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Assam cab operators suspend blockade

Ministerial-level talks held in Guwahati ● Meghalaya assures Assam travellers of safety, regrets Shillong violence ● SIT formed to probe Aug 19 incident

GUWAHATI, Aug 22: Assam cab operators on Saturday suspended their blockade against Meghalaya-registered vehicles following assurances on safety after a ministerial-level meeting between the two states. The decision was announced following a meeting between Assam Border Protection Minister Atul Bora and Meghalaya Deputy CM S Dhar.

"We have decided to suspend the blockade for the time being. The Meghalaya government has formed a Special Investigation Team to enquire into the violence of August 19. We will wait for its findings," a cab operator said at the blockade site at Jorabat, after a meeting with Bora.

"Our minister has said that Meghalaya will compensate for the damage caused to our drivers and vehicles," he added.

Bora visited the protesters after meeting Dhar.

A delegation of the protesters will meet representatives of the Assam government on Sunday to take forward their demands.

Violence had erupted during a bike rally organised by the Khasi Students' Union in Shillong on August 19. At least 31 vehicles, including those from Assam, were damaged, and 16 people were injured, according to the police.

Following the incident, commercial vehicle operators in Assam blocked traffic to Meghalaya at Jorabat and Khanapara, the main entry points to the neighbouring state, from Thursday.

The blockade was extended to other entry points to Meghalaya from Guwahati on Saturday.

Earlier, the Meghalaya government on Saturday expressed regret over the violence during a recent students' rally in Shillong, in which Assam residents were allegedly

targeted, and assured the safety of travellers.

This was informed in a joint statement issued by both states after a ministerial-level meeting here.

The governments of Assam and Meghalaya decided on short- and long-term measures to ease the situation and urged people to cooperate in restoring normalcy.

The statement, issued during a joint press briefing by Meghalaya Deputy Chief Minister S Dhar and Assam Border Protection and Development Minister Atul Bora, said the Meghalaya government had expressed regret over the August 19 incident and assured the safety of people travelling to the hill state.

"The government of Meghalaya has sincerely regretted the unfortunate incident of August 19 in Shillong and assured to take strong action against those who are in-

involved," it said.

The president, vice-president and general secretary of the Khasi Students' Union (KSU), which organised the rally during which the violence took place, have been arrested under the Meghalaya Maintenance of Public Order Act.

Fifteen FIRs have so far been registered in connection with the incident, while five masked persons have been identified as allegedly being involved, particularly in attacks on Assam-registered vehicles, the joint statement said.

The Meghalaya government said a Special Investigation Team (SIT) has been constituted to probe, identify and prosecute those involved in the August 19 violence here, in which 16 people were injured, two vehicles set ablaze and around 31 vehicles damaged, the statement said. It also said five masked (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)



Centre forms panel for 'permanent political solution' to Gorkha issue

SILIGURI (WB), Aug 22: The Centre on Saturday constituted a committee to draft an agreement and finalise modalities for a "permanent political solution" within the constitutional framework to the Gorkha identity issue in the Darjeeling hills and adjoining areas, officials said following a key tripartite meeting involving Union Home Minister Amit Shah, Gorkha leaders and the West Bengal government.

The development comes amid the longstanding demand for greater political recognition, autonomy and protection of the distinct linguistic, cultural and ethnic identity of the region's predominantly Gorkha population.

"All issues relating to the hill population of West Bengal were discussed in detail. Their demands pertaining to a distinct identity, a permanent political solution and recognition under the Constitution of India were taken up. The Union Home Minister promised a permanent political solution soon under the umbrella of the Constitution," a statement issued by the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) said.

"To finalise modalities, it was decided to form a committee under Shri Pankaj Kumar Singh, former



deputy national security advisor and current interlocutor, to finalise the details regarding the final agreement that will be drafted towards a permanent political solution for the people of the hill areas of West Bengal under the Constitution of India," the statement added.

Shah, the release said, also promised to sympathetically look into all other demands of the community.

"He said adequate funding from the Centre will ensure all pending issues are taken care of," the communication added.

The meeting, held at a hotel in

Sukna in the Darjeeling foothills on the third and final day of Shah's visit to the state, was chaired by the Union Home Minister and attended by Chief Minister Suvenudh Adhikari and leaders of various political parties of the hills and other stakeholders of the region.

Gorkha Janmukti Morcha (GJM) chief Bimal Gurung, and the party's senior leader Roshan Giri, Gorkha National Liberation Front (GNLF) chief Mann Ghisingh, several state ministers and BJP MLAs from the hills, besides senior officials of the state govt, (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Peace and tranquillity along border areas prerequisite for good relations with China, says S Jaishankar

NEW DELHI, Aug 22: India and China have an interest in maintaining a "stable" bilateral relationship, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar said on Saturday while asserting that the state of the border would naturally determine the state of the ties.

The external affairs minister said India will have to do business with the entire world, including China, with confidence while continuing to stand its ground as it did along the frontier.

"I think we went through a particularly bad patch between the summer of 2020 and the autumn of 2024, and that was primarily an outcome of the situation in the border areas," he said at the Economic Times World Leaders Forum.

Jaishankar said that "at the end of the day, peace and tranquillity in the border areas is a prerequisite for good relations, and the state of the border, to a very large measure, naturally would determine the state of the relations."

The external affairs minister said the countries are "very big economies" and both countries are markets to each other in many ways as well as part of a supply chain.

"The world is competitive. We



must build up our strengths. We have to do business with the entire world. That includes China too. But it is important we deal with them confidently and we stand our ground as we have stood in the border," he said.

Jaishankar's remarks came in response to a question on the state of India-China ties.

India and China rolled out a series of measures in the last over one year to rebuild their relationship after it

came under severe strain following the deadly Galwan valley clashes in 2020 and the subsequent military face-off that lasted for more than four years.

In October 2024, the two sides signed up a disengagement pact for Depsang and Demchok, the last two friction points in eastern Ladakh. Days after the agreement was finalised, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chinese President Xi Jinping held (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

No peace without dialogue among communities: Singh

IMPHAL, Aug 22: Manipur Chief Minister Y Khecham Singh on Saturday said there can be no peace in the state without dialogue among communities and stressed that development cannot be achieved without restoring peace.

"There can be no peace without dialogue among the communities," he said while speaking at the inauguration of a parking facility here.

He added that development can only be possible if there is peace in the state.

At another event at Khuman Lampak Stadium, Singh felicitated weightlifter Saikhom Mirabai Chanu and other medallists and participants of the 2026 Glasgow Commonwealth Games for bringing laurels to the state and the country.

He also distributed appointment letters to gold medallists of the 36th and 37th National Games.

Gold medallists were given a cash reward of ₹ 20 lakh each, while silver medallists received ₹ 15 lakh each along with a certificate.

Bronze medallists were given ₹ 10 lakh each and a certificate, while participants of the Glasgow Games received ₹ 4 lakh each and a certificate. (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

California assembly adopts resolution to celebrate Diwali on Nov 8



WASHINGTON, Aug 22: The California State Assembly adopted a resolution recognising November 8 as Diwali Day and urged citizens of the state to take part in the celebration.

The resolution, moved by assembly members Darshana Patel and Ash Kalra, also expresses deepest respect for Indian Americans and the Indian diaspora in California and throughout the world on this prominent occasion.

"...the Assembly recognizes this year's Diwali festival on Sunday, November 8, 2026, and encourages Californians to take part in this joyous day of celebration," said the resolution, adopted by the assembly on Thursday. It said that Diwali, a festival of great significance to Indian Americans and South Asian Americans, is celebrated annually by Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, and Jains throughout the United States, and across the globe.

Diwali or Deepavali, which means "a row of lamps," is one of the world's oldest holidays that brings families, friends, and communities together for a celebration of generosity, unity, joy, appreciation, and a time of reflection, the resolution said. "Diwali, commonly referred to as the Festival of Lights, is a time when homes are brightened with candles, oil lanterns, and clay lamps and the skies are filled with firecrackers to show respect for good health, wealth, knowledge, peace, and prosperity," it said.

The resolution said Diwali is celebrated in abundantly diverse ways that represent the triumph of good over evil, connecting to themes of liberation (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Nagaland to restructure govt schools, undertake emergency teacher recruitment

KOHIMA, Aug 22: The Nagaland government will undertake a major restructuring of government schools, including the amalgamation and closure of low-enrolment institutions, creation of composite schools and rationalisation of teacher deployment, an official said on Saturday.

Addressing the Nagaland Government Higher Secondary School Employees Association (NGHSSEA) General Conference here on the theme "Catalyzing Educational Transformation", on Saturday, Advisor for School Education Dr Kekhrilhoulie Yheme said the School Education Department had gathered the necessary data and would consult teachers, communities and other stakeholders before implementing the reforms.

The restructuring is aimed at improving enrolment, infrastructure, governance and the overall quality of government education, he said.

Composite schools, particularly

where institutions are located within the same or nearby premises, would provide students continuity from elementary to higher secondary education and could help improve enrolment.

Yheme said the department was facing shortages of teachers in key subjects, particularly mathematics, science and postgraduate teaching, while there were surplus teachers in other categories. Available resources would be redeployed to address critical shortages.

Speaking to reporters on the sidelines of the conference, Yheme said the government would undertake emergency recruitment of graduate teachers in mathematics and science to address the shortage of subject teachers in government schools.

He also announced that the government would undertake emergency recruitment of graduate teachers in mathematics and science. The shortage, he said, was particu-

larly acute in technical subjects including mathematics, physics and chemistry.

The issue has been recognised by the state Cabinet, and the modalities for the recruitment will be worked out by the government, Yheme said.

"If we do not have teachers, we will have no choice because our schools cannot be running on shortage of teachers," he said, adding that the government may have to consider candidates from outside Nagaland if suitable teachers are not available within the state.

Yheme said around 780 postgraduate teachers currently constitute the NGHSSEA, while 70 more PGTs are expected to join after recruitment formalities, with another 30 posts in the pipeline.

He also outlined plans to strengthen curriculum, digital education, arts, music, socio-emotional learning and mother-tongue education. (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

SHILLONG, Aug 22: Meghalaya Congress on Saturday accused the state government of failing to prevent the escalation of violence, which it said hit normal life, affected tourism and left vehicles stranded at the inter-state boundary with Assam.

Violence was witnessed in Shillong during an August 19 students' rally, in which 16 people were injured and two vehicles set ablaze, besides damage to several other vehicles, including those from Assam. The violence prompted retaliatory blockade of the Assam-Meghalaya border at Guwahati by taxi drivers, even as petrol bomb attacks were reported across the hill state on Friday.

Meghalaya Pradesh Congress Committee (MPCC) president Vincent H Pala, in a statement, said that the government should not merely condemn violence after incidents occur, but must anticipate tensions, protect citizens and take timely action to prevent escalation.

"The government cannot remain a spectator while violence escalates, tourists are stranded and ordinary people suffer. Its responsibility is to anticipate, prevent, protect and act, not simply issue statements after the damage is done," Pala said.

He alleged that the government failed to maintain law and order and respond effectively to growing tensions, including along the inter-state border.

Pala said protests over various demands and incidents

of violence disrupted movement between the two states, with tourist vehicles stranded at the border and visitors facing difficulties in leaving Meghalaya.

The disruptions have also hit hotels, homestays, taxi operators, restaurants, shops and thousands of families dependent on tourism, he said.

"We condemn violence in the strongest terms, but democratic demands and peaceful protests must be addressed through dialogue. No government can afford to allow legitimate grievances to fester until they turn into confrontation," Pala said.

The MPCC alleged that despite intelligence and administrative inputs about developing tensions, the government failed to demonstrate the preparedness and timely intervention required to prevent the situation from escalating.

It also criticised the handling of the Meghalaya-Assam border situation and called for sustained dialogue and political intervention to resolve the issues.

Pala said the high-level meeting in Guwahati between representatives of the two states was a welcome step, but such intervention should have come earlier.

"Sensitive inter-state matters require mature leadership, continuous dialogue and timely intervention. They should never be allowed to escalate because of administrative negligence or (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Every child deserves a safe childhood, quality education and good health Arunachal Governor calls for preventive child protection framework

ITANAGAR, Aug 22: Arunachal Pradesh Governor Lt Gen K T Parinaik (Retd) on Saturday called for a shift from a complaint-based system to a preventive child protection framework, stressing the need for early identification of vulnerable children and stronger action against child abuse, trafficking, child labour, substance abuse, school dropouts, child marriage and cyber exploitation.

The governor also expressed concern over the growing number of cases under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act and the low rate of prosecution in the state, while calling for stricter monitoring of child care institutions and effective imple-

mentation of child protection laws.

Parinaik said this when the Chairperson of the Arunachal Pradesh State Commission for Protection of Child Rights (APSCPCR) Ratan Anya, along with members of the Commission, called on him at Lok Bhavan here, an official statement said.

During the meeting, the chairperson briefed the governor about the outcome of the two-day North East SPCRs convention on child rights, held in Tawang on July 31 and August 1.

The convention brought together child rights institutions from across the northeastern states to discuss emerging challenges, best practices and ways to work together for the



protection and welfare of children.

Appreciating the initiative, Parinaik said the well-being of children should be a shared responsibility of both society and the government.

"Every child deserves a safe childhood, quality education, good health, protection from exploitation and equal opportunities to realise his or her potential," he said.

The state Commission, he said, should work as a vigilant watchdog for child rights and also help build a child-friendly Arunachal Pradesh where every child can grow with dignity, security, confidence and hope.

The governor urged the Commission to strengthen monitoring at the district level and maintain close coordination with schools, anganwadi centres, law enforcement agencies, health departments and community organisations to identify children in distress at an early stage.

Expressing concern over the increasing POCSO cases, he stressed the need for effective prosecution of offenders and stronger monitoring of child care institutions. He also called

for regular inspections of observation homes, shelter homes, hostels and other child care facilities.

The governor further emphasised strict implementation of the Juvenile Justice Act, the POCSO Act and the Right to Education Act to ensure the safety, education and protection of every child. He said periodic reviews and independent assessments would help improve accountability and address gaps in the system.

Highlighting the growing social and digital challenges faced by children, Parinaik called for a broad-based Child Rights Awareness Movement across the state. He said the Commission should launch a statewide child rights literacy campaign (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

India-Finland cooperation takes centre stage at circular economy forum

NEW DELHI, Aug 22: India and Finland are looking to deepen business and technology partnerships in the circular economy as companies from both countries explored opportunities for resource-efficient and sustainable growth at a forum here.

The concluding day of the two-day India Circular Economy Forum (ICEF) 2026, which focused on Finland, on Friday brought together policymakers, businesses and circular economy experts to discuss opportunities arising from the evolving India-EU economic relationship, an official statement.

Held from August 20 to 21, the ICEF 2026 was a precursor to the World Circular Economy Forum (WCEF) 2026, which will be held for the first time in South Asia in Gandhinagar from September 15 to 18.

The WCEF defines a circular economy as a system where materials never become waste and nature is regenerated. It helps tackle climate change and other global challenges, like biodiversity loss, waste and pollution, by decoupling economic activity from the consumption of limited resources.

Friday's discussions, held under the theme "Harmonising Value Chains: The new India-EU Trade Era", focused on building competitive and resilient value chains through circularity, traceability, resource efficiency and sustainable business practices.

Antti Herlevi, Counsellor for Trade and Investments in the Em-



bassy of Finland in New Delhi, said, "Circular economy is not just an environmental agenda; it is an economic and industrial one."

He said more than 100 Finnish companies were already active in India across sectors such as clean energy, waste management, recycling, digital solutions and sustainable design, and that there was scope for greater cooperation with Indian partners.

"As the Indian market continues to grow rapidly, there is a significant opportunity for Finnish businesses to work alongside local partners in India across a range of fields, combining expertise and innovation to support resource-efficient and sustainable growth,"

Herlevi said.

Indian and Finnish companies also participated in a dedicated business-to-business session aimed at developing investment, technology and commercial partnerships in the circular economy.

Finnish companies, including Peikko, Nokia, Normet, Mirasys and Lamor, and Indian firms, such as Orbigen Techsource, LoopM Alternatives, Re:Gen Collective and Syaahi Uniforms, took part in the discussions.

Shalini Goyal Bhalla, founder and managing director, International Council for Circular Economy, said, "India is at an important point in its circular economy transition."

She said circular economy prin-

ciples needed to move beyond waste management and become part of product design, value chains, resource use, skills development and new business models.

The 10th edition of the WCEF in Gandhinagar will be jointly organised in September by Finnish innovation fund Sitra and the Central Pollution Control Board, with support from the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, the Gujarat government and other global and Indian partners.

The forum aims to identify practical strategies to help businesses improve resource efficiency, strengthen environmental and ESG performance and develop new growth opportunities as India expands its role in global value chains.

India's bilateral trade with Finland rose about 25 per cent year-on-year to USD 3.70 billion in 2025-26. Overall trade grew around 38.5 per cent over five years, from USD 2.64 billion in 2021-22 to USD 3.65 billion in 2025-26, according to Indian government data.

Friday's discussions assumed significance against the backdrop of the India-EU Free Trade Agreement (FTA), whose negotiations were concluded on January 27, with the agreement opening preferential market access for more than 99 per cent of Indian merchandise exports to the EU.

However, the FTA is currently undergoing legal review and formal ratification procedures, and has not come into force. (PTI)

Ather Energy scooters are now available through CSD for Armed Forces Personnel



HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Aug 22: Ather Energy, one of India's leading electric two-wheeler manufacturers, has received approval to commence sales through the Canteen Stores Department (CSD) portal, making its electric scooters available to eligible Armed Forces personnel.

As per an official statement on Saturday, sales through the CSD portal are expected to commence from September 2026.

"Eight variants across Ather's 450 and Rizta model ranges (Ather 450 Apex excluded) have been listed on the CSD platform. Ather is among the first two electric two-wheeler manufacturers in India to have its products listed on the CSD platform," the statement added.

It further said that the CSD listing will give eligible Armed Forces personnel access to Ather's 450 and Rizta ranges, along with special discounts offered by Ather on purchases made through the platform. These discounts will be available on top of the GST benefits applicable to purchases through CSD, providing an additional benefit to personnel purchasing an Ather scooter.

Ather's 450 range is built around performance and engaging everyday riding, while Rizta is designed as a family scooter, with a focus on comfort, practicality, and everyday usability. With eight variants across the two ranges available through CSD, Armed Forces personnel will

have the flexibility to choose a scooter based on their individual requirements.

"The availability of Ather scooters through CSD comes at a time when electric two-wheeler adoption is expanding across the country, supported by increasing product availability and state-level policies encouraging EV adoption. The CSD listing will further expand access to electric two-wheelers for Armed Forces personnel and allow them to benefit from the growing EV ecosystem," the statement said.

Ravneet Singh Phokela, chief business officer, Ather Energy Limited said that they are pleased to partner with CSD and bring Ather to the Armed Forces community.

"Being among the first pure-play electric two-wheeler manufacturers to be listed on the CSD platform is a significant step for us. In practical terms, this gives Armed Forces personnel and their families access to Ather scooters through a channel they already trust and use for their everyday purchases. A big part of expanding EV ownership is simply about availability, making sure the product is where customers already are. CSD does that at scale, and we look forward to being part of that journey," he added.

The availability of Ather scooters through CSD further expands the company's reach across the country and brings its products to a new set of customers through an established purchase platform.

Power ministry asks states to accelerate smart meter installation

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Aug 22: The Ministry of Power has asked all the States and UTs to continue and rather accelerate the rollout of Smart Meters in all categories of consumers in collaboration with the DISCOMs and the consumers under the Revamped Distribution Sector Scheme (RDSS) of the Union Government.

In an official notification addressed to all the chief secretaries/principal secretaries and secretary (Power) all states, the under secretary, Ministry of Power, Ankita Varshney, has pointed out that installation of smart meters is mandated through the aforesaid statutory provisions irrespective of the mode of payment (pre or postpaid) which is essentially a functional configuration.

"The installation of smart meters provides for transparent and accurate billing for consumers with facility of consumption monitoring. It also facilitates an ecosystem for energy transition and leveraging the benefit of time-of-day tariff which would enable in shifting loads to nonpeak timings thereby reducing electricity bills. For DISCOMs it would help in enhanced energy accounting and operational efficiency," the August 12 notification read.

It stated that considering the benefits offered to consumers, through convenience of recharge in small domination, and distribution utilities, through advance revenue collection and reduced working capital requirement, the deployment of smart meters under the RDSS is being supported for pre-paid mode.

All states and UTs are requested to continue and accelerate smart meter installations across all consumer categories, in line with the extant regulations and the benefits of smart meters are leveraged both by the consumers and the distribution utilities, the notification concluded.

Contd. from Page 1...

Assam cab operators suspend

men involved in the violence and random attacks on Assam-registered tourist vehicles have so far been identified. More than 3,770 Assam-registered vehicles have already been safely escorted out of Meghalaya into Assam, it said. The Assam Control Room has received 54 distress calls involving 175 people seeking assistance in evacuation. These include 22 private vehicles and five tourist vehicles, the statement said.

The Meghalaya Control Room has received 379 distress calls, and steps have been taken to assist those stranded in making safe transit, it said.

Most stranded travellers and vehicles, including around 400-500 vehicles that were earlier held up in Meghalaya, have crossed key transit corridors, including the Umling Lake section. Any passenger or vehicle yet to be transferred to Assam will be safely escorted within the next 48 hours, the statement said.

"A dedicated exercise will be undertaken to ensure that every tourist or vehicle wishing to return to Assam is facilitated and safely escorted," the statement added.

The meeting decided to establish a dedicated coordination mechanism between the Inspector General, Special Branch, Assam, and the IG, Law and Order, Meghalaya, along with dedicated helplines.

An online support forum will also be activated to assist in locating and facilitating stranded individuals, with the numbers 9181014888 (WhatsApp) and 0361-2381-511 (landline).

This mechanism shall remain operational until the situation is fully normalised, the statement added.

As part of long-term measures, permanent district-level joint committees will be constituted comprising the Deputy Commissioner of Nongpoh and the District Commissioner of Kamrup Metropolitan, along with police officers of corresponding ranks from both states, to ensure that day-to-day issues along the inter-state border are resolved promptly. A joint committee comprising commissioner/secretary-level transport authorities of both states and representatives of tourist vehicle associations will also be constituted to facilitate and regulate tourist transport movement and safeguard the shared tourism interests of Assam and Meghalaya.

Both governments will take necessary measures to ensure safe transit for vehicles travelling from southern Assam to other parts of the state, including movement from the Barak Valley through Meghalaya.

Similarly, arrangements will be made for people travelling from Meghalaya to other parts of the state through Assam, the statement said.

"The government of Meghalaya reiterated that it shall take responsibility for the safety and security of all tourists and vehicles travelling from Assam and other parts of the country into Meghalaya, during their stay and movement within the state," it added. Both the ministers urged the people to cooperate to restore normalcy, with Bora appealing to the cab operators to call off their traffic blockade against the neighbouring state. (PTI)

Centre forms panel for 'permanent

were among those present at the meeting. Also present were BJP MPs Raju Bista and Harshvardhan Singla, MoS, Hill Affairs Bishal Lama, MLAs Bharat Chettri, Sonam Lama and Noman Rai, among others.

In October 2025, the MHA appointed Pankaj Kumar Singh, a retired IPS officer and former BSF director general who served as deputy national security adviser from 2023 to 2025, as the government's interlocutor for issues relating to the Darjeeling hills, Doars and Terai.

His role focuses on leading political dialogue and addressing long-standing demands of the Gorkha community. BJP's Darjeeling MP Raju Bista said that Saturday's meeting was held on a historic day since it coincided with the date of signing of the Gorkha accord in 1988. The accord, signed between the Centre, the West Bengal government and the Gorkha National Liberation Front (GNLF), had led to the creation of the Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council (DGHC) as an autonomous administrative arrangement following a prolonged and violent agitation for a separate state of Gorkhaland in the 1980s.

The demand resurfaced strongly in subsequent decades, including through the Gorkhaland movement led by the GJM, prompting repeated rounds of tripartite talks involving the Centre, the state government and Gorkha representatives. In 2011, a tripartite agreement led to the creation of the Gorkhaland Territorial Administration (GTA), but several core political and identity-related demands remained unresolved.

The Centre resumed formal tripartite talks in 2021 and has since maintained that the hill issues, including those concerning Darjeeling, Terai and Doars, should be addressed within the constitutional framework and in coordination with the state government.

"The history of struggle of the hill communities spans over four decades, during which the previous Left and TMC government trampled over the aspirations of the hill people. The sacrifice made by our people involves nearly 2,000 people who were martyred, over 5,000 people displaced and women tortured and raped," the Darjeeling MP alleged. Bista said while representatives of the various communities put forth their concerns and expectations at the meeting, Adhikari also spoke on how he intends to address the issues of the hill people.

"After hearing out all stakeholders, Shah summed up the meeting by elucidating how a permanent solution to the issues could be reached in the days ahead," the MP said. GJM leader Roshan Giri said the Gorkha leadership was committed to finding a solution through constitutional means and would work with the Centre in the process. "Shah has clearly said that whatever solution is reached to address the issue will have to be under the constitutional framework. I am in favour of a constitutional solution and have put forward my suggestions in accordance with that," Giri told reporters. (PTI)

Peace and tranquillity along

talks in Kazan and took a number of decisions to improve the ties. In August last year, Prime Minister Modi travelled to the Chinese city of Tianjin to attend the annual SCO summit. PM Modi and Chinese President Xi Jinping held extensive talks on the sidelines of the SCO (Shanghai Cooperation Organisation) Summit.

Jaishankar also extensively delved into economic aspects of India-China relations. "In many ways, we are markets to each other. We are, you know, part of a supply chain. They (China) industrialise much faster and much bigger and much earlier," he said. The external affairs minister rued that India could have taken the opportunity to deepen manufacturing and industrialisation over half-a-century back.

"I would also say, at a political level, at a strategic level, both of us have an interest in maintaining a certain, I would say, stable relationship," he said.

Jaishankar also said that India has taken up with China issues relating to businessmen facing visa problems.

The external affairs minister said India must work on its strengths.

"We develop our strengths, which unfortunately, as I said, from the 1960s for half a century we did not do. We have to make up for the shortcomings," he said. "I think a stronger, a more 'Atma-Nirbhar' (self-reliant) India, a more industrialised India, a stronger and a more manufacturing India will be able to actually compete with China as it will with other major countries of the world. To a question on US-China relations that has been billed as G2, Jaishankar called for looking at it "with some caution".

"If you look at the US-China relationship, I think at its heart is a fundamentally competitive relationship, but as is often the case, it can also be collaborative in certain matters. It can be indifferent in certain sectors. So it is not that they will compete on every issue in every geography in every time frame. So it's a very complicated relationship as is natural. "So, where we are concerned, I will, as I said, for me the guiding principle Indian national interest...it's a relationship which we will monitor and assess from the manner in which it serves us best," he said. (PTI)

Meghalaya govt failed

political calculations," he said. The MPCC urged the NPP-BJP government to restore confidence, ensure the uninterrupted movement of tourists, medicines and essential commodities, provide security to travellers and tourist vehicles and engage with all stakeholders to resolve the issues through dialogue.

Meghalaya cannot afford to acquire an image of insecurity and instability, the party said, warning that it takes years to build confidence among tourists and investors but only a few incidents and an inadequate response can damage that confidence. (PTI)

Arunachal Governor calls for

involving educational institutions, panchayati raj bodies, religious leaders, youth organisations, civil society groups and the media. Awareness programmes on child protection laws, online safety, mental health, counselling services and reporting mechanisms should reach every village and urban area, he added.

The chairperson assured him that the Commission would work towards implementing his suggestions to create a safer, more inclusive and child-friendly environment in the state. APSCPCR members Nirri Chongrowju, Honluk Lukham and Ngurang Achung, along with member secretary Yakar Dawe, accompanied the chairperson during the meeting. (PTI)

California assembly adopts

from negativity, encouragement to overcome struggles, embracing positivity and humility, and upholding kindness despite personal challenges. "For those who celebrate, Diwali is a time to commit to knowledge, growth, and happiness; it is a time to reflect, signifying the importance of wisdom, kindness, and transformation," the resolution read. (PTI)

No peace without dialogue

Singh said sportspersons had helped create a positive impression of Manipur following the Glasgow Commonwealth Games, as people across the country had otherwise been largely concerned about the state's law and order situation over the past three years.

Singh also informed that a special recruitment policy for sportspersons who brought laurels to the state was formulated in the recently held Cabinet meeting. He maintained that under this policy, sportspersons would be recruited by the state government with complete transparency and strictly on the basis of merit.

He added that, so far, only gold medalists were provided state government jobs, but under the new policy, even silver and bronze medalists would be also be considered for jobs. (PTI)

Nagaland to restructure govt schools

The department is working with external organisations on project-based learning, art and music initiatives, while exploring the use of artificial intelligence in education, he said.

On teacher attendance, Yhome said the department was strengthening monitoring mechanisms to ensure regular attendance and classroom teaching.

A teacher attendance monitoring system is already in place, while the department is working with the Information Technology Department on an integrated system and mobile application to track attendance and leave records, he said.

The proposed system would link teachers' leave records with their Annual Performance Appraisal Reports (APARs), he said.

He acknowledged connectivity problems in some areas and said teachers without internet access could upload attendance once they reached a serviceable location, with the data synchronised automatically.

On Sanskrit teaching, Yhome said schools under the Nagaland Board of School Education (NBSE) would continue to follow the state's language policy, under which mother-tongue education is compulsory. Schools affiliated to CBSE and CISCE, however, would have to follow the respective mandates of their boards.

The government, he said, would not be required to provide additional support for Sanskrit teachers in schools operating outside the NBSE system. (PTI)

AFFIDAVIT

I, Shri Jitu Deori, S/O Pitambar Deori, aged about 35 years, presently serving in Assam Rifles and resident of Mahadevpur-I, P.O. /P.S. Mahadevpur, district Namsai, Arunachal Pradesh, PIN 792105, solemnly declare on 12th August, 2026 at Mahadevpur, Namsai that due to some pious reason I have changed my son's name from Kairuv Deori to Khonin Deori which has been written in his birth certificate and Aadhar Card.

Therefore the name Kairuv Deori and Khonin Deori are one and the same person i.e. my son and the name Kairuv Deori appearing in my Assam Rifles Service Record refers to the same and identical person.

Shri Jitu Deori,
S/O Pitambar Deori
Vill - Mahadevpur-I,
P.O. /P.S. Mahadevpur
District - Namsai,
Arunachal Pradesh.

87 mn Indian youth are not studying, working or in training: NITI Aayog

NEW DELHI, Aug 22: An estimated 8.7 crore Indian youth aged 15 to 29 are not studying, working, or receiving training, a recent Niti Aayog report said, highlighting the urgent need for subsidised training programmes to encourage self-employment and align with local demand and emerging sectors.

The Aayog, in the report titled 'Reimagining Skilling for Viksit Bharat@2047', said the estimate is based on data from the 78th round of the National Sample Survey conducted in 2021.

To ensure the highest impact, the Aayog organised India's workforce landscape and learners into five segments -- schooling; tertiary education; formal and informal work; not in education, employment and training (NEET) youth; and women.

"NEET youth are constrained by the absence of income and the sunk cost of prior education. Students often cannot layer paid skilling onto existing financial commitments," it said.

The Aayog has defined NEET youth as youth comprising individuals between the ages of 15 and 29 who are not engaged in education, employment, or training, as well as those who are unemployed.

"NEET youth and women require affordable or subsidised training options, alongside dedicated financial support where constraints are most binding. Across segments, the ability to combine learning with earning re-

mains a central requirement.

"For the workforce and NEET youth, the need shifts towards mid-career reskilling, self-employment pathways, and learning options aligned with local demand and emerging sectors," the Aayog said in the report.

The report pointed out that students, especially those from low-income households, are already stretched by college expenses and, in many cases, private tuition.

As a result, it said making additional investment in paid skilling alongside a traditional degree is often financially unviable.

"As a result, many students choose to get themselves a formal job/income source after graduation to support their families and often end up taking whatever brings in some stable income even if that is low-paying; others, however, struggle to transition into work and become NEET," the Aayog said. The report also lamented that only 8.25 per cent of graduates are employed in roles aligned to their qualifications.

"Limited exposure to practical learning and industry-aligned training continues to constrain employability, even among formally educated youth," it said.

The Aayog said that India's ambition of Viksit Bharat 2047 depends on enabling citizens to learn, earn, and advance continuously, and skilling is central to this goal. Since 2014-15, over 7.67 crore individuals have been trained, it added. (PTI)

Officials were directed to keep a close watch on stock levels Cachar admin fixes sugar price range, orders market monitoring



HT Bureau
GUWAHATI, Aug 22: The Cachar district administration has agreed on a reasonable price range for sugar after reviewing stock availability, supply channels and prevailing market conditions, with wholesale sugar to be sold at ₹ 60.50 to ₹ 61 per kg and the retail price maintained between ₹ 63 and ₹ 64 per kg.

As per an official statement, the decision was taken at a meeting held at the Old Conference Hall of the Office of the District Commissioner, Cachar, Silchar, on Friday.

The meeting was chaired by Cachar District Commissioner Rahul Kumar Gupta, IAS, and attended by officials of the Food, Public Distribution and Consumer Affairs (FPD&CA) Department and wholesale sugar traders.

The meeting reviewed the supply situation and discussed measures to maintain price stability across the district.

The review followed a video conference chaired by the Minister for Food, Public Distribution and Consumer Affairs, Housing and Urban Affairs and Cooperation, which was attended virtually by district officials and wholesale traders. Subsequently, the district administration held discussions with wholesale traders on the availability of sugar and its movement into Cachar.

Additional District Commissioner (FPD&CA), Cachar, Devid Kr. Borah, ACS, initiated the discussion and sought details on the stock position and prevailing market conditions. Traders informed the meeting that a major portion of the district's sugar supply is received through railway rakes routed via Guwahati.

"Following an assessment of the stock position and supply arrangements, the meeting mutually agreed on the price range of ₹ 60.50

to ₹ 61 per kg for wholesale sugar and ₹ 63 to ₹ 64 per kg at the retail level," the statement added.

The district administration also stressed the need for regular monitoring of sugar stocks to ensure adequate availability in the market. Officials were directed to keep a close watch on stock levels and conduct inspections wherever necessary to prevent hoarding and the creation of artificial shortages.

Traders and retailers were advised to keep price revisions reasonable and linked to the actual landed cost of the commodity. The administration cautioned against imposing any unwarranted financial burden on consumers through unjustified price increases.

The FPD&CA Department will continue to monitor the inflow of sugar through railway rakes routed via Guwahati.

Officials said regular monitoring of incoming consignments and their movement within the district would help maintain steady supplies and minimise the possibility of localised price escalation.

The administration also reminded traders to comply with prevailing government instructions on prices and stock maintenance. Traders were directed to issue cash memos while selling essential commodities to ensure transparency in retail transactions.

District Commissioner Rahul Kumar Gupta emphasised the importance of coordinated action among officials, wholesalers and retailers to maintain market stability and ensure the availability of essential commodities to consumers at reasonable prices.

The meeting concluded with the chair thanking officials and wholesale traders for their participation and cooperation in maintaining a smooth supply chain and transparent pricing mechanism for sugar in Cachar.

Minister Krishnendu Paul reviews key infrastructure projects in Barak Valley

HT Bureau
GUWAHATI, Aug 22: Minister for Public Health Engineering, Hill Areas and Barak Valley Development, Krishnendu Paul, on Saturday chaired a review meeting at the Assam Secretariat, Barak Valley, Silchar, to assess the progress of major development projects in the region.

The meeting focused on two key infrastructure projects — the construction of the New Auditorium-District Library at Silchar and the establishment of the Assam Secretariat at Barak Valley, Silchar.

During the meeting, officials held detailed discussions on the current status of both projects, including revised estimates and the process of obtaining administrative approval. Minister Paul directed the concerned officials to take necessary steps to expedite the approval process and ensure that the projects progress smoothly and are completed within the stipulated time-frame.

The minister said the development of Barak Valley remains a priority of the government and stressed the need for close coordination among all concerned departments and agencies for the timely implementation of major infrastructure projects.

"The development of Barak Valley has to move forward with speed and proper coordination. Our focus should be on completing important projects on time so that the people can have their intended benefits at the earliest," Paul said.

He also reviewed the ongoing construction activities and directed the concerned contractors to accelerate the pace of work while main-



taining the required quality standards. He called for regular monitoring of the projects to ensure that they remain on schedule.

Emphasising the importance of timely completion of public infrastructure, Paul said effective coordination among the administration, implementing agencies and contractors would help ensure that the benefits of the projects reach the people without delay.

"We are working towards creating better infrastructure and stronger institutional facilities for Barak Valley. Every project has its own importance and our collective responsibility is to ensure that the work progresses efficiently and reaches completion at the earliest," the minister added.

The proposed New Auditorium-District Library at Silchar is expected to provide an important facility for cultural, educational and community activities. The proposed Assam Secretariat at Barak Valley, Silchar, is also expected to strengthen the administrative infrastructure of the region.

Paul directed officials to main-

tain regular follow-up on the projects and ensure that all necessary administrative and technical procedures are completed in a timely manner.

The review meeting was part of the government's ongoing efforts to monitor major development projects in Barak Valley and facilitate their smooth and timely implementation. The minister reiterated that the government would continue to accord priority to infrastructure development in the region to provide better facilities and services to the people.

The meeting was attended by Cachar District Commissioner Rahul Kumar Gupta, IAS; joint secretary Dr Khaleeda Sultana Ahmed, ACS; joint secretary Pankaj Deka, ACS; additional secretary J.R. Lal-sim, ACS; joint secretary Haricharan Bakta, ACS; executive Engineers of PWD (Building) and other senior officials.

The information was stated in a press release issued by the Regional Office of Information and Public Relations, Barak Valley Zone, Silchar.

KVK Karbi Anglong observes Parthenium Awareness Week, conducts weed eradication drive

HT Bureau
DIPHU, Aug 22: The Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK), Karbi Anglong, observed the 21st Parthenium Awareness Week from August 16 to 22, 2026, with a series of awareness and weed eradication activities aimed at curbing the spread of Parthenium hysterophorus across the district.

Parthenium, commonly known as carrot grass, has emerged as a major invasive weed in Karbi Anglong. Besides reducing crop yields and affecting agricultural biodiversity, the weed is also associated with health hazards, including dermatitis, hay fever, asthma and bronchitis in humans, as well as skin and respiratory allergies in livestock.

As part of the week-long programme, KVK staff and local farmers conducted a large-scale eradication drive around the KVK office premises and adjoining roadsides. Addressing the participants, Shourav Dutta, Subject Matter Specialist (Horticulture), stressed the importance of systematically uprooting and properly disposing of the weed to prevent its further spread.

KVK personnel were joined by



student interns from Diphu Government College for an extensive cutting and uprooting drive across the campus.

Prakshiya Boruah, Subject Matter Specialist (Agronomy), briefed the students on the long-term environmental impact of Parthenium and explained Integrated Weed Management strategies for controlling and eventually eradicating the invasive weed.

Boruah also conducted a practical demonstration on the safe conversion of harvested Parthenium into compost, highlighting how the weed can be processed into an or-

ganic nutrient source when handled appropriately.

The awareness programme witnessed the participation of more than 82 people, including KVK Subject Matter Specialists Dr Lohit Katak, Rasinja Englempi and Priyadi Nunisa, other officials, student interns and members of the local community.

The organisers said the initiative was aimed at strengthening public awareness about the environmental and health impacts of Parthenium while encouraging coordinated community-level efforts for its effective management.

Armed miscreants allegedly snatch gold chains at multiple locations in Tezpur

HT Correspondent
TEZPUR, Aug 22: A series of gold chain-snatching incidents at different locations in Tezpur has triggered concern among residents, with several women reportedly targeted by a group of miscreants from Thursday evening till late night.

In one of the incidents, the suspects were allegedly carrying a firearm.

According to reports, the first incident took place at around 5.45 pm on Thursday in the Murhatetelli area of Tezpur town. A 75-year-old woman was returning home from a Namghar when a youth approached her from the opposite direction and allegedly grabbed her from behind before snatching the gold chain she was wearing.

The suspect reportedly fled on a motorcycle with an accomplice who was waiting nearby. While the alleged chain-snatcher had not covered his face, his motorcycle-borne accomplice was reportedly wearing a helmet.

Another chain-snatching incident was reported at around 6 pm on the road connecting Convent School and Ganesh Ghat in Tezpur town. According to reports, four youths travelling on two motorcycles allegedly snatched a gold chain from a teenager passing through the area.

The teenager raised an alarm, following which some local youths reportedly managed to catch one of the fleeing suspects. However, they allegedly had to release him after he was found to be carrying a firearm.

In another incident reported on Thursday afternoon, a woman was allegedly robbed of her gold chain in Shukleshwar Nagar near Mission Chariati. The suspect, reportedly wearing a blue shirt, allegedly snatched the chain from the woman when she had gone to pick up her child from school and fled from the spot on a motorcycle.

The incidents occurring at different locations on the same day have caused apprehension among residents. There is also speculation among local sources that the incidents may have been carried out by an organised gang from outside the state, though this has not been officially confirmed.

CCTV footage reportedly captured images of some of the suspected miscreants, which may assist the police in identifying those involved.

The series of incidents has raised concerns over the safety of residents, particularly women and elderly people, and prompted calls for increased police surveillance and patrolling in vulnerable areas of Tezpur town.

Two held after 16 cattle rescued from pickup truck in Karbi Anglong

HT Bureau
DIPHU, Aug 22: Karbi Anglong Police arrested two persons after allegedly recovering 16 cattle from a Tata Yodha heavy-duty commercial pickup truck during a late-night checking operation at Dillai check gate on August 21.

According to police, the vehicle, bearing registration number AS 31 C 2127, was intercepted during the checking operation while it was travelling from Golaghat towards Hojai.

Police allegedly found 16 cattle loaded inside the vehicle following the interception.

The two persons arrested in connection with the incident have been identified as Dillabar Hussain and Abdul Kayum.

The vehicle and the cattle were taken into custody following the operation, while the arrested persons were detained for questioning.

Police have initiated further investigation to ascertain the circumstances surrounding the transportation of the cattle and other details of the case.

All Assam One-Act Play competition to begin in Demow today

HT Correspondent
DEMOW, Aug 22: An All Assam One-Act Play Competition will be held at the Demow Jyoti Bishnu Cultural Building from August 23 to 25 as part of a three-day cultural programme organised under the patronage of the people of Demow.

The programme will begin on August 23 with the hoisting of the flag by Rupjyoti Handique, president of the reception committee. It will be followed by Nataraj Bandana, while the ceremonial lighting of the earthen

lamp will be performed by Surajit Borgohain, president of Demow Keindriya Naam Ghar.

A tribute programme and Smriti Tarpan will also be held on the opening day. A Solo Acting Competition, organised in memory of Kshetradhar Konwar, will be inaugurated by Lukumoni Borah, Co-District Commissioner, Demow. The One-Act Play Competition will commence in the evening, with Sushanta Borgohain, local MLA and Minister of Water Resources and Judicial Department, scheduled to attend as the chief guest.

AI and Robotics workshop held for students and teachers in West Karbi Anglong

HT Correspondent
KHERONI, Aug 22: A special training programme and workshop on Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Robotics was organised at Shri Sri Sankar Madhab High School in Hawaipur under the Socheng Education Block of West Karbi Anglong, with the aim of equipping students and educators with knowledge of emerging technologies.

The initiative was organised by the Assam Science, Technology and Environmental Council (ASTEC) in

collaboration with the Aryabhata Science Centre of Socheng Block.

Students and teaching staff from seven government educational institutions across the hill district participated in the programme. The workshop offered participants both theoretical and practical exposure to AI and Robotics, with discussions focusing on their real-world applications and future prospects. Training sessions were conducted by Anindita Das, Assistant Professor at Assam down town University, Guwahati, and

Bikash Jyoti Bora, Robotics Expert from TechBooster, Guwahati.

Haripada Nath, Block Coordinator of the Aryabhata Science Centre, Socheng Block, was also present along with the organisers and local dignitaries. The organisers said such programmes are particularly important for students from remote and underprivileged areas, as they provide hands-on exposure to modern technologies and help build a foundation for pursuing future careers in science and technology.

UCO Bank Retirees Federation distributes ₹ 6 Lakh among flood-affected Families in upper Assam

HT Correspondent
SIVASAGAR, Aug 22: The UCO Bank Retirees Federation (UCBRF) of the Northeast and other states has raised Rs 6 lakh towards flood relief and distributed financial assistance among families severely affected by the unprecedented floods in Upper Assam.

A team of the federation visited Sivasagar, Sonari, Nazira, Santak and Charaideo on Friday and distributed ₹ 15,000 to each affected family with the assistance of UCBRF members residing in the respective areas.

The relief amount was directly credited to the bank accounts of the heads of the beneficiary families, UCBRF president Bapdhan Bharali and Ranjit Bhattacharjya said in a release issued here on Friday.

The humanitarian initiative of the federation has received appreciation from local residents.

Meanwhile, a group of teachers representing the Bajali and Barpeta Jila Adhividyaya Parishad visited the flood-affected districts of Charaideo and Sivasagar and provided financial assistance to 100 students from economically disad-

vantaged flood-affected families. Each student was provided ₹ 5,000 as assistance. A meeting organised in this connection was held at Mathurapur Higher Secondary School on Friday.

The programme was attended by, among others, Polash Kakoty, Inspector of Schools, Charaideo; Sadananda Saikia and Charu Chakravarty, president and secretary of the Barpeta Academic Council respectively; Parikshit Talukdar, secretary of the Bajali Academic Council; and Amulya Goswami, Munindra Kumar Saha, Jehirul Islam, Pritam Kumar Saha, Navadip Kumar Gayan, Anirudha Kumar Arjya, Lakshminath Kakoty, Ratul Kr Das and Dhanjit Das.

Apart from this, the Charaideo District Kobi Sammilan, in association with Aalap, Kabitar Ao Aa Ka Kha, Bronson & Brown School and Ushapur Mahila Mancha, distributed educational and other essential materials among more than 500 students belonging to flood-affected families.

The distribution was carried out recently among students in Tengapukhuri, Dhamghuli, Sumoni-gaon, Silikhaguri and Suffry.

The modern LHB coaches are equipped with advanced safety systems NF Railway completes conversion of all long-distance trains to LHB coaches

HT Bureau
GUWAHATI, Aug 22: Northeast Frontier Railway (NF Railway) has completed the conversion of all long-distance passenger trains operating under its jurisdiction from conventional Integral Coach Factory (ICF) coaches to modern Linke Hofmann Busch (LHB) coaches, said an official statement on Saturday.

As per the statement, with the completion of the conversion, a total of 103 long-distance passenger train services are now operating with LHB coaches.

"Of these, 55 services belong to N.F. Railway, while 48 services are operated by other railway zones," the statement added.

