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Assam flood situation critical; death toll 100, nearly 1.4 lakh affected



GUWAHATI, Aug 10: The flood situation in Assam remained critical on Monday as the toll touched 100 with two more deaths, while almost 1.4 lakh people reel under the deluge in seven districts, according to an official bulletin.

An official of the Assam State Disaster Management Authority (ASDMA) said several rivers are flowing above their danger mark, posing a threat to newer areas.

According to the authority's daily flood bulletin on Sunday night, two persons have lost their lives in the deluge in Golaghat and Karbi Anglong districts in 24 hours.

With these fatalities, the total number of deaths in this year's floods has increased to 100.

At present, 456 villages are inundated while 11,933.46 hectares of crop areas have been damaged across Assam.

According to ASDMA's daily flood report, more than 1,37,500 people have been affected in Charaideo, Darrang, Golaghat, Jorhat, Karbi Anglong, Nagaon and Sivasagar districts. Golaghat is the worst-hit with almost 70,000 people affected, followed by Sivasagar with nearly 40,000 people and Jorhat with more than 16,000 people reeling under floodwaters.

An ASDMA official said that the Dhansiri river at Golaghat and Numaligarh, and the Kushiara river at Sribhumi are flowing above the danger level. "Due to a steady rise in the water level of Dhansiri in Golaghat district, people have been advised to stay away from the river," she added.

ASDMA said that the administration has been operating 125 relief camps and relief distribution centres in six districts, taking care of 49,061 people at present. (PTI)

Chhattisgarh govt pledges ₹ 5 cr aid for Assam flood victims

RAIPUR, Aug 10: The Chhattisgarh government will give ₹ 5 crore for relief and rehabilitation of people affected by floods in Assam, officials said on Monday.

Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai spoke to his Assam counterpart Himanta Biswa Sarma over the phone on Sunday and took stock of the flood situation in the northeastern state, an official said.

Sai expressed deep sympathy for families affected by the floods and said the people of Chhattisgarh stand

in solidarity with their brothers and sisters in Assam during this difficult hour caused by the natural calamity.

The CM decided to provide ₹ 5 crore from the Chhattisgarh government to support ongoing relief and rehabilitation efforts in Assam's flood-affected areas, the official said.

The flood situation in Assam remained critical on Monday as the death toll touched 100, while almost 1.4 lakh people reel under the deluge in seven districts, according to an official bulletin. (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Firing along Arunachal border leaves at least 12 Assam residents injured

Clash erupts over alleged land encroachment along inter-state boundary CM deposes minister for talks as border tension escalates*

NORTH LAKHIMPUR, Aug 10: At least 12 people from Assam were injured in alleged firing by miscreants from Arunachal Pradesh along the interstate border in Dhemaji district on Monday over encroachment of land, police said.

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said he has deputed one cabinet minister to hold talks with the Arunachal Pradesh government to hammer out the differences, and the DGP and chief secretary are already in touch with their respective counterparts.

According to a senior official, the incident took place in the morning at Mingmang Basti along the Assam-Arunachal Pradesh border in Gogamukh revenue circle of Gerukamukh police station.

The clash erupted following a dispute in connection with alleged en-

croachment by people from Arunachal Pradesh over land in Assam, police said.

As per preliminary information, the miscreants from across the border allegedly opened indiscriminate fire targeting residents of Assam, the official said.

The injured have been identified as Durgheswar Patir, Rohit Dole, Nagaraj Dole, Biggeswar Patir, Pame Pegu, Sanjay Tayung, Utpal Dole and Jan Dole, while the identities of four persons are yet to be ascertained, he said.

All the injured were initially admitted to Gogamukh Rural Hospital. Seven of them were later referred to Dhemaji Civil Hospital in a critical condition, officials said.

Out of them, four critically injured were shifted to the Assam Medical College and Hospital for advanced



treatment, they said.

"Security has been stepped up in the border area and further details are awaited," the senior official said.

Meanwhile, Sarma speaking to reporters on the sidelines of an official function at Sonapur near Guwahati,

said that a "localised incident" was reported in Dhemaji along the Assam-Arunachal Pradesh boundary.

"There is nothing to do at the state level as such. The situation has been promptly brought under control and the tension has been defused," he

said. Sarma said Education Minister Ranaj Pegu has been deputed to solve the matter and he is in touch with his counterpart from the neighbouring state.

"Our DGP is also in touch with his counterpart, and the CS is communicating with the Arunachal Pradesh government," he said.

Assam and Arunachal Pradesh share a 804.1-km border. There are 1,200 points of dispute along the border between the two states.

The Assam government had on July 29 told the state assembly that Arunachal Pradesh has encroached upon 16,144.01 hectares of land. Out of these, Arunachal Pradesh claims 858.91 sq km.

Both the states have constituted 12 regional committees for resolving the border dispute, and are taking steps to (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

SC asks authorities to set up to 2 special courts to deal with Manipur violence cases probed by CBI, NIA

NEW DELHI, Aug 10: The Supreme Court on Monday asked the Manipur and Assam governments and others to consider setting up two special trial courts to exclusively hear CBI and NIA cases arising from the 2023 ethnic violence in Manipur.

Taking stock of the status of investigations into cases arising from the ethnic violence in Manipur, a bench comprising Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justices Joymalya Bagchi and V Mohana also directed the authorities to compile details of cases in which chargesheets have been filed so that victims, their families and legal counsel can access the relevant records.

The bench also directed the registrar general of the high court concerned to submit a status report on the issue before the next date of hearing.

"The authorities shall consider setting up two separate exclusive courts, one for dealing with the CBI cases and another for dealing with the NIA cases arising out of the Manipur violence. The registrar general of the high court shall submit a status report in this regard before the next date of hearing," the bench ordered.



The CJI said the bench had devised a mechanism for monitoring the investigation and also issued directions regarding reports concerning such probes.

The bench said there were cases where chargesheets have been filed.

"The request is that particulars of those cases, including the relevant case numbers and status of the proceedings, be made available so that the legal counsel as well as the families concerned have access to the reports

and proceedings. We accept the request and direct that the relevant particulars and reports be compiled and placed before the court," the bench said.

"We have also considered the status reports regarding the cases investigated by the CBI and the NIA and the courts before which the charge sheets have been filed. It has been pointed out that there are Special Judges dealing with CBI and NIA cases," it said.

The bench said its concern was whether these courts are dealing exclusively with the CBI and NIA cases arising out of the Manipur violence or whether they are also dealing with other cases.

It then asked the authorities to consider setting up two separate exclusive courts, one for dealing with the CBI cases and another for dealing with the NIA cases arising out of the Manipur violence.

The bench also noted the facts about attacks on Assam Rifles and protests seeking NRC (National Register of Citizens) before the census. "As regards the safety and security situation in Manipur, joint action by the Manipur Police and security forces has strengthened the (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

'Nasha Mukh Yuva' competition held in Diphu to promote drug-free society

HT Bureau

DIPHU, Aug 10: The MY Bharat Kendra organised a one-day district-level competition on the national theme "Nasha Mukh Yuva" under the Viksit Bharat programme at Kala Kendra here on Monday.

The competition, aimed at creating awareness among youths about the harmful effects of drug and substance abuse and promoting a drug-free society, featured folk songs, dance, mini acts, painting, debate, short film and reel-making, slogan writing and slam poetry.

Around 250 participants in the age group of 15 to 29 years took part in various competitions. District Youth Officer (DYO), MY Bharat Kendra, Diphu, Lavangshu Bagri said the event was organised at the district level and the winners would get an opportunity to compete at the state level.

"The initiative was part of a campaign to build a drug-free society in line with the vision of Prime Minister Narendra Modi for a developed India," he added.

A certificate distribution ceremony was also held later, where Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC) executive member (EM) in charge of Education Department, Richard Tokbi, attended as the chief guest.

Addressing the gathering, Tokbi said a drug-free India was an essential component of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of making India a developed nation by 2047.

He further said the responsibility of realising this vision rested significantly with the younger generation.

"Our visionary Prime Minister Narendra Modi ji has dreamt of making India a developed country by 2047. However, to realise this dream, there lies a big responsibility on our youths. The vision of Viksit Bharat can only be realised when our youths are educated, healthy, skilled and free from all addictions," he avowed.

Tokbi said a nation could not be built merely through roads and factories but also through strong character and sound minds. Highlighting the dangers of addiction, he said it affected individuals, families and society.

"Individually, it ruins health, wastes talent and breaks families. At the family level, it brings pain, debt and conflicts, while at the societal level, we lose productive citizens and our social fabric is weakened," he stated.

He further observed that every young person lost to drugs represented a potential doctor, teacher, innovator or other productive citizen who might never contribute to society.

Tokbi urged students to remain engaged in constructive activities such as education, sports, music and skill development instead of falling prey to addiction. He said the government had taken several initiatives to keep (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Bangladesh seeks Hasina's extradition again as India's envoy meets PM Rahman



DHAKA, Aug 10: Bangladesh on Monday once again sought the extradition of former premier Sheikh Hasina from India during High Commissioner Dinesh Trivedi's first meeting with Prime Minister Tarique Rahman in Dhaka, amid fresh strains in ties between the two countries. The meeting also "covered a range of important bilateral issues", the Bangladesh prime minister's office said in a statement.

According to a post on X by the Indian High Commissioner in Dhaka, Trivedi conveyed greetings from Prime Minister Narendra Modi and India's intent to work with the Bangladesh government and people in a "positive, constructive and forward-looking manner".

Rahman also met Bangladesh Home Affairs Minister Salahuddin Ahmed on Monday, and Foreign Affairs Minister Khalilur Rahman on Sunday.

The meetings took place 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 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 had hurt the sentiments of its people and could adversely affect efforts to improve bilateral ties with India. They described Hasina as an "absconding, convicted genocider".

However, India's Ministry of External Affairs on August 7 said 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.

"Bangladesh hopes that India will expedite the process of extraditing Sheikh Hasina," said the Bangladesh PMO statement on Monday. (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Shah's statement offer fails to end Parl deadlock; Cong sticks to 3 demands

NEW DELHI, Aug 10: The government's offer for a debate and Home Minister Amit Shah's reply on student protests and police action failed to end the over three-week-long stalemate in Parliament on Monday, with the Congress insisting that Prime Minister Narendra Modi reply to a discussion on the alleged donation theft at the Ram temple in Ayodhya.

Upping the ante, the Congress asserted that the two issues cannot be delinked and Rahul Gandhi demanded Shah's resignation, but the government hit back, with Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju saying only a "coward" runs away from discussion by "giving excuses".

The Monsoon session, which began on July 20, has been witnessing repeated disruptions due to protests by a combative Opposition on the issues of student protest on NEET paper leak and Ram temple donation theft.

With the session slated to conclude on Thursday, there is a question mark on the fate of the crucial women's reservation amendment bill, which fell in the last session, and the Foreign Contributions (Regulation) Amendment Bill.

Of the nine bills cleared by the Lok Sabha, debate could take place only on two, while the rest



were cleared without discussion amid noisy opposition protests.

Amid the logjam, Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju announced on Monday that the government is ready for a full-fledged discussion in the Lok Sabha on the student protests and police action across the country and Union Home Minister Shah will reply to the debate, provided the opposition promises not to disrupt and listens peacefully. (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

India donates five peacocks to UN Geneva, reviving decades-old tradition

The five young peacocks comprise four blue peafowl and one white-feathered male

UNITED NATIONS, Aug 10: India has donated five Indian peacocks, including a rare white-feathered one, to the United Nations Office at Geneva (UNOG), reviving a decades-old tradition.

At a special ceremony held on Friday, India's Permanent Representative to the UN in Geneva, Arindam Bagchi, formally handed over the five peacocks to UNOG Director-General Tatiana Valovaya, highlighting the country's rich natural heritage and commitment to multilateralism.

The five young peacocks comprise four blue peafowl and one white-feathered male, reflecting the



blue and white colours associated with the United Nations.

The donation marks the second time India has presented peacocks to

UNOG. In 1981, then prime minister Indira Gandhi sent a breeding pair from the Delhi Zoo.

"The Indian Peacock, a symbol of grace, beauty and resilience, represents India's enduring commitment to the conservation of biodiversity and environmental stewardship," the Indian mission said. Valovaya expressed appreciation to the Indian government for the gesture, according to a statement issued by the Permanent Mission of India in Geneva.

"It's really a dream habitat for them," said Tobias Blaha, Director of Geneva Bioparc zoo, which will oversee the birds' care along with UN staff. (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Mizoram cabinet approves 'Ro Min Rel Sak Ang Che' as state song

AIZAWL, Aug 10: The Mizoram cabinet on Monday approved Mizo devotional and patriotic song 'Ro Min Rel Sak Ang Che' as the official state song, an official said.

The cabinet also approved a structured mechanism for payment of Non-Practising Allowance (NPA) to government doctors and a slew of legislative proposals.

The decisions were taken at a Council of Ministers meeting chaired by Chief Minister Lalduhoma, where 24 agendas or proposals tabled by various departments were approved.

An official resolution may be moved during the upcoming monsoon session of the assembly, beginning August 25, to formally adopt

the state song, he said.

Composed by Mizo writer and composer Rokunga in 1947, 'Ro Min Rel Sak Ang Che' (Be Thou our Counsellor), the song has long been considered the state anthem although it lacked official recognition.

In 2022, the Mizoram government under the MNF directed all schools across the state to sing the song before classes commence.

