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THE HILLS TIMES

PUBLISHED SIMULTANEOUSLY FROM GUWAHATI & DIPHU

Voice of the hills people

Vol. No. III Issue No. 157

RNI-ASENG/2023/86488

GUWAHATI, THURSDAY, AUGUST 13, 2026

PAGES 8

PRICE ₹ 8

Over ₹ 1,000 cr likely needed for Assam flood rehabilitation: CM



GUWAHATI, Aug 12: Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Wednesday said more than ₹ 1,000 crore may be required for repairing damaged properties and rehabilitating people affected by the latest wave of floods in the state.

Addressing a press conference in Guwahati, Sarma said Prime Minister Narendra Modi has assured full assistance from the Centre in the rehabilitation process.

"To give permanent relief, a rapid relief assessment drive was launched on August 9. As per an initial report, over 8,000 families have been assessed, and Rs 150 crore damage has been estimated," he said.

The CM said the assessment will continue till August 30 and is expected to cover 50,000-60,000 families in Upper Assam districts severely affected by the latest floods.

"I believe there will be a spending of over ₹ 1,000 crore in damage repair and rehabilitation. The PM has assured that there is no issue in paying the affected families and asked us to do the assessment without any lapse," he said.

Sarma said the assessment would be conducted in multiple stages, with the final survey likely to be completed by Sep-

tember.

In several areas, including Nepalikhuri, Majgaon and Kamal Chapori, every house has suffered damage, he said.

"We are talking to the Centre and social scientists if a model housing scheme can be launched to rebuild their houses. The Assam government is looking to find a permanent solution to such floods," he added.

Acknowledging support from various groups in providing relief, Sarma said 72 YouTubers had raised funds for flood-affected people across the country.

"Many of them are already working on the ground and giving relief to the people. We are keeping a close watch on them whether they are spending the money for flood-affected areas or not," he said.

Sarma also released ₹ 11.3 crore for rebuilding 494 flood-damaged Anganwadi centres across Upper Assam.

"We want to restart these centres as soon as possible so that all services can be provided. Altogether 494 Anganwadi centres, which were damaged, will be rebuilt in this drive," he said.

Each centre will receive up to ₹ 2.5 lakh for restoration, he said.

The flood situation in Assam remained (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

Mising groups intensify agitation over Dhemaji incident ● Pegu says Arunachal CM promises impartial inquiry

Himanta seeks probe into border firing, Khandu assures action

GUWAHATI, Aug 12: Two days after several people from Assam were injured in firing by miscreants from Arunachal Pradesh along the inter-state border, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Wednesday said his counterpart Pema Khandu "must" order an inquiry into the incident and ensure that those responsible are punished.

Assam Education Minister Ranaj Pegu, who was deputed by Sarma to monitor the situation along the border, said Khandu had assured him of strict action against those responsible for the firing.

Meanwhile, the Takam Mising Porin Kebang (TMPK), the apex student organisation of Assam's Mising community, launched an indefinite economic blockade against Arunachal Pradesh in protest against the alleged firing.

As part of the agitation, protesters blocked key entry points along



the inter-state border, including roads at Dwarmukh-Banderdewa, Ruksin in Dhemaji, Banderdewa in Lakhimpur, Solengi in Gohpur and Pabhoi in Biswanath.

At least 12 people from Assam were injured on Monday after al-

leged firing by miscreants from Arunachal Pradesh along the inter-state border in Dhemaji district over land encroachment issues.

On August 10, the firing incident took place at Mingmang Basti along the Assam-Arunachal

Pradesh border in Gogamukh revenue circle of Gerukamukh Police Station.

"We should not fight, we should not indulge in conflict. Ultimately we have to remain together. I request the Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister to order an inquiry, find the culprits, and punish them," Sarma said at a press conference here.

He said the incident was painful, primarily because both states have settled the boundary disputes in most of the sectors.

"Only in five sectors, some disputes remain. Yesterday in our Cabinet meeting, we reconstituted our regional committee so that we can resolve the issue with Arunachal," Sarma said.

"I don't think there will be a permanent conflict because we have so many similarities between the people of the two states. I think this is a temporary setback and we will

overcome it," Sarma said.

Referring to the continuing border disputes, the CM said, "I hope that we will be able to settle our border dispute with Arunachal soon. The place where the clash took place is a disputed area. There has been no clash in the settled areas and permanent border pillars have been put up."

In a social media post, Pegu said, "Hon'ble Chief Minister of Arunachal Pradesh, Shri @PemaKhanduBJP ji, called me this morning and assured me that there will be a proper and impartial investigation into the police firing incident at Bodoti, Mingmang, Dhemaji."

"He (Khandu) further assured that those found guilty will be dealt with in accordance with the law," Pegu added.

Immediately after the incident, Sarma had deputed Pegu, a local Mising (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

Assam flood situation remains serious with more rain in forecast

GUWAHATI, Aug 12: The flood situation in Assam remained serious on Wednesday, with more than 1.12 lakh people affected across four districts amid the forecast of more rain in several areas already reeling under the deluge, officials said.

Several rivers are flowing above their danger levels, posing a threat of flooding in new areas, an Assam State Disaster Management Authority (ASDMA) official said.

The IMD's Guwahati centre has forecast thunderstorms, accompanied by lightning, and moderate to heavy rain in parts of Charaideo, Dibrugarh, Jorhat, Sivasagar and Tinsukia districts, she said.

The Dhansiri river at Numaligarh in Golaghat district continues to flow in a "severe flood situa-



tion", she said, advising people to stay away from the river amid a continuous rise in its water level.

According to the ASDMA's

daily flood bulletin, no fresh death was reported and the toll in this year's floods remained at 101.

More than 1,12,700 people are

currently affected by the floods in Golaghat, Jorhat, Nagaon and Sivasagar districts, the bulletin said.

Golaghat is the worst-hit district, with over 65,000 people affected, followed by Sivasagar with nearly 20,000 and Nagaon with more than 16,000 people reeling under floodwaters.

The Dhansiri at Numaligarh and the Kushiyara at Sribhumi are flowing above the danger levels, the ASDMA official said.

The administration is operating 92 relief camps and relief distribution centres across five districts, providing assistance to 30,205 affected people, the authority said.

During the last 24 hours, the ASDMA distributed 420.32 quintals of rice, (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

West Bengal announces ₹10 crore flood assistance to Assam

KOLKATA, Aug 12: Describing the flood situation in Assam as "terrifying", West Bengal Chief Minister Suvenudh Adhikari on Wednesday announced financial assistance of ₹ 10 crore to the neighbouring state to help it deal with the crisis.

He said more than 100 people had died in the floods in Assam, with which West Bengal shares a "special spiritual connection".

"The situation in neighbouring Assam is terrifying. We have a special spiritual connection with Assam. Several states such as Manipur and Chhattisgarh have announced assistance to Assam. We will also provide financial assistance of ₹ 10 crore from the Chief Minister's Relief Fund to Assam," Adhikari told the Assembly on Wednesday. (PTI)

Sino-India border 'generally stable at the moment': China



BEIJING, Aug 12: China on Wednesday said the situation along the Sino-India border is "generally stable at the moment" while declining to comment on reports of stepped-up Chinese military activity near the Arunachal Pradesh border.

Foreign Ministry spokesperson Guo Jiakun made the comments while responding to media queries about whether there has been a recent military incident with India and if China has increased its military activity near the state, which China claims as part of South Tibet.

"The China-India border situation is generally stable at the moment," Guo said.

China and India held the 36th meeting of the Work-

ing Mechanism for Consultation and Coordination on China-India Border Affairs last week, he said.

"The two sides agreed to maintain communication via diplomatic and military channels and jointly uphold peace and tranquility in the border areas," he added.

India on Tuesday said it considers matters relating to border areas with China as "most serious" and asserted that maintaining peace and tranquillity along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) is of "utmost importance", as the state of the frontier will govern the overall trajectory of bilateral ties.

The remarks came amid reports of aggressive posturing by Chinese troops in Arunachal Pradesh's Upper Subansiri region.

New Delhi also trashed Beijing's criticism of its decision to formally identify 27 places and geographical features in Arunachal Pradesh by their standard names, emphasising that the state is an "inalienable and integral" part of India and nothing can change this "indisputable reality".

India and China rolled out a series of measures in the last over one year to rebuild their relationship after it came under severe strain following the deadly Galwan Valley clashes in 2020 and the subsequent military face-off that lasted for over four years.

In October 2024, the two sides firmed up a disengagement pact for Depsang and Demchok, the last two friction points in eastern Ladakh. Days after the agreement was finalised, Prime (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

Coal source of coke oven plants in Meghalaya comes under scrutiny

SHILLONG, Aug 12: The coal source of coke oven plants in Meghalaya's South West Khasi Hills district has come under scrutiny after a high court-appointed audit committee found no verification that coal procured by them from within the state was from legal sources, officials said on Wednesday.

The finding assumes significance as Meghalaya's rat-hole coal mining was banned by the National Green Tribunal (NGT) in 2014, and the issue has since remained under judicial scanner, with the Meghalaya High Court monitoring compliance through the panel headed by retired Justice B P Katakey.

The Coal Audit Committee noted that inspections conducted by the South West Khasi Hills district administration on June 1 identified 10 coke oven plants in the district, of which three were non-operational for lack of Consent to Operate (CTO).

However, information furnished by the Meghalaya State Pollution

Control Board (MSPCB) showed that Consent to Establish (CTE) had been issued to 15 coke oven plants, of which 10 had valid CTOs, while five had not applied for CTO.

The Committee observed that coal used by several plants was sourced from outside Meghalaya, some from within the state and others from both sources.

The district administration had not verified compliance with the 2024 Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for imported coal, or whether coal procured within the state came from legal sources, the panel reported to the high court during its hearing recently.

Justice (ret'd) Katakey has accordingly directed a fresh field enquiry into the coke oven plants, including verification of their existence, approvals, source of coal and compliance with the 2024 SOP.

The Committee has also decided to conduct physical inspections of the plants across the state to verify coal procurement, maintenance of

records and compliance with applicable norms, in association with the district task forces.

A coke oven plant is an industrial facility that heats specific types of coal to very high temperatures in a particular way to turn it into coke—a hard, pure-carbon fuel essential for making iron and steel.

The latest findings form part of the continuing scrutiny of coal mining and coal-based industries in Meghalaya by the Katakey Committee.

The panel has previously called for strict compliance with the 2024 SoP and continued audits of coal sources of coke oven plants, ferro-alloy plants and cement companies to prevent the use of illegally procured coal.

The high court, while considering the Katakey Committee's reports, has sought detailed status reports from the state government on issues including alleged illegal mining, non-compliance with the SoP and action taken by enforcement (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

Jorhat bans forceful collection of flood relief

HT Correspondent
JORHAT, Aug 12: The Jorhat district administration has prohibited the forceful or coercive collection of donations, subscriptions and relief materials in the name of providing assistance to flood-affected people.

The order, issued by the District Magistrate under Section 163 of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS), 2023, bars individuals, groups, NGOs and organisations from forcibly collecting cash, kind or relief materials in public places, roads, highways, residential areas and commercial locations.

The administration has also prohibited the erection of unauthorised barricades, check-gates and roadblocks for stopping private, commercial or relief vehicles to collect flood relief funds or materials.

The order stated that violations would (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

ZSI scientists document Colletes bhutanicus in India for the first time

Rare Himalayan bee recorded in Arunachal's Tawang

ITANAGAR, Aug 12: A rare solitary Himalayan bee, *Colletes bhutanicus*, has been recorded for the first time in India from Tawang district of Arunachal Pradesh by scientists of the Zoological Survey of India (ZSI), officials said.

The species was recorded during a recent survey in Tawang by ZSI scientists Dibyajyoti Ghosh, K A Subramanian and Dhriti Banerjee, they said.

Earlier, *C. bhutanicus* had been recorded from Bhutan and China, including the Xizang region. Its documentation in Arunachal Pradesh adds to the understanding of the distribution and diversity of Himalayan pollinators, they added.

According to researchers, the bee was found at elevations ranging from 1,500 metres to 3,800 metres and was observed visiting 25 species of flowering plants, including mustard, buckwheat, coriander, beans, chilli and eggplant.



Unlike honeybees, *Colletes* bees are solitary and do not live in large colonies. Individual bees generally nest separately and play an important role in pollination by moving between flowers to collect pollen and nectar.

The finding also provides fresh insights into the bee diversity of the eastern Himalayas, officials said.

Earlier taxonomic studies have documented *C. bhutanicus* from Bhutan and parts of China. A 2014

study published in Zootaxa listed the species among *Colletes* bees recorded from China.

Scientific records from Xizang have also documented the species at several high-altitude locations, including areas above 3,800 metres, indicating its adaptation to Himalayan environments.

Arunachal Pradesh, with its wide variations in altitude, climate and vegetation, is among India's important biodiversity regions. The latest record highlights the need for continued biodiversity surveys in the state's remote mountain areas, where several species remain poorly documented, officials said.

Deputy Chief Minister Chowna Mein described the discovery of the rare bee in Tawang as a matter of pride for Arunachal Pradesh.

He said the finding highlighted the potential role of native pollinators in supporting mountain agriculture. (PTI)

NIT Silchar temporary staffers stage hunger strike demanding regularisation



SILCHAR, Aug 12: Muster roll workers of the National Institute of Technology-Silchar in Assam's Cachar district are on a hunger strike demanding the regularisation of their services, members of an agitating union said on

Wednesday.

Altogether 54 workers under the banner of the NIT Workers' Union are staging the hunger strike, which entered the third day on Wednesday, seeking permanent posting as per a Gauhati High

Court order directing the institute to do so.

Quoting the court verdict, a union leader told PTI that the High Court had directed the NIT Silchar authorities to regularise the services of muster roll employees and extend to them all facilities available to permanent staffers.

According to the union, there were 122 muster roll workers, of whom only 20 have been regularised so far.

"These employees have been working since 1993," a union leader added.

The protesters said the strike will continue until their demands are met.

The agitation is being held outside the main administrative office of NIT Silchar.

No immediate comments could be obtained from the NIT Silchar authorities. (PTI)

After nine years at helm, N Chandra to exit Tata Sons amid expansion, governance standoff

NEW DELHI, Aug 12: N Chandrasekaran will step down as chairman of Tata Sons when his current term ends on February 20, 2027, wrapping up a nine-year tenure that transformed the scale and breadth of one of India's most influential conglomerates but ended with a standoff with Tata Trusts Chairman Noel Tata over his reappointment.

Chandrasekaran, 63, who has spent 40 years with the Tata Group, told the Tata Sons board on Wednesday that he would not offer himself for another term and asked the directors to decide on a successor soon to ensure an orderly transition. His decision comes after a six-month impasse over his reappointment and marks the end of what would have been an unprecedented third five-year term at the helm of Tata Sons.

"I have completed 40 years of professional life at the Tata Group. I am grateful for the immensely satisfying opportunity to contribute to this venerable institution," Chandrasekaran, widely known as Chandra, said in a statement.

Tata Sons is the principal investment holding company and promoter of the Tata Group, controlling more than 30 companies, including Tata Consultancy Services, Tata Motors and Air India. Tata Trusts collectively own about 66 per cent of Tata Sons, giving the philanthropic arm decisive influence over the group's governance.

Chandra said the Sir Dorabji Tata Trust and Sir Ratan Tata Trust, which together hold 51.54 per cent of Tata Sons, had unanimously recommended extending his term by five years. The recommendation was recorded and backed by the Tata Sons Nomination and Remuneration Committee and board before being put to directors on February 24.

"However, the proposal was not carried through because one of the Board Members did not support it, and in the absence of unanimous support, I chose to defer the decision," he said. "It has been 6 months since that Board meeting, and no resolution has been reached till date."

While he did not name the board member, Noel Tata, who took over as chairman of Tata Trusts in 2024 following the death of Ratan Tata, had wanted certain assurances from Chandra before giving him another term.

Noel sought greater clarity on the group's five-year strategic roadmap, the handling of losses at newer businesses and a way to provide an exit to the Shapoorji Pallonji Group without taking Tata Sons public, according to people



familiar with the matter. He also sought Chandra's position on the long-debated question of listing Tata Sons.

Chandra was reportedly unwilling to commit that Tata Sons would never be listed, making the potential IPO one of the key fault lines between the operating company and its controlling trusts. The two sides have also differed over board representation and capital allocation.

The board's differences, however, did not completely paralyse its functioning. A Tata Sons meeting in May was described by people familiar with the deliberations as constructive, with Noel Tata focusing on businesses, including Air India and BigBasket, while Chandrasekaran led reviews of group companies.

But with no agreement even after reached after six months, Chandra said the uncertainty could no longer continue.

"Tata Sons is a very large institution and there are many strategic projects that are under critical stages of execution," he said. "It is not only necessary to have a leader in place to lead the Group beyond February 2027, but also clarity on leadership is important for employees, investors, partners and other stakeholders."

"Under these circumstances, earlier today, I have communicated to the Tata Sons Board, that I have decided not to offer myself for reappointment when my term ends on February 20, 2027. I have asked the Board to decide on the succession soon to ensure a proper transition."

A DECADE OF SCALE AND EXPANSION

Chandrasekaran joined the Tata Group in 1987 as an intern at TCS, rose through the ranks to become the IT company's chief executive in 2009 and was appointed Tata Sons chairman in 2017, succeeding Ratan Tata's interim tenure after Cyrus Mistry's ouster. He was the first non-Parsi chairman of Tata Sons and was credited with bringing stability to the group after the

bruising 2016 boardroom battle.

Under him, the group expanded aggressively into aviation, electronics, semiconductors, batteries and digital commerce while strengthening its traditional technology, automotive and steel businesses. Tatas acquired Air India from the government in 2022 and subsequently consolidated Air India, Vistara, Air India Express and AIX Connect into a major airline operation.

Tata Digital acquired majority stakes in BigBasket and Img in 2021, while Tata Electronics emerged as a vehicle for the group's semiconductor and electronics ambitions. The group also pursued major manufacturing investments and strategic partnerships, including in batteries and mobile-device manufacturing.