The transition makes NF Railway fully LHB-compliant for its long-distance train services and is expected to enhance passenger safety, travel comfort and operational efficiency.



Detection and Suppression Systems (FDSS) and aerosol-based fire detection systems.

According to NF Railway, 1,226 LHB AC coaches have been fitted with FDSS, while 155 power cars and 79 pantry cars are equipped with FDSS. In addition, aerosol-

based fire detection systems have been installed in 3,436 AC coaches.

The systems continuously monitor critical areas inside coaches to detect potential fire incidents and trigger timely alarms, enabling prompt intervention. Early detec-

tion is expected to help minimise the risk of injuries and loss of life and property, while also reducing disruptions to train services.

As part of its efforts to further strengthen fire safety, NF Railway is equipping all power cars, pantry cars and AC coaches with appropriate fire protection systems in a phased manner.

The railway zone said improving rail safety remains a continuous process. Along with regular safety drives, periodic safety audits and inspections of railway infrastructure are conducted to identify vulnerabilities in asset maintenance, safety procedures and other systemic gaps.

The assessments are used to introduce corrective measures aimed at preventing untoward incidents and ensuring safer train operations.

NF Railway reiterated its commitment to maintaining high safety standards across its network while continuing efforts to modernise passenger services and infrastructure.

Wild elephant herd sparks panic in Hawaipur villages

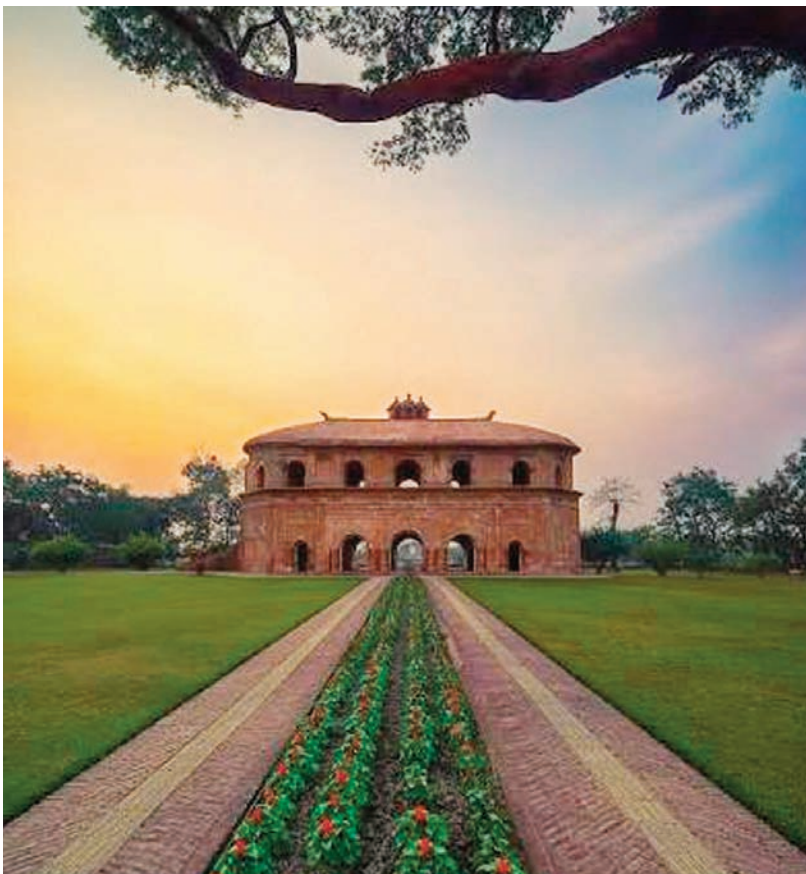
HT Correspondent
KHERONI, Aug 22: Fear and panic have gripped several villages in the greater Hawaipur area of West Karbi Anglong as a large herd of wild elephants has been reportedly entering human settlements during the night, causing extensive damage to agricultural fields and disrupting the lives of local residents.

According to reports, the herd emerges from the nearby Lumding Reserve Forest after nightfall in search of food and has been entering villages including Goxai Gaon, Goha Gaon, Jiribasa and Hawaipur.

The presence of the elephants has left villagers in a state of fear, with many residents reportedly spending sleepless nights as the herd continues to roam through the settlements.

The elephants have also caused significant damage to newly planted paddy fields, affecting the livelihoods of local farmers. Large stretches of crops have reportedly been trampled and destroyed by the herd.

Distressed farmers have appealed to the forest department for urgent intervention and effective measures to address the escalating human-elephant conflict in the region.



By: Himangshu Ranjan Bhuyan

Rang Ghar stands among the most recognisable symbols of Assam's historical heritage. Located near Sivasagar, the monument represents the architectural ability, cultural life and political confidence of the Ahom kingdom, which ruled the Brahmaputra valley for more than six centuries. The present structure dates to the reign of Swargadeo Pramatta Singha and was built in 1744 as a royal pavilion for sporting and recreational activities. The Government of Assam describes it as one of Asia's earliest amphitheatre-type structures, with a two-storey octagonal form and a roof shaped like an inverted Ahom royal boat. Rang Ghar therefore deserves attention not simply because it is old, but because it represents a distinctive stage in the development of Assam's architecture and public culture. The monument also occupies an important place within the wider historical landscape of Sivasagar, a region containing more than 350 ancient monuments associated with the Ahom period and later history. The word Rang Ghar itself carries the idea of entertainment, and the building originally served as a royal viewing pavilion from which rulers, nobles and other members of the court watched games and public performances. The adjoining Rupohi Pathar hosted events such as wrestling and various traditional sporting contests, creating a public space where royal authority and popular recreation came together. That historical function gives the monument a character different from that of a palace, temple or fort. Rang Ghar was connected with public life. It allowed the Ahom court to display its wealth and authority while also participating in forms of entertainment that attracted people from the surrounding society. Over time, the political institution that created the monument disappeared, but Rang Ghar survived as a physical reminder of that period. Today, its importance has expanded beyond the original purpose. It has become a reference point for understanding Assam's past and an important destination for visitors interested in the state's history. Its image frequently appears in representations of Assam because its form is immediately distinctive and strongly associated with the Ahom period. Such recognition can create a useful connection between heritage and public consciousness. Yet pride becomes meaningful only when people understand what they are proud of. Rang Ghar should therefore be viewed not merely as a beautiful structure or tourist attraction, but as historical evidence that allows Assam to examine its architectural traditions, political history and cultural development.

The architectural character of Rang Ghar explains much of its enduring appeal. The Archaeological Survey of India describes it as a double-storeyed royal pavilion with a rectangular central unit and trapezoidal extensions that create an overall octagonal plan. This design reflects the creativity of Ahom builders, who developed construction techniques suited to the local environment while also incorporating influences from wider architectural traditions. The roof remains its most striking feature. Its curved profile resembles an inverted royal boat, and decorative forms associated with makaras or water creatures project from its ends. The connection with the boat is especially significant in Assam, where rivers shaped transportation, trade, warfare and communication for centuries. Architecture often reflects the geographical world in which it develops, and Rang Ghar provides a clear example of that relationship. Its form does not simply decorate the building. It connects the structure with the riverine culture of the Brahmaputra valley. The Assam Directorate of Tourism also records the use of an unusual combination of traditional materials in the construction of Rang Ghar, including brick, limestone, jaggery, black gram, elephant grass, mustard oil and other materials. Such information reminds us that historical monuments can preserve knowledge about traditional engineering as well as political history. Modern construction depends heavily on industrial materials and standardised methods, while older structures often demonstrate how builders worked with locally available resources and developed practical solutions through experience. Rang Ghar also illustrates the evolution of Ahom architecture from earlier structures that relied more heavily on perishable materials towards large masonry buildings that could survive for centuries. The monument should consequently receive attention from architects, engineers and conservation specialists, not only his-

torians. Its structure offers opportunities to study traditional building techniques, material behaviour and methods of adapting architecture to regional conditions. The monument's visual identity also matters. Its red-brick character, curved roof and unusual proportions distinguish it from many other historic buildings in India. This uniqueness helps explain why Rang Ghar has become an easily recognised cultural image of Assam. However, its uniqueness should not encourage exaggerated historical claims. Heritage becomes stronger when public narratives remain connected to evidence. Rang Ghar does not need myths to establish its importance. Its architecture, history and surviving physical form already provide sufficient evidence of its exceptional place in Assam's cultural landscape.

Rang Ghar also offers an important understanding of the social and cultural life of the Ahom kingdom. The monument functioned as a viewing pavilion, but the activities around it involved a wider section of society. According to the Sivasagar district administration, the adjoining Rupohi Pathar became a festive space during the Ahom period, where activities such as wrestling, buffalo fights, elephant fights and cock-fights were held on different occasions. The royal family watched these events from the pavilion while spectators gathered around the field. The arrangement reflected the social hierarchy of the period, yet it also created an occasion for interaction between the court and the wider population. This aspect of Rang Ghar deserves greater attention because historical monuments often become disconnected from the everyday lives of the



people who once used them. Rang Ghar was not simply an ornamental royal building. It formed part of a larger public culture involving sport, festivals, entertainment and collective gatherings. Its history therefore provides an opportunity to study how the Ahom state presented royal authority to society. Public entertainment could reinforce political legitimacy because it brought the ruler, court and subjects into a shared cultural setting, even though their positions remained unequal. The monument also demonstrates that sport and

scapes in Assam. Rang Ghar cannot therefore be understood completely as an isolated structure. Its historical meaning grows when visitors examine the surrounding monuments and understand the relationship between royal residence, administration, religion, water management and public culture. The Assam Tourism Department already places Rang Ghar within a broader Sivasagar heritage circuit that includes Sivadol, Kareng Ghar, Talatal Ghar and Joysagar. This approach can help Assam develop a more meaningful heritage

tourism model. Visitors should not come only to photograph Rang Ghar and leave. They should receive enough historical information to understand why Sivasagar became such an important centre of the Ahom kingdom. Heritage tourism can generate employment, support local businesses and encourage young people to learn about their region, but these benefits depend on proper planning. The Directorate of Archaeology states that the protection and preservation of historical and archaeological sites form part of its mandate, along with developing



Rang Ghar: Assam's Symbol of Pride

The architectural character of Rang Ghar explains much of its enduring appeal. The Archaeological Survey of India describes it as a double-storeyed royal pavilion with a rectangular central unit and trapezoidal extensions that create an overall octagonal plan. This design reflects the creativity of Ahom builders, who developed construction techniques suited to the local environment while also incorporating influences from wider architectural traditions. The roof remains its most striking feature. Its curved profile resembles an inverted royal boat, and decorative forms associated with makaras or water creatures project from its ends. The connection with the boat is especially significant in Assam, where rivers shaped transportation, trade, warfare and communication for centuries. Architecture often reflects the geographical world in which it develops, and Rang Ghar provides a clear example of that relationship. Its form does not simply decorate the building. It connects the structure with the riverine culture of the Brahmaputra valley. The Assam Directorate of Tourism also records the use of an unusual combination of traditional materials in the construction of Rang Ghar, including brick, limestone, jaggery, black gram, elephant grass, mustard oil and other materials. Such information reminds us that historical monuments can preserve knowledge about traditional engineering as well as political history



such sites as centres of tourist attraction. The challenge lies in balancing conservation with visitor access. Excessive construction near a monument can damage its visual setting. Poorly managed traffic, waste, commercial structures and unregulated activities can also weaken the character of a heritage landscape. Conservation should therefore protect not only the building but also its surroundings. Interpretation deserves equal attention. Accurate multilingual signage, trained local guides, digital resources and educational programmes can make Rang Ghar more useful to students and visitors. Local communities should also participate in tourism planning because they live closest to the heritage landscape and understand its changing conditions. Economic benefits should reach them through guiding, handicrafts, transport, food services and other legitimate activities. This approach would connect heritage protection with local development without turning the monument into an ordinary commercial attraction. Rang Ghar can become a strong example of how Assam can use its historical resources to create knowledge-based tourism rather than tourism based only on photographs and short visits.

The future of Rang Ghar depends on whether Assam can convert historical pride into responsible conservation and deeper public knowledge. The monument has already survived nearly three centuries, but survival alone does not guarantee preservation. Climate pressures, moisture, biological growth, pollution, visitor pressure and inappropriate development around heritage

sites can create long-term risks, particularly when conservation receives attention only after visible damage appears. Assam's Directorate of Archaeology maintains a wider framework for protecting and developing archaeological sites and monuments, while the Archaeological Survey of India also lists Rang Ghar among the important protected Ahom monuments under its Guwahati Circle. The responsibility therefore belongs to institutions as well as citizens. Governments must provide scientific conservation, regular structural assessment, proper visitor management and reliable historical interpretation. Educational institutions can bring the monument into classroom discussions about Assam's political history, architecture, geography and cultural development. Researchers can document traditional construction materials and techniques before such knowledge becomes difficult to recover. Local communities can help protect the surrounding landscape and discourage careless behaviour. Visitors also have a role. Respecting restricted areas, avoiding littering and treating the monument as a historical site rather than a backdrop for entertainment are simple but important responsibilities. Rang Ghar's symbolic importance also creates an opportunity to discuss what Assamese pride should mean in contemporary society. Pride in heritage should encourage curiosity, scholarship and conservation. It should not become an excuse for exaggerating history or reducing a complex past to a few heroic stories. The Ahom period contains a long record of political organisation, warfare, administration, agriculture, cultural exchange, architecture and social change. Rang Ghar provides one physical entry point into that larger history. Its survival allows present generations to see how earlier Assamese society expressed power and culture through architecture. The monument can therefore become a bridge between historical memory and modern responsibility. Assam does not need to choose between development and heritage if it plans carefully. Tourism infrastructure can improve without overwhelming protected areas. Modern technology can expand access to historical information without replacing the physical experience of the monument. Young people can use digital platforms to share the history of Rang Ghar while conservation experts continue to protect its material structure. The real measure of pride will come from how Assam treats this inheritance. If Rang Ghar remains structurally secure, historically accurate in public interpretation and connected to the wider heritage landscape of Sivasagar, its importance will continue to grow. It will remain a powerful symbol of Assam, not because people merely repeat that claim, but because the monument itself provides enduring evidence of the region's architectural skill, cultural confidence and historical depth. Rang Ghar belongs to the past, but its meaning belongs equally to the present and the future.

Meta, Power and Free speech

By: Satyabrata Borah

The recent summoning and reprimanding of senior Meta executives by the Indian government marks a troubling moment for the world's largest democracy. On the surface, the dispute flared up over the temporary removal of a video message by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Facebook and Instagram. But behind that official story lies a much broader and more calculated push to manage public conversation online.

The government makes little effort to hide its intention to press social media networks into suppressing footage and commentary related to popular protests, including the notable gatherings at Jantar Mantar. Through a steady stream of take-down demands, some of the most visible forms of public dissent are being systematically wiped away. Instagram Reels has grown into one of the most powerful forms of media in India today, exposing millions of people to automated content recommendations from creators across the nation. Attempting to censor political expression on such a widely used feed puts India on a slippery slope, drawing uncomfortable parallels with countries like Pakistan, which briefly banned TikTok in recent years until the platform agreed to curb content deemed objectionable. More alarmingly, these actions bring India dangerously close to the tightly controlled digital environment of China, where opposition to official narratives is erased within minutes. The main obstacle currently keeping India from reaching that level of total control is simply a lack of technical capacity to review every post instantaneously, a limitation that could soon be overcome through destructive artificial intelligence tools.

Meta has shown little real appetite to resist these pressures, even though its services have been central to public mobilization over recent months. For quite some time, the tech giant has yielded to official demands without putting up much of a fight. It routinely takes down content whenever it receives a notice under Section 79 3 b of the Information Technology Act. This legal route allows authorities to flag posts they consider unlawful without having to present their case before a judge. Even though these takedown requests almost never undergo judicial review, Meta consistently chooses automatic compliance to protect its operational interests. This habit of quick surrender has created the perfect environment for the kind of arm twisting currently taking place.

In China, the conditions that enabled total digital control were built over decades prior to the rise of the internet, supported by a single party system dedicated to centralized authority. India lacks those historical prerequisites, making absolute control over the web far harder to achieve through traditional means. Manipulating how the public views its own culture and democratic rights remains deeply harmful to the fabric of society. Left unchecked, these sweeping measures create a dangerous precedent that future administrations can abuse. The current leadership seems to have drawn the wrong conclusions from popular rallies and the online energy surrounding them. Open assemblies and public grievances are the heartbeat of a healthy democracy, not threats that need to be permanently muted.

The rise of digital platforms was once celebrated as a great equalizer for human expression. Anyone with a smartphone could share their reality, highlight local issues, and chal-

lenge powerful institutions directly. People believed that the internet would inherently protect free speech because information could flow faster than any government could stop it. The ongoing tension between tech giants and state authorities tells a very different story. When a government realizes how much influence platforms like Instagram and Facebook hold over public opinion, the temptation to control those feeds becomes overwhelming.

By targeting short form video formats, authorities are aiming directly at the spaces where young citizens get their news and form their political views. This strategy shifts social media from a place of open public discussion into a carefully curated window that reflects only approved perspectives. The reliance on statutory mechanisms like Section 79 3 b shows how administrative pressure can quietly undermine constitutional protections. When a platform receives a warning from a government agency, its primary goal is to avoid financial penalties or legal trouble within a lucrative market. Defending an individual user's right to post a short video of a street rally rarely aligns with corporate profitability. As a result, tech companies build automated filters and hire moderation teams trained to err on the side of caution. If an official notification arrives, the content disappears first, and questions are asked later, if at all. This creates a hidden system of censorship where valid political commentary is removed quietly, leaving ordinary citizens with no easy way to appeal or even understand why their posts disappeared.

Comparing these developments to neighboring regions highlights the broader direction of digital control. When Pakistan pressured social media applications to moderate content, it framed the issue around cul-

tural standards and public order. China built an entire parallel online world from the ground up, placing heavy filters at its digital borders and employing vast teams of reviewers to catch sensitive phrases instantly. India seems to be treading a path between these models. While it retains a vibrant culture of public debate and a competitive political landscape, the systematic removal of protest media points toward a desire for Chinese style narrative control. Relying on advanced software to screen video content automatically could soon give authorities the tools they need to close the remaining gaps in their oversight.

The danger of using automated intelligence for content moderation lies in its inability to understand context. Human protest is messy, emotional, and complex. Algorithms trained to flag specific keywords, logos, or crowd movements struggle to distinguish between violent unrest and peaceful civic assembly. When algorithms are instructed to minimize political risk, they simply block everything that resembles controversy. This leads to a public sphere where passionate debates are replaced by sanitized, harmless content. Citizens who log on to see what is happening in their country are presented with a false sense of calm, completely disconnected from the real struggles taking place on the streets. Surrendering to this style of digital management reshapes how a society understands itself. When people no longer see their collective grievances reflected in the media they consume every day, they begin to feel isolated and powerless. The shared awareness that fuels social progress starts to break down. Public rallies at sites like Jantar Mantar have historically served as a pressure valve for democracy, allowing citi-



zens to express frustration and demand accountability from their leaders. Trying to erase those events from the digital record does not make the underlying problems go away. It merely hides them from view, allowing dissatisfaction to build beneath the surface without a safe outlet. Private companies like Meta bear a significant share of responsibility for this decline. By marketing themselves as open spaces for global conversation, they encouraged millions of people to build their social and political lives on their infrastructure. When faced with regulatory pushback, these platforms frequently prioritize market access over the principles they preach. Their willingness to comply with informal or non-judicial takedown demands sets a precedent that makes it harder for any platform to stand up for user rights. Smaller companies with fewer resources find it even harder to resist, leading to an industry-wide standard of quiet submission. The long term consequences of these practices extend far beyond any single administration or political party. Tools developed to quiet one group of protesters can easily be

turned against another group when power changes hands. Once a state establishes the infrastructure and legal habits necessary to filter online speech, subsequent leaders rarely give up those capabilities. Instead, they refine and expand them, using the existing machinery to protect their own interests. This creates a continuous cycle where the boundaries of permissible speech grow narrower with every passing year.

Protecting an open digital environment requires recognizing that online spaces are now integral to democratic life. Treating social media as mere entertainment overlooks how deeply embedded these applications have become in political organizing, news sharing, and community building. When access to these spaces is restricted or quietly altered, the health of the entire political system suffers. True stability in a diverse nation comes from listening to dissenting voices, not from designing digital barriers to keep those voices from being heard.

Reclaiming the open web calls for greater transparency from both government bodies and technology firms. Citizens deserve to know why

specific posts are removed, which agencies requested their deletion, and what legal standards were applied. Without clear public records and independent oversight, the process of content removal remains an arbitrary exercise of power. Tech platforms need to establish stronger safeguards for user content, resisting broad administrative demands that lack judicial backing. At the same time, public awareness around digital rights must grow so that attempts to filter social feeds are met with the scrutiny they deserve.

The current trajectory presents a critical choice for the future of digital expression in India. Falling back on heavy handed moderation and borrowing techniques from authoritarian regimes endangers the very qualities that make a democracy resilient. A free society relies on the chaotic, unscripted flow of ideas, arguments, and demonstrations. Preserving that freedom requires a firm commitment to keeping the internet open, ensuring that the digital realm continues to serve as a mirror for real human experience rather than an instrument of state control.

Why isn't Green finance funding India's clean energy transition?

By: Nidhi Bhat

Why is sustainable finance better at funding what's already green than financing the companies that still need to transition?

In 2026 the world is on course to spend a record \$3.3 trillion on energy, and for the first time clean energy will attract roughly two dollars for every one that flows to oil, gas and coal—about \$2.2 trillion against \$1.1 trillion, according to the IEA's World Energy Investment 2025. In the advanced economies, the same report puts combined investment in low-emissions generation and storage at roughly twelve times fossil generation.

These are extraordinary numbers. They are also the easy part. Announcing a net-zero target costs a press release; financing the transition costs a balance sheet. Markets have grown very good at funding things that are already green, and remain hesitant about the difficult, expensive process of things becoming green. Those are not the same problem, and we keep treating them as if they are.

Green finance is not transition finance

Consider two companies. The first builds solar farms: clean revenue, trivial emissions, an easy fit for a green bond framework or an ESG index. Capital finds it easy.

The second is a blast-furnace steelmaker that has committed billions to hydrogen-based direct reduction. For a decade it will remain, on paper, one of the dirtiest names an investor can hold—even though the marginal tonne of capital going into it may abate far more carbon than another solar panel in a country that already has plenty. The first company is green. The second is getting green. Our financial plumbing is built to reward the former and is unsure what to do with the latter.

Green-labelled bonds accounted for 64% of aligned sustainable debt in 2025, per the Climate Bonds Initiative, which recorded roughly \$1.0 trillion of aligned issuance. Clearer is the market's shape: instruments built specifically to finance transition are dwarfed by conventional green issuance. Aligned sustainability-linked bonds grew 46% in 2025, but from a base of just \$14 billion, a rounding error beside the green-bond market. The capital meant to move companies through the transition remains much smaller—and harder to mobilise—than conventional green finance.

The transition is expensive—and sometimes the economics genuinely don't work yet

It is tempting to read that reluctance as timidity or bad faith. Often it is neither—much transition investment simply does not pencil out today.

Take green hydrogen, on which much heavy-industry decarbonisation depends. In India, its levelised cost sits around \$3.5–5 per kilogram, against roughly \$2.3–2.5 for the grey hydrogen it is meant to replace. The government targets \$2/kg by 2030; several analysts think true unsubsidised parity may not arrive until the early-to-mid 2030s. So a steelmaker weighing a hydrogen route is not being asked to make a good investment—it is being asked to make a loss-making one, on faith that policy, carbon pricing and scale eventually close the gap. Add technology risk, uncertain offtake and stranding risk, and delay looks less like cowardice than a rational response to real uncertainty. A management team can sincerely support decarbonisation and still, correctly, conclude the numbers aren't ready. Transition finance has to solve for that—not for reluctance, but for economics that are real.

The numbers tell two stories at once

Here is where the data refuses to cooperate with a tidy thesis.

Ask "is clean energy winning?" and the answer is plainly yes. Solar alone will draw \$450 billion in 2025; clean investment has climbed from 44% of the energy total a decade ago to two-thirds today. The aggregate gap between clean and fossil is narrowing, fast.

Ask "is capital reaching the hard parts of the transition?" and the picture darkens. To align with a net-zero pathway, the IEA reckons annual

clean-energy investment must roughly double, to around \$4.5 trillion by the early 2030s. In emerging economies outside China, it needs to rise something like sevenfold. Africa holds 20% of the world's population and receives 2% of clean-energy investment; its debt-servicing costs in 2025 are equivalent to more than 85% of all the energy investment the continent makes. And grids attract barely \$400 billion a year against more than \$1 trillion for generation.

The more I looked at the numbers, the less the problem resembled a shortage of money and the more it resembled a sorting mechanism—capital pooling where deployment is easiest, and thinning where the transition is hardest.

The investor's problem is real, not lazy

The sectors that sorting starves are the ones that most need to change—steel, cement, chemicals, shipping, aviation, industrial heat, the hard-to-abate quarter of global emissions. A cement plant retrofitting for carbon capture does not become an ESG darling; it becomes a high-emitter with elevated capex and compressed margins, a stock most mandates are built to avoid.

Blaming asset managers for that is easy and mostly wrong. Their incentives are structural. An investor judged quarterly, against a benchmark, cannot easily hold a high-emitting steelmaker whose transition thesis plays out over ten years and whose next three look like margin pressure and headline risk. Transition investing means accepting more risk and worse optics today for a better outcome later—and later is not when performance is measured. Add reputational exposure and the fact that a credible transition is harder to underwrite than a solar farm, and the caution becomes legible.

Which is the central trap. A heavy emitter mid-transition can be too dirty for the green fund and too risky for the conventional one—stranded in the middle, unable to raise the very capital its transformation requires. The companies whose change would matter most are the ones our markets are least designed to fund.

The paradox of exclusion

Divestment is the intuitive response, and it does something measurable: it lowers the emissions attributed to your portfolio. But portfolio decarbonisation and economic decarbonisation are not the same thing, and conflating them is a costly error. When a fund sells its stake in a coal-heavy utility, the utility's emissions do not fall—the shares simply move to an owner who cares less. The carbon stays in the atmosphere; only its ownership changes.

This isn't quite the whole story. Sustained, broad-based divestment can raise a company's cost of capital and shift the incentives of the managers who remain. But those channels are slow and indirect, and none puts a single rupee of transition capital on the table. For a firm with no credible pathway, walking away is a fair allocation of risk. The point is narrower: exclusion and engagement are different instruments for different situations, and a market that reaches reflexively for exclusion will systematically underfund the transitions patient capital could finance.

The hardest question: who pays?

Underneath every financing structure sits a distributional problem no clever instrument dissolves. A transition can be net-beneficial over twenty years and painful over five, and someone absorbs that pain in the interim—consumers, shareholders, taxpayers, lenders, workers. Transition finance is usually discussed as a product-design puzzle—the right bond, taxonomy, blended vehicle. It is really an allocation-of-costs question, as much political as financial. Nowhere is that clearer than in the economies asked to carry the cost while they are still trying to grow.

India makes the tension impossible to ignore. No economy exposes this better than India, which must do everything at once: grow, industrialise, expand energy access and create jobs, and cut emissions, on a net-zero-by-2070 timeline. The headline looks like triumph: India crossed 50% non-fossil installed capacity in 2025, five years early. But capacity and genera-

tion tell different stories—coal still produces roughly 73–75% of the electricity, because with demand surging and storage still short, dispatchable power commands a premium solar cannot yet match.

Industry is harder still. India is expanding steel capacity, much of it via blast furnaces fed by imported coal and run on captive coal generation, a parallel carbon-intensive grid insulated from utility-level greening. From January 2026, the EU's Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism entered its definitive regime. The European Commission subsequently published a Q1 2026 certificate price of €75.36 per tonne of CO₂; importers will purchase certificates from February 2027 to cover their 2026 imports. For an Indian exporter, carbon intensity is now a line item that decides how competitive a shipment looks in Europe. Green hydrogen was meant to bridge much of this, yet stays structurally more expensive than the grey hydrogen it replaces.

So India poses a precise, unforgiving question: how do you finance a transition that is economically necessary but not yet commercially attractive? Answer that, and you have confronted one of the central problems of transition finance. We haven't. The problem generalises. Where the cost of capital is high, currency risk significant and paybacks long, private money alone won't show up at the price the economics require—which is why transition finance keeps colliding with development finance: concessional funding, blended structures, guarantees. The IEA estimates such concessional flows must reach \$80–100 billion a year by the early 2030s just to catalyse private capital. Yet emerging markets make up only about 14% of labelled bond issuance, on World Bank data. The capital markets we built for the transition largely speak to the places that need them least.

Are markets rewarding the wrong thing?

Markets are demonstrably good at rewarding green: the LSEG green economy surpassed \$10 trillion in market capitalisation for the first time, while green revenues grew 5.3% in 2025, and it has outperformed global equities by roughly 133% since 2008. What markets price far worse is the rate and credibility of improvement—a transition premium that would reward a heavy emitter for a plausible plan to halve its footprint over a utility with no plan at all. The difficulty is that a transition premium only works if investors can distinguish a credible transition from an attractive story about one.

The instinct is to say markets should reward improvement. But it deserves resistance, because improvement is exactly where greenwashing hides. A transition plan is a promise, and promises are cheap. There is a deeper measurement trap here, familiar from this series' ESG-data arguments: the market risks judging its success by how much capital gets labelled transition rather than by how much emissions actually fall—the same substitution of proxy for substance that has dogged ESG scoring from the start. A market that optimises for the label rewards the companies best at producing transition narratives, not the companies that transition.

Increasingly this is industrial policy as much as climate policy: CBAM, the US Inflation Reduction Act, China's clean-tech lead and Europe's 2025 "OmniBus" rollback of its own sustainability rules are about competitiveness, trade and energy security as much as emissions.

Net zero is a destination. Transition is a balance-sheet problem.

The comfortable part of net zero is the target; agreeing on the destination costs nothing. The hard part is deciding who funds the assets, tolerates the inefficiencies and carries the risk of the journey—and there, the enthusiasm thins. Which leaves a harder one than the piece began with. If everyone agrees the economy must transition, why are our capital markets still built to reward the destination more easily than the journey? Net zero will not be reached by financing only the companies that are already clean. It will be reached—if it is reached—by financing the ones that still have to get there. (Courtesy: Youth Ki Awaaz)

Iran says world has accepted it has defeated US, and other Middle East developments

DUBAI, Aug 22: Iran's president says the world has accepted that it's won the war with the United States, while France and Saudi Arabia are expected to discuss plans to bypass the Strait of Hormuz, which has been effectively closed since the US and Israel launched a war with Iran nearly six months ago.

Meanwhile remarks by the US Ambassador to Türkiye and special envoy for Syria appear to contradict official US position over the Golan Heights.

Here's a look at the latest developments in the Iran war and the wider Middle East on Saturday. Full coverage can be found here.

Iranian state media reported Friday that President Masoud Pezeshkian said the war with the US should end since the world has already accepted that Iran has won. Iran sees its control over the Strait and not giving into US demands as a win.

"The entire world approved our victory and the US is hated," he said according to IRNA news agency. Iran sees its control over the Strait and not giving into US



demands as a win.

The remarks came as the Trump administration is touting a crushing financial campaign against Iran, promising an "economic D-Day" against the country. President Donald Trump announced that the US would be imposing an "unprecedented" level of economic warfare and isolation on Iran, aiming to force its leadership to cave to demands to end its nuclear programme and fully reopen the crucial Strait of Hormuz to oil and natural gas tankers.

In an interview Friday, Tom Barrack said that Israel "still" occupies the territory in violation of UN resolutions.

In his comments made to Mario

Nawfal, a Lebanese-Australian entrepreneur, Barrack said that "in the Golan, with Syria, they (Israel) still occupy the Golan, against the UN resolutions."

Israel captured the Golan Heights from Syria in the 1967 war and annexed it in 1981. The UN considers the territory occupied Syrian land and the annexation null and void, with UN resolutions calling for Israel's withdrawal to the June 4, 1967, line.

In March 2019, Trump signed a proclamation recognising Israeli sovereignty over the Golan Heights, reversing decades of US policy. The move did not change the territory's status under international law or win broader international recognition.

Colombia became the second country to recognise Israeli sovereignty over the Golan this month, joining the United States.

Barrack's remarks sparked a backlash Saturday from conservative activist and US presidential ally Laura Loomer, who posted on X that he "should resign for his lack of understanding of US foreign policy." (AP)

US imposes 50% tariffs on \$20 billion worth of Canadian products; Canada says it will retaliate

'Canada will match those tariffs dollar for dollar to protect our workers and businesses'

WASHINGTON, Aug 22: The United States imposed 50 per cent tariffs on USD 20 billion worth of Canadian products early Saturday, and Canada immediately said it would retaliate, after last-ditch negotiations failed to resolve the latest strain in already tense relations between the historic allies.

President Donald Trump's import taxes will hit about 5 per cent of what Canada ships to the United States every year, including products ranging from hockey sticks to tongue depressors.

"Canada will match those tariffs dollar for dollar to protect our workers and businesses," Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney said in a statement. The retaliation escalates the trade conflict and calls into question the future of a North American trade pact between the United States, Canada and Mexico that is crucial to industry in all three countries.

Canada sought concessions on



Trump tariffs on steel, aluminum, autos and lumber that the United States was unwilling to provide, a senior Trump administration official told reporters.

"Tonight, Canada declined to finalize the trade deal under the terms agreed earlier this week. Despite the US offer to Canada to receive the best treatment of any major exporter to our market, new demands and walk-backs of other

commitments by Canada have upended the careful balance reached in the past days," US Trade Representative Jamie Green said in a statement read to reporters on a press call shortly before midnight.

Carney blamed Washington for the breakdown, saying "last-minute changes in the US proposed terms were unfair, uneconomic, and called into question the reliability of any deal." He

said he had suspended negotiations and directed Canada's negotiating team to return to Ottawa.

Carney said his government would announce additional support for Canadian workers and businesses in the coming days. Green said the US offer was "forward-looking" and included "a historic economic and national security partnership."

No further talks have been planned. The breakdown in negotiations marked a sharp reversal from two days earlier, when officials from the two countries sounded as if they were headed toward a compromise.

Carney said Canada's goal throughout the negotiations had been to secure the best possible agreement, "never a deal at any price or on any deadline."

The political impact will likely be even bigger than the economic fallout. The countries sold each other USD 880 billion worth of goods and services last year. (AP)

Victim of sword attack at Swedish school was a 17-year-old girl

STOCKHOLM, Aug 22: The victim of a deadly sword attack at a school in central Sweden was a 17-year-old girl, police said Saturday.

An 18-year-old man armed with a sword carried out the attack at the Brinell School in Fagersta, northwest of Stockholm, while classes were in session on Friday. One person was killed and three others were wounded, two of them severely.

Police said the suspect had been arrested and that the case was being investigated as murder and attempted murder. The police said they have no reason to believe there were more perpetrators.

Vastmanland County, where the town is located, said that the two seriously injured boys were ages 12 and 17. A third person, also under 18, was slightly injured and has been discharged from a hospital, Swedish news agency TT reported. On Saturday morning, around 70 people gathered at the memorial site that the municipality prepared, carrying flowers and lighting candles, TT reported.

There was no official information on the attacker's possible motive. Sweden's national police said that investigators have already carried out two house searches in connection with the suspect. Many witnesses were expected to be interviewed as part of the investigation.

The region went into a state of emergency on Friday, but it had ended by Saturday.

Swedish Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson, in an earlier X post, lamented the violence in Fagersta "right after the summer break."

"We do not yet know what lies behind the act, but we know that the police are working very intensively," he said. "Our thoughts are with all those affected." (AP)

Pak ex-PM Imran Khan's sister files contempt plea over violation of SC hospitalisation order

ISLAMABAD, Aug 22: The sister of jailed former Pakistan prime minister Imran Khan on Saturday filed a petition in the Supreme Court, accusing the government and senior officials of violating the top court's order to shift him to a private hospital for medical examination and treatment.

Uzma Khan has sought contempt proceedings alleging wilful violation of the Supreme Court's August 18 order.

The Supreme Court had directed authorities to shift 73-year-old Khan from Adiala Jail in Rawalpindi to Shifa International Hospital in Islamabad within two days and ordered that he remain there until the next hearing on September 16.

Instead, Khan was taken to the state-run Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences (PIMS) in Islamabad during the night of August 20-21 for medical examination and treatment before being returned to Adiala Jail.

Khan's family and leaders of his political party, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf, have termed the move a violation of the Supreme Court order and challenged the official action.

In her petition, Uzma Khan urged the



top court to initiate contempt proceedings against the respondents for their "wilful, deliberate and contemptuous disobedience and violation" of the August 18 order.

The respondents include Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, Law Minister Azam Nazeer Tarar, Information Minister Attaullah Tarar, and several senior government officials, including Adiala Jail Superintendent Sajid Baig.

The petition contended that the court was being approached in light of the "non-compliance and brazen violations" of the Supreme Court's order by the respondents. "It is clear from the respon-

dents' own admissions that the court directions contained in the August 18 order were violated," it said.

It said the failure to shift Khan to Shifa International Hospital "leaves no manner of doubt" that the respondents had consciously chosen to disregard and violate the top court's order. It also said the respondents' conduct undermined the authority of the Supreme Court and warranted cognisance by the court.

The petition further requested the Supreme Court to issue show-cause notices to the respondents and direct them to appear personally. It also sought appropriate punishment against the respondents and asked the court to take all necessary steps to implement its directions for Khan's medical examination.

The government, however, has defended its decision to take Khan to PIMS rather than Shifa, citing security concerns.

Two specialists from Shifa International Hospital also participated in Khan's eye examination at PIMS, according to the hospital administration. They said that PIMS specialists conducted other medical examinations on Khan as well. (PTI)

Andy Burnham marks first month as UK PM with 15 per cent salary donation pledge

LONDON, Aug 22: Andy Burnham marked his first month as British prime minister with a commitment to donate 15 per cent of his salary to charities tackling homelessness as part of a pledge to end rough sleeping on the streets of the country. Burnham, who took charge at 10 Downing Street on July 20 from Keir Starmer, has used his social media channels to highlight the work being undertaken as part of his focus on tackling the cost-of-living crisis.

As a member of Parliament, Burnham had committed donations to local causes in his constituency of Makerfield in northern England and this week he said his "top up pay" as a PM will also be earmarked for donations.

"For the best part of nine, almost 10 years, I donated 15 per cent of my salary as mayor of Greater Manchester to tackling homelessness in Greater Manchester," Burnham told the 'Big Issue' — a weekly magazine sold to raise funds for the homeless. Burnham said he is committing to donating the same from his prime minister's

salary. "I'm donating part of my constituency MP salary to local organisations, but the extra bit that comes with being prime minister."

"I wouldn't want to ask anybody to do anything that I'm not prepared to do. I want to lead from the front. This issue matters massively to me," he said. Burnham said he didn't want to live in a country where walking past people sleeping rough on street corners becomes "commonplace."

"There are things that we can do. We proved it in the pandemic. We should do it again now and it should just be what we do all the time," he added. It is estimated that Burnham would be donating over 26,000 pounds to local causes in his Makerfield constituency and homeless charities.

"The prime minister is leading by example by donating 15 per cent of his salary to the fight against homelessness. This gesture reminds us that homelessness is all our problem and everyone will need to put their shoulder to the wheel to eradicate it," said 'Big Issue' founder Lord John Bird. (PTI)

Plane crashed on its second attempt to land in heavy fog in Alaska, killing all 8 aboard

JUNEAU, Aug 22: A small plane crashed on its second attempt to land in heavy fog at a remote military airport in Alaska, killing all eight people aboard, federal investigators said Friday.

The National Transportation Safety Board said the pilots could not see the runway and had to rely entirely on instruments as they tried to land Thursday at the Cape Newenham Long Range Radar Site Airport about 450 miles (725 kilometers) west of Anchorage.

The two pilots and six passengers who died in the crash around midday Thursday were not immediately identified. Two US Army Corps of Engineers employees were among those killed.

The radar site was built in the 1950s as part of a network designed to provide early warning of a missile attack by the Soviet Union. Today, it monitors the skies off the coast in the direction of Russia, North Korea and China. The site has a gravel airstrip built on the slope of a mountain. The Federal Aviation Administration recommends that pilots use GPS and other instruments when they land there.

Those on board were "dedicated professionals carrying out a vital mission in a demanding environment," US Air Force Lt. Gen. Robert Davis, commander of Alaskan

Command, the Alaskan North American Aerospace Defense Command Region and Eleventh Air Force, said in a statement.

"This is a devastating loss for our military family and the communities we serve," Davis said.

Weather conditions were changing Thursday as heavy fog rolled through the area. An automated observation system not far from the airport reported a low cloud ceiling, fog and visibility of about 10 miles (16 kilometers) in the minutes before the crash, but the next update about 15 minutes after the crash showed visibility reduced dramatically to less than one-quarter mile (0.40 kilometer), according to Carrie Haisley, the meteorologist in charge of the National Weather Service's Alaska sector operations center.

The airport is a private military site managed by the Pacific Air Forces Regional Support Center. It's part of a network of remote radar sites that tracks aircraft operating in Alaska's airspace and along its borders, the statement from Alaskan Command said.

The outpost at Cape Newenham closed in 1983 after a new radar was installed, and now the site is visited only occasionally by civilian contractors who perform maintenance on the system. (AP)

UN welcomes Sri Lanka's efforts to bring back refugees from India

COLOMBO, Aug 22: The United Nations on Saturday welcomed Sri Lanka's decision to simplify immigration procedures to expedite the voluntary return of refugees from India who left the country without valid documents during its decades-long civil war. The Sri Lankan government earlier this month made special arrangements for the initiative aimed at streamlining the process to facilitate the return of refugees from India.

Sri Lankan refugees began arriving in Tamil Nadu in large numbers after ethnic violence in the island nation that started in 1983, and the subsequent escalation of the armed conflict between government forces and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), which went on for nearly three decades. While around 18,000 of them returned home between 2002 and 2022, approximately 90,000 refugees continue to reside in the southern Indian state.

Many of those who remain have spent decades in India, with questions around livelihoods, documentation and long-term legal status forming part of the challenges surrounding their eventual return. (PTI)

Former Hong Kong vigil organizer strives to mark Tiananmen crackdown despite convictions

HONG KONG, Aug 22: Tang Ngok-kwan still occasionally visits the places where Hong Kong once publicly remembered Beijing's 1989 Tiananmen Square crackdown.

Though Tang's fellow activists were locked up in prison, accused of inciting subversion, and an annual candlelight vigil they previously organized to mourn the crackdown's victims vanished, the 58-year-old continues to personally and discreetly remember the event, which is a political taboo on mainland China.

At Victoria Park, where tens of thousands of people once gathered for the only large-scale public commemoration of the crackdown in China, Tang bowed on the eve of the anniversary and read of a list of the victims in a low voice. He sometimes returns to two university campuses where commemorative sculptures once stood, even though most traces of their existence already have vanished.

Two of Tang's former colleagues were convicted Friday under a Beijing-imposed national security law, facing a maximum prison term of 10 years. Their vigil organizing group also was found guilty. Government-approved judges ruled the pair had incited others to overthrow the leadership of China's Communist Party



through unlawful means.

Many observers say the convictions were the latest case reflecting the decline in freedoms in the former British colony that returned to Chinese rule in 1997.

Tang told The Associated Press that the arguments in the verdict did not convince him and he felt wronged on behalf of those convicted.

"After the alliance was convicted, I feel that whenever people bring up the al-

liance, there'll be a sense of wariness around it," he said.

Tang was an ordinary young man when he joined a wave of people who marched in Hong Kong in support of Beijing's student-led, pro-democracy protests in May 1989. When tanks rolled into the heart of Beijing on the night of June 3-4 to quell the protests, Tang didn't sleep. Hundreds, possibly thousands of people, were killed during the crackdown. (AP)

Tesla recalls nearly 3M vehicles in China over door handle safety risks

Some experts in the industry said the automakers should value safety over design

HONG KONG, Aug 22: Tesla and other Chinese carmakers are making a major recall of more than 4 million vehicles over safety concerns mostly related to their door handles, according to Chinese authorities on Friday.

The US carmaker is recalling about 2.98 million China-made and imported EVs including Model 3, Model Y, Model X and Model S over door handle safety risks, according to China's State Administration for Market Regulation.

The recall, the largest this year according to Chinese media, comes a few months after Chinese authorities said in February that starting next year, it would be banning hidden car door handles that are commonly seen on Tesla electric vehicles and many Chinese EV models.

China has stepped up scrutiny recently on hidden, or flush, car door handles following EV accidents in the country and elsewhere, in which cars' hidden electronic doors failed and trapped people inside.

In a notice on the Chinese regulator's website, it cited safety risk. In extreme situations, such as a severe collision that causes an electrical system failure, the car handles could hinder



car users from quickly opening the doors to escape, or prevent rescuers outside the car from gaining access, the notice said.

Some experts in the industry said the automakers should value safety over design.

Cui Dongshu, head of the China Passenger Car Association, called the recall "an inevitable step" in the development of the electric vehicle industry and said automakers were "being responsible" by moving toward a more reliable, "safety-first" approach.

"This represents, in part, the growing pains of the industry. At the same time, however, this move signifies a policy-driven safety upgrade,"

said Cui.

Tesla will perform software updates on the vehicles to mitigate risks, the notice added. Tesla did not immediately respond to a request for comment on Friday.

Xiaomi, the Beijing-based Chinese technology giant, is recalling more than 390,000 vehicles. Hangzhou-based Leapmotor is recalling over 370,000 cars. Other Chinese carmakers, including Geely and XPENG are also recalling some vehicles.

The reasons given in each case were similar, mostly relating to issues with their car door handles.

A report published by the People's Daily, the official newspaper of China's ruling Communist Party, said the large-scale recall "serves as a unified safety upgrade" for existing vehicle models ahead of the 2027 implementation of the ban on hidden car door handles.

"For the rapidly evolving NEV (new energy vehicle) industry, competition should be defined not only by the pace of technological innovation but also by the high standards set for safety," the newspaper said. (AP)

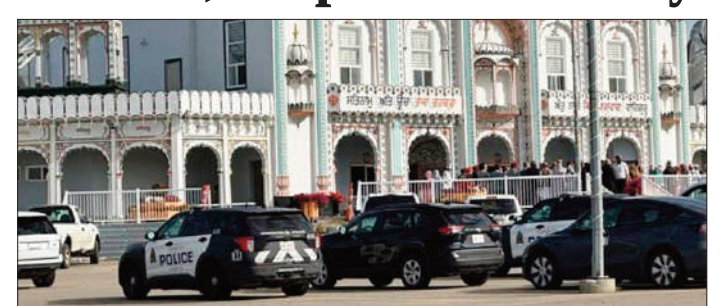
2 injured in stabbing at Canada's Edmonton gurdwara, suspect in custody

TORONTO, Aug 22: Two men, including a priest, were injured after a 27-year-old man stabbed them with a screwdriver inside a gurdwara in Canada's Edmonton, with police investigating whether the attack was hate-motivated, authorities said.

The incident took place at Nanaksar Sikh Gurdwara in northeast Edmonton around 5 am (local time) on Friday, police said, adding the suspect entered the gurdwara and attempted to access the prayer area before he was confronted by the staff. The confrontation escalated and two men, aged 75 and 51, were stabbed, Edmonton Police Service (EPS) said in a statement on Friday.

Witnesses intervened and detained the suspect until police arrived and arrested him, it said.

The two injured men were taken to a hospital with non-life-threatening injuries, while the suspect was also injured and taken to the



hospital, CBC News reported.

Prime Minister Mark Carney condemned the attack and expressed solidarity with the Sikh community.

"The attack at the Nanaksar Gurdwara in Edmonton this morning is appalling. My thoughts are with the two people who were injured and the wider community that is shaken by this terrible event," Carney said in a post on X. "No one should ever feel unsafe in their place of worship. I want to thank the Edmonton Police Service

for their swift response," he said.

Alberta Premier Danielle Smith condemned Friday's act of violence against the Sikh community and called for reforms to federal bail and parole laws, CBC News reported.

"Everyone deserves to feel safe in their communities and places of worship, and we will continue to defend that right," Smith said, adding that the attack underscored the need for the federal government to take bail and parole reform seriously. (PTI)

Mayawati also accused the SP of using alliances only for its own political interests

Akhilesh must apologise to Jats for insulting family of Charan Singh: Mayawati

LUCKNOW, Aug 22: BSP supremo Mayawati on Saturday said that Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav must apologise to the entire Jat community for his "derogatory" remarks against the RLD and its president Jayant Chaudhary, grandson of former prime minister late Charan Singh.

In a post on X, Mayawati said Yadav's public remark about his former ally Rashtriya Lok Dal (RLD) and its leader and Union minister Jayant Chaudhary that "we turned them from 'chavanni' (quarter) into a rupee" was "completely improper, indecent and highly shameful". She said Yadav should apologise not only to the RLD and its leader but also to the entire Jat community for insulting the family of former prime minister Chaudhary Charan Singh.

Prominent peasant leader Charan Singh served as the prime minister from July 1979 to January 1980. His son and Jayant's father, late Ajit Singh, was a former



Union minister.

Mayawati also alleged that the SP has remained narrow-minded, marked by caste-based animosity, not only towards rival parties but also towards its allies.

She claimed its politics often benefited the BJP electorally and weakened the secular forces.

Referring to the 1993 SP-BSP alliance, Mayawati claimed it

broke down because of the arrogant attitude of the SP, resulting in the 1995 Lucknow state guest house incident.

In June 1995, BSP leaders and workers were allegedly attacked by SP supporters at the state guest house here amid tensions following the collapse of the SP-BSP alliance, with Mayawati alleging that there was a conspiracy to kill her.

She also recalled the 2019 alliance for the Lok Sabha elections between the SP and the BSP, claiming that that too ended because of Akhilesh Yadav's arrogant and self-serving attitude after the union failed to achieve expected electoral results.

Mayawati also accused the SP of using alliances only for its own political interests and changing its stance once its purpose was served.

Targeting the SP's PDA (Pichhda, Dalit, Alpsankhyak) formula, she alleged that Yadav changed the meaning of 'P' according to his political interests, sometimes projecting it as the voice of the backward classes and at times as representing the interests of Brahmins.

She alleged that the previous SP governments failed to take positive steps for Dalits, backward classes, minorities and upper-caste communities, particularly Brahmins, and instead benefited "goons, criminals, mafias and other anarchic elements". (PTI)

Adityanath expresses concern over NCR pollution, orders stricter action

LUCKNOW, Aug 22: Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has expressed concern over rising air pollution in the National Capital Region and directed officials to intensify measures to curb stubble burning, industrial emissions, road dust and vehicular pollution, officials said on Saturday.

Following his direction, the chief secretary recently held a high-level meeting with officials of concerned departments and reviewed measures to control air pollution, with a focus on stubble burning and pollution from industries. Officials were directed to ensure the availability of balers and other agricultural machinery for stubble management and expedite pending tender processes to address shortages.

The meeting also stressed strengthening field-level monitoring to check incidents of stubble burning and creating awareness among farmers about the harmful effects of crop-residue burning.

Officials were asked to ensure maximum utilisation of available



resources for effective management of paddy straw, according to a press statement.

The chief secretary directed strict action against industries violating pollution-control norms and ordered regular inspections of industrial units.

"Action should also be taken against industries causing air pollution, and they should be directed to install necessary equipment to prevent pollution," he said.

He also directed departments to designate nodal officers to ensure better coordination and timely implementation of air-pollution control measures.

Concerned departments were asked to regularly update accurate and complete data on the Pawan Portal so that progress on pollution-control measures could be monitored effectively.

Reviewing road works, the chief secretary directed officials to expedite tenders for road redevelopment and take measures to prevent road dust. Pothole repairs and restoration of damaged footpaths were also ordered on priority.

Information on damaged roads under the Public Works Department, municipal bodies and other urban development authorities should be shared with the concerned departments for time-bound repairs, he said.

Officials were further directed to expedite procurement of electric city buses and identify locations for charging stations. Details of the proposed locations are to be shared with the Uttar Pradesh New and Renewable Energy Development Agency (UPNEDA) to speed up development of charging infrastructure. (PTI)

DM orders status quo in land dispute between AMU, Aligarh municipal corporation

ALIGARH, Aug 22: The face-off between the Aligarh Muslim University (AMU) and the local municipal corporation over a prime 3.8-acre plot eased after the district magistrate ordered status quo in the matter till the sub-divisional magistrate's court -- where the ownership dispute is pending -- arrived at a decision.

"Since both the contending parties are government institutions, it would not be appropriate that any confrontation exists. The matter should be resolved amicably through due process of law," District Magistrate Avinash Kumar told reporters on Friday.

"The plot of land would remain in possession of the university till the SDM decides on the matter," he added.

The dispute erupted on Thursday when municipal officials began fencing the plot, which is part of the AMU Riding Club grounds.

The university had termed the action "forcible occupation", while the civic body claimed its records show that the land has belonged to

it for the past 40 years.

A senior AMU official said the university submitted before the DM the original 1923 land title and gazette notification issued by the United Provinces government, besides documents issued by the governor of Uttar Pradesh in 1940 mentioning allotment of the land to AMU.

The official alleged that the land records were tampered with in 1992 and said the university learnt about it only in 2003. In a statement, AMU said it had approached the SDM court on March 29, 2025, and the matter is pending.

"The manner in which the entire sequence was carried out surreptitiously in cover of darkness certainly raises suspicions about the intent of this move," an AMU official said.

Rahat Abrar, former head of AMU Public Relations Department, said the university has received large tracts of land since the late 19th century but successive administrations had failed to adequately safeguard its properties. (PTI)

BJP seems to be scared of Rahul Gandhi, attempts on to disrupt 'Chhatron Ki Goonj': Rohit Pawar

MUMBAI, Aug 22: NCP (SP) leader Rohit Pawar on Saturday alleged that the BJP appeared to be scared of Congress MP Rahul Gandhi, claiming that attempts were on by the ruling party to disrupt the grand old party's 'Chhatron Ki Goonj' student interaction programme in Pune.

He also accused the BJP of targeting workers of the National Students Union of India (NSUI), a student wing of the Congress, while allegedly allowing those who threatened and confined female students in Pune to go scot-free.

Gandhi is scheduled to address the 'Chhatron Ki Goonj' event at SSPMS Ground in Pune city on Saturday evening.

On Friday, members of the Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP) and the NSUI clashed at the COEP Technological University hostel campus. Following the clash, the police on Saturday registered a case against 50 to 60 Youth Congress workers.

In a statement, Rohit Pawar al-



leged that "BJP's hired goons" who had allegedly locked up and threatened female students were roaming free, while cases were being registered against NSUI workers to harass them.

He said students had historically played a key role in fighting oppression, and warned that attempts to harass them would only strengthen their resistance.

"The more students are harassed, the stronger their resistance will become," he said, adding that the BJP would have to face the consequences.

The MLA from Karjat Jamkhed

assembly constituency in Ahilyanagar district said the BJP appeared to be "scared" of Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, alleging that BJP workers had started intimidating and confining women students even before Gandhi arrived in Pune for the 'Chhatron Ki Goonj' programme.

He strongly condemned the alleged clash, and said students and NSUI workers had confronted those involved.

Pawar alleged that there was also an attempt to send some people into the programme to disrupt it. (PTI)

Pinarayi Vijayan rejects CPI demand for deputy leader post in Keralam Assembly

THRISSUR (KERALAM), Aug 22: Leader of Opposition Pinarayi Vijayan on Saturday rejected the CPI's demand for the deputy leader's post in the Keralam Assembly, saying it would go to a CPI (M) leader.

He accused the UDF government of failing to contain the rise in essential commodity prices during the Onam season.

The CPI is the second-largest constituent of the opposition Left Democratic Front.

Responding to questions about the CPI's repeated demand, Vijayan said the appointment of the new deputy leader only required him to send a letter to the Assembly Speaker and made it clear that he would recommend the name of a CPI (M) leader for the post.

"Once the letter is given as directed by the Assembly Speaker, the deputy assembly leader will be appointed. There is no doubt that the name written in that letter will be that of a CPI (M) leader," he said.

Asked about the CPI's position,

Vijayan said the party would eventually be convinced.

Further, Vijayan expressed concern over the alleged sharp rise in prices of essential commodities during the Onam season and accused the UDF government of failing to take effective measures to check inflation.

Prices of essential commodities have risen sharply, he claimed, pointing to increases in the prices of rice, sugar, vegetables, coconut oil and fruits.

The price of rice has increased by more than ₹ 15 per kg, he alleged.

Vijayan said special mechanisms had been in place in the past to intervene in the market and recalled that the LDF government had not increased the prices of 13 essential commodities sold through Supplyco since 2016, with only nominal changes made towards the end of its second term.

He alleged that market intervention through Supplyco and ration shops had now become ineffective. (PTI)

BJP resolution condemns Cong decision on Vande Mataram

NEW DELHI, Aug 22: The BJP on Saturday passed a resolution condemning the Congress' decision to sing only two stanzas of Vande Mataram and said that it would not accept any compromise on the honour of the national song for political convenience or appeasement.

The Congress could not override constitutional institutions or laws of the country, the BJP said in the resolution passed at a meeting of its new office-bearers here.

The ruling party announced that it would launch a campaign to spread the significance of Vande Mataram to every corner of the country.

BJP president Nitin Nabin presided over the meeting and later shared the resolution on X.

The BJP resolution comes after the Congress Working Committee (CWC) on Wednesday decided to abide by its 1937 resolution on Vande Mataram, saying only two stanzas of the national song would be sung at all party events henceforth.

"The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) today, August 22, 2026, passed an important resolution regarding the respect for Vande Mataram and the protection of its historical legacy," Nabin said.

The BJP "strongly condemns and unequivocally opposes" the August 19 decision of the CWC reaffirming its 1937 resolution, limiting the singing of Vande Mataram to only the first two verses at Congress functions, he said.

The BJP would oppose any attempt to subject the national song to "communal pressure, political appeasement or narrow vote-bank politics",



Nabin said.

"No compromise on the honour, legacy of Vande Mataram will be accepted for political convenience or appeasement," he added.

Nabin said a resolution of the CWC could not override constitutional institutions or laws of the country.

A "political compromise" of 1937 could not be elevated above the constitutional settlement of 1950 and legislation enacted by Parliament in 2026, he said.

On July 30, Parliament passed the Prevention of Insults to National Honour (Amendment) Act, 2026, which grants Vande Mataram the same legal status as the national anthem, Jana Gana Mana.

Under the amended law, intentionally disrupting or preventing the singing of Vande Mataram is a criminal offence punishable with

up to 3 years of imprisonment, a fine, or both.

The BJP president said his party would launch a campaign to spread the history, meaning, national significance and glorious heritage of Vande Mataram to every corner of India.

"BJP will protect the honour, dignity, heritage and national character of the Purna Vande Mataram," he said.

The BJP said it would also disseminate Mahatma Gandhi's statement in which he described Vande Mataram as an "anti-imperialist slogan" associated with the "purest national sentiment".

It also resolved to launch an awareness campaign, especially among the younger generation, so that the complete national song, comprising six verses, and its history are not forgotten, and future generations can understand the memories of India's independence associated with Vande Mataram, Nabin said.

"This is not merely a matter concerning a political party. It concerns the honour of Bharat and the legacy of countless patriots who sacrificed for the freedom of the nation," he said.

"The BJP calls upon every citizen to remember that the words Vande Mataram were once powerful enough to frighten an empire. The British sought to suppress them because they awakened resistance. Generations of Indians carried them as a mantra of freedom, sacrifice and national pride.

"That legacy cannot be reduced to the calculations of contemporary vote-bank politics," he said. (PTI)

Khera claims conspiracy to disrupt Rahul Gandhi's Pune event

PUNE, Aug 22: Congress leader Pawan Khera on Saturday said there was anger among the youth across the country against those in power, and alleged that there was a conspiracy to disrupt party MP Rahul Gandhi's 'Chhatron Ki Goonj' programme in Pune.

Gandhi, the Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha, is scheduled to hold an interactive session with female students at the 'Chhatron Ki Goonj' here on Saturday evening.

Addressing a press conference here hours before the event, Khera said the response to the programme had rattled the state government.

"There is anger among the youth not only in Pune and Maharashtra but across the country, and history has shown that when the youth become angry, they bring about change," he said.

"The storm of youth anger is clearly resonating in Pune. Those in power feel threatened when a young woman raises her voice. Trolls are unleashed against her, comments are made about her clothes and her character is at-



tacked," Khera alleged.

He said the mindset of the ruling establishment was to confine women and young female students to their homes and prevent them from participating in decision-making.

"We saw this mindset during the passage of the women's reservation bill. Even today, despite the bill being passed, its implementation is being delayed in the name of delimitation and the census," he said.

On Friday, members of the Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi

Parishad (ABVP) and the National Students' Union of India (NSUI) clashed at the COEP Technological University hostel campus ahead of Rahul Gandhi's event.

While ABVP members claimed that Congress workers were forcing female students of the College of Engineering, Pune (COEP) to register for the 'Chhatron Ki Goonj' event, Congress leaders claimed that two female students, who had spoken in support of the event, were confined and threatened inside the hostel by ABVP workers. (PTI)

Champai Soren accuses Jharkhand govt of cheating job aspirants, demands CBI probe

RANCHI, Aug 22: Senior BJP leader and former Jharkhand chief minister Champai Soren

EXAM ROW

on Saturday accused the JMM-led alliance government of cheating job aspirants and using police force against those seeking a fair probe into alleged irregularities in recruitment examinations.

Soren demanded that the state government recommend a CBI inquiry into the alleged irregularities, claiming that the ruling alliance had no intention of providing justice to the protesting job aspirants.

"JMM workers and police thrashed the students who were peacefully protesting and attempting to burn effigies of the chief minister. They had also taken permission from the administration. Despite this, they were beaten. It happened not only in Ranchi but also in other districts of the state," Soren alleged.

A scuffle broke out on Friday between police and students protesting against alleged irregu-

larities in Jharkhand recruitment examinations in Ranchi, Hazaribagh, Giridih and other districts.

The protesters had attempted to burn effigies of Chief Minister Hemant Soren and the Congress.

The BJP leader alleged that the government had already weakened the case concerning alleged irregularities in examinations conducted by the Jharkhand Public Service Commission (JPSC).

"Former JPSC chairman is in jail, while other members have been forced to resign. Now, who will submit the documents related to irregularities?" he asked.

Soren further alleged that the students had understood the government's "trick".

"Feeling cheated, the protesting students during Friday's programme were just demanding that the government present the correct facts before the court and follow the entire legal procedure," he alleged. (PTI)

Parliament sees growing trend of bills introduced, passed in same session: PRS data

The trend was most pronounced in the Monsoon Session, which ended on August 13

NEW DELHI, Aug 22: More than half of the bills introduced in the 18th Lok Sabha so far have been passed by both Houses in the session of their introduction, with the trend accelerating sharply over the past year, an analysis of data from PRS Legislative Research shows.

Of the 64 bills introduced since this Lok Sabha was constituted, 34 or 53 per cent were passed by both Houses in the session in which they were introduced, according to an analysis of PRS' session-wise data.

The corresponding proportion was 33 per cent during the 16th Lok Sabha, when 63 of the 189 bills introduced were passed in the session of their introduction. It nearly doubled to about 62 per cent during the 17th Lok Sabha, when 117 of the 190 bills introduced were passed in the same session, an analysis of PRS data shows.

The 18th Lok Sabha, however, began slowly on this count, according to records maintained by PRS, an independent, not-for-profit group that researches and tracks the



functioning of Parliament and state legislatures.

In the Budget Session of 2026, five of the 10 bills introduced completed passage through both Houses in the same session.

The trend was most pronounced in the Monsoon Session, which ended on August 13. Eleven of the 12 bills introduced were passed before the session ended.

The only one that remained pending was the Indian Statistical Institute Bill, 2026.

The government's original legislative agenda had listed five new bills for introduction and passage and two pending bills for consideration and passage. But six of the 11 bills eventually passed by Parliament had not been listed for introduction in the original agenda.

Neither of the two pending bills listed on the government's agenda for consideration and passage - the Viksit Bharat Shiksha Adhishthan (VBSA) Bill, 2025, and the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Amendment (FCRA) Bill, 2026 - was passed.

The parliamentary committee examining the VBSA Bill has not yet presented its report, while the FCRA Amendment Bill was referred to a Joint Committee of the Parliament amid Opposition demands for its withdrawal.

PRS has in the past pointed out that a short gap between introduction and passage gives MPs less time to examine proposed legislation and limits opportunities for consultations with stakeholders, a concern that the time spent discussing several Bills during the Monsoon Session attests.

As many as nine bills were cleared without any MP, other than the minister piloting them, speaking, according to PRS. Seven of the 11 Bills were passed in five minutes or less. (PTI)

My job is to win trophies and that's all I believe in: Gambhir



COLOMBO, Aug 22: Gautam Gambhir isn't bothered by the "outside noise" and the brickbats hurled at him after a string of poor results, saying his focus firmly remains on "winning trophies for India".

Since Gambhir took over as head coach in July 2024, India have lost two home Test series against New Zealand and South Africa and were thrashed by Australia Down Under.

The only silver lining in Tests under his stewardship has been a creditable 2-2 away series draw against England.

Asked about his criticism, Gambhir retorted in his inimitable manner.

"Criticism? My job is to win trophies. That's all I believe in. That is the difference between me and everyone. I don't care about views or likes," Gambhir said during a pre-match press conference here on Saturday.

Gambhir was also asked about his interaction with chairman of the selection committee Ajit Agarkar.

"I wish I could tell you about the conversation between the head coach and the chairman of selectors. It's only about how we want to move forward within cricket, what is important and what are the right decisions to make for betterment within cricket. So probably it's only around cricket now, how we see it in the game going forward," he added.

However, Gambhir admitted that there have been discussions within the power group regarding the frequent injuries to players.

"Even in this series, we have been missing so many players. We have had a bit. It's not the BCCI, but overall, we want our best players to play as much cricket as possible. It's also because there will be continuity and we can put our best players on the path as regularly as we can."

India are currently placed fifth in the World Test Championship table behind Australia,

South Africa, New Zealand and Bangladesh.

But for Gambhir, the positioning did not matter, and it did not exactly reflect the way India have been playing Test cricket.

"Rankings do not matter. We are not struggling. Since the England tour, we have played reasonable Test cricket. I think we are going through a transition."

"I am sure that people sitting in the press box and in the commentary box know that we are going through a transition. There will be ups and downs. But we know that wherever we are getting it right," he added.

While he didn't fully divulge if India will stick to its winning combination at Galle in the second Test here, Gambhir had some words of encouragement for under-fire left-arm wrist spinner Kuldeep Yadav.

Kuldeep went for over 100 runs in his 25 combined overs in the first Test, bagging only a wicket.

"Ultimately, we know how good a bowler Kuldeep is. And more importantly, sometimes, it's up to the captain as well (team selection). It's not about under-bowling. It's about getting the result. For me, I think that is more important."

"When you play five proper bowlers, someone will eventually get under-bowled. But it's not about someone not delivering and getting under-bowled. It's the captain or the management's decision as to who will be most effective in that particular condition."

"For a very long period of time, we get Kuldeep doing the right things. We know how successful and how effective he can be in a good condition," Gambhir explained.

However, the former India opener hinted that India will stick to their five-bowler policy in the second Test as well.

"If it's a very flat wicket, the bowlers will have to work hard, maybe a lot of extra hard work, because, as I said, you'll have to take 20 wickets. If it's a flat wicket, ultimately, we have only one solution. We have five proper bowlers."

Gambhir said having five bowlers will help the skipper to rotate the bowlers more effectively during a match.

"So, when you have five proper bowlers, you can better rotate your bowlers. We saw this in the last Test match as well. Even if Kuldeep didn't bowl a lot, we had five proper bowlers, who can get you a wicket at any stage. (PTI)

India's defensive resilience has been one of the biggest positives of their campaign

India face Australia in a crucial match for World Cup semifinal berth

AMSTELVEEN (THE NETHERLANDS), Aug 22: The Indian women's hockey team will treat Sunday's second-round clash against Australia as a virtual quarterfinal, with a win potentially taking the side into the FIH World Cup semifinals after an encouraging campaign so far.

India went down 0-2 to world No. 1 and defending champions Netherlands in their opening second-round match on Friday but remained in contention for the last-four stage. Under the new format, India will not face China again, with their points from the first round carried forward.

India have one point from their opening draw against China, while the Netherlands - who are already through to the semifinals - have six points after beating both Australia and India. China have two points after drawing Australia, who also have one point.

India's route to the semifinals is straightforward. If the Netherlands avoid a defeat against China, a win over Australia would take the ninth-ranked India through.

However, if China manage to upset Netherlands, then the result of the India vs Australia match will become inconsequential. In that case, China would have accumulated five points while India can have a maximum of four points even if they beat Australia in the second match of the day.

China's defeat and a draw between India and Australia would leave all the three teams on two points each and goal difference could come into play.

India's defensive resilience has been one



of the biggest positives of their campaign. Goalkeepers Savita and Bichhu Devi made several crucial saves in the goalless draw against England, with India successfully defending all 12 penalty corners.

They also restricted the Netherlands to just one goal from a penalty corner, with the Dutch failing to score from open play despite sustained pressure.

Salima Tete produced some outstanding defensive interventions, while the backline stood firm against one of the strongest attacking units in world hockey.

The challenge now is to complement that defensive solidity with greater efficiency in attack.

India created opportunities against the

Netherlands but struggled to convert them, while penalty-corner specialist Deepika, who scored six goals during India's Nations Cup triumph in New Zealand in June, will be expected to provide the cutting edge.

Australia, meanwhile, have not enjoyed their best season. The two-time world champions finished eighth in the 2025-26 Pro League and were runners-up to the hosts at the World Cup qualifiers in Santiago.

India, who toured Australia before winning the Nations Cup, know the Hockeyroos well. The two sides played four closely fought matches, with India winning one, losing two and drawing one.

India coach Sjoerd Marjine acknowledged that the schedule had taken a toll on his play-

ers after they had to play two high-pressure matches on successive days against England and the Netherlands.

"We played two big matches on two consecutive days. I'm not saying we would have won if that hadn't happened, but the players made technical mistakes in the end," Marjine said.

"The team showed good intentions, but they should have capitalised on the opportunities. We don't get many chances against such teams. Now, I consider the match against Australia like a quarterfinal, where a win will take us to the semifinals."

For a team featuring 11 players at their first World Cup, India have already exceeded expectations in several areas.

They held China to a draw in their opening game, thrashed South Africa 6-1 and then held England goal-less to enter the second round.

Savita, the most experienced player in the tournament with 317 international appearances, has led from the back, while Bichhu Devi's late save against England underlined India's defensive depth.

In attack, Navneet Kaur has been influential, while Sunelita Toppo, Baljit Kaur, Sakshi, Lalremisiami and Neha have shown the ability to trouble opposition defences.

Against Australia, however, India will need to turn that promise into goals.

A win would put them within touching distance of a World Cup semifinal which implies Sunday's contest is the quarterfinal Marjine believes it is. (PTI)

George Russell cruises to sprint race win at F1's Dutch Grand Prix

ZANDVOORT (NETHERLANDS), Aug 22: George Russell started the second half of the Formula 1 season in style as he eased to a sprint race victory Saturday ahead of the Dutch Grand Prix.

Russell started from pole position, quickly built a gap to Lando Norris in second and didn't look back from there, taking his first win since the Austrian Grand Prix in June.

Charles Leclerc snatched second off Norris with a daring pass into the inside of the first corner with six laps to go.

Norris held off a late charge from Russell's Mercedes teammate Kimi Antonelli to stay third. Fourth-place Antonelli, starting fifth after car damage in qualifying, still managed to extend his standings lead because his closest challenger Lewis Hamilton could only manage seventh for Ferrari.

Qualifying takes place later Saturday for Sunday's Dutch Grand Prix. (AP)

Starc and Islam take 6 wickets each in a wild 1st day of the 2nd Australia-Bangladesh cricket test



MACKAY (AUSTRALIA), Aug 22: Mitchell Starc removed Bangladesh opener Shadman Islam with the first ball of the match and the veteran Australian fast bowler took six wickets in the first innings of a wild first day of the second cricket test Saturday.

Later, Shoriful Islam incredibly matched Starc's total with a six-wicket haul on a day which saw 18 wickets fall.

After Australia won the toss and decided to bowl, with captain Pat Cummins suggesting "the wicket looks pretty good, but if there is any moisture in it, it might be this morning," Starc proved Cummins correct and Bangladesh was bowled out for 64 runs shortly after lunch.

The wicket, however, continued to be a challenge for batters well beyond the morning.

In reply, Australia was 165-8 at stumps to lead by 101 runs despite Shoriful Islam's 6-35 total. Cameron Green was one of the not-out batsmen on 51 with Nathan Lyon on 10.

Shadman Islam was caught in the gully off a leading edge to give Starc his record fourth career wicket on the first ball of a match. Starc removed Tanzid Hasan and had captain Najmul Hossain Shanto caught lbw in the third over to leave Bangladesh, which surprisingly won the first test of the two-test series, reeling.

Starc got his fourth wicket when Cameron Green made a grass-top catch to remove Mominul Haque for 9, the only Bangladesh batter to score a run among the first four batters Saturday. His fifth wicket came when he had Litton Das trapped lbw and his sixth after lunch. (AP)

Americans Gauff, Tiafoe, Nakashima and Pegula reach the semifinal round at Cincinnati Open

MASON (OHIO, USA), Aug 22: Frances Tiafoe and Brandon Nakashima won quarterfinal matches Friday night to set up one all-American men's semifinal at the Cincinnati Open. Coco Gauff and Jessica Pegula also advanced to make it four U.S. players in the semis.

"It's insane, I think we're all doing so well," Gauff said. "Hopefully, you know, we can have a double title win. Obviously there are more matches to be played for that to happen. We definitely root for each other."

Tiafoe beat Italian Lorenzo Musetti, 7-6 (2), 7-5, and Nakashima beat fellow American Taylor Fritz, 7-6, 4-6, 6-3, marking the first time two Americans have reached the men's semifinals in Cincinnati since Andy Roddick and Mardy Fish in 2010.

Nakashima is the first American man to reach the semifinals in Canada and Cincinnati in the same season since Fish in 2011. Nakashima is coached by Tiafoe's former coach, Wayne Ferreira.

"It's a guy who knows me pretty well in Wayne," Tiafoe said. "I expect some good serving and all the best from him. Happy where I've been mentally more than anything. This has been a great week."

Tiafoe reached the Cincinnati finals in 2024, losing to Jannik Sinner. The other men's semifinal Saturday features Italy's Flavio Cobolli against Frenchman Arthur Fils. Gauff beat Ukraine's Marta Kostyuk, 6-2, 6-2. Gauff will face surprise entrant 20-year-old Czech Sara Bejlek on Saturday.

Bejlek outlasted 2019 champion Madison Keys, 3-6, 6-4, 7-6 (5) on Friday. She upset No. 1-ranked Aryna Sabalenka in straight sets in the Round of 16.

"Sara is a great player," Gauff said. "I watched her a lot in Abu Dhabi (in February) this year when she won that title. So I think it's going to be a tough match. I'm looking forward to it." (AP)

Neeraj finishes second, Pathirage wins title in Lausanne Diamond League

LAUSANNE, Aug 22: Indian javelin ace Neeraj Chopra produced his best performance in more than a year but was pipped to the post by the rising Sri Lankan star Ramesh Pathirage for the top spot by a mere nine centimetres in the Lausanne Diamond League meet here on Friday.

The 28-year-old Chopra's 88.05m throw in the second round, which fetched him the second spot in the nine-man star-studded field, was his best after the 88.16m he recorded while winning the Paris Diamond League in June 2025. It was also his season's best throw.

However, the 23-year-old Pathirage continued his juggernaut this season as he overtook Chopra with his third-round throw of 88.14m.

Grenada's Anderson Peters was third with his sixth and final round effort of

86.69m.

Reigning world champion Keshorn Walcott of Trinidad and Tobago was fourth with a best throw of 83.71m.

World Championships bronze winner Curtis Thompson of the USA was sixth with a below par 78.13m while Tokyo Olympics silver winner Jakub Vadlejch of Czech Republic took the seventh spot with 77.32m.

Chopra later said it was a close tussle between him and Pathirage for the top spot.

"I didn't realise it was only nine centimetres, it was really close, but I'm happy with the 88-metre throw. To be honest, it didn't feel like it went 88m because I felt very relaxed. I tried really hard and later focused on my technique," he said.

"With every competition, I feel that I'm coming back. The crowds in Lau-

sanne and Zurich understand athletics and really support you, so it's always good to compete here."

With his second-place finish, Chopra also jumped to top-five in the season-ending Diamond League Finals standings from earlier seventh spot.

For jumps and throws, the top six in the standings will compete in the September 4-5 DL Finals in Brussels. One additional athlete per discipline may also compete via a national or global wildcard selection.

Pathirage and Peters have already qualified for the DL Finals after accumulating 23 and 22 points respectively. There is another DL meet which has men's javelin throw event in it -- in Zurich on August 27.

Chopra had won the DL Finals title in 2022, and finished second in 2023, 2024 and 2025. (PTI)

Olympic medalist Casey set for APL debut

HYDERABAD, Aug 22: World No 3 Casey Kaufhold, who won a mixed team gold at the Paris Olympics, will make her debut at Archery Premier League when the second season begins in Hyderabad on October 8 as 12 overseas star archers are set to compete in the event. The inaugural edition was held in Delhi last year, and the second season will once again feature several of the biggest names in world archery. However, the event will lack some of its sheen with no Korean archer in the overseas roster for a second successive season.

The American archer Casey, who won an Olympic medal at the age of 20, will join an elite line-up that includes Tokyo Games gold medalist Mete Gaz