The cabinet also approved the amalgamation of the Directorate of Land Revenue and Settlement and the Directorate of Registration and Stamps under the Director of Land Revenue and Settlement, the official said. The move is aimed at bringing the two related functions under a unified administrative structure, he

said. The meeting also approved the structured implementation of NPA for government doctors under the Mizoram Health Service, addressing a long-pending service-related issue concerning doctors in the state, he said. It further approved amendments to the Mizoram New Defined Contributory Pension Scheme, 2010, to enhance benefits for subscribers to the National Pension System (NPS).

On the legislative front, the cabinet cleared several Bills and proposed amendments, including the Mizoram Floodplain Zoning Bill, 2026, Mizoram Goods and Services Tax (Second Amendment) Bill, 2026, Mizoram Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (Facilitation & Promotion) (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

TRAI directs use of 1601-series for service, transactional calls by utilities, logistics cos

NEW DELHI, Aug 10: The Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) on Monday directed the use of a separate 1601-series number for transactional and service calls by entities in sectors other than Banking, Financial Services & Insurance (BFSI) and Government.

In the first phase, the 1601 number series will cover transactional and service calls made by entities in utilities, courier and logistics sectors, TRAI said, making it clear that such dedicated number series should not be used for promotional voice calls by any entity.

At present, the 1600-series numbers are allotted for service and transactional calls by the BFSI sector and Government entities.

The telecom regulator said that considering the critical and sensitive nature of communications made by the entities in the BFSI sector and Government, a separate series of 1601 has been issued for other sectors in order to avoid mixing of important financial voice calls with the service and transactional calls from the other sectors.

"After widespread adoption of the 1600-series numbers for service and transactional calls by BFSI sector entities, which has provided valuable experience for extending the trusted numbering framework to the other sectors also, TRAI has now initiated phase-wise implementation of the 1601-series allotted by the DoT (Department of Telecom) for similar calls by the entities in sectors other than the BFSI sector and Government," TRAI said.

According to the regulator, based on consultations with stakeholders, it has been decided to implement 1601-series, covering entities in utilities, courier and logistics sectors under Phase-I.

The 1601-series numbers will be allocated directly to eligible entities, and not to intermediaries or aggregators, after



due verification by the telecom service providers (TSPs).

Their adoption is, therefore, expected to become an important tool in combatting impersonation by fraudsters who use normal 10-digit numbers and falsely claim to represent legitimate businesses, TRAI said.

Moreover, the distinct numbering identity will enable consumers to easily identify legitimate service and transactional calls, thereby strengthening trust in such voice-based communications, as per TRAI.

Accordingly, the 1601-series shall be initially allocated to the eligible entities in the utilities and logistics and courier services space. The category of utilities entails electricity distribution companies, water utilities, city gas distribution companies, LPG distribution entities and similar other utility service providers. The logistics and courier services companies would include courier firms, express logistics companies, parcel delivery service providers, as well as freight and logistics service providers engaged in delivery of consignments.

The telecom operators have been asked to complete migration and onboarding of eligible entities covered under the first phase within 90 days.

"The TSPs shall verify the eligibility of entities before assigning 1601-series

numbers, and obtain an undertaking from them regarding exclusive use of these numbers for service and transactional voice calls," TRAI said.

It is pertinent to mention that while TRAI mandated the use of 1600 series numbers for service and transaction calls by regulated banking, financial services and insurance or BFSI entities, and government-to-citizen communications, the 140 series numbers are for promotional calls by registered entities across sectors.

Last month, there was a standoff between TRAI and Truecaller over the display of tags on dedicated 140 and 1600 number series. Truecaller alleged that spam calls have surged after TRAI mandated the use of dedicated 140 and 1600 number series while preventing caller ID apps from displaying community-reported spam information for those numbers. The regulator hit back, saying Truecaller should display a label informing users that they can "exercise their choice" to block unwanted communication from the 140 series through TRAI's official Do Not Disturb (DND) preference management app.

TRAI has repeatedly cautioned call management apps and users that under no circumstances should the 1600 number be tagged as such, given that this series is used for service and transaction calls by regulated entities of the BFSI sector (entities regulated by RBI, SEBI, IRDAI and PFRDA) to their existing customers and by government entities for government-to-citizen communication.

What this implies is calls from the 1600 series could range from fraud alerts to transaction verification, and tagging or labelling them in any form may have adverse consequences for consumers.

According to a recent TRAI report, as many as 1.15 billion calls originated from 1600 dedicated series numbers during Q1 FY2026-27. (PTI)

PhonePe launches fixed deposit distribution with banks, NBFCs



HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Aug 10: PhonePe has launched Fixed Deposit (FD) distribution on its platform in partnership with leading banks and NBFCs, enabling users to discover, compare and book FDs digitally through the app.

As part of the expansion of its financial services portfolio, PhonePe, in partnership with Shivalik Small Finance Bank, has also introduced a Daily Recurring Deposit (RD) product that allows users to build a regular savings

habit with investments starting from ₹100 a day. The FD facility enables users to book deposits directly through the PhonePe app and manage deposits across multiple partner banks.

FDs booked with partner banks are insured up to ₹5 lakh by the Deposit Insurance and Credit Guarantee Corporation (DICGC), as per RBI guidelines.

Users can select tenures ranging from seven days to 10 years and complete the booking process digitally.

The Daily RD allows users to automate investments ranging from ₹100 to ₹1,000 per day through UPI Autopay.

According to PhonePe, users can withdraw funds after seven days or stop the mandate, while a 15-day consecutive grace period is provided for missed investments without penalties.

Deep Agrawal, VP and Head of Payments at PhonePe, said the launch of FD distribution and the Daily RD was aimed at making traditional savings instruments more accessible through a fully digital process. To book an FD or Daily RD, users can select the relevant option under the "Mutual Funds & Deposit" section of the PhonePe app and choose a partner bank or NBFC.

They can then select the investment amount and tenure, complete PAN and Aadhaar-based digital verification, add nominee details and make the payment through UPI or net banking.

For Daily RD, users can authorise the UPI Autopay mandate.

PhonePe said the platform also allows users to manage and withdraw their FDs and Daily RDs through the app.

Maldives tobacco tax cut revives debate on balanced taxation

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Aug 10: The Maldives' decision to halve cigarette import duty following a reported surge in illicit tobacco trade has renewed debate over the need to balance tobacco taxation with effective enforcement, public health and revenue objectives.

The Maldives recently reduced cigarette import duty from MVR 8 to MVR 4 per pack after authorities reported that earlier tax increases had contributed to the growth of the illicit tobacco market, affecting legal sales and government revenue. The policy review has drawn attention internationally, particularly as the Maldives received the World Health Organization's 2024 World No Tobacco Day Award for strengthening tobacco-control measures, including tobacco taxation.

Maldives Minister of Finance and Planning Moosa Zameer told Parliament that the decision followed discussions with the WHO and was aimed at curbing the expanding illicit tobacco market, which authorities said had grown after previous tax increases.

Public health and policy experts said the development highlights the importance of combining tobacco taxation with strong enforcement, supply-chain monitoring and sustained action against illicit trade.

Dr Nandini Sharma, former Dean and Director Professor, Community Medicine, Maulana Azad Medical College, said tobacco taxation remained among the most effective public health measures



for reducing consumption, but its effectiveness depended on strong enforcement and coordinated action against illicit trade.

Dr Meenakshi N, Family Physician and Public Health Expert at Apollo Hospital, Noida, said the Maldives experience demonstrated the need for evidence-based taxation backed by effective enforcement. She said unchecked illegal markets could undermine both public health objectives and government revenues. Experts also pointed to the experiences of Bhutan and Australia, where illicit tobacco markets have posed challenges to tobacco control and taxation policies.

For India, they said, the experience underlined the importance of a comprehensive approach combining appropriate taxation with regulatory compliance, intelligence-led enforcement, stronger border controls, supply-chain monitoring and coordinated action against illicit tobacco trade.

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Firing along Arunachal border

resolve these issues based on recommendations of the panels, the officials said.

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

A MoU in this regard was later signed by the two CMs in New Delhi on April 20, 2023.

Out of the 123 villages claimed by Arunachal Pradesh, the differences in 71 villages have been resolved, and the process is on to address the issues in the remaining 52 villages, they said. Arunachal Pradesh was a centrally-administered region initially after Independence and became a Union Territory later, before attaining full statehood in 1987.

After Arunachal Pradesh achieved statehood, a tripartite committee was appointed which recommended that certain territories be transferred from Assam to Arunachal Pradesh. Assam contested this and the matter is in the Supreme Court. (PTI)

SC asks authorities to set up

process of recovery of arms and ammunition, as well as arrests. With respect to the law-and-order situation, the CBI and NIA shall be facilitated so that they are able to carry out their investigation uninterrupted," it said. The state of Manipur, as well as the central agencies and security agencies, shall extend necessary support and coordination to ensure the proper functioning of the system and maintenance of security, including the safety of students, it said.

During the hearing, the bench was informed by Additional Solicitor General Aishwarya Bhati that the CBI has investigated 31 cases, with final reports filed in 27, including 22 chargesheets and five closure reports.

Four cases remain under investigation. Of the 22 CBI cases in which chargesheets have been filed, cognisance has been taken in 20, while it is pending in two, she added. Only one of these cases is triable by a magistrate, with the remaining matters being Sessions trials and all CBI cases have been transferred to Gauhati, the law officer said. The NIA, which was entrusted with 30 cases, has filed chargesheets in 15, while investigations are continuing in the remaining 15, she told the bench.

"The 15 charge-sheeted cases are ripe for trial despite further investigation continuing, and charges have been framed in seven of them," she said. "Of the 15 NIA cases in which chargesheets have been filed, two are before a Delhi court, five before courts in Gauhati and eight in Manipur," she said.

During the hearing, senior advocate Vrinda Grover raised concerns over the availability of status reports and chargesheets, saying victims and their families had not received documents despite earlier directions. Responding to the submissions, the law officer said the bench has been seized of the matter since 2023 and had put in place a mechanism for monitoring investigations as well as a committee to examine other issues arising from the violence.

She said raising the broader issues again at this stage would take the matter back to its initial stage and submitted that the focus should be on the chargesheets and cases where trials were to proceed. The ethnic violence in Manipur broke out on May 3, 2023, following a Tribal Solidarity March organised in the hill districts to protest against the demand for Scheduled Tribe status by the majority Meitei community. More than 200 people have been killed, several hundred injured and thousands displaced since then. (PTI)

Chhattisgarh govt pledges

Several rivers were flowing above their danger mark, posing a threat to newer areas. More than 1,37,500 people have been affected in Charaideo, Darrang, Jorhat, Karbi Anglong, Nagaon and Sivasagar districts, as per official data. (PTI)

Bangladesh seeks Hasina's

"The meeting covered a range of important bilateral issues between Bangladesh and India. The prime minister stressed the need to create a suitable environment to further strengthen bilateral relations between the two countries," it said after the meeting, which lasted for around half an hour. Trivedi's meeting with Rahman was his first courtesy call with the prime minister, more than six weeks after he joined as India's High Commissioner in Dhaka with the status of a Union Minister. Trivedi, a senior leader of India's ruling Bharatiya Janata Party, is the first politician to occupy this diplomatic position.

During Monday's meeting, Rahman also took up the matter pertaining to the extradition of the accused in the case of student-leader Osman Hadi's murder last year. "Bangladesh reiterated its request to India to return the killers involved in the murder of Shahid Osman Hadi," the statement said. Hadi, a prominent activist during the student-led movement that ousted Hasina in 2024, was killed in an attack in December 2025 that triggered renewed political tensions in Bangladesh.

The issue assumed significance as three suspects in the case were arrested in India in March and are currently in judicial custody in West Bengal. India has agreed to extradite the suspects back to Bangladesh following the due process.

Hasina was ousted in August 2024 following violent student-led protests and fled to India. In November 2025, she was sentenced to death in absentia by a special tribunal in Bangladesh over alleged "crimes against humanity" during the crackdown on protesters.

Dhaka has since been seeking her extradition from India.

The Bangladesh government maintains that Hasina shall have to surrender and face the law if she returns. After meeting the prime minister, Trivedi on Monday paid a courtesy call on home minister Salahuddin Ahmed, with the discussions focusing on furthering bilateral relations and areas of common interest, including security cooperation between the two countries, the Indian mission said.

Ahmed had earlier warned that India could not simultaneously pursue friendly relations with Dhaka while giving refuge to Hasina.

The details of the meeting between Trivedi and Bangladeshi foreign minister Khalilur Rahman were not shared by any of the sides. The latest diplomatic engagement comes against the backdrop of an uneasy reset in India-Bangladesh ties after Rahman's Bangladesh Nationalist Party came to power in February, following a period of strained relations under the interim government over issues that include Hasina's extradition, border-related matters and Dhaka's foreign policy tilt towards China.

Trivedi on Sunday said a meeting between Rahman and Modi could help resolve problems in bilateral ties. "When two leaders meet, a lot of problems are solved. I have full confidence [about the problem resolution through the meeting]," he said. (PTI)

Shah's statement offer fails

The minister said the Congress and Rahul Gandhi have been demanding a statement from Home Minister Amit Shah from day one, and the opposition party should not walk out during his statement. "It should not be scared," he said in the Lok Sabha. Rijiju's announcement came shortly after a meeting of the Business Advisory Committee (BAC) of the Lok Sabha where the agenda of the House for the next three days was discussed with members from different political parties.

Shah has not been seen in the House in the ongoing session even though he has been regularly coming to Parliament House complex. "We have made it clear to the BAC of the Lok Sabha that the government is ready for a full-fledged discussion on the student and youth agitations that have been going on in different parts of the country as well as police action. The Home Minister will give a point-by-point reply to the debate on behalf of the government," Rijiju told reporters after the BAC meeting in Parliament House complex.

However, he said the opposition has to assure that they will take part in the debate peacefully and will not disrupt the proceedings. They will listen to the Home Minister's reply and "will not run away" after creating turmoil and sloganeering by citing some excuses. Asked by the media whether the issue of alleged theft of donation will also be discussed in Parliament, he said the Uttar Pradesh government's probe through an SIT and several other steps at the state government level have been going on. The Congress, however, said Rijiju's statement was to "mislead" the Opposition and accused the government of running away from its responsibility. Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi asserted that the question was never about whether Shah can give a speech in Parliament on "general issues". "The question was that Home Minister Shah has to make it clear who authorised the shooting of our children in Delhi. He is the home minister; pellet guns were fired," Gandhi said, adding he must come clean whether he gave the firing orders or not. If Shah ordered it, he is culpable, and if he did not know, he is incompetent, Gandhi said, adding that either way Shah "should go".

Gandhi also said that the prime minister should apologise for the police action on students during the Janta Mantar protest.

The third issue is the donation "theft" at Ram temple, he said addressing a press conference alongside Congress president Mallikarju Kharge. Kharge said the Opposition wanted a discussion the two issues. But the government did not say anything for 14-15 days, which shows that they did not want a discussion. "Under Modi ji's trusted trustees, theft of donations took place. We wanted the guilty punished and the PM to make a statement, but the government did not pay heed to it," he said. Kharge said PM Modi should apologise because "lakhs of people have faith in the Ram temple". "These three issues are non-negotiable. We are fighting on all three issues. We stand firm on these three issues; the government must reply on this," he asserted.

The student protests led by the Cockroach Janta Party (CJP) at Jantar Mantar here started on June 20 and culminated after 36 days on July 25 following the resignation of Dharmendra Pradhan as education minister and acceptance of other demands by the government.

The discontent split over into a massive march to Parliament on July 20, which witnessed a strong police response involving lathicharge and the use of tear gas shells. Reacting to the Congress' demands, Rijiju said it will now be clear to everyone as to who runs away from discussion. "Whether Congress has the guts to witness the reply of the Home Minister, we will see." "When the Home Minister is ready, Rahul Gandhi is running away. You level allegations and then run away. This is no good in democracy. You have to face it. I want to tell Rahul Gandhi that you should not run away by giving excuses.

"Now he is demanding a statement from the Prime Minister, an apology. This is nothing but drama. Only a coward runs away from discussion. Who is a coward? One who demands a debate but runs away when a debate takes place," he said. (PTI)

'Nasha Mukh Yuva' competition held

youths active and healthy through development of sports infrastructure and creation of opportunities for skill development. "Our government's Nasha Mukh Bharat initiative is not only about saying no to drugs, but about saying yes to life, yes to music, sports, skills and education," he added. He also called upon students, families, communities and society to play their respective roles in preventing drug abuse, adding, "While students should choose discipline over distraction and have the courage to say no to drugs, families should communicate with and support young people at an early stage."

Communities, he said, should help those struggling with addiction, while society must work to prevent the illegal supply of drugs and support rehabilitation efforts. Tokbi thanked the organisers for taking up the important cause of creating a drug-free society through the district-level competition. Speaking on the occasion, vice-president of BJYM Assam Pradesh, Jiten Bey, said such programmes should be organised regularly to sensitise youths about the harmful effects of drugs and guide them towards a productive future.

He also urged youths to shun drugs, focus on education and engage in various economic activities for a prosperous future.

The certificate distribution ceremony was also attended by KAAC EM Kadam Terangpi, DY0 Lavangshu Bagri, vice-chairperson of Manja Municipal Board Joya Jigdang and judges Kaban Rongpharpi, instructor at the Karbi Traditional Music, Culture & Research Institute, Diphu, and Maggie Katharpi, assistant professor in the English Department of Diphu Government College. Other judges included Thong Timung, Head Teacher of Hanjianglangso Karbi Traditional Music School (KTMS), Semson Engti, head teacher of KTMS, Dengkimo Apam and sculpture Satyendra Terang.

India donates five peacocks

The peacocks will initially remain in an enclosed habitat for around three months before being allowed to roam freely in Ariana Park, where the UN's European headquarters is located. The 46-hectare Ariana Park is one of the biggest and most prestigious parks in Geneva. The City of Geneva made the park available initially to the League of Nations and then to the United Nations for its offices, for as long as the UN exists. Peacocks have been part of Ariana Park for more than a century, with the tradition predating the establishment of the League of Nations and the United Nations. The tradition dates back to Swiss archaeologist and art collector Gustave Revilleod, who bequeathed the estate where the UN complex now stands to the city of Geneva in 1890. Most of the birds that visitors can see today were donated to the UNOG in 1997 by a zoo in Japan.

India's donation adds to the biodiversity of the UN premises and reflects the country's natural heritage and cultural ethos, the Indian mission said. The gesture also underscores India's longstanding partnership with the UN and reaffirms its commitment to multilateralism and international cooperation, it added. (PTI)

Mizoram cabinet approves

Bill, 2026, Mizoram Industrial Area (Management, Regulation & Control) (Amendment) Bill, 2026, and the Mizoram Land Survey and Settlement Operation Bill, 2026. The fresh bills and amendments are likely to be tabled in the upcoming assembly session, the official said. Among other decisions, the cabinet approved the creation of six new posts in the Mizoram Electricity Regulatory Commission and absorption of 15 retained posts from the Joint Electricity Regulatory Commission.

The cabinet further approved a 12 per cent Special Incentive Allowance on basic pay for police personnel deputed to the Inquiry Wing under the Mizoram Lokayukta, enhancement of advertisement rates for local newspapers, and regularisation of certain provisional and contractual employees under the Mizoram State Commission for Protection of Child Rights. (PTI)

No.JDB/15th-FC/13/Pr-II/2025-26/8719 Date 10/08/2026

NOTICE INVITING TENDER

Sealed Tenders affixing a non-refundable Court fee stamp amounting Rs. 8.25 (Rupees eight & twenty five paise) only with a validity period of 180 Days which will subsequence to be converted and drawn up in the printed of F-2 form are invited from the registered Contractor of Class-I (A, B, C), Class-II, Class-III category of Assam PWD (Roads & Building) and BTC for the following works under 15th-FC(Untied) fund for the year 2025-26 during 2026-27 under Jalah Dev. Block of BTC area. The Tenders will be received by the undersigned up to **2.30PM on 02/09/2026** and will be opened on the same date & place at 3.30PM.

Sl. No.	Name of Scheme	Tender Value (In Rs.)	Bid Security	Cost of BID documents (D/D) @ 0.03% (Approx.)	Time of Completion
1	Const. of road at Koklabari Dakshin Supa from Duba Brahma house to Laben Basumatary house (Active Code-128494728)	Rs.10,00,000/-	Rs. 10,000/- @ 1% for ST/SC/OBC & Rs. 20,000/- @ 2% for General	Rs. 300/-	3 (Three) months from the date of issue of work order

Details NIT may be seen at the office of the undersigned from 10/08/2026 to 02/09/2026 up to 1.00PM.

Sd/-
Block Development Officer,
Jalah Dev. Block, Jalanghat

IPR(BTC)/C/2026-27/1138

New regional party APM launched in Diphu

Outfit vows to unite pro-autonomy forces and intensify demand for Autonomous State

HT Bureau

DIPHU, Aug 10: A new regional political outfit, the Autonomous People's Movement (APM), was formally launched at a political convention held at the Sarsing Teron (Langkung Habe) Memorial Town Hall here on Monday.

The party said it would seek to unite pro-autonomy forces and launch a people's movement against what its leaders described as the "misrule, corruption and nepotism" of the BJP-led Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC), while pursuing the demand for an Autonomous State.

The convention was spearheaded by former Karbi Students Association president Rabindra Rongpi, Sarsing Rongpi, former spokesperson of the JI Kathar faction of the All Party Hill Leaders' Conference Angtong Engti Kathar, former ASDC leader Sarsing Englang and others.

After deliberations on the proposed party's objectives, organisational structure and name, the convention adopted the name Autonomous People's Movement and



constituted a 27-member central committee.

Rabindra Rongpi and Angtong Engti Kathar were appointed convenors until the president and secretaries of the central committee are elected or selected.

Sarsing Englang and Sarsing Rongpi were appointed spokespersons, while Rasong Engti was made treasurer.

Addressing the media after the convention, Rongpi said political

and social divisions within Karbi society had weakened the Autonomous State movement as well as efforts towards social development, education and rural development.

He said the new party would work towards bringing together pro-autonomy forces.

Spokesperson Sarsing Englang said the APM would remain committed to the rights of the people and would launch a movement

against what he alleged were instances of misrule, corruption and nepotism under the BJP-led KAAC administration.

He said the party would raise issues concerning the Autonomous State demand, inter-State boundary, protection of land and natural resources, alleged leasing of large tracts of land to companies and alleged diversion of government funds through contracts.

The APM would also seek changes in the existing administrative system, he said.

Angtong Engti Kathar said political parties and organisations that remained loyal to the government could not effectively pursue the Autonomous State demand.

He asserted that strong agitation and a sustained movement would be necessary to press the government to fulfil the demands.

Former Members of the Autonomous Council Ramsing Ronghang, Pator Phangcho, Chandrasing Ronghang and Welson Kro, besides several former leaders and supporters, attended the convention.

Dima Hasao bans roadside cooking, open fires along NH-27 and NH-137

Prohibitory order also restricts littering and alcohol consumption at public places

HT Correspondent

HAFLONG, Aug 10: The Dima Hasao district administration has prohibited roadside cooking, open fires, littering and alcohol consumption at public places across the district, particularly along specified stretches of NH-27 and NH-137, citing concerns over public safety, traffic movement, fire hazards and environmental degradation.

District Magistrate and Chairman of the District Road Safety Committee, Dima Hasao, Gayatri Devadas Hyalinge, IAS, issued the prohibitory order under Section 163 of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS), 2023.

The order followed reports of tourists and visitors cooking food along roadsides, lay-bys, viewpoints, open spaces and other undesignated locations, particularly along the Manderdisa-Harangajao stretch of NH-27 and the Mahur-Hangrum stretch of NH-137.

According to the administration, such activities have resulted in the dumping of food waste, plastic, bottles, disposable plates and pack-

aging materials, leading to environmental degradation, public nuisance, traffic obstruction and the accumulation of stray animals.

The waste was also affecting the natural beauty of the area.

The administration further cited the risk of accidental fires and wildfires from the use of LPG cylinders, kerosene stoves, firewood, charcoal stoves, barbecue grills and other open flames without adequate safety arrangements.

Under the order, cooking, food preparation and the lighting of fires, as well as the use of cooking or heating appliances, have been prohibited on roadsides, road shoulders, parking areas, lay-bys, viewpoints, open spaces, forest areas and other public places.

The restriction covers NH-27 between Manderdisa and Harangajao and NH-137 between Mahur and Hangrum, besides other public roads and public places in the district.

The restriction, however, does not apply to designated picnic sites or locations specifically notified or

approved by the competent authority or NCHAC authority where cooking is permitted and adequate waste-disposal and fire-safety arrangements are available.

The order also prohibits dumping food waste, plastic, bottles, disposable utensils, packaging materials and other refuse in public places.

Visitors have been directed to carry back their waste or dispose of it only at authorised collection points. Consumption of alcohol at such public places has also been prohibited.

Executive Magistrates, police station officers-in-charge and officials of the Transport, Forest, Tourism, PWD and Excise departments, along with local authorities, have been directed to enforce the order.

Violators will be liable for prosecution under relevant provisions of law, including the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, BNSS, applicable environmental laws and other laws in force.

The order has come into force with immediate effect and will remain in force until further orders.

NFR records 18.1% growth in freight loading in July



HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Aug 10: Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR) registered an 18.1 per cent year-on-year growth in freight loading during July 2026, recording a total loading of 1.105 million tonnes (MT) during the month.

According to NFR, cement loading increased by 89.6 per cent during July compared with the corresponding period of the previous year, while dolomite loading rose by 42.9 per cent.

Container loading also recorded a substantial growth of 45.5 per cent, while Petroleum Oil & Lubricants (POL) loading increased by 3.6 per cent.

Loading under the Other Goods category, comprising miscellaneous commodities, grew by 10 per cent during the month.

The cumulative freight loading of NFR up to July 2026 stood at 4.135 MT, representing a 6.9 per cent increase over the corresponding period of the previous year.

The railway attributed the growth to increasing economic and industrial activity across the North-east and adjoining areas, saying the rise in freight movement has strengthened regional supply chains and contributed to its revenue earnings.

NFR said it would continue to focus on technological advancements, operational efficiency and customer-centric freight services to ensure reliable transportation and sustain growth in freight movement.

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

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Aug 10: 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 in the Lumding-Badarpur Hill Section.

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

Train Nos 15615 (Guwahati-Silchar Express), commencing journey on August 11, and 15616 (Silchar-Guwahati Express), commencing journey on August 12, have been cancelled between their respective originating and terminating stations. Several trains have also been rescheduled.

Train No 15650 (Narangi-Agartala Express), scheduled for August 11, will depart Narangi at 10.30 pm in-

stead of 5 pm, while Train No 15649 (Agartala-Narangi Express) will depart Agartala at 11.30 pm instead of 9.30 pm. Train No 15609 (Guwahati-Sairang Express) will depart Guwahati at 11.30 pm instead of 7 pm on August 11.

Train No 15610 (Sairang-Guwahati Express) will depart Sairang at 9.30 pm instead of 7 pm.

Train No 15611 (Rangia-Silchar Express) will depart Rangia at 11.30 pm instead of 7 pm on August 11, while Train No 15612 (Silchar-Rangia Express) scheduled for August 12 will depart at 5 am.

Train No 15628 (Silchar-Coimbatore Express), commencing journey on August 11, has been rescheduled to depart Silchar at 4.10 am on August 12. Meanwhile, Train No 15625 (Deogarh-Agartala Express), commencing journey on August 10, will be regulated en route suitably.

Social activist Niren Ray builds house for elderly couple

Former BPF leader hands over keys to childless couple in Kokrajhar

HT Correspondent

KOKRAJHAR, Aug 10: Noted social activist and senior BPF leader Niren Ray has extended humanitarian assistance to a needy elderly couple in Kokrajhar by constructing a two-room concrete house for them at Bank Colony.

Ray, who hails from Kajalgaon in Chirang district, funded the construction of the house from his own resources for 70-year-old Shibdas Bhaduri and his 64-year-old wife, Baby Bhaduri, who had been living in rented accommodation in Kokrajhar for the past four to five years. Ray formally handed over the keys to the newly constructed house to the couple on Sunday evening in the presence of local residents and well-wishers.

The childless couple had been struggling to make ends meet, with Shibdas working as a newspaper hawker to support the family. Malay Kanti Som, proprietor of Boroland News Agency in Kokrajhar, had also supported Shibdas by providing him work at his newspaper shop and extending financial assistance.

After learning about the couple's circumstances, Ray had promised to build them a permanent home.

He subsequently constructed the house on a plot of land at Bank Colony and fulfilled his commitment.

Speaking on the occasion, Ray said that with age he had realised that helping people in need was more meaningful



than spending money on a luxurious lifestyle and social activities. He expressed happiness at being able to fulfil his promise to the couple. Ray said he has also planned two more social-service projects — construction of the entrance gate of the Lakshmi Temple at Kajalgaon in Chirang district and donation of a statue of Bir Chilarai.

He expressed hope of completing the projects in September and December respectively. Shibdas Bhaduri, who earns his livelihood by delivering newspapers published from Guwahati to households, expressed gratitude to Ray for helping the couple secure a home of their own. He thanked Ray for treating them like family and prayed for his continued success and prosperity.

Lions Club of Guwahati Gold organises Kawariya Seva

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Aug 10: The Lions Club of Guwahati Gold organised a Kawariya Seva near Gopal Boro Higher Secondary School at Ganeshguri here on Sunday night, offering chai, prasad and drinking water to devotees undertaking their spiritual journey.

The seva commenced at 10 pm, with volunteers serving refreshments and drinking water to the Kawariyas as they passed through the area. The service initiative was led by Project Chairperson Deepak Bhajanka.

A total of 23 Lions and Leos actively participated in the programme, which benefited around 2,000 devotees.

The initiative reflected the club's commitment to community service and its efforts to extend support to devotees through dedicated volunteer service.

National seminar on Gurudev Kalicharan Brahma concludes

HT Correspondent

KOKRAJHAR, Aug 10: A national seminar on "Gurudev Kalicharan Brahma: Architect of Social Transformation and Inclusive Nationalism" concluded on Monday, highlighting Gurudev Kalicharan Brahma's contribution to social reform and the uplift and welfare of marginalised communities.

The seminar was organised by the Gurudev Kalicharan Brahma Trust in collaboration with KISS Deemed to be University, Bhubaneswar, at the university's conference hall. It brought together research scholars, faculty members, students and delegates from Bodoland and other parts of Assam and the Northeast.

The programme was chaired by Dr Ajit Boro, president of the Gurudev Kalicharan Brahma Trust, recipient of the Bal Sahitya Puraskar and principal of Gossaigaon B.Ed. College.

The programme began with a fo-

ral tribute to Gurudev Kalicharan Brahma, followed by Bodo and Tripuri cultural performances by KISS students.

In his keynote address, Dr Boro highlighted the inclusive philosophy of Gurudev Kalicharan Brahma and said his vision extended beyond the uplift of the Bodo community to the progress of the nation.

He urged students and research scholars to undertake further academic research into Gurudev's philosophy, particularly his ideas on social reform, morality, education and national integration.

Prof Ramesh C. Bhardwaj, former Vice-Chancellor of Maharshi Valmiki Sanskrit University, Haryana and Prof Chittaranjan Bhoi, Professor of the Dr Ambedkar Chair, participated as resource persons. Prof Bhardwaj said Gurudev's philosophy profoundly influenced Bodofa Upendra Nath Brahma and described him as a national figure whose vision centred on social

transformation, moral leadership and inclusive nationalism.

Representatives of KISS Deemed to be University, including Registrar Dr Prashant Kumar Routray, Deputy Registrar Dr Snigdha Rani Panda, Director of the Research & Development Cell Dr Arpana Premi Lina Oraon, Assistant Professor Dr Avindita Nayote, Assistant Professor Anirban Bandyopadhyay and Dr Sujata Acharya, also attended the seminar.

More than 50 research scholars, deans, faculty members and students from the Northeast, along with Bodo students of KISS and 14 delegates from Bodoland and Assam, participated in the event.

The seminar provided a platform for academic discussions on Gurudev Kalicharan Brahma's life, philosophy and contributions to social reform, education, spirituality and inclusive nationalism. It concluded with an interactive session and a vote of thanks.

Dhubri Police foil two cattle-smuggling attempts, arrest two

HT Correspondent

DHUBRI, Aug 10: Dhubri Police foiled two separate alleged cattle-smuggling attempts in the district on Sunday night, arresting two persons and recovering 11 cattle from two vehicles.

In the first operation, SI(P) Sagar Das, accompanied by police personnel and the District Crime Unit, conducted a raid in the Jhagarap area following a tip-off.

Police intercepted a vehicle bearing registration number AS01EX7668. Police said one person allegedly got down from the vehicle and attempted to flee after being signalled to stop.

He was pursued and apprehended by the police team. During the chase, the man was allegedly assaulted by a group of local residents before police intervened.

A search of the vehicle led to the recovery of six cattle, which police said were being transported under cruel and illegal conditions. The vehicle and cattle were seized in the presence of local witnesses.

The arrested person was identified as Mohibul Mondal, 22, son of Abu Siddique Mondal of Joldoba Part-II under Kazigaon Police Station in Kokrajhar district.

He was taken to Gauripur CHC for medical examination and treatment for injuries allegedly sustained during the assault.

The recovered cattle were subsequently handed over to the designated government cattle pound for safe cus-



tody. Mondal was later produced before the Dhubri District Court on Monday.

In a separate operation, police arrested Tahar Ali, 27, son of Haje Ali of No 2 Burisatam under Gossaigaon Police Station in Kokrajhar district, from the Choto Bashjani area under the BN College Police Top.

Acting on secret information, a police team led under the instructions of BN College Police TOP I/C Dipashri Deka intercepted a Maruti Suzuki S-Presso bearing registration number AS17 N 1955 on Sunday night.

Five cattle allegedly being smuggled were recovered from the vehicle and Ali was arrested.

Ali was also produced before the Dhubri District Court on Monday. Police said further investigation into both cases is underway.

Symposium on Indian Nationalism in Bodo Literature held at Bodoland University

HT Correspondent

KOKRAJHAR, Aug 10: In collaboration with the Department of Bodo and the Centre for Bodo Studies, Bodoland University, organised a symposium on Indian Nationalism in Bodo Literature along with a Kavisandhi programme at Bodoland University in Kokrajhar on Monday. The programme was chaired by Dr Surath Narzary, former president of the Bodo Sahitya Sabha and Sahitya Akademi awardee. Prof BL Ahuja, Vice-Chancellor of Bodoland University, inaugurated the programme by lighting the ceremonial lamp.

In his address, Prof Ahuja discussed the concept of Indian nationalism and referred to examples of political demonstrations.

Dr Avishek Rath, Programme Officer of the Sahitya Akademi, Kolkata, delivered the welcome address, while Dr Jwishri Boro, Member of the Sahitya Akademi Bodo Advisory Board, delivered the introductory speech.

Prof Indira Boro, Head of the Department of Bodo, chaired the inaugural session, and Danswarg Basumatary, Assistant Secretary of the Alumni Association, Department

of Bodo, delivered the vote of thanks. The first technical session, chaired by Dr Jhanin Mushahary, Associate Professor, Department of Political Science, featured papers on different dimensions of nationalism in Bodo literature. Dr Bardwichila Narzary spoke on Bodo freedom fighters who sacrificed their lives for the country, while Dr Sanhang Mwchahary presented a paper on Reflections of Indian Nationalism in Bodo Novels. Chibikhang Narzary presented a paper on Reflections of Indian Nationalism in Bodo Poetry.

The second technical session was chaired by Dr Bijitgiri Basumatary, Assistant Professor, Bodoland University. Dr Alaka Basumatary, Assistant Professor, Kokrajhar University, presented a paper on Reflections of Indian Nationalism in Bodo Prose, while Dr Indrajit Brahma, Assistant Professor, Bijni College, spoke on Reflections of Indian Nationalism in Bodo Short Stories. Dr Ruphashri Hazowary, Assistant Professor, Department of Bodo, Bodoland University, presented a paper on Indian Nationalism in Bodo Drama, while Dr Terisha Basumatary, Assistant Professor, Kokrajhar Girls College, presented a paper on Reflections of Indian Nationalism in Bodo Poetry.

Demow Model Hospital treats 4,000th snakebite victim

Rural hospital records milestone with only one death and four referrals since 2020

HT Correspondent

DEMOW, Aug 10: Demow Model Hospital-cum-CHC at Raichai Konwar Dehingia has treated its 4,000th snakebite victim, marking a significant milestone in rural snakebite management in Assam.

According to Dr Surajit Giri, anaesthesia specialist and snakebite specialist at the hospital and a member of the National Technical Advisory Committee, Ministry of Health, Government of India, the milestone was reached on August 7.

Since the beginning of the initiative, the hospital has recorded only one death, in 2020, among the 4,000 snakebite cases treated.

All other patients survived and recovered, while the overall proportion of venomous bites among the cases was around 13%.

Dr Giri said the achievement was particularly significant given the limited effectiveness of the currently available polyvalent anti-snake venom (ASV) against some



medically important venomous snakes found in Assam and the Northeast.

The hospital has continued to manage cases through early recognition, close monitoring, timely supportive treatment and appropriate use of available resources.

Around 96% of the patients

treated were from financially distressed backgrounds, highlighting the importance of accessible snakebite care for rural and economically vulnerable communities.

Community participation has also played an important role, with many patients reaching the hospital

within an hour of being bitten.

Patients are generally kept under observation for at least 24 hours, allowing medical teams to intervene promptly if complications arise.

Of the 4,000 patients, only four required referral to nearby collaborating private hospitals.

All four cases involved krait envenoming and required mechanical ventilation, a facility not available at the rural government hospital. The collaboration enabled patients requiring prolonged artificial respiratory support to receive higher-level care.

Dr Giri said the milestone was a collective achievement involving healthcare workers, patients, families, community members, public representatives and others who supported the initiative.

"The fight against venom is ultimately a fight for life—and particularly for those who have the least financial and social resources to fight it themselves," Dr Giri said.

Retired IAS, IPS officers donate ₹3.25 lakh to Assam flood relief

HT Correspondent

MANGALDAI, Aug 10: The Assam Branch of the All India Services Pensioners' Cell on Monday contributed ₹3.25 lakh to the Assam government to support relief efforts for people affected by the recent devastating floods in Upper Assam.

A cheque for the amount was handed over to the Chief Minister of Assam.

KK Hazarika, IAS (Retd), Gayatri Baruah, IAS (Retd), Debajyoti Hazarika, IAS (Retd) and Brajenjit Singh, IPS (Retd) were present on the occasion.

Speaking while handing over the cheque, Hazarika described the contribution as modest but said the retired officers stood in solidarity with those affected by the floods.

He also expressed support for the state government's relief and rehabilitation measures.

The Chief Minister appreciated the initiative of the retired officers and their continued commitment to public service even after retirement.

The All India Services Pensioners' Cell, Assam Branch, said it would continue supporting the government's efforts towards relief, rehabilitation and strengthening the state.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

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

Meeting of CJP and anti-BJP front INDIA

Bloc, the anti-BJP front of the opposition parties, will be meeting at Hyderabad shortly to review the national situation since its last meeting on June 8 in New Delhi. In the last two months, there have been major positive developments for INDIA Bloc which have helped in rejuvenating the anti-BJP opposition. The first and foremost is the big success of the newly set up body of students and youth, the Cockroach Janta Party (CJP), in compelling the Prime Minister Narendra Modi to sack his education minister Dharmendra Pradhan, in the wake of an unprecedented stir against the government for failure of its education policies. The second is the win of the Jan Suraj Party candidate Prashant Kishor defeating the BJP candidate in the by poll for Bankipur assembly in Bihar. In the last thirty years, the BJP has been representing this seat, last few times by its present president Nitin Nabin. This Bankipur has always been considered as one of the strongest seats for BJP in Bihar which is ruled by the BJP now with its own Chief Minister. But still, there was a big anti-BJP swing leading to the big defeat of the BJP candidate.

Taking into account these two developments, INDIA Bloc leaders have to chalk out their programmes so that the generation Z which responded in a big way to anti government stir last month on education policies failures, are brought into the fold of the opposition's broader movement against the present NDA government demanding educational reforms and creation of jobs through reorientation of the employment policy and the youth training programmes. It is a good coincidence that the CJP has just ended its two-day brainstorming session and announced its national programme to take effect from September 1. CJP members and supporters throughout the country will participate in their Kya Bolti Public outreach sessions with the common people seeking their views on education, unemployment and governance engaging directly with the citizens. CJP founder Abhijeet Dipke was clear that CJP's ideology was rooted in Constitution and Mahatma Gandhi, Dr. B R Ambedkar and Jawaharlal Nehru are their inspiration. The CJP is committed to secularism, democracy and social justice.

This CJP's charter fits totally with the INDIA Bloc's ideals and there is big scope for both the INDIA Bloc parties and the CJP to cooperate at the state level as also at the national level. In the course of the agitation, especially in the last stage before the CJP won their demands, Rahul Gandhi has been in constant touch with the protesters. The Congress, Left parties and the Samajwadi Party have been in the forefront for supporting the demands of the CJP. So that way, a base has been built for a sort of cooperation.

From Protest to dialogue: Bhagwat's vision for Gen-Z and Indian democracy

By: Lalit Garg

The recent voices raised by young people at Jantar Mantar have posed several new questions before Indian democracy. There may be differences of opinion over the movement, and its style, leadership and possible political exploitation may certainly be debated. But one fundamental truth cannot be denied: in a democracy, every citizen has the right to express an opinion, voice dissent and protest peacefully. It is in this context that the perspective expressed by Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) chief Mohan Bhagwat on young people, particularly Gen-Z, becomes highly significant. He has clearly stated that the new generation asks questions and seeks rational answers; it cannot be persuaded merely through orders or instructions. According to him, what is needed today is "discussion, not dictation; consensus, not command."

Bhagwat has gone a step further by stating that protest is a legitimate means of dialogue in a democracy and that the grievances raised by Gen-Z through its movement are justified. He has also made it clear that branding those who protest as "anti-national" is neither fair nor appropriate. In his view, the objective of a movement should not be to create divisions in society, but to move towards consensus and constructive solutions. He has also drawn attention to the relationship between the need for reforms in the education system and the growing discontent among students. Bhagwat's perspective deserves appreciation because this is not merely an issue concerning one particular movement or one particular government. It touches the very soul of Indian democracy, where power derives its legitimacy from the people, and listening to the people is both a constitutional and moral responsibility of those in power.

To regard every protest as rebellion is to narrow our understanding of democracy. To equate dissent with anti-nationalism is an even greater mistake. The nation is larger than any government, and democracy is greater than political power. A citizen who questions the system out of concern for the country's future is not necessarily opposing the nation; very often, he or she is expressing an earnest desire to make the nation better. As we celebrate the achievements of independent India on the occasion of Independence Day, we must also ask ourselves: What does freedom truly mean? Is freedom limited to hoisting the national flag, singing the national anthem and remembering our freedom fighters? Or does it also mean that the youth of the country can question the system, draw attention to its shortcomings and express their views without fear? If we genuinely aspire to build a developed, prosperous and powerful India, we must listen to the dreams, concerns and aspirations of its young people.

India's great thinkers have always regarded youth power as a cornerstone of nation-building. Swami Vivekananda called upon the youth to awaken, recognize their inner strength and move towards their goals. The essence of his message was that young people are not merely the future of the nation; they are an active force in the present. Mahatma Gandhi believed that change does

not come only from corridors of power; it emerges from the consciousness of alert and responsible citizens. Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam repeatedly connected the dreams of young people with the future of India. For him, a dream was not something one sees while asleep, but something that does not allow one to sleep. The restlessness of today's youth needs to be understood in this spirit.

The difference between the younger and older generations is natural. In earlier times, there was relatively little space in families, schools and society for asking "why." Accepting what elders said was often considered a virtue. Today's young person asks: Why? How? And for what purpose? The new generation does not automatically accept something merely in the name of tradition. It wants evidence, reasoning and tangible results. This transformation is both a challenge and an opportunity. If we suppress this questioning spirit, it can lead to frustration and alienation. But if we channel it in the right direction, the same questioning spirit can become a powerful force for innovation, research and nation-building.

There is no need to fear a clash of ideas. Indian civilization itself has evolved through a rich tradition of dialogue and debate—"Vāde Vāde Jayate Tattva-Bodhah," meaning that deeper understanding emerges through sustained discussion and debate. The Upanishads are filled with ques-



tions, answers and further questions. Lord Mahavira's doctrine of Anekantavada teaches us that truth cannot be viewed from a single, one-sided perspective; a subject may have multiple dimensions and viewpoints. Therefore, debate is not a weakness of democracy; it is its intellectual strength. The problem is not debate, but when debate becomes violent. The problem is not dissent, but when dissent becomes a pretext for anarchy. This is why the other side of Bhagwat's message is equally important: protests must remain within constitutional limits, peaceful in character and focused not on humiliating individuals but on bringing about positive change in the system.

Protest is a democratic right—but it must be exercised with democratic discipline. Criticizing the government is democracy; violence is not. Asking questions is freedom; damaging public property is not. Therefore, both the government and the protesters have responsibilities. But the responsibility of the government is greater because it possesses political authority, administrative machinery and institutional power. A student's voice may be silenced with a baton, but the anxiety behind that voice cannot be eliminated with a baton. Calling a protester "anti-national" does not make the question disappear. If a demand is wrong, it should be demonstrated to be wrong through facts and rea-

son. And if a demand is legitimate, why should there be hesitation in acknowledging it? In a democracy, the government's most effective instrument is not the police—it is dialogue.

Here, Mohan Bhagwat's role appears that of a guide and social conscience. On several occasions, rather than merely offering praise, he has raised questions concerning the larger interests of society. When power or institutions appear to be moving excessively in a particular direction, it is the responsibility of a conscientious guide to encourage introspection and remind them of their larger obligations. In this sense, Bhagwat's role may remind us of Bhisma Pitamah from the Mahabharata—a figure who remained close to the centre of power yet, from time to time, reminded those in authority of dharma, restraint and the larger good. This comparison is not intended as personality worship, but only to explain the role of a responsible guide. When governments listen to people's concerns in time, a movement can become a solution before it turns into a problem. But when grievances remain buried in files for months or years, when channels of dialogue gradually close and citizens begin to feel that they will not be heard, discontent inevitably spills onto the streets. At that point, political parties, opportunistic elements and vested interests may enter the scene. The original issue gets pushed into the background, and the character of the movement begins to change. This is precisely the situation that democracy must prevent.

The controversies surrounding NEET and the examination system have also conveyed an important message: matters concerning the future of young people demand extraordinary sensitivity from governments and institutions. An examination is not merely a question paper. It represents years of hard work, dreams and economic and social aspirations of millions of families. If a student feels that his or her hard work has not been evaluated through a fair and transparent system, the resulting anger is understandable. Recent student movements have brought the need for reforms in the education system to the centre of national debate. In this context, the role of the police also needs to be redefined. Every protester is not a criminal, and every slogan is not anti-national. Along with maintaining law and order, the police must also be trained to protect legitimate democratic rights. Distinguishing between genuine national security threats and legitimate civic dissent is one of the fundamental tests of a mature democratic policing system.

Therefore, Mohan Bhagwat's remarks should not be viewed merely through the narrow lens of the Gen-Z movement. They should be understood as part of a much broader message about India's democratic journey. Governments will come and go. Political parties will change. The nature and language of movements will evolve. But one fundamental requirement of democracy will never change: the people must be heard. A strong democracy does not fear questions. A confident government does not fear criticism. A progressive nation does not silence its youth. The real strength of India lies not in the absence of dissent, but in its ability to transform dissent into dialogue, dialogue into understanding, and understanding into constructive national action.

Assam's per capita income

Assam's per capita income has been rising, but the pace and quality of that rise deserve closer scrutiny. The latest Economic Survey of Assam, 2025-26, places the state's per capita income at ₹1,60,417 at current prices, while the corresponding figure at constant 2011-12 prices stands at ₹85,503. The survey records a clear upward movement from ₹1,21,573 at current prices and ₹71,551 at constant prices to the latest estimates. These figures indicate that Assam's economy has expanded substantially, but they also expose an important distinction between nominal income growth and real improvement in purchasing power. A rise in current-price per capita income partly reflects inflation, so it cannot by itself demonstrate that households have become proportionately better off. The constant-price figure gives a clearer picture of real economic expansion. Assam's economic performance therefore needs to be judged not simply by the headline number of ₹1.60 lakh, but by how much productive capacity, employment and household purchasing power have actually improved. The state has several advantages that can support higher incomes. Tea, petroleum, natural gas, agriculture, tourism, forests, handloom, handicrafts and a strategic location connecting the Northeast with the rest of India and neighbouring countries provide a broad economic base. Yet Assam has not fully converted these advantages into high-value economic activity. The official state income statistics show that per capita income has been increasing over the years, while the state continues to face structural constraints linked to low industrialisation, limited private investment, weak productivity in agriculture and inadequate employment opportunities outside traditional sectors. The central question, therefore, is not whether Assam's per capita income is rising. It clearly is. The more important question concerns the nature of that rise and whether it can continue without creating deeper regional and social inequalities.

Per capita income is a useful economic indicator, but it does not represent the actual income of every individual in Assam. It divides the state's income by its population and therefore provides an average rather than a household-level picture. This distinction matters greatly in a state where economic opportunities vary sharply between districts, rural and urban areas, agricultural communities, wage workers, small traders and formal-sector employees. A higher average can coexist with considerable economic insecurity among large sections of the popula-

tion. Assam's economy also remains closely connected to agriculture, where productivity and income are vulnerable to floods, erosion, climate variability, fragmented landholdings and fluctuating market prices. The state's geographical conditions make this challenge more serious. Every year, floods and river erosion can damage crops, homes, roads and productive assets, forcing families to spend resources on recovery rather than investment. Such losses rarely receive adequate attention when policymakers discuss aggregate income growth. The same issue applies to employment. If GSDP rises because of capital-intensive sectors that generate limited direct employment, the increase in per capita income may not translate into proportionate improvements in household earnings.

Assam therefore needs a growth model that creates productivity while creating more jobs. The latest official data show that the state has made progress, but the gap between economic expansion and broad-based prosperity remains important. The Directorate of Economics and Statistics itself publishes state income estimates and related economic indicators precisely because growth has to be assessed through multiple measures rather than a single number. Assam's challenge is particularly significant because a young population will enter the labour market in large numbers, and the state cannot depend indefinitely on government employment or low-productivity informal activities. Higher per capita income will become meaningful only when economic growth produces stable employment, higher labour productivity, stronger enterprises and better wages. Otherwise, the headline number may improve while many families continue to experience financial pressure. The distinction between statistical growth and lived economic improvement must remain central to Assam's economic debate.

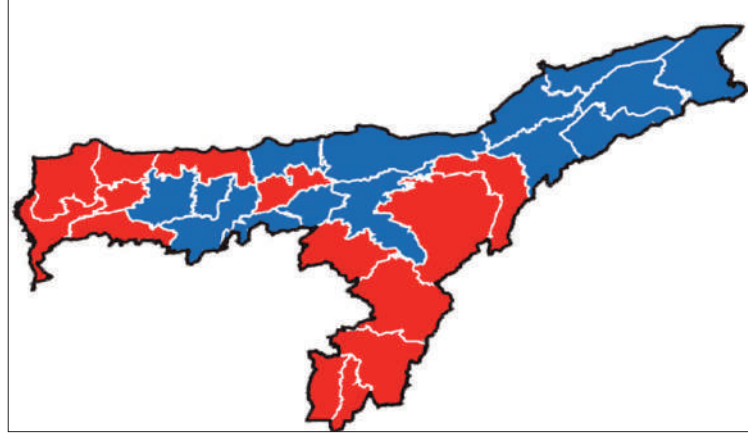
The structure of Assam's economy provides the clearest explanation for the difficulty of raising per capita income rapidly. Agriculture remains essential for livelihoods, but the sector needs a major productivity and value-chain transformation. Assam has significant potential in rice, vegetables, fruits, spices, fisheries, dairy, livestock and horticulture, yet farmers often re-

ceive a relatively small share of the final consumer price because processing, storage, branding and organised marketing remain limited. A stronger agro-processing industry could change this equation by creating value within the state rather than sending raw agricultural products outside for processing. Tea offers another important lesson. Assam is one of India's leading tea-pro-

investment cycles.

The real test of Assam's economic progress will be whether higher income reaches households through better employment, wages, productivity and public services. A state can record impressive GSDP growth and still struggle with poverty, unemployment or inequality if the benefits remain concentrated in a few sectors and loca-

tions. Assam needs stronger small and medium enterprises because they can distribute economic activity more widely than a small number of large projects. It also needs better vocational training, industry-linked education and digital skills so that young people can participate in emerging sectors rather than leaving the state in search of work. Migration is not necessarily a negative economic outcome, but large-scale outward migration driven by the absence of suitable local employment indicates that the state is losing part of its human capital. At the same



DEGREE OF THOUGHT

By: Himangshu Ranjan Bhuyan

ducing regions, but production alone does not guarantee high income for workers and producers. The state must increasingly focus on quality, branding, specialty tea, packaging, direct marketing and higher-value products. Similar opportunities exist in silk, bamboo, cane, handicrafts and handloom. Industrial development also requires attention. Assam has petroleum and natural gas resources, and the state has increasingly tried to attract investment in manufacturing, logistics, food processing, petrochemicals and other sectors. Its strategic location can support a larger logistics economy if road, rail, inland waterways, airports, warehousing and border trade infrastructure develop together. Government investment can create the basic conditions, but sustained private investment requires predictable policies, reliable power, skilled labour, efficient land and regulatory systems, and access to markets. The state's investment-promotion efforts, including Advantage Assam, have increasingly presented diversification beyond traditional sectors as an economic priority. The Annual Survey of Industries also provides evidence of Assam's organised industrial base through data on factories, employment and other industrial characteristics. The policy challenge is therefore clear. Assam must move from an economy that largely produces commodities and basic services towards one that increasingly produces processed goods, specialised services and knowledge-based activities. That transition will determine whether per capita income can rise sustainably rather than simply following nominal growth and periodic

time. Assam should not measure development only through income. Better schools, healthcare, roads, sanitation, housing, electricity and digital connectivity can increase the real value of household income because families spend less on essential deficiencies and gain greater access to opportunities. The state's economic planning must therefore connect income growth with human development. Assam's latest per capita income estimate of ₹1,60,417 at current prices is encouraging, but the figure should be treated as a starting point for deeper economic analysis rather than as proof that prosperity has already arrived. The constant-price estimate of ₹85,503 is equally important because it helps separate real growth from price effects. Assam has made measurable economic progress, yet its next stage requires structural transformation. The state needs productive agriculture, competitive manufacturing, modern services, stronger local enterprises and better employment opportunities. It also needs to protect the gains from floods, erosion and climate-related disruptions. If these priorities receive sustained attention, rising per capita income can become more than a statistical achievement. It can reflect a broader improvement in the economic capacity of Assam's households. The objective should not simply be to make the number larger each year. The objective should be to make economic growth more productive, employment-intensive, geographically balanced and durable. That is the standard by which Assam's per capita income should ultimately be judged.

WORLD LION DAY: India's conservation success must become a wider ecological commitment

By: Siddharth Roy

Every August 10, World Lion Day invites the world to celebrate one of nature's most recognisable predators. In India, however, the occasion carries a deeper significance. The Asiatic lion is not simply a symbol of wilderness or Gujarat's cultural identity. It is a species whose survival rests almost entirely on India's ability to protect habitats, maintain ecological connectivity and reconcile conservation with the needs of communities living alongside wildlife.

The story of the Asiatic lion is both a warning and a remarkable conservation success. Once distributed across large parts of Asia, the species was pushed to the brink of extinction by hunting, habitat destruction and other pressures. Today, the only surviving wild population of the Asiatic lion is in India, centred on the Gir landscape of Gujarat. Its continued existence is therefore a responsibility of national and global importance.

There is encouraging evidence that India has made substantial progress. The 2025 lion population estimation placed the number of Asiatic lions at 891, compared with 674 in 2020—an increase of 32.2%. The population has risen from 523 in 2015, representing a growth of more than 70% over a decade. Even more significant, the distribution range expanded by about 59% over the same period.

These numbers deserve recognition. But conservation policy should resist the temptation to treat population growth as the final measure of success.

For the Asiatic lion, the central challenge is no longer simply preventing extinction. It is managing the consequences of recovery.

The 2025 estimation recorded lions in nine satellite populations, with 497 individuals outside the core population. It also recorded 22 lions in a corridor area. Lions have increasingly moved into river corridors, notified forests and revenue wastelands. Barda Wildlife Sanctuary, for instance, is emerging as an important additional habitat. Such expansion is encouraging because it reduces excessive dependence on a single landscape. But it also makes habitat connectivity and human-wildlife coexistence more important than ever.

This is where the real significance of World Lion Day lies.

A lion population cannot be protected merely by drawing boundaries

around a national park. Wildlife does not recognise administrative borders. A landscape that appears to humans to be a revenue village, agricultural field, grazing area or scrubland may constitute an essential movement corridor for a wild animal. Roads, railway lines, transmission infrastructure, mines and other development projects can fragment such corridors and gradually isolate populations.

India must therefore move from protected-area conservation to landscape-level conservation.

Project Lion, announced in 2020, represents an important step in that direction. Its stated objectives include securing and restoring lion habitats, strengthening local livelihoods and participation, developing expertise in wildlife disease diagnostics and treatment, and promoting inclusive biodiversity conservation.

The emphasis on disease deserves particular attention. A geographically concentrated population, however successful, remains vulnerable to epidemics. The experience of African lions and other social carnivores has demonstrated how infectious diseases can move rapidly through populations. For India's Asiatic lions, veterinary preparedness, disease surveillance, genetic research and rapid-response systems are therefore not optional additions to conservation; they are essential safeguards.

The proposed National Referral Centre-Wildlife at Junagadh is an important development in this context, envisaged as a hub for wildlife health and disease management.

Yet no conservation programme can succeed without people.

The Gir landscape is unusual in the extent to which wildlife and human activity coexist. Farmers, pastoralists, forest workers, trackers and village communities are part of the conservation story. Their willingness to tolerate the presence of lions, report movements and modify practices has contributed significantly to the species' recovery. Government compensation for livestock losses, rapid response to conflict, awareness campaigns and community participation must consequently remain central to conservation policy.

As lions expand their range, human-wildlife encounters are likely to become more frequent. The objective should not be to prevent every encounter—an impossible proposition—but to ensure that encounters do not become conflicts. Scientific monitoring, early-warning systems, livestock protection, compensation

mechanisms and community-based conservation can help create a more durable coexistence.

India's experience also offers a broader ecological lesson. An apex predator is not an isolated conservation object. Lions influence prey populations and ecological relationships, while their survival depends on functioning food chains, water sources, grasslands, forest patches and healthy prey populations. Protecting the lion therefore means protecting an entire ecosystem.

This ecological perspective is particularly important in an era of climate change. Rising temperatures, changing rainfall patterns, water stress and extreme weather could alter prey availability and habitat suitability. Conservation plans designed only around present conditions may prove inadequate in the decades ahead. Climate-risk assessments should become a routine part of lion landscape management.

India's international responsibility is equally significant. In May-June 2026, India hosted the first International Big Cat Alliance Summit, bringing together conservation efforts for seven major big-cat species. The government highlighted the Asiatic lion as an example of successful wildlife conservation while acknowledging continuing challenges such as habitat pressures, climate change and human-wildlife interactions. The message should be clear: India's success must not encourage complacency.

The rise from 284 lions in 1990 to 891 in 2025 reflects decades of conservation effort. But a larger population creates a larger obligation. The objective should be to create multiple secure, connected and ecologically viable populations rather than simply increase numbers within one broad landscape.

World Lion Day should consequently be more than a celebration of the animal's majesty. It should be a reminder that conservation succeeds when science, institutions and communities work together.

The Asiatic lion was once close to disappearing from the earth. India helped prevent that outcome. The next chapter must be about ensuring that the species does not merely survive, but thrives across secure landscapes where wildlife and people can coexist.

The roar from Gir is therefore not just the sound of a conservation triumph. It is also a call to protect the forests, grasslands, corridors and communities that have made that triumph possible.



Mir Yar Baloch: Imagined as Sheikh Mujibur Rahman for the Baloch people

By: Dr Ratan Bhattacharjee

History often draws parallels between leaders who emerge from oppressed peoples seeking dignity, political rights, and self-determination. Such comparisons can be illuminating, but they must also be made with care because every historical movement develops within its own unique political, cultural, and geopolitical context. In recent years, some supporters of the Baloch nationalist movement have described Mir Yar Baloch as “the Sheikh Mujibur Rahman of the Baloch people.” Whether that comparison ultimately proves accurate is a matter for history rather than present-day political rhetoric. Nevertheless, the analogy invites an examination of the qualities associated with both figures and the aspirations of the people they represent.

Sheikh Mujibur Rahman occupies a unique place in South Asian history. Revered as the founding leader of Bangladesh, he transformed a regional political movement into a mass struggle that ultimately led to the birth of a sovereign nation in 1971. His political journey was marked by years of imprisonment, sustained mass mobilization, eloquent public speeches, and an extraordinary ability to connect with ordinary

people. His leadership was rooted in democratic politics and electoral legitimacy, culminating in the overwhelming victory of the Awami League in Pakistan's 1970 general elections.

The Baloch question, however, has developed under very different historical circumstances. Spread across parts of Pakistan, Iran, and Afghanistan, the Baloch people possess a distinct linguistic and cultural identity. In Pakistan's Balochistan province, nationalist organizations have, for decades, raised concerns regarding political autonomy, economic development, equitable sharing of natural resources, human rights, and cultural preservation. The region has experienced repeated periods of conflict between the Pakistani state and various nationalist groups, producing a complex political landscape in which constitutional politics, civil activism, and armed insurgency have all existed simultaneously.

Within this broader movement, Mir Yar Baloch has emerged as one of the voices advocating for the rights and aspirations of the Baloch people. His writings, speeches, and public interventions have attracted attention among sections of the Baloch diaspora and among observers interested in regional politics. His supporters portray him as a determined advo-

cate for political recognition, while critics challenge aspects of his political positions and influence. As with many contemporary political figures associated with contested movements, assessments of his role differ significantly depending on one's political perspective.

The comparison with Sheikh Mujibur Rahman rests primarily on several perceived similarities. First, both are associated with the articulation of a distinct national identity. Sheikh Mujib emphasized the linguistic and cultural identity of Bengalis within Pakistan. Similarly, Baloch nationalist leaders emphasize the historical identity, language, and traditions of the Baloch people. In both narratives, culture becomes an essential element of political consciousness.

Second, both are presented by their supporters as symbols of resistance against political marginalization. Sheikh Mujib argued that East Pakistan suffered from economic discrimination and political underrepresentation. Many Baloch activists likewise contend that Balochistan has experienced uneven development despite its rich natural resources. These claims continue to be debated in political and academic circles, reflecting the complexity of the region's history.

Third, charismatic leadership often becomes central to national-

ist movements. Sheikh Mujib's speeches inspired millions during a defining period in South Asian history. Supporters of Mir Yar Baloch similarly view his public advocacy as a source of inspiration for those seeking greater recognition of Baloch rights. However, the scale, historical circumstances, and political impact of the two leaders remain fundamentally different.

The differences between Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and Mir Yar Baloch are equally significant. Sheikh Mujib led a mass political party that participated successfully in democratic elections and secured an undisputed electoral mandate before Bangladesh's independence. His leadership represented the overwhelming electoral will of the Bengali population in East Pakistan. Mir Yar Baloch, by contrast, operates in a very different political environment, and there is no equivalent nationwide electoral mandate comparable to that achieved by Sheikh Mujib in 1970.

International circumstances also differ considerably. Bangladesh's emergence occurred during the Cold War amid a major humanitarian crisis and an interstate war involving India and Pakistan. Those geopolitical conditions profoundly influenced international recognition of Bangladesh. The contemporary Baloch issue unfolds in a

vastly different international environment, where regional stability, international law, state sovereignty, and geopolitical considerations shape diplomatic responses.

Another distinction lies in historical outcome. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's political movement culminated in the internationally recognized independent state of Bangladesh. The future political trajectory of Baloch nationalism remains uncertain and continues to be the subject of competing visions among different stakeholders. It would therefore be premature to conclude that any contemporary Baloch leader occupies an identical historical position.

Leadership is also measured by the capacity to unite diverse groups. Sheikh Mujib successfully brought together students, workers, intellectuals, farmers, professionals, and political activists under a common democratic platform. Whether any present-day Baloch leader can similarly unite the many strands of Baloch political opinion—both within the region and throughout the global diaspora—remains an open question.

The comparison nevertheless highlights an enduring feature of history: peoples experiencing political conflict often seek inspirational figures whose leadership embodies collective hopes. Such comparisons are rarely perfect. Mahatma Gandhi has been compared with Martin Luther King Jr.; Nelson Mandela has been compared with Vaclav Havel in certain respects; yet each remains unique within his own national experience. Historical analogies illuminate certain features while inevitably obscuring others.

Academic scholarship therefore encourages caution. Rather than declaring Mir Yar Baloch to be “the Sheikh Mujibur Rahman of the Baloch people” as an established historical fact, it is more accurate to say that some supporters view him through that symbolic lens. Whether history ultimately endorses that characterization will depend upon future political developments, public legitimacy, and the long-term consequences of his leadership.

The Baloch question itself de-

serves careful study beyond slogans and political polarization. It involves issues of identity, federalism, constitutional governance, economic development, security, human rights, regional diplomacy, and the aspirations of ordinary people. Sustainable solutions require dialogue, political participation, respect for human dignity, and peaceful engagement among all stakeholders.

History reminds us that durable political settlements emerge not merely through passionate rhetoric but through institutions capable of protecting rights while maintaining peace and justice. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's legacy illustrates the transformative power of popular leadership during a decisive historical moment. Whether Mir Yar Baloch will ultimately occupy a comparable place in the historical memory of the Baloch people remains a question that only time can answer.

Can the Baloch Achieve Freedom Under Mir Yar Baloch's Leadership?

Whether the Baloch people can achieve independence under the leadership of Mir Yar Baloch remains an open question rather than a certainty. The future of any nationalist movement depends on a combination of political leadership, public support, international diplomacy, regional geopolitics, and historical circumstances. No single leader, however influential, can by himself determine the outcome.

Supporters of Mir Yar Baloch regard him as an articulate advocate for Baloch identity and political aspirations. They argue that his efforts have helped draw greater international attention to the Baloch issue and have encouraged discussion about the rights and future of the Baloch people. Such advocacy can play an important role in shaping public opinion and maintaining political momentum.

At the same time, significant challenges remain. The Baloch nationalist movement is diverse and includes different organizations and viewpoints. Achieving a unified political strategy is often difficult. Moreover, questions of state sovereignty, regional security, and international law mean that recog-

nition of a new state—if sought—is influenced by factors extending well beyond the leadership of any individual.

History offers examples where determined leadership contributed to major political transformations, but those outcomes were also shaped by mass public participation, changing geopolitical conditions, and sustained diplomatic engagement. The experiences of different independence movements cannot simply be replicated, as each arises from its own unique historical and political context.

For these reasons, it would be speculative to predict whether Mir Yar Baloch's leadership will ultimately lead to Baloch independence. His long-term historical role will depend on his ability to build broad political support, foster unity, pursue effective engagement with stakeholders, and respond to evolving regional realities.

Ultimately, whether the Baloch people achieve greater autonomy, expanded political rights, or any other constitutional or political outcome will be determined by complex developments over time. History, rather than present-day expectation, will provide the final assessment of Mir Yar Baloch's leadership and its legacy.

For scholars, journalists, and readers alike, the more productive approach is not to seek simplistic equivalences but to understand the distinct historical experiences that shape different nationalist movements. Comparisons may inspire reflection, yet history always demands evidence, context, and perspective. In that spirit, Mir Yar Baloch should be evaluated on the basis of his own leadership, ideas, and contribution to the Baloch cause, just as Sheikh Mujibur Rahman continues to be assessed through the extraordinary historical transformation that led to the creation of Bangladesh. (*International Tagore Award-winning multilingual writer and Poet Dr Ratan Bhattacharjee is a former Affiliate Faculty of English Virginia Commonwealth University Richmond and President of Kolkata Indian American Society. Email profpratanbhattacharjee@gmail.com*)

Book Review

Reclaiming a Frontier's forgotten past- 'The History of the Bodos of Missamari'

By: Mahendra Kumar Nath

“The History of the Bodos of Missamari” (মিছামারীৰ বড়ো-সকলৰ ইতিহাস) written in Assamese language by Prasanta Boro, a noted writer, former Vice President and former General Secretary of the Bodo Sahitya Sabha is a significant contribution to the historiography of Assam, particularly to the study of the Bodo community and the Assam-Arunachal frontier. The book fills a long-standing gap in regional historical literature by presenting a comprehensive account of the historical, cultural, political, and social evolution of Missamari and its people.

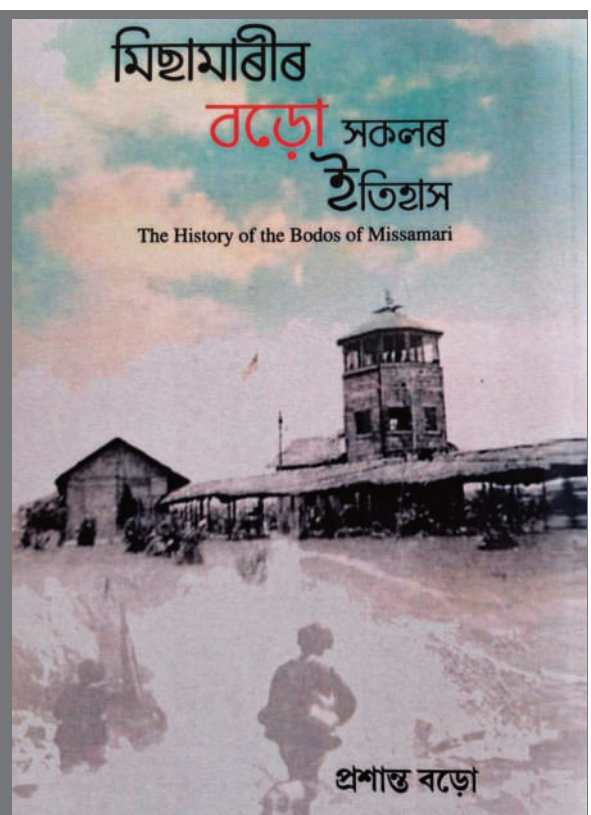
Situated in Sonitpur district of Assam, adjoining Arunachal Pradesh, Missamari occupies a strategically important geographical position at approximately 26.78° North latitude and 92.70° East longitude, covering an area of about 181.5 square kilometres. Historically inhabited predominantly by the Bodo, Kachari, and Koch communities, the region has served as a vital gateway between the Brahmaputra Valley and the Himalayan foothills for centuries.

The author begins the book with a remarkable quotation from the renowned British historian E. H. Carr: “History is a continuous process of interaction between the historian and his facts, an unending dialogue between the past and present.” This quotation aptly reflects the methodology adopted throughout the work. Rather than merely recording events, the author interprets historical evidence in the context of contemporary society, making the narrative both analytical and accessible.

Divided into 27 chapters, the book traces the history of Missamari from ancient times to the present day. One of its notable strengths is its detailed treatment of the strategic importance of Missamari during the Second World War. Drawing upon the authoritative source The Army Air Forces in World War II (Washington, D.C., 1983), the author explains how the British-Indian Army established an important military airfield at Missamari. The survival of an Air Traffic Control (ATC) installation from that period, still preserved by the Indian Air Force, stands as a valuable reminder of the region's wartime significance. The book also discusses two major international events that profoundly influenced the history of Missamari. The first is the arrival of His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama in India in 1959 following his fleeing from Tibet, during which the region played an important role in providing shelter and logistical support. The second is the Sino-Indian War of 1962, which led to the establishment

of the Army Cantonment at Missamari. The author carefully documents the large-scale displacement of local inhabitants by the Revenue Department of the Government of Assam, illustrating the human cost of national security measures and the subsequent resettlement of affected families.

An equally important contribution of the book is its account of the role played by the people of Missamari in India's freedom movement. Under the leadership of Harijan Sevak Late Kando Ram Kachari and Gaonburha Late Jongbir Kachari, local people actively participated in the Quit India Movement of 1942. Many freedom fighters from the region were imprisoned and injured, yet their contributions have received little attention in mainstream historical writings. By documenting these events, the author restores deserved recognition to these local heroes.



traditional trade fair at Doimara connected the Shertukpen, Thembang Monpa, Aka, and Dafa communities of the hills with the tribes of the plains. Drawing upon David Scott Welsh's reports on Assam, the author notes that this frontier trade flourished from 1797 to 1885, highlighting the long-standing economic and cultural interactions between the hill and plain communities.

The historical narrative extends further into the Ahom period. Referring to Sarbananda Rajkumar's historical work Ithaxe Xuwara Chaxota Bosor, the author explains how the routes through Chariduar, Dijumukh, Bhalukpong, Gabharu and Doimara served as important corridors for the movement of Aka, Dafa, and Bhotia communities into the plains of Missamari. These accounts provide valuable insights into the frontier dynamics of pre-colonial Assam and enrich the understanding of regional history.

One of the greatest strengths of this volume lies in its multidisciplinary approach. Political history is carefully interwoven with social transformation, demographic change, cultural continuity, environmental history, military history, and ethnographic observations. The narrative successfully connects ancient traditions with modern developments, enabling readers to appreciate how Missamari has evolved through successive historical phases.

The book is particularly commendable for its extensive use of historical references, official records, scholarly publications and documentary evidence. By integrating local oral traditions with established historical sources, the author has produced a work that is academically valuable while remaining accessible to general readers. Overall, The History of the Bodos of Missamari is an important and pioneering contribution to the regional historiography of Assam. It not only documents the history of the Bodo people of Missamari but also illuminates the wider historical processes that shaped the Assam-Arunachal frontier.

The book deserves a place in university and college libraries, public libraries and the collections of scholars interested in the history of Assam, the Bodos, frontier studies, indigenous societies, military history and the socio-cultural evolution of Northeast India. It stands as a lasting contribution to preserving the collective memory and historical identity of the people of Missamari. The revised 2026 edition further strengthens the work and enhances its value as a reference source. The title has been published by the author himself with ISBN: 978-93-5917-873-8.

Environmental history also receives considerable attention. The author traces the evolution of Sonai Rupai Wildlife Sanctuary, originally declared a Game Sanctuary by the British Government in 1938 before being redesignated as a wildlife sanctuary after Independence. Beyond its ecological significance as a crucial wildlife corridor linking Assam and Arunachal Pradesh, the sanctuary possesses deep historical importance. The annual

False ‘bestseller’ tag

By: Dr Priyanka Saurabh

A book is more than just a book's pages. They embody the author's thoughts, experiences, emotions, imagination, and years of creative work. A good book fosters a connection with its reader that transcends momentary fame or commercial success. But in today's publishing industry, the term “bestseller” has become a mere publicity tool. Little information is available about a book's actual sales, yet it can be promoted as a bestseller through its cover, advertisements, social media pages, or authors. This raises an important question: Can the mere label of “bestseller” make a book a bestseller?

Ideally, “bestseller” should imply actual sales and sustained reader demand. When a book sells reliably and transparently, and sells a large number of copies, it can be considered a bestseller. However, if sales or ranking figures, platforms, or measurement periods are not provided, the claim becomes questionable. It's natural for readers to ask, “Bestseller according to which list? How many copies sold? During what period? On which platform was the book most popular? Is there any independent verification of the figures?” If you don't know the answers to these questions, “bestseller” will become a marketing gimmick rather than a genuine achievement.

With the advent of social media, this type of promotion has become much easier. Creating eye-catching posters, taking appropriate photos for book launches, making videos, receiving support from schools, and receiving reviews and congratulatory messages can all make a huge impact. A book can be found anywhere on the web and thus appear to be very successful. However, there is no clear correlation between visibility and readership. A hundred likes doesn't necessarily mean you have as many readers. Seeing a photo of someone holding a book doesn't mean they actually read it. Similarly, having a lot of comments doesn't mean readers are deeply interested in the content.

You can buy a book, but you can never buy a true reader.

Sometimes, hundreds or thousands of copies of books are sold during a campaign, institutional event, network, or organized promotion. But this is not a lack of sales. Both authors and publishers

have the right to profit from and promote their books. The problem begins when sales are exaggerated to create the illusion of popularity. There is not much difference between honest and misleading promotion, but it can have a profound impact on readers' trust.

This creates a true readership. A true reader buys a book, reads it carefully, ponders its contents, discusses it, and recommends it to others. A reader who reads such a comment is far more valuable than hundreds of artificial promotional comments. There's nothing better for an author than having someone say years later, “I read your book, and it changed my perspective on something.” This kind of response doesn't come from advertising. It's only possible through quality writing.

The problem isn't limited to book sales. Excessive praise isn't limited to other areas of art: the same applies to book reviews. In the modern era, almost every new book is called “brilliant,” “historic,” “unforgettable,” or “a work of genius.” When every book is called a masterpiece, it becomes difficult to distinguish it from other books. A good book review focuses on the positive aspects of a book but also highlights its shortcomings. Providing constructive criticism is not an insult to an author. Literature is an important aspect of literary development. If people receive honest criticism, they can improve themselves as writers, and they have a better basis for deciding what they should read.

Readers should consider the subject matter, the quality of the writing, the author's previous works, unbiased reviews, and suggestions from writers whose literary criticism they respect. Readers should draw their own conclusions from reading this book. Literature becomes meaningless if it is not analyzed and appreciated.

A bestseller is primarily driven by commercial success, while a timeless book is driven by cultural success. Bestseller lists change, publicity periods expire, and market trends fade. However, a valuable book can remain relevant for many years. A book that is little read at the time of publication sometimes becomes very popular later. Its true success can be gradual, as readers discover it, appreciate it, and tell others about it. Word of mouth remains the best and most reliable way to spread the

word about a literary work.

Advertising can bring the reader to the book and the book can keep them in the book.

Therefore, transparency in the use of the term “bestseller” is essential. It is crucial for authors and publishers to clarify the basis for making such claims, on which platforms, and over what period. Literary institutions and publishing platforms can also establish systems that keep reliable records of sales and assess actual readership. This will prevent readers from being misled and ensure truly successful authors receive the recognition they deserve.

A work is truly created only after it's completed. Words like “great,” “popular,” “excellent,” and “bestseller” may attract readers' attention, but the final decision rests with readers and time. An author can promote a book, but they can't create a genuine love connection with readers.

There are no statistics available to determine what constitutes the best book in literature – the most important achievement isn't the number of copies sold. Rather, it's the number of readers who feel a change within themselves after reading it. A book may be a best-seller, but that doesn't necessarily give the author more readers. True readers are attracted by honest writing, powerful ideas, rich use of language, and emotional connection.

Ultimately, the market can provide visibility, advertising can arouse curiosity, and a bestseller can make an impression. However, trust is only established by a good book. So, while sales figures can tell us how many copies were sold, it's only over time that we can determine how many readers remember a book. This is the difference between a book that sells and one that stays. (Dr. Priyanka Saurabh, PhD (Political Science), is a poet and social thinker.)



'The Bill does not propose any tax or transaction charge on UPI'

Parliament clears taxation bill, Sitharaman says UPI transactions to remain free

NEW DELHI, Aug 10: Parliament on Monday passed the Taxation and other Laws (Amendment) Bill, with Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman making clear that the legislation does not impose any tax on UPI and the digital payment system will remain free.

The Bill, which was passed by the Lok Sabha last week, was returned by the Rajya Sabha with a voice vote after a brief discussion and reply by the Finance Minister.

The Bill does not propose any tax or transaction charge on UPI, she asserted.

"Will consumer pay any UPI charge - No. UPI has remained free for consumers since its launch and every Indian will continue to make this instant digital without paying any transaction charge," Sitharaman said.

The Bill also proposed to remove the linkage between the



Payment and Settlement Systems Act and the Income Tax Act, and provide legal backing to the government to modify the zero-MDR framework of UPI and RuPay

card transactions.

At present, banks and payment system providers cannot directly or indirectly charge users for payments made through UPI and

RuPay debit cards. The Bill proposes allowing the central government to decide, through notification, which electronic payment modes or transactions must remain free.

Besides other objectives, through the Bill, the government seeks to attract more foreign capital, promote domestic electronics manufacturing and make it easier for foreign cloud companies to use Indian data centres by providing "process certainty".

The Taxation and other Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2026, replaces the June 5 ordinance that provided I-T exemption to interest income and capital gains made by FPIs from investments in G-Secs.

The Bill also proposes to make it easier for fund managers to relocate to India by cutting down on the list of conditions that these funds will have to satisfy to ensure that their global income does not get taxed in India. (PTI)

Delhi Lakshmi Yojana: BJP leaders protest outside offices, residences of AAP MLAs

NEW DELHI, Aug 10: BJP leaders and workers staged protests near offices and residences of AAP MLAs over the Arvind Kejriwal-led party's opposition to the Delhi Lakshmi Yojana.

This comes a day after the opposition AAP boycotted the Delhi Assembly session, which saw minister Ashish Sood deliver the vote of thanks for the launch of the scheme under which eligible women will receive monthly financial assistance of ₹ 2,500.

Delhi BJP general secretary Yogita Singh, former South Delhi MP Ramesh Bidhuri and other party leaders staged a protest near the residence of Leader of Opposition Atishi in Kalkaji.

Singh said it is unfortunate that despite being a woman herself, Atishi has allowed her party to protest against the Delhi Lakshmi Yojana.

Workers of the BJP's Mayur Vihar district unit, led by its president Vijender Dhama and state vice president Richa Pandey, staged a protest outside the office of AAP MLA from Kondli Kuldeep Kumar.

Similar protests were held by the BJP outside offices and residences of AAP MLAs in Seemapuri, Babarpur, Karol Bagh and other constituencies.

The Delhi Lakshmi Yojana was launched on August 1. The first instalment of the scheme is likely to be released around the festival of Raksha Bandhan, which will be celebrated on August 28.

AAP leaders have questioned the application process and the eligibility criteria of the scheme, including being a Delhi resident for 10 years and a recommendation from the local MP or MLA.

The AAP has also been protesting against the scheme in the ongoing monsoon session of the assembly. (PTI)

BSP's Akash Anand attacks BJP over jobs, paper leaks, govt spending in UP



HATHRAS (UP), Aug 10: BSP national coordinator Akash Anand on Monday accused the BJP government in Uttar Pradesh of failing on employment, education and law and order, and alleged that more than ₹ 7,000 crore had been spent on advertisements over the past decade to hide its shortcomings.

Addressing a BSP workers' conference in Sadabad area here in support of the party's candidate Avin Sharma, Anand said the government should be questioned about its performance over the last 10 years as the assembly elections approach. He alleged that more than four lakh government posts were lying vacant in the state, while several competitive examinations had witnessed paper leaks.

"Had the money been spent on examinations for youth and employment, a large number of young people could have got government jobs," he said, referring to the alleged expenditure on advertisements. Anand also claimed that more than 25,000 schools had been closed in the state and questioned the government's employment figures, saying even people selling snacks or running a roadside stall once a week were counted as employed.

He also raised questions over the quality of development projects,

referring to the Lucknow-Kanpur Expressway and alleging that it had sunk at several places within a month of inauguration.

The BSP leader also invoked the quality of the Yamuna Expressway, which was built during Mayawati's regime as UP CM, to further slam the Yogi Adityanath-led government.

On law and order, Anand questioned the government's record on crime and women's safety and took a dig at Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath's claims of being an "encounter specialist".

Slamming the Congress and its leader Rahul Gandhi, Anand said the party talked about the Constitution of B R Ambedkar but was doing in states where it was in power what the BJP government was doing.

He also targeted Samajwadi Party and its chief Akhilesh Yadav as he referred to the party's PDA (Pichhda, Dalit, Alpsankhyak) formulation and alleged it "keeps changing".

After referring to the SP chief as "uncle", Anand added, "I am 30, he is 50, what else should I call him! He's not bhaiyya (elder brother), he is uncle to me. And I am saying this respectfully," Anand, also the nephew of Mayawati, told the crowd. (PTI)

AAP's Somnath Bharti sends defamation notice to BJP leaders over Hauz Rani fire remarks

NEW DELHI, Aug 10: AAP leader Somnath Bharti on Monday sent a defamation notice to Delhi BJP president Harsh Malhotra and MLA Harish Khurana over their remarks allegedly holding him and former minister Saurabh Bharadwaj responsible for the licensing of a hotel in Hauz Rani where a fire claimed 23 lives.

Addressing a press conference, Bharti said, "The BJP leaders had made irresponsible statements to shift the blame for the incident and I demand that they clarify the basis of their allegations."

"If they do not apologise, we will meet them in court," he said.

The fire in a Bed and Breakfast facility at Hauz Rani on June 3 claimed 23 lives, including several foreign nationals.

Referring to the hotel licence, Bharti said it was issued on May 3, 2024, after the Lok Sabha election schedule was announced on March 16 that year, and argued that during the election period, the administration was under the supervision of the Election Commission.

"Neither the MLA nor the minister has any role in constructing, running or granting a licence to a hotel," Bharti said.

He said BJP leaders Malhotra and Khurana had attributed responsibility for the incident to him and Bharadwaj.

There was no immediate response available from the BJP over Bharti's allegation.

Bharti said he had issued the defamation notice on behalf of himself and Bharadwaj, asking the BJP leaders to explain the basis of their allegations.

In his statement issued after the June 3 fire, Malhotra had alleged that a Bed and Breakfast licence issued for six rooms during the tenure of the then AAP government was used to operate a hotel across the entire building. (PTI)

AAP calls itself 'kattar imandar' but made false promises to people of Punjab: Haryana CM

CHANDIGARH, Aug 10: Haryana Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini on Monday targeted the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) government in Punjab, alleging that they call themselves 'kattar imandar' (staunchly honest) but made false promises to the people during polls and betrayed them after coming to power.

Saini took a potshot at Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann, saying he seemed to be worrying about Haryana instead of fulfilling promises made to the people of Punjab.

"The Aam Aadmi Party had made a series of tall promises to the people of Punjab before coming to power, but the people of the state today felt let down," Saini told reporters here.

With the Assembly elections only a few months away, Saini claimed that people are once again being

subjected to fresh promises and announcements aimed at misleading them. He said the AAP built its politics around the image of being a 'staunchly honest' party, claiming that the present condition of Punjab raises serious questions about that claim.

"The Aam Aadmi Party used to call itself staunchly honest. But looking at the condition of Punjab today, one fails to understand what kind of honesty this is," Saini said.

He alleged that the people of Punjab first suffered exploitation under the Congress and that their situation worsened further under the Aam Aadmi Party rule.

Saini said that the Punjab chief minister can now be seen speaking on public platforms about providing financial assistance for one or two months to women.

"If the intention was to provide benefits to women, why were these benefits not given from the very first year?" he asked, referring to the ₹ 1,000 monthly assistance poll promise made by AAP during the 2022 assembly polls.

"Now, there are barely few months to go for Punjab polls. Had they been committed to their promise, they would have provided this assistance right from start. But they take votes by making false promises and later betray people. And they call themselves kattar imandar," Saini said.

Saini claimed that people from Punjab had told him that elderly people have seen their monthly pension reduced from ₹ 1,500 to ₹ 1,000 after the 'Mukh Mantri Mawan Dheeyan Satkar Yojana' was introduced. (PTI)

Projects in SIPCOT complexes stalled during previous DMK regime: TN Minister

CHENNAI, Aug 10: Industrial projects at the SIPCOT complexes in Tamil Nadu, specifically Manapparai in Tiruchirappalli district were stalled during previous DMK regime due to significant delays and lack of essential infrastructure, state Minister S Keerthana said on Monday.

Despite being endowed with 1,097.86 acres, the SIPCOT industrial park in Manapparai faced significant delays and stagnation for want of essential infrastructure, she told the Assembly refuting the opposition DMK charge of "neglecting the sector."

"There was no consistent water supply. Insufficient road infrastructure, and a lack of street lighting hindered investor interest. Public transport services to the industrial park were not adequately established, making it difficult for workers to reach the site. The situation prevailing in Manapparai was similar in other places across the state," the Industries Minister said. Raising the issue during a debate in the Assembly, former DMK minister K N Nehru questioned the timing and credit for developmental works in the Manapparai constituency.

He wondered whether the minister could truly complete significant water supply and infrastructure proj-

ects within a short span of 90 days, and implied that foundational planning for these projects was laid by the previous administration.

Also, he criticised the present state of infrastructure, water supply, and industrial projects in the local SIPCOT industrial park.

Responding, Keerthana said on the shortcomings in power infrastructure that "a critical failure was the complete absence of an electrical substation, which is a fundamental requirement for industrial operations. Also, certain companies, such as a local PepsiCo facility, faced years of delays due to a lack of proper planning permits (DTCP approval)," she said.

The Manapparai site also lacked necessary security measures, such as CCTV camera installations, the minister said defending the government's action of initiating the "SIPCOT Revival Mission."

She highlighted that despite significant land allocation, previous projects remained stalled. The government has since initiated tenders for road construction, improved water supply, street lighting, and the establishment of a 110kV electrical substation to attract new industries. (PTI)

Police use water cannons, tear gas, batons as exam protesters try to reach Jharkhand assembly

RANCHI, Aug 10: Police used water cannons, lobbed tear gas shells, and lathi-charged job aspirants as they breached barricades and closed in on Jharkhand Assembly premises, protesting alleged irregularities in recruitment exams.

The Assembly was adjourned for the day in the afternoon.

Several protesters claimed they were injured in the police action, which took place when they reached the final barricade near Jagannathpur Temple on the road to the assembly.

"The baton charge was barbaric. We were protesting peacefully, but the government used batons against us. They can only inflict physical injuries, not harm our thoughts," Piyush Kumar Soni, a protester, told PTI.

"Many female students sustained injuries. Police hit us on our head, arms, face everywhere," he claimed.

Vikram Kumar, who came from Hazaribag district, claimed to have sustained a head injury.

"Whatever the Hemant Soren government is doing to us is not good. We were protesting peacefully; then why is your police baton charging us," he asked.

The march, which coincided with the 51st birthday of Chief Minister Hemant Soren, began from outside the old assembly building around 10.30 am as the protest over the recruitment exam irregularities entered the 17th day.

The Bharatiya Janata Yuva Morcha's state unit president Shashank Raj said: "Today is a black day for democracy as police used batons on peaceful protesters. Many of the agitators have suffered injuries."

He urged the chief minister not to be "insensitive" towards students' demands.

JLKM leader Devendra Nath Mahto, who has been



on a fast for nine days over the issue, joined the march in an ambulance. He was seen carrying a portrait of former chief minister Shibu Soren.

Objecting to the installation of barbed-wire barricades along the route of the assembly march, Mahto said anger was brewing among students over the injustices done to them.

"The government is hell-bent on suppressing our voice. We will not hold any talks now," he said.

Armed with tricolours and placards that read "Cancel JSSC-CGL Exams or Conduct a CBI Probe", "Why is CID escaping from conducting a raid on JSSC?" and "Conduct an impartial investigation, bring out the truth", thousands of young men and women breached one barricade after the other amid heavy security deployment.

As police used water cannons when the march reached Jagannathpur Temple, the demonstrators broke into dance, waving tricolours. But the situation soon escalated when the protesters attempted to march forward, prompting the police to baton charge.

Failing to restrain the gathering, the police fired several rounds of tear gas shells when the protesters were about 200 meters away from the assembly. (PTI)

Parl panel recommends 'integrated security and surveillance framework' for tourist spots in J-K

NEW DELHI, Aug 10: A Parliamentary panel has recommended an "integrated security and surveillance framework" for all major tourist destinations in Jammu and Kashmir with centralised monitoring facilities.

In its report on Administrative Governance, Socio-Economic Development and Border Security and Internal Security of the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir and Border Security Management and Preparedness in the UT of Ladakh, the panel said clear inter-agency standard operating procedures be prescribed and reviewed before every peak tourist season to ensure a coordinated and timely response to any security-related incident.

The recommendations came in the backdrop of the terror attack on tourists on April 22 last year in the scenic Baisaran valley of Pahalgam, where 26 people, mostly tourists, were killed by terrorists who had taken shelter in the higher localities.

The committee recommended that an integrated security and surveillance framework be developed for all major tourist destinations, incorporating comprehensive CCTV coverage, centralised monitoring facilities, regular vulnerability assessments and periodic security audits.

The committee further recommended that clear inter-agency standard operating procedures be prescribed and reviewed before every peak tourist season to ensure a coordinated and timely response to any security-related incident.

The committee had undertaken a study visit to Jammu, Srinagar, Gulmarg, Sonmarg and Kargil from May 11 to 15, 2026.

It undertook an "on-the-spot assessment" of the security arrangements at the tourist destination of Gulmarg; interacted with the representatives of the Jammu & Kashmir Police regarding the law and order situation in Sonmarg; and assessed the border security establishments and operational preparedness in Kargil through interactions with the representatives of the Indian Army.

Noting that there is a steady rise in the number of tourists in Jammu and Kashmir, the panel said security management at tourist destinations assumes special importance, in this context, as it directly affects the perception of safety, the quality of visitor experience and the continued growth of the tourism sector. (PTI)

'The national flag evolved during the freedom movement'

'Har Ghar Tiranga' campaign tribute to freedom fighters' sacrifices: CM Adityanath

GORAKHPUR (UP), Aug 10: Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Monday said the 'Har Ