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Assam flood survivor's house in Sivasagar remains underwater for 20 days



SIVASAGAR, Aug 9: The damaged album of her wedding photos, the scattered pieces of the dinner set her late mother had picked for her, the toppled study tables of her daughters with their stuff lying around destroyed these were some of the sights that awaited Nasiman Zaman when she visited her home in Assam's Sivasagar town on Sunday, 20 days after she had "escaped" with her two minor girls.

With ankle-deep water still inside their house, she is worried about when they can return to live there; but more concerning for her is who will assure them that there will be no recurrence of the devastation when rains pour again.

"Our house is on the ancestral land of my husband's family. My brother-in-law's house is next to ours, and besides his is the house of their cousin. All our houses have been inundated, with some facing worse situation than us even," Zaman told PTI.

Water was four feet high and entering the ground floor of her two-storeyed house over the lower sill of the window when she left with her two minor daughters at around 6 pm on July 21, with the help of four workers she had engaged during the day to take some of the household goods to the under-construction upper floor.

"My husband, who is a government employee, was away on official work in Guwahati. Water started

entering the house around noon, and within six hours, it was nearly at my chest level. It was getting dark, power had been cut off, and we somehow managed to come out," Zaman recalled the horror.

Since then, they have been taking shelter at her husband's sister's residence in another part of the town. Besides them, her brother-in-law's family and a sister-in-law's family are also staying in the same house.

Among the stuff she could save were a few electronic gadgets, some clothes, ornaments and important documents, with the rest of the things, from sofa set to beds to almirahs to utensils, all damaged by the water.

"My husband and I went to see the house today, and found ankle-level water still. The study tables of our girls have been toppled and all their supplies destroyed. The album with our wedding memories has been destroyed. Every small thing that made the house our 'home' has been damaged," Zaman lamented. "We are about 15 people now living under one roof. We are among the luckier ones as we have our own family to stay with. But we have to go back to our own place. My daughters are scared to return, and so am I. What will happen when it rains again?" the homemaker questioned, her voice carrying fear and frustration.

She said water from the Nazira end, which has suffered some of the worst devastation in the flood, had entered their (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Fate of women's quota, delimitation, FCRA bills hangs in balance

Monsoon session heading for washout ● Congress vows to resist

NEW DELHI, Aug 9: With only four days remaining in the Monsoon session, the fate of major bills on women's reservation, delimitation and the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act (FCRA) remains uncertain amid the ongoing logjam in Parliament.

None of these bills figured in the list of business for the Lok Sabha for Monday. While a few opposition parties have shown signs of mellowing their stand on the women's quota and delimitation bills after the government's outreach, the Congress and most of its allies have vowed to oppose any move to bring in this legislation and the FCRA Amendment Bill.

The Constitution Amendment Bill that proposes 33 per cent reservation for women in 2029 and a redrawing of Lok Sabha constituencies to expand the House was defeated in

April due to failure to secure a two-thirds majority.

"If the central government thinks they can cook up and introduce the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Amendment Bill within these two or three days, they should keep that wish to themselves," AICC general secretary KC Venugopal said on Sunday.

Venugopal alleged that the proposed legislation targeted minorities and NGOs and said the opposition would not allow it to be passed.

"Even if Amit Shah comes to pass this anti-people bill, there is no doubt that he will have to face strong protests in Parliament. This bill is unconstitutional and anti-people. We will not allow such an anti-people and unconstitutional bill to be passed," Venugopal told reporters in Alappuzha, Kerala.

The FCRA bill seeks to signifi-



cantly tighten the oversight of foreign-funded organisations, proposing creation of a powerful new authority to seize and manage the assets of non-profits that lose their licence. It has met with strong opposition from Christian organisa-

tions apart from political parties.

Congress leader Jairam Ramesh on Sunday recalled how an unprecedented number of 146 MPs were suspended during the 2023 Winter Session of Parliament and multiple significant laws were passed in the

presence of minimal opposition, as he asserted that "history should not repeat itself".

With no let-up in the protests by the opposition parties, which are demanding Home Minister Amit Shah's statement on the police action against students agitating on the NEET paper leak issue, the Monsoon session of Parliament appears headed for a near-complete washout.

The monsoon session, which started on July 20, has seen repeated adjournments and virtually no business except the debate on the anti-paper leaks bill -- The Public Examination (Prevention of Unfair Means) Amendment Bill, 2026 -- which was passed by both Houses of Parliament. Three more bills were passed in the two Houses with little or no debate and two other bills were passed by the Lok Sabha, amid unrelenting (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

NEADS reaches over 45,000 flood-affected people in Upper Assam

HT Correspondent

JORHAT, Aug 9: The North-East Affected Area Development Society (NEADS), a Jorhat-based organisation, has reached more than 45,000 people through its ongoing humanitarian response across the flood-affected districts of Jorhat, Sivasagar, Charaideo, Golaghat and Dhemaji in Upper Assam.

Working directly with affected communities, NEADS emergency response teams, community volunteers and local partners are supporting families based on their immediate and emerging needs. The response focuses on safe water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), hygiene and dignity support, essential non-food items, emergency shelter, protection and early recovery assistance, with particular attention to vulnerable households.

"We have reached more than 45,000 people so far across five flood-affected districts. This is an important milestone, but the needs remain enormous. Our teams and volunteers will continue working with communities and partners to reach more families who require urgent humanitarian support," said Tirtha Prasad Saikia, director of NEADS.



As part of its response, NEADS has also undertaken multi-sectoral Post-Disaster Needs Assessments (PDNA) in severely affected areas of Sivasagar, Charaideo and Jorhat. The assessments are aimed at identifying the impact of the floods and priority needs related to shelter, WASH, health, food security and livelihoods, agriculture, livestock, essential household items and community infrastructure.

The organisation is also strengthening co-

ordination with humanitarian agencies, civil society organisations, government authorities, community groups and volunteers to improve information sharing, identify gaps and ensure that assistance reaches affected communities without duplication.

On August 6, NEADS hosted a Humanitarian Coordination Meeting on the Upper Assam Flood Response at its office in Jorhat under the aegis of the Inter-Agency Group (IAG), Assam.

Organisations engaged in the flood response participated in the meeting to share operational updates, discuss emerging needs and identify areas requiring greater collective action. With humanitarian needs continuing to remain high, NEADS has launched an Emergency Humanitarian Appeal seeking support from individuals, institutions, businesses, philanthropic organisations, donors and humanitarian partners. The appeal aims to strengthen emergency assistance while supporting affected families in their transition towards early recovery and livelihood restoration.

NEADS has set a broader target of reaching 100,000 flood-affected people across the five districts, (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Youth buried Cong; its downfall a lesson in power intoxication: Yogi

SIDDHARTHANAGAR (UP), Aug 9: Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath asserted on Sunday that the youth of the nation have effectively "buried" the Congress party, and emphasised that the downfall of Congress serves as a clear example of the dangers of power intoxication.

"One need only look at the downfall of the Congress party to understand how dangerous the intoxication of power can be. They forgot the revolutionaries, and today, the youth of the country have buried the Congress," Adityanath said.

The chief minister made these remarks while inaugurating and laying the foundation stone for 107 development projects valued at over Rs 311 crore in Siddharthnagar.

Coming down heavily on the Congress, Adityanath said, "Congress is moving on fully negative tracks. Why did India become a slave? There are two reasons: first, the contradictions among people, including humiliation based on caste, region, and language, which has led to the division of society. Second, there was a conspiracy by some within our own system. Those responsible for guiding the country misled society during that time."

He claimed that the sin of dividing society, which contributed to India becoming a slave, is the same mistake that Congress and the Samajwadi Party are repeating today by creating divisions along caste lines. "What is the result of their divisive politics? Has anyone ever asked them, considering that Congress has ruled the country and the state for the longest period, what they have done for the youth, farmers, the poor, and women during their tenure?" Adityanath questioned.

Adityanath stated that under the leadership of Prime Minister Modi, India has witnessed a transformation over the past 12 years. "There was a time when the world viewed India as a backward, poor, and weak nation, one that would not be able to withstand its adversaries. Today, that same India stands tall before its opponents, and the entire world is looking towards it," he said.

Crediting Modi for transforming the very India whose economy was once "devastated by Congress into the world's fourth-largest economy", Adityanath said that India, previously characterised by corruption and policy paralysis, has now emerged as a thriving startup ecosystem for its youth.

Mounting an attack on the Congress, Adityanath said, "The great revolutionaries who worked to liberate India, risking their lives, were labelled as dacoits by the British, and even after independence, the Congress referred to them as such. We are grateful to Prime Minister Modi ji, who honoured the revolutionaries by renaming the 'Kakori robbery' incident as the 'Kakori train action'."

He added, "Those who held power after independence became so intoxicated by it that they were busy naming institutions after their own families. They failed to recognise (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Bangladesh PM's meeting with Modi could resolve bilateral problems: Envoy

DHAKA, Aug 9: Bangladesh Prime Minister Tarique Rahman's meeting with his Indian counterpart Narendra Modi could resolve strains in bilateral ties, Indian High Commissioner in Dhaka Dinesh Trivedi said on Sunday.

His comments come amid speculations that Rahman, who has been invited by India to attend the BRICS summit in New Delhi, may skip the event scheduled for September 12-13.

Relations between India and Bangladesh have witnessed strain after former Bangladesh prime minister Sheikh Hasina virtually addressed the press on August 5 in New Delhi, where she said she is determined to return home in December to put the country on the "right track" by restoring democracy notwithstanding the risk of facing the threat of imprisonment or a death sentence.

Bangladesh expressed outrage over the media interaction, saying the event has hurt the sentiments of its people and could adversely affect efforts to improve bilateral ties with India.

However, India's Ministry of External Affairs on August 7 confirmed that it had no role in the media event concerning Hasina and it does not endorse anything said at the forum about the Bangladesh government.

"When two leaders meet, a lot of problems are solved. I have full confidence [about the problem resolution through the meeting]," said Trivedi at an event in a visa



application centre here.

"We all respect Bangladesh PM Tarique Rahman a lot. He is a people's person, and our PM is also a people's person," he said. "I am very confident," he added. "There is nothing negative. Things remain positive."

Trivedi, a senior leader of the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party, is the first politician to serve as the Indian high commissioner to Bangladesh, with the status of a union minister, who arrived (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Protest faced by Mamata reflects public anger, claims Suvendu

KOLKATA, Aug 9: West Bengal Chief Minister Suvendu Adhikari on Sunday claimed that the protest his predecessor Mamata Banerjee faced at Halisahar in North 24 Parganas district while going to visit the family of a deceased Trinamool Congress worker reflected "strong public anger".

Banerjee faced a group of protesters who surrounded her vehicle, raised "chor-chor" slogans and hurled mud and slippers at her car earlier in the day. She had gone to visit the family of a TMC worker who allegedly died in police custody.

Denying any involvement of the ruling BJP in the incident, Adhikari said, "You (Banerjee) have committed so much theft, you will have to hear people call you a thief."

He questioned why Banerjee did not visit the family of 'Abhaya' (fearless), a monk given to the RG Kar victim by the state's protesting millions, on the second anniversary of her death.

"You could have gone to Abhaya's house today. You could have gone to Ratna Debnath with a towel around your neck and apologised, saying you had made a mistake and asking for forgiveness. I believe she would have forgiven you," he said.

Ratna Debnath, the mother of 'Abhaya', is now a BJP MLA. Debnath had said she contested the elections to fight for justice, and had accused Banerjee of failing to save her daughter. Adhikari added, "You (Banerjee) killed Abhaya, went to destroy evidence and tried to buy her family with ₹ 10 lakh. If people threw mud at your car, what else would they throw? Flowers?"

He alleged Banerjee went to Halisahar without being invited by the deceased's family and said the kin was satisfied with the police and administration.

"Do not do this when the family is shutting the door. You are saying you will enter by force. Do it when people seek your help or intervention. This is the time for development. Do not go anywhere and do anything that disrupts normal life," Adhikari said.

Banerjee was forced to pass through a police cordon as the demonstration briefly turned the road into a charged political theatre, with the rival sides trading allegations of conspiracy, provocation and administrative failure.

"My car has been attacked with stones, shoes and mud. This is nothing but a conspiracy. I had informed the police (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

96 pc Indian travellers opt to adapt, not cancel amid disruptions: Report

'Travel is increasingly becoming more than just a break from routine'

NEW DELHI, Aug 9: As many as "96 per cent" of Indian travellers are willing to adapt their travel plans rather than cancel them when disruptions occur, highlighting their resilient approach to travel, according to a new report by online travel agency Booking.com.

The inaugural "Travel Happiness Index", based on a survey of over 10,000 travellers across 10 Asia-Pacific markets, found that travel continues to be a major source of happiness and wellbeing for Indians.

"As many as 96 per cent say they would rather adapt their travel plans than cancel when disruptions occur," reads the report.

"Among those adapting their plans, 28 per cent would opt for an alternative destination, 19 per cent would postpone their trip and an-



other 19 per cent would change the timing or duration," reads the report.

Similarly, as per the report, an overwhelming "99 per cent" per cent of Indian travellers associate travel

with positive emotions, while "90 per cent" say having a trip to look forward to lifts their mood.

About "82 per cent" consider travel essential to their overall hap-

piness and wellbeing, while happiness (55 per cent), relaxation (46 per cent) and excitement (43 per cent) were the top emotions associated with travel.

The study also found that Indian travellers are increasingly prioritising meaningful experiences over packed itineraries.

Around "78 per cent" prefer local food and meaningful experiences, while "68 per cent" said family trips are the most enjoyable.

Despite concerns over extreme weather and health and hygiene risks (33 per cent each), crime (29 per cent), inflation (28 per cent) and political instability (24 per cent), travel remains a priority. Around "70 per cent" state they feel more confident about their ability to afford travel than before. (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Meiteis must play role of 'big brother' to foster peace, development in Manipur: CM

IMPHAL, Aug 9: Manipur Chief Minister Y. Khemchand Singh on Sunday said Meiteis must play the role of a "big brother" among the state's communities to foster peace and development.

Addressing a Tiranga Rally, Singh said various communities had come together in the past to protect Manipur.

"In the history of Manipur, several communities came together to protect the land. During the devastating Burmese war in the 19th century, community leaders united to defeat and oust the enemies who had occupied the land," he said.

Referring to the 'Har Ghar Tiranga' campaign, Singh said the national flag reminded people that as Indian citizens, they must love the country like their own family.

"We must remember that the first speaker when Manipur became independent from British rule in 1947



was a man from the Paite tribe in Churachandpur," he said.

"I want to stress that if Meiteis, Kukis and Nagas think of themselves only, Manipur will never develop and progress," he added.

The chief minister said the Meitei community must take the role of a "big brother" and preserve the land

inherited from their ancestors.

"Also, I have suspicions that there are certain elements who have created mistrust among communities," he said.

Singh referred to his recent visit to Jiribam, where he interacted with members of the Kuki and Hmar communities, and said a bomb explosion subsequently took place at Tronglaobi in Bishnupur district, killing two children and critically injuring their mother.

"Please think if such a despicable act would be done by any government. It would have been done by those who are against the government. The public must know and realise that there are elements who want to destroy peace and must face them," he said.

Singh urged people to participate in the 'Har Ghar Tiranga' campaign and work towards making Manipur a developed state. (PTI)

India Energy Week moves to Kolkata, to be held from Jan 28-31 next year

NEW DELHI, Aug 9: India Energy Week (IEW) will move to Kolkata next year, a year after a ₹ 1,000-crore exhibition-cum-convention centre in Goa was inaugurated and touted as a permanent venue for the annual energy conference.

The next edition of India Energy Week (IEW) will be held from January 28 to 31, 2027, at the Biswa Bangla Convention Centre in New Town, Kolkata, according to an announcement on the event's LinkedIn page.

The move marks a shift for the annual conference, which was held at the newly built 4,000-seat convention centre at state-owned ONGC's Advanced Training Institute (ATI) in pristine south Goa.

The Goa venue was positioned as a permanent home for the flagship energy event when it was built by Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) at breakneck speed.

Kolkata's selection comes after the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) won the West Bengal assembly elections, taking power in the state for the first time.

"A landmark 5th edition of India Energy Week demands an unforgettable scale," IEW's LinkedIn page said. "The foundation is being laid. Stay tuned as the Convention Centre, New Town, Kolkata transforms for #IEW2027."

From industry leaders and policymakers to innovators, investors and technology pioneers, IEW continues to unite the voices shaping the global energy landscape, it said. "India Energy Week 2027 - Convention Centre, New Town, Kolkata



- 28-31 January 2027".

In a separate post, Oil Minister Hardeep Singh Puri said he reviewed preparations for IEW 2027 with officials.

IEW has become the world's largest energy gathering, he said, adding "2027 will be bigger: global CEOs, policymakers, investors and innovators converging on India."

"From clean energy transition to energy self-reliance, India isn't just joining the global energy conversation. We're setting its agenda," he said.

ONGC in a separate post said: "Kolkata, the energy is coming. India's biggest energy conversations are heading east as #IndiaEnergyWeek 2027 arrives in the City of Joy!"

The then West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee had inaugurated the Biswa Bangla Convention Centre in New Town, Kolkata on October 13, 2017.

Built to host major international

summits, business meets, and cultural events, the 18-storey facility features a massive 3,200-seater auditorium and advanced convention infrastructure including an exhibition centre, multiple seminar rooms, banquet spaces, multi-level car parking, and an adjoining 100-key hotel block.

In February 2024, a makeshift conference centre at the unused portion of the vast land at ONGC's IP-SHEM training facility in south Goa was used to host a second edition of IEW, as convention centres that could hold an event of that size elsewhere in the country were unavailable. And there germinated the idea of building a permanent facility to add another chapter to Goa's tourism.

Puri first spoke about it and weeks later ONGC began approving one of its largest non-core infrastructure projects in recent years. Approvals came in remarkable speed, and the centre was built at

neck-breaking speed.

Goa Chief Minister Pramod Sawant had in his Independence Day address on August 15, 2024, announced that the coastal state would serve as the permanent venue for the annual IEW.

The 2025 edition of IEW took place in Delhi, but the 2026 edition was hosted in the new facility in Goa. The convention and exhibition facility at the ATI campus was positioned as a venue for large conferences and marquee events, but no significant event has taken place at the site since IEW 2026.

The oval-shaped Convention Center has a seating capacity of around 4,000 persons at a time. It comprises a VVIP room, a VVIP green room, two VIP rooms, two VIP lounges, a CEO's meeting room, 5 CEO's translator rooms, bilateral rooms, office spaces, 3 lounges, a dining hall, dry pantries, elevators/escalators and a large foyer.

The 8,353 sq meters rectangular-shaped Management Development Facility (MDF) comprises of offices space, dining hall, conference rooms, 182 seater auditorium, VIP Lounge, office rooms, breakout rooms, 8 syndicate rooms, and 11 classrooms, while the 6,669 sq mt exhibition hall is designed to accommodate large trade fairs and expos.