The scale-up has been reflected in the group's financial footprint. Tata companies reported aggregate revenue of more than USD 180 billion in 2024-25, employed more than one million people, and the group's 26 listed companies had a combined market capitalisation of more than USD 328 billion as of March 31, 2025.

Chandrasekaran also pushed for portfolio consolidation. Tata Coffee was merged with Tata Consumer Products, while Timpla Company of India, Tata Metaliks and Tata Steel Long Products were folded into Tata Steel. The listings of Tata Technologies and Tata Capital further expanded the group's listed universe and unlocked value for investors.

GROWTH AND SETBACKS

The expansion was not without significant challenges. Air India has remained a recurring source of scrutiny over service standards, operational disruptions and pilot-related incidents, while the fatal crash of an Air India Boeing 787 in Ahmedabad in June 2025 became the most serious crisis of Chandrasekaran's tenure.

The group's technology business has also faced pressure from the global shift towards artificial intelligence, while Jaguar Land

Rover has endured a sharp downturn in sales and a major cyberattack. Newer ventures, particularly Air India and Tata's digital and e-commerce businesses, have required substantial capital and continued to weigh on returns.

His exit therefore, comes at a delicate moment. The next chairman will inherit a much larger and more diversified group, but also a heavy investment pipeline and several businesses still seeking to deliver sustainable returns.

The immediate challenge will be execution rather than re-invention: turning around Air India, scaling Tata Electronics and its semiconductor ambitions, improving returns from digital businesses and preserving the cash-generating strength of TCS, Tata Motors, Titan and other established companies.

The new chairman will also have to navigate Tata's unusually complex governance structure and repair the relationship between Tata Sons and Tata Trusts. Questions over capital allocation, board representation, the future of Tata Sons and the possible listing of the holding company remain unresolved.

The succession is particularly significant because the Tata group has experienced a major governance rupture before. In 2016, the Tata Sons board ousted Cyrus Mistry, triggering a bitter public dispute with Ratan Tata and years of litigation. Chandrasekaran was subsequently chosen to restore stability.

His departure now puts succession and governance back at the centre of the group.

ADDRESS TO STAFF

For Chandrasekaran, however, the decision represents the end of a tenure that he described in his statement as a period of immense responsibility. He said leading Tata Sons over the past decade had been "a great honour and a profound responsibility", and expressed gratitude to the group's employees, investors, partners and other stakeholders.

Addressing a town hall at the Bombay House in the afternoon, Chandrasekaran said he had been "touched with the love and affection" of employees over the years.

"Tata is a revered name and that is because of the efforts of employees like you," he said, according to people present at the meeting.

"Do not pay much attention to the gossip, theories, conspiracies that you hear (about the leadership transition)," he urged the staff.

The Tata Group would continue to make progress and they would continue to have opportunities within the organisation, he told the employees. (PTI)

Inflation inches up to 4.45 pc in Jul on higher food prices: Govt data

NEW DELHI, Aug 12: Retail inflation inched up to 4.45 per cent in July on expensive kitchen staples, including onion and ginger, even as the price rise remained above the Reserve Bank's median target for the second consecutive month, according to government data.

The consumer price index (CPI) based retail inflation was 4.38 per cent in June.

The July reading is the highest since the new series, with base year 2024, came into effect from January.

Food inflation in July rose to 5.52 per cent from 5.32 per cent in the preceding month, according to CPI data released by the National Statistics Office (NSO).

Inflation in onions increased significantly to 22.54 per cent in July against 4.73 per cent in June. The rate of price rise in ginger shot up to 83.62 per cent. Inflation in garlic also rose significantly.

On the other hand, inflation in potatoes, ladyfinger, peas and tomatoes was negative.

Earlier this month, Reserve Bank Governor Sanjay Malhotra said the higher inflation is mostly on account of fuel and food, with few signs of generalisation of price pressures so far.

Core inflation excluding precious metals continues to be benign.

As projected earlier, Malhotra



said the headline inflation is expected to rise further in the near term and peak in Q3 2026-27, primarily due to food and fuel, before moderating thereafter.

The central bank has projected the CPI inflation for 2026-27 at 5 per cent, marginally lower than its June estimates.

The government has mandated the Reserve Bank to ensure retail inflation remains at 4 per cent with a margin of 2 per cent on either side.

The NSO data further showed that while the national average inflation was 4.45 per cent (provisional) in July, corresponding CPI rates for rural and urban areas were 4.84 per cent and 3.96 per cent, respectively.

Telangana had the highest inflation at 6.32 per cent, and Mizoram (1.84 per cent) recorded the lowest during July, according to the NSO data.

Dipti Deshpande, Senior Director and Principal Economist, Crisil, said July brought some relief on the inflation front, as

food inflation saw a slower rise and non-food inflation was steady.

"However, this comfort may prove short-lived. Adverse base effects for food inflation, higher edible oil prices, the fading impact of GST rate cuts and a gradual pass-through of input costs, particularly transportation costs, are expected to push inflation higher in the coming months," she said.

Megha Arora, Director, India Ratings and Research, said the fuel impact was evident on user groups – transport prices increased 4.43 per cent (June 2026: 4.31 per cent; May 2026: 1.75 per cent), while restaurant and accommodation services grew 7.72 per cent (June 2026: 6.91 per cent; May 2026: 5.75 per cent) underlining the impact of ongoing West Asia conflict on commercial liquified petroleum gas.

"Persistent upside risks are posed by geopolitical tensions and the El Nino weather pattern, though some improvement in the latter could be visible in the August print. Crude price volatility is expected to continue with oil likely to hover around USD 80-85/bbl in the coming weeks," she added.

NSO collects real-time price data from selected 1,407 urban markets (including online markets) and 1,465 villages across the country. (PTI)

Contd. from Page 1...

Himanta seeks probe

leader, to monitor the situation and hammer out the impasse.

The Assam minister further said, "We also discussed the resumption of Assam-Arunachal Pradesh border discussions (on inter-state boundary disputes) through the joint regional committees."

"I informed him (Khandu) that the Assam cabinet, in its meeting yesterday, has reconstituted the regional committees with new ministers and senior officers of the Assam government," he added.

Pegu said that in the telephonic discussion, both leaders agreed on the importance of continuing dialogue in a spirit of mutual understanding and cooperation to resolve the remaining border issues amicably.

"I appeal to everyone to maintain peace, harmony and mutual respect in the border areas and to refrain from any action that may disturb the cordial relations between the people of the two neighbouring states," he added.

Along with TMPK, other local social groups like Mising Mimag Kebang (MMK) and Takam Mising Mahila Kebang (TMMK) are supporting the blockade and stopped vehicles with Arunachal Pradesh registration numbers at the entry points.

TMPK secretary Saan Panging said, "Such incidents along the inter-state border are not new, but our government has not taken it seriously. This time, our agitation will continue till all the culprits are arrested and handed over to Assam Police."

The organisations are demanding an early resolution of the Assam-Arunachal Pradesh border dispute, action against the "miscreants" who had fired two days ago and an end to alleged encroachment on Assam land.

The firing incident took place at Mingmang Basti along the Assam-Arunachal Pradesh border in Gogamukh revenue circle of Gerukamukh Police Station.

Police said the clash erupted following a dispute over alleged encroachment by people from Arunachal Pradesh on land in Assam.

Assam and Arunachal Pradesh share an 804.1-km border passing through Udalguri, Sonitpur, Biswanath, Lakhimpur, Dhemaji, Tinsukia, Dibrugarh and Charaideo districts of Assam and 12 districts of the neighbouring state.

There are around 1,200 points of dispute along the inter-state border between the two states. The Assam government on July 29 told the state Assembly that Arunachal Pradesh had allegedly encroached upon 16,144.01 hectares of land. Of this, Arunachal Pradesh is claiming 858.91 sq km, it said.

Both states have constituted 12 regional committees to resolve the border disputes and are taking steps based on the recommendations of these panels, which have jointly toured the disputed areas and held consultations with stakeholders.

A Namsai Declaration was signed by the chief ministers of the two states on July 15, 2022, setting in motion measures to resolve differences over 123 villages in Assam claimed by Arunachal Pradesh.

A memorandum of understanding in this regard was later signed by the two chief ministers in the presence of the Union Home Minister in New Delhi on April 20, 2023.

Of the 123 villages claimed by Arunachal Pradesh, differences over 71 have been resolved, while the process is under way to address the issues concerning the remaining 52 villages. (PTI)

Over ₹ 1,000 cr

serious on Wednesday, with more than 1.12 lakh people affected across four districts amid a forecast of more rainfall.

Sarma said 64,891 flood-hit families had received ₹ 15,000 each as initial assistance, while another 31,212 families would receive the aid in the coming days.

"From August 20, ₹ 1.5 lakh each will be provided to affected Namghars, a place of worship for Vaishnavite followers, in flood-ravaged Sivasagar and Charaideo districts to rebuild the institutions. PWD has engaged 50 machines to clear the debris from roads," he said.

Sarma said more than 26,000 micro-donations had been received in the Chief Minister's Relief Fund, in addition to larger institutional contributions.

"So far, we have received ₹ 142 crore in CMRF. We will utilise this amount in the model housing colony," he said.

The chief minister said the Water Resources Department would now have to focus more on the Brahmaputra's tributaries, which have been causing increasing devastation in recent years.

"So far, the main focus has always been Brahmaputra. There are many hydro projects coming up in the Tibet region and Arunachal Pradesh. It will give some cushion to Brahmaputra's floods. Now, we need to concentrate on the tributaries also," he said.

The latest wave of floods in Upper Assam was primarily caused by the Dikhow, a tributary of the Brahmaputra. Other rivers, including the Dhansiri and Dorika, also contributed to the devastation. (PTI)

Assam flood situation

74.72 quintals of dal, 22.42 quintals of salt and 2,058.95 litres of mustard oil among flood-affected people. At least 441 villages remain inundated, and 10,879.03 hectares of cropland have been damaged across the state, the authority said.

Floodwaters have also damaged embankments, roads, bridges and other infrastructure in several districts. The flooding has affected 31,650 domestic animals and poultry across the state, according to the ASDMA. (PTI)

Jorhat bans

attract action under Section 223 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS).

Coal source of coke

agencies. The Coal Audit Committee has also reported demand notices against several coke oven plants for amounts running into lakhs of rupees, with recovery and closure proceedings initiated in some cases.

The committee has further ordered verification of the source of coal and production records of coke oven plants, including month-wise details of coal used and coke produced from January 1, 2026, following allegations of continued illegal coal mining activities in the district.

The audit of coal sources of ferro-alloy plants and cement companies is also underway, while show-cause notices have been issued to Star Cement Meghalaya Ltd and Star Cement Ltd over the source of coal the company uses in their cement plant in East Jaintia Hills district. (PTI)

Sino-India border

Minister Narendra Modi and Chinese President Xi Jinping held talks in Kazan and took several decisions to improve the ties.

In August last year, Modi travelled to the Chinese city of Tianjin to attend the annual SCO summit. Modi and Xi held extensive talks on the sidelines of the SCO (Shanghai Cooperation Organisation) summit.

In the meeting, Modi said India is committed to taking forward its ties with China based on mutual trust, respect and sensitivity. In the last few months, India and China initiated a series of measures to reset their ties. (PTI)

Ather to launch first mass-market scooter on new EL platform

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Aug 12: Ather Energy CEO and Co-founder Tarun Mehta has confirmed that the company will launch its first mass-market electric scooter, built on its new EL platform, at Ather Community Day on August 29 in Bengaluru.

Mehta made the announcement on X, describing the upcoming scooter as the culmination of years of investment in the core technologies and architectures required to build electric scooters for mainstream consumers.

He said the electric two-wheeler industry was entering a new phase as EV technology moved beyond the early-adopter segment.

According to Mehta, mainstream customers would expect electric scooters to offer strong resale value, faster servicing, ride comfort on challenging roads, convenient charging, visible safety features and software-driven intelligence that enhances everyday ownership.

The upcoming model will be the first production scooter based on Ather's EL platform, a next-generation scooter architecture unveiled at Ather Community Day 2025.

PR Sreejesh becomes first customer to take delivery of 2026 Yezdi Roadster



HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Aug 12: Olympic medalist and former Indian hockey captain PR Sreejesh has become the first customer in India to take delivery of the all-new 2026 Yezdi Green Mamba Roadster, marking the beginning of deliveries of Jawa Yezdi Motorcycles' recently unveiled range.

Sreejesh, who experienced the new Yezdi line-up at its national launch in Kerala, chose the Green Mamba

Roadster for its distinctive styling and road presence.

Finished in a matte-green shade with a quilted Arabica-brown seat and copper decals, the Roadster is powered by a 334-cc liquid-cooled Alpha2 engine paired with a six-speed gearbox.

The motorcycle also features an assist-and-slipper clutch, ABS and modular seating.

Speaking on the occasion, Sreejesh said the motorcycle's design, character and attitude had caught his attention at the launch in Kochi.

He said Yezdi's legacy and the motorcycle's character prompted him to become part of the brand's story. Anupam Thareja, Co-Founder, Classic Legends, said the Roadster represented the brand's "bold character, confidence and challenger spirit".

He said Sreejesh's sporting journey reflected the perseverance, courage and self-belief associated with the Yezdi brand. With Sreejesh taking delivery of the Green Mamba Roadster, Yezdi's 2026 range has begun reaching customers across India.

The company said its expanding retail network and growing rider community would support its presence in the country's mid-capacity motorcycle segment.

Airtel, Netflix launch #MillionThankYou campaign around Operation Safed Sagar

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Aug 12: Airtel and Netflix have joined hands for an Independence Day campaign centred on Operation Safed Sagar, bringing the story of the Indian Air Force's Golden Arrows Squadron and its role during the 1999 Kargil War to audiences across India.

The initiative, titled #MillionThankYou, seeks to turn the story of courage, precision and sacrifice of the air warriors involved in the operation into a nationwide expression of gratitude.

Netflix will bring the story of Operation Safed Sagar to screens across India, while Airtel will facilitate public participation through a series of dedicated initiatives.

As part of the campaign, Airtel has set up Thank You Stations across 11 cities in 10 states, where people can leave messages of gratitude.

Those unable to visit the stations can participate through Airtel's dedicated WhatsApp facility.

People can join the #MillionThankYou campaign by sending a WhatsApp message to +91 92895 59403 and watching the Operation Safed Sagar film.

The campaign seeks to encourage audiences to revisit an important chapter of India's history while acknowledging the courage and sacrifice of the air warriors who served during the Kargil conflict.

Under the theme "One Nation. A Million Thank



Yous," Airtel and Netflix have invited Indians to watch, remember and express their gratitude to the Indian Air Force this Independence Day.

Airtel said its IPTV service brings together more than 25 streaming applications, 650-plus live television channels and an extensive on-demand library in one integrated entertainment platform. Airtel IPTV plans start at ₹699.

The service will also feature a selection of stories centred on courage, sacrifice, resilience and India's history alongside Operation Safed Sagar as part of the Independence Day offering.

REPAIRS & RENOVATION WORKS

Tender Notice No.: LM/Engg/50 of 2026. E-Tender is invited by the undersigned for the following work: **SN-1: Brief Description of Item :** Repairs and renovation of four nos. of rooms, revitization of existing bar room to a new double bedded room, extension and modernization of existing Auditorium and emergency exit from all floors of Club Building at Officer Rest House at Lumding. **Tender Value:** ₹2,60,88,367.22/- **Earnest Money:** ₹5,21,800/- **Date & time of closing of tender at 15:00 hrs. on 31-08-2026 and opening of tender at 15:00 hrs. on 01-09-2026.** Complete information alongwith the tender document of above e-tender are available up to 15:00 hrs. on 31-08-2026 in the website www.reps.gov.in

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

18-year-old drowns while fetching cattle fodder in Teok

HT Correspondent

JORHAT, Aug 12: An 18-year-old youth drowned in a flooded stream while going to fetch grass for cattle at his home in Bogoriguri, Teok, in Jorhat district on Wednesday.

According to a source, the youth, identified as Mintu Bora, slipped and fell from his country boat while crossing a rivulet to collect fodder for his cows.

He drowned after falling into the water.

The source said Bora did not know how to swim.

Local residents who witnessed the incident managed to retrieve him from the bottom of the rivulet.

The area experiences flooding almost every year, the source said, adding that the current in the rivulet was particularly strong this time.

School teacher Nijwm Kumar Brahma dies



HT Correspondent

KOKRAJHAR, Aug 12: Nijwm Kumar Brahma, assistant teacher of Kachugaon Public High School, died on Wednesday morning while undergoing treatment for a heart ailment.

Brahma, a resident of Dotma, had been suffering from heart-related complications for the past few months.

Besides his teaching profession, he was associated with various social activities and was known for his work as a social worker.

He was also an aspiring writer and had been involved in literary pursuits.

His untimely death has cast a pall of gloom among his colleagues, students, friends and well-wishers.

People from different communities and organisations expressed deep condolences over his demise.

The greater Dotma area mourned the loss of Brahma, who was remembered as a gentle and socially active person.

Delegation seeks intervention on flood, erosion issues and greater powers for Sixth Schedule councils

UPPL MPs urge PM to expedite BTR Accord implementation



HT Correspondent

KOKRAJHAR, Aug 12: A four-member delegation of the United People's Party Liberal (UPPL) urged Prime Minister Narendra Modi to expedite implementation of all provisions of the BTR Peace Accord, 2020, during a meeting at Parliament on Wednesday.

The delegation, led by UPPL president and Rajya Sabha MP

Pramod Boro, comprised Rajya Sabha MP Rungwa Narzary, Lok Sabha MP Joyanta Basumatary and UPPL vice-president Dipen Boro.

During the meeting, the delegation discussed key issues concerning the welfare and development of the Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR).

The UPPL leaders sought expeditious implementation of the

provisions of the BTR Peace Accord, signed in 2020, and urged the Centre to take steps towards passage of the 125th Constitutional Amendment Bill.

The delegation also called for strengthening Article 280 of the Constitution to further empower the Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) and other Sixth Schedule councils across the country.

The UPPL leaders apprised the

Prime Minister of the flood and erosion-related challenges confronting the BTR, including problems caused by streams originating in Bhutan.

They also sought special intervention for flood-affected districts of Upper Assam.

Boro later said the meeting was meaningful and that the Prime Minister patiently heard the issues raised by the UPPL delegation.

In a statement following the meeting, Boro said the delegation had discussed matters concerning the welfare of the BTR, including implementation of the BTR Peace Accord, the 125th Constitutional Amendment Bill and strengthening Article 280 to empower the BTC and other Sixth Schedule councils.

He also reiterated the need for intervention to address flood and erosion problems in the BTR and the difficulties arising from water streams originating in Bhutan, besides seeking special measures for flood-affected areas of Upper Assam.

Sonitpur holds bicycle rally, Tiranga Yatra in Tezpur

Around 500 participants join Har Ghar Tiranga 2026 events to mark Independence Day



HT Correspondent

TEZPUR, Aug 12: The Sonitpur district administration organised a Bicycle Rally and Tiranga Yatra in Tezpur on Wednesday as part of the Har Ghar Tiranga-2026 celebrations, marking the 80th Independence Day of the nation and promoting patriotism, national pride and unity among citizens.

Tezpur MLA Prithiraj Rava, accompanied by Sonitpur District Commissioner Ananda Kumar Das and Additional District Commissioners James Aind and Tridib Roy, flagged off the rally and yatra from Church Field at around 11 am. Heads of various departments, officials and staff of the district administration, students and teachers from schools across Tezpur, along with other dignitaries and invitees, participated in the event.

Around 500 people joined the rally and yatra, carrying the Tricolour and spreading the message of patriotism and national unity.

As part of the day's celebrations, mass singing of "Vande Mataram" was organised during morning assemblies in schools and colleges across Sonitpur. Students and teachers participated in the initiative commemorating 150 years of Vande Mataram.

Adding to the patriotic fervour, an SSB Band Display was held at Tezpur University, Napaam, from 4 pm onwards.

The performance received an enthusiastic response from students and the university administration.

Dimasa language recognition celebrated in Dima Hasao

HT Correspondent

HAFLONG, Aug 12: The Dima Hasao Autonomous Council (DHAC) on Wednesday celebrated the recognition of Dimas as an official language of Dima Hasao district, alongside English, following an Assam government order allowing the use of Dimas in official correspondence in the district.

The celebration was held at the District Library Auditorium in Haflong, where DHAC Chief Executive Member Debolal Gorlosa attended as the chief guest.

Haflong MLA Rupali Langthasa was present as the guest of honour along with other dignitaries.

The Assam government issued the order on July 29 permitting the use of Dimas, in addition to English, for official correspondence in Dima Hasao. As part of the programme, individuals who contributed to the efforts for recognition of the Dimas language were felicitated for their dedicated work.

Speakers at the programme highlighted the significance of having the indigenous language recognised for official use and stressed the need to strengthen Dimas further. They also expressed the aspiration of securing its inclusion in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution.

Addressing the gathering, Gorlosa lauded Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma and the Assam government for granting official recognition to Dimas in the district.

He also announced that July 29 would henceforth be observed every year as 'Dimas Language Recognition Day'.

Stolen computers, equipment recovered in Dalgao; two held

HT CORRESPONDENT

DALGAON, Aug 12: Dalgao Police have recovered a large quantity of suspected stolen articles, including computers, printers, fans and other equipment, in connection with a series of thefts targeting educational institutions in the Dalgao-Bachimari area in recent weeks.

Two persons have also been arrested in connection with the theft cases. Several institutions, including Bechimari HS School, Bechimari Jatiya Vidyalaya, Anchalik Jatiya Vidyalaya, Sankardeva Jatiya Vidyalaya and Dr APJ Abdul Kalam Memorial Academy at No 1/2 Baruahgarh, were reportedly targeted by thieves.

Electric fans, water pumps, utensils and other essential items were allegedly stolen from the institutions.

Acting on information that stolen articles had been concealed in an isolated area surrounded by vegetation at Madhupur under Dalgao

Police Station, a police team conducted a search operation and recovered a cache of suspected stolen property covered with a tarpaulin.

The recovered items included seven computer monitors, five CPUs, four printers, a UPS, a solar CPU, a projector set, three computer keyboards, two wall-mounted fans and a speaker.

Police suspect that some of the articles may be linked to the recent thefts reported from educational institutions in the area.

During the operation, a vehicle approaching the spot reportedly stopped after its driver noticed the police team.

Taking advantage of the darkness, the driver fled from the scene.

Police subsequently seized the vehicle bearing registration number AS12Y6561 along with the suspected stolen articles, following due legal procedure.

In another breakthrough, police recovered several stolen items that

had allegedly been sold to a scrap dealer.

Acting on the information, Dalgao Police recovered the articles and arrested two persons suspected of involvement in the thefts.

The accused were produced before a court and subsequently remanded in judicial custody. The scrap dealer, however, remains absconding.

Dalgao Police Station Officer-in-Charge Nipu Kalita said theft and burglary incidents had increased in recent days and warned that those involved would not be spared.

The latest recovery is expected to provide important leads in the investigation into the series of thefts.

Local residents have meanwhile expressed concern over the incidents and urged the authorities to intensify night patrolling and strengthen security measures around educational institutions in the area.

Nagaon meeting focuses on preventing child marriage

HT Correspondent

NAGAON, Aug 12: An inter-departmental meeting was held at the conference hall of the Nagaon District Commissioner's Office on Wednesday to strengthen ongoing efforts towards making Assam free of child marriage. The meeting focused on enforcement of the legal provisions and penalties under the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006, besides reviewing measures for prevention and timely intervention in cases of child marriage.

Officials discussed the roles and responsibilities of Child Marriage Prohibition Officers, with emphasis on prompt reporting, verification of information and immediate follow-up action on complaints and suspected cases. The meeting also stressed the need for effective coordination among the District Child Protection Officer, Child Marriage Prohibition Officers, police, Block Development Officers and village-level stakeholders to strengthen preventive mechanisms.

Participants highlighted the importance of intensifying awareness campaigns at the grassroots level, maintaining special vigilance in rural and vulnerable areas and activating village-level committees to identify and prevent child marriages.

The meeting was attended by Assistant Commissioner Shikha Nath, Deputy Superintendent of Police Paramita Sarkar, District Child Protection Officer Anjali Arya, BDOs from all development blocks of the district, officials of the District Child Protection Unit and representatives of NGOs NEAID and Kushi Lok Mancha. A special initiative of the Union Ministry of Women and Child Development was also discussed.

Under the initiative, villages reporting no FIR or complaint related to child marriage during a specified period may be declared "Child Marriage Free Villages" following due verification. The meeting concluded with participants reaffirming their commitment to strengthening community participation, ensuring timely intervention and maintaining continuous monitoring to eliminate child marriage from Nagaon and contribute towards making Assam a child marriage-free state.

NFR revises train services amid restoration work in Lumding-Badarpur section

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Aug 12: Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR) has announced further changes in train services amid ongoing restoration work near New Harangajao station following the settlement of railway tracks on Line-1 and Line-2.

Train operations over the Lumding-Badarpur Hill Section are currently being maintained through Line-3 with enhanced safety measures, NFR said.

Train No 15615 Guwahati-Silchar Express, scheduled to commence its journey on August 13, has been cancelled. Its return service, Train No 15616 Silchar-Guwahati Express, commencing journey on August 14, has also been cancelled.

Several other trains have been rescheduled.

Train No 15650 Narangi-Agartala Express on August 13 will depart from Narangi at 10.30 pm, while Train No 15649 Agartala-Narangi Express will depart from Agartala at 11.30 pm.

Train No 15609 Guwahati-Sairang Express will depart from Guwahati at 11.30 pm, while Train No 15610 Sairang-Guwahati Express will depart from Sairang at 9.30 pm, both on August 13.

Train No 15611 Rangia-Silchar Express will depart from Rangia at 11.30 pm on August 13.

Train No 15612 Silchar-Rangia Express will depart from Silchar at 5 am on August 14.

Train No 14619 Agartala-Firozpur Express scheduled for August 13 has been rescheduled to depart from Agartala at 11 pm.

Train No 15608 Silchar-Thiruvananthapuram Express will depart from Silchar at 4.10 am on August 14.

Meanwhile, Train No 12503 SMVT Bengaluru-Agartala Express, commencing its journey on August 11, will be regulated suitably en route.

NFR said the changes have been necessitated by the ongoing restoration work and are part of measures to ensure safe train operations through the affected section.

Baksa, Tamulpur academic councils donate ₹5 lakh to CM Relief Fund

HT Correspondent

BAKSA, Aug 12: The Baksa and Tamulpur District Academic Councils have contributed ₹5 lakh to the Chief Minister's Relief Fund, Assam, to support relief and rehabilitation efforts for flood-affected people in the state.

Of the total contribution, ₹3.70 lakh was donated by the Baksa District Academic Council, while ₹1.30 lakh was contributed by the Tamulpur District Academic Council.

A delegation of the two academic councils presented the cheque to Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Wednesday in the presence of Assam Legislative Assembly Speaker Ranjeet Kumar Dass.

The delegation comprised Dr Ranish Ch Ramchary, working president of the Baksa District Academic Council; Lakshwar Talukdar, general secretary of the Baksa District Academic Council; Umesh Das, general secretary of the Tamulpur District Academic Council and Tapeswar Kalita, headmaster of Magurmari Kalbari High School.

The contribution was raised from teaching and non-teaching staff of schools in Baksa and Tamulpur districts as a gesture of solidarity with people affected by the ongoing flood situation.

A member of the academic councils said the contribution was a small effort to extend support to the government's relief initiatives and expressed hope that the flood situation in Assam would improve soon.

Scooty rally held in Morigaon under 'Har Ghar Tiranga' campaign

HT Correspondent

MORIGAON, Aug 12: A scooty rally was organised in Morigaon recently by the Assam State Rural Livelihood Mission (ASRLM) under the aegis of the District Administration as part of the 'Har Ghar Tiranga 2026' campaign and to commemorate 150 years of 'Vande Mataram'.

Morigaon District Commissioner Srishti Singh, IAS, flagged off the rally from the Circuit House.

The rally passed through Morigaon College before culminating at Basnaghat.

District Development Commissioner Orpah Baglari, ACS, along with Additional District Commissioners, Assistant Commissioners, ASRLM's District Project Manager, Block Coordinators and other district administration officials were present during the programme.

He stressed the need to develop it as a resource-rich, modern and accessible centre of knowledge, research and intellectual development.

Rajkhawia emphasised the importance of providing quality books, research resources and modern digital materials, besides maintaining a peaceful and conducive environment for students.

He also called for identifying and addressing shortcomings in li-

National Librarian's Day observed at AAU

HT Correspondent

JORHAT, Aug 12: National Librarian's Day was observed at the Reverend BM Pugh Library of Assam Agricultural University (AAU), Jorhat, recently to commemorate the birth anniversary of Dr S R Ranganathan, regarded as the Father of Library Science.

The programme began with an introductory address by Acting Chief Librarian Uday Konwar.

Addressing the gathering as chief guest, AAU Vice-Chancellor Dr Dipjyoti Rajkhawia described the library as a key foundation of the university's academic and research environment.

He stressed the need to develop it as a resource-rich, modern and accessible centre of knowledge, research and intellectual development.

Rajkhawia emphasised the importance of providing quality books, research resources and modern digital materials, besides maintaining a peaceful and conducive environment for students.

He also called for identifying and addressing shortcomings in li-

brary services at the earliest.

He said dedicated and committed performance by employees would strengthen every institution of the university, including the library and appreciated the services rendered by its officers and staff.

AAU Comptroller and former Chief Librarian Dr Chandan Hazarika described the library as the "heart" of a university.

He said modern university libraries had evolved beyond being repositories of books into dynamic centres of knowledge, information and intellectual resources.

Hazarika stressed the need to strengthen traditional library services through database development, greater use of digital information resources and modern technologies.

He also called for establishing an institutional repository to preserve the university's research, publications and other intellectual resources and make them accessible globally.

Agricultural scientist Dr Prasanna Kumar Pathak empha-

sised the need for a stable, peaceful and pleasant library environment and adequate availability of books and information resources based on students' requirements.

Director of Postgraduate Studies Dr Anup Kumar Das called for making library services more open, accessible and user-friendly in the face of rapid technological advancement.

He said libraries needed to move beyond traditional boundaries and adapt to emerging technologies.

Former Deputy Librarian Hemanta Gogoi and senior staff members Bakul Bora and Pratibha Jaiswal also spoke on the occasion.

Dr Mrinal Saikia, Officer on Special Duty to the Vice-Chancellor; Dr Sanjay Kumar Chetia, Director of Research (Agriculture); Dr Manoranjan Neog, Director of Extension Education; Dr Bidyut Kumar Sarma, Director, DBT and Dr Pankaj Barua, Acting Director of Physical Plant, were among those present.

NGO promotes elephant-resistant crops among farmers in conflict-prone areas of Assam

Alternative crops offer tool to reduce economic losses from HEC

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Aug 12: Promoting crops that are less attractive to wild elephants can be an effective strategy to mitigate human-elephant conflict (HEC) and reduce recurring economic losses faced by farming communities in conflict-prone areas.

Wild elephants frequently raid traditional crops such as paddy, sugarcane and several horticultural crops cultivated near human settlements.

Encouraging farmers to adopt alternative crops that are less palatable to elephants can therefore help minimise crop damage while providing an additional source of livelihood.

Research-driven biodiversity conservation organisation Aaranyak has been promoting such alternative crops among farming communities in HEC-affected areas of Udalguri, Baksa and Tamulpur districts.

Under the initiative, Aaranyak has so far distributed 12,625 chilli and lemon saplings, 9,036 kg of roots and rhizomes, including taro, ginger and turmeric, 800 kg of seeds such as rapeseed, niger, coriander and sesame, and 39 kg of mushroom spawn among villagers in HEC-prone areas of the three districts.

In Udalguri district, the initiative has covered villages including Amlaiguri, Amjuli, Badlapara, Bansipur, Barbari Pathar, No 2 Dimakuchi, Garuajhar, Kundarbill, Mainao-



phuri, Mwinaguri, Nepaligaon, No 1 Amjuli, No 1 Sathgaria, No 2 Bamunjuli, No 2 Jankibasti, No 2 Satgaria, Samrang, Salguri, Tenki Basti, Nonke Sukhla, No 1 Bholatar, No 2 Bholatar, Nonaikhas, Rangapani and Silikh-aguri.

In Baksa, the programme has covered Baganpur, Barikadanga, Borikadonga, Borikadonga (Bhotiyali), Dao-raibari, Jarbasti, Gwijnphuri, Madhupur, Mainoguri, No

2 Simlabari, Bhutankhuti and Sibrubari.

In Tamulpur, the villages include Abhayapur, Kalibari, Kawli, Kumarpara (Sonmuni) and Mariyampur.

The alternative crops are selected based on factors including their relatively low palatability to elephants, suitability to local agro-climatic conditions, market demand and economic viability.

The crop basket includes ginger, turmeric and taro, besides chilli, coriander, sesame, rapeseed, sunn hemp and other locally suitable high-value crops.

According to the initiative, rhizomatous crops such as ginger, turmeric and taro are rarely consumed by elephants, resulting in lower crop losses during elephant depredation.

As their yields develop below the ground, the crops are also less vulnerable to damage caused when elephants move through fields compared to crops such as paddy and maize, which are highly susceptible to feeding and trampling.

The crops also have steady demand in local markets, enabling farmers to sell their produce without relying heavily on distant market networks.

Their relatively higher returns per unit area compared to conventional cereals further make alternative cropping a potentially viable strategy for reducing livelihood risks in human-elephant conflict landscapes.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

Progress might have been alright once, but it has gone on too long. -Ogden Nash

8th post-Independence census

India's eighth post-Independence census of 2027, coming after a gap of almost 16 years, assumes a great importance in the country's political system as it will lift the long-standing freeze on redrawing Parliamentary boundaries. The census report will provide the official population data required under Article 82 of the Indian Constitution to lift the freeze. The census will enable the government and the election commission to formally readjust Lok Sabha and state assembly seats. The census will help draw fresh federal power balances, and act as the legal trigger to implement the women's reservation mandate. The country's 84th Constitutional Amendment froze seat allocations based on the 1971 census until the first census after 2026, making the upcoming 2027 headcount the legal baseline to restart the process. The Article 82 mandate requires Parliament to establish a fresh Delimitation Act after the census data is published to readjust seat counts across and within states. It will have a big impact on seat reservation for women. The 106th Constitutional Amendment ties the rollout of one-third reservation for women in the Lok Sabha and state assemblies directly to the first delimitation conducted after the post-2026 census.

The latest census is expected to bring about regional power shifts with risks of altering the federal balance by potentially increasing representation for northern and central states with higher population growth, while limiting relative gains in southern states that have stabilized population. It will impact reserved constituencies updating the exact boundaries and numbers of Scheduled Caste (SC) and Scheduled Tribe (ST) seats based on their revised proportional populations. Reallocating Lok Sabha seats based on pure population numbers will reduce the relative legislative weight of southern and western states. Any national ruling party heavily reliant on the Hindi heartland stands to gain a larger share of total parliament seats, while parties with localized southern strongholds face diminished leverage. The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), having strong presence in the populous Hindi heartland, will probably be the biggest gainer of the delimitation process.

However, the exercise may lead to federal frictions as it risks deepening political tensions between northern and southern states over resource distribution, representation, and cooperative federalism. India exhibits a stark North-South demographic divide. Northern Hindi heartland states experience high population growth well above the national average (around 0.8 percent to 1.4 percent annually), led by Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. In contrast, southern states show low growth rates well below the national average, approaching near-stabilization. However, operational gaps, human error, and the unprecedented delay of the decennial count—leaving a 16-year gap since the last full census in 2011—have raised contemporary challenges regarding real-time accuracy.

Independence Day: Assam's sacrifices and resolutions for the future

By: Lalit Nath

Independence Day is a significant national festival of India. On August 15, 1947, India gained independence from British rule. This day remains unforgettable for the nation, as citizens remember the struggles and challenges of the freedom movement. On this day, Indians gather with humble reverence and deep gratitude to honour the brave sons and daughters who sacrificed their lives for the motherland. Mahatma Gandhi's powerful principle of non-violence united people across the country during the long journey to freedom. Beyond paying tribute to the freedom fighters, the objectives of this day include remembering key historical sites of the movement and committing to preserving the nation's sovereignty while pursuing all-around progress in the future.

The people of Assam also celebrate this day with enthusiasm and fervor, reflecting on their heritage, culture, and glorious history of struggle. Assam's journey toward freedom is not merely a struggle for liberation from colonial rule, but an ongoing quest for social justice, economic prosperity, and cultural unity. This journey is built on a blend of past sacrifices, present challenges and future resolve. Standing at this auspicious moment in 2026, it is the responsibility of every citizen to reflect on the glorious past, understand the complex challenges of the present and make firm pledges for the future.

Assam's history in the freedom struggle is glorious and inspiring. It began with the Ahom Revolt of 1828, when Gomdhar Konwar and Pioli Phukan raised an armed resistance against British rule. Later, during the First War of Independence in 1857, Maniram Dewan, Pioli Baruah, Kandarpeswar Singha and their associates fought steadfastly against the British and ascended the gallows. Their sacrifices ignited the spark of freedom in the hearts of the Assamese people and inspired subsequent generations to walk the path of struggle. In the Quit India Movement of 1942, the heroes and heroines of Assam added a new dimension to the collective struggle, securing a prominent place on the national stage. The supreme sacrifices of Kanaklata Baruah, Bhogeswari Phukanani, Mukunda Kakati and Kushal Konwar have rendered Assam's freedom struggle immortal. In particular, the 14-year-old girl Kanaklata Baruah sacrificed her life to British bullets while at-

tempting to hoist the national flag at the Gahpur police station. Her martyrdom etched Assam's contribution in golden letters in the history of national independence. However, even after 79 years of independence, reaching 2026, Assam's journey remains fraught with challenges. Natural disasters like annual floods and riverbank erosion continue to paralyze the rural economy, agriculture and daily life. The lack of clean drinking water, quality education and adequate healthcare in rural areas remains a serious concern. Poverty, unemployment and malnutrition continue to distress many families. Furthermore, incidents of violence against women, gender inequality and communal intolerance disrupt the stability of both rural and urban societies. Social and economic restructuring is urgently needed to achieve a lasting solution to these issues.

In this context, Mahatma Gandhi's moral ideals, his vision of Ramrajya and his philosophy of building a justice-based society remain profoundly relevant. His principles of self-reliance, equality and non-violence can guide the path to rural development. To strengthen the rural economy, emphasis should be placed on utilizing local resources, promoting cottage industries, upholding the dignity of labour and improving educational standards. Additionally, promoting women's empowerment and communal harmony will help reduce gender discrimination and social intolerance. Inspired by Gandhi's simple living and ideals of social justice, these problems can be resolved by building awareness and a spirit of cooperation at the local level.

As practical steps, local Panchayats must be empowered with greater responsibilities, skill development programs for women should be expanded and access to clean water and healthcare services must be broadened. Following Gandhi's path and awakening self-reliance and mutual cooperation among rural communities can help build a fair and prosperous society. Gandhi's vision of Ramrajya embodies non-violence, tolerance, love and the welfare of the underprivileged. In his view, when the wealthy use their resources for the benefit of the needy, social disparities diminish. Yet, in Assam today, certain incidents of communalism, violence, and intolerance continue to pull us away from Gandhi's ideals. Following his philosophy is essential to guiding Assam's ongoing journey of free-

dom toward social harmony and justice. While social issues present obstacles to progress, the advances Assam has made in science, technology and education open up promising new avenues. Educational institutions such as IIT Guwahati and AIIMS are steering the youth toward new horizons. Assam has also taken fresh steps in agricultural research, organic farming and environmental conservation. Government initiatives like Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao, Assam Mala, and Chief Minister's Samagra Gramya Unnayan Yojana play a vital role in developing rural infrastructure. However, ensuring that the benefits of this progress reach all strata of society requires greater transparency and sensitivity. Sustainable development can be achieved by responsibly utilizing Assam's abundant natural resources, rich biodiversity and vibrant cultural heritage, paving the way for balanced, long-term growth for everyone.

The courage of Kanaklata Baruah and the sacrifice of Bhogeswari Phukanani have added glory to Assam's history of struggle. Today, athletes like Hima Das and Uma Chetry, along with young icons like Lovlina Borgohain, have brought pride to Assam on the global stage. Women in Assam are also establishing strong identities in education, health, politics and the arts. Nevertheless, the rising incidents of violence against women remain deeply concerning. Preserving the honor, dignity and freedom of women calls for both heightened social awareness and strict legal enforcement by the administration.

As the famous French philosopher Albert Camus remarked, "Freedom is nothing but a chance to be better." On this Independence Day in 2025-26, every citizen of Assam must resolve to unite in combating poverty, ignorance, illiteracy, unemployment, violence and discrimination.

At this sacred moment of independence, let us pay rich tribute to Assam's diverse culture and pledge to move forward on the path of tolerance, unity, mutual harmony and brotherhood. Our goal must be an advanced and prosperous Assam built on good governance, social justice and human values. Carrying Gandhi's ideals and the glorious legacy of our freedom struggle in our hearts, let us—the people of Assam—promise to build a happy, prosperous, self-reliant, and harmonious state through social justice, economic progress, and cultural unity.

Clause Six and Assam's identity

The signing of the historic Assam Accord on August 15, 1985, marked the culmination of a turbulent, six-year mass agitation led by regional student bodies, notably the All Assam Students' Union and the All Assam Gana Sangram Parishad, against the unchecked influx of illegal immigrants that threatened to fundamentally alter the demographic, cultural, and political landscape of India's northeastern frontier. At the heart of this hard-fought peace accord lay Clause Six, a provision pregnant with profound historical responsibility, promising constitutional, legislative, and administrative safeguards to protect, preserve, and promote the cultural, social, linguistic identity, and heritage of the indigenous people of Assam. For decades, this clause remained a largely unfulfilled promise, functioning as a flickering beacon of hope for a regional populace grappling with deep-seated anxieties regarding ethnic marginalization, linguistic dilution, and the steady erosion of ancestral land rights. The core anxiety driving the historic Assam Movement was never merely economic or xenophobic; it was an existential defense of an indigenous way of life that genuinely feared being swamped by unmonitored demographic shifts across porous international borders. Over the years, successive governments grappled with the immense complexities of translating this broad political commitment into enforceable legal realities, often bogged down by highly contentious debates over who precisely constituted the indigenous populace and how far the state could legally go in carving out special protective measures without running afoul of constitutional principles of equality, non-discrimination, and freedom of movement. The true significance of Clause Six lies precisely in its constitutional recognition that Assam represents a unique and fragile civilizational mosaic, characterized by a delicate coexistence of diverse tribal and non-tribal indigenous communities whose ancient linguistic roots and rich cultural heritage require special affirmative instruments to survive and flourish in an increasingly homogenized national mainstream. Consequently, untangling the historical threads of the Assam Accord requires acknowledging that identity preservation is not an insular or exclusionary political impulse, but rather a legitimate constitutional imperative designed to protect a distinct cultural borderland that forms an integral, vibrant strand of India's pluralistic federal tapestry, thereby elevating the fulfillment of Clause Six into an ultimate test of institutional empathy, statecraft, and historical justice for the indigenous communities who shaped the destiny of the Brahmaputra and Barak valleys.

The long-stalled journey toward realizing the objectives of Clause Six gained a definitive structural blueprint with the formation of a High-Level Committee by the Union Ministry of



Home Affairs in February 2020, chaired by retired Gauhati High Court judge Justice Biplab Kumar Sharma. Tasked with the formidable responsibility of defining the "Assamese people"



DEGREE OF THOUGHT
By: Himangshu Ranjan Bhuyan

safeguards. Navigating through decades of historical settlements and legal cut-off dates, the panel proposed that the definition should encompass all Indian citizens who are part of the indigenous tribal communities of Assam, or members of other indigenous communities residing in the territory of Assam on or before January 1, 1951, along with their descendants. This cut-off date served as a rational historical anchor, distinguishing long-standing indigenous populations from subsequent waves of migration. Beyond this vital definition, the committee's sixty-seven recommendations were systematically categorized into measures that could be executed independently by the state government, those requiring central legislative action, and those demanding joint implementation. These proposals encompassed wide-ranging domains, including the creation of special revenue circles to restrict land ownership and transfer strictly to indigenous people, extensive reservations in state government jobs, provisions for linguistic secu-

rity such as making Assamese a compulsory school subject and issuing bilingual government documents, and structural safeguards like establishing an upper house or legislative council. By methodologically addressing land rights, language promotion, and institutional autonomy for cultural bodies like the neo-Vaishnavite Sattras, the Justice Biplab Kumar Sharma Committee report provided a holistic framework that bridged historical grievances with practical governance mechanisms, transforming an abstract political clause into a tangible blueprint for identity protection.

The implementation landscape underwent a remarkable transformation when the Assam government and key regional stakeholders, particularly the All Assam Students' Union, reached a decisive consensus on a vast majority of the state-level recommendations forwarded by the high-level committee. Through structured rounds of deliberations, political leadership and student representatives successfully categorized the recommendations, revealing that a substantial portion—spanning over forty specific actionable points—fell squarely within the legislative and administrative competence of the state government. This political breakthrough provided a fresh and much-needed impetus to a process that had long suffered from bureaucratic inertia and political procrastination. Among the most critical state-level measures currently being operationalized are institutional frameworks for safeguarding indigenous land rights, which involve designating specialized revenue circles where land alienation to non-indigenous entities is legally restricted, alongside comprehensive survey initiatives in sensitive riverine and char areas to prioritize land allocation to erosion-affected indigenous families. Furthermore, concrete steps have been initiated to strengthen linguistic and cultural security, ensuring that Assamese and

other regional indigenous languages receive mandatory prominence in educational institutions, administrative communication, and public documentation. The state government's commitment to establishing autonomous developmental boards for traditional cultural institutions like the ancient Sattras and building multi-purpose cultural complexes across every district reflects a concerted effort to institutionalize heritage preservation. By prioritizing these actionable state-level deliverables, the administration has demonstrated a pragmatic willingness to build mutual trust and deliver tangible results without waiting for the more complex constitutional hurdles to clear. This localized execution strategy not only validates the enduring spirit of the Assam Accord but also proves that regional identity protection can be effectively harmonized with modern developmental governance when political will matches the genuine aspirations of the indigenous populace.

Despite the significant headway achieved on state-competence recommendations, the ultimate realization of Clause Six remains intricately tethered to resolving several complex, politically sensitive items that require direct central intervention, constitutional amendments, and parliamentary consensus. A notable subset of the high-level committee's proposals—encompassing extensive reservations ranging from eighty to one hundred percent for indigenous people in parliamentary and state assembly seats, local government bodies, and premier public sector employment, alongside proposals for creating a legislative council or upper house—lies entirely outside the jurisdiction of the state legislature. These measures touch upon delicate constitutional questions regarding fundamental rights, federal structures, and legislative competence, necessitating rigorous tripartite dialogues among the state government, central authorities, and regional representative bodies like the All Assam Students' Union. Navigating these constitutional dimensions requires a delicate balancing act that honors the solemn promises of the 1985 Accord while upholding the overarching architecture of the Indian Constitution. Furthermore, the interplay between Clause Six safeguards and existing legal frameworks, such as the National Register of Citizens and the Citizenship Amendment Act, introduces layers of administrative and judicial complexity that demand careful, transparent calibration. Yet, the steady momentum witnessed in recent months underscores a growing political maturity among all stakeholders, shifting the discourse from perpetual confrontation to constructive, time-bound negotiation. As Assam continues to navigate its unique demographic and cultural realities, the steadfast implementation of Clause Six stands as a moral and political imperative. Successfully bridging the gap between state-level administrative safeguards and central constitutional amendments will not only fulfill a historic promise made four decades ago but will also cement the enduring protection of Assam's pluralistic, indigenous identity for generations to come.

Finding purpose in a finite world

DEGREE OF THOUGHT
By: Satyabrata Borah

Human life unfolds as a quiet wonder, an uncharted journey that comes without a blueprint, a compass, or a guaranteed destination. Every single one of us feels, at one point or another, the breathtaking brevity of our stay on this planet. We arrive in a tiny corner of an endless universe, grow under the sun, taste joy and sorrow, fall in love, fight through hardship, and eventually fade back into the earth from which we came.

Standing against the backdrop of infinity, a deep question echoes in the quiet places of the human heart. What does all of this mean? Why are we here? What is the genuine significance of our presence? If every memory, achievement, and heartbeat eventually dissolves into silence, do our tears, our laughter, our ambitions, and our daily struggles carry any real value?

These inquiries are far from cold academic exercises or abstract mathematical formulas reserved for philosophers. They represent a visceral, universal longing that touches every human soul. In the middle of the night, when the noise of the world settles into stillness, or when we suddenly stand face to face with an overwhelming inner emptiness, these thoughts surface naturally. From ancient times to our modern digital age, humanity has relentlessly searched for answers. Monarchs, thinkers, researchers, poets, and humble workers have all carried this exact same silent curiosity within their chests. It is a shared thread that binds us together regardless of where or when we live.

To understand what it means to exist, we must first recognize that a human being is much more than a biological frame built of bone, blood, and tissue. We are an extraordinary spark of conscious awareness. We possess the unique capacity to think deeply, to feel intensely, to preserve memories of yesterday, and to construct vivid dreams for tomorrow. Unlike trees, rivers, or animals that live strictly according to the instinctual rhythm of nature, we hold the rare ability to step back and question our own existence. We evaluate our choices, judge our actions, and ponder our purpose. This awareness grants us an incredible dignity, though it simultaneously places a heavy emotional responsibility on our shoulders.

According to physical laws, our individual birth might seem like a random cosmic occurrence, but the way we navigate our personal narrative is never a mere series of accidental events. The essence of our presence reveals itself in how we choose to live, how we offer warmth to others, and how we leave an impression on the world around us. Many people fall into the trap of believing that the purpose of living resides in grand achievements, accumulating vast fortunes, reaching the summit of public applause, or carving an indestructible name into the history books. Real life demonstrates again and again that while material wealth and social status offer fleeting moments of comfort or pride, they cannot fill a hollow spirit. Even after acquiring everything the world considers valuable, countless individuals still experience a profound sense of isolation and purposelessness.

Where then does genuine meaning reside? Per-

haps there is no singular, prepackaged answer waiting to be uncovered in some hidden vault. Instead, life resembles a blank canvas, and each person holds a paintbrush, tasked with creating their own colors and shapes. Meaning is not an external object to be found through a treasure hunt. It is an internal realization, something cultivated through daily choices, awareness, and intent.

One of the most potent sources of meaning stems from our connections with other living beings. Human beings are fundamentally incapable of thriving in total isolation. Our lives gain depth when we see a flicker of hope return to someone else's eyes, when we share the weight of another person's grief, or when we find genuine happiness in the success of those around us. Love, empathy, kindness, and compassion are not mere sentimental vocabulary words. They form the foundational pillars of human existence. Extending a helping hand to a stranger, comforting

a grieving friend, or setting aside personal desires to uplift someone else creates a quiet satisfaction that runs far deeper than any external award. When we step outside the narrow boundaries of our own ego and touch the lives of others, our daily path takes on a rich sense of purpose.

Our inherent desire to create and to learn also enriches our journey immensely. The rhythms of life echo through the brushstrokes of an artist, the patience of a farmer planting seeds in rich soil, the precision of an equation solved by a researcher, or the simple act of watching a sunset paint the evening sky in shades of gold and purple. Whenever we absorb a new idea, build something with our hands, or seek out truth, we expand the boundaries of who we are. Every small contribution made with care and passion contributes to the collective story of humanity, moving our shared world forward in subtle yet profound ways.

Living fully does not mean experiencing non-stop happiness or unbroken success. Sorrow, struggle, failure, and physical pain are equally vital components of our existence. It is completely natural to want to avoid suffering, to turn away from heartbreak whenever possible. Difficulties carry a unique power to refine us. Just as raw gold must pass through intense heat to reveal its purity and brilliance, human character reaches maturity through the fires of adversity. Hard times reveal our internal strength, showing us capabilities we never knew we possessed. The resilience required to stand tall after a painful fall, to keep moving forward when hope feels thin, displays the true elegance of the human spirit. Without knowing the sharp edge of grief, we would lack the depth needed to truly appreciate moments of pure joy.

Viewing hardship not as an enemy, but as a necessary part of growth allows us to navigate life with greater wisdom.

An inescapable truth of our condition is our impermanence. Every person alive shares the exact same destination, a point where the physical journey comes to a close. For many, the thought of mortality brings a wave of anxiety and dread. Thinking deeply about our limited time reveals

that impermanence is precisely what gives life its extraordinary value. If we were immortal, today would lose its urgency and charm. We would continuously postpone our conversations, our forgiveness, and our creative pursuits until a tomorrow that never ends. Because our time is strictly finite, every dawn, every shared laughter, every intake of breath carries immense weight. Knowing our days are numbered reminds us not to waste our energy on petty arguments, anger, jealousy, or resentment, urging us instead to live each moment with full presence and appreciation.

Modern society moves at a relentless, exhausting pace. Most people spend their days sprinting toward the next milestone, chasing advanced degrees, prestigious careers, larger homes, luxury vehicles, and social validation. In this perpetual race toward the future, we frequently forget to taste the present. We consume our energy dwelling on past regrets or worrying about future uncertainties, allowing the current moment to slide right through our fingers. Existing in the fullest sense happens only in the immediate present. We cannot alter the events that lie behind us, and no one can guarantee what tomorrow will bring. Practicing gentle awareness, breathing deeply, and noticing the quiet beauty of ordinary things brings an immediate freshness to our days.

Finding meaning does not require performing grand feats that command global attention. A mother raising her child with patient devotion, a teacher patiently explaining a concept to a struggling student, a healthcare worker offering comfort to a sick patient, or a kind stranger leaving food for a stray animal on a cold evening all embody the true beauty of existence. Any action performed with sincerity, honesty, and affection carries a quiet holiness.

Our world is vast and wildly diverse. Among the billions of people sharing this planet, every individual carries an entirely unique history, filled with personal battles, quiet triumphs, and distinct perspectives.

Comparing our trajectory to someone else's is a trap that generates unnecessary heartache and envy. No two paths are identical. True peace arrives when we stop measuring our worth against the achievements of others and focus instead on our own growth. The real question is whether we are slightly kinder, wiser, and more grounded today than we were yesterday. Accepting our personal truths, recognizing our limitations while celebrating our strengths, and working consistently to cultivate good character provides a lasting sense of fulfillment.

Our search for meaning is not a puzzle with a final, rigid answer that closes the book once and for all. It is an ongoing conversation, an evolving art form, and a continuous process. Life does not hand us a pre-written script; we write the script through the way we choose to respond to each day. Bringing hope to a discouraged heart, offering a warm smile to a stranger, marveling at the natural world, standing firm during storms of sorrow, and treating each morning as a precious gift constitutes the true substance of living. We will not walk this earth forever, but during the time we are given, filling our days with love, compassion, truth, and simple wonder is the most beautiful answer we can possibly offer to the gift of existence.

By

Every Day is a gift. Recognize it, however, deeper significance is not simple. In Gujarat, species are disappearing, and the loss of biodiversity is a global concern.

The story of the world is a tapestry of diverse cultures and languages. The loss of any one thread would weaken the entire fabric.

There is a profound truth in the words of the ancient sages: "The greatest of all teachers is the world." The world is our classroom, and every experience is a lesson.

These are the lessons that shape our character and define our humanity. Let us embrace the world with an open heart and a curious mind.

For the challenge of life is not to avoid suffering, but to find meaning in it. The path to happiness lies in the journey, not in the destination.

The world is a beautiful and complex place. It is a place of endless possibilities and infinite wonder. Let us cherish every moment and strive to make the most of our lives.

Butterflies are on the move as the planet warms: New research

By: Shawan Chowdhury

Imagine spotting a butterfly species in your garden you have never seen before. You might take a photo and upload it to a citizen science app, or tell a local nature group about your new encounter. It feels like a small moment of joy.

But if that butterfly has appeared in your backyard because its old home is becoming too hot, too dry or too damaged, the sighting is more worrying.

Around the world, ongoing environmental changes are prompting many butterfly species to relocate and search for new homes, a process referred to as species range shifts or species redistribution. As temperatures, rainfall and habitats change, butterflies can relocate over long distances, or even move vertically up and down mountain ranges.

Our new global study found one in ten known butterfly species has already shifted in range. So, where are they going – and why?

How do we know butterflies are on the move?

The data used in our global study was comprehensive: more than 6,180 reports of butterfly range shift from 565 studies and 68 expert assessments, which covered 1,758 species across 105 countries.

These showed 80% of the documented butterfly species had expanded their ranges latitudinally, meaning north to south, or longitudinally, meaning east to west. We found 27% had reduced their range and 22% had shifted up or down slopes on hills or mountains. Many species showed a combination of these range changes.

The public narrative is often



simply: as the world warms, species are shifting towards cooler temperatures at higher latitudes, or moving upwards in mountains. This is happening, but it is only one piece of the puzzle.

In fact, butterflies need more than to find new homes at the right temperature. Caterpillars often depend on specific host plants; adults need nectar, shelter and safe places to breed; and populations also require connected habitats so individuals can move easily through the landscape, meet, reproduce and breed.

Change can come quickly

Some species show how fast changes can happen. The tawny coster (*Acraea terpsicore*) native to the Indian subcontinent, has expanded through Southeast Asia and into Australia. In Brazil, (*Godartiana byses*) has expanded from Rio de Janeiro and Bahia into São Paulo, a shift linked to climate warming.

Other species show the opposite pattern. The small blue (*Cupido minimus*) has lost 40% of its habi-

tat in the United Kingdom over the past 150 years. In Germany, the cranberry fritillary (*Boloria aquilona*) has lost much of its original habitat because of bog drainage. In Romania, an increase in farming has been linked to a severe range contraction of the danube clouded yellow (*Colias myrmidone*).

Even range shifts along mountain slopes are not always straightforward. In Mexico, the painted lady (*Vanessa cardui*) shifted upslope at a rate of about 83 metres per year between 1988 and 2011. Over the same period, the queen butterfly (*Danaus gilippus*) shifted downslope at a rate of about 32m per year.

Together, these examples show butterfly species range shifts are not simply a story of animals moving towards the poles.

What's causing this change?

In our study, climate change and extreme weather events were the most common reasons why butterflies shifted their range. But climate change is not the only factor.

Agriculture, forestry, urban development and habitat destruction are also reshaping where butterflies can live and reproduce. These disturbances destroy host plants and breeding sites, and fragment large habitats into patches too small to sustain a healthy population.

Europe and North America have many long-term butterfly monitoring programs, run by expert volunteers and citizen scientists. We found that in some European countries, range shifts have been documented for more than half the national butterfly species. But in most countries, records exist for fewer than 10% of known butterfly species.

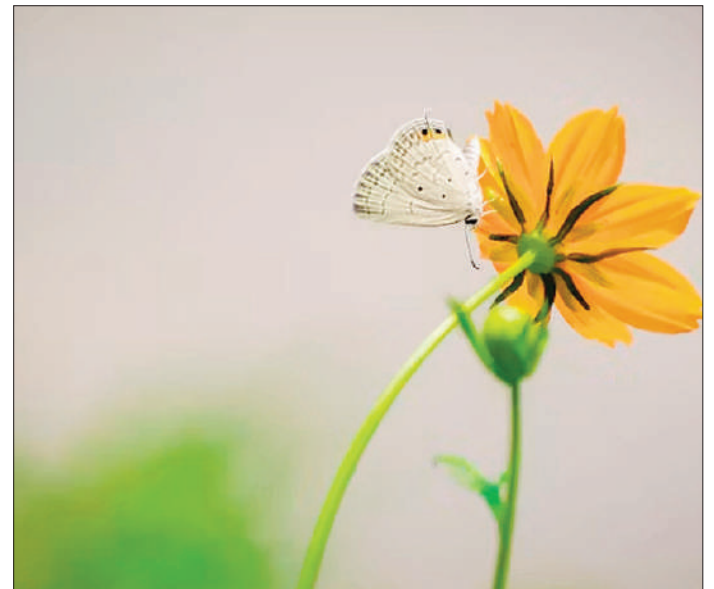
We know the least about butterflies in Central Africa, Southeast Asia, New Guinea and the Amazon Basin, some of the richest places on Earth for biodiversity. They are also places where many species may already live close to their upper thermal limits. Even small increases in temperature can make parts of their habitat unsuitable.

Supporting experts and volunteers to develop citizen science monitoring programs would better protect butterflies in these megadiverse countries.

Why this matters

Why should people care? Butterflies are part of the living fabric around us. Adult butterflies contribute to pollination. Caterpillars feed birds, spiders and other insects. When butterflies disappear, it can signal the plants, grasslands or woodlands once visited by butterflies are also changing.

This matters for conservation. Many protected areas are based on maps of where species lived in the past. But if butterflies and other species are moving, those maps quickly become outdated. The message is simple. Conservation cannot only protect habitats where species once lived – it must include the places where they will relocate, and the wildlife corridors they will use to get there. If not, we may keep protecting yesterday's nature while tomorrow's nature has nowhere left to go. (Courtesy: *The Conversation*)



Why the cauvery dispute needs science, trust and ecological renewal

By: BK Singh

The dispute between Karnataka and Tamil Nadu over the sharing of Cauvery water is a hundred years old. The Cauvery Water Management Authority (CWMA) ordered Karnataka on 28 July to release 3,500 cusecs of water every day for fifteen days. Billigundlu, a water-measuring station in Tamil Nadu, records the outflow from Karnataka. The CWMA was constituted by the Supreme Court in 2018 to oversee the implementation of the Cauvery Tribunal Award. The long-pending dispute was resolved by the Supreme Court in 2018, allocating 404.25 TMC to Tamil Nadu, 284.75 TMC to Karnataka, 30 TMC to Kerala and 7 TMC to Puducherry. In the same order, the Supreme Court also recognised 740 TMC per year as the drinking water requirement for Bengaluru. Due to deficient rainfall during June and July this year, Karnataka's reservoirs were 65.6% below the 30-year average level by the end of July. Karnataka moved the CWMA again, arguing that releasing water at this stage would jeopardise the water supply required for drinking purposes up to June 2027. The State argued that Tamil Nadu had already benefited from the earlier releases of water and would soon receive the North-East Monsoon. It further added that maintaining a flow of 3,500 cusecs would require a release of 7,000 cusecs from the upper reservoirs, considering the dry conditions of the riverbeds and transmission losses. Tamil Nadu opposed the move and charged Karnataka with not sharing the distress-sharing formula. The CWMA rejected Karnataka's submission and directed it to continue releasing water according to the 28 July order. However, due to the sudden revival of the monsoon in early August, the four reservoirs, namely Krishna Raj Sagar, Hemavati, Kabini and Harangi, in the Cauvery basin are receiving an inflow of 81,000 cusecs of water a day. In view of this, the Karnataka Government conducted a meeting of representatives of all political parties and decided to comply with the direction of the CWMA. Despite this, Tamil Nadu is knocking on the doors of the Supreme Court. The overall drought situation in Karnataka is quite severe. Mandya farmers are protesting over water for agricultural crops. Bengaluru is totally dependent on Cauvery water. Karnataka must present relevant

data on the drought to the Central Government, concerned ministries and authorities. Furthermore, MPs from Karnataka should also raise the issue in Parliament. The Government should aggressively bring the data into the public domain and use back-channel communication to explain the prevailing hydrological conditions within the bureaucracy. A bilateral meeting between the Chief Ministers of the two states would be a welcome step, but it has been put off amid escalating tensions over the Cauvery water-sharing dispute. It is hoped that it materialises soon.

The crisis in Cauvery water sharing has been caused by a steep rainfall deficit in the catchment during the first two months of the south-west monsoon this year. The IMD and WMO have forecast a Super El Niño, which may impact the rainfall pattern from August/September onwards; however, the rainfall deficit during June and July is attributed to local weather conditions. The IMD's forecast covered all regions of the country, but the Western Ghats region of peninsular India has registered a greater rainfall deficit compared with other parts of the country. However, the WMO's latest update predicted the possibility of a positive Indian Ocean Dipole (IOD), which could offset the impact of El Niño. El Niño is a climatic pattern involving the warming of surface waters in the central and eastern tropical Pacific and is linked with a weak monsoon and relatively harsher summers. The IOD is governed by the difference in sea surface temperature between the western and eastern tropical Indian Ocean. A positive IOD helps form stronger monsoon winds and can partly nullify the influence of El Niño. The Cauvery water dispute between Tamil Nadu and Karnataka is a flashpoint in distress years, when reservoir levels are low and riverbeds are dry. In this opinion piece, let me bring out some short-term and some long-term solutions to deal with the issue. Hydrologists are of the view that the principle behind sharing water in distress years is to distribute the shortfall proportionately between the states. In other words, the water received in the basin should be shared proportionately among all stakeholders. The principle is accepted by all, but the difficulty arises when stakeholders question the quantity of the rainfall deficit, reservoir storage, inflows, drinking water requirements, or any other data presented by the other side. A third-party assess-

ment of the data may be acceptable to both sides. Experts have flagged genuine issues and have called for updated studies on siltation in major reservoirs, accurate live storage of water, rainfall, and transparent real-time hydrological data. Any formula worked out on the basis of these data will inspire greater confidence among stakeholders and would be more acceptable. They also add that climate variability has made droughts more frequent. The allocations designed on a monthly schedule and based on a normal monsoon do not work in distress situations. The allocations must be made dynamic and should depend on science-based temporal and spatial data, certified by a third party. Among the several reservoirs in the Cauvery basin, Krishna Raj Sagar, Harangi, Hemavati and Kabini are the main ones, where gates are opened to release water to Tamil Nadu. The catchments of these reservoirs were heavily forested, but, with the passage of time, anthropogenic pressures led to the degradation of forests in the catchments. As a result, large quantities of silt come down through streams and tributaries and get deposited in the reservoirs. The rate of siltation is directly proportional to the loss of tree cover in the catchments. Frequent desilting of the reservoirs is not practical, as dewatering of reservoirs during the summer season is often avoided to save summer crops. A high proportion of the dead storage in the reservoirs contains silt. Continuous deforestation in the catchments will have to be prevented so that their water-holding capacity is not compromised. The current tension between the two states can be resolved by exchanging authentic data, but the long-term solution can come only by preserving the landscape and avoiding changes in the land-use pattern of the catchments. The Cauvery catchments in Karnataka comprise good-quality forests as well as shola forests interspersed with grasslands. Apart from the legal and illegal cutting of trees to satisfy different interests, such as land grabbing and the felling of valuable trees, the grasslands are set on fire every year. Although the fire does not enter the sholas, it scorches all around their periphery. Every year, the sholas shrink, and so does their capacity to hold water. The roots of trees in the sholas act like a sponge and store water during the rainy season. A stream originates from every patch of shola, carrying water downhill to join larger streams and tributaries before finally flowing into rivers. It is these rivers that feed water to the reservoirs. The flow of water in streams originating from the sholas continues even after the end of the rainy season, confirming that the water remains stored in the roots of the trees. As the sholas shrink, the summer flow in the streams depletes. A special drive must be undertaken to prevent fires and conserve the sholas, as well as all other forests in the river catchments. This year's drought has also triggered a war of words between the political parties of the two states. The Karnataka Government is set to revive its Mekedatu Project on the River Cauvery, planned to solve the drinking water problem of Bengaluru city. Tamil Nadu opposes the project, fearing that its share of Cauvery water would decline in future distress years. In my opinion, this project would be an environmental disaster, as 5,000 hectares of dry deciduous forests would have to be sacrificed. The loss of forests would make wildlife homeless and increase human-wildlife conflict. The population density of elephants in the area is quite high; elephants straying into villages would trample people and damage crops, creating an irreversible situation. (Courtesy: *The Pioneer*)



Wildfires can leave surviving homes and their water unsafe — safety tips for residents as they return



By: Andrew J Whelton

When fire evacuation orders are lifted and residents start returning to burned neighborhoods, many people assume "cleared to return" means "safe." It rarely does.

As an environmental engineer who has worked with communities recovering from some of the most destructive wildfires in US history, I have seen the same pattern repeatedly: Families return to still-standing homes, turn on taps without knowing whether plumbing has been contaminated, and view debris removal as the end of recovery when it is often only the midpoint.

While there are many safety concerns after a wildfire like the destructive blazes Spokane, Washington, experienced in August 2026, three deserve particular attention: chemicals in surviving buildings, the safety of drinking water and whether burned lots are ready for rebuilding.

A standing home is not automatically a safe home. Buildings that appear unscathed after a nearby fire may still be unsafe. Smoke, toxic ash and chemicals from burning buildings and vehicles can enter through windows, vents, HVAC systems and other openings.

These contaminants settle in ductwork, walls, carpets and furniture, as well as on clothing, blankets and toys.

They can include lead, which can harm human lungs and children's brain development; arsenic and asbestos, which can cause cancer and damage the respiratory system; and volatile or semi-volatile organic compounds, known as VOCs, which can damage the organs; among other risks. Exposure to each through the air, food or drinking water can harm human health.

The home might seem fine, but contamination like this cannot be reliably identified by sight or smell. That's why, before moving back into a home near where a wildfire burned, owners should consider professional inspections, especially if part of the home or a nearby structure burned.

Inspections should test living spaces, attics, crawlspaces, garages, HVAC systems, ductwork and indoor surfaces for harmful metals, chemicals and other substances. Dust is often tested for lead and other metals, as well as asbestos, while indoor air is often analyzed for volatile organic compounds.

The quality of the testing is critical.

Reviews of wildfire recovery efforts have found instances of inappropriate laboratory methods, incorrect comparison standards and results that could not be properly interpreted. Property owners should ask what contaminants will be tested, where samples will be collected, which analytical methods will be used, how results will be reported and when the report will be delivered.

If tests reveal contamination, remediation work comes next, followed by confirmation testing conducted by an independent firm. Visitors and workers restoring the site must use protective equipment and safe practices to protect their health.

Do not assume the building's water system is safe

Drinking water contamination is one of the least

visible wildfire hazards. A functioning faucet can create a false sense of security.

Fires may damage water systems when firefighting demands and broken pipes cause the system to lose pressure. This can allow smoke, contaminated air or debris to enter pipe networks. Heat from a fire can also damage plastic pipes and plumbing equipment, releasing chemicals into the water supply.

Contaminants such as benzene, which can cause cancer, have been detected in plumbing and water systems after fires at concentrations capable of causing illness through drinking, bathing or showering. Boiling water does not remove these chemicals and may actually increase the chance people will be exposed to them by releasing them into indoor air.

A loss of water pressure, discolored water, melted plastic components or nearby fire damage can signal problems, but the contamination is often invisible, so testing is essential.

Utilities are generally responsible for testing and repairing infrastructure up to the property line and should provide public guidance on water safety.

Property owners are responsible for water safety once it enters the property. That includes pipes, water heaters, irrigation systems and private wells. Even when utility water has been declared safe, contamination can persist inside a building's plumbing.

Tests can look for volatile organic compounds, bacteria and, in some cases, semi-volatile compounds and metals. The samples for testing are commonly collected after water has been stagnant in plumbing for about 72 hours, allowing contaminants to accumulate. Depending on how the home was affected, residents may need to use alternative water sources such as bottled water for drinking, cooking and bathing.

Rural and agricultural water systems require similar attention. Heat-damaged water tanks, troughs and irrigation lines may release chemicals, while smoke or ash can enter through vents. Repairs should be completed by licensed contractors and followed by disinfection and certified testing before the system returns to use. Local health departments have lists of approved water-testing laboratories.

Debris removal is a first step, not a finish line

Removing debris after wildfires burn through a property is only one phase of recovery, and it carries its own risks.

Effective restoration generally involves three steps:

1. Removing major hazards, such as propane tanks, gas cylinders, batteries and damaged vehicles.
2. Removing debris, ash and contaminated surface soils.
3. Testing the soil for contamination after cleanup.

This final step is often overlooked.

A property is not necessarily safe to rebuild on simply because debris trucks are gone. Research after previous wildfires found that up to 34% of properties still contained hazardous contamination, such as heavy metals, even after the debris had been removed and the topsoil scraped away.

To be safe, testing should be overseen by a board-licensed professional engineer or geologist, independent of the debris-removal contractor. A notice that debris removal is complete indicates only that initial cleanup has ended. In many cases, local health departments or environmental agencies must review testing results before rebuilding can proceed.

The bottom line

While many hazards in the days and weeks after a wildfire are invisible, lessons from past events provide a clear path to restoring safety:

- Do not rely on appearance or odor to judge safety.
- Use qualified professionals to evaluate homes, water systems and soils before reoccupying or rebuilding.
- Consult local health departments for guidance and approved testing resources.

Restoring properties to safe use is possible. Following evidence-based guidance can help homeowners manage the process safely and with more certainty of a full recovery. (Courtesy: *Down To Earth*)

Govt offers to hold debate on student protests, oppn rejects proposal

NEW DELHI, Aug 12: The government's efforts for a debate on the students' agitation in the Lok Sabha on the penultimate day of the Monsoon session came to nought with the opposition rejecting Home Minister Amit Shah's proposal for a two-day discussion on the NEET paper leaks and other issues followed by a reply from him.

The fast paced developments -- which finally ended with the House being adjourned for the day -- kicked off with Shah first daring the opposition to submit a formal letter to Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla for a debate. He said he would attend the entire proceedings to address all questions if the discussion begins Wednesday. It was now up to the opposition to decide whether they want to take part in the debate or create turmoil in Parliament, the home minister told reporters in the Parliament House complex minutes after the proceedings of the House began.

"Even today, I say that they should submit a letter to the speaker by 2 pm. We are ready for all kinds of discussions from 3 pm today until 3 pm tomorrow," Shah said, asserting that the government has nothing to hide.

Soon after, Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi turned down the proposal and asserted that the youth want to



know who ordered that "protesting students be shot" at with pellet guns.

He said the opposition was not interested in listening to Shah's imagination and lecture in Parliament. If Shah ordered that students be shot at, he is culpable, and if he did not, he is incompetent, Gandhi said.

"In both the cases he should resign," the Congress leader said. Subsequently, the home minister wrote to the speaker on the matter.

"I want to request you to kindly consult

the opposition. With everyone's consent, allocate as much time needed for the debate. I will sit through the entire discussion and respond to all questions from the opposition during the debate," Shah said.

He also said dialogue and discussions are the only ways to find solutions in a democracy and he has full faith in democracy and democratic institutions. He said the debate should facilitate the views of the opposition and treasury benches on the important issue of students' protests.

But the chaos continued.

When the Lok Sabha reassembled at 3 pm after two adjournments, the noisy opposition protests took off from where they had been stopped. Amid the turmoil, Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju announced in the House that the government was ready to start a debate immediately on the student protest, and Shah had already written to the speaker.

He said the opposition should not run away from the debate when the home minister was ready to answer all their questions.

But the minister's appeal failed to cut ice. Amid the slogan shouting and protests, Jagdambika Pal, who was in the chair, repeatedly urged the opposition to accept the government offer for the debate. His appeal was ignored and the House was adjourned for the day. Rijiju addressed a hurriedly convened press conference after the Lok Sabha was adjourned for the day and said it is "unthinkable and incomprehensible" that the opposition is avoiding a discussion when the government is ready to respond.

"I am totally frustrated and I am seeing for the first time where the government is ready for discussion, the opposition is running away," Rijiju said. (PTI)

'Oppn not interested in Shah's 'lecture' in Parliament'

Must answer who ordered firing at students: Rahul



NEW DELHI, Aug 12: Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi on Wednesday described Home Minister Amit Shah's call for having a discussion on students' protests as a "last-minute" attempt to fill gas in the BJP leader's image "balloon" that had burst, and asserted that the youth want to know who ordered that protesting students be shot at with pellet guns.

Gandhi said the opposition was not interested in listening to Shah's imagination and lecture in Parliament.

The Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha said if Shah ordered that students be shot at, he is culpable, and if he did not, then he is incompetent, and in both the cases he should resign.

Gandhi said Shah's image "balloon" had been deflated and there was a last-ditch attempt to fill gas in it but "the balloon had burst".

The Congress leader's remarks came after Shah said the government is ready to discuss all issues in Parliament, including students' protests.

He said if the Opposition gives it in writing before 2 pm to Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla, discussion can start at 3 pm today till 3 pm tomorrow.

Speaking with reporters, Gandhi said, "(Congress president Mallikarjun) Kharge ji and myself did a press conference and the rest of the opposition has made it clear - we are not interested in listening to Mr. Amit Shah's imagination. We are not interested in him giving us a lecture or a discussion."

"We are interested in one simple thing. When I say we, I mean the younger generation of this country - who shot those students, who gave the order to shoot those students, who blinded one of the students, who shot one of the students in the ear, who gave the order to beat the students with lathis and nails, who gave that order, that order was implemented by the home ministry," the former Congress chief said.

He said the Delhi police and the Rapid Action Force (RAF) are both home ministry systems.

"Did Mr. Amit Shah give the order to shoot our children or did he not, if he did, he should resign because he is culpable, and if he did not, he should resign because he is incompetent," Gandhi said.

He also hit out at journalists for interrupting him and asked whether they do the same when Shah speaks.

Gandhi also asked mediapersons what is so special about the BJP leader that the media stands before him like a "mouse".

The students are not scared and so shouldn't the media, he said.

"We don't care what he has to say. For 20 days he disappeared, he would come and sit here (in Parliament), students should know that 30 cars move around with Amit Shah, there are a thousand policemen outside his residence, so that no child appears there," Gandhi said.

"The (image) balloon has deflated and in a last-minute, he is trying to fill gas again but the balloon has burst. Amit Shah has no courage, the home minister of India has no courage, he cannot come to the House," the Congress leader said.

Gandhi said he has not been silent in the student protest in Jharkhand.

"I have said clearly in my press conference that we do not appreciate any violence against our students. I am not silent, I am saying it openly," he said.

Later sharing the video clip of his remarks on X, Gandhi said, "When a man lacks the courage to speak the truth, his silence speaks for him. Amit Shah's silence is his confession." (PTI)

Abhishek urges LS speaker to decide on disqualification pleas against 20 rebel MPs

NEW DELHI, Aug 12: Trinamool Congress's (TMC) Lok Sabha leader Abhishek Banerjee said on Wednesday that he met Speaker Om Birla in the morning and sought an early decision on the party's pending disqualification petitions against 20 rebel MPs, warning that he would approach the Supreme Court if the speaker fails to act within the period required by law and judicial directions.

Banerjee said he first raised the issue with Birla in June, when the individual disqualification petitions were filed against the MPs, but nearly two months have passed without any satisfactory response.

"I had already raised this issue with the speaker in June, when individual disqualification petitions were moved against each of them. Nearly two months have passed since then, but I have still not received any satisfactory response. Even today, I have been given essentially the same answer, while the petitions remain pending," he told reporters outside Parliament. Banerjee said he is relying on the Supreme Court's directions regarding timely disposal of disqualification petitions by the speaker.

"If the speaker does not decide on these petitions within the period required by law and applicable judicial directions, I will be compelled to approach the Supreme Court and seek its intervention," he said.

Banerjee said he and other TMC MPs have repeatedly taken up the matter with Birla.

"When the House began, around July 23 or July 24, I raised this issue with the speaker. I was asked to submit a specific letter, which was duly submitted by July 26. I, along with Saugata Roy, Kirti Azad and Pratima Mandal, went to follow up on the matter. Despite that, no action has been taken so far," he said.

Banerjee said he again met the speaker along with Roy and other TMC leaders and raised the pending disqualification issue.

He said the 20 MPs were elected on the TMC's "twin-flower" symbol and had contested the Lok Sabha polls with the image of former West Bengal chief minister and party supremo Mamata Banerjee.

"I want to make it clear that these MPs were elected on the Trinamool Congress's twin-flower symbol and fought the election

with Mamata Banerjee's image before the electorate. Now, they have come to Parliament and are openly saying that they support the NDA," he said.

"In such circumstances, I believe the provisions of the 10th Schedule (of the Constitution) must be examined and the question of their disqualification cannot simply be ignored," he added.

The 10th Schedule of the Constitution contains provisions for the disqualification of MPs, MLAs and MLCs on the grounds of political defection.

The TMC had, on June 19, submitted 20 separate petitions to the speaker, seeking disqualification of the MPs after they announced that they had joined the Nationalist Citizens' Party of India (NCPI).

The party has contended that the MPs voluntarily gave up their TMC membership by joining another political formation and that their claim of a merger is not protected under the anti-defection law.

In a separate issue raised with the speaker, Banerjee also questioned the treatment of the rebel MPs as a separate group, without formal recognition. (PTI)

Jharkhand exam stir: Health condition of protesters on hunger strike stable, say officials

RANCHI, Aug 12: The health condition of four student protesters who were on hunger strike over alleged irregularities in recruitment examinations and are undergoing treatment at Sadar Hospital here is stable, officials said on Wednesday.

A core committee member of the JPSC-JSSC Reforms Manch said two protesters, Habiba and Rahul Kranti, who have also been on hunger strike, are undergoing treatment at Sadar Hospital. Habiba was admitted on Tuesday, while Kranti was taken to the hospital on August 7.

Two other protesters, Devendra Nath Mahto and Mahendra Pratap, who were on hunger strike and receiving treatment in the same hospital, are protesting under the banner of JSSC-Chhatra Manch.

"The health condition of all four students is stable. Check-ups and regular monitoring of their health are being done periodically," the deputy superintendent of Sadar Hospital said. He said Mahto was still fasting, but his health condition was stable, while Kranti was taking a liquid diet. Mahto has been on hunger strike for the past 11 days to protest alleged irregularities in recruitment examinations. (PTI)

Will have to first see if there was split in party, says SC



NEW DELHI, Aug 12: The Supreme Court on Wednesday said that it will have to first see whether there had been a split in the Shiv Sena as such a division may originate in the legislature party and the fissure can percolate into the organisation and the primary membership.

The observations were made by a bench comprising Chief Justice Surya Kant and justices Joydip Bagchi and V Mohana Jeyalingam the final hearing on the pleas by the Uddhav Thackeray faction to the Election Commission's decision recognising the Eknath Shinde faction as the original Shiv Sena and allotting it the party's name and the "bow and arrow" symbol.

During the hearing on the fourth day, Justice Bagchi said "First, we have to see whether there is a split. A split may originate in the legislature party, but the fissure can percolate into the organisation and the primary membership."

To this, senior advocate Kapil Sibal, appearing for the Uddhav faction, said, "As a proposition of law, a split in the political party can never arise merely from a split in the legislature party. That has been decided by the Constitution Bench (in a judgement)."

Justice Bagchi said the judgement says that the proposed split cannot be restricted to a split in the legislature party.

"But it does not say that if a split begins in the legislature party and subsequently gets reflected in the organisation and the primary membership, it cannot be considered. It may be the epicentre of a larger split," the judge said.

Sibal said the judgement does not speak of the legislature party. The bench said it needed clarity on this aspect.

"The Shinde group had the support of 11 'Rajya Prabhari'. A Rajya Prabhari is part of the party structure. It is not something outside the Shiv Sena's organisational structure. More importantly, when we consider a political party, we are not concerned only with office-bearers. We also have to consider the primary membership," the bench said.

Sibal questioned the Election Commission's approach in determining whether there was a genuine dispute within the party and whether the faction approaching it had exhausted the internal remedies available under the Shiv Sena's constitution.

He said that the Commission's reasoning effectively required a faction to pursue internal remedies even when the rival group had already moved to another location, formed a government and had itself acted contrary to the party constitution.

Sibal also challenged the Commission's assessment of the Shiv Sena's organisational structure, including the powers of the party chief and the manner in which various organisational posts were filled.

"The point is, who is the Election Commission to determine at which level, for which posts and how many persons must be elected," Sibal asked.

He said there was no dispute before the Commission regarding the validity of the party constitution, elections held under it or nominations made under it.

The poll panel's characterisation of the constitution as "autocratic" was aimed at excluding the organisational structure from consideration and ultimately relying on the legislative majority to decide the symbol dispute.

"You predetermine the end and

SHIV SENA ROW

then manipulate the logic to reach it. That is contrary to the very exercise contemplated under Paragraph 15," he said.

The bench examined whether a split originating in the legislature party could subsequently manifest itself within the broader party organisation and primary membership, and whether such developments could be considered by the Election Commission while deciding a dispute under Paragraph 15.

Sibal reiterated that as a matter of law, a split in a political party could not arise merely from a split in its legislature party.

He said that once a prima facie split in the political party was established, subsequent developments could be considered by the Commission while reaching its final decision.

The CJ said if the poll panel had threshold jurisdiction but exercised it erroneously or adopted an approach contrary to settled principles, that would be distinct from a situation in which it had no jurisdiction at all.

Sibal said the Election Commission could exercise its powers under Paragraph 15 only if there was a split in the political party when its jurisdiction was invoked.

He said Shinde's subsequent position as chief minister could not itself be used to demonstrate greater support for his faction, as party members and others would naturally gravitate towards the person holding the office.

"He became chief minister. According to us, he was illegally appointed chief minister. You cannot first appoint him chief minister and then say that so many people have subsequently joined him and therefore he has greater strength," Sibal said.

The hearing would resume on Thursday.

The bench was hearing two pleas filed in 2024 by the Uddhav faction against the poll panel's order allotting the 'bow and arrow' symbol to the Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Eknath Shinde-led unit.

The pleas have also challenged the February 17, 2023 order of the EC recognising the Shinde faction as the original Shiv Sena. (PTI)

Central mining law amendment unnecessary, will cause ₹ 11,000 crore loss to TN: PMK

CHENNAI, Aug 12: PMK President Anbumani Ramadoss on Wednesday urged the Centre to immediately withdraw the proposed amendment to the Mines and Minerals, Development and Regulation Act, warning that it usurps the taxation rights of state governments and threatens Tamil Nadu with an annual revenue loss of ₹ 11,000 crore.

In a statement, the PMK leader alleged that the introduction of Section 9D in the Mines and Minerals, Development and Regulation (MMDR) amendment bill, recently tabled in the Lok Sabha, is a direct blow to state autonomy.

"The proposed clause strictly prohibits state governments from independently imposing taxes, cesses, or surcharges on mineral resources," he said, adding, "moreover, it waives pending tax dues owed by mining contractors under previous state levies once the amendment takes effect".

"Even though land and mineral resources fall under the State List, the Centre is 'misusing' its power to regulate taxation, effectively stripping state governments of their revenue-generating capacity," the PMK leader alleged.

Anbumani claimed that Tamil Nadu generated ₹ 4,100 crore in revenue from mineral taxes and royalties in 2025-26, with an estimated target of ₹ 11,000 crore for 2026-27, "all of which is now at risk". (PTI)

₹ 4,102 crore released to states, UTs for training census functionaries: Govt

NEW DELHI, Aug 12: The Centre has released ₹ 4,102 crore to states and Union territories (UTs) for training of census functionaries, manpower assistance, technical infrastructure and honorarium, the Rajya Sabha was informed Wednesday.

In a written response to a query, Minister of State for Home Affairs Nityanand Rai said the first phase of Census 2027 -- the houselisting and housing census -- has already been completed in 31 states and UTs.

"In the remaining states, first phase of the census is scheduled to be completed by September 2026," he said.

The minister said the second phase of the census -- Population Enumeration -- in the UT of Ladakh and snow-bound non-synchronous areas of the UT of Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand shall be undertaken from September 1-30, 2026, with a revisional round from October 1-5, 2026.

"There shall also be an option for self-enumeration from August 17, 2026, to August 31, 2026," he said.

The minister said orientation of master trainers, field trainers, enumerators, supervisors, etc, for the first phase of Census 2027 has been completed or in progress, in accordance with the notified schedule, in coordination with the states and UT administrations.

"Till now, a total amount of ₹ 4,102 crore has



been released to States/UTs for training of census functionaries, manpower assistance, technical infrastructure, payment of honorarium to census functionaries, etc," the reply read.

The minister said mobile applications for data collection and other digital platforms, including the Census Management and Monitoring System (CMMS) Portal, have been developed for the first phase of Census 2027.

"The facility of self-enumeration to the respondents through an online web portal has also been given for the first time in census. Digital tools for the second phase of the census have been developed," he said. (PTI)

Govt renews MoU aimed at standardising medicinal plants used as traditional systems of medicine

NEW DELHI, Aug 12: The government has renewed for three years an MoU aimed at standardising medicinal plants used across India's traditional systems of medicine, with the partnership seeking to harmonise quality standards and align them with global benchmarks.

The renewed agreement between the Pharmacopoeia Commission for Indian Medicine and Homoeopathy (PCIM&H) and the Indian Pharmacopoeia Commission (IPC) will build on the "One Herb, One Standard" initiative launched in 2022.

Under the renewed partnership, the two institutions will develop uniform, reliable and scientifically robust quality standards for single drugs of plant origin used in Ayurveda, Siddha, Sowa-Rigpa, Unani and Homoeopathy systems of medicine, an Ayush ministry statement said.

The monographs will take into account Indian standards as well as



international quality requirements, with the objective of strengthening Indian standards in line with global benchmarks and enhancing the quality and credibility of Indian medicinal plants and products in international markets, it said.

The initiative will also seek to harmonise standards for the same medicinal plant across different traditional systems, reducing ambiguity among stakeholders and

creating a stronger and more coordinated standardisation mechanism. The cooperation builds upon the MoU initiated in 2022 to promote and facilitate the "One Herb, One Standard" concept, under which 50 monographs of medicinal plants were successfully developed during the first phase, according to the statement.

The renewed partnership will further expand this framework by

bringing together the scientific and standard-setting expertise of PCIM&H and IPC.

The Union minister expressed confidence that "the renewed three-year MoU would give fresh momentum to the standardisation of medicinal plants".

He said the inter-ministerial co-operation demonstrates how coordinated efforts among ministries and institutions can strengthen the standardisation of medicinal plants and traditional medicines.

"The initiative would contribute to protecting India's rich biodiversity and traditional medicine heritage, while strengthening India's position as a trusted global standard-setter in medicinal plants, traditional medicines and their quality standards."

The collaboration is expected to strengthen quality assurance, support ease of doing business and enhance the international acceptance of Indian medicinal plants and traditional medicine products. (PTI)

Manipur CM calls for voluntary surrender of illegal firearms within 15 days

'If anyone is apprehended with firearms after 15 days, appropriate action will be taken as per the law'

IMPHAL, Aug 12: Manipur Chief Minister Y Khemchand Singh on Wednesday urged anyone in possession of illegal firearms to voluntarily surrender their weapons within 15 days, failing which strict action will be taken as per the law.

Singh made the appeal during an event held on initiatives taken to bring normalcy in Manipur.

He said the progress of the state had been adversely affected since the crisis began on May 3, 2023.

Singh said that after he became the CM on February 4 this year, peace outreach initiatives were undertaken in various districts to bring lasting peace in the state.

He said that during the President's Rule prior to him becoming the CM, law and order had stabilised in the state.

Singh also maintained that the government had made continuous efforts towards bringing peace by reaching out to different places that could not be visited earlier due to



the crisis.

"Now that the unrest has subsided, this is not the time to continue holding onto the guns. I urge all, in both hills and the valley, to voluntarily surrender their weapons within 15 days either through their local MLAs or SPs," he said.

"If anyone is apprehended with firearms after 15 days, appropriate action will be taken as per the law," the CM said.

Singh, in social media post, later

said, "The programme highlighted the coordinated efforts of the state police, Indian Army, Assam Rifles and central forces towards restoring peace, strengthening security and recovering illegal arms."

During the event, 1,422 firearms, 7,010 cartridges and 1,137 explosives seized by security forces from February 5 to August 11 this year were also displayed.

"The display was intended to highlight the sustained efforts of the security forces and law en-

forcement agencies towards restoring peace and security in the state and to demonstrate the scale of recovery of arms and ammunition during the period," an official statement said.

The CM also commended the efforts of state police, Border Security Force, Assam Rifles and CRPF in recovering such a huge quantity of arms and ammunition during such a short span of time.

Home Minister Govindas Konthoujam, in his address, said that strict action will be initiated against any organisation or individual involved in extortion, intimidation and causing harassment to transporters along the national highways.

He said the government is planning to book the extortionists and miscreants along the national highways under the National Security Act (NSA). DGP Mukesh Singh said that 491 extremists have been arrested from February to August this year. (PTI)

Naga village attacked in Manipur's Kangpokpi, 9 houses burnt down

KANGPOKPI/IMPHAL, Aug 12: At least nine houses were burnt down in an attack on a Naga village in Manipur's Kangpokpi district, officials said on Wednesday.

The incident happened at Tokpa Liangmai Naga village around 9.30 pm on Tuesday, they said.

Armed men allegedly opened fire and later set fire to nine houses, mostly kutcha structures, they added.

Residents of nearby villages rushed to the spot and helped contain the blaze, officials said.

Additional security personnel have been deployed in the area to control the situation, they said.

The Liangmai Naga Council, Manipur condemned the incident and alleged that armed men of another community were behind the attack. The council claimed that 10 houses and a church were burnt in the attack.

"The deliberate targeting of innocent civilians, residential properties and a place of worship constitutes a grave and reprehensible act of violence," it said in a statement. (PTI)

Arunachal CM hands over appointment orders to 72 specialist doctors



ITANAGAR, Aug 12: Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister Pema Khandu on Wednesday handed over appointment orders to 72 newly recruited medical specialists and announced that the state will soon initiate organ transplant facilities at TRIHMS.

Speaking at the felicitation ceremony of the successful candidates from the Medical Specialist Recruitment (MSR) Examination-2026, Khandu described their induction as a major milestone toward filling manpower gaps and extending specialised healthcare services to remote and underserved pockets of the state, an official statement from CMO said.

Highlighting steps to bolster tertiary healthcare, the chief minister said the state government, in collaboration with Sir Ganga Ram Hospital, New Delhi, is working to introduce organ transplantation at the Tomo Riba Institute of Health and Medical Sciences (TRIHMS).

The installation of an Organ Perfusion System is currently under-

way, with kidney transplants set to launch in the initial phase.

"Our objective is to ensure that our people do not have to travel outside the state for advanced treatment. A patient in a remote village should have the same right to quality healthcare as someone living in Itanagar," Khandu said.

To relieve the financial burden of complex treatments, Khandu highlighted the launch of the Chief Minister's Organ Transplant Scheme (CMOTS).

The scheme expands coverage beyond kidney transplants to include bone marrow and liver procedures.

Under CMOTS, the state will provide financial assistance of up to ₹ 12 lakh for kidney, ₹ 17 lakh for bone marrow, and ₹ 22 lakh for liver transplants.

Outlining the state's healthcare roadmap, Khandu announced plans to establish two new medical colleges: one at Namsai under a Public-Private Partnership (PPP) model, with construction starting this year, and another in the West Kameng district.

Further, TRIHMS, which increased its MBBS intake to 100 seats and raised the local reservation for APST candidates to 85 per cent, will soon introduce MD and MS postgraduate specialist courses.

The state's vast public healthcare network currently comprises 6 zonal hospitals, 17 district hospitals, 57 community health centres, 162 primary health centres, and 647 sub-health centres.

While recent recruitment drives have substantially covered personnel shortages, Khandu said 35 specialist vacancies at TRIHMS, 61 specialist roles across government hospitals, and 79 General Duty Medical Officer (GDMO) posts remain to be filled.

The chief minister praised the Arunachal Pradesh Public Service Commission (APSSC) for conducting a transparent and time-bound recruitment process.

Advertised on April 13, 2026, the commission evaluated 117 applications and interviewed 116 qualified candidates in June before recommending the final 72 specialists.

Linking healthcare reform with the vision of 'Viksit Arunachal by 2047', aligned with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's national objective, Khandu urged the newly appointed doctors to serve rural communities with empathy, professionalism, and dedication. (PTI)

Two asphyxiated to death after entering water tank in Champhai

AIZAWL, Aug 12: Two persons were asphyxiated to death and another was hospitalised after entering a water tank in Mizoram's Champhai district on Wednesday, police said.

The incident took place in Tlangsam village, located about 5 km from Champhai town, this morning when daily wagers Vanlalpeka and Vannunmwawia were hired to dismantle a six-foot-deep old water tank that had remained sealed for several years, a police officer said.

Vanlalpeka first entered the tank but collapsed soon after going inside, the officer said.

Around this time, two of their friends, Baggio Lalhmingthanga and Ramengmwawia, who were planning to work nearby, came to check on them. When Vannunmwawia and Ramengmwawia entered the tank to rescue Vanlalpeka, they also lost consciousness and collapsed, the officer said.

Lalhmingthanga raised an alarm before entering the tank to rescue others, prompting neigh-

bours to intervene.

Eventually, all four men were pulled out of the water tank by local volunteers and rushed to a nearby hospital.

However, Vanlalpeka (39) of Tlangsam, and Ramengmwawia (33), a resident of nearby Chalang village, died on the way to the hospital, the police officer said.

Lalhmingthanga was discharged after receiving first aid, while Vannunmwawia is currently receiving oxygen support at the village sub-centre after complaining of breathing problems, he said.

Preliminary findings suggested the victims died of asphyxiation or suffocation due to a lack of oxygen, he said.

The officer said the water tank, which is about six feet deep, contained about two feet of water.

It had been sealed for several years, he said, adding that the owner wanted it dismantled due to its age. Further investigation into the incident is underway, the officer added. (PTI)

Tripura minister seeks Centre's intervention to retain Agartala flights

AGARTALA, Aug 12: Tripura Transport Minister Sushanta Chowdhury has sought the intervention of Civil Aviation Minister K Ram Mohan Naidu to retain existing flight services from Agartala and restore withdrawn routes.

In a letter to the Union minister, Chowdhury said services of Air India, Air India Express, IndiGo and Akasa Air have either been withdrawn, reduced or are proposed to be discontinued on various routes connecting Agartala in recent months.

"Air India has reduced its services and is likely to discontinue operations on the Agartala-Guwahati sector from October 22. Air India Express has also withdrawn/reduced services on important routes, while its Agartala-Bagdogra-Bengaluru service is also reported to be withdrawn," Chowdhury said in the letter dated August 11.

The minister said IndiGo's direct Agartala-Hyderabad service is proposed to be withdrawn from October 1, while Akasa Air is scheduled to discontinue its serv-



ices from Agartala from October 22.

Services on the Agartala-Shillong, Agartala-Aizawl and direct Agartala-Chennai routes had also been withdrawn earlier, he said.

"The reduction in the number of flights, contrary to the growing demand for increased air connectivity from Agartala, has significantly affected the availability of air services across the country," Chowdhury said.

He said the reduction in services had also led to a sharp increase in airfares, particularly on key routes such as Agartala-Kolkata, Agar-

tala-Delhi, Agartala-Guwahati and Agartala-Bengaluru.

"This is causing considerable financial hardship and inconvenience to passengers, particularly those travelling for medical treatment, higher education, business, official work and other urgent purposes," he said.

Chowdhury urged Naidu to personally intervene and take up the matter with the airlines concerned.

He urged the Centre to explore all possible measures for restoring withdrawn services, retaining existing flights and augmenting capacity on high-demand routes from Agartala. (PTI)

Sikkim welcomes MSME amendment Bill, says move will ease delayed payment woes



GANGTOK, Aug 12: The Sikkim government has welcomed Parliament's passage of the MSME Development (Amendment) Bill, 2026, saying the legislation will strengthen safeguards for micro, small and medium enterprises and create a more business-friendly environment for entrepreneurs in the state.

The Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises Development (Amendment) Bill, 2026 was passed by Parliament in August 2026. It was cleared by the Rajya Sabha on August 3, and subsequently passed by the Lok Sabha on August 7.

The Sikkim government's Department of Commerce and Industries, in a press statement on Wednesday, said delayed payments remain one of the biggest challenges confronting MSMEs, often putting pressure on cash flows, wages and work-

ing capital and limiting the ability of small businesses to expand.

"The amendments are an important step towards creating a more supportive and business-friendly environment for MSMEs. Faster recovery of delayed payments and stronger institutional mechanisms will help enterprises manage their working capital more effectively and operate with greater confidence," the Commerce and Industries Department said.

The amendments are aimed at making the mechanism for resolving delayed payment disputes more effective and efficient, including by strengthening the role of MSME facilitation councils and promoting greater use of digital systems to improve transparency and ease of doing business.

According to the department, the

changes are expected to facilitate quicker recovery of outstanding dues, speedier resolution of payment-related disputes and improve access to working capital by reducing payment delays. They are also expected to simplify business processes and reduce the regulatory burden on small enterprises.

The department said it has undertaken mass awareness and outreach programmes across Sikkim to familiarise entrepreneurs, MSME associations and other industry stakeholders with the new provisions and their potential benefits.

It has also urged MSMEs in the state to make use of the MSME Facilitation Councils to pursue outstanding payments and secure their legitimate dues.

"MSMEs are the backbone of Sikkim's local economy and make a significant contribution to employment generation, entrepreneurship, innovation and inclusive economic growth," the department said, adding that the state government remained committed to creating an ecosystem in which MSMEs could access timely payments and grow sustainably.

The department said the new provisions would be particularly significant for smaller enterprises, for whom prolonged payment delays can have a disproportionate impact on day-to-day operations and business expansion. (PTI)

Mizoram govt, CYMA sign pact to boost tourism

AIZAWL, Aug 12: The Mizoram government and the Central Committee of Young Mizo Association (CYMA) have signed an MoU to strengthen cooperation in promoting tourism in the state, officials said on Wednesday. The agreement was signed here on Tuesday in the presence of Tourism Secretary Vanlalaina Fanai and CYMA president R Lalhgheta.

"Tourist arrivals in our state have increased significantly in recent times, and there are many initiatives and plans in this sector. Although various steps are being taken in terms of infrastructure and other areas, the most important factor we need to address is human resource," Tourism Minister Lalhghinglova Hmar said.

"With the number of tourists increasing, the department alone cannot manage everything, and it is necessary for us to work together with the CYMA," he said. The minister also expressed confidence that the Tourism Department would grow into a major revenue-generating wing in the coming years. Lalhgheta said the CYMA would extend full cooperation to the government in boosting tourism in the northeastern state. (PTI)

Itanagar civic body bans single-use plastic, carry bags below 120 microns



ITANAGAR, Aug 12: The Itanagar Municipal Corporation (IMC) has imposed a strict ban on single-use plastic items and plastic carry bags below 120 microns, officials said on Wednesday. In an order issued by IMC Joint Commissioner Khoda Lasa, commercial establishments, shops, supermarkets, hotels, eateries and street vendors have been directed to immediately stop using prohibited plastic items and switch to eco-friendly and biodegradable alternatives.

The banned items include plastic-stemmed earbuds, balloon sticks, plastic flags, candy and ice-cream sticks, thermocol decorations, plastic plates, cups, cutlery, straws, wrapping films for sweet boxes, invitation cards, cigarette packets, PVC banners below 100 microns and stirrers, the order said.

The manufacture, stocking, distribution, sale and transportation of plastic carry

bags below 120 microns and non-biodegradable packaging sachets have also been prohibited, it said.

Commercial traders dealing in plastic packaging have been directed to comply with mandatory statutory labelling requirements under the Plastic Waste Management Rules, 2016.

The IMC said the restrictions would be strictly enforced through regular inspections, surprise checks and special enforcement drives across its jurisdiction.

"No person shall litter or improperly dispose of plastic waste in drains, public roads, parks, markets, or water bodies within the IMC jurisdiction," the order said.

The civic body appealed to residents and business owners to cooperate in eliminating non-biodegradable single-use plastic and maintaining cleanliness and sanitation in the city. (PTI)

Judoka Asmita Dey felicitated in Tripura after winning gold at CWG



AGARTALA, Aug 12: Asmita Dey of Tripura, who became the first Indian judoka to win a gold medal at the Commonwealth Games, was accorded a grand felicitation by the state government here on Wednesday.

A cheque of ₹ 10 lakh was also handed over to Dey, who produced a spirited comeback to clinch the women's -48kg title, defeating Canada's Heidi Quach in a dramatic golden score contest in Glasgow recently.

The 23-year-old judoka was also allotted a piece of land for building a house in the state capital Agartala, Chief Minister Manik Saha

said while addressing the gathering.

"The journey from an obscure village in South Tripura to a podium finish at Glasgow was a race against time. Her father was a cycle mechanic at Sonaichari. Against all odds, she stood firm on her mission and achieved phenomenal success for the country," he said.

The chief minister said she had met him at Tripura Bhavan in New Delhi when she returned from the Commonwealth Games after winning the gold medal and wanted to know how the state could help her.

"During the meeting, Asmita revealed she desperately wanted a house in Agartala. I promised to fulfil her wish, and today a piece of land has been allotted to her," he said. Ascerting that Asmita's success will inspire the state's young generation, the chief minister exhorted her to remain focused on her mission for the Asian Games.

"I urge Asmita to remain alert, particularly about food, because she has to pass through a stringent dope test before joining the prestigious Asian Games. We believe she will shine again in the Asian Games by winning a medal for the country," he said. (PTI)

Kuki outfit lifts blockade on NH-202 in Manipur's Ukhrul

IMPHAL, Aug 12: A conglomerate of Kuki organisations in Manipur's Ukhrul district lifted its more than two-week-long blockade along NH-202 following talks with state Home Minister Govindas Konthoujam, officials said.

The Kuki CSO Working Committee Ukhrul (KCWC) imposed the "counter blockade" on July 27 to protest what it described as a "selective economic blockade" in Kuki areas of the district by certain communities. In a statement issued on Tuesday night, the KCWC said it had decided to lift the blockade following discussions with the state government.

Konthoujam said in a late-night social media post that a "long and detailed discussion" was held at Shangkai village in Ukhrul with members of the KCWC, following a directive from Chief Minister Y Khemchand Singh. (PTI)

Arunachal Guv urges youth to make sports, fitness part of daily lives

ITANAGAR, Aug 12: Arunachal Pradesh Governor Lt Gen KT Parnaik on Wednesday called upon people, particularly the youth, to make sports and fitness an integral part of their daily lives, saying a healthy population is the foundation of a strong state and nation.

Parnaik said sports not only improve physical fitness but

also enhance mental alertness, self-confidence, discipline and emotional resilience, an official communique said.

He also stressed that sporting activities teach teamwork, leadership, perseverance, fair play and respect for others, which are essential for professional life and nation-building. (PTI)

No.BDB/15th FC-125/2020-21/1853

NOTICE INVITING TENDER

Dated 11/08/2026.

Sealed Tenders affixing a non-refundable Court fee stamp amounting Rs. 8.25 (Rupees eight & twenty five paise) only with a validity period of 180 Days which will subsequence to be converted and drawn up in the printed of F-2 form are invited from the registered Contractor of Class-I (A,B,C), Class-II, Class-III category of Assam PWD (Roads) and BTC for the following works under 15th-FC (Untied Grant) fund for the year 2025-26 during 2026-27 under Baska Dev. Block of BTC area. The Tenders will be received by the undersigned up to **2.30PM on 03-09-2026** and will be opened on the same date & place at 3.30PM.

Name of Scheme	Tender Value (In Rs.)	Bid Security	Cost of BID documents (D/D) @ 0.03% (Approx.)	Time of Completion
Construction of Village RCC Slab Culvert on Manin Boro's house to Dagasur Ramchary's house near Kama Baro's house at Ulubari (AC-128501214) under 15 th FC (Tied Grant) for the year 2025-26 during 2026-27.	800000/-	Rs. 8000/- @ 1% for ST/SC/OBC & Rs. 16000/- @ 2% for General	Rs. 500/-	6 (Six) months from the date of issue of work order

Details NIT may be seen at the office of the undersigned from 14/08/2026 to 01/09/2026 up to 1.00PM. The contractor should be attested copy of latest Registration certificate, Labour licence, Income Tax, GST, PAN, Aadhar, Caste etc. The BTC authority reserves the right of accepting or rejecting the tender papers without assigning any reason thereof.

Sd/-

IPR(BTC)/C/2026-27/1173

Block Development Officer
Baksa Development Block, Mushalpur

Principles of accountability and democratic functioning expected of a National Sports Federation have not been followed, Ministry says

Sports Ministry suspends TTFL over governance issues



NEW DELHI, Aug 12: The Sports Ministry on Wednesday suspended its recognition of the Table Tennis Federation of India and asked the Indian Olympic Association (IOA) to form an ad-hoc committee to administer the sport, citing governance deficiencies within TTFL.

In its order, the ministry cited TTFL's failure to conduct elections on time as one of the reasons for the suspension after getting an "unsatisfactory response" to a show cause notice issued earlier this year.

"The IOA, in consultation with the international body (ITTF) will take appropriate action to create an internal regulatory mechanism, including the constitution of an ad-hoc committee, till such time that a duly

constituted governance structure is restored in TTFL," the ministry order stated.

The TTFL is currently led by Meghna Ahlawat, its first ever woman President who is also the wife of Haryana MLA Dushyant Chautala. Chautala is the son of former TTFL President Ajay Singh Chautala.

Ahlawat took charge in December 2022.

The body has been in turmoil for the past several months. It suspended its Secretary General former player Kamlesh Mehta in January alleging financial irregularities. Mehta took the matter to Delhi High Court which eventually quashed his suspension.

His suspension was widely attributed to an internal power struggle in TTFL, which denied the charge, insisting that the decision was

taken "solely to safeguard transparency, collective decision-making, and the long-term interests of Indian table tennis."

The body made headlines a few months later when star paddler Manika Batra was left out of the Asian Games squad, citing lack of requisite domestic game time.

Batra publicly lambasted the decision and sought the Sports Ministry's intervention, alleging that the selection process followed by the federation was ambiguous and unfair.

The Ministry took cognisance of all the issues plaguing the TTFL and served a show cause notice to it. The response, according to Ministry sources, was not convincing enough.

The Ministry said that the TTFL failed in its duty of ensuring athlete welfare, an example of which was the delay in holding the National Championships last year.

The body is due to hold its elections this year but there has been no word on when the process would get underway.

The principles of accountability and democratic functioning expected of a National Sports Federation have not been followed, the ministry said, adding that the TTFL "repeatedly disregarded directions and guidelines" issued by it.

The TTFL was previously suspended in February 2022 by the Delhi High Court following Batra's petition questioning the selection policy of that time which resulted in her omission from the Asian Championships that year.

The Delhi High Court, while ordering the appointment of an administrator at that time, had stated that it was "appalled" by the "sorry state of affairs" in TTFL. The federation was restored in December following fresh elections. (PTI)

Australia launch 20-test year in Top End against depleted Bangladesh

DARWIN (AUSTRALIA), Aug 12: Test cricket returns to Australia's tropical Top End for the first time since 2003 when the hosts face Bangladesh in a two-match series starting Thursday.

The series opener at Marrara Stadium in Darwin marks Bangladesh's first test tour Down Under in over two decades and kicks off a 12-month period of at least 20 test matches for the Aussies including tours of world test champion South Africa, India and England.

Australia's so-called Big Four bowling attack is set to be reunited in Darwin with Pat Cummins, Josh Hazlewood and Nathan Lyon returning from injuries.

Pace bowlers Cummins, Hazlewood and Mitchell Starc and off-spinner Lyon have been the long-time front line attack for Australia but injuries have limited the frequency of all four combining in the same XI in recent series.

Hazlewood's expected inclusion comes at the expense of the evergreen Scott Boland, while all-rounders Cameron Green and Beau Webster have also been named in Australia's starting team.

"We know Scotty's class, it is always a pretty tight call," said captain Cummins at a pre-match press conference Wednesday. "There is not much you can say to Scotty except there is a lot of cricket coming up."

"He knows his worth, and how good he is, and I am sure he will be out there at some point pretty soon."

Questions remain over batting

While the bowling unit is settled, it's Australia's batting lineup that poses more questions.



Opening bat Jake Weatherald, the first test player from Australia's Northern Territory, has been retained from the Ashes series win over England last season despite indifferent form and is likely to open the innings with Travis Head.

The retirement of veteran opening batter Usman Khawaja has allowed a structural reshuffle with the hosts able to unleash both its all-rounders, Green and Webster, at the same time.

Marnus Labuschagne and Steve Smith anchor the innings at No. 3 and No. 4 respectively, with Labuschagne also in need of runs to secure his place in the lineup.

Bangladesh short-handed

Meanwhile, Bangladesh arrives severely depleted in the bowling department.

Nahid Rana, Mustafizur Rahman, and Shoriful Islam are all unavailable for the opening test, though Shoriful may return for the second match in Mackay, Queensland state from Aug. 22-26.

The 23-year old Rana, one of the quickest bowlers in world cricket, will be sorely missed by the tourists after he tormented a de-

pleted Australian side with extreme pace and bounce to secure a historic ODI home series victory for Bangladesh just two months ago.

Rana then suffered a side strain in a Twenty20 international match against Zimbabwe in July, but skipper Najmul Hossain Shanto said despite Rana's absence his team was still ready for the challenge.

"It was the first time we beat them and we played on good wickets so that gives us a little more confidence," Shanto said. "Here it is a different ball game and challenge."

"Bounce is the main thing but in the last few months on home soil we have been preparing bouncy wickets and played ODI series on a bouncy wicket."

The batting order has also been hit hard by injuries, with veteran Mushfiqur Rahim ruled out due to a finger injury and the brittle top order was exposed as it collapsed for a lowly 54 in a heavy defeat to a Cricket Australia XI in a warm-up match on the weekend at the same venue. (AP)

India lock T20 series against Afghanistan in September; Bangladesh hopes fade

NEW DELHI, Aug 12: Bangladesh's hopes of hosting India for a long-pending white-ball rubber in September seem all but over with the BCCI announcing that Shreyas Iyer and his men will face Afghanistan in a three-match T20I series in Delhi from September 13 to 17.

The BCCI and the Afghanistan Cricket Board (ACB) announced the series in a joint statement on Wednesday, the window for which clashes with the plans that Bangladesh had proposed. The Indo-Bangla bilateral series had to be postponed last year due to the political unrest in that country.

The games against Afghanistan are a part of ACB's Future Tours Programme. They are being treated as a home assignment for the ACB, which has made India a base for conducting games in recent years due to the volatile political situation in Afghanistan.

The series will get underway on September 13, with the second T20I scheduled for September 15 and the third on September 17. All the three matches will be played at the Arun Jaitley Cricket Stadium here.

Afghanistan most recently toured India for a three-match ODI series in June, and the two sides also played a three-match T20I series in January 2024.

India hosted Afghanistan for their historic first Test in 2018, and the two teams have since continued to engage regularly across for-



mats. BCCI President Mithun Manhas said the Indian Board remains committed to supporting the growth of cricket in Afghanistan and providing its players opportunities to compete at the highest level.

"Bilateral cricket is an important part of this, as it allows teams to play regularly against quality opposition and gain valuable experience. We welcome the Afghanistan Cricket Board to India for this series and look forward to working closely with them to make it a successful one," he said.

"We believe there is scope to do more together and will continue to support Afghanistan cricket while strengthening the relationship between the two cricketing nations."

BCCI Secretary Devajit Saikia said the India-Afghanistan cricketing rivalry has produced some thrilling encounters over the years, with both teams boasting of quality

cricketers.

"Afghanistan's players are also quite popular among fans in India, which is a reflection of the strong bond that has developed between the two cricketing nations."

"India hosting Afghanistan for their historic first Test in 2018 was another significant milestone in this journey, and since then, we have continued to see regular bilateral engagements between the two teams."

Rohan Jaitley, the president of Delhi and District Cricket Association, which is hosting the matches, said the DDCA will provide the two teams the best possible facilities.

ACB Chairman Mirvais Ashraf said the series holds great significance for Afghanistan cricket and represents another important step in the development of the long-standing relationship with the BCCI. (PTI)

PARIS, Aug 12: Paris Saint-Germain gets back on the trophy trail on Wednesday in the UEFA Super Cup against Aston Villa.

There are six pieces of silverware up for grabs for PSG this season, with the No. 1 priority being a third straight Champions League title to cement its status as one of the greatest club teams in soccer history. The first trophy could be lifted inside Red Bull Arena in Salzburg, Austria, in the annual match between the most recent winners of the Champions League and Europa League. It starts at 9 p.m. local time (1900 GMT).

PSG is bidding for a second straight Super Cup win after beating Tottenham in a penalty shootout last year. Villa won the Super Cup in 1983 after beating Barcelona over two legs. The manager, Unai Emery, has experienced three straight losses in the Super Cup — the first two with Sevilla and the third with Villarreal.

Referee is Somali official barred from World Cup

The game will be refereed by Omar Artan, the Somali who was barred by the United States from officiating at the World Cup days before the start of FIFA's tournament because of vetting concerns.

U.S. officials claimed Artan had connections to terror organizations, though without providing proof. UEFA responded by picking Artan — a referee judged the best in Africa last season — to take charge of the Super Cup in a powerplay by European soccer's governing body amid its increasing disconnect with FIFA.

That disharmony has increased since, with UEFA leading the campaign to oust Gianni Infantino from the FIFA presidency over his recent — aborted — plan to sell an interest in the World Cup.

Team news

Villa will be without new signing Johan Mamzambi, with the Swiss World Cup star out due to a knee injury, while key players Emi Martinez, Ollie Watkins and Ezri Konsa won't play as they haven't returned to full training after the World Cup.

PSG coach Luis Enrique must decide whether to include France internationals Ousmane Dembélé, Désiré Doué and Bradley Barcola and Spain's World Cup-winning midfielder Fabian Ruiz, as they only returned to training on Monday.

PSG could pick left back Lucas Digne, who recently joined from Villa. (AP)

Durgapur karateka Aaleina Sen wins gold at All India Independence Cup

NEW DELHI, Aug 12: Durgapur youngster Aaleina Sen clinched a gold medal in the Kumite Under-11, above 45kg category at the 20th All India Independence Cup Karate Championship 2026 here.

The championship was held at Talkatora Stadium from August 7-9 and featured nearly 2,000 karatekas from across the country.

Aaleina defeated opponents from Delhi and Uttar Pradesh in two successive bouts to emerge champion in her category.

She also bagged a bronze medal in the Under-11 Kata category, adding to an impressive outing at the national-level competition.

A student of Durgapur Karate Academy, Aaleina trains under Rensi Samir Kumar Mondal, a sixth Dan black belt and former Army and National Security Guard personnel.

The tournament, organised under the aegis of Karate India Organisation (KIO) president Bharat Sharma, also witnessed the presence of several prominent figures from the sport, including Asian Karate Championship gold medalist Alisha Choudhury, Indian team captain Aniket Gupta and international-level player Akash Kumar.

Bansuri Swaraj, daughter of former Union minister Sushma Swaraj, was also present at the event.

Choudhury holds the distinction of becoming the first Indian karateka to win gold at the Asian Karate Championships, having defeated a Japanese opponent in the final.

Aaleina's latest medals add to her growing list of achievements and underline the impact of the structured training and disciplined approach at Durgapur Karate Academy. (PTI)

Strong field for Asian Junior Open & Girls Chess Championship

MUMBAI, Aug 12: A strong field of 157 players from 10 countries, including six International Masters and 24 FIDE Masters and Women FIDE Masters, will compete in the Asian Junior Chess Championships here from August 16 to 26.

The tournament, featuring Asia's top U20 talent, will comprise nine rounds of Classical Swiss, along with seven rounds each of Rapid and Blitz. It is being held under the aegis of the All India Chess Federation, Asian Chess Federation and

FIDE, and hosted by the Maharashtra Chess Association.

The event has previously crowned several prominent players, including Viswanathan Anand, Abhijit Kunte and Tejas Bakre in the open section, and Tania Sachdev, Koneru Humpy and Ivana Furdado in the women's section.

The winners will earn a Grandmaster norm if they are already IMs, while non-IMs will be eligible for an IM norm.

The Classical event will feature 157 players, while 153 will compete in Rapid and 151 in

Blitz. The Open section has an average Elo rating of 2054, compared to 1885 in the junior women's section.

Indian IM Mayank Chakraborty (2500) heads the open field, followed by Russia's IM Artem Pigin (2477) and India's IM Apporv Kamble (2441).

In the junior women's section, India's WFM Prathee Boridoloi (2252) leads the field, ahead of Kazakhstan's WFA Mariya Kholyavko (2217) and Turkmenistan's WFM Lala Shohradova (2159). (PTI)

Era of randomly scheduling bilaterals over, re-invention needed in Tests and ODIs: ICC CEO

NEW DELHI, Aug 12: The era of "randomly" scheduling bilateral series is over but the much-debated ODI format can continue to survive and thrive with its place "inextricably" linked to the World Cup, International Cricket Council (ICC) CEO Sanjog Gupta has asserted in an interview to PTI.

Gupta, a leading figure in the business of sport, had joined the ICC in July last year. He shared his thoughts on the Test and one-day formats at a time when their future has been constantly debated in the age of mushrooming T20 leagues.

"The era of randomly scheduled bilateral series has to come to an end, because countries will not be able to sustain cricket without context, culture, competition and competitiveness, which require significant investment of resources, both financial and non-financial," Gupta said.

"It's important to stay focused on the four levers which drive attention and affiliation -- context, culture, competition and competitiveness -- and ODIs can continue not just to survive, but thrive.

"There is a place for the format in the product portfolio, which is inextricably linked to men's and women's ICC Cricket World Cups. We need to look at what we want the format to stand for and how we want it to evolve, including the expanse of participation," he noted.

Bilateral cricket is decided exclusively by the member boards without ICC's intervention. The world body only handles the scheduling of multi-national competitions like the World Cups and the World Test Championship.

The Boards retain the sponsorship and media rights of bilateral engagements. As things stand, only the big three -- India, England and Australia -- can afford to play Tests while the other full members are struggling to monetise the longest format.

ODIs too have become less attractive in the age of T20s, the chosen format for the growth of the game globally.

"If you are not growing, you are dying"

Gupta, a former head of sports at JioStar, said cricket can learn from mar-



quee events in other sports -- such as the Wimbledon in tennis and The Masters in golf -- to engage with fans across age groups.

"Our ambition has to be growth; our ambition should never be to maintain the

status quo. Because in this world, where population is growing, attention is getting disaggregated and affiliation is hard to sustain, if you're not growing, you're dying," he warned.

"There is obviously value in high-quality Test cricket. There is prestige, legacy and a sense of heritage associated with it, but if prestige, legacy and heritage are not made relevant and amplified, then the product can become burdensome."

"Wimbledon and The Masters are examples of prestige events looking at ways to reinvent themselves and remain relevant by using their premium status to their advantage," he said.

Gupta said Test cricket needs to be served in a manner that is appealing to the new-age audience.

"We have to focus on the experience of Test cricket and ensure that fans engaging with it are being served a viable and appealing product," he said.

Gupta acknowledged that Test cricket remains a high-value product and the World Test Championship has been suc-

cessful in adding more meaning and context to the longest format.

However, he also noted that the prestige associated with Tests and the format's commercial viability should be viewed from the same lens.

"Every time there is conversation around the commercials of Test cricket, the passion, pride and legacy tend to override the conversation around the economics. I don't think the answer is necessarily binary, and I don't think it's a question solely for Test cricket to answer but one which must be asked of all our products across formats and events."

"Our primary tool of global growth is T20 cricket, but that does not mean we don't focus on growing the value or engagement around ODIs or Test cricket. The World Test Championship Final is now an event of significance and one that didn't even exist seven years ago," he said.

In case of 50-over cricket, PTI understands that there have been discussions in the ICC to create a dedicated window

for ODIs heading into the World Cup.

Talking more about Test cricket, Gupta highlighted the pressing need for better scheduling outside the big three nations.

"We will continue to invest in growing the status, significance and spectacle associated with cricket's marquee events. Test matches in certain countries are of immense fan value, but can we focus more on providing Members with opportunities to build occasions of appointment and significance in Test cricket?"

Gupta said Test cricket needs to be scheduled "optimally" with adequate marketing support.

"That has to be by virtue of the World Test Championship having more meaning and a continuing narrative, by virtue of Test cricket being scheduled optimally, by virtue of Tests receiving adequate positioning and marketing support, by virtue of the competitive standards of the two teams and playing conditions being offered, and fans being promised cricket which is going to be compelling," he said. (PTI)