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Govt ensuring medical care, hygienic conditions in flood-hit areas: Minister

GUWAHATI, Aug 11: The Assam government is undertaking extensive measures to provide medical care in the flood-affected areas and prevent outbreak of diseases, Health Minister Ashok Singhal said on Tuesday.

He said equal emphasis was also being laid on providing safe drinking water and sanitation facilities.

"Following the severe flood situation in the state, our department has undertaken extensive preventive measures to stop outbreak of infectious diseases and safeguard public health," Singhal said at a press conference here.

"Along with continuing healthcare services in flood-affected areas, special emphasis has been placed on ensuring safe drinking water, sanitation and cleanliness, disease surveillance, vector-borne disease control and overall health protection," he said.

The minister said the health department has deployed medical teams and organised camps across the state.

So far, 2,06,442 people have received free treatment and medicines through 3,103 medical camps in the flood-affected areas.

In the worst-affected districts of Charaideo and Sivasagar, 11 'Mega Health Camps' were organised from August 5-9, covering five assembly constituencies, he said. Specialist doctors from Dibrugarh and Jorhat medical colleges have been deployed at these camps.

"Pregnant women, mothers and children staying in relief camps face greater health risks during floods. Keeping this in mind, the department has taken special measures to protect their health," Singhal said.

A total of 387 pregnant women, 462 mothers, 590 chil-



dren below one year of age and 1,627 kids aged between one and five years have been identified so far, officials said. Regular health check-ups, nutritional support and necessary healthcare services are being ensured for them, Singhal said.

In view of the increased risk of diarrhoea and other diseases following the floods, adequate stocks of Oral Rehydration Salts (ORS) and zinc tablets have been maintained across the state, he said.

The minister also said ensuring access to safe drinking water has emerged as one of the major challenges following the floods.

In coordination with the Public Health Engineering Department, 511 water samples were tested at IDSP laboratories to ensure safe drinking water, he said. The affected water sources were (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Assam flood situation improves marginally

PolicyBazaar moves to expedite flood claims

1.12 lakh people remain affected

GUWAHATI, Aug 11: The flood situation in Assam improved marginally on Tuesday as the number of affected people dipped to 1.12 lakh people and no fresh fatalities were reported, an official bulletin said.

The Assam State Disaster Management Authority (ASDMA) bulletin issued this evening said seven districts remained impacted by the floods.

The toll in this year's deluge stood at 101 with no deaths reported in the last 24 hours.

The Dhansiri (S) River was flowing above the danger level in Numaligarh and Kushiya River in Sribhum.

A total of 441 villages in 25 revenue circles of Golaghat, Sivasagar, Hojai, Jorhat, Darrang, Lakhimpur and Nagaon districts remained affected by the deluge.

The total number of affected people was at 1,12,718. Golaghat was the worst hit with 65,295 reeling under floodwaters, followed by Sivasagar (18,494) and Nagaon



(16,321). On Monday, the number of affected people was 1.26 lakh in seven districts.

The administration was operating 47 relief camps, providing shelter to 7,982 displaced people. Another 45 relief distribution camps were also functional.

Crop land of 10,879.03 hectares remained submerged in floodwaters,

while over 29,000 animals have been affected.

Reports of damage to various infrastructure, including houses, cattle sheds and roads, were received from the affected districts, the ASDMA bulletin added.

Meanwhile, insurance aggregator PolicyBazaar has said that it was working closely with its partners for expeditious settlement of insurance

claims by flood-hit people in the state.

It also welcomed the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India's (IRDAI) directive to fast-track claims from the worst-hit districts of the northeastern state.

"Floods in Assam have upended lives, and for many families, this means facing tremendous loss with no time to prepare for paperwork. This is the kind of unpredictable moment that insurance exists for, and it is our prerogative to make sure no policyholder in Assam is left waiting at a time like this," Amit Chhabra, chief business officer, General Insurance, PolicyBazaar, said.

He further said PolicyBazaar was working closely with insurer partners to keep documentation simple, settle claims quickly and bring relief to people without delay.

Commending IRDAI's directive on fast-tracking claims, Chhabra maintained that it was a much-needed measure for the affected families. (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

NASA invites India to join Moon Base mission



NEW DELHI, Aug 11: In a major move to deepen bilateral space collaboration, NASA has invited the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) to join its ambitious programme to build humanity's first lunar outpost near the Moon's South Pole.

The project named Moon Base mission is aimed at setting up a permanent habitat for astronauts to live, work, and explore through a series of crewed and uncrewed missions.

According to the US space agency, the aim of the project is to unlock new scientific discoveries, and prepare for future deep space exploration.

India and the US explored expanding their space cooperation at a meeting of their Civil Space Joint Working Group (CSJWG) held in Bengaluru last week.

"The NASA invited ISRO to join its Moon Base programme, building on the two countries' partnership under the Artemis Accords," according to a joint press statement.

The two sides also agreed to advance discussions for cooperation on open scientific data sharing under the accords, it said.

The meeting advanced civil and commercial space cooperation under the US-India Transforming the Relationship Utilising Strategic Technology (TRUST) initiative.

The TRUST was unveiled in February last year to promote application of critical and emerging technologies in areas like defence, artificial intelligence, semiconductors, quantum, biotechnology, energy, and space.

"Both sides discussed expanding cooperation following the successful launch of the joint NASA-ISRO Synthetic Aperture Radar (NISAR) mission last year, as well as pursuing future science and human space flight technology collaborations," the joint statement said.

It said both sides reaffirmed their commitment to advancing the United Nations Committee on the (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Govt considering sending FCRA Bill to joint committee of Parl for further scrutiny: Sources

NEW DELHI, Aug 11: The government is considering sending 'The Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Amendment Bill, 2026' to a joint committee of both houses of Parliament, even as the Congress and some opposition parties have demanded that it be withdrawn, sources said on Tuesday.

The Congress and TMC were among the parties which raised the issue during the meeting of the Business Advisory Committee of the Rajya Sabha, though it was not part of the agenda, asking when the FCRA Bill will be taken up in the House, to which the government said a decision will be taken on it in due course of time. The two parties demanded that the bill be withdrawn, but others like BJD feel the bill could be sent to a joint committee of Parliament for further scrutiny.

The DMK also wants the Bill to be withdrawn, the sources said. The Bill was introduced in the Lok Sabha on March 25 this year and proposes tighter government oversight on non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and for-



eign funding in the country.

Government sources said it is considering sending the Bill to a joint committee of both Houses of Parliament and a motion may be brought in the Lok Sabha in this regard on Wednesday. The Bill seeks to create a designated authority to manage and dispose of assets if an organisation loses its FCRA licence.

The opposition parties which have raised strong objections to the FCRA Bill allege that it targets minorities as certain provisions will choke legitimate

funding for Christian NGOs and minority-run social welfare and educational institutions. But the government has made it clear that the proposed legislation is not religion-specific and is aimed at regulating foreign contributions.

The Business Advisory Committee of the Rajya Sabha was chaired by Chairman C P Radhakrishnan and attended by Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju and leader of the house J P Nadda and opposition leaders Jairam Ramesh (Cong), Tiruchi Siva (DMK) and Sammit Patra (BJD).

During the meeting, the BAC allotted two hours for 'The Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Amendment Bill, 2026'; two hours for 'The Tribunals Reforms Bill, 2026'; three hours for 'The National Co-operative Development Corporation (Amendment) Bill, 2026'; and 1.5 hours for 'The Kerala (Alteration of Name) Bill, 2026. Later, Deputy Chairman Harivansh announced the decisions of the business advisory committee in the House. (PTI)

Small finance bank slice announces profit of over ₹ 50 crore in first quarter of current fiscal

GUWAHATI, Aug 11: Small finance bank slice on Tuesday announced a profit of over ₹ 50 crore for the first quarter of 2026-27, surpassing the bank's net profit for the entire previous fiscal of 2025-26, a company statement said.

The bank's full-year profit for 2025-26 was ₹ 48.4 crore

It said for the quarter ended June 30, 2026, the bank reported a net profit after tax of ₹ 50.9

crore, against a net loss of ₹10.1 crore in the same quarter of the previous financial year.

The total income grew to ₹ 413.8 crore from ₹ 298.6 crore in the year-ago quarter, a year-on-year increase of about 39 per cent. Net worth stood at ₹ 896 crore as of June 30, 2026, and the capital to risk-weighted assets ratio came in at 18.2 per cent, well above regulatory requirements, the statement said. (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Morphine worth ₹ 13 crore seized, one held in Assam

GUWAHATI, Aug 11: One person has been arrested and over 8 kg of morphine worth ₹ 13 crore seized in a joint operation by security forces in Assam's Sribhum district, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said.

The operation was carried out by police teams of Cachar and Sribhum districts, and Assam Rifles.

"In a coordinated op of @cacharpolice, @sribhumipolice and @official_dgar, 8.2 kg morphine worth ₹ 13 cr was seized from a secret fuel-tank chamber at Badarpur Ghat," Sarma said in a social media post on Monday. He added that one accused has been apprehended. (PTI)

Nagaland Gov stresses need for stronger enforcement against illicit liquor, drugs

KOIHIMA, Aug 11: Nagaland Governor Nand Kishore Yadav on Tuesday stressed the need to strengthen enforcement mechanisms and institutional capacity to effectively tackle trafficking of illicit liquor and drugs.

Speaking at a review meeting with the Department of Excise and Prohibition at Lok Bhavan here, the governor emphasised that the department must address operational and manpower constraints while continuing to contribute to public health and effective governance.

According to a Lok Bhavan statement, during the meeting, the department highlighted several challenges affecting enforcement, including porous borders, shortage of manpower, discontinuation of inter-district check-gates, outdated firearms and limited operational mobility.

The department noted that its personnel-to-population ratio stands at 1:6,000, compared to 1:2,000 in Mizoram.

Reviewing its enforcement record from April 2021 to March 2026, the department reported cases registered under the Nagaland Liquor Total Prohibition (NLTP) Act and drug-related cases.

Seizures during the period in-



cluded Indian-made foreign liquor (IMFL), country liquor, poppy straw, opium, heroin, cough syrup and other drugs in the form of capsules and tablets.

The department also highlighted recent seizures, destruction of seized drugs and liquor, and drug awareness campaigns.

The department reported total excise revenue collection of ₹ 22.51 crore between April 2021 and March 2026.

Annual collections increased from ₹ 3.17 crore in 2021-22 to ₹ 5.92 crore in 2025-26.

The department's future roadmap focuses on strengthening enforcement, combating organised crime, protecting public health, enhancing governance, increasing revenue, building personnel capacity and advancing towards a drug-free Nagaland, the statement added. (PTI)

State of border with China will reflect on state of bilateral ties: India

NEW DELHI, Aug 11: India on Tuesday said the state of its border with China will reflect on the state of the "larger bilateral ties" and that maintenance of peace and tranquillity along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) is of "utmost importance".

The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) also rejected China's criticism of New Delhi identifying 27 places and features in Arunachal Pradesh by their standard names, and asserted that the state is an "inalienable and integral" part of India and nothing can change this "indisputable reality."

"In matters relating to the border areas between India and China, we have always emphasised in discussions with the Chinese side that we consider these issues as most serious," MEA spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said at a regular media briefing.

"The maintenance of peace and tranquillity in these areas is of the utmost importance. We have also stated that the state of the border affairs will reflect on the state of our larger bilateral ties," he said.

Jaiswal said this was reiterated at meeting of the Working Mechanism for Consultation and Coordination on India-China border affairs (WMCC) held last week.

"At this meeting, the two sides engaged in frank discussions and reviewed the situation along the Line of Actual Control (LAC)," he said. Jaiswal said the Indian side again underlined that maintaining peace and tranquillity in the border areas is essential for the overall development of bilateral relations.

"It was agreed to continue to use existing diplomatic and military channels, including the WMCC, local commander-level meetings and other agreed mechanisms, to resolve outstanding issues and avoid misunderstanding and miscalculation along the LAC," he said.

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

In October 2024, the two sides firmed up a disengagement pact for Depsang and Demchok, the last two friction points in eastern Ladakh.

Days after the agreement was finalised, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chinese President Xi Jinping held talks in Kazan and took a number of decisions to improve the ties. (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

PM Modi urges people to celebrate Independence Day with honour, pride

'Let us pay tribute to our freedom fighters. Let us take a pledge for a developed India'

NEW DELHI, Aug 11: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday urged citizens to celebrate the Independence Day with honour, pride and glory, and take a pledge for a developed India.

Modi said this in a post on Instagram and also shared a video showing the NDA MPs and Union ministers greeting him by waving the tricolour and raising slogans of 'Vande Mataram' and 'Bharat Mata Ki Jai' when he entered the venue of the ruling coalition's weekly 'Mangal Milan' meeting here.

"Let us pay tribute to our freedom fighters. Let us take a pledge for a developed India. Har Ghar Tiranga, Ghar Ghar Tiranga, Har Mann Tiranga (Tricolour in every home, tricolour in every heart). Come, let



us hoist the tricolour at every home. Modi said in the Instagram video. Bharat Mata Ki Jai, Vande Mataram, Vande Mataram, Vande Mataram,"

parliamentary party meeting, the GMC Balayogi Auditorium at the Parliament House complex, the ministers and MPs greeted him by waving the national flag and raising 'Vande Mataram' and 'Bharat Mata Ki Jai' slogans. The prime minister reciprocated the gesture by himself holding a national flag and waving towards the members present.

Those who attended the meeting included BJP president Nitin Nabin, Union ministers Amit Shah, Nirmala Sitharaman, Nitin Gadkari, Shivraj Singh Chouhan, and S Jaishankar.

Ministers belonging to NDA constituent parties - HD Kumaraswamy (JD-S), Kinjarapu Ram Mohan Naidu (TDP), Ramdas Bandu Athawale (RSP-A), and leaders Praful Patel (NCP), Upendra Kushwaha

(RLM), and Satabdi Roy (NCPI), and others also attended it.

The NDA parliamentary party meeting also saw a presentation by Union Minister of Jal Shakti C R Paatil on different aspects of the Jal Shakti ministry, which is responsible for laying down policy guidelines and programmes for the development, conservation and management of water as a national resource.

The ministry is also responsible for an overall national perspective of water planning and coordination in relation to diverse uses of water.

The NDA parliamentary party meeting is held on every Tuesday when Parliament is in session. The Monsoon session of Parliament, which began on July 20, is set to conclude (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

US court permanently dismisses criminal case against Gautam Adani

NEW YORK/NEW DELHI, Aug 11: A US federal judge has permanently dismissed criminal charges against Adani Group Chairman Gautam Adani and his nephew Sagar, removing a major legal overhang that had dogged the ports-to-energy conglomerate for nearly two years.

US District Judge Nicholas Garaufis of the Eastern District of New York approved the Justice Department's request to dismiss the charges.

Adani welcomed the country's decision, saying he accepted it with "humility" and "deep respect" for the judicial process.

In a 47-page order issued on August 10, Garaufis granted the Justice Department's Rule 48(a) motion to dismiss Counts Two, Three and Four of the indictment against Gautam Adani, Sagar Adani, and former Adani Green Energy CEO Vneet Jaan.

The counts covered securities-fraud conspiracy, wire-fraud conspiracy and securities fraud. The dismissals were with prejudice, meaning the charges cannot be refiled.

Garaufis reserved judgment on Count One, alleging Foreign Corrupt Practices Act violations, and Count Five, alleging conspiracy to obstruct justice, both involving five non-appearing, India-based co-defendants: Ranjit Gupta, Cyril Cabanes, Saurabh Agarwal, Deepak Malhotra, and Rupesh Agarwal.

The Justice Department has until August 31 to satisfy the court's requirements, while counsel for the non-appearing defendants must confirm their clients' consent by the same date.

The judge stressed that the dismissal was an exercise of prosecutorial discretion, not a verdict on the allegations. "No one should mistake" the ruling for the court's agreement with the government's decision or an opinion on the merits, Garaufis wrote. No trial was held, witnesses were examined or evidence tested in court.

The indictment, returned by a grand jury on October 24, 2024 and unsealed on November 20, 2024, alleged three interlocking schemes between 2020 and 2024. It accused Adani executives of paying about USD 265 million in bribes to Indian officials to secure solar-power contracts projected to generate more than USD 2 billion in after-tax profits over two decades; misleading US and international investors to raise nearly USD 4 billion in financing; and destroying evidence and lying to the FBI, SEC and a federal grand jury.

The Adani Group has consistently denied the allegations, saying it acted in accordance with the applicable law.

In May, the Justice Department asked for the charges to be dismissed after an extensive review, citing jurisdictional and evidentiary challenges, the predominantly Indian nature of the alleged conduct, scrutiny of the matter by Indian authorities, the absence of identified investor losses and that pursuing it no longer aligned with the department's priorities.

It also argued that the case, unsealed during the closing weeks of the Biden administration, had little realistic prospect of reaching trial and appeared to have been a politically motivated "name and shame" exercise.

The request came after Adani hired a new legal team led by Robert J Giuffra Jr, co-chair of the US law firm Sullivan & Cromwell and a personal lawyer to President Donald Trump. Giuffra had reportedly met Justice Department officials earlier this year to raise concerns about the case.

Judge Garaufis initially resisted the government's request. In June, he said its explanation



for abandoning the prosecution was insufficient and ordered officials to provide more information.

The judge also questioned whether Adani's pledge to invest USD 10 billion in the US and create 15,000 jobs had played a role in the decision to drop the charges.

Adani announced the investment in November 2024 in a post congratulating Trump on his election victory. Reports later said Adani's lawyers had raised the pledge during discussions with the Justice Department over the case.

Adani's lawyers said the investment was never offered in exchange for dropping the charges. Garaufis ultimately concluded that the pledge had not influenced the Justice Department's decision.

Commenting on the ruling, Adani said "truth has prevailed", adding that he respected the judicial process and was grateful to those who supported the Group during proceedings.

"Throughout this challenging period, our faith in truth, fairness and the rule of law remained unwavering," Adani said in a post on X.

He reaffirmed the Group's commitment to "nation-building", long-term value creation and serving a purpose "larger than ourselves".

Adani's legal team, retained in August 2025, submitted about 600 pages of legal arguments, expert reports and presentations to the DOJ over 10 weeks between February 3 and April 17, 2026.

The material included an 118-page letter, a 95-page slide deck, a separate 151-page presentation to the SEC and about 200 pages of expert opinions from four specialists: a Harvard Law School professor, a former acting SEC chair, a former chief justice of India and a former chairman of India's Central Electricity Authority.

Giuffra described the effort as involving "many thousands of hours".

The Adani Group says the litigation never interrupted its operations, financing or project execution. It invested more than ₹ 2.08 lakh crore in the second half of FY25 and FY26, including record annual capital expenditure of ₹ 1,52,967 crore in FY26 -- the highest by any Indian corporate -- while its asset base grew from ₹ 4.12 lakh crore in FY23 to ₹ 7.85 lakh crore in FY26 and its market capitalisation recovered above pre-indictment levels.

During the period, Navi Mumbai International Airport, Terminal 2 at Guwahati Airport, Colombo West International Terminal and the Ganga Expressway came onstream.

Adani Ports and Special Economic Zone became India's first port operator to handle more than 500 million tonnes of cargo in a financial year, while Adani Green Energy crossed 20 gigawatts of operational renewable capacity.

Several Group companies received credit-rating upgrades. Investors, including Apollo Global Management, BlackRock and Capital Group expanded their positions, while banks including MUFG, SMBC, Deutsche Bank, BNP Paribas, and Société Générale deepened rela-

tionships with the Group.

Partnerships with Google, MSC, IHC, Edge-Connex, Embraer, and Dioxycle also expanded.

Adani announced nearly USD 15 billion in fresh investment commitments in a single week as the US legal uncertainty began to ease.

Separately, the SEC's civil action against Gautam Adani resulted in a final judgment under which he consented to permanent injunctions covering specified US securities-law violations without admitting the allegations, except as to jurisdiction.

The criminal dismissal concludes proceedings against the appearing defendants before trial, leaving no judicial finding on the underlying criminal allegations.

However, the judge Garaufis strongly criticised the way the decision was reached.

He said R Trent McCotter, principal associate deputy attorney general, had worked with Adani's lawyers on the dismissal without consulting prosecutors and investigators who had handled the case.

Garaufis rejected most of the government's stated rationales. He found that the Indian filings cited by the DOJ did not substantiate its claim that Indian authorities had cleared the conduct, and rejected its argument that the case was essentially foreign.

He also rejected a separate argument that the transactions fell outside US securities jurisdiction, noting that the indictment alleged investors "irrevocably committed themselves in the United States" and that the scheme relied on the US financial system.

The court did accept one rationale: that statements in Adani Green's bond and loan documents about a "zero tolerance policy for bribery and corruption", "robust internal compliance measures" and oversight by a risk-management committee could constitute "inactionable puffery" -- generic corporate assurances that investors could not reasonably rely on. Garaufis found that sufficient to support dismissal of the three fraud-related counts.

The judge also criticised the DOJ's internal process for seeking dismissal, describing it as containing "irregularities" and being "highly unusual".

He said Principal Associate Deputy Attorney General R Trent McCotter, who joined the Deputy Attorney General's office in January 2026 and said he had never heard of the defendants, became the sole architect of the dismissal after months of meetings with Adani's defence team, apparently without input from the FBI, Securities Exchange Commission (SEC) investigators or prosecutors who originally brought the case.

Two DOJ attorneys involved in the original indictment, Shy Jackson, and Andrew Tyler, withdrew from the case two days after McCotter filed the dismissal motion.

Garaufis also called McCotter's characterisation of the original indictment as a "name and shame" exercise "baseless" and "unbecoming of his office," saying that in 26 years on the bench he had not shared McCotter's characterisation of the integrity of the FBI, SEC, and prosecutors involved in the case.

Separately, on the day the dismissal motion was filed, the US Treasury Department's Office of Foreign Assets Control announced a USD 275 million settlement with Adani Enterprises over "apparent violations" of US sanctions on Iran.

OFAC described the conduct as "egregious" while saying the company had "extensively co-operated" with the investigation. (PTI)

Vande Bharatam selects over 50 innovators from 26,000 applications

AHMEDABAD, Aug 11: Vande Bharatam, the grassroots innovation and entrepreneurship initiative launched by Adani Group Chairman Gautam Adani, has selected its inaugural cohort of more than 50 innovators from over 26,000 applications received from across the country, the organisers said on Tuesday.

The selected innovators are currently in Ahmedabad for the Vande Bharatam Immersive Week, where they are undergoing mentorship sessions.

The nationwide initiative received applications from every state and Union Territory, with ideas spanning mobility, sustainability, technology, agriculture, defence, healthcare, manufacturing and education, among other sectors.

"Vande Bharatam is a very

good initiative...it is so inspiring to see that people are solving such complex and difficult problems, and we have such amazing talent in India," said Aarti Gill, co-founder of Oziva and one of the mentors.

RENEE Cosmetics co-founder Ashutosh Valani said startup founders are present across the country but need platforms that can provide them with resources and access. "Not everyone has resources and accessibility. So, what Vande Bharatam is providing today is exactly that: resources and accessibility," Valani said.

"We have seen some excellent startup pitches. We have even offered to mentor two or three of those pitches. Furthermore, many other panelists have also offered their time and resources to the other startups," he said.

The first cohort was selected through a multi-stage evaluation process and will undergo successive rounds of evaluation during the Immersive Week.

The programme will culminate in the Vande Bharatam Grand Finale on August 14, where outstanding innovators will be recognised and presented with the Vande Bharatam Trophy.

In a statement, Gautam Adani said the initiative was based on the belief that talent has no geographical limits and that innovators from across the country should have access to opportunities.

"When I look at these innovators, I see the possibilities of tomorrow's Bharat. Talent has no city limits and opportunity should not have them either," he said. (PTI)

Delhi govt's purchases from GeM portal jump 156 pc to ₹1,595 cr in Apr-Jul

NEW DELHI, Aug 11: The Delhi government's purchases from the GeM portal jumped 156 per cent to ₹ 1,595 crore in April-July of FY27 from ₹ 624 crore in the year-ago period, giving a boost to MSMEs, the Chief Minister's Office said on Tuesday.

MSMEs are not just businesses but the strong foundation of jobs, innovation and the local economy, Chief Minister Rekha Gupta said, adding that the Delhi government is providing them a strong platform through enhanced purchases.

According to official data, procurement worth ₹ 1,595 crore was recorded up to July in the current fiscal year, 156 per cent higher than ₹ 624 crore recorded during the corresponding period of the last year.

The increase reflects the growing market and opportunities available to Delhi's small businesses.

In 2025-26, the total government procurement through Government e-Marketplace (GeM) in Delhi stood at ₹ 4,311 crore, an increase of 41 per cent over 2024-25.

The share of micro and small enterprises (MSEs) ac-

counted for around ₹ 2,177 crore, the statement said.

With the effective use of GeM, the procurement process has now become digital, simpler and more transparent. This is giving small businesses and entrepreneurs access to a common and wider digital marketplace for government procurement, it added.

The participation of small businesses in government procurement has also grown steadily over the past few years.

Procurement from MSEs stood at around ₹ 965 crore in 2021-22 and rose to ₹ 2,177 crore in 2025-26. Nearly 95 per cent of orders received by Delhi-based sellers in 2025-26 came from the central government and other states.

This is giving Delhi's MSMEs an opportunity to move beyond the local market and take their products and services to customers across the country, it said.

The participation of women and SC/ST entrepreneurs and startups is also increasing, as the Delhi government is making the procurement process more inclusive, said the Chief Minister's Office (CMO). (PTI)

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Govt ensuring medical care

disinfected with the required chemicals and subsequently retested. These sources were reopened for public use only after testing confirmed that the water was safe for consumption, he said.

Singhal said that in view of the possibility of increased mosquito breeding following the deluge, special measures have also been undertaken for vector-borne disease control.

Carcass of livestock are being disposed of in accordance with prescribed health and safety protocols to prevent contamination of water and the environment, and reduce the risk of the spread of infectious diseases, the minister said.

The health department is also giving special attention to the mental health of flood-affected people, Singhal said. "As floodwaters recede, new health-related challenges may emerge. The department continues to maintain close surveillance of the situation," he added. (PTI)

Assam flood situation improves

The Assam government had earlier decided to approach the insurance companies for expeditious and hassle-free settlement of claims by people from the worst-hit districts of Sivasagar, Charaideo, Jorhat and Golaghat.

The insurance aggregator also held a meeting with representatives of the insurance companies, with the central government also issuing special instructions to the companies to dispose of the claims faster. (PTI)

NASA invites India to join

Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (COPUOS) guidelines on the long-term sustainability of outer space activities, as well as reviewed ongoing multilateral efforts for ensuring the Committee's effectiveness.

The ninth meeting of the CSJWG was hosted by India on August 5 and 6 at ISRO's headquarters in Bengaluru. ISRO chairman V Narayanan and US Ambassador Sergio Gor addressed the opening segment of the meeting and highlighted the significance of further strengthening the bilateral space cooperation.

The meeting was co-chaired on the Indian side by M Sankaran, Director, UR Rao Satellite Centre at ISRO.

The US side was co-chaired by Wesley Brooks, Assistant Secretary of State for Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs and Kathleen Karika, NASA Associate Administrator for International and Inter-agency Relations. (PTI)

Border residents of Arunachal

The latest allegations followed claims by the NWS that PLA personnel had moved towards areas near Yaja and Togo villages in the Taksing circle.

The organisation alleged that Chinese troops had advanced towards Pukar La and Ollo, areas located close to the two villages, and had moved to within around 15-16 km of the settlements through the Ollo stream. The NWS had also alleged that Indian Army deployment in the sector had increased over the last one month and claimed that Indian and Chinese troops had come into contact in the area.

However, the Indian Army has previously rejected allegations of fresh Chinese encroachment in the region, saying such reports were "incorrect and without any basis".

The controversy first surfaced in June when the NWS submitted a representation to the Upper Subansiri district administration alleging that the PLA had expanded its presence in several strategically important areas around Taksing, including Oying in the Asaphila region, Paniar, Marpan, Potrang and Tindingtang. The organisation alleged that roads, bridges and military camps had been established in areas that local communities traditionally used for hunting, grazing and collecting forest produce.

The Army subsequently rejected those claims, while the state government urged people not to circulate unverified information and maintained that security agencies were closely monitoring developments along the frontier.

The issue, however, continued to draw attention, with the People's Party of Arunachal (PPA) releasing on Monday the findings of a four-member fact-finding committee that described alleged PLA intrusions in the Taksing area as "inexplicable yet irrefutable".

The chief minister's meeting with the Mra Welfare Society representatives focused on their concerns and development priorities, with particular emphasis on improving connectivity and strengthening infrastructure in the border areas of Upper Subansiri, officials said. (PTI)

Small finance bank slice

The bank's gross NPA and net NPA have improved to 4.36 per cent and 3.24 per cent respectively, compared to 6.31 per cent and 4.66 per cent respectively, as of June 30, 2025.

Its gross loan book grew about 55 per cent year-on-year to Rs 5,098 crore as of June 30, 2026, from Rs 3,284 crore; while the deposits nearly doubled to Rs 5,765 crore from Rs 3,038 crore, as of June 30, 2025.

Total assets of the bank stood at Rs 7,444 crore, a year-on-year increase of 54 per cent, the statement added. Slice Small Finance Bank, with its registered office in Guwahati, was formed following the merger of consumer payments and lending company Slice with North East Small Finance Bank. (PTI)

State of border with China

In August last year, Modi travelled to the Chinese city of Tianjin to attend the annual SCO summit. Modi and Xi held extensive talks on the sidelines of the SCO (Shanghai Cooperation Organisation) summit. In the meeting, Modi said India is committed to taking forward its ties with China based on mutual trust, respect and sensitivity. (PTI)

PM Modi urges people

on August 13. Soon after the meeting, the NDA MPs staged a protest outside Parliament's main gate, 'Makar Dwar', where they came face-to-face with opposition INDIA bloc MPs, who staged another protest.

The ruling alliance members protested and raised slogans over "brutal" police action on job aspirants in Jharkhand and Congress leader Rahul Gandhi allegedly "running away" from a debate on student protests in different parts of the country.

The opposition block protested over the issues surrounding the alleged embezzlement of donations at the Ayodhya Ram temple and demanded accountability from Union Home Minister Shah over alleged police excesses during the July 20 student protests over paper leaks.

The Monsoon session has seen repeated adjournments and virtually no business except the debate on two bills, including The Public Examination (Prevention of Unfair Means) Amendment Bill, 2026, which was passed by Parliament.

Four more bills were passed by the two Houses with little or no debate and three other bills were passed by the Lok Sabha, amid unrelenting protests by the opposition. The opposition parties initially protested over the NEET paper leak and alleged embezzlement of donations at the Ram temple in Ayodhya.

They later pressed for a discussion on the police action against students protesting over the NEET paper leak and also demanded the presence of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the home minister and their statements. (PTI)

Dibakar Dutta appointed Meinhardt India GM for NE

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Aug 11: Meinhardt India has appointed Dibakar Dutta as General Manager-Business Development, North East, with the executive based at the company's Kolkata office.

In his new role, Dutta will lead the company's business development initiatives across the North-east, with a focus on strengthening its regional presence and driving growth in infrastructure, real estate and urban development projects.

Meinhardt India, headquartered in Singapore, has been operating in India for over 25 years and has provided consultancy and engineering services across sectors including urban planning, infrastructure, water and sanitation, airports, metro rail, tunnels, highways and landmark structures.

In Kolkata, the company has worked on projects including ITC Sonar Bangla, South City Tower, South City Mall, Urbana and the Emami township on Jessore Road.

It has also served as the Project Management Consultant for the Kolkata Metro.

Stock markets decline; Sensex drops 388 points

MUMBAI, Aug 11: Benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty ended lower on Tuesday as a sharp rally in crude oil prices due to geopolitical uncertainties dented investors' sentiment.

The 30-share BSE Sensex dropped 388.19 points, or 0.49 per cent, to settle at 78,154.25. During the day, it tanked 494.18 points, or 0.62 per cent, to 78,048.26.

The 50-share NSE Nifty declined 112.10 points, or 0.46 per cent, to end at 24,471.70.

From the Sensex pack, UltraTech Cement, Axis Bank, InterGlobe Aviation, Bharti Airtel, Bajaj Finance and Power Grid were among the major laggards.

Eternal, Infosys, Titan, HCL Tech, and Tata Consultancy Services were the gainers.

Brent crude, the global oil bench-

mark, jumped 2.18 per cent to USD 89.63 per barrel.

"Indian equity benchmarks ended lower on Tuesday, with both Sensex and Nifty declining around 0.5 per cent and the Nifty 50 slipping below the 24,500-mark, as a rebound in crude oil prices and volatility associated with the weekly F&O expiry weighed on investor sentiment," Harisvelan Radhakrishnan, Founder & CEO of HST Wealth, a Research Analyst firm, said.

The dominant headwind for the session remained the renewed surge in global oil prices, he added.

"Markets traded under pressure on Tuesday, extending their cautious tone amid renewed geopolitical concerns and rising crude oil prices. Investor sentiment remained subdued amid a renewed rise in crude oil prices, with Brent crude moving to-

wards the USD 90 per barrel mark as hopes of an early US-Iran agreement faded," Ajit Mishra - SVP, Research, Religare Broking Ltd, said.

The BSE SmallCap Select index edged higher by 0.38 per cent, while MidCap Select index ended marginally lower by 0.01 per cent.

Among sectoral indices, Hospitals dropped 1.82 per cent, realty (1.03 per cent), FMCG (0.87 per cent), commodities (0.80 per cent), power (0.54 per cent) and capital goods (0.47 per cent).

Focused IT, Housing Finance, IT, Energy and Consumer Discretionary were the winners.

In Asian markets, South Korea's KOSPI ended higher, while Shanghai's SSE Composite index and Hong Kong's Hang Seng index settled lower. Equity markets in Japan were closed due to a holiday. (PTI)

Himalaya sets Guinness World Records title with 66,928 healthcare practitioners

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Aug 11: Himalaya Wellness Company has secured a new GUINNESS WORLD RECORDS™ title after 66,928 doctors and healthcare practitioners from across India participated in a month-long tree-planting initiative launched on Doctors' Day on July 1.

The achievement, under the category of "The Largest Online Photo Album of People Holding a Sign", surpassed the previous record of 53,201 participants.

Participants submitted photographs holding signs bearing the message, "United for Wellness, United for a Greener Tomorrow". Himalaya Wellness Company said each submission was reviewed and verified in accordance with GUINNESS WORLD RECORDS™ guidelines before the final count was confirmed.

Jayashree Ullal, Chief Financial Officer and Chief Operating Officer, Himalaya Wellness Company, said the record reflected the company's philosophy of "Care for Life", encompassing care for people, the planet and partnerships.

She described the initiative as part of the company's long-term commitment to sustainability and environmental conservation.

Vikas Bansi, Business Director-Healthcare, Himalaya Wellness Company, said the initiative sought to bring India's medical community together around the shared objective of building a healthier and greener future.

Chakravarthi NV, Director-BabyCare, Himalaya Wellness Company, expressed gratitude to the participating doctors and the company's field force, describing the achievement as a reflection of the trust built between Himalaya and the medical fraternity.

The initiative was aimed at promoting environmental sustainability and reinforcing the connection between planetary and human health.

Himalaya cited the growing global concern over the impact of climate change on public health, including through extreme heat, air pollution, food insecurity, infectious diseases and disruptions to healthcare systems.

As part of its broader environmental initiatives, the company said it is targeting the planting of at least five million trees by 2030.

It has so far planted more than two million trees across ecologically significant regions in collaboration with NGOs, local communities and farming partners.

The company also said it works with farmers to promote sustainable herb cultivation practices and livelihood initiatives, including training in vermicomposting and beekeeping.

Himalaya said the Guinness World Records title marks another milestone in its environmental initiatives and its efforts to bring healthcare professionals, communities and environmental partners together for biodiversity conservation and a greener future.

PROVISION OF SIGNAGE AT 04 NOS. OF ABSS STATIONS

Tender Notice No.: C/TSK/SIGNAGE/ABSS/4/2026. **Dated:** 07-08-2026. E-tender are invited by the undersigned for the following work: **Tender No.:** C/TSK/SIGNAGE/ABSS/4/2026.

Name of Work: Provision of Signage at 04 nos. of ABSS stations over Tinsukia Division (North Lakhimpur, Murkongselek, Dhemaji & Silapathar). **Advised Value:** ₹ 4,87,74,940.99/- **Earnest Money:** ₹ 3,93,900/- **Date & time of closing of tender at 11:00 hrs. on 02-09-2026.** For complete information alongwith the tender document of above e-tender are available in website <http://www.ireps.gov.in>

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AI logistics distributed to Maitris to strengthen livestock services

Certificates, equipment handed over at Khanapara programme to improve doorstep breeding services

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Aug 11: Minister of Animal Husbandry and Veterinary Nilima Devi attended a certificate and Artificial Insemination (AI) logistics distribution programme at the Regional Artificial Insemination Training Institute, Khanapara, Guwahati, on Tuesday.

During the programme, the Minister distributed certificates to five beneficiaries and AI logistics to Maitris, with the aim of strengthening livestock breeding and veterinary services at the grassroots level across Assam.

Additional Chief Secretary, Animal Husbandry and Veterinary Department, Kailash Chandra Samra and Director of Animal Husbandry and Veterinary Department Dr Jayanta Kumar Goswami also attended the programme.

The initiative seeks to equip Maitris with the necessary train-



ing, certification and equipment to provide efficient artificial insemination services to livestock farmers.

The distribution of AI logistics is expected to enhance their capacity to deliver doorstep breeding services, particularly in rural

areas. The programme is aimed at improving livestock breeding and productivity while expanding access to veterinary services and supporting the sustainable development of Assam's livestock sector.

ASCW launches mobile app

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Aug 11: The Assam State Commission for Women (ASCW) launched its dedicated mobile application at a programme held at the Commission's Conference Hall in Guwahati on Tuesday.

The application was formally launched in the presence of Women and Child Development and Tourism Minister Ajanta Neog.

Additional Chief Secretary, Women and Child Development Department, Mukesh Chandra Sahu and ASCW Chairperson Angorata Deka were also present.

Developed by the ASCW in collaboration with the National Commission for Women (NCW), the mobile application is aimed at providing women across Assam with easier and faster access to information, assistance and services relating to women's rights, welfare and grievances.

The initiative is expected to strengthen digital accessibility and citizen-centric service delivery by enabling women to access the Commission's services through a convenient and user-friendly platform. The Commission said the application would also enhance its outreach and facilitate more effective and timely grievance redressal.

Mission APSC, UPSC to launch on August 15

Six-month mentorship programme to provide accessible guidance to civil services aspirants in BTC, adjoining districts

HT Correspondent

KOKRAJHAR, Aug 11: The Bodoland Administrative Staff College (BASC), Kokrajhar, has announced the launch of Mission APSC and UPSC, a six-month mentorship and academic support initiative aimed at providing quality and largely free guidance to serious and deserving civil services aspirants from the BTC and adjoining districts. The initiative was announced at BASC on Tuesday by Kokrajhar District Commissioner Pankaj Chakravarty.

The programme is being implemented by BASC in collaboration with the District Administration, Kokrajhar, with Nirman IAS as the academic and knowledge partner and NTPC, Salakati, as the sponsoring partner.

The initiative seeks to address the opportunity gap faced by aspirants who lack access to quality coaching and mentorship locally.

According to the organisers, civil services preparation often involves considerable expenditure on coaching, study materials and relocation to cities such as Guwahati and Delhi.

The programme will provide academic guidance and mentorship while encouraging aspirants to develop independent preparation skills.

A key component will be personalised mentorship by IAS, IPS, ACS and APS officers and experienced faculty. Each mentor will guide a group of around five to 10 aspirants, maintain regular contact, clarify doubts, monitor progress and provide strategic guidance.

The programme will be largely free, with only nominal administrative expenses applicable wherever required.

The initiative will be implemented in two phases.



The first phase, a two-day orientation workshop, will be held on August 28 and 29, with around 200 aspirants expected to participate.

The sessions will cover examination strategy, syllabus and study sources, current affairs, newspaper reading, note-making, revision, previous-year questions, use of AI tools, interview preparation and motivation. The second phase will comprise a six-month structured mentorship programme from September 2026 to February 2027, keeping the next APSC Preliminary Examination, tentatively scheduled for April 2027, in view.

Registration for Mission APSC and UPSC will open on August 15.

The District Commissioner said the initiative aims to create a more level playing field by providing aspirants with access to quality mentors, academic guidance, study materials and regular assessment.

The broader objective is to ensure that financial or geographical constraints do not prevent deserving students from pursuing careers in the civil services.

Tamulpur meeting reviews 'Har Ghar Tiranga', Partition Horrors programmes

HT Correspondent

KOKRAJHAR, Aug 11: A meeting to review preparations for various programmes related to the upcoming Independence Day, including the 'Har Ghar Tiranga' campaign and 'Partition Horrors Remembrance Day', was held at the conference hall of the Deputy Commissioner's Office in Tamulpur on Tuesday.

The meeting was chaired by Tamulpur District Commissioner Simi Karan, IAS, and discussed a series of activities planned across the district in the run-up to Independence Day.

Among the programmes discussed were drawing competitions in schools from August 9, a human chain by students of Kendriya Vidyalaya, Tamulpur, on August 12 and a Tiranga Yatra to be organised by the SSB from Darangamela Bhutan Gate on August 13.

Tiranga Yatras involving students

and members of Self-Help Groups will also be organised at the local level. The meeting also discussed the screening of short films among students of educational institutions on August 14 in observance of Partition Horrors Remembrance Day.

An exhibition showcasing the 150-year journey of 'Vande Mataram' will also be organised during the official Independence Day programme on August 15. The District Commissioner urged all departments and stakeholders to complete their assigned responsibilities within the stipulated time and extend full cooperation for the successful conduct of the programmes.

Officials and staff of the Deputy Commissioner's Office, heads of various departments, teachers from schools and colleges, SSB personnel, members of Self-Help Groups and other concerned officials and employees attended the meeting.

Vande Bharat Sleeper, Amrit Bharat trains draw strong passenger response



HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Aug 11: Newly introduced Vande Bharat Sleeper and Amrit Bharat train services under Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR) have continued to receive a strong response from passengers, with several services recording occupancy well above 100 per cent during the January-July period this year.

NFR introduced 14 pairs of trains during the period, comprising one pair of Vande Bharat Sleeper, eight pairs of Amrit Bharat trains, three pairs of long-distance Mail/Express trains and two pairs of Mail/Express Intercity trains.

The Kamakhya-Howrah Vande Bharat Sleeper service

recorded 103 per cent occupancy on Train No 27576 from Kamakhya to Howrah, while Train No 27575 from Howrah to Kamakhya recorded 126 per cent occupancy.

The Amrit Bharat services registered particularly high occupancy.

Train No 20609 New Jalpaiguri-Tiruchchirappalli recorded 159 per cent occupancy and Train No 20610 Tiruchchirappalli-New Jalpaiguri recorded 150 per cent.

Train No 20603 New Jalpaiguri-Nagercoil registered 173 per cent occupancy, while Train No 20604 Nagercoil-New Jalpaiguri recorded 160 per cent.

Other services also witnessed strong demand. Train No 15671 Kamakhya-Rohtak recorded 138 per cent occupancy, Train No 15950 Gontni Nagar-Dibrugarh 144 per cent, Train No 16597 SMVT Bengaluru-Alipurduar Jn. 151 per cent and Train No 15673 Charlapalli-Kamakhya 135 per cent.

NFR said the occupancy figures reflected growing passenger preference for modern, comfortable and efficient rail connectivity between the Northeast and major destinations across the country.

The railway said it would continue efforts to strengthen passenger connectivity, expand advanced train services and improve the overall travel experience for rail users across the Northeast.

₹3 lakh extortion demand alleged against nationalist outfit leader in Dibrugarh

HT Correspondent

DIBRUGARH, Aug 11: An allegation of extortion has surfaced against a self-styled leader of a nationalist organisation in Dibrugarh, with the proprietor of a bakery at Titadimoru in Mohanbari alleging that ₹3 lakh was demanded from her in the name of "managing" the media.

According to the complaint, the incident followed a commotion at the Paribeks Bakery outlet on August 7, when the alleged leader raised allegations regarding the sale of adulterated food products. Subsequently, negotiations with the bakery proprietor were allegedly conducted through a third party.

The proprietor, Parisma Barua, al-

leged that ₹3 lakh was demanded to prevent news reports against the bakery from being published by digital media outlets in Dibrugarh.

She claimed that after the bakery authorities refused to pay the alleged amount, reports concerning the establishment appeared in some digital news outlets the following day. The matter gained further attention after an audio recording, purportedly containing a conversation relating to the alleged demand for money through a third party, circulated on social media.

Barua said she had lodged an FIR at the Mohanbari Police Outpost against the person concerned, identified as Duwara.

She also said written complaints had been submitted to the Dibrugarh Deputy Commissioner and Superintendent of Police.

The allegations have raised questions over the circumstances surrounding the alleged demand, the purported use of media management as a justification for seeking money and the authenticity of the audio recording circulating on social media.

The authenticity of the allegations and the recording, however, remains to be established.

The claims are based on the complainant's statements and are subject to verification through police investigation.

NFR revises train services amid restoration work

Four trains cancelled, seven rescheduled as work continues near New Harangajao



HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Aug 11: Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR) has announced further changes in train services in the Lumding-Badarpur Hill Section as restoration work continues near New Harangajao following the settlement of railway tracks on Line-1 and Line-2.

Train operations in the section are currently being maintained through Line-3 with enhanced safety measures, NFR said.

Four train services have been cancelled for the specified dates. Train No. 15617 Guwahati-Dullabcherra Express, scheduled to commence its journey on August 12, has been cancelled between Guwahati and Dullabcherra, while Train No 15618 Dullabcherra-Guwahati Express, scheduled for August 13, has been cancelled between Dullabcherra and Guwahati.

Train No 15615 Guwahati-Silchar Express scheduled for August 12 has also been cancelled between Guwahati and Silchar, while Train No 15616 Silchar-Guwahati Express scheduled for August 13 has been cancelled between Silchar and Guwahati.

Several trains have also been rescheduled. Train No 15650 Narangi-Agartala Express and Train No 15649 Agartala-Narangi Express, both commencing their journeys on August 12, will depart at 10.30 pm and 11.30 pm respectively.

Train No 15609 Guwahati-Sairang Express will depart from Guwahati at 11.30 pm instead of its scheduled time, while Train No 15610 Sairang-Guwahati Express will depart from Sairang at 9.30 pm.

Train No 15611 Rangiya-Silchar Express will depart from Rangiya at 11.30 pm on August 12. Train No 15612 Silchar-Rangiya Express will depart from Silchar at 5 am on August 13.

Train No 15646 Silchar-Charlapalli Express has also been rescheduled and will depart from Silchar at 4.10 am on August 13.

Meanwhile, Train No 17031 Charlapalli-Agartala Express, commencing its journey on August 10, will be regulated en route suitably.

NFR said the revised services are part of the operational adjustments being made while restoration work continues in the Lumding-Badarpur Hill Section.

Sujit Das's 'Chitrashilpa, Fine Arts' released at Nagaon University

AHSEC approves book as reference text for Fine Arts



HT Correspondent

NAGAON, Aug 11: Internationally acclaimed artist, researcher and teacher Sujit Das's book 'Chitrashilpa, Fine Arts' was ceremonially released at Nagaon University recently.

Published in both Assamese and English, the book was unveiled by Nagaon University Vice-Chancellor Dr Hitesh Deka at a function attended by academics, artists and members of the cultural fraternity.

Speaking on the occasion, Dr Deka praised Das's contribution to the promotion of Assam's traditional art and culture, saying he had taken the "fundamental culture of Gurujana" to 30 countries.

He said Nagaon University, being the first public-sector university in Gurujana's birthplace, plans to establish a large museum showcasing Gurujana's works and various art forms of Assam.

Describing Chitrashilpa, Fine Arts as a significant addition to art education, Deka said students of Fine Arts as well as those of other disciplines could benefit from the book.

The book has already been approved by the Assam Higher Secondary Education Council (AHSEC) as a reference book for Fine Arts.

It deals with various aspects of art and fine arts in a simple, informative and student-friendly

manner, covering art history, different art movements, fundamentals of art and other dimensions of the discipline.

Das, who has long been associated with the preservation and training of Assam's manuscript painting and traditional art, said the publication would open "new possibilities for art education and practice in Assam".

He expressed hope that the AHSEC approval would help the book reach more art schools, colleges and institutions and prove useful to teachers, students and art enthusiasts.

The programme was anchored by senior journalist Jiten Borkotoki.

University Dean Lakhyajyoti Borthakur, IQAC Coordinator Dr Bhuvan Chandra Chutia, Deputy Controller Afzalur Rahman, faculty members Shrimoni Hazarika and Danda Devi, journalist Dibyajyoti Baruah and reciter Sumita Dutta were among those present.

The attendees expressed hope that the book, drawing on Das's years of practice, experience and study, would emerge as an important guide for art students and contribute significantly to the development of art education in Assam.

Cachar DC briefs media on 'Har Ghar Tiranga', Partition remembrance programmes

HT Correspondent

SILCHAR, Aug 11: Cachar District Commissioner Rahul Kumar Gupta on Tuesday briefed the media on the district administration's preparations for the 'Har Ghar Tiranga' campaign and the observance of 'Vibhajan Vibhishika Smriti Diwas', outlining a series of patriotic, educational, cultural and community-oriented programmes across the district.

The media briefing was held at the Old Conference Hall of the District Commissioner's Office in Silchar in the presence of Additional District Commissioner Devid Kumar Bora, ACS. Gupta said comprehensive arrangements had been made to ensure participation from different sections of society and take the messages of patriotism, national unity and civic responsibility to the grassroots.

The DC said the Tiranga Bike Rally, organised jointly by the District Police and District Transport Office on August 9, had already been conducted successfully, with enthusiastic participation from citizens.

He said Art, Essay and Debate Competitions were being organised from August 10 to 14 in government and private schools and other educational institutions, in coordination with the Education Department, NCC and NSS. The final rounds will be held at Gandhi Bhawan on August 14.

Cleanliness drives are also being conducted from August 10 to 14 at government offices, schools, markets and other public places with the participation of municipal bodies, Zilla Parishad, BDOs, civil society organisations and government departments.

A Tiranga Rally will be held on August 12, commencing from DSA at 5 pm and proceeding towards Gandhi

Bagh Park, where participants will also join in the singing of 'Vande Mataram'.

The programme will involve the District Administration, Police, NCC, NYK, NSS, ASRLM, NULM, civil society organisations, District Sports Office and other departments.

At the grassroots level, Prabhut Ferries and rallies will be organised on August 12 and 13 through ASRLM and the Development Blocks, with participation from Self-Help Groups.

Tiranga stalls and sales activities will also form part of the programmes.

On August 13, 'Vande Mataram' will be sung at schools, Anganwadi Centres, Gaon Panchayat offices, Block offices and Circle offices across the district.

The DC also informed that a blood donation camp would be organised under the coordination of the Joint Director of Health Services.

The district administration will observe 'Vibhajan Vibhishika Smriti Diwas' on August 14.

A candlelight march will commence from the DSA Sports Complex at 6.30 pm to commemorate the suffering, displacement and sacrifices associated with the Partition of India.

A blood donation camp will also be held as part of the observance.

Gupta said various government departments, educational institutions, local bodies, youth organisations, SHGs, business associations, NGOs and civil society organisations were being involved in the programmes.

Appealing to citizens to participate enthusiastically, the DC urged people to hoist the Tiranga with pride and dignity and make the campaign a collective celebration of India's unity, diversity and democratic spirit.

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QUOTE OF THE DAY

Politics is too serious a matter to be left to the politicians.-Charles de Gaulle

Hasina and India-B'desh ties

Exiled Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's virtual press appearance from New Delhi has plunged India-Bangladesh relations into their sharpest crisis in months, with Dhaka accusing New Delhi of allowing its soil to be used to attack Bangladesh's sovereignty, and India insisting it had no hand in organising the event at all. The flashpoint was a live media interaction held in the Indian capital on August 5 — the second anniversary of the day Sheikh Hasina, then Bangladesh's prime minister, fled Dhaka as a student-led uprising closed in on her government. The 78-year-old former premier used the occasion to reject the findings of Bangladesh's tribal justice process, accuse the interim government of Nobel laureate Muhammad Yunus of plotting against her, and declare that she intends to return home in December — "whatever fate awaits me," in her words, including arrest, imprisonment or worse.

Bangladesh's Ministry of Foreign Affairs said it was "outraged" that a woman it calls an absconding convicted mass murderer had been permitted to hold forth on Indian soil against the Bangladesh state and its people, timed cruelly, in its telling, to coincide with the anniversary the nation marks as its "July Revolution." Bangladesh's foreign ministry had already summoned India's deputy high commissioner in Dhaka in November 2025 over an earlier round of interviews Hasina gave to Indian and international outlets, formally asking that her access to the media be shut down. Dhaka went further still in the days after the August 5 broadcast, lodging a fresh protest with New Delhi's acting envoy over Hasina's remarks — delivered, again, from Indian territory — condemning the demolition of her father Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's historic Dhanmondi residence by a mob, which she said had turned Bangladesh into "a land of militants and terrorists."

On the substance of the August 5 broadcast itself, New Delhi has drawn a careful line. Government sources described the media interaction as a privately organised event with no official Indian sponsorship or endorsement, distancing the state from any suggestion that it had facilitated a political platform for Hasina. That formula — noting events, declining responsibility, urging calm — has become India's standard posture through two years of Bangladeshi demands that it hand over its most consequential political exile. That silence is precisely what now animates Dhaka's fury. With Hasina publicly vowing to return in December regardless of consequences, and Bangladesh's foreign ministry renewing its extradition demand with every fresh broadcast from Delhi, the two capitals are locked in a cycle that shows no sign of easing: Hasina speaks, Dhaka protests, Delhi demurs, and the underlying question of her legal status and eventual fate remains exactly where it has stood since August 2024 — unresolved, and increasingly costly to a relationship both governments say they still want to repair.

Burnham has identified the problem – but he needs to tackle its causes

By: Ben Chacko

At a point when trust in politicians is at an all-time low, Andy Burnham's "cost-of-living" tour is an astute move. The sense that politicians promise much but deliver little is woven into the understanding of the British people because it is true. So Burnham is raising expectations.

The Joseph Rowntree Foundation reports that over the last six months 7.4 million low-income families can no longer afford essential items. This is the highest number since it began running its cost-of-living tracker survey in 2021.

The foundation reports that "...there has also been an increase in the number of families being forced to cut back on meals or go hungry, an increase in the number of families in arrears on their household bills and credit repayments, and an increase in the number of families borrowing money from high-cost lenders such as loan sharks and payday lenders to buy essentials."

Dig down into their figures and it is clear that the cost-of-living crisis is becoming more generalised.

The fastest rise in the number of households unable to afford essentials is among people who don't fall into the usual categories of people in poverty — people on universal credit, young people heading households, lone parents, families with three or more children, households headed by a black or mixed ethnicity background, or by non-UK citizens.

The number of households going without essentials has increased fastest over the last two years for those not on means-tested benefits, those who own their property outright without a mortgage, families without any disabilities or health conditions, childless households, and households that are headed up by someone over the age of 65.

Burnham has let it be known that he thinks Westminster has got used to telling people that everyday hassles, "like hidden pricing and consumers being ripped off, must be accepted as part of life and he doesn't think this is right."

Doing something about these inevitable aspects of living in a capitalist market economy will be a good thing. But Burnham needs to dig deeper for solutions.

So long as prices are subject to the market — ie the tendency of the capitalist owners of the means of production, distribution and exchange to increase their profit margins — then prices will rise. Price control entails measures that limit profits and we know how much that upsets these people.

Of course, not every restraint on the market economy upsets the rich. Measures, mostly legal, to limit the ability of workers to extract the best price for their labour are very popular in these circles. And this includes the Parliamentary Labour Party which has failed to repeal Thatcher's anti-union and anti-worker laws.

So there we have two measures Burnham can bring before Parliament — impose price controls on essentials and boost wages by restoring workers' rights and trade union freedoms.

For working people the social wage is a vital support that should not be subject to inflationary pressures on the family budget. Public housing at affordable rents, free healthcare when it is needed, comprehensive education, affordable public transport — these are the building blocks of an inclusive society and when private alternatives to these things are made impossible even for the rich standards inevitably rise for everyone.

For example, Finland does not have private schools so everyone gets a decent education and Finland scores highest in education standards globally. And a good public transport system is when even the rich use it.

One big problem is John Healey, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, who is insisting on cuts in ministerial budgets to finance massive arms spending and an unwinnable war in Ukraine. (IPA Service)

The future of Assam's rural livelihoods

The future of rural livelihoods in Assam stands as one of the most critical socio-economic determinants shaping the state's developmental trajectory, demanding a rigorous re-examination of policy priorities away from urban-centric models toward a holistic rural paradigm. Official figures extracted from the recent Economic Survey of Assam 2025-26 lay bare the enduring predominance of the agrarian sector, recording 27.58 lakh hectares of net cropped area and 40.88 lakh hectares of gross cropped area during the 2024-25 fiscal period, alongside a commendable cropping intensity of 148.17 percent. Within this sprawling agricultural landscape, rice cultivation alone commands an overwhelming 22.86 lakh hectares, demonstrating how heavily rural livelihoods remain tethered to traditional staple production. This economic reality is powerfully reinforced by demographic imperatives highlighted by the Directorate of Economics and Statistics, which estimates that Assam sheltered roughly 3.02 crore rural residents in 2023 against a modest urban populace of approximately 55.6 lakh. These stark demographic proportions establish beyond doubt that the future economic viability of the state cannot rest exclusively on investments channeled into metropolitan expansion, highway corridors, or heavy industrial infrastructure. For sustainable prosperity to take root, rural incomes must rise dynamically alongside urban growth.

However, rural Assam is no longer confined to a primitive agricultural framework; it represents an intricate livelihood ecosystem spanning tea cultivation, livestock management, inland fisheries, handloom weaving, traditional handicrafts, small food-processing ventures, local trade, transportation, construction, and diverse rural enterprises. Yet, this multifaceted foundation is burdened by profound structural vulnerabilities. According to Agriculture Census figures cited in the Economic Survey 2023-24, more than 85 percent of the state's farmers are classified as small or marginal, operating on severely fragmented land holdings that impede mechanisation, modern irrigation deployment, scientific storage, and direct market integration. Compounding these structural handicaps is Assam's highly volatile natural geography, characterized by annual monsoon floods, devastating riverbank erosion, excessive rainfall, heavy siltation, and periodic dry spells that routinely disrupt agricultural cycles and obliterate productive assets. Consequently, securing the future of rural livelihoods requires looking far beyond raw crop production to construct a diversified, resilient rural economy capable of withstanding climatic shocks while generating multiple income streams for vulnerable farming households across the state.

Translating agricultural potential into tangible financial gains demands a structural overhaul of farm economics that directly addresses the ground realities faced by Assam's smallholder farmers. The state possesses enviable natural endowments, including fertile alluvial soils, abundant rainfall, sprawling wetlands, extensive river networks, and diverse agro-climatic conditions that theoretically provide an ideal environment for prolific agricultural output. In practice, however, these intrinsic advantages fail to translate into elevated farm incomes due to persistent structural bottlenecks, chief among them being a critical deficit in dependable irrigation infrastructure. Although recent data indicates an upward trend in cropping intensity, a wide chasm persists between actual agricultural productivity and its true potential. While rice will inevitably remain the cornerstone of Assam's agrarian identity, the rural economy urgently requires deep-rooted diversification into high-value horticultural commodities, vegetables, pulses, oilseeds, spices, and commercial livestock systems tailored to micro-regional ecologies. Assam already demonstrates formidable productive capacity in crops such as bananas, pineapples, ginger, turmeric, arecanut, and oranges, with several districts exhibiting exceptional horticultural promise. Nevertheless, in-



creased production in the absence of organized market linkages creates a perverse paradox where bumper harvests fail to enrich the cultivator. Farmers frequently find themselves compelled to sell perishable produce immediately post-harvest, thereby capturing only a fraction of final consumer value. Overcoming this market asymmetry necessitates robust agricultural value chains supported by Farmer Producer Organisations, cooperatives, and active producer groups capable of aggregating smallholder output and strengthening bargaining power. The Assam State Rural Livelihoods Mission has already laid valuable groundwork by championing producer groups for aggregation, value addition, and organized marketing across agricultural and non-farm sectors. To secure the future of rural livelihoods, these commendable initiatives must transition from project-bound interventions into the absolute core of state agricultural policy.

Backed by heavy investments in cold storage facilities, scientific grading, hygienic packaging, and rural connectivity. Roads, electricity, and digital networks acquire true economic significance only when they seamlessly connect the village producer to lucrative consumer markets, completing an unbroken value chain from the farm gate to the final marketplace. Beyond traditional crop cultivation lies a vast, underutilized frontier of economic opportunity centered on Assam's vibrant non-farm sectors, including livestock management, inland fisheries, handloom weaving, exquisite handicrafts, and micro-enterprises. Historically, these vital sectors have languished at low operational scales, operating in deep isolation from formal credit and structured markets. The livestock sector holds extraordinary promise, offering a reliable, year-round income buffer for rural households vulnerable to seasonal crop failures through poultry, piggy, goat rearing, and cattle management—the latter bolstered by a staggering cattle population exceeding one crore as documented in the 20th Livestock Census of 2019. Similarly, the fisheries sector commands immense economic weight, drawing upon the natural abundance of the state's wetlands, beels, and rivers to satisfy rapidly rising urban protein demand. A parallel narrative defines Assam's legendary handlooms and handicrafts, where traditional artisans are frequently trapped in a vicious cycle of low productivity, obsolete technology, and weak market visibility. Revitalizing these indigenous industries requires comprehensive modern inputs, including professional design adaptation, stringent quality control standards, aggressive digital marketing, sophisticated branding, eco-friendly packaging, and direct consumer access that preserves cultural authenticity while multiplying financial returns. Furthermore, rural tourism presents a viable economic diversification strategy when anchored around historic satras, scenic tea estates, wildlife sanctuaries, wetland ecosystems, and traditional craft villages, provided such tourism remains environmentally responsible and directly benefits local

communities. The primary catalyst for scaling up these household enterprises is collective action, allowing individual producers to pool resources, lower input acquisition costs, execute joint processing, and penetrate larger commercial markets. Assam's remarkable Self Help Group movement serves as an unshakable institutional foundation for this socioeconomic transformation. Official records from ASRLMS as of January 31, 2026, document an impressive network of 3,62,118 active SHGs engaging nearly 39.76 lakh rural households, with cumulative bank linkages scaling unprecedented heights at ₹13,981 crore. Furthermore, the program has extended agricultural interventions to over 32.55 lakh women farmers while bolstering more than 17.93 lakh women through specialized livestock initiatives. These figures signify a profound societal paradigm shift: rural women in Assam are stepping far beyond passive welfare dependency to emerge as dynamic producers, corporate entrepreneurs, commercial traders, and grassroots service providers. The immediate imperative is converting accumulated savings and financial credit into durable, income-generating enterprises through targeted training in accounting, technology, and professional management.

Employment generation remains one of the most pressing policy challenges confronting Assam, as the expanding rural workforce cannot be sustainably absorbed through low-productivity agriculture alone. Addressing this challenge does not require abandoning the agrarian sector, but rather constructing a robust rural non-farm economy firmly anchored to agriculture and localized natural resources. Food processing stands out as one of the most promising horizons, capable of converting raw commodities into high-value market goods through localized rice milling, spice grinding, fruit processing, dairy packaging, fish processing, bamboo crafting, and traditional food manufacturing. Establishing these enterprises directly in rural production zones drastically curtails post-harvest wastage and retains a significantly larger share of economic value within village boundaries, thereby transforming rural roads, power grids, digital networks, and storage facilities into productive economic catalysts. Public employment programs like Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act also play an indispensable stabilizing role by guaranteeing up to 100 days of manual wage employment to rural households during agricultural lean periods.

However, public employment policies must increasingly transcend simple wage distribution to create durable, community-owned productive assets. Prioritizing projects like water conservation reservoirs, agricultural irrigation channels, systematic land development, robust village roads, drainage networks, and flood-resilient community infrastructure can simultaneously fortify the local economy and generate temporary employment. While the Panchayat and Rural Development Department explicitly targets rural poverty eradication, job creation, infrastructural expansion, and the minimization of regional disparities, the actual efficacy of these missions depends heavily on execution quality. Chronic operational bottlenecks such as delayed wage disbursements, lax monitoring, substandard asset

upkeep, and administrative inefficiencies frequently undermine these well-intentioned schemes. Parallel to infrastructure, Assam urgently requires a robust rural financial architecture to dismantle lingering systemic barriers. Data from ASRLMS highlights that rural households continue to battle uneven banking footprints, excessive physical distance from brick-and-mortar branches, acute staff shortages, cumbersome documentation formalities, and the hidden financial costs of repeated administrative visits. While digital banking innovations offer a promising pathway to bypass geographical hurdles, technology alone cannot succeed without comprehensive financial literacy programs and dependable network connectivity. Consequently, public policy must weave credit access, technical skills, modern machinery, and direct market integration into a single, cohesive operational strategy rather than treating them as isolated administrative interventions.

Ultimately, securing the future of rural livelihoods requires a profound philosophical shift in how the state approaches rural development, moving decisively away from passive welfare dependency toward a dynamic framework centered on income generation, productivity enhancement, and long-term economic resilience, all while preserving safety nets for the most vulnerable populations. Assam has already forged a formidable institutional architecture comprising Panchayati Raj institutions, widespread Self Help Groups, specialized livelihood missions, agricultural directorates, cooperative societies, and financial networks. The principal challenge moving forward is eliminating departmental fragmentation and achieving seamless institutional coordination. A hardworking farmer should never be forced to navigate a labyrinth of disconnected government offices simply to secure quality seeds, irrigation permissions, institutional credit, crop insurance, technical training, and market access; instead, essential services must converge smoothly through integrated local institutions. Moreover, the state must urgently craft localized, district-specific rural economic blueprints, recognizing that the agrarian and economic realities of Majuli diverge sharply from those of Karbi Anglong, the Barak Valley, Lower Assam, or the flood-ravaged zones of Upper Assam, where specific crop choices, livestock systems, handicraft traditions, and commercial linkages dictate unique developmental pathways. Climate resilience must be woven into every single rural investment decision, ensuring that storage facilities are engineered to withstand severe flood risks, rural roadways feature resilient drainage systems, agricultural extension services provide actionable guidance on shifting weather patterns, and crop insurance schemes are simplified for smallholders.

Furthermore, forging unshakable bridges between state universities, agricultural research institutions, and grassroots village producers is paramount to ensuring that cutting-edge innovations actually reach the soil rather than stagnating in academic laboratories. Assam's rural economy possesses breathtaking potential, but potential left untended will never organically generate state-wide prosperity. The immediate mandate calls for elevated productivity, hardened value chains, thriving micro-enterprises, and the unhindered economic participation of the state's youth and women. The staggering scale of existing SHGs and bank-linked rural households proves that the institutional foundation is already firmly in place. The decisive next step is to leverage that formidable foundation to trigger a lasting economic transformation, because a prosperous Assam can never be built on the illusion of shining urban islands surrounded by an ocean of stagnant rural villages. Rural and urban economies must rise together as co-equal engines of progress; when agricultural producers secure fair returns, rural enterprises expand, young minds find rewarding local vocations, and women exercise genuine control over household incomes, the transformative dividends cascade across the entire state economy. Assam's rural landscape deserves recognition not as an afterthought or a marginal welfare sector, but as the pulsating core of its future destiny.

LONG-TERM SOLUTIONS FOR ASSAM FLOODS



DEGREE OF THOUGHT

By: Satyabrata Borah

Assam faces a recurring nightmare every single year as the monsoon rains arrive and the Brahmaputra River overflows its banks, swallowing vast stretches of land, homes, and livelihoods. Millions of people find themselves displaced, struggling to secure basic necessities while watching their hard-earned assets wash away in the muddy brown water. The sheer scale of destruction impacts agriculture, infrastructure, and human life, making it one of the most critical challenges the state experiences annually. To understand the gravity of this disaster, one must look at how geography and climate work together to create a complex ecological puzzle.

The topography of the region plays a massive role in making the valley vulnerable to such intense overflowing. Streams and tributaries rush down from the surrounding hills of neighbouring states and countries, carrying immense volumes of water along with heavy sediment loads. As these fast-moving streams hit the flat plains of Assam, they slow down and deposit enormous quantities of silt onto the riverbed. Over decades, this

continuous deposition has raised the riverbeds significantly, reducing the water-carrying capacity of the main channels. When heavy monsoon downpours hit the catchment areas, the shallow riverbeds simply cannot hold the surging water, forcing it to spill over into human settlements and agricultural fields.

Human interventions and poor land management have made the situation noticeably worse. Unplanned urban development, deforestation in upper catchment areas, and the destruction of natural wetlands have disrupted the natural drainage systems that once absorbed excess rainfall. Wetlands and local water bodies used to act as natural sponges, holding back millions of liters of storm water and releasing it slowly over time. With these natural buffers paved over for buildings and roads, rainwater has nowhere to go except into residential areas, causing severe flash floods in cities alongside the traditional riverine flooding in rural districts.

The traditional approach to controlling these surging waters has long relied almost entirely on building embankments along the riverbanks. Thousands of kilometers of these earthen dykes were constructed over the last several decades as a temporary shield against the floods. Many of these structures have outlived their intended lifespan, becoming weak and prone to breaches during high water levels. When an embankment breaks under pressure, the resulting rush of water is far more destructive than a gradual rise in water levels, flattening entire villages within minutes and leaving behind thick layers of infertile sand on fertile farmland.

Addressing this monumental crisis requires moving away from piece-

meal solutions and adopting a comprehensive, long-term strategy that works with nature rather than trying to forcefully contain it. A fundamental shift must happen in how the river basin is managed, starting from the upper catchment regions all the way down to the plains. Massive afforestation drives along hill slopes can slow down soil erosion, directly reducing the sediment that ends up clogging the riverbeds below. Protecting existing forest cover and restoring degraded forest lands across the entire river basin will naturally regulate the flow of rainwater during intense weather events.

Dredging key river channels and managing sediment scientifically offers another practical pathway to mitigate the damage. While complete dredging of a giant river like the Brahmaputra is neither financially feasible nor ecologically sound, targeted dredging at critical choke points can help maintain deeper channels for water flow. The silt removed from the riverbed can be repurposed to raise the height of vulnerable villages or to strengthen riverbanks in areas facing extreme erosion. Combining sediment management with proper river training techniques can stabilize bank lines and protect communities living close to the edges.

Reclaiming and rejuvenating the natural wetland network is equally vital for creating long-term resilience against heavy rains. Oxbow lakes, local ponds, and marshlands must be desilted, cleared of encroachments, and reconnected to the main river systems through natural channels. During the peak monsoon season, these rejuvenated wetlands can store enormous amounts of excess water, significantly reducing the peak flood levels in

nearby towns and villages. In the dry winter months, the stored water can serve as a crucial resource for local agriculture and fishing communities, creating a sustainable ecological cycle.

Modernizing early warning systems and leveraging advanced technology can save countless lives and minimize economic losses. Installing real-time hydrological sensors, weather radars, and satellite monitoring systems allows authorities to track rainfall patterns and water levels with high accuracy. Translating this data into hyper-local, easy-to-understand alerts sent directly to villagers' mobile phones gives families precious hours to move their cattle, essential documents, and belongings to safer grounds. Community-based disaster management teams, trained in quick evacuation and basic first aid, can ensure that emergency responses are swift and well-coordinated.

Building flood-resilient infrastructure is another essential pillar for long-term adaptation in the flood-prone plains. Traditional housing designs, such as houses built on raised stilts, have allowed local indigenous communities to live alongside the river for generations without facing total destruction. Promoting these climate-resilient architecture styles for public buildings, schools, and homes in high-risk zones ensures that basic life can continue even when water enters the village. Raising the height of roads, electrical sub-stations, and drinking water sources above historical flood levels prevents the complete collapse of essential services during emergencies.

International and inter-state cooperation must be strengthened to manage the shared river basin effectively.

Rivers do not recognize administrative boundaries, and decisions made upstream directly impact communities living downstream. Sharing real-time hydrological data during the monsoon season among all regional stakeholders enables better preparation and dam water management. When hydroelectric reservoirs upstream need to release water, doing so in a controlled, phased manner with advance warnings prevents sudden artificial floods from overwhelming downstream areas.

Securing sustainable livelihoods for vulnerable populations requires a complete rethinking of regional agricultural practices. Promoting short-duration crop varieties or flood-tolerant rice strains enables farmers to harvest their produce before the peak flood season arrives or survive prolonged submergence without losing the entire crop. Diversifying rural incomes through flood-resistant fish farming, backyard poultry, and handloom handicrafts reduces total financial dependence on traditional seasonal farming, helping families recover much faster after the water recedes.

Ultimately, living with floods requires a fundamental mindset shift from attempting total control to building systemic resilience and harmony with natural water cycles. The river system is a living ecological entity that brings fertility, life, and culture to the region, alongside its seasonal fury. By combining traditional ecological wisdom with modern engineering, robust regional cooperation, and proactive community participation, the state can transform an annual disaster into a manageable natural event, safeguarding the future of its people for generations to come.

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Women's safety is India's real development test

By: Vedang Ahire

There are tragedies that make headlines for days and weeks, capturing the nation's imagination and stopping the country in its tracks. There are also tragedies that occur with such regularity that they become background noise. Sexual violence in India is one of these.

Dozens of thousands of rapes are reported in the country every year, and the number recorded in official crime statistics has not changed for several years. However, this figure is not the be-all and end-all; every such case is a life ruined, a family destroyed, and an injustice committed against an individual.

The consequences of rape are much broader than the immediate aftermath of the crime itself. For the victim, the long-term effects often include psychological trauma, depression, anxiety, sexual dysfunction, post-traumatic stress disorder, social stigma, and loss of self-esteem. For family members, the burden is no less severe. Not least because, in many cases, the rape victim is a daughter, wife, mother, or sister. And the family is forced to live with the consequences of this traumatic event for a long time.

Meanwhile, society as a whole must reckon with the fact that such crimes are happening. The question is why, despite so many years of public outrage, loud speeches by politicians, and judicial rhetoric, India continues to be a country where women cannot freely walk the streets. This is where the responsibility of the state and law enforcement authorities is most acute. Reliable protection, effective investigation, and swift prosecution are essential elements in preventing sexual violence and ensuring justice. However, they are not the only answer. This problem is complex, multi-layered, and requires a broader social response.



education are essential elements in preventing sexual violence and ensuring justice. However, they are not the only answer. This problem is complex, multi-layered, and requires a broader social response.

It is necessary to return to the very roots of the problem – to the attitude of men towards women. It is necessary to abandon once and for all the idea that women are somehow a category of people who are allowed to be disrespectful, arrogant, harassing, and violent. It is necessary to stop

considering women as a means to an end, a tool for satisfying male fantasies, and a measure for personal success. The fact that a woman is a daughter, wife, mother, or sister is not the reason why she should be respected. She has the right to respect simply because she is a human being, just like any other person.

Unfortunately, the situation of women in India today is complicated by the fact that harassment often takes place in cyberspace. Many girls and women are exposed to threats, insults, and sexual assault online. They are sent explicit messages, harassed by phone, stalked on social media, and their photos circulated without consent. This problem is more extensive than it might seem at first glance because it affects girls of different ages and social classes. Moreover, it is not only boys and men who express such behavior – sometimes women also become perpetrators of harassment. Teenagers, college students, and even older women have been reported to engage in online violence. For many girls, the risks associated with social media have become a reality of everyday life. The ability to control what information to allow on social media and who has access to it is a huge responsibility. Behind every handle on social media, there is a living person who may be completely unscrupulous and disrespectful. The anonymity of the Internet often encourages people to say things that they would never say in real life. This creates an additional challenge for women who must remain constantly aware of the potential threat.

It is crucial to recognize that education is the key to solving this situation. It is necessary to instill in students a culture of tolerance from a young age, based on mutual respect and recognition of the rights of others. It is also essential to educate children about the dangers of social media and the importance of consent. Parents also have a responsibility to set an example and monitor their children's online

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activity. It is necessary to start a dialogue on this topic not only in schools but also in the family. After all, children adopt many behavioral habits from their parents, and their opinions often influence the formation of a child's views.

The role of the media and public figures in shaping a healthy attitude towards women is also difficult to overestimate. Every celebrity who promotes toxic behavior and spreads misogynistic ideas poisons public opinion. It is necessary to stop glorifying films and TV series in which harassment is presented as something desirable and acceptable. It is necessary to establish a dialogue on this topic not only between men and women but also among women themselves. This is where many men can make a mistake in their attempts to support women. They should understand that their role in combating sexual violence is no less significant than women's one. It is not enough to express sympathy and support for women in whose name loud speeches are made on social media. Men should take responsibility for their behavior and the attitude towards women. Moreover, they should openly condemn other men for harassment and not let them get away with it.

India has made great strides in technological development and economic growth. However, as long as women cannot freely walk around town, use social media without being harassed, and go to work without looking over their shoulders, the country cannot call itself developed. Women's safety is a litmus test for the state's policy. It is a responsibility for every person in the country to make the streets safer for women. (Courtesy: Youth Ki Awaaz)

Short fiction by Geetanjali Shree: A woman goes on a writer's retreat and falls in love with the sky

By: Geetanjali Shree & Daisy Rockwell

The whole thing happened as if in a dream. The government had offered her an opportunity to go on a retreat somewhere remote for an extended period. This was in response to a growing demand by artists that they be shown more consideration and respect and be given the chance to take a break from society and the daily humdrum routines of life by sending them to faraway places where they may pursue their work in peace. There will only be you and your art there, they announced, and handed over a ticket, visa, etc., and sent the woman on her way.

What the woman had said was that she was getting tired. Of the demands of society, friends and relations. But first, she had to take part in a protest against Parliament because although the government was sending her on a wonderful residency to work on her art, they had also stood by silently when an artist in the city had sculpted a nude statue and some right-wing activists had broken into the sculptor's studio fully armed, stripped him naked and smeared him in blood, all for the sake of preserving the modesty of the naked statue. The government hadn't made the slightest effort to arrest anyone involved in the matter.

Emerging from the protest – aah society, relations, culture! – the woman then attended a party because for the first time in the country's history, an untouchable had topped in the country's civil service, and this was a moment for celebrating progress.

Finally done with all this excitement, the woman arrived at the airport, which was so chaotic, it might as well have been an oxen stand or a bus stop. People were cutting and twisting the queues to such an extent that they didn't seem like lines any more but rivers that flowed throughout the country, pooling and ponding in some places, springing forth in others, and damming up to such an extent elsewhere that they were causing drought.

The woman began to feel like she was turning into a statue as she stood in line, but just then a worker came and snapped her from her reverie. Madam, he said Madam, only one cabin bag allowed.

But I only have one, the woman said, showing it to him.

Only one, the worker repeated and he touched her backpack and then motioned towards her handbag.

But this is a handbag. Ladies' purse, said the woman confidently.

Zero tolerance. It's the latest law for all the airlines. It was useless to argue. The woman emptied the contents of her carefully packed purse into the backpack and shoved and squeezed everything in.

Security, Ma'am. If we let you go, they'll stop you up ahead.

One bag. Nowadays. Any gel, liquid or prohibited items? Colgate?

No, Ma'am. Security.

Body lotion?

Sorry, Ma'am. Terrorism.

Some things went in the rubbish bin, others got squished into the backpack.

If she took her clock with her, the X-ray machine would object.

But it's just tiny and I was going to check it in the luggage.

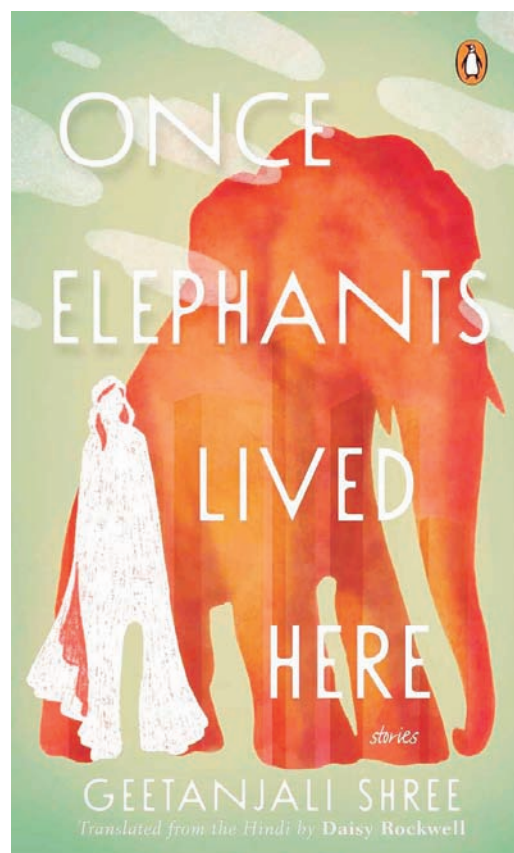
But it has a battery in it.

So?

Please remove the battery.

Rummaging about, everything nearly ripping at the seams. The watch was rendered lifeless, everything was repacked, and finally the suitcase was allowed through.

When she had finally squeezed herself through the machines, after doing the same to her belongings, she sat down at last in her seat, extremely exhausted; all



her joints were aching.

I wrote all this out in detail to explain precisely that: When she finally sat down in her seat, she was so discombobulated that bits and pieces of her were falling out here, stuffed in there, a bit broken from her liver, another lost in the celebration she'd attended, another stuck to the nude statue by the denuded artist, everything huffing, puffing, winded hanging by a thread.

As the plane took off, the clouds of the nation shimmered, and the woman thought, oh my, all this has been happening, and I am off all the same, and she felt tired and fell asleep.

Meaning the woman, who was tired, fell asleep.

She had a dream. A tortoise appeared in her dream. It was a blue tortoise. So beautiful, so blue, as though someone had dipped it in blue dye, totally drenched in it. It was not fitted with a battery, motor or computer. That is, the tortoise that appeared in her dream was alive. But how did it turn blue, wondered the woman with surprise.

The dream was surprising, but as it progressed, the woman's surprise transformed into a deep understanding that when everything is blue, of course a tortoise will be blue as well.

She felt that the dream was very beautiful, and the tortoise was also very beautiful. A deeply satisfying blue. Lively, yet tranquil.

She also felt that a singular event occurred during this time. Someone lightly tapped the airplane in which she was seated. As you might tap a ball. And it turned slightly.

This is what happened with the plane: At the moment of the tap, it was at the edge of the orbit of the world, and it shifted slightly and slid outside that orbit.

When the woman opened her eyes, there was nothing but an abundance of clouds outside her window. From that moment onwards, she stopped feeling alone. But she also did not miss any of the folk she had left behind.

Slowly she felt suffused with a glow of joy that was a harbinger of her coming union with the sky.

The new sky was behind the clouds. It was new but centuries old. Apart from the world she'd left behind, a part of this new galaxy.

It would be misleading if I were to say that there were no two-legged or four-legged beings that moved about on their own in this world at all. In fact, there were, and they moved about with great purpose and intention. Hold on, what do you mean?

This: that when the plane landed and the woman emerged, she beheld a world much like what they call a still-life in the art world, only this was a framed moving-life picture. As though all the beings ran on a mechanism by which they transitioned from immobile to mobile.

After getting out of the plane, the travellers entered the frame and became part of the picture. The moving picture, that is. By which I mean they moved. Or rather, they stood in a line.

The woman glanced at the faces of her fellow travellers. Had all these entities been sitting with her on the plane? Since when?

She didn't recognise a single one. Everyone was staring straight ahead, which was nowhere, at nothing. They had opened their bags, and held out their passports, tickets with checked bag stubs, and landing cards as they stood in a line.

The woman felt as though she was composed of an odd assortment of limbs, each making their own willful movements, and it shouldn't be like that. She pulled herself together and joined the line in imitation of the others.

The trays were also lined up on the belt in front of the line of people. When a tray appeared before someone, they would pick it up. Then they would open their jacket and take out their wallet, keys, flotsam, jetsam, and place them all in the tray. Then they would take their jacket off and put it in a tray. Then they'd lean over and unlace their boots or shoes and place them next to the jacket – ew, probably dirty! Then they'd place their baggage and the packed tray back on the conveyor belt.

All that was required next was for the belt to move and for the two-legged being to walk alongside it. The tray would enter an X-ray tunnel, and the two-legged would walk like an automaton through the metal detector. As soon as they reached the other side, they stood on a small platform – the kind you see at a cobbler's shop holding both arms out at ninety-degree angles. What an odd shoe that would make if the uniformed airport "cobbler" were to hammer it into shape.

The woman, quietly, unquestioningly, did everything in the moving picture that the rest did. Even if it seemed strange. Especially the part where you get brushed, wiped and hammered like a pair of shoes.

The strange thing was that it all seemed peculiar to her but not bad. She even felt at peace with the fact that sticking to emulating the others was the path to both salvation and escape. To the other side of the airport, where the sky was.

She had a subconscious sensation that it was waiting for her. The sky. Meaning that they were both, the sky and the woman, S and W, awaiting one another.

Of course they didn't know all this beforehand. How could they, the woman and the sky? Who could imagine there was such a place in the galaxy, or just outside the galaxy, where only one woman and one sky are truly alive?

The woman stood in the taxi queue bewildered. When her turn came, an automaton opened the door for her, took the address card from her hand, sat down in the driver's seat and stuck the card in a machine attached to the windshield. The address smoothly entered the consciousness of the taxi, and the driver-bot began to turn the steering wheel to manipulate the wheels of the taxi. (Courtesy: Scroll.in)

Ariana Grande's appearance attracted intense scrutiny, not just genuine concern

By: Vivienne Lewis

Every time a celebrity appears to lose weight, the same debate begins. Some people say we shouldn't comment on another person's body. Others argue staying silent ignores the possibility that someone may be struggling.

So when does genuine concern become harmful scrutiny?

It's a question many people have been asking following recent public discussion about singer Ariana Grande's appearance.

Today Grande announced she will be "taking a step back from visibility" after her current tour, saying recent public appearances had led to "endless, ongoing public scrutiny".

Grande hasn't said this relates to her weight or to an eating disorder, and it would be inappropriate to speculate about her health. But the discussion raises an important question that extends far beyond celebrities.

I'm a clinical psychologist and academic who has spent more than 20 years researching and working with people experiencing eating disorders. Here's what I've found about the difference between scrutiny and concern – and why the difference matters when you're worried someone might have an eating disorder.

Scrutiny focuses on bodies, concern focuses on people.

Scrutiny begins with appearance, while concern begins with wellbeing. Scrutiny asks, "What does this person look like?" Concern asks, "How is this person coping?"

When we publicly analyse someone's body, we're making assumptions about their health based on appearance alone. Yet you cannot tell if someone has an eating disorder simply by looking at someone. Eating disorders occur across all body sizes, ages, genders and backgrounds. Many people experiencing serious eating disorders are never underweight.

Likewise, weight loss can occur for many reasons, including physical illness, medication, grief, stress or other life circumstances. Appearance alone simply doesn't tell us enough.

Why public speculation can do more harm than good

Many people defend comments about a celebrity's appearance by saying they're simply expressing concern.

But concern doesn't require thousands of strangers discussing someone's body online. Public speculation can become deeply personal, intrusive and impossible to escape. It can also have unintended consequences for everyone else watching. Research shows stigma surrounding eating disorders remains a major barrier to seeking help. Many people delay treatment because of shame, fear of judgement and misconceptions about what an eating disorder looks like.

Weight stigma itself contributes to body dissatisfaction, disordered eating and poorer mental health.

So public conversations that repeatedly evaluate people's bodies may inadvertently reinforce exactly the problems we hope to prevent.

If you're worried about someone Before saying anything, ask yourself: am I commenting on this person's body,



or am I checking in on the person? That shift, from appearance to wellbeing, can completely change how your concern is received.

If you're worried about someone you know, try shifting your attention away from their body and towards changes in their wellbeing, or behaviours you've noticed.

Perhaps they seem withdrawn. Maybe they've stopped joining family meals, become increasingly anxious around food, started exercising compulsively, or no longer seem interested in activities they once enjoyed.

Rather than saying: "You've become so thin", try saying: "I've noticed you don't seem like yourself lately. How are you going?" or "I'm worried about you because you don't seem yourself. Is there anything you'd like to talk about?" This small change makes a big difference.

If someone tells you they are struggling, resist the urge to become their therapist or convince them they have an eating disorder. Instead, listen. Thank them for trusting you. The goal isn't to diagnose someone: it's to let them know they matter.

Encourage them to speak with their GP or another health professional experienced in eating disorders. The Butterfly Foundation provides excellent resources for families and friends who want to know how to have these conversations well.

It's also important to have these conversations privately when you are alone with the person rather than in front of others so you don't further stigmatise the person and the issue. People are more likely to be open and calm when a conversation is held in a private, respectful manner.

Looking after yourself

If you have an eating disorder, or are recovering from one, the current media discussion may feel overwhelming. It's OK to step away. Limit your exposure to social media discussions and comment sections. Curate your online environment.

Spend time with people who value you for who you are rather than how you look.

As I discuss in my book Embracing You, A Practical Guide to Body Image and Self-Acceptance, recovery is about reclaiming your life back from appearance-based thinking. It's about reconnecting with your relationships, your values, your purpose and your wellbeing.

So the next time you're worried about someone's health, don't ask yourself what you see when you look at their body. Ask what they might need as a person. That simple shift, from scrutiny to compassion, could make all the difference. (Courtesy: The Conversation)

At least 14 artisanal miners found dead at disused mine in South Africa, police say

Rustenburg is a hub for platinum mining in South Africa



JOHANNESBURG, Aug 11: At least 14 artisanal miners are dead and scores are injured at a disused mine in South Africa, police said Tuesday. The South African Police Service said the miners were found dead at a mine near the city of Rustenburg, around 130 kilometres northwest of Johannesburg.

The national police service did not give more details on the circumstances of the deaths, but said the provincial police commissioner

was on the way to the mine.

South Africa has tens of thousands of artisanal miners working illegally in gold and platinum mines that are no longer being used by mining companies. The informal miners go into the mines to look for leftover deposits to sell. They often operate without proper safety equipment and sometimes stay underground for weeks.

Rustenburg is a hub for platinum mining in South Africa, which has

the largest platinum reserves in the world.

Informal mining is a deep problem in South Africa and is connected to criminal syndicates, according to authorities. The informal miners are renowned and known as zama zamas, which translates loosely as "chance takers." They often operate in gangs that fight violent battles with rivals.

South Africa's most recent major disaster involving illegal mining was in late 2024, when hundreds of miners became trapped underground at a gold mine that had been surrounded by police.

The standoff lasted months and more than 80 miners died underground, according to authorities.

South African President Cyril Ramaphosa took the unusual step earlier this year to deploy soldiers on the streets in a yearlong operation to combat organised crime, with illegal mining one of the focuses of the operation. (AP)

Trump to sign executive order calling for spacing out childhood shots

NEW YORK, Aug 11: President Donald Trump on Monday announced he was signing an executive order calling for revamped childhood vaccine recommendations that promote his long-held belief that childhood shots should be spaced out into separate medical visits.

The order will recommend separating the measles, mumps and rubella (MMR) vaccine into three different shots administered in separate visits, and direct the nation's health department to improve vaccine research, says a White House fact sheet, first reported by The Daily Caller.

Trump also said in an event at the Oval Office on Monday afternoon that one-year-olds should have their shots separated out into five separate visits, though it wasn't clear whether he was talking about all the vaccines they receive or specific ones.

Public health experts have raised concerns that spacing out shots as Trump suggests can lead to an increased risk that children become infected with a vaccine-preventable disease before returning for another visit. (AP)

Congo says 2,000 people have died in its Ebola outbreak, fastest growing on record



BUNIA (CONGO), Aug 11: At least 2,000 people have died in Congo's Ebola outbreak, the fastest-growing on record, according to the latest data, as health authorities struggle to get help to remote localities due to rebel conflict, bad roads and work stoppages over payment issues.

Government data published overnight into Tuesday showed the outbreak has recorded a total of 4,381 confirmed cases, including 2,011 deaths. A total of 704 patients are in admission and isolation.

The outbreak was declared on May 15 but health authorities say sequencing showed it began months earlier, in February.

While it took about nine weeks for the outbreak to record the first 1,000 deaths, it's taken just around three weeks for the figure to double, an evidence that the health crisis is moving faster than efforts to track and manage it.

It's already the second-largest outbreak in history, only behind the 2014-2016 West Africa outbreak that recorded more than 28,000 cases including over 11,000 deaths.

The Ebola outbreak is unlike most previous ones because the rare Bundibugyo virus responsible for it has no approved vaccines or treatments. Clinical trials for those have begun in Ituri province, the epicentre of the outbreak, in eastern Congo.

Aid workers say the outbreak continues to outpace response that's been expanding across the five eastern provinces affected. Many health workers have gone on strike to protest lack of payment for their work since the outbreak was declared. And WHO has said most new cases are still being recorded outside of contacts being

monitored, showing that transmission remains out of the control of health workers.

Ebola can be caused by different types of virus. Although the type responsible for the 2014-2016 outbreak is considered the deadliest, government data shows this Bundibugyo outbreak has killed a higher percentage of people as care and support are not getting to patients quickly enough. Many cases are reporting symptoms late or not at all. The ongoing outbreak has so far had a case fatality rate of 45.9 per cent, more than the 39.6 per cent rate recorded in the 2014-2016 West Africa outbreak. (AP)

Former Syrian President Assad sentenced to death in absentia for war crimes

DAMASCUS, Aug 11: A Syrian court sentenced ousted Syrian President Bashar Assad along with his younger brother to death in absentia on Tuesday for crimes against humanity and war crimes during Syria's 14-year conflict that left about half a million people dead.

The sentences at the Fourth Criminal Court in Damascus are the first against Assad or members of his inner circle since the Assad family's five decades in power came to an end 20 months ago.

"Bashar Assad used state agencies to commit war crimes and crimes against humanity," said judge Fakhreddine al-Aryan during a court session that was aired live on state TV. Also sentenced to death was Assad's maternal cousin Atef Najib, who was convicted of overseeing a crackdown in the southern province of Daraa that led to the uprising and later the civil war. Al-Aryan said Najib can appeal.

Under tight security, Najib stood inside a cage wearing a prisoner's



uniform as the judge read the sentence. A crowd gathered outside the courthouse in central Damascus to hear the verdict.

"Today is the day of justice for all the wounded, martyrs, detainees and Syrians who were forced to leave their country," said attorney Adnan al-Masalmeh who represented families of Najib's victims. "Today marks a victory of right against injustice, a victory of the Syrian people against the ousted regime."

Assad and his brother Maher fled to Russia after the government's fall in

December 2024 and received political asylum. Syria's new rulers have asked Russia to hand the Assads over.

Najib, who was sanctioned by the US Department of the Treasury in April 2011, was later detained and is one of the highest-ranking security officials to be put on trial.

Najib is a former army brigadier general who was head of the Political Security Branch in Syria's southern Daraa province under Assad in 2011.

During his tenure, more than a dozen teenagers who scrawled anti-government graffiti on a school wall in Daraa were arrested and tortured. The case became a catalyst for mass protests against the repressive policies of Assad's security forces.

The protests were met by a brutal government crackdown that spiraled into a 14-year civil war that ended with Assad's ouster in a lightning rebel offensive. Some of Najib's victims were present at the courthouse including two who were teenagers in 2011 and expressed their opinions to The Associated Press. (AP)

Drone strike sparks massive blaze at Libya's Zawiya refinery

CAIRO, Aug 11: Firefighters in western Libya fought Tuesday to extinguish the remnants of a massive fire caused by a drone strike on an oil facility, and a car bomb killed a senior military officer in the country's east, in the latest attacks in the chaos-stricken North African nation.

The drone hit a gasoline tank at the Zawiya oil refinery in the Mediterranean town of Zawiya on Monday, about 47 kilometers (about 30 miles) west of capital Tripoli, the state-run National Oil Corporation said.

The attack ignited a massive blaze at gasoline-storage tank that burned through the night and was still burning as of Tuesday afternoon, according to the Civil Defence, a first responders' agency.

There were no reports of casualties, the health authorities said.

No group has claimed responsibility for a series of attacks on oil facilities in Zawiya, or the car bomb in the eastern city of Benghazi on Monday.

Footage aired by local media showed massive flames and fireballs erupting from the tank, with black and orange smoke rising in the sky as firefighters spray what appears to be foam or water in efforts to quench the

intense fire.

As they fought the flames, another drone hit close to a key oil tank nearby but did not cause casualties or damage, the company said.

The company said the tank, which held 4.5 million litres of fuel when it was hit, collapsed and declared a state of maximum emergency at the facility.

Two drones hit the town's power plant, with one damaging its firefighting system while the second landed close to the facility's main fuel storage, local media reported.

Monday's strikes were the latest in a series of drone attacks on oil infrastructure in Zawiya, which houses critical energy infrastructure including the country's largest oil refinery, an export terminal and a power plant.

The drone strikes come as Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan is set to arrive in Libya for a visit. He is due to visit both Tripoli and Benghazi.

Over the weekend, the oil company said drone strikes had hit a fuel tank and a desalination plant linked to the oil facilities in Zawiya. It said the tank was damaged.

The attacks come as tensions are rising be-

tween the government of western Libya and a warlord who controls the city of Zawiya.

Much of western Libya is ruled by local militias loosely allied to Prime Minister Abdul-Hamid Dbeibah's government in Tripoli.

Jalel Harchaoui, an analyst affiliated with the Royal United Services Institute in London, said warlord Mohamed Bahroun has been cornered by the government and his forces "are likely to resort to desperate measures."

Separately, a senior military officer with the forces of powerful commander Khalifa Hifter was killed in a car bomb Monday evening in the eastern city of Benghazi, authorities said.

Major General Fawzy al-Mansouri, director of the military intelligence of Hifter's self-styled Libyan National Army, was killed when an explosive-laden vehicle exploded into his car in the Sayyida Aisha neighbourhood in Benghazi, the LNA said.

The LNA is allied with one of Libya's two rival governments, which controls the country's eastern and southern parts.

The attacks underscored the fragility of security in the oil-rich country. (AP)

2 ex-Chinese military personnel arrested in South Korea for alleged espionage

SEOUL, Aug 11: Two former Chinese military servicemen were arrested in South Korea for alleged espionage, accused of acts including intercepting communications between fighter jets and ground control and collecting information on movements of US armaments, police said Tuesday.

Police said that one of the suspects, a Chinese national in his 60s, set up an interception device consisting of an software-defined radio receiver, an antenna and a laptop at a hotel near an air base jointly used by South Korean and US air forces in southern South Korea. Police said the man is accused of intercepting communications between fighter jets flown by South Korean and US pilots and air traffic controllers at the base several times since 2024.

Police said he previously served in the Chinese military but refused to disclose further details about his identity. The police statement said the man was arrested Monday for violating laws on aiding the enemy and protecting communication secrets.

Police said they were conducting a forensic examination of his laptop to find if he relayed any of the intercepted communications to Chinese authorities.

The man told investigators that it was his hobby to listen to communications between civilians planes and air traffic controllers and he wanted to listen to communications in-

volving fighter jets as well.

Police said they also arrested another Chinese man in his 40s on Monday on accusations of illegally collecting information from the US military headquarters near Seoul, including information on US-South Korean military drills, photos showing the movements of weapons at the headquarters, and personnel changes of top US military officers, according to police.

Police allege that he obtained some of the information from a South Korean woman working at the US command. Police say he gave her money in return for the information and they suspect the pair had a romantic relationship. The man, who runs a military supply store near the US command, argued during questioning that he sought the information believing it would help his business.

Police said the man also previously served in the Chinese military. Police said he violated laws on aiding the enemy and protecting military installations in South Korea.

Calls to the Chinese Embassy in Seoul were unanswered after business hours Tuesday.

The police announcement came a day after South Korean and US militaries said they would start large-scale annual exercises next week. The US stations about 28,500 troops in South Korea to help deter potential aggressions from North Korea. (AP)

'Spark of revolution' among Pakistan's youth over Imran Khan's jailing: Party leader

PESHAWAR, Aug 11: Public anger over the continued incarceration of former Pakistan prime minister Imran Khan could reach a point where even his call for reconciliation may fail to restore peace, a senior leader of Khan's party, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf, said on Tuesday.

Talking to reporters outside the Supreme Court building in Islamabad, Sohail Afridi, the chief minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, a province governed by Khan's party, said, "I can see a spark of revolution in the eyes of the youth, and no one will be able to control it."

Afridi's remarks came a day after he threatened countryside protests if Khan was not allowed to meet his party colleagues scheduled to visit him in jail this week.

The 73-year-old cricketer-turned-politician has been in Pakistan's Adala Jail since 2023, with several cases against him. Khan's party has repeatedly alleged that the authorities have denied him access to family members and party colleagues and have failed to provide adequate medical care for his health problems, including an eye condition. (AP)

China's rapidly expanding aircraft carrier fleet may be vulnerable to submarine attacks: Report

BEIJING, Aug 11: China is expanding its aircraft carrier fleet at a rapid pace to bolster its global naval presence but the massive warships may remain vulnerable to submarine attacks, according to a US think tank report.

A recent report from the Washington-based Centre for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) outlined a "cost-imposition" strategy that could help the US and its allies threaten China's carriers.

It included the use of land-based strike networks, long-range air strikes supported by satellites, cyber and electromagnetic attacks and drone swarms.

However, the fifth element of the strategy - submarine ambushes - could exploit one of the Chinese navy's key vulnerabilities, the Hong Kong-based South China Morning Post reported on Tuesday, citing the CSIS study.

Specifically, the report identified US attack submarines operating in the western Pacific as one of the potent threats to Chinese carrier groups, arguing that gaps in the navy's undersea detection and tracking capabilities could leave the high-value ships exposed.

Last November, China commissioned its third aircraft carrier, the Fujian, at a ceremony attended by President Xi Jinping. The Fujian is equipped with an electromagnetic aircraft launch system (EMALS), making it the world's second aircraft carrier to use electromagnetic catapults, after the US Navy's USS Gerald R Ford.

China's first carrier, the Liaoning, a



refit of a Soviet-era ship, was commissioned in 2012, followed by the indigenously built Shandong in 2019.

The Fujian is the largest of China's three carriers, with a full-load displacement of more than 80,000 tonnes. Fujian-based aircraft including the J-15T, J-35 and KJ-600 have successfully completed catapult-assisted take-off and arrested landing training on the carrier, according to China's Defence Ministry.

All three Chinese carriers - Liaoning, Shandong and Fujian - are conventionally powered. Analysts say that with tensions on the rise with the US, China may build more aircraft carriers to operate on various global maritime routes, including the Indian Ocean.

The CSIS report says submarines and other forces could be used to threaten Chinese navy carrier groups as they pass through strategic waterways.

Further out to sea, carrier-based aircraft could also be used to strike Chinese carriers, with satellites supporting surveillance and targeting, while attacks on sensors and communications could disrupt PLA operations.

Christopher Sharman, director of the

China Maritime Studies Institute at the US Naval War College, told the Post that the undersea vulnerability identified in the report "remains significant today", although it was "not a static weakness".

In recent years, the PLAN (People's Liberation Army Navy) has invested heavily in capabilities intended to improve its awareness of and ability to predict the undersea operating environment, Sharman said.

However, he added that important gaps remained, saying PLAN-affiliated authors acknowledge that China's meteorological and oceanographic capabilities still lag those of the US Navy.

"This comparative lack of knowledge about the undersea ocean battlespace remains an impediment to PLAN submarine and anti-submarine warfare operations, particularly beyond the first island chain," Sharman was quoted as saying by the Post.

Timothy Heath, head of defence research firm Perceptum, said anti-submarine warfare remained a challenge for China, particularly because US submarines are among the quietest in the world.

He also said Japanese intervention in any conflict over Taiwan would raise the stakes, because Japan could seek to target Chinese warships operating near its coast, according to the Post report.

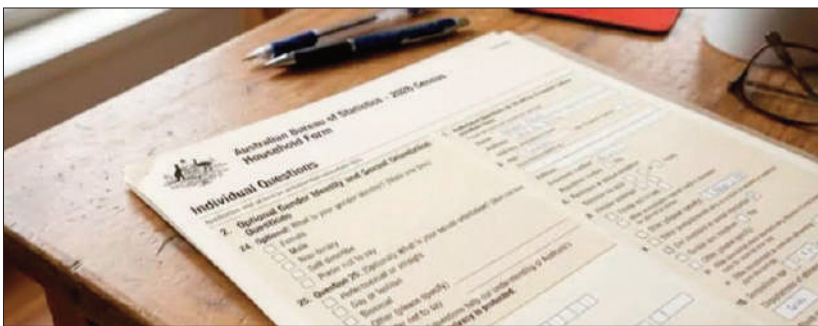
In such a scenario, carriers could be deployed in the western Pacific to provide air cover for naval forces seeking to delay or prevent third-party intervention in a Taiwan conflict. (AP)

'We do not want to open up divisive debates in the community now' Australia adds optional gender identity and sexual orientation questions to census

MELBOURNE, Aug 11: Australians for the first time can reveal their sexual orientation and whether they identify as a different gender than the one recorded at birth — contentious debut questions in the latest census that occurs every five years.

The 66-question census, held on Tuesday, Aug 11, is the first under a center-left Labor Party government since 2011. The current Labor government backflipped to allow the questions after having dropped them temporarily two years ago as "divisive." Both questions are open to members of households 16 years of age and older. The answer options for sexual orientation are straight, gay or lesbian, bisexual, don't know, prefer not to answer or a term of the respondent's choice that can be written in a designated blank space.

The options for the gender that the respondent currently identifies with that differs from that registered at birth are man, woman, nonbinary, prefer not to answer or another term that the respondent can provide. The gender and sexual orientation questions are optional, along with a question on religion that has been in-



cluded since the first census in 1911.

Labor had promised such questions about sexuality and gender would be included in the next census while campaigning ahead of the 2022 elections that brought the party to power after nine years out of government.

The Australian government determines the topics for each census. The Australian Bureau of Statistics decides the wording of questions. In 2024, the government decided against deviating from the 2021 census questions in the interests of main-

taining social cohesion.

"We do not want to open up divisive debates in the community now," Deputy Prime Minister Richard Marles said in August 2024. The government soon re-evaluated after almost a week of backlash from LGBTQ+ advocates and criticism from some Labor lawmakers.

Two days after Marles spoke, Prime Minister Anthony Albanese, a heterosexual who has marched in the annual Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras twice since he took office in 2022, confirmed in a radio interview

NO.KDB-415/2025-26/5683

NOTICE INVITING TENDER

Date 11/08/2026

Sealed tender affixing a non refundable court fee stamp of Rs. 8.25 (Rupees eight & paise twenty five) only with a validity period of 180 days, which will subsequently be converted and drawn up in the printed F-2 form are invited from the registered contractors of Class-I (A, B, C) & Class-II categories Assam P&RD and BTC, according to their eligibility for submitting tenders for the works under 15th FC (Untied) fund for the year 2025-26 as stated below. The tender will be received by the undersigned 2.00 PM of 07/09/2026 and will be opened on same day at 3.00 PM.

Sl. No.	Name of Work	Location	A.A. Amount (Rs. In lakh)	Cost of bid document	Amount of bid security	Time of completion
1	Const. of RCC Box culvert near Gaur Das house at No. 2 Kanupara	Kanupara	Rs. 8.84 L	0.03%	SC/ST= 1% OTH = 2%	3 months
2	Const. of RCC Box culvert at Pokalagi Boro village	Pokalagi	Rs. 8.84 L	0.03%	SC/ST= 1% OTH = 2%	3 months
3	Const. of RCC Box culvert at Pechadabri village	Pechadabri	Rs. 8.84 L	0.03%	SC/ST= 1% OTH = 2%	3 months
4	Const. of RCC Box culvert at Ranipur Boro Basti	Ranipur Boro Basti	Rs. 8.84 L	0.03%	SC/ST= 1% OTH = 2%	3 months
5	Const. of RCC Box culvert at No. 1 Gurufela FV	Gurufela	Rs. 8.84 L	0.03%	SC/ST= 1% OTH = 2%	3 months

Details NIT may be seen in all working days during office hours in the office of the undersigned. Tender will be issued to the contractors or their authorized agent from 12/08/2026 to 07/09/2026 in the office of the undersigned on payment in the form of demand draft/Bankers Cheque from any Nationalized Bank duly pledged in favour of the BDO, Kachugaon Dev. Block, Gurufela.

IPR(BTC)/C/2026-27/1158

Sd/- Block Development Officer,
Kachugaon Dev. Block, Gurufela

'In a democracy, prestige is enhanced through debate, not by running away'

'Don't run away Rahul': Yogi, deputy CM target Congress ahead of Shah's reply on students' protest

LUCKNOW, Aug 11: Criticising the opposition for repeated disruptions in Parliament, Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath and his deputy Keshav Prasad Maurya on Tuesday asked Rahul Gandhi and others to patiently listen to Union Home Minister Amit Shah's reply in the Lok Sabha on the Delhi students' protest and not run away.

Both leaders used the hashtag #Rahul_Bhagna_Nahi (Rahul don't run away) in their posts on X to target the Lok Sabha's leader of opposition.

Adityanath said, "Democracy grants the freedom to ask questions, but it also fixes the responsibility to listen to the answers. Union Home and Cooperation Minister @AmitShah ji is fully prepared to present his stand in detail in the House regarding issues concerning students."

"The Congress and the entire



opposition are expected to face the facts, uphold the dignity of the House, and listen to the reply in full. In a democracy, prestige is enhanced through debate, not by running away," he added.

Maurya accused the Congress of making baseless claims over the police action on protesters, and misleading the public.

"Weaving a web of lies, leveling baseless allegations, and fleeing the scene the moment the truth comes to light -- this is the reality

of the politics of Rahul Gandhi and the Congress. They have one principle - tell lies, create a ruckus, and when the Union Home and Cooperation Minister @amitshah ji responds with facts, walk out of Parliament," he said.

"Time is a witness that whenever the black deeds of the Congress party have been exposed backed by facts, arguments, and evidence, the entire party has sought an escape route rather than offering a response. Generating baseless noise has become their nature," he added.

Further targeting the Congress, he said, "Those who have looted the country and misled the public for generations lack the moral courage to face arguments."

Earlier on Monday, Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju announced that the government was ready for a debate on the students' agitation and the police ac-

tion, adding that Shah will be giving his reply on the issue.

Rijiju's announcement came shortly after a meeting of the Business Advisory Committee (BAC) of the Lok Sabha where the agenda of the House for the next three days was discussed with members from different political parties.

There has been a persistent demand from the opposition for a statement from the home minister on the police action against students protesting in the city last month.

Shah has not been seen in the House in the ongoing Monsoon session even though he has been regularly coming to Parliament House complex.

Rijiju also asked the opposition not to create any disturbance and resort to sloganeering during the discussion in the House while Shah's reply in the Lower House. (PTI)

Kabir criticised Hindu fundamentalism, yet Hindus worshipped him: Yogi Adityanath

SANT KABIR NAGAR (UP), Aug 11: Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Tuesday said Hindus revered Sant Kabir Das despite his criticism of Hindu orthodoxy, while Muslims did not, asserting that his teachings transcended religious divisions. Adityanath made the remarks here after inaugurating and laying the foundation stones of 201 development projects worth more than ₹ 684 crore.

"Sant Kabir was from the Nirgun tradition. He spoke as much against Hindu orthodoxy, as he did against Islamic fundamentalism. But Hindus worshipped him, while Muslims would not even touch him. This is the difference," the chief minister said in his address.

He said Sant Kabir detested hypocrisy and caste divisions.

"Sant Kabir Das ji launched a fight against hypocrisy and came here to Maghar. People believed that dying in Maghar would lead one to hell, but he said it depends on a person's deeds whether he attains heaven or hell after death," he said. (PTI)

Suwendu Adhikari urges police to open 2024 Keshpur file

KESHPUR (WEST BENGAL), Aug 11: West Bengal Chief Minister Suwendu Adhikari on Tuesday asked the Superintendent of Police of Paschim Medinipur district to prosecute those involved in framing BJP workers and functionaries in false cases during the reign of the TMC.

Adhikari said the Keshpur file regarding a 2024 incident when he was stopped while campaigning for the party should also be opened and those behind such an act be prosecuted as per law.

"I have asked the SP to withdraw all cases levelled against BJP functionaries jailed for months as well," he said, while speaking at a function to commemorate the death anniversary of revolutionary freedom fighter Khudiram Bose.

"As I speak, I can see many of those having faced brutalities for working on behalf of the BJP in past years sitting in the front row. Don't worry. I am asking the SP to prosecute those behind framing false cases against you and beating you. I am hereby asking the SP to open the file so that those behind such attacks are punished and identified," he said.

"I am asking the SP to reopen the file so that those who staged agitation against me during a democratic meeting of our party during the 2024 Lok Sabha polls are identified and action taken against them," the CM said.

Adhikari said Keshpur, a politically volatile area known for bombs and firings, was once known for one-party rule and did not get the fruits of development because of the cut money culture adopted during the rule of the TMC government.

Freedom fighters from undivided Midnapore, which was the soil of luminaries like Khudiram Bose and Matangini Hazra, did not receive adequate recognition during the Left Front and TMC rule.

He said those who want to foment trouble must desist from their design. Adhikari said his government would ensure that the contributions of freedom fighters such as Khudiram Bose and Matangini Hazra receive their due recognition.

He alleged that freedom fighters from the area did not receive adequate recognition during the Left Front and TMC rule and said the history of their sacrifices needed to be brought before the younger generation. We could not highlight how Khudiram had to die or how

Matangini Hazra was killed while holding the national tricolour," he said. Adhikari also announced plans to develop Khudiram Bose's ancestral home and establish a gallery dedicated to the revolutionary.

He said a light and sound laser show depicting Khudiram Bose's life and contribution would also be introduced.

"I received a phone call from Union Home Minister Amit Shah regarding the development of Khudiram Bose's ancestral house. The Union Home Minister wants to accord due respect to Khudiram Bose and other revolutionaries," he said. The chief minister said the district magistrate would float a tender for the proposed gallery within the next three days and that work was expected to begin after the monsoon.

Adhikari said adequate funds would be allocated for the project and researchers and historians would be given an opportunity to contribute to the gallery's content.

"It will not be only about changing the face of the place, but also its content and its history," Adhikari said.

Taking a dig at what he described as selective treatment of history, the chief minister said people had extensively read about industrialist Ratan Tata being forced to leave Singur, but the story and sacrifice of Khudiram Bose and Hazra had not received comparable attention.

"We have read about Tata being driven out of Singur, but not enough about Khudiram Bose and Matangini Hazra, who was the daughter of Medinipur, now Purba Medinipur," he said.

Adhikari also sought to project Keshpur as a region that could shed its long-standing association with political violence.

"Keshpur's image was associated with bombs and guns at one time. It was associated with political violence in earlier regimes. We must remind people about Keshpur's association with Khudiram and other great souls, he said, adding that in the present change of guard, those who want to foment trouble should keep away.

He said a sum of ₹ 5 crore has been allocated for Mohbani Unnayan Parishad in the region. Bose, one of the youngest revolutionaries of India's freedom movement, was executed by the British in 1908 at the age of 18. (PTI)

AAP MLAs protest with rice bags in Delhi Assembly premises to flag scam



NEW DELHI, Aug 11: The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) MLAs protested with rice bags in the Delhi Assembly premises on the third day of the Monsoon Session on Tuesday, alleging that the BJP government has sold subsidised rice, intended for the city's poor, to a private company in Haryana.

AAP's Delhi unit president Saurabh Bharadwaj alleged that the government has "black-marketed" rice meant for the city's poor to the private company.

"There have been very serious allegations against Manjinder Sirsa's department, which recom-

mended the Food Corporation of India (FCI) to give subsidised rice to a North-East corporation in Assam. The subsidised rice, which was only meant to be distributed to Delhi's poor and migrant population, was instead black-marketed to a private company in Haryana," Bharadwaj said on X.

On Sunday, Food and Supplies minister Manjinder Sirsa threatened defamation action against Bharadwaj and other AAP leaders, giving them 24 hours to withdraw their allegations and issue a public apology, failing which he said he

would initiate appropriate legal proceedings against them.

On Tuesday, the MLAs squatted on the floor in front of Leader of Opposition Atishi's office. They placed large sacks of rice before them, and raised slogans such as "Garib ka chawal kahan gaya?" (Where did the rice of the poor go?)

"Crores of rupees were earned as illegal commission," Bharadwaj said in the X post, adding that AAP MLAs have demanded the resignation of Food and Civil Supplies Minister Sirsa.

Earlier, Bharadwaj had said that the Rekha Gupta government and an Assam-based corporation had made a formal request to the FCI for subsidised rice to be distributed among the poor and needy in the national capital.

Under the agreement, around 31,000 metric tonnes of rice per week were sought. However, the rice did not reach the intended beneficiaries; it was subsequently sold to a private company in Haryana, he claimed. (PTI)

Eight protesting AAP MLAs marshalled out of Delhi Assembly

NEW DELHI, Aug 11: Eight Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) MLAs were marshalled out of the Delhi Assembly on Tuesday by Speaker Vijendra Gupta after they raised slogans and disrupted proceedings demanding the resignation of Food Minister Manjinder Singh Sirsa.

AAP had been protesting against Sirsa since the start of the session alleging a rice scam by the Delhi government. Sirsa has denied the charge.

The MLAs sent out of the House were -- Sanjeev Jha, Jamail Singh, Kuldeep Kumar, Som Dutt, Ajay Dutt, Virendra Kadyan, Surinder Kumar and Chaudhary Zubair Ahmed. Soon after the House resumed proceedings after a lunch break, AAP members started raising slogans holding placards demanding Sirsa's resignation.

"This will not be tolerated. This is very irresponsible behaviour of the Opposition. They have tried to disrupt the session continuously over the past three days," Gupta said while directing the marshals to take the AAP MLAs out.

PWD Minister Parvesh Sahib Singh claimed that AAP MLA Kuldeep Kumar "threw something towards the officials present".

"This is not acceptable behaviour and the marshals should throw them out immediately," Singh said.

Sirsa threatened to file a defamation case against AAP.

"We did not buy or sell any rice. We had a representation from a company. I only wrote 'maybe considered as per rules'. There is no real issue left with the Opposition. I will take them to court in a defamation matter," the minister said inside the House.

BJP MLA Ajay Mahawar requested Speaker Gupta to ban Kumar from the Assembly for an entire year for his conduct. (PTI)



Delhi Assembly passes Bill for time bound service delivery; officers liable to pay penalty on delay

NEW DELHI, Aug 11: Designated officers of the Delhi government will pay penalties of ₹ 249 per day, upto a total of ₹ 5,000, if found responsible for delaying or unreasonably rejecting applications for time-bound delivery of services, according to the Delhi (Right of Citizen to Time Bound and Ease of Delivery of Services) Bill, 2026, passed by the Assembly on Tuesday.

Under the legislation, time-bound delivery of services will be treated as a legal right of the people. The government will constitute a Delhi Right to Service Commission, while senior officers will be deputed as citizen grievance redressal authority at department level, to deal with complaints of the people.

In case of breach of stipulated timelines for delivery of various services, an appeal will be automatically lodged before the authority. In case of rejection of an application, the applicant will require to file an online appeal before the authority concerned.

If the authority finds that the default in providing a service is wrong and unreasonable, it will direct the designated officer to provide it within seven days. The appeals will be decided by the authority within 30 days.

The authority will also issue a show cause notice to the designated officer

seeking his reply why a penalty should not be imposed against him.

The designated officer will submit his reply within seven days and if it is found "unsatisfactory", the authority may through an order, impose a penalty against him. No penalty will be imposed on any designated officer without giving them a reasonable opportunity of being heard. The penalty will be recovered from the salary of the designated officer, according to the legislation. The penalty amount will be ₹ 250 per day subject to a maximum of ₹ 5,000.

In case the authority itself fails to follow the stipulated timeline in dealing with the appeals, the applicant may appeal before the Delhi Right to Service Commission. The Commission may confirm, modify or set aside the orders passed by the Authority. The order of the Commission will be final and binding.

The Public Grievance Commission will discharge the functions of the Right to Service Commission till it is set up by the government.

It will have a chairman and three members. Implementation of the time bound delivery of service Act will be duty of the Commission. It will also be authorised to penalise on designated officer or any other officials involved in the process. The Bill passed by the As-

sembly will replace the Delhi (Right of Citizen to Time Bound Delivery of Services) Act, 2011.

It was found that the Act was inadequate to enforce stipulated timelines due to absence of effective monitoring and enforcement mechanisms.

The new legislation introduces a comprehensive mechanism of fixing responsibility of government officials, automatic escalation mechanism and provides for constitution of a Right to Service Commission. Delhi IT minister Pankaj Singh replying to a discussion on the legislation in the Assembly, that its objective is to ensure that citizen do not have to repeatedly visit government offices to access services.

During the discussion, ruling BJP MLAs lauded the Bill, saying it will make governance more accountable and citizen-centric. BJP MLA Ajay Mahawar said that the Bill stipulated delivery of several services within three days and the penalty for violations by officials were raised from ₹ 10 per day to 250 per day.

Opposition AAP MLA Anil Jha said that the role of agencies like Delhi Development Authority (DDA) and Delhi Police that do not come under jurisdiction of Delhi government should also be specifically categories in the Bill. (PTI)

Mayawati urges Gen Z to stay away from BJP-Cong, says none serious about youth issues

LUCKNOW, Aug 11: BSP supremo Mayawati on Tuesday appealed to students and Gen Z to stay away from the "conspiracies" of both the ruling and opposition camps, accusing the BJP and Congress of trying to "hijack" youth protests for their own political interests.

Addressing select media here, the former Uttar Pradesh chief minister said students and young people across the country were deeply concerned about their problems and the BSP remained "serious and sensitive" towards addressing them. Mayawati claimed neither BJP nor Congress were serious about addressing issues of youth.

She alleged that the recent student and youth protest at Delhi's Jantar Mantar was first launched by what she described as the "Cockroach Janata Party" (CGP), but was subsequently "hijacked" by the Congress and its allies. She said a similar situation was emerging in Ranchi, where students and youths were protesting over their issues but was later "hijacked" by BJP and its allies.

"Delhi's Jantar Mantar student and youth movement and now the movement in Ranchi... we are seeing more politics in their garb," Mayawati said, alleging that neither the ruling nor opposition parties were showing seriousness towards resolving the problems of the youth.

She appealed to Gen Z to "stay away from the conspiracies of the ruling and opposition



parties" and use them cautiously to get their issues resolved instead of allowing political parties to exploit their protests for electoral gains. Mayawati also slammed the ruling BJP over the reservation system, accusing it of weakening quota provisions that were brought in by her during the BSP regime.

"We are not against the private sector, but reservation should be available in the private sector in the same way as it is available in government jobs," she said.

She alleged that poor, unemployed and disadvantaged sections were being pushed further behind while benefits were accruing to the rich. Mayawati also claimed that during her four terms as Uttar Pradesh chief minister, her government had not discriminated against any section and had worked on the principle of "Sarvajan Hitay, Sarvajan Sukhay" (welfare and happiness of all). (PTI)

Goa BJP accuses Cong of 'double standards' on Jharkhand protest, seeks Rahul's apology

PANAJI, Aug 11: Goa BJP leaders on Tuesday demanded an apology from Rahul Gandhi over his "silence" on ongoing protests in Ranchi and accused the Congress of adopting "double standards" on issues concerning the youth.

Addressing a press conference here, BJP MLA and state minister Mauvin Godinho alleged that students in Jharkhand were subjected to atrocities and police action despite protesting over their demands.

"This exposes the double standards of the Congress party. When students protested at Jantar Mantar, the Congress was at the forefront, labelling the BJP government anti-student. The party claimed it had the highest regard for the sentiments of the youth," Godinho said.

He alleged that the Congress maintained silence on the protests in Jharkhand despite being in power in the eastern state.

"Students were stopped in Jharkhand by putting up barbed wires. They still managed to cross over them. The government does not want to listen to the voice of the students," he said. (PTI)

Parl panel 'disheartened' over scholarship delays, seeks strict measures

NEW DELHI, Aug 11: A parliamentary panel has said it felt "disheartened" over the persistent issue of delay in the disbursement of scholarships that has left students at the mercy of states and battled for strict measures for the completion of the process within the prescribed time period.

The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Social Justice and Empowerment, headed by BJP MP P C Mohan, in a report said that students continued to face delays because some states and union territories take months, and in some cases up to a year, to complete verification.

It was the panel's 21st report on action taken by the government on its recommendations on the ministry's Demands for Grants for 2026-27.

Observing the delay in the disbursement of scholarships to students, the Committee had recommended that the Department of Social Jus-



tice and Empowerment take concrete measures to ensure that scholarships are disbursed within the same academic year in which they fall due, the report said.

The committee noted that the department has again given the routine reply that the National Scholarship Portal (NSP) opens the portal in June for inviting applications from eligible applicants from states/UTs.

In its action taken reply, the ministry said while most states/UTs complete the verification process within the stipulated time frame, some take additional time, which at times varies from a few months

to a year in some cases, to finalise the verification process and push the state share paid data to NSP.

"This leads to delays in processing and disbursement of central share," the department said.

The department said that over the years, most states/UTs have aligned with the prescribed timelines. However, in certain states, the processes of verification, validation and certification continue to take additional time.

It said if all states/UTs align with the advanced timelines of completing the process by the end of the third quarter and adhere to the prescribed schedule, the overall process of application, verification and disbursement can be further streamlined, minimising delays and reducing spill-over cases.

The committee, however, said it had expected the Department to "find some solution to the persistent problem" but was "disheartened with the reply". (PTI)

Be curious, choose science: ICMR chief to students

'Every discovery begins with a question, and every innovation begins with the courage to explore a new possibility'

NEW DELHI, Aug 11: Every discovery begins with a question and every innovation with the courage to explore a new possibility, ICMR Director General Dr Rajiv Bahl said on Tuesday as he urged students to be curious and choose science.

Bahl was speaking at the Department of Health Research (DHR) and the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) began the second edition of ICMR-SHINE (Science and Health Innovation for NextGen Explorers), opening their labs to school students as part of a nationwide two-day programme.

Inspired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi's call to students to "spend one day as a scientist", the programme is being held on August 11 and 12 at 83 locations, in-

cluding ICMR institutes, Model Rural Health Research Units and affiliated field units.

From Keylong in Himachal Pradesh, at an altitude of nearly 10,000 feet, to Kerala in the south, and from Diu in the west to Nagaland in the east, the programme will reach children across the country.

"To all the young students joining us today, I encourage you to be curious, ask questions and never be afraid to wonder why. Every discovery begins with a question, and every innovation begins with the courage to explore a new possibility."

"I hope your experience at SHINE gives you a glimpse of the exciting world of health research and inspires you to consider science not only as something you



study, but as a career through which you can make a meaningful difference to people's lives," Dr Bahl, who is also DHR secretary, said.

Dr Bahl also inaugurated an exhibition showcasing ICMR's research and innovations.

Over two days of the programme, students from classes 9-12 from government and private

schools will step into the world of health research by participating in guided lab tours, research exhibitions, poster walks, video presentations, and live demonstrations of scientific work.

On the first day of the event, ICMR launched the official SHINE website (shine.icmr.org.in), a platform hosting resources, updates, and opportunities for students interested in health research.

ICMR also announced a nationwide school competition inviting students to frame their own research questions and propose potential solutions to real-world public health challenges.

Around 30,000 students are expected to take part in this next phase of the initiative, officials said. (PTI)

US officials claimed Artan had connections to terror organisations, though without providing proof

Super Cup: PSG vs Aston Villa, UEFA vs FIFA and the Somali ref barred from the World Cup

LONDON, Aug 11: Barely three weeks after the World Cup final, the first trophy of the new European soccer season is up for grabs in the UEFA Super Cup between Paris Saint-Germain and Aston Villa in Salzburg on Wednesday.

The annual match between the most recent winners of the Champions League and Europa League also offers another chance for more grandstanding by UEFA at the expense of FIFA at a time of a growing disconnect between the two powerful soccer governing bodies in light of the recent conduct of Gianni Infantino.

That's because refereeing the game will be Omar Artan, the Somali referee who was barred by the United States from officiating at the World Cup days before the start of the tournament because of vetting concerns. US officials claimed Artan had connections to terror organizations, though without providing proof.

UEFA responded by picking Artan — a referee judged the best in Africa last season — to take charge of the Super Cup, a move that was widely celebrated in the soccer community and also was regarded as a clever political ploy by the European association.

The disharmony between UEFA and FIFA has increased since, with UEFA leading the campaign to



oust Infantino from the FIFA presidency over his recent — aborted — plan to sell an interest in the World Cup.

And so, the referee taking charge of the match is proving to be as interesting as the players involved, as PSG looks to become the second team in the modern era to retain the Super Cup, after Real Madrid (2016 and 2017).

PSG beat Tottenham in a penalty shootout in last year's match.

PSG's World Cup stars return to pre-season training in scattered order over the summer, largely depending on how long they played at the World Cup — or not at all in one

noteworthy case.

Ballon d'Or winner Ousmane Dembélé, who stood out for France with six goals and two assists, returned on Monday along with international teammates Désiré Doué and Bradley Barcola. They were joined by Spain's World Cup-winning midfielder Fabián Ruiz, whose clinical performance was key to the semifinal victory against France.

Star winger Khvicha Kvaratskhelia didn't play at the tournament because Georgia did not qualify, and has been back training for considerably longer. He looks certain to start in his favored position on the left flank,

with new signing Maghnes Aklouché possibly on the right wing. Aklouché's arrival from Monaco could coincide with Barcola's departure, with the fleet-footed winger — who scored three goals at the World Cup — heavily linked with a move to Premier League giant Liverpool.

Coach Luis Enrique's team may also feature former Villa player Lucas Digne.

Back to the future

Villa sold Digne to PSG on Sunday for a reported fee of 10 million euros (\$11.6 million), returning the 33-year-old left back to one of his first clubs.

Digne was among the first signings when PSG began its new era after being bought by Qatari investors QSI.

He was born in the Paris suburbs and joined PSG in 2013 from Lille. He then represented Roma and Barcelona before spending eight years in the Premier League with Everton and Villa, where he played 182 games in total and was one of coach Unai Emery's most consistent players.

Emery has lost key Villa midfielders

There'll be a different look to Villa at the start of its fourth full season under Emery, a former PSG coach.

Departing over the summer

were key midfielders Morgan Rogers to Chelsea and Youri Tielemans to Manchester United, along with Digne.

Among the new signings are Swiss World Cup star Johan Manzambi and Brazilian midfielder Joao Gomes, who has joined from relegated Wolverhampton. Manzambi is missing because of a knee injury.

Villa won the Europa League by beating Freiburg 3-0 and in the final will be in the Champions League for the second time under Emery.

Artan's very challenging time

Artan, who oversaw the African Champions League final in 2025, is the first non-European to take charge of the Super Cup and said the honor comes after a "very tough period".

"A lot of people have sympathy for me," he told UEFA, "because when someone has been working a lot of years and is supposed to do something, and then can't do it, it's very challenging. I really appreciate the support I received throughout the world, though. I'm so grateful."

Artan said he had been undertaking lots of research on PSG and Villa for his first match in Europe.

"The standard in Europe is fantastic and the football they play is very, very good," he said. (AP)

World Cup: Jugraj sees his reflection in Harmanpreet, calls him 'trump card'



NEW DELHI, Aug 11: Former India drag-flicker Jugraj Singh sees shades of his own aggressive game in Harmanpreet Singh, terming him "trump card" at the FIH World Cup, beginning this week.

A product of the Surjit Hockey Academy like Harmanpreet, Jugraj said the India captain's aggressive approach often reminds him of his own playing days.

"His style is exactly like mine. His playing style and aggression remind me of myself. I see my reflection in him," Jugraj said.

"I even tell him, 'You are playing,' and I feel like I am on the field."

Jugraj, whose promising international career was cut short by a car accident in 2003, rates Harmanpreet among the world's top three drag-flickers and feels the India captain has developed into a player the team can rely on in crucial moments.

"Harmanpreet is currently one of the top three drag-flickers in the world. He has been playing brilliantly since the Tokyo Olympics. A player who consistently performs well when the team needs him is a 'trump card', and I think that player will be Harmanpreet," Jugraj told PTI in an interview.

"He has also worked hard on his fitness," he added.

Jugraj, 43, was the star of India's title-winning campaign at the 2001 Junior World Cup in Hobart and was regarded as one of the finest drag-flickers of his generation, alongside Pakistan's Sohail Abbas and Germany's Florian Kunz.

His career, however, came to an abrupt end following a car accident near Jalandhar in 2003.

Jugraj has remained closely

associated with Harmanpreet's game, speaking to him after tournaments and national camps and sharing observations on his performance.

"From outside, I am able to note a lot of things and guide him. Of course, the coaching staff must be doing this too, but I have worked with Harman for a long time," he said.

Jugraj, currently posted as SP (Gurdaspur), believes video analysis can help drag-flickers identify technical details that may not be apparent during live action.

"When we watch in slow motion on TV, we can see the movements of the rushers and goalkeepers. If you share all these things with the player, he benefits. He also insists that I tell him about his shortcomings," he said.

He feels Harmanpreet's willingness to keep learning despite his achievements is among his biggest strengths.

"It is also a special quality of his that he is always eager to learn and seek guidance. Even after winning two Olympic medals, including one under his captaincy, he remains grounded. He is one-in-a-generation player," he said.

Jugraj, however, cautioned that success at the World Cup will require more than a potent drag-flick. "In today's hockey, it is not just about being a drag-flicker. What matters is your skill, how much you are able to assist in scoring goals and how you coordinate with other players," he said.

"Hockey is a team sport, so teammates also have to fully support you. The team's bonding looks strong this time." (PTI)

East Bengal face Al Arabi test in AFC Champions League Two qualifier

KOLKATA, Aug 11: Reigning Indian Super League champions East Bengal face their biggest test of the new season when they take on Kuwaiti league runners-up Al Arabi SC in a one-off AFC Champions League Two preliminary-stage knock-out fixture here on Wednesday, with a place in the group stage at stake.

It will be a single-leg qualifier in the West Region, with FC Goa facing Turkmenistan outfit FK Arkadag away in the other preliminary-stage tie on Wednesday.

The winners of the two matches will join Bahrain's Al-Khaldiya and Oman's Al-Nahda in Pot 4 for the group-stage draw, which will be held in Kuala Lumpur on August 18.

The West Region group stage will comprise 16 teams split across four pots, while the East Region will have another 16 teams in four pots, with the draw determining the group-stage fixtures.

For East Bengal, who endured a 0-1 loss to arch-rivals Mohun Bagan in the Durand Cup opener, the continental challenge comes after the euphoria of a historic ISL triumph has subsided.

The Red-and-Gold Brigade ended a 22-year wait for a National top-flight title when they beat Inter Kashi 2-1 in the ISL 2025-26 final at the Kishore Bharati Krirangan on May 21.

It was their first ISL title since making their debut in the competition in 2020-21 and their first National League crown since the 2003-04 season, when the top tier was known as the National Football League.

But much water has flown under the Hooghly since that memorable night. The club have parted ways with sponsors Enami, while title-winning coach Oscar Bruzon has also left.

In his place is the vastly experienced Antonio Lopez Habas, who now faces an immediate continental examination with a squad still adjusting to a new regime.

Depleted foreign lineup
East Bengal will also be without an important defensive option.

Spanish centre-back Nacho Monsalve has suffered a knee injury and is set to miss the game, while Lalchhungnunga is suspended after his red card.

The available foreign contingent includes Spanish midfielder Dani Ramirez and Palestinian defensive midfielder Mohammed Rashid.

Australian midfielder Chris Ikonomidis has also been nursing a few niggles, leaving his availability for the starting XI uncertain.

"Injuries are not an excuse to me. It will be a tough fight for us, but the match will be 11 players versus 11 players. I believe in that," Habas said.

Nacho's absence leaves East Bengal without an experienced presence at the heart of the defence against an Al Arabi attack led by Palestinian striker Zaid Qunbar and Brazilian Lucas Shallon.

The responsibility will therefore fall heavily on Anwar Ali, T Boris Singh, Sandeep Mandi and Jay Gupta to hold their defensive shape against a side that finished second in the 2025-26 Kuwaiti Premier League.

Prabhsukhan Singh Gill is likely to be the man between the posts. His experience and ability to handle pressure could prove particularly important if the match remains undecided through 90 minutes and goes to a penalty shootout.

In a likely 4-2-3-1 setup of Habas, Mohammed Rashid and T Jeakson Singh could operate as the two deeper midfielders.

Their task will be to disrupt Al Arabi's sharp attacks while helping East Bengal transition quickly from defence to attack.

Further forward, Bipin Singh, Dani Ramirez and Rohit Danu are expected to provide the attacking thrust behind Edmund Lalrindika, who could lead the line.

The pace and creativity of the trio could trouble Al Arabi's defence, with Ramirez in particular expected to be one of East Bengal's main attacking weapons.

Al Arabi on the other hand possess enough quality to expose any defensive uncertainty. (PTI)

Virat's intensity inspires 5 others to stretch limits when fielding with him: T Dilip



NEW DELHI, Aug 11: Former India fielding coach T Dilip says Virat Kohli's relentless intensity has a contagious effect on the team and pushes at least five other players to "stretch their limits" whenever they share the ground with him.

Dilip, whose nearly five-year stint with the Indian team ended after the recent tour of England, also lauded Kohli's ability to maintain the same intensity in training and matches as one of the biggest influences on India's fielding standards.

Gurnoor could be India's X-Factor in Bumrah's absence: Maharoor

KOLKATA, Aug 11: Former Sri Lanka allrounder Farveez Maharoor feels rookie pacer Gurnoor Brar could be the 'X-Factor' in absence of Jasprit Bumrah and says he would be tempted to hand the 26-year-old his Test debut in the two-match series against Sri Lanka, beginning in Galle on Saturday.

Under pressure following home series defeat to South Africa, fifth-placed India will be without pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah when they resume Test action with a two-match tour of Sri Lanka.

Mohammed Siraj is expected to lead the pace attack but there is a speculation whether inexperienced Brar could make his Test debut replacing Prasidh Krishna who played in the last Test against Afghanistan.

"The ability to reverse-swing the ball, especially with the older ball, is something Bumrah brings, and that is going to be a massive miss for India," Maharoor replied to a PTI query in a virtual media interaction organised by Sony Sports Network.

"That is where I think they could lack some wicket-taking ability. Mohammed Siraj is a good bowler, with all due respect to him, but when you compare the two fast bowlers, there is a bit of a difference."

But at the same time, the former pace bowling all-rounder said he would be "tempted" to give a debut to Brar espe-

cially for the fact that the tall Punjab pacer's raw pace, bounce and aggressive approach especially the way he gave body blows to several Test-squad batters during the warm-up match.

"I really like Gurnoor Brar. I think he can be the X-factor. He has the bounce, the pace and the fighting spirit. He can be nasty," Maharoor said.

"If you watched the warm-up game, some of the deliveries he bowled to batters who are in the Test squad made them quite uneasy, and he even hit a couple of players on the body."

"If I were in the Indian think tank, I would be tempted to give Gurnoor a go. I know he has only played white-ball cricket for India, but he brings that X-factor. In short, burst spells, when you want to break a batter's rhythm, he can be a lethal weapon."

Tall Punjab pacer Brar was picked for the Test squad despite having only a handful of First-Class matches and limited IPL experience.

The 26-year-old Brar subsequently made his ODI debut against Afghanistan, and has picked up 11 wickets in six matches.

Brar also featured in India A's tour to Sri Lanka last month, picking up a 10-wicket haul in the first match at Galle.

Suthar as first spinner

Maharoor says India will miss the now retired Ravichandran Ashwin and the injured Washington Sundar, who is ruled out of the first Test as Sri Lankan pitches often produce bounce for spinners rather than just turn.

While the duo of Ravindra Jadeja and Kuldeep Yadav will be the first choice spinners there is a debate over the third spinner. (PTI)



Ingebrigtsen wins 5,000m gold at European championships, Hunt takes women's 100m

BIRMINGHAM, Aug 11: Jakob Ingebrigtsen showed plenty of kick on his comeback from injury by winning his fourth consecutive 5,000-meters title at the European championships Monday.

The two-time Olympic champion from Norway hadn't raced since having surgery early this year to clean up scar tissue on the protective sheath around his left Achilles tendon.

Down the stretch, Ingebrigtsen was in third place before accelerating in the final 50 meters to pass Florian Bremm of Germany and cross the line in 13 minutes, 15.29 seconds. Bremm was second followed by France's Etienne Daguino.

"Coming from the lowest of lows to be European champion again means the world to me," Ingebrigtsen said. "Not even I believed it could happen coming here. Only with 600 meters to go I knew

I would win.

"I am starting to feel more like myself," he added. "I doubted myself every day coming in to this and every minute leading up to the last lap today, but I'm always hoping to do my best. I've tried my best, and the last three weeks was very smooth."

The Norwegian's rivals could only marvel at his abilities. Daguino called him "a legend of our sport."

Bremm said he looked to both sides "and I thought, Oh yes I have it for sure," before Ingebrigtsen passed him.

"He proved he's faster than everyone else even after the injury," Bremm said.

Ingebrigtsen is not racing in the 1,500 meters in Birmingham. He's won both the 1,500 and 5,000 at the past three European championships.

The Achilles problem seemed to be a



factor in Ingebrigtsen's performance at last September's world championships in Tokyo, where he failed to advance out of the first round of the 1,500 and finished

10th in the 5,000 final.

Amy Hunt wins tight 100m Amy Hunt of Britain got just enough separation to win the women's 100 meters in 11 sec-

onds, edging Poland's Ewa Swoboda (11.02) and Belgium's Delphine Nkansa (11.06). Hunt's teammate Dina Asher-Smith (11.10), the defending champion, was fifth.

Hunt won silver in the 100 at the Commonwealth Games two weeks ago. She was also the silver medalist in 200 at the world championships last September.

Three-peat for Schilder in women's shot put Netherlands star Jessica Schilder made it three in a row in the shot put, taking gold with a throw of 20.73 meters at Alexander Stadium.

The reigning world champion's teammate Jorinde van Klinken (19.64) won silver, and 2024 Olympic champion Yemisi Mabry (19.50) of Germany was third.

"I will never get tired of this feeling, I will never get bored of winning these

medals," Schilder said. "I had the confidence going into this that even though I was competing with an injured finger I was capable of doing well here. It was a little bit about battling and pushing through the pain today."

Schilder is the only woman this decade to surpass 21 meters when she threw 21.09 at the Shanghai Diamond League in May.

Schilder won gold at the past two European championships: 2024 in Rome and 2022 in Munich. She called this one the "easiest" of the three.

"There was quite a gap with the other competitors," she said.

For the men's shot put, Leonardo Fabbrì defended his title with a throw of 22.31, and his Italian teammate Zane Weir took silver. Sweden's Victor Petersson was third. (AP)