

WORLD
NATION

- Iran's leaders think they have Trump cornered, but their strategy carries great risks
- Canada deported record 3,323 Indians in first half of 2026, data shows
- Jharkhand govt holds talks with various outfits amid paper leak protests
- 'Kanwar Yatra example of social unity': Adityanath



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2 elephant tusks seized, 2 arrested

GUWAHATI, Aug 8: Two persons have been arrested and two elephant tusks seized from their possession in Assam's Tamulpur district, a police statement said on Saturday.

The operation was carried out by the state police's Special Task Force (STF) on Friday night. The arrests were made from Banglipara in Tamulpur, and two elephant ivory tusks, weighing 2.09 kg and 1.97 kg, respectively, were seized from them.

Preliminary investigation revealed that the apprehended persons were allegedly attempting to sell the ivory tusks for approximately ₹ 6 lakh, at a negotiated rate of around ₹ 1.5 lakh per kg, the statement said. The STF handed over the arrested persons and seized items to the Forest Department after lodging an FIR for necessary (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Govt to plug breached embankments: Himanta

Assam flood: Toll two short of century mark; damage assessment from today

GUWAHATI, Aug 8: Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Saturday said special measures would be taken to repair breached embankments and assured all possible assistance to flood-affected people across the state.

Inspecting a breached embankment along the Kulsi River at Naharbari during a review of several flood-hit areas of Darrang district, Sarma said the floods had caused considerable hardship to people in the area following damage to the embankments.

He said the government would take special measures to rebuild the breached portions with enhanced strength.

He also assured that all flood-hit

families would be provided necessary assistance at the earliest as per government norms.

The CM also visited Bengabara to take stock of the flood situation and assess the condition of the affected areas.

He inspected the breached portion of the embankment along Noa River near Bengabara village and reviewed the ongoing repair works.

Sarma also visited relief camps set up at the under-construction anganwadi centre at Bengabara village and Outala HS School, and interacted with people taking shelter there.

He enquired about their well-being and assured them of all possible assistance.

At least 98 people have died, and



over 1.55 lakh people remain affected in floods in the state this year so far. Even as 13 districts remained

affected, the government will, from Sunday, launch an assessment of damage caused by the deluge to ex-

pedite release of funds for permanent rehabilitation in the four worst-hit districts in the eastern part of the state. Officials said one death was reported from the Mahmora revenue circle in Charaideo district, taking the toll to 98.

Thirteen districts -- Sivasagar, Golaghat, Nagaon, Hojai, Sonitpur, Dhemaji, Darrang, Biswanath, Kamrup (M), Lakhimpur, Udalguri, Jorhat and Charaideo -- remained affected on Friday.

A total of 1,55,849 people were reeling under the deluge, with Golaghat being the worst-hit district, where 58,750 were affected, followed by Sivasagar (48,286) and Jorhat (25,259). On Thursday, over 1.68 lakh people in 15 districts were

affected.

The administration was operating 55 relief camps, sheltering over 10,000 displaced people. Another 18 relief distribution centres were also functional. A crop area of 10,748.64 hectares remained submerged, while over 47,000 animals have been affected.

Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Friday said his government will conduct a door-to-door assessment of flood damage in the worst-hit districts of Jorhat, Sivasagar, Golaghat and Charaideo from August 9 to 30.

He asserted that no affected household will be left out and the government will provide maximum relief permissible as per norms. (PTI)

Rijiju, Rahul spar on issue of implementation of women's quota



NEW DELHI, Aug 8: The Congress and BJP sparred on Saturday over the women's quota and delimitation bills after Rahul Gandhi said that no country can be successful if its women do not express themselves, prompting Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju to call it a "visible change of heart" and express the hope that the opposition party will support the proposed legislation "unconditionally".

Responding to Rijiju's comments on X, Gandhi hit back, saying, "Mr Rijiju, who would know better than you, as the Minister of Parliamentary Affairs, that the Women's Reservation Bill 2023 has already been passed unanimously, with the full support of the Congress."

"The question is why has it still not been implemented even after three years, and why do you now want to unnecessarily link it to delimitation?" Gandhi asked in a post on X. "Implement the 2023 Law. Without any conditions", he added.

Responding to Gandhi's retort, Rijiju said the Congress leader knows "very well" that the reservation of seats for women in the House of the People and Legislative Assembly of the State is provided in the Constitution (106th Amendment) Act, 2023.

He said that Gandhi also knows that it shall come into effect after an exercise of delimitation is undertaken based on the census figures published after the year 2023, which means the census figures published after the year 2026.

"The exercise for publishing the census figures after the year 2026 is

currently underway. However, this may take substantial time due to the caste-based census to be finally published. In view of this, it may result in considerable delay in the implementation of women reservation, at least not before the 2034 General Elections," the senior BJP leader said.

Therefore, to implement the women reservation at the next general elections in 2029, the delimitation exercise needs to be undertaken at the earliest, based on the latest available Census figures, as published, he added. Rijiju said the implementation methodology has been proposed under the Delimitation Bill 2026, introduced in the Lok Sabha along with the amendments to the Constitution.

However, the Constitution (131st Amendment) Bill, 2026, which was introduced for this purpose, has been defeated, the minister said.

"Also, a reminder to Rahul Gandhi, there's no woman in Karnataka DK Shivakumar's Cabinet! This raises serious questions over Congress' stand on 33% women quota," Rijiju said in another post on X. Reacting to the criticism, Karnataka Chief Minister D K Shivakumar said, "We are the ones who piloted (women's reservation bill), we are the ones who passed (the bill)."

"The Congress party believes in it (giving priority to women). You know how many seats we gave (to women) in Parliament, I think you remember. So, in Karnataka, definitely we are sorting out that issue. Rijiju may not worry about the Congress Party," (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

NO CHARGES FOR UPI USERS

Vast majority of transactions to remain free for merchants as well: Govt

NEW DELHI, Aug 8: The government on Saturday categorically stated that consumers and small merchants will continue to enjoy free Unified Payments Interface (UPI) services to allay fears regarding the levy of charges on such transactions following the passage of a Bill to amend the Payment and Settlement Systems Act, 2007.

However, nominal Merchant Discount Rate (MDR) for merchants will be applicable as and when charges are introduced.

"They will apply only to a limited set of merchant transactions, above a certain threshold, at a nominal rate, far lower than debit or credit card MDRs," the finance ministry said in a statement.

The statement comes two days after the Lok Sabha passed a Bill to amend the Payment and Settlement Systems Act, 2007, which authorises the government to permit

banks and other service providers to levy charges on payments through UPI and other notified electronic payment modes.

"Once the Parliament passes the Taxation and Other Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2026, which proposes to amend Section 10A of the Payment and Settlement Systems Act, 2007, the 'UPI and Services Steering Committee' headed by NPCI will decide on the MDR, if any," it said.

The recent amendment to the Payment and Settlement Systems Act (PSS Act) has generated a debate, with some misinterpreting it as a move to impose charges on ordinary users, it said, adding, in reality, the amendment is an enabling provision designed to ensure UPI's long-term sustainability, technological advancement, and resilience against emerging risks.

Explaining the rationale, the statement



said, with exponential transaction volumes, the system requires significant and continuous upgrades in cybersecurity, fraud prevention, and infrastructure. (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Need for accountability if people harmed in peaceful protest in PoK: UN

UNITED NATIONS, Aug 8: Expressing concern over the security situation in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir, a spokesperson for UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres has highlighted the need for accountability for actions against people engaging in peaceful protest.

The Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK) region has been witnessing protests for several months over 12 contentious refugee seats, triggering a crackdown by security forces. The protests intensified with elections to the so-called assembly in the region starting at the end of last month amid allegations of widespread rigging.

According to the Joint Awami Action Committee (JAAC), a collective of activist groups, more than 40 people were killed during the first phase of polls on July 27. Besides, it claims that some 400 protesters have been killed since the first week of June. Both claims have been dismissed by the Pakistan government.

The JAAC has alleged that the establishment manoeuvres the 12 refugee seats to install a prime minister of its choosing to lead the so-called government in PoK.

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

"The Secretary-General supports the work of his High Commissioner, and we certainly hope that the pleas made by Mr Türk will be listened to," Deputy Spokesman for the Secretary-General Farhan Haq said here on Friday in



response to a question by PTI.

The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Türk had on July 17 expressed concern about the recent developments in PoK, calling for impartial and thorough investigation into the deaths of protesters, Pakistan's ban of the JAAC and arrest of its leaders.

Türk had appealed for calm in PoK amid a wave of unrest ahead of regional elections at the end of the month, a statement issued in Geneva last month had said.

On whether there will be calls for accountability from the authorities on the crackdown on protesters in the PoK, Haq said on Friday, "It's important that all authorities everywhere allow for (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

NEERI-ZAR: Zero-energy water purifier comes to rescue of flood-hit Jorhat district of Assam

JORHAT, Aug 8: In flood-hit Jorhat district of Assam, potable water is worth its weight in gold. Coming to people's rescue is 'NEERI-ZAR', a gravity-based, zero-energy water purifier developed by the National Environmental Engineering Research Institute of CSIR.

A total of 100 units of the water purification system were distributed in the district on Saturday, with 75 of those meant for single households and the rest for larger communities, officials associated with the endeavour told PTI.

"Today, we handed over five units each of household and community-based units at Jonakimondal village under Titabor block. The remaining 90 were handed to the Jorhat district commissioner. His office will ensure their further distribution," an official said. CSIR-NEERI, Nagpur, Director S Venkata Mohan, and his CSIR-NEIST, Jorhat, counterpart V M Tiwari were present at the distribu-

tion programme. A water treatment unit with two 22-litre vessels for a small household can serve five to six people when operated for one hour a day, based on the assumption of six to 10 litres per capita/day for drinking and cooking. One community-level water filter with the two 100-litre vessels can serve the drinking and cooking water needs of around 10 households. Officials said that these purification systems come in handy in emergencies such as floods.

"The unit is designed for easy operation and does not require electricity. It is also easy to transport and install, making it extremely useful in emergencies and flood-affected regions," another official said. The technology was developed in 2006, during the floods in Rajasthan that swept through Barmer. It was improvised over the years and deployed during natural calamities, most recently during last year's flash floods in Jammu and Kashmir. (PTI)

Assam-based start-up's 'Soil-to-Silk' model gets recognition with national award

The venture has been co-founded by Pakumoni Das and Jugal Bharali

NEW DELHI, Aug 8: An Assam-based start-up was awarded a national prize by the Ministry of Textiles, marking excellence in the start-up venture category, among the 22 awards presented by President Droupadi Murmu on the National Handloom Day.

The president felicitated Marvella Associates with the award on Friday. The venture has been co-founded by Pakumoni Das and Jugal Bharali and represented Sualkuchi, a silk town in Assam renowned for its weaving heritage.

At the event, the 22 awards included three Sant Kabir Handloom Awards and 19 National Handloom Awards for excellence in weaving, innovation, design development, marketing, start-up ventures and producer companies.

Instituted under the Handloom Marketing Assistance component of the National Handloom Development Programme, these awards represent the pinnacle of national



recognition for creativity, quality, and innovation in India's handloom sector, officials said.

The National Handloom Award celebrates those who preserve traditional skills while embracing modern techniques, selected through a

rigorous, multi-level evaluation process that ensures transparency, objectivity and recognition of excellence across the sector, they said.

The Marvella Associates' 'Soil-to-Silk' model has created a living, immersive experience of Assam's

silk tradition -- from cultivating castor and 'som' plants, rearing 'eri and muga' silkworms, producing cocoons, reeling yarn, dyeing, weaving, to finishing handloom products, the start-up said in a press release.

This integrated approach allows visitors to witness the full value chain while appreciating the artistry of local weavers, it said.

"Beyond tourism, Marvella has built a vibrant livelihood ecosystem where every stakeholder's contribution is honoured. Its model has been introduced to students to deepen awareness of Assam's weaving culture and the livelihoods it sustains," the statement said.

The venture said it envisions a self-sustaining Assamese village, rooted in healing herbs, vegetables, prayers, folk music, rituals, and strengthened by handloom weaving as a pillar of economic resilience.

Marvella received an award from the Ministry of Tourism in the 'craft' in 2025 as well. (PTI)

Free movement for all communities on NH-2, NH-37 during Kangpokpi visit: Singh

IMPHAL, Aug 8: In a major step towards restoring peace and normalcy in Manipur, Chief Minister Y Khemchand Singh and Deputy Chief Minister Nemcha Kipgen on Saturday announced that national highways in the state will be reopened for free movement of people from all communities.

Singh made the announcement during his visit to Kuki-majority Kangpokpi district, where he inaugurated several development projects. Movement on National Highway 2 (Imphal-Dimapur) and NH-37 (Imphal-Silchar) has been severely affected for sections of the population since ethnic violence broke out in the state in May 2023. Both highways pass through Kangpokpi district.

On his arrival at Kangpokpi, Singh was welcomed by Kipgen, Saitu MLA Haokholet, Deputy Commissioner, SP and other senior officials.

Inaugurating various development projects, Singh said Manipur had a history spanning nearly 3,000 years and that its boundaries had been shaped by contributions from all communities. He said people from different communities had made sacrifices to safeguard the state's territory.

"Because of the conflict that has happened, future generations have been affected. To reduce that effect, Imphal-Dimapur bus services will resume very shortly for all communities," Singh said. Singh said it was unfortunate that some vested-interest groups were trying to create confusion among people, but stressed that there was a solution to every crisis.

He urged members of all communities to trust and support one another and said people should first consider themselves Indians and then Manipurians.

The chief minister said India's development would remain incomplete without the development of the Northeast and Manipur's progress would be incomplete without the development of Kangpokpi district. While inaugurating a dialysis unit at the Kangpokpi district headquarters, Singh said everyone should forgive and forget and stressed that (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Mizo group ZORO calls for unity across India, Myanmar, Bangladesh

AIZAWL, Aug 8: The Zo Reunification Organisation (ZORO), which represents indigenous Zo or Mizo communities across India, Myanmar and Bangladesh, on Saturday renewed its call for reunification of the community's people living across the three countries, asserting that greater unity was essential to safeguard their common identity and future.

The call came at a rally organised here to mark the 31st World Indigenous Day.

Around 1,000 people representing different Mizo ethnic communities took part in the rally, which began at Millennium Centre in Dawrpui and culminated at Vanapa Hall, ZORO said. Participants also showcased traditional attire representing 48 different Mizo communities, it said.

Addressing the march, Mizo National Front (MNF) legislator Robert Romawia Royte said unity was crucial for the survival and progress of the Mizo people. He urged the gathering to support ZORO's initiatives, stressing that the organisation was not affiliated (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

RBI has proactively helped UCBs; cooperatives should look at regulator differently: Shah

MUMBAI, Aug 8: Union Minister of Cooperation Amit Shah on Saturday urged urban cooperative banks (UCBs) to look at the RBI from a "different viewpoint", underlining that the central bank has "proactively helped" the sector in recent times.

Speaking at the inauguration of a new office building of the National Urban Cooperative Finance and Development Corporation (NUCFDC) at the BSE here, Shah also said that when it comes to the safety of money, no other segment is as safe for lenders as small borrowers.

"I know of your experience till now. RBI looks at you from a particular viewpoint, and UCBs also look at RBI from a different viewpoint. But we have to come out of it," Shah told the audience comprising executives from over 1,400 UCBs and other stakeholders.

"My five years' experience as the Union Cooperatives Minister suggests that whenever we have put a step forward with confidence, RBI has proactively helped us," he added, listing out the relaxations delivered by RBI.

Among other aspects, RBI has liberalised branch opening, allowed UCBs to offer doorstep banking, made it possible for them to issue demand drafts and life certificates, and also appointed a ded-



icated nodal officer just to look into the affairs of the UCBs, which have over Rs 6 lakh crore of deposits, he said.

Shah, who also handles the Home portfolio, said a lot of aspects have been resolved with the help of the RBI, and also welcomed the raising of limits on gold loans and permitting one-time settlements for UCBs.

