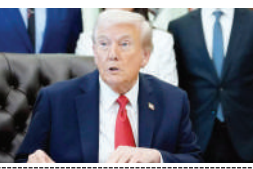


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● Nayab Saini says BJP to form govt in Punjab, procure all crops at MSP



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Assam flood situation improves as number of affected dips to 1.78L, Himanta tours worst-hit districts

Govt to rope in IIT-Guwahati to tackle river erosion

GUWAHATI, Aug 2: The flood situation in Assam improved slightly, with the number of affected people coming down to 1.78 lakh even though the count of districts hit by the deluge increased to seven, officials said on Sunday.

The toll remained unchanged at 82 as no fresh fatalities were reported in the state in the last 24 hours, they said.

Meanwhile, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Sunday said the state government will engage IIT-Guwahati for developing a long-term solution to the erosion problem of the Brahmaputra river.

After visiting Chabua, Balijan, Pukhuri, Dinjan and Rahmoria in Dibrugarh district to assess the erosion problem first-hand, he said, "Our teams are working to mitigate the problem. I will soon have a meeting with experts from IIT-Guwahati to find a lasting solution to the issue."



He said that erosion of riverbanks, especially by the Brahmaputra, is one of the biggest geographical challenges of the state as it loses land year after year. The government is working to fortify the river banks using modern

technology, Sarma said.

The Chief Minister's Office (CMO) said IIT experts will be engaged to develop a long-term solution to the erosion caused by the Brahmaputra, complementing the government's proposed ₹ 90 crore

mitigation project.

It added that the chief minister, during his visit to Dibrugarh district, interacted with locals and assured them of the government's unwavering support and commitment to implementing long-term measures to protect vulnerable areas from erosion.

A total of 349 villages in Golaghat, Sivasagar, Charaideo, Bajali, Dhemaji, Sonitpur and Jorhat districts remained affected by the deluge. Charaideo was the worst-hit, with 75,199 people affected, followed by 58,824 in Sivasagar.

A total of five districts and 1.92 lakh people were affected on Friday.

Forty-four relief camps were operational in the state, providing shelter to around 15,000 displaced people. Another 17 relief distribution centres were also working, catering to 5,569 people. A crop area of (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Protests over paper leaks: SC to hear pleas relating to police action today



NEW DELHI, Aug 2: The Supreme Court is scheduled to hear on Monday a batch of pleas alleging police brutality during the recent protests against irregularities in exams and the NEET paper leaks.

A bench of Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justices Joydip Bagchi and V Mohana will be hearing the pleas in which the court had indicated that it might constitute an SIT headed by a former Supreme Court judge for a probe into the allegations made by protesters, pellet gun victims and to ascertain whether the attacks on policemen were carried out by students or some "miscreants".

On July 28, the top court had restrained states from

taking any coercive action against protesters and directed them to release those under 18 on the condition that none should have any criminal antecedents.

The top court had observed that a fair and independent probe in the matter was required and whoever committed excesses, took law into their hands should be taken to task.

It had directed, "All states are hereby instructed to release children under the age of 18, who have been reported to be arrested or detained in connection with the ongoing protests and who do not possess any criminal antecedents."

The top court had said if necessary, these children shall be released upon the execution of a simple bond by themselves or their family members, especially if such a requirement is insisted upon for surety.

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

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

"Such protection, nonetheless, shall not be extended to the persons with criminal (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Man allegedly hacked to death by son in Karbi Anglong

HT Correspondent

HOWRAGHAT, Aug 2: A man was allegedly hacked to death by his youngest son at the Utar Borbil weekly market in Assam's Karbi Anglong district on Saturday evening, with police suspecting a property dispute as the motive.

The deceased, identified as Harilal Majumdar, was selling vegetables near the Shani Temple at the market around 7 pm when his youngest son, Khadiram alias Badal Majumdar, allegedly attacked him with a sharp weapon, slashing his neck. Harilal died on the spot, according to local sources.

The incident triggered panic among vendors and shoppers at the busy market. The accused fled the scene (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Census 2027: CM urges all to participate in self-enumeration exercise

GUWAHATI, Aug 2: Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma urged people to participate in the self-enumeration exercise of Census 2027 which commenced in the state on Sunday.

Sarma also filled up his own details online.

"Good morning Assam! Today marks the beginning of online self-enumeration for #Census2027 in Assam -- where you can sit in the comfort of your home and fill in your details," the chief minister said in a social media post.

"I just did mine; requesting everyone to fill their details correctly and be a part of this exercise," he added.

Sarma also shared a video message, appealing to the people to provide their accurate data and play their part as responsible citizens of the country.

The self-enumeration facility will remain available till August 16, and will enable citizens to provide their household and individual information online through the dedicated self-enumeration portal, se.census.gov.in.

After the conclusion of the process, house-listing operations and housing Census will be done from August 17 to September 15, officials said. The process has been postponed (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)



Indian diaspora in China flags visa, social media concerns at embassy's first Open House in years

BEIJING, Aug 2: Members of the Indian diaspora in China raised concerns over abusive anti-India content on Chinese social media, declining work visas for professionals, and restrictions on employment for spouses at the Indian Embassy's first Open House in recent years.

The mission hosted the outreach initiative on Friday, bringing together a large number of Indian professionals working in various sectors in Beijing to discuss issues affecting the community.

Indian Ambassador Vikram Doraiswami, accompanied by Counsellor (Consular, Education and Community Affairs) Nitinjeet Singh and Counsellor (Visa) Ramesh Singh, interacted with members of the diaspora on a range of issues.

Among the concerns raised were the increase in abusive content against Indians, including their food habits and culture, on Chinese social media platforms, a decline in the number of job visas issued by China to Indian professionals, restrictions on employment for spouses, and difficulties relating to counsellor services.

Doraiswami, who assumed charge in May and has stepped up engagements with Chinese officials as part of efforts to improve bilateral ties, said the embassy would further simplify the documentation required for Chinese nationals applying for Indian visas from next week to facilitate greater travel to India.

Responding to concerns over negative and abusive content on Chinese social media, he said the

Chinese government is also concerned about the rise in such content and is taking steps to address the issue.

On its part, the embassy is countering misinformation by disseminating fact-based information through its social media handles, Doraiswami said.

The ambassador also said the embassy planned to organise more cultural events, building on the huge response to annual programmes such as the Vasant Mela, to showcase India's diverse culture and cuisine.

The mission is also working to establish a mechanism with legal professionals to assist Indians facing work-related issues, he said.

To improve consular services for the Indian diaspora, the embassy (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Himanta congratulates Lovlina on CWG Silver

GUWAHATI, Aug 2: Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma has congratulated Lovlina Borgohain on winning the silver medal at the ongoing Commonwealth Games in Glasgow.

He said her achievements are an inspiration for the younger generation in her native northeastern state. "Assam's pride, India's champion. Heartiest congratulations to @LovlinaBorgohai on winning the Silver medal at the #CWG2026," Sarma said in a post on X late on Saturday night.

"You continue to inspire a generation of young athletes and make every Assamese immensely proud. We can't wait to celebrate this remarkable achievement with you," he added. Tokyo Olympic medalist, Lovlina lost to Emma-Sue Greentree of Australia in the women's 70kg boxing final in a split 1-4 verdict. (PTI)

NSCN(K) militant arrested in Manipur's Tamenglong

IMPHAL, Aug 2: Security forces have arrested a militant belonging to the banned NSCN(K) outfit in Manipur's Tamenglong district for his alleged involvement in extortion along highways, a police statement said.

The 32-year-old insurgent, identified as Lungthaikhon Panmei, was nabbed along NH-37, which connects Imphal with Silchar, in Kaimai police station area on Saturday.

Several extortion documents and cash of ₹ 2,800 were seized from his possession, it said.

Meanwhile, security forces also arrested another person for his alleged involvement in the illegal procurement and sale of arms, ammunition and explosives.

The man, identified as Laishram Lakpati Singh (56), was apprehended from Khongman Zone-III in Imphal East district on Saturday and a (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Drugs can give you brief high but make your entire life low: PM Modi to youth

NEW DELHI, Aug 2: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday asked the country's youth to take a pledge against substance abuse, saying drugs can give them a "high" for some time, but would make their entire career and personal life "low".

Launching the 'Nasha Mukti Yuva for Viksit Bharat Sankalp Abhiyan', Modi said the country's youth must be mentally and physically fit, for which it is necessary for them to stay away from all kinds of substance abuse.

He also said that enemy countries use the supply of drugs as part of their terror plans because they know that "youth are the future of our country".

"Drugs can give you a high for some time, but it makes your entire career and personal life low," he said.

Questioning the taboo around drug addicts, Modi said those who come out of drug addiction are

fighters and should be honoured by society.

"Society should respect them, embrace them and give them a second chance," he said.

The prime minister launched the campaign virtually in the presence of a large number of youth, who described themselves as representatives of Gen-Z, days after large-scale protests by students demanding reforms in the public examination system rocked Delhi and other parts of the country.

"Our culture teaches us that one can get rid of substance abuse with the support of society, yoga and meditation," Modi said.

The 'Nasha Mukti Yuva' campaign is a resolve for the individual, family, society and, most importantly, the nation, and the name of the initiative itself reflected its objective, the prime minister said.

"When the country has set the goal of building a developed India, it is essential that the youth stay

away from harmful addictions to remain physically and mentally healthy and full of self-confidence," Modi said.

"This is the objective of this campaign," he added, urging everyone to take a pledge to ensure that young people understand the dangers of drug addiction and remain aware and vigilant in every possible way.

"From today, the Nasha Mukti Yuva Abhiyan is being launched across the country. When this becomes a collective campaign, even those who are unable to do something on their own will receive new energy."

"The resolve taken today will move forward in the same manner for the next 100 weeks. Every Sunday, activities related to art, culture, sports, meditation, spirituality and service will be organised. The message of de-addiction will reach new people," Modi said.

"The coming 100 Sundays will mark 100 (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Assam chief secy reviews restoration of telecom network in flood-hit areas

GUWAHATI, Aug 2: Assam Chief Secretary Ravi Kota on Sunday said he has reviewed the restoration of the telecommunication network in flood-hit districts and discussed with officials ways to enhance the resilience of critical communication infrastructure.

After a meeting with BSNL Chief General Manager Vinet Saxena, the chief secretary said reliable telecommunications network remains indispensable for the effective coordination of relief, rescue and rehabilitation operations.

"Had a meeting... to review ongoing efforts to strengthen and expedite the restoration of telecommunications connectivity in flood-affected areas, while also enhancing the resilience of critical communication infrastructure across the state," Kota said in an X post.

"Emphasised the need for close inter-agency coordination, rapid deployment of technical resources



and proactive measures to minimise disruptions and ensure uninterrupted connectivity for affected communities," he said.

The flood situation in Assam improved slightly, with the number of affected people coming down to 1.78 lakh. The toll remained unchanged at 82. (PTI)

IIT-Guwahati student missing in Brahmaputra

RANGIA, Aug 2: A B.Tech student of IIT-Guwahati went missing after falling into the Brahmaputra river, officials said on Sunday.

A police official said the incident took place on Saturday when two students of the institute were walking along the riverbank near the institute.

"Suddenly, both of them fell into the river. After being informed, an SDRF team from a nearby camp reached the spot and rescued one student. She was admitted to a hospital," the official said.

The SDRF team searched the entire area but could not find the other girl, the official said.

The missing student has been identified as Kachana Sai Chethana, hailing from Jammalamadurai in Andhra Pradesh.

She is a third-year B.Tech student of the Electronics and Communication Engineering Department. (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

'The technology provides an objective assessment of tissue health'

IHL D's WoundHeal Plus adopts near-infrared fluorescence imaging for complex wound care

NEW DELHI, Aug 2: WoundHeal Plus, an advanced wound management centre at the Institute of Heart, Lungs Diseases and Research Centre (IHL D), has introduced near-infrared fluorescence imaging technology for real-time assessment of blood flow and tissue viability in patients with complex wounds, officials said.

The Centre said the surgical-grade imaging technique is being deployed in India for the first time.

The technique enables clinicians to objectively evaluate tissue perfusion and viability in conditions such as diabetic foot ulcers, gangrenous wounds and post-surgical complications, helping guide treatment decisions that could improve healing outcomes and reduce the



risk of amputations, it said.

The imaging system uses Indocyanine Green (ICG), a clinically

validated fluorescence imaging agent that allows real-time visualisation of blood flow, lymphatic

pathways and critical tissue structures.

According to WoundHeal Plus, ICG has been used in millions of procedures globally over several decades and is widely employed across specialties, including hepatobiliary, colorectal and reconstructive surgery.

The Centre said the point-of-care imaging platform is based on a CE-marked and US FDA-cleared near-infrared (NIR) fluorescence camera that enables doctors to assess tissue perfusion and identify critical anatomy in real time, bringing imaging capabilities traditionally available in operating theatres to specialised wound care settings.

Experts said the technology provides an (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

RIWATCH conducts research fieldwork in Arunachal's Anjaw district

ITANAGAR, Aug 2: The RIWATCH Centre for Intangible Cultural Heritage (RICI) conducted a two-week research fieldwork to document the traditions and culture of border communities in the Anjaw district of Arunachal Pradesh, an official release said.

Research Institute of World's Ancient Traditions, Cultures and Heritage (RIWATCH) is a non-profit cultural research institute and ethnographic museum in Roing, Arunachal Pradesh, dedicated to preserving indigenous tribal heritage and community traditions.

The research team, led by Hari Apralo and Miju Mena, carried out extensive documentation across several villages in the Walong, Hayuliang, and Chaglagam circles of the district. The project focused on the Meyor, Kaman Mishmi, and Taron Mishmi communities inhabiting the region, a press statement from RIWATCH said on Sunday.

Throughout the drive, the team organised interactive sessions with local villagers, screened documentaries produced by the Roing-based Research Institute of World's Ancient Traditions Cultures and Heritage (RIWATCH), and highlighted ongoing initiatives to preserve, safeguard, and promote indigenous heritage.

Community leaders, government officers, gaon buras, women, youth, and students actively partici-

pated in the documentation process, it said.

During the fieldwork, traditional ritual specialists, locally known as Kambring, Gwak, and Kaho, shared vital aspects of their intangible cultural heritage. Farmers, craftsmen, and hunters also recounted their lived experiences of resilience and hardship, reflecting the authentic way of life in the border region.

The report said community members, however, voiced growing concerns over the threats of cultural dilution, identity complexities, and rapid assimilation facing indigenous groups in the district.

In a significant contribution toward heritage preservation, several residents voluntarily donated sacred artefacts and personal heirlooms to the People's Museum of RIWATCH.

"These invaluable contributions will not only ensure the protection of culturally significant objects from theft, deterioration, and destruction, but will also present the community's identity and indigenous knowledge systems on a global platform," the research team said.

The institute emphasised that the donated collections will serve as primary reference materials for research, education, and the transmission of cultural knowledge to future generations. (PTI)

Drill, Baby, Drill: India to fund ₹ 650 cr per well for 60 deepsea wells to break its oil import habit

NEW DELHI, Aug 2: India is embarking on what could be one of the world's first large-scale programmes to fund high-risk offshore oil and gas exploration directly from the national budget, wagering that the country's largely untapped deepwater reserves can help curb its growing dependence on imported crude and gas.

The Union Cabinet last week approved the ₹ 84,084-crore Samudra Manthan National Offshore Exploration Scheme, under which the government will fund half of the cost of drilling a deepsea and ultra-deep water exploration well or ₹ 650 crore, whichever is lower, directly from the budget, officials said.

"This perhaps is the first time that any government in the world is funding risk exploration from the budget," an official said, adding that in all, 60 deepwater and ultra-deepwater exploration wells over the next five years will be funded from the budget.

Besides underwriting part of the cost of drilling exploration wells, the government will part-fund common infrastructure, including subsea pipelines and onshore oil and gas receipt and processing facilities, allowing multiple operators to commercialise hydrocarbon discoveries using shared assets.

Officials said private companies have largely shied away from risk exploration because the investment has to be written-off if no commercially viable hydrocarbon discovery is made.

"They were spending money only on development drilling -- producing already established discoveries. Hardly any money went into risk exploration, which is key to finding new resources," an official said.

"Samudra Manthan is, in that sense, a game-changing scheme," another official said.

Companies holding blocks awarded under previous Open Acreage Licensing Programme (OALP) rounds, as well as those securing acreage in the ongoing bid round, will be eligible to claim government support of up to Rs 650 crore for each deepwater or ultra-deepwater exploratory well they drill, the official said.

The scheme is designed to draw global energy majors into India's offshore basins.

Prashant Vashisht, Senior Vice President, ICRA Ltd, said the scheme provides funds for offshore seismic data acquisition especially in erstwhile No-Go zones, which is a key issue hampering commercial exploitation of oil and



gas reserves in these areas due to lack of good prospectivity data.

"Additionally, the scheme provides support for drilling deepwater/ultra-deepwater wells where the domestic Upstream sector has limited experience and technical expertise and exploitation of the same remains highly capital intensive and risky. The scheme aims to add incremental annual production of 10-15 million tonne of oil equivalent which would reduce the dependence on imports of oil and gas but only to the extent of 3-5 per cent," he said.

WHERE THE MONEY GOES

The scheme's ₹ 84,084-crore outlay is weighted heavily toward the riskiest part of the exploration chain. More than half -- ₹ 43,200 crore -- will be deployed over five years through 2031 specifically to support deepsea drilling, working out to roughly ₹ 650 crore for each of the 60 wells planned -- the clearest signal of the state's willingness to fund exploration risk directly rather than wait for the private sector to absorb it alone.

Beyond the wellhead, the government has set aside ₹ 10,000 crore to help fund the common infrastructure needed to move any discovered reserves into actual production -- pipelines, processing facilities and the like, without which even a successful discovery cannot reach the market.

Of the remainder, ₹ 28,534 crore has been allocated for offshore data acquisition, the seismic and geological surveying work that identifies promising basins before a single well is sunk, while ₹ 2,000 crore is earmarked for developing oil and gas manufacturing and services zones -- the industrial ecosystem needed to support a growing offshore sector.

SHARING THE INFRA-

STRUCTURE BURDEN

A central piece of the programme is its Common Hub Infrastructure (CHI) component, designed to fast-track the commercialisation and pooling of offshore discoveries made by multiple operators -- removing the need for every small or isolated find to build its own standalone infrastructure.

Officials said the shared-infrastructure model has the potential to reduce development costs and improve project economics, optimise marine engineering and offshore resources, enable more efficient pooling and evacuation of hydrocarbons, streamline offshore logistics, accelerate the monetisation of smaller and marginal discoveries, and enhance the viability of projects in challenging deepwater and ultra-deepwater environments.

THE IMPORT PROBLEM IT'S DESIGNED TO SOLVE

The scheme responds to a trend line that has been moving in the wrong direction for a decade. India's reliance on imported crude oil -- the essential input for fuels such as petrol and diesel -- has climbed from 77 per cent to 88 per cent over the past 10 years.

The country also imports roughly half of its natural gas needs, a resource that feeds directly into fertiliser production, power generation, compressed natural gas for vehicles, and piped cooking gas supplies to households.

That vulnerability was thrown into sharp relief by the recent conflict in West Asia, which disrupted energy supplies and sharpened the case, in the eyes of policymakers, for building out domestic production capacity rather than remaining exposed to global supply shocks.

THE BET

Officials expect the scheme to

accelerate exploration activity across India's offshore basins, draw in the investment and technical expertise of international energy majors, and ultimately help unlock hydrocarbon potential that has so far gone untapped beneath Indian waters.

It is, by design, a long-horizon wager -- deepsea exploration rarely pays off quickly, and not every well drilled under the scheme will find oil or gas.

But by moving, for what officials describe as perhaps the first time by any government worldwide, from funding only proven development to underwriting genuine exploration risk directly from the budget, India is making a qualitatively different bet than it has before, they said.

India has overhauled its oil and gas exploration policy three times since 1997, moving away from production sharing contracts (PSCs) that let companies recover costs before splitting profits with the government, toward a system based on revenue sharing and exploration commitments.

The Hydrocarbon Exploration and Licensing Policy (HELP), adopted in 2016, replaced PSCs with Revenue Sharing Contracts (RSCs), under which the government's take is based on gross revenue rather than costs, eliminating cost-recovery disputes.

HELP also introduced the Open Acreage Licensing Policy (OALP), letting companies propose blocks year-round instead of waiting for bid rounds, along with a uniform licence, and marketing and pricing freedom.

The government later introduced a hybrid model to boost exploration in under-commercialised basins: unexplored areas within producing basins are still bid out on a revenue-sharing basis but with greater weight given to companies' proposed work programmes, while blocks in basins with no commercial production are awarded purely on work commitments, with no revenue share to the government beyond royalties.

The framework was consolidated under the Oilfields (Regulation and Development) Amendment Act, 2025, which took effect in April, delinking petroleum operations from mining law and introducing a single petroleum lease, graded royalties and legal stability provisions -- underpinning the 50 new exploration blocks the government put up for bidding across OALP, small-field and coal-bed-methane rounds in December 2025. (PTI)

TCI reports 9.1% revenue growth in Q1 FY2027

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Aug 2: Transport Corporation of India Ltd. (TCI) reported a 9.1 per cent year-on-year increase in consolidated revenue to ₹12,548 million for the first quarter of FY2027, driven by steady demand across key business segments.

The company's EBITDA rose 5.2 per cent to ₹1,599 million, while profit after tax (PAT) stood at ₹1,066 million, marginally lower than ₹1,072 million recorded in the corresponding quarter of the previous financial year.



Commenting on the results, Managing Director Vineet Agarwal said automotive, consumer goods and quick-commerce fulfilment businesses continued to perform well, al-

though sectors such as chemicals, tiles and packaging were impacted by the effects of war.

He said TCI's diversified multimodal network helped maintain operational stability despite higher diesel and bunker fuel costs.

The company expects demand to improve during the festive season and plans to accelerate investments in technology and AI-driven capabilities to enhance forecasting, route optimisation, automation and overall operational efficiency.

Contd. from Page 1...

Govt to rope in

15,060 hectares remained submerged, while 1,543 animals were washed away and another 6,765 were affected.

Sarma expressed his gratitude to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah for extending all assistance to the flood-hit state.

"The approval of Rs 379.35 cr under the SDRF and the timely deputation of Inter-Ministerial Central Teams to Assam reflect the Centre's unwavering commitment to standing with our people," Sarma said in a post on social media.

Sarma had reviewed the relief and rehabilitation work in the worst-hit four districts in a virtual meeting from Guwahati on Saturday.

The chief minister directed the DCs to expedite the submission of the list of affected families to enable the release of financial assistance from August 3, ensure uninterrupted distribution of relief kits, complete damage assessment of educational institutions ahead of the reopening of schools on August 10 and submit the list of damaged 'Namghars' (Vaishnavite centres of prayer) for early restoration support. (PTI)

Protests over paper

antecedents," it had clarified. Noting that the bench is mulling an independent, a transparent and thorough probe into all allegations by a task force, the bench had said a probe is also required to ascertain the attacks on policemen and whether they were by students or some "miscreants".

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Indian diaspora in

plans to hold Open House interactions periodically to address their concerns, Doraiswami said. (PTI)

Census 2027: CM urges

for the districts of Sivasagar and Charaideo, which have been the worst-hit by the current wave of floods. (PTI)

Man allegedly hacked

immediately after the attack. Police personnel from Howraghat Police Station and the Uttar Borbil Police Outpost rushed to the spot after receiving information.

The body was recovered and sent for post-mortem examination.

Residents alleged that a long-standing dispute over land and property could have led to the murder. Meanwhile, police have launched a search operation to trace and arrest the accused.

NSCN(K) militant

grenade and 10 rounds of 9mm cartridge were seized from his possession, it added. (PTI)

Drugs can give

strong steps towards a drug-free India," he added.

The prime minister also said that addiction not only harms the body, but also takes away a mother's smile, shatters a father's dreams, weakens a sister's hope, and takes away the respect of a younger brother.

"Family members live with this pain every day, watching their children gradually lose themselves before their eyes," he said.

Modi also said the government stands firmly with the youth in this campaign against drugs.

"Strict action is being taken against drug traffickers across the country. The arrests have gone up several times as compared to before, and drugs worth thousands of crores of rupees have been seized. This shows how strongly our government is acting against drugs," the prime minister said.

He also urged families not to hide their children's addiction out of concern for social reputation, and instead communicate openly with them and seek expert and medical help to help them overcome substance abuse.

The 'Nasha Mukti Yuva for Viksit Bharat Sankalp Abhiyan' aims to inspire youth to stay away from substance abuse and encourages them to become ambassadors of positive social change in their communities.

The launch marked the beginning of a 100-week nationwide 'Jan Bhagidari' campaign, under which activities will be organised every Sunday across the country to promote awareness and encourage public participation in building a drug-free society.

The activities will include sports events, walkathons, meditation sessions, cultural programmes, awareness campaigns, nukkad natak, discussion forums, art competitions and community engagement programmes.

The Nasha Mukti Bharat Abhiyaan was launched in 2020 in line with the prime minister's vision of creating a Nasha Mukti Bharat, Union Minister for Sports and Youth Affairs, Mansukh Mandaviya, said at the launch. (PTI)

IIT-Guwahati

"The SDRF team is continuing its search operation to locate the student," police said. (PTI)

IHLD's WoundHeal Plus

objective assessment of tissue health, unlike conventional visual inspection, allowing clinicians to identify poorly perfused tissue earlier and intervene before wounds deteriorate.

The launch comes against the backdrop of a growing burden of chronic wounds in India, driven largely by rising diabetes, peripheral vascular disease and an ageing population.

Dr Rahul Chandola, a cardiovascular surgeon and founder-managing director of IHLD MedTech, said that diabetic foot ulcers remain one of the leading causes of lower-limb amputations, with delayed diagnosis and inadequate access to specialised wound care often contributing to poor outcomes.

The advanced imaging can help doctors determine whether sufficient blood supply exists for wound healing, identify tissues that may require debridement and monitor the effectiveness of treatment over time, he said.

"For conditions like diabetic foot ulcers, gangrenous wounds, and post-surgical complications, clinicians can evaluate perfusion and tissue viability objectively, rather than relying on visual inspection alone, enabling earlier, more accurate intervention in cases where timing is often the difference between healing and amputation," Chandola said.

The introduction of the technology builds on the company's broader plans to expand specialised wound care services in India.

With a new centre being launched in Gurugram this month, WoundHeal is extending this technology to a wider patient population, officials said.

Earlier this year, the IHLD MedTech announced plans to establish dedicated wound care centres across the country to address the increasing burden of chronic wounds linked to diabetes and vascular disorders.

According to the company, the centres would combine advanced imaging, artificial intelligence-enabled monitoring and multidisciplinary care to improve outcomes for patients with difficult-to-heal wounds while reducing avoidable amputations and hospitalisation. (PTI)

Petrol, diesel sales soar on weak monsoon rains, LPG demand shifts to piped gas

NEW DELHI, Aug 2: Petrol and diesel sales by India's three state-run fuel retailers rose sharply in July as below-normal monsoon rainfall boosted fuel demand from farmers and motorists, preliminary industry sales data showed.

Petrol sales by Indian Oil Corp (IOC), Bharat Petroleum Corp Ltd (BPCL) and Hindustan Petroleum Corp Ltd (HPCL) climbed 9.7 per cent to 3.45 million tonnes during July, compared with 3.14 million tonnes in the corresponding period a year ago.

The volume was also 15.1 per cent higher than 2.99 million tonnes sold during July 2024 and 36.1 per cent above the level recorded in the same period of 2023. Compared to June, however, petrol sales fell 1.1 per cent from 3.48 million tonnes.

Diesel sales, a key indicator of economic activity in India, rose 10.7 per cent year-on-year to 7.12 million tonnes in July from 6.43 million tonnes a year earlier.

Diesel is India's most widely used fuel, powering freight transport, agricultural machinery and irrigation. Below-normal monsoon rainfall boosted irrigation demand during the peak sowing season.

The volume sold in July was 11.5 per cent higher than in the corresponding period of 2024 and 12.7 per cent above the July 2023 consumption. On a month-on-month basis, diesel sales declined 9.2 per cent from 7.85 million tonnes in June.

Fuel sales typically moderate with the onset of the monsoon, which reduces demand for running agricultural irrigation pumps as well as slows vehicular

movement. But this year, the monsoon rains arrived late, which led to farmers using diesel to run pumps to irrigate farms.

Month-on-month, sales in July remain lower because in June holiday travel picks up due to school and college holidays.

Jet fuel (ATF) sales inched up by 2.9 per cent to 659,900 tonnes during July -- volumes that were 2.3 per cent more than the consumption of 641,300 tonnes in July 2024 and 16.5 per cent more than 566,600 tonnes of July 2023.

Month-on-month, the consumption fell 4.6 per cent from 691,700 tonnes of June.

Liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) sales continued to fall, dropping 17.4 per cent to 2.37 million tonnes.

Industry officials said this was largely because some volumes have shifted to piped natural gas since the West Asia crisis.

LPG sales have been declining since the onset of the West Asia crisis disrupted supplies, leading to the imposition of consumption restrictions in sectors like hotels and restaurants.

The curbs were lifted last month, and sales saw an 8.6 per cent rise to 2.18 million tonnes consumed in June but were lower year-on-year as some industrial and commercial users are now using piped natural gas for their needs, they said.

The July LPG consumption was 13.3 per cent lower than 2.73 million tonnes of July 2024 and 1.1 per cent lower than 2.39 million tonnes of July 2023. (PTI)

India approves just 1 Chinese FDI proposal worth ₹1 cr, 13 Hong Kong proposals worth ₹610.42 cr

NEW DELHI, Aug 2: India approved just one Chinese FDI proposal worth ₹1 crore, while clearing 13 applications from Hong Kong worth ₹610.42 crore in the last financial year, according to official data. These approvals are important as investments from countries sharing a land border with India have been subject to prior government approval since April 2020 under Press Note 3 of the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT). The measure was introduced to curb opportunistic takeovers and acquisitions of Indian companies during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Overall, the government has approved 63 FDI (foreign direct investment) proposals worth ₹10,292.67 crore, or USD 1.18 billion, during April 2025-March 2026, according to the DPIIT data. Singapore emerged as the largest source of a proved FDI proposals in value terms, with five proposals worth ₹3,259.88 crore (USD 382.52 million) receiving clearance.

This was followed by the UK, where five proposals worth ₹2,477.67 crore (USD 283 million) were approved, and Thailand, which received approval for two proposals worth ₹1,600 crore (about USD 180 million).

In March, the government eased Press Note 3 of April 2020. Under that, it stated that investors with non-controlling LBC (land border countries) beneficial ownership of up to 10 per cent would be permitted under the automatic route, according to the applicable sectoral caps, entry routes, and other conditions. (PTI)

Health camp benefits 75 residents at Core Residency

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Aug 2: Core Residency Society, Six Mile, in association with Agile Hospital, organised a free health check-up camp for residents on Saturday, benefiting 75 people.

The medical camp was conducted with the support of Dr Maniruz Jaman, Dr Asan Habeeb, Prem Das and Kaushik Borah, who provided health consultations and check-ups to participants.

The programme was coordinated by Sanjukta Khedia and Vandana Choudhary as project chairpersons.

Among those who assisted in organising the camp were Asha Dole, OP Choudhary, RK Bajaj, Mangil Sharma, PD Sharma and Pankaj Khedia.

NPCI issues advisory against rising text message scams

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Aug 2: The National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) has issued a public advisory urging people to remain vigilant against fraudulent text message scams, warning that cybercriminals are increasingly using SMS-based social engineering to steal money and personal information.

NPCI said scammers often impersonate banks, government agencies, telecom operators or delivery companies and attempt to create fear, urgency or curiosity to trick recipients into taking immediate action.

Such messages typically urge users to click suspicious links, call fake helpline numbers, download unknown applications, share sensitive details such as OTPs and UPI PINs or transfer money on the pretext of false account credits.

The organisation advised users to read messages carefully, verify requests only through official websites, apps or customer care channels, download applications exclusively from trusted app stores and never share confidential banking credentials.

It also recommended checking bank account statements to verify any claimed credit transactions and reviewing app permissions before installation.

AFFIDAVIT

I, Fatema Begum, W/o Late Abdus Salam, resident of Chukabahi, P.O. Daipam, P.S. Dalgaoon, District Darrang, Assam, do hereby declare that my actual & correct name is Fatema Begum. But my name has wrongly been recorded in my daughter's HS Passed Certificate vide Roll: 0206 No. 10161 as Fatema Khatun in place of Fatema Begum. That Fatema Begum and Fatema Khatun are the same and one person who is myself. That I have sworn in this Affidavit before the Notary Public, Darrang, Mangaldai on 01/08/2026.

Sd/-
Fatema Begum

BTC Chief urges public to participate in digital census exercise from August 2 to 16

Hagrama, Sewli Mohilary complete Census 2027 self-enumeration



HT Correspondent

KOKRAJHAR, Aug 2: BTC Chief Hagrama Mohilary and MLA Sewli Mohilary on Sunday completed their Census 2027 self-enumeration through the official Census portal, marking the commencement of the nationwide digital self-enumeration exercise and appealed to citizens to actively participate in the process.

Completing the exercise at their official residence, the BTC Chief said the Census was a vital national exercise that forms the basis for evidence-based planning, equi-

table development and effective governance.

He urged every eligible household to make use of the self-enumeration facility, describing it as a simple, secure and convenient digital initiative that enables citizens to submit accurate household information from their homes.

MLA Sewli Mohilary also called upon residents to participate wholeheartedly in the exercise, stating that timely and accurate information would contribute to transparent governance and strengthen the planning and imple-

mentation of welfare and development programmes.

The Self-Enumeration facility under the first phase of Census 2027 will remain open from August 2 to August 16, 2026.

Citizens can complete the process by visiting the official self-enumeration portal, logging in through OTP verification, filling in household and family details, and securely preserving the generated Self-Enumeration (SE) ID.

The SE ID is to be shared with the Census Enumerator during the House Listing and Housing Census, scheduled to be conducted in Assam from August 17 to September 15, 2026, for verification of the information submitted online.

The district administration appealed to all residents to participate in the Census exercise and provide accurate information, stating that every citizen's contribution is vital for inclusive development and effective future planning.

Woman, toddler feared drowned after jumping into Bhogdoi

HT Correspondent

JORHAT, Aug 2: A young woman and her two-year-old son are feared to have drowned after allegedly jumping into the swollen Bhogdoi River at Solmara Malowpam under Pulibor Police Station on Sunday morning in an apparent case of suicide.

According to local residents, the woman, identified as Krishna Bora, reportedly leapt into the river with her child.

The State Disaster Response Force (SDRF) and Pulibor Police were informed immediately after the incident, and a search operation was launched.

However, the bodies had not been traced till the filing of this report as the Bhogdoi River is in spate following recent heavy rainfall.

Local residents alleged that Krishna Bora took the extreme step due to domestic problems.

Police are investigating the circumstances leading to the incident.

RPF conducts 15 operations, rescues 11 vulnerable persons

Force recovers contraband and stolen property, apprehends offenders in two-day vigilance drive

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Aug 2: The Railway Protection Force (RPF) of the Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR) carried out 15 successful operations across its jurisdiction on July 28 and 29, rescuing vulnerable persons, apprehending offenders, recovering contraband and stolen property, and extending timely assistance to passengers.

As part of its drive against illegal transportation of prohibited substances, the RPF recovered 200 bottles of Eskuf cough syrup, valued at around ₹ 44,000, from an unclaimed consignment at Rangiya Railway Station.

In separate operations at Barsoi, New Jalpaiguri and Kishanganj railway stations, personnel also seized 119 bottles of illicit liquor worth approximately ₹ 28,000.

The recovered items were handed over to the concerned police and excise authorities for

legal action.

The force also intensified action against railway-related offences by apprehending six offenders, including five persons involved in theft cases and one railway ticket tout.

During the operations, RPF recovered five stolen mobile phones worth about ₹ 72,000, along with one future Tatkal railway ticket and two used journey tickets valued at nearly ₹ 5,000.

The accused and the recovered property were handed over to the concerned law enforcement agencies.

In humanitarian operations, RPF rescued 11 vulnerable persons, comprising 10 minors—seven boys and three girls—and one destitute woman from Tangla, Barpeta Road, Guwahati, Kishanganj and New Jalpaiguri railway stations.

The children were handed over to their parents or the concerned Child Welfare Commit-

tees and Child Care Institutions, while the rescued woman was reunited with her elder brother.

The RPF, in coordination with the Engineering Department, also conducted an anti-encroachment drive at Katihar Railway Station, removing unauthorised structures erected on railway land adjoining the boundary wall of the 109-acre Kochi Green Golf Club.

Overall, the two-day vigilance drive resulted in the saving of one passenger's life, medical assistance to another, the apprehension of six offenders, the rescue of 11 vulnerable persons, one anti-encroachment operation and recoveries worth approximately ₹ 1.50 lakh.

Northeast Frontier Railway said the operations reflect the RPF's continued commitment to passenger safety, crime prevention, protection of railway property and humanitarian service through proactive policing and effective enforcement.

KKHSOU conducts flood relief drive in Sivasagar

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Aug 2: The Mother Teresa Social Welfare Mission of Krishna Kanta Handiqui State Open University (KKHSOU) on Sunday organised a flood relief drive in Sivasagar district, extending humanitarian assistance to 250 flood-affected families in Hulang Katoni and Ligiripukhuri under Nazira, and Lonpuria under Simaluguri.

As part of the initiative, the Mission distributed relief kits containing essential food and household items, including candles, bathing soap, mustard oil, soyabean, lentils, bottled drinking water, tea, flattened rice (chira), phenyl, sugar, milk, matchboxes, rice, toothpaste, toothbrushes, biscuits, mugs, sanitary pads and baby food.

In addition to the relief kits, families received bedsheets, pillow covers, bowl sets, ladles, gamosas, clothes, mosquito nets and stationery items for children to help meet their immediate needs.

The relief materials were distributed in the presence of Dr Bhaskar Bhattacharyya, Chairperson of the Mother Teresa So-

cial Welfare Mission; Kamaleswar Kalita, Finance Officer, KKHSOU; Birinchi Kumar Borah, Assistant Registrar (Study Centre); Dr Sanjib Ghimire, Assistant Regional Director of the Jorhat Regional Centre, along with other university officials and staff.

The university acknowledged the support of Dr Ajit Chandra Borah, Coordinator of Nazira College; Suka Muni Das, Coordinator of Sivasagar University; Nabajyoti Sarmah, Coordinator of Bir Lachit Barphukan College; Pranjal Gogoi, Office Assistant at Nazira College; Aditya Kalita of Hulang Katoni; and Dilip Saikia of Ligiripukhuri for coordinating the relief distribution in the affected areas.

KKHSOU said the Mother Teresa Social Welfare Mission has consistently undertaken humanitarian initiatives for vulnerable communities and that the latest relief drive reflects the university's continued commitment to community outreach and timely assistance for families affected by the recent floods in Sivasagar district.

DC urges residents to submit accurate details online between August 2 and 16

Nagaon begins Census 2027 self-enumeration drive

HT Correspondent

NAGAON, Aug 2: The first phase of Census 2027 commenced in Nagaon district on Sunday with the launch of the nationwide self-enumeration process, as District Commissioner Devashish Sharma appealed to residents to actively participate and provide accurate information.

Addressing a press conference at the District Commissioner's office, Sharma said citizens can complete self-enumeration online from August 2 to August 16 by visiting the official Census portal, se.census.gov.in, using a mobile phone or computer.

He said each household would be required to answer 36 questions and urged those with access to smartphones or computers to complete the process independently, which would help save time for both citizens and enumerators.

Describing Census 2027 as the country's eighth Census and the first to be conducted digitally, Sharma said the exercise would make the enumeration process faster and more efficient if eligible households submitted their information in advance.



The District Commissioner said census data plays a crucial role in economic planning, policymaking and development programmes.

He assured residents that the information collected would remain confidential and would not compromise personal privacy, urging everyone to furnish only correct and authentic details.

Officials clarified that only one household can be self-enumerated through a single mobile device.

After completing the process, families must retain the Self-Enumeration (SE) ID generated by the portal and present it to the enumerator during the subsequent verification process.

For those unable to complete

self-enumeration online, Sharma said there was no cause for concern, as enumerators would visit every household between August 17 and September 15 to collect the required information.

A live demonstration on completing the self-enumeration process using a mobile phone and computer was also conducted during the press conference.

District Development Commissioner Devyani Choudhury, Additional District Commissioners, Assistant Commissioners, Sub-Divisional Officers, the Additional Superintendent of Police, the District Information and Public Relations Officer and other officials were present at the event.

West Karbi Anglong launches Census 2027 self-enumeration portal

HT Correspondent

HAMREN, Aug 2: The West Karbi Anglong District Administration on Sunday launched the Census 2027 Self-Enumeration (SE) Portal at the Conference Hall of the District Commissioner's Office in Hamren, synchronising the programme with the statewide rollout of the digital census initiative across Assam.

The launch programme was attended by Additional District Commissioner Dhrubajyoti Dey, Dr Khaidem Shuranjoy Singh, Joint Director, Directorate of Census Operations, Assam, other Additional District Commissioners, Assistant Commissioners, district officials and staff.

The district administration appealed to all eligible residents to complete their self-enumeration through the official portal, se.census.gov.in, between August 2 and August 16, 2026.

Officials said that upon successful submission of household details, an 11-digit Self-Enumeration (SE) ID would be generated.

Residents have been advised to



preserve the ID and present it to the Census Enumerator during the House Listing phase of the Census.

The administration has also directed all Heads of Departments to initiate the self-enumeration process within their respective offices and encourage employees as well as members of the public to complete the exercise within the stipulated period.

Appealing for public participation, the district administration said accurate census data is essential for effective planning, policy formulation and implementation of development and welfare programmes.

It also urged citizens to ensure that no eligible resident is left out of the Census exercise.

Tribal bodies allege fresh land encroachment in Kokrajhar



HT Correspondent

KOKRAJHAR, Aug 2: A fresh land encroachment controversy has erupted in Kokrajhar after several tribal organisations alleged that government land earmarked for indigenous religious institutions at Patharghat, on the bank of the Gaurang River, had been illegally occupied.

The organisations accused alleged land mafia Sanjan Pal of encroaching upon land allotted for the proposed Kokrajhar District Brahma Dharma Samity and Bathou Dharma Samity, situated adjacent to the office of the Kokrajhar District Tribal Sangha.

According to the organisations, a tin-sheet boundary fence was

erected on the disputed land late on Saturday night despite existing court orders and official directions.

They also alleged that banners installed by the Brahma Dharma and Bathou Dharma organisations were removed and thrown away by the miscreants.

The land, they said, was previously under the Water Resources Department and later served as an Army camp before being earmarked by the Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) for the Tribal Sangha and the proposed indigenous religious institutions.

The latest controversy follows an earlier police raid at the residence of Sanjan Pal after an FIR was lodged by the Tribal Sangha.

During the operation, Kokrajhar Police reportedly recovered iron grills and tin sheets allegedly stolen from the under-construction Tribal Rest House-cum-office and the proposed Brahma Dharma complex.

Describing the alleged encroachment as an attack on institutions representing the indigenous tribal communities of the region, the organisations expressed concern over what they termed repeated attempts to occupy government land reserved for community welfare and religious activities.

Condemning the incident, the tribal bodies demanded immediate intervention by the BTC and the district administration to protect the disputed land, remove the alleged illegal structures and initiate stringent legal action against those responsible.

The incident has once again brought the issue of safeguarding government land and protecting institutions of indigenous communities in the Sixth Schedule areas of the Bodoland Territorial Council into focus.

BJP hails Assam govt's expanded flood relief package



HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Aug 2: The Assam Pradesh BJP on Sunday welcomed Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma's expanded flood relief and rehabilitation package, describing it as a comprehensive response to the recent floods. In a statement, BJP spokesperson Brojen Mahanta said the previously announced ₹ 15,000 assistance for flood-affected families would be disbursed between August 3 and 5.

The government has also announced an additional ₹ 10,000 for families unable to return home, free school uniforms for affected students, waiver of July electricity bills and land revenue in Sivasagar and Charaideo, financial aid for damaged schools, Namghars and Anganwadi centres, and simplified insurance claim procedures. The statement added that damage assessment will begin on August 7, the APSC Assistant Engineer examination has been postponed in view of the flood situation and Orunodoi assistance in the worst-affected districts has been enhanced to ₹ 2,500.

The BJP also appreciated party workers and Orunodoi beneficiaries for supporting flood relief efforts.

NFR revises train services as restoration work continues

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Aug 2: The Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR) has announced fresh changes to train services as restoration work continues near New Harangajao 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.

According to the latest advisory, Train No 15617 (Guwahati-Dullabcherra) Express scheduled to commence its journey on August 3, Train No 15618 (Dullabcherra-Guwahati) Express on August 4, Train No 15615 (Guwahati-Silchar) Express on August 3, and Train No 15616 (Silchar-Guwahati) Express on August 4 have been cancelled.

Several trains have also been rescheduled.

Train No 15650 (Narangi-Agartala) Express will depart at 10.30 pm on August 3, while Train No 15649 (Agartala-Narangi) Express, Train No 15609 (Guwahati-Sairang) Express and Train No 15611 (Rangiya-Silchar) Express will depart at 11.30 pm the same day.

Similarly, Train No 15610 (Sairang-Guwahati) Express has been rescheduled to leave at 9.30 pm on August 3.

Train No 15612 (Silchar-Rangiya) Ex-



press will depart at 5 am on August 4, while Train No 20501 (Agartala-Anand Vihar Terminal) Tejas Express will leave at 11 pm on August 3.

Train No 14037 (Silchar-New Delhi) Poorvottar Sampark Kranti Express has been rescheduled to depart at 4.10 am on August 4.

In addition, Train No 15645 (Charlapalli-Silchar) Express, which commenced its journey on August 1, and Train No 12501 (Kolkata-Agartala) Garib Rath Express, which commenced its journey on August 2, will be regulated en route as operationally required.

NFR said restoration work is continuing on a priority basis and advised passengers to verify the latest train schedules before commencing their journeys.

Nagaon rallies behind flood victims, sends relief worth ₹ 20 lakh



HT Correspondent

NAGAON, Aug 2: Responding to an appeal by Nagaon-Batadroba MLA Rupak Sarma, people from across Nagaon district came together to raise over ₹ 20 lakh for flood-affected families in Sivasagar, Jorhat and Charaideo, enabling the dispatch of several truckloads of relief materials to the affected areas.

The appeal received overwhelming support from all sections of society, including children, senior citizens, educational institutions, social organisations, gram panchayats, Anganwadi workers and helpers, women's self-help

groups, the Nagaon Municipal Board and members of the business community. Contributions ranged from ₹ 50 to ₹ 50,000.

Students of Classes IX and X also joined the relief effort by performing songs to raise funds, which they later handed over to the MLA. In another touching gesture, a child from Dhing donated savings accumulated over several years in the form of coins.

Using the funds collected, essential relief materials, including large cooking utensils, baby food and other household necessities, were transported in several trucks to Sivasagar and Nazira on Sun-

day. Sarma said the relief would be distributed through the respective district administrations and local MLAs.

The MLA said the recent floods had washed away household belongings, leaving many families without even basic cooking utensils. He added that flood-hit areas also required equipment such as spades and shovels, along with disinfectants like phenyl and bleach powder to clean homes filled with silt after the waters receded.

Keeping these needs in view, the relief consignment included new utensils, spades, shovels, phenyl, bleaching powder and baby food.

Speaking to the media, Sarma said it was the moral responsibility of every citizen to stand beside people affected by natural calamities. Thanking all those who contributed to the relief drive, he expressed hope that the assistance would provide immediate relief to the affected families and help them rebuild their lives.

Addresses launch of 100-week nationwide anti-drug campaign in Varanasi

Governor calls for drug-free youth to realise Viksit Bharat vision

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Aug 2: Governor Lakshman Prasad Acharya on Sunday called for building a drug-free, disciplined and value-based generation of youth, saying it was essential for achieving the vision of a Viksit Bharat by 2047, while attending the nationwide launch of the 'Nasha Mukta Yuva for Viksit Bharat' campaign in Varanasi.

The programme, organised to mark the launch of the 100-week nationwide campaign initiated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, aims to eliminate substance abuse and encourage young people to contribute actively towards nation-building.

Addressing the gathering, the Governor described the campaign as a national mission to nurture healthy, patriotic and value-driven youth capable of leading the country towards the goal of a developed India.

He said the sustained 100-week initiative would help create long-term awareness, bring about behavioural change and strengthen community participation in the fight against drug abuse.

Stressing that a drug-free society is a collec-



tive responsibility, Acharya said India's demographic dividend could be fully realised only when its youth remained free from substance abuse and were guided by strong moral values.

He underscored the importance of transforming the campaign into a people's movement through the active involvement of families, educational institutions, religious organisations and community groups.

Referring to Assam's experience, the Governor said social awareness, community participation and value-based guidance had played a significant role in addressing substance abuse in several parts of the Northeast.

Following the Governor's directions in his capacity as Chancellor, higher educational institutions across Assam organised live screenings of the Prime Minister's address.

Students, teachers and members of the academic community participated in the programme and reaffirmed their commitment to the 100-week campaign and the larger goal of building a healthy, responsible and drug-free society.

Highlighting the spirit of Ek Bharat, Shreshtha Bharat, Acharya said India's unity is strengthened when its youth remain rooted in values and dedicated to national service.

He also urged young people to use digital platforms responsibly to spread awareness and promote the message of a drug-free society.

The Governor appreciated the efforts of Gayatri Pariwar, which organised the programme in Varanasi, for promoting character-building and value-based education.

He expressed confidence that the campaign would evolve into a vibrant nationwide movement through active public participation and make a meaningful contribution to the vision of a Viksit and Atmanirbhar Bharat.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

Leadership is the art of getting someone else to do something you want done because he wants to do it
- Dwight D. Eisenhower

Legal setback for Kerala government

An attempt by the Congress-led United Democratic Front (UDF) government in Kerala to politicize the police force has failed with the High Court frustrating the move. The court stayed the operation of an order by the Additional Chief Secretary (Home) to reorganize the Kerala Police Association (KPA), on the recommendation of the State Police chief. The KPA had filed a petition, contending that the order violated its fundamental right to form associations under the Constitution of India. Only the Union Government had the power to modify any rights conferred on a citizen who was part of the armed forces in charge of maintaining public order. The order was made, the petition argued, without stating the reasons for the reconstitution of the police associations. The Secretary's order envisaged the revamp of all civil police officers, senior civil police officers, grade assistant sub-inspectors, assistant sub-inspectors and grade sub-inspectors. Senior officers above the rank of sub-inspectors up to Superintendent of Police would be included in the Kerala Police Senior Officers Association (KPSOA). It also abolished the Kerala Police Officers Association (KPOA). As per the order, 60 percent of KPOA's bank accounts, documents, deposits and investments and assets were to be given to the Kerala Police Association and 40 per cent to KPSOA.

The committee was also asked to conduct elections for the two newly constituted associations before September 30. The court also ordered that the committee would not function until further orders. In an oral remark, the court made it clear that once the two bodies come into operation, there would be no going back, adding that the petitioner had approached the court at the right time. Once a right to form an association is conferred, taking back that right is not easy. The court also enquired about the basis on which the 60:40 ratio was decided for the division of KPOA's assets. The court found merit in the contentions raised by the petitioner. On its part, the State argued that at present there were three associations, KPA, consisting of police personnel in the lower rank, the KPOA, comprising officers in the rank of assistant sub-inspectors, sub-inspectors and circle inspectors. The KPSOA consists of Deputy Superintendent of Police and Superintendent of Police (non-IPS), which was instituted under the recommendation of the National Police Commission. It stated that the order was aimed at benefiting the police force as a whole since the Senior Officers Association only had two categories of senior officers.

The petitioner's argument was that the three associations had been functioning independently with different objectives. The Court order has vindicated the stand taken by the Leader of the Opposition (LoP) Pinarayi Vijayan who had criticized the State Government's move to "unilaterally" revamp the police organisations in the State with the express objective of bringing the police force fully under the control of the political interests of the ruling administration.

The culture of protest: Rights must be matched by responsibility

By: Lalit Garg

India's democracy is not merely an electoral system; it is a vibrant framework of dialogue, dissent, and constitutional values. Within this democratic order, every citizen has the right to express their views and present their demands peacefully. The Constitution guarantees freedom of expression and the right to peaceful assembly. However, these rights can never be construed as a license for violence, lawlessness, destruction of public property, or attacks on security personnel. The greatest strength of democracy lies in its ability to accommodate dissent with dignity, but dissent, too, carries its own limits and responsibilities.

In recent years, certain protests have raised a serious question: can democratic rights be invoked to justify challenging the rule of law and public order? If a demonstration involves breaking police barricades, assaulting law enforcement personnel, damaging public property, or attempting to forcibly march towards the nation's highest democratic institution—the Parliament—it is unreasonable to expect the government and security agencies to remain passive spectators. The State's foremost responsibility is to safeguard its citizens and protect constitutional institutions.

The Supreme Court's refusal to impose a complete ban on the use of pellet guns, while observing that they may be employed under exceptional circumstances, reflects this balanced approach. The Court did not endorse the unrestricted use of force; rather, it acknowledged that the State must retain the necessary means to maintain law and order. If every effective tool is taken away from security forces, how can they control violent mobs? This is a question that concerns not only the government but society as a whole.

This, however, does not imply that the police or security agencies should be vested with unlimited powers. In a democracy, every action of the State is subject to judicial scrutiny and public accountability. If force has been used excessively in any instance, there must be an impartial investigation, and those responsible should be held accountable. Such inquiries, however, must be based on facts rather than preconceived notions. Just as the grievances and suffering of protesters deserve to be heard, the injuries sustained by police officers and security personnel also merit equal attention and seriousness.

Today, there is an urgent need to reassess the culture of protest in India. During the freedom struggle, Mahatma Gandhi established the tradition of

Satyagraha, where moral courage was the greatest weapon. Satyagraha embodied resistance without hatred, struggle without violence, determination without disorder, and conviction without chaos. Regrettably, some contemporary protests have replaced dialogue with confrontation, restraint with aggression, and reason with the power of the crowd. This is not a healthy trend for a democratic society.

The younger generation must understand that lasting democratic change is not achieved by throwing stones on the streets but through ideas, organisation, public awareness, and constitutional processes. If every disagreement is allowed to escalate into violence, it is the youth—on whose behalf many movements claim to speak—who will ultimately suffer the most. Democracy is sustained not by emotions alone, but by discipline, responsibility, and respect for constitutional values.

Even if one assumes that anti-social or violent elements infiltrated a protest organised by a political party or its supporters and attempted to steer it towards anarchy, the government's primary duty remains the protection of law and order, constitutional institutions, and the safety of ordinary citizens. Administrative intervention undertaken in a timely manner—even if it results in some unfortunate incidents—may be viewed in the broader context of preventing widespread disorder and protecting national institutions from potential harm. At the same time, it is equally expected in a democratic system that the Opposition, while representing public sentiment, should unequivocally distance itself from violence and vandalism, drawing a clear distinction between supporting legitimate demands and condemning unlawful acts. Democracy is strengthened only when the government upholds the rule of law, the Opposition acts responsibly, and public protests remain firmly within constitutional and peaceful boundaries.

Political parties, too, bear a vital responsibility in this regard. Every political organisation has an obligation to channel public sentiment in a constructive direction. If any party or its supporters encourage violence, vandalism, or the taking of law into their own hands during protests, its democratic credibility naturally comes under question. The role of the Opposition is not merely to oppose the government but also to present constructive alternatives. When mass movements are exploited solely for political gain by any side, it is democracy itself that ultimately suffers. Governments, for their part, must also engage in introspection regarding the circumstances that

give rise to public anger. The doors to dialogue should always remain open. Transparent decision-making, timely communication and effective grievance redressal mechanisms can prevent many protests from escalating into confrontation. Democratic governance is not simply about enforcing laws; it is equally about earning the trust and confidence of the people.

Looking ahead, certain guiding principles should be firmly established. Every large-scale protest should require prior permission, adherence to designated routes, and clearly defined accountability on the part of organisers. Adequate measures must be taken to protect public property, ensure the prompt identification of those responsible for violence, and guarantee impartial legal action against offenders. Simultaneously, police forces should receive continuous training in modern crowd-management techniques based on scientific methods and the principle of minimum necessary force. Such measures would help achieve a more effective balance between protecting civil liberties and maintaining public order. The true beauty of democracy does not lie in the loudness of slogans but in the depth and sincerity of dialogue. Parliament is the supreme institution representing the aspirations of the people. Every citizen and every group has the right to have their voice heard by Parliament. However, attempting to coerce or besiege Parliament undermines democratic traditions. In a democracy, the will of the people to be expressed through constitutional processes is supreme—not the rule of the mob.

Today, as India advances not only as the world's largest democracy but also as an aspiring global leader, it must cultivate a culture of protest that serves as an example for the world. Our movements should become instruments for improving the system, not dismantling it. Our demonstrations should strengthen democratic consciousness rather than deepen divisions. Ultimately, we must remember that rights and duties are two sides of the same coin. Rights can be meaningfully protected only when duties are discharged with equal sincerity. If protests remain within the framework of constitutional values and peaceful conduct, governments, too, will become more accountable, and democracy will emerge stronger. India needs movements that inspire reform rather than disruption; that teach young people responsibility instead of extremism; and that place the national interest above partisan considerations, thereby paving the way for a more mature, disciplined, inclusive, and people-centric democracy.

The boundaries of student politics



association with student movements, having anchored numerous existential struggles across past decades. This glorious legacy, however, cannot serve as a blank check to justify the systemic chaos and institutional decay observable today. As society evolves, the methodologies of student movements must transform in tandem; yet, the predictable cycle of agitations—frequent blockades, disruptive dharnas and constant boycotts of classroom instruction—remains stubbornly entrenched. While peers across the globe immerse themselves in artificial intelligence, advanced space science and pioneering economic research, a massive fraction of Assam's youth remains tethered to the rhythm of street protests, inflicting irreparable damage on the local academic environment.

DEGREE OF THOUGHT

By: Himangshu Ranjan Bhuyan

Educational sanctuaries are explicitly designed to foster free inquiry, rigorous debate and objective analysis, yet modern student union elections mirror the ugliest elements of mainstream politics through rampant cash transactions, brute muscle display and clandestine conspiracies. When adolescents learn lessons of corruption and moral bankruptcy under the guise of leadership training, society forfeits any legitimate expectation of a transparent future. Furthermore, this aggressive politicisation severely fractures the sacred guru-pupil tradition, breeding an environment where mutual respect collapses under the weight of administrative interference, intimidation and campus 'gheraos'. Dedicated educators and exceptionally brilliant minds are systematically driven into states of profound frustration, compelling a massive brain drain as top-tier talent flees the state in search of peaceful scholastic atmospheres. The boundary lines of student activism must therefore be strictly reinforced to safeguard institutional autonomy and academic dignity, ensuring that collective representation remains channelled through appropriate channels rather than de-

scending into lawlessness and coercion. Student organisations must limit their scope to conveying academic grievances to relevant authorities, rather than usurping administrative authority or attempting to govern institutions through intimidation, thereby restoring academic sanctuaries to their rightful status as centers of enlightenment and intellectual growth.

Beyond the immediate academic sphere, the persistent culture of disruption exerts a profoundly corrosive influence on Assam's broader economic landscape and work culture. Frequent work stoppages, spontaneous bandhs and relentless agitation-driven environments create a climate hostile to sustainable industrialisation, capital investment, and economic self-reliance.

Rather than championing enterprise, innovation, and the dignity of labour, student leadership structures have frequently cultivated a culture of perpetual dependency, where individuals transition directly from campus politics into lifetime careers centered on state patronage, political lobbying or government contracting. This systemic failure sends a perilous message to the younger generation, discouraging entrepreneurial initiative and rewarding political expediency. Significantly, this intellectual and moral degradation is heavily sustained by an enabling society, including senior intellectuals and civic leaders who routinely coddle, flatter or fearfully endorse the transgressions of student leaders, thereby inflating their egos and fostering a dangerous immunity to accountability. The traditional concept of student organisations acting as undisputed national guardians requires radical reassessment; young students represent the future of a nation, but they inherently lack the seasoned wisdom, psychological maturity, and long-term perspective required to act as the custodians of the present. In the modern era of

digital revolutions and hyper-connected social media landscapes, the potential for manipulation has multiplied exponentially. Digital platforms are routinely exploited to viralise unverified emotional narratives, spread toxic rumors, and orchestrate online harassment campaigns, reducing meaningful civic discourse to a polarised battleground. True student leadership in the digital age demands rigorous adherence to factual accuracy, emotional restraint, and constructive dialogue over sensationalism, ensuring that information technology serves as a bridge for collective knowledge rather than an instrument for social division.

To reverse this systemic decline, student politics must undergo a profound paradigm shift, pivoting away from raw emotionalism toward rigorous intellectual movements. In a challenge-laden region like Assam, student bodies must transition from mere vocal protestations to scientific problem-solving, tackling monumental crises such as recurring floods, severe river erosion, rampant unemployment and demographic shifts through empirical research, dedicated study circles and academic seminars. Organising libraries, promoting scientific aptitude, hosting literary discussions and fostering cultural harmony across diverse linguistic and religious communities must take precedence over divisive, communal or ultra-nationalist rhetoric. Moreover, student organisations must urgently address the crushing mental health crisis confronting modern students, establishing robust counseling frameworks and wellness workshops to combat academic burnout and depression, thereby redefining service through quiet, compassionate action rather than performative political glamour. A critical structural reform long overdue is the strict enforcement of tenure limits, ensuring that student leadership remains exclusively in the hands of active, enrolled students rather than allowing veteran professional figures well into their forties to manipulate organisations for personal survival. Ultimately, the boundaries of student politics do not act as restrictive chains, but rather as necessary guardrails designed to harness volatile energy into constructive national development, resembling a powerful nuclear force that can either illuminate or obliterate a civilisation. By replacing placards with books, slogans with logical reasoning and hostility with universal empathy, the student community can reclaim its historical glory. The ultimate goal is to cultivate a generation of global citizens who remain deeply rooted in their cultural identity while achieving towering intellectual excellence. Through rigorous self-analysis and moral awakening from within, student organisations can evolve into powerful catalysts of progress, illuminating the path toward a transparent, progressive, and dynamic society.

Building a skilled generation for the digital economy

By: Dr Vijay Garg

The world is witnessing one of the greatest economic transformations in history. Just as the Industrial Revolution changed the way people lived and worked, the Digital Revolution is reshaping every aspect of modern life. Artificial intelligence, automation, robotics, cloud computing, cybersecurity, data science, blockchain and the Internet of Things (IoT) are redefining industries and creating entirely new career opportunities. In this rapidly evolving landscape, the true wealth of any nation will not merely be its natural resources but the skills of its people. Building a skilled generation has therefore become the most important investment for a thriving digital economy.

The digital economy is no longer limited to software companies or technology firms. Agriculture is becoming smarter through precision farming and drones. Healthcare increasingly relies on telemedicine, wearable devices and AI-assisted diagnosis. Manufacturing is adopting smart factories powered by automation and robotics. Education has expanded beyond classrooms through digital learning platforms. Banking, retail, logistics, entertainment and government services are all undergoing digital transformation. Consequently, digital literacy and technological competence are becoming essential for nearly every profession.

This transformation demands a fundamental shift in education. For decades, education systems focused primarily on memorisation, examination, and theoretical knowledge. While academic foundations remain important, employers today seek individuals who can solve problems, think critically, communicate effectively, collaborate in teams and adapt to changing technologies. The future belongs to learners who can continuously acquire new skills rather than depend solely on degrees earned years earlier.

Schools play a crucial role in preparing students for this future. Digital literacy should begin at an early age, enabling children to use technology responsibly, safely and creatively. Coding, computational thinking, financial literacy, media literacy and environmental awareness should complement traditional subjects. Equally important are creativity, curiosity, ethics and emotional intelligence—qualities that machines cannot easily replicate.

Teachers themselves need continuous professional development. As technology evolves rapidly, educators must be equipped to integrate digital tools into

teaching while preserving the human values that define meaningful education. Artificial intelligence can personalise learning, provide instant feedback, and automate administrative tasks, but it cannot replace the inspiration, empathy and mentorship that dedicated teachers provide.

Higher education institutions must also strengthen their partnerships with industry. Universities should regularly update curricula to match emerging technologies and labour market needs. Internships, apprenticeships, live industry projects, innovation labs, and entrepreneurship



programmes help students bridge the gap between classroom learning and workplace expectations. Industry participation in curriculum design ensures that graduates possess relevant and employable skills.

Vocational education deserves equal recognition alongside academic education. Skilled technicians, electricians, healthcare assistants, machine operators, digital marketers, cyber-security analysts, renewable energy technicians and AI support professionals are increasingly in demand. A modern economy requires both highly qualified researchers and highly skilled technical professionals. Respect for vocational careers is essential for balanced national development.

Digital skills alone are not sufficient. Human skills—often called "power skills" or "soft skills"—are becoming even more valuable. Communication, teamwork, adaptability, leadership, creativity, resilience, ethical decision-making and lifelong learning enable individuals to thrive in environments where technology changes rapidly. Employers consistently report that these qualities are as important as technical expertise.

The digital economy also presents opportunities for inclusion. Remote work allows talented individuals from rural and underserved regions to participate in global markets without relocating. Women, persons with disabilities and small entrepreneurs can benefit significantly from digital platforms when pro-

vided with appropriate training, internet connectivity, and access to digital tools. Inclusive skill development can reduce inequalities while expanding economic participation.

Governments have a vital role in creating a strong digital ecosystem. Investments in broadband connectivity, digital infrastructure, modern schools, teacher training, innovation centres, startup ecosystems and affordable access to technology can accelerate national progress. Public-private partnerships can further strengthen skill development programmes that respond quickly to emerging industry needs.

Parents also contribute to building a skilled generation. Instead of measuring success solely through examination marks, families should encourage curiosity, creativity, reading, experimentation, responsible technology use and lifelong learning. Children should be allowed to explore diverse interests, develop practical skills and understand that learning continues throughout life.

However, technological advancement must be guided by ethics and responsibility. As artificial intelligence and automation become more powerful, digital citizens must understand issues such as privacy, cybersecurity, misinformation, intellectual property, environmental sustainability and the ethical use of technology. A skilled workforce must also be a responsible workforce.

The future of work will undoubtedly be different from the present. Many existing jobs will evolve, some will disappear and entirely new occupations will emerge. Rather than fearing this transformation, societies must prepare people to adapt confidently. The ability to learn, unlearn and relearn will become one of the most valuable skills of the twenty-first century.

Building a skilled generation is therefore not merely an educational objective—it is a national mission. Countries that invest in quality education, digital literacy, vocational excellence, innovation and lifelong learning will be better positioned to compete in the global economy while ensuring inclusive and sustainable development.

The digital economy belongs not only to those who possess technology but also to those who possess the skills to use it wisely. By empowering today's learners with knowledge, practical abilities, ethical values and adaptability, we can build a generation capable of driving innovation, creating employment, solving global challenges and shaping a prosperous future for all.

India's evolving digital health strategy

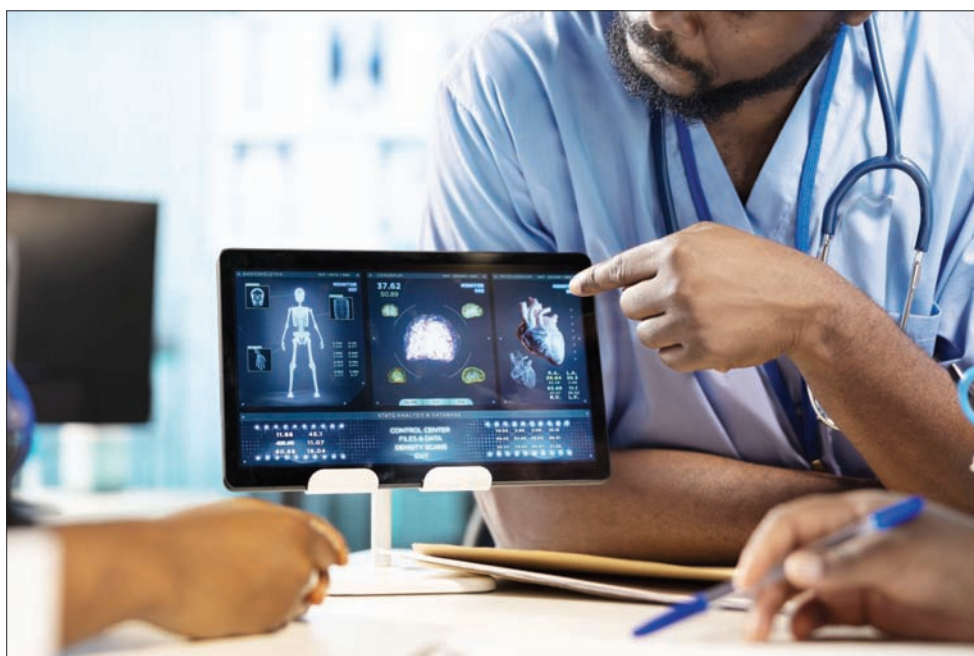
By: Aditya Narayan, Indu Bhushan & Kevin Schulman

India's healthcare landscape is a vast and independent network comprising both public and private sectors, with each playing distinct roles in delivering medical services to its 1.4 billion population. The public healthcare system is designed to offer free or low-cost services for low-income and rural populations. However, these public facilities are often overwhelmed as a consequence of inadequate infrastructure, shortages of medical supplies and a paucity of healthcare professionals. This gap between supply and demand for healthcare services is exacerbated in rural areas where nearly 71% of the population resides but where only one-third of the country's physicians are located.

The recognition that fragmented governance and unequal access to healthcare were major impediments to achieving equitable health outcomes led to the drive for a cohesive national health strategy. The concept of Universal Health Coverage (UHC) became central to India's healthcare policy, aiming to ensure that all citizens, regardless of income or location, have access to necessary health services without facing financial hardship. This push for UHC led to the development of the National Health Policy (NHP) in 2017, which laid the groundwork for leveraging digital technologies to strengthen the healthcare system. Specifically, the National Health Policy of 2017 aimed to achieve universal health coverage by increasing access to quality healthcare services, reducing the cost of healthcare and leveraging digital technologies to enhance the efficiency of service delivery. The Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PM-JAY), launched in 2018 as part of this policy. PM-JAY is a flagship health insurance scheme providing coverage of up to Rs 5 lakhs per family per year for secondary and tertiary care hospitalization (approximately USD 6000), targeting the bottom 50% of the population by income, or approximately 500 million people.

As the strategy developed, policymakers envisioned a significant role for digital innovation as a means of supporting the overall healthcare strategy. The foundation for this insight was known as "Digital India"—the moniker of an evolving federal government strategy aimed at deploying technology to address the chronic economic and social challenges of India's diverse population. The technological backbone of Digital India is the India Stack, which began in 2009 to digitize government and financial services. India Stack had four key components: a digital identification system for all citizens, unified interoperable transactions between individuals and businesses, digital document verification and the scaffolding regulation surrounding consent in data sharing.

The digital identification system, Aadhaar, offers a unique 12-digit biometric ID to 1.3 billion people and could be leveraged to ensure the fi-



delity of public services. Based on these digital identities, the Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY) was launched to provide a virtual bank account to all Indian citizens free of cost to bring the most underserved citizens into the formal economy. Together, these systems have facilitated the creation of over 510 million bank accounts and integrated over 98% of the population into Aadhaar10. Building upon this foundation, the Unified Payments Interface (UPI) was established. UPI provided a secure and interoperable digital infrastructure that could facilitate instant fund transfers via smartphones, leading to 117 billion transactions in 2023 alone. This system overcame common obstacles such as a lack of interoperability between public, private, and retail payment systems as well as geographic barriers to transferring funds for small businesses. As a consequence of this elegant infrastructure, innovation in the financial markets continues to develop at a rapid pace.

Digital health care

On the foundation of this success, the government of India turned to the health sector and committed to "a paradigm shift from the existing silo systems to a holistic and comprehensive health eco-system, founded on the latest digital architectures and technologies".

The development of India's digital health strategy began with a global survey of best practices, in an effort to "leapfrog many of the traps that bedevil health information systems even in developed economies". The United States' HITECH Act, for example, highlighted the importance of a cohesive data architecture and interoperability. The UK's NHS Digital illustrated the importance of developing and deploying integrated digital health platforms that ensure data privacy while en-

abling efficient health information exchanges. South Korea's approach to integrating personal health records with national identifiers and Singapore's "One Patient, One Health Record" model offered lessons on the value of ensuring patient access to their health data for enhanced care coordination and privacy.

Drawing from these global models, India launched the ABDM in 2021 with a focus on creating a secure, integrated digital health ecosystem that emphasizes personal health records, ensuring that each citizen's health data is accessible, interoperable, and under their control. This ambitious project introduced five key innovations designed to enhance the delivery and management of healthcare services across the nation.

Central to the ABDM was a unique 14-digit health identifier for every citizen, the Ayushman Bharat Health Account (ABHA). Notably, the ABHA was primarily built upon Aadhaar (although other sources of identification are allowed) - India's robust biometric identification system, leveraging its technological underpinnings to securely authenticate and manage health records.

The ABDM mobile application provides individuals with an accessible electronic personal health record (PHR) that adheres to national interoperability standards. Unlike traditional Electronic Medical Records architectures, the PHR is managed, shared and controlled by the patient themselves with the ability to make records visible or invisible to providers. This architecture is a unique feature of the ABDM program.

The Healthcare Professionals Registry and Healthcare Facilities Registry catalog enrolled healthcare professionals and facilities nationwide.

By creating standardized, accessible databases of healthcare providers and institutions, the ABDM facilitated easier verification and provider credentialing processes, which in turn helped patients make more informed choices about their healthcare.

Finally, the Unified Health Interface is the patient-facing platform supporting healthcare transactions. It was designed as an "open protocol for various digital health services," including, but not limited to, appointment bookings, teleconsultations and patient service delivery. Its open network structure allows for the integration of End-User Applications—such as data from health apps used by patients—and Health Service Provider applications—digital tools used by hospitals, clinics, and laboratories to manage patient data or facilitate operations.

Of note, the ABDM concept was conceived as a catalyst for private investment in the digital health sector. Accordingly, ABDM has put in place a "digital sandbox" that provides access to APIs from ABDM registries to private sector digital application developers aimed at providing novel services for patients and providers. To date, ABDM has integrated over 1,000 private companies into the ecosystem. Examples include diagnostics companies that allow patients to link lab results (e.g., TB tests, blood tests, urine drug screens) with their ABHA records. Further, a range of Hospital Management Information Systems allow hospitals to link patients' ABHA records to data management platforms, which offer monitoring of patients' health status, secure telemedicine channels, organized appointment bookings, and other "quality of life" upgrades.

Scale and adoption

The COVID-19 pandemic served as a catalyst for the ABDM, accelerating the deployment of digital health technologies. A prime example of this acceleration is the CoWIN platform, a federal digital platform designed to facilitate the registration, scheduling, and management of COVID-19 vaccinations for citizens. Alongside this platform, a mobile health application, Aarogya Setu, emerged as a means of conducting remote COVID-19 contact tracing. ABHA numbers were created rapidly through the CoWIN initiative, leading to 130 million new accounts while ensuring efficient record keeping. For patients, the ability to readily access personal health records allowed for rapid verification of vaccination status, exemplifying the potential of digital tools in managing public health emergencies.

As of March 2024, the country has seen the creation of 568 million ABHA accounts and the integration of over 350 million health records into the digital ecosystem. The program's reach, encompassing over 230,000 health facilities and 285,000 registered providers, underscores the scale of the effort.

Telemedicine has evolved along with the ABDM program. The eSanjeevani telemedicine

platform, launched by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare in 2019, facilitated over 270 million teleconsultations as of August 2024. eSanjeevani was initially designed for physician-to-physician consultations, facilitating collaborative care. However, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, it expanded rapidly into a physician-to-patient service, known as eSanjeevani OPD (outpatient). Notably, eSanjeevani scaled healthcare delivery during the pandemic, with 57% of beneficiaries being female and 12% senior citizens. The second phase of this effort, eSanjeevani 2.0, integrates information from Point of Care Diagnostic devices for rapid diagnosis.

Challenges in implementation

One of the most persistent challenges to the scale-up of India's digital healthcare ecosystem is the uneven technological and infrastructural landscape across the country. While urban areas have largely benefited from improved connectivity and digital literacy, rural regions continue to struggle with limited access to the internet and necessary IT infrastructure. Although there are over 400 million internet subscribers in rural areas as of 2024, the quality and reliability of this connectivity often fall short of what is needed to sustain robust digital health services.

Data privacy and security concerns also loom large over the adoption of ABDM. The digitalization of health records necessitates stringent data protection measures to safeguard sensitive patient information, particularly given the scale of ABDM. To this end, the Digital Personal Data Protection Act (DPDPA) of 2023 represents a step forward in India's efforts to regulate the processing of personal data and ensure data privacy.

While the Federal government has direct control over the financial sector and could implement the India Stack strategy, the responsibility for oversight of the health sector is a state responsibility. The states of Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka have made notable progress in the adoption of ABDM. Karnataka, in particular, has seen higher engagement from private healthcare centers, offering valuable lessons on provider onboarding and navigating provider concerns regarding increased accountability.

Looking forward

The ABDM is an exciting initiative for India and offers a vision for a national digital health architecture. Importantly, after assessing the utilization of electronic health records in the US and globally, India has made significantly different strategic choices on how a digital health strategy can be accomplished. Specifically, the backbone of their strategy is the development of a set of unique patient identifiers, and the implementation of a personal health record architecture to collect data and provide digital health services for patients. This massive experiment at scale should provide important insights into the digital transformation of the United States and global healthcare markets. (Courtesy: npj Digital Medicine)

Public health priorities for India



By: Rakhi Dandona

Only 21% of all registered deaths in India had a medically certified cause of death available in 2019.4 This inadequacy in the availability of medical certification of cause of death has fundamental implications for the country's health system and policy efforts to improve health of the population that lives in India.

Indian states are in different phases of epidemiological transition, resulting in large variations in disease burden across the states. However, the public health priorities across the country remain similar. Addressing the availability of relevant and robust data for meaningful planning of programmes and policies is a gap that needs urgent consideration to improve population health and the continuum of care.

People in India are living longer than ever before, but what they die of is still an extrapolation based on verbal autopsies in a sample of deaths and is not based on medically certified cause of death.

Only 21% of all registered deaths in India had a medically certified cause of death available in 2019.4 This inadequacy in the availability of medical certification of cause of death has fundamental implications for the country's health system and policy efforts to improve health of the population that lives in India. Addressing this gap in data is among the most urgent public health priority for the country.

India generates a substantial amount of data on various aspects of health under the many national and state health programmes. However, these data remain fragmented, in-

To track COVID-19 infections and vaccination, India responded by linking the COVID-19-related health services for individuals with a unique identification number, thereby documenting that it is possible to link records at such a large scale. The Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission which aims to integrate health infrastructure for the country, has developed a system to generate a unique health identification number for each person across the variety of health-care providers; however, the use of this number is currently optional. As a priority, the availability of the unique health identification number should be made mandatory to ensure that each individual is unique in the health system, and has health records available seamlessly over the life course for continuity of care.

adequate, non-standardised and tedious to collate and interpret. Improving the data quality and integration of data is another

major priority. In recent years, substantial effort has gone into the use of technology to improve data availability, but data quality is yet to receive similar attention.

Much of the data in the health management information system (HMIS) is generated on maternal and child health, and yet neonatal mortality—a key indicator—is still not readily available.

Immediate attention is also needed within the HMIS to track and improve data on health services for conditions beyond maternal and child health for India to address the increasing burden of non-communicable conditions and injuries, which can also facilitate priority-setting for public health resource allocation to improve population health.

The factors that influence health outcomes extend well beyond the authority remit of the health ministry. The continuing burden of malnutrition in India highlights the need for coordinated and intersectoral action between the relevant ministries to address this complex and persistent health challenge.

Another example is the neglect of injuries, despite their substantial burden. Injuries are reported as accident (unintentional injuries) and crime (intentional injuries) on the basis of data from police records by the National Crime Records Bureau, under the Ministry of Home Affairs, which are fraught with under-reporting and inadequate reporting of risk factors and do not provide individual-level data that are needed for strategising injury prevention to save lives and to prevent disability. Therefore, an urgent public health need is to co-create key priorities between the key sectors and ministries for successful intersectoral initiatives by sharing the accountability for the right to health across the government as a whole, to achieve the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals.

To track COVID-19 infections and vaccination, India responded by linking the COVID-19-related health services for individuals with a unique identification number, thereby documenting that it is possible to link records at such a large scale. The Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission which aims to integrate health infrastructure for the country, has developed a system to generate a unique health identification number for each person across the variety of health-care providers; however, the use of this number is currently optional. As a priority, the availability of the unique health identification number should be made mandatory to ensure that each individual is unique in the health system, and has health records available seamlessly over the life course for continuity of care.

The critical gaps in data availability and quality cannot be ignored for India to effectively address and measure progress towards improving population health, which would require an integrated government response and multi-sectoral action. How the second most populous country addresses these public health priorities will have implications for the global health agenda. (Courtesy: The Lancet)

Hidden toxins in daily life that may be affecting your fertility

The conversation about fertility often focuses on biological clocks, lifestyle choices and medical treatments, but environmental exposure deserves just as much attention. Men and women alike need to be aware of how their surroundings may be shaping their reproductive health. By acknowledging these risks and making conscious decisions, couples can take control of what is within their power and improve their chances of building a healthy family.



By: Dr Lakshmi Kumari A.

Everyday Sources of Exposure

Fertility is not just about the ability to conceive—it is the result of a delicate balance between hormones, reproductive organs and overall health. While age, genetics, and lifestyle are well-recognised factors, there is another silent contributor that often escapes attention: environmental toxins. In the modern age, women and men are continuously exposed to all kinds of toxic materials in the air we inhale, the food we consume, the water we drink, and even in the products we use daily. Although not visible, these toxins can be very detrimental to reproductive health.

How Toxins Affect Reproductive Health

Toxins in the environment block the body by playing the role of endocrine disruptors, whereby they mimic or inhibit natural hormones. This interference may be on the process of ovulation, sperm generation, or even embryogenesis. In women, this may present as irregular menstruation, decreased ovarian reserve, or an increased risk of diseases like polycystic ovary syndrome and endometriosis. Men, however, can develop decreased sperm count, low sperm motility or even DNA damage in sperm, significantly reducing the likelihood of conception. Other than conception, these toxins can also affect the outcome of pregnancy and even the later health of children.

Some of the most common exposures are found in everyday life. Pesticides sprayed on non-organic fruits and vegetables, or chemicals such as bisphenol A (BPA) in plastics and packaged goods, are well-known offenders. These substances throw off the hormonal balance, lower the quality of women's eggs, and prevent men from producing testosterone. Toxic heavy metals like lead and mercury, which can enter the body through drinking water or specific fish species, are another issue. They build up insidiously over time and are associated with low sperm counts in men and miscarriage in women.

Even the air we inhale can be a villain; pollution with particulate matter and industrial exhaust raises oxidative stress, which harms the egg as well as the sperm. Top this with the chemical burden from common cleaning agents, beauty products, and house paints, and it is easy to see how deeply entrenched modern life has become with these unseen villains.

Reducing the Risks

Though this sounds alarming, it is worth noting that we are not completely helpless. Minor changes in our lifestyle can have a significant impact. Selecting organic fruits and vegetables wherever possible minimises the intake of pesticides. Preferably, choosing glass or stainless steel for water and food storage reduces chemical leaching compared to plastic containers, which

contain harmful elements which can be passed through your food. Consumption of lead and heavy metals can be degraded at home by using an efficient water purifier or switching to boiled water. Even simple shifts, such as selecting natural alternatives for personal care and cleaning products, reduce daily exposure to harmful chemicals.

For those working in industries where chemical contact is unavoidable, protective gear becomes essential. The body can combat oxidative stress brought on by pollutants by maintaining a healthy lifestyle that includes frequent exercise, eating a balanced diet, and ingesting foods high in antioxidants.

Looking ahead

The conversation about fertility often focuses on biological clocks, lifestyle choices and medical treatments, but environmental exposure deserves just as much attention. Men and women alike need to be aware of how their surroundings may be shaping their reproductive health. By acknowledging these risks and making conscious decisions, couples can take control of what is within their power and improve their chances of building a healthy family.

Fertility is not just a medical journey—it is also a lifestyle journey. Understanding the role of environmental toxins is one of the steps towards healthier parenthood, for this generation and the next. (Courtesy: Healthcare Radius)

Plane carrying European tourists crashes in Peru, killing 13 people on Nazca Lines viewing flight



BOGOTA, Aug 2: A plane carrying European tourists to view the famed Nazca Lines crashed into a field outside the Peruvian city of Nazca, killing 13 people, local authorities said.

Nazca's municipal government said the plane departed from the nearby city of Ica on Saturday and was operated by Peruvian company Aerodiana. On its website, the airline said that it has offered scenic flights over the Nazca lines

for the past 14 years using Cessna Grand Caravan planes.

The Nazca Lines are a group of extensive geoglyphs scraped into the desert around Nazca hundreds of years ago by Peru's Indigenous inhabitants. The lines form images of animals that can only be fully appreciated from planes or viewing towers.

Among the dead were seven Italian citizens between the ages of 18 and 54, two 52-year-old Spaniards and two Germans of 77 and 78 years, Peru's Transportation Ministry said. The other two fatalities were the pilot Américo Salazar and copilot Irenka Guanilo del Carpio, it said in an official report.

President Keiko Fujimori expressed regret over the accident and said a "temporary suspension" of the airport was being considered, though the decision will be made once she receives reports from the relevant ministries.

Peruvian authorities said the accident is under investigation. Aerodiana was not immediately available for comment. (AP)

Ruling BNP authorises PM Rahman to finalise nominee for Bangladesh's presidential elections

DHAKA, Aug 2: The ruling Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) has authorised Prime Minister Tarique Rahman to select the party's candidate for the country's presidential elections, local media reported.

The decision was taken on Saturday at BNP's National Standing Committee's meeting, the Dhaka Tribune newspaper reported.

The meeting was headed by PM Rahman, who is also the BNP chairman.

"The Standing Committee has entrusted the Prime Minister and BNP Chairman to take the necessary decisions regarding the presidential election and select the party's nominee," state-owned Bangladesh Sangstha (BSS) quoted BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir as saying.

Speaker Hafiz Uddin Ahmad took charge as the acting president after Mohammed Shahabuddin resigned on July 24. (AP)

The US President has announced halts to strikes in Iran on several occasions

Trump says he will order halt to Iran strikes after parameters reached for deal to end war

WASHINGTON, Aug 2: US President Donald Trump says he will order American forces to hold off on new strikes against Iran, claiming Mideast allies have reached the parameters of a deal to end the 5-month-old war.

The emerging deal "would include the Immediate, Complete, and Total OPENING OF THE HORMUZ STRAIT, and an end to Iran's nuclear threat," Trump wrote in a Saturday evening social media post.

"Based on this request, I have agreed, for the future benefit of the WORLD and, likewise, the survival of a successful and prosperous Iran, to cancel the attack, subject to being able to rapidly make a DEAL," Trump said.

Trump has announced halts to strikes in Iran on several occasions since the US and Israel attacked Iran on February 28, only for things to unravel and fighting to resume again.

Iran's defence minister said on



X that the country was "neither surprised nor passive" following Trump's announcement and said Iran continues to remain alert in the face of concrete threats from the US.

A regional official says the proposal announced by Trump over the weekend calls for the US and Iran to return to negotiations and continue working out many of the issues that have stymied prior progress on the deal.

The official, who is involved in the mediation efforts, said the proposal calls for reopening of the Strait of Hormuz and halting attacks across the region, including by Iranian-backed militias in Iraq on the Arab Gulf countries and Jordan. The US, in exchange, will end its naval blockade on Iran and allow Tehran to export its oil as stated in the tentative ceasefire deal, he said.

No deal has been reached yet,

but mediation efforts are underway, said the official, who spoke on condition of anonymity because he wasn't authorised to talk to the media.

Trump said that Israel is joining his commitment to end the war by implementing the ceasefire deal. Israel did not publicly comment on the announcement.

Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, the kingdom's de facto leader, spoke with Trump by phone Saturday and raised concerns about the US potentially escalating the conflict with Iran, according to the Saudi press agency.

The Saudis, according to the person briefed on the substance of the call but not authorised to comment publicly, are concerned that Tehran could respond with attacks on the energy infrastructure of the kingdom and other Gulf countries. The call happened before Trump's social media announcement, the person said. (AP)

Curfew relaxed in southern Nepal as situation improves after communal clashes

KATHMANDU, Aug 2: Nepalese authorities on Sunday relaxed the curfew imposed in various parts of Madhesh and Koshi provinces as the security situation improved days after communal violence rocked the region.

Three people have been killed in communal violence in Nepal that started after clashes erupted in Sunsari district bordering India in Koshi Province, prompting authorities to impose curfews, prohibitory orders and step up security deployment.

The violence broke out after members of the two communities, who were holding separate programmes, clashed over the use of loudspeakers and the display of religious flags on July 26. The violence soon spread to neighbouring areas. Authorities said that two people were killed in Sunsari district and one in Siraha district.

The curfew has been removed, and only prohibitory orders are in effect in two areas of Saptari district, including Rajbiraj Municipality, taking into consideration the improved security situation, said Naresh Kumar Yadav, assistant chief district officer of Saptari district.

Similarly, in Dhanusha, curfew orders have been withdrawn effective from Saturday while prohibitory orders have been issued in a few places after improvement in the security situation.

In Parsa district, prohibitory orders have been issued only for the night. However, public meetings and assembly of more than four people from 5 pm to 6 am in parts of Birgunj Metropolitan City were not allowed, according to a notice issued by the district administration office, Parsa. (AP)

Idaho fast food restaurant shooting leaves 3 dead, 7 injured: city spokesman

BOISE (US), Aug 2: Three people were killed and seven more were injured, some critically, in a shooting at an In-N-Out Burger restaurant in southern Idaho on Saturday afternoon, a Twin Falls city spokesman said.

Police who responded to the shooting found the body of the suspected gunman in an area near the restaurant, Twin Falls city public information officer Josh Palmer said. He did not know if the suspect was included in the fatality count.

Officials were still working on notifying the family members of victims and so were not yet releasing the names, ages or other details about the people hurt in the shooting, Palmer said.

Some of the people injured are in critical condition, Palmer said. Police were still trying to determine the shooter's identity and motive, Twin Falls Police Chief Matthew Hicks said in a news conference earlier Saturday.

"We believe the threat to the community is over," Hicks said. "It was a very chaotic scene."

Palmer said investigators were still interviewing witnesses to the shooting. The restaurant is in a busy shopping plaza, and hundreds of people were in the area when it happened around 2 pm.

Lane Koehn, 34, said he was at a stoplight near the In-N-Out when he saw a person with an AR-style rifle emerge from the drive-thru. A man with a pistol started firing at the shooter.

He then saw someone in an In-N-Out uniform drag a person, also uninjured, bleeding from a gunshot wound in her chest across the parking lot. The employee, Koehn and the man with the pistol stayed until paramedics arrived for her.

"She was pretty bad off, but I don't know. I hope she made it," Koehn said.

Koehn said he was told by police to evacuate because the shooting was still active.

He also said the shooter fired at least three or four rounds and it was not clear whether or not anyone in particular was targeted.

Video taken by a driver from across the street captured a shooter, who appeared to be dressed in black, walking up to a white car carrying a long rifle, opening the driver-side door and popping the trunk.

The person then walked to the trunk and reached inside. At that point the driver who shot the video left quickly, fearing that the man might be getting more weapons.

Twin Falls resident Haley Dodaro, 43,

and her mother went to In-N-Out for lunch Saturday afternoon. While waiting in the drive-thru line, they saw people running across the road and workers bolting out of the restaurant.

At first Dodaro thought there might have been a fire, but then a man directing traffic in a reflective vest said there was a shooter.

"So that's when we knew there was a shooting. People were running out crying and screaming. It was very scary," Dodaro said in a text message to The Associated Press.

Nayeli Rodriguez, 40, of Burley, was inside waiting for food with her daughters when she heard shots from the kitchen. An employee said it was a shooting and told people to get down.

Rodriguez said an older man tried to protect her and her daughters, and they were among the last to run outside.

"We were trying to get as far as we could and some angels let us in their car," Rodriguez said, also via text message. "I left my car there in the parking lot."

The In-N-Out opened just about a week earlier, on July 24, as part of the company's recent expansion to Idaho. Police said multiple people were taken to St Luke's Magic Valley Medical Centre. (AP)

Blaze on Indonesian passenger ferry leaves at least 5 dead, dozens missing

SURABAYA (INDONESIA), Aug 2: An Indonesian ferry carrying 271 people caught fire in waters off the main island of Java on Sunday, leaving at least five people dead and dozens missing as rescuers and passing vessels evacuated hundreds from the burning ship, officials said.

The Mutiara Sentosa 2 ferry was travelling from Indonesia's second-largest city of Surabaya in East Java to the city of Makassar in South Sulawesi, with 232 passengers and 39 crew members, when the fire broke out between 6 am and 7 am in waters off Sumenep regency, according to Indonesia's National Search and Rescue Agency, or Basarnas.

The ferry operator, PT Atosim Lampung Pelayaran, reported the incident to the Surabaya search and rescue office about an hour later, Basarnas said in a statement. It said the company received information from the ferry's captain that the vessel was on fire near the northern tip of Madura island, but contact was later lost.

By 9:45 am, authorities deter-

mined the ferry was about 19 nautical miles north of Burau Sapudi island after communicating with the nearby cargo vessel Meratus Project 3, which was unable to approach the burning vessel closely because it was carrying a flammable load.

Footage released by the National Search and Rescue Agency showed thick black smoke billowing from one side of the ferry and spreading across much of the ship while videos circulating on social media and messaging groups showed terrified passengers, mostly wearing life jackets, could be seen clustered on the deck and upper sections of the vessel awaiting rescue, some jumping into the sea as orange flames and black smoke billowed from the burning vessel.

The ferry was reported to be nearly engulfed by flames, with passengers gathered on the bridge and bow. A tugboat and another passing vessel moved in and began evacuating passengers shortly before 10 am, the statement said. (AP)

Veteran mountaineer Purja's body found three days after avalanche on Broad Peak in PoK



LAHORE, Aug 2: The body of veteran Nepalese-British mountaineer Nirmal Purja was found on Sunday, three days after he and nine fellow climbers were swept away in an avalanche on Broad Peak, located in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir's Gilgit-Baltistan.

The Alpine Club of Pakistan (ACP) said the 43-year-old mountaineer's body was found at an altitude of around 5,700 metres.

So far, the bodies of five climbers have been recovered, and efforts are underway to locate the remaining five, it said.

"The ground rescue team has reached Nirmal Purja 'Nims Dai'

at approximately 5,700m on Broad Peak, where three additional bodies have also been sighted, though their identities remain unconfirmed," the ACP said.

The ground team will bring the bodies down to the Japanese camp, it said, adding that recovery efforts continue under extremely difficult terrain conditions.

The ACP said the mountain's terrain, risk of avalanches and steep slopes are posing challenges in rescue efforts as helicopters could not be employed due to the weather conditions.

Purja and the other climbers -- five from Nepal, one Pakistani,

one Omani, one American and one Chinese -- were on Thursday swept away by the avalanche that struck Broad Peak, located in the Karakoram range near K2.

It is the world's 12th-highest mountain and is considered one of the most challenging peaks to climb. On Saturday, Purja's expedition enterprise -- Elite Exped -- announced that all members of the group had died.

Four of the ten bodies were recovered on Friday, three of them identified as Oman's Nadhira Ahmed Abdullah Al Harthy, Nepal's Pur Bahadur Gurung and American Mallory Geis, according to ACP President Major General Irfan Arshad. The bodies were airlifted to Skardu, a city in Gilgit-Baltistan.

Purja had an illustrious mountaineering career. He had successfully climbed all 14 peaks above 8,000 metres around the world in just six months and six days, setting a new record in 2019. He was about to complete his mission of climbing all 14 eight-thousanders twice after completing Broad Peak. (PTI)

Iceland seizes Paul Watson Foundation's anti-whaling ship, detains its crew

LONDON, Aug 2: Icelandic coast guards and special forces seized a ship operated by a group founded by anti-whaling activist Paul Watson and detained its crew, officials in the Arctic island nation said.

The Icelandic Coast Guard on Saturday said the crew of whaling ship Hvalur 9 requested assistance on Thursday evening because they believed their safety was under threat from the protest vessel Bandero. It said the Bandero ignored coast guards' instructions to leave Icelandic waters, and later an order to stop its engines.

Coast guards and the police special forces Viking Squad boarded the vessel around midnight on Thursday and detained its crew. Watson was not aboard.

The Captain Paul Watson Foundation confirmed in a statement that the vessel had been seized. It said the 21 crew members were being detained aboard the ship without their phones.

The ship arrived Friday in Reykjavik, Iceland's capital, and police have taken over the investigation, the coast guard agency said. Icelandic national broadcaster RUV reported that police will seek to deport the crew and ban them from returning to Iceland.

Along with Norway and Japan, Iceland is one of the only countries still practising commercial whaling. The country sets annual quotas for the fin whales and minke whales fishermen are allowed to hunt in its waters. It exports most of its whale meat to Japan, but demand there has dwindled since Japan left the IWC and resumed commercial whaling in 2019.

The hunt is increasingly contentious in Iceland, where whale meat is now rarely eaten. (AP)

Flight attendants at Canada's WestJet go on strike in dispute over pay

NEW YORK, Aug 2: Flight attendants with WestJet, Canada's second-largest airline, went on strike Sunday in a dispute over pay.

The Canadian Union of Public Employees represents the 4,400 cabin crew at the airline. It announced the strike on its Facebook page but did not provide further details. The company had cancelled more than 300 flights as of early Sunday, snarling travel plans in Canada in the middle of a three-day weekend.

WestJet confirmed the strike and said its focus remains on staying available for the union to reach an agreement.

A key issue in the dispute was how flight attendants should be paid for duties performed while still on the ground. The union said some of that work is unpaid, while the company said its staff was indeed compensated, citing pay through a "credit hour" system rather than an hourly rate.

"We presented a proposal that would have set a new standard for cabin crew in Canada, making WestJet the only airline to offer an hourly rate covering all time before and after flights, plus a double-digit wage increase in year one among other priorities the union raised," said Alexis von Hoensbroech, CEO of the WestJet Group. "Unfortunately, it wasn't accepted."

The airline said it could not operate any



of its scheduled flights on Boeing 737s or 787s, and travellers will be refunded or reaccommodated. WestJet said it would contact people who reserved with them directly via email, while those who booked through a travel agent or third-party platform should reach out to them.

WestJet Encore flights operated on a Q400, as well as code-share flights operated by airline partners, remain unaffected.

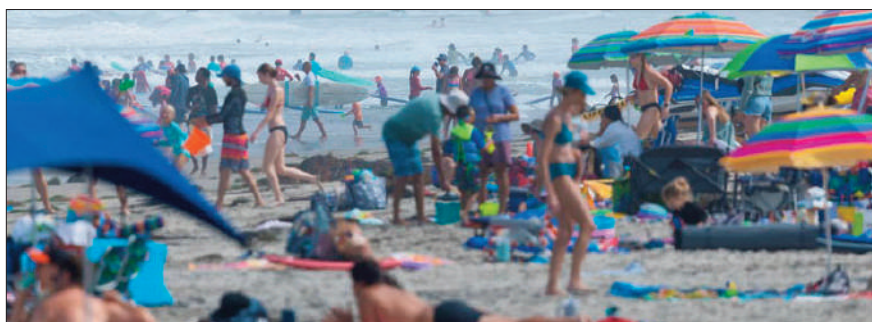
Last summer, flight attendants at Air Canada, the country's largest carrier, stranded more than 100,000 travellers during peak travel season with a strike partly over the same issue of groundwork. That work stoppage lasted three days before the sides came to an agreement. (AP)

In Las Vegas, Saturday's forecast high was 10 degrees above normal Heat wave bringing record-breaking temps, heightened wildfire risk to parts of western US

WASHINGTON, Aug 2: A heat wave gripped large swaths of the western US on Saturday as temperatures hovered near record highs, heightening wildfire risks in areas that already are dry or burning and prompting warnings for people to stay inside.

A ridge of high pressure is holding heat close to the ground -- what's known as a heat dome -- from Arizona to Montana, though the good news is that it will be relatively short-lived, National Weather Service meteorologists said.

Dangerous heat and warnings were plaguing the region Saturday, and the National Weather Service on Saturday forecast a high of 115 degrees Fahrenheit (46 degrees Celsius) in Las Vegas, the hottest temperature of the year. Phoenix was expected to reach 116F (47C), while El Centro, California, was expected to hit a record 118F (48C). Even parts of Montana were expected to broil, with a record 104F (40C) forecast for Great Falls.



In Las Vegas, Saturday's forecast high was 10 degrees above normal, with meteorologists warning of dangerous heat through Sunday, when the high is expected to be 114, said weather service meteorologist Morgan Stessman.

Overnight lows in the upper 80s to low 90s will make the situation especially dangerous because it doesn't allow people's bodies to recover. "There's just no relief overnight," Stessman said.

People were being urged to stay indoors and hydrated.

At the Justa Center in Phoenix, which caters to seniors but opens to the public as a cooling centre in the afternoon, the biggest challenge is keeping up with the need for water and electrolytes, said operations director Rudy Soliz. He said about 200 people come in daily.

"Anybody can come in, get a meal, sign up, get checked in through the cooling cen-

tre, sit down, relax, watch a little TV, you know, catch themselves before they move on to another cooling centre or their destination," he said.

The August record for Las Vegas is 116F (47C), while the hottest on record was 120F (49C) in July 2024, which also was the hottest summer on record, Stessman said.

In Montana, the entire east side of the state was under an extreme heat warning Saturday, though by Sunday, much of the state will be in the 70s, said weather service meteorologist Jeff Kitsmiller.

Great Falls was heading toward a record high of 104F (40C), which would top its previous record of 101F (38C), while Helena was expected to match or surpass its record of 102F (39C), he said.

Still, it's not as bad as the heat wave in mid-July, when some areas broke all-time records, including Billings, which reached 111F (44C) on July 12, Kitsmiller said.

"That was a rare heat wave," he said. "This one fits for this time of year." (AP)

French wildfire near Bordeaux contained as 1,500 firefighters battle separate blaze in Provence

LACANAU (FRANCE), Aug 2: France's vast wildfire near Bordeaux, which scorched an area four times the size of Paris and forced 224,000 people to evacuate, remained contained Sunday but was still burning. Hundreds of kilometres (miles) away, a newer blaze in Provence had stopped advancing overnight but was not yet contained.

About 3,000 firefighters remained deployed across the two fronts, extinguishing hot spots, cutting firebreaks and securing areas of burned forest as high temperatures and wind threatened to breathe new life into smoldering embers.

The fire in the Gironde region burned about 420 square kilometres (162 square miles) in just 10 days before authorities declared its advance stopped over the weekend.

"The fire is now fixed, which does not mean that the fire is extinguished," the Gironde prefecture said Sunday, using the French fire-

fighting term for a blaze that has been contained within its perimeter.

The region remained under France's highest red forest-fire alert. Dry conditions and soaring temperatures in Bordeaux, along with afternoon winds, risked rekindling flames.

Additional firefighters from Ukraine, Lithuania and French Polynesia were expected Sunday and Monday to reinforce the operation.

Human-caused climate change doubled the chances of extreme fire conditions for the flames in France, scientists at World Weather Attribution calculated in a rapid analysis Thursday, conducted while fires were still burning.

Europe is the world's fastest-warming continent, with temperatures increasing at twice the speed as the global average since the 1980s, according to the European Union's Copernicus Climate Change Service. (AP)

'We must proceed very carefully while dealing with court proceedings'

Shivakumar leads all-party meet, affirms commitment to protect Karnataka's interests

BENGALURU, Aug 2: Karnataka Chief Minister D K Shivakumar on Sunday asserted that his government was committed to protecting the interests of the state's farmers and people on the Cauvery issue, while appealing to organisations to withdraw the proposed state-wide bandh.

He also said Tamil Nadu Chief Minister C Joseph Vijay has agreed to postpone his visit to Bengaluru following a request from the Karnataka government in view of the prevailing Cauvery water dispute, describing the gesture as one that would help maintain a cordial atmosphere between the two states.

The two leaders were supposed to meet on Monday to discuss the Cauvery issue but Shivakumar had appealed to Vijay to defer his visit so as to hold talks in a more conducive atmosphere, as protests were happening across the state over the inter-state dispute earlier this week.

Pro-Kannada organisations have



given a call for Karnataka Bandh on August 13 against the Cauvery Water Management Authority's order on Thursday upholding the Cauvery Water Regulation Committee's order on releasing 3,500 cusecs of water for 15 days to Tamil Nadu.

Addressing reporters on Sunday after chairing an all-party meet on Cauvery, Shivakumar said there was no need for protests as rainfall had improved the situation and all political parties had extended support and such a bandh would not benefit anyone.

The CM said the government would continue to take decisions within the legal framework, prioritise drinking water needs, consult legal and agricultural experts, and closely monitor the evolving water situation before taking any further steps.

"Our government remains fully committed to protecting the interests of Karnataka's farmers on the Cauvery issue," he said.

Stating that he too hailed from the Cauvery basin and was a farmer's son, Shivakumar said there should be no doubt among

the state's 7.5 crore people about the government's commitment to safeguarding Karnataka's interests.

To a query, he said the government would decide its future course after consulting its legal team on proceedings before the Supreme Court.

Referring to Tamil Nadu's main opposition party DMK approaching the apex court, the CM said Karnataka would respond through the legal process.

"We must proceed very carefully while dealing with court proceedings, drawing upon the experience of senior legal experts," Shivakumar explained.

He also reiterated that the Meke-datu project should move forward, noting that the Supreme Court has already delivered its judgment on the issue. The project is about constructing a balancing reservoir across river Cauvery at Mekedatu in the state and Tamil Nadu is opposed to it saying its interests would be harmed if the dam took shape. (PTI)

Youth should stay away from drugs, channel their energy positively: CM Bhajanlal

JAIPUR, Aug 2: Rajasthan Chief Minister Bhajanlal Sharma on Sunday urged the youth to play a constructive role in nation-building by staying away from drugs and channeling their energy positively.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday launched the "Nasha Mukta Yuva for Viksit Bharat Sankalp Abhiyan", a nationwide campaign aimed at mobilising the youth against substance abuse, with CM Sharma joining the programme via video conference from Udaipur. Addressing a gathering, Sharma said, "The youth should become drug-free, disciplined and thoughtful, and use their energy, talent, capacity and potential in a positive direction."

He added that the campaign would act as an effective medium for behavioural change among youngsters. The chief minister said the campaign would be run as a nationwide mass movement over the next 100 weeks with active public participation.

Volunteers from MY Bharat, National Service Scheme (NSS), youth clubs, educational institutions, and social and spiritual organisations are expected to take part, he said. (PTI)

Nayab Saini says BJP to form govt in Punjab, procure all crops at MSP

CHANDIGARH, Aug 2: Haryana Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini on Sunday said the BJP will come to power in Punjab after next year's Assembly polls and procure all crops from the farmers at minimum support price (MSP).

Saini was addressing an event in Punjab's Kotkapura as part of the nationwide 'Nasha Mukta Yuva for Viksit Bharat Sankalp Abhiyan', which was launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday.

Exuding confidence that the BJP will form the government in Punjab after the Assembly polls scheduled for early next year, Saini said, "Under Prime Minister Modi's leadership, the BJP will work in Punjab just like in Haryana to make our farmers strong and prosperous."

Before the 2024 Haryana elections, the BJP had promised to procure all crops from farmers at MSP, which it fulfilled after retaining power in the state, Saini said.

"When we form our government here (in Punjab), we assure that we will procure all crops from farmers at MSP," Saini said,



adding that the BJP will also replicate the Bhavantar Bharpai Yojana in the state.

Under the scheme operational in Haryana since 2018, protected prices have been fixed for 21 horticultural crops.

Taking a dig at the AAP government in Punjab, Saini said it promised to eradicate the drug menace, but it has only "increased". Asking the youth to stay away from drugs, he said that substance abuse not only affects individuals or their families, but also weakens society. (PTI)

YS Sharmila urges immediate rehabilitation for people displaced by Godavari floods

AMARAVATI, Aug 2: APCC chief YS Sharmila on Sunday demanded immediate rehabilitation for people displaced by the Godavari River floods, alleging that the TDP-led government was focused on praising Prime Minister Narendra Modi rather than addressing the plight of flood-hit families.

Stating that over 20,000 people have been displaced by the floods, she accused the government of failing to provide immediate rehabilitation and relief measures despite warnings of inundation.

"The government has not shown the same level of concern for the people affected by floods in the Godavari River as it has shown in praising PM Modi. Entire villages are submerged, thousands have lost everything, and nearly 100 villages are living under the shadow of floods," Sharmila said in a press release. (PTI)

Over 26,000 government primary schools shut in UP after BJP came to power: Akhilesh Yadav

LUCKNOW, Aug 2: Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav on Sunday said the current administration in Uttar Pradesh has shut down more than 26,000 government primary schools since assuming power in 2017, alleging that this was done to deny education to children from the PDA (Backwards, Dalit, Minority) communities.

The former chief minister claimed that according to official data, Uttar Pradesh had 1,13,938 government primary schools until March 2017, when the BJP came to power. More than 26,000 of them have been closed ever since, he said.

The highest number of closures took place in Lakhimpur Kheri, where 758 schools were shut, followed by Sitapur (650) and Prayagraj (638). In Gorakhpur, the home district of Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, around 500 primary schools were closed, he said.

Pointing out that a majority of students in government primary schools belong to Other Backward Classes and Scheduled Castes, Yadav alleged that the BJP did not want children from the



PDA communities to receive education. The Samajwadi Party chief said that enrolment in government primary schools has declined from 1.17 crore students in 2017 to around 89 lakh in 2026. Of this 89 lakh, about 25 lakh students belong to OBC, Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe categories.

The number of teachers in these schools has also fallen from around 4 lakh in 2017 to 3.40 lakh at present,

while nearly 81,000 teaching posts remained vacant, he said.

Yadav alleged that the administration was reducing teaching posts because it did not want to provide permanent government jobs, as regular recruitment would require budgetary allocations and implementation of reservation policies.

He said the closure of government primary schools has adversely affected girls' education, with the number of girls studying in these schools declining from 61.57 lakh in March 2017 to around 45 lakh now.

Thousands of government schools continue to lack basic infrastructure, he said, stating that around 7,000 schools have no electricity, about 2,300 have no toilets for girls, 576 lack drinking water facilities and nearly 23,000 have no provision for computer education.

Yadav said all Samajwadi Party legislators would jointly raise the issue in the Assembly on Monday and corner the government on issues such as education, paper leaks, law and order, and alleged corruption. (PTI)

Raise issues concerning public interest: Adityanath to representatives

LUCKNOW, Aug 2: Ahead of the Monsoon Session of the state legislature, Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Sunday urged representatives from both the ruling party and the opposition to raise every issue concerning public interest in the House.

He called on them to engage in healthy, constructive discussions and support the government in accelerating the state's development, appealing to opposition parties to ensure the smooth functioning of the House.

On Sunday, the UP government stated that Adityanath addressed an all-party meeting chaired by UP Legislative Assembly Speaker Satish Mahana at the Vidhan Bhavan. The meeting was convened to discuss the conduct of the Monsoon Session of the Uttar Pradesh Legislature, which begins on Monday.

Addressing the meeting as the Leader of the House, Adityanath said, "The Monsoon Session should witness constructive discussions on issues concerning the common people. Such deliberations, he said, contribute to the state's development and help resolve public grievances."

Mahana also sought the cooperation of all members for the smooth conduct of the House.

The meeting was attended by UP's deputy chief minister Keshav Prasad Maurya; Finance



and Parliamentary Affairs minister Suresh Khanna; Leader of the Opposition Mata Prasad Pandey; president of the Nishad Party and cabinet minister Dr Sanjay Nishad; president of the Suheldev Bharatiya Samaj Party and cabinet minister Om Prakash Rajbhar; Congress Legislature Party leader Aradhana Mishra; Raghuraj Pratap Singh 'Raja Bhaiya' of the Jansatta Dal Loktantrik Party; RK Patel of Apna Dal (S); and Rajpal Balyan of the Rashtriya Lok Dal, among others, the statement said. (PTI)

Paper leak agitation continuation of years of Left activism, not revival: AISA's Neha Bora

NEW DELHI, Aug 2: From hand-painted posters and protest libraries to catchy slogans that travelled far and wide from the Jantar Mantar, Left student organisations provided much of the visual language and organisational backbone to the month-long agitation against paper leak, AISA president Neha Bora said, arguing that the movement was the continuation of years of campus activism rather than a sudden political revival.

In an interview with PTI, Bora, a PhD scholar at the Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), said the participation of Left student bodies in the agitation was an "inevitable continuation" of years of protests over issues relating to education and examinations.

AISA, SFI, AISE, DISHA, Krantikari Yuva Sangathan (KYS), AIDS, PDSU and the Agraami Chhatra Naujawan Sabha were among the Left organisations that participated in the protest, organising activities ranging from poster making and slogan writing to mock courts, makeshift libraries and cultural events during the sit-in at the Jantar Mantar.

"I think the movement against paper leak demanding accountability from the government was many years in the making. We have been protesting for several years; FIRs have been filed against our activists, we were sent to Tihar (Jail)... Be it black flag protests outside the NTA headquarters, the UGC headquarters or the Ministry of Education, we were constantly agitating," Bora said.

"The anger that had accumulated over so many years found expression through the Cockroach Janta Party (CJP). It would have been surprising had the Left organisations not joined the protest. Being part of the movement was an inevitable continuation of many years of struggle," she added.

Bora said the Left's contribution went beyond mobilisation. "Left student bodies pushed the movement, enriched it with political narrative — we also put our lives at stake and sat on a hunger strike along with Sonam Wangchuk," said Bora, who was among three AISA activists who sat on a hunger strike at the Jantar Mantar for 23 days.

She said one of the biggest take-aways for her was the popularity of the Left's slogans and its visual campaign among the other participants.

"Our slogans and our posters were received so positively by young people. They would come to our stalls and libraries, pick up the posters and carry them. If there were 80 or 100 AISA activists at the Jantar Mantar, there were 200 to 400 people across the venue holding our posters," Bora said.

"I think what we understood from these protests is that the language of the Left, the slogans of the Left and the creativity of the Left are so popular among young people. It was wonderful to see," she added.

Rejecting suggestions that the movement represented a revival of the Left, Bora said Left organisations had consistently been at the forefront of major democratic movements over the past decade.

"We won't call it a revival because we have always been here," she said, citing the 2015 UGC protests, the movement following Rohith Vemula's institutional death, the protests after the attack on JNU, the agitation against the

JNU fee hike, the anti-CAA movement and the farmers' protests.

"On every democratic issue and every people's issue, you will find the Left not only fighting on the ground but also giving the movements shape, language and a political narrative."

"Perhaps what did not happen before is the fact that Left organisations came forward in a movement so openly and undeniably. Also, we are getting such popular support because this time it was the youth who were at the forefront of the movement," Bora said.

According to Bora, young people connected with the Left's message because it offered hope.

"They like the language that things can change, that the world we are living in can be different and more beautiful. Young people have the courage and conviction to imagine a different world," she said.

Asked about the role of the opposition parties, Bora welcomed the support extended by the Congress, NSUI, Youth Congress and others, saying it is the responsibility of elected representatives to amplify people's movements. (PTI)

Pro-Channi slogans raised at Congress event in Barnala as infighting continues

BARNALA, Aug 2: The internal rift in Punjab Congress refuses to abate despite efforts by the top party leadership, with supporters of former chief minister Charanjit Singh Channi raising slogans at a programme in Barnala in the presence of Bhupesh Baghel, AICC general secretary in-charge for the state, on Sunday as well.

Channi's supporters have been increasingly sloganeering at Congress events even as the party is preparing for campaigns as assembly elections are due early next year.

Pro-Channi slogans had disrupted the "Har Booth Congress Mazboot" programmes in Patiala and Sangrur on Saturday.

At the Barnala event on Sunday, a group of partymen started raising slogans in favour of Channi, briefly interrupting the programme.

Punjab Congress chief Amrinder Singh Raja Warring urged them to let the meeting continue. "No nara (slogan)," he told them.

Barnala MLA Kuldeep Singh Kala Dhillon got down from the stage in a bid to calm down the dis-

sidents.

Without naming anyone, Dhillon said, "In this state, there are five to seven leaders who speak in Delhi and make up their own stories. Sitting at Indira Bhawan in Delhi, they speak about strengthening the Congress. Then they come back and start harming others (in the state). We need to remain cautious of these people."

Former minister Razia Sultana said those who deliberately spoil the atmosphere in the party should be shown the door.

"If anybody has an issue, they should say that before the high command," she said.

Punjab Congress has been struggling with factionalism, despite repeated assertions by the party leadership that efforts are underway to strengthen organisational unity ahead of the 2027 Punjab elections.

The infighting came to fore when the Congress leadership on July 1 announced its decision to retain Amrinder Singh Raja Warring as the state unit chief, and appointed Jalandhar MP Channi as

the chairperson of its campaign committee.

As the leadership tussle intensified, Bhupesh Baghel on Saturday asserted that the Congress high command will decide the party's chief ministerial candidate and ministers after the Punjab assembly elections.

Baghel, who had on Friday dismissed the existence of factionalism in the state party unit, warned that whosoever indulges in indiscipline will be shown the door.

Channi too on Saturday urged party workers to maintain discipline during meetings and refrain from sloganeering that could create internal discord.

"Our fight is not among ourselves. Our fight is for Punjab. We have to strengthen Congress and take everyone along," Channi said, adding that the party should focus on issues affecting Punjab instead of internal rivalries.

Baghel, who is currently on a tour of the poll-bound state, is scheduled to visit several assembly constituencies and hold meetings with the party's district and block-level leaders. (PTI)

Jan Surraaj files complaint with ECI against Patna police for illegally detaining party supporters

PATNA, Aug 2: Jan Surraaj founder Prashant Kishor on Sunday said his party has filed a complaint with the Election Commission of India against Patna police for "illegally detaining" his party leaders and supporters during the Bankipur assembly byelection allegedly at the behest of the BJP.

Kishor alleged that 54 people, including a significant number of locals, were detained by the police in two days leading up to the commencement of voting on Thursday.

"Patna SSP falsely claimed that the police detained outsiders during the 48-hour silence period ahead of the voting day to maintain law and order. We have filed a complaint with the ECI, and presented evidence that many of the detainees were locals. They also did not violate Section 144 of CrPC (now Section 163 of the BNSS)," Kishor said while speaking at a press conference here.

Kishor was accompanied by at least three such local individuals who, or their family members,

were detained by police at night from their homes. They, too, shared the stories of their detention at the press conference.

"More than 18 individuals of the 54 detained were local residents of Bankipur. They were not creating disturbance or violating Section 144. How can a person sleeping at home at night disturb law and order?" he asked.

Describing Patna SSP Kartikeya K Sharma as "incompetent, motivated and foolish", Kishor alleged that he (SSP) tried to influence votes by acting in a biased manner.

"If the SSP wants to do politics, he should first resign from his post. Everyone has the freedom to do politics in a democracy, but not while sitting on an administrative chair. The incompetent, motivated and foolish man is trying to influence politics, but we are not going to be scared of him," the Jan Surraaj founder said.

He claimed that on his party's request, Bihar DGP and his subordinates assured that "there will be

no role of Patna SSP in the counting areas on Monday".

Kishor contested the Bankipur byelection, where polling was held on July 30. The counting of votes will take place on August 3.

Kishor said while 54 of his party members and supporters were detained, no detention of people from the BJP was made.

"The fact is that BJP people were leading from the front, and whoever they pointed out to, the police were detaining them. This naked dance of police administration has shamed democracy. Never in Nitish Kumar's 20-year-rule was such a situation created," he said.

The Jan Surraaj leader said that apart from the ECI, the complaint was submitted to the general observer and police observer as well.

"In the next two days, I will complain against the SSP and police in Delhi's Election Commission. If that does not work, we will go to court. But in Bihar, such a thing will not be allowed to happen," he said. (PTI)

'Our youth must emerge like a cloud of energy and spread across the horizon of development'

India's greatest strength lies in its young population: J-K LG

SRINAGAR, Aug 2: India's greatest strength lies in its young population, with nearly 65 per cent of the population below the age of 35, Jammu and Kashmir Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha said on Sunday as he urged the youth to work towards nation building.

Addressing a UT-level function for the launch of the 'Nasha Mukta Yuva for Viksit Bharat Sankalp Abhiyan', Sinha said that 37 crore youth in the age group of 15 to 29 years are eager to contribute to nation building.

The 100-week mega campaign was virtually inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, marking a nationwide resolve to secure India's future by empowering its youth and eliminating the menace of drugs.

"India's greatest strength lies in its young population, with nearly 65 per cent below the age of 35. Nearly 37 crore youth in the 15-29



age group are eager to contribute to nation building," Sinha said.

He said the 'Nasha Mukta Yuva for Viksit Bharat Sankalp Abhiyan' seeks to engender this demographic, guiding them towards healthy lifestyles and active participation in development.

"Our youth must emerge like a cloud of energy and spread across the horizon of development," he added.

The Lieutenant Governor said that the campaign, launched in 2020 by the prime minister, is not merely a government programme

but a social movement against drug menace.

Sinha said that more than one crore youth joined the campaign at nearly 10,000 locations nationwide, reflecting the collective responsibility of society to protect young people from drugs.

He also highlighted the significant achievements of the Nasha Mukta Jammu Kashmir campaign.

"Around 2,300 FIRs have been registered, 2,600 people arrested, and 1,500 kilograms of narcotics seized. More than 331 properties worth around ₹ 200 crore belonging to narco-terrorists and drug smugglers have been attached," he added.

Additionally, over 370 driving licenses and 750 vehicle registrations have been cancelled, with recommendations made to cancel nearly 3,000 Aadhaar cards, he said. (PTI)

CWG medallists receive heroes' welcome on return

NEW DELHI, Aug 2: The first batch of Indian athletes, including ace weightlifter Mirabai Chanu and Lovepreet Singh, returned home to a heroes' welcome after a successful Commonwealth Games campaign with hundreds of fans lining up to receive them at the Indira Gandhi International Airport here on Sunday.

Olympic medallist Mirabai clinched her third successive Commonwealth Games gold medal in the women's 49kg event.

"Coming from Manipur, I feel really proud that I have done something good for my country," Mirabai told PTI at the airport.

Lovepreet, who settled for silver in the men's +110kg category after narrowly missing the gold by just one kilogram, said his next target is the Asian Games in Japan.

"I would like to thank my Indian Navy staff and captain Vijay Kumar, and all who have come," said the 28-year-old from Punjab, who lifted a total of 388kg, including a Commonwealth Games record of 176kg in the snatch.

"It happens (missing on gold), but I did my hard work and I have got the result for that and when two players fight one has to lose. Up next, I will prepare well for Asian Games."

Happy with the warm welcome on their return, Bindyarani Devi Sorokhaibam, who claimed bronze in the women's 58kg category, said she would work even harder ahead of the upcoming competitions.

"Everyone has welcomed us like this so it feels great, thank you all for making feel like home," she said.

"I'll train even harder than I have so far for the upcoming competitions."

Rishikanta Singh, who won silver in the men's 60kg category, said he would strive for gold the next time.

"Feeling good that I have got a medal for India. I've already spoken about my performance, but I'll come back stronger and



perform even better," Rishikanta said.

The Imphal-born Indian Army weightlifter also appealed for peace in his home state, saying it would help produce more sporting talent.

"For me both Navy and Meitei are equal. I would want to say this that we need peace in Manipur so that Manipur could produce more athletes even better than me," he said.

Indian weightlifters concluded their campaign with eight medals - one gold, six silver and one bronze.

Chief National Coach of the Indian weightlifting team coach, Vijay Sharma said: "We feel very proud as we have received this reception here. Everybody is very happy. I am really very happy with the performance of my players."

"There are some areas where we fell short, and we can work on them to change the colour of our medal from silver to gold. But that happens in sports. Overall, the results are good. We are happy."

He also lavished praise on Mirabai for her third gold.

"Mirabai is an exceptional player. With her discipline, she is able to deliver these results. We are preparing for the Asian Games, and I think we will win that medal as well," Sharma said.

Silver medallist Harjinder Kaur, who finished second in the women's 69kg category, said she has already set her sights on upgrading the medal to gold at the next edition of the Games in Ahmedabad.

"My target is to convert the silver medal into gold at the next Commonwealth Games in Ahmedabad."

Raja Muthupandi, who bagged a silver medal in the men's 65 kg category, said the podium finish was a reward for years of perseverance after enduring multiple surgeries.

"I was the only one competing in the 2018 Commonwealth Games, but I could not win a medal there. At that time, I felt very bad. After that, I put in a lot of hard work for this medal," Muthupandi said.

"I was trying to win the gold medal, but my performance on that day was not good enough. Still, I am happy to have won a

medal for India for the first time."

"As an athlete, I have undergone two or three surgeries. After each surgery, my coach and I made plans and worked step by step on my comeback. When you return and win a medal after all the struggle, it feels really good."

Looking ahead, Muthupandi said his focus has shifted to the Asian Games and the road to the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics.

"The Asian Games are coming up, and after that there is the Olympics. Our Olympic qualification process starts in October. We will sit down with our coach, Vijay Sharma Sir, make a proper plan, and prepare fully for all the qualification events and rounds ahead."

Another silver medallist, Valluri Ajaya Babu, said he drew confidence from handling the pressure of a closely-fought contest and hopes to qualify for the Los Angeles Olympics.

"I am feeling proud. It was my first Games, and it was a good experience. My performance was good. I missed the gold medal, but that's okay. I will prepare well and train hard."

"The pressure was there because the contest was decided by just a 1 kg difference. But I performed well under that pressure too, and I felt good. I want to dedicate this medal to my coaches and my father. I will try to qualify for LA 2028 and also for the 2030 Commonwealth Games."

Martina Devi, who finished in a brave fifth place in the Women's +86 kg category, described her maiden Commonwealth Games campaign as a learning experience.

"It was a good learning experience for me at the Games. I will try to perform better in the future, and it feels great to see the warm welcome we are receiving here at the airport."

India are currently fourth in the medal standings with 13 gold, 17 silver and nine bronze medals for an overall tally of 39. (PTI)

Young Indian shuttler Tanvi Sharma wins maiden BWF Super 300 title at Taipei Open



TAIPEI CITY, Aug 2: Teen Indian sensation Tanvi Sharma clinched her maiden BWF World Tour title after defeating Vietnam's sixth seed Thuy Linh Nguyen in straight games in the women's singles final of the Taipei Open Super 300 badminton tournament here on Sunday.

The 17-year-old from Punjab, who had finished runner-up at last year's US Open Super 300, needed just 36 minutes to outclass world No. 21 Nguyen 21-16 in the summit clash.

"I'm really very happy to win this title here," said Tanvi, who became the youngest champion in Taipei Open history at just 17 years and 222 days old, surpassing the legendary Tai Tzu Ying.

"I didn't expect to win a title, but yeah, I just thought I'll give my best over here. So I was going step by step, match by match. So yeah, every match I played really well here."

Coached by PV Sindhu's former mentor Park Tae-sang, Tanvi also became the first Indian to win the women's singles title at the Taipei Open since Saina Nehwal, who had lifted the trophy in 2008.

"I was quite nervous, but I just thought I will play my 100 percent, what I have in my game, I will play that," said Tanvi, who dropped only one game all week.

"It was pretty hard for me as well, playing five matches. But yeah, I just needed to be consistent. I have to work harder for playing Super 500 and 750s. So I'll be keep working hard."

Tanvi had defeated Nguyen en route to the final at US Open. The Indian made a flying start, repeatedly catching Nguyen at the front court with deft drops played with the same action as a smash to open up a 4-1 lead.

The Vietnamese struggled to read the Indian's deception and also found it difficult to judge the drift, going wide twice as Tanvi mixed steep cross-court smashes with her trademark touch to surge to a 10-2 advantage.

The Indian, however, suddenly slipped into a string of errors, struggling to keep the shuttle inside the lines. She eventually produced a timely smash to carry a three-point lead into the mid-game interval, with coach Park Tae-sang urging her to relax.

Tanvi found her rhythm after the break, producing powerful smashes from both flanks to move 15-9 ahead. Though she gifted away a few points with errors at the net and from the back court, she regained control, earning five game points before sealing the opening game with a cross-court smash.

After the change of ends, Nguyen opened a 3-0 lead by making Tanvi cover the court with sharp angles. But the Indian slowly began dictating the rallies, drawing level at 3-3 with a fine net shot before once again pushing her opponent deep and catching her at the net with deft touches.

Nguyen's inconsistency also helped Tanvi build an 8-4 lead before another patch of errors allowed the Vietnamese to close the gap to 7-8, prompting Park to tap his head in frustration. Two exquisite deceptive winners helped Tanvi take an 11-8 lead at the interval.

The Indian gradually stretched the advantage to 15-10 and then 18-12, her deception once again fetching crucial points. At 19-12, Tanvi unsuccessfully challenged a line call after being ruled late, but soon earned seven match points with a smash. A nervous finish saw her squander three of them before she finally converted to seal her maiden BWF title.

In a heartwarming moment, Tanvi took off her gold medal and placed it around coach Park Tae-sang's neck before the two posed together for photographs.

Tanvi is the youngest finalist in the tournament's history, surpassing Korean doubles great Lee Yong Dae, who was 17 years and 287 days old when he reached the men's doubles final in 2006.

Tanvi had become the first Indian to win two medals at a single edition of the World Junior Championships, securing silver in girls' singles and bronze in the mixed team event. She was also a member of the Indian team that won the country's maiden gold medal at the Asian Team Championships.

A former world junior No. 1, Tanvi reached her maiden Super 300 final at the 2025 US Open at the age of 16. She also finished runner-up at the Odisha Masters Super 100 and Guwahati Masters Super 100.

Behind Tanvi's rapid rise is her mother Meena Sharma, a physical education teacher and former national volleyball player, who learnt badminton herself to coach her daughter in Hoshiarpur.

She put Tanvi through grueling 4 am training sessions before the teenager moved to National Centre of Excellence (NCE) in Guwahati to train under Park, who had guided Sindhu to an Olympic bronze in Tokyo. (PTI)

Gulveer wins historic bronze in men's 5000m

GLASGOW, Aug 2: Gulveer Singh, on Saturday, scripted history as he became the first Indian to win a 5000m medal in the Commonwealth Games with a bronze as well as the first track and field athlete from the country to win two medals in a single edition of the Games.

Reigning Asian champion Gulveer, who had won a silver in the 10,000m on July 28, finished third in the 5000m with a time of 13 minute 24.95 seconds to complete a historic double on the concluding day of the athletics competition.

Mathew Kipchumba Kipsang of Kenya took the gold with a time of 13:23.61, while Australia's Ky Robinson, who had earlier won the gold in the 10,000m, clinched the silver, clocking 13:24.70.

However, the 28-year-old Indian, who holds national records in both 5000m and 10,000m, ran much below his season best timing of 13:03.93. His Saturday's time was also well outside his national record effort of 12:59.77.

Gulveer, who also won a 10,000m bronze in the Hangzhou Asian Games in 2023, kept himself among the leading pack throughout the race before surging ahead in the final lap. He beat Kenya's Cornelius Kemboi for the bronze by a mere 0.04 seconds. (PTI)

Nadeem cops criticism for poor show in Glasgow

LAHORE, Aug 2: Pakistan's Olympic gold medallist javelin thrower Arshad Nadeem has come in for criticism after his disappointing in the Commonwealth Games in Glasgow.

Nadeem finished ninth with a sub-80 effort in Glasgow with Sri Lanka's Ramesh Pathiraja winning gold and India's Neeraj Chopra and Yashvir Singh finishing second and third respectively.

The outcome was not unexpected keeping in mind Arshad took part in only one preparatory event in Switzerland in 2026 for the CWG and that he spent all his time training in the hot weather in Lahore without working with any foreign coaches or trainers in person.

Arshad, who has previously trained under South African coach, Terseus Liebenberg trained with his local coach, Salman Butt and local trainers.

Ironically the weather conditions in Lahore and Glasgow were the opposite.

Now compare this with how Arshad's arch rival, Neeraj Chopra and other Indian javelin throwers trained for the CWG.

While Neeraj had his final preparation and rehabilitation camp at his training camp in Biene in Switzerland, his teammates like Rohit Yadav and Yashvir Singh trained in



Spala, Poland with foreign coaches and trainers.

The result India won the silver and bronze medals in the CWG Javelin throw events.

Arshad, who was the defending champion in the Commonwealth Games after winning the gold in the last CWG in Birmingham in 2022 with a best of 90.12 metres was unable to even cross the 80 metres mark in the finals in Glasgow.

He failed to qualify for the final round of eight due to his poor performance dashing Pakistan's hopes

of another medal in the games. For his fans it was a big letdown to see him struggling to even get past the 80 metres mark as he had also won the Olympic Gold Medal with a record throw of 92.97.

Arshad's long serving coach, Salman Butt admitted that Arshad was nowhere his best in the CWG and was under prepared.

While Neeraj is also to partially blame for his fall from grace as he clearly didn't look 100 percent fit in the finals, he has also had to battle many issues off the track. (PTI)

Bumrah ruled out Sri Lanka Test series

NEW DELHI, Aug 2: Premier pacer Jasprit Bumrah is set to miss India's two-Test tour of Sri Lanka as he is yet to recover from his knee injury.

The swelling in his knee seems to be more serious than it initially looked and the Sports Science team at Bengaluru's Centre of Excellence doesn't want to rush the seasoned pacer to the grind of international cricket, keeping in mind a packed calendar ahead.

The Sri Lanka series begins August 15 in Galle.

The 32 year old had missed out on the third ODI against England at Lord's after sustaining an impact injury. He recently reported at the Centre Of Excellence in Bengaluru and was expected to be match-fit by the time series begins in two weeks.

However it has been learnt that Bumrah is still feeling some discomfort and even if he gets fit before August 15 or the second Test starting August 23, the medical team isn't sure if Test match is correct format due to a massive workload on the docile tracks.

It will be interesting to see of selectors pick Jammu and Kashmir pacer Aqib Nabi or Vidarbha's Yash Thakur as Bumrah's replacement. (PTI)

India to host Malaysia U-21 men's hockey team for 8-match exposure series



BENGALURU, Aug 2: India will host Malaysia U-21 men's hockey team for a eight-match exposure series at the SAI Netaji Subhas Southern Centre here from August 7 to 13.

The Malaysia U-21 men's hockey team will take on the Indian junior men's side in five matches and the SAI team in three matches. The series forms an important part of both teams' preparations for upcoming international competitions.

The exposure series is designed to provide both teams with high-quality competitive opportunities while strengthening bilateral sporting ties. The Indian junior team will face Malaysia on August 7, August 8, August 10, August 12, and August 13.

In addition, the Malaysian team will take on the SAI Team on August 3, August 5, and August 15.

Speaking ahead of the series, Indian junior men's hockey team

coach Frederic Soye said, "These matches will serve as important preparation for the Asia Cup. They are part of the continuity of the work we started during our tour in Belgium, where we already saw significant progress throughout the matches we played there."

"We hope this series against Malaysia will allow us to continue building on that progress by reinforcing the work we put in during our time in Belgium, as well as the improvements made over this past week of training."

The exposure tour follows the Indian junior team's productive training and competition phase in Belgium and forms a key part of their preparations for the upcoming Junior Asia Cup. The series is expected to provide the players with valuable international match experience and help the coaching staff assess combinations and strategies ahead of the continental tournament. (PTI)

Shrug off jersey issue, focus on ending 50-year WC medal drought: Sreejesh

NEW DELHI, Aug 2: The legendary PR Sreejesh has advised the Indian men's hockey team to leave behind the unnecessary jersey controversy and off-field noises and focus on ending the country's 50-year World Cup medal drought in next month's quadrennial event in the Netherlands and Belgium.

The two-time Olympic bronze medallist said there was nothing unusual about changing jersey colours, noting that India had worn different kits at the 2014 and 2018 World Cups.

While he questioned the reasoning that blue jerseys hamper visibility on blue turfs, Sreejesh stressed that if the players had approved the decision, the debate should end there.

"To be honest, I didn't initially understand what the issue was because the jersey colour had changed for the 2014 and 2018 World Cups as well. Even one of our training kits was orange. Why is there so much discussion before the World Cup this time? Is it because of the saffron colour or simply because the colour changed?" Sreejesh told PTI.

The Indian men and women teams will wear saffron jerseys instead of their traditional blue as the primary kit at the World Cup beginning on August 15, a move that has drawn criticism from several former captains, including Viren Rasquinha, Dhanraj Pillay, Ajit Pal Singh, Vasudevan Baskaran and Pargat Singh.

Sreejesh, however, said he had no objection regarding the change of jersey colour but found the explanation that blue jerseys affected visibility on blue turfs difficult to understand.

"If the controversy is about the colour change, then it should have happened in 2014 and 2018 too, when we wore yellow and light blue jerseys."

"I have no issue with changing the jersey colour, but the reason being cited is strange. If



the colour is being changed due to visibility issues during play, then the blue jersey should never be worn again," he said.

The former goalkeeper, who represented India in 339 international matches and later coached the junior team to a bronze medal at last year's Junior World Cup in Chennai, acknowledged that identical colours could marginally affect visibility but said it had never been considered a major concern despite blue turfs being in use since the 2012 London Olympics.

"It is true that having the same colour makes visibility a bit difficult, but in the 14 years since the blue turf was introduced, the jersey colour has changed only twice. We have played in blue in almost every major tournament, including the Tokyo and Paris Olympics."

Sreejesh maintained that if the players had endorsed the decision, there was little reason for further debate.

"From what I have seen in the media, the colour change was made with the players consent. Hockey India must have obtained permission from the FIH for the saffron jersey. Since orange is also the colour of the Netherlands' jersey, we can wear our alternate white jersey when playing against them," he said.

"If the players have approved this decision, the matter ends there, because ultimately it is the players who have to perform on the field."

With the controversy taking political overtones, Sreejesh was categorical.

"I believe politics should be kept away from sports. The players are paramount. If they have no problem with it, then outsiders shouldn't have an issue either."

At the same time, the 38-year-old felt that if the team was to adopt a new primary jersey, the transition should have been made earlier to allow the players to get used to it.

"I feel the players should have been given a chance to play in this jersey beforehand. We are currently used to playing in the blue jersey."

"Suppose I am on the field and Harmanpreet is out there, I would look for him in the blue jersey as I have always seen him in that colour. If the jersey colour had to be changed, it should have been done a bit earlier," Sreejesh said.

Sreejesh, however, expressed confidence that the off-field issues would not distract the team in its campaign.

"Within the team, we always talked about staying away from outside noise. Players are aware of what is being said off the field, but fortunately there is still time. The team is now in Europe and they need to put these matters aside and focus entirely on the tournament." (PTI)

Dalgaon RSA crowned Mangaldai A-Division Football League champions

HT Correspondent
MANGALDAI, Aug 2: Dalgaon Regional Sports Association (RSA) emerged champions of the Kumar Jyotirindra Narayan Dev and Babul Sharma-Rani Devi Memorial Mangaldai A-Division Football League, defeating Hazarikapara Regional Sports Association in a tie-breaker after an engrossing 3-3 draw in regulation time.

The final witnessed an entertaining contest, with Minhajul Islam scoring twice and Chanchuma Bodo adding one goal for Dalgaon. For Hazarikapara, Tanmay Kalita, Animesh Saharia and Rakesh Hazarika found the net.

With the scores level at the end of regulation time, the title was decided through a tie-breaker.

Aminal Islam, Avinash Tanti and Chanchuma Bodo converted their spot-kicks for Dalgaon, while Hazarikapara managed two successful conversions through Avinash Saharia and Bhargabjyoti Saharia, handing Dalgaon the championship.

In the individual awards, Biswajit Deka of Hazarikapara finished as the tournament's highest scorer.

Dev Bhumij of Dalgaon was adjudged the Best Player, while his teammate Mandip Gayari received the Best Goalkeeper award.