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NEET protests: Apex court mulls formation of SIT for probe SC orders release of U-18 protesters

NEW DELHI, July 28: The Supreme Court on Tuesday restrained states from taking any coercive action against protesters in the recent student-led agitation and directed them to release those under 18 on the condition that none should have any criminal antecedents.

The top court indicated that it might constitute an SIT headed by a former Supreme Court Judge for the investigation.

Hearing a batch of petitions alleging police brutality during demonstrations against irregularities in exams and the NEET paper leak, a bench headed by Chief Justice of India Surya Kant said a fair and independent probe on the matter was required.

"All states are hereby instructed to release children under the age of 18, who have been reported to be arrested or detained in connection with the ongoing protests and who



do not possess any criminal antecedents," the bench directed.

It said if necessary, these children shall be released upon the execution of a simple bond by themselves or their family mem-

bers, especially if such a requirement is insisted upon for surety.

During the hearing, the bench also comprising justices Joydama Bagchi and V Mohana observed, "Whosoever committed excesses,

took law into their hands should be taken to task."

The bench took note of allegations such as the use of pellet guns, lathis embedded with nails, rubber bullets and electric batons on protesters resulting in severe life-threatening injuries to several students and young women.

It directed that Delhi government and other states may proceed with the investigation of the FIRs registered but no coercive measures shall be taken against the protesting students.

"Such protection, nonetheless, shall not be extended to the persons with criminal antecedents," it clarified.

Noting that the bench is mulling an independent, a transparent and thorough probe into all allegations by a task force, the bench said a probe is also required to ascertain the attacks on 250 policemen and whether (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

Financial assistance from Centre assured

Modi reviews Assam flood situation with state MPs

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, July 28: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday held a special meeting with all 13 MPs from Assam to undertake a comprehensive review of the flood situation, said BJP spokesperson Mita Nath Bora.

During the meeting, the Prime Minister expressed profound grief over the devastation caused by the floods and conveyed his heartfelt condolences to the families who have lost their loved ones.

"He reviewed the extent of the damage, the ongoing rescue and relief operations, and the rehabilitation measures being undertaken across the affected districts," an official statement quoted Bora as saying.

As per the statement, reaffirming the government of India's unwavering commitment to the people of Assam, the Prime Minister assured that the Centre would continue to provide every possible assistance for relief, rehabilitation

and reconstruction.

Apart from this, the Prime Minister also announced that financial assistance would be extended by the Central Government to the families of those who lost their lives in the floods, in accordance with the prescribed norms.

Bora stated that underscoring the Centre's prompt response, a five-member Inter-Ministerial Central Team, led by M Ramachandru, joint secretary, Disaster Management Division, Ministry of Home Affairs, continues its on-ground assessment for the second consecutive day.

She further added that the team is evaluating the extent of the damage, reviewing rescue and relief operations, and assessing losses to crops, livestock and public infrastructure to facilitate timely Central assistance for the state's recovery and rehabilitation efforts.

Meanwhile, the Assam Government has simultaneously intensi-

fied relief and rehabilitation measures across the affected districts.

"The government of Assam continues to ensure the uninterrupted supply of food, drinking water, medicines, essential commodities and other relief materials through district administrations, while restoration of roads, electricity, communication networks and other critical infrastructure is progressing on priority," she added.

Complementing these efforts, Bora states that BJP Assam Pradesh committee has announced a major humanitarian relief initiative worth ₹ 12 crore to assist flood-affected families across the state. Under this programme, relief materials will be directly distributed to two lakh women and two lakh children.

"Women beneficiaries will receive traditional Assamese sarees and mekheleasadors, while children will be provided with T-shirts and other (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

Assam govt to withdraw cases lodged against protesters over NEET paper leak

GUWAHATI, July 28: The Assam government has decided to withdraw police cases registered against those involved in protests over the NEET question paper leak and to release those arrested or detained during such demonstrations, an official notification said.

Altogether five cases had been registered in the state in connection with the protests led by students and the youth, resulting in the arrest of 13 people.

An official notification issued late on Monday said those arrested or detained will be released promptly, and no adverse legal action will be initiated against any person involved in the protests.

The notification, signed by the Home and Political Department's additional chief secretary Ajay Tewari, said the decision was taken "after careful consideration of all aspects of the circumstances and the consequent need to strengthen accountability and undertake systemic reforms across the examination and higher education ecosystem".

It said that the process for withdrawing the registered cases, irrespective of the stage of proceedings within the state, will be initiated promptly as per law.

About arrests or detentions already made, the process for reviewing such cases and releasing the persons concerned will be initiated expeditiously, it said.

No adverse legal action will be initiated by any of the police authorities within the state against those persons who have been involved in these protests.

The notification also said that the government does not propose to take any further adverse action against the individuals involved in the protests, and the matter shall be treated as closed without any future proceedings on this account.

Guwahati had witnessed a large-scale protest on July 23 over the NEET question paper leak, demand for the resignation of Union minister Dharmendra Pradhan and express solidarity with activist Sonam Wangechuk and agitating students seeking (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

Assam flood situation improves with no fresh deaths, receding water levels, 4.45 L still affected

GUWAHATI, July 28: Assam's flood situation improved with no fresh fatalities reported, the number of affected people decreasing to 4.45 lakh and water levels receding in several districts, officials said on Tuesday.

A central team visited Sivasagar, one of the worst-hit districts in the current wave of floods, and reviewed the situation in the eastern parts of the state, they said.

The toll is currently at 68 with no fresh deaths recorded and no person was reported missing, an official bulletin said.

The officials said Sivasagar, Golaghat, Charaideo, Jorhat, Nagaon and Kamrup (Metropolitan) continued to be impacted by the floods, but the number of people hit by the deluge decreased to 4.45 lakh.

Charaideo remained the worst-hit district, where 1.88 lakh people remained affected, followed by Sivasagar (1.44 lakh) and Jorhat (74,458).

Till Sunday, the number of affected people was over 5.24 lakh across five districts.

Altogether 90 relief camps remained operational, sheltering 28,695 displaced people. Additionally, 94 relief distribution



centres were also functional, the bulletin said.

The Dhansiri (S) river was flowing above the danger level at Numaligarh in Golaghat district.

Multiple agencies, including the NDRF, SDRF and civil defence personnel, are carrying out the rescue and relief operations.

A total crop area of 37,139.52 hectares was still submerged, while damage to houses, roads and other infrastructure was reported from various parts of the affected districts, the officials said.

A five-member central team led by MHA joint secretary M Ramachandrudu

visited Sivasagar on Monday to review Upper Assam's flood situation with state ministers Keshab Mahanta and Bimal Borah, and local officials accompanying them.

Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, in a social media post, said power restoration work was going on in a phased manner.

"Since this morning, the number of families without power has declined by another 25 per cent. As floodwaters continue to recede, power supply is being restored across more affected areas. I will continue to share regular updates and keep you posted until power is restored to every affected household," he said in the post late on Monday evening.

Sarma also said that with water receding, disinfection and fogging drives across villages have been started to prevent the outbreak of any disease.

Water Resources Minister Susanta Borghain said steps were being taken to bury livestock and animals killed in the deluge.

"The recent floods in Assam have sadly claimed the lives of many livestock. To prevent water (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

All Assam MLAs pledge 1 month salary for flood relief

GUWAHATI, July 28: All legislators of Assam, barring those of the Rajiwar Dal, on Tuesday announced donating their one month's salary for the relief and rehabilitation of the state's flood victims.

The speaker Ranjeet Kumar Dass said he and deputy speaker Habbey Teron will donate one month's salary for flood relief.

"Besides us, all assembly secretariat staff will donate one day's salary for the relief and rehabilitation of the victims," he announced.

Welcoming the gesture, Parliamentary Affairs minister Pijush Hazarika said all BJP MLAs will also donate one month's salary.

The Trinamool Congress' lone MLA in the state, Sherman Ali Ahmed, followed suit and announced donating his one month's salary for the flood-affected areas.

Leader of the Opposition Wajed Ali Choudhury said the Congress has already provided flood relief in the past few days and the party MLAs will donate one month's salary for the cause.

AIUDF Mazibur Rahman said, "Our party president Badruddin Ajmal has donated far more than that from AIUFD. But still, as other members have decided, we will also give our salaries of one month."

AGP MLA Prithiraj Rava announced all the members of the (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

13 infiltrators detected in Assam: CM

GUWAHATI, July 28: Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said that 13 infiltrators have been identified, and appropriate legal action was initiated against them.

He, however, did not mention where the illegal migrants were detected.

"Our Detect, Delete, Deport mechanism is underway to secure Assam's interests. Thirteen individuals have been identified, and appropriate action has been taken to deal with them in accordance with law," Sarma said in a post on X on Monday.

He said the state government will firmly deal with all elements which are detrimental to Assam's security. Nearly 2,100 illegal foreigners (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

Rare flowering plant rediscovered in Assam's hills after 180 years



SILCHAR, July 28: A rare flowering plant, *Rungia mastersii*, which was not seen for nearly 180 years after its discovery, has been spotted again in the jungles of Assam's Dima Hasao district, researchers said on Tuesday.

The rediscovery was made by a team of researchers from Assam University -- Debiyoti Bhatlacharya and Kangkan Kumar Das -- and a research article about it was published in a peer-reviewed international journal recently.

The plant, rediscovered in the Jatinga hills of the district, is noted for its pale green and whitish flowers with delicate purple patterns.

The flowering plant was discovered by J W Masters at an unidentified location in Assam in 1845.

The rediscovery of *R. mastersii* after nearly (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

Assam Assembly passes bills seeking to make better business environment

GUWAHATI, July 28: The Assam Assembly on Tuesday passed several bills intended to facilitate a business-friendly regulatory environment in the state.

The passage of the bills will help the state government take measures like creating a single window task force for a smooth disposal of proposals and reducing the compliance burden on commercial establishments.

The House passed 'The Assam Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (Facilitation of Establishment and Operation) Bill, 2026' with the government saying that the sector is the backbone of employment generation, entrepreneurship and economic growth of the state.

The bill replaced the Assam Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises

(Facilitation of Establishment and Operation) Act, 2020, which was enacted to provide time-bound processing of approvals for MSMEs, Industries, Commerce and Public Enterprises minister Bimal Borah said.

He said that experience gained during the existing Act, the Centre's emphasis on ease of doing business and Business Reform Action Plan (BRAP) framework, and digital clearance mechanism, among others, have necessitated a comprehensive revision of the law governing the MSMEs.

"Accordingly, the state government proposes to introduce The Assam Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (Facilitation of Establishment and Operation) Bill, 2026, which repeals and replaces the 2020 Act," Borah said.

Besides, 'The Assam Shops and Establishment (Amendment) Bill, 2026', introduced by Labour Welfare Minister Rameswar Teli in order to reduce compliance burden on commercial establishments and facilitate a business-friendly regulatory environment in the state was also passed.

"It also intends to align the provisions of the Act with emerging concepts such as digital governance, self-certification, deemed registration, and promotion of 24x7 economic activities, while ensuring adequate safeguards relating to working conditions, employee welfare, safety, overtime and weekly holidays," he said.

The Assembly also passed 'The Assam Ease of Doing Business (Amendment) Bill, 2026', seeking to create a (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

Assam govt to set up new authority to develop townships, satellite cities

GUWAHATI, July 28: The Assam assembly on Tuesday passed a bill, empowering the state government to create a new authority to promote and develop notified townships and satellite cities.

The government had introduced the Guwahati Satellite City Development Authority Bill, 2026 in the assembly, which was taken up for discussion and passage during the day.

In the Statement of Objects and Reasons of the bill, Housing and Urban Affairs minister Kaushik Rai said that it is proposed to set up a new body -- Guwahati Satellite Cities Development Authority (GSCDA).

"The objects of the authority shall be to promote and secure the development of notified township and/or satellite city(ies). The areas

under the purview of the authority shall be as notified by the State Government from time to time," he said.

The GSCDA shall be entrusted with the responsibility of preparing the development plans for such notified areas, Rai said.

Explaining the logic behind establishing the new authority, the minister said Assam has witnessed unprecedented rapid urbanisation and population growth, thereby increasing exponential pressure on existing urban centres, particularly in and around the municipal limits of Guwahati.

The rising demand for healthcare and other state services in these urban centres has resulted in pressure on existing civic infrastructure, environmental stress on natural resources and regulatory is-

suces, he said.

"Concurrently, there is a need to explore, strategise and establish new avenues of economic growth capable of attracting fresh investments, generating employment in a sustained and scalable way," Rai said.

At present, township development, planning and its execution is fragmented across multiple government agencies and inevitably cause overlap in decision-making, he said.

"Therefore, to be able to efficiently address the need and challenges as identified, it is proposed to establish a dedicated centralised institution responsible for identifying future urban growth corridors," the minister said. The proposed body will also consolidate contiguous land, (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

Parl panel summons Instagram, others over social media platforms regulation

NEW DELHI, July 28: A Parliamentary panel has summoned representatives of major social media platforms, including Instagram, along with officials of the ministries of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) and Home Affairs, on August 3 to discuss regulation of social media and digital platforms.

BJP MP Nishikant Dubey, who chairs the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Communications and Information Technology, said the panel has called representatives of Meta (Facebook, Instagram and WhatsApp), Google, X (formerly Twitter) and Snapchat to explain how they protect the privacy of women, children, farmers, rural residents, labourers and the general public, and ensure public order.

The meeting comes days after social media, particularly Instagram, was extensively used by the Cockroach Janta Party (CJP) to

publicise and mobilise participants for its student protest at Jantar Mantar. The demonstrations, which were held over the NEET-UG paper leak and other issues, drew widespread attention online, with videos, reels and live updates from the protest sites being shared across social media platforms.

The 36-day CJP-led agitation at the Jantar Mantar here ended on Saturday after the government accepted key demands of the protesters and Dharmendra Pradhan resigned as education minister.

According to the notice issued on Tuesday, the agenda includes a "briefing by the representatives of (i) Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY); (ii) Ministry of Home Affairs; and (iii) Social and Digital Media Platforms -- Snapchat, Google, X (formerly Twitter), Meta (Facebook and Instagram) on the subject 'Social and (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

GUWAHATI, July 28: As eastern Assam grapples with its one of its worst floods in the recent history, the protection of livestock has emerged as a key challenge as a large number of affected families are dependent on cattle and poultry for their livelihoods, officials said.

While the state government has been providing fodder and veterinary care for the animals, private organisations are also chipping in with their bit.

"During this difficult time of floods, protecting our livestock is equally important," state Animal Husbandry and Veterinary Minister Nilima Devi said in a social media post.

She said that in flood-affected areas of Sivasagar, her department is providing essential feed and veterinary care to ensure the safety and well-being of our animals.

"The government remains committed to protecting every life during this crisis," Devi added. The minister also thanked the non-governmental organisations (NGOs) for extending help during this hour of crisis.

"A heartfelt appreciation to Chandamita Das, Abhay Bora, and their fellow volunteers from 'Ahimsa Helping Hands for Paws Foundation'



and 'Parvah' for their selfless service across multiple locations in Sivasagar," she said.

Devi said providing food and medicines to cows, dogs, cats, pigs, goats and other animals during these difficult times was truly commendable and inspiring.

"I am proud of everyone who came forward with such compassion and dedication. Your kindness reminds us that every life matters," she added.

Another NGO, 'Humane World for Animals India', said it has also launched emergency relief efforts in Sivasagar to support animals and the communities that depend on them.

Working in collaboration with the state Veterinary department and local NGO partner 'Just Be Friendly', the organisation has begun conducting veterinary medical camps, providing treatment and essential medicines to injured and sick animals.

Relief teams are also distributing tarpaulin sheets to vulnerable cattle-owning families to help protect livestock from continued exposure to rain and harsh weather conditions.

Jaihari A K, senior specialist, disaster response at Humane World for Animals India, said, "In Gaurisagar and Nazira, both in Sivasagar district, we saw animals that have been severely dehydrated, malnourished and physically weak after prolonged exposure to floods."

"Many dogs are in visibly poor condition and hungrily consume (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

Company apologises, but govt says explanation not reasonable Meta summoned after PM Modi's post removed

NEW DELHI, July 28: The government has summoned Meta's global head of public policy after the US-based social media company removed Prime Minister Narendra Modi's post, in which he had addressed India's youth and promised stringent measures against paper leaks, sources said on Tuesday.

Sources told PTI that Meta has told the government that a glitch in its automated content filters caused PM Modi's Facebook post removal.

Meta's explanation is not reasonable, and deeper discussions are needed, sources said, adding that the matter is "not settled and done".

They further said that if a glitch in the automated system caused the error, then Meta must improve its tools.

Sources said that the global head of public policy of Meta (Facebook and Instagram) has been summoned by the IT Ministry over the issue.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Instagram post on July 23, later shared on Facebook, had featured his first direct selfie video aimed at engaging with young people and underscoring the government's commitment to crack down on paper leaks, but was subsequently restricted by Meta on Facebook, prompting BJP worker Priti Gandhi to question the platform's actions.

In a post on X, she criticised Meta over the alleged restriction of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's selfie video on Facebook, saying the move raised questions over the company's political bias, transparency and accountability.

"The Prime Minister of the world's largest democracy uploads



his first direct selfie video to connect with India's youth... and Facebook restricts it??? Who gave Meta the authority to decide what millions of Indians should or should not see???" she had said.

She added: "This isn't just content moderation. It raises serious questions about your political bias, transparency & accountability. Respond!!!"

Meta has apologised and admitted that the content was removed "in error" and has since been restored on the platform.

"The content was removed in error and has since been restored," Meta's spokesperson said.

The video, posted on July 23 amid the student protest organised by the Cockroach Janta Party, was Prime Minister Narendra Modi's outreach to youth where he had announced that a bill containing provisions for strong action against paper leaks will be introduced in Parliament.

In that video post, Modi also

said the contours of the bill will be discussed at a meeting of the Union Cabinet the next day (Friday), where the proposed legislation will be finalised.

Over the last few weeks, Meta has faced regulatory scrutiny on a number of issues.

The IT ministry issued a notice to WhatsApp earlier, questioning the Meta-owned platform's proposed username feature, as the government flagged concerns that it could materially increase online fraud, phishing, digital arrest scams, and impersonation attacks. The Centre had also directed WhatsApp not to launch the feature until consultations on the issue are completed "to the satisfaction of the government".

WhatsApp had subsequently assured the government that it would not roll it out in India until discussions are complete.

The government also slapped a stern notice on Meta over Child Sexual Exploitative and Abuse

Material (CSEAM) in paid advertisements on Instagram. MeitY (Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology) ordered Instagram to disable all ads and content promoting and facilitating access to CSEAM, and demanded a detailed explanation bound to a deadline.

Within a few days of that notice, Meta outlined its efforts to combat child sexual abuse material (CSAM) across its apps, highlighting AI-powered detection and large-scale enforcement actions, and, in a blogpost, promised to continue investment in technology and resources to keep young people safe and strengthen its ad review processes.

Just a few weeks back, Meta's announcement of Muse Image, which was then touted as its most powerful AI image generator, drew criticism and user concerns over data privacy, image scraping and consent, and the Indian government had said, at that point, that it will assess Meta's Muse AI image generator under the existing legal framework. Subsequently, however, the social media platform scrapped the controversial feature, which enabled users globally to create AI images using public Instagram accounts.

"We've heard the feedback that this feature missed the mark, so it's no longer available," Meta had said in a global post.

As social media platforms increasingly reshape the contours of digital content, public narratives and data ecosystems, the Centre has stepped up oversight of emerging technologies in the AI era, with a sharper focus on platform accountability and safeguards around user rights, privacy, transparency and consent. (PTI)

EU-ASEAN Business Council urges stronger regional action against illicit trade

HT Bureau
GUWAHATI, July 28: The EU-ASEAN Business Council (EU-ABC) has called for stronger regional cooperation to combat illicit trade, describing it as a growing threat to ASEAN's economic growth, public safety and supply chain resilience.

In a report released ahead of the Philippines' ASEAN Chairship in 2026, the council identified India as a key strategic dialogue partner in strengthening regional efforts to curb illegal trade.

Titled Driving ASEAN Action Against Illicit Trade: A Strategic, Philippines' Priority Economic Deliverables (PED)-aligned Blueprint for the Philippines' 2026 ASEAN Chairship, the report warns that illicit trade undermines economic expansion, government revenues, consumer protection and the stability of regional supply chains.

It calls for coordinated regional action to address the challenge.

The report notes that India's strategic geographical location, enforcement capabilities and increasing emphasis on risk-based trade governance position it to play a significant role in supporting ASEAN's efforts.

It recommends closer cooperation through intelligence sharing, pre-export assurance mechanisms and enhanced enforcement collaboration to promote secure and efficient trade.

Among its key recommendations, the report advocates strengthening institutional coordination through a consolidated platform for intelligence sharing and joint action, harmonising regulatory and licensing frameworks across ASEAN member states, expanding the use of digital tools for

customs risk management, developing common regulatory principles adaptable to different sectors and fostering structured collaboration with the private sector and ASEAN dialogue partners.

Commenting on the report, Navaneel Kar, Managing Director of Philip Morris India, said illicit trade continued to undermine revenue integrity, market transparency and the rule of law.

He said the illicit tobacco trade remained a longstanding challenge requiring sustained attention, reliable data and effective governance.

Kar said the company had focused on improving understanding of illicit trade through analytical research, structured market intelligence and the adoption of global best practices, including voluntary track-and-trace initiatives.

He added that awareness programmes and information shared with law enforcement agencies had contributed to a better understanding of illicit trade patterns in India, while reaffirming the company's commitment to supporting efforts aimed at strengthening transparency, compliance and lawful trade.

EU-ABC Executive Director Chris Humphrey said illicit trade imposed significant economic, social and environmental costs on the region, while also fuelling organised crime and posing risks to public health and safety. He said the Philippines was well positioned to lead ASEAN's response during its 2026 chairmanship and expressed confidence that the report would help guide regional efforts to strengthen economic resilience and safeguard legitimate trade.

Indus Towers extends flood relief to 1,100 families in Upper Assam

HT Bureau
GUWAHATI, July 28: Telecom infrastructure company Indus Towers has expanded its flood relief efforts in Assam, extending assistance to around 1,100 flood-affected families in the districts of Charaideo, Sivasagar and Jorhat as severe flooding continues to affect large parts of the state.

The relief operation was carried out under the company's flagship corporate social responsibility (CSR) programme, Pragati, through distribution centres at Sonari and Teok.

The initiative provided affected families with support kits containing dry rations, hygiene and sanitation (WASH) supplies, and essential medical items to address immediate needs.

Specifically designed kits were also distributed to pregnant women, new mothers and children between six months and two years of age to meet their specific nutritional and healthcare requirements.

Commenting on the initiative, Rajender Gurung, Circle CEO (NESA) of Indus Towers, said the floods had severely disrupted access to food, healthcare and other essential services for thousands of families.



He said the company remained committed to supporting communities during times of crisis and contributing to their recovery and long-term resilience across the Northeast.

Employees of Indus Towers visited the affected areas and interacted with beneficiaries during the relief distribution programme as part of the company's outreach efforts.

The relief drive was implemented in partnership with the Northeast Affected Area Development Society (NEAIDS).

The company said the initiative builds on its recent flood relief efforts in Arunachal Pradesh and reaffirmed its commitment to working with local stakeholders and community partners to strengthen disaster relief, recovery and resilience-building measures across the region.