The campus also features a floating jetty and a helipad with four parking points, providing connectivity by sea, air and road. The jetty connects the venue to all leading hotels and resorts on the 15-km beachline in South Goa. (PTI)

'Tejeswita' women's convention concludes in Guwahati

GUWAHATI, Aug 9: The two-day 'Tejeswita' Women's Convention, the first-ever women's convention organised in the history of the Purvottar Pradesh Marwari Sammelan (PPMS), concluded in Guwahati on Sunday with a focus on women's empowerment, leadership, awareness and personality development.

Hosted by the Marwari Sammelan Guwahati Mahila Sakha with the support of Manikchand Jewellers at Assam Maheshwari Bhawan, Chatribari, the convention brought together more than 300 women representing 20 women's branches from across the North Eastern Province.

The convention provided a platform for women to exchange experiences, discuss issues concerning women and society, and explore ways to strengthen leadership, confidence and personal development.

The inaugural session on Saturday was attended by Pawan Goenka, National President, Akhil Bharatiya Marwari Sammelan, as Chief Guest, along with National Organisation Minister Basant Surana and Guests of Honour Aruna Sarawagi and Khushboo Damani.

Addressing the gathering, Goenka said, "Marwari is not merely a name, but an identity of culture, values and self-respect." He called upon members of the community to pursue progress through hard work, honesty and commitment while preserving their cul-

tural values and traditions.

He also described 'Tejeswita' as a landmark initiative for providing women with a platform to showcase their capabilities and leadership.

The convention also featured discussions on mental health, social values and the importance of transforming aspirations into goals.

Aruna Sarawagi stressed the importance of mental well-being among women, while Khushboo Damani encouraged women to pursue their dreams with confidence and determination.

The second session on the opening day centred on women's empowerment, with Captain Meera Sid-dharth Dave of Surat as the keynote speaker.

Sharing her life experiences, Dave urged women to recognise their inner strength and potential.

She described women as embodiments of motherhood, leadership and achievement and interacted with participants during an engaging question-and-answer session.

The inaugural programme also featured the release of the convention's theme song and the book Subodh-hini.

A tribute was also paid to those who lost their lives in the devastating floods in the State.

The organisers said the successful conclusion of the first PPMS women's convention marked an important step towards creating sustained platforms for women to connect, learn, lead and contribute to society.

Range Rover SV Ultra brings pinnacle of luxury and technology to India

GUWAHATI, Aug 9: Range Rover has introduced the Range Rover SV Ultra in India, positioning it as the most luxurious and technologically advanced Range Rover yet, with exclusive design elements, advanced materials and world-first immersive audio technology.

The flagship SUV features SV Electrostatic Sound, described by the company as the world's first application of electrostatic audio technology in a vehicle.

The system uses 21 lightweight thin-film transducers integrated into the redesigned headrests, seatbacks and existing speaker locations to create a detailed, immersive audio experience for occupants.

The electrostatic speakers use an ultra-light membrane that is claimed to respond up to 1,000 times faster than conventional speakers. The technology also requires up to 90 per cent less power and reduces mass by up to 90 per cent compared with the conventional coil speakers they replace.

According to Range Rover, the speakers are manufactured without

rare earth elements and use 100 per cent upcycled and recyclable materials by mass.

The audio system works alongside the Body and Soul Seats (BASS) and Sensory Haptic Floor to create a multi-dimensional listening environment. Six BASS wellness programmes are also available, ranging from relaxation-focused settings to more invigorating modes.

The SV Ultra introduces an exclusive Titan Silver exterior finish featuring real fine aluminium flake and advanced pigment technology.

Technology helps ICICI Prudential Life reduce savings cost-to-premium ratio

GUWAHATI, Aug 9: Technology and automation initiatives have helped ICICI Prudential Life Insurance reduce its cost-to-premium ratio for its savings business to 13.6 per cent in Q1-FY2027, down 50 basis points from the previous year, even as the company continues to expand its business.

Ganessan Soundiram, Chief Technology Officer, ICICI Prudential Life Insurance, said the company's investments in digital infrastructure, artificial intelligence and analytics had strengthened customer acquisition, distributor effectiveness, servicing and operational efficiency. He said platforms including ICICI Pru Partner Stack and IPRU Edge were being used to streamline processes and improve customer experience throughout the policy lifecycle. A significant part of the efficiency gains has come from digitising the policy issuance process.

Around 58 per cent of policies issued using digital KYC and nearly 54 per cent of savings policies were issued on the same day during Q1-FY2027.

The company has also expanded digital claim services through end-to-end online registration, real-time tracking through its AI-based chatbot Ask Khushmani and WhatsApp, besides AI-supported pre-claim assessment and processing.

AI-based models are being used to support underwriting decisions, predict policy persistency and assess claims.

The company reported a claim settlement ratio of 99.3 per cent in Q1-FY2027, with an average turnaround time of one day for non-investigated individual claims.

Ask Khushmani handles a significant share of routine customer servicing, while renewal reminders are increasingly being delivered through a multilingual voice assistant capable of reaching up to 50,000 customers an hour.

On the distribution side, the IPRU Edge advisor application enables advisors to manage operations, issue policies on the same day and support business growth while improving customer service. As the company marks 25 years of operations, ICICI Prudential Life said its technology-led approach would remain an integral part of its strategy to improve operational efficiency and support profitable growth.

Contd. from Page 1...

Assam flood survivor's

locality, just behind the Circuit House, before flowing into the Dorika river, which was already in spate, leading the waters to drown all the neighbouring areas.

"I am no expert, but as a resident of the area, I can understand that there is a problem of drainage. Natural culverts and outlets have narrowed due to road and bridge constructions. Water is being pumped out, but it is not adequate," Zaman said.

Starting afresh will be a challenge, Zaman admitted, but it was not the cleaning and setting up of the house once again that she is most concerned about.

"That we are safe is our biggest blessing. Our daughters will also come to terms with the loss, and we can rebuild our home and memories again. But we need the assurance that such havoc won't be unleashed again.

Even after 20 days, water is stagnant in our area, a locality which has never seen floods. We can't abandon our homes nor can we live there safely," Zaman added, faced with the sorrow of nearly losing her house and staring at the uncertainty of the future.

Zaman, along with her family and friends of the area, now look towards the authorities for reassurance of protection and solution so that they can start putting together their lives once again. (PTI)

Fate of women's quota, delimitation

protests by the Opposition. The opposition parties initially protested over the NEET paper leaks and alleged theft of donations at the Ayodhya Ram temple. They later pressed for a discussion on police action against students protesting over the NEET paper leaks and also demanded the presence of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the Home Minister and their statements.

Last week, the government made several attempts to reach out to the opposition as well as its allies seeking their support for the women reservation and delimitation bills, but received little success. Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju had met Congress leader Rahul Gandhi twice in a bid to end the impasse. The minister also had telephonic conversations with Gandhi.

Sources said when Rijiju sought Congress support in the passage of the women reservation and delimitation bills, the leader of opposition insisted on convening an all-party meeting on the proposed legislations. Both the leaders also sparred on social media on Saturday over the women's quota and delimitation bills.

The government floor managers are trying to gauge the views of other opposition leaders, including Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav, and DMK leadership on the women reservation and delimitation bills.

However, DMK leader Udhayanidhi Stalin on Friday told a TV news channel that his party has neither supported the delimitation bill in the past nor will it support it in the future. The DMK is no longer part of the INDIA bloc after Congress joined the TVK government in Tamil Nadu. With 22 Lok Sabha members, it has emerged as the third-largest Opposition party in the Lower House.

In the Rajya Sabha, its eight members make the DMK the second-largest Opposition party. The Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD), which left the ruling NDA six years ago over the now-repealed three agriculture laws, on Saturday extended its support to the women reservation bill and the delimitation bills for a uniform 50 per cent increase in seats for states. The Punjab-based party has just one Lok Sabha MP.

The SAD statement came a day after party chief Sukhbir Singh Badal met Prime Minister Narendra Modi, triggering a buzz that it will rejoin the NDA ahead of the state assembly elections next year. A meeting called by Tamil Nadu Chief Minister C Joseph Vijay and attended by a section of the state's MPs on Saturday adopted a resolution against the delimitation and demanded a freeze of Lok Sabha seats at 543.

The meeting was boycotted by the main opposition party, the DMK, and the AIADMK.

NCP (SP) working president Supriya Sule on Saturday said it would be premature to comment on the delimitation bill. "When it comes, we will discuss every Bill with our alliance partners," she said. She, however, opposed the FCRA bill in its present form, saying one cannot always view foreign funding with suspicion, and urged the Centre to either withdraw it or refer it to a Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC).

Sule had also said that a delegation of eight MPs belonging to NCP (SP) will meet the PM at his Parliament office on Monday. Following her statement, the Congress asked Sule to use her scheduled meeting with the Prime Minister to make the INDIA bloc's opposition to linking the implementation of the Women's Reservation Act with delimitation "unequivocally clear". DMK chief MK Stalin also urged the Centre to withdraw the FCRA bill and said a delegation led by party MP P Wilson recently met Shah to press the demand.

A three-day special sitting was convened from April 16 to 18 for getting the Parliament's approval to the Constitution (131st Amendment) Bill, but for the first time a bill under the Modi government was defeated.

The bill fell short of the constitutionally mandated two-thirds majority in the Lok Sabha, with 298 members voting in favour and 230 opposing it.

The government's numbers have since improved marginally. The NDA's strength in the Lok Sabha now stands at 299 following the merger of seven Shiv Sena (UBT) MPs with the Eknath Shinde-led Shiv Sena.

Among the 20 NCPI MPs, three Muslim lawmakers remained non-committal about their allegiance towards the NDA. But the government is still well short of the 360 votes required to pass a constitutional amendment based on the current effective strength of the House.

There is another view that even if the women reservation and delimitation bills are delayed till the Winter session, there is enough room for their implementation by the 2029 Lok Sabha elections.

The Congress on Friday issued a whip to its MPs in the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha, asking them to be present in their respective Houses on August 10, 11 and 12 as "very important" issues will be taken up for discussion. It also conveyed to all its INDIA bloc allies to ensure that their MPs remain present on all three days, sources said.

Four bills have been included in the Lok Sabha agenda for Monday. They are — The Tribunal Reforms Bill, 2026, the Minerals and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Amendment Bill, 2026, The Kerala (Alteration of Name) Bill, 2026 and The National Co-operative Development Corporation (Amendment) Bill, 2026. (PTI)

NEADS reaches over 45,000

subject to the availability of resources and support.

"The need is huge, and the time to act is now. We appeal to partners, donors and individuals to come forward and stand with the flood-affected communities of Upper Assam," Saikia said.

Bangladesh PM's meeting with

in the country on June 12. He is scheduled to meet Rahman on Monday. Hasina's government was toppled in August 2024, after violent student-led street protests, forcing her to flee to India. In November 2025, Hasina was sentenced to death, in absentia, by a special tribunal in Dhaka for alleged "crimes against humanity" over her government's brutal crackdown on protesters in 2024. Since the verdict, Dhaka has been urging New Delhi to extradite her to face the law. The current government in Bangladesh - led by Rahman's Bangladesh Nationalist Party - maintains that Hasina shall have to surrender and face the law if she returns.

India's ties with Bangladesh had turned frosty under an interim government led by Muhammad Yunus which succeeded Hasina's Awami league, especially over the ousted leader's extradition, border-related issues and Dhaka's foreign policy pivot toward China.

But the relations experienced a cautious and uneasy reset after the new government under Rahman took charge in February. In that context, the August 5 press interaction marks a new flashpoint between the two neighbouring countries. On Sunday, the Prothom Alo newspaper in Bangladesh reported that it is "almost certain" Rahman would skip India's invitation to participate in the BRICS summit as tensions mounted afresh in bilateral ties over Hasina's August 5 virtual press interaction in New Delhi. Citing unidentified sources, the newspaper said: "The recent situation virtually shut the possibility of the premier's participation in BRICS outreach." Earlier, on Saturday, Bangladesh Home minister Salahuddin Ahmed warned that India could not simultaneously play the "Hasina card" and pursue friendly ties with Bangladesh. "We will maintain our relationship with you (India). But that does not mean you can play the Hasina card and still want a friendly relationship with Bangladesh," he said. (PTI)

Protest faced by Mamata reflects

that I would be coming, but despite that, no security measures were taken," Banerjee told reporters after reaching the area. The former chief minister alleged that large bricks were also thrown at her vehicle. "My head could have been smashed. I could have died here," she said, accusing the BJP-led state government of using "goons" to target her. Banerjee also trained her guns on Chief Minister and Home Minister Suvenud Adhikari, saying she had no particular anger against the police, but alleged that the force was being used at the behest of the state government.

"The police are protecting the lumpens. Bengal has fallen into the hands of lumpens," she said, adding that her party would pursue the matter legally. (PTI)

Youth buried Cong; its downfall

the memorials dedicated to the revolutionaries and did not honour their memory. They (revolutionaries) were forgotten," Adityanath further criticised the Congress, claiming that before 2014, they had created such a negative atmosphere in the country that young people struggled to venture abroad and experienced an identity crisis. "The Congress had tarnished India's image, branding it as a corrupt and weak nation," he said.

Posing a question to Rahul Gandhi and Akhilesh Yadav, the chief minister asked, "The Congress had the opportunity to govern Uttar Pradesh for a long time, and the SP has had its chief minister four times. Yet, what exactly did they do to win the support of the youth?"

Accusing the Congress of creating an identity crisis for the nation's youth, while the SP did the same for the youth of the state, Adityanath said, "When the country faces corruption, terrorism, Naxalism, extremism, and riots, and the state suffers from riots, lawlessness, and there is an environment hostile to business and investment, it is natural that the youth are the ones who are affected the most."

Attacking the SP, Adityanath stated that they nurtured a "One District, One Mafia" culture, whereas his administration has introduced "One District, One Medical College." Regarding education in the state before 2017, he remarked, "The Samajwadi Party effectively declared that cheating was their birthright. By fostering a culture of cheating, they created a crisis for the state's youth and eliminated opportunities for self-reliance. Whenever job opportunities were announced, the Samajwadi Party's 'Saifai Syndicate' would extort money."

He claimed that due to the 'exploitation by the uncle-nephew duo', the youth were forced to either migrate or take drastic actions like committing suicide. "Today, I can proudly say that in the last nine years, our government has provided over nine lakh government jobs to young people," the chief minister said.

Recalling the severe encephalitis outbreaks that claimed many lives in eastern Uttar Pradesh, Adityanath stated, "Thousands of children used to suffer from encephalitis, and hundreds lost their lives. Yet, this issue never stirred the Congress or the SP; they never felt any sympathy for those children. These very children have now grown up and become today's youth, for whom the 'double-engine' government has provided excellent healthcare facilities to ensure a healthy life." (PTI)

96 pc Indian travellers opt

"Travel is increasingly becoming more than just a break from routine, it is an investment in wellbeing, relationships and personal enrichment. What's particularly encouraging is their resilience, rather than putting their plans on hold during uncertainty, most are choosing to adapt and make the most of their trips," Santosh Kumar, regional head, South Asia at Booking.com, said in a statement. The research was commissioned by Booking.com and independently conducted among 10,136 respondents aged 21 years and above across 10 Asia-Pacific countries.

The online survey was conducted in May 2026, with 1,015 respondents from India. (PTI)

AFFIDAVIT
My actual name is DHIRAJ BARUAH which is recorded in my all relevant documents. But in my land jamabandi covered by Dag No.888 & 889, Of KP Patta No. 400 & 350 Revenue Vill- Agchia Mouza - Dakhin Rani. My name has been recorded as BHABESH BARUAH instead of DHIRAJ BARUAH.
DHIRAJ BARUAH and BHABESH BARUAH is the one and same person having single identity which is correct to the best my knowledge and belief.
DHIRAJ BARUAH

AFFIDAVIT
I Samim Ahmed, Vill- Farmarpar , P.O-Kharikhana, P.S-Lanka, Dist-Hojai (Assam)that, in the Passport vide M2720784 my name has been recorded as Mohammad Samim Ahmed instead of Samim Ahmed. Mohammed Samim Ahmed and Samim Ahmed same and one person.
Samim Ahmed

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SALE INTIMATION AND NOTICE FOR SALE OF SECURITIES PLEDGED TO HDFC BANK LTD.
The below mentioned Borrowers of HDFC Bank Ltd. (the "Bank") are hereby notified regarding the sale of securities pledged to the Bank, for availing credit facilities in the nature of Loans/Overdraft/Against Securities.
Due to persistent default by the Borrowers in making repayment of the outstanding dues as per agreed loans / facilities terms, the below loan / facilities accounts are in delinquent status or classified as NPA (Non-Performing Asset). The Bank has issued multiple notices/loan recall notice to these Borrowers, including the final sale notice on the below-mentioned date whereby, Bank had invoked the pledge and provided 7 days' time to the Borrower to repay the entire outstanding dues in the below accounts, failing which, Bank would be at liberty to sell the pledged securities without issuing further notice in this regard. The Borrowers have neglected and failed to make due repayments, therefore, Bank in exercise of its rights under the loan agreement as a pledgee has decided to sell / dispose off the Securities on or after 17th August 2026 for recovering the dues owed by the Borrowers to the Bank. The Borrowers are hereby notified to treat this as a notice of sale in compliance of section 176 of the Indian Contract Act, 1872. The Borrowers are, also, notified that, if at any time, the value of the pledged securities falls further due to volatility in the stock market to create further deficiency in the margin requirement then Bank shall at its discretion sell the pledged security within one (1) calendar day, without any further notice in this regard. The Borrower(s) shall remain liable to the Bank for repayment of any remaining outstanding amount, post adjustment of the proceeds from sale of pledged securities.

Sr. No.	Loan Account Number	Borrower's Name	Outstanding Amount as on 06 th Aug 2026	Date of Sale Notice
1	XXXXXXXXXX3793	RHEMBOR G SAIBON	9,93,841.64	06-08-2026
2	XXXXXXXXXX2286	NATHU SAH	7,405.64	06-08-2026
3	XXXXXXXXXX9802	SANTOSH KR TIWARI	42,624.00	06-08-2026
4	XXXXXXXXXX6934	JAMES K SANGMA	46,73,159.60	07-08-2026
5	XXXXXXXXXX7572	BRANDON BAZELEY RYMBAI	61,609.25	07-08-2026
6	XXXXXXXXXX9836	SANTOSH KUMAR RAY	81,434.88	17-07-2026
7	XXXXXXXXXX9350	PAUL LYNGDOH	4,72,749.89	07-08-2026
8	XXXXXXXXXX9146	ABDUS SHUKUR SARKAR	10,08,553.24	07-08-2026

DATE : 10.08.2026 | PLACE : MEGHALAYA
Sd/- HDFC BANK LTD.

Tiranga Bike Rally held in Cachar to mark 'Har Ghar Tiranga' campaign

District administration outlines week-long programmes ahead of 80th Independence Day

HT Correspondent

SILCHAR, Aug 9: A Tiranga Bike Rally was organised in Silchar on Sunday as part of the 'Har Ghar Tiranga' campaign and celebrations marking the 80th Independence Day, with the Cachar district administration joining hands with the Cachar Police and District Transport Department for the event.

The rally began at the Office of the District Commissioner, Cachar, with government officials and members of the public carrying the Tricolour.

The participants proceeded towards Rangirkhari and the Netaji Statue, passing through several major streets and prominent locations before returning to the DC's Office, where the rally concluded.

The event witnessed enthusiastic public participation and added to the patriotic atmosphere in the city ahead of Independence Day on August 15.

The initiative was aimed at encouraging wider participation in the 'Har Ghar Tiranga' campaign and promoting respect for the National Flag.



The district administration has also planned a series of programmes from August 10 to 14 involving educational institutions, government departments, community organisations and civil society groups.

Art, essay and debate competitions will be held in government and private schools and other educational institutions, with the final rounds scheduled at Gandhi Bhawan on August 14.

Cleanliness drives will also be conducted at government offices,

schools, markets and other public places during the period to promote civic responsibility and community participation.

On August 12, a Tiranga Rally and collective singing of 'Vande Mataram' will be held at Gandhi Bagh Park with participation from the district administration, police, NCC, Nehru Yuva Kendra, NSS, livelihood missions, civil society organisations and other departments.

Block-level programmes will include Prabhat Ferries, rallies,

Tiranga stalls and sales activities involving Self-Help Groups on August 12 and 13.

On August 13, 'Vande Mataram' will be sung at schools, Anganwadi Centres, Gaon Panchayat offices, Block and Circle offices and other government establishments.

The programmes are aimed at taking the spirit of the 'Har Ghar Tiranga' campaign to educational institutions, public spaces, government offices and communities across Cachar.

Among those who participated in Sunday's rally were Cachar SSP Sanjib Kumar Saikia, APS; Additional District Commissioner Devid Kumar Borah, ACS; Additional SP (Crime) Rajat Kumar Paul, IPS; Assistant Commissioner Bhaskar Choudhury, ACS; District Transport Officer and District Cultural Development Officer Snehangshu Shekhar Roy, among others. The district administration appealed to citizens and various institutions and organisations to participate actively in the programmes and observe the National Flag with due dignity and respect.

Mizoram govt urges Centre to refer FCRA amendment bill to JPC

AIZAWL, Aug 9: Mizoram Chief Minister Lalduhoma on Sunday said that the state government has urged the Centre to refer the proposed Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act (FCRA) Amendment Bill to a Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC) to facilitate a wider consultation before the legislation is finalised.

The bill seeks to significantly tighten the oversight of foreign-funded organisations, proposing creation of a powerful new authority to seize and manage the assets of non-profit groups that lose their licence.

The proposed amendments have drawn attention in Christian-majority Mizoram, where churches and civil society organisations have expressed concerns over provisions they believe could affect groups receiving foreign contributions.

Lalduhoma said he recently met Union Home Minister Amit Shah in New Delhi along with leaders of two apex church bodies -- the Mizoram Kohhran Hruaitute Committee (MKHC) and the Council of Churches in Mizoram (CCM), which represented various Christian denominations across the state.

During the meeting, the delegation placed before Shah its concerns and suggestions regarding certain provisions of the proposed legislation and also submitted a memorandum to the Union Home Ministry,



he said.

Making a fresh appeal for parliamentary scrutiny, Lalduhoma said referring the Bill to a JPC would allow concerns and suggestions from different parts of the country and various stakeholders to be examined before its final passage.

"In the spirit of democratic consultation, we respectfully appeal to the Union Government to refer the Bill to a Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC)," Lalduhoma said in a post on Facebook.

"This would provide an opportunity for concerns and suggestions from different parts of the country and across stakeholders to be carefully examined and considered before the legislation is finalised," he added.

He expressed hope that the Centre would consider the request in the larger interest of inclusive, transparent and consultative policymaking.

The contentious FCRA amendment bill will be taken up for dis-

cussion and passage in Parliament on August 12, but it will not come into effect retrospectively, Lalduhoma had said on August 6 in New Delhi after meeting Shah.

Earlier, Congress had urged the chief minister to summon a special session of the state assembly to adopt a resolution opposing the Bill.

The CCM, a conglomerate of nine major churches, including the Presbyterian Church of India and the Baptist Church of Mizoram (BCM), will organise a rally in Aizawl on August 11 to protest the proposed Bill.

The protest march will begin simultaneously in two directions -- one from Zarkawt and another from Sikulpukawt at 10:30 am with participants converging outside Vanapa Hall for a public programme, according to CCM president Rev Dr Lalbiakiana.

The church body expressed concern over provisions in the proposed amendment that would allow authorities to confiscate properties, land and other assets acquired through foreign funding if an organisation's FCRA licence is cancelled.

The CCM also objected to the proposal to establish a Designated Authority, which it claimed would have sweeping powers to seize and dispose of the assets of churches and NGOs without prior court approval or judicial oversight. (PTI)

Indigenous Peoples' Day observed in Bokajan

HT Correspondent

BOKAJAN, Aug 9: The International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples was observed with great fervour at Bokajan in Karbi Anglong on Sunday, with tribal leaders calling for greater unity and coordination among the indigenous communities of the region.

The commemorative programme was held at the premises of Jinbaba Hindi Higher Secondary School and organised by the United Tribal Coordination Front of Assam (UTCFA) in association with the Indigenous Forum, Assam (IFA) and the North East Indigenous Peoples Forum (NEIPF).

The meeting was chaired by Horeswar Bora, Headmaster of Jinbaba Hindi Higher Secondary School. Among those present were Lurinjyoti Gogoi, Barim Engti, Litsong Rongphar and Boson Rongphar, besides community elders and social leaders.

Addressing the gathering, speakers highlighted the diverse indigenous tribal communities inhabiting Karbi Anglong and their distinct cultural and traditional heritage.

They, however, expressed concern over the lack of adequate dialogue, coordination and collective action among the region's indigenous groups.

The speakers said growing socio-political challenges and external pressures could make it difficult for individual communities to protect their interests without a united approach.

They stressed the need for a common platform to safeguard ancestral land, identity and the collective future of indigenous communities.

The convention concluded with a call for all indigenous tribes of Karbi Anglong to unite and work collectively to protect their land rights and constitutional safeguards.

Torrential rain inundates Lahorijan's Dudu Coloni

HT Correspondent

BOKAJAN, Aug 9: Torrential overnight rain inundated Dudu Coloni in Lahorijan along the Assam-Nagaland border on Sunday, submerging homes, courtyards and roads and forcing residents to wade through knee-deep water.

The sudden rise in water levels caused panic among residents, many of whom woke up to find rainwater entering their homes and struggled to protect their belongings.

Locals blamed the recurring waterlogging on a drain running along the border that has remained clogged with municipal waste, plastic and accumulated garbage.

They alleged that the blocked drainage channel causes rainwater to backflow into residential areas during heavy rainfall.

Severe waterlogging was also reported near the railway-line flyover

adjoining Lahorijan Sunday Market, where blocked drains prevented water from receding.

Pedestrians and commuters were forced to negotiate knee-deep water, while traffic movement slowed considerably, affecting local businesses and daily activities.

Residents said the problem has become a recurring ordeal, with heavy rain regularly leading to overflowing drains and inundation of homes and roads.

They urged the authorities to immediately clear and desilt clogged drains, waterways and natural outlets and prepare a long-term plan to improve drainage infrastructure in the area.

As water levels continued to remain high, affected families remained on alert and awaited assistance and concrete action from the authorities.

Asam Natya Sanmilan to extend flood relief support, plans Tribal Drama Festival

HT Correspondent

TEZPUR, Aug 9: The newly constituted executive committee of Asam Natya Sanmilan held its first Steering Committee meeting at Bijoy Chandra Bhagawati Bhawan here on Sunday, resolving to extend support to flood-affected people and strengthen theatrical activities across the State.

The meeting, hosted by the Sammilan's Tezpur branch, began with a minute's silence in memory of the 96 people who lost their lives in the recent floods in Assam.

Tezpur branch president Bikram Kumar Bora welcomed the gathering and recalled the branch's association with the organisation since its inception. The Tezpur branch also felicitated newly elected Sammilan president, playwright, director, litterateur and film screenwriter Jiten Sarma. Central working president



Mrigen Chandra Bora, vice-presidents Jayanta Saikia, Jayanta Bora and Jayanta Hazarika, assistant secretaries Jogananda Gogoi and Deepak Sharma and executive members Trailokya Nath and Jitumoni Deb Choudhury were also felicitated. The meeting resolved to extend full cooperation to the government in the rehabilitation of people affected by floods in the three worst-hit districts and decided to contribute to the Chief Minister's Relief Fund.

A team of the Sammilan will also

visit the affected areas shortly.

The committee approved the organisation of a Tribal Drama Festival in Golaghat in November, aimed at promoting tribal theatre and cultural expression.

It also decided to translate and publish the fourth volume of Bharat Muni's Natya Shastra from Sanskrit into Assamese and reprint its first volume. The meeting further resolved to constitute new co-district committees in line with the State's administrative co-district structure.

The Sammilan's midterm session will be held along with its next central executive meeting at Maithong in Doodmoa, Tinsukia district.

Earlier, a special felicitation was accorded to Manoranjan Mahanta, founder secretary of the Tezpur branch, who was conferred the State Government's Shilpi Bota this year.

Four militants arrested in Manipur

IMPHAL, Aug 9: Security forces have arrested four militants having affiliation to different proscribed outfits from Manipur's Bishnupur district, police said on Sunday.

Khwaitrakpam Rojit Singh (21), a member of the banned Kanglei Yawol Kanna Lup outfit and involved in the recruitment of cadres, was arrested from Thamnepokpi Makha in Bishnupur district on Saturday, an official said.

In the Naorem Mayai Leikai area of the same district, Naorem Priyokumar Singh (37) was arrested for his alleged extortion activities, he said.

Moreover, two cadres -- Akhom Premkumar Singh (55) and Ningthoujam Jiten Singh (46) -- of Kangleipak Communist Party (Nongdrenkhomba) were apprehended from Ngangkhalawai in Bishnupur district, police added. (PTI)

Any attempt to replicate Bengal or Bihar-style SIR will be resisted in Tripura: CPI(M)

AGARTALA, Aug 9: Leader of the Opposition in the Tripura assembly, Jitendra Chaudhury, on Sunday said any attempt to replicate the "West Bengal or Bihar-style" Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls in the state would be resisted. The Election Commission has announced that the SIR exercise will be conducted in Tripura from September 5.

"We want the EC to ensure that no valid voter is left out of the final electoral rolls. The SIR was conducted in the state earlier, but not in the way the poll panel carried out the exercise in West Bengal and Bihar," Chaudhury told reporters.

He alleged that the "new style of SIR" introduced by Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar was aimed at excluding eligible



voters to benefit the BJP rather than cleaning up the electoral rolls.

Chaudhury, who is also the CPI(M) state secretary, urged people to remain vigilant during the exercise. He said the revision should not be used to "save the sinking boat" of the BJP-IPFT-Tipra Motha alliance ahead of the 2028 assembly elections.

"The party wants no valid elector left out of the final electoral rolls, and any attempt to repeat what we

have seen in West Bengal and Bihar will be resisted with the help of the people," he said.

Chaudhury also criticised the on-going talks between the BJP and its ally, the Tipra Motha Party (TMP), over seat-sharing for elections to the Village Committees of the Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council (TTAADC).

"This is not a talk for an alliance or seat adjustment between two allies as they are already sharing power in the northeastern state. It is like bargaining between two parties at a fish market to safeguard each other's electoral interests," he said.

He said the two parties should publicly announce their seat-sharing arrangement so that voters could understand their "real intention" and not be "duped". (PTI)

Freedom fighters recall Quit India Movement in Darrang

HT Correspondent

MANGALDAL, Aug 9: The Darrang District Freedom Fighters' Association commemorated the Quit India Movement of 1942 at a programme held at the Mangaldai Media Circle hall on Sunday, recalling the contributions of freedom fighters from Assam and Darrang.

The meeting, chaired by association president Kamalakanta Sharma, was attended by senior advocate Dharma Barua, Associate Professor of Assam Engineering College Dr Utpal Nath, association secretary Dr Binoy Ranjan Sharma and other office-bearers, including Mrinal Saharia, Gajen Kalita, Kamaleswar Deka and Nilamani Barua.

The speakers highlighted the significance of August 9 in the Quit India Movement and discussed how the decision of the Congress Working Committee in Bombay on August 9, 1942, was subsequently implemented in Assam on August 11 under the leadership of freedom fighters including Gopinath Bordoloi and Siddhinath Sharma.

The meeting also recalled the contributions of promi-

nent freedom fighters from Darrang, including Dineswar Sharma, Tonkeswar Sharma, Paniram Das and Bipin Chandra Medhi.

Later, an executive meeting of the association adopted a resolution urging Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma to announce a monthly pension for the heirs of freedom fighters during the upcoming Independence Day celebrations.

The association also demanded early release of funds sanctioned for construction of the Darrang District Freedom Fighters' Memorial Building and implementation of free medical facilities for family members of freedom fighters in government hospitals.

Other demands included a 10 per cent increase in reserved seats for heirs of freedom fighters in government employment and technical and higher educational institutions, including government-aided institutions, besides exemption from toll fees on national highways.

The association decided to submit the demands to the Chief Minister through the Deputy Commissioner of Darrang.

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

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Aug 9: Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR) has announced further changes in train services in view of ongoing restoration work near New Harangajao station following the settlement of railway tracks on Lines 1 and 2 of the Lumding-Badarpur Hill Section.

Train operations in the affected section are currently being maintained through Line 3 with enhanced safety measures.

Four trains have been cancelled.

Train No 15617 Guwahati-Dulabcherra Express scheduled to commence its journey on August 10 and Train No 15618 Dulabcherra-Guwahati Express scheduled for August 11 have also been cancelled.

Train No 15615 Guwahati-Silchar Express scheduled for August 10 and Train No 15616 Silchar-Guwahati Express scheduled for August 11 have also been cancelled.

Several trains have also been rescheduled.

Train No 15650 Narangi-Agartala Express will depart at 10.30 pm on August 10, while Train No 15649 Agartala-Narangi Express will depart at 11.30 pm.

Train No 15609 Guwahati-Sairang Express has been rescheduled to 11.30 pm and Train No 15610 Sairang-Guwahati Express to 9.30 pm on August 10.

Train No 15611 Rangiya-Silchar Express will depart at 11.30 pm on August 10, while Train No 15612 Silchar-Rangiya Express will depart at 5 am on August 11.

Train No 20501 Agartala-Anand Vihar Terminal Tejas Express has been rescheduled to 11 pm on August 10, while Train No 14037 Silchar-New Delhi Poorvottar Sampark Kranti Express will depart at 4.10 am on August 11.

Meanwhile, Train No 12501 Kolkata-Agartala Express, commencing its journey on August 9, will be regulated en route at a suitable location under Lumding Division in view of the restoration work.

Lions Club of Guwahati Gold hosts vibrant 'Sindhara' evening

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Aug 9: The Lions Club of Guwahati Gold organised a vibrant 'Sindhara' evening at Hotel Awesome Palace, Christian Basti, bringing together traditional customs, cultural performances and entertainment. The event was jointly chaired by Preeti Agarwalla, Renu Lahoty, Puja Agarwal and Mamta Saraf.

The 'Sindhara Queens' received a traditional welcome with auspicious bangles, fragrant itar and ceremonial sindoor, while professional nail artists added a contemporary touch to the celebrations. The formal programme began with an opening address by Project Chair Preeti Agarwalla.

Club President Anupam Agarwalla and Treasurer Lion Sidhartha Khetawat felicitated Chief Guest Preeti Bhajanka and Guest of Honour Payal Chadda. The dignitaries and club office-bearers jointly lit the ceremonial lamp to mark the beginning of the cultural programme.

The evening featured dance performances, live songs, music and a Desi Fashion Show. Guests also participated in games, including Tambola.

A major attraction was the Solo Reel Making Contest, which provided participants an opportunity to showcase their creativity and talents through specially prepared reels.

Preserving local cultures essential to protect age-old knowledge systems, values: Arunachal DyCM

Arunachal Pradesh is home to over 26 major tribes and more than 100 sub-tribes



ITANAGAR, Aug 9: Arunachal Pradesh Deputy Chief Minister Chowna Mein on Sunday emphasised the importance of protecting indigenous heritage, saying that preserving local cultures is essential to protecting age-old knowledge systems and values.

In a message on the occasion of International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples, Mein highlighted the

state's vibrant tribal identity.

He said indigenous cultures are an integral part of the state's ethos.

"On International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples, we celebrate the diverse indigenous communities whose traditions, languages, knowledge systems and relationship with nature enrich our shared heritage," Mein said.

Calling for collective efforts to

safeguard local practices, the deputy chief minister stressed that indigenous traditions carry wisdom passed down through generations.

"In Arunachal Pradesh, our indigenous cultures are an integral part of who we are. Preserving them means protecting not only our traditions, but also the knowledge and values passed down through generations," he said.

Mein urged citizens to take pride in their roots and foster mutual respect among communities.

"Let us honour our roots, respect our diversity and ensure that our heritage continues to thrive," he added.

Arunachal Pradesh is home to over 26 major tribes and more than 100 sub-tribes, each with distinct languages, customs, and traditional governance systems.

The state government has undertaken several initiatives to document oral traditions, indigenous languages and digitise historical manuscripts to protect the unique heritage against the pressures of rapid modernisation. (PTI)

Indigenous Peoples' Day observed in Kokrajhar

HT Correspondent

KOKRAJHAR, Aug 9: The International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples was observed in Kokrajhar on Sunday with programmes highlighting the rights, identity and welfare of indigenous communities.

The programme was jointly organised by the United Tribal Organization of Assam (UTOA) and the All Bodo Ex-Volunteer Force Organization.

As part of the observance, a rally was taken out through Kokrajhar town, with participants raising issues concerning the protection of indigenous identity, rights and welfare.

The United Tribal Organization of Assam submitted a memorandum addressed to the Prime Minister and Union Home Minister through the Kokrajhar District Commissioner, seeking proper implementation and protection of the provisions of Chapter X of the Assam Land Revenue Regulation, 1886. The organisation urged the Centre and the State Government to extend welfare and development services to indigenous communities across Assam and called for protection of tribal belts and blocks from alleged illegal encroachment and other activities.

The tribal body also urged the governments to implement the Forest Rights Act, 2006, in Assam and take measures to ensure the overall welfare and development of indigenous people.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

Be faithful in small things because it is in them that your strength lies - Mother Teresa

Unchanged RBI credit policy

The Reserve Bank of India announced its new credit policy on August 5, keeping the policy interest rates unchanged. The policy interest rates are an extremely important tool used by a central bank for maintaining price stability and the pace of the economy. On the face of it, it looks rather strange as the current inflation rate is well above the target rate of inflation. The Reserve Bank has projected inflation to remain over around 5% in the coming months to the opening days of the next financial year. Against this, RBI targeted level of inflation is 4%. The reason RBI has chosen to retain the current level in interest rates, instead of raising it to rein in inflation to the targeted level, is that its analysis of the inflation dynamics convinces the policy maker that this was a limited kind of price rise and there is little fear of a general price increase. Going into the details of inflation figures the RBI has worked on, “CPI inflation for 2026-27 is projected to be 5.0 per cent with Q2 at 4.7 per cent; Q3 at 5.9 per cent; and Q4 at 5.5 per cent. Inflation for Q1:2027-28 is projected at 5.3 per cent with risks being evenly balanced.”

But RBI pointed out that core inflation, that is, excluding fuel and food prices, the prints are in a comfortable zone. That is, the current inflationary pressure is emanating mainly from two groups of articles, fuel and food. Of these, the fuel inflation is due mainly to volatility stemming from the Middle East war. As for food prices, these have a seasonal behaviour and therefore the inflationary trends should also change. Generally speaking, the food prices spike in the summer months and till the harvest season in late October. Thereafter the food prices tend to soften after the arrival of food items in the markets. With such a background, the RBI has taken the gamble to encourage growth of the economy through a more accommodating stance in monetary policy. The bank analysis of the growth-inflation dynamics points towards a tilt towards supporting growth rather than a need for some emergency brakes to control inflation. It is more optimistic than a cautionary tale of control, based on the Reserve Bank's trust on domestic demand as a trigger for continuing growth.

The Reserve Bank approach is fundamentally data driven, that is, fine tuning its monetary policy in the context of emerging data. All central banks promise that and so also RBI. Nevertheless, in the end, it is the gut feelings—the judgment—which have been known to really prompt the actions.

India and the New Global economy

India has firmly established itself as a transformative anchor and a beacon of resilience within the contemporary global economic landscape. Amid a sluggish international environment characterized by geopolitical fragmentation, elevated trade uncertainties, and subdued global output, the Indian economy continues to exhibit remarkable momentum driven by robust domestic demand and structural stability. According to recent economic assessments from international bodies like the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, India maintains its status as the world's fastest-growing major

economy, with projected growth hovering between 6.4 percent and 6.6 percent. This vibrant economic performance translates into a Nominal GDP projected at approximately US\$ 3.91 trillion for fiscal year 2025-26, reflecting a nominal expansion of roughly 8.6 percent. Unlike many developed nations grappling with persistent inflation and sluggish recovery, India's growth trajectory is structurally rooted in strong household consumption, extensive public capital expenditure on infrastructure, and a predictable policy environment. The country's macroeconomic fundamentals remain exceptionally sound, underscored by substantial foreign exchange reserves, predominantly domestic public debt, and a resilient financial sector that absorbs external shocks effectively. This solid foundation has allowed India to transition from being merely a regional participant to a core driver of global economic stability, shaping international trade flows, investment patterns, and multilateral dialogues. As global supply chains undergo profound structural realignments, India's domestic market size and consistent economic expansion provide a reliable cushion against external headwinds, ensuring that the country remains uniquely positioned to influence the trajectory of the twenty-first-century global economy. Furthermore, continuous fiscal prudence, robust GST collection milestones crossing record highs, and sustained industrial production growth indices reinforce the narrative of a disciplined yet high-growth emerging market. Policy frameworks have increasingly focused on enhancing ease of doing business, reducing regulatory bottlenecks, and fostering competitive federalism, which collectively attract long-term capital and foreign direct investment. Consequently, the overarching macroeconomic narrative of India is de-

fined not just by short-term cyclical recovery, but by a deep-seated structural transformation that redefines its economic gravity on the global stage.

Beyond macro-level expansion, India is actively rewriting its industrial and trade narrative through strategic initiatives aimed at bolstering manufacturing capabilities and diversifying global export portfolios. Historically recognized predominantly as a service-sector powerhouse, the country has launched comprehensive industrial interventions, such as Production-Linked Incentive schemes and targeted export promotion missions, designed to anchor global value chains within its borders. These policy measures have yielded tangible results across core industrial segments, including manufacturing, mining, and



DEGREE OF THOUGHT
By: Himangshu Ranjan Bhuyan

electricity generation, reflecting broad-based industrial expansion as captured by recent Index of Industrial Production figures. In the face of global trade friction, shifting tariff structures, and regional conflicts impacting energy markets, India has leaned heavily into trade diversification and bilateral economic partnerships, securing critical trade agreements while insulating its domestic energy security. The services sector continues to serve as a formidable export engine, with software, IT-enabled services, and professional consultancy generating a substantial trade surplus that effectively buffers the merchandise trade deficit. Simultaneously, government initiatives targeted at empowering Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises through interest subventions and credit guarantee supports are democratizing export participation, enabling smaller enterprises to access international markets at scale. This dual focus on heavy industrial development and grassroots export enablement ensures that India's integration into the new global economy is comprehensive rather than superficial. By positioning itself as a reliable, cost-competitive, and technologically capable alternative manufacturing hub, India is successfully capturing the shift in global sourcing strategies away from single-nation dependencies. Moreover, infrastructural investments in logistics, multi-modal connectivity networks, and industrial corridors are systematically reducing logistics costs and transit times, thereby enhancing the global competitiveness

of Indian goods. Collaborative frameworks between central and state governments are driving regional manufacturing clusters, ensuring balanced economic development and transforming emerging urban centers into thriving export hubs. The deliberate convergence of domestic industrial policy with global export integration creates a virtuous cycle of capital formation, employment generation, and technological upgrading, setting the stage for su-



tained industrial prowess in the decades ahead.

At the heart of India's integration into the new global economy lies an unprecedented digital revolution and a rapidly maturing innovation ecosystem. The country's pioneering digital public infrastructure, anchored by scalable public digital stacks, has redefined financial inclusion, governance transparency, and consumer market efficiency. This foundational digital architecture has catalyzed a vibrant startup ecosystem, evidenced by a burgeoning community of unicorns and widespread venture capital deployment across deep-tech, fintech, and artificial intelligence domains. Reinforcing this structural evolution, recent findings from the World Intellectual Property Organization's 2026 reports highlight India's phenomenal surge as a leading global innovation hub, recording the fastest growth in intangible investments among the world's largest economies. Investments in software, research and development, intellectual property, and advanced organizational capabilities have expanded exponentially, outpacing traditional tangible investments and signaling a definitive transition toward a knowledge-driven economy. This intellectual capital is further amplified by a vast demographic dividend comprising millions of young, digitally fluent professionals, engineers, and creators who are actively shaping the future of global technology. Multinational corporations are increasingly establishing their global capability centers and advanced research facilities across Indian metropolitan areas, recognizing the country not merely as a back-office support center, but as a primary breeding ground for

cutting-edge intellectual property and core product engineering. The synergy between government-backed digital initiatives and private entrepreneurial energy has created an environment where technological solutions developed locally are easily scalable to address global challenges. Consequently, India's currency in the new global economy is increasingly denominated in code, intellectual property, and innovation capacity, allowing the nation to leapfrog traditional industrialization stages and assert digital sovereignty on the world stage.

Looking forward, India's trajectory within the new global economy is bound by both immense opportunities and complex structural challenges that require nuanced policy management. While macroeconomic buffers, robust foreign reserves, and low inflation provide a strong shield against external volatility, sustained long-term growth will depend heavily on unlocking private sector-led investments and generating quality employment at scale for its massive workforce. Achieving the national vision of Viksit Bharat requires a predictable, business-enabling regulatory environment that successfully transitions young job seekers into high-productivity sectors such as green energy, advanced manufacturing, agribusiness, and modern tourism. Furthermore, addressing vulnerabilities tied to global energy price fluctuations, climate change imperatives, and geopolitical supply chain disruptions necessitates proactive adaptation and continuous structural reforms. Investments in education, vocational skilling, and healthcare must keep pace with technological disruptions to prevent structural unemployment and ensure inclusive growth that bridges regional and socio-economic divides. At the same time, maintaining fiscal discipline while financing massive infrastructural expansion remains a delicate balancing act for policymakers. Despite these hurdles, India's strategic positioning, democratic stability, and unwavering commitment to multilateral cooperation give it a distinctive advantage in navigating a fragmented global order. By leveraging its demographic dividend, expanding its technological leadership, and forging resilient international partnerships, India is well-equipped to redefine its economic destiny. The nation's evolving role is no longer defined by passive participation in global trade, but by active rule-making, technological innovation, and leadership in sustainable development, ensuring that its economic ascent contributes meaningfully to global prosperity in the decades to come.

Turning waste into wealth and clean energy

By: Mowsam Hazarika

At a time when India is striving to balance rapid economic growth with environmental sustainability, the Union Cabinet's approval of the GOBARdhan Scheme marks a timely and strategic intervention. By promoting the conversion of crop residue, cattle dung and organic waste into compressed biogas (CBG), the initiative seeks to address two persistent challenges—waste management and clean energy generation—through a single integrated approach.

India's rural landscape produces enormous quantities of organic waste every year. Much of it remains underutilised or is disposed of in ways that harm the environment. Crop residue burning, for instance, continues to contribute to severe air pollution in several parts of the country, while unmanaged cattle dung and biodegradable waste release methane, a greenhouse gas far more potent than carbon dioxide. The GOBARdhan Scheme offers a practical alternative by transforming such waste into a valuable economic resource.

The scheme focuses on establishing compressed biogas plants that process organic waste through anaerobic digestion. The resulting biogas, once purified and compressed, can be used as a clean fuel for transport, cooking and industrial purposes. Equally important is the by-product—organic manure—which can help restore soil health and reduce dependence on chemical fertilisers. In this way, the initiative reinforces the principles of a circular economy, where waste is reintegrated into the production cycle.

From an economic standpoint, the scheme holds considerable promise for farmers and rural entrepreneurs. Agricultural residues and cattle dung, traditionally seen as low-value by-products, can now generate additional income. Farmers can supply feedstock to biogas plants, while local enterprises, including farmer-producer organisations and self-help groups, can participate in setting up and managing these units. This opens up new avenues for employment and decentralised rural development.

The implications for India's energy security are equally significant. As the country continues to rely heavily on imported fossil fuels, the expansion of domestically produced bioenergy offers a viable pathway towards reducing this dependence. Compressed biogas can serve as a substitute for compressed natural gas, particularly in the transport sector, thereby contributing to lower emissions and cleaner urban environments.

For a state like Assam, the relevance of the scheme is particularly noteworthy. With its strong agrarian base, substantial livestock population and growing environmental concerns—especially those linked to flood-induced waste and degradation—the State stands to benefit from decentralised biogas initiatives. Properly implemented, such projects can complement ongoing efforts in organic farming, sustainable agriculture and rural livelihood generation.

However, the success of the GOBARdhan Scheme will depend on more than policy intent. It requires effective implementation at the grassroots level. This includes ensuring access to finance, building technical capacity, and creating awareness among farmers and rural communities. Equally important is the development of a reliable market for compressed biogas and organic fertilisers, supported by clear pricing mechanisms and procurement policies.

There is also a need for coordinated efforts between government agencies, private investors and local institutions. Public-private partnerships can play a critical role in scaling up infrastructure, while digital platforms can facilitate efficient linkages between waste producers, plant operators and end-users.

The GOBARdhan Scheme represents an important step in reimagining how India manages its natural resources. By converting waste into wealth and clean energy, it offers a model that is both environmentally responsible and economically inclusive. If implemented with commitment and clarity, it has the potential to transform rural economies, strengthen energy security and contribute meaningfully to the country's climate goals.

As India moves forward on its path of sustainable development, such initiatives underscore the importance of innovation rooted in local realities. Turning waste into wealth is no longer just an idea—it is a necessity, and the GOBARdhan Scheme may well prove to be a decisive step in that direction.

India's young women power MNC factory revolution

By: T N Ashok

Women in the age group 18 to 30 are the rising work force in India representing the strongest demographic powering an unprecedented revolution of the fairer sex working at the shopfloor level in India, particularly the south, with aggressive hiring by MNCs for their quality work and efficiency.

Every hour, hundreds of smartphones roll off production lines in southern India, destined for stores across America, Europe and Asia. Behind the gleaming aluminium frames and precision-engineered chips are rows of young women dressed in anti-static uniforms, their fingers moving with astonishing speed and accuracy. A trained operator can assemble, inspect or process nearly 500 smartphone units in an hour, a feat of dexterity that global electronics manufacturers say has become one of India's biggest competitive advantages.

The story unfolding across Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh is not merely one of industrial growth. It is rapidly becoming one of the biggest stories of women's economic empowerment in modern India.

For decades, India's manufacturing sector struggled to absorb women into its workforce. Today, that equation is changing dramatically as multinational corporations diversify production away from China and build massive new facilities across southern India. At the centre of this transformation stands Taiwanese electronics giant Foxconn, Apple's largest manufacturing partner.

Its sprawling campuses near Sriperumbudur in Tamil Nadu and Devanahalli near Bengaluru resemble modern industrial townships more than traditional factories. Thousands of women arrive every morning in company buses from villages and towns across Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh. Others live in purpose-built hostels equipped with round-the-clock security, biometric access, medical facilities, transport services and supervised accommodation designed to reassure anxious parents sending daughters hundreds of kilometres from home.

For many of these young women, the job represents something unprecedented. A regular salary. Financial independence. The confidence to support parents, educate siblings and delay early marriage. The migration of women into India's electronics manufacturing hubs represents a quiet social revolution.

Unlike construction or heavy engineering, electronics assembly demands patience, precision, concentration and consistency rather than physical strength. Global manufacturers have increasingly concluded that women excel in such environments because of lower error rates, better process discipline and superior



fine-motor skills required for assembling miniature electronic components.

This preference is hardly unique to India. Electronics factories across Taiwan, Vietnam, Malaysia and China have historically relied heavily on female workers. India is now witnessing a similar transition. The numbers are striking.

As Apple expands manufacturing in India, Foxconn, Tata Electronics (which acquired Wistron's India operations), Pegatron and other suppliers have collectively hired tens of thousands of workers, with women forming a substantial share of assembly-line employees. Apple has steadily shifted more iPhone production to India as part of its “China Plus One” strategy, while Foxconn continues investing billions of dollars in new campuses across southern India.

Foxconn's new Bengaluru campus alone is expected to become one of the world's largest iPhone manufacturing facilities over the next few years. But Foxconn is only one chapter in a much larger story. The global manufacturing map is being redrawn.

Rising wages in China, geopolitical tensions between Washington and Beijing, supply-chain disruptions following the pandemic and the desire of multinational corporations to diversify production have encouraged companies to build alternative manufacturing bases. India has emerged as one of the principal beneficiaries.

Electronics majors, semiconductor companies, automobile manufacturers, consumer appliance makers and medical-device firms are expanding rapidly across southern India. Among those increasing their footprint are Apple suppliers Foxconn, Pegatron and Tata Electronics, while companies such as Samsung, Dell, HP, Lenovo, Flex, Jabil, Sammin, Bosch, Siemens, Hyundai, Kia, Volvo, Schneider Electric and several Japanese and Tai-

wanese manufacturers have expanded manufacturing capacity or supplier ecosystems in India over the past few years.

Many of these companies openly acknowledge that women constitute an increasingly important part of their manufacturing workforce, particularly in electronics, precision engineering, medical devices and component assembly.

The transformation is visible beyond factory gates. Entire local economies are changing. Small restaurants, transport operators, hostels, tailoring shops, banks, coaching centres and retail outlets flourish around industrial corridors.

Parents who once hesitated to educate daughters beyond school increasingly encourage them to pursue diplomas in electronics, mechatronics and industrial engineering. Yet this inspiring story carries uncomfortable contradictions.

Foxconn has also faced criticism over labour practices. A Reuters investigation reported that recruiters working for Foxconn's main iPhone plant in Tamil Nadu had systematically discouraged or rejected married women from assembly jobs, allegedly because managers believed family responsibilities, pregnancy and absenteeism could affect productivity.

The allegations prompted scrutiny because both Apple and Foxconn's supplier codes prohibit discrimination based on marital status. Indian authorities examined the matter after the report, while Foxconn stated that it had removed the practice were identified and that the vast majority of women employed at the facility were married.

The controversy highlights an important question confronting India's industrial future. Can rapid manufacturing growth coexist with inclusive employment? Human-rights advocates argue that genuine women's empowerment cannot stop at providing em-

ployment alone.

Equal opportunity, maternity protection, workplace safety, career progression, fair wages and freedom from discrimination are equally important. The encouraging news is that competitive pressures may ultimately favour better labour standards.

Apple, whose global reputation depends heavily on responsible sourcing, has steadily tightened oversight of suppliers following previous controversies involving working conditions. International investors increasingly evaluate environmental, social and governance (ESG) practices before committing capital, making workforce policies a strategic business issue rather than merely a legal obligation.

The larger picture remains overwhelmingly positive. Across southern India, daughters of farmers, daily-wage labourers and small shopkeepers are becoming part of global supply chains.

Many are first-generation industrial workers. Some are first-generation graduates. Many become the highest earners in their families before turning twenty-five. Their salaries finance siblings' education, household improvements, motorcycles, health insurance and even small entrepreneurial ventures back home.

This ripple effect is perhaps the greatest measure of empowerment. Economists have long argued that no society transforms faster than one where women enter formal employment in large numbers.

Factory wages create bank accounts. Bank accounts create financial identity. Financial identity creates economic independence. Economic independence gradually reshapes families and communities.

The same southern states that once led India's information technology revolution may now be leading its manufacturing revolution as well—this time powered not by software en-

The transformation is visible beyond factory gates. Entire local economies are changing. Small restaurants, transport operators, hostels, tailoring shops, banks, coaching centres and retail outlets flourish around industrial corridors. Parents who once hesitated to educate daughters beyond school increasingly encourage them to pursue diplomas in electronics, mechatronics and industrial engineering. Yet this inspiring story carries uncomfortable contradictions

gineers alone, but by thousands of women on factory floors producing some of the world's most sophisticated consumer electronics.

Every iPhone assembled in India tells two stories. One is about geopolitics, supply chains and multinational investment. The other is about a young woman leaving her village, boarding a company bus before dawn, entering a clean-room assembly line and quietly participating in India's emergence as a global manufacturing powerhouse.

That second story may ultimately prove to be the more important one. For the future of Indian manufacturing will not merely be measured by export figures or factory output. It will be measured by how many millions of women find dignity, independence and opportunity through productive employment.

If India succeeds in marrying industrial growth with inclusive labour practices, the country's manufacturing boom could become not just an economic miracle but one of the most significant chapters in the history of women's empowerment in independent India.

In a country where female foeticide incidence is high because it involved paying high dowries, girl child, was considered a burden, especially in rural hinterland, particularly in north and western India. Women were not encouraged to study. But with the Modi government launching Beti Bachao, Beti Padoo, slogan, the scenario is changing. The slogan means Save the girl child, educate the girl child, meaning a girl child is as important as a boy child capable of earning bread and bringing prosperity to the family. (IPA Service)



By: Shoba Suri

As India charts its course towards becoming a developed nation by 2047, conversations around human capital have largely centred on education, digital innovation, skills, and employment. Yet, one of the country's most transformative investments starts in the first hour after birth. The theme of World Breastfeeding Week (WBW) 2026, "Breastfeeding for a Sustainable Start in Life: Strengthen What Works", offers an important policy message. The evidence is no longer in question. Breastfeeding saves lives, improves cognitive development, strengthens economies, reduces health-care costs, and contributes to environmental sustainability. The challenge today is not discovering new interventions but ensuring that proven interventions reach every mother and every child equitably. The World Health Organization (WHO) emphasises that the priority should now be to scale evidence-based interventions through stronger health systems, supportive workplaces, community engagement, and sustained political commitment rather than relying solely on awareness campaigns.

India has made remarkable gains in maternal and child health over the past decade through initiatives such as POSHAN Abhiyaan, the National Health Mission, Home-Based Newborn Care, and expanded institutional deliveries. However, the recently released National Family Health Survey (NFHS-6, 2023–24) reveals that despite improvements

across several health indicators, one of the country's most effective child survival interventions is losing momentum. Exclusive breastfeeding among infants below six months declined from 63.7 percent in NFHS-5 (2019–21) to 55.8 percent in NFHS-6 (2023–24), while early initiation of breastfeeding increased modestly to around 50 percent, remaining well below universal coverage. These findings suggest that improvements in service coverage alone cannot guarantee optimal infant feeding practices unless breastfeeding support is embedded throughout the continuum of maternal and newborn care.

Breastfeeding is the world's first sustainable food system. It is locally produced, nutritionally complete, safe, renewable, and requires no packaging, transportation, refrigeration, or waste disposal. The WHO increasingly frames breastfeeding not merely as a child survival strategy, but as an essential component of sustainable food systems and resilient health systems. Breastfeeding is also a child's first immunisation, as breast milk contains antibodies, immune cells, enzymes, hormones, and bioactive compounds that protect infants against diarrhoea, pneumonia, and numerous infectious diseases. The WHO estimates that optimal breastfeeding could prevent nearly 400,000 deaths among children under five each year, while undernutrition contributes to nearly 45 percent of child deaths globally.

Breastfeeding has been recognised as one of the highest-return investments in

human capital because its benefits extend well beyond infancy.

Breastfeeding has been recognised as one of the highest-return investments in human capital because its benefits extend well beyond infancy. Evidence synthesised by The Lancet demonstrates that breastfed children have lower risks of infectious diseases during childhood, a reduced likelihood of obesity and type 2 diabetes later in life, and improved cognitive performance. Longer periods of breastfeeding have been associated with higher intelligence scores, improved school readiness, better educational attainment, and increased lifetime earnings. These developmental gains accumulate across populations, strengthening labour productivity and national economic growth. For India, where nearly one-fifth of the world's children reside and where demographic advantage is expected to drive future economic expansion, these benefits carry substantial weight.

WHO highlights that investments in breastfeeding support of US\$1 can generate returns of US\$59, along with reduced health-care costs, improved educational outcomes, and enhanced workforce productivity. Breastfeeding also benefits women across the life course and lowers risks of breast cancer, ovarian cancer, and type 2 diabetes, while also supporting improved postpartum recovery. These maternal health gains further reduce health-care expenditure and strengthen family well-being, reinforcing breastfeeding as a population-level pub-

Strong policies, Falling rates: India's breastfeeding challenge

Breastfeeding has been recognised as one of the highest-return investments in human capital because its benefits extend well beyond infancy. Evidence synthesised by The Lancet demonstrates that breastfed children have lower risks of infectious diseases during childhood, a reduced likelihood of obesity and type 2 diabetes later in life, and improved cognitive performance. Longer periods of breastfeeding have been associated with higher intelligence scores, improved school readiness, better educational attainment, and increased lifetime earnings. These developmental gains accumulate across populations, strengthening labour productivity and national economic growth. For India, where nearly one-fifth of the world's children reside and where demographic advantage is expected to drive future economic expansion, these benefits carry substantial weight

lic health intervention rather than solely an individual maternal choice.

The WBW 2026 theme deliberately shifts the conversation from promotion to implementation. The evidence is unequivocal: countries do not need new breastfeeding interventions; they need to strengthen those that have already proven effective. India has built one of the world's most comprehensive policy ecosystems supporting breastfeeding. The Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS), Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana, National Health Mission, Janani Suraksha Yojana, and Infant and Young Child Feeding (IYCF) guidelines collectively provide a strong policy foundation. The country also enacted one of the strongest legal frameworks globally through the Infant Milk Substitutes, Feeding Bottles and Infant Foods (Regulation of Production, Supply and Distribution) Act (IMS Act), restricting inappropriate marketing of breast-milk substitutes. Yet policies alone do not guarantee outcomes.

Countries do not need new breastfeeding interventions; they need to strengthen those that have already proven effective.

WHO's evidence review released for WBW 2026 demonstrates that these interventions work. Skilled breastfeeding counselling delivered across health facilities, households, and communities increases exclusive breastfeeding rates by 58 percent. Implementation of the Baby-Friendly Hospital Initiative increases exclusive breastfeeding at six months by 45 percent, while paid maternity leave is associated with a 52 percent increase in exclusive breastfeeding. Countries that effectively implement the International Code of Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes report notably higher breastfeeding rates than countries with weak legislative enforcement.

The most effective interventions remain notably consistent. They include initiating breastfeeding within one hour of birth, exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months, and continued breastfeeding alongside complementary feeding until two years and beyond. Equally important are skilled lactation counselling during antenatal and postnatal care, implementation of the Baby-Friendly Hospital Initiative (BFHI), and community-based support through Accredited Social Health Activists (ASHAs), Auxiliary Nurse Midwives (ANMs), Anganwadi workers, and mother support groups.

Despite a strong policy architecture, the latest evidence suggests that India is entering a new phase of the breastfeeding challenge, one where coverage of maternal health services has improved, but continuity of breastfeeding support remains inadequate. The decline in exclusive breastfeeding reported by NFHS-6 underscores that breastfeeding is no longer primarily an issue of awareness; it is a systems challenge that requires coordinated action across health, labour, nutrition, social protection, and digital governance.

India also faces emerging challenges arising from rapid urbanisation, rising female labour force participation, the growth of nuclear families, and changing employment patterns. Maternity protection has not kept pace with these shifts. The Maternity Benefit (Amendment) Act, 2017, which provides 26 weeks of paid maternity leave, is among the most progressive globally — yet its benefits remain confined largely to women employed in the organised sector.

Nearly 90 percent of India's women workers are employed in the informal economy, where maternity protection, paid leave, breastfeeding breaks, and

workplace childcare remain largely inaccessible. Expanding maternity protection through social protection mechanisms and creating breastfeeding-friendly workplaces are therefore critical if India is to sustain breastfeeding while also increasing women's labour-force participation.

As India advances towards the vision of Viksit Bharat 2047, strengthening breastfeeding should be recognised as an investment in national development itself.

Equally concerning is the growing influence of digital marketing by manufacturers of breast milk substitutes. The IMS Act operationalises many provisions of the International Code of Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes. However, online advertising, influencer marketing, and cross-border digital promotions increasingly circumvent conventional regulatory mechanisms. WHO and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) continue to call for stronger monitoring and enforcement of the Code, particularly in digital environments where parents are increasingly exposed to commercial messaging.

The next phase should focus on improving implementation quality and ensuring equitable access across states and socioeconomic groups. As India advances towards the vision of Viksit Bharat 2047, strengthening breastfeeding should be recognised as an investment in national development itself. The science is unequivocal, the policy framework is largely in place, and the interventions are well established. What remains is the political will to scale them equitably, monitor them rigorously, and protect them consistently. The call of World Breastfeeding Week 2026 is therefore not simply to promote breastfeeding, but to strengthen what works. (Courtesy: ORF)

Why it is important to understand dyslipidaemia

By: Upendra Kaul

When we talk about heart attacks and strokes, we often visualise dramatic scenes: a sudden sharp chest pain or a collapsed individual. It is estimated that roughly four Indians suffer a heart attack every minute, which equals more than 5,700 heart attacks every single day. Cardiovascular diseases claim about 2.8 million lives in India each year, which are responsible for 27% deaths of our country. But long before a heart attack strikes, a quiet, invisible process has usually been unfolding inside the body for years, if not decades. At the centre of this hidden process is a condition known as dyslipidaemia — a term doctors use to describe abnormal levels of lipids (fats) in the blood. Understanding the causes of this condition and how modern medicine can treat it can literally save millions of lives. Cholesterol and triglycerides are fatty substances that your body actually needs to build cells and produce vital hormones. However, problems arise when these fats circulate in the bloodstream in unbalanced amounts and that is what constitutes dyslipidaemia.

It involves raised levels of LDL (Low-Density Lipoprotein) cholesterol, often called "bad" cholesterol. There is a type of cholesterol called HDL (High-Density Lipoprotein) cholesterol, often called "good" cholesterol, which helps clear excess fats and High Triglycerides. Its high levels are good for heart health. Yet another type of fat in the blood linked to diet and metabolic health is triglycerides. It is often co-existent with low HDL cholesterol, making a person prone to fat deposition in arteries.

When "bad" LDL cholesterol levels remain elevated, excess cholesterol particles begin to penetrate the delicate inner lining of your arteries. Over time, these particles oxidise and trigger an inflammatory reaction, turning into a sticky substance called plaque. This buildup is known as atherosclerosis, or hardening of the arteries.

It is essential to follow the lipid screening programme as recommended by the American College of Cardiology, American Heart Association and Multi-Society Dyslipidaemia Guidelines in March 2026. These are as follows.

Children: Universal screening is recommended between ages 9 and 11, with earlier cascade screening around age 2 if there is a family history of familial hypercholesterolemia (FH) or premature heart disease.

Young Adults: Baseline lipid panel is recommended starting at age 19.

Adults (General): Re-screening is advised at least every 5 years, or more frequently if cardiovascular risk factors are present.

Lipoprotein(a) [Lp(a)]: Recommended measurement at least once in all adults to identify hidden genetic risk. A normal lipoprotein(a) or

Lp(a) level is less than 30 mg/dL (or less than 75 nmol/L), which indicates a low risk for heart disease. Levels from 30 to 50 mg/dL (75 to 125 nmol/L) are borderline or intermediate risk, while levels above 50 mg/dL (125 nmol/L) are considered high risk.

Apolipoprotein B (ApoB): Reasonable to measure for patients on lipid-lowering therapy with diabetes, high triglycerides, or established heart disease to guide treatment intensification. Normal levels being less than 100 mgs. Lower it is the better is the prognosis.

LDL c Goals: The currently recommended Goals for Primary prevention target <100 mg/dL High risk <70 mg/dL; Very high risk/Secondary prevention <55 mg/dL).

Effects of Dyslipidaemias

Your blood vessels are like smooth plumbing pipes. Plaque buildup acts like sludge lining the pipe walls, making them narrower, stiff, and rough. If a piece of this plaque cracks or ruptures, the body attempts to heal it by forming a blood clot. If that clot blocks a vessel supplying the heart, it causes a heart attack. If it blocks blood flow to the brain, it triggers a stroke.

The management of this issue for almost everyone, managing cholesterol starts with lifestyle habits. What you eat, how much you move, and how you care for your body play a very important role in maintaining healthy lipid levels. Heart-healthy nutrition is the key. Focus on diets rich in soluble fibre (oats, beans, lentils), healthy unsaturated fats (olive oil and nuts), and lean proteins. Limit saturated fats found in fatty meats and full-fat dairy, and avoid trans fats (vanaspati ghee, margarine, etc.) entirely. Engaging in 150 minutes of moderate aerobic exercise per week (like brisk walking, cycling, or swimming) helps boost "good" HDL cholesterol while keeping weight in check. Shedding excess abdominal fat significantly improves how your body processes fats and sugars.

There are several instances where the above narrated measures are not sufficient. A common misconception is that high cholesterol is simply the result of a poor diet or a lack of exercise. In reality, your liver produces most of the cholesterol in your body, heavily influenced by genetics. For many individuals — especially those with a history of heart disease, severe hypercholesterolemia, or diabetes — lifestyle changes alone will not bring LDL cholesterol down to safe target levels. For high-risk individuals, medication is not a failure of willpower; it is a vital medical necessity. Although a number of agents are available these days. Statin group of drugs (Atorvastatin and Rosuvastatin) are the foundation therapies for cholesterol lowering. These work by blocking a key enzyme in the liver responsible for producing cholesterol. Not only do statins dramatically lower LDL levels, but they also help stabilise existing ar-

terial plaque, making it much less likely to rupture and cause a heart attack.

When statins alone aren't enough, or if a patient cannot tolerate high doses, doctors often add Ezetimibe. This daily pill works differently: instead of stopping cholesterol production in the liver, it blocks the absorption of cholesterol from the food you eat in your digestive tract. A newer oral option, Bempedoic Acid, blocks cholesterol production in the liver just like statins, but earlier in the chemical pathway. Because it remains inactive in skeletal muscle, it is a valuable option for patients who experience muscle aching on statins.

Modern injectable therapies

For extremely high-risk patients who still cannot reach their target cholesterol levels despite taking oral medications, medical science has developed advanced injectable treatments. PCSK9 inhibitors (e.g., Evolocumab) which is given as a self-administered injection once every two weeks (or monthly in a higher dose), these targeted therapies block a specific protein in the liver. This allows the liver to clear vast amounts of bad cholesterol from the bloodstream, often lowering LDL by 50–60%. During the last few years, we have another breakthrough molecule belonging to the group of small Interfering RNA (Inclisiran). It uses advanced RNA technology to stop the liver from producing the PCSK9 protein in the first place. After an initial dose and a follow-up at 3 months, it only requires one injection every 6 months. This twice-a-year schedule makes staying on track effortless for patients.

While high cholesterol is the most important reversible risk factor it does not act in isolation. It works synergistically with other health factors to damage your arteries. To truly prevent heart attacks, high-risk individuals must manage the complete picture by acting on other risk factors too.

Tobacco smoke damages blood vessel walls, making it much easier for LDL cholesterol to cling to arterial walls and form plaque. High pressure constantly strains and tears the delicate inner lining of arteries, creating sites where cholesterol easily collects. Elevated blood sugar changes the structure of LDL particles, making them smaller, denser, and more prone to causing arterial damage. Finally, stress hormones drive up blood pressure and inflammation, aggravating cardiovascular risk over time.

Dyslipidaemia is a silent condition. You won't feel high cholesterol until it causes a crisis. The good news is that with routine blood tests, personalised lifestyle changes, and modern medications, cardiovascular disease is largely preventable. Talk to your physician about checking your lipid panel — taking action today is the best gift you can give to your heart and enjoy a happy life for a much longer duration. (Courtesy: The Wire)

World IVF Day 2026: Fertility cannot wait- Why timely action matters more than ever

By: Dr Mannan Gupta

For millions of young Indians today, life follows a familiar trajectory—higher education, career growth, financial stability, and then starting a family. While this shift reflects changing aspirations and greater opportunities, our biology has not evolved at the same pace. Fertility remains governed by age, and delaying parenthood without understanding its biological implications is becoming one of the biggest reproductive health challenges of our time.

As we observe World IVF Day on July 25, the conversation around fertility must move beyond celebrating medical breakthroughs to encouraging awareness, early intervention, and informed choices. IVF has undoubtedly transformed reproductive medicine, but the larger message is that couples should not wait until IVF becomes their only option.

According to global estimates, nearly one in six couples experience infertility during their reproductive years. India is witnessing a steady rise in fertility-related concerns, driven by delayed marriages, sedentary lifestyles, obesity, diabetes, stress, environmental factors, polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS), endometriosis, and declining reproductive health. Despite this growing burden, infertility continues to be viewed through the lens of stigma rather than science.

One of the most common misconceptions is that infertility is primarily a woman's problem. Medical evidence tells a different story. Male factors contribute to nearly half of all infertility cases, either independently or in combination with female factors. Yet, in many households, women continue to shoulder the emotional burden, often undergoing repeated investigations while the male partner delays even a basic fertility assessment. Fertility is a shared responsibility, and evaluation should always involve both partners from the outset.

Another widespread myth is

that IVF is recommended to every couple struggling to conceive. In reality, IVF is only one of several evidence-based fertility treatments. Many couples conceive successfully with lifestyle changes, medications, ovulation induction, treatment of hormonal disorders, minimally invasive surgeries, or intrauterine insemination (IUI). IVF is advised only after a comprehensive clinical evaluation, taking into account the woman's age, ovarian reserve, sperm quality, duration of infertility, and previous treatment history.

The most important factor that couples often underestimate is time. Female fertility begins to decline gradually after the age of 30 and more rapidly after 35, primarily because both the number and quality of eggs reduce with age. While advances in reproductive medicine have significantly improved success rates, medical science cannot completely reverse the natural ageing process of the ovaries. This is why women over the age of 35 should seek fertility evaluation after six months of unsuccessful attempts to conceive, while younger couples should consult a specialist after one year.

The good news is that fertility care today is more advanced than ever before. Modern IVF is no longer the physically demanding and uncertain treatment it was decades ago. Innovations such as advanced embryo culture systems, time-lapse embryo monitoring, highly efficient embryo freezing techniques, improved laboratory conditions, minimally invasive egg retrieval procedures, and genetic testing in selected medical situations have made treatment safer and more effective. Importantly, fertility treatment is increasingly personalised, ensuring that each couple receives a protocol tailored to their unique medical profile rather than a one-size-fits-all approach.

Equally significant is the growing role of fertility preservation. Many women today choose to delay pregnancy due to education, career aspirations, or personal circumstances. Others may require

cancer treatment or have medical conditions that threaten future fertility. Egg and embryo freezing now offer scientifically validated options that provide greater reproductive flexibility, although these decisions should always be made after detailed medical counselling.

However, successful fertility treatment is not just about technology. Emotional wellbeing is an equally important pillar of care. Couples undergoing fertility treatment often experience anxiety, self-doubt, financial stress, and emotional exhaustion. Compassionate counselling, psychological support, and open communication between clinicians and patients are essential to improving not only treatment outcomes but also the overall patient experience.

As clinicians, we also have a responsibility to promote fertility awareness before infertility develops. Simple lifestyle measures—including maintaining a healthy weight, exercising regularly, managing chronic illnesses, avoiding tobacco and excessive alcohol consumption, reducing stress, and seeking timely medical advice for menstrual irregularities or reproductive health concerns—can positively influence fertility and improve pregnancy outcomes.

World IVF Day is not merely a celebration of scientific innovation. It is a reminder that infertility is a medical condition—not a personal failure, a social taboo, or a reason for shame. Couples deserve empathy instead of judgment, scientific guidance instead of myths, and timely medical care instead of delayed reassurance.

The dream of parenthood has become achievable for millions because of advances in reproductive medicine. But the greatest success of fertility care will not be measured only by the number of IVF pregnancies. It will be measured by how effectively we educate people to understand their fertility, seek help without hesitation, and make informed reproductive choices before time becomes the biggest obstacle.

Nagasaki marks 81st atomic bomb anniversary

Mayor says nuclear deterrence only increases risk

TOKYO, Aug 9: Nagasaki marked on Sunday the 81st anniversary of the US atomic bombing of the southwestern city, as the mayor called nuclear weapons "absolute evil," denounced growing support for nuclear deterrence and called on the Japanese government to adhere to its three postwar non-nuclear principles.

The anniversary coincided with Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi's government revising the country's defense policy to further bolster the military's offensive capability. Speculation has risen about whether Takaichi, who supports nuclear dissuasion, may allow nuclear weapons to be brought into the country, going against the third non-nuclear principle. Mayor Shiro Suzuki said that while some countries argue the possession of nuclear weapons helps deter potential attackers, the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki had demonstrated that humans can cross the line.

"The theory of nuclear deterrence is extremely dangerous and fragile. Nuclear weapons are not a necessary evil but an absolute



evil,' and can never coexist with humanity," Suzuki said. "To all leaders of the nuclear states and nations relying on nuclear deterrence, you must face the reality that the more you rely on nuclear deterrence, the more you increase the risk of a nuclear war."

The United States launched the Nagasaki attack on Aug. 9, 1945, killing 70,000 by the end of that year, three days after the bombing of Hiroshima that killed 140,000. Japan surrendered on Aug. 15,

1945, ending World War II and the nearly half-century of aggression across Asia. Representatives from more than 90 countries attended the ceremony at the Peace Park on Sunday and observed a moment of silence at 11:02 a.m. when a B-29 dropped a plutonium bomb, known as "Fat Man."

Suzuki singled out the Japanese government, demanding it uphold Japan's war-renouncing Constitution, attend the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons

review conference later this year and stick to the three non-nuclear principles.

Takaichi supports the first two principles of not possessing and developing nuclear weapons.

The prime minister, who attended Sunday's ceremony, reiterated her policy of taking "a realistic and pragmatic approach" toward achieving a world without nuclear weapons. As she did in Hiroshima, Takaichi remained ambiguous about the three non-nuclear principles and only reiterated that Japan currently maintains the policy. Takaichi, in her speech at the ceremony, did not mention the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, which Tokyo has refused to sign because Japan is under the protection of the US nuclear umbrella.

She later told reporters that Japan's policy is to work within the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty, and that her government will decide what to do with the treaty based on what's most effective to ensure the country's national security and push forward nuclear disarmament. (AP)

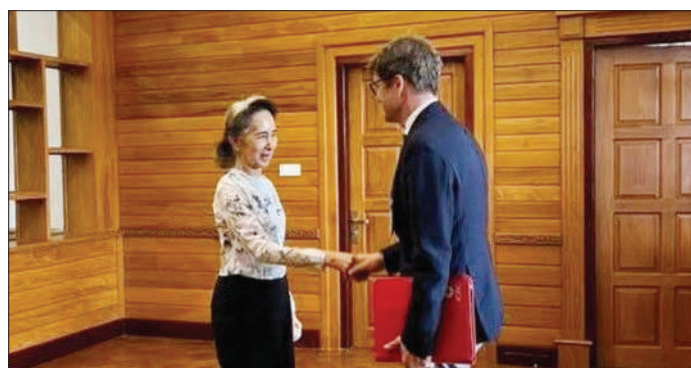
Myanmar junta rebuffs ASEAN call to free Aung San Suu Kyi, questions need for envoy

BANGKOK, Aug 9: Myanmar's military-backed government has rejected the Association of Southeast Asian Nations' renewed call for the unconditional release of detained former leader Aung San Suu Kyi and dismissed the need for the organization's special envoy on Myanmar, according to the foreign affairs ministry.

President Min Aung Hlaing, the former army chief who had originally seized power in 2021 from Suu Kyi's civilian government, has been trying to win political legitimacy since the takeover and resume relations with ASEAN.

ASEAN came up with a peace plan for the Southeast Asian country in April 2021 to end hostilities and initiate dialogue among contending parties, to be facilitated by the special envoy. Min Aung Hlaing has since been barred from attending top-level meetings for failing to comply with the plan.

In an apparent effort to placate critics, the government allowed a representative of the International Committee of the Red Cross to visit 81-year-old Suu Kyi last week, the first known contact with



an outside international independent humanitarian organization since her detention five years ago.

Suu Kyi is serving her sentence under house arrest at an undisclosed location in the capital Naypyitaw, on charges that her supporters and rights groups have said are politically motivated.

The current ASEAN chair, the Philippines, welcomed the meeting as a step toward dialogue and reconciliation on Friday, while urging greater access to political detainees and reiterating its call for Suu Kyi's "complete and unconditional release."

Myanmar's foreign ministry's statement late Saturday criticized the call.

"Although the government has commuted her sentences based on humanitarian considerations, the matter of a full and unconditional release shall only be carried out in accordance with the law," it said.

The statement also said the government will continue working with ASEAN's current special envoy, Philippine Foreign Minister Maria Theresa Lazaro, but doesn't see the need to continue down that path when Singapore takes over on Jan. 1, 2027. (AP)

Pak-Saudi-Turkiye defence pact not against any country: Dy PM Dar

LAHORE, Aug 9: Pakistan Deputy Prime Minister Ishaq Dar said on Sunday that the defence pact signed between Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and Türkiye is "purely defensive" in nature and it is not "targeted against any country". Dar also said that the accord remains "open to any country in the region willing to uphold its fundamental principles".

The Makkah Joint Defence Agreement was signed on Friday by Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, Saudi Crown Prince and Prime Minister Mohammed bin Salman and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan at the Al-Safa Palace in Islam's holiest city of Mecca. Under the agreement, an armed attack against any one of the three countries will be regarded as an attack against all three.

In a post on his X account on Sunday, Dar, who is also the foreign minister, provided additional context about the defence agreement. He said the pact reflects the "depth of the brotherly relations between the leadership and peoples of the three countries".

Dar called it the culmination of years of discussions and coordination, with "a common desire to strengthen strategic cooperation in addressing multifarious peace and security challenges and advancing regional peace, stability and prosperity."

The foreign minister added that the pact does not abrogate or replace any existing bilateral or multilateral agreements between the three countries, or with other countries or organisations.

"The Makkah Accord is purely defensive in nature. It is not targeted against any country and its sole purpose is to further strengthen our ongoing efforts towards peace, stability and prosperity in the wider region," Dar said, adding any external armed attack on any one of the three countries will be considered as an attack on all, consistent with the inherent right of individual and collective self-defence under Article 51 of the UN Charter.

He further said: "Makkah Accord remains open to any country in the region willing to uphold its fundamental principles and resolve differences through mutual respect, cooperation and peaceful means."

Asserting that the agreement is consistent with the fundamental pillars of Pakistan's foreign policy, he said the country "looks forward to continuing to work closely with all brotherly countries in the region towards lasting peace and stability."

"We remain committed to advancing the cause of peaceful resolution of all conflicts and building a more secure, stable and prosperous future for our peoples," Dar said.

The pact comes as the conflict in West Asia has widened across multiple fronts, including the Red Sea and the Bab al-Mandeb Strait, prompting Gulf states to strengthen regional security coordination. Pakistan, which has sought to play a mediatory role between the US and Iran, said last week that it was "doing its utmost" to bring the two sides back to the negotiating table under a Memorandum of Understanding signed in June. (PTI)

Russia, Ukraine exchange overnight strikes that leave 7 dead, many injured

KYIV (UKRAINE), Aug 9: Russia and Ukraine exchanged strikes overnight that killed civilians and injured many others on both sides, local authorities reported. In Russia's border region of Belgorod, Ukrainian drones killed five people and injured two dozen others including a 4-year-old boy, according to the regional administration.

Russian missiles struck a high-rise apartment block in Kharkiv's Saltivskiy district, killing two people and injuring 13, according to regional head Oleh Syniehubov. Eight more people were injured in Ukraine's Black Sea port of Odesa after "dozens of missiles and drones" struck the city and surrounding region, according to local administration head Oleh Kiper.

Large-scale Russian missile strikes on Ukrainian cities have become almost routine in recent weeks, with Moscow exploiting Ukraine's critical shortage of interceptors for the US-made Patriot systems — the sole air defence weapon in its arsenal able to shoot down ballistic missiles. (AP)

PM Sharif's PML(N) on back foot on PoK protesters; calls them 'patriots'

ISLAMABAD, Aug 9: Set to take charge of the so-called government in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir, the PML(N), headed by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and his brother Nawaz, seems to be on the back foot in dealing with protesters in the region, following months of violence.

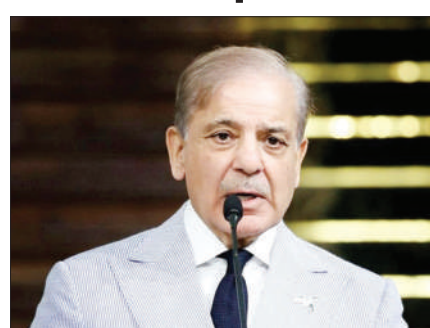
Prime Minister's adviser Rana Sanaullah on Saturday said 99 per cent of the protesters in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK) are "patriotic" people.

He further said the political party's representatives would soon meet members of the banned Joint Awami Action Committee (JAAC) - a collective of activists that have been spearheading protests in the region.

Till a few days ago, the political party maintained that members of the banned terrorist group Tehrik-e Taliban were present among the protesters, to justify the government's crackdown on them.

Addressing a rally on Saturday, ahead of the third phase of "elections" in PoK, Sanaullah said: "Ninety-nine per cent of those associated with the Joint Awami Action Committee are our patriotic brothers."

India maintains that the entire Union Territories of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh are



integral and inalienable parts of it. New Delhi also asserts that Pakistan has been in "illegal and forcible occupation" of parts of these Union Territories.

Sanaullah further said on Saturday, "When the PML(N) government will be formed with two-third majority, it will sit with [Joint Awami] Action Committee representatives. Their first task will be to resolve this issue."

In the two phases of the polls held so far, the establishment-backed PML(N) has won 25 seats - crossing the majority mark in the so-called assembly in PoK, which has 45 elected seats, amid widespread violence and allegations of massive rigging. (AP)

Indian woman's partner arrested 7 months after her murder in Canada

TORONTO, Aug 9: A 32-year-old man has been arrested in Toronto for allegedly killing an Indian woman, who was his partner, according to a local media report.

Abdul Ghafoori was arrested at a Toronto airport on Friday after returning to Canada following more than seven months of being on the run. He was charged with first-degree murder, the CBC News reported.

A first-degree murder conviction in Canada carries a mandatory life sentence, with no eligibility for full parole for 25 years.

The case relates to the killing of 30-year-old Himanshi Khurana, who was found dead inside a Toronto residence in December last year.

Police had earlier determined that her death was a homicide and said she was in an intimate partner relationship with Ghafoori.

However, exact details of the homicide were not shared with the press.

Officers with the force's Fugitive Squad and Homicide and Missing Persons Unit worked with

national and international law enforcement agencies to facilitate Ghafoori's return without specifying the country from which he was brought back, the report said.

On December 19, Toronto Police responded to a call about a missing woman. The following day, around 6:30 am, officers found the woman dead inside a residence, according to a police release issued at the time.

Police identified the victim two days later and subsequently issued a warrant for Ghafoori's arrest, launching a nationwide search for him in connection with the case, but it yielded no outcome for several months.

The authorities did not share further information about the accused and the victim.

The Consulate General of India in Toronto had earlier expressed shock and grief over Khurana's death. In a post on X on December 24, the Consulate said Khurana was a "young Indian national" and that it was extending all possible assistance to her family in coordination with local authorities. (PTI)

Car-bomb attack targets southwest Colombia

CALI (COLOMBIA), Aug 9: A car bomb exploded Saturday in southwestern Colombia, the army said, a day after conservative political neophyte Abelardo de la Espriella was sworn in as Colombia's new president.

The army alleged the attack was carried out by two dissident groups of the now-defunct Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, or FARC. The groups did not accept the peace agreement that FARC signed a decade ago with the Colombian government.

The explosion took place at a toll plaza on the Pan-American Highway, the main road in the country's southwest. The army said two security guards suffered minor injuries in the attack. One of the guards told authorities that the explosion was caused by a vehicle that had been abandoned by an individual who fled on a motorcycle.

The affected road connects the departments of Cauca and Valle del Cauca, whose capital, Cali, hosted Friday's swearing-in ceremony for de la Espriella. During his inaugural speech, he outlined his security policy and warned illegal groups that "they have two paths: submit to the rule of law or

confront the security forces."

The army on Saturday said on social media that soldiers were securing the area and using trained dogs to search for other explosive devices. Scattered around the toll plaza were parts of the vehicle, including the charred chassis.

The explosion woke up families who live in houses located a few yards (meters) from the crime scene. Elizabeth Zapata, 57, said she felt the blast wave "lift them out of bed" and the windows shattered. Her family members, who live with several children, "arrived with shards of glass embedded in their backs."

Cauca Gov. Jorge Octavio Guzmán told reporters he believes the attacks are intended to isolate the department in order to maintain control over thousands of hectares. "This is not an isolated incident; it is systematic," he said.

Minister of Transportation Elsa Noguera condemned the attack and said work was underway to restore traffic in the area.

"Colombia will not kneel before violence, nor will it allow the destruction of the infrastructure that connects our regions," she wrote on social media.

Dozens of prisoners sent to maximum security prisons

Also on Saturday, de la Espriella announced the transfer of 117 prisoners linked to the previous administration's peace talks to eight maximum-security prisons. The measure, according to the country's corrections agency, aims to "regain permanent control of the prisons" and "contain any capacity of criminal organizations" to coordinate illicit activities from within prisons. De la Espriella has rejected the dialogue with armed groups promoted by his predecessor, Gustavo Petro.

With no prior political experience, the 48-year-old de la Espriella, a lawyer and businessman, narrowly defeated Iván Cepeda, a progressive senator and Petro ally, in a June runoff election in a polarized political climate.

His term begins with a robust opposition led by Petro, who refused to acknowledge his victory and insisted on alleged fraud despite the official declaration from the electoral authority and the positive assessment from international observers. (AP)

Syria agrees deal with Russia over future use of 2 key Mediterranean bases

DAMASCUS, Aug 9: Syria and Russia have reached an agreement over the future of two strategic Mediterranean coastal bases that ultimately ends their use a military outposts for Moscow, Syria's Foreign Ministry said Sunday.

Russia was the top political and military ally of ousted President Bashar Assad between 2011 and 2024 when Syria fought against an Islamist-led armed opposition of which current interim President Ahmad al-Sharaa was a prominent militant leader. Throughout the conflict, the Hmeimem air base near Latakia and the Tartus naval base were key Russian outposts in the eastern Mediterranean.

Under the agreement, Syria will take control of the Hmeimem air base and the commercial berth at Tartus port as part of its civil administration. The military facilities at both sites will become "joint training and qualification centres," the Foreign Ministry said. The new arrangements represent a "re-organising of the Russian presence" along Syria's coast, the ministry said.

"This move marks the most significant development since negotiations began approximately a year

and a half ago, paving the way for a new phase in Syrian-Russian relations," a statement read. Russia did not immediately comment on the agreement.

Moscow did not interfere during the lightning insurgency that led to the overthrow of Assad, but it did provide the longtime Syrian leader and his family asylum. After Assad's ouster Russian troops remaining in Syria gradually left the country.

Syria's new leadership has aimed to maintain strong bilateral ties with Moscow. Al-Sharaa has visited President Vladimir Putin in Moscow twice since taking power, with the two Mediterranean bases being key points of discussion.

Since Assad's ouster, Syria has also bolstered its ties with the United States, Europe, and neighbouring Arab countries that had cut ties with Damascus during Assad's crackdown on protests. Washington has lifted most of its crippling sanctions on the country, and French President Emmanuel Macron made a visit to Syria in July during which he announced that the two countries would appoint respective ambassadors for the first time in 14 years. (AP)

8 political parties join hands to form 'Progressive Front' in Nepal



KATHMANDU, Aug 9: Eight Nepalese political parties have announced the formation of a new alliance named the 'Progressive Front' based on "shared political issues and common agendas."

The alliance was announced at a programme held in Kathmandu on Saturday comprising Janata Samajbadi Party (JSP), Janamat Party (JP), Aam Janata Party (AJP), Nagarik Unmukti Party (NUPN), Pragatisil Loktantrik

Party (PLP), Nepal Sanghiya Samajwadi Party (NSSP), Bahujan Samajbadi Party Nepal (BSPN) and Khimbuwan Rastriya Morcha (KRM).

According to a statement issued by the Progressive Front, the alliance is preparing to move forward on the basis of shared political issues and common agendas.

The formation comes amid ongoing efforts among Madhesh-

based parties and some other fringe parties to forge political collaboration and cooperation. The front aims to work for the formation of a "just, inclusive and discrimination-less unified society" by ending all types of discrimination and anomalies irrespective of the people's castes, creed and classes, the statement said.

"The front also aims to institutionalise and develop a federal, democratic, republic governance system and an inclusive democratic system in practical terms," it said. The alliance also seeks to ensure equal and proportionate representation based on population in the parliament, both the House of Representatives and the National Assembly, as well as provincial assemblies.

The front said it aims to end all types of exploitation, inequalities and discrimination against Madhesis, ethnic groups, Dalits, women, Tharu, Muslims, backward classes and sexual minorities. (AP)

China issues red alert as Typhoon Dolphin hits its eastern coast

BEIJING, Aug 9: China's national observatory issued a red alert -- the highest level in the country's typhoon warning system as Typhoon Dolphin hit Zhejiang province on the eastern coast on Sunday afternoon. Typhoon Dolphin made landfall along the country's east coast from Sanmen in Zhejiang Province to Fuding in Fujian Province, the National Meteorological Center (NMC) said.

Wang Haiping, NMC chief forecaster, said a high alert was required due to the typhoon's heavy rainfall intensity, extensive impact range and prolonged duration.

From Sunday to Wednesday, regions including northern Fujian, Zhejiang, Shanghai, northern Jiangxi, Jiangsu, Anhui, eastern Hubei, central and eastern Henan, and southern Shandong will be hit by heavy downpours, with some areas in central-eastern Zhejiang and southern Anhui facing severe torrential rain.



Addressing key areas of prevention, Wang said the coastal areas of East China and the East China Sea need to focus on guarding against gale-force winds. From Sunday to Tuesday, most parts of the East China Sea, Hangzhou Bay, the coastal areas of Zhejiang, and the Yangtze River Estuary are expected to experience winds of Force 9 to 12, with gusts reaching Force 11 to 14, while gusts near the typhoon centre

could reach Force 15 to 16, state-run Xinhua news agency reported.

Relevant provinces also need to guard against secondary disasters triggered by persistent heavy rainfall. The risks of mountain torrents, geological disasters, and flash floods in small and medium-sized rivers are relatively high in Zhejiang, Anhui, Henan, and Hebei, while some cities face high risks of urban waterlogging.

NMC forecasts Typhoon Dolphin to move north-westward and gradually weaken after landfall. After Wednesday, the weakened remnant vortex will turn northward. A typhoon remnant vortex is a persistent low-pressure system that continues to exist after a tropical cyclone makes landfall and loses its primary energy source from the ocean.

"A typhoon's landfall does not mean its impact is over. After Dolphin makes landfall, it will push further inland," Wang said.

From Thursday to Sunday, the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei region, northern Shandong and Liaoning are likely to see heavy rainfall, with some areas expected to experience severe torrential rain. In response to the typhoon, China's meteorological authority on Sunday upgraded its emergency response for severe meteorological disasters from Level III to Level II. (PTI)

You can't stay in India and insult its symbols, national anthem, song: Adityanath

'This Tiranga Yatra is an expression of gratitude towards all those martyrs'

LUCKNOW, Aug 9: Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath said on Sunday that people living in India cannot continue to insult the country's symbols, its great personalities, the national anthem, and the national song.

The Tiranga Yatra, led by Adityanath, was taken out from the chief minister's residence at 5, Kalidas Marg to the Vidhan Bhawan, with UP BJP President Pankaj Chowdhury and Deputy Chief Ministers Keshav Prasad Maurya and Brijesh Pathak among thousands of youths who participated.

Addressing a gathering before kicking off the Tiranga Yatra as part of the "Har Ghar Tiranga" campaign on the 101st anniversary of the Kakori Train Action, Adityanath said, "We are all grateful to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who has ensured greater respect for India's national symbols and enhanced the dignity of the national anthem and national song by classifying insults against them as



cognizable and punishable offences. People can no longer be allowed to live in India while insulting the country's symbols, its great personalities, its national anthem, and its national song."

He said the national flag was a symbol of India's simplicity, development, heritage and its "aan, baan and shaan" (honour, pride and glory). The chief minister paid tribute to the freedom fighters, including Ram Prasad Bismil,

Thakur Roshan Singh and Ashfaqullah Khan, saying they had shaken the foundations of British rule through the Kakori Train Action in 1925.

"Today is also the 101st sacred anniversary of the Kakori Train Action. On this occasion, the BJP is starting Tiranga Yatras across the country to express gratitude towards the great revolutionaries and freedom fighters," he said. Adityanath recalled the soldiers'

supreme sacrifice after Independence.

"This Tiranga Yatra is an expression of gratitude towards all those martyrs and a resolve to carry forward Prime Minister Narendra Modi's mantra of 'nation first'," he said.

The chief minister said 2016 was significant because the country was marking 150 years of the national song 'Vande Mataram'.

"Our youth is talented, a symbol of energy and can face every challenge confronting the country. This youth energy should get an appropriate platform to move forward and prepare itself to face the country's challenges while pursuing its traditional curriculum," he said.

Adityanath said around 25,000 to 30,000 youths were expected to participate in the Lucknow yatra.

"I was receiving reports since morning. I was happy that by 8:30 am, more than 25,000 youths had already gathered here, and now the number is crossing 30,000," he said. (PTI)

Crime, lawlessness gripping Haryana; govt failed to maintain law and order: Kumari Selja



CHANDIGARH, Aug 9: Sirsa MP Kumari Selja on Sunday expressed concern over the alleged rise in criminal incidents in Haryana, saying the law and order situation in the state was deteriorating and criminals no longer appeared to fear the law.

Selja, a former Union minister and AICC general secretary, said in a statement released here that incidents of murder, robbery, extortion and firing have created a sense of insecurity among people.

She urged the Haryana government to move beyond political statements and claims about im-

proving law and order and take concrete steps to prevent crime.

"Criminals have become so emboldened that they are not hesitating to commit serious offences in broad daylight," she said. Selja referred to the recent alleged firing outside the office of Congress MLA Balram Dangi in Rohtak. The incident was reportedly carried out by motorcycle-borne assailants near a police station.

The Congress leader said the incident was particularly serious as it involved the office of an elected representative and allegedly took place in front of a police station.

"If elected representatives, businessmen and shopkeepers do not feel safe, it is natural for ordinary families to be worried about their security," she said.

Selja said Haryana had traditionally been known for development, prosperity, social harmony, hard-working farmers, soldiers and sportspersons. However, repeated reports of serious crimes were damaging the state's image, she claimed.

She said ensuring the safety of people's lives and property was the government's foremost responsibility. "The government cannot claim that the law and order situation has improved merely on the basis of statistics and statements. The ground reality has to be addressed," she said.

Selja called for strengthening the police system and taking effective action against criminals and organised gangs involved in serious offences.

She also urged the government not to dismiss questions raised by the opposition on law and order as political criticism. (PTI)

AAP alleges ₹ 22,000 crore rice scam plan by BJP govt in Delhi

NEW DELHI, Aug 9: Delhi AAP president Saurabh Bharadwaj on Sunday alleged corruption in the BJP-led Delhi government's procurement and sale of subsidised rice, claiming that the proposed arrangement could result in a ₹ 22,000 crore scam over three years.

Addressing a press conference, Bharadwaj said the Rekha Gupta government and an Assam-based corporation had made a formal request to the Food Corporation of India (FCI) for subsidised rice to be distributed among the poor and the needy in the national capital.

He claimed that around 31,000 metric tonnes of rice per week were sought under the arrangement, but they did not reach the intended beneficiaries and were subsequently sold to a private company in Haryana.

"The rice, obtained at around ₹ 23.20 per kg, was allegedly being sold in the open market for ₹ 46 per kg, resulting in a commission of ₹ 23 per kg, amounting to around ₹ 143 crore scam every week," (PTI)

AAP govt indulged in large-scale financial irregularities, caused losses to exchequer: Delhi min

NEW DELHI, Aug 9: Delhi PWD minister Parvesh Sahib Singh on Sunday alleged financial irregularities and huge losses to the public exchequer during AAP rule, citing findings of a CAG report recently tabled in Assembly.

"After the CAG report, we can say Arvind Kejriwal flouted rules, floated 1,185 manual tenders and inserted arbitration clauses in tenders, indulging in large-scale irregularities and looting of public money," Singh alleged during a press conference here.

A Controller and Auditor General (CAG) report detailing the finances of various Delhi government departments between 2019 and 2023, was tabled in Delhi Assembly by Chief Minister Rekha Gupta on Friday.

The CAG report is a written document of the "corruption" under the Arvind Kejriwal government, Singh claimed, adding that the BJP government, during the past 18 months, had released 24 such reports which were not tabled in the Assembly earlier.

Citing the report, the minister said approximately ₹ 70,410 crore in tax revenue was outstanding against some businesses. The GST department in collusion with certain industrialists and business owners, allowed their outstanding GST liabilities to remain pending, he charged.

Singh claimed that despite cancellation of GST registrations of 8,334 businesses, they continued to generate E-way bills related to transport of goods. The CAG report states that "bogus" E-way bills worth ₹ 68,680 crore were generated, he said.

He further said out of 6.10 crore E-way bills, only 0.1 per cent were examined. An investigation into 70



cases found 344 instances of non-compliance, involving a revenue impact of ₹ 3,071.92 crore, while a turnover mismatch of ₹ 3,710.17 crore was also detected.

The PWD minister also accused the previous AAP government of indulging in irregularities across various departments.

Under the electricity subsidy scheme, 50,000 consumers whose electricity bills remained zero for 12 consecutive months, were provided subsidies amounting to ₹ 17.81 crore, thereby causing a loss to the government exchequer, Singh said.

Further, around 90,000 consumers who had not been residing in their homes for six to eleven months had been provided electricity subsidies worth ₹ 11.88 crore, he alleged, adding that a total of ₹ 42 crore had been released in the name of power subsidies in such cases, and the matter would be investigated.

No immediate reaction was available from Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) over the allegations. (PTI)

Mamata faces protest, mud, slippers, 'chor' slogans during visit to family of deceased TMC worker

KOLKATA, Aug 9: Former West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee faced a hostile reception at Halisahar in North 24 Parganas district on Sunday when protesters surrounded her vehicle, shouted 'chor' (thief) and 'dakait rani' (queen of thieves) slogans, and allegedly hurled mud, slippers and stones at her car as she went to meet the family of a deceased TMC worker.

Banerjee, who was visiting the family of a TMC worker who allegedly died in police custody, was forced to pass through a police cordon as the demonstration briefly turned the road into a charged political theatre, with the rival sides trading allegations of conspiracy, provocation and administrative failure.

"My car has been attacked with stones, shoes and mud. This is nothing but a conspiracy. I had informed the police that I would be coming, but despite that, no security measures were taken," Banerjee told reporters after reaching the area.

The former chief minister al-



leged that large bricks were also thrown at her vehicle.

"My head could have been smashed. I could have died here," she said, accusing the BJP-led state government of using "goons" to target her. Banerjee also trained her guns on Chief Minister and Home Minister Suwendu Adhikari, saying she had no particular anger against the police but alleging that the force was being used at the behest of the state government.

"The police are protecting the lumpens. Bengal has gone into the hands of lumpens," she said, adding that her party would pursue

the matter legally.

The BJP, however, accused Banerjee of coming to Kanchrapara to "provoke" tensions and said local people had protested against her presence.

The confrontation added a new edge to the increasingly adversarial political atmosphere in West Bengal, where Banerjee and senior TMC leaders have faced public protests during recent visits.

The latest incident came two months after Banerjee faced "chor-chor" slogans outside the Calcutta High Court in June as she emerged from the premises. (PTI)

JNU cancels permission for event on Umar Khalid's book; students' union hits out

NEW DELHI, Aug 9: The Jawaharlal Nehru University on Sunday said that permission has been cancelled for an August 9 discussion by JNUSU on a book authored by its former student Umar Khalid, who is in jail in the 2020 northeast Delhi riots conspiracy case, at a university auditorium over "non-disclosure of full facts" about the event.

The Jawaharlal Nehru University Students' Union (JNUSU) alleged that the cancellation was an "arbitrary and authoritarian" decision by the administration and accused it of attempting to suppress academic discussion and dissent.

The discussion on the book "Fractured Communities: Adivasi Histories and the Politics of Power", being organised by JNUSU on the occasion of the International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples, was scheduled to be held at the School of Social Sciences-I (SSS-I) auditorium from 3 pm. It will feature professors Prabhu Mahapatra and Uma

Chakravarti, Shuddhabrata Sengupta, and social activists Harsh Mander and Banjoysna, according to the event poster.

"The discussion on Fractured Communities will proceed as planned, outside the SSS-I building, in the open," the JNUSU said, adding that they are also looking for an alternative venue.

In a post on its official X handle on Sunday, the JNU said the booking of the SSS-I auditorium had been cancelled because "full facts" about the programme scheduled for August 10 had not been disclosed.

"JNU is a democratic and decentralised institution. The permission was given by the Dean, SSS, who has taken action as well in cancelling the event," the university said.

"The booking of the auditorium SSS-I stands cancelled because of non-disclosure of the full facts about the program which is going to take place on 10th August 2026 from 3 pm to 6 pm," it added. (PTI)

Op Sindoor showed India will go to any extent to ensure its citizens' safety: Rajnath

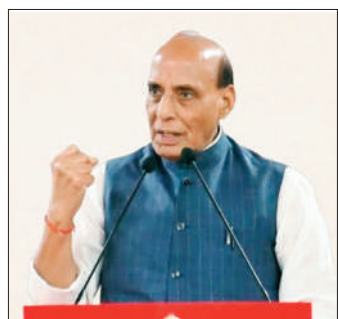
NEW DELHI, Aug 9: The Operation Sindoor demonstrated the unmatched valour of the country's armed forces, who sent a global message that India will go to any extent to ensure the safety of its citizens, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said on Sunday.

He was addressing an event held at the Base Hospital, Delhi Cantonment.

Singh commended the defence forces for eliminating terrorists and their handlers based in Pakistan and ensuring that those who dared to cast an evil eye on India faced dire consequences.

Indian armed forces conducted Operation Sindoor in May 2025 in response to the deadly Pahalgam terror attack.

"Operation Sindoor demonstrated the unmatched valour of our defence forces who sent a global message that India will go to any extent to ensure the safety of its citizens while protecting the



sindoor worn by our women," Singh said at the blood donation camp, titled 'Sindoor Maharak-tadan Yatra', at the Base Hospital here.

Drawing a parallel with the mega blood donation camp, Singh asserted that it represents compassion while Operation Sindoor showcased courage.

Approximately 1,000 wrestlers and athletes from Maharashtra were among the donors who participated in the camp, demonstrat-

ing the spirit of selfless service and solidarity with the armed forces, the defence ministry said in a statement.

Expressing gratitude to the donors, the Union minister expressed confidence that the blood donated today would serve as a credible reserve for needy soldiers and their families in the future.

He described blood donation as 'jivandan' and 'mahadan', stressing that despite remarkable advances in science and medicine, no artificial substitute for human blood has yet been developed.

Since (human) blood can only be produced by the human body and donated by one person to another, Singh said, blood donation remains "one of the noblest forms" of charity. He underlined that every blood donor and recipient is, in their own way, serving the nation, and urged the people, particularly the youth, to make blood donation a culture. (PTI)

Govt panel talks to man on hunger strike, urges him to end fast

RANCHI, Aug 9: The Jharkhand government committee set up to talk to students protesting the al-

JHARKHAND EXAM PROTEST

leged recruitment exam irregularities, on Sunday talked to Devendra Nath Mahto, one of the individuals who has been on an indefinite hunger strike for the past eight days, an official said. The condition of Mahto had deteriorated around 3 am. Doctors found that his blood glucose level was low.

Talking to Mahto through a video call, Higher and Technical Education Minister Sudivya Kumar, a member of the panel, inquired about his health and assured him that talks were underway and the issue would be resolved during the day. Mahto said that another panel member, minister Dipika Pandey Singh, also urged him to end the hunger strike.

Mahto said he would decide on it only after the delegates of the protesters returned from the meeting with the panel. The Jharkhand government has begun fresh talks on

Sunday with aspirants protesting alleged recruitment exam irregularities

for the 16th day now, with a prominent student faction terming the Hemant Soren dispensation's move "political manoeuvring".

The decision to hold another round of talks was taken after a series of meetings between the government and student groups on Friday night and throughout Saturday failed to break the deadlock.

The state government on Friday night held discussions with the JPSC-JSSC Reforms Manch which has been spearheading the agitation. Throughout the next day, it held four rounds of talks with different student groups, including the Congress's student wing NSUI, Jharkhand Chhatra Morcha (JCM) and Adivasi Chhatra Sangh (ACS).

However, since the meetings remained inconclusive, the government decided to hold a sixth round of talks with student representatives around 12 pm on Sunday. (PTI)

Amit Shah presents President's Colour to Puducherry Police

'The President's flag is the most honourable moment for any police force'

PUDUCHERRY, Aug 9: Union Home Minister Amit Shah presented the President's Colour to Puducherry Police on Sunday and praised the force for its commitment and dedication in ensuring the country's internal security. Referring to the government doing away with British-era criminal laws, including the Indian Penal Code (IPC), Shah said its replacement, the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) was enacted with the intention of ensuring justice to citizens.

In his address after presenting the President's Colour to the Union Territory's police force, he said the new criminal laws are based on the "three pillars of technology, timeline and trust."

The President's Colour is the highest honour given to a military unit or police force of a state or union territory. Past recipients of the honour include the Indian Navy, Indian Coast Guard and various state police departments.

President Droupadi Murmu had announced on May 8 the conferment of the honour on Puducherry police in recognition of its "exceptional service, discipline and distinguished



achievements".

Underlining the Centre's commitment to the UT's growth, Shah said Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision over the last 12 years has been to strengthen it. To make Puducherry strong, several development initiatives, including investments to the tune of ₹ 39,000 crore in the last nine years and road expansion activities worth thousands of crores of rupees, have been taken up, he said.

While the UT received about ₹ 3,500 crore in Central fund allocation between 1950 and 2014, the NDA government provided ₹ 13,762 crore

during the 2014-26 period to it, he added.

Various government initiatives, including Lakhpati Didi, Ujjwala and PM Awas schemes, direct benefit transfer and construction of toilets have benefited about seven lakh citizens in Puducherry, he said.

"Puducherry police has received the Nishaan (President's Colour). In this golden hour, let me assure on PM Modi's behalf, the government is committed to the union territory's development," Shah underlined. Shah praised the UT police force for its dedication and commitment to maintaining law and order in Puducherry, which is geographically spread across different states in the south: Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh (Yanam) and Kerala (Mahe). It has been playing a crucial role in the area of internal security for years, he added.

"The President's flag is the most honourable moment for any police force. Puducherry police may number around 5,000 but has been maintaining the UT's safety and its internal security. You don't do it due to any file or order but due to your sense of commitment and dedication." (PTI)

TN's political rights, representation in jeopardy due to delimitation: Congress

CHENNAI, Aug 9: Warning that Tamil Nadu's political rights and representation are at risk, the Congress on Sunday strongly opposed the BJP-led Centre's proposed delimitation exercise, calling it a direct threat to the voice of southern states.

Addressing a public rally organised by the Congress, MP Praveen Chakravarty and Tamil Nadu Congress Committee (TNCC) Chief Manickam Tagore claimed that the proposed delimitation would stifle the voice of southern states in Parliament.

Tagore pointed out that a uniform 50 per cent seat expansion would raise Tamil Nadu's representation (including Puducherry) from 40 to 60, while pushing Uttar Pradesh from 80 to 120, thereby widening the representation gap between the two states from 40 to 60 seats.

"Our position is clear: no delimitation and no increase in seats,"



Tagore said, advocating instead for reserving seats for women within the existing framework.

He termed political figures endorsing or facilitating the Centre's proposal as "modern-day Ettappans" (traitors) who are compromising the state's political authority.

Meanwhile, responding to queries regarding the DMK's stance and non-participation in the state government's recent meeting

on delimitation, DMK leader Kanimozhi Somu dismissed the event as a gathering "called just for name's sake".

Speaking at a blood donation drive in Chennai, Somu remarked that the current administration lacks administrative experience and standard operating procedures.

She asserted that under M K Stalin, the DMK has consistently fought for Tamil Nadu's fair share of parliamentary seats at the national level.

