Indian Grandmaster R Praggnanandhaa navigated his match against the reigning world champion Ding Liren with remarkable ease, holding him to a draw in the sixth round of the Sinquefeld Cup, the final leg of the Grand Chess Tour.

World championship challenger D Gukesh also played out another enterprising draw with France's Maxime Vachier-Lagrave while Russia's Ian Nepomniachtchi suffered a shocking loss, going down to Fabiano Caruana of United States in just 25 moves.

The sixth round saw no other surprises as the games between Anish Giri of Holland and Nodirbek Abdusattorov of Uzbekistan and Alireza Firouzja of France versus local star Wesley So ended draws.

With just three rounds remaining, Caruana seems determined to give Firouzja a run for his money even though the former still leads

the fray on 4 points.

Caruana and Wesley So are on 3.5 points each.

Praggnanandhaa, Gukesh, Vachier-Lagrave and Liren share the fourth spot on three points each with Nepomniachtchi and Abdusattorov following them a half point behind.

Anish Giri stands last on two points in the USD 3,50,000 prize money tournament.

Gukesh has been trying hard in almost every game but so far the lady luck has not smiled on him.

Playing white against Vachier-Lagrave, he went for the King pawn opening and faced the tried and tested Najdorf Sicilian.

Gukesh came up with a double-edged idea in the middle game that fetched him a pawn in return for a king side attack for Vachier-Lagrave.

For sometime it looked like the Frenchman had a powerful attack but Gukesh always found the best

manoeuvres.

In the end, the Indian had an extra pawn but black had counterplay compensating for the same. The game was drawn vide stalemate after 72 moves.

Praggnanandhaa did not have to sweat much against Liren, who has been pretty solid in the tournament and is not taking much risk ahead of the World Championship match against Gukesh in November.

The Kings Indian defense by Praggnanandhaa as black did not see any serious mistake from either side and the game was drawn without much ado.

Results round 6: Ding Liren (Chn, 3) drew with R Praggnanandhaa (Ind, 3); Alireza Firouzja (Fra, 4) drew with Wesley So (Usa, 3.5); Anish Giri (Ned, 2) drew with Nodirbek Abdusattorov (Uzb, 2.5); Ian Nepomniachtchi (Fid, 2.5) lost to Fabiano Caruana (Usa, 3.5); D Gukesh (Ind, 3) drew with Maxime Vachier-Lagrave (Fra, 3). (PTI)

Waqar, Misbah, Saqlain among five mentors appointed

LAHORE, Aug 26: The Pakistan Cricket Board on Monday named stalwarts Misbah-ul-Haq, Saqlain Mushtaq, Sarfaraz Ahmed, Shoaib Malik and Waqar Younis as mentors of five teams taking part in the Champions Cup domestic tournament.

The big names in Pakistan cricket have been appointed mentors on three-year contracts following a transparent and robust recruitment process, according to a PCB statement.

Waqar Younis recently worked as PCB advisor on cricket affairs while Saqlain Mushtaq is a former head coach of the national team. Misbah and Waqar have also had coaching stints with the national team.

The PCB said the first assignment of the mentors in the PCB Domestic Cricket Season 2024-25 will be the Champions One-Day Cup, which will be held in Faisalabad from September 12-29.

The PCB has made it mandatory for all the top players to appear in the 50-overs competition. (PTI)

Australia name Darcie Brown in T20 World Cup squad

SYDNEY, Aug 26: Pacer Darcie Brown, who has recovered from her foot injury, was on Monday named in Australia's 15-member squad for the T20 World Cup even as the defending champions left out experienced spinner Jess Jonassen.

Brown, who pulled out of the tour of Bangladesh in March due to a foot injury, is now fully fit and will be joined by fellow pacer Tayla Vlaeminck.

"The pace duo of Tayla and Darcie is one we've been wanting to unleash for a while and is a real point of difference for us," selection chief Shawn Flegler said.

The team, which will be vying for a fourth consecutive T20 title, will be led by Alyssa Healy while Tahlia McGrath will be her deputy in the tournament beginning in the UAE on October 3.

"This is the first time in a long time we've had our entire contract list available for selection ahead of a World Cup and it's resulted in a really stable and balanced squad,"

Flegler said.

"It's the first time Alyssa will have the reins at a World Cup and we've already seen what her and Tahlia bring from a leadership perspective, so it's exciting for them to have this opportunity to lead their country on the biggest stage," Flegler added.

Left-arm spinner Sophie Molineux and Grace Harris have also recovered from their injuries.

Molineux was forced to pull out of The Hundred having suffered an acute rib fracture after being struck by a ball while batting in the off season while Harris also missed the English franchise league due to a calf injury.

However, left-arm spinner Jonassen has been left out of the squad again despite being the joint highest wicket-taker for Delhi Capitals in the Women's Premier League and the third-highest wicket-taker in The Hundred earlier this month. "Jess Jonassen is again unlucky to miss out but we've been

If fitness permits, will play LA 2028 Olympics: Manpreet Singh

NEW DELHI, Aug 26: He will be on the wrong side of 30s and maintaining fitness would be no stroll in the park but veteran Indian hockey mid-fielder Manpreet Singh foresees an unprecedented fifth Olympic appearance for himself in the 2028 Los Angeles Games before he calls time on his career.

The 32-year-old is a two-time Olympic medallist. He captained the side that ended a 41-year-old Olympic medal drought in Tokyo 2020, before remaining a part of the squad under Harmanpreet Singh for an encore in Paris 2024.

"My target is till Los Angeles but it all depends upon my fitness. If I can maintain my fitness and game, I will surely be there in LA," the ace mid-fielder told PTI in an exclusive interview.

"In today's hockey fitness is very important so at the end everything will boil down to my fitness," added the player, who has rarely faced any fitness issues in his career.

Former greats Udhav Singh, Leslie Claudius, and Dhanraj Pillai along with Manpreet's recently-retired contemporary P R Sreejesh also have four Olympic appearances to their credit.

And Manpreet, a veteran of 378 international games and 44 goals, is now aiming to go one better on them by making the cut for LA 2028. The easy-going player, who hails from Mithapur village in Punjab, is grateful for all that he has achieved with the team.

"Winning back-to-back medals is a something wonderful for me. It was after a long time that we won back-to-back medals and every athlete aspires to win an Olympic medal."

"I have played four Olympics. In the first two, I didn't get any medal but in the last two, I won medals and you can't imagine my happiness," he said. A multi-faceted player, Manpreet can play in a defensive position as well when the team needs.

His skills came in handy in India's 4-2 penalty shootout win over Britain in the quarterfinals of the Paris Olympics despite being down to 10 men with 42 minutes remaining in the match.

"I am always prepared to play in every scenario. I always adjust to every position which the team de-

mands. When (Amit) Rohidas got the red card, I immediately realised that I had to play in the defence."

"I have trained a lot for that, even in Pro League matches. So, it was not very difficult for me. I knew my roles and responsibilities, I just had to execute my plans," Manpreet said.

The show against Britain tested the Indian team's mental toughness and Manpreet credited a short three-day camp at renowned adventurer Mike Horn's base in Switzerland before the Olympics for that.

"That camp was very useful for us. It changed our mindset and taught us to be strong. When we went there, nobody knew what we were supposed to do there," he recalled.

"That camp taught us how to tackle adverse situations with a strong mentality. That camp also taught us how to be together and help each other in difficult situations." We learnt to play as a team and be united," he said.

Talking about Sreejesh, who retired at 36 after the Paris Games, Manpreet was effusive in his praise for the former teammate.

"Everyone knows how good a goalkeeper he (Sreejesh) was but it was his personal decision and it is with every athlete. But we need to look at how we need to cope with this situation."

"Krishan (Bahadur Pathak) and Suraj (Karkera) are good goalkeepers and already have the experience of playing at the highest level," he said.

Manpreet's Malaysian wife Illi Najwa Saddique and their two-and-half-year-old daughter Jasmine were there in Paris when he won his second Olympic medal and the star said it was the best moment of his life to share the joy with his family.

"After the medal ceremony, my daughter and wife were with me at the ground and my daughter was running around the ground. I had a photo of my daughter wearing the medal, it was a really proud feeling," he said.

Manpreet revealed that Jasmine, despite her tender age, seems to have developed a liking for shooting after meeting double Olympic medallist pistol shooter Manu Bhaker recently. (PTI)

PCB chairman promises 'changes' after shock defeat against Bangladesh



LAHORE, Aug 26: PCB Chairman Mohsin Naqvi on Monday vowed to fix problems in Pakistan cricket following the national team's shock defeat to Bangladesh in the first Test, saying "changes are on the way."

Stalwarts such as Shahid Afridi, Muhammad Hafeez and Fawad Alam lambasted the national team for its 10-wicket defeat on Sunday in Rawalpindi.

"I will fix the issues in Pakistan cricket, God willing. And changes are on the way," Naqvi said while talking to media.

Hafeez took a swipe at Naqvi, reminding him of his major surgery required in Pakistan cricket comment during the World Cup.

Earlier this year, when Pakistan were bundled out of the World T20 Cup, Naqvi was quoted as saying after the defeat to India: "Initially, I believed a minor surgery would suffice, but after this poor performance, it's clear that a major overhaul is needed. The nation will soon witness substantial changes."

However, no changes have been made in the national team and the same senior players appeared in the first Test against Bangladesh under the captaincy of Shan Masood, who suffered his fourth consecutive test defeat since taking over last December.

Naqvi insisted that things will change in Pakistan cricket and will not remain the same.

"Remember my words that things will not remain the same and a lot is happening in the background," he said without giving details.

Afridi reacting to the defeat was furious that Pakistan went in without a specialist spinner and played four fast bowlers on the Pindi pitch.

"How can you not read your own home conditions? You play four pacers on this pitch unacceptable," he said. (PTI)

PCB is a bunch of confused people: Mudassar Nazar

Nazar said he would have gone in with not one but two spinners against Bangladesh

LAHORE, Aug 26: Former Pakistan head coach Mudassar Nazar on Monday called Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) officials a bunch of confused people, who do not learn from mistakes.

Mudassar's comment came in the wake Pakistan's heavy 10-wicket defeat against Bangladesh in the first Test.

"The PCB is full of confused people and they are making mistakes after mistakes, leading to increasing problems in Pakistan cricket," Mudassar who also worked as Director of the National Academy said.

The former Test cricketer he was surprised that no one in the PCB and the team think tank is aware that in the month of August playing with four fast bowlers in Rawalpindi is not a good idea.

"Everyone who has played cricket in Pakistan knows that no matter whatever anyone says in August the pitches in Rawalpindi



tend to become good batting tracks after the first one or two hours of help for the seamers," he added.

Mudassar, who was one of former captain Imran Khan's trusted lieutenants, said that the defeat to

Bangladesh came as a big surprise to him.

"It is the result of confusion that is all. One day they appoint Waqar Younis as advisor on cricket and now he is mentor of a domestic team in Champions Cup," he ques-

tioned.

Nazar said he would have gone in with not one but two spinners against Bangladesh.

Former Test opener Ahmed Shehzad also lashed out at the PCB and team the management, describing the defeat a new low for Pakistan cricket.

He warned that Pakistan would find it hard to recover from this Test defeat.

"Pakistan cricket has reached a point where today Bangladesh defeated Pakistan on home soil for the first time ever. I have never seen Pakistan cricket sink so low in my life. This is a new low that Pakistan has hit, which I have never seen in my life" he said.

"If you make short-term decisions, the Pakistan team is already heading towards zero, just like hockey's situation. But we didn't expect that you would even lose to Bangladesh. Today, you've shown that as well," he added. (PTI)

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02-09-2024	NMCH, Nalbari	Nalbari, Baksa	NH Bangalore	9864066772
03-09-2024	FAAMCH, Barpeta	Barpeta, Bongaigaon, Bajali	NH Bangalore	9435973537
03-09-2024	DMCH, Dhubri	Dhubri, South Salmara- Mankachar, Goalpara	NH Guwahati	9435016507
04-09-2024	KMCH, Kokrajhar	Kokrajhar, Chirang	NH Kolkata	9435105372
05-09-2024	NMCH, Nagaon	Nagaon, Morigaon, Hojai	NH Bangalore	9854065992
05-09-2024	TMCH, Tezpur	Sonitpur, Darrang, Biswanath, Udalguri	NH Mumbai	9864018665
06-09-2024	JMCH, Jorhat	Jorhat, Golaghat, Sivasagar, Majuli	NH Kolkata	9864015372
07-09-2024	LMCH, Lakhimpur	Dhemaji, Lakhimpur	NH Mumbai	7578003500
07-09-2024	AMCH, Dibrugarh	Dibrugarh, Charaideo	NH Bangalore	8723051445
08-09-2024	TMCH, Tinsukia	Tinsukia	NH Guwahati	7399095411
09-09-2024	SMCH, Silchar	Hailakandi, Karimganj, Cachar	NH Kolkata	9435071362
10-09-2024	DMCH, Diphu	Dima Hasao, Karbi Anglong.	NH Mumbai	9435144372



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