In a statement on developmental and regulatory policy accompanying the bi-monthly policy review announced on Wednesday, RBI Governor Sanjay Malhotra announced a move forward on the 'on-tap' licensing of UCBs, which will end a two-decades long pause

in the matter.

In the past, instances of lax governance practices at UCBs, which are perceived to be controlled by political heavyweights, have led to instances of some lenders going down, leading to higher systemic caution.

Recalling his experience of chairing a UCB in Gujarat, Shah said the small borrower segment is the safest for lenders and pointed out a scheme of offering Rs 2.5 lakh of loans without any collateral by his bank. He said the management had doubts, but the repayment rate including interest is over 99 per cent under the scheme, and the overall lending offered has

been doubled as well.

Shah also announced that NUCFDC, which works as an umbrella body for the sector, will soon be moving its head office to Maharashtra from New Delhi, and added that 449 of such lenders are in the state and 70 per cent of the entities are from Maharashtra, Gujarat, Goa and Karnataka.

He said the body has only 690 members as of now, and urged the management to lower membership fees and ensure that all 1,400 UCBs avail the membership.

A lot of advantages will accrue to a lender by joining a grouping like NUCFDC, Shah said, adding that the umbrella organisation can give technical know-how, help with compliances, and offer the best in cyber security solutions.

He said a security operations centre has also been opened as part of the efforts, and urged the UCBs to join that as well to deepen the depositors' faith.

On the issue of scaling up, Shah pointed to the Amul experience of how a string of cooperatives can come together to create a brand with a Rs 1.25 lakh crore turnover now, and added that if India has to become a developed nation as aspired, UCBs will play an important role by supporting the sole proprietors or entrepreneurs in the economy. (PTI)

Contd. from Page 1...

2 elephant tusks seized

legal action and further investigation to unearth the wider inter-state and pan-India nexus involved in the trafficking of wildlife, wildlife parts and products, it added. (PTI)

Vast majority of transactions

The statement further said that it was required for market expansion and self-sustainability. It is necessary to increase competition by encouraging more companies to expand their operations, which requires a self-sustaining revenue model, it said. Reliance on subsidies alone is not viable for the next wave of growth, it said, adding that a balanced framework is required to ensure that UPI remains robust, inclusive, and future-ready.

Addressing concerns on narratives like external influences may be driving policy changes, the statement said, this is unfounded, completely false and misleading.

If external pressure had been a factor, the government would not have introduced UPI in 2016 or made it free of charge for both merchants as well as citizens since January 2020 and ensured that it became the world's largest real time interoperable payment system, it said.

The amendment should therefore be viewed in the context of the Government's broader objective of ensuring that India's digital payment infrastructure remains sustainable, competitive, innovative and capable of serving the country's rapidly expanding digital economy, it said.

UPI is India's own innovation, and the government remains committed to keeping it free for citizens while ensuring its sustainability for decades to come, it added. India now stands at the cusp of the next wave of digital payments growth, it said, adding that to expand UPI further into rural and semi-urban areas and maintain competitiveness, the UPI ecosystem must be self-sustainable and affordable.

The amendment to the PSS Act is a forward-looking step to ensure that UPI continues to thrive as a secure, affordable, inclusive, and globally recognised payment system, it said. Since its launch in 2016-17, the Unified Payments Interface (UPI) has transformed India's digital economy into one of the most inclusive and dynamic payment ecosystems in the world, it said. What began as a bold experiment in real-time, interoperable payments has now become a global benchmark, processing billions of transactions every month and reaching deep into the fabric of everyday life, it said. (PTI)

SoO groups in Manipur agree to

The meeting concluded with the signing of a tripartite SoO agreement on re-negotiated terms and conditions (ground rules) to be effective from the day of signing of the agreement for a period of one year," it added. The meeting also agreed on a negotiated solution to bring lasting peace and stability in the northeastern state.

"Among other provisions, the revised ground rules reiterated the territorial integrity of Manipur and the need for a negotiated solution to bring lasting peace and stability to the State of Manipur," the statement added. It also said that "KNO and UPF have also agreed to relocate seven designated camps away from areas vulnerable to conflict and reduce the number of designated camps" while relocating the weapons to the nearest CRPF/BSF camps. SoO groups operate around 14 designated camps in the hill districts, particularly Churachandpur and Kangpokpi, and have around 2,200 cadres belonging to the KNO and UPF, according to official estimates.

A designated camp is a monitored residential facility to house militant cadres who have signed the SoO or peace agreement with the government. These camps keep armed groups confined and restricted under agreed-upon ground rules.

The development comes amid demands by several Meitei and Naga civil society organisations for abrogation of the SoO agreement. These organisations have alleged the involvement of SoO groups in the ethnic conflict. Kuki groups, in turn, have alleged the involvement of Meitei and Naga militant groups in the violence. In another development, the Kuki-Zo Council (KZC) decided to reopen National Highway-2 for the free movement of commuters and essential goods. (PTI)

Rijiju, Rahul spar on issue

the chief minister said. Wading into the issue, BJP IT department head Amit Malviya said that the country is watching how the Congress is now "trampling" on the greater representation for women while simultaneously "re-siting proportional representation" for the states.

However, Congress' media and publicity department chairman Pawan Khera reiterated the charge that the government is using women's reservation as a "smokescreen" to sneak through delimitation based on the 2011 Census.

On Friday, Gandhi said no country can be successful and will remain stunted if its women do not express themselves. The Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha said it is important to bring women back into the conversation and allow them to do what they want to do. His remarks in an Instagram post came as an addition to his reply made during his Thursday's "Ask Me Anything" session.

Reacting to Gandhi's remarks, Rijiju said in a post on X, "This seems to be a positive message from the Congress Party. There's a visible change of heart in Shri Rahul Gandhi Ji about women. 'Now, I hope Congress Party will support the Women's Reservation Bill unconditionally.'"

Rijiju on Thursday had a telephonic conversation with Gandhi to seek support for the passage of the women's reservation and delimitation bills, but the leader of opposition insisted on convening an all-party meeting on the proposed legislation, sources aware of the matter had said.

This was the second time in a couple of days that the parliamentary affairs minister spoke with Gandhi on the phone. The minister also met him twice in 10 days for smooth functioning of the House.

"I had a productive conversation with Rahul Gandhi. I have made a request on a few specific issues and also discussed other matters. We expect continuous communication and coordinated action with the Congress and other opposition parties," Rijiju had told reporters in the Parliament House complex on Thursday.

Amid the war of words between Rijiju and Gandhi on X, BJP's Amit Malviya said the 2023 law cannot be viewed in isolation from the constitutional framework that determines how seats are allocated.

The proposed delimitation exercise is precisely about ensuring fair and proportionate representation of states and the Congress cannot pretend to support one kind of representation while blocking another, he added.

"If Congress truly believes in women's representation, let it listen to the people's voice instead of creating political roadblocks. Otherwise, Congress is not defending democracy or federalism. It is simply scripting its own marginalisation," Malviya said on X. (PTI)

Need for accountability if

peaceful protest, and certainly that is the case here."

"If there have been people harmed for engaging in peaceful protest, there needs to be accountability for that," Haq added.

Türk's statement had specifically said that dozens of people, mostly protesters but also law enforcement personnel, were reportedly killed since June ahead of the vote for the Legislative Assembly starting July 27.

The High Commissioner had called for prompt, thorough and impartial investigations into all deaths that have occurred due to the unrest, both amongst protesters and members of security forces.

The JAAC – a movement behind the protests comprising traders, transporters, students, lawyers, activists and others – has been banned under anti-terrorism laws for allegedly threatening public order and security.

There are 53 seats in the so-called PoK legislative assembly - 45 are directly elected, while eight are reserved for women, technocrats and clerics. Elections for the 45 seats are being held in three phases, with the first phase on July 27 and the second phase on August 2 marred by violent protests.

The Shehbaz Sharif government has dismissed the JAAC claim of over 400 deaths since June first week saying the figure is "overly exaggerated."

"The number of the people killed in protests is in two digits. Moreover, security personnel have also lost their lives," PM's adviser Rana Sanaullah said in a TV statement recently.

India on August 4 described the so-called local body elections in PoK a "complete farce," asserting that such "hollow" exercises cannot hide the ground reality in the region.

The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) strongly criticised Pakistan's crackdown on protesters in PoK and said the international community should see through the "flimsy veneer" of Islamabad's "hypocritical lecturing" on human rights.

"This so-called local election in PoK is a complete farce. The real happening is that of public protests and wanton killings by Pakistani forces. Such hollow exercises cannot hide reality," MEA spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said in New Delhi. (PTI)

Free movement for all

the government was taking the situation arising from the conflict seriously. Earlier, on his way to the district headquarters in the morning, the chief minister received a warm welcome from villagers of Gangphai in Kangpokpi district. In a social media post, Singh said, "Today marks a significant step towards restoring normalcy in Manipur. In the presence of Deputy Chief Minister Nemcha Kipgen and NDA legislators, it was decided that the Imphal-Guwahati Bus Service will resume shortly and the national highway will be open to all communities."

"These steps will strengthen connectivity, rebuild trust and deepen people-to-people bonds. Let us move forward together in peace, reconciliation and hope for a peaceful, united Manipur," Singh said. Speaking on the occasion, Kipgen said national highways belonged to the nation and should be accessible to everyone.

"National highways are not the property of anyone but the property of the nation. I also agree that the movement of all should be allowed on the highways," he said.

Kipgen also said that the day marked a historic occasion for everyone and said the present BJP-led government has been consistently working to bring development to the state.

She added that Manipur can achieve complete development only when both the valley and the hill areas progress equally and that peace in the state can be ensured through mutual love and trust among communities. (PTI)

Mizo group ZORO calls for unity

with any political party, church or other organisation and could therefore serve as a common platform for bringing the Zo people together. State Art and Culture Minister Lalsawimunga graced the main event held at Vanapa Hall.

Speaking on the occasion, Lalsawimunga highlighted key issues and challenges that needed to be addressed as the Zo people continued to work towards their future.

He also spoke about the framework established by the United Nations for indigenous peoples and its relevance to the Zo community. ZORO president R. Sangkawia said the 2011 census put the population of Zo people at around 30 lakh across their inhabited areas, which together covered nearly 90,000 square kilometres.

He said the Zo people, despite living across regions dominated by different religious communities, shared a common identity and faith.

The ethnic Zo people (also synonymous with Mizo) are an indigenous ethnic community spread across India, Myanmar and Bangladesh. They have historically sought to overcome the territorial divisions created during British rule and reunite under a common political administration.

In India, the largest concentration of Zo people is found in Mizoram and Manipur.

In Myanmar, they are predominantly found in Chin state, while in Bangladesh they identify themselves as indigenous inhabitants of the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT).

The Zo ethnic communities are identified primarily under three nomenclatures - Mizo (particularly in Mizoram), Kuki (particularly in Manipur, Tripura and Nagaland), and Chin in Myanmar. ZORO was established in 1988 with the objective of bringing the Zo people together under a single administration. (PTI)

GIGABYTE launches it's first made in India gaming laptop

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Aug 8: GIGABYTE, a global leader in high-performance computing and gaming innovation, on Saturday announced the launch of its first Made in India (MII) gaming laptop, the GIGABYTE GAMING A16. As per an official statement, the GAMING A16 marks the brand's first locally manufactured gaming laptop in India and is designed to deliver exceptional gaming performance and AI-ready computing capabilities. "The inaugural Made in India lineup features the GIGABYTE GAMING A16, powered by AMD Ryzen™ processors. Designed to deliver exceptional gaming and AI-ready computing experiences, the laptop combines premium performance, cutting-edge AMD technologies, and GIGABYTE's globally recognized engineering excellence to meet the evolving needs of gamers, creators, students, and professionals alike," the statement added.

It further said that to manufacture the lineup locally, GIGABYTE has partnered with Dixon Technologies, one of India's leading electronics manufacturing companies.

"The collaboration combines GIGABYTE's global engineering and quality standards with Dixon's manufacturing capabilities, bringing premium gaming technology closer to Indian consumers while maintaining the uncompromising quality standards for which the brand is known worldwide," it added.

To mark this milestone, Sinclair Hsiao, vice president – Global Sales, GIGABYTE, visited India alongside senior leaders from the company's headquarters representing Product Management, Procurement, Materials Planning and Quality Assurance.

"The leadership team worked closely with Dixon Technologies to oversee every stage of the project, the outcome of a highly collaborative global effort, ensuring that the Made in India gaming laptop lineup meets GIGABYTE's rigorous global benchmarks for performance, reliability, and quality," he added.

India has emerged as one of the world's most dynamic PC and gaming markets, driven by a rapidly expanding community of gamers, creators, students, and technology enthusiasts. Recognizing this momentum, GIGABYTE continues to deepen its investment in the country by expanding its local manufacturing capabilities while ensuring every product reflects the innovation, precision, and performance that define the GIGABYTE brand globally.

E-AUCTION FOR THE CONTRACT OF PARKING OVER LUMDING DIVISION

E-Auction for the contract of Parking over Lumding Division for the period of 03 years. **Rate Unit:** Annual Licensing Fee. **Trips/Days:** 1096.

Auction Catalogue No. PARK-LMG-09-26		
SN	Lot No./category	Description
AA/1	PARKING - LMG - JGNR-MX-142-26-1 (Parking - Mixed)	Parking Lot for Two Wheelers, Three Wheelers and Four Wheelers at location Jogenranagar in Lumding Division
AA/2	PARKING - LMG - AGTL-MX-141-26-1 (Parking - Mixed)	Parking Lot for Two Wheelers, Three Wheelers and Four Wheelers at location Agartala in Lumding Division

Auction Start Date & Time: At 12.00 hrs. & **Closing at:** 12.40 hrs. of 24-08-2026. Initial Cooling off period is 30 minutes. Lot wise closing time can be viewed in e-Auction module of IREPS.

Note: Prospective bidders are requested to visit E-Auction Leasing Module on IREPS website www.ireps.gov.in for more details.

Divisional Railway Manager (C), Lumding

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File No.: ArSRLM-15020(12)/10/2026-ArSRLM-ASRLM, E-Comp No.329776/18337-41 Dated: Itanagar, 06th Aug 2026

For Publishing in Newspaper

Notice Inviting Expression of Interest (Eoi)

Arunachal State Rural Livelihoods Mission (ArSRLM), invites online Expressions of Interest (Eoi) from eligible and interested agencies for empanelment of Project Implementing Agencies (PIAs) under Captive Employer Category for Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushalya Yojana (DDU-GKY) 2.0 for FY 2025-28. Only those agencies possessing a valid and fresh Permanent Registration Number (PRN) under DDU-GKY 2.0 issued by the Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD) Government of India are eligible to apply.

Interested agencies may apply online through the DDU-GKY portal <https://kaushal.rural.gov.in>. The detailed EOI document containing eligibility criteria and other important instructions are available on the portal.

Last Date for Submission of Online Application 15.08.2026

Sangeeta Yirang APCS (AG)
CEO-cum-SMD
Arunachal State Rural Livelihoods Mission
Govt. of Arunachal Pradesh Itanagar

No.: ArSRLM-15020(12)/10/2026-ArSRLM-ASRLM, E-Comp No.329776 Dated: Itanagar, 06th Aug 2026

India ships 18 tonnes of Makhana to Australia

NEW DELHI, Aug 8: India has shipped 18 tonnes of Mithila makhana by sea route from Bihar to Australia, the commerce ministry said on Saturday.

The consignment, sourced from Makhana growers of Darbhanga district, is expected to strengthen the international presence of Bihar's flagship GI product while creating enhanced income opportunities for farmers through export-led market access.

Bihar accounts for nearly 85 per cent of India's Makhana production. To further strengthen the sector, a separate HS (harmonised system) Code for Makhana came into effect from July 2025. During 2025-26, India exported more than 7,000 metric tonnes of Makhana and value-added Makhana products to over 20 international destinations, including the USA, the Middle East and Africa. (PTI)

'We want to make it clear that the ASDC is not going to participate in the convention'

ASDC rules out participation in Aug 10 convention to form new regional party

HT Bureau

DIPHU, Aug 8: The Autonomous State Demand Committee (ASDC) has categorically ruled out any participation in the proposed political convention scheduled to be held here on August 10 for the formation of a new regional political outfit, dismissing rumours that the party would join the initiative.