Addressing criticisms regarding her party's posture toward the BJP, Somu clarified that in politics, "nobody can be called a friend or an enemy," emphasising that the DMK will endorse whatever serves Tamil Nadu's best interests.

She also pushed back against Congress critiques, stating that the grand old party needs to hold responsibility and reflect on post-election developments. (PTI)

Ashmita stuns Han to win maiden BWF Tour title at Korea Masters

Assam's Ashmita Chaliha brings laurels to the country

ASAN (KOREA), Aug 9: India's Ashmita Chaliha produced a gritty show to secure her maiden BWF World Tour title with a fighting win over fourth seed Han Qian Xi of China in the women's singles final of the Korea Masters Super 300 badminton tournament here on Sunday.

The 26-year-old from Assam, who had suffered a career-threatening knee injury two years back in Korea, overcame a slow start and a testing decider to complete a memorable victory, recovering from the loss of the opening game to stun world No. 35 Han 14-21, 21-14, 21-14 in the summit clash that lasted 53 minutes.

"I feel really great and unbelievable. But then I am trying to digest it. Now, I am hungry for more," said Ashmita, who trains under Park Tae-Sang at the National Centre of Excellence in Guwahati.

"In the first game, it was a little bit tricky because of the drift conditions, so I was not able to manage it... But in the second, the other side was more comfortable and there was less drift, so I was able to control it. And in the third, after 11 points, I changed again, so I was on the good side. I'm glad that I could pull off."

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

Park, who has now seen two of his wards win Super 300 titles in successive weeks, believes Ashmita always had the tools to succeed but needed to become more consistent in her approach.

"Before the injury, Ashmita was already a good player and a very good talent. She has a



good smash and nice movement, but unfortunately, at the wrong time, she had to take a break because of the injury," the South Korean told PTI.

"When she joined me, I thought, 'Oh, she is a good player.' But tactically and strategically, and also a little bit mentally, she had some problems."

The world number 50 Ashmita had to undergo surgery and an extensive rehabilitation period after suffering a medial meniscus tear in her right knee during the Korea Open in 2024. She returned in February next year and played 14 events.

This year she competed in a couple of events but then spent three months building strength to handle a full elite BWF calendar

load.

She enjoyed a strong comeback on the BWF Tour with back-to-back quarterfinals at China Masters and Malaysia Masters and then a semifinal appearance at the Macau Open.

Ahead of Sunday's final, Park and Ashmita analysed Han's game on video, with the coach identifying unforced errors as the biggest obstacle.

"Yesterday, we also did a video analysis of her Chinese opponent. I told Ashmita, 'Your biggest problem is your own mistakes. You are making simple mistakes. But if you can reduce those simple mistakes, 100 per cent, I promise you, you can win the title today,'" Park said.

In the final, Ashmita opened up a 3-0 start and had a 9-5 lead early on but Han made a stirring comeback as the two players were locked at 11-11.

The Chinese shuttler found another gear and a run of points helped her establish control as she closed out the game comfortably to earn the bragging rights.

Ashmita responded strongly in the second game. She attacked with greater authority, using her smashes to put Han under pressure while also producing some sharp defensive returns to break off aft 6-6.

The Indian led 11-8 at the interval and continued to dictate the rallies thereafter.

Han struggled to close the gap as Ashmita maintained a comfortable advantage, moving 17-10 ahead before wrapping up the game 21-14 with another powerful attacking shot to force a decider.

The final game was closely fought early on, with Ashmita moving to a 5-2 lead early

on only to see Han edge ahead 11-9 at the mid-game break.

Ashmita, however, kept fighting and gradually turned the momentum in her favour. She moved ahead 12-11 with a precise winner along the line. Another exceptional shot, played while stretching low towards the shuttle, landed just inside the court as Chaliha extended her advantage to 15-11.

The Indian continued to find the gaps in Han's court and a cross-court winner made it 19-14. Han then sent her return wide, handing Ashmita the championship point and, ultimately, her first BWF World Tour title.

"In the first game, she played well. But in the second game, again, she started making easy mistakes. When the second game finished, I told her, 'Ashmita, think about the first game and think about the second game. What was the difference?' The reason was very simple. In the second game, you made too many mistakes," Park said.

"If you reduce those mistakes, you have a big chance because today's opponent, Han, is normally a rally player. She doesn't have a very powerful smash, she doesn't have much deception, and she is not particularly strong around the front court. She is mainly a rally, rally player... so I told her very strongly again, 'Ashmita, you have to change your game.'"

"At the beginning of the third game, up to 11 points, Han was playing a little faster than Ashmita. So I told Ashmita, 'From this point, you have to play more aggressively. You have a good smash and good power. Why are you making mistakes with drop shots? Why are you making mistakes with your clears? Just use your smash.' And she did it. The start of the third game was very good." (PTI)

Players are not machines, co-ordination between CoE, team management brilliant: Laxman



BENGALURU, Aug 9: Putting up a stout defence of BCCI's Centre of Excellence, its chief VVS Laxman on Sunday said the center should not be blamed for slow recovery of players as cricketers are not "machines" who meet recuperation timelines every time.

Laxman asserted that there is "seamless" coordination between CoE and team management.

Strike bowler Jasprit Bumrah, all-rounders Harshit Rana, Hardik Pandya, Washington Sundar and top-order batter B Sai Sudharsan are some of the players who have been recuperating from their respective injuries at the CoE at present.

"See, CoE is not just a rehab centre, but there are bigger roles to play for it in helping cricketers achieve excellence. So, we don't like to use the term 'blame' (for injuries) because when you're using that term, then you're finding someone as a scapegoat," Laxman told select media at the CoE.

"But there's brilliant coordination between the CoE and the team management of both the teams (men and women) and the SSM staff of both the teams. So that communication is happening seamlessly."

Laxman said given the stringent fitness parameters and nature of the human body, it's tough for a player to attain full fitness at a specific timeline.

"This is where I think it's very important to understand that the guidelines and the timelines are given based on what you expect. But it's the human body. It is not a machine where the timelines will always be met."

"So there's a continuous process of understanding how a player is progressing and based on that, the load is increased. So

that's a process from the time they are diagnosed with the injury to the time they leave the CoE and declare fit," he explained.

Laxman put his finger on the cases of Bumrah and Sudharsan to explain his point.

"Now you're talking about Bumrah and Sai Sudharsan. The process is that the selector reaches out to the CoE asking for the fitness status report and we collect it and send it to the selection committee chairman or chairperson in women's selection committee with a copy to the head coach of both the teams and the BCCI."

"Now Bumrah and Sudharsan, there's always an asterisk against their name. It means subject to fitness. So Bumrah and Sudharsan were going to be picked for Sri Lanka subject to fitness clearance."

"As I told before, we assess them, move them from one stage to the next stage and if the progression is slow, you communicate to the selection committee chairman and the head coach, which is happening seamlessly, and they understand that they're not yet ready to participate in an international series," he detailed.

But isn't it a massive concern to see a large pool of players getting consistently injured?

The former Indian cricketer downplayed the sequence and said injuries are part and parcel of a player's career.

"I don't think it's a cause of concern. But obviously, when someone is playing at the elite level, you're supposed to give value more than 100%."

"So I think ultimately, injuries are part and parcel of any player. So, if you're thinking about not getting injured, then you're not playing to the best of your ability," he said. (PTI)

Search on for Nitin Patel's replacement as CoE's head of sports medicine: Laxman

BENGALURU, Aug 9: The BCCI Centre of Excellence chief VVS Laxman on Sunday said the hunt for a suitable candidate to fill the role of Head of Sports Science and Medicine at the facility is still on despite Nitin Patel quitting the post almost 18 months ago.

In this interim, Dhananjay Kaushik, the senior physiotherapist, is handling the job at the CoE.

But the extended time to find a replacement for Patel is staggering because of the mounting injury cases among Indian cricketers.

However, Laxman said the delay is not due to BCCI's indifference.

"We are divided into four verticals. After Nitin left, we did not get anyone who can fill in that position. We had Andrew Leipus, and everything was agreed upon. In fact, (BCCI secretary) Devajit (Saikia) had two or three meetings with him but suddenly Andrew backed off citing family reasons," Laxman told select media at the BCCI CoE.

Laxman said moving to Bengaluru, where the CoE is based, was one of the mandatory criteria for the candidates who applied for the post.

"We conducted a full fledged interview process where we had Dr. Dinkar Pardiwalla, Dr. Ashish Soni, Dr. Rohan Khavte and myself, and we shortlisted five candidates and number one was an Australian. After selecting him, suddenly he also backed out saying he cannot move to Bangalore and it was one of the important conditions."

"It is a full time job and it is not a part time one. It is day to day monitoring. That professional did not join. Another professional was the head of sports science at All Blacks (New Zealand rugby team) and we engaged with him and he almost agreed but at the last moment he also backed off."

However, the 51-year-old said the current staff at CoE has stepped up in an excellent manner.

"To fill in the position, you require not someone of the stature but the knowledge and understanding of Indian cricketers. But I think a lot of

credit goes to the professionals who are already in the team because they have stepped up."

Laxman said they will be filling in the role at the earliest.

"So, I think the lookout is there, and you have to find someone who is qualified and capable enough to take up that position. So we will quite definitely fill that position and the suitable candidate has to be identified," he added. midst this news emerged that certain cricketers like Nitish Kumar Reddy opted to train with individual coaches in an effort to bump up his pace. Reddy is also recuperating at the CoE after suffering a hamstring injury. "And I think there's a lot of news which is happening. But as I said, the way we do it is the Indian team, S&C, is responsible for keeping a track of the contracted players. The S&Cs and the CoE are responsible to keep a track of the targeted and the age group players."

"Every session of the player is recorded and that's why we use the GPS. Whatever he's doing, it's documenting our player. And if you see the men and women team's trainer, Adrian (Le Roux), he's a world class trainer," Laxman said such individual training episodes have not come to his notice. "In 2002, I remember he was our first fitness trainer. And the quality of him has got no questions. So I'm sure he knows how to manage the contracted players. Their understanding of each and every player in their respective group is there."

"So I think the trust and the coordination between the S&C and the players, as far as my knowledge is concerned, is going on. So, if there's something else, that's news to me," he explained.

Laxman used the introduction of the Bronco test at CoE as an example of the current staff's commitment.

"There is one new introduction which is fantastic — which is Bronco test. As I mentioned that while you are playing, it is very important for you to remain fit. Now, Yo-Yo is one test through which we inspect the player's anaerobic capacity. (PTI)

FIFA defends Infantino against allegations tied to his time at UEFA

LONDON, Aug 9: FIFA has issued a statement defending its president, Gianni Infantino, against what it calls a "concerted and ongoing effort" to undermine his leadership of the organization.

The statement was released Saturday, a day after a report by British newspaper The Daily Telegraph raising questions about an exit package paid by UEFA to a female staffer who worked with Infantino when he was general secretary of European soccer's governing body.

UEFA confirmed that a "departure payment" was made to the employee and said it was "in line" with regulations at the time.

Infantino worked at UEFA for 16 years before being elected FIFA president.

In the statement Saturday, FIFA accused Infantino's critics of trying to weaken his authority and remove him from office without due process.

"It is increasingly evident that there is a concerted and ongoing effort by some to undermine FIFA and its president," the FIFA statement said. "Those who do not have the support of FIFA's member associations should not seek to achieve through allegation, insinuation or misinformation what they cannot achieve through FIFA's established democratic processes."

It said some reporting has included "unsubstantiated assertions and demonstrably false claims" which shouldn't be presented as fact.

"Change inevitably challenges established interests, but disagreement with that change cannot justify efforts to undermine the democratic mandate of FIFA's president or the institution he was elected to lead."

Infantino faced intense backlash after details of his plan to sell World Cup profits to private equity were published. UEFA and two other continental confederations — North America's CONCACAF and the Asian Football Confederation — rejected the plan.

He did receive backing from FIFA's management board last Wednesday following a meeting in Morocco, and he apologized over the process. UEFA's threat to have its 55 member countries boycott FIFA competitions until the plan was scrapped remained, with UEFA saying Thursday that the announcement "changes nothing."

While confirming the exit payment "was in line with the regulations that existed for departing staff at the time," UEFA said the rules had been tightened since 2016 and currently "reflect those found in a modern, high-profile organization." (AP)

Diego Rossi helps Monterrey to 2-1 Leagues Cup win over Messi-less Inter Miami



MIAMI, Aug 9: Diego Rossi scored the go-ahead goal in the 90th minute to help Monterrey to a 2-1 win over Inter Miami, which played without Lionel Messi, in the group stage of the Leagues Cup on Saturday night.

Messi returned to his native Argentina following the death of his father, Jorge, earlier in the day. It is not known when the 39-year-old star forward will return to the club.

The 39-year-old Messi took a two-week break after leading Argentina to a runner-up World Cup finish. He made his first appearance as a reserve when Inter Miami tied Columbus 2-2 in an MLS match Aug. 1. Messi then had two goals and an assist in Inter Miami's first Leagues Cup match — a 4-2 win against Atletico San Luis on Wednesday.

Miami (1-1-0, 3 points) won the 2023 Leagues Cup and reached the final last year, but its chances of advancing to the knockout stage appear bleak with one match remaining in its 18-team group.

The strike by Rossi, who was acquired July 3 from the Columbus Crew, capped a two-goal second half for Monterrey (1-1-0, 3 points). Rossi won the 2022 MLS Golden Boot for Los Angeles FC

and he helped Columbus to titles in the 2023 MLS Cup and 2024 Leagues Cup.

Monterrey erased a 1-0 halftime deficit on Hugo Cuypers' equalizer in the 47th minute. Cuypers was an 2026 MLS All-Star and scored 13 goals in 11 games this season for the Chicago Fire before his transfer to Monterrey on July 23.

Rodrigo De Paul put Inter Miami on the board with a strike from 25 yards that landed inside the left post in the 32nd minute.

As he celebrated the goal, De Paul temporarily removed his No. 7 jersey to reveal Messi's No. 10 in support of his national team and club teammate, which resulted in a yellow card. Monterrey defender Carlos Salcedo went off due to an injury in the 15th minute and was replaced by Jorge Rodriguez. (AP)

Basant Meghwal wins silver at World U20 C'ships

EUGENE (USA), Aug 9: Basant Kumar Meghwal won a silver in men's high jump event with a personal best effort to take India's medal tally to two at the World Athletics U20 Championships here.

The 19-year-old from Anupgarh, a border town in the Sri Ganganagar district of Rajasthan, sailed over 2.21m, his lifetime best, to clinch the silver medal on the fourth and penultimate day of the championships on Saturday.

Algeria's Younes Ayachi won the gold while Great Britain's Otis Poole took the bronze. All the three medalists could only clear 2.21m but failed all their three attempts to sail over 2.24m.

The positions were thus decided on countback based on the number of attempts to clear the previous height. (PTI)

From Olympic bronze with Sindhu to back-to-back Super 300s, Park's next act takes shape

NEW DELHI, Aug 9: Two Super 300 titles. Two different players. Two consecutive weeks.

For Park Tae-Sang, it is not just a fortnight of good results. It offers a glimpse of his work that he has been putting in Indian badminton, building players who, he hopes, can become the next generation of Indian stars.

Last Sunday, 17-year-old Tanvi Sharma won the Taipei Open. Seven days later, 26-year-old Ashmita Chaliha made a stunning comeback from a career-threatening knee injury to win the Korea Masters.

"It's been an amazing two weeks. Last week, Tanvi was also amazing. She is only 17 and won her first BWF-level title. Today, I was even happier because it was Ashmita's first final and she won the title. As a coach, I'm really happy," Park told PTI from Asan, Korea.

Park spent four years with PV Sindhu in Hyderabad, a stint that culminated in the Tokyo Olympics bronze medal.

After that association ended, he was approached by the Badminton Association of India about working with younger players.

"When I started working with Sindhu, she was already a world champion and had a group of good senior players around her. This time, I thought to myself, 'Okay, let's start from the beginning. I will build these players myself, with my own hands.'"

"The idea was to create a new generation of Indian players."

Bigger goal is Olympic qualifying race for 2028 LA Games

Three years in National Centre of Excellence, Guwahati and the results are beginning to show. However, Park sees the two titles as stepping stones to bigger achievements. "I think winning two BWF 300-level titles in the last two weeks is a good achievement, but they are only 300-level tournaments. The players are now looking towards the 500, 750 and 1000-level tournaments," he said.

"Our bigger goal is the same for both Tanvi and Ashmita. From May 1 next year, the Olympic qualifying race for the 2028 Los Angeles Games will begin, so next year is going to be very important."

"We will start playing more 500-level tournaments, and they can also play 750-level tournaments. After today's result,



Ashmita's world ranking should improve enough for her to enter some of those tournaments."

For Tanvi and Ashmita to genuinely challenge for an Olympic place, it's a tough road ahead.

"Yeah, 100 per cent. We will try. But we already have some very good players. Sindhu and Unnati (Hooda) are there,

right? It will be very tough."

The emphasis, however, remains on development rather than a wholesale change in approach.

"I don't want to change my training style. Now Ashmita and Tanvi have to follow my instructions and train very hard. I will take care of their endurance and their mental strength. They also need more on-

court speed training. These are the areas where I think they need to improve."

Look at An Se-young

Park also holds up world No. 1 An Se-young as the benchmark for the younger Indian players. "Actually, An Se-young is at another level. I tell my players that she should be their target. They have to aim for that level."

"Look at An Se-young. She keeps winning 750 and 1000-level tournaments. Look at her mentality and look at her physical strength. Both are really, really strong. So I tell my players, 'You have to target all of that. You have to learn from her level.'"

Tanvi and Ashmita have talent but need to learn how to manage the moments when momentum changes, he said.

"They sometimes take a big lead and then suddenly make an easy service mistake or an easy net mistake... At that time, I have to shout a little more, be stronger with them, and tell them to calm down."

"I always tell 'Aaramse'. You are doing well. Why are you rushing yourself? Why are you putting so much pressure on yourself to finish the point quickly?" "Calm

down. Aaramse.' It's an Indian Hindi word, and sometimes I think it is a very good word for them."

Now, players such as Devika Sihag, Unnati, Tanvi, Ashmita and others are pushing one another, creating the kind of competitive environment Park believes can accelerate development.

"I think this is a very good system and a very good motivation for the players. Before, there were only a few Indian women's singles players, mainly Sindhu and Saina."

"This year, Devika won the Thailand Masters. At that time, I told Tanvi and Ashmita, 'Look at Devika. She worked very hard, trained very hard and finally won the title. So what are you doing? What are you doing now?'" he said.

"Of course, they also have the ability to win titles. But sometimes they train a little harder for a period and then relax. Their movement becomes loose and they lose that intensity. That is when I have to shout at them. I tell them, 'You don't have time now to relax when you are a little tired. You have to push more. You have to work harder.'" (PTI)