Contd. from Page 1...

SC orders release

they were by students or some "miscreants". "Be that as it may, the allegations made by the petitioners, prima facie, establish a compelling case for an independent and impartial investigation into the incidents of violence. Such an investigation will adequately address the allegations presented by the family members of the police personnel, as well as the issues raised by the Solicitor General of India," the bench said.

While posting the matter for further hearing on August 3, the top court said in the interest of justice it is giving an opportunity to the Centre and the states concerned to place their versions on record before it considers constituting an independent committee or a Special Investigation Team (SIT).

The top court issued notices to Maharashtra, Bihar, Assam, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, West Bengal and Kerala and asked their advocates general to appear online on the next date of hearing.

The bench issued a slew of interim directions to states where protests were held to preserve CCTV footage, drone recordings, body-camera footage, wireless communication records, PCR logs and other digital evidence pertaining to the protests.

"Although it has already been stated at the bar by the Solicitor General of India, on instructions, we also, as an abundant precaution, direct that all CCTV footage, drone footage, body-worn camera recordings, videography, wireless communication records, and PCR lodge collections related to the students' protest be preserved," it directed.

It also ordered the police authorities to ensure that the personal information and digital data of the protestors, collected during the students' protests, are preserved and are not disclosed to the public domain for the time being.

The bench emphasised that the authorities may not publish any public data/details of the protestors, especially students.

"The NCT of Delhi and other states may proceed with the investigation of the FIRs registered; however, no coercive measures shall be taken against the protesting students. Such protection, nonetheless, shall not be extended to the persons with criminal antecedents," it ordered.

After hearing arguments for various parties, the bench said, "The allegations prima facie warrant consideration of a fair and independent probe, which must also address the concerns of families of over 200 injured police personnel."

The law must take its course once there is violation of "defined protocol", the apex court said, adding that it will disclose details of the composition of the SIT at a later stage.

The CJJ said time has come to collate all legal principles formulated by the courts over the period of time and uniform protocols should now govern the situation of protests.

Taking note of the submissions of lawyers of victims, the bench said a fair probe on protesting NEET students was required.

"Once there is violation of defined protocol, law must take care of it," the bench said.

Solicitor General Tushar Mehta said students will not indulge in violence against police personnel but some "miscreants" were involved in violent incidents.

The Cockroach Janta Party (CJP)-led march on July 20 in Delhi witnessed clashes between protesters and security personnel, who used lathis and teargas shells to disperse crowds to move towards Parliament. The protests escalated and spread to several other states.

The protesters were demanding the resignation of Union education minister Dharmendra Pradhan over the NEET paper leak issue.

The agitation ended on Saturday with Pradhan's resignation and the government agreeing to the demand for compensation to the families of those who had ended their lives and no FIRs against the protesters. (PTI)

Financial assistance from

essential clothing based on their needs. This initiative is intended to provide immediate assistance and restore dignity to families that have suffered severe losses due to the floods," she stated.

All Assam MLAs

party will follow suit, as did Paniram Brahma from BPF. However, the Rajior Dal did not make any announcement. MLA Mehboob Muktar was present in the House, but did not say anything.

The House Speaker thanked everyone for their support. (PTI)

Assam flood situation

contamination and the spread of diseases, the deceased animals are being buried and disposed of scientifically. This is an important step to protect public health and the environment," he said. (PTI)

Assam govt to

education reforms. Students, parents, educators and citizens joined the demonstration, carrying placards and raising slogans for ensuring transparency, accountability and justice for NEET aspirants.

Pradhan had resigned on July 25 amid mounting pressure over the medical entrance test paper leak controversy, with the Centre conceding the principal demand of the Cockroach Janata Party (CJP)-led agitation after weeks of protests that spread from the national capital to several parts of the country. (PTI)

13 infiltrators

have been deported, expelled or sent back from Assam to various countries in the last 10 years, and 2,023 of them were from Bangladesh, the assembly was informed by the government recently. (PTI)

Assam Assembly passes

single window task force dedicated to the coordination and disposal of proposals relating to notified industrial areas.

"Then Bill further provides for a separate module on the existing centralised web portal exclusively for proposals relating to notified industrial areas, and empowers the Single Window Task Force to engage an agency for support in discharge of its functions," Borah said in the Statement of Objects and Reasons of the bill.

Besides, the House passed 'The Assam Jan Vishwas (Amendment of Provisions) Bill, 2026' for amending six laws, aiming at removing "avoidable compliance burden, enabling faster approvals and clearances, and promoting institutional expansion and investment in the state", Borah said.

The assembly passed 'The Assam Tourism (Development & Regulation) (Amendment) Bill, 2026' for changing several existing clauses as well as repealing the colonial era legislation, the Sarai Act, 1867, that regulates all hotels, lodges, inns, guest houses and resorts. (PTI)

Assam govt to

particularly earmarked for planning, developing satellite cities, integrating transport, housing and economic infrastructure with existing civil infrastructure, and raising and deploying funds together with encouraging private investment to be able to realise the goal, he said.

"The concerned institution so established will be a specialised institution empowered to provide strategic direction, integrated planning and efficient execution," Rai added. (PTI)

Rare flowering plant

two centuries proclaims the rich floristic diversity of northeastern India as a whole and Assam in particular, the researchers said.

However, the species remains isolated in distribution and poorly known, and hence, intensive surveys are urgently needed to locate extant populations and evaluate potential threats, they added.

These will facilitate evidence-based planning and the implementation of appropriate management measures, the researchers added. (PTI)

Parl panel summons

digital platforms and their regulation". In a post on X, Dubey said, "On 3 August 2026 at 4 PM, our Parliamentary Committee on IT and Communication has summoned Meta (Instagram, Facebook, WhatsApp), X (Twitter), Snapchat, and Google. How will the privacy of women, children, farmers, rural folks, labourers, and the general public be protected? How do these companies ensure the government's public order?" he said. (PTI)

Livestock protection key

whatever food is offered to them. Buffaloes and other farm animals are forced to eat while standing in contaminated floodwater or thick sludge. Even where water has receded, the land remains covered in mud, and there is little or no grass available for grazing," Jaihari told PTI.

He said the families are doing everything they can to save the animals.

"We have witnessed this in previous flood responses as well -- the greatest challenge often begins after the waters recede," he added.

He said the Animal Husbandry and Veterinary department has been able to provide around 1.5 kg of feed per farm animal per day, but a large animal requires at least 3-4 kg of dry feed daily when green fodder is also available.

"A major gap is the lack of safe temporary shelter for animals. Many families are choosing to remain near their homes in temporary sheds instead of moving to relief camps because they do not want to leave their animals behind," Jaihari said.

He said the animals are being kept in makeshift shelters built with bamboo and tarpaulin sheets, which provide only limited protection from rain, wind and changing temperatures.

They also remain highly exposed to mosquitoes and other insects.

These conditions increase the risk of diarrhoea, respiratory illness, skin and hoof infections, infected wounds, parasitic infestations and vector-borne diseases, Jaihari added.

He said the common health conditions observed include malnutrition, loss of appetite, bloating, severe weakness, downer cow cases, fractures and wounds.

"The team is providing fluid therapy, wound dressing, anti-inflammatory medication, vitamin injections and other treatment as required. The next priorities are continued veterinary care, disease surveillance, feed and hydration support, temporary shelter assistance and follow up care for weak and injured animals," Jaihari added. (PTI)

AFFIDAVIT

I do hereby solemnly affirm and declare that in my father PAN Card bearing PAN No.- BNSPB4304A and Aadhaar Card vide Aadhaar No- 2654 9180 8155 his name has been correctly recorded as Jogen Basumatary. But in my Passport bearing Passport No-N9787250, my father's name has been recorded as Jogen Basumatary instead of Jogen Basumatary.

The above names Jogen Basumatary and Jogen Basumatary are not of different individuals but the same and single person i.e. the name of my father.

I swear this affidavit before the Notary Public, Diphu, Karbi Anglong on 22nd July, 2026, and declare that the above statement made are true to the best of my knowledge and belief and to wish to submit to the concern authorities in support of this document.

Name: Jugal Basumatary
Address: Diphu Police Reserve,
P.O. & P.S., Diphu,
District: Karbi Anglong, Assam,
Pin Code - 7822460,
Mobile No. 8135066269.

AFFIDAVIT

My father's name has been wrongly recorded as "Jit Bahadur Chetri" instead of the correct "Jeet Bahadur Chetri" in his Aadhaar Card vide No. 933011450296 and PAN Card vide ZPC0464.

Therefore, "Jit Bahadur Chetri" and "Jeet Bahadur Chetri" are the same person, i.e., the names of my father. The correct name "Jeet Bahadur Chetri" is also in my EPIC Card Vide No. OYP0004887, Birth Certificate Regd. No. 2595 dt 20/02/2007 in my HS Final Exam Certificate cum Marksheet vide Sl. No. 242220, Roll 0503 No. 10493 in the year 2025.

Deba Chetri,
S/o- Jeet Bahadur Chetri,
Ram Bahadur Chetri Gaon,
Dillai Bazar, PO & PS- Dillai,
Dist- Karbi Anglong, Assam

AFFIDAVIT

I Mehbub Alom, S/o- Bilal Ahmed, Vill-Okek Pather, P.O.- Murajhar, P.S.-Murajhar, Dist-Hojai (Assam) That, my actual and correct name is Mehbub Alom and my father's actual and correct name is Bilal Ahmed and my mother's actual and correct name is Momota Begum. That, in my birth certificate, Admit card wherein my name has been recorded as Mohd Mehbub Alom instead of Mehbub Alom and my father's name has been recorded as Mohd Bilal Ahmed instead of Bilal Ahmed and my mother's name has been recorded as Mrs Momota Begum instead of Momota Begum.

Mehbub Alom

AFFIDAVIT

I Sri Pranab Barman resident of Matkhola Dimasa Gaon, Howraghat, Karbi Anglong would like to mention that in my daughter Aadhaar Card bearing No. 531580936750, her name wrongly recorded as Desri Daudunglangtha instead of her correct name Desri Barman and my name also wrongly recorded as Kishan Daudunglangtha instead of correct name Praban Barman. This is true.

NAME CHANGE

I have Changed my name from Mohammad Kamrul Islam to Kamrul Islam by swearing a notarial affidavit at Srimanta Sankardevnagar, Hojai (Assam)
Kamrul Islam
S/O- Masaddar Ali
Vill-Pachim Jamunagaon,
PO-Koroiguri,
PS-Murajhar,
Dist-Hojai (Assam)

NAME CHANGE

I have Changed my name from Mohammad Masaddar Ali to Masaddar Ali by swearing a notarial affidavit at Srimanta Sankardevnagar, Hojai (Assam)
Masaddar Ali
S/O-Makbul Ali
Vill-Pachim Jamunagaon, PO-Koroiguri,
PS-Murajhar,
Dist-Hojai (Assam)

IMPROVEMENT OF POWER SUPPLY DISTRIBUTION NETWORK

Tender Notice No.: Dy.CEE/PS/MLG/HQ/09/26-27, **Dated:** 23-07-2026. E-Tender are invited by the undersigned for the following work: **Tender No.:** DYCEE-PS-MLG-HQ-09-26-27, **Name of Work:** Improvement of power supply distribution network in Central Gotanagar colony, replacement of overhead lines with underground cables. **Advised Value :** ₹ 2,31,14,120/-, **Estimated Money :** ₹ 4,62,300/-, **Date and time of closing of tender at 15:00 on 14-08-2026.** For complete information with the tender document of above e-tender will be available in the website www.ireps.gov.in

Dy. CEE/PS/MLG/HQ
NORTHEAST FRONTIER RAILWAY
Serving Customers With A Smile

ENGINEERING WORKS IN LUMDING DIVISION

Tender Notice No.: SCL-Engg-56-2026, **dttd:** 15-07-2026. E-Tender are invited by the undersigned for the following work: **SL-1: Brief Description of Item :** Badarpur Jn.-Baraigarh Jn.-Agartala (SL)-TBR-88.900 Tkm under the jurisdiction of Sr.DEN/V/Lumding. **Tender Value:** ₹13,37,99,225.98/-, **Earnest Money:** ₹26,76,000/-, **Date & time of closing of tender at 15:00 hrs. on 17-08-2026 and opening at 15:00 hrs. on 18-08-2026.** Complete information alongwith the tender document of above e-tender will be available up to 15:00 hrs. on 17-08-2026 in the website www.ireps.gov.in

DRM(W)/Lumding at Silchar
NORTHEAST FRONTIER RAILWAY
Serving Customers With A Smile

CIVIL ENGINEERING WORKS AT JORHAT TOWN STATION

E-Tender Notice No. TSK/Engg/37 of 2026 Dated: 22-07-2026. Works tenders through "E" Tendering system for and on behalf of the president of India are invited for the works as detailed below:- **Brief Description of Item:** Construction of new structures, ancillary works and PF surfacing at Jorhat Town station in connection with Amrit Bharat Station Scheme works. **Tender Value:** ₹3,83,26,310/-, **Earnest Money:** ₹7,66,500/-, **Date & time of closing of tender: At 15:00 hrs. & opening at 16:00 hrs. on 14-08-2026.** The complete information with tender documents of above e-tender will be available upto 15:00 hrs. in 14-08-2026 in the website www.ireps.gov.in

DRM (W), Tinakulia
NORTHEAST FRONTIER RAILWAY
Serving Customers With A Smile

District administrations pay tribute to freedom fighter, call upon youth to uphold his ideals of patriotism and public service

Deshbhakti Divas observed across Assam in honour of Tarun Ram Phukan

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, July 28: Deshbhakti Divas was observed across Assam on Tuesday with commemorative programmes held in Karbi Anglong, Nagaon, Morigaon and Kokrajhar to mark the death anniversary of eminent freedom fighter Deshbhakta Tarun Ram Phukan.

District administrations, scholars, public representatives and citizens paid homage to the veteran nationalist leader, highlighting his contributions to India's freedom struggle, social reform and Assam's political awakening.

Our Karbi Anglong Correspondent adds: The district-level programme was held at the Conference Hall of the District Commissioner.

Delivering the keynote address, Satyajit Das, Assistant Professor at Assam University, Diphu Campus, described Tarun Ram Phukan as a leader who transformed patriotism into a mass movement through his leadership, sacrifice and literary contributions.

He said Phukan inspired nationalist consciousness across Assam through his speeches, writings and public life while also contributing to social reform.

Chairing the programme, District Commissioner Aranyak Saikia said Phukan's ideals remained relevant in contemporary governance and public service.

He described the freedom fighter as one of the architects of Assam's national awakening whose values of patriotism, integrity and dedication continued to inspire citizens and public servants.

The programme began with floral tributes and the lighting of the ceremonial lamp.

Our Nagaon Correspondent adds : Nagaon, the district administration, in collaboration with the Office of the District Information and Public Relations Officer, organised a commemorative lecture programme at the Nagaon Zila Parishad Conference Hall.

ence Hall.

District Commissioner Devashish Sharma said Tarun Ram Phukan's sacrifices deserved to be remembered by every generation, noting that he had given up a successful legal career and personal comforts for the country's freedom.

The event featured lectures by Professor Shiromoni Hazarika, Head of the Department of History at Nagaon University and retired professor Sharat Hazarika.

Sharat Hazarika highlighted Phukan's role in establishing the Indian National Congress in Assam, his campaign against opium addiction and his advocacy of progressive social reforms, including awareness on sex education.

Shiromoni Hazarika spoke about lesser-known aspects of Phukan's life, including his literary contributions and his unwavering commitment to Assam.

Our Morigaon Correspondent adds: The 87th Desh Bhakti Divas was observed at Pobitora Hat District Commissioner Anamika Tewari, ACS, who attended as the chief guest, paid tribute to Tarun Ram Phukan and urged the younger generation to emulate his ideals of patriotism, selfless service and dedication to nation-building.

The programme concluded with floral tributes and a reaffirmation of the need to preserve the values for which the freedom fighter stood.

Our Kokrajhar Correspondent adds : the district administration, in association with the District Information and Public Relations Department, organised the observance at the Conference Hall of the District Commissioner's Office.

District Commissioner Pankaj Chakravarty described Tarun Ram Phukan as one of Assam's foremost nationalist leaders and recalled his association with Mahatma Gandhi, who stayed at Phukan's residence in Bharalumukh during his 1921 visit to Assam.



He also highlighted Phukan's distinguished legal career and his role in the freedom movement.

Delivering the keynote address, Dr Ratul Deka, Assistant Professor at Bodoland University, reflected on Tarun Ram Phukan's contributions to the freedom struggle, social reform and nation-building, saying his commitment to justice, humanitarian values and national unity remained relevant today.

The programme also featured cultural performances by students of Kokrajhar Government Girls' Higher Secondary School and members of Sur Bharati Maha Sangeet Vidyalaya.

Across the four districts, speakers called upon citizens, particularly the youth, to draw inspiration from Tarun Ram Phukan's life and continue to uphold the ideals of patriotism, integrity, public service and national unity that defined his enduring legacy.

Our Silchar Correspondent adds : the District Administration, in association with the Regional Office of Information and Public Relations, Barak Valley Zone, observed the 87th death anniversary of Deshbhakta Tarun Ram Phukan with a commemorative programme at the Old Conference Hall

of the District Commissioner's Office.

The observance began with patriotic songs presented by students of Deshbhakta Tarun Ram Phukan Higher Secondary School and Gurucharan University, setting a solemn tone for the programme attended by scholars, educationists, advocates, writers, government officials and members of the public.

Presiding over the programme, Additional District Commissioner Jagriti Kalwar, ACS, described Tarun Ram Phukan as a visionary leader whose courage, public service and leadership shaped Assam's socio-political consciousness.

She stressed the need to familiarise the younger generation with his life and ideals to preserve his legacy of sacrifice and patriotism.

Delivering the keynote address, Dr Ashraf Hussain, Head of the Department of Assamese Literature at Gurucharan University, traced Phukan's journey as a freedom fighter, litterateur and nationalist. Referring to his collection of devotional poems Stutimala, written during imprisonment, Dr Hussain said the work reflected how literature became an instrument of national awakening.

He also highlighted Phukan's role in the 1926 Indian National Congress session at Pandu, Guwahati, describing it as a milestone in Assam's participation in the freedom movement.

Eminent writer and columnist Dipankar Ghosh spoke on Tarun Ram Phukan's contribution to India's struggle for independence and recalled that during his imprisonment in Silchar Jail in 1921, the freedom fighter composed devotional hymns and patriotic verses that were later published as Stutimala.

Offering a legal perspective, senior advocate and District Bar Association Vice-President Tuhina Sharma described Tarun Ram Phukan as an accomplished lawyer, statesman and visionary who regarded the law as an instrument of justice rather

than privilege.

Tracing his career from legal practice in Shillong to leadership in the Assam Legislative Council, she said Phukan upheld constitutional values, peaceful public engagement and the dignity of every individual.

She urged lawyers, administrators and students to uphold justice, humanity and integrity in their professional and personal lives.

Women's College, Silchar Principal Dr Sujit Kumar Tiwari highlighted Phukan's contributions as a freedom fighter, writer and social reformer, noting that he willingly sacrificed personal comfort and professional success for the country's freedom.

He also recalled Phukan's role in translating Mahatma Gandhi's speeches into Assamese, his opposition to the exploitation of tea garden workers in the Surma Valley and his public service during the railway and steamer strike following the Chandpur incident.

He urged students to embrace the ideals of unity, selfless service and national integration.

Vijay Sonar, Principal of Deshbhakta Tarun Ram Phukan Higher Secondary School, said educational institutions bearing the freedom fighter's name had a responsibility to instil his ideals of patriotism and nation-building among students.

Dr Apratim Naug, Principal of Cachar College, also spoke on Tarun Ram Phukan's enduring contribution to Assam's political, social and literary heritage.

The programme concluded with patriotic performances by students of Deshbhakta Tarun Ram Phukan Higher Secondary School and Gurucharan University, while announcer Biplob Biswas conducted the proceedings.

Speakers collectively called upon the younger generation to uphold the ideals of justice, sacrifice, integrity and national service exemplified by Tarun Ram Phukan.

Assam marks World Hepatitis Day with district-wide awareness drives

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, July 28: Health authorities across Sonitpur, Biswanath and Karbi Anglong observed World Hepatitis Day 2026 on Tuesday with awareness programmes highlighting the importance of prevention, early diagnosis and timely treatment of viral hepatitis under the global theme "Let's Break It Down."

In Sonitpur, the District Health Society organised the main programme at the GHIPCO Rehabilitation Centre in Goting, while similar awareness activities were conducted at health institutions across the district.

The programme was attended by senior officials of the Health Department and the National Health Mission, including the Joint Director of Health Services, District Surveillance Officer, District Epidemiologist, District Data Manager (IDSP), District Media Expert and District Community Mobiliser, along with representatives of the GHIPCO Rehabilitation Centre and members of the public.

Health officials explained that viral hepatitis, caused by the Hepatitis A, B, C, D and E viruses, can result in serious complications such as liver cirrhosis, liver cancer and death if left untreated.

Special emphasis was laid on preventing mother-to-child transmission of Hepatitis B, with officials advising that all pregnant women undergo screening, infected mothers opt for institutional deliveries, and newborns receive the Hepatitis B birth-dose vaccine within 24 hours of birth.

Infants born to Hepatitis B-positive mothers should also receive Hepatitis B Immunoglobulin (HBIG) in accordance with medical guidelines.

Officials highlighted the common modes of transmission of viral hepatitis, including unsafe needles and syringes, sharing of razors and toothbrushes, unsterilised tattoo and piercing equipment, and unsafe blood transfusions.

They also informed that free treatment for Hepatitis B and C is available at Kanaklata Civil Hospital and Tezpur Medical College and Hospital.

According to the District Health Society, 4,991 people, including 2,525 pregnant women, were screened for hepatitis in Sonitpur between April and June of the current financial year.

Screening facilities are available across the district, with special camps being organised for high-risk groups, including inmates of Central Jail, Tezpur, residents of rehabilitation centres, people living in forest and tea garden areas, sex workers and truck drivers.

In Biswanath, the district-level World Hepatitis Day Campaign 2026 was launched at Biswanath District Hospital by Dr Jogen Ch Bey, Joint Director of Health Services.

The programme was attended by Dr Eliza Deka, CM&HO-cum-DSO-cum-DNO (NVHCP), Dr Mina Borah, District Immunisation Officer, Dr Ripon Chutia, Superintendent of Biswanath District Hospital, Dr Gunjan Pathak, Blood Bank In-charge, Dr DC Sharma, SDMA&HO of Biswanath Chariali BPHC, representatives of Mahabahu Club and district health officials.

Information, education and communication (IEC) leaflets were distributed among the public to spread awareness about hepatitis prevention, testing and treatment.

Dima Hasao concludes 15-day summer workshop with cultural showcase

HT Correspondent

HAFLONG, July 28: A 15-day Summer Vacation Workshop 2026, organised by the Department of Cultural Affairs in collaboration with the Dima Hasao district administration, concluded on Tuesday with vibrant cultural performances by students at Saraswati Vidya Mandir in Boro Haflong.

The workshop, launched on July 15, was conducted simultaneously at Saraswati Vidya Mandir and PM SHRI Maibang Higher Secondary School under the 113 Haflong Legislative Assembly Constituency.

More than 400 students participated in the workshop at Saraswati Vidya Mandir, where the concluding programme featured performances in music, dance, drama and yoga, showcasing the skills acquired during the training.

The participants also presented



'Mati Akhora' of the Sattriya dance tradition and performed Dr Bhupen Hazarika's iconic song Manuhe Manuhur Babe, both of which were learned during the workshop.

The initiative was organised to provide school students with a constructive platform during the summer vacation while promoting physical fitness, artistic expression and awareness of the region's cultural heritage.

Additional Deputy Commissioner Shaurya Sharma attended the concluding programme as the chief guest.

Assistant Commissioner Junali Devi and Cultural Development Officer Gautam Bodo were present as distinguished guests.

They appreciated the participants and highlighted the importance of nurturing young talent through cultural and creative activities.

NFR cancels, reschedules trains after track subsidence in hill section

HT bureau

GUWAHATI, July 28: The Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR) has cancelled, rescheduled and regulated several trains following the subsidence of railway tracks near New Harangajao station in the Lumding-Badarpur Hill Section.

According to the railway, train operations have been disrupted after settlement of both Line-1 and Line-2 near the station.

At present, all train movements are being operated through Line-3 under strict monitoring and enhanced safety measures.

As a precautionary measure, passenger train services through the affected section have been suspended during night hours between 7 pm and 5 am. During the daytime, trains are being allowed to operate under regulated conditions while the track is continuously monitored.

Railway officials said engineering teams, personnel and heavy machinery have been deployed on a war footing to restore the affected section, and normal train services are expected to resume after the

completion of repair work.

As part of the revised operating plan, Train Nos. 15617 Guwahati-Dullabcherra Express (July 29), 15618 Dullabcherra-Guwahati Express (July 30), 15615 Guwahati-Silchar Express (July 29), and 15616 Silchar-Guwahati Express (July 29 and 30) have been cancelled.

Several other trains have also been rescheduled. Train No 15650 Narangi-Agartala Express will depart at 10.30 pm on July 29, while Train No 15649 Agartala-Narangi Express has been rescheduled to 11.30 pm the same day.

Train No 15609 Guwahati-Sairang Express and Train No 15611 Rangiya-Silchar Express will also depart at 11.30 pm on July 29.

Similarly, Train No 15610 Sairang-Guwahati Express has been rescheduled to depart at 9.30 pm on July 29.

Train No 15612 Silchar-Rangiya Express, scheduled to commence its journey on July 28 and 29, will now depart at 5 am on July 29 and 30, respectively.

ASS appeals for educational material donations for flood-hit students

HT Correspondent

JORHAT, July 28: The Asam Sahitya Sabha (ASS) has appealed to the public to donate books and educational materials for students affected by the recent floods, which have washed away textbooks, notebooks and other essential learning resources in several parts of the state.

In a statement issued from its Central Office in Jorhat, the state's premier literary organisation said many students had lost their study materials in the floods, disrupting their education, and called upon individuals and organisations to extend support.

The Sabha urged people to donate textbooks, exercise books, pens, pencils, slates, scales and other educational materials at its office located at Chandrakanta Handiqui Bhawan in Jorhat.

According to the statement, donations will be accepted from 10 am to 4 pm every day until August 5.

The organisation appealed to the public to participate in the initiative to help students resume their education as normalcy returns to the flood-affected areas.

Book explores historical ties between Khasi-Jaintia and Karbi communities

HT Bureau

DIPHU, July 28: A book examining the historical and cultural relationship between the Khasi-Jaintia and Karbi communities was re-launched at the Jirsong Asong Conference Hall in Diphu on Tuesday.

Titled as "Khasi-Jaintias and Karbis: From Symbiotic History to an Ongoing False Dispute" — Karbi Youth Festival as the Confluence of Two Communities, the book has been authored by Hirofolsberg Rongphar, Assistant Professor at Nehru College, Pailapool, Cachar and a doctoral scholar at Assam University Diphu Campus.

The publication was first released on July 18 at Karbi Hemtun in Laban, Shillong.

The Diphu event brought together scholars, community leaders and members of the Khasi-Pnar and Karbi communities to celebrate their shared cultural heritage and promote inter-community harmony.

The book was formally released by Rev Dr Solomon Rongpi, Senior Pastor of Diphu Baptist Church, in the presence of retired IAS officer Jones Ingti Kathar as the guest of honour.

Augustin Myrten, Assistant Accounts Officer in the Public Health



Engineering Department, and Moniram Teron, Executive Member of the Karbi Students' Association (KSA), attended as special invitees.

Speaking on the occasion, Rongphar said the book explores the historical relationship, cultural exchanges and post-Independence interactions between the Khasi-Jaintia and Karbi communities.

It also examines how the Karbi Youth Festival has served as a platform for strengthening ties between the two indigenous groups.

The author discusses the communities' shared historical associations, cultural traditions, linguistic similarities and folklore.

The book also revisits the legacy

of Karbi warrior Thong Nokbe, offering an interpretation of the Jaintia archery festival Siat Thong as a traditional sporting event rather than a reference to his execution.

The publication also highlights similarities in traditional attire, language and customs, and documents initiatives by organisations such as the United Khasi People Organisation (UKPO) and the All Party Hills Leaders' Conference (APHLC) to preserve peace and foster dialogue between communities in border areas.

Addressing the gathering, Rev Dr Rongpi said books played an essential role in preserving history and truth for future generations.

He said the publication docu-

mented the longstanding friendship and peaceful coexistence between the Khasi-Jaintia and Karbi communities while recognising the efforts of organisations working to maintain communal harmony.

In his keynote address, Jones Ingti Kathar said the historical interaction between the two communities had naturally resulted in shared linguistic and cultural traits.

He cautioned against attempts by external forces to create divisions and urged the indigenous communities of the Northeast to remain united.

Other speakers, including Augustin Myrten and Moniram Teron, described the publication as an important contribution towards promoting mutual understanding and preserving the region's shared heritage.

The programme was attended by more than 50 participants, including a delegation of Khasi-Pnar residents led by village headmen from Nagashank Khasi Village in Donsuri and students of the Department of History at Assam University Diphu Campus.

The event concluded with a prayer led by Rev Dr Solomon Rongpi.

AJYCP seeks relief package, long-term flood measures for Upper Assam

HT Correspondent

NAGAON, July 28: The Assam Jatiyatibadi Yuba-Chatra Parishad (AJYCP), Nagaon District Committee submitted a memorandum to the Chief Minister of Assam through the Nagaon District Commissioner on Tuesday, demanding immediate relief and long-term flood management measures for people affected by the recent floods in Upper Assam.

The memorandum highlighted the situation in the flood-affected districts of Sivasagar, Charaideo, Jorhat and Golaghat and urged the government to take urgent steps to assist affected families.

Led by District President Prabal Sarma and General Secretary Hemanta Das, the organisation placed five key demands before the government. These included ₹20 lakh as one-time financial assistance to the family of each person who died in the floods, ₹5 lakh for every flood-affected family, rehabilitation of homeless families within one month, financial assistance to farmers along with waiver of agricultural loans, and exemption from government taxes and loan repayments for one year for people in the affected areas.

Speaking on the occasion, Prabal Sarma said floods had become a recurring crisis in Assam and called for long-term solutions such as scientific river management and effective erosion control measures.

General Secretary Hemanta Das said the organisation would launch a democratic agitation if the government failed to respond to its demands promptly.

Among those present during the submission of the memorandum were AJYCP Central Committee Organisational Secretary Dipmoni Bora, Education Secretary Githartha Saikia, Executive Member Devashish Das and members of the Nagaon District Committee.

Governor inaugurates conference on animal health security in Northeast

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, July 28: Governor and Chancellor of the Assam Veterinary and Fisheries University (AVFU) Lakshman Prasad Acharya on Tuesday inaugurated a regional conference on "NER Animal Health Security for Viksit Bharat", emphasising that healthy livestock is essential for achieving the vision of a developed India by 2047.

The conference, organised by the College of Veterinary Science at the university campus, focused on strengthening animal health security in the North Eastern Region through research, innovation and improved veterinary services.

Addressing the inaugural session, the Governor said livestock has always been central to India's rural economy, culture and heritage.

He observed that the goal of Viksit Bharat could be realised through healthy livestock, prosperous farmers, environmental sustainability and scientific progress in agriculture. He also highlighted the North East's rich biodiversity and natural resources, saying the region has the potential to become a national model for livestock development by integrating modern science with traditional knowledge.

Stressing the "One Health" approach, Acharya said animal health is closely linked to human health, food security, environmental sustainability and economic development.

He noted that ensuring animal health was not only a veterinary concern but also an important component of nation-building.

The Governor lauded initiatives of the Central Government under Prime Minister Narendra Modi to strengthen the livestock, dairy and fisheries sectors through disease control programmes, vaccination drives, modern veterinary infrastructure and increased investment.

He also appreciated the Assam Government, led by Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, for measures aimed at improving livestock quality, boosting milk production, modernising dairy systems and achieving self-reliance in fish production.

Awareness programme on child marriage held in WKA

HT Correspondent

HAMREN, July 28: A comprehensive awareness programme on the prevention of child marriage was organised at Durbintila Government High School in Zirikindang as part of the Baal Vivah Mukth Bharat (Child Marriage Free India) campaign.

The programme was jointly held on July 27 organised by the District Legal Services Authority (DLSA) and the District Child Protection Unit (DCPU) of West Karbi Anglong.

The initiative aimed to educate students and members of the local community about the harmful consequences of child marriage and the importance of protecting children's rights.

During the session, resource persons highlighted the adverse impact of child marriage on the physical and mental health of children, their education, social development and future opportunities.

They also explained the legal provisions relating to child marriage and stressed the need for greater awareness to prevent the practice.

The programme featured discussions on legal awareness, youth empowerment and the collective responsibility of communities in safeguarding children from early marriage. Officials appealed to parents, teachers, community leaders and students to work together to eliminate child marriage and ensure that every child has the opportunity to pursue education and lead a safe, healthy and dignified life.

Assam floods: Sivasagar survivors recount harrowing escape, face long recovery

SIVASAGAR, July 28: Forced to spend 12 hours atop a wooden divan floating in the floodwaters that engulfed their home in the worst-hit Sivasagar district of Assam, septuagenarian couple Mukul and Bonti Bezborra survived the deluge but lost everything.

Communication ceased when their mobile phone batteries ran out. Rescued by boat 10 days ago from the heart of the eastern Assam town of Nazira, retired professor Mukul Bezborra and his wife now face an uncertain future with nothing but the clothes on their back and a house filled with silt and debris.

In the ONGC Colony in Sivasagar, Madhusmita Borthakur's experience was no less terrifying. She may have been spared by the deluge, but was nearly marooned with her two daughters as the campus got inundated fast.

With her husband out on field duty, she managed to hitch a ride in an open van with her two daughters and spent the next few days at a friend's house.

The deluge that hit Assam over a week ago hit Sivasagar the worst, pushing the death toll this year's flood in the state to 68 and impacting more than six lakh people at its peak. Bezborra and his wife barely survived the horrors of the night of July 19.

"We heard the sound of a raging torrent around 8 pm. There was commotion outside. My wife and I climbed on an old wooden divan we had, where we stored old quilts. The stuff inside was wringing wet while the divan itself was floating with us on top," he recalled.

"The water current was so strong that it toppled the fridge and almira. Nothing survived. We escaped with only the clothes we were wearing."

They were rescued on the morning of July 20 by boats sent out by the administration. As the floodwaters started receding, the couple returned home to find that almost all of their belongings had been destroyed.

Two truckloads of mud and debris were cleared out of his house. Even then, two to three inches of silt remained. "We don't know if we will be able to salvage anything at all," the retired professor of Gargaon College told PTI.

A resident of Nazira town since 1992, Bezborra claimed they had never seen or heard of such a massive flood in the area ever. "There has been waterlogging in the area following heavy rains. But such a deluge was unimaginable." While lamenting his own loss, Bezborra expressed equal concern for others affected by the floods.

"I have some means to put my life back together. My son has also come. But there are many who are still reeling under the flood and have lost even their livelihood," he said, urging expeditious rehabilitation for the affected people.

In the ONGC colony, Borthakur faced an ordeal unlike anything she had ever known. As floodwaters crept higher, she watched helplessly, trapped inside her home with her nine-year-old and three-year-old daughters.

"My husband was away on field duty and was not to return for another week. Though we were relatively safe, I got scared as the water continued to rise with great speed. I didn't have anyone to fall back on if there was any emergency," she said.

The mother of two managed to hitch a ride in an open van with her daughters and spent the next few days at a friend's house in the area, which was miraculously saved from being inundated.

The initial days of the floods were as scary for those living outside, with family and friends residing in the affected areas.

"My sister-in-law and her son live near the Simaluguri railway station in Sivasagar. News showed that the area was under deep water and the train tracks were also damaged. We were scared, but had no means to contact them," a police personnel posted in Guwahati said. He heaved a sigh of relief when his nephew called him up after two days.

The receding floodwaters have brought little relief. For survivors, the first phase of the disaster may be over, but the daunting task of clearing the debris, rebuilding their homes and recovering from the emotional scars has only just begun. (PTI)

Veteran CPI leader Dharma Baruah passes away at 77

HT Correspondent

SIVASAGAR, July 28: Veteran Communist Party of India (CPI) leader and social activist Dharma Baruah passed away at his residence in Demow Sukapha on Sunday night following a brief illness. He was 77.

Baruah, who served as the former district secretary of the CPI and former chairman of the CPI State Control Council, was also the president of the Sivasagar Purani Kirtisinh Sanrakshan Samity.

His wife had predeceased him.

Following the news of his demise, CPI State General Secretary Kanak Gogoi, along with other party leaders, visited Baruah's residence in Demow to pay their last respects and offer condolences to the bereaved family.

A prominent figure in Sivasagar's public life, Baruah remained actively associated with social causes, farmers' movements and workers' rights campaigns for more than four decades.

He was widely recognised for his commitment to public service and his longstanding role in various people's movements in the district.

Leaders and well-wishers paid tribute to Baruah, remembering him as a dedicated political activist and social worker whose contributions to the CPI and to grassroots movements in Assam will be long remembered.

GOVERNMENT OF ASSAM
OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT COMMISSIONER: WEST KARBI ANGLONG:: HAMRERN: CENSUS BRANCH:: Sai-Ali::
Hamren::782486:: (email::dc.westkarbianglong@gov.in)::
No. WKAH/CENSUS-2027/02/QUOTATION2026/63
Dated Hamren the, 27th July. 2026
NOTICE INVITING TENDER
Sealed quotations are hereby invited affixing non-refundable Court fee stamps of Rs.8.25 (Rupees Eight and twenty-five paise) only preferably from the intending Firms having experience of similar nature of work fixation of rates for supply of the following IT & Electronic items, Banner, Mascot, Standee, etc. for Census Operations-2027 in respect of West Karbi Anglong District as per the terms and conditions given below. The NIT will be received at the Office of the District Commissioner cum Principal Census Officer, West Karbi Anglong, Hamren during office hours on or before 02-08-2026 and will be opened on the same day at 5:00 PM The Quotationers/Tenderers or their authorized agents may remain present at the time of opening of the Quotations
The items for which quotations invited are available in the District Commissioner's, West Karbi Anglong, official website in the link https://westkarbianglong.assam.gov.in (latest NIT).
Sd/-
District Commissioner,
West Karbi Anglong, Hamren.
Memo No. WKAH/CENSUS 2027/02/QUOTATION2026/63(A)
WKA/DIPRO/AdvT-103/2026 Dated Hamren the, 27 July, 2026

GOVT. OF ASSAM
OFFICE OF THE INSPECTOR OF SCHOOLS:: KARBI ANGLONG DISTRICT CIRCLE
DIPHU
No. IS/Sec. Teacher/Appt/2025/1940
Dated Diphu the 28/07/2026.
NOTICE
It is for information to all candidates who appeared in the TET Cum Recruitment Written Test Examination, 2026 and declared as qualified for appearing in the Viva-Voice Interview cum Documents verification for the post of Graduate Asstt. Teacher (Arts), Intermediate Asstt. Teacher (Arts), Graduate Asstt. Teacher (Science), Intermediate Asstt. Teacher (Science), Graduate Asstt. Teacher (Hindi) and Intermediate Asstt. Teacher (Hindi) are mentioned below:
In this connection, the qualified candidates are informed to collect their Calling Letter for appearing in the Viva-Voice Interview Cum Documents Verification from 05th August, 2026 to 14th August, 2026 from the O/o the Inspector of Schools, Karbi Anglong District Circle, Diphu during office hours.
Requirement Documents for issue of Calling letter as shown below:
1. Voter-ID.
2. PAN Card.
3. 2 (two) nos. of passport size photograph.
4. Admit Card of Written Test Examination.
NB: Calling Letter is allow to collect by the candidate/applicant only.
Sd/-
Inspector of Schools,
Karbi Anglong District Circle, Diphu.

Roll Nos. of Qualified Candidate for appearing the Viva-Voice Interview Cum Documents Verification for the post of Intermediate Asstt. Teacher (Arts)

Roll No.	Roll No.	Roll No.	Roll No.	Roll No.	Roll No.	Roll No.	Roll No.	Roll No.	Roll No.	Roll No.	Roll No.	Roll No.	Roll No.	Roll No.	Roll No.	Roll No.	Roll No.	Roll No.	Roll No.
2	33	61	95	128	161	205	239	271	301	344	374	419	457	496	544	574	628	683	722
3	34	62	97	130	165	206	240	272	302	345	375	420	458	497	546	576	633	684	724
4	35	63	98	131	166	207	241	274	303	346	376	422	461	498	547	577	634	687	725
10	36	64	99	132	169	208	242	276	304	347	377	423	463	499	548	578	635	688	728
13	37	65	100	133	171	209	243	277	305	348	379	427	464	501	549	579	637	691	731
14	38	69	101	135	173	210	245	278	310	349	380	428	465	502	550	580	638	693	734
15	39	71	103	136	174	212	247	279	313	351	381	429	467	504	551	581	642	694	
16	40	72	105	137	175	214	248	280	314	353	385	431	469	506	552	584	645	695	
19	41	73	107	138	176	216	249	281	318	354	387	434	470	510	553	585	646	697	
20	44	76	109	139	178	217	250	282	320	355	389	436	473	516	554	590	647	699	
21	45	77	114	140	179	219	252	283	321	356	392	437	474	520	555	593	648	700	
22	46	78	115	141	180	220	253	284	325	358	396	438	476	521	556	598	649	702	
23	47	79	116	145	181	221	254	286	326	359	397	440	479	523	559	599	650	704	
24	48	81	117	146	182	223	256	288	327	360	404	441	480	527	560	600	656	707	
25	51	84	120	147	185	224	257	290	334	361	405	444	481	530	561	602	665	708	
26	52	85	121	150	186	227	262	291	336	363	406	445	485	532	563	607	667	709	
27	53	86	122	151	187	230	263	293	338	364	408	446	486	533	566	611	669	710	
28	54	87	123	152	192	231	264	294	339	365	409	447	489	534	567	616	672	712	
29	55	88	124	153	193	232	266	295	340	366	411	448	491	540	570	619	673	717	
30	57	90	125	154	194	235	268	296	341	369	412	449	493	541	571	621	674	719	
31	58	91	126	155	198	236	269	297	342	370	416	450	494	542	572	624	675	720	
32	59	94	127	158	203	238	270	300	343	371	417	451	495	543	573	625	682	721	

Roll Nos. of Qualified Candidate for appearing the Viva-Voice Interview Cum Documents Verification for the post of Graduate Asstt. Teacher (Arts)

Roll No.	Roll No.	Roll No.	Roll No.	Roll No.	Roll No.	Roll No.	Roll No.	Roll No.	Roll No.	Roll No.	Roll No.	Roll No.	Roll No.	Roll No.	Roll No.	Roll No.	Roll No.	Roll No.	Roll No.
1	39	93	137	193	241	303	353	407	453	527	593	651	718	777	878	965			
2	47	97	139	194	243	304	354	409	455	532	594	652	721	778	883	967			
7	50	98	141	196	246	305	357	411	459	534	596	655	724	791	887	970			
10	51	99	142	201	248	307	360	412	466	535	601	661	729	792	890	971			
13	53	101	143	202	250	308	361	413	467	537	603	662	733	793	894	972			
14	55	102	144	204	251	312	362	414	468	540	604	664	734	794	974	901			
16	56	103	145	205	252	315	363	416	471	544	608	665	735	798	903	975			
17	57	104	147	206	253	317	368	421	473	545	609	671	736	799	905	978			
19	58	109	150	208	254	318	370	423	478	547	610	674	738	806	907	982			
20	59	110	155	209	255	322	372	424	481	551	611	676	740	812	983	908			
22	60	111	160	214	256	324	376	425	484	559	615	678	741	815	909	984			
23	64	112	161	216	262	327	379	426	486	560	617	680	752	816	914	987			
24	66	113	162	218	263	329	383	427	488	561	619	684	753	821	917	988			
25	67	117	163	220	264	334	384	432	489	564	626	690	754	822	922				
26	68	119	165	222	265	335	386	434	491	566	627	691	756	830	923				
27	75	120	169	223	267	336	387	436	493	567	628	692	757	835	925				
28	76	121	174	226	272	337	389	438	496	571	630	693	758	836	928				
29	77	122	176	227	280	341	391	439	503	574	631	696	762	843	933				
30	79	123	177	230	283	342	392	440	505	575	635	699	763	848	934				
33	81	124	182	231	284	344	396	441	506	577	637	700	765	849	950				
34	82	126	185	232	287	347	397	443	507	578	639	701	767	850	954				
35	83	128	186	233	291	348	398	444	508	579	640	703	769	856	956				
36	86	129	187	234	292	350	400	445	510	584	642	710	770	866	960				
37	87	132	188	235	296	351	403	448	511	588	646	713	773	867	961				
38	88	134	191	238	301	352	406	452	525	591	648	714	775	869	963				

Roll Nos. of Qualified Candidate for appearing the Viva-Voice Interview Cum Documents Verification for the post of Graduate Asstt. Teacher (Hindi)

Roll No.	Roll No.	Roll No.
7	94	209
12	96	211
13	99	214
16	105	215
21	106	235
25	109	238
26	119	241
30	124	242
31	130	247
35	133	248
39	140	258
43	143	259
45	147	260
46	155	268
49	156	269
50	158	281
58	173	289
61	179	293
64	184	294
67	185	295
74	188	297
80	199	303
81	200	
92	206	

Roll Nos. of Qualified Candidate for appearing the Viva-Voice Interview Cum Documents Verification for the post of Intermediate Asstt. Teacher (Science)

Roll No.	Roll No.	Roll No.	Roll No.	Roll No.	Roll No.	Roll No.	Roll No.	Roll No.	Roll No.
2	27	61	95	132	172	220	263	319	382
3	29	64	96	134	173	221	267	321	389
4	31	65	98	136	174	224	268	326	390
6	32	66	101	137	177	225	270	328	391
7	33	67	103	138	179	228	274	330	392
8	34	68	104	141	180	230	278	331	406
9	35	70	105	142	183	231	281	337	407
10	36	72	106	143	184	232	282	338	416
11	37	75	107	145	188	234	283	339	417
12	39	76	113	147	193	239	284	354	421
13	43	77	114	153	194	240	287	360	422
16	47	80	115	154	196	244	292	363	424
17	50	82	116	157	198	245	293	364	436
19	54	84	117	158	206	246	294	366	437
20	55	85	118	160	207	250	298	367	442
22	56	87	119	162	208	252	300	369	445
23	57	88	123	165	209	253	306	374	454
24	58	90	124	167	211	254	307	377	
25	59	91	127	169	216	260	311	378	
26	60	94	130	170	217	262	313	380	

Law enforcement authorities in the region disputed the death toll

14 activists killed, dozens injured in clashes with security personnel in PoK: JAAC

ISLAMABAD, July 28: At least 14 activists of the banned Joint Awami Action Committee (JAAC) were killed and more than two dozen injured in clashes with law-enforcement personnel during the first phase of elections for the so-called legislative assembly in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK), the organisation claimed on Tuesday.

Law enforcement authorities in the region disputed the death toll and accused JAAC protesters of opening fire on security personnel.

The JAAC has been holding a series of protests in PoK since last month over 12 contentious seats of the so-called regional legislative assembly. It alleges that the establishment manoeuvres these seats to install a prime minister of its choosing. India on July 14 had described the protests in PoK as a "direct consequence" of Islamabad's decades-long "systemic exploitation and administrative oppression" in areas under its "forcible" occupation and criticised the police brutality on the protesters.

India maintains that the entire Union Territories of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh are integral and inalienable parts of it.

As the first phase of polls was held on Monday on 13 seats, the JAAC held a long march from Rawalakot towards the regional capital Muzaffarabad.

The JAAC claimed that its activists were killed when law-enforcement personnel opened fire on participants of the long march. The party's claim could not be independently verified.

JAAC core committee member Abid Shaheen told BBC that around a dozen activists had been killed and more than 20 wounded during clashes on Monday.

Another committee member, Imtiaz Aslam, put the death toll at 14 and said those killed included Usman Nazir, younger brother of JAAC founding member Umar Nazir.

Shaheen claimed the bodies had been taken to a medical camp near Drek, where the JAAC has been staging a sit-in for one-and-a-half months. The JAAC also denied that its marchers were armed, saying they carried only sticks. The claim was rejected by PoK police chief Captain (retd.) Liaquat Ali Malik, who alleged that protesters possessed modern weapons and were targeting security personnel.



Malik said the reported deaths could not be verified until bodies were recovered, officially recorded or brought to hospitals for post-mortem examinations.

He recalled that during an operation against the JAAC last month, the group

had claimed 400 deaths, whereas five fatalities had been recorded officially.

Malik, however, confirmed that a Rangers personnel was killed and two others wounded in firing during the clashes. Two police personnel were also injured. He said the JAAC activists po-

sitioned in the mountains opened fire on police and security personnel after darkness fell as the protesters attempted to advance towards Rawalakot.

According to a Rawalakot district administration officer, around 3,000 protesters had marched towards the city from Drek, while another group of around 2,000 approached from the bus terminal side. The authorities prevented the protesters from entering the city.

In Poonch region, police claimed that armed groups associated with the banned JAAC attempted to enter Rawalakot and opened fire on law-enforcement personnel after being asked to disperse, injuring two policemen. The police also accused JAAC-linked social media accounts of circulating fabricated videos and distorting facts to mislead the public.

JAAC executive council member Shaheen, however, rejected the allegations and accused law-enforcement personnel of opening "unprovoked fire" on a peaceful long march. He vowed that the march would continue to Muzaffarabad.

The confrontation comes amid weeks of protests by the JAAC over its demand

for the abolition of 12 legislative assembly seats reserved for Kashmiri refugees.

The group began protests and a long march across PoK on June 9. Before Monday's violence, 40 people had reportedly been killed during the unrest, including 34 protesters and six police and paramilitary personnel.

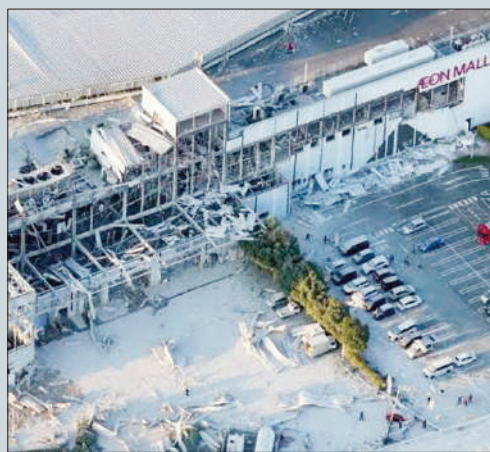
The government had opened negotiations with the JAAC to end the protests before the so-called legislative assembly elections, but the talks have so far failed to yield a settlement. The government banned the JAAC last month.

The first phase of the elections was held in Mirpur on Monday. Polling in Muzaffarabad is scheduled for Aug 2, while voting in the Poonch division will take place on Aug 10.

The authorities have suspended Internet services in the Kashmir region. Besides, there has been a complete media ban in Pakistan on the coverage of the JAAC protest.

There are 53 seats in the so-called PoK legislative assembly - 45 are directly elected, while eight are reserved for women, technocrats and clerics. (PTI)

Magnitude 7.1 earthquake shakes part of southern Japan but no tsunami detected



TOKYO, July 28: An earthquake registering a magnitude of 7.1 shook Kumamoto on Japan's southern main island of Kyushu late Tuesday afternoon, causing damage and injuries, officials said. A tsunami advisory was temporarily issued but was lifted within two hours, the Japan Meteorological Agency said.

The agency said the tsunami advisory covered the nearby Ariake and Yatsushiro Seas on the western coasts of Kumamoto, Nagasaki, Fukuoka and Saga prefectures about 900 kilometres southwest of Tokyo.

The US Geological Survey initially said the earthquake had a magnitude of 7.1, but revised it later to 6.8.

Japan's Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi, in a message posted on X, said her government has set up a task force to gather information, assess possible damage and prepare for rescue operations if needed.

Takaichi later told reporters that there have been reports of a number of injuries and damages to

roads, bridges and buildings, as well as blackouts and fire, though details are still unclear. Takaichi warned people cooking to be careful with fire and with shards of broken glass.

Kyodo News agency said a hospital in Yatsushiro city accepted about 40 people with injuries from the quake. A train was derailed and fell on one side at the Yatsushiro station, and stone walls were damaged at the Kumamoto castle, Kyodo said.

Japan's Fire and Disaster Management Agency said there were no reports of damage to major public facilities and infrastructure, though authorities were still assessing the extent of damage. Local fire departments received many emergency calls reporting fires and damage to homes.

"We are putting people's lives as the top priority," Takaichi said, urging residents in the strongly shaken areas to use caution in light of possible aftershocks.

Shinji Kiyomoto, JMA's Earthquake and Tsunami Countermeasures planning officer, told a news conference that the shallow earthquake was triggering active seismic activity in the area, urging residents to especially be cautious over the next two to three days. He said, however, that no tsunami was observed from the inland quake. Japan's Nuclear Regulation Authority said no abnormalities were found at three nearby nuclear power plants.

Shinkansen bullet trains and local trains in Kyushu have been suspended for safety checks, while the runway at the Aso Kumamoto Airport was closed, with "no prospect of resuming operations" according to a notice on the airport's website.

The Japanese Defence Ministry said it dispatched aircraft to the area to assess the situation.

Kumamoto was hit with a deadly quake in 2016 that left more than 50 people dead, 1,800 injured and tens of thousands of homes damaged or destroyed. (AP)

UN chief makes rare Cyprus visit to help ease decades-old ethnic division

NICOSIA (CYPRUS), July 28: UN Secretary-General António Guterres on a rare visit to Cyprus said Tuesday he was demonstrating his commitment to resolving the island nation's decades-old ethnic division, even as expectations remain low for a speedy breakthrough leading to a peace accord.

"I will do everything I can to support the Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots in this very important moment," Guterres said after talks with Greek Cypriot President Nikos Christodoulides.

The UN chief also met with Turkish Cypriot leader Tufan Erhman and was scheduled to hold joint meetings with both later Tuesday and Wednesday.

The first visit by a UN chief in 16 years came during renewed efforts to resume formal peace talks after a nearly decade-long hiatus. The last major push, which Guterres mediated in 2017, collapsed in recriminations over who and what was to blame for the impasse.

A Cyprus peace deal would help unlock the eastern Mediterranean's potential as a provider of natural gas for Europe and beyond while easing tensions in a turbulent region with competing interests over energy, territory and influence.

Numerous rounds of UN-mediated talks have shared the same fate since 1974, when the island was divided following a Turkish invasion prompted by an Athens-



backed coup with the stated goal of union with Greece.

Turkish Cypriots declared independence in the island's northern third in 1983 but it's only recognised by Türkiye, which maintains more than 35,000 troops there. Cyprus joined the European Union in 2004, but only the internationally recognised south enjoys full benefits.

A few months before his UN term expires, Guterres wants to convene a wider meeting to involve top diplomats from Cyprus' guarantors — Greece, Türkiye and Britain — to declare a formal start to peace talks. It is hoped a declaration would offer momentum to the process so that Guterres' successor could see it through.

Guterres told Christodoulides he's fully aware a Cyprus deal would have "not only a very positive impact for Cyprus, but will be extremely useful in the context of a very difficult situation of the region."

Cyprus government spokesman Constantinos Letymbiotis said the fact that Guterres has devoted his personal time to the visit "signals that there can be progress."

But hurdles to a peace deal remain. A UN-endorsed outline of a deal in the form of a federated Cyprus made up of Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot-administered zones has been in place for decades, but time has hardened each side's position and driven them farther apart. (AP)

Firefighters say they've never seen anything like Spain's record blaze

BARCELONA, July 28: Spanish firefighter Javier Garcia has never faced anything like the record blaze raging near Madrid in his two decades protecting woodlands and rural communities.

"This doesn't have a precedent," Garcia told The Associated Press by phone before another long day ahead.

The out-of-control fire has consumed 500 square kilometers (193 square miles) — an area five times the size of Barcelona — and forced 25,000 people to flee villages in the smoldering hills of Avila west of Madrid, the capital.

The ferocity of Spain's largest recorded wildfire is forcing firefighters to fundamentally change their tactics, prioritising evacuations and property protection due to the danger posed by fast-moving walls of flames and blazes too powerful to attack directly.

"The evolution is alarming," Garcia said.

Before, his brigade would tackle fires in the wilderness. Now they are a last line of defence, focused on saving lives. No deaths from these fires have been reported, while 79,000 people have fled their homes from the Avila fire, another fire nearby in the Madrid region and one in eastern Castellon. (AP)

Kuwait ratifies defence cooperation pact with Pak

ISLAMABAD, July 28: Kuwait has ratified a defence cooperation agreement with Pakistan, three years after it was signed, marking another step in Islamabad's efforts to deepen military engagement with Gulf countries, according to a media report.

The agreement, which was approved and published in the official gazette, Kuwait Al-Yaum, on Sunday, will remain in force for five years and will be automatically renewed unless either side opts to withdraw.

The deal establishes a framework for cooperation between the armed forces of Pakistan and Kuwait, covering military training, education, intelligence sharing, logistics, defence technology, research and exchanges of expertise to strengthen institutional military ties, the Kuwait Times reported.

Last year, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia signed a defence agreement under which the two countries agreed to deepen military cooperation through intelligence sharing, joint training, military exercises and defence technology collaboration.

Pakistan is reportedly pursuing broader security arrangements with countries such as Qatar and Türkiye as well.

The Pakistan-Kuwait agreement provides for cooperation in military manufacturing, electronic communications systems, scientific research, military media, and cultural and sports activities, the Kuwait Times report said.

A joint military committee will oversee implementation of the agreement, including organising military exercises, official visits and other joint programmes, it said.

It added that the ratification follows a series of recent high-level contacts between Kuwaiti and Pakistani military officials aimed at expanding defence coordination. (PTI)

China hits back at criticism over excess industrial capacity

HONG KONG, July 28: China pushed back Tuesday against claims of overcapacity in the world's second largest economy, ahead of the release of results of a US probe on the matter that could result in new tariffs.

Massive capacity in a slew of Chinese industries, from automaking to solar panels, cement and steel manufacturing, among many others, has drawn increasing attention from Beijing's trading partners in recent years. Although China's own leaders have made rebalancing the economy a priority, slowing domestic demand has prompted companies to expand into markets overseas. Surging exports pushed China's trade surplus to a record of nearly USD 1.2 trillion last year.

China has never sought a large trade surplus, the Ministry of Commerce said in a report titled "China's Position on the So-called Excess Capacity Issue." It took aim at recent talk of a "China shock 2.0" due to excess capacity.

"The US and other Western countries have come up with the so-called China shock 2.0," falsely accusing China's industrial development of posing threats to western countries' monopoly," said the report, alluding to assertions of an earlier shock to trading partners from China's ascent as a manufacturing power.

"This is not supported by facts and totally untenable," the report said.

Tuesday's document echoed remarks by China's No. 2 official, Premier Li Qiang, at the World

Economic Forum's "Summer Davos" meeting in the northeastern Chinese city of Dalian. Li said that instead of a "China Shock 2.0," recent trends should be viewed as a "China Opportunity 2.0."

The US is expected to soon announce findings of an investigation of 16 economies, including China, relating to excess capacity and production in their manufacturing sectors. The probe is widely expected to result in increased tariffs on some countries.

On Friday, the US imposed higher tariffs of 10 per cent to 12.5 per cent on 60 economies, including China, saying they had failed to effectively enforce a ban on goods produced with forced labour. Many countries including China protested that move. (AP)

'He didn't dress like that before he was starting to build Kentucky Fried Chicken' KFC founder Colonel Sanders' personal items, former home and restaurant up for auction

SHELBYVILLE (US), July 28: KFC founder Colonel Sanders' pressure cooker, black bow tie and dozens of other personal items are up for public auction, along with his former home and a dinner house Sanders opened after selling his iconic restaurant chain.

Harland Sanders, still known as the face of the worldwide chain originally known as Kentucky Fried Chicken (KFC), established the Shelbyville property as the first headquarters of his restaurant business in the late 1950s.

He sold the property, which included his home and the Claudia Sanders Dinner House, in 1974 to Tommy and Cherry Settle, who have run the restaurant since then.

"Colonel Sanders was the original celebrity chef," said Bill Menish, whose firm, The Menish

Group, is conducting the auction. "The feedback has been worldwide, so we needed to have an auction that would cater to that worldwide audience."

Online pre-bidding concludes with a live, in-person auction for the Sanders memorabilia on Tuesday evening. Sealed bids for the restaurant and Sanders' former 5,000-square-foot (465 square-metre) home, which he named Blackwood Hall, will be taken until Friday.

Sanders' personal watches, an original cash register, his cutlery set, a bust sculpted by his daughter and a commercial gas range from the colonel's former residence are among the items up for bidding.

Sanders sold KFC in 1964 to a group of investors, but continued as a brand ambassador for the company.



Menish called Sanders a "marketing genius" for creating the character of the colonel.

"He didn't dress like that before he was starting to build Kentucky

Fried Chicken," Menish said. "He adopted the colonel: the clothes, the bow tie, the glasses, the goatee."

One of the most intriguing

pieces could be a personal 1964 planner with a handwritten herbs and spices recipe that was later the subject of an early 2000s lawsuit filed by the KFC Corp to keep the contents private. KFC later dropped the legal action, saying after reviewing the planner, the ingredients didn't match Sanders' secret blend of 11 herbs and spices, and it was likely a recipe for stuffing.

"What a keepsake," Menish said.

One of Sanders' signature black bow ties is also up for auction. The highest online bid for the tie was more than USD 2,000 on Monday.

Auctioneer Jonathan Klunk said there's a little-known secret behind the bow tie.

"Not a lot of people know, he did wear clip-ons," Klunk said. (AP)

Criminal gangs increasingly lure people to work in online scam centres, UN migration agency warns

GENEVA, July 28: The UN's migration agency is warning that criminal networks have been trafficking hundreds of thousands of people — many of them educated English speakers — to work in online scam centres, and the caseload is growing.

The International Organisation for Migration says victims are often lured by fake job advertisements — mostly through social media — promising work abroad, only to get locked up, have their identity documents seized, and forced through violence, threats and "debt bondage" to participate in the online scams.

"We're seeing so many more of these cases emerge right now," IOM Director-General Amy Pope told reporters in Geneva on Tuesday. "We're seeing victims from over 80 different countries being trafficked into the scams."

"They're recruiting people who often speak English very well, who often have graduate degrees, some level of education," Pope said, adding that the cases are "specifically playing out across Asia."

The migration agency cited estimates from the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime that losses across east Asia, Australia, and New Zealand reached as much as USD 114 billion last year, and "scam compounds" across the region could hold hundreds of thousands of trafficked workers.

IOM said it had assisted over 3,500 such victims of forced criminality between 2022 and 2025, people who originated from nearly 40 countries: people from Indonesia, India, Sri Lanka, Ethiopia, Kenya, and Bangladesh were most affected. (AP)

Sharif's PML-N wins 9 seats out of 13 in first phase of PoK polls amid violence

ISLAMABAD, July 28: The Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) won nine out of 13 seats in the first phase of elections held in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir, the Election Commission said on Tuesday.

There were allegations of massive rigging in the first phase of the polls held on Monday, in which the Pakistan's People Party (PPP) won the remaining seats.

The elections for 45 contesting seats in the so-called legislative assembly in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK) are happening in three phases between July 27 and August 10 amid widespread violence.

India maintains that the entire Union Territories of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh are integral and inalienable parts of it. New Delhi also asserts that Pakistan has been in "illegal and forcible occupation" of parts of these Union Territories.

On Tuesday, India described the ongoing elections in PoK as an attempt by Islamabad to camouflage its illegal occupation and hide its "grave" human rights violations in the region.

"The current cosmetic electoral exercise is nothing but an attempt by Pakistan to camouflage its illegal occupation and hide its grave human rights violations in the region," External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said in New Delhi. (PTI)

Ojing Tasing stresses capacity building for stronger grassroots governance

HT Correspondent

PASIGHAT, July 28: Arunachal Pradesh Minister for Panchayati Raj and Rural Development Ojing Tasing on Tuesday underscored the need to strengthen grassroots governance by empowering rural institutions and enhancing the capacity of officials and elected representatives.

Addressing a one-day orientation programme for Panchayati Raj and Rural Development functionaries in Pasighat, Tasing said similar programmes were being organised across the State to ensure wider participation and reinforce the government's commitment to holistic rural development.

He urged officers, officials and elected representatives to share the knowledge gained during the orientation at the village level so that the benefits of various government schemes reach every eligible citizen.

Highlighting the significance of the 16th Finance Commission, the

minister said effective implementation of development programmes required practical understanding and efficient problem-solving at the grassroots.

He called upon officials and public representatives to act as facilitators of development and appealed to citizens to contribute towards the vision of Viksit Bharat.

Tasing also stressed the need for effective implementation of flagship schemes, including the Swachh Bharat Mission (Gramin), SPR, G-RAM-G and other rural development programmes aimed at improving livelihoods and creating opportunities for unemployed youth.

Advisor to the Minister Taniya Soki said capacity-building initiatives were essential for strengthening Panchayati Raj Institutions and improving rural governance.

He emphasised the importance of enhancing digital literacy among grassroots leaders and pro-

moting better coordination between elected representatives and government officials.

Earlier, East Siang Zilla Parishad Chairperson Ruth Tabing Boko welcomed the participants and encouraged them to actively engage in the technical sessions to improve their understanding of rural development schemes, grants and Panchayati Raj administration.

The orientation programme featured technical presentations on the Schedule of Rates (SOR), Outcome-Based Service Rating (OSR), the 15th Finance Commission, convergence of government schemes, Swachh Bharat Mission (Gramin), VB-RAM-G, SECURE and the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY).

The programme concluded with a vote of thanks proposed by East Siang Deputy Commissioner (In-charge) Pebika Lego, IAS, Additional Deputy Commissioner (Headquarters).

Oppn urges Mizoram MPs to vote against it in Parliament

MNF opposes FCRA Amendment Bill



educational institutions and charitable organisations that depend on foreign assistance.

"The MNF is firmly opposed to the FCRA Amendment Bill. We expect the state's MPs in both the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha to strongly oppose it and not simply abstain during the voting," he said.

Mizoram has one MP each in the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha, and both belong to the ruling Zoram People's Movement (ZPM)

Ralte, who is leader of the opposition in the state Assembly, said the proposed amendments to the law would make it significantly more difficult for organisations to receive foreign contributions, adversely affecting schools, orphanages and other institutions in Mizoram.

"As Christians, we strongly oppose these amendments because they will have a far-reaching impact on institutions serving the

people," he said. The senior MNF leader also alleged the proposed law would further centralise the regulation of foreign funds, while introducing stricter provisions relating to organisational assets.

He said the party had already made its opposition public and added that the MNF president Zoramthanga, who is currently in New Delhi, would also raise the issue with senior Central leaders.

Lalchhandama further pointed to efforts by the governments of Nagaland and Meghalaya, saying their chief ministers had already met senior leaders in New Delhi along with church representatives to voice their concerns over the proposed amendments.

Mizoram should adopt a similar approach, the leader said.

Officials said that the Mizoram government is planning to submit a memorandum to the Centre, highlighting its concern and changes to be made in the proposed amendment. (PTI)

Names of 1.5 lakh Meghalaya voters marked under absent, shifted, dead and duplicate category



SHILLONG, July 28: Nearly 1.5 lakh of Meghalaya's total 23.49 lakh voters have been marked under the absent, shifted, dead and duplicate (ASDD) category during the ongoing Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls, the Chief Electoral Officer BDR Tiwari's office said on Tuesday.

Those placed under the ASDD category account for 6.37 per cent of the state's total electorate.

The list includes 74,851 deceased electors, 28,826 absent voters, 37,914 shifted electors, 5,899 duplicate entries and 2,166 cases where enumeration forms were refused, according to an SIR status report issued by the CEO's office.

The statement came a day before

the house-to-house distribution and digitisation exercise is scheduled to end. It said that the electors who fail to submit their verified forms before the deadline risk exclusion from the draft electoral roll, which will be published on August 5.

The election authorities have urged electors to submit their completed enumeration forms to Booth Level Officers or through the online voter service portal.

The report said 99.62 per cent of enumeration forms have been distributed across the state, while 22,78,071 forms, or 96.95 per cent, have already been digitised.

However, 2,24,435 forms, representing 9.55 per cent of the total, are yet to be geographically mapped, with Ri-Bhoi recording the highest percentage of unmapped forms at 23.45 per cent, followed by South West Khasi Hills at 14.53 per cent.

Ten of Meghalaya's 12 districts have achieved 100 per cent distribution of Enumeration Forms, while East Khasi Hills continues to be the state's largest electoral district with 6,32,146 electors, senior election officials said. (PTI)

Tripura govt partners with NSE to boost financial literacy, entrepreneurship



AGARTALA, July 28: The National Stock Exchange on Tuesday signed MoUs with a government training institute in Tripura and its Industries & Commerce and Skill Development departments to boost financial literacy and entrepreneurship in the state, officials said.

Chief Minister Manik Saha, Industries & Commerce Minister Santana Chakma and NSE Chief Regulatory Officer Ankit Sharma were among those present at the MoU signing ceremony here, they said.

In a social media post, Saha said, "Tripura signs landmark

tem.

"With this initiative, SIPARD has become one of the first government training institutes in India to establish such a strategic partnership with NSE, setting a benchmark for institutional collaboration in capacity building and financial education. Together, we are building a financially aware, skilled and future-ready Tripura," the CM asserted.

Later, speaking to reporters, Saha said the state has several public sector undertakings (PSUs) that can raise funds through the stock market.

"Our PSUs depend on the government's budgetary allocation, which often falls short to undertake major initiatives. It will be better if these PSUs could raise funds through the capital market to implement their projects," he said.

Chief Secretary J K Sinha said the northeastern state received a "massive response" during the recently concluded 'Destination Tripura' business summit, "where 466 MoUs with investment proposals of ₹ 1.29 lakh crore were signed". (PTI)

Rijiju lauds Khandu for completing 10 years as Arunachal CM



ITANAGAR, Jul 28: Union Minister Kiren Rijiju called on Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister Pema Khandu at Parliament House in New Delhi and congratulated him on completing 10 years as the chief minister of the northeastern state.

Commending Khandu's leadership, Rijiju said Arunachal Pradesh has achieved historic milestones in infrastructure, the social sector, and governance reforms over the past decade.

"Met Hon Chief Minister of Arunachal Pradesh, Shri @PemaKhanduBJP ji, at Parliament House today. Congratulated him on completing 10 years of tenure. Under his leadership, the state has witnessed historic milestones in infrastructure, social sector and gov-

ernance reforms," Rijiju posted on X on Monday. Expressing his gratitude, Khandu thanked the Union minister for his support and attributed the state's developmental strides to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision.

"Thank you, Hon'ble Union Minister Shri @KirenRijiju ji, for your continued support and guidance. Under the visionary leadership of Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri @narendramodi ji, Arunachal Pradesh has witnessed remarkable transformation across all sectors, with unprecedented development reaching every corner of the state. Together, we remain committed towards Team Arunachal for a stronger and Viksit Arunachal," the CM wrote on the microblogging platform. (PTI)

Four militants arrested in Manipur



IMPHAL, July 28: Four militants belonging to various proscribed outfits were arrested in two districts of Manipur for their alleged involvement in extortion activities, a police statement said on Tuesday.

Two active members of the banned SOREPA were apprehended from Nungoo Lamkhai area under the Sugnu Police Station limits in Kakching district on Monday, it said.

A 21-year-old active cadre of the outlawed People's Liberation Army was arrested from an abandoned house at New Lambulance in Imphal East district on the same day, the police said.

A cadre of the proscribed Kangleipak Communist Party (MFL) was held from Langdum Lamkhai in Imphal East district, the statement said.

Security forces have been conducting search operations and area domination exercises in the fringe and vulnerable localities across all districts of Manipur since ethnic violence broke out three years ago.

More than 260 people have been killed and thousands rendered homeless in ethnic strife between Meiteis and Kuki-Zo groups since May 2023. (PTI)

NSF seeks modalities for regulation of fees in pvt institutes

HT Correspondent

DIMAPUR, July 28: The Naga Students' Federation (NSF) on Tuesday urged the Nagaland government to constitute a high-powered committee within one month to formulate the modalities of the proposed Nagaland Non-Government Educational Institutions (Regulation of Fees) Act.

In a representation to the chief secretary, the federation urged the government to formulate a comprehensive policy as proposed within three months and enact and implement the Act within six months.

It said it had been consistently examining the establishment and functioning of educational institutions, wherein private institutions continue to foster quality education and achieve commendable academic results in Nagaland.

While acknowledging the credibility of these institutions, the NSF said it is equally important to monitor their recognition, establishment, and functioning to create an environment where institutions can grow and perform effectively.

After an extensive study of the matter, the federation concluded that the state government should enact the

Nagaland Non-Government Educational Institutions (Regulation of Fees) Act to safeguard the interests and well-being of students, teachers, and educational institutions.

It stated that the purpose of the proposed policy is to regulate fees and admissions in private and professional educational institutions to prevent arbitrary fee hikes and the harassment of students and parents.

"It should also regulate the salaries of teachers employed in private institutions, who are often deprived of their rightful remuneration," the NSF said.

It said the regulation of fees through a systematic policy should take into consideration factors such as the location of the institution, the infrastructure available, the classes or courses offered, the qualifications of teaching and non-teaching staff, salary components and annual increments, expenditure incurred per student in relation to the total income of the institution, and other relevant parameters.

The policy should, however, be framed after taking into account the concerns of all stakeholders so that it serves as a valuable asset for the state, the federation added.

11 stolen two-wheelers recovered, two minors among six held



ITANAGAR, July 28: Six people, including two minors, were arrested after 11 stolen two-wheelers were recovered from their possession in Arunachal Pradesh's Itanagar, police said.

The operation was conducted in the Nirjuli area near here following an investigation into a theft case, Itanagar Capital Region Naharlagun Superintendent of Police (SP) Nyelam Nega said on Monday.

Two dedicated investigation teams led by Sub-Inspector Topi Josam and Sub-Inspector Gopal Tok carried out coordinated field operations, technical surveillance, and intelligence gathering to trace the accused and recover the vehicles, a police statement said.

The overall operation was supervised by Assistant Superintendent of Police Rishi Longdo and Nirjuli Police Station officer-in-charge Inspector Tadu Hasang, it said. The SP has urged the general public to remain vigilant and take necessary precautions while parking their vehicles, especially at night.

He also advised owners whose two-wheelers were reported missing in recent months to contact the SDPO Naharlagun or the Nirjuli Police Station with valid documents to verify and identify the recovered vehicles. (PTI)

Moral objection by church elders, locals cannot shut legal liquor shop: Meghalaya HC

SHILLONG, July 28: The Meghalaya High Court has observed that moral objection by church elders and locals cannot be a ground to deny the operation of a legally licensed liquor outlet that complies with the state's Excise Rules.

While hearing a petition by the owner of the shop, Justice HS Thangkiew directed the authorities to permit the owner to operate the Indian Made Foreign Liquor (IMFL) retail outlet at Danakgre in West Garo Hills district.

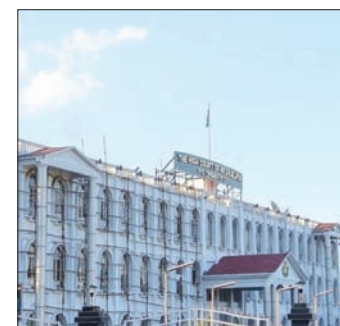
In its order issued on Monday, the high court held that she had fulfilled all statutory requirements for shifting the shop from Jengjal market.

The petitioner had obtained a no-objection certificate from the local 'Nokma' or village head, secured permission from the Excise Department to shift the outlet in January 2025 and possessed a valid licence.

However, she alleged in her petition that the Superintendent of Excise directed her to close the shop following objections from local church leaders and members of a development committee.

The court noted that official inquiries found no violation of the Meghalaya Excise Act and Rules and confirmed that the outlet was situated beyond the mandatory 200-metre distance from places of worship, educational institutions and hospitals.

It held that the objections raised



by the respondents were based "on moral grounds, rather than legal or other substantial grounds" that would justify revoking the licence or preventing the shop from operating.

The court also took note of official reports stating that another licensed restaurant-cum-bar was operating about 105 metres away from the petitioner's outlet and that illegal liquor sales were rampant in the area, observing that the presence of a legal retail outlet could help curb bootlegging.

While reiterating that there is no fundamental right to trade in liquor, the court said that once a licence is granted in accordance with the law, it creates a legal right that cannot be taken away except through due process.

Holding that the petitioner's licence and permissions were valid and that the objections lacked legal merit, the court directed the authorities to allow her to operate the liquor outlet at the relocated site. (PTI)

NU study on biological health in Assam's tea plantations

HT Correspondent

DIMAPUR, July 28: A collaborative team of researchers from Nagaland University and other research institutes across the country has generated insights on climate variability effects on soil microbes & biological health in Assam's tea plantations. The team studied how seasonal variations in climate affected soil microbial communities and enzyme activities across five representative tea estates at Jorhat in Assam.

The study provides new insights into how climate variability, soil health, and microbial activities are interconnected, which has implications for sustainable and climate-resilient tea cultivation in North-East India.

Tea productivity and quality have become increasingly affected by climate variability. Soil microorganisms and enzymes play a crucial role in balancing soil fertility and nutrient cycling. However, there is limited information on how climate change is affecting the biological processes of tea plantations in Northeast

India. In order to address this gap, the researchers conducted a comprehensive multi-year assessment of seasonal bacteria in soil and fungal communities and other associated enzymes. The study offers one of the first comprehensive multi-year assessments (2016-2019) of seasonal microbial dynamics across several tea estates in Assam.

The study has integrated microbiological, biochemical, climatic and advanced statistical analyses within a single research framework. The researchers used probability distribution fitting, correlation analysis, hierarchical cluster analysis and principal component analysis (PCA) to understand ecological variability and characterise soil biological responses under different climatic conditions.

The findings were published in the Journal "Environments" (<https://www.mdpi.com/2076-3298/13/6/314>).

Researchers have identified climatic conditions that support microbial activity and demonstrated strong positive relation-

ships between microbial abundance and soil enzyme activities. It is also found that more than 80% of the variability in the biological data was explained by the first three principal components, demonstrating the robustness of the statistical analyses. Hierarchical cluster analysis successfully grouped tea estates based on microbial and enzymatic characteristics. The study establishes soil microbial communities and enzyme activities as sensitive indicators of environmental change and sustainable tea production.

Explaining the study, co-author of this study Prof. Tanmoy Karak, department of soil science, School of Agricultural Sciences, Nagaland University, said, "We attempted to determine seasonal thresholds that favour beneficial microbial communities and also understand how climatic variables regulate soil biological processes. The study establishes soil microbial communities and enzyme activities as sensitive indicators of environmental change and sustainable tea production."

No.DDB/BTC/NIT/05/2026-27/978

NOTICE INVITING TENDER

Date 28/07/2026

The Block Development Officer, Dotma Dev. Block, Dotma, BTC Kokrajhar, invites sealed bids affixing non-refundable Court Fee Stamp of Rs.8.25(Rupees Eight and Twenty-five Paise) only from the approved and eligible contractor of Class-I (A, B, C), Class-II or Class-III categories registered with Assam PWD (Roads Buildings)/Irrigation/PHE Deptt. for the following work under P&RD Deptt. under 15th FC (Tiet) for the year 2025-26 during 2026-27. The tender Form will be issued from the office the undersigned from 03/08/2026 at 11.00AM up to 20/08/2026 at 12.00 Noon. The submission of tender bids will commence from 11.00AM on 28/07/2026 and continue up to 2.00PM on 20/08/2026 at the Office of Block Development Officer, Dotma Dev. Block, Dotma. The tender box will be opened on 20/08/2026 at 3.00 PM. The tender fee shall be submitted in the form of DD/Banker Cheque in favour of the Principal Secretary, BTC and the Bid Security (EMD) shall be submitted in the form of DD/Banker Cheque/FD in favour of the Block Development Officer, Dotma Dev. Block, Dotma. The TIA reserves the right to accept or reject any bid/tender and to cancel the bidding process and reject all bids at any time prior to contract award. For further information, interested bidders may visit the office of the undersigned during office hours.

Sl. No.	Name of Activity	Estimated value (In Rs.)	EMD/Bid Security (In Rs.1% ST, SC & 2% Others)	Tender fees (in Rs.)
1	Const. of Community Toilet at Laokriguri Village	Rs. 17,85,833.00	1% for reserve category & 2% for unreserve	Rs. 550.00
2	Const. of Community Toilet at Rannogor Village	Rs. 17,85,833.00	1% for reserve category & 2% for unreserve	Rs. 550.00

Sd/-

Block Development Officer,
Dotma Dev. Block, Dotma

IPR(BTC)/C/2026-27/934

'I built a genuine connection and enjoy credibility among the people' Apologise if my remarks on violence against protesters in Kashmir hurt anyone: Mehbooba

SRINAGAR, July 28: Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) president Mehbooba Mufti on Tuesday apologised for her remarks made at Jantar Mantar that appeared to be justifying the use of force against Kashmiris, saying she meant to say that security forces have an "excuse" in the valley due to militancy.

"If the remarks have hurt the people, I apologise," Mehbooba said addressing a press conference here on the occasion of the party's 27th foundation day.

Mehbooba visited Jantar Mantar on July 23 to extend support to the Cockroach Janta Party-led protest against alleged examination irregularities.

While opposing police action against student protesters in Delhi, the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) chief appeared to defend the use of pellet guns in the valley in the past and faced backlash over it.

The former J-K chief minister on Tuesday clarified that she



meant to say the words "bahana banta hai" -- that security forces get an excuse to use force against Kashmiris as there is militancy in the valley but what "it slipped out" as she was "talking to a lot of people".

Mehbooba said the video of her remarks was real, not fake or AI-generated. She said her remarks were given a different meaning, and sought an apology from the people.

"If my incomplete statement caused pain or hurt to my people who consider me one of their own and hold high expectations of me, I sincerely apologise for it," she added. She claimed that whenever her party speaks up, "not only the people in Delhi" but political parties in J-K also "feel threatened".

"Attempts are made to damage my credibility because I haven't accumulated wealth, built mansions, or indulged in luxuries. In-

stead, I built a genuine connection and enjoy credibility among the people," she said.

The PDP president said Chief Minister Omar Abdullah went to Jantar Mantar to seek statehood and should have also stood there for the youth of J-K.

"Omar went to Jantar Mantar for statehood. What difference would it have made if he stood there for two minutes for the youth of J-K. I went there, but I did not on my own."

"The children from Jammu and Kashmir invited me over the phone because Kashmiri students outside often face hardship in colleges, universities and hostels and they thought Mehbooba will go there and it will perhaps help them. I went there, and said that today, the entire India has become Jammu and Kashmir," she said.

She accused the National Conference (NC) of blowing her remarks out of proportion. "But, I am not bothered." (PTI)

JK CM asks departments to increase pace of capital expenditure



SRINAGAR, July 28: Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Tuesday directed departments to accelerate the pace of capital expenditure (CAPEX) and ensure timely utilisation of funds.

The chief minister chaired a high-level review meeting on CAPEX at the Civil Secretariat here and directed all departments to significantly accelerate the pace of expenditure, emphasising that timely utilisation of available funds is critical for infrastructure development, public service delivery and sustained economic growth, an official spokesman said.

He said Abdullah underscored the need for focused attention on departments lagging in expenditure and cautioned against the practice of delaying spending until the closing months of the financial year.

"To have money and not spend it is incompetence. This is very difficult to justify. Not having money is easier to explain, but it is impossible to explain when funds are available and remain unutilised," the chief minister said while addressing the meeting.

He said the review was intentionally convened at the beginning of the financial cycle rather than towards the end of the year so that corrective measures could be taken in time and departments could utilise the remaining working season effectively.

"There is still ample working season available in both the Kashmir Valley and the Jammu plains. There should be no reason why funds already released are not spent appropriately. Every department must give this focused attention," he said.

Reviewing the implementation of the Special Assistance to States for Capital Investment (SASCI), the chief minister directed departments to ensure full utilisation of allocations under the scheme, warning that any unspent amount during the current financial year would reduce Jammu and Kashmir's allocation in the next fiscal.

Abdullah stressed that every rupee available under SASCI Part-I must be utilised and instructed departments to identify eligible projects without delay. The chief minister also directed ministers to personally review reform-linked targets under the scheme on a fortnightly basis so that Jammu and Kashmir could qualify for additional financial assistance under the reform component of SASCI.

"The earlier we implement the specified reforms, the sooner we receive additional funds and the more time we will have to utilise them productively," he said.

The chief minister asked departments to immediately begin work on projects where administrative approvals and tendering had already been completed, saying that such projects could initially be funded through the CAPEX budget and later shifted to the reform-linked component of SASCI once additional funds become available.

He directed departments to prepare a robust pipeline of projects for the next financial year instead of waiting for funding before identifying development works. Expressing concern over the inability of some departments to identify projects despite the availability of financial resources, the chief minister remarked that the government's challenge had shifted from shortage of funds to inadequate project preparedness.

He advised departments to revisit the development priorities submitted by MLAs during the Budget consultations and utilise proposals, particularly projects exceeding the ₹ 2 crore threshold, for inclusion under future SASCI funding.

Abdullah also instructed departments to initiate administrative approvals and other statutory formalities well in advance so that projects for the 2027-28 financial year remain implementation-ready as soon as funds are sanctioned. (PTI)

Committed to engaging with youth, incorporating their suggestions into policymaking: Rajasthan CM



JAIPUR, July 28: Rajasthan Chief Minister Bhajanlal Sharma on Tuesday said the state government is committed to engaging with youth, and incorporating their suggestions into policymaking.

He said the government is working to fulfil the aspirations of youth across sectors, from education and sports, to jobs and self-employment, also emphasising their role in building a developed India and Rajasthan.

Addressing a programme titled 'Sapno Ki Udaan' at the chief min-

ister's residence here, Sharma said thoughtful, disciplined and value-driven youth form the foundation of a progressive society.

"Youth are full of new ideas and energy. Our government is committed to engaging with them and incorporating their valuable suggestions into policymaking, including the budget," he said.

Highlighting steps taken by the government, Sharma said over 1.78 lakh youths have been provided government jobs in the past two-and-a-half years, while re-

RSS condemns Mohandas' controversial remarks, says views are personal

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, July 28: The RSS on Tuesday condemned the controversial remarks made by right-wing political observer T G Mohandas on the recent students' agitation in New Delhi, saying they were his "personal thoughts" and deserved to be denounced.

In a statement, senior RSS functionary K B Sreekumar clarified that Mohandas was not an RSS officer-bearer at any level.

"T G Mohandas's comments on the recent protest are his personal thoughts. He is not an RSS official at any level. RSS doesn't agree with his views, and they should be condemned in the highest possible manner," Sreekumar said.

The clarification came a day after Mohandas's remarks triggered widespread protests in Kerala and on social media, prompting the pro-CPI student outfit All India Students' Federation (AISF) to lodge a police complaint against him.

Mohandas allegedly said in a



YouTube video that the Delhi students' protest over the NEET paper leak "could lead to incidents of gang rape and that there would be no complaints against that since those attending the protest like rape and there are girls who enjoy being raped."

In the same video, he also allegedly said that, if he were in charge, he would impose a curfew, order the crowd to disperse, and then open fire if they refused, claiming that although some people would be killed or permanently injured, the situation would be brought under control within hours and the bodies shifted to hospitals.

No paper leak case in Punjab, oppn lying: Minister Harpal Singh Cheema

CHANDIGARH, July 28: Punjab Finance Minister Harpal Singh Cheema on Tuesday rejected the opposition's charge of a paper leak in the state, claiming that it is trying to spread lies against the AAP government.

Addressing the media here, Cheema said there has been no paper leak in the past four years of the Bhagwant Mann government.

Opposition parties have been attacking the Mann government over the issue of a cheating racket detected recently in a pharmacy officer recruitment exam and are demanding the resignation of Education Minister Harjot Singh Bains and Health Minister Balbir Singh.

On July 19, Punjab Police dismantled a highly sophisticated, interstate cheating racket operating during the pharmacy officer examination. A total of seven key conspirators and 28 candidates were held. Police also recovered 27 battery-operated wireless cheating devices.

Cheema said, "There has not been a single case of paper leak in Punjab. Opposition parties are trying to mislead our youths."

Referring to the pharmacy officer exam, the minister said some youths in the exam were caught cheating using electronic means.

"There is nothing more than that. The opposition is lying. It does not have any issue against the Bhagwant Mann government and that is why it is trying to create a fake issue," he charged. Nearly 7,000 candidates appeared in the exam for 454 pharmacy officer posts across 25 examination centres in Faridkot, Kotkapura and Ferozepur.

On the recent lathi-charge on sanitation workers in Barnala, Cheema said a special investigation team has been formed to probe the matter and action will be taken against anyone who is found to have misused power. (PTI)

In Lok Sabha, DMK MP Maran calls for scrapping NEET

NEW DELHI July 28: DMK MP Dayanidhi Maran on Tuesday reiterated his party's demand for scrapping NEET, arguing that the proposed amendments to the anti-paper leak law do not address what he described as the fundamental problem with the medical entrance examination.

Speaking during a debate on the Public Examination (Prevention of Unfair Means) Amendment Bill, 2026 in the Lok Sabha, Maran said Tamil Nadu had consistently opposed NEET since its inception and accused the Centre of ignoring the state's concerns.

"Enough is enough, ban NEET, abolish NEET. Do not go for 'One India, One Examination'. Our strength comes from our diversity," he said, alleging that 26 students in Tamil Nadu had died by suicide till date over the examination.

The former Union minister said that NEET was designed against first-generation learners and students from state boards while promoting coaching centres.

"The bill they are bringing today - you are not addressing the core



issue which is that NEET. It is not necessary. DMK and Tamil Nadu were the first to voice their opposition to NEET due to the fundamental flaws in its design. Our warnings were never heard," he said.

Citing official figures, he said around 22 lakh students appear for NEET annually, about 12 lakh qualify, but there are only around 1.39 lakh undergraduate medical seats.

"What happens to the remaining students? Imagine the trauma they go through... It has been a decade since NEET was introduced. Has the quality of doctors improved? Has infant mortality suddenly fallen? Has rural healthcare improved? Has India's doctor short-

fall disappeared? If the answer to all these is no, why do we need NEET?" he asked.

Maran also referred to alleged examination irregularities over the years, including the 2015 AIPMT paper leak, 2018 CBSE question paper leak, 2024 NEET controversy and the 2026 paper leak allegations.

Referring to reports that Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Facebook post on paper leaks was briefly removed before being restored, he said the government had summoned Meta after the incident, while MPs themselves were facing restrictions on platform use.

Maran claimed he and NCP (SP) MP Supriya Sule were unable to use WhatsApp broadcasts for three days because of forwarding limits.

"Today by mistake a Facebook post by the PM was removed, and the government called Meta chief to explain. But this is happening to MPs," he claimed.

He also alleged that Meta smart glasses had been used to record protesting students, following which police reached their homes. (PTI)

SAD (Punar Surjit) delegation meets Punjab gov, raises several issues

CHANDIGARH, July 28: A delegation of the Shiromani Akali Dal (Punar Surjit) on Tuesday met Punjab Governor Gulab Chand Kataria here, raising several issues including the release of 'Bandi Singhs' and the reopening of the Kartarpur corridor.

The delegation comprised Prem Singh Chandumajra, Parminder Singh Dhindsa, Gaganjit Singh Barnala and Karnail Singh Panjoli.

'Bandi Singhs' are those Sikh prisoners who were convicted for being involved in militancy during Punjab insurgency in the 1990s.

The delegation also sought the intervention of the governor in allowing Jagtar Singh Hawara, a convict in the then Punjab chief minister Beant Singh's assassination in 1995, to meet his ailing mother.

The SAD (Punar Surjit) also sought the commutation of the death sentence of Balwant Singh Rajoana, a convict in the 1995 assassination case.

"We request you to kindly pursue the matter with the government of India and urge it to take an early and compassionate decision in accordance with law and constitutional principles," according to a memorandum submitted to Governor Kataria. The delegation also demanded immediate conduct of the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC) general elections, saying the tenure of the elected body has long expired, and the democratic process of conducting the elections deserves immediate attention.

The delegation further demanded reopening of the Kartarpur corridor. The Kartarpur corridor, which facilitates devotees to pay obeisance at the historic gurdwara Darbar Sahib in Pakistan, has been shut since May 7 last year when the Indian armed forces carried out pre-dawn missile strikes on nine terror targets in Pakistan and Pakistan-Occupied Kashmir.

On the issue of 'Bandi Singhs', the delegation submitted that repeated memorandums and representations have been submitted seeking the release of Sikh prisoners who have already completed the sentences but remain incarcerated. (PTI)

UP BJP MLA proposes 'Youth Advisory Council' to bridge generational gap in policy-making

NEW DELHI, July 28: Uttar Pradesh BJP MLA Rajeshwar Singh has proposed creation of a youth advisory council at the state and the national level to enable the new generation, especially the Gen Zs, to become an integral part of policymaking in specific subjects of education, AI, competitive exams and startups among others.

The four-page letter by the Singh, a former Enforcement Directorate officer, was sent to UP Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath and Union Education Minister Pralhad Joshi on Tuesday. It comes in the backdrop of the nationwide Cockroach Janata Party (CJP) protests, largely led by Gen Z students, following the NEET-UG 2026 paper leak case that led to the resignation of Dharmendra Pradhan as the Union education minister.

According to the legislator, the proposed Youth Advisory Council would function like the advisory council of experts to the prime minister.

They would act as police makers on subjects like youth employment, education, Artificial Intelligence, competitive examinations, and the digital economy.

"The next phase of governance should empower young people not



merely as beneficiaries of government programmes but as active partners in shaping public policy," the letter stated.

"The proposed council will enable youth to share their ideas, aspirations and experiences becomes an integral part of policy making," Singh, the MLA from the Sarojini Nagar assembly seat of Lucknow, said.

He argued that "rapid" changes driven by AI, technological disruption, competitive examinations, evolving labour markets, entrepreneurship, mental health challenges and the digital economy require governments to maintain continuous engagement with young citizens rather than relying on "occasional" consultations.

Singh suggested that young members between 18 and 35 years of age, should

be selected to the proposed council through a transparent process.

He said the proposed council should target students and youngsters who have prepared for UPSC and UPPSC exams, top performers in IIT-JEE and NEET, students and alumni of IITs, IIMs, AIIMS and NLU, and other leading global universities, young scientists, researchers, entrepreneurs, innovators, sportspersons, farmers and representatives from aspirational districts with at least 40 percent representation from women.

"The council can be asked to submit regular 'Youth Pulse Reports' to the policy-makers, providing evidence-based recommendations on employment, education, recruitment reforms, skill development, startups, mental health, sports, digital safety and AI," he stated.

"The greatest strength of any developed nation is its young people. Governments become more responsive, innovative and future-ready when youth are treated not merely as beneficiaries but as partners in policymaking and participatory governance is one of the strongest foundations of a vibrant democracy," the MLA added. (PTI)

NDMC said all complaints were attended to on priority and restoration work NDMC resolves 38 rain-related complaints as heavy showers lash Delhi

NEW DELHI, July 28: The New Delhi Municipal Council (NDMC) on Tuesday said it resolved all 38 rain-related complaints received during heavy rainfall in the Lutyens' area, including 19 complaints of waterlogging, while claiming there was no major waterlogging in its jurisdiction.

NDMC vice chairperson Kuljeet Singh Chahal inspected several vulnerable locations, beginning with Africa Avenue, along with senior officials from the civil, roads, drainage, horticulture and electrical departments to review the situation on the ground, according to an official statement issued here.

According to the civic body, the complaints comprised 19 cases of waterlogging, six instances of tree falls and 13 complaints of power outages. The complaints were received from areas including Gole Market, Shahjahan Road, Krishna



Menon Marg, Golf Links, Janpath, Connaught Place, Lodhi Colony, Sarojini Nagar, South Avenue, INA and adjoining localities.

NDMC said all complaints were attended to on priority and restoration work was completed through coordinated efforts of its field teams.

According to the India Meteorological Department (IMD), between 11:30 am and 2:30 pm, Lodi Road received at least 63.4 mm of rain while Safdarjung received at

least 51 mm of rain in the NDMC area.

Chahal said the civic body had activated its emergency response teams after the India Meteorological Department issued a red alert for Delhi-NCR, forecasting heavy to very heavy rainfall accompanied by thunderstorms and gusty winds.

He claimed that locations previously considered vulnerable to waterlogging, including Bharti Nagar, Golf Links, Ravinder Nagar, Minto Bridge, Kaka Ka Hotel and

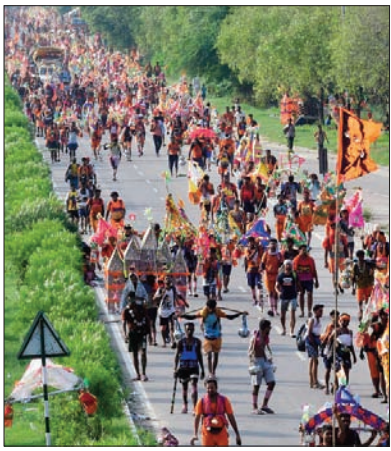
Mother Teresa Crescent, did not witness significant water accumulation during Tuesday's rainfall.

The vice chairperson said ensuring smooth traffic movement and uninterrupted civic services remained the NDMC's priority, adding that he reviewed the functioning of pumping systems, drainage arrangements and field deployments during the inspection.

NDMC in the statement said horticulture teams also cleared fallen trees from Janpath, Teen Murti Lane, Gole Market, Kasturba Gandhi Marg, Bharat Vikas Path near India Gate and Bhagwan Das Road, restoring normal movement in the affected areas.

The civic body said its civil, roads, drainage, sewerage, horticulture and electrical departments remained deployed across the area to respond to complaints despite the adverse weather conditions. (PTI)

No non-veg at eateries along Kanwar Yatra route in Muzaffarnagar



MUZAFFARNAGAR (UP), July 28: Hotels and roadside eateries on the Kanwar Yatra route are banned from cooking and serving non-vegetarian food and they have been directed to put up owners' paper work, including licence, on display, officials said on Tuesday.

Ahead of the Kanwar Yatra which begins July 30, the food safety department has also started a drive to check shops and eateries across the yatra route in

Muzaffarnagar, saying this is done every year.

"Cooking and serving non-vegetarian foods in hotels and dhabas have been banned on the Kanwar Yatra route. The hotel and dhaba owners have also been told not to use onions and garlic in cooking and serving food," Assistant Commissioner Food (Muzaffarnagar) Archana Dheeran on Tuesday told PTI.

"Hotels and dhabas have been following this norm every year. Any new hotel or dhaba, which comes up, is informed about this by the department," she said.

Six teams of the officials have been formed for checking food items. "Stale food will not be allowed in these dhabas," Dheeran said.

She added that steps have been taken for food safety measures and eateries have been directed to display owners' details, licence and food safety connect app QR codes.

The district authorities have set a standard rate for 21 essential items to prevent over-charging. The Food Safety department has directed that cooks must wear gloves, and artificial colours are strictly prohibited in food items. (PTI)

Mule account syndicate with Dubai, UK links busted by Delhi Police

'The probe began with what initially appeared to be a routine cyber cheating complaint'

NEW DELHI, July 28: A cyber fraud complaint involving just ₹ 10,000 has led Delhi Police to unravel a nationwide mule account syndicate that allegedly routed cybercrime proceeds to the tune of ₹ 70 crore through 248 corporate bank accounts opened using shell firms and fake business entities, an official said on Tuesday.

Police said the investigation led to the arrest of six persons, including a bank manager, while four other bank officials and associates were apprehended or bound down for allegedly facilitating the racket.

"The syndicate had been supplying fully operational corporate current bank account kits to cyber frauds across India as well as operators based in Dubai and the United Kingdom for the past three to four years," Deputy Commissioner of Police (Central) Rohit Rajbir Singh said in a statement.

The officer said the accounts were used to receive and layer proceeds of



cyber frauds before the money was transferred to other accounts, making it difficult for agencies to trace the beneficiaries.

The six arrestees have been identified as alleged mastermind Dishant Khanna (36), bank manager Kundan Kumar (35), mule recruiters Mohit Soni (26) and Yogesh Kumar (35), shell firm owner Ranjeet Damion Ekka (41), and syndicate

associate Mridul (22).

"Besides them, four persons associated with a bank branch in Dwarka Sector-22 -- branch manager Komakshi Sharma, deputy manager Payal Setia, bank teller Shristi and insurance agent Chirag Bhatia -- were apprehended and bound down for allegedly facilitating the opening of accounts by bypassing Know Your Customer (KYC) norms and receiving illegal

benefits," the statement said.

"The investigation began with what initially appeared to be a routine cyber cheating complaint. A resident of Baljeet Nagar in central Delhi reported that he had been lured through social media with an offer of online work-from-home free-lancing assignments.

"The frauds induced him to deposit ₹ 10,000 into multiple instalments towards registration and account processing charges before blocking all communication," the DCP said.

Based on the complaint registered on the National Cyber Crime Reporting Portal (NCRP), an FIR was lodged at the Cyber police station.

Investigators traced the financial trail and found that ₹ 5,000 of the cheated amount had eventually reached a private bank current account opened in the name of Damion Traders, a shell business entity. However, neither the firm's proprietor nor its registered address could initially be verified. (PTI)

UP: Police Commissioners of Lucknow and Prayagraj among 15 IPS officers transferred



LUCKNOW, July 28: The Uttar Pradesh government on Tuesday transferred 15 IPS officers, including police Commissioners of Lucknow and Prayagraj, an official statement issued here said.

Lucknow Commissioner of Police (CP), Amrendra K Sengar, has been appointed DGP, Intelligence, with additional charge of DGP, Security, while ADG Security, Tarun Gaba, has been appointed new police CP Lucknow.

Prayagraj CP Jogendra Kumar has been shifted to Moradabad PAC as IG, while Piyush Mordia

has been moved from ADG, Varanasi Zone and will be the new CP, Prayagraj.

IG, Anti-Corruption Organisation Anand Suresh Rao Kulkarni (2008 batch) has been made Secretary (Home), UP; M Ashok Jain, ADG, Gorakhpur Zone, has been posted as DG, Fire and Emergency Services, Police Headquarters, Lucknow, Ram Kumar has been shifted from ADG, Logistics, Police Headquarters, Lucknow, to ADG, Gorakhpur Zone, replacing Jain, it said.

While Naveen Arora has been

transferred from ADG, Technical Services, Police Headquarters, to ADG, Varanasi Zone, Bhagwan Swaroop Srivastava has been transferred from ADG, Intelligence to ADG, Technical Services, Dr Sanjeev Gupta has been given additional charge of ADG, Logistics, while continuing as ADG, Police Headquarters.

Dharmveer has been shifted from Inspector General (IG), Home Guards, Lucknow, to IG, PAC Eastern Zone, Prayagraj and Mohit Gupta, Secretary (Home), has been posted as IG, Anti-Corruption Organisation.

Similarly, Vinod Kumar Singh has been transferred from IG, Dr Bhimrao Ambedkar Police Academy, Moradabad, to IG, Special Investigation.

Among the SP-level officers, Anup Kumar Singh and Anand Kumar, who were attached to the DGP Headquarters, have been transferred as SP, EOW, Lucknow and SP, Public Grievances, DGP Headquarters, Lucknow, respectively. (PTI)

Gangster Zulfikar Behlim among 12 held for bid to extort ₹ 25 lakh from Mumbai builder

MUMBAI, July 28: The Mumbai Crime Branch has arrested gangster brothers Zulfikar Behlim and Mohsin Behlim, along with 10 members of their gang, for allegedly demanding Rs 25 lakh from a local builder by threatening him at gunpoint, police said on Tuesday.

They had been demanding the money to allow the builder to continue his construction business and had threatened to kill him if the demand was not met.

Officials said 12 members of the gang were apprehended in suburban Bandra on Monday while they were allegedly accepting the extortion money.

A case has been registered at Bandra police station under relevant sections of Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), along with Sections 3 and 25 of the Arms Act. The arrested accused were produced before the court, which remanded them to police custody till July 31.

Preliminary investigation shows that the accused are habitual offenders, an official said.

Police said gang leader Zulfikar Behlim had earlier been arrested under the Maharashtra Control of Organised Crime Act (MCOCA) and was out on bail. (PTI)

Rajasthan Police, University of Manchester sign MoU to strengthen training

JAIPUR, July 28: Rajasthan Police has signed a memorandum of understanding with the University of Manchester to strengthen cooperation in police welfare, mental health, training and research, officials said on Tuesday.

The agreement between the Rajasthan Police Academy and the UK-based university was signed at the police headquarters in the presence of Director General of Police Rajeev Kumar Sharma.

Additional Director Shankardutt Sharma signed the MoU on behalf of the academy, while Prof Vimal Kumar Sharma represented the University of Manchester.

"This partnership with a globally reputed institution will help combine Rajasthan Police's field experience and data with international research expertise, leading to improvements in policing, welfare and training," the DGP said.

He said the collaboration would provide opportunities for police personnel in distance learning, certificate courses, online and offline training, seminars and expert lectures, helping enhance professional skills as well as stress management and mental health support.

Under the agreement, initial collaboration will be undertaken with the university's School of Health Sciences, focusing on areas such as mental health, social care, health sciences and police welfare. Joint research projects and studies will also be conducted on issues of mutual interest.



The DGP also expressed concern over incidents of suicides among police personnel in recent years and called for focused research and recommendations on the issue.

Additional Director General (Training) Raghvendra Suhasa said the MoU provides for joint research projects, academic publications, seminars, workshops and exchange of experts, researchers and faculty between the two institutions.

The agreement also includes provisions for student and researcher exchange programmes, visiting faculty arrangements, joint teaching initiatives, PhD co-supervision, internships and short-term academic programmes, officials said. (PTI)

U'khand HC upholds recovery of excess pension paid due to official error

NAINITAL, July 28: The Uttarakhand High Court has dismissed a petition by a retired government officer challenging the recovery of excess pension paid to him due to a Treasury Department's error, holding that he was not entitled to retain the excess amount.

A division bench of Chief Justice Manoj Kumar Gupta and Justice Subhash Upadhyay observed that although the excess payment resulted from an administrative lapse, the petitioner was aware that the commuted portion of his pension had not been deducted despite his having received the lump-sum commutation amount.

The petitioner, who retired as a Circle Officer in Tehri Garhwal on July 31, 1977, received a commutation amount of ₹ 18.99 lakh in October that year.

As per the Pension Payment Order (PPO), ₹ 19,320 was to be deducted from his monthly pension from November 2017 towards the commuted portion. However, due to a Treasury Department error, the deduction was not made for nearly eight years, and he continued to receive full pension. The lapse came to light during an audit, following which the department initiated recovery of the excess amount.

Counsel for the petitioner argued that the excess payment was caused entirely by the department's mistake and that recovery of ₹ 20,000 a month, in addition to the regular commutation deduction, was causing financial hardship. (PTI)

Andhra govt partners with AstraZeneca to transform cancer care

AMARAVATI, July 28: The Andhra Pradesh government on Tuesday signed an MoU with global pharmaceutical major AstraZeneca to establish an Integrated Precision Oncology Ecosystem aimed at transforming cancer care in the state.

The ecosystem will integrate artificial intelligence, Next-Generation Sequencing, advanced genomics and the innovation capabilities of Amaravati Quantum Valley.

"The Government of Andhra Pradesh today signed a Memorandum of Understanding with AstraZeneca India to launch India's first integrated Precision Oncology Ecosystem, bringing together AI, NGS, advanced genomics and the innovation capabilities of AQV to transform cancer care," a press release said.

The agreement aims to establish a comprehensive, technology-enabled model covering the entire patient journey—from early screening and diagnosis to genomic testing, personalised treatment and long-term follow-up.

Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu said healthcare across the world was undergoing a fundamen-



tal transformation.

"Artificial Intelligence, genomics and data science are changing the way diseases are detected, diagnosed and treated. Our vision is to ensure that these technologies are not confined to a few advanced institutions but become accessible to every citizen through our public healthcare system," he said.

"This initiative complements our broader vision of leveraging emerging technologies through programmes such as Sanjeevani, Real-Time Governance and Amaravati Quantum Valley to build a healthier, future-ready Andhra Pradesh," Naidu added.

The Integrated Precision Oncology Ecosystem would set a new benchmark for innovation in public healthcare and position Andhra Pradesh at the forefront of precision medicine in India, the release said.

Bringing together AstraZeneca's global expertise in oncology, the AI and advanced computing ecosystem of AQV, and the state's vision of technology-enabled healthcare, the collaboration aims to create an end-to-end precision oncology platform.

It will support every stage of cancer care, from AI-enabled screening and diagnosis to biomarker testing, treatment planning and long-term follow-up. (PTI)

Four of a family killed as vehicle plunges into gorge in Himachal's Chamba

SHIMLA, July 28: Four members of a family were among five people killed when the vehicle in which they were travelling fell into a gorge on the Bharmour-Pathankot state highway in Himachal Pradesh's Chamba district late Monday night.

The tragedy struck when the family was taking their three-month-old child for treatment to Pathankot.

The victims included the ailing child, the grandfather, Vachan Singh (60), and the parents -- Ripun Singh (30) and Rimpi Devi. The fifth victim was identified as Kirti (23). All are residents of Gehra village in Chamba, officials said.

According to police, the cause of the accident has not yet been ascertained. Preliminary reports suggest the car plunged into the 400-metre-deep gorge after the driver lost control.

The bodies have been extracted and sent to Dalhousie hospital for postmortem. An investigation is underway to determine the exact cause of the accident," Superintendent of Police, Chamba, Vijay Saklani said.

Upon receiving news of the incident, police and rescue teams immediately rushed to the scene. Rescuers faced significant challenges due to the remote terrain and the nighttime accident. (PTI)

Kanwar Yatra: Heavy vehicle diversions begin at midnight in Meerut zone

LUCKNOW/MEERUT, July 28: Traffic diversions in view of the Kanwar Yatra will take effect at midnight on Tuesday-Wednesday for heavy vehicles in the Meerut zone, and will remain enforced till August 12, a senior police official said.

For light and medium vehicles, the diversions will begin at midnight on August 4 and will last until midnight on August 12. However, people going from Delhi to Haridwar can use the Delhi-Dehradun Economic Corridor, on which the Kanwariyas will be "discouraged".

ADG Meerut zone Bhanu Bhaskar on Tuesday told PTI, "The Kanwariyas who are moving from Delhi to Haridwar will first take Ghaziabad, followed by Baghpat, then Muzaffarnagar and then move towards Haridwar. The total distance covered by Kanwariyas from Delhi to Haridwar is approximately 200 kilometres. To ensure a smooth and incident-free Kanwar Yatra, around 25,000 police personnel have been deployed."

When asked what alternate routes people can take while going from Delhi to Haridwar from August 4 to August 12, when all vehicles will be banned from the Delhi-Haridwar national highway, the ADG Meerut zone said, "People going from Delhi (to Dehradun or Haridwar) can take

the Delhi-Dehradun Economic Corridor, where the Kanwariyas will be discouraged from using it."

Sources also told PTI that the states of Delhi, Haryana, Uttarakhand and Uttar Pradesh have "prohibited" Kanwariyas from using the Delhi-Dehradun Economic Corridor, the Ganga Expressway and the Eastern and Western Peripheral Expressways, as in case of any untoward incident, reaching them will be an arduous and time-taking task.

Authorities have also requested the Kanwariyas to "stick to their traditional routes". Bhanu Bhaskar also informed that from August 4 to August 12, there will be a complete ban on vehicle movement on the Delhi-Haridwar Highway.

Comprehensive arrangements have been made along the 969 kilometres of road in the Meerut zone, which features 28 major Kanwar routes. For real-time monitoring and effective crowd control, the area has been distributed into 36 super zones, 101 zones and 439 sectors.

"Artificial Intelligence is being used for the first time to monitor the Kanwar Yatra, and a network of 6,955 high-resolution CCTV cameras has been installed to keep a close watch on every movement of the Kanwar pilgrims on the entire route. (PTI)

The NCRTC said the frequency could be increased further if required Delhi-Meerut Namo Bharat to run 52 additional daily trips during Kanwar Yatra



MEERUT (UP), July 28: The National Capital Region Transport Corporation (NCRTC) has decided to operate 52 additional daily trips on the Delhi-Meerut Namo Bharat corridor from July 30 in view of the expected surge in passenger traffic during the Kanwar Yatra, an official statement said on Tuesday.

With the additional services, Namo Bharat trains will be available at intervals of every eight minutes instead of the cur-

rent 10-minute frequency, it said.

The enhanced services will be operational from July 30 to August 14 between Sarai Kale Khan in Delhi and Modipuram in Meerut.

The NCRTC said the frequency could be increased further if required, depending on passenger demand.

The Delhi-Meerut Namo Bharat corridor currently serves around one lakh passengers daily. The corporation expects a

significant rise in ridership during the annual Kanwar pilgrimage, prompting the decision to augment services.

Apart from the Namo Bharat trains, the Meerut Metro service between Meerut South and Modipuram will continue to facilitate intra-city travel, the statement said.

The NCRTC said road transport is often affected during the Kanwar Yatra due to traffic restrictions and road closures at several locations. In such circumstances, the Namo Bharat service will provide a fast, reliable and time-bound public transport option for daily commuters, students and office-goers.

It added that parking facilities at some Namo Bharat stations may be temporarily affected because of road closures, and passengers would be informed in advance.

Security and passenger management arrangements are being coordinated with the CISF in Delhi and the UPSSF in Uttar Pradesh to minimise inconvenience during the pilgrimage period. (PTI)

Delhi: 28-year-old man dead, another injured in firing; probe on

NEW DELHI, July 28: A 28-year-old man died and his associate was injured after unidentified assailants opened fire on them in south Delhi's Pul Prahladpur, officials said on Tuesday.

Police said a PCR call regarding the firing was received at the Pul Prahladpur police station at around 12.41 am on Monday, following which a team was rushed to the spot.

The deceased was identified as Mohammad Irshad Alam alias Guddu (28). He sustained multiple gunshot injuries and a deep cut-throat injury in the attack, police said.

He was immediately shifted to a nearby hospital, where doctors declared him dead. The body has been preserved for postmortem.

Mohammad Farukh (27) suffered a gunshot injury to his left hand. He was taken to the AIIMS Trauma Centre. After being administered first aid, he was discharged.

A Crime Team and forensic experts inspected the scene of the crime and collected evidence. Police recovered 10 empty cartridge cases and two live cartridges from the spot, all of which



have been seized and sent for forensic examination.

The police said multiple teams have been constituted to identify and apprehend the attackers.

Investigators are analysing CCTV footage from the surrounding area, while technical surveillance and other investigative methods are being employed to trace the accused.

No arrests have been made in the matter yet.

An FIR has been registered and further investigation into the matter is underway. (PTI)

Naseeruddin Shah, Pa Ranjith, Arijit Singh and many more back protesting students, slam police action

Naseeruddin Shah, filmmakers Pa Ranjith, Rajkumar Rao and many other prominent names from cinema have voiced their support for students demanding accountability over irregularities in NEET exam.

In a video, an angry Shah condemned the police crackdown on the protesting students, comparing it to the actions of "American ICE agents".

"Sab yaad rakha jayega (Everything will be remembered)," Shah said in an emotional video posted on Instagram while asking students to continue their fight.

The video came two days after police in the city cracked down on thousands of people, mostly students, who hit the streets of the capital

in response to a "Chalo Sansad" call to push for the resignation of Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan and voice their protest against irregularities in the exam system and NEET paper leaks.

"Right now, my heart is aching, and I am also boiling with anger to see how our kids are being meted out injustice by these goons who remind me of American ICE agents, wearing masks and carrying sticks," Shah said.

"To the children, I want to say that don't lose courage as sympathies of many are with you. There are many who are with you, keep fighting. I have always had hope with the youth of my country and it has only grown stronger now. You keep fighting your battle, we all are with you. And to the rulers of this country, I just want to say this, 'sab yaad rakha jayega' (everything will be remembered)," he added.

His wife and actor Ratna Pathak Shah also supported the Cockroach Janta Party (CJP) protest, saying they were ready to be with the students whenever they call.

"We are talking about becoming 'Vishwaguru' but we cannot even connect with our students... We want children to sacrifice their future so that some people in power are saved," she said.

"I don't believe we have the right to lecture or guide you anymore. But we do stand with you, wholeheartedly and sincerely. Whenever you call, we'll be there by your side," she added.

Ranjith, known for socio-political movies such as "Kaala", "Kabali" and "Thangalaan", said the student protests reflect a shared angst and demand for "accountability from Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan and the Union Government for the repeated failures of our public education system".

"What began as a demand for accountability has become the collective anger and agitation of a generation that refuses to accept a government which continues to gamble with the futures of millions of young people," he said, calling it a people's movement.

Singer Arijit Singh shared a series of posts on X and expressed anger over the use of force against the protesters.

"Yaar ab to students ko maar rahe hain yahaan aap log (Now you are beating up the students). Aren't you ashamed!?" he wrote.

Actor Seema Pahwa posted on Instagram, "I am with these children, I am with these families, I am with this country. @cockroachjantaparty."

Actor-filmmaker Revathy said the demand is for the education system to be reformed.

"LEADERS we voted entrusting in them the future of our children and our country are silent - hear them out, have a dialogue, agree to disagree but sit down and TALK... they deserve to be heard... with Sonam Wangchuk and every student in the protest!!!" she said.

While many expressed solidarity on social media, others joined the protests in Delhi and shared firsthand accounts of the violence and police action faced by the students.

"Laapaata Ladies" star Pratibha Ranta, who was at the protest site at Jantar Mantar, wrote, "Ab nahi to kab! Break the silence. Step out. Speak up."

One of the photos showed her attending the protest with actor Gurfateh Pirzada.

Rapper Hanumankind also shared pictures from the protests that he attended.

"July 20th 2026. Some of the more colorful moments of the day," he wrote.

Amol Parasher attended the protest on Monday and said the scenes he witnessed there brought tears in his eyes.

"Yesterday I learnt what is worse than the intense burning of eyes and the terrible taste of tear gas in your throat. The state of helplessness you feel when you see evil unfold right in front of your eyes, and you can do nothing to stop it. What is the future of a state that makes its youth feel so small, so humiliated, so insignificant," he asked.

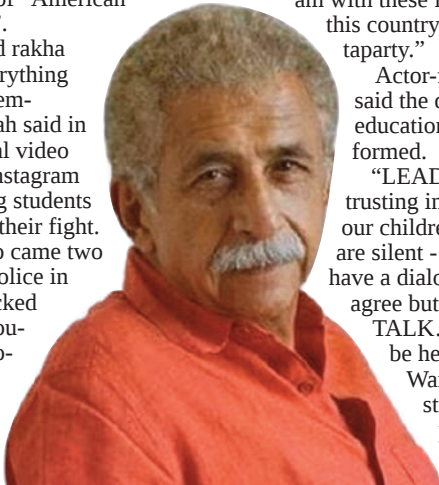
Malayalam cinema superstar Tovino Thomas criticised the way protests were handled.

"When the future generation of a nation speaks up, and their voices are met with repressive force, it is the future itself that is being stamped down. It is faith in democracy that is being drained away. The right to dissent is not a threat to democracy; in fact it is one of its foundations," he said, criticising those questioning his nationalism.

In a video shared on Instagram, Swara Bhasker responded to media reports claiming that the Centre had ordered the deployment of 30 additional companies of central armed police forces to Delhi.

"It feels like the Indian government has declared war on the children and youth of our country! Shame!!!" she said.

Actor Rajkumar Rao said every voice deserves to be heard with dignity, fairness and respect. (PTI)



RELIGIOUS DIVIDE WILL END WHEN WE SEE OURSELVES AS HUMAN BEINGS FIRST: SUNNY DEOL ON 'BATWARA 1947'

Bollywood star Sunny Deol on Tuesday said his upcoming film "Batwara 1947" is rooted in the idea that humanity transcends religious divide.

Directed by Rajkumar Santoshi and produced by Aamir Khat, the period drama is set against the backdrop of the 1947 Partition.

The story revolves around a family whose lives are irrevocably altered as religious violence, fear and forced migration tear apart communities that once lived side by side. Yet, amid unimaginable loss and deepening divisions, the film celebrates the courage of those who chose kindness over hatred and hope over despair.

"The reason behind it (religious divide) is that people forget their shared humanity, and it will stop only when every human being truly understands that we are all human beings first. I don't believe in any post, whether it is a minister or a policeman, they are all human beings... And if a human being understands that there is only one religion, which is humanity, then nothing wrong will happen," Deol told reporters here when asked about the continued religious tensions years after Partition.

Veteran lyricist and screenwriter Javed Akhtar, who has penned the lyrics for the movie, said it is wrong to stereotype entire communities.

"Every community has all kinds of people, so it is wrong to say that people of a specific community are always a certain way. In every community, there are some honest people, and some bad people as well, but this is common," Akhtar said, adding that the bad people often become more visible while the ordinary ones remain unnoticed.

Santoshi and Deol have previously delivered box office hits in the 90s like "Ghayal", "Damini", and "Ghatak", and the director-actor duo are working together on "Batwara 1947" after 30 years.

Deol expressed regret over the long gap between their collaborations.

"Raj and I share the same wavelength. We challenge each other, do retake after retake and even argue, but in the end, the result looks good," he said, adding that he hopes to do more films with the director.

Santoshi described "Batwara" as a "family film" that fo-



Sony LIV's animated series 'The Legend of Karna' to premiere on Jul 31

Streamer Sony LIV on Wednesday announced that its original animated series "The Legend of Karna", based on one of the central characters of the Mahabharata, will premiere on its platform on July 31.

Created by Sharad Devarajan and Jeevan J Kang and produced by Graphic India, the series traces Karna's journey from his birth to Kunti and the Sun God Surya to his rise as one of the greatest warriors of the Mahabharata.

According to the makers, the series follows Karna's struggle against social prejudice after he is raised in a charioteer's household despite his extraordinary skill in archery.

It also explores his friendship with Duryodhana, who crowns him king, and the conflict between destiny and the legacy he seeks to forge.

Devarajan, who serves as co-creator and showrunner, said the series aims to present Karna's story from a fresh perspective.

"Karna has always been the tragic heart of the Mahabharata. What the world refused him by birth, his own hands took with skill, and that question feels more urgent today than ever. Does greatness come from where you are born, or from what you do?" he said in a statement. (PTI)

Paper leak serious issue, my heart goes out to those hurt: Salman Khan

Calling paper leak a serious issue, Salman Khan on Wednesday came out in support of protesting students and said his heart goes out to those who were hurt while demonstrating peacefully.

The Bollywood star appreciated the stand taken by the students who, he said, have shown dedication, sincerity, and keenness to study hard for their own futures, and for a greater, educated India.

"It was such a peaceful movement, feel so sad that it had to take a violent turn. My heart goes out to the students and their families who were hurt. Paper leak is a very serious issue, and I am glad to know and see that the kids of our country have come together for a better educational system, and their parents supported them," the actor wrote in a carefully-worded post on X.

He, however, said the protests should not be "hijacked politically". "This andolan, this protest, is the right way to go about it, and the stu-



dents have done this peacefully. So courageous and brave. Driven and motivated towards education, this generation will make India proud.

"This issue is between the students and the educational system, it should not be hijacked politically, the credit should only go to the students of our country, and I am sure the government

will also give them all the support and make a stronger educational system. It's a win-win situation. Hoping and praying for a positive decision," he wrote.

The actor said education should get trendier and more fashionable so that India becomes an education hub.

The student protests over the alleged NEET paper leak have found support from many in the film industry, including Naseeruddin Shah, Ratna Pathak Shah, Shabana Azmi, Prakash Raj, Rajkumar Rao, Revathy, Tovino Thomas and Anurag Kashyap.

The "Sultan" star, however, is the first from the Khan trio to speak on the issue.

His post comes two days after the police crackdown on protestors in the capital during the "Chalo Sansad" march called by the Cockroach Janta Party, to push for the resignation of Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan over alleged irregularities in various examinations. (PTI)

I've found my forte with romance: Director Milap Milan Zaveri



Director Milap Milan Zaveri, known for films such as "Ek Deewane Ki Deewaniyat" and "Satyamev Jayate", said he has found his creative sweet spot in romance and intends to keep telling new stories in the genre, especially after the encouraging response to his films.

In his two-decade long career, the writer-director has largely made adult comedies like "Masti" franchise, "Kya Kool Hai Hum 3", "Mastizade", and actioners like "Satyamev Jayate", "Marjaavaan", and others. But his last release "Ek Deewane Ki Deewaniyat", starring Harshvardhan Rane and Sonam Bajwa, turned out to be surprise hit of 2025 with a box office score of over Rs 100

crore. He is currently awaiting the release of his new film, "Tera Yaar Hoon Main", a romantic-comedy headlined by newcomers Aman Indra Kumar and Akanksha Sharma, and will next direct an "intense and violent" love story with actor Aditya Roy Kapur in the lead role.

"I feel maybe I've found my forte with romance. Earlier, Marjaavaan succeeded in a big way, 'Ek Deewane...' was a blockbuster. I hope people will enjoy 'Tera Yaar Hoon Main' and then the film with Aditya Roy Kapoor."

"So, romance is a key integral part of my stories and I think going forward it will remain along with action. So, romance, action, dialogue baazi, these are things I like to

do as a director-writer and till audiences like my films, I'll try to keep doing them," Zaveri told PTI in an interview.

The director described "Tera Yaar Hoon Main" as a wholesome film that blends romance, action, humour and emotions.

"This film is a family entertainer, it's got values, father-daughter relationship, friendship, romance. So, it's a story that will appeal to the youth as well as their parents," he said adding that the upcoming rom-com movie is in sharp contrast to "Ek Deewane Ki Deewaniyat", which he termed an "intense, violent and heartbreaking" love story.

Zaveri has introduced newcomer Aman Indra Kumar, son of director Indra Kumar, in "Tera Yaar Hoon Main",

and praised his dedication. It also features Akanksha Sharma, best known for starring in "Kesari Veer" and Telugu movie "Laila".

"Both are extremely talented and hardworking. They've honed their craft. When I directed them, I didn't feel that I was directing someone who's never faced the camera before or have not done much work."

Zaveri also reflected on the underperformance of "Masti 4", which came out in 2025 but didn't do much business at the ticket window.

"The genre (of adult comedy) maybe passe. The genre worked many years back but there were no OTT platforms at the time and YouTube wasn't so strong, the internet wasn't such a rage.

"Today, you've so much material on your phone, on apps, on various platforms, that the shock value of the genre is completely diminished. So, that's one of the major reasons why audiences didn't come in for 'Masti 4' because this is not a genre that is as exciting or as unique as it was when the original 'Masti' or 'Grand Masti' came out."

Produced by Ajay Murdia, Bina Indra Kumar, and Manish Singhal, and co-produced by Subhash Kale, "Tera Yaar Hoon Main" is set to arrive in cinemas on July 24.

The film boasts of an ensemble cast featuring Paresh Rawal, Johnny Lever, Supriya Pilgaonkar, Mrinal Kulkarni, and Darshan Jariwala, among others. Jul 22 (PTI)

After world junior triumph, Anahat puts Harvard plans on hold to chase Olympic glory



NEW DELHI, July 28: Newly-crowned junior squash world champion Anahat Singh has revealed that she placed her academic goals at the prestigious Harvard University on hold this year to give herself the best chance of winning a medal at the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics.

Anahat's original plan was to follow in her elder sister Amira's footsteps and pursue higher education at the Harvard.

But bolstered by the title triumph in her fifth and final attempt, the 18-year-old now wants to put all her energies into preparing for the upcoming Asian Games and the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics in a couple of years' time.

Anahat has been living out of the suitcase for as far as she can remember, juggling top level squash and school. Having graduated from school only a couple of months ago, Anahat has now chosen to focus on the sport to take her game to the next level.

"I was supposed to go to college this

year, but I decided to take a gap year because of the Asian Games coming up. And now I understand that this year is really important for me regarding squash and, the build up to the LA 2028 (Games)," Anahat told PTI in an interview referring to her plans for squash's Olympic debut.

"So, yeah, I mean, just focusing on this year, outside of school, because I've been doing that for the last 12 years (smiles). I'm just focusing on squash for a year and just making sure that I'm at my peak going in to LA 28," she said.

World title confidence-booster ahead of Asiad

Having got the monkey off her back with a world junior title in her fifth and final appearance, Anahat's next big assignment is the Asian Games in Japan in September-October.

If Anahat is to win gold, she will have to find ways to upstage higher-ranked players like world number five Sivasangari Subramaniam from Malaysia and sixth-

ranked Satomi Watanabe from Japan.

Considering the challenge ahead, the triumph in Canada that included wins over three Egyptians, will give Anahat more confidence against the world's best players. A gold in Japan would secure her automatic qualification to the Olympics.

"It (the win at world juniors) definitely adds a lot to my confidence to get into this event. I mean, if I didn't win, it wouldn't really make much of a difference, but it definitely puts me on a high now," said the youngster, who is supported by JSW Sports.

"I've played almost every single player that will be there in the Asian Games, and I know what to expect. So, just going back home and focusing on that. If I have a shot at getting a chance to be a part of the Olympics in almost two months, I think that will be a dream come true," said Anahat.

Praise from idol PV Sindhu and PM Modi

Anahat began her journey in racket sports with badminton before settling on squash. No wonder she continues to idolise the great PV Sindhu, who was among the many who took to social media to congratulate on her path-breaking win in Ontario. Prime Minister Narendra Modi too was among them.

"Firstly seeing the Prime Minister's post was, I mean, there's no words to it really. It's amazing getting to see that and of course PV Sindhu as well. I've been following her since I've been almost four or five years old and she's been an inspiration to me ever since I got into the world of sports," she said.

Egypt has dominated squash for decades but Anahat doesn't feel any added pressure while playing the players from that country on the professional circuit. She faced three Egyptians -- in the quarters, semis and final -- and came out on top.

"The Egyptian infrastructure is basically what makes them the best. Like I went for

the World Juniors last year, which happened in Egypt, and they were playing until 10, 11 pm, which was crazy," she recalled.

World champion Gaultier and Ghosal as support staff

Anahat's support staff included world champion Gregory Gaultier from France and India great Saurav Ghosal. Both of them have dealt with success and failure in equal measure and now help Anahat with tactics and handling pressure in top level sport.

"...having Greg and Saurav by my side, I don't think I could have really asked for anything more. They've been in the top stages, they felt that sort of pressure, they know what it's like to climb up to the top," she said.

"It's not just helpful in the game aspect, but also mentally and the strategy side of it, just being able to understand what I need to do in those big moments," Anahat added. (PTI)

Lopes Cabral's equalizer wins public vote for best goal at WC

CORAL GABLES, July 28: Cape Verde made more World Cup history on Monday when Sidney Lopes Cabral won the public vote for goal of the tournament.

Lopes Cabral's curling shot into the far top corner of the Argentina net was a standout moment at the World Cup where the unheralded African team made a stellar debut.

His goal tied defending champion Argentina at 2-2 in extra time of their thrilling round of 32 game in Miami Gardens. Cape Verde would eventually lose 3-2.

Lopes Cabral's goal was voted best of the 308 goals scored at the tournament, ahead of Eldor Shomurodov's delicate lob for Uzbekistan against Congo and Wilson Isidor of Haiti scoring with a powerful rising shot against Morocco.

FIFA drew up a shortlist of 12 goals for public voting that closed Monday.

Lopes Cabral's celebration also entered World Cup lore as he broke free of teammates reaching to grab him before climbing into the tribune to hug his girlfriend and look for his mother. (AP)

Ajaya Babu wins silver medal in men's 79kg weightlifting



GLASGOW, July 28: Fast-rising Indian weightlifter Valluri Ajaya Babu produced a remarkable performance to win the silver medal in the men's 79kg category and continue the country's successful run in the sport at the ongoing Commonwealth Games here.

The 21-year-old from Andhra Pradesh's Vizianagaram district lifted a Games record 149kg in snatch and 181kg in clean and jerk

for a total of 330kg to win the second prize, narrowly missing out on gold to Malaysia's Erry Hidayat Muhammad, who totalled a Games record 331kg (147 + 184) during a gripping contest on Monday night.

This was India's sixth medal in weightlifting in the current edition of the Games.

England's Chris Murray settled for bronze with a total of 325.

First, Hidayat lifted 181kg to

smash the Games record, the Indian then bettered it within seconds by lifting 181kg in his final attempt to break the record again for 330kg.

Hidayat did one better, breaking the record again with a lift of 184kg in his final attempt to win the gold medal.

Earlier, after a failed second attempt at 149kg, Ajaya Babu made a fine comeback to lift the weight

in his final try and set a new Games record, finishing at the top of the heap at the end of snatch section ahead of England's Chris Murray (148kg) and Malaysia's Erry Hidayat Muhammad (147kg).

He had 145kg listed as his first attempt and nailed it too easily.

Entering the clean and jerk section on a high, Ajaya Babu looked confident of winning the top prize but his opponent from Malaysia edged the Indian out eventually.

Seen as one of India's fastest-growing lifters, Ajaya Babu had in the past won the gold medal in the men's 79kg category at the 2025 Commonwealth Championships in Ahmedabad with a personal-best total lift of 335kg (152kg snatch + 183kg clean & jerk), breaking the championship records.

That performance earned him his direct qualification spot for Glasgow 2026.

In the 2024 Commonwealth Championships, he secured double gold medals across both the junior and senior divisions in the men's 81kg category in Suva, Fiji.

After that, in the 2025 World Championships, the youngster was placed 16th overall in a highly competitive 39-lifter field in Forde, Norway. (PTI)

Sonom and Himanshu clinch bronze in 10m air rifle mixed team at ISSF World Cup

HANGZHOU, July 28: Rifle shooters Sonam Uttam Maskar and Himanshu Dhillon added another medal to India's campaign, clinching the bronze in the 10m air rifle mixed team event at the ISSF World Cup here on Tuesday.

The bronze medal took India's overall tally at the World Cup to four medals, including 1 gold, 1 silver, and 2 bronze.

Both Indian teams delivered strong performances in the qualification round to advance to the final.

Sonom Uttam Maskar (317.2) and Himanshu Dhillon (317.4) combined for an aggregate qualification score of 634.6.

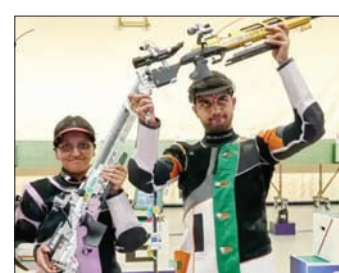
Meanwhile, the pair of Elavenil Valarivan (316.8) and Parth Rakesh Mane (317.4) qualified right behind them with a total score of 634.2.

In the final, Sonam and Himanshu produced a composed performance to combine for 441.2 points (220.6 each), securing the bronze medal behind China 1 and China 2.

Elavenil (190.5) and Parth (188.3) finished fourth with a final score of 378.8.

"It was a tough competition, and the overall experience was very good," said Sonam, the 23-year-old from Maharashtra, in a release.

"Winning a medal is always important because it gives us confidence for the assignments ahead. Experience matters more than anything, and this performance will



motivate us as we prepare for the Asian Games and the World Championships later this season."

Making his first-ever senior ISSF World Cup final appearance, Himanshu said, "It was a great experience competing in my first senior World Cup final. I believed in myself, trusted my coach's guidance and relied on my strengths. I've competed in many junior finals, but winning my first senior World Cup medal makes this achievement very special."

The podium finish marks another milestone for Sonam, who previously won silver medals at the ISSF World Cup in Cairo and the ISSF World Cup Final in New Delhi in 2024, alongside a fifth-place finish at the ISSF World Cup Granada.

For 20-year-old Himanshu from Haryana, the bronze medal represents his maiden senior ISSF World Cup podium. He previously won gold in the 10m air rifle junior event at the Junior World Cup in New Delhi in 2025 before adding another gold at the Asian Shooting Championships. (PTI)

FIFA's Infantino targets critics, says spread 'hate and false rumors' about World Cup

GENEVA, July 28: One week after the World Cup final, FIFA President Gianni Infantino attacked perceived critics for "spreading hate and false rumors" about the tournament.

Infantino praised FIFA for "delivering the best show in the world" and spoke of the World Cup bringing "joy and togetherness," in a 900-word statement published across a 15-page post on his Instagram account and on FIFA's website late Sunday.

"Sorry that you were so consumed by hate and criticism that you missed it all," the FIFA leader wrote, addressing his comments to "those behind their pens and papers, behind their screens spreading hate and false rumors."

FIFA and Infantino faced criticism during the World Cup for Iran team officials, a Somali referee and fans being denied entry to the United States; alleged political influence by U.S. President Donald Trump in letting Folarin Balogun avoid a ban for a red card; unprecedented high ticket prices and commercialized breaks in play midway through each half of all 104 games.

"Every city was packed with fans from all around the globe," Infantino wrote. "While they celebrated, you were busy planting seeds of hate."

"While you hide, we are exploring the streets of Canada, Mexico, and the United

States, talking with fans, engaging with people, and ensuring everyone's safety."

Tasty media relationsInfantino has an increasingly testy relationship with media during the 11th year of his presidency. His eve-of-tournament news conference in Mexico City was his first with a full gathering of international media since March 2023.

The previous such news conference in Rwanda, after his reelection by acclaim from FIFA member federations, saw Infantino ask his audience: "Why are you so mean?"

In Mexico City last month, Infantino suggested critics should "chill, relax."

And he's coming under scrutiny from some in the U.S. Congress. Rep. Jamie Raskin of Maryland, the top Democrat on the House Judiciary Committee, sent Infantino a letter on Sunday seeking documents detailing ties between FIFA and the Trump administration. A representative for FIFA didn't immediately respond to a request for comment on the letter.

FIFA uniting the U.S. and IranIran's ability to play at least three games in the U.S. was a key pretournament issue, and the squad made a late switch to a training camp in Tijuana, Mexico instead of Tucson, Arizona.

"Iran entered the United States without incident or conflict," Infantino noted in his

statement. "While you spread hatred, we worked tirelessly to unite two countries at war."

Fans denied visas to enter the U.S. included Michel Nkuka Mboladinga, the celebrated statue supporter of Congo who was dealing with an Ebola virus outbreak. He attended one game in Mexico.

"You mentioned the few people denied visas and overlooked the millions who were approved, from all parts of the world," Infantino wrote. "Countries facing serious health issues or other challenges were granted visas."

Infantino defends Balogun decisionOn fallout from the red card for U.S. forward Balogun, Infantino claimed "subsequent decisions not to ban players in certain situations are routine."

FIFA did not overturn Balogun's red card, which does occur in domestic club competitions, but instead took the more unusual step of deferring the one-game ban for a probationary period. FIFA has yet to publish the written verdict of its disciplinary judge.

"To those spending their time and energy hating us, please take a moment to reflect, meditate, pray, or watch a football match and truly observe the faces, the eyes, the emotions," Infantino wrote.

He signed off his statement: "Much love to all." (AP)

Indian shuttlers disappoint in Taipei Open qualifiers

TAIPEI CITY (TAIWAN), July 28: Indian shuttlers endured a disappointing outing in the qualifiers of the Taipei Open Super 300 tournament, with only Rounak Chouhan progressing to the second round of the men's singles qualifying round here on Tuesday.

Chouhan, seeded second in the qualifiers, defeated Joshua Nguyen of Canada 21-15, 21-11 to set up qualifying quarterfinal clash against Chinese Taipei's Kuan Lin Kuo.

All other Indians in the men's singles qualifiers exited in the opening round. Rithvik Sanjeevi lost 10-21, 11-21 to the top seed Riki Takei of Japan, while Sankar Subramanian was shown the door by USA's Garrett Tan 17-21, 10-21.

Tushar Suveer fought hard before losing 19-21, 21-16, 12-21 against Chinese Taipei's Kuan Lin Kuo.

The only Indian in the women's singles qualifier, Aakarshi Kashyap, seeded fourth, lost 15-21, 19-21 against Malaysia's Kisona Selvaduray.

The Indian pair of Achutaditya Rao Dod-davarapu and Arjun Reddy Pochana also bowed out of the men's doubles qualifying round, losing 5-21, 8-21 against Chinese Taipei duo Chen Bo-Yuan and Lu Ming-Che.

In the women's doubles, the Indian combination of Aditi Bhat and Shravani Walekar will take on Chinese Taipei's Yu Tong Chen and Yu Jung Lai in the first round of qualifiers later in the day. (PTI)

In tears after his own injury-forced exit, Tejaswin stays to help Kushare



GLASGOW, July 28: His own campaign derailed by a recurring knee problem, Tejaswin Shankar fought through tears and discomfort to be there for compatriot Sarvesh Kushare, offering him technical advice that proved crucial in securing his men's high jump silver in the Commonwealth Games here.

Tejaswin had claimed the high jump bronze in the 2022 Birmingham CWG, which was a first ever for India in the sport. On Monday, the 27-year-old felt a sharp pain in his knee during his warm-up and could not continue in the competition after clearing his first attempt.

Despite his own heartbreak, he stayed back at the venue and switched roles to help Kushare, who eventually fetched a silver medal, bettering Tejaswin's 2022 performance.

Kushare credited Tejaswin's technical advice for helping him regain his rhythm after a shaky start. "I wanted to clear the height in my first attempt itself, but during 2.25m my rhythm was affected and my stride became shorter. Then TJ told me to move forward in my run-up, and that helped," Kushare said.

A visibly emotional Tejaswin struggled to compose himself while speaking to reporters after the event. "I felt a shooting pain in my

knee. It happened during my warm-up. It's nothing new; I have always had tendonitis in my knees," he said.

"I don't think there is any high jumper who doesn't have it. That's why it's called jumper's knee. Everyone manages it, and so do I," he said.

Hope to be back for Decathlon Tejaswin said the timing of the injury was particularly cruel as he had arrived in Glasgow believing he was capable of winning another Commonwealth Games medal.

"But it's one of those days. You want just one day in a year when you don't have that pain, but it came on that day only. It really stings. In these conditions, I was really confident I could jump for a win, jump for a medal. I really knew I could win a medal," he rued.

"But to not even get through the first height, it stings because I was in really great shape."

Explaining the injury, he added: "It's just overuse of the patellar tendon. There is nothing spectacular about it. It just flared up today and ruined my entire competition."

Tejaswin, however, remains hopeful of recovering in time for the decathlon, which begins on Thursday.

"I will come back in two days. We still have two days. I'll give my best over the next two days and try and fix this. I will obviously start. I'm not here on vacation."

"The patellar tendon is used in high jump and long jump, so if I'm somehow able to get by those two events, I'm still confident the other events will be fine."

Tejaswin is the national record holder in decathlon and has won an Asian Games silver besides two Asian Championships medals in the gruelling discipline.

He is also the first Indian to breach in the 8000 points mark in the 10-event competition which is considered the most demanding in athletics. (PTI)

Building team chemistry ahead of GCL will be key to success: GM Nihal Sarin

BENGALURU, July 28: Leading Indian Grandmaster Nihal Sarin believes team chemistry will be the key to Fyers American Gambits' success in the upcoming Global Chess League, with the players set to come together only after arriving for the tournament next month.

The GCL will be held from September 3 to 13 and features six franchise teams comprising 36 elite players, including world champions, grandmasters and leading women players.

American Gambits boast a formidable line-up featuring Candidates champion Javokhir Sindarov, Women's World Blitz and Norway Chess champion Bibisara Asaubayeva, Spanish WGM Sara Khadem, Sarin, Daniil Dubov and Marc'Andria Maurizzi.

Coach Srinath Narayanan faces the challenge of moulding the star-studded squad into a cohesive unit -- a task that will be crucial to the team's title ambitions.

"Every player brings a different style and perspective to the team,

and that makes the experience both challenging and exciting. I think the key will be to find the right balance and build that team chemistry once we are together," conceded Sarin, one of the best rapid and blitz players in the world and one of the marquee players of his side.

"I think we have a very strong and exciting team this year, with a great mix of experienced players and young talent. The squad has a lot of promise, and I am really looking forward to playing alongside such a strong group of players and seeing what we can achieve together."

GCL as a tournament is different as it places greater emphasis on team dynamics, shared strategy and collective performance.

"The GCL is a unique experience because of its team format and the opportunity to compete alongside and against some of the best players in the world," Nihal said.

"Every player brings a different style and perspective to the team, and that makes the experience both



challenging and exciting. I think the key will be to find the right bal-

ance and build that team chemistry once we are together."

With the Chess Olympiad happening in Samarkand immediately after the GCL, Sarin said the tournament will provide opportunity for players to compete at the highest level in a team environment ahead of the prestigious global team championship.

"With the Olympiad in Samarkand coming up soon after, playing the GCL will also be a great opportunity to be part of a high-level team environment and compete in a format that is very different from individual tournaments," he added.

"It will be interesting to see how the experience of playing together, handling the pressure and competing as a unit translates into the bigger team events later in the year," he added.

For Nihal, the focus is on turning the potential of the squad into results on the board.

"We have a team that can definitely compete with the best, and I am really looking forward to getting started," he added. (PTI)

Shot-putter Sharmila Dhankar clinches India's first ever para-athletics gold in CWG

GLASGOW, July 28: Sharmila Dhankar, a woman who was impaired by polio at the age of two and survived the trauma of an abusive marriage, became India's first para-athlete to clinch a gold medal in the Commonwealth Games, winning the women's shot put F57 event here.

The 40-year-old produced her season's best throw of 9.81m to end India's 20-year wait for a para-athletics medal in the CWG.

Compatriot Shilpa Shyla, was awarded the bronze medal following an Indian protest amid controversial circumstances. Shyla had produced a personal best effort of 7.26m.

"I am very happy. The feeling has not yet sunk in, may be it will take another two-three days. My mother fought the world to help me fulfil my dreams. My next target is a gold at the Asian Games," Sharmila told PTI.

Nigeria's Eucharika Iyazi was initially placed at the bronze medal position but after a protest and official review, her only valid mark was adjudged a foul.

That led to Shyla being upgraded to bronze from the initial fourth place. However, it is likely that a counter protest may also be launched by Nigeria.

A sobbing Shyla celebrated, along with



Sharmila, after the dramatic upgradation to bronze, giving India two medals from the event.

F57 classification is for athletes with lower limb impairments, limb deficiencies, or reduced muscle power.

Sharmila's performance on Monday night

is one for the ages not just for the result it yielded but the resolve that it took for her to come this far in life.

Hailing from Haryana's Chhithroli, Sharmila's left leg was impaired by Polio at the age of two.

According to a profile shared by the

Sports Authority of India, Sharmila was married off early and was trapped in an abusive marriage before resurrecting her life with support from her family.

She eventually married again, to Ajit Singh, who is a businessman from Rewari, and they have two children.

It was Ajit who encouraged Sharmila to begin her para athletics career in 2020 under the guidance of coach Tek Chand.

Within a year, she won the National Championship and has since emerged as one of India's leading para throwers in the Shot Put and Discus Throw (F57) events.

Sharmila won a gold medal in the Fazza International Para Athletics Championship this year. She also took part in the 2022 Birmingham Games and finished fourth.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi congratulated her for the historic show.

"History has been created in Glasgow! Congratulations to Sharmila for a very special Gold in the Women's Shot Put F57 event and also for a season-best throw. This remarkable performance ends a two decade long wait for a Para Athletics Gold at the Commonwealth Games.

"My best wishes for the endeavours ahead," he posted on X. (PTI)

Kushare becomes first Indian to win CWG men's high jump silver



GLASGOW, July 28: National record holder Sarvesh Kushare scripted history as he became the first Indian to win a silver medal in the men's high jump event of the Commonwealth Games, losing the gold by the narrowest of margins in an enthralling showdown with Jamaica's Romaine Beckford.

After sailing over 2.25m, both the 31-year-old Kushare and Beckford failed to clear the 2.28m mark. But the Jamaican took the gold as he had one less failed attempt than the Indian on count-back. The bronze went to Jack Kimani (2.20m) of England.

The other Indian in the fray, Adarsh Ram, finished fifth with 2.15m.

Before Monday, Tejaswin Shankar was the lone Indian to have won a high jump medal -- a bronze in the 2022 Birmingham Games. But Kushare bettered it with his silver. It was Kushare's first medal in the CWG and that too on debut.

Tejaswin also competed on Monday and retired after failing to clear 2.05m in his first attempt. The move was a precautionary measure for Tejaswin as he is competing in the men's decathlon starting on Thursday.

The 27-year-old, who has a personal best of 2.29m, has not competed in too many individual high jump events in the last two years as he has been focussing on decathlon.

Son of an onion farmer at Devergaon village in Maharashtra's Nashik district, Kushare used to practice high jump by using makeshift landing pits made of corn husks, cotton, and agricultural waste, prepared by his father and childhood coach.

"It's my first medal, also my first medal at a major event. Asian Games and the Commonwealth Games are the Games that push for the Olympics. I want to win a medal. I will do my best," Kushare told PTI after his event.

"I want to win a gold medal at the Asian Games."

Asked what was going through his mind before his final two jumps, he said: "I wanted to do every jump in the first chance. It was a good experience."

On Tejaswin giving him tips inside the throwing arena, Kushare said, "Let the player be in the role. He is a good player. We will do more competitions. We will do our best."

Earlier this month, Kushare scripted history by becoming the first Indian high jumper to finish on the podium at a Diamond League meet, claiming third place on his debut in Monaco and joining an exclusive four-member club of Indian achievers.

He had cleared 2.26m to take the third spot in a star-studded field and grabbed a remarkable personal milestone. He had set a national record of 2.31m while winning gold at the National Inter-State Championships in Bhubaneswar last month.

He was the fourth Indian to finish in top-three of a Diamond League event after javelin throw superstar Neeraj Chopra (13 times since 2022), long jumper Murali Shreshankar (once in 2023) and former discus thrower Vikas Gowda (on two occasions in 2015).

A late bloomer, Kushare first took part in a national event when he was nearly 20 at the 2014 Junior Championships. His first national level gold came in 2018 Indian Open where he jumped 2.24m. He improved his mark to 2.26m while winning gold in the 2019 Indian Open.

He raised the bar by one centimeter to 2.27m on way to a gold at the 2022 Gujarat National Games. For two years, he could not make any improvement before jumping 2.18m while finishing sixth in the 2025 World Championships in Tokyo.

In the process, he also became the first Indian to qualify for the men's high jump final at the World Championships.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi congratulated Kushare for his performance.

"A spectacular Silver for Sarvesh Kushare in Men's High Jump at #CWG2023! His determination and consistency have been noteworthy. Congratulations to him on this outstanding achievement. India is proud of him. Wishing him many more successes ahead," he posted on X. (PTI)

Srihari Nataraj enters 100m backstroke semis Sajan Prakash bows out of 50m butterfly

GLASGOW, July 28: India's Srihari Nataraj qualified for the 100m backstroke semifinals but veteran Sajan Prakash failed to go past the Heats of 50m butterfly event in the Commonwealth Games swimming competition here on Tuesday.

Nataraj finished fifth in his Heat and 13th overall with a timing of 55.58 seconds. The 16 fastest swimmers move ahead from the preliminary stage. The semifinals will be held later tonight.

Nataraj, whose timing at the 50m mark was 26.26sec, has a personal best of 53.77 seconds, which is also the national record that he created in 2021.

Sajan, however, failed to qualify after finishing eighth in his Heat and 28th overall.

The 32-year-old, who was part of the ninth and final group, clocked 24.94 seconds to bow out of contention. The effort was well below his personal best of 23.83 seconds, also a national record.

Sajan, a two-time Olympian, had earlier finished eighth and last in the 200m butterfly event finals on Monday, clocking 1:58.05sec. That performance was also underwhelming as his personal best and national record stands at 1:56.38sec.

The 25-year-old Nataraj, also a two-time Olympian, was a part of the Indian men's 4x200m freestyle relay team which could not translate an encouraging qualification into a podium finish, ending sixth in the final on Monday.

Prasanta Karmakar remains the only Indian swimmer to have ever won a medal at the Commonwealth Games - a bronze in the 50m freestyle S9 para event at New Delhi 2010. (PTI)

MP off-spinner Saransh Jain gets maiden India Test call-up for Sri Lanka series

NEW DELHI, July 28: Veteran Madhya Pradesh off-spinner Saransh Jain earned his maiden Test call-up on Tuesday, capping a decade of consistent domestic performances as the selectors announced India's 15-member squad for the two-match series against Sri Lanka next month.

As reported by PTI on Sunday, the 33-year-old Saransh was in contention due to Washington Sundar's likely unavailability for the opening Test because of his ongoing rehabilitation from a hamstring injury.

The short series will be played in Galle (August 15 to 19) and Colombo (August 23 to 27). India will also play a four-day practice match from August 7 to prepare for the main assignment.

Saransh's inclusion stems from the Shubman Gill-led side's need for a right-arm finger spinner in Washington's absence.

A key member of Madhya Pradesh's Ranji Trophy-winning side under Chandrakant Pandit's coaching, the tall off-spinner enhanced his credentials during the recent India A tour of Sri Lanka, claiming six wickets across the two



matches while also scoring a gritty unbeaten 70. With Ravindra Jadeja and Manav Suthar being the left-arm orthodox spinners and Kuldeep Yadav a left-arm wrist spinner, the selectors opted for variety by drafting in the only specialist right-arm finger spinner in contention.

Jadeja had been given a break from the one off home Test against Afghanistan in June.

Mumbai all-rounder Tanush Kotian, who had replaced the retired R Ashwin during the 2024-25 Border-Gavaskar Trophy, seems to have slipped in the pecking order be-

cause of his inability to consistently produce wicket-taking performances.

The rest of the squad was largely on expected lines.

Right-arm fast bowler Gurnoor Brar retained his place after his outstanding 10-wicket match haul against Sri Lanka A.

Pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah and batter Sai Sudhansan have been included subject to fitness and will undergo assessments at the BCCI's Centre of Excellence later this month before the team departs for Sri Lanka.

While no official standby has been named, Vidarbha pacer Yash Thakur and Jammu and Kashmir fast bowler Aaqib Nabi remain in contention in case Bumrah fails to recover fully from his impact injury.

India squad: Shubman Gill (captain), KL Rahul (vice-captain), Yashasvi Jaiswal, Rishabh Pant (wicket-keeper), Sai Sudhansan, Dhruv Jurel (wicketkeeper), Ravindra Jadeja, Kuldeep Yadav, Manav Suthar, Jasprit Bumrah, Mohammed Siraj, Prasidh Krishna, Gurnoor Brar, Devdutt Padikkal and Saransh Jain. (PTI)

Boxers Sachin Siwach, Ankush, Sakshi enter quarterfinals

GLASGOW, July 28: The Indian trio of Sachin Siwach, Ankush and Sakshi Chaudhary advanced to the quarterfinals of their respective categories in the boxing competition of the Commonwealth Games here on Monday. Sumit, however, lost a tight men's 70kg round of 16 bout to Northern Ireland's Jon McConnell by 1-4 split decision.

Earlier, former world youth champion Sachin produced a composed performance to beat England's William Hewitt 4-1 in the men's 60kg class, winning four of the five judges' scorecards.

Judges 1, 2, 3 and 5 awarded the 26-year-old Sachin a 29-27 victory, while Judge 4 favoured Hewitt with a 29-27 scoreline.

Sachin dominated the contest with consistent scoring across the three rounds.

He won the first two rounds on four judges' cards

before securing the overall verdict despite one judge scoring the bout in Hewitt's favour. The Indian then sealed the win despite a point deduction in the final round.

The victory puts Sachin one win away from a CWG medal as he next faces Botswana's Treasure Moremi in the quarters. Moremi defeated Lesotho's Toka Litabe in another last-16 contest by a 3-2 split decision.

Rising youngster Ankush also advanced to the quarterfinals of the men's 80kg competition. He won a one-sided round of 16 bout against Jan Zalaan of Antigua and Barbuda 5-0 in a unanimous decision by the five judges to make it to the last-eight stage.

The 20-year-old Haryana boxer is also one win away from a medal in his debut Games. He faces Jade Micock of Seychelles in the quarterfinals on Wednesday. (PTI)

Emotional Zinedine Zidane realizes his 'dream' as he takes charge of the France team

PARIS, July 28: Moments after being announced as France's new coach on Tuesday, Zinedine Zidane clenched his fists and his usually measured voice trembled a little.

"I'm excited," he said. "The France team makes you dream. We have extraordinary players, an extraordinary team."

Zidane coached Real Madrid until leaving in 2021. He replaces Didier Deschamps at the helm of France team he led to glory as arguably its greatest ever player.

"I've waited five years for this chance, so that's why I'm a bit emotional," said Zidane, adding that it was the happiest day of his career as coach.

"I've always watched this side as a fan and also as a future coach, I won't hide it," Zidane added. "That's why I didn't take a club side. I told myself that the only thing I wanted to do after Madrid was taking the France team."

French Football Federation president Philippe Diallo announced Zidane's appointment at the FFF headquarters in Paris on Tuesday, saying he has been given a 4-year contract.

Diallo called the hiring of Zidane "an exceptional moment, exceptional because of the person sat next to me," adding that Zidane "is one of the legends of French soccer."



The 54-year-old Zidane could have gone to another club after leaving Madrid in 2021. But there was no way he would.

"I had some offers during the five years I was away to take charge of a club," he said. "I turned them all down for the France team. It was the only thing I wanted to do."

Zidane called it "an immense joy" taking charge.

"I have so many emotions, I am ready for the challenge," he said. "That's what motivates me."

Zidane praised Deschamps, who won the 2018 World Cup and stepped down after the recent edition, where Les Bleus

lost in the semifinals to Spain.

"Today I have the opportunity to be in charge of this team and I will give everything so that this team can win," Zidane said. "I would also like to congratulate DD (Deschamps) for these remarkable years."

Diallo said he met Zidane for talks in February, 2025 after Deschamps said he would stand down after the 2026 World Cup. Zidane said France would play differently to how it did under Deschamps.

"What motivates me is the game, I was a No. 10, I like goals," Zidane said. "I was a leader on the field and now I want to be a leader by experience."

His first game as France coach will be away to Turkey in the Nations League on Sept. 25, followed by a match in Belgium three days later.

Home fans need to wait until Oct. 2 for a glimpse of Zidane at Stade de France, when France plays Italy, 20 years after he was sent off against Italy in the 2006 World Cup final for headbutting Italy defender Marco Materazzi in the chest.

"I've noted all of the four matches to come, they're in my head," Zidane said, tapping his forehead. "Italy is special, because I played there, because I know people, because I speak Italian. All of those things."

From Deschamps to Zidane

France lost the World Cup final on penalties in 2022 and lost the European Championship final on home soil in 2016. Some Deschamps critics, among them former France teammate Christophe Dugarry, said he should have won more with the players he had.

Deschamps described an "unbreathable atmosphere" at the end of his tenure, without detailing what the tensions were.

Zidane and Deschamps were different types of midfielders, but are forever linked by glory.

The industrious Deschamps was France's captain and the mercurial Zidane was the creative force when France won the 1998 World Cup and Euro 2000.

Affectionately nicknamed "Zizou" his face was beamed onto the Arc de Triomphe the night France celebrated its first World Cup triumph in '98. An inspired Zidane scored two headers in the final in a 3-0 win against Brazil at Stade de France and later that year he won the Ballon d'Or.

Zizou's rise Born in Marseille to Algerian parents, Zidane's club career took him from Cannes to Bordeaux and then to two of the world's biggest clubs: Italian giant Juventus and Madrid.

His international career began in

1994, when he scored two stunning goals against the Czech Republic after coming on as a substitute, in front of his home fans in Bordeaux.

He won league titles with Juve and Madrid and scored a brilliant volley to help Madrid win the Champions League in 2002.

With Zidane carrying an injury, France flopped at the 2002 World Cup — going out in the group stage — but reached the final four years later after Zidane came out of international retirement.

His 108th and final game for France was against Italy in the 2006 World Cup final and he scored early with a deft Panenka-style penalty for his 31st, and last, international goal.

Then, with millions watching around the world, an infamous moment saw him walk back up the field and slam his forehead into Materazzi's chest, sending the tall defender flying backward.

Zidane trudged past the gold-tinted World Cup trophy as he left the field in Berlin, his international career over.

His first game as France coach will be away to Turkey in the Nations League on Sept. 25, followed by a match in Belgium three days later.

Home fans need to wait until Oct. 2 for a glimpse of Zidane at Stade de France, when France plays Italy. (AP)

European T20 franchise league to begin on August 26

DUBLIN, July 28: The European T20 Premier League (ETPL) on Tuesday unveiled the schedule for its inaugural season, with the six-team competition set to run from August 26 to September 20 across venues in the Netherlands and Ireland.

The opening match will feature Jonty Rhodes' Rotterdam Dockers taking on Steve Waugh's Amsterdam Flames at the Voorburg Cricket Club in The Hague on August 26.

The second fixture, scheduled for August 27, will see Rahul Dravid-backed Dublin Guardians, led by Ravichandran Ashwin, face Glenn Maxwell's Belfast Wolves.

The tournament will begin in Voorburg before shifting to the Malahide Cricket Club in Dublin for the remainder of the league stage.

Malahide will also host the Qualifier and the final.

The inaugural edition will feature six teams from across Europe, bringing together some of the biggest names in world cricket alongside Europe's finest homegrown talent.

Global stars including Tim David, Steve Smith, Faf du Plessis, Heinrich Klaasen, Mitchell Marsh, Lungi Ngidi and Trent Boult will share the stage with leading European players such as Paul Stirling, Scott Edwards, Josh Little, Jai Moondra, George Dockrell, Aryan Dutt, Max O'Dowd, Richie Berrington and Matthew Cross.

Each franchise will play every other team twice in a round-robin format. The team finishing at the top of the league table will qualify directly for the Final, while the second and third-placed teams will contest the Qualifier for the remaining place in the championship decider. (PTI)