The proposed convention, reportedly being spearheaded by leaders including Rabindra Rongpi and Angtong Ingti Kathar, aims to pave the way for the formation of a new regional political party.

Clarifying the party's position at a press conference held at the ASDC central committee office here on Friday, ASDC president Sonasing Terang said the party was registered with the Election Commission of India in 1989 and continues to exist as a regional political party.

He further said that there are rumours that the ASDC will participate in the political convention.

"We want to make it clear that



the ASDC is not going to participate in the convention. There is no need for anyone to be confused; party workers should remain committed to the principles and ideology of the ASDC," Terang said.

Former chief executive member (CEM) of the Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC) and ASDC general secretary Jotson Bey said some leaders had approached the party and invited it to participate in the proposed convention, but the offer was rejected.

He further said that some leaders came to discuss participation in the political convention aimed at giving birth to a new political party.

"Their suggestion was that the ASDC should be dissolved to pave the way for a new political party. How can a regional political party already registered with the Election Commission of India disown itself to form another party? We rejected the proposal as it goes against the party constitution and its principles," Bey added.

Highlighting the ASDC's political journey, Bey said that although the party's longstanding demand for an autonomous state had not yet been fulfilled, its mass movement had resulted in the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the State and Central governments in 1995.

According to Bey, the MoU subsequently resulted in the devolution of additional departments and powers to the KAAC, besides an increase in annual financial allocation from the State government, enabling the council to

undertake more development activities.

He also claimed that the powers enjoyed by the CEMs of the KAAC and the North Cachar Hills Autonomous Council (NCHAC) were equivalent to those of state cabinet ministers.

Bey identified Rabindra Rongpi as one of the principal figures behind the proposed political convention and appealed to the organisers to instead join hands with the ASDC and other like-minded organisations to launch a united movement to pressurise the government for fulfilment of the region's political demands.

On the reported participation of Sarsing Englung of Kheroni in West Karbi Anglong in the proposed convention, Bey said Englung had been expelled from the ASDC for allegedly acting against the party's principles.

"Englung was expelled from the party before the State Assembly election. A person who has been expelled from the party cannot claim to represent the ASDC," Bey added.

SRD teachers protest in Kokrajhar over SNA-SPARSH salary payment



HT Correspondent

KOKRAJHAR, Aug 8: SRD teachers staged a one-hour sit-in protest in Kokrajhar on Saturday, demanding the withdrawal of the Assam government's decision to disburse their salaries through the SNA-SPARSH module.

Following a call by the Assam State Primary Teachers' Association, primary teachers across the state held protests on Saturday. In Kokrajhar, the Kokrajhar, Parbatjhora and Gossaigaon Sub-Divisional Primary Teachers' Associations jointly organised the protest on the premises of the District Elementary Education Officer's office.

The protesting teachers displayed banners and placards and raised slogans demanding the withdrawal of the decision to pay the salaries of SRD-appointed teachers through the SNA-SPARSH module. They also raised slogans against the Assam government and Education Minister Ranaj Pegu and demanded that SRD teachers continue to receive their salaries through the treasury system as before.

Later, representatives of the three sub-divisional teachers' associations submitted a memorandum to the Chief Minister through the District Elementary Education Officer, highlighting their demands.

After the protest, Bikash Subedi, Assistant Secretary of the Assam State Primary Teachers' Association and Secretary of the BTC Regional Teachers' Association, said the Assam government had regularised the services of SRD teachers in 2024 and their salaries had since been disbursed through the respective district treasuries.

He said the government's decision on July 31 to pay SRD teachers through the SNA-SPARSH module was unfortunate and unacceptable. He urged the government to withdraw the decision and continue disbursing the teachers' salaries through the district treasury system.

Subedi warned that if the decision was not withdrawn by August 12, the teachers' association would intensify its agitation.

The protest was attended by Binod Chandra Roy, president of the Kokrajhar Sub-Divisional Primary Teachers' Association, Zakir Hussain, general secretary, and leaders of the Gossaigaon and Parbatjhora Sub-Divisional Teachers' Associations.

Application forms under Mukhyamantrir Nijut Moina Aasoni distributed



College of Teacher Education, Tezpur, Darrang College, Government Model College, Borsola-Doomdoo, Government Model Degree College, Balipara, LGB Girls' College, Lokanayak OME Kumar Das College, Rangapara College, Sonitpur Polytechnic, Tezpur College, Tezpur University and Tyagbir Hem Barua College.

The live streaming of the Central Programme, graced by the chief minister of Assam Himanta Biswa Sarma, was screened simultaneously across all ceremonial venues as well as in Higher Secondary Schools, Colleges and Universities across the district.

Following the live telecast, application forms under both schemes were ceremonially distributed to eligible students at the higher educational institutions. Application forms for eligible students of Higher Secondary and Higher Secondary Schools under the schemes will be distributed on 7 August 2026.

District Commissioner Ananda Kumar Das attended the ceremonial programme held at Darrang College. The programme was also attended by social worker Abhijit Kalita, who ceremonially distributed the application forms to eligible students.

MLA of Barchalla LAC Ritu Baran Samrah, MLA of Tezpur LAC Prithiraj Rava and MLA of Naduar LAC adma Hazarika attended the programmes at Sonitpur Polytechnic, Tezpur University and Tyagbir Hem Barua College respectively.

Bodo organisations protest alleged exclusion of language from Census portal



HT Correspondent

KOKRAJHAR, Aug 8: The Bodo Sahitya Sabha and the All Bodo Students' Union (ABSU) have strongly protested against the alleged exclusion of the Bodo language from the Census Self-Enumeration Portal during the ongoing first phase of self-enumeration across the country and Assam.

A joint press conference was held on Saturday at Bodofa House in Kokrajhar by the Bodo Sahitya Sabha and ABSU. The organisations alleged that the exclusion of Bodo from the self-

enumeration process at the national level was an insult to the dignity of the Bodo community.

Bodo Sahitya Sabha president Gopinath Boro Goyary and ABSU president Khauramdao Owari expressed concern over the issue. They said Bodo is a constitutionally recognised language included in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution and has also been recognised as an associate official language by the Assam government.

Despite this recognition, the two organisations expressed disappointment over the alleged exclusion of Bodo from the Census Self-Enu-

meration Portal.

They questioned why the Government of India had excluded Bodo from the self-enumeration process and alleged that the move amounted to discrimination against the Bodo language and community.

The Bodo Sahitya Sabha and ABSU urged the Government of India, the Assam government and the Registrar General of India (RGI) to take the matter seriously and resolve the issue at the earliest.

They warned that if the issue was not addressed, the Bodo Sahitya Sabha, along with ABSU and other allied organisations, would launch a series of democratic programmes to press for their demand.

The Bodo Sahitya Sabha also appealed to political and non-political organisations in Assam, including the Assam Sahitya Sabha and the All Assam Students' Union (AASU), to raise their voice on the issue in the interest of unity and coordination.

Bodo Sahitya Sabha president Gopinath Boro Goyary said the organisation would, if necessary, meet Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma and the Registrar General of India to submit its demands.

It may be mentioned that the Census Self-Enumeration Portal currently provides forms in 16 languages, including English, while Bodo has not been included, according to the organisations.

Diphu Municipal Board warns shopkeepers of ₹2,000 fine for littering

HT Bureau

DIPHU, Aug 8: The Diphu Municipal Board (DMB) has directed all shopkeepers and business establishments within its jurisdiction to strictly maintain cleanliness in and around their premises, warning of stiff penalties for violations of civic and sanitation rules.

In a notification issued on July 9, 2026, signed by the DMB Chairman, the municipal authority stated that certain shops and commercial establishments have failed to comply with waste management and cleanliness norms. This failure has resulted in the accumulation of garbage in public spaces, drains, and roads, posing health risks and adversely affecting overall hygiene in Diphu town.

Under the fresh directives, shopkeepers and business owners must keep areas in and around their shops clean at all times, preventing leftover food, plastic, or general waste from accumulating; install suitable covered dustbins inside premises for proper waste collection, and refrain from dumping waste at designated civic collection points before 9:00 PM.

The Board warned that throwing garbage on streets or at unauthorised locations will attract a spot fine of ₹2,000.

Continued failure to comply with sanitation guidelines will invite further penalties as prescribed under applicable civic rules.

NCC cadets launch public awareness campaign ahead of blood donation camp at Tezpur College

HT Correspondent

TEZPUR, Aug 8: Cadets of 5 Assam Battalion NCC, Tezpur, have launched a public awareness campaign across Tezpur town to encourage voluntary blood donation and highlight the importance of maintaining an adequate blood supply for the healthcare system.

As part of the campaign, NCC cadets from Tezpur College, Tezpur University, Darrang College, Government Boys and Girls HSS and All Saints Diocesan School have been interacting with members of the public at prominent locations across the town. They have been distributing awareness materials and explaining the importance of voluntary blood donation.

The cadets have highlighted the constant need for blood in hospitals for accident victims, patients undergoing major surgeries, mothers facing obstetric emergencies, children suffering from blood disorders such as thalassemia, cancer patients and others whose lives depend on the timely availability of safe blood.

The awareness drive is part of

the build-up to a blood donation camp being organised jointly by Tezpur Medical College & Hospital and 5 Assam Battalion NCC, Tezpur. The camp will be held on August 9, 2026, from 9 am onwards at Tezpur College.

During their interactions with the public, the cadets have also sought to dispel common misconceptions about blood donation, reassuring people that the process is safe and scientifically managed.

The initiative reflects the NCC's commitment to community service and nation-building. The organisers have appealed to healthy and eligible citizens of Tezpur and surrounding areas to come forward and donate blood at the camp.

They said donated blood can be separated into different components and used to help multiple patients, making each donation a valuable contribution towards saving lives.

The campaign has received an encouraging response from the public, with several citizens appreciating the initiative and expressing their willingness to participate in the blood donation camp.

Assam gets first female Station Officers in Fire and Emergency Services

HT Correspondent

DEMOW, Aug 8: Assam has appointed its first two female Station Officers in the Fire and Emergency Services, with Dikshita Baruah of Demow and Bhanupriya Gogoi of Namti Hudupar securing the posts through a recruitment process conducted by the Assam Public Service Commission (APSC).

Baruah, daughter of Probudh Baruah and Krishna Baruah, is a resident of Demow, while Gogoi hails from Namti Hudupar in Assam.

Speaking to this correspondent, Baruah said the APSC conducted the recruitment examination for the post of Station Officer in 2022. Of the nine vacancies advertised across the state, two were secured by female candidates — Baruah and Gogoi.

The final results of the recruitment were declared in 2023.

Baruah said no woman had previously been appointed as a Station Officer in the Assam Fire and Emergency Services, making their appointments a first for the department.

"Both of us are the first female officers to hold this prestigious position in the department," Baruah said.

NFR unloads 1,052 freight rakes across zone in July

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Aug 8: The Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR) handled 1,052 freight rakes at various goods sheds across its jurisdiction in July, maintaining a steady flow of essential and industrial commodities across the region. According to an NFR statement issued on Saturday, the freight consignments included foodgrains, food-grade commodities, fertilisers, sugar, coal, salt, tank wagons and other goods. Assam accounted for the largest share of the unloading during the month, with 596 rakes handled at different locations.

"The consignments comprised both essential and non-essential commodities and contributed to public distribution, industrial activities and meeting consumer demand," the railway said. Among other northeastern states, Tripura received 55 rakes, followed by Nagaland with 23, Manipur 18, Arunachal Pradesh and Mizoram eight each, and Meghalaya one.

Outside the Northeast, West Bengal recorded the unloading of 200 rakes, while Bihar accounted for 143 rakes, the statement added.

The NFR said the continued movement of freight consignments was important for maintaining supplies of essential commodities and supporting economic activities in the region.

'Such flags should not be discarded casually or in a manner that amounts to disrespect'

Cachar administration urges citizens to observe Flag Code during Har Ghar Tiranga campaign

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Aug 8: The Cachar district administration has appealed to citizens, institutions, public representatives, private establishments and organisations to participate in the nationwide 'Har Ghar Tiranga' campaign from August 9 to 15 while maintaining the dignity and sanctity of the National Flag.

In an official statement, issued by the Regional Office of Information and Public Relations, Barak Valley Zone, Silchar, the administration urged people to observe the provisions of the Flag Code of India, 2002, and other applicable laws governing the display and handling of the Tricolour.

The administration said the National Flag is not merely a symbol of national pride but represents the values, sacrifices and aspirations associated with the Republic of India.

Citizens have been advised to display the Tricolour with utmost respect and dignity and ensure that it remains in a position of honour.

According to the statement, when displayed horizontally, the saffron band of the National Flag should remain at the top, while in a vertical display, the saffron band should be on the right. The Flag should not



be displayed upside down, allowed to touch the ground or floor, or trail in water.

The administration has also cautioned against using the National Flag as clothing, part of a costume or uniform, or as a covering for statues, monuments, buildings or vehicles, except where specifically permitted under applicable provisions.

People have further been urged to ensure that the Tricolour is not damaged, defaced

or soiled and is not used for commercial purposes or in any manner that may diminish the respect due to it.

The administration also noted that polyester and machine-made flags are permissible under the amended provisions of the Flag Code and encouraged citizens to use flags conforming to the prescribed specifications.

It stressed the need for proper disposal of

worn-out or damaged National Flags after the campaign.

"Such flags should not be discarded casually or in a manner that amounts to disrespect. They should preferably be disposed of privately by burning or through another method consistent with their dignity," the statement added.

Cachar Deputy Commissioner Rahul Kumar Gupta appealed to residents to make the campaign a celebration of patriotism, unity and national pride while demonstrating responsible citizenship.

"The Tricolour belongs to every Indian. Displaying it with pride is an expression of our patriotism; safeguarding its dignity is our collective responsibility," Gupta said.

The administration has also urged people to encourage children and young people to understand the significance of the National Flag and the values it represents.

The release said the district administration was confident that the people of Cachar would participate in the campaign with enthusiasm, discipline and deep respect for the Tricolour, making 'Har Ghar Tiranga' a memorable expression of collective national pride.



By: Himangshu Ranjan Bhuyan

Borgeet occupies a distinctive place in the cultural history of Assam because its importance cannot be measured merely by its musical form. It represents an unusual meeting point of devotion, philosophy, literature, language and disciplined musical practice. Created within the religious movement led by Srimanta Sankardeva and Madhavdeva, Borgeet became much more than a collection of devotional songs. It helped give the Neo-Vaishnavite movement an emotional and artistic language through which complex philosophical ideas could reach ordinary people. This is perhaps the most important reason why Borgeet continues to command respect centuries after its creation. The word 'Borgeet' itself came into wider use later; the two Gurus generally referred to their compositions simply as songs. The later addition of 'Bor' was not a reference to length or physical size but an acknowledgement of their exceptional spiritual and artistic stature. This distinction is important because it explains why Borgeet cannot be treated as another category of Assamese folk music. Assam already possessed a rich tradition of folk songs dealing with love, marriage, agriculture, festivals, social relationships and everyday emotions. Borgeet entered this cultural landscape with a different purpose. Its central concern was the relationship between the individual soul and the Supreme Being. Its language, imagery and musical structure were therefore shaped by the requirements of devotion. Yet Borgeet did not become inaccessible religious literature. Its philosophical concerns were expressed

through song, making them capable of reaching people beyond the boundaries of scholarship. The strength of the tradition lies precisely in this combination of depth and accessibility. Borgeet asks the listener to contemplate impermanence, surrender, devotion and the limitations of worldly attachment, but it does so through melody rather than abstract argument. This gives the compositions a quality that ordinary philosophical discourse cannot easily achieve. The songs do not merely communicate religious ideas; they create an atmosphere in which those ideas can be experienced. Their continued presence in the Namghar and Satra traditions demonstrates that Borgeet has survived not simply as an inherited literary text but as a living practice. Its survival also reveals something significant about Assamese society. Cultural traditions remain alive when communities continue to find meaning in them, not merely when institutions preserve them in books and museums. Borgeet has survived because successive generations have continued to sing, hear and interpret it. Its heritage therefore belongs equally to literature, music, religion and collective memory.

The musical character of Borgeet further explains why it deserves to be regarded as a heritage beyond music. Its foundation rests on a disciplined system of raga and tala, but its actual performance tradition developed a distinct Assamese character. This is not simply a matter of borrowing musical forms from elsewhere. Sankardeva's extensive travels exposed him to different religious and cultural traditions across India, and elements of the wider Bhakti movement found a creative expression in Assam

through his work. The ragas associated with Borgeet have parallels with wider Indian classical traditions, yet their treatment within the Borgeet tradition possesses its own identity. This distinction is crucial. Cultural exchange does not necessarily weaken regional identity; it can strengthen it when borrowed elements are transformed through local experience. Borgeet demonstrates precisely such a process. Its musical grammar reflects a broader Indian heritage while its pronunciation, expression, performance practice and devotional atmosphere remain deeply connected with Assam. The role of khol, taal and the Gayans and Bayans in performance further strengthens this collective character. Borgeet is not simply a song performed by an individual singer for entertainment. Traditionally, it forms part of a larger ritual and communal environment in which music, movement, prayer and discipline come together. The association between particular ragas and different times of the day adds another dimension. It establishes a relationship between music, time, nature and spiritual consciousness. Such a system indicates that the creators of this tradition did not regard music merely as ornamentation. Music was itself a means of creating a particular state of mind. The restrained emotional character of Borgeet is equally significant. Unlike several other Vaishnavite literary traditions where romantic descriptions of Radha and Krishna occupy a central position, Borgeet largely avoids excessive emphasis on erotic or romantic imagery. Shanta, Dasya and Vatsalya sentiments receive greater importance. Sankardeva's compositions often express surrender, humility and awareness of

Borgeet: A heritage beyond music

worldly impermanence, while Madhavdeva's compositions bring warmth and intimacy through depictions associated with child Krishna. This disciplined treatment of emotion gives Borgeet its distinctive character. It does not seek popularity through sensational themes. Its appeal depends upon contemplation, melody and devotion. That quality has enabled it to retain dignity even when musical tastes have changed dramatically. At a time when much of contemporary music is increasingly shaped by speed, commercialisation and instant entertainment, Borgeet offers a contrasting idea of what music can accomplish: not merely stimulation, but reflection and inner discipline.

The linguistic character of Borgeet is another important part of its heritage. The use of Brajavali gave the compositions a literary and devotional identity different from ordinary spoken Assamese. It would be simplistic, however, to regard Brajavali merely as an artificial language created for ornamentation. Its use reflected the wider intellectual and religious environment of the period and the desire to connect Assamese Vaishnavism with the larger Bhakti movement of India. By combining Assamese elements with linguistic influences associated with eastern and northern Indian devotional traditions, Sankardeva and Madhavdeva created a literary medium capable of carrying a distinctive spiritual vocabulary. The language helped establish distance from everyday speech while remaining sufficiently intelligible within its cultural context. That balance between familiarity and sacred distinction contributed to the aesthetic appeal of Borgeet. The tradition also demonstrates how language can function as a cultural bridge. Assam was never an isolated cultural island. Its religious, literary and artistic traditions developed through interactions with wider Indian currents while retaining strong regional characteristics. Borgeet is one of the clearest examples of this process. It absorbed external influences without losing its As-

samese identity. That is an important lesson for contemporary debates on cultural preservation. Preservation should not mean freezing a tradition in an imagined untouched past. A living culture has always interacted with other cultures, adopted ideas and transformed them according to its own needs. What matters is the ability to retain identity while engaging with change. Borgeet provides an example of such cultural confidence. Its survival also raises a contemporary question: how should this heritage be transmitted to younger generations? It is not enough to praise Borgeet as an ancient achievement. If younger Assamese speakers en-

can assist this process through carefully documented recordings, digital archives, translations, notation, research publications and educational material. At the same time, digitisation cannot substitute for authentic performance traditions. Borgeet must continue to live through trained voices, traditional instruments, disciplined practice and the institutional structures that have preserved it for generations. The challenge is therefore not simply preservation but transmission.

Borgeet's greatest significance perhaps lies in the fact that it represents a complete cultural vision rather than a narrow religious form. Literature provides its

present generation. Cultural pride should not remain confined to speeches about Assam's glorious past. It must be reflected in serious research, accurate documentation, quality teaching and respectful performance. Borgeet should also be approached beyond narrow sectarian boundaries. Its philosophical and artistic significance belongs to the broader cultural history of Assam. Appreciating it does not require uniform religious belief; one can study its poetry, music, language and historical importance from literary, cultural or artistic perspectives as well. Such a wider approach can make Borgeet relevant to a larger section of society



counter it only during ceremonial occasions, its meaning may gradually become distant from everyday cultural consciousness. Schools, universities, cultural institutions, Sattriya organisations and the wider Assamese literary community have a responsibility to make its literary and musical dimensions understandable to new audiences. This does not require reducing its spiritual character or turning it into commercial entertainment. Rather, its history, language, philosophy, ragas and performance traditions should be taught in ways that encourage informed appreciation. Modern technology

words, philosophy gives it intellectual depth, music gives it emotional force, language gives it identity, and the Satra and Namghar traditions provide the institutional setting in which it continues to live. Removing any one of these dimensions weakens our understanding of the whole. This is why describing Borgeet simply as devotional music is inadequate. It is an expression of a particular Assamese understanding of devotion, discipline and cultural life. Its historical survival is itself remarkable. A substantial number of Sankardeva's compositions were reportedly lost in a fire, leaving only a portion to be preserved through oral transmission. The accepted corpus of Borgeet subsequently acquired a particularly sacred status within the Vaishnavite tradition. This history shows how fragile cultural heritage can be. Manuscripts can disappear, performance traditions can decline and languages can become unfamiliar. What survives does so because communities make conscious choices about what deserves to be remembered. In the case of Borgeet, generations of devotees, performers and scholars carried forward a tradition that might otherwise have suffered greater losses. The responsibility now belongs to the

while preserving its original character. Its future will depend on whether Assam can create that balance between reverence and critical understanding. Blind glorification is not enough, because heritage survives through knowledge rather than slogans. Nor is excessive modernisation desirable if it strips the tradition of its musical grammar and spiritual character. The appropriate path lies between preservation and meaningful engagement. Borgeet should be heard, studied, taught, documented and performed with the seriousness it deserves. Its greatest message may ultimately be that culture becomes durable when beauty is joined with thought and tradition is joined with lived experience. For Assam, therefore, Borgeet is not merely an inheritance from Sankardeva and Madhavdeva. It is a continuing cultural responsibility. Protecting that responsibility means protecting a significant part of Assam's intellectual memory, musical identity and spiritual imagination. The true measure of Borgeet's future will not be how frequently it is praised, but whether future generations can still understand why it was created, sing it with discipline and hear in its melodies something more enduring than music itself.



On World Tribal Day (9 August 2026)

Tribal Communities: The soul of the nation and the True Guardians of nature

By: Lalit Garg

World Tribal Day is far more than an international observance; it is a tribute to the timeless wisdom that has taught humanity the art of living in harmony with nature. India's tribal communities are not merely a demographic segment—they embody the nation's cultural memory, ecological balance, spiritual consciousness, and enduring spirit of freedom. If the vision of a Developed India, an Atmanirbhar Bharat (Self-Reliant India), and a Vishwaguru Bharat (India as a global guide) is to become a meaningful reality, Tribal communities must no longer be viewed as passive beneficiaries of development. They must be recognized as equal partners and natural leaders in shaping India's future. The country's development journey can never be considered complete until the communities that have safeguarded forests, rivers, biodiversity, and natural resources for millennia receive the dignity, opportunities, and recognition they rightfully deserve. Unlike the modern model of relentless exploitation, Tribal communities have always believed in conserving nature rather than consuming it. At a time when the world is grappling with climate change, ecological degradation, and the urgent need to preserve biodiversity, the Tribal philosophy of life offers humanity an alternative model of sustainable development rooted in coexistence, restraint, and respect for nature.

The Tribal people are truly the children of nature and the custodians of civilization. The saying, "Those who remain connected with nature are the true protectors of humanity," perfectly reflects their way of life. The term "Tribal" is not merely a social identity—it represents a profound philosophy of simplicity, collective living, balance, and harmonious coexistence. Nearly ninety percent of India's mineral wealth, medicinal plants, and rich biodiversity are located in regions inhabited by Tribal communities. Their lives are guided not by materialistic ambitions but by deep human values and environmental consciousness. Though they have often been described as "forest dwellers," their lifestyle offers invaluable lessons to an increasingly urbanized world that is losing its connection with nature. If modern development is measured only through multinational investments, glittering skylines,

and smart cities, then Tribal communities have become the forgotten victims of that very model. Unregulated mining, indiscriminate exploitation of natural resources, forced land acquisition, religious conversions, and cultural disruption have not only weakened their economic foundations but have also threatened their identity, languages, and ancient traditions.

Today, many Tribal communities continue to struggle with poverty, indebtedness, illiteracy, migration, unemployment, inadequate healthcare, and social marginalization. Ironically, the very process of so-called "development" has often alienated those who have contributed the most to preserving India's natural wealth. Recognizing this historical imbalance, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has, in recent years, placed tribal welfare and empowerment among the nation's key priorities. Declaring the birth anniversary of Bhagwan Birsa Munda as Janjatiya Gaurav Divas (Tribal Pride Day), expanding education, healthcare, road connectivity, digital infrastructure, skill development initiatives in tribal regions, strengthening Eklavya Model Residential Schools, and launching several tribal development initiatives reflect a significant shift in India's developmental approach. These efforts represent not merely an expansion of govern-

ment schemes but a broader transformation in national thinking, placing Tribal communities closer to the center of India's development narrative. However, government initiatives alone cannot bring lasting transformation. Sustainable progress requires visionary individuals who inspire social awakening through service, values, education, and community organization.

One such inspiring personality is the renowned Jain saint of Gujarat, Dr. Gani Rajendra Vijayji, whose remarkable work over the past two to three decades has evolved into a powerful movement for Tribal empowerment. He never viewed Tribal communities as objects of charity but as a tremendous force for nation-building. Under his guidance, extensive initiatives in education, healthcare, de-addiction, women's empowerment, self-reliance, cultural preservation, and moral awakening have transformed the lives of thousands of tribal families. I consider it my privilege to have been associated with this mission from its very beginning. The Sukhi Parivar Foundation has emerged as a significant platform for this social renaissance. The massive Tribal Convention organized in 2007 remains a landmark event in India's social history. The presence of lakhs of enthusiastic, disciplined, and confident tribal participants demon-

strated that with genuine leadership and trust, Tribal communities possess immense potential to become one of the nation's greatest strengths.

The participation of the then Chief Minister of Gujarat, and now Prime Minister, Narendra Modi, elevated the significance of the historic gathering. His warmth, appreciation, and emotional connection with the enormous gathering reflected not merely a political presence but a sincere commitment to tribal empowerment. From the same platform, he entrusted the Sukhi Parivar Foundation with the responsibility of operating an Eklavya Model Residential School and announced several landmark initiatives for tribal development, including the ambitious Vandanhu Kalyan Yojana, with an allocation of nearly ₹15,000 crore. More than a venue for policy announcements, the conference became a defining moment in shaping India's future approach to tribal development. The visionary leadership, social commitment, and dedicated work of Dr. Gani Rajendra Vijayji gave this movement extraordinary momentum. The conference fostered a new bridge of trust between tribal communities and governance through the shared values of service, cultural preservation, and social harmony. Many observers regard it as one of the significant social milestones that helped strengthen public confidence in Narendra Modi's future national leadership by demonstrating how constructive collaboration between spiritual leadership and public governance could positively transform society.

Today, discussions about a Developed India cannot remain confined to economic growth alone. If India truly aspires to become a global moral leader, equal importance must be given to cultural heritage, ecological sustainability, and social harmony. In this larger vision, Tribal communities represent one of India's greatest national assets. They possess generations of knowledge about biodiversity, medicinal plants, sustainable resource management, community living, traditional arts, and above all, a deeply humane philosophy rooted in mutual respect and coexistence. In an era defined by artificial intelligence, digital technology, drones, biotechnology, and global innovation, the challenge is not to modernize Tribal communities by replacing their identity, but by empowering them while preserving it. Digitization of Tribal languages,

documentation of traditional knowledge, global marketing of forest produce, promotion of local entrepreneurship, digital education, and telemedicine can seamlessly connect Tribal communities with the opportunities of the twenty-first century without compromising their cultural heritage.

History reminds us that the earliest sparks of India's freedom struggle emerged from its forests and hills. Great Tribal heroes such as Birsa Munda, Sidhu and Kanhu, Rani Durgavati, Komaram Bheem, Govind Guru, and countless others sacrificed their lives for the nation's freedom. Sadly, mainstream history has not accorded them the recognition they truly deserve. Today, the need is not merely to remember their sacrifices but to integrate their ideals of courage, justice, self-respect, and environmental stewardship into the national character. World Tribal Peoples' Day reminds us that genuine development cannot be measured solely by skyscrapers, smart cities, or industrial investments. True development is founded upon human dignity, cultural respect, social justice, environmental sustainability, and harmonious coexistence with nature. Tribal communities embody all these ideals in their daily lives.

As India advances confidently through the Amrit Kaal towards becoming a developed nation, it must never forget that the soul of India resides not only in its metropolitan skylines but equally in its forests, mountains, and Tribal villages, where nature continues to celebrate culture in its purest form. The future of a Developed India will be truly bright only when Tribal communities are recognized not merely as beneficiaries of welfare schemes but as active participants in leadership, policymaking, innovation, and nation-building. On this World Tribal Peoples' Day, let us renew our collective resolve to preserve Tribal cultures, protect their languages, safeguard their constitutional rights, provide national platforms for their talents, and learn from their timeless philosophy of balanced living. By embracing their wisdom, India can offer the world a development model that is sustainable, inclusive, compassionate, and deeply humane. That alone will define the true identity of a Developed India—and provide the strongest foundation for India to emerge as a genuine Vishwaguru, inspiring the world through harmony, sustainability, and shared human values.



Falcon 9 rocket crash on Moon exposes gaps in International Space Law

By: Ajey Lele

On August 5, 2026, at approximately 1205 IST, a massive crater has probably been created on the lunar surface for the first time in history due to a non-natural impact. The impact was caused by the spent second stage of a SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket launched in January 2025, which is known to have eventually collided with the Moon.

The spent rocket stage was travelling through space at an estimated speed of 8,690 km/h and is believed to have struck the lunar surface at an approximate velocity of Mach 7, about seven times the speed of sound. Impact is expected to have happened near the Moon's Einstein Crater with a force equivalent to roughly three tonnes of trinitrotoluene (TNT). This unique event offers an opportunity to examine its scientific, technological, legal and policy implications from multiple perspectives.

Scientists and space agencies like NASA have confirmed that a discarded SpaceX Falcon 9 upper-stage rocket has already crashed into the Moon as estimated. This inference is based on conclusions drawn by tracking data and undertaking trajectory calculations. However, definitive visual photo confirmation of the fresh crater is yet come essentially none of the satellites revolving around the Moon were favourably placed at the time of impact to take photographs.

As per NASA, the impact could have created a crater about 60 ft (18 metres) wide and 12ft (four metres) deep and must have thrown raised dust and rock outward as ejecta, possibly reaching 100 km above the lunar surface. Some scientists estimate the diameter of crater to be about 30 meters.

Since no spacecraft orbiting the Moon was in a position to directly observe this impact, scientists have had to rely on post-impact analysis to confirm the event. South Korea's Danuri lunar orbiter came closest to observing the event, having passed near the impact site shortly before the collision.

However, its mission team has indicated that any images or observations will only be released after detailed analysis by the relevant research institutes. NASA's Lunar Reconnaissance Orbiter (LRO) is expected to photograph the impact site during its subsequent orbital

passes, providing the most definitive evidence of the newly created crater.

Some ground-based observatories in the US, where it was still nighttime during the impact, were well positioned to detect the brief impact flash and the resulting dust plume. Nevertheless, processing and validating these observations requires considerable time and astronomers would be required to carefully analyse and verify the data before releasing confirmed results.

The SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket was launched in January 2025 as part of a joint United States (US) and Japan mission carrying two lunar landers and scientific payloads for the Moon. One lander was Firefly Aerospace's Blue Ghost and the other lander called Resilience was built by the Tokyo-based company ispace. Amongst them Blue Ghost landed successfully and carried out the mission successfully, but Resilience had crashed during its touchdown attempt.

Falcon 9, is a reusable two-stage launch vehicle designed to transport satellites, scientific payloads, and astronauts into Earth orbit and beyond. The first stage of this rocket is designed to return to Earth for reuse and its upper stage typically remains in space after completing its mission.

In this particular case, the upper stage failed to escape the Earth-Moon system and instead entered an uncontrolled orbit.

As per the experts, what has happened is essentially a mixture of solar activity and gravity forces, which led to putting this second stage of the rocket (which is now a space debris) on a path towards the Moon.

Sometime back independent astronomers tracking publicly available orbital data had first identified that the approximately 4,000 kg spent stage was on an accidental collision course with the Moon. Subsequent analysis by NASA's Centre for Near-Earth Object Studies (CNEOS) confirmed that the discarded rocket stage would eventually impact the lunar surface, resulting in the first documented instance of a human-made launch vehicle unintentionally creating a sizeable impact crater on the Moon.

It may take some more time to undertake the exact impact analysis of this event. Mainly, this unplanned event could provide valuable lessons for future



missions to the Moon. At the same time, it raises important questions that need to be addressed from the perspectives of safety and global space (and Moon) governance.

For scientists and mission planners, this event provides an important opportunity to deepen the understanding of the Moon. It also allows them to improve on the processes related to the design and conduct of safer and more reliable lunar missions in the future. Studying the impact and its aftermath will improve knowledge of lunar impact processes and could come to know more about the lunar surface properties.

Comparing the observations with pre-impact predictions will improve understanding of the Moon's surface properties and the mechanics of high-velocity impacts. It would allow the scientists to determine the crater's size, morphology and ejecta pattern.

Ejecta behaviour is about how solid, liquid or gaseous material is expelled, moves, and settles after being violently displaced by an impact. Such impact could happen owing to any explosion, volcanic eruption or rocket landing. The behaviour of ejecta on the Moon differs significantly from that on Earth because of the Moon's low gravity (only about one-sixth that of Earth) and the absence of a substantial atmosphere. Essentially over Moon it could be viewed as a near-vacuum environment.

It is expected that during Falcon-9 second stage impact on the Moon leading to creator formation would have ejected huge amount off rock fragments and

lunar soil (regolith) to higher altitudes and in absence of gravity would have led to the formation of an extensive ejecta blanket. Understanding ejecta behaviour is of critical importance for future robotic and human missions to the Moon. The knowledge gained from this blast will support a wide range of activities, from the selection of future lunar landing sites to the development of resilient infrastructure for sustained human presence on the Moon.

From a legal perspective, the accidental impact of a commercial rocket stage on the Moon exposes significant gaps in the existing framework of international space law. The principal treaties governing outer space include the Outer Space Treaty (1967) and the Liability Convention (1972). These treaties were negotiated at a time when space activities were conducted almost exclusively by governments, leaving many questions relating to commercial actors unresolved.

Under Article VI of the Outer Space Treaty, states bear international responsibility for the activities of their non-governmental entities, meaning that the US remains internationally responsible for the actions of SpaceX. While the Liability Convention establishes a mechanism for compensation, it applies differently depending on the nature of the damage.

Absolute liability applies to damage on Earth or to aircraft caused during the satellite launch or any related accident afterwards. Whereas damage occurring in outer space or on the Moon is subject to obtaining the actual proof of negligence.

In present case, the impact on the Moon has not led to any damage of any perma-

nent infrastructure or economic activity at the impact site. This means there is no 'injured party' capable of pursuing compensation. The incident also highlights broader regulatory deficiencies, including the absence of binding international rules governing the protection of the lunar environment, the preservation of scientifically and historically significant sites, and the disposal of spacecraft operating in cislunar space; a region extending beyond geostationary orbit (approximately 36,000 km above the Earth) toward the Moon.

Actually, there is a Moon Agreement which has been adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1979. However, many countries have refrained from joining this arrangement. While on other hand, there is a US-led mechanism called the Artemis Accords (2020), which is a non-binding framework establishing principles for civil lunar exploration. This is industry friendly document outside the United Nations consensus processes and clearly undermines traditional multilateral global governance and raises big question about (illegal) space mining and commercial exploitation of mineral deposits on other planets.

Against this backdrop, as the commercial and governmental activities on the Moon continue to expand, the recent SpaceX rocket stage crash on the lunar surface underscore the need to modernise international legal frameworks to address the realities of sustained human and commercial operations beyond Earth orbit.

It is also important to highlight the experiences of one of the Indian missions

over here. ISRO's Moon Impact Probe (MIP) was a 34 kg cube shaped scientific module that was deliberately drooped on the lunar surface from an approximate height of 100 km above the lunar surface on November 14, 2008 as part of the Chandrayaan-1 mission.

During its descent, the probe transmitted data from three onboard instruments. This experiment led to an important finding related to presence of water molecules in the tenuous lunar exosphere, providing one of the earliest direct confirmations of the presence of water on the Moon.

It needs to be noted that unlike accidental impacts from uncontrolled spacecraft or rocket stages, the MIP was a carefully planned and internationally accepted scientific experiment conducted under established planetary exploration norms.

Broadly, the Falcon 9 impact represents more than an isolated mission anomaly; it offers valuable scientific insights while highlighting emerging challenges for future lunar exploration. The event provides an opportunity to validate various technologies and practices associated with undertaking the lunar missions. As plans for sustained lunar exploration gather momentum, the foundations of a future lunar economy are steadily emerging. However, this incident demonstrates that such growth must be accompanied by robust checks and balances, including effective regulatory frameworks, safety standards, debris mitigation measures and international oversight. (Courtesy: The Wire)

How cybersecurity is redefining and reshaping India's young minds rapidly?

By: Dr T Senthil Siva Subramanian

Cyber domain is considered to be one of the world's prominent, interesting, inspiring, innovative and challenging coordinate systems in the current era of 5th / 6th industrial revolutions, where time, speed, safety, security and scalability coordinates play a vital role in the protection systems. A nation's security is determined and diagnosed by the strength and capability of the Cyber Walls established by Cybersecurity, which India has attained peak milestones and supremacy over the past 12 years.

The launch of Digital India program and policy frameworks like DPDP-Digital Personal and Data Protection Act, 2023 has boosted and pushed the Cybersecurity domain in our nation beyond limitless boundaries and created wide spectrum of skilling opportunities for young minds.

The best classical examples of India's high volume of data safeguarded are the successful UPI (Unified Payment Interface) supported by National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) across the nation and global countries and Aadhaar under the UIDAI, Unique Identification Authority of India. These are the distinguished pillars of Digital Public Infrastructure, which forms the DNA and strong testament for our country's success pathway in Cybersecurity.

India has adopted the best practices of protecting preserved the data and took proactive action against the cybercrimes through an effective and strong comprehensive cyber mechanisms

Cybersecurity - NCERT Guided safety for Youth

India has been forefront in keeping cybersecurity of the young children as highest priority. In view of this it took several initiatives in the form of awareness program, inducting safety aspects in the academic curriculum to protect the school going children to be aware of cyber-attacks. This enables the safe use of digital education platforms. One of the key initiatives outlined under the DPDP act, 2023 for the social platforms which has to comply with taking the parental consent before admitting the personal data of children while using digital platforms. This ensures safety and security of the young students.

Central Institute of Educational Technology, a constituent of NCERT has facilitated young students and teachers in publishing several digital hand-outs like Cyber world for both students and faculty members, Cyber Safety guidelines for students, parents, teachers that will allows the safe usage of digital platforms.

India's Cyberspace — A Viksit Case study
Ministry of Home affairs, Government of India has been playing a key role in launching several robust initiatives that bring ruggedness and rationalise the access of data through cyber protection walls which can hardly be intruded by cyber attackers.

India's cyber system is sailing through strong



protective covering strategies like recently the launch of Cyber Crime Mitigation Centre which is First of its kind that caters to the need of different stakeholders in fintech, telecom service providers, IT domain which includes our emerging data centre, supercomputing infrastructures, and most importantly this could also be extended to the growing and emerging India's Space, Nuclear and Defence sectors.

Cybersecurity - An emerging domain to develop young talents

Cybersecurity — India's powerhouse has sown the seed in both academics and research thereby building a strong skilling opportunities for today's youth. The opportunities could be in space, nuclear, defence, agriculture, smart cities, automotive, manufacturing, Indian railways like the recent bullet train, quantum technologies like quantum cryptography and recently the domain of digital forensics.

Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO): The technology cluster wings of DRDO like SAG-Scientific Analysis Group, PXE-Proof and Experimental Evaluation, CAIR-Centre for Artificial Intelligence & Robotics are working on advanced security solutions-blockchain security, application security, cryptography like Cyber Defence & Cryptanalysis Automation, Development of PUF chips, security

documentation and masks for production, Blockchain for Defence Applications - Access Control & Trust Management

CERT-In: Indian Computer Emergency Response Team under Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology plays a significant role in creating cyber awareness program through hand-holding practices for different stakeholders.

India's one of the premier organisations like Society for Electronic Transaction and Security under the flagship initiative of Office of the Principal Scientific Advisor, Government of India, located in Chennai, Tamil Nadu, is working on network security. The organisation has a thought process of providing cybersecurity coverage and robust safeguard mechanism for Indian MSMEs, which play a vital role in India's GDP. The organisation has been creating several value-added opportunities for students and faculty members in the field of quantum cryptography, IoT security, critical infrastructure and industrial security, privacy and data protection, cryptography and computing. The organisation provides summer internship, and short-term program in different field of cybersecurity for students.

C-DOT (Centre of Development of Telematics): A Research and Development organisation wing of national and global importance working on optical technology, post quantum cryptogra-

phy, security solutions. It offers diversified internship in the field of security solutions for students.

The recent introduction of Bachelor of Technology program in Cybersecurity by Indian Institute of Technology, IIT Kanpur and Indian Institute of Technology, IIT Madras has brought a paradigm shift in the admission process which has unique selection mechanisms against the traditional selection process especially through the hackathons, solving real-time problems by applying critical thinking. This has empowered and enabled young talents to explore the ample opportunities available in the field of Cybersecurity. The program is first of its kind that the students will learn both theory and lab sessions initially for first 02 years followed by the hands-on experiential learning through internship at the Government organisation to work on real-world problem statements.

CSiHub, IIT Kanpur a premier centre of excellence for cybersecurity established under the National Mission on Cyber-physical systems and a technology innovation hub at IIT Kanpur is one of the prominent pillars that offers cutting edge training in the field of cybersecurity in collaboration with institutions across India.

Futureskills Prime under Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology, Government of India in collaboration with Centre for Development of Advanced Computing (C-DAC) and NASSCOM has been offering cutting-edge cybersecurity, block chain, machine learning and various 5th / 6th industrial revolution program. The C-DAC, Noida has been pioneering in offering Big Data program for students and faculty members through a cost-effective mechanism thereby offer training in high computing software at virtual labs mode. Additionally, the C-DAC enable the students to work on real-time projects on various interesting problem statements as well.

Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology, Government of India has launched the Digital India internship especially in different verticals like cybersecurity, web development, big data and many more.

Virtual Labs, an initiative under National Mission on Education through ICT - NMEICT, Ministry of Education, Government of India has developed Virtual lab experiments for cyber security, network security, database security. This allows students and faculty members to remotely access the laboratory experiments 24x7 anywhere and anytime.

DSCL: Data Security Council of India in collaboration with industry giants like Rockwell Automation has taken great step forward in addressing the security solution through establishing new-age OT cybersecurity laboratory to meet the growing demands of digital public infrastructure integrated with intelligent supply chain security, smart manufacturing.

Smart factories: The growing smart / intelligent factories in India like Havels Lloyd new manufacturing plant in Rajasthan, bajaj silent fac-

tory, Pune, Colgate-Palmolive, Gujarat, L'Oréal, Pune utilize 5th/6th industrial revolution technologies like Machine-to-Machine (M-2-M), Human-Machine interface-collaborative robots (Cobots), automated guided vehicles, telepresence robots, advanced rapid prototyping technologies, industrial robots. These future generation factories in India has created ample internship and job opportunities for young minds to explore the possibilities to work on enhancing the security solutions of the manufacturing processes. International giants like Boeing have launched Boeing India Engineering & Technology Center (BIETC) campus in Bengaluru, Karnataka, is aiming to provide cybersecurity solutions for designing future-generation aircraft.

The availability of above skilling avenues and experiential learning platforms showcases the creation of unique-of-its kind opportunities for young talents in India to explore in defence, space, nuclear and industrial setups.

India's future outlook on Cyber Viksit

India is pushing the automotive segment to become more cyber aware by building a safe connecting systems like vehicle-to-vehicle and vehicle-to-infrastructure. Cybersecurity is increasingly becoming an essential element, especially in the automotive segment, with a special focus on built-in tamper-proof systems in both existing and new-generation vehicles. India's Viksit Vision is to build self-reliant ADAS, Advanced Driver Assistance System enabling safety components in the automotive vehicles.

India has laid the foundation for the cybersecurity by establishing prestigious Universities like Rashtriya Raksha University located in Gandhinagar, National Forensic Sciences University, Gujarat and Uttar Pradesh State Institute of Forensic Science, which has been playing a key role in providing Undergraduate, postgraduate, Advanced Diploma and Self-paced learning MOOC courses in the field of Windows Malware and cyberattacks. These stand as a pathway for Aatmanirbhar Bharat Cybersecurity.

In addition to the above the premier centre of excellence, digital experience zones, cybercrime mitigation centres, India Cyber Crime Coordination Centre, CFCFRMS- Citizen Financial Cyber Fraud Reporting and Management Systems, Centre for Development of Advanced Computing (C-DAC- Cyber Forensic section), Trivandrum, NIELIT has pushed India to the next level of future generation skilling platforms. Our nation has created a handful of training platforms like the MOOC 'CyTrain' offers state-of-the-art experiential learning for police/judicial officers across state/central and UTs.

Cybersecurity is not the technology for India. It adds value to our nation's robust vision policies by building cyber infrastructure to address the cyber framework, thereby achieve the Mission Mantra of Cyber Viksit, which will act as a fulcrum for our nation's security. (Courtesy: The Pioneer)

‘They started the war, but its end was never with them’

Iran’s leaders think they have Trump cornered, but their strategy carries great risks

WASHINGTON, Aug 8: The Strait of Hormuz is, by some accounts, named for a Zoroastrian deity destined to emerge victorious after a 9,000-year standoff with an adversary.

Iran’s leaders feel their own victory is at hand and won’t require the same epic patience.

They are betting that military pressure will ultimately force the United States to accept their control over the crucial waterway for global energy — and that time is on their side.

They know about the diminishing stockpiles of key US weapons such as advanced missile interceptors. They know the war is deeply unpopular with Americans. They know that as long as the strait is largely closed, the price of gas and other goods will stay high ahead of US congressional elections in November.

They know that trying to open it by force would be costly and may require American ground troops.



They know their Houthi allies in Yemen could widen the war and disrupt another major trade route.

By that logic, US President Donald Trump has no choice but to capitulate.

But Iran’s strategy carries risks.

Trump points to strikes that have decimated Iran’s top leadership, navy and air force. He alternates between threatening escalation and saying talks are going well. Iran’s own economy has been battered, in

part because of a US blockade. Iranians rose up in mass protests just months ago and could do so again.

And Iran’s leaders need only look to how Trump’s “short-term excursion” to the Middle East has bogged down to be reminded that wars rarely turn out as expected.

Iran says it is close to reaching a deal with Oman to manage the strait, which runs between the two countries. But it would be conditioned on the US lifting its block-

ade, so even if there are no direct negotiations — as Iran says — Trump would have to approve.

It’s unclear whether the deal would allow Iran to charge fees. But it would formalize its control over what had been an open international waterway before the war, one that carried a fifth of the world’s traded oil and gas.

Abdolreza Davari, an analyst who once advised former President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, said Iran’s effective control of the strait has given it leverage with the US and regional countries that can help guarantee its security.

“More than revenue from the strait, Iran wants to confirm its management and sovereignty over the strait,” he said by phone from Tehran.

Formal control over even part of the strait would be a clear win for Iran and a loss for the US, which has yet to accomplish some of its various and shifting goals in the war. (AP)

Canada deported record 3,323 Indians in first half of 2026, data shows

OTTAWA, Aug 8: Canada deported 3,323 Indian nationals in the first six months of 2026, putting the figure on track to surpass the last six years’ record, according to official data.

According to data from the Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA), the number of Indians removed from the North American country in the first half of this year is already nearly 88 per cent of the 3,779 removed during the whole of 2025, which was itself a record high.

The data comes at a time when Canada has been tightening its immigration system and reducing the number of temporary residents, including international students and temporary foreign workers.

Canada routinely deports Indian nationals primarily due to non-compliance with immigration rules, rejected asylum or refugee claims, visa overstays and visa fraud scams.

Indians emerged as the largest nationality among those removed from Canada in the first half of 2026, overtaking Mexicans with 1,573 deportations.



Mexico topped Canada’s list of nationalities for deportations in each of the last five years, with India ranking second during that period. India had last topped the list in 2020, when 1,424 Indian nationals were deported from Canada.

In 2021, as many as 603 Indians were deported from Canada, followed by 786 in 2022. In 2023, the number rose to 1,132, and further to 2,004 in 2024, according to CBSA data.

The CBSA maintains a separate database on reasons for deportation, but that does not have a country-wise breakdown.

Indians also accounted for the

largest group in Canada’s “removal in progress inventory”, with 7,669 people awaiting removal, CBSA data showed.

Canada enforces three broad categories of removal orders.

Under a departure order, a person is required to leave Canada voluntarily within 30 days, failing which it automatically becomes a deportation order. An exclusion order bars a person from returning to Canada for a specified period, generally between one and five years. A deportation order permanently bars re-entry unless the person obtains written authorisation from the Canadian government. (AP)

US role in West Asia could be reduced because of Pak-Saudi-Turkiye defence pact: Experts



LAHORE, Aug 8: The trilateral defence pact signed by Pakistan, Türkiye and Saudi Arabia could significantly reduce the United States’ strategic role in West Asia, according to some Pakistan-based defence analysts.

The three countries on Friday signed a joint defence agreement under which an attack against one of them will be treated as an attack against all of them, amid increas-

ing security concerns in the wake of escalating tensions in West Asia.

Defence analyst Abdullah Hameed Gul, son of a former ISI chief, said the pact has emerged against the backdrop of growing doubts in the Gulf region about the United States’ ability to provide security guarantees to regional allies.

“The US had 27 military bases in the Gulf countries, and 17 of them were destroyed by Iran dur-

ing the recent US-Iran war. This led people in the region to question whether the Americans could actually protect them. That created the need for such an agreement,” Gul said. With this pact, said Gul, America’s “role in the region has been minimised — or is effectively over.”

“Qatar and Kuwait will soon also join similar agreements with Pakistan,” said Gul, adding that Gulf countries had realised that Israel, rather than Iran, posed a greater security challenge to them.

Foreign affairs expert Muhammad Mehdi said the pact has altered perceptions of Pakistan’s position in the international arena.

“Pakistan’s standing in the world has changed. The world now sees Pakistan as having a major role to play in the Middle East and Central Asia. With Türkiye joining the three-nation arrangement, Pakistan will also be viewed differently in Europe,” he said. (AP)

Russian attacks kill 4 in Kyiv and surrounding region as air defences fall short

KYIV, Aug 8: Four people, including a child, were killed in Russian attacks on the Ukrainian capital, Kyiv, and the surrounding region, local officials said Saturday, as Ukraine hit another oil refinery in Russia.

Residents endure regular drone and missile barrages that Kyiv’s depleted air defences are struggling to counter amid Moscow’s 4-year-old full-scale invasion, while repeated Ukrainian strikes on oil facilities have caused fuel shortages and rattled Russians.

Two grandparents and their 3-year-old grandson were killed after multiple Russian drones destroyed their home in the Brovary district of Kyiv region, northeast of the Ukrainian capital, Kyiv, early Saturday.

Three other members of the same family and a neighbour who came to their aid were hospitalised, local authorities said. The attack reduced the house to rubble



and wrecked outbuildings and cars.

In the city of Kyiv, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said at least one other person died in a “strike involving six ballistic missiles against civilian infrastructure.”

In its daily report, Ukraine’s air force said it had downed or intercepted 135 of 151 drones launched by Russia overnight. The attack also involved six ballistic missiles and other guided

missiles. Russia has relentlessly pounded civilian areas of Ukraine, even though Moscow insists its forces target only military facilities.

Moscow is exploiting Ukraine’s critical shortage of interceptors for the US-made Patriot systems, the sole air defence weapon in its arsenal able to shoot down ballistic missiles.

Zelenskyy has pleaded with other countries, especially the US, to send more of the ammunition

made scarcer by the Iran war. Failing that, he wants to make Patriot ammunition in Ukraine or win permission from Elon Musk to use his Starlink satellite communications system to guide strikes inside Russia that can hit its missile launchers.

Following the latest attacks, Zelenskyy appealed on X for more sanctions to “prevent the production of these ballistic missiles,” along with “anti-ballistic capabilities” and “interceptor missiles.”

Ukraine’s air defences shot down around 5,300 drones and missiles last month, Ukraine’s defence ministry said Friday, just under 60 per cent of the around 9,000 attack drones and missiles Russia fired in the same period.

In Russia, five people were wounded when a fire broke out at the Ilsky Oil Refinery in the southern Krasnodar region due to debris from a falling drone, local officials said. (AP)

Todd Blanche narrowly confirmed as Trump’s attorney general in overnight vote

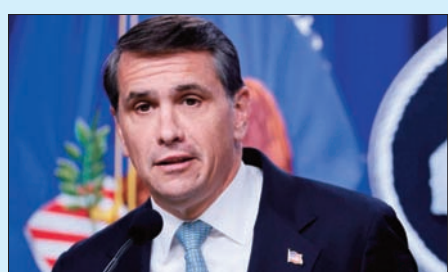
WASHINGTON, Aug 8: The Senate confirmed Todd Blanche as attorney general in a vote early Saturday morning, cementing President Donald Trump’s former personal attorney’s command of a Justice Department the Republican president has sought to bend to his will.

The Republican-led Senate voted 50-49 to make Blanche the second confirmed attorney general since Trump returned to the White House last year with a stated desire to use the law enforcement agency to investigate his political enemies. While Blanche has already been leading the department in an acting capacity, his confirmation could free him to pursue the Trump administration’s agenda even more aggressively.

The vote followed a tumultuous confirmation fight that exposed deep concerns — from some Republicans as well as Democrats — about installing Trump’s close ally atop a Justice Department that historically prided itself on its independence from the White House.

In the end, Blanche was confirmed by the narrowest of margins, opposed by two Republicans — Sens Susan Collins of Maine and Lisa Murkowski of Alaska.

The path to confirmation for Blanche was unusually rocky, due in large part to Republican concerns about a controversial settlement



of Trump’s lawsuit against the Internal Revenue Service.

Under pressure, Blanche publicly promised in writing that the department would abandon Trump’s proposed USD 1.8 billion compensation fund for the president’s allies, including those who attacked the Capitol on January 6, 2021, and rein in another piece of the settlement designed to shield Trump and his family from IRS tax audits.

His appeals were enough to win over Republican Sen Bill Cassidy, the decisive vote who threw his support behind Blanche Friday morning. Cassidy said no other nominee may be able to run the department better under Trump and suggested Blanche’s role as Trump’s former criminal defense lawyer can make him more effective at pushing back on the president’s demands.

“This is not a referendum on President Trump. It is a decision regarding Mr. Blanche in very specific circumstances,” said Cassidy, who lost his primary this year to a Trump-backed challenger.

Sen Dick Durbin of Illinois, the top Democrat on the Senate Judiciary Committee, said confirming Blanche would be a “serious mistake.” He begged his colleagues not to be on the “wrong side” of history.

“If there is ever a moment in history when we need an Attorney General above reproach, who is clearly dedicated to ending corruption, even at the highest level of our government, it’s right now,” Durbin said.

Blanche’s loyalty to Trump left senators skeptical</h2>The vote capped off a bruising confirmation fight, with Blanche’s loyalty to Trump at the center of the stalemate.

Blanche was elevated to the top Justice Department post in an acting capacity after Trump fired Pam Bondi in April. Blanche moved swiftly to advance the president’s interests, accelerating investigations into Trump’s perceived foes and announcing the settlement that created the USD 1.8 billion “Anti-Weaponization Fund” to compensate people who feel mistreated by the criminal justice system and provided Trump and family members with immunity from tax audits. (AP)

Trump admin moves ahead with efforts to fire Federal Reserve governor Lisa Cook

WASHINGTON, Aug 7: The Trump administration is moving ahead with its efforts to fire Federal Reserve governor Lisa Cook, two months after the Supreme Court allowed her to retain her job while she fights the president’s effort to terminate her over mortgage fraud allegations that she has denied.

The justices, in a 5-4 decision in June, said Cook, who was nominated to the Fed’s Board of Governors by President Joe Biden, could remain in her post at least as long as her lawsuit challenging her firing goes on. The Trump administration is appealing a lower-court ruling in Cook’s favor.

Supreme Court Chief Justice John Roberts wrote in a footnote in his opinion that nothing forbids President Donald Trump from “trying again” to fire Cook, provided she is given proper notice and a chance to contest it. Trump indicated, after the opinion, that he would do just that, vowing to “take appropriate action immediately.”

In a letter this week obtained by The Associated Press, White

House aide Dan Scavino told Cook that Trump was “considering removing you from your position” but cited the Supreme Court’s requirement of proper notice in giving her until August 26 to challenge it.

The attempt to fire Cook is rooted in a criminal referral made last August by Bill Pulte, the director of the Federal Housing Finance Agency, that accused her of committing mortgage fraud by declaring two different homes — one in Ann Arbor, Michigan, and one in Atlanta — as “primary residence”.

Homebuyers can get lower mortgage rates or smaller down payments on their primary homes compared to second or vacation homes. Cook has aggressively defended herself against the allegations, saying the president had attempted to oust her “on a manufactured pretext because I refused to bow to political pressure and continued to set interest rates based only on what would best serve the American people”.

Her lawyer, Abbe Lowell, argued in a November letter that

Cook has mostly lived in the Ann Arbor property since first purchasing it in 2005. As a result, it was accurate for her to refer to it as her “primary residence” in a June 2021 application to refinance its mortgage, the letter said.

A month later, she purchased a condominium in Atlanta and, in a July 2021 document, also referred to it as her “primary residence”.

Lowell said it was an “isolated notation” that did not reflect an intent to defraud. An earlier mortgage application to the same lender in May 2021 had referred to the Atlanta condo as a “vacation home,” Lowell said. Cook also referred to it as a second home in federal filings during her confirmation process to become a Fed governor. The latest White House letter largely reshapes the year-old allegations.

“These allegations are as baseless now as they were a year ago when President Trump tried to remove Governor Cook and interfere with the independence of the Federal Reserve,” Lowell said in a statement. (AP)

Student kills at least 7 people at high school, home outside Bangkok, officials say

NONTHABURI (THAILAND), Aug 8: A student opened fire at a high school outside Bangkok on Friday, killing at least five people and wounding more than 20, according to authorities, who said he also appeared to have killed his two grandparents at the family home earlier in the morning.

The 14-year-old shooter took his own life at the school, officials said.

Five school staff members, including teachers and administrators, died in the shooting around 10 am at Debsirin Nonthaburi School in Nonthaburi province northwest of Bangkok, Deputy Interior Minister Polapee Suwunchuee said at the scene.

The boy also killed his grandparents at the home he shared with them prior to the school shooting, Polapee said.

Bangyai Hospital, about 5 kilometres from the school, said 23 people were wounded, of whom 10 were in critical condition, with most suffering gunshot wounds. Earlier reports gave conflicting

casualty numbers.

A witness said students hid inside a classroom while they heard gunshots from another building before police officers knocked on the door and cleared a way for them to leave the building.

Amporn Niamfuang, who owns a restaurant 50 metres from the school, said there was the sound of a single gunshot and then a pause.

“And then there were multiple continuous shots,” Amporn said, recalling the narrow road outside the restaurant filling with fleeing students. “Students were running scared and pouring onto the street. Young girls were holding each other’s hands and crying. I went inside to hide.”

Prime Minister Anutin Charnvirakul, speaking after touring the school, confirmed reports that the shooter was 14 and had killed himself. He said the student had shown signs of stress connected to school.

The gun, described by police as small



and compact, was legally registered to his grandfather, he said.

About an hour after the shooting, people stood outside comforting one another as police and first responders walked

around the co-educational state school, which has an enrolment of about 3,000 students ranging from 12 to 18 years old.

All classes will be suspended between August 10 and 14 and school staff have

been instructed to work from home during that time, the school said.

After the shooting, police went to his home and found both grandparents dead of apparent gunshot wounds, regional police Commander Wattana Yeejeen said.

The student appeared to have shot them before attending school as normal. He waited until classes started and began shooting inside his classroom before walking out and firing more shots, Police spokesperson Trairong Piwpan said.

The boy fired more than 20 shots and police found he still had 30 rounds after shooting himself, he said.

Several family members, including his uncle and sisters of the grandfather who were at the family home while police investigated, said he usually kept to himself and was a good student.

The family members said they were unaware of any troubles he faced at home or school.

Thailand has one of the highest rates of gun ownership in Asia, second only to

Pakistan and far surpassing its Southeast Asian neighbours.

Data collected in 2017 by the groups Small Arms Survey and GunPolicy.org in their last extensive international study found civilian gun ownership in Thailand was about 15.1 guns per 100 people, compared with less than one per 100 in neighbouring Malaysia.

Thailand had 3.49 deaths by firearms per 100,000 people, according to 2023 statistics published by World Population Review. That puts it well behind parts of Latin America and the Caribbean, but relatively high in Asia. Only the Philippines is higher in Southeast Asia.

In February, a 17-year-old stole a gun from police and opened fire at a public high school in southern Thailand, briefly taking people hostage in a two-hour attack that killed one person and injured two others.

A 14-year-old boy was accused of a 2023 shooting at a major Bangkok shopping mall. (AP)

'The government assured us of a quick decision to resolve the issues raised by us'

Jharkhand govt holds talks with various outfits amid paper leak protests, fails to break deadlock

RANCHI, Aug 8: The Jharkhand government on Saturday held talks with various outfits amid the massive agitation over the alleged paper leaks in recruitment exams, but failed to break the deadlock as the protesting aspirants decided that their stir would continue until all their demands are met.

A five-member panel of the government, which included state ministers, first met the faction of protesters led by JLM leader Devendra Nath Mahto, whose fast over the issue entered its seventh day. They then separately met delegations of the Congress-backed NSUI, ACS and JCM.

On Friday night, the government had held similar talks with a delegation of the JPSC/JSSC Reforms Manch.

"Demands of protesting aspirants are genuine; we will place these before Chief Minister Hemant Soren," state minister Sanjay Prasad Yadav, who is a member of the panel set up by the government, said after the back-to-back



meetings.

The ruling JMM's students' wing Jharkhand Chhatra Morcha (JCM) placed five demands before the government panel, including the cancellation of the 14th Jharkhand PSC Civil Services Examination. The NSUI placed six demands before the government, including a CID probe into all JPSC and JSSC examinations under doubt within 90 days and the setting up of Jharkhand Testing Agency (JTA) on the lines of the

National Testing Agency, its spokesperson Sanjiv Shah said.

Adivasi Chatra Sangh leader Karik Oraon said, "We demanded inclusion of tribal and regional languages as qualifying papers in the recruitment examinations, besides cancellation of the tests in which irregularities were found."

The government panel's first meeting was with Mahto's group, JPSC JSSC Candidates' Forum, and it lasted around two hours.

"The government assured us of a quick decision to resolve the issues raised by us. However, our protests will continue until all our demands, including cancellation of the 14th JPSC exam, are met," a leader of the forum said.

State minister Dipika Pandey Singh said the talks were held in a positive atmosphere and recruitment discrepancies explained by students will be resolved soon.

Higher and Technical Education Minister Sudivya Kumar said the government has issued an email ID, jpssc.jssc.feedback@gmail.com, seeking suggestions from aspirants on reforming the recruitment processes.

The government undertook the parleys as the protest over the paper leaks entered its 15th day.

"We have been demanding immediate cancellation of the 14th Jharkhand PSC Civil Services Examination, and all exams conducted by that agency," Mahto told PTI. (PTI)

'Kanwar Yatra example of social unity': Adityanath showers flower petals on Kanwariyas in Meerut

MEERUT, Aug 8: Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Saturday welcomed Kanwariyas in Meerut by showering them with flower petals, and said the devotees of Lord Shiva who are walking hundreds of kilometres present an example of social and national unity.

Standing on a specially erected platform, Adityanath, along with BJP leaders, showered rose petals on the passing Kanwariyas near the Dulhera police outpost in the Modipuram area.

Speaking to reporters later, Adityanath said, "The devotees of Lord Shiva walking hundreds of kilometres are an example of social and national unity. Rising above the barriers of caste and regional boundaries, their devotion displays immense enthusiasm."

"I believe that by Shivratri (August 11), nearly 4.5 crore devotees of Lord Shiva will perform 'jalabhishek' at the sacred Shiv temples along the Kanwar route from Ghaziabad to Haridwar."

The chief minister said that not just in Meerut, there is also a massive crowd at the Shiv Chowk in Muzaffarnagar.



"Just now I had the opportunity to shower flower petals upon the Kanwariyas in Meerut, accompanied by the honorable public representatives of the city."

From the Baba Agharnath temple here to the Baba Dudheshwar Nath temple in Ghaziabad, lakhs of devotees of Lord Shiva from Uttar Pradesh, Delhi, Haryana, Rajasthan, Punjab and Himachal Pradesh are participating in the Kanwar Yatra," he said, adding that flower petals would be showered on the pilgrims over the next two days.

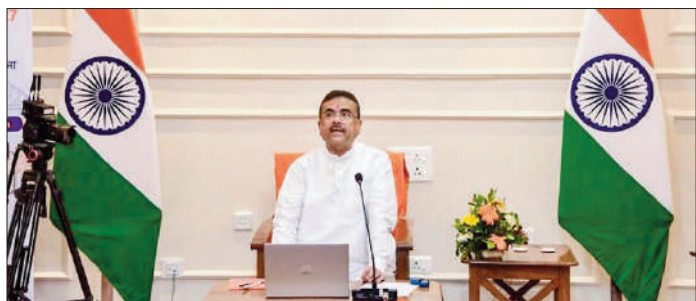
In a Hindi post on X, Adityanath said, "Flower petals showered upon devotees and Kanwar pilgrims in Meerut during the holy

month of Shraavan."

On Saturday, a large number of Kanwariyas turned the major Kanwar routes in this region into a sea of saffron, as the air reverberated with chants of 'Bol Bam' and 'Har-Har Mahadev'. Earlier, the chief minister's aircraft landed at the Hindon airport; from there, he travelled to Meerut on a helicopter, conducting an aerial survey of the Kanwar Yatra route over Ghaziabad and Baghpat on the way.

Extensive security arrangements were made by the police and the administration for the chief minister's programme, with additional forces deployed along the key Kanwar routes and in the vicinity of the event venue in Meerut. (PTI)

2 Murshidabad MPs meet CM over loudspeaker removal from mosques, allege 'Muslims being targeted'



KOLKATA, Aug 8: Two MPs from Murshidabad district met West Bengal Chief Minister Suvenudh Adhikari on Saturday and raised concern over the removal of loudspeakers from mosques.

Speaking to reporters after the meeting at the state secretariat Nabanna, MP Abu Taher Khan alleged Muslims were being targeted in the state.

"Removing loudspeakers from mosques is extremely unfortunate. Muslims are being targeted in Bengal. Please stop this. We should be allowed to offer our prayers," said Khan, accompanied by Jangipur MP Khalilur Rehman.

"The court's directions must cer-

tainly be followed, but removing loudspeakers from mosques is not right. We have requested the government to look into the matter," he added.

Khan, who was re-elected from Murshidabad on a TMC ticket in 2024, alleged that the state police were "overenthusiastic" over the removal of loudspeakers from mosques.

"We have appealed to the CM to stop the removal of loudspeakers from mosques," he said.

The two lawmakers also sought Adhikari's intervention over a large number of cases pending at the SIR tribunals in the Muslim-majority district. (PTI)

AAP govt has imposed 'undeclared censorship' on media in Punjab: BJP

NEW DELHI, Aug 8: The BJP on Saturday launched a sharp attack on the ruling Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) in Punjab, alleging the Bhagwant Mann government is busy managing headlines and cover-ups when the state is reeling under a "deteriorating" law and order situation, drug menace and "rampant" crime.

Addressing a press conference at the BJP headquarters here, party national general secretary Tarun Chugh also raised the issue of paper leaks in Punjab and accused the AAP government of protecting those involved.

"People in Punjab are living in the atmosphere of fear because the gangsters and mafia are ruling the state under the protection of the AAP government," Chugh alleged.

Chugh alleged that the Bhagwant Mann government has imposed "undeclared censorship" on media in Punjab. The chief minister's office is deciding what should be published in print media and aired on the news channels, the BJP leader charged.

On the issue of drug menace, the



BJP leader took on Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann, alleging that his government's state-wide 'Yudh Nashian Virudh' (war against drugs) campaign is nothing but "a sham and a drama aimed at grabbing headlines".

"How can a leader go out and ask people to shun substance abuse when he himself is doing 'nasha'?" the BJP Rajya Sabha MP asked, demanding that Mann should undergo a "dope test" before exhorting others to quit drugs.

There was no immediate response from AAP to the BJP's allegations.

Chugh alleged that the AAP dispensation in Punjab has become a "big example" of misuse of government machinery.

"Those meant to be protectors have turned into predators, devouring Punjab's economy, peace and assets. Exam papers are being leaked. Law and order has crumbled. Extortion and torture centres are rampant," the BJP leader alleged. (PTI)

Delhi LG seeks market traders' feedback on encroachments, traffic, parking issues

NEW DELHI, Aug 8: Delhi Lieutenant Governor Taranjit Singh Sandhu has sought feedback from representatives of major markets on issues including unauthorised encroachments, traffic congestion and parking management, while stressing the need to keep commercial hubs accessible and orderly.

Sandhu interacted with representatives of market and traders' associations from several prominent markets, including Sarojini Nagar, Lajpat Nagar, Connaught Place, Mori Gate and Chandni Chowk, where issues affecting traders, shoppers and daily business were discussed.

During the meeting, the lieutenant governor also sought first-hand feedback on the effectiveness of 'Jan Sunwai' being conducted by the Delhi Police at police stations across the city.

He said direct interaction with traders and residents was important to assess whether public grievances relating to safety, traffic, encroachments and other local issues were being addressed promptly.

The representatives raised concerns regarding encroachments, traffic snarls and parking arrangements in busy commercial areas, according to a statement issued by the lieutenant governor's office.

Sandhu emphasised the need for strict enforcement against violations while also calling for better urban planning and civic arrangements to address recurring problems in the markets.

He said that Delhi's major commercial hubs play an important role in the city's economy and stressed that their accessibility, cleanliness, pedestrian spaces and overall appeal should be maintained. The lieutenant governor also underlined the importance of walkability, smooth traffic movement and disciplined parking, saying that preserving the character and vibrancy of Delhi's markets was part of the broader vision of a developed Delhi.

He called for continued engagement between market associations and authorities to find practical solutions to the problems faced by traders and consumers. (PTI)

'Can't always doubt foreign funding': Sule opposes FCRA bill in present form, seeks JPC scrutiny



MUMBAI, Aug 8: NCP (SP) working president Supriya Sule on Saturday opposed the FCRA bill in its present form, saying one cannot always view foreign funding with suspicion, and urged the Centre to either withdraw it or refer it to a Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC).

Sule told the media here that all political parties should be given an

opportunity to discuss the contentious Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Amendment Bill, 2026, amid reports that it will be taken up for discussion and passage in Parliament next week.

She also compared foreign funding to money sent home by Indians living abroad. The Baramati MP cautioned the government against

rushing it through Parliament. "We reject and disagree with the present form of the FCRA bill. If the government is not ready to withdraw the bill, then it should send it to a JPC. In a strong democracy, merely opposing something is not enough; we also have to sit together and discuss it," she said.

According to Sule, one can't always doubt foreign funding, and it should not automatically be viewed with suspicion, maintaining that action should be taken if funds are linked to illegal activities like drug trafficking or terrorism.

Sule said foreign funds could also support legitimate medical and educational work in India. She also drew parallels between foreign funding and money sent home by Indians living abroad.

"There are organisations such as the Gates Foundation and USAID that have been doing good work for many years. Why should we look at every foreign-funded organisation with a bad eye?" she said. (PTI)

Akhilesh pretending to well-wisher of Brahmins: Deputy CM Pathak

LUCKNOW, Aug 8: Uttar Pradesh Deputy Chief Minister Brajesh Pathak on Saturday slammed SP president Akhilesh Yadav for "pretending to be a well-wisher" of the Brahmin community and said ideas should be countered with ideas, not with "bitterness and baseless accusations".

"Today, you are pretending to be a well-wisher of the Brahmin community, but the words that came from your mouth -- asking a journalist his caste and saying, 'Mishra Ji, have some shame' -- still pierce the heart of the community like a spear," Pathak said in a post on X.

He was referring to an earlier interaction between Yadav and a reporter, a video of which circulated widely online.

The deputy chief minister's remarks come days after Samajwadi Party chief Yadav reached out to the Brahmin community, asserting that 'PDA' includes Pandits, and also accused the BJP government in Uttar Pradesh of targeting opposition workers, Brahmins, and religious leaders, including Shankaracharya.

Addressing a Brahmin Sammelan organised at the SP state headquarters in Lucknow on the birth anniversary of late socialist leader Janeshwar Mishra on Wednesday, Yadav alleged that



the state government denied permission to hold the event at its proposed venue, Janeshwar Mishra Park in Gomti Nagar, which forced the party to hold it at their office premises instead.

Deputy CM Pathak hit back at the SP leader, targeting him over "dynastic politics".

"Dr Ram Manohar Lohia was one of the staunchest opponents of dynastic politics. He used to say that one who clings to the family becomes alienated from society. He also believed that when the family becomes the most powerful entity, society weakens," Pathak posted in Hindi.

"Those who engage in politics in Lohia's name today are the very ones who have abandoned his ideals. Had Lohia been alive today,

he would have been the first to rigorously question those who make dynastic politics the basis of their political activity. He would never have accepted a brand of politics aimed at securing power for one's family," Pathak said.

The BJP leader added that the upliftment of society is not achieved by bringing one family to power, but by ensuring equal opportunities, justice, and respect for every section of society.

"As far as my public life is concerned, it is the public that evaluates it. I have always accorded the highest priority to the organisation, the Constitution, and public service. Personal allegations, abusive language, and malicious propaganda can neither alter the truth nor the public's trust," he said.

Pathak also said that the politics of the Bharatiya Janata Party is based on the principles of "Nation First, Organisation Foremost, and Antyodaya" (upliftment of the last person), whereas the fundamental objective of dynastic politics is to confine power to a single family.

"The public fully understands this distinction. Differences of opinion are natural in a democracy. However, ideas should be countered with ideas and facts with facts, rather than with confusion, bitterness, and baseless allegations," he said. (PTI)

Mayawati slams SP for including Pandits in PDA, says party changing colours like 'chameleon'

LUCKNOW, Aug 8: Bahujan Samaj Party chief Mayawati criticised the Samajwadi Party's affinity for Brahmins on Saturday, stating that the party constantly changes its colours like a chameleon for its narrow casteist politics and electoral self-interest.

In a post on X in Hindi, Mayawati said the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) is an Ambedkarite party dedicated to the welfare of all sections of society, implementing the policy and principle of 'Sarvajana Hitaya and Sarvajana Sukhaya'.

"The four governments the BSP formed in UP were also run on this very basis, whereas the Samajwadi Party (SP) keeps changing colours like a chameleon, openly and evidently, for the sake of its narrow casteist politics and electoral self-interest," she said. The BSP chief questioned the SP's 'PDA' formula.

"In the PDA -- which stands for Pichhda (Backwards), Dalit, and Alpasankhyak (Minority) -- promoted by the SP, the first 'P' originally stood for Pichhda. However, rattled by seeing the upper-caste community, particularly Brahmins, aligning with the BSP and the party fielding candidates from

that section, the SP has now redefined the 'P' for 'Pandit'. This proves their political deception," Mayawati said.

She said such political deceit might bring temporary, short-term benefit to a specific individual, but it can never lead to the welfare of society as a whole.

"Therefore, people from all sections of society must remain alert to the deceptive SP and its narrow, casteist politics. This is both the need of the hour and in the interest of society at large," the BSP chief said.

Mayawati's X post assumes significance because the SP president Akhilesh Yadav reached out to the Brahmin community on Wednesday, asserting that 'PDA' includes Pandits. He also accused the BJP government in Uttar Pradesh of targeting opposition workers, Brahmins, and religious leaders, including Shankaracharya.

"People keep talking about PDA and inventing new definitions for it. Ever since they lost to PDA, they have been trying to redefine it. But they have forgotten that the 'PD' in PDA also stands for Pandit. The more pain (peeda) they inflict, the stronger PDA will become," (PTI)

'My father and grandfather made flags during the freedom movement' Sadar Bazar decks up in tricolour as Delhi's flag-making legacy gears up for Independence Day

NEW DELHI, Aug 8: There is barely enough room to walk. Rolls of cloth lean against walls, sewing machines hum without pause and freshly stitched tricolours are packed into bundles, ready for dispatch across the country. At the centre of it all is Bharat Handloom Cloth House, one of Delhi's oldest flag-making shops in Sadar Bazar.

Here, a family that has been making the national flag for generations is working through a rush ahead of the 80th Independence Day.

Established in 1962, the year of the India-China war, this tiny shop has supplied flags to government officials, households and institutions through some of the country's defining moments, including the war.

The family's association with flag-making, however, goes back even further, to Ghaffar's grandfather and father, who made flags during the freedom movement.

Abdul Ghaffar later carried that



legacy forward, spending more than six decades making flags. Fondly known as the "Flag Uncle" after Prime Minister Narendra Modi mentioned him during the Har Ghar Tiranga campaign, Ghaffar died on December 29, 2025, at the age of 81.

Today, his younger brother Abdul Malik and the family's third generation

continue the work from the same shop. For Malik, the business is less a trade than a family legacy which has passed through generations.

"My father and grandfather made flags during the freedom movement. It was their small contribution to the country. Khadi cloth used to come from Bengal then, and they would prepare the

flags here. After Independence, the work continued and in 1962, our family established Bharat Handloom Cloth House here in Sadar Bazar," Malik said.

"That was also the time of the China war. We sold flags to government officials and households when there was a need for patriotism. Since then, we have seen the demand for the tricolour rise whenever the country has gone through an important moment," he said.

Malik said his elder brother Ghaffar joined the family business when he was around 15-16 years old and spent more than six decades making the national flag.

"He started working with our father when he was very young. For more than 60 years, he remained associated with this work. Today, our children are learning the same craft," Malik said.

The workshop has witnessed changing demand for the tricolour through some of the country's defining moments, he said. (PTI)

Ashmita Chaliha reaches maiden BWF World Tour final at Korea Masters

ASAN (SOUTH KOREA), Aug 8: Ashmita Chaliha continued her impressive run at the Korea Masters Super 300, overcoming teenage compatriot Rakshitha Ramraj 21-13 16-21 21-13 to reach her maiden BWF World Tour singles final, here on Saturday.

The 26-year-old Indian, who returned to competition in May after a three-month layoff due to a medial meniscus tear in her right knee, has enjoyed a strong comeback on the BWF Tour, including a semifinal appearance at the Macau Open.

World Ranked 50 Ashmita, who trains under Park Tae-sang at the National center of excellence, Guwahati, will now battle China's Han Qianxi for the title in the summit clash.

The World Ranked 35 Qian Xi, seeded fourth, battled past 22-20, 18-21, 21-14 in a one-hour five-minute battle in the other semifinal.

Ashmita's run also marks back-to-back BWF World Tour finals for Indians, with Tanvi Sharma having won the Taipei Open last Sunday.

Indian shuttlers have now made finals across several events this season, with Ayush Shetty at the Asia Championships, Lakshya Sen at the All England, Devika Sihag at the Thailand Masters, Kidambi Srikanth at the US Open, Tanvi at the Taipei Open, PV Sindhu at the Japan Open, Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty at



the Singapore Open, and now Ashmita at the Korea Masters.

Ashmita, who had stunned top seed and world No. 22 Hina Akechi of Japan in the quarterfinals, came out aggressively and quickly moved from 2-2 to 6-2 in the opening game.

She then reeled off five straight points to establish a 13-6 lead before closing the game out 21-13.

Rakshitha, who had upset third seed and compatriot Tanvi Sharma in the quarterfinals after coming from a game down, responded strongly.

The 19-year-old Pullela Gopichand Academy trainee raced to a 4-

1 lead. Ashmita struggled to control the lifts and went long twice, besides finding the net, to fall 3-8 behind.

Another lift going long gave Rakshitha a five-point advantage.

A brutal smash at 6-12 down from the left-handed Ashmita was the first convincing shot from the Indian in the second game.

Another straight smash, a return of serve going into the net and a long lift from Rakshitha meant Ashmita narrowed the gap to 12-13.

Despite the Assamese shuttler finding a second wind, Rakshitha managed to keep her nose ahead at 17-13 after hurrying her opponent.

At 18-14, Rakshitha sealed another tight rally with a cross-court smash.

Ashmita responded with her own jumping cross-court smash. A weak lift was dispatched with disdain by Rakshitha to grab four game points, and she converted immediately to take the match to the decider.

Back on her winning side, Ashmita made a dominant start, surging to a 9-1 lead quickly with three smashes. Rakshitha also made a few unforced errors.

She made a net error next as Ashmita took an overwhelming 11-3 advantage at the final interval.

The change of sides once again brought a change of fortune for Rakshitha as she started dominating the rallies and Ashmita became error-prone.

The Hyderabad-based Indian narrowed the gap to 7-12 before Ashmita again found her bearings to move to 15-7.

Rakshitha seemed a little flustered as she tried too much, often leading to errors such as a reverse drop going into the net or missing the backline.

Each error only compounded her agony as Ashmita moved to 18-9.

A smash earned Ashmita nine match points.

She squandered two before Rakshitha sprayed one wide to hand her the win in 48 minutes. (PTI)

BCCI secretary Saikia to visit COE to take stock of injury crisis, to meet with VVS Laxman



NEW DELHI, Aug 8: Concerned with the spate of injuries that has rocked Indian team of late, BCCI secretary Devajit Saikia will be meeting Head Of Cricket VVS Laxman on Sunday to take a stock of the rehabilitation management programme at the Centre of Excellence (COE).

India will be missing the services of Jasprit Bumrah (knee swelling), B Sai Sudharsan (left foot big toe), Harshit Rana (hamstring), Nitish Kumar Reddy (hamstring) and Washington Sundar (quadriceps) due to various injuries. Akash Deep (lower back stress fracture) has been out for the longest time since Bengal's Ranji Trophy semi-final defeat.

Adding to that, white ball experts Hardik Pandya (quadriceps), Varun Chakravarthy (hamstring) and Prince Yadav (hamstring) are also at the Centre of Excellence where the Sports Science team is overworked without a figure head since the resignation of Nitin Patel in early 2025. Right now the challenge is to get all these players back on the park.

Sudharsan and Bumrah were enlisted in the squad subject to fitness but COE's team of experts decided to exercise caution looking at the bigger picture.

"Yes, secretary Saikia will be in Bengaluru to take a stock of the situation along with VVS Laxman. There is a meeting scheduled be-

tween the two. It is not known whether head coach of national team Gautam Gambhir or chairman of selectors Ajit Agarkar will join online or not. It will be interesting if both Saikia and Laxman can front up and answer a few media queries with so many conjectures," a BCCI source in the know told PTI on conditions of anonymity.

There are also rumours that COE and the current selection committee has always not been in sync with regards to the injury management timelines and some of the players being released before they ticked all the boxes.

The issue of Harshit Rana reaching England after being distinctly overweight has not gone down well with the selection committee. Similarly, the selection committee was initially made to believe that Bumrah and Sudarshan will be at least available for one of the two Test matches.

However once the dust settled down, it was found that Bumrah, post impact injury is finding that there is water retention in his knee which requires more time to heal.

In case of Sudharsan, he was battling 75 minutes a day for some time but the pain still persists on his big toe.

Nitish Reddy tried to increase his pace by a good 7 to 8 kmph and that put a toll on his hamstring and quadriceps. (PTI)

Sai Sudharsan ruled out of Sri Lanka Test series



NEW DELHI, Aug 8: Talented top order batter B Sai Sudharsan was on Saturday ruled out of the two-Test series against Sri Lanka after failing to recover from a big toe injury sustained during the India A tour of the island nation last month.

Sudharsan, who scored two tons in two 'A' Test matches, was hit during the second game against Sri Lanka 'A' and since then has been in rehabilitation at the Centre of Excellence in Bengaluru.

"Sai Sudharsan has been ruled out of the upcoming Test series against Sri Lanka. Doctors have advised more time for biological healing. Significant improvement, but not yet sufficient for a safe return to Test cricket," according to the update from the Sports Science team which is monitoring the rehabilitation of the player.

The Sports Science team has informed the management and national selection committee.

The medical cum fitness advice for Sudharsan reads: "Rehabilitation, strength & conditioning, and cricket-specific loads should be increased gradually and under close monitoring. The cautious approach is aimed at reducing the risk of recurrence or further complications and protecting long-term performance." In his absence, Devdutt Padikkal, who scored a century in the practice game, will be the new number three batter. (PTI)

ESFI announces Indian contingents for BRICS Esports Championship and GEG26

NEW DELHI, Aug 8: The Esports Federation of India (ESFI) on Saturday announced the final contingents for the BRICS Esports Championship 2026 to be held in Moscow, and the Global Esports Games (GEG26) in Los Angeles following the conclusion of the National Esports Championships (NESC).

The National Esports Championships, which concluded on August 5, served as India's official selection tournament, bringing together the country's top esports athletes to earn the right to represent the nation at two of the world's premier multi-title esports events.

For the BRICS Esports Championship, scheduled to be held from September 9-15 at the VK Play Arena in Moscow, organised by the Russian Esports Federation, India will field a two-member TEKKEN 8 contingent.

National champion Arsalan Wani secured his berth after emerging victorious at the NESC BRICS qualifier and will join Gurashish Singh, who was the winner of NESC 2026 (Asian Games) as part



of the Team India. Shubham finished as the first runner-up, while Ashish claimed the second runner-up position in the qualifier.

Meanwhile, India finalised its roster for the Global Esports Games 2026 in Los Angeles, organised by the Global Esports Federation (GEF). Team India will compete across multiple esports titles spanning PC, console, and mobile platforms, further strengthening the country's presence on the global esports stage.

ports stage.

"The BRICS Esports Championship and the Global Esports Games are invaluable opportunities for our athletes as we build towards the Asian Games. Competing against some of the world's best players reflects the growing depth of India's esports talent while giving our athletes the exposure needed to sharpen their skills, perform under pressure and raise their competitive standards. (PTI)

Ashish Yadav opens India's medal account with javelin silver at World U20 Championships

EUGENE (USA), Aug 8: Ashish Yadav won a silver in the men's javelin throw event to open India's medal account, while national senior record holder Pooja Singh qualified for the women's high jump final at the World Athletics U20 Championships here.

Yadav's third round throw of 74.09m fetched him the silver medal while T Dharanidharan, the other Indian in the fray in the men's javelin throw finals on Friday, finished sixth with 72.35m.

Yadav's effort was 40cm short of his personal best of 74.49m, which he had recorded during the Indian Open Throws Competition in Patiala in March.

The 19-year-old Yadav became the second Indian, after two-time Olympic medallist Neeraj Chopra, to win a silver in the event.

Chopra had won gold and set the still-stand-

ing world junior record of 86.48m in the 2016 edition in Poland.

The gold medal went to South Africa's Jan-Hendrik Heymans who sent his spear to 80.50m, the season's U20 world lead, in his sixth and final attempt. Dominica's Addison James clinched the bronze medal with a throw of 73.89m.

Mohammed Ashfaq, who broke the U20 national record during the men's 400m first round heat race a day earlier with a time of 45.81 seconds, finished eighth, clocking 46.20 seconds in the finals. American Jayden Deleon won the gold with a championships record time of 44.47 seconds, while compatriot Quincy Wilson took the silver with 44.62 seconds.

South Africa's Leendert Koekemoer clinched the bronze with a time of 44.96 seconds.

Pooja qualified for the final round in the

women's high jump event, sailing over 1.79m on day three of the meet. All 14 athletes across two qualification groups, who managed to clear 1.79m, were awarded places in the final.

The 19-year-old Pooja holds the national senior record of 1.93m.

In the men's long jump, both Shahnava Khan and Jithin Arjuna made it to the finals after the qualification round.

Shahnava finished fourth in qualification Group A and fifth overall with a 7.73m jump in his third and final attempt. Jithin also advanced, finishing 12th overall and taking the last available spot, with his 7.57m jump in his third and final attempt.

Italy's Daniele Inzoli was the only athlete across the two qualification groups to breach the automatic qualification distance of 8m with an effort of 8.15m. (PTI)

Ayush wanted Shi Yu Qi in World Championships draw



NEW DELHI, Aug 8: Ayush Shetty's daunting World Championships opener against China's world No. 1 Shi Yu Qi could work in the Indian's favour as his opponent is not currently at his best and the home crowd could give the youngster an edge, feels his coach Sagar Chopra.

Shetty, who announced himself on the big stage with a runner-up finish at the Badminton Asia Championships earlier this year, faces the toughest opening-round assignment against Shi Yu Qi, who outclassed the Indian in the continental final in straight games.

"If you look at it, it's probably one of the toughest draws anybody could get. But playing Shi Yu Qi, Ayush has nothing to lose," Chopra, the head coach at the Centre for Badminton Excellence (CBE) in Bengaluru, formerly known as the Prakash Padukone Badminton Academy (PPBA), told PTI Videos.

"In fact, he is playing in India and on our home ground, so the pressure is going to be on Shi Yu Qi."

Chopra believes the timing of the draw could work in Shetty's favour, with Shi not quite at the same level as he was a few months ago.

"Shi Yu Qi has had a tough last couple of tournaments, including the China Open. He's not looking at his best, like he probably was a few months ago. And Ayush has gotten better with every tournament. He's been playing really well and lost close matches."

"I think facing Shi in the first round is probably better than facing him in the later rounds, where the players get adjusted to the climate and sport conditions. So, Ayush definitely has the upper hand."

Chopra said that the 21-year-old from Mangalore welcomed the draw. "As soon as the draws came out, Ayush actually was looking forward to playing Shi Yu Qi. It never looked once that Ayush doubted himself. That's a good thing. If the player himself is feeling confident about it, I think that's a good sign," he said.

"So I think Ayush will have nothing to lose. He is going to have crowd support, and the first thing he has to do is believe that he can do it."

The Bengaluru-based coach believes Shetty's improved defence and fitness could make him a much tougher opponent this time around.

"Ayush is a tall player, and everybody is wary of his downward strokes. He has gotten better with his defence and his fitness has also improved. He needs to believe that if the match goes long, he can sustain it," Chopra said. (PTI)

Play for the country, win at all costs: 1975 heroes urge India to end 51-year World Cup wait

NEW DELHI, Aug 8: India's 1975 World Cup heroes Ashok Kumar and Aslam Sher Khan have urged the national hockey team to put the country ahead of individual ambitions, saying an uncompromising desire to win for the nation can help end the 51-year wait for a World Cup medal.

India has won the men's World Cup only once, in Kuala Lumpur in 1975 when they defeated Pakistan 2-1 in the final.

Ashok scored the winning goal in the 51st minute to script one of the most memorable moments in Indian hockey history. His message to the current side is simple.

"I would say to the Indian team: keep in mind that victory or defeat will not be yours, but your country's. This will automatically inspire you. This 51-year wait has been too long, and now we have to win a medal," Ashok said while talking to PTI.

The World Cup is scheduled to be held in the Netherlands and Belgium from August 15 to 30.

Aslam, who scored the important equaliser in the semi-final against Malaysia, believes the current players

need to approach the World Cup with the same sense of patriotism that drove the 1975 team.

"When we entered the World Cup, our country was like our mother, and we played with that same passion. You too must enter the field with the thought that we are playing for our mother, and our passion must be such that we will win at all costs," he said.

The two former players know what it takes to recover from disappointment.

Ashok and Aslam were part of the Indian teams that won bronze at the 1971 World Cup and silver in 1973.

Missing out on the title in those tournaments only intensified their hunger for gold in 1975.

"When we lost the semi-final in 1971, coach Balbir Singh Sr cried so much that it was difficult to calm him down. Such was the passion to win for the country," Ashok recalled.

"When we won silver in 1973, there was huge disappointment of missing out on gold. I even wondered how I would show these medals to my father and uncle. I would feel ashamed to return home with a bronze or silver," said Ashok, son of legendary hockey player



Dhyan Chand and nephew of Roop Singh.

The disappointment also created a unique atmosphere at the team's camp in Chandigarh ahead of the Kuala Lumpur tournament.

"When we were going to Kuala

Lumpur, there was a camp in Chandigarh where players from all over the country were playing together for a common goal because we had missed out on gold in the previous two World Cups," Aslam said.

There was also an unwavering belief within the squad.

"We never considered ourselves inferior to anyone, whether it was Germany, Holland or Australia. This confidence is what is needed, and with this passion, no one can stop this team," said Aslam, who later represented India at the 1976 Montreal Olympics.

For Aslam, the 1975 campaign was also a test of personal resilience.

Having spent most of the tournament on the sidelines, he said the frustration of not getting an opportunity became almost unbearable.

"I spent most of the time away. I sat there, and the personal agony was so intense that I would tear up every night before going to sleep for not getting a chance to play," he recalled.

That frustration eventually turned into a defining moment.

"That two-week agony led me to score a goal in the last 15 minutes of the semi-final," Aslam said.

Aslam, however, believes the current team must understand that success at the Olympics and the World Cup comes with different pressures.

The Harmanpreet Singh-led side has won bronze medals at two successive Olympic Games, at Tokyo in 2021 and

Paris in 2024.

"However, the dynamics of the Olympics are different from those of the World Cup, which must be kept in mind," he said.

He also pointed out that the Tokyo Olympics were held under the shadow of the COVID-19 pandemic, but India successfully repeated its Olympic medal-winning performance in Paris.

"If we can play with the same spirit as we did at the Paris Olympics, India is sure to be on the podium after 51 years," he said.

Ashok, meanwhile, advised the players to make quick decisions on the field while staying focused on the basics of the game.

"The way I played and what I learnt was to know what to do and when to do it, and to make those decisions quickly. Ball control, attacking, ball handling and passing—all these decisions need to be made quickly. Hockey is a team sport, and every player is important," he said.

He further emphasized the importance of the forward line, saying, "I also believe that the forwards will have to make extraordinary efforts." (PTI)