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Give an affidavit within 7 days or apologise to the nation, Cong leader told

CEC directs Rahul to submit affidavit on 'vote chori' claims

NEW DELHI, Aug 17: Hitting back at Rahul Gandhi for his 'vote theft' charges against the Election Commission, Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar on Sunday served a seven-day ultimatum on the Congress leader to submit a signed affidavit to back his claims, else his allegations will be considered baseless and invalid.

In his first press conference after Gandhi levelled allegations of 'vote chori' in the 2024 Lok Sabha elections and several opposition leaders flagged issues about revision of electoral rolls in Bihar, a combative Kumar asked Gandhi to either apologise or back his claims with a signed affidavit as required under electoral rules.

"Give an affidavit or apologise to the nation. There is no third option. If an affidavit is not given within seven days, this means that all allegations are baseless," said Kumar, flanked by Election Commissioners Sukhbir Singh Sandhu and Vivek Joshi.

The remarks by the Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) came on a day when Gandhi-led opposition launched the 'Vote Adhikar Yatra'



in Bihar and stepped up attack against the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls in the poll-bound state.

Kumar said the SIR exercise was aimed at removing all shortcomings in the voter list and it is a matter of grave concern that some parties are spreading misinformation about it, "firing from the Election Commission's shoulder".

"If one thinks that by making a PPT presentation with wrong facts, the EC will act, that is not the case. EC cannot act without the affidavit in such a serious matter as

it would be against the law and the Constitution," Kumar said.

Levelled allegations of "vote chori", Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi had on July 31, through a presentation at a press conference, cited data from the 2024 Lok Sabha polls to claim that over 1 lakh votes were "stolen" in Mahadevapura assembly segment in Karnataka through five types of manipulation, including duplicate voters, fake and invalid addresses and single-address voters.

The chief electoral officers of several states had asked Gandhi to file an affidavit under oath on his claims, but he had refused to do so. The CEC on Sunday admitted that there could be discrepancies in the electoral rolls and asserted that SIR was the only way to correct this. He, however, contended that a person being present in multiple voter lists does not automatically mean that he or she also voted multiple times.

Kumar also said the poll panel has already identified and corrected more than three lakh cases of multiple people having the same voter identity card numbers, but the duplicate voter issue of one person being listed as a voter at multiple places can be resolved only through exercises like SIR.

"At the ground level, all the voters, district presidents of political parties, BLOs are working transparently, validating and giving video testimonials. It is a worrying matter that these efforts are not reaching their national and state level leaders, or they are ignoring it to create confusion. The truth is, all the stakeholders are walking in tandem to (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Cloudburst, landslide in J&K's Kathua; seven killed

JAMMU, Aug 17: Seven members of four families, including five children, were killed in two separate incidents of cloudburst and landslide in Kathua district of Jammu and Kashmir early Sunday, officials said.

The calamity struck Jodh Ghati village of Rajbagh and Bagra village of Janglote amid heavy overnight rains in the district, leading to increase in the level of water bodies and submerging many low-lying areas, they said.

The cloudburst in Kathua came three days after flash floods triggered by cloudburst struck Chisoti village in Kishtwar district of Jammu and Kashmir on August 14, leaving 60 people dead and more than 100 injured.

Officials said while five persons, including a man and his two minor sons, lost their lives in Jodh Ghati which was hit by the cloudburst, snapping access to the village and causing damage to several mud houses, a mother-daughter duo lost their lives in landslide triggered by rains at Bagra village of Janglote.

The Army has evacuated six injured persons to hospital from Jodh Ghati. "Indian Army columns on the ground in Kathua - rescuing families, giving hope, food & care after the (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Eviction drive in Biswanath dist displaces 309 families



TEZPUR, Aug 17: The Assam government on Sunday began an eviction drive in Biswanath district, displacing 309 families, officials said.

The eviction drive was started in the morning to clear encroachment on nearly 175 bigha or 23 hectare of land in the Village Grazing Reserve (VGR) in Japariguri, they said.

"The eviction drive is going on peacefully. There were 309 families who had encroached on 175 bigha of land. Notices were issued to them on August 1 to vacate the areas within 15 days," District Commissioner Simanta Kumar Das said.

He said all the families have already left the area, and many of

them had dismantled their houses.

"We demolished the remaining houses. There was also one big tea garden. That is being dismantled now for the forestation drive later," he said.

The DC said 600 security personnel were deployed, and 20 excavators, along with dozens of tractors, were used during the eviction drive.

The encroachers were mostly from the Bengali-speaking Muslim community, another official said.

Visiting the site, All Assam Minority Students' Union (AAMSU) General Secretary Kuddus Ali Sarkar alleged that the Himanta Biswa Sarma government has been evicting people in an "inhuman manner". (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Nagaon DC office staff suspended on briber charge

HT Correspondent

NAGAON, Aug 17: The District Commissioner of Nagaon has suspended Manjurani Deka, a copyist at Nagaon District Commissioner's Office on allegations of bribery.

The accused allegedly demanded a bribe of ₹ 3,000 for providing a certified copy of a land document.

A video footage showed Deka demanding the bribe and threatening to withhold the document if not paid. She was also heard mentioning that she would share the bribe money with her colleagues.

The video has sparked outrage among the public, who are demanding strict action against the accused.

Issuing the suspension order, the DC expressed concern over the alleged corruption, saying that a thorough investigation and strict action against her would be initiated soon.

IndiGo flight makes sudden 'go around' at Guwahati airport

GUWAHATI, Aug 17: An IndiGo flight from Dibrugarh to Guwahati on Sunday made a sudden 'go around' seconds before landing at Lokpriya Gopinath Bordoloi International (LGBI) Airport here, officials said.

There has been no impact on the carrier or any passenger due to this move of the flight, a source from the airline told PTI.

"Go around is absolutely a normal phenomenon during the landing of an aircraft if the pilot faces any issue. He may decide to make a second attempt for various reasons, for the safety of the passengers and there is nothing to worry about," the company source said.

In the second attempt, the plane landed safely at LGBI Airport in Guwahati, he added.

Flight 6E-187 was coming from Dibrugarh to Guwahati. It has already proceeded on its onward journey after completing its necessary formalities, an airport official said.

A go-around, also known as a missed approach or aborted landing, is a procedure where an aircraft, during its final approach or after touchdown, discontinues its landing attempt and climbs back into the air for another approach or diversion.

It is a safety precaution initiated by the pilot or requested by air traffic control due to various factors like unstable approach, runway obstruction, or adverse weather. (PTI)

Merely crying of woman cannot make out case of dowry harassment: Delhi HC

NEW DELHI, Aug 17: The Delhi High Court has held that mere fact that a woman was crying, cannot per se make out any case of dowry harassment.

Justice Neena Bansal Krishna made the observation while dismissing a petition against the discharge of a husband and his family from charges of cruelty and dowry harassment.

According to the prosecution, the woman, married in December 2010, faced harassment and dowry demands from her husband and in-laws.

Her family claimed that they spent nearly Rs 4 lakh on the wedding, alleging that later demands for a motorcycle, cash, and a gold bracelet were made by the husband and in-laws.

The woman, a mother of two daughters, died on 31 March 2014.

"Statement of the sister of the deceased



under Section 161 Cr.P.C. was recorded wherein she also stated that on the occasion of Holi, she had called her sister and found her crying. However, merely because the deceased was crying, cannot per se make out any case of dowry harassment," the high court said. The trial court had discharged the accused noting that the death took place due to pneumonia, a natural cause. The high court also emphasised (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

NDA picks CP Radhakrishnan as Vice President candidate

NEW DELHI, Aug 17: Maharashtra Governor Chandrapuram Ponnusamy Radhakrishnan, a seasoned BJP leader from Tamil Nadu with an RSS background, was on Sunday named the vice-presidential candidate of the ruling National Democratic Alliance.

BJP president J P Nadda made the announcement following a meeting of the party's parliamentary board, which included Prime Minister Narendra Modi, and consulting the party's allies.

Nadda appealed for unanimous election of Radhakrishnan (67), an OBC leader and two-time former member of Lok Sabha, to the constitutional position, saying the BJP leaders had spoken to the opposition parties last week and will con-

tinue to do so. The opposition leaders had told the BJP interlocutors that they can make up their mind only after being told of the ruling alliance's nominee, Nadda said, adding that his party will reach out to them again.

Due to the comfortable majority of the BJP and its allies in the electoral college, comprising Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha members, Radhakrishnan's election is all but certain, and the party hopes that his elevation will help it make fresh inroads in Tamil Nadu, where elections are due next year.

Radhakrishnan belongs to the influential Gounder caste, an OBC community, in Tamil Nadu. Nadda emphasised (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Modi urges states to cooperate in implementing proposed GST reforms

NEW DELHI, Aug 17: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday said the Centre has circulated the draft of the next-generation GST reforms among states and sought their cooperation to implement the proposal before Diwali.

He said the reform in GST would benefit poor and middle-class people, as well as small and big businesses.

Addressing an event after the inauguration of two expressways, the Prime Minister said the Centre intends to make the GST law simpler and revise tax rates.

Modi had announced the proposal to reform the GST law in his Independence Day speech on August 15 from the ramparts of Red

Fort. "For us, reform signifies the advancement of good governance, which is why we place a strong emphasis on continuous improvement. In the near future, we are set to implement reforms aimed at making life and business operations smoother and more convenient.

"As part of this vision, next-generation reforms will be introduced during the GST framework. This Diwali, these GST reforms will bring a double bonus to the people, enhancing their celebrations," he said.

Modi said the Centre has sent the draft proposal of the GST reform to the states.

"I hope that all states will cooperate in the initiatives of the central government," he said, urging them to complete the process at the earliest so that the Diwali festival becomes more fabulous.

The objective of this reform is to make GST simpler and revise rates, he added.

The present GST tax rates of nil/zero on essential food items, 5 per cent on daily use products, 12 per cent on standard goods, 18 per cent on electronics and services and 28 per cent on luxury and sin goods will be replaced by a two tax slabs of 5 per cent and 18 per cent plus a special 40 per cent top bracket for 5-7 demerit goods. The (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

AJYCP backs eviction drive, cautions against misuse of term 'Miyan'



HT Correspondent SIVASAGAR, Aug 17: The Asom Jatiyatibadi Yuva Chatra Parishad (AJYCP) has extended support to the state government's ongoing eviction drive against illegal land grabbers in reserve forest areas but cautioned the government not to use the term 'Miyan' indiscriminately while referring to illegal immigrants, saying it is a political term.

In a press conference held at the Tourist Office here on Sunday, AJYCP leaders said they did not want Assam to face a situation similar to Jammu and Kashmir or Tripura in the coming decades.

They urged the government to continue eviction measures to safeguard the interests of indigenous people and demanded that the eviction drive be carried out in Sivasagar district as well to clear all government land from illegal encroachers.

Addressing the media after the organisation's annual session, AJYCP central secretary Udayan Kumar Gogoi reiterated their demand to transfer all Tea Board offices from Kolkata to Guwahati.

The leaders further urged the government to identify and deport illegal foreign nationals from the state and to enact a Land Act at the earliest.

They also called for making history and geography compulsory subjects up to Class XII. On the Citizenship (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Shubhanshu Shukla returns to India to rousing welcome

Lok Sabha set to discuss astronaut's sojourn to ISS

NEW DELHI, Aug 17: Astronaut Shubhanshu Shukla returned to India early Sunday to a rousing welcome by a large number of people waving the tricolour and beating drums at the airport here to celebrate his historic visit to the International Space Station (ISS).

Shukla, who became the second Indian to undertake a spaceflight as part of the Axiom-4 mission, and his back-up astronaut-designate Prashanth Balakrishnan Nair were welcomed at the airport by Union Minister Jitendra Singh, Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta, and ISRO Chairman V Narayanan.

"Thank you sir. Surely feels good to be back home," Shukla posted on X in response to Singh's post welcoming after receiving him at the airport.

Shukla's wife Kamna and son Kiash were also present at the air-



port to welcome him home after a nearly one-year stay in the US training for the space flight, which finally took place from June 25 to July 15.

A large crowd waving the national tri-colour had gathered at the Indira Gandhi International Airport

here to welcome Shukla to the sound of drumbeats.

The government has proposed a special discussion in the Lok Sabha on Monday on the subject 'India's first astronaut aboard the International Space Station -- Critical role of the space programme

for Viksit Bharat by 2047 -- to mark Shukla's return to India.

Shukla is expected to meet Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday and travel to his hometown, Lucknow. He is also expected to return to the capital to participate in the National Space Day celebrations on August 22-23.

"India's space glory touches Indian soil... as the iconic son of Mother India, #Gaganyatri Shubhanshu Shukla, lands in Delhi in the early hours of this morning. Accompanying him, another equally accomplished Group Captain Prashanth Balakrishnan Nair, one of the astronauts selected for India's first human mission Gaganyaan, who was India's designated backup for the mission to the International Space Station #ISS," Singh said in a post on X.

Shukla was part of the Axiom-4 private space mission that lifted off from Florida on June 25 and docked at the International Space Station on June 26. He returned to Earth on 15 July.

Along with three other astronauts - Peggy Whitson (US), Sławosz Uznanski-Wisniewski (Poland), and Tibor Kapu (Hungary) - Shukla conducted over 60 experiments and 20 outreach sessions during the 18-day mission.

Earlier on Saturday, Shukla had posted a smiling photograph of himself sitting in an aeroplane on Instagram, saying he was filled with mixed emotions as he left the US and looked forward to returning to India to share his experiences with everyone back home.

"As I sit on the plane to come back to India, I have a mix of emotions running through my heart. I feel sad (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Gold prices may see consolidation next week as focus shifts to Fed, US data

NEW DELHI, Aug 17: Gold prices are likely to witness a phase of consolidation in the coming week as traders weigh a mix of global economic indicators, cues from central banks and shifting geopolitical dynamics, analysts said.

Traders will monitor US housing numbers, consumer price data from the UK and Eurozone, and provisional PMI releases from key economies. Also, investors will closely track European Central Bank's President Christine Lagarde speech as well as commentary by Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell at the Jackson Hole Symposium, which will provide further insights for the broader trajectory of the bullion prices, they added.

"Gold prices are likely to see some consolidation/correction in the coming week as focus now remains on the incoming US macroeconomic data and the Federal Reserve's meeting next month with interest rate cuts in focus.

"In the week ahead the focus will be on US housing data, CPI numbers from the UK and the Euro zone and the provisional data on manufacturing/ services PMI from across regions," Pranav Mer, Vice President, EBG - Commodity & Currency Research, JM Financial Services, said. Pranav Mer noted that safe-haven demand has eased after Washington and Beijing agreed to extend trade negotiations for another 90-days.

Meanwhile, US-Russia talks to end war in Ukraine had some progress but ended without any conclusion.

According to Mer, weaker US macroeconomic data have highlighted a slowdown in the economic activity, but a firm producer and import price data have kept inflation concerns



alive, leaving Fed officials divided on the timing of interest rate cuts.

Last week, the most traded gold futures for October contract declined by ₹1,648 per 10 grams or nearly 2 per cent on the Multi Commodity Exchange (MCX).

Prathamesh Malloya, DVP-Research, Non-Agri Commodities and Currencies at Angel One, said gold prices retreated last week as futures on the MCX slipped nearly 2 per cent.

He added that "prices declined from highs of ₹1,02,000 to lows of ₹1,00,000 per 10 grams after US President Donald Trump clarified that gold imports into the US would not face tariffs, in turn threatening the upside momentum of the precious metal".

Going forward, Malloya added, developments from US-Russia discussions will be critical. "If not, the possibility of increased tariffs on India will dent the macros and in turn lift gold prices in the week ahead," he added.

On Saturday, Comex gold futures for December contracts ended lower at \$3,382.60 per

ounce in New York.

Manav Modi, Analyst - Precious Metal Research, Motilal Oswal Financial Services, said gold prices lost ground last week as safe-haven demand eased amid shifting geopolitical and economic developments.

The White House clarified that reports of US tariffs on Swiss gold were inaccurate, reversing a brief price rally that had been driven by confusion following a Customs and Border Protection note. At the same time, optimism surrounding a potential ceasefire in Ukraine gained traction, particularly after a high-profile meeting between US President Trump and his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin in Alaska.

Also, the extension of the US-China tariff truce signalled easing trade tensions further capping demand for gold as a safe-haven asset.

On the supportive side, Modi said a weaker dollar and rising expectations of a US rate cut in September provided a cushion. "Soft inflation data spurred dovish bets and Treasury Secretary Bessent hinted at a deeper 50-basis-points reduction.

Modi also stated that physical gold demand in Asia, usually a seasonal driver, remained subdued due to elevated prices.

Investors are turning their focus on preliminary US PMI data and Fed Chair Powell's upcoming speech at the Jackson Hole Symposium and the broader trajectory of Washington-Moscow discussions, he added.

Overall, the near-term outlook for gold will hinge on how incoming data and central bank commentary shape market sentiment, analysts said. (PTI)

Next-Gen GST step towards a single tax slab GST

NEW DELHI, Aug 17: The proposed 'Next Gen GST' with sweeping reforms, lower tax rates, and just two slabs, aims to boost the economy amid tariff threats and set the stage for a single tax rate regime by the time India becomes a developed nation, government sources said.

They said the proposed new GST regime, which slashes tax rates and assigns just two slabs of 5 per cent and 18 per cent, will boost the economy and also serve to mitigate tariff threats. The proposed two-slab regime, if approved by the GST Council, will replace the current four slabs in the Goods and Services Tax (GST) regime, doing away with the 12 per cent and 28 per cent slabs.

Calling it the "next Gen GST", a government official said, "It is a game changer reform. In the pantheon of economic reforms seen in India, it's right up there". The officials spoke on the condition of anonymity.

Government sources said the new structure would mean that almost all of the common-use items will move to the lower tax bracket, leading to price cuts, which in turn would boost consumption. Terming the overhaul as "reformed and refined GST", a source said the Centre did not want a short-term solution in the tax rate rationalisation and, with the Compensation Cess coming to an end, a Next Gen GST was necessary.

"Lower taxes mean it will put more money in people's pockets. It will obviously lead to more consumption," the official said.

The Centre's proposal for a 5 and 18 per cent tax rate on merit and standard goods and a 40 per cent tax for sin goods has been a "large canvas exercise" to ensure stability in tax rates, officials said, explaining the rationale behind the exercise.

The changes that have come about after nearly six months of deliberations and dozens of meetings have been conceived in a way to ensure that demand for tax tweaks does not arise, and also that input tax credit (ITC) does not get accumulated in the system.

Once the Centre's proposal is accepted by the Group of Ministers (GoM) and is approved by the GST Council, it will end the flux of tax rates and ensure stability, the officials said. "What we have suggested is a 'Next Gen GST' keeping the needs of the middle class, poor, farmers, and MSMEs in mind. Also, it has been ensured that tax on daily use items is low," the official told PTI.

"Once the system is put in place and India becomes a developed nation, we can think about a single rate GST," the official said, adding that a single rate structure is suitable

for developed countries where income and spending capacities are uniform.

"The ultimate aim is to move to a single slab structure," the official said, adding that the time, however, is not right at present.

According to the official, during the process of overhaul, every due process is being followed. The Centre has taken the steering role but is protecting constitutional obligations by sharing it with the Group of Ministers (GoM) on rate rationalisation.

"We have looked at every item, item by item and in some cases, we have gone back and forth 3-4 times. Whether it is pesticides for use by farmers or pencils for students or some raw material or intermediaries for MSMEs, every item has been discussed threadbare and categorised in the merit or standard slab," the official added.

As many as 99 per cent of items in the 12 per cent category, such as butter, fruit juices and dry fruits, would move to a 5 per cent tax rate. Similarly, electronic items like ACs, TVs, fridges, and washing machines, as well as other goods like cement, will be among the 90 per cent of the items that will move from 28 per cent to a lower 18 per cent slab.

The move comes after US President Donald Trump imposed a 25 per cent tariff on all goods India exports to the US, and planned doubling of the levy to 50 per cent from August 27 to punish New Delhi for its oil purchases from Russia. The tariffs are likely to impact USD 40 billion of non-exempt Indian exports such as gems and jewellery, textiles and footwear. Prime Minister Narendra Modi, in his Independence Day address to the nation on Friday, emphasised that India should become self-reliant and consume what is made in India.

The tax slabs that the Union Finance Ministry has proposed will go to a group of ministers from different states, and after their concurrence, will be placed before the all-powerful GST Council, which is headed by the Union Finance Minister and comprises representatives of all states and UTs.

The council is expected to meet next month to deliberate on the tax reform proposal.

About 20 per cent of items, including packaged food and beverages, apparel and hotel accommodation, are currently taxed at 12 per cent GST and account for 5-10 per cent of consumption and 5-6 per cent GST revenue.

Moving them to a lower 5 per cent slab may lead to loss of revenue, but the Central government is hopeful that a boost in consumption would be able to make up for the deficit in the next few months. (PTI)

Amazon India upbeat on festive season after strong Prime Day sales

NEW DELHI, Aug 17: Amazon India is "excited" about the festive season, its optimism bolstered by strong Prime Day sales last month and rising demand from smaller cities, the e-commerce giant's India Head Samir Kumar has said, adding the company has stepped up supply-side readiness to meet expected festive demand.

Festive season shopping remains one of the biggest annual opportunities for brands, driven by cultural calendar, gifting traditions, lucrative discounts dished out, and consumer appetite for new and seasonal products.

According to 2025 edition of the JioStar Festive Sentiment Survey, 92 per cent of Indian consumers plan to continue or increase their festive spending this year, signalling robust consumer confidence and a golden opportunity for brands.

"I can tell you that as Amazon, we are preparing well for the event including fulfilment capabilities. We are enabling sellers to send their products into our fulfilment centres and we are getting ready for that. So I'm really excited about the entire festive season," Kumar told PTI.

Referring to the Prime Day sales metrics, Kumar said the "good uptake" was recorded, with especially strong contributions from Tier-2 and Tier-3 cities. "There was a good uptake and... Tier 2 and 3 cities performed really well.

"So the portion of business that we got from there was really high. As we go past that, we had our freedom sale and now it's coming up to festive season. It's already started and we look forward to the next few months. So the supply side is in place," he said.

Amazon last month said that Prime Day this time had more members shopping than any previous Prime Day event in India. According to the e-commerce firm, about 70 per cent of new Prime sign-ups before the event came from tier 2 and tier 3 cities and towns. The number of small and medium businesses receiving a sale during Prime Day 2025 reached an all-time high across all editions, the company had said, adding that over 68 per cent of SMBs participating in the event were from tier 2-3 cities and beyond.

When asked about demand indicators fuelling optimism for festive season sales, Kumar pointed to the customer sentiments on Amazon platform, healthy traffic, Prime uptake and deals. "...the customer sentiments on Amazon...we are seeing decent traffic, Prime uptake is really good and the kind of deals and the prices that we'll have on the platform...and our sellers are excited about it," he said.

According to JioStar Festive Sentiment Survey, Millennials are expected to spend more than Gen Z, with higher budgets and category intent, while women shoppers are seen driving variety. (PTI)

MGM healthcare holds CME on heart & lung transplant, ECMO

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Aug 17: MGM Healthcare, a quaternary care hospital based in Chennai, organised a Continuing Medical Education (CME) programme in Guwahati focusing on heart and lung transplant, mechanical circulatory support and extracorporeal membrane oxygenation (ECMO).

According to an official statement, the session brought together leading doctors and healthcare experts to discuss recent advancements in critical care and organ transplantation.

It featured India's leading specialists from MGM Healthcare, including Dr K R Balakrishnan, Chairman - Cardiac Sciences and Director, Institute of Heart and Lung Transplant and Mechanical Circulatory Support, Dr Suresh Rao KG, Co-Director of the Institute, and Dr Soumitra Sinha Roy, Senior Consultant in Lung Transplant and Interventional Pulmonology/Respiratory Medicine.

The experts highlighted the significance of heart and lung trans-



plantation as a life-saving intervention for patients suffering from end-stage conditions such as dilated and ischemic cardiomyopathy, congenital heart disease, cystic fibrosis, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis and pulmonary hypertension. They also stressed on the role of mechanical circulatory support devices, including left ventricular assist devices (LVADs) and ECMO, in bridging patients to transplantation and improving survival outcomes.

According to the statement, ECMO has emerged as a vital technique in managing patients with severe heart and lung failure

by temporarily taking over the function of these organs, thereby stabilising patients either while awaiting a suitable donor organ or during post-transplant recovery.

Its integration into transplant protocols has contributed to improved patient survival and quality of life. Commenting on the importance of these interventions, Dr K R Balakrishnan said that when a patient's heart or lung disease reaches the advanced stage where organ function is severely compromised, transplantation becomes a necessary option.

He added that early diagnosis and timely medical management could make transplantation a viable possibility for individuals with end-stage disease.

MGM Healthcare's Institute of Heart and Lung Transplant and Mechanical Circulatory Support has so far performed over 750 heart and lung transplants in India.

The institute runs the country's largest adult and paediatric heart and lung transplant programme, the statement further said.

Contd. from Page 1...

CEC directs Rahul to

make the SIR successful; they are working hard," Kumar said. The CEC also urged all political parties to point out the mistakes in the Bihar draft electoral rolls before September 1. Kumar said the EC cannot discriminate among political parties, and both ruling and opposition parties are equal before the poll authority.

He said the list of names deleted from Bihar's draft electoral rolls following special intensive revision has been posted on the websites of district magistrates within 56 hours of the Supreme Court's orders.

The apex court, while hearing a bunch of petitions challenging SIR, had last week asked the Election Commission to publish details of 65 lakh deleted names from the voters list with reasons of non-inclusion to enhance transparency in the process. Soon after Kumar's 85-minute press conference ended, Congress said the CEC answered none of the questions raised by Gandhi meaningfully and called his assertion of the Election Commission making no distinction between opposition and ruling party as "laughable". Several opposition leaders described the press conference as a "monologue" by the CEC.

With the opposition questioning the timing of the electoral roll revision in Bihar, Kumar said that it is a myth that SIR has been carried out in haste and emphasised that it is the EC's legal duty to correct the voter list before every election. (PTI)

Cloudburst, landslide in J&K's

"cloudburst," Rising Star corps said in a post of X. It was also shared pictures of soldiers evacuating the affected people to safety. The officials identified the deceased as Surmu Din (32), his sons Fanu (6) and Shedu (5), Zulfoon (15) and Tahu (2), all residents of Jodh Ghati, and Renu Devi (39) and her daughter Radhika (9) of Janglote. The injured were identified as Surmu Din's wife Gogli Begum (26), daughter Nageena (3 months) and Habib Din's wife Karoon Begum (26) and daughters Rafia Begum (4), Aisha Begum (6) and Parveen Akhter (8), the officials said.

A video on social media showed a couple of collapsed mud-houses belonging to the victims with survivors trying to pull out a half-buried girl from the rubble and frantically searching for missing persons.

The landslide triggered by rains also hit Changda villages under the jurisdiction of Kathua police station and Dilwan-Hutli in Lakhampur police station area but there was no major report of damage.

The heavy rains have led to a sharp increase in the level in most of the water bodies with the Ujh river flowing near the danger mark, the officials said, adding several low lying areas were submerged with flood water entering homes and shops.

The district administration is closely watching the situation and has requested people to stay away from water bodies for their safety.

Police in Kathua also asked the people especially living in hilly areas to stay at home and not to move close to the water bodies as there is every apprehension of flash flood owing to heavy rains.

"For any emergency please contact to nearest Police Station or call on helpline numbers: 9858034100 or 112," the police said.

Train traffic has been disrupted along the Jammu-Pathankot rail line following the cloudburst, prompting authorities to cancel local trains and short-terminate others.

Union Home Minister Amit Shah spoke to Jammu and Kashmir Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha and Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on the cloudburst in Kathua and assured all support from the

"Spoke with the Lieutenant Governor and Chief Minister of Jammu and Kashmir regarding the cloudburst in Kathua. Relief and rescue operations are being carried out by the local administration and NDRF teams have also been rushed to the site. Assured every support from the Modi government. We stand firmly behind our sisters and brothers of J&K," Shah wrote on X.

Sinha, Abdullah and Union Minister Jitendra Singh have expressed grief over the loss of lives in the incidents.

"Deeply anguished by the loss of lives in the devastating rain-triggered landslides in several areas of Kathua. The tragedy is mind-numbing. Briefed Union Home Minister Amit Shah on rescue and relief operations by the army, NDRF, SDRF, police and administration.

"I have directed senior civil and police officials to coordinate and execute rescue and aid efforts in the affected areas and ensure on-site medical assistance. My thoughts are with bereaved families and praying for the swift recovery of those injured," the Lt Governor said in a post on X.

The chief minister announced ex-gratia assistance to the deceased from the CM's relief fund.

In a post shared on X by the office of chief minister, Abdullah said the assistance is aimed at providing immediate relief and supporting the affected families in rebuilding their lives.

"The Chief Minister, expressing deep concern for the lives and property affected by the recent cloudburst in Kathua, has announced ex-gratia assistance from the CM's Relief Fund, in addition to SDRF support," the post read. (PTI)

Eviction drive in

"We demand an immediate halt to the eviction drive. Unless people are rehabilitated properly, no eviction should take place," he said.

Supporting the state government's steps to evict encroachments on public land, several ethnic organisations have started 'Miya Kheda Andolan' (movement to drive out Miyas) in the state.

'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 his Independence Day speech, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said that "aggression" has changed the demography of lower and central Assam, and now efforts are being made for it in upper and north Assam, in an apparent reference to the community. (PTI)

FS Misri discusses

focused on further strengthening the close and multifaceted Nepal-India relations, built on mutual trust, goodwill, and shared aspirations for prosperity and stability in our region," Deuba wrote in a social media post after the meeting.

"There was a substantial exchange of views on issues of mutual interest and ways to further enhance the multifaceted India-Nepal partnership, across all sectors," the Indian embassy said about Misri's meeting with Deuba. Misri also held a meeting with his Nepalese counterpart Rai.

Misri later met Nepali Congress president and former Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba and CPN-UML chairman and former Prime Minister Pushpakamal Dahal 'Prachanda'.

The foreign secretary will leave Kathmandu on Monday afternoon. (PTI)

Merely crying of woman

that the post-mortem report attributed the cause of death to pneumonia, not cruelty.

"In the present case, to bring in the clause of cruelty leading to the death of the woman, it may be noted that the deceased had died not because of any act of cruelty but for natural reasons... Therefore, Clause (a) to the Explanation annexed to Section 498A IPC is not attracted," the Court said.

It also observed that the father of the woman neither mentioned specific incidents nor did he provide proof of giving money to the accused. "Such bald assertions, in the given situation, cannot be held to be even making out a prima facie case of harassment," the judge added. (PTI)

NDA picks CP Radhakrishnan

on his nearly 40 years in public life, noting that he is well regarded in different parties and commands respect among various sections of society. (PTI)

Modi urges states

proposed two-slab regime, if approved by the GST Council, will replace the current four slabs in the Goods and Services Tax (GST) regime, doing away with the 12 per cent and 28 per cent slabs.

The changes that have come about after nearly six months of deliberations and dozens of meetings have been conceived in a way to ensure that demand for tax tweaks does not arise, and also that input tax credit (ITC) does not get accumulated in the system.

As many as 99 per cent of items in the 12 per cent category, such as butter, fruit juices and dry fruits, would move to a 5 per cent tax rate. Similarly, electronic items like ACs, TVs, fridges, and washing machines, as well as other goods like cement, will be among the 90 per cent of the items that will move from 28 per cent to a lower 18 per cent slab.

The move comes after US President Donald Trump imposed a 25 per cent tariff on all goods India exports to the US, and planned doubling of the levy to 50 per cent from August 27 to punish New Delhi for its oil purchases from Russia. The tariffs are likely to impact USD 40 billion of non-exempt Indian exports such as gems and jewellery, textiles and footwear.

The council is expected to meet next month to deliberate on the tax reform proposal.

About 20 per cent of items, including packaged food and beverages, apparel and hotel accommodation, are currently taxed at 12 per cent GST and account for 5-10 per cent of consumption and 5-6 per cent GST revenue. (PTI)

AJYCP backs eviction

(Amendment) Act (CAA), AJYCP leaders maintained that the law cannot be enforced in Assam as long as political parties and organisations in the state oppose it.

Lok Sabha set to

leaving a fantastic group of people behind who were my friends and family for the past year during this mission. I am also excited about meeting all my friends, family, and everyone in the country for the first time post-mission. I guess this is what life is - everything all at once," Shukla said in the post.

"Having received incredible love and support from everyone during and after the mission, I can't wait to come back to India to share my experiences with all of you. Goodbyes are hard, but we need to keep moving in life. As my commander Peggy Whitson fondly says, 'The only constant in spaceflight is change.' I believe that applies to life as well," he added.

Shukla also wrote, "I guess at the end of the day - 'Yun hi chala chal rahi - jeevan gaadi hai samay pahiya,'" recalling the song from the Bollywood movie Swades, which was on his playlist just before he embarked on the Axiom-4 mission to the ISS on June 25 from the US.

Shukla and his backup astronaut Nair participated in the Independence Day celebrations at the Indian Consulate in Houston on Friday. Addressing the 79th Independence Day celebrations at the Red Fort, Prime Minister Modi on Friday said India was developing its own space station and noted that Group Captain Shukla had returned from a space mission. "Our Group Captain Shubhanshu Shukla has returned from the space station. In the coming days, he is returning to India," Modi had said. (PTI)

Sensitisation-cum-awareness meet on public distribution held in Haflong

Construction of godown and weighbridge in Maibang proposed



HT Correspondent

HAFLONG, Aug 17: A sensitisation-cum-awareness conference titled Sajagata Samilian was held at the Auditorium Hall of Haflong Government College to strengthen the Public Distribution System (PDS) and ensure food security.

The event brought together Fair Price Shop (FPS) dealers and LAMPS Secretaries under the Food, Public Distribution & Consumer Affairs Department.

Addressing the gathering, Kaushik Rai, Minister of Food, Public Distribution & Consumer Affairs, Mines & Minerals, and Barak Valley Development, unveiled a new scheme to provide ration card holders with Masur Dal, sugar, and salt at subsidised rates through FPS outlets.

Beginning October, cardholders in ten districts will be able to buy Masur Dal at ₹69/kg, sugar at ₹38/kg, and salt at ₹10/kg, with the scheme expanding to 25 more districts in November.

The official launch is planned between October 1 and 10, coinciding with Anna Sewa Diwas.

Rai stressed the need to reduce freight charges by developing local storage facilities.

In response, CEM Debol Gorlosa proposed the construction of a godown and weighbridge in Maibang Subdivision.

Minister Nandita Gorlosa highlighted loopholes and pilferage in the existing PDS and urged FPS dealers to ensure transparent distribution of the newly introduced commodities.

CEM Debol Gorlosa emphasized that ration cards are vital not only for food security but also as a gateway to other government schemes for BPL families. He appealed to FPS dealers to keep distribution above politics and raise awareness among citizens.

Biswaranjan Samal, Additional Chief Secretary, FCS & CA, assured full departmental support and announced that LAMPS will deliver food grains directly to FPS dealers' doorsteps to eliminate logistical delays.

The programme was attended by Hemanta Bhuyan, Commissioner (FCS&CA&LM), Mohet Hojai, Chairman NCHAC, Executive Members, MACs, Partha Jahari, Principal Secretary NCHAC, ADCs, officers, cooperative secretaries, and other stakeholders, making it a significant step towards reforming the PDS in Assam.

BTC polls: BJP's EM accused of politicising Quran



HT Correspondent

GOSSAIGAON, Aug 17: In a major controversy ahead of the Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) elections, serious allegations have been levelled against BTC Executive Member and BJP's probable candidate from 2 No. Guma constituency, Sajal Kumar Singha, for allegedly using the Holy Quran to influence voters.

The North East Minorities Students' Union (NEMSU), BTR strongly condemned the act, warning that religion should never be used for political gains.

The organisation demanded an unconditional apology within 24 hours, declaring Singha "unwelcome" in minority-dominated areas and threatening to obstruct his election campaign if he failed to comply.

According to reports, on Saturday, BJP worker Azhar of Tajpur village allegedly gathered nearly 100 women at the residence of Singha's associates.

The women were reportedly asked to pledge their votes in favour of Singha by placing their hands on the Quran, after which

cash payments of around ₹2000 were allegedly made to each participant upon submission of their voter cards.

Some women reportedly resisted the act, leading Singha's associates to seek forgiveness.

Later, Azhar admitted to a "mistake" and apologised, but when approached by the media, he refused to comment further or disclose his full identity.

The incident has triggered widespread outrage in the region, with many demanding immediate accountability.

Gaurav addresses Congress rally in Baksa

HT Correspondent

KOKRAJHAR, Aug 17: Deputy Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha and Congress MP Gaurav Gogoi launched a scathing attack on Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma during a public rally at Keshab Nagar in Koklabari, Baksa district, on Sunday.

In his address, Gogoi accused the Chief Minister of "distributing guns to the public in the name of politics." He alleged that voting for the BJP meant putting weapons into the hands of young people, thereby promoting a culture of violence.

He further claimed that Sarma maintains three separate secret mobile phones to manage his relations with different groups, including Hagrama Mohilary, Pramod Boro and even Congress insiders. Gogoi also alleged that both the Bodoland People's Front (BPF) and the United People's Party Liberal (UPPL) were being controlled by Sarma, asserting that these parties never raised their voice against him.

Speaking to mediapersons, Gogoi said that people in the Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR) desired peace and harmony.

He recalled that the Congress in the past had entrusted power to regional parties in the BTR with the objective of ensuring peace.

Accusing the BJP government of creating a "dangerous model of governance," Gogoi said it benefited only a few individuals while causing harm to the people of the BTR. He added that while the Chief Minister never armed his own children or those of BJP leaders, weapons had been placed in the hands of ordinary Assamese youth.

"Congress wants to give scholarships to the youth of Assam, not guns," he stated.

He further alleged that the Chief Minister was attempting to destroy peace in Assam and remarked that "every family in Assam has to pay a special tax called 'Mami Tax'."

Gogoi also claimed that Sarma remained insecure about the Congress, fearing that the party could return to power in the next Assembly elections. "That is why he tries to maintain good relations with Congress insiders, fearing jail if a Congress government comes to power," Gogoi added.

Literary discussion held at Satadal Sakha Sahitya Sabha

HT Correspondent

MORIGAON, Aug 17: The 179th literary discussion of Morigaon Gyan Monjuri Alohana Chakra (GMAC), was held at Gurucharan Medhi Bhawan of Satadal Sakha Sahitya Sabha on Sunday.

The programme was presided over by GMAC President Pradip Parasar, Secretary Sima Bora delivered the objective of the meeting and also moderated the session.

As part of the event, several writers and poets presented their self-composed stories and poems.

The discussion witnessed the presence of Vice President of Assam Sahitya Sabha Kabi Sanmilan Harendra Bora, former MZSS president Nur Mohamad, writer Puna Devi, former secretary Jyotish Barman, writer Parameswari Deka, senior journalist Janardan Sarma, Dr. Najma Begum, Jarjina Begum, Dipa Sarma, and Dipanjali Goswami amongst others.

Dibrugarh's Jyotinagar road renamed as Nirupama Phukan road

HT Correspondent

DIBRUGARH, Aug 17: The Jyotinagar road in Dibrugarh has been renamed as Nirupama Phukan road by Dibrugarh Municipal Corporation (DMC).

Noted writer, social worker and tea planter Devi Prasad Bagrodia inaugurated the Nirupama Phukan road on Sunday. Dibrugarh District Commissioner Bikram Kairi, Mayor Saikat Patra, Dibrugarh Municipal Corporation Commissioner Jay Vikas and several renowned citizens of Dibrugarh were present on the occasion.

Nirupama Phukan was an eminent Assamese writer and translator. Phukan was conferred the Sahitya Akademi award in 1999 for translating Munshi Premchand's Godan into Assamese.

Prahari, a Dibrugarh based NGO, has submitted a letter to DMC for renaming the Jyotinagar road as Nirupama Phukan road.

An inaugural meeting was organised in association with Prahari, where a large number of eminent personalities of Dibrugarh were present.

Speaking at the programme, Devi Prasad Bagrodia said, "Nirupama Phukan had translated many Hindi books into Assamese. She had a profound knowledge in literature and her works reflect in her books. Earlier, no road name was given, the whole stretch of road was known as Nalipaol, after that we had discussion and the road name was given Jyotinagar road."

Phukan's first translation was Ahuti, a Hindi drama, by Hari Krishna Premi.

Her father-in-law Radhanath Phukan printed that book. Her other translated works include Pratigya, Chandragupta and Jibanimala.

Phukan also contributed to children's literature with Bulbul Aru Badsah, Geet Gowa Charai, Kashmir Deshor Sadhu, Nepalor Sadhu, Mainar Mou Kosh, Suraj powar Suryakanta and Amis aru Niramis Ahar.

The Sadou Asom Lekhika Samaroh Samity, a voluntary women's literary organisation, bestowed the Gyanshree title on her.

She won the National Award in 1987 for her work Surajpur Suryakanta (manuscript) on the theme of adult literacy.

Kharupetia Police recover stolen jewellery worth ₹5 lakh

HT Correspondent

MANGALDAL, Aug 17: In an operation, Kharupetia Police cracked a burglary case within 12 hours, recovering jewellery and valuables worth nearly ₹5 lakh stolen from a businessman's residence.

The incident took place in the early hours of August 16 at the home of Narayan Agarwal in Ward No. 7. The thief allegedly scaled the roof using a ladder, broke into the staircase room, and escaped with a suitcase filled with ornaments and expensive clothing that had been kept for a family function.

Dimasa body condemns rape of Bina Engtipi; demands swift justice

HT Correspondent

HAFLONG, Aug 17: The Dimasa Mothers' Association (DMA) has condemned the shocking rape and murder of Bina Engtipi (48) of Umrangso, Dima Hasao, calling the crime "heinous and barbaric."

In a press statement, the Association demanded that the culprits be brought to justice without delay, stressing that swift and exemplary punishment is essential to uphold the rule of law and deliver justice to the victim.

The DMA criticised it as a "complete failure of the police administration and law and order machinery."

The Association also urged authorities to take firm action against the company that employed the accused, arguing that recruiting individuals with "criminal tendencies" has endangered local communities.

It further called for a thorough enquiry into the underlying causes of rising lawlessness and pressed for stricter preventive measures to protect women.

The Unimodal Foundation with support from Marico Ltd, the camp witnessed participation from food handlers of stations under the Alipurduar division

NFR holds FoSTaC training at Alipurduar for 'Eat Right' initiatives

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Aug 17: Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR) organised a Food Safety Training and Certification (FoSTaC) programme at the Divisional Railway Hospital in Alipurduar during the second week of August 2025 as part of preparations for 'Eat Right Station' and 'Eat Right Campus' certifications under the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI).

According to an official statement, the training session was conducted by Debarati Kundu, FoSTaC Trainer, with technical support from FSSAI Auditor Kalpana Prajapati.

Organised by the Unimodal Foundation with support from Marico Ltd, the camp witnessed participation from food handlers of stations under the Alipurduar division, staff of Zonal Training Centres, the APDJ Hospital Kitchen team, and health officials including Dr Jibesh Kumar Sarkar (ACMS/APDJ), Dr Sumit Priyadarshi (Sr DMO/APDJ), He-



mant Kumar Kanaujiya (AHO/HQ/MLG), Dipankar Dey (Food Safety Officer/APDJ), Reena Paul (Assistant Nursing Officer/APDJ) and Alok Nandan Singh (AHO/APDJ).

According to the statement, FoSTaC training is a mandatory prereq-

Wild snake rescued and released into Sikh Jwhlwao National Park

HT Correspondent

GOSSAIGAON, Aug 17: Panic gripped Shakti village under Namapara East in Mahendrapur after a giant wild snake, measuring over ten feet, entered the locality in search of food on Sunday morning.

The reptile's sudden appearance around 10:30 a.m. caused alarm among residents, as its size posed a threat to both livestock and villagers. Responding to a call from the villagers, a team from the Evergreen Charitable Trust, an organisation engaged in wildlife conservation in the Sikh Jwhlwao National Park region, arrived at the spot.

The trained rescuers captured the snake safely and later released it into its natural habitat inside the national park, ensuring the safety of both the animal and the local community.

According to information provided by the Trust, headquartered at Digli Office, Jharbari, Kokrajhar, the organisation has been actively handling wildlife emergencies and spreading awareness on biodiversity conservation. Under the leadership of Chairman Rajiv Narzary, it has regularly carried out rescue missions, awareness drives and conservation activities to safeguard the fragile ecosystem of the region.

The incident highlighted the increasing human-wildlife interface and the importance of community cooperation in managing such situations.

Villagers of Shakti and Namapara East expressed gratitude to the rescue team for their timely action, which helped avert danger while protecting an important species of the forest.

HT Correspondent

MORIGAON, Aug 17: Kiling noir paare paare', a collection of Assamese poems written by Late Atul Chandra Sarma, was inaugurated recently in a solemn ceremony at Gurucharan Medhi Bhawan, Morigaon.

Dedicated to the memory of his wife late Bhanu Devi, the book has been published by his son poet Manuj Kumar Sarma and is now available

for readers in emporiums.

The collection reflects Sarma's lyrical fascination with the natural beauty of Nellie, where he served under the Sericulture Department during his government service at Jagiroad constituency.

The inauguration ceremony was conducted by Dr Sarat Barkatki, retired Principal of Nagaon College, in the presence of distinguished

guests and family members.

His sons and daughters-in-law — Manuj Sarma, Leena Bagis Sarma, Arup Sarma, Mrinal Sarma, Sangeeta Sarma, Juli Sarma, Dhurbajoti Sarma, and Pompi Sarma extended full cooperation to make the event a success.

Apart from this collection, Late Atul Chandra Sarma had also authored another poetry book titled 'Tumar Sure Sure'.

BEFORE THE NATIONAL COMPANY LAW TRIBUNAL GUWAHATI BENCH AT GUWAHATI IN THE MATTER OF:

CP(CAA)/3/GB/2025

IN

CA(CAA)/7/GB/2024

IN THE MATTER OF:

JALLAN GOLAGHAT TEA COMPANY PVT LTD

..... Petitioner No. 1/Demerged Company

AND

JALLAN CONSUMER PRODUCTS PVT LTD

..... Petitioner No. 2/Resulting Company

NOTICE FOR FINAL HEARING OF PETITION

The above stated Petition jointly filed by the above stated Petitioner Companies under Section 230 to 232 of the Companies Act, 2013 for sanctioning a Scheme of Arrangement between the Petitioner Companies and their respective shareholders and creditors, was admitted by the Hon'ble National Company Law Tribunal, Guwahati Bench, on 05.08.2025. The said Petition is fixed for hearing by the Hon'ble Tribunal on the 4th day of September, 2025.

Any person supporting or opposing the said Petition, should send to the authorised representative of the Petitioner Companies at the address mentioned hereunder, a notice of his intention signed by him or his advocate with his full name and address, so as to reach the said authorised representative not later than two days before the date fixed for hearing of the Petition. Where he seeks to oppose the Petition, the grounds of opposition and a copy of the affidavit intended to be used in opposition should be filed before the Hon'ble National Company Law Tribunal, Guwahati Bench, at BSNL Bhawan, Ananda Ram Baruah Road, Pan Bazar, Guwahati, PIN : 781001, Assam, and a copy thereof be served to the authorised representative of the Petitioner Companies, not later than two days before the date fixed for the hearing.

A copy of the Petition will be furnished by the said authorised representative to any person requiring the same on payment of the prescribed charges.

Sd/- CS Sudha Sarma
Authorised Representative of Petitioner Companies
Address : M/s SUDHA & Associates
185, M.R.D. Road, Near SBI, Bamunimaidam, Guwahati - 781021
EMAIL : cs.sudhasarma@gmail.com
PHONE : (91) 98640 50249
Date : 18/08/2025

QUOTE OF THE DAY

It's the friends you can call up at 4 a.m. that matter.
—Marlene Dietrich

EV penetration in Indian market

India had a dream to unlock a \$200 billion opportunity in transitioning to Electric Vehicle (EV), but trailing far behind the target, chiefly due to policy paralysis and lack of financing. There have been many other challenges too that remained unaddressed. Even though the recently released report of NITI Aayog titled "Unlocking a \$200 Billion Opportunity: Electric Vehicles in India" does not take into consideration the latest international challenges including the Trump's trade war and constraints of importing or producing rare earth materials, the other challenges it mentions in the way of India's transition to Electric Vehicles seems to be too difficult to overcome in short term. India seeks to attain a 30% share of electric vehicles, in the total vehicles sold, by 2030. However, India's transition has been very slow, and progressed to only about 7.6% of the sales in 2024 being electric. Thus, it has taken nearly 10 years to reach a penetration level of 7.6% and now needs to increase this share by over 22% in the next 5 years alone. In order to achieve its ambition, India has set up a National Mission on Electric Mobility and has also introduced specific schemes aimed at providing financial support to further the adoption of electric vehicles. The first of these schemes was the Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of Electric Vehicles (FAME-1). This was in operation from 2015 to 2019 and had an allocation of Rs 895 crores.

The achievement so far is not satisfactory at all, and hurdles in the way are by and large still unaddressed. The sale of EVs in India went up from 50,000 in 2016 to 2.08 million in 2024 taking the total EV stock in the country to 5.45 million in 2024. Thus, EV penetration rate in India stands at only 7.66 per cent, and is obviously off the track from achieving its target of reaching a 30% by 2030. If EV penetration in India is compared with the US, EU and China for different types of vehicles, it can be seen that India has done fairly well in the 2-wheeler and bus segments, but has been slow in e-cars and electric trucks. It is a leader in the electric 3-wheelers segment. China is the leader in all categories, except 3-wheelers.

As far as electric trucks are concerned, this has been very slow. Out of 8,34,578 trucks sold in India in 2024, only 6,220 were electric. 95% of these (5940) were of less than 3.5 tonne capacity. These are generally used for carrying short haul freight, largely in urban areas. In fact, several countries do not count trucks of less than 3.5 ton capacity in the category of trucks, given their usage pattern. Only 280 of these electric trucks sold in India in 2024 were of more than 3.5 ton capacity, which are used for longer hauls.

Four decades of the Assam Accord and the Illegal immigration issue

Four decades have passed since the signing of the Assam Accord, a historic political settlement that emerged from the fire of a mass movement demanding identity, survival, and dignity. The accord, signed on August 15, 1985, between the leaders of the All Assam Students' Union (AASU), the All Assam Gana Sangram Parishad (AAGSP), and the Government of India, was expected to resolve one of the most contentious issues in Assam—the unchecked influx of migrants, primarily from neighbouring Bangladesh. At its heart, the accord was not merely a political compromise but a social contract that sought to safeguard the cultural identity of the Assamese people while restoring peace to a region shaken by years of agitation and violence. Yet, forty years later, the accord has become a symbol of unfulfilled promises, political evasions, and festering wounds. The problem of illegal immigration continues to dominate Assam's political and cultural discourse, and the very questions that sparked the six-year-long Assam Movement remain alive, if not sharper.

The Assam Movement, which lasted from 1979 to 1985, had its roots in the growing perception that Assam was facing a demographic invasion. Waves of migration had begun during colonial times, but the situation worsened during the partition of India and again after the liberation of Bangladesh in 1971. Indigenous Assamese communities feared that the influx would not only alter the demography of the state but would also erode their language, culture, land rights, and political representation. The agitation demanded the detection, deletion, and deportation of foreigners. The Assam Accord thus attempted to codify these demands into a practical framework. It fixed March 24, 1971, as the cut-off date for identifying foreigners, a date tied to the Bangladesh Liberation War. Those who entered before January 1, 1966, were to be granted citizenship; those who came between January 1, 1966, and March 24, 1971, were to be disenfranchised for ten years but allowed to remain; and those who arrived after March 24, 1971, were to be detected and deported. This three-tier formula was projected as a just balance between humanitarian concerns and indigenous rights.

However, translating this formula into

practice proved far more complex than imagined. The detection of foreigners was entrusted to Foreigners' Tribunals under the Foreigners Act of 1946, and later through other mechanisms, but the process quickly got mired in legal complexities, bureaucratic lethargy, and political hesitation. Over the years, the number of foreigners actually detected and deported has remained negligible compared to the alleged scale of migration. Government figures suggest that only a little over 30,000 illegal immigrants have been expelled since 1985, a number that mocks the scale of the problem as understood by the people of Assam. The Accord's promise of detection and deportation has thus remained largely unimplemented, creating a deep sense of betrayal among those who sacrificed for the movement.

Adding to this disillusionment is the failure to meaningfully implement Clause 6 of the Accord, which promised constitutional, legislative, and administrative safeguards to protect the Assamese people's cultural, social, and linguistic identity. Clause 6 was regarded as the backbone of the accord, a guarantee that Assamese people would not become strangers in their own land. Committees have been set up from time to time, including the one under Justice B.K. Sharma, which recommended concrete measures such as defining who constitutes an "Assamese" and ensuring their protection in matters of land, jobs, and resources. Yet, little progress has been made. The absence of effective safeguards has deepened insecurities about identity, especially as migration-related tensions continue to shape the state's social and political fabric.

The issue has also been complicated by shifting national politics. The National Register of Citizens (NRC), updated under the supervision of the Supreme Court, was hailed as a long-awaited tool to implement the Accord's provisions. Completed in 2019, the NRC excluded nearly 19 lakh people. But the exercise, instead of bringing closure, opened new controversies. Questions were raised about the fairness of the process, the reliability of documents, and the fate of those excluded. Moreover, the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) of 2019, which provides a path to citizenship for non-Muslim migrants from Bangladesh,

Pakistan, and Afghanistan who entered India before December 2014, has further unsettled Assam. By effectively shifting the cut-off date from 1971 to 2014 for certain communities, the CAA is seen as a betrayal of the Assam Accord's very essence. It introduces a religious filter to an issue that was always seen in Assam as one of identity and demography rather than faith. The mass protests against the CAA in Assam were therefore not surprising; they reflected the feeling that the Accord's fragile balance was being deliberately undermined.

Beyond the legal and political dimensions, the continuing problem of illegal immigration has had profound social consequences. In many areas of Assam, indigenous communities feel increasingly marginalized as settlements of migrants—whether long-term or recent—grow in size and influence. Tensions over land ownership have led to periodic clashes, evictions, and accusations of encroachment on government or tribal land. Political parties have often capitalized on these fears, using the immigration issue as an electoral weapon. For the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), highlighting illegal immigration has been a central plank, while opposition parties have accused the government of using the issue selectively, targeting certain communities while shielding others for political convenience. Such communalization has only deepened divisions within Assamese society.

The reality is that illegal immigration is not just a political slogan; it is a lived experience for many in Assam. Villages have transformed, electoral rolls have shifted, and the linguistic and cultural composition of regions has changed perceptibly over the decades. While some migrants have integrated, adopting Assamese language and customs, others remain distinct, creating parallel social worlds. This has fuelled the fear that Assam's indigenous identity is being steadily diluted. The sense of cultural loss is perhaps more profound than the economic or political concerns. For a community that has historically struggled to assert itself within the Indian Union, this erosion of identity strikes at the core of existence.

Forty years on, the Assam Accord stands as a half-implemented, half-forgotten document. It achieved peace at one historical moment, but its failure to deliver lasting solutions has made peace fragile and contingent. The families of the 855 martyrs who

laid down their lives during the Assam Movement continue to feel that their sacrifices were in vain. Each year, commemorations of the Accord are marked more by frustration than celebration. Student bodies such as AASU and AJYCP remind governments of their commitments, but successive regimes—whether Congress, regional parties, or BJP—have failed to act with decisiveness. The problem of illegal immigration is thus not only about porous borders but also about porous political will.

The way forward requires both courage and clarity. First, there must be an honest recognition that half-hearted measures and selective enforcement have eroded trust. Implementation must be fair, transparent, and consistent, regardless of religion or community. The original cut-off date of 1971, as enshrined in the Accord and upheld by the Supreme Court, should remain non-negotiable. Any attempt to dilute this principle will only inflame tensions further. Second, Clause 6 must be given life through constitutional amendments and legal safeguards that protect the cultural and economic rights of Assamese people. This is not a matter of charity but of justice—of honouring a promise that has been delayed for four decades. Third, the process of detection and deportation must be made effective through reformed legal mechanisms that avoid endless delays while ensuring due process. Without visible results, public anger will continue to fester. Finally, there must be a genuine effort to depoliticize the issue. Political parties must resist the temptation to turn immigration into a communal wedge and instead work towards a consensus that protects Assam's identity while balancing humanitarian concerns.

The Assam Accord was a product of immense sacrifice, struggle, and negotiation. It was meant to be a roadmap for peace and cultural survival. Forty years later, its incomplete implementation is a stark reminder of how promises can turn into burdens when governments fail to act with sincerity. Illegal immigration continues to haunt Assam, not only as a demographic or political issue but as a question of dignity for its people. Unless decisive steps are taken now, the Accord may be remembered not as a solution but as a missed opportunity—a document that promised much but delivered little, leaving Assam trapped in the very anxieties it sought to resolve.

Shadows of Alaska: India's Dilemma in a fractured world order

By: Dipak Kurmi

The Alaska summit between Donald Trump and Vladimir Putin was expected to signal a turning point in the grinding war in Ukraine and, by extension, shape the economic trajectories of nations caught in the whirlpool of great power rivalries. Instead, it ended in a haze of half-promises and unresolved tensions, leaving countries like India grappling with uncertainty over their immediate economic interests and long-term geopolitical alignments. For New Delhi, the unfinished business in Alaska is not merely about whether peace in Ukraine is within reach but about how far Washington is willing to go in pressing punitive measures against India's trade and energy choices. The announcement of an additional 25 per cent US tariff on Indian exports, linked to Delhi's continued reliance on Russian oil, has cast a shadow that extends well beyond commerce. It is a reminder that in a world increasingly defined by zero-sum geopolitics, India's strategy of balancing energy security with diplomatic flexibility is under siege.

The summit itself unfolded with a curious blend of optimism and ambiguity. Putin declared that the two leaders had reached an "agreement" that could "pave the path toward peace in Ukraine," hinting at a shared roadmap that might transcend a temporary ceasefire. Trump, however, struck a more cautious note, insisting that "there's no deal until there's a deal." His words reflected both the fragility of the talks and his ambition to push for a comprehensive peace agreement rather than a piecemeal arrangement. In his characteristic fashion, he argued that the only sustainable way to end what he termed the "horrible war" was to go directly toward a full settlement rather than waste time on pauses that only reset the clock of conflict.

Trump's claim that only a few "sticking points" remained, with one being particularly significant, sparked speculation about the contours of the unresolved issues. Some observers read this as an allusion to territorial guarantees or the security architecture of Eastern Europe. Others saw it as a reference to sanctions relief, a subject that has divided the American foreign policy establishment and its transatlantic allies. Whatever the details, the fact that Trump briefed Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and key European leaders suggested that he hoped to build momentum for a trilateral format involving himself, Putin, and Zelenskyy. For now, however, the Europeans remain cautious, offering tepid support while watching closely for signs of Russian flexibility.

Putin's tone during the summit was notable for its overtures to Washington. He recalled the shared history of wartime cooperation during the Second World War, invoked the reality of Russia and the US as neighbours across the Northern Pacific, and painted a picture of potential partnership in high technology, outer space, and the Arctic. He even pointed to the rising trade volumes between the two countries since Trump took office earlier this year. The Russian leader seemed to suggest that



reconciliation with Washington was within reach, provided that the West showed pragmatism. Yet, Putin's gestures also carried an implicit warning: that any understandings reached with Trump must not be undermined by Washington's allies. This was both a plea for trust and a subtle acknowledgment of the deep divisions across the Atlantic about dealing with Moscow.

For Trump, the Alaska summit represented more than an attempt to settle Ukraine. It was also about vindicating his political gamble on building a partnership with Russia, despite stiff resistance from Washington's entrenched foreign policy establishment. He has poured political capital into this project, presenting himself as the one leader capable of delivering a deal that others could not. But the structural obstacles are immense. European leaders remain wary of any peace deal that smacks of rewarding Russian aggression. In Washington, sceptics fear that any softening towards Moscow would erode US credibility and embolden rivals like China. Trump's rhetoric may have suggested progress, but his path to a breakthrough is littered with geopolitical landmines.

Amidst these global manoeuvres, Delhi finds itself caught in the crossfire of policies not of its own making. Washington's decision to slap an additional 25 per cent tariff on Indian exports is a punitive measure tied directly to India's continued purchase of discounted Russian oil. Since the invasion of Ukraine in 2022, India has emerged as one of the largest buyers of Russian crude, taking advantage of steep discounts that bolstered its energy security and helped cushion its economy against global price shocks. Yet, this very strategy has drawn ire from the West, which views such purchases as indirect financial support for Moscow's war effort. The Biden administration had already been critical of India's position, but under Trump, the critique has been weaponised into tariffs.

The timing of these measures has amplified Delhi's concerns. US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent made it clear on the eve of the summit that more tariffs could follow if no peace deal emerged, signalling Washington's willingness to escalate economic pressure not only on Russia but also on its partners. He went further, urging Europe—ironically dependent on refined petroleum products from India—to join in imposing sanctions on states that trade extensively with Moscow. A bill currently

moving through the US Congress threatens to authorise tariffs of up to 500 per cent on countries accused of sustaining Russia's war economy. The message to India could not be clearer: its strategy of energy pragmatism is colliding headlong with the West's war calculus.

For India, the stakes are high. On one hand, discounted Russian oil has been an economic lifeline, allowing New Delhi to manage inflation and maintain a delicate balance in its fiscal accounts. On the other, the additional tariffs threaten to erode the competitiveness of Indian exports in the US market, undermining one of the pillars of its growth strategy. The Modi government now faces a stark choice: whether to recalibrate its energy policy to mollify Washington or to dig in and absorb the costs of confrontation. The hope, of course, is that Washington and Moscow will reach a final agreement sooner rather than later, prompting Trump to discard the additional tariffs. At the very least, Delhi would like to see the deadline of August 27 for implementing the new tariffs postponed, buying time to adjust.

Trump himself has offered a glimmer of hope. In a television interview after the summit, he said he would revisit the question of oil-related tariffs in a couple of weeks, once the prospects for a peace deal became clearer. His words were a calculated attempt to keep the diplomatic space open, but they also underscored the precariousness of India's position. If peace proves elusive, Delhi will have to rethink the costs and benefits of its reliance on Russian oil. If, on the other hand, reconciliation gathers momentum, India must brace for a significant reconfiguration of global alignments, as US-Russia relations thaw and Europe recalibrates its security posture.

What makes the situation even more complex is China's looming presence in the background. Any reset between Washington and Moscow has implications for Beijing, which has drawn closer to Russia since 2022. A weakening of that partnership could shift the strategic equilibrium in Asia, forcing India to rethink its assumptions. Conversely, if reconciliation stalls and Russia doubles down on its partnership with China, Delhi will find itself squeezed between its energy dependence on Moscow and its strategic rivalry with Beijing. Either way, the Alaska summit has thrown into relief the interconnectedness of India's trade, energy, and security choices.

Ultimately, the story of Alaska is not about failure or success in the narrow sense. It is about the reminder that the fortunes of nations like India are increasingly bound up with the tectonic shifts of global power politics. New Delhi's strategy of multi-alignment—maintaining ties with Washington, Moscow, and others simultaneously—faces its sternest test in years. The summit may not have delivered a peace deal, but it has clarified the contours of India's dilemma. The road ahead is fraught with uncertainty, but one conclusion is inescapable: India's big bet on Russian oil, though rational in economic terms, has tethered it inextricably to the geopolitics of war and peace in Ukraine. *(The writer can be reached at dipakurmi@gmail.com)*

Gamusa: The Soul of Assam

By: Satyabrata Borah

The gamusa, a simple yet profound piece of cloth, is far more than a mere textile in the cultural fabric of Assam. It is a symbol of identity, heritage, and emotion, woven into the very essence of Assamese life. In every household, every festival, and every significant moment, the gamusa makes its presence felt, transcending its utilitarian roots to become a powerful emblem of love, respect, and tradition. To write about the heritage of the gamusa is to delve into the heart of Assam, where the threads of history, craftsmanship, and community intertwine to create a legacy that resonates deeply with every Assamese soul.

The origins of the gamusa are shrouded in the mists of time, with no definitive historical record pinpointing its inception. Yet, its etymology offers a glimpse into its primal purpose. The word "gamusa" is derived from "ga," meaning body, and "musa," meaning to wipe or clean. Originally, it was a humble cloth used to dry the body after bathing, but over centuries, its role has expanded far beyond this functional beginning. The gamusa has evolved into a versatile artifact, embodying the spirit of Assam in its every fold. It is offered as a token of honor, gifted as an expression of love, and used in religious and social ceremonies, making it an indispensable part of Assamese culture.

The beauty of the gamusa lies in its simplicity and the artistry embedded within it. Woven by skilled artisans, often women in rural Assam, the gamusa is a testament to the state's rich tradition of handloom weaving. The loom, a fixture in many Assamese households, transforms cotton or silk threads into intricate patterns that reflect the natural and cultural motifs of the region. The vibrant red, white, and green threads, often adorned with delicate floral designs, birds, butterflies, or traditional Assamese jewelry patterns, speak of a deep connection to nature and heritage. Each gamusa tells a story of the weaver's skill, her dreams and her emotions. During the festival of Bohag Bihu, the Assamese New Year, young women weave gamusas with care and affection, gifting them to loved ones as "Bihuwaan," a gesture imbued with warmth and sentiment. These gamusas, with their intricate designs, are not just gifts but carriers of unspoken emotions, a silent language of love and care.

The gamusa's versatility is reflected in its various forms, each serving a distinct purpose in Assamese society. The "phulam gamusa," adorned with elaborate floral motifs, is a symbol of festivity and respect, often used during Bihu or to honor distinguished guests. The "gosain gamusa," with its sacred connotations, is reserved for religious settings, particularly in the Vaishnavite prayer halls known as Namghars, where it is used to cover scriptures or as an offering to the divine. The "anakaata gamusa," a speciality of Lower Assam, is unique in its making; its threads are not cut but separated by hand or stone, preserving its sanctity for use in auspicious occasions like weddings. The "tiani gamusa," thicker and coarser, serves the practical needs of daily life, used by farmers in the fields or for wiping the body after a bath. The "darabaran gamusa," often woven with golden threads, is used to welcome the groom in wedding ceremonies, its elegance adding to the grandeur of the occasion. Then there is the "uka gamusa," a lighter, softer variant used to offer guests for wiping their hands or face. Each type of gamusa, with its specific role, underscores the cloth's omnipresence in Assamese life, from the mundane to the sacred.

Beyond its practical and ceremonial uses, the gamusa holds a deeper significance as a marker of Assamese identity. It is a unifying thread that binds the diverse communities of Assam, from the Bodos to the Misings, the Ahoms to the Karbis. While other regions in India, such as Bengal or Bihar, may use similar cloths, the gamusa's cultural weight and its centrality to Assamese traditions set it apart. Its recognition as a Geographical Indication (GI) tag on December 13,

2022, by the Government of India was a landmark moment, affirming its unique place in the cultural landscape of the nation. This accolade not only elevated the gamusa's status but also brought global attention to Assam's handloom heritage. The gamusa's prominence has been further amplified by public figures like Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who has often been seen wearing or displaying it during national and international events, showcasing its cultural significance to a wider audience. The gamusa's role in Assam's socio-political history adds another layer to its legacy. During the Assam Movement (1979–1985), a period of intense agitation for the preservation of Assamese identity, the gamusa emerged as a powerful symbol of resistance and pride. It replaced floral garlands as a mark of honor, signifying solidarity and cultural assertion. Protesters and leaders alike draped gamusas around their shoulders, transforming the humble cloth into a badge of Assamese nationalism. This period cemented the gamusa's status as more than a piece of fabric; it became a rallying point for a people striving to protect their language, culture, and identity in the face of external pressures.

Economically, the gamusa plays a vital role in sustaining Assam's rural communities. The handloom industry, of which gamusa production is a significant part, provides livelihoods to thousands of weavers, particularly women, who work tirelessly to keep this tradition alive. In villages across Assam, the rhythmic clatter of the loom is a familiar sound, as families weave gamusas for both personal use and commercial sale. However, the rise of mechanized production and the influx of cheaper, mass-produced imitations pose a threat to this cottage industry. These imitations, often devoid of the craftsmanship and cultural essence of the traditional gamusa, undermine the weavers' efforts and dilute the cloth's heritage. The GI tag, while a step toward protecting the gamusa's authenticity, underscores the need for greater support, be it through government initiatives, consumer awareness, or promotion of handwoven products to ensure the survival of this craft.

The gamusa's universal appeal lies in its ability to transcend social and economic boundaries. From the farmer toiling in the fields to the urban intellectual, the gamusa finds a place in every Assamese life. During Bohag Bihu, it becomes a vibrant accessory, tied around the head or waist of dancers as they sway to the rhythm of the dhol and pepa. In weddings, it is a symbol of welcome and blessing, draped over the shoulders of the bride and groom. In moments of grief, it is used to cover the deceased, a final act of respect. Its adaptability and omnipresence make it a true reflection of Assamese resilience and inclusivity.

Yet, the gamusa's heritage is not static; it is a living tradition that continues to evolve. Modern designers have begun incorporating gamusa motifs into contemporary fashion, blending tradition with innovation. From sarees to stoles, the gamusa's iconic patterns are finding new expressions, appealing to younger generations while preserving their cultural roots. This adaptability ensures that the gamusa remains relevant, bridging the gap between the past and the future.

The gamusa is more than a piece of cloth; it is the heartbeat of Assam. Its threads carry the stories of generations, the artistry of weavers, and the emotions of a people deeply connected to their land and culture. To preserve this heritage is to honor the spirit of Assam itself. It calls for collective effort, from supporting local weavers to celebrating the gamusa's cultural significance on global platforms. As the world becomes increasingly homogenized, the gamusa stands as a reminder of the beauty of tradition, the value of craftsmanship, and the power of a simple cloth to embody the soul of a community. In every weave, in every fold, the gamusa whispers the story of Assam, a story of resilience, love, and an enduring legacy that will continue to inspire generations to come.

SWACHH BHARAT MISSION (SBM): AN ANALYSIS

By: Diganta Barooah

India was ranked right at the bottom of 180 countries in the Environment Performance Index (EPI) in 2022. The EPI ranks countries on climate change performance, environmental health, and ecosystem vitality. It measures 40 performance indicators across 11 issue categories, such as air quality, and drinking water and sanitation. For 10 years, the government has embarked on several campaigns of environmental health and development. These included the Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM), the Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation, the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana, and the National Clean Air Programme. The SBM is meant to address the issue of WASH (Water, Sanitation, and Health). Likewise, the Smart Cities Mission (SCM) is supposed to deliver on the clean energy requirements of towns. However, what is witnessed is an increase in the vulnerability of the population owing to air and water pollution, among others. To deal with various issues concerning garbage, waste and sewage, Government has launched the Swachh Bharat Mission -Urban (SBM-U) on October 2, 2014 and the Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation (AMRUT) in 500 cities on June 25, 2015. To carry forward the work done on ground in Phase-I, Swachh Bharat Mission-Urban (SBM-U) 2.0 has been launched on October 1st, 2021 for a period of five years, up to October 1, 2026, with a vision of achieving safe sanitation and scientific processing of municipal solid waste in all cities. AMRUT 2.0 has been launched on 1st October 2021 to make cities 'self-reliant' and 'water secure'. AMRUT 2.0 will extend the ease of living by up-scaling universal coverage in water supply from 500 cities to all statutory towns in the country. Launched on October 2, 2014, SBM aimed to eliminate open defecation and improve solid and liquid waste management across India, revolutionizing the sanitation landscape. Its key components include: SBM-Grameen (SBM-G):

- **Phase I (2014-2019):** Focused on achieving ODF (Open Defecation Free) status by constructing household toilets and promoting behavioral change through awareness campaigns.
- **Phase II (2019-2025):** Focuses on sustainability through ODF Plus villages and integrated waste management. Swachh Survekshan Grameen (SSG) 2023-24 (by Department of Drinking Water and Sanitation (DDWS):
- **Key Sanitation Parameters:** Faecal Sludge Management (FSM), waste segregation, Grey Water Management (GWM), Galvanizing Organic Bio-Agro Resources Dhan (GOBARdhan) plants, Plastic Waste Management Units (PWMUs) assets.

- **Survey Coverage:** 17,304 villages, 729 districts, 2.6 lakh households, 85,901 public places.
- **Household-Level Insights:** 95.1% have toilet access, 92.7% dispose biodegradable waste, 78.7% manage greywater and 39.9% segregate waste.
- **Village Infrastructure:** 45% have waste collection vehicles, 29.4% have segregation sheds and 62.1% have plastic waste linkages.
- **Public Places:** 76.7% have toilets and 91.1% have minimal stagnant water.
- **Asset Functionality:** 61.4% PWMUs functional and 58.5% GOBARdhan plants functional. Under SBM(G), the key challenges in maintaining CSCs include limited awareness on regular usage and upkeep, lack of dedicated funds for maintenance, absence of clear ownership and overall management. However, in several States, Gram Panchayats are making commendable efforts within their means—undertaking awareness activities, exploring business linkages (such as attaching a shop) etc to ensure regular maintenance and sustainability. Swachh Survekshan Grameen 2023-24

The Survey, conducted during the period 2023-2024, covered 17,304 villages in 729 Districts across India and 85,901 public places namely schools, anganwadis, public health centres, haat/bazaars/religious places etc. in these 17,304 villages. Around 2,60,059 Households were interviewed for their feedback on SBM(G) related issues. The main findings of SSG 2023-24 are: ✓ 95.1% of surveyed households have access to Toilet ✓ 39.9% of households reported segregating their waste into biodegradable (organic) and non-biodegradable (inorganic) categories ✓ 92.7% of households reported to have some arrangement in place for the disposal of Biodegradable (organic) Waste ✓ 78.7% of households had some arrangements in place for disposal of greywater ✓ 45.0% of villages had either exclusive or shared vehicles for the collection and transportation of solid waste ✓ 29.4% of villages had storage and segregation sheds ✓ 62.1% of villages were observed to have forward linkage for plastic waste ✓ 91.1% of public places had minimal stagnant water within their premises ✓ 76.7% of public places surveyed have access to toilets. ✓ 83.8% of FSTPs/STPs with urban linkage were observed to be functional out of 437 surveyed ✓ 61.4% of PWMUs were observed to be functional out of 1,029 surveyed ✓ 58.5% of GOBARdhan/bio-gas plants were observed to be functional out of 451 surveyed. The key objective of Swachh Bharat Mission Grameen Phase II is to sustain the ODF status of villages and to improve the levels of cleanliness in rural areas through solid and liquid waste management activities, making villages ODF plus. As per the op-



erational guidelines of SBM (G) Phase -II, villages must be provided with an adequate number of individual and community compost pits for biodegradable waste including agricultural & cattle waste, and an adequate segregation and collection system for plastic waste. For this purpose, financial assistance of up to ₹60 per capita is available for villages with a population of up to 5,000, and ₹45 per capita for those with a population above 5,000. This will also cover the procurement of waste collection vehicles and the construction of storage and segregation sheds at the village or Gram Panchayat level. The operational guidelines also provide for at least one Plastic Waste Management Unit (PWMU) in each block in case clustering of blocks is not possible. A provision of up to 16 lakh per block has been made for the construction of a PWMU at the block level.

Swachh Bharat Mission SBM-Urban (SBM-U)
As per information received from MoHUA, Government of India launched the Swachh Bharat Mission-Urban (SBM-U) on October 2, 2014 with the objective Open Defecation Free (ODF) and for scientific processing of Municipal Solid Waste (MSW) generated in all the urban areas of the country. To carry forward the progress made, Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM-U) 2.0 has been launched on October 1, 2021 for a period of five years with a vision of achieving Garbage Free Status for all cities through 100% source segregation, door to door collection and scientific management of all fractions of waste including safe disposal in scientific landfills. It also aims at remediation of all legacy dumpsites and converting them into green zones. The Swachh Bharat Mission Urban leverages technology to enhance sanitation and waste management across urban India. The selection of treatment technologies is open to ULBs/State Governments, allowing them to choose any proven technology as outlined in the

Central Public Health & Environmental Engineering Organization (CPHEEO) Manual and advisories issued from time to time. As per Clause 15 (v) of Solid Waste Management Rules 2016, ULBs may adopt suitable technologies including the following technologies for management of municipal solid waste:
✓ Bio-methanation, microbial composting, vermi-composting, anaerobic digestion or any other appropriate processing for bio-stabilization of biodegradable wastes;
✓ Waste to energy processes including refused derived fuel for combustible fraction of waste or supply as feedstock to solid waste-based power plants or cement kilns. Also, to promote an enabling environment for development startups and entrepreneurs in the waste management sector, in collaboration with Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT), start-ups are identified through challenge mode. A centre has been set up at Startup Incubation and Innovation Center (SIIC), IIT Kanpur for providing one year of incubation support to the shortlisted organizations.

- **Phase I (2014-21):** Focused on achieving ODF Urban India with a target of 100% scientific processing of municipal solid waste in 4,041 statutory towns.
- **Phase II- SBM-U 2.0 (2021-2026):** Launched with a vision of Garbage-Free Urban India focusing on sustainability, circular economy, behavioral change. The goal was to contribute to SDG 2030 and improve urban quality of life. Swachh Survekshan Urban (SSU) 2024-25 (9th edition conducted by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA)) : It recognizes urban local bodies (ULBs) across India for exemplary performance in sanitation, waste management, and public hygiene.
 - Theme: Reduce, Reuse, Recycle.
 - Cities covered: 4,500+ cities.
 - Survey Parameters: 10 broad param-

eters, 54 indicators- Waste processing, citizen feedback, Open Defecation Free+ (ODF+), certifications, sustainable practices.

- **Assessment Tools:** On-ground inspections and feedback via MyGov, Swachhata App, face-to-face surveys. Over 3,000 assessors and over 11 lakh households evaluated.

Central Share (CS) assistance under SBM-U 2.0 has been given to States/UTs for establishing of various types of MSW management plants like, Waste-to-Compost (WtC), Waste-to-Energy (WtE), Bio-methanation, Material Recovery Facilities (MRF) and legacy waste dumpsites remediation, etc. The details of budget provision for SBM-U and SBM-U 2.0 is given as under:

SBM-U (2014-2021):
Budget Outlay = ₹ 62,009 Crores Central Share = ₹ 14,623 Crores
SBM-U 2.0 (2021-2026):
Budget Outlay = ₹ 1,41,600 Crores Central Share = ₹ 36,465 Crores Under SBM-U and SBM-U 2.0 Central Share of funds are released to the States/UTs and not to the cities. Hence, city-wise details of funds are not maintained at MoHUA. Further, funds under SBM-U are allocated for the entire mission period and not on yearly basis.

Under sewerage and septage management sector of AMRUT, 889 projects worth ₹34,501 crore have been grounded of which work worth ₹32,175 crore have been physically executed. Under AMRUT 2.0, Sewerage and septage management sector, so far 592 projects worth ₹67,649 crore which covers creation/augmentation of 6,739 MLD sewage treatment plant capacity & 2,089 MLD for recycle/reuse. For technical assistance to States/ULBs, Ministry of Housing & Urban Affairs (MoHUA) has brought out the Manuals on Sewerage and Sewage Treatment Systems and Solid Waste Management and also issued various Advisories and Guidelines for choosing appropriate technologies to manage sewage and solid waste. In addition, capacity building of field officials is being taken up regularly. Monitoring of these schemes is done through review at various levels of the information submitted by States/Union Territories on progress and through field visits. Additionally, the 'Swachh Survekshan' survey conducted annually under SBM-U through third party assessment to evaluate the cleanliness status and progress in implementation of SBM-U in cities.

Different Components of SBM:
✓ **Swachh Vidyalaya Abhiyan:** The Ministry of Education has launched Swachh Vidyalaya Programme under SBM with an objective to provide separate toilets for boys and girls in all government schools within one year. * The programme aims at ensuring that every school in the country must have a set of essential interventions that relate to both technical and human development aspects of a good Water, Sanitation and

Hygiene Programme.

- * The Ministry financially supports States/Union Territories inter alia to provide toilets for girls and boys in schools under Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) and Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA).

- ✓ **Rashtriya Swachhata Kosh :** The Swachh Bharat Kosh (SBK) has been set up to facilitate and channelize individual philanthropic contributions and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) funds to achieve the objective of Clean India (Swachh Bharat). * The Kosh will be used to achieve the objective of improving cleanliness levels in rural and urban areas, including in schools. * The allocation from the Kosh will be used to supplement and complement departmental resources for such activities. * To incentivise contributions from individuals and corporate, modalities are being considered to provide tax rebates where it is possible.

- ✓ **GOBAR-DHAN:** Galvanizing Organic Bio-Agro Resources Scheme (GOBAR-DHAN) scheme was launched by the Ministry of Jal Shakti in 2018 and aims to augment income of farmers by converting biodegradable waste into compressed biogas (CBG).

- **New initiatives in SSU 2024-25:**
 - o Super Swachh League introduced to honour consistently top-performing 3 cities over past 3 years.

- o Population-based categories created for fair comparison across city sizes - [* Very Small Cities (Less than 20,000 population) * Small Cities (20,000 - 50,000 population) * Medium Cities (50,000 - 3 lakh population) * Big Cities (3 - 10 lakh population) * Million Plus Cities (above 10 lakh population)]

- o Focus on tourist and high-footfall areas to ensure sanitation in key public spaces.
- o Simplified 10-section framework for holistic sanitation assessment.

- o New indicators added for project grounding and CTU (City Transport Unit) transformation.

- o School-level assessments launched to instill Swachhata values in students.

- **Top Performers:**
 - o Cleanest Mega Cities (>10L): Indore, Navi Mumbai, Surat

- o Best Ganga Town : Prayagraj
- o Best Safai Mitra Surakshit Shehar : Visakhapatnam, Jabalpur, Gorakhpur
- o Special Recognition : Mahakumbh for exceptional urban waste management during the Mahakumbh (66 crore footfall).

- **Significance of SSU 2024-25:** This year, the awards not only celebrate the top Swachh Shehar but also recognize and encourage small cities showing strong promise and progress.

- **Benefits of SBM**
 - **Improved Public Health:** Significant reduction in infant and under-five mortality. Lower incidence of diarrhea, (CONTD TO NEXT ISSUE)

Revolutionising brain tumour treatment: The role of minimally invasive Neurosurgery

By: Dr (Prof) Sumit Sinha

Brain tumours, once considered rare and difficult to treat, are now being managed more effectively thanks to advanced medical technology. One of the most promising developments in recent years is minimally invasive neurosurgery. This cutting-edge approach is transforming the way as to how brain tumours are treated—making surgeries safer, more precise, and easier for patients to recover from.

Understanding Minimally Invasive Neurosurgery

Traditional brain surgery usually requires large incisions in the scalp and skull, which can lead to longer recovery times and a higher risk of complications. In contrast, minimally invasive neurosurgery uses small incisions, endoscopic tools, and advanced imaging both inside and outside the operation theatre, to access and remove the tumour with less disruption to healthy tissue.

This approach relies on the surgeon's expertise, enhanced by high-quality visuals and instruments that allow for better planning, safer tumour removal, and improved patient outcomes.

Why Is This Approach a Game-Changer?

Enhanced Precision
Minimally invasive techniques allow surgeons to operate with extreme accuracy. This is especially important when removing tumours from delicate or critical areas of the brain where even a tiny millimeter error can impact speech, memory, or movement.

Smaller Incisions, Faster Recovery

Because the procedure involves smaller cuts, patients experience less pain, a lower risk of post-operative infection, and a shorter hospital stay. Most patients recover quickly and can return to their normal lives sooner than those who undergo conventional open surgery.

Reduced Complications

By minimising disruption to the surrounding brain or spine tissues and nerves, minimally invasive brain surgery helps reduce the risk of serious side effects like paralysis, speech difficulties, or loss of cognitive function.

Real-Time Imaging and Navigation

During surgery, advanced imaging technologies like 3D navigation systems and intraoperative MRI or CT scans help guide the neurosurgeon. These tools improve the accuracy of tumour removal and reduce the chances of leaving behind tumour tissue or damaging nearby healthy brain structures.

Who Can Benefit?

Minimally invasive neurosurgery can be beneficial for a wide range of patients, including those with:

- Benign (non-cancerous) brain tumours such



as meningioma

- Malignant (Cancerous) tumours like gliomas
- Deep-seated or hard-to-reach tumours
- Tumours located near vital areas controlling vision, movement, or speech

In certain cases, this technique may also be combined with awake brain surgery, where the patient remains conscious during the procedure to ensure brain functions are preserved while the tumour is removed.

Role in Improving Long-Term Outcomes

The primary goal of any brain tumour surgery is to remove as much of the tumour as safely possible while protecting brain function. Minimally invasive surgery plays a crucial role in achieving this goal.

Even when complete removal isn't possible, surgeons can use these techniques to perform a maximum safe resection, reducing tumour burden and improving the success of follow-up treatments such as chemotherapy or radiotherapy. This leads to a better quality of life and potentially longer survival.

The Future of Brain Tumour Care

Minimally invasive neurosurgery marks a significant shift towards safer, more effective, and more personalised treatment for brain tumour patients. With constant advancements in imaging, surgical instruments, and post-operative care, this approach is expected to become the preferred standard in the years to come.

If you or someone you know has been diagnosed with a brain tumour, consider consulting a neurosurgeon trained in minimally invasive techniques. Choosing the right surgical method at the right time can make a major difference in recovery and overall outcome.

Because when it comes to the brain, precision matters !!

Benefits of Healthy and Neurological Lifestyle

By: Vijay Garg

We often have the idea of how we can stay healthy? Healthy and healthy lifestyle means spending a balanced life, healthy catering, sleeping on time, drinking more water, doing regular exercise, reducing stress, sleeping in the right way, keeping your mind positive. It's not just diet and exercise. A healthy and neurological lifestyle is not a day's job. It has a series of small efforts, which inspire your life to become happy, healthy and worthy.

What is needed to keep the body healthy?

Typically, most will agree that a healthy person adopting a healthy and unresponsive lifestyle rule does not consume smoking and alcohol, weighing right, eating a balanced healthy diet, thinks positive, exercises regularly and benefits from good life balance.

Benefits of a healthy lifestyle

Your mind is happy with a healthy lifestyle.

Healthy lifestyle gives you activeness. Healthy lifestyle protects you from many types of diseases.

A healthy lifestyle gives you immunity that you get in less time.

Additionally, the adherence to healthy and neurological lifestyle prevents obesity, diabetes, cardiovascular problems, cancer, mental problems, immunity loss, stomach problems, chronic waist pain, prostate cancer in men, menstrual time in women, pregnancy, problems from weakening the immune system.

Easy tips for healthy and neurological lifestyle

According to the World Health Organization, the definition of a healthy and neurological lifestyle marks good health as 'a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being, not merely the absence of disease or infirmity'. Healthy and neurological lifestyle habits focus on bringing together the following aspects. How can we stay healthy? Follow some rules of healthy lifestyle:

- healthy eating habits
- Regular exercise, yoga
- keeping body weight under control
- enough sleep
- Do not smoke
- Being emotionally cheerful
- Yoga, Lifestyle & Health

Yoga is the key to a healthy life in today's world. Yoga helps to improve general health of stress relief, adherence to good health habits, and by improving mental/emotional health, sleep and balance. A yogic lifestyle in-



volves changing our attitudes, habits, diet, ideas, and general ways of life to be more effective with the philosophy and ethics of yoga. Yes that we all will have a highly personal way of implementing yogic lifestyle, but there are some guidelines that we all can follow.

How to follow a healthy lifestyle?

Benefits of a healthy lifestyle help our body work correctly. A healthy lifestyle protects you from many types of diseases. Healthy lifestyle gives you mental balance. Healthy lifestyle gives you activeness. Healthy lifestyle gives you the immunity you get in a short time. Some habits:

- Don't skip your breakfast, eat on time
- Drink plenty of water, 2-3 litres every day
- Do regular exercise, exercise for 30 minutes every day

- Do not smoke, consume alcohol, have plenty of sleep, complete 7-8 hours of sleep daily

- Get enough sunlight
- Meditate to reduce stress
- How should food to stay healthy?

The best food for your health is the one, which is balanced. Your food should contain adequate amount of protein, carbohydrates, vitamins and minerals. In the following tips on how you should eat to stay healthy, we will explain:

- Have a breakfast in the morning
- Eat 2-3 fruits daily
- Eat 2-3 cups of vegetable daily
- 2-3 cup milk per day/ paneer/ curd/ whey/ buttermilk etc
- Daily 2-3 cup grains/ roti/ paratha/ poha/ sooji/ corn roti/ peanut/ soup/ salad/ murmur

etc
Important: Always have a balanced meal, eat on time, always have a light meal, consume as you need a nutritious supplement

Routine in healthy and neurological lifestyle

Include these simple healthy habits to create the best daily routine for a healthy body and mind:

Get up early

The importance of a healthy lifestyle is from getting up early. In terms of efficiency, early risers undoubtedly overtake late risers. In early hours, pressing the snooze button and sleeping back may seem more convenient. On the other hand, convenience is not always the best option. Early in the morning adds hours to your day and allows you to start the day peacefully. Those who wake up early and start their morning will always dominate those who don't. In addition to greater efficiency, there are more benefits to getting up early.

Take a little sunshine on your skin

Getting into the sun is one of the least-rated activities nowadays. Yes that you should not ignore its importance. So go out in the sun and take time out in your routine to get some vitamin D and fresh air. A few minutes spent outside will also make you feel much better. Drink water at regular intervals. Since water is 70% of your body weight, staying hydrated is essential to keep your body healthy and work properly all day long. So don't forget to drink water at regular intervals to stay hydrated. Staying hydrated even in a bad day will make you feel better. If you have a habit of forgetting to drink water, see the

RAHUL GANDHI'S 'VOTER ADHIKAR YATRA' TO CONCLUDE WITH A RALLY IN PATNA ON SEPTEMBER 1

WILL NOT LET 'CONSPIRACY' TO 'STEAL' BIHAR POLLS THROUGH SIR SUCCEED: RAHUL

SASARAM (BIHAR), Aug 17: Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Sunday said the whole country now knows that the Election Commission is "stealing" elections in collusion with the BJP and asserted that the INDIA bloc will not let them succeed in their "conspiracy" to steal Bihar Assembly polls by voter additions and deletions through the Special Intensive Revision of electoral rolls.

Addressing the gathering here at the launch event of his 1,300 km 'Voter Adhikar Yatra' covering over 20 districts in Bihar, Gandhi said while he was asked to submit an affidavit after his press conference exposing "vote chori", no such demand was made from BJP leaders who made claims in their presser.

"In the whole country, Assembly and Lok Sabha elections are being stolen and their last conspiracy is to delete and add voters through SIR to steal the elections in Bihar," Gandhi charged.



"We will not let them steal the election in Bihar. People of Bihar will not let them steal elections. Poor only have the power of vote and will not let them steal polls," the Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha said.

He said the whole country now knows what the EC is doing and how it is carrying out this "theft". Gandhi said his press conference a few days back had exposed how "vote chori" is being carried out. He asserted that it is a fight to

save the Constitution. Gandhi alleged that in the whole of India, the RSS and BJP are trying to "destroy" the Constitution. "In every election BJP wins. In Maharashtra all opinion polls said the INDIA bloc will win. In the

Lok Sabha, our alliance had won but after four months in same Maharashtra, BJP alliance swept the polls as one crore voters were added and wherever such additions happened BJP won," Gandhi said.

He said the Congress had showed that over one lakh votes were stolen in one assembly segment and the BJP won that Lok Sabha seat.

The Yatra launch event here was attended by the likes of Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge, RJD chief Lalu Prasad, Leader of Opposition in Bihar Assembly Tejashwi Yadav, Vikasheel Insaan Party's Mukesh Sahani, CPI(ML) Liberation general secretary Dipankar Bhattacharya, CPI(M)'s Subhashini Ali and CPI's P Sandosh Kumar.

With the Assembly polls barely three months away, Gandhi, along with RJD's Tejashwi Yadav and other Mahagathbandhan leaders, launched the 1300 km yatra from BIADA Ground, Sasaram, and

after 16 days, the yatra will conclude with a rally in Patna on September 1.

In a post in Hindi on X on Saturday, Gandhi had said, "16 days, 20+ districts, 1,300+ km. We are coming among the people with the Voter Adhikar Yatra. This is a fight to protect the most basic democratic right - 'one person, one vote'."

"Join us in Bihar to save the Constitution," he added.

The 'yatra' will be in a hybrid mode, on foot and by vehicle, as was Gandhi's Manipur to Mumbai Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra ahead of the Lok Sabha polls, party leaders said.

The 'yatra' will pass through Aurangabad, Gaya, Nawada, Nalanda, Sheikhpura, Lakhisarai, Munger, Bhagalpur, Katihar, Purnea, Araria, Supaul, Madhubani, Darbhanga, Sitamarhi, East Champaran, West Champaran, Gopalganj, Siwan, Chapra and Ara. (PTI)

2 dead, more than 300 injured in Dahi Handi festivities in Mumbai, Thane

MUMBAI, Aug 17: Two people have died and more than 300 sustained injuries during the 'Dahi Handi' festival in Mumbai and neighbouring Thane city that drew large crowds of people, civic officials said on Sunday.

Of the 318 persons injured in Mumbai, only 24, including a nine-year-old boy, have been hospitalised while the rest were discharged after treatment on Saturday, they said.

The festival, celebrated to mark the birth of Lord Krishna, saw troupes of young men and women forming human pyramids to break dahi handis (pots of curd) suspended in the air with ropes.

According to officials, the highest number of 135 people were injured during the festivities in the island city, followed by 111 and 72 in the western and eastern suburbs, respectively.

Two of the injured persons, including a nine-year-old boy, are in a critical condition, they said.

The boy, identified as Aryan Yadav, a resident of Tanaji Nagar, was injured during celebrations at a chawl and is undergoing treatment at a civic-run hospital in Kandivali, while Shreyas Chalke (23) has been admitted to government-run GT Hospital.

Among the casualties, a 32-year-old man, identified as Jagmohan Shivkiran Chaudhari, fell to his death while tying a 'dahi handi' in Mankhurd in the north-eastern part of the metropolis, and a 14-year-old boy was declared dead at a hospital in Ghatkopar on Saturday night.

"Chaudhari was tying the handi to a rope from the first-floor window grille of his house in Maharashtra Nagar when he fell. He was taken to the civic-run Shatabdi Govandi Hospital, where he was declared brought dead," an official said.

Rohan Mohan Malvi, who was part of the Gaondevi Govinda Pathak, fell unconscious while sitting in a tempo at Adarsh Nagar in the Andheri area. He did not take part in the pyramid formation since he recently suffered a bout of jaundice.

In the neighbouring Thane city, 22 participants were injured while attempting human pyramids, local civic body's disaster management cell chief Yasin Tadvai said.

Of them, 17 were admitted to the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Hospital in Kalwa, including some who suffered head injuries, shoulder dislocations, waist and chest injuries, he said.

An 18-year-old participant, who suffered a head injury, was referred to the state-run J J Hospital in Mumbai for advanced care. Some of the others injured were children in the age group of 5 to 10 years, the official said.

Another five persons were admitted to the District Government Hospital in Thane, with injuries ranging from hand fractures to back pain and abrasions, Tadvai said.

The festivities drew large crowds at multiple mandals in Thane, where actors Govinda, Chunky Pandey and Sunil Shetty joined the celebrations. (PTI)

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi on two-day visit to India beginning today



NEW DELHI, Aug 17: India and China are expected to discuss new confidence-building measures for durable peace and tranquillity along their contested border during Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi's two-day visit to India beginning Monday.

Wang's visit is largely seen as part of ongoing efforts by the two neighbours to rebuild their relationship after it came under severe strain following the deadly Galwan Valley clashes in 2020.

The trip assumed greater significance in view of increasing tensions in India-US relations following President Donald Trump doubling tariffs on Indian goods to 50 per cent that included an additional penalty of 25 per cent for purchasing Russian oil.

The Chinese foreign minister will be in India primarily to hold a fresh round of Special Representatives (SR) dialogue on the boundary question with National Security Advisor Ajit Doval.

Wang and Doval are the designated special representatives for the boundary talks.

Both sides are expected to deliberate on new confidence-building measures besides reviewing the overall situation along the Line of Actual Control (LAC), people familiar with the matter said.

Though the two sides disengaged troops from the friction points, they are yet to de-escalate the situation by pulling back the frontline forces from the border.

Each side currently has around 50,000 to 60,000 troops along the

LAC in the eastern Ladakh region. The Chinese foreign minister will also meet External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar.

It is learnt that the two sides will also use the opportunity to lay the ground for Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to China to attend the annual summit of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) on August 31 and September 1.

As per the plan, PM Modi will embark on a visit to Japan around August 29 and after concluding the trip, he will travel to the northern Chinese city of Tianjin for the summit to be held on August 31 and September 1.

Modi's visit to China is being planned amid efforts by the two sides to repair their bilateral ties which came under severe strain following the deadly clashes between Indian and Chinese troops in Galwan Valley in June 2020.

NSA Doval travelled to China in December last and held the SR talks with Wang, weeks after Prime Minister Modi and Chinese President Xi decided to revive various dialogue mechanisms between the two sides at a meeting in the Russian city of Kazan.

The military standoff in eastern Ladakh began in May 2020 and the clashes at the Galwan Valley in June that year resulted in a severe strain in bilateral ties. The face-off effectively ended following completion of the disengagement process from the last two friction points of Demchok and Depsang under an agreement finalised on October 21 last year. (PTI)

Some parties spreading misinformation on SIR, EC not scared of baseless allegations: CEC

NEW DELHI, Aug 17: The Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls is aimed at removing all shortcomings in voters lists and it is a matter of grave concern that some parties are spreading misinformation about it, Chief Election Commissioner Gynaesh Kumar said on Sunday as the Congress and other INDIA bloc parties launched 'Voter Adhikar Yatra' in poll-bound Bihar against alleged "vote-chori".

Addressing a press conference, the CEC rejected as baseless the allegations of double voting and "vote theft" and asserted that all stakeholders are working to make SIR a success in a transparent manner.

"It is a matter of grave concern that some parties and their leaders are spreading misinformation on SIR in Bihar. EC exhorts all political parties to file claims and objections on draft electoral rolls in



Bihar... 15 days are still remaining. "Doors of the Election Commission are open to everyone, and booth-level officers and agents are working together in a transparent manner," he said.

Kumar said the EC cannot discriminate among political parties, and both ruling and opposition par-

ties are equal before the poll authority. "It is an insult to the Indian Constitution if election petitions are not filed within 45 days but allegations of vote chori are raised," he said.

Neither the EC nor the voters are scared of "baseless allegations" of double voting and "vote chori", Kumar asserted, adding that the

Election Commission will remain steadfast with voters of all classes being bothered about politics being played by some

The comments come as the Opposition stepped up its attack against the poll roll revision in Bihar and on the allegations of 'vote chori' raised by Congress.

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Sunday said the whole country now knows that the Election Commission is "stealing" elections in collusion with the BJP and asserted that the INDIA bloc will not let them succeed in their "conspiracy" to steal Bihar Assembly polls by voter additions and deletions through the Special Intensive Revision of electoral rolls.

He was addressing a gathering in Sasaram at the launch event of his 1,300 km 'Voter Adhikar Yatra' covering over 20 districts in Bihar. (PTI)

Ex-CJI Khanna to ONOE committee: Constitutional validity does not mean desirability

NEW DELHI, Aug 17: Former chief justice of India Sanjeev Khanna has told a parliamentary committee scrutinising the simultaneous election bill that the constitutional validity of a proposal in no way amounts to a pronouncement upon the desirability or necessity of its provisions.

In his written opinion to the committee, Khanna, however, said that arguments related to the dilution of the country's federal structure may be raised about the constitutional amendment bill, as he listed the various claims made supporting and criticising the concept, sources said.

Most of the experts, who have shared their views with the committee headed by BJP MP P P Chaudhary, have rejected the charge that the proposals are unconstitutional but have flagged some issues with the current provisions of the bill.

Khanna, who is scheduled to interact with the committee on Tuesday, has joined a few other former chief justices of India in raising concerns over the extent of power given to the Election Commission in the



bill. He said the bill confers "unfettered discretion" on the EC in deciding that an assembly poll cannot be conducted along with that of the Lok Sabha, and to make a recommendation to the President on these lines, the sources said.

"This clause will be open to question as violating and offending the basic structure of the Constitution on the ground of being arbitrary and offending Article 14 of the Constitution," he is learnt to have said.

Article 14 deals with equality be-

fore law. Khanna added, "Postponement of elections by the Election Commission may result in indirect President's rule, in other words, the Union government taking over the reins of the state government. This will be questionable judicially, as violating the federal structure envisaged by the Constitution."

Commenting on various arguments related to the bill, he said the fact that simultaneous elections were held in 1951-52, 1957, 1962 and 1967, is a "coincidence", cer-

tainly not an express or not even an implied constitutional mandate.

Khanna said there is a difference between "merit review" and "judicial review". When the Supreme Court or high courts uphold constitutional validity, it is a mere affirmation of the legislative power and that the amendment or the provision is not violative of the constitutional limitations, he said.

"The court decisions in no way amount to pronouncement upon the desirability or necessity of such provisions," he added. Before Khanna, ex-CJIs D Y Chandrachud, J S Khehar, U U Lalit and Ranjan Gogoi have interacted with the committee members on various provisions of what is often referred to as "one nation one election" bill.

The BJP and its allies have supported the bill, asserting that it will boost growth by cutting down on expenditure caused by the relentless poll cycle, leading to frequent deployment of security and civil officials on poll duty and the imposition of the Model Code of Conduct. (PTI)

NCC cadets to undertake fresh expedition soon, peaks shortlisted: DG

NEW DELHI, Aug 17: A newly constituted NCC expedition team consisting of 20 cadets, is set to embark on a mountaineering adventure post monsoon when they will attempt to scale a peak in northern India, the Corps' director general said.

Two peaks have been shortlisted by the NCC -- Mt Yunam (6,111 m) in Himachal Pradesh and Mt Shalang Dhura (5,678 m) in Uttarakhand.

"One of the two peaks will be selected based on weather conditions. The team has equal number of male and female cadets, and the planned mission is in line with promoting a spirit of adventure among the youth," DG of NCC, Lieutenant General Gurbirpal Singh told PTI.

Both are basic or beginners' peak, he said.

The National Cadet Corps (NCC), the largest uniformed youth organisation in the world, was raised in 1948.

Earlier in May this year, an expedition team of the NCC summited Mt Everest — the world's highest peak.

"We are now looking for the next expedition. We are still to decide on a peak, but it will be either Mt Yunam located in Lahaul in Himachal Pradesh or Mt Shalang Dhura, located in Uttarakhand," Singh said.

An NCC team has earlier scaled Mt Yunam but, it will be the "first attempt" by cadets to summit Mt Shalang Dhura, he added.

This will be a post-monsoon expedition, so depending on rainfall and other weather conditions, it is likely to begin around either end-September or October, he added.

The NCC DG said the Corps has already put together a team for this upcoming expedition.

Around fifteen days ago, nearly 150 cadets had come to Delhi after being shortlisted by their respective directorates, and from that pool, the 20 cadets were finalised,



he said. The NCC has 17 directorates spread across the country, with a total sanctioned strength of 20 lakh. It has two divisions -- Junior Division and Senior Division.

After they join, in the first year of Senior Division, the cadets are made to train at various training academies as part of different

courses, and mountaineering is also part of their training.

After selection for a mountaineering expedition, they get trained for 7-10 days in Uttarkashi generally, but due to natural disaster there recently, "we are trying to do this at another place in Uttarakhand", the DG said.

Lieutenant General Singh expressed pride that 2,000 NCC cadets along with 500 My Bharat volunteers were part of the team that sat in front of the Red Fort ramparts here during the 79th Independence Day celebrations, in a formation of the 'Naya Bharat' logo. The NCC DG also attended the celebrations at Red Fort on August 15, where the defining spirit was the success of Operation Sindoor -- India's decisive four-day military action in May in the wake of Pahalgam attack.

"75,000 NCC cadets participated in civil defence and other related activities across the country, during the four-day period when Operation Sindoor was underway," he said. The cadets helped in traffic management and crowd control.

As also in hosting blood donation camps, thus contributing to nation-building which they are trained for, the DG said, adding, that they also took part in mock drills that took place around that period. (PTI)

PM inaugurates 2 highways worth ₹11,000 cr to decongest Delhi

NEW DELHI, Aug 17: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday inaugurated the Delhi section of the Dwarka Expressway and the Urban Extension Road-II (UER-II), worth nearly ₹11,000 crore, which are aimed at reducing traffic jams in Delhi and its surrounding areas. The two projects have been developed under the government's comprehensive plan to decongest the capital, with the objective of greatly improving connectivity, cutting travel time, and reducing traffic in Delhi and its surrounding areas. These new projects are expected to significantly reduce travel time from Sonapat, Rohtak, Bahadurgarh and Gurugram to IGI Airport when completely operational.

"Dwarka Expressway and UER-II will benefit people of Delhi-NCR...Government is making efforts to remove all difficulties of people of Delhi," Modi said after inaugurating these projects.

The 10.1 km long Delhi section of Dwarka Expressway has been developed at a cost of around ₹

5,360 crore. The section will also provide multi-modal connectivity to Yashobhoimi, Delhi Metro Blue line and Orange line, upcoming Bijaasan railway station and Dwarka cluster bus depot.

The stretch has been divided into two parts: package I: 5.9 km from Shiv Murti intersection to the Road Under Bridge (RUB) at Dwarka Sector-21, package II: 4.2 km from Dwarka Sector-21 RUB to the Delhi-Haryana Border, providing direct connectivity to Urban Extension Road-II.

Modi interacted with labourers while doing inspection of the Dwarka Expressway. He also held a roadshow in Mundka-Bakkarwala Village Toll Plaza, Delhi.

The 19 km long Haryana section of the Dwarka Expressway was earlier inaugurated by the prime minister in March 2024.

Modi also inaugurated the Alipur to Dichaon Kalan stretch of Urban Extension Road-II (UER-II) along with new links to Bahadurgarh and Sonapat, built at a cost of around ₹5,580 crore. (PTI)

Israeli police use water cannons, arrest dozens as protesters demand hostage deal

Israel's military did not immediately respond to questions about strikes

JERUSALEM, Aug 17: Israeli police blasted crowds with water cannons and made dozens of arrests on Sunday as protesters demanding a hostage deal escalated their campaign with a one-day nationwide strike that blocked roads and closed businesses.

The "day of stoppage" was organised by two groups representing some of the families of hostages and bereaved families, weeks after militant groups released videos of emaciated hostages and Israel announced plans for a new offensive.

Protesters fear further fighting could endanger the hostages who were seized by Hamas on October 7, 2023 — the attack that triggered the war — and are believed to still be alive in captivity. Israel believes that some 20 are still alive, with Hamas holding the remains of about 30 others.

"We don't win a war over the bodies of hostages," protesters chanted.

They gathered at dozens of points throughout Israel, including outside politicians' homes, military headquarters and on major highways, where they were sprayed with water cannons as they blocked lanes and lit bonfires. Some restaurants and the-

atres closed in solidarity.

In Tel Aviv, among the protesters was a woman carrying a photo of an emaciated child from Gaza. Such images were once rare at Israeli demonstrations, but now appear more often as outrage grows over conditions there.

Police said they had arrested 38 people as part of the nationwide demonstration — one of the fiercest since the uproar over six hostages found dead in Gaza last September.

"Military pressure doesn't bring hostages back — it only kills them," former hostage Arbel Yehoud said at a demonstration in Tel Aviv's hostage square. "The only way to bring them back is through a deal, all at once, without games."

Netanyahu and allies oppose any deal that leaves Hamas in power.

"Today, we stop everything to save and bring back the hostages and soldiers. Today, we stop everything to remember the supreme value of the sanctity of life," said Anat Angrest, mother of hostage Matan Angrest. "Today, we stop everything to join hands — right, left, centre and everything in between."

Protesters at highway intersections handed out yellow ribbons, the



symbol that represents the hostages, the Hostages and Missing Families Forum, which organised the stoppage, said.

Still, an end to the conflict does not appear near. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has demanded the immediate release of the hostages but is balancing competing pressures, haunted by the potential for mutiny within his coalition.

"Those who today call for an end to the war without defeating Hamas are not only hardening Hamas's position and delaying the release of our hostages, they are also ensuring that the horrors of Oct. 7 will be repeated," Netanyahu said on Sunday, in an apparent reference to the

demonstrations. The last time Israel agreed to a ceasefire that released hostages, far-right members of his cabinet threatened to topple Netanyahu's government.

Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich on Sunday called the stoppage "a bad and harmful campaign that plays into Hamas's hands, buries the hostages in the tunnels and attempts to get Israel to surrender to its enemies and jeopardise its security and future."

'No other option'
Hospitals and eyewitnesses in Gaza reported at least 17 aid-seekers had been killed by Israeli forces on Sunday, including nine awaiting aid

trucks close to the Morag corridor.

Hamza Asfour, an aid-seeker, said he was just north of the corridor awaiting a convoy when Israeli snipers fired, first to disperse the crowds, then from tanks hundreds of meters (yards) away.

He saw two people with gunshot wounds — one in the chest and the other in the shoulder.

"It's either to take this risk or wait and see my family die of starvation," he said. "There is no other option."

In response to questions about deaths the hospital reported from two incidents near its sites, the Gaza Humanitarian Foundation, which runs the distribution points, said there was no gunfire Sunday "at or near" its sites, which are located in military-controlled areas.

Israel's military did not immediately respond to questions about strikes in the three areas.

Israel's air and ground war has already killed tens of thousands of people in Gaza and displaced most of the population. The United Nations is warning that levels of starvation and malnutrition in Gaza are at their highest since the war began.

The Hamas-led attack in 2023 killed around 1,200 people in Israel. Israel's retaliatory offensive has killed more than 61,900 people in

Gaza, according to the Health Ministry, which does not specify how many were fighters or civilians but says around half were women and children.

On Sunday, two children died of malnutrition-related causes in Gaza, bringing the total over the last 24 hours to seven, according to the ministry, which is part of the Hamas-run government and staffed by medical professionals. The UN and independent experts consider it the most reliable source on casualties. Israel disputes its figures but has not provided its own.

Aid flow is far below what is needed.

While demonstrators in Israel demanded a ceasefire, Israel began preparing for an invasion of Gaza City and other populated parts of the besieged strip, aimed at destroying Hamas.

The military body that coordinates its humanitarian aid to Gaza said Sunday that the supply of tents to the territory would resume. COGAT said it would allow the United Nations to resume importing tents and shelter equipment into Gaza ahead of plans to forcibly evacuate people from combat zones "for their protection."

The majority of assistance has

been blocked from entering Gaza since Israel imposed a total blockade in March after a ceasefire collapsed when Israel restarted its offensive. Deliveries have since partially resumed, though aid organisations say the flow is far below what is needed. Some have accused Israel of "weaponising aid" through blockades and rules they say turn humanitarian assistance into a tool of its political and military goals.

Airstrike on a power plant in Yemen

Israeli airstrikes hit Yemen's capital on Sunday, escalating strikes on Iran-backed Houthis, who, since the war began, have fired missiles at Israel and targeted ships in the Red Sea.

The Houthi-run Al-Masirah Television said the strikes targeted a power plant in the southern district of Sanhan, sparking a fire and knocking it out of service. Israel's military acknowledged Sunday's strikes, saying they were launched in response to missiles and drones aimed at Israel.

While some projectiles have breached its missile defences — notably during its 12-day war with Iran in June — Israel has intercepted the vast majority of missiles launched from Yemen. (AP)

States move to send hundreds of National Guard members to Washington

WASHINGTON, Aug 17: Three states moved to deploy hundreds of members of their National Guard to the nation's capital as part of the Trump administration's effort to overhaul policing in Washington through a federal crackdown on crime and homelessness.

West Virginia said it was deploying 300 to 400 Guard troops, while South Carolina pledged 200 and Ohio says it will send 150 in the coming days. The moves announced Saturday came as protesters pushed back on federal law enforcement and National Guard troops fanning out in the heavily Democratic city following President Donald Trump's executive order federalising local police forces and activating about 800 District of Columbia National Guard members.

By adding outside troops to join the existing Guard deployment and federal law enforcement officers, Trump is exercising even tighter control over the city. It's a power play that the president has justified as an emergency response to crime and homelessness, even though city officials have noted that violent crime is lower than it was during Trump's first term in office.

So far, National Guard members have played a limited role in law enforcement in D.C. and it's unclear why additional troops are needed. They have been seen patrolling at landmarks like the National Mall and Union Station and assisting with crowd control.

A protest against Trump's intervention drew scores to Dupont Circle on Saturday before a march to the White House, about 1.5 miles away.

Demonstrators assembled behind a banner that



said, "No fascist takeover of D.C.," and some in the crowd held signs saying, "No military occupation." Trump was at his Virginia golf club after Friday's summit with Russian President Vladimir Putin in Alaska.

Protest pushes back on federal officers in Washington

Morgan Taylor, one of the organisers who coordinated Saturday's protest, said they were hoping to spark enough backlash to Trump's actions that the administration would be forced to pull back on its crime and immigration agenda.

"It's hot, but I'm glad to be here. It's good to see all these people out here," she said. "I can't believe that this is happening in this country at this time."

Fuelling the protests were concerns about Trump overreach and that he had used crime as a pretext to impose his will on Washington. John Finnigan, 55, was taking a bike ride when he ran into the protest in downtown Washington. The real estate construction manager who has lived in the capital for 27 years said Trump's moves were "ridiculous" because crime is down.

"Hopefully, some of the mayors and some of the

residents will get out in front of it and try and make it harder for it to happen in other cities," Finnigan said.

Jamie Dickstein, a 24-year-old teacher, said she was "very uncomfortable and worried" for the safety of her students given the "unmarked officers of all types" now roaming Washington and detaining people. Dickstein said she turned out to the protest with friends and relatives to "prevent a continuous domino effect going forward with other cities."

National Guard is coming to DC from West Virginia, South Carolina and Ohio

Governor Patrick Morrisey, R-W.Va., announced Saturday that he was sending a contingent of 300 to 400 Guard troops to Washington, while South Carolina Gov. Henry McMaster authorised the deployment of 200 of his state's National Guardsmen and Ohio Gov. Mike DeWine said his state would send 150 military police at the request of the US Defence Department.

"West Virginia is proud to stand with President Trump in his effort to restore pride and beauty to our nation's capital," Morrisey said.

The West Virginia activation suggests the administration sees the need for additional manpower after the president personally played down the need for Washington to hire more police officers. Maj Gen. James Seward, West Virginia's adjutant general, said in a statement that members of the state's National Guard "stand ready to support our partners in the National Capital Region" and that the troops' "unique capabilities and preparedness make it an invaluable partner in this important undertaking." (AP)

Mistrust, fear: Complex story behind strained Syria-Lebanon relations

BEIRUT, Aug 17: A lot has happened in just a year on both sides of the Lebanon-Syria border. A lightning offensive by Islamist insurgents in Syria toppled longtime autocrat Bashar Assad and brought a new government in place in Damascus.

In Lebanon, a bruising war with Israel dealt a serious blow to Hezbollah — the Iran-backed and Assad-allied Shiite Lebanese militant group that had until recently been a powerful force in the Middle East — and a US-negotiated deal has brought a fragile ceasefire.

Still, even after the fall of the 54-year Assad family rule, relations between Beirut and Damascus remain tense — as they have been for decades past, with Syria long failing to treat its smaller neighbour as a sovereign nation.

Recent skirmishes along the border

have killed and wounded several people, both fighters and civilians, including a four-year-old Lebanese girl.

Beirut and Damascus have somewhat coordinated on border security, but attempts to reset political relations have been slow. Despite visits to Syria by two heads of Lebanon's government, no Syrian official has visited Lebanon.

Here is what's behind the complicated relations.

A coldness that goes way back

Many Syrians have resented Hezbollah for wading into Syria's civil war in defence of Assad's government. Assad's fall sent them home, but many Lebanese now fear cross-border attacks by Syria's Islamic militants. There are new restrictions on Lebanese entering Syria, and Lebanon has maintained tough restrictions on Syrians entering Lebanon. The Lebanese also fear that Damascus could try to bring Lebanon under a new Syrian tutelage.

Syrians have long seen Lebanon as a staging ground for anti-Syria activities, including hosting opposition figures before Hafez Assad — Bashar Assad's father — ascended to power in a bloodless 1970 coup. In 1976, Assad senior sent his troops to Lebanon, allegedly to bring peace as Lebanon was hurtling into a civil war that lasted until 1990. Once that ended, Syrian forces — much like a colonial power — remained in Lebanon for another 15 years.

A signature of the Assad family rule, Syria's dreaded security agents disappeared and tortured dissidents to keep the country under their control. They did the same in Lebanon.

"Syrians feel that Lebanon is the main gateway for conspiracies against them," says Lebanese political analyst Ali Hamadeh. (AP)

5.8 magnitude quake rocks Indonesia



PALU, Aug 17: A magnitude 5.8 undersea earthquake shook the eastern side of Indonesia on Sunday morning, injuring 29 people, including two in critical condition.

The quake struck 15 kilometres north of Poso district in Central Sulawesi province, according to the US Geological Survey, and was followed by at least 15 aftershocks.

No tsunami warning was issued by Indonesian authorities.

Indonesia's National Disaster Mitigation Agency said most of the injured had been taken to the regional government hospital. Most of them were the congregation attending Sunday morning service at a church, said National Disaster Mitigation Agency spokesperson Abdul Muhari on Sunday.

"Amateur videos showing structural damage to the church have been circulating. Poso Disaster Mitigation Agency continues to conduct rapid assessments in the field to determine the initial impact of the earthquake," Muhari said.

Indonesia, a vast archipelago of more than 270 million people, is frequently struck by earthquakes, volcanic eruptions and tsunamis because of its location on the "Ring of Fire," an arc of volcanoes and fault lines in the Pacific Basin.

In 2022, a magnitude 5.6 earthquake at least 602 people in West Java's Cianjur city, the deadliest one in Indonesia since a 2018 quake and tsunami in Sulawesi killed more than 4,300 people.

In 2004, an extremely powerful Indian Ocean quake set off a tsunami that killed more than 230,000 people in a dozen countries, most of them in Indonesia's Aceh province. (AP)

European leaders to join Ukraine's Zelenskyy for White House meeting with Trump

KYIV, Aug 17: European and NATO leaders will join Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy for his crucial meeting with President Donald Trump, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said on Sunday. The move in relation to the key White House meeting on Monday is an apparent effort to prevent a repeat of the heated encounter Zelenskyy faced when he met Trump in the Oval Office in February.

The European leaders' presence at Zelenskyy's side, demonstrating Europe's support for Ukraine, could potentially help ease concerns in Kyiv and in other European capitals that Zelenskyy risks being railroaded into a peace deal that Trump says he wants to broker with Russia.

Von der Leyen, head of the European

Union's executive branch, posted on X that "at the request of President Zelenskyy, I will join the meeting with President Trump and other European leaders in the White House tomorrow."

In a quick succession on Sunday, a stream of European leaders also announced that they'll be going. They included French President Emmanuel Macron, the Chancellor of Germany, Friedrich Merz, and the Secretary General of the NATO military alliance, Mark Rutte.

The grouped trip underscored European leaders' determination to ensure that Europe has a voice in Trump's attempted peace-making, after the US president's summit on Friday with Russian President Vladimir Putin — to which Zelenskyy wasn't invited. (AP)

Air Canada says it is restarting flights

TORONTO, Aug 17: Air Canada said it plans to resume flights on Sunday after the Canadian government intervened and forced the airline and its striking flight attendants back to work and into arbitration.

The strike stranded more than 1,000,000 travellers around the world during the peak summer travel season.

The country's largest airline said in a release that the first flights will resume Sunday evening but that it will take several days before its operations return to normal. It said some flights will be cancelled over the next seven to 10 days until the schedule is stabilised.

Less than 12 hours after workers walked off the job, Federal Jobs Minister Patty Hajdu ordered the 10,000 flight attendants back to work, saying now is not the time to take risks with the economy and noting the

unprecedented tariffs the US has imposed on Canada. Hajdu referred the work stoppage to the Canada Industrial Relations Board.

The airline said Sunday the Canada Industrial Relations Board has extended the term of the existing collective agreement until a new one is determined by the arbitrator.

The shutdown of Canada's largest airline early Saturday was impacting about 1,30,000 people a day. Air Canada operates around 700 flights per day.

According to numbers from aviation analytics provider Cirium, Air Canada had cancelled a total of 671 flights by Saturday afternoon — following 199 on Friday. And another 96 flights scheduled for Sunday were already suspended.

The bitter contract fight escalated Friday as the union turned down Air Canada's prior

Pak warns of more heavy rains as flash flood death toll hits 327

PESHAWAR, Aug 17: Pakistan's weather department on Sunday warned of heavier torrential rains countrywide, as the death toll from flash floods in the country's north rose to 327, according to authorities. The monsoon rainfall which began on June 26 has wreaked havoc in the country, killing nearly 650 people since then.

The meteorological department issued a heavy rain alert countrywide from August 17 to August 21. It also urged people in northwestern regions to take "precautionary measures".

The National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) also warned that the downpours, which began earlier than usual this year, are expected to continue with greater intensity over the next fortnight.

Flash floods triggered by days of torrential monsoon rains and cloud bursts have killed at least 327 people in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, according to the NDMA.

Over 200 were killed in Buner alone, which is the worst-hit district. At least 137 people were injured as homes collapsed and torrents of water swept away resi-

dents, livestock, and vehicles.

Many people are feared trapped under rubble in remote villages and several remain missing, officials warned.

Rescue operations are underway with nearly 2,000 personnel deployed, but the destruction of key roads, including bridges and link routes, has complicated relief efforts, according to officials.

"Heavy rainfall, landslides and washed-out roads are severely hampering rescue efforts, particularly the transportation of heavy machinery and ambulances," said Bilal Ahmed Faizi, spokesman for Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's rescue agency.

"In some areas, workers are forced to walk long distances to reach disaster sites," he said. "They are trying to evacuate survivors, but very few people are relocating due to the deaths of their relatives or loved ones being trapped in the debris."

Buner's Deputy Commissioner Kashif Qayum Khan said rescuers were forced to find new ways to reach remote areas. "Many more people may still be trapped under the debris, which local residents cannot clear manually."

The Pakistan Army's Corps of Engineers Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) team also launched rescue operations in Buner, Shangla, and Swat, using advanced equipment to locate injured people and recover bodies trapped under the rubble. Army personnel are also working to clear blocked routes and repair damaged bridges to restore access to affected areas.

A villager in Buner told local media that residents kept on searching through the rubble overnight.

Funerals were being held in devastated villages, where survivors continue to search through rubble by hand. "I helped retrieve the bodies of children I taught," said Saifullah Khan, a schoolteacher in Buner. "The trauma is unbearable."

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Ali Amin Khan Gandapur visited Buner on Saturday to review the ongoing rescue, relief, and rehabilitation operations. According to a briefing provided to him, seven village councils the district were hit by cloudbursts, damaging a total of 5,380 houses. So far, 209 deaths have been reported, 134 people remain missing, and 159 others sustained injuries. (PTI)

GOVERNMENT OF ASSAM OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT COMMISSIONER: KARBI ANGLONG: DIPHU

No. ADM-35/23/2024-ADM-KAG/453408

Dated Diphu the 14th August, 2025

PUBLIC NOTICE

Notice is hereby given to all public that M/S Maa Kamakhya Enterprises, Parkup Pahar, Duar Bamuni, Karbi Anglong has applied for No Objection Certificate (NOC) to possess explosive of Class 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 or 7 in a Magazine to be used for blasting work in well, sinking, canal, quarry mines, pipelines works, road works dam works & Legal Govt. Project etc at Khasra/Survey No.: PP No. 277, Dag No. 789, Parkup Pahar, Mouza Duarbamuni, PS: Angjokpani, Karbi Anglong District (Assam). Therefore, in accordance with the Rule 103 sub-section 3 (a) of The Explosive Rule, 2008, this notice is published calling upon the public to submit objections, if any, with reasons, thereof, within a period of 1 (one) month from the date of publication of this Notice before the Enquiry Officer Shri Dipankar Bora, ACS, Executive Magistrate, Diphu, Karbi Anglong.

Digitally signed by
NIROLA PHANGCHOPH
Date: 15-08-2025
07:44:31

Sd/-
District Magistrate,
Karbi Anglong, Diphu

Memo No. ADM-35/23/2024-ADM-KAG/453408-A

Dated Diphu the 14th August, 2025

2nd Inter-Village Knockout Football match organised by ICYM concludes

HT Correspondent
DONGKAMUKAM, Aug 17: The 2nd Inter-Village Knockout Football final match was held at Wakanta Playground on Sunday evening under Bithung Rengthama Constituency, organised by the Indian Catholic Youth Movement (ICYM), Satgaon Parish.

In the final, Jalpara (A) emerged victorious by defeating Boldampara with a convincing score of 4-0.

Jalpara (A) took the lead in the very first half when striker Rebaren Sangma netted cleanly from inside the box. Just 20 minutes later, Silchang Sangma doubled the advantage with a fine finish from Rebaren's simple pass inside the box, making it 2-0.

In the second half, Kasan Sangma sealed the win by scoring twice in the 7th and 34th minutes bringing the final tally to 4-0.

The champions, Jalpara (A), were awarded a cash prize of ₹15,000 along with a trophy, presented by the chief guest Fr. P.J. Joseph, Assistant Parish Priest of Sojong Parish. The runners-up, Boldampara, received ₹7,500 and a trophy, presented by the guest of honour Fr. Abraham Kannatu, Parish Priest of Sojong Parish.

Individual awards were also presented to Abinas Sangma for Best Goalkeeper, Bedel Marak for Highest Goal Scorer and Silchang Sangma for Player of the Tournament. The final match was graced by the presence of Fr. Abraham Kannatu (Parish Priest of Sojong), Fr. Pradip Ekka (Principal, Sojong HS School), Fr. Charles Sangma, Fr. Daniel Sangma, Sr. Superior Mary Hasda, Sr. Sonia Sangma and was witnessed by over five thousand spectators.

North East United outclass Bodoland to set up repeat Shillong clash



HT Correspondent
KOKRAJHAR, Aug 17: Defending champions NorthEast United FC produced a commanding performance to overpower Bodoland FC 4-0 in front of a packed SAI Stadium, marching into the semi-finals of the 134th Indian Oil Durand Cup on Saturday evening.

Moroccan striker Alaeddine Ajarai struck a brace, while Spaniard Andy Garcia and substitute Parthib Gogoi added their names to the scoresheet, as the Highlanders set up a mouthwatering last-four clash against Shillong Lajong FC.

All 43 matches of the 134th In-

dianOil Durand Cup will be broadcast LIVE on the Sony Sports Network (Sony Ten2 HD) as well as livestreamed on the SonyLiv OTT platform.

Vikash Panthi fielded a settled 4-2-3-1 lineup with Diamary in goal and Robinson leading the line, supported by Pranjal and Gwagsar Gayary on the flanks. NEUFC head coach Juan Pedro Benali, reverting to his strong XI after resting players in the group finale, deployed his familiar 4-3-3 with skipper Miguel Zabaco marshalling the backline, Gurmeet Singh in goal, and a potent frontline of Ajarai, Jithin MS, and Lalrinzuala.

The opening quarter-hour saw both teams exchange blows in a frenetic, end-to-end contest. Robinson, Pranjal, and Urjoy Brahma tested Gurmeet at one end, while Ajarai, Lalrinzuala, and Andy forced Diamary into sharp saves at the other. In the 17th minute, Andy's curling free kick from the right nearly crept in, but Diamary parried away at the near post.

The breakthrough arrived in the 29th minute. A defensive lapse from Bodoland allowed Jithin MS to burst down the right and square for Ajarai, who calmly finished past Diamary to silence the home crowd and put the champions

ahead. Substitute Arjun Mardi had Bodoland's best chance to equalise soon after, but he dragged his effort wide, while Junior Onguene was denied by Gurmeet following a clever Robinson pass.

The Highlanders could have doubled their lead on the stroke of halftime when Ajarai was one-on-one with Diamary, but the Bodoland goalkeeper stood tall and drew a foul to keep the deficit at 1-0 at the end of first half.

Bodoland came out aggressively after the restart, but their lack of cutting edge in the final third was punished in the 53rd minute. A flowing move started by Zabaco released Buanthanglung Samte on the left, whose cross was met by Andy Gaitan in the middle. The Spaniard's low strike squeezed past Diamary despite his fingertips, doubling NEUFC's advantage and making it the first goal for Andy for his new side.

Eight minutes later, Ajarai struck again. Thoi Singh's cross from the right found the Moroccan in space, who teased with the goalkeeper and defence before slotting coolly into the net for his second of the evening, effectively sealing the contest at 3-0.

Bodoland, spurred by their vociferous supporters, pushed hard to reduce the margin but were repeatedly thwarted by Zabaco's disciplined backline and Gurmeet's safe hands. In the 74th minute, Redeem Tlang forced Diamary into another acrobatic save from distance.

The final word came deep into stoppage time when substitute Jairo threaded a delightful through ball for Parthib Gogoi, who kept his composure to slot into the far corner and complete the 4-0 rout.

Healy's 137 powers Australia A to consolatory win over India A in final Women's ODI

BRISBANE, Aug 17: Star wicketkeeper-batter Alyssa Healy blazed away to an unbeaten 137 as Australia A picked up consolatory nine-wicket win in the inconsequential third women's ODI against India A here on Sunday.

India had already sealed the three-match series 2-0 after a two-wicket win in the second game on Friday, having also edged the opener by three wickets. Opting to bat first, India rode on opener Shafali Verma's 52 and wicketkeeper Yastika Bhatia's 54-ball 42 to post 216 before being bowled out in 47.4 overs.

Australia A skipper Tahlia McGrath was the pick of the bowlers with 3/49 in eight overs.

Chasing 217, the spotlight belonged to Healy (137 not out off 84 balls), who made light work of the target, punishing the Indian bowlers to all parts of a ground named after her uncle and former Australian wicketkeeping great Ian Healy.

Blending brute power with trademark flair, the Australian national team captain, returning after foot and knee injuries, tore into the bowlers as she peppered the boundary 23 times and cleared it thrice, including a straight six to seal the game.

She was dropped twice -- on 7 and 49 -- and made full use of the

reprieves, powering Australia to victory in just 27.5 overs.

The keeper-batter found an able partner in Tahlia Wilson, who played with composure and fluency for her 59. The duo added 137 for the opening stand. Wilson eventually fell to Radha Yadav.

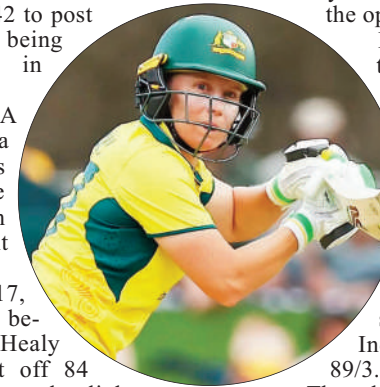
Earlier, Shafali was at her free-flowing best, striking a polished half-century studded with seven boundaries while Nandini Kashyap (28) played the supporting role. The duo gave India a steady start, adding 86 for the opening wicket.

But the introduction of McGrath as she removed Shafali to spark a collapse that saw Kashyap and Tejal Hasabnis (1) depart in quick succession, leaving India wobbling at 89/3.

Though Yastika held the innings together with support from Raghvi Bisht (18) and Tanushree Sarkar (17), McGrath returned to break the resistance, having Yastika caught by Healy as India slumped again, eventually folding for a below-par total.

Brief Scores:
India A 216 all out in 47.4 overs (Shafali Verma 52, Yastika Bhatia 42; Tahlia McGrath 8/40)

Australia A 222/1 in 27.5 overs (Alyssa Healy 137 not out, Tahlia Wilson 59; Radha Yadav 1/46) (PTI)



Sinquefield Cup: Gukesh in familiar territory, Pragm aims for podium

ST LOUIS (USA), Aug 17: World Champion D Gukesh returns to classical chess after a brief hiatus to face a star-studded field at the Sinquefield Cup starting Monday while R Praggnanandhaa will eye a podium finish in the fifth leg of the Grand Chess Tour to strengthen his overall fifth-place standing.

While many argue that the field feels incomplete without world No. 1 Magnus Carlsen, the Norwegian Grandmaster has openly admitted that he no longer enjoys classical chess.

Without Carlsen, the GCT was announced and this is the culmination point wherein the players would qualify for the grand finale slated later this year.

Fabiano Caruana of United States, Alireza Firouzja from France, and in-form Armenian-turned-American Levon Aronian are most likely to pose a stiff challenge for the Indian duo but the rest of the field is also quite impressive as all the nine selected players for the Grand Chess Tour for this year will compete together.

Given his current form in faster

version, Gukesh may not be one of the favourites here but one should be reminded that classical chess is the Indian GM's forte.

Praggnanandhaa, meanwhile, has already cemented his credentials by qualifying for next year's Candidates Tournament, which will decide Gukesh's challenger for the world title.

Both Gukesh and Praggnanandhaa have also chosen to compete in the Grand Swiss in Uzbekistan next month, underlining their intent to win everything.

In the GCT standings, Praggnanandhaa currently leads Gukesh, but consistency will be key as they face seasoned opponents.

Among them, Maxime Vachier-Lagrave remains the man to beat, while 42-year-old Aronian has rediscovered top form.

The former world junior champion and World Cup winner has already bagged two titles in as many weeks -- Freestyle Chess in Las Vegas and the St. Louis Rapid & Blitz. Now it's classical chess and an encore is what his fans are rooting for. (PTI)

Yash Dhull says staying in present and grabbing opportunities are paramount

NEW DELHI, Aug 17: Staying in the present is the mantra Yash Dhull wants to live by as the former India U-19 World Cup winning captain aims to make the most of the opportunities that come his way, like a stunning hundred in the Delhi Premier League here.

In a rain-truncated DPL game here on Saturday, the right-handed 22-year-old set the tone with a 51-ball 105 with 14 fours and four sixes to propel Central Delhi Kings to 197/7, helping them win by 15 runs against North Delhi Strikers.

"I am thinking about how I can grab the opportunity that I have... If you think too much about the future, you can't play well in the present", Dhull told PTI Videos.

"I am living in the present and doing my practice side by side... Yes, batting a bit against the red-ball... the lessons at the National Cricket Academy (now BCCI Centre of Excellence) on how to switch from white ball to red ball cricket are helping me a lot right now", Dhull added.

A heart surgery for a "minor" congenital issue in July last year also led Dhull to pause, reassess, and come back stronger on the cricket field.

"That incident helped me a lot because I got to know what all I



can do... No one was standing with me at that time. I knew I was alone, and I had no choice but to make a comeback. I just kept myself mentally strong," Dhull said.

"(But) I had confidence in myself. I knew I would play again one day and I knew how to make it and how I will make it," he recalled.

If inner strength pushed young Dhull through the toughest times, his coaches shaped the way forward.

"They are the ones who taught me everything. I am blessed to have such good coaches. I have Rajesh Nagar sir and Pradeep

Kochhar sir who have taught me. They must be very happy to see my matches. I am very happy to play under them," he said.

In his debut Ranji Trophy season in 2021-22, he finished as Delhi's leading run-getter with 479 runs in six innings at an average of 119.75, scoring hundreds in both innings of his debut and an unbeaten double century against Chhattisgarh.

Last season was steadier in which 286 runs across seven matches came at 40.90 and two centuries signalling the steady rise after the surgery.

In DPL, Dhull has piled up 292

runs at 146 and a strike rate of 180.25 in five innings, placed third among the leading run-scorers.

But the 2024-25 season brought more than runs; it brought refinement. Dhull's technique now features a subtle trigger movement, a tweak he credits with adding balance to his game.

"You know that you have to make small changes in your life and I just did the same. I am trying to make small changes every day because now everyone is playing at a good level like the IPL plus nowadays video analysis helps oppositions to plan better against you," he said.

"A bowler like Harshit Rana, who is playing international cricket for India, won't let me score if I keep playing the same way," he added. "I am enjoying my game at the moment. I am not thinking too much about my runs, I am taking things game by game and reacting accordingly."

The aspiration to play for India are there but Dhull doesn't think too far ahead.

"It is very important for me to stay in the present because I have made this mistake earlier. I used to think more about the future, I used to think about the past," he said. (PTI)

No place for Babar, Rizwan in Pak squad for Asia Cup and UAE tri-series

LAHORE, Aug 17: Pakistan on Sunday left out seasoned batters Babar Azam and Mohammed Rizwan while announcing their 17-member squad for Asia Cup and the preceding tri-series in the UAE later this month.

Babar and Rizwan, who helped Pakistan to their first-ever ICC tournament win in the 2021 T20 World Cup in the UAE, have been away from the format for a while. Both Babar and Rizwan made their last appearance in the shortest formats in December 2024.

In the lead-up to the Asia Cup which will be played in T20 format in the UAE from September 9, the Salman Ali Agha-led side will play a tri-series against Afghanistan and the hosts UAE at Sharjah from August 29 to September 7.

Pakistan head coach Mike Hesson said Babar has been asked to improve certain aspects of his game.

"I think it's really harsh to challenge a player on their form on three games. Babar played nicely in the first ODI but missed out on the next two," Hesson told reporters during a media interaction.

"There's no doubt Babar's been asked to improve in some areas around taking on spin and in terms of his strike rate. Those are things he's working really hard on."

"A player like Babar has an opportunity to play in the BBL and show he's improving in those areas in T20s. He's too good a player not to consider."

The squad features senior fast bowler Shaheen Shah Afridi, Mohammed Wasim and left-arm bowler Salman Mirza.

Hesson said the players in the current squad, which recently lost an away ODI series to West Indies after losing to Bangladesh in an away T20 series in July, have been doing well.

"But at the moment, the players we have have done exceptionally well. Sahibzada Farhan has played six games and won three Player of the Match awards," he said.

Pakistan are placed along with arch-rivals India in Group A, also featuring the UAE and Oman, in the eight-team Asia Cup tournament which will conclude on September 28.

Pakistan squad:
Salman Ali Agha (c), Abrar Ahmed, Faheem Ashraf, Fakhar Zaman, Haris Rauf, Hasan Ali, Hasan Nawaz, Hussain Talat, Khushdil Shah, Mohammad Harris (wk), Mohammad Nawaz, Mohammed Waseem Jr, Sahibzada Farhan, Saim Ayub, Salman Mirza, Shaheen Shah Afridi, Sufyan Moqim. (PTI)

Chhetri is not there as team playing a preparatory tournament, doors are open for him: Jamil

BENGALURU, Aug 17: Newly-appointed India head coach Khalid Jamil on Sunday cleared the air about the leaving out of talismanic striker Sunil Chhetri from the CAFA Nations Cup national camp, saying it was just a preparatory tournament for the crucial Asian Cup qualifying round matches in October.

Jamil, who succeeded Manolo Marquez's as India head coach earlier this month, on Friday named 35 probables for the upcoming CAFA Nations Cup in Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, with Chhetri missing from the list.

Jamil did not say in so many words but made it clear that Chhetri is expected to walk into the national team for the Asian Cup qualifying round matches against Singapore on October 9 (away) and October 14 (home).

"He (Chhetri) is not there in this camp because we are playing a tournament which will essentially serve as a preparation for our Asian Cup Qualifiers," Jamil said on the second day of the national camp here.

"I also want to try out a few other players during this FIFA window. I had a talk with him about the same. It's always a pleasure to have a player like him in the team, and the door is always open for him."

"Sunil is a legend of Indian football. I have played against him, I've seen him play on numerous occasions, and he is one of my favourite players. He is a role model for Indian football," he said in a release from the All India Football Federation (AIFF).

Placed in Group B of the CAFA Nations Cup, India face co-host Tajikistan on August 29, Iran on September 1 and Afghanistan on September 4. The third-place match and the final will be played on September 8 in Hisor and Tashkent (Uzbekistan), respectively.

The national camp began on Saturday featuring 22 players while the remaining 13, who were doing club duties at the ongoing Durand Cup, are likely to join in a few days. The AIFF has urged all the clubs to release national team play-



ers for the tournament.

The 41-year-old Chhetri took international retirement after playing against Kuwait in June last year but made a return for national duty in the match against Maldives in March this year following a request from Marquez to help the team in the Asian Cup qualifiers third round.

Chhetri has played four matches since then and scored once -- in the

3-0 win over Maldives.

India drew Bangladesh 0-0 and lost to Hong Kong 0-1 in the Asian Cup qualifiers, leaving the country in a difficult position to qualify for the continental showpiece in 2027.

In between India lost 0-2 to Thailand in an international friendly. Marquez quit after the string of poor performance of the team. The CAFA Nations Cup will be 48-year-old Jamil's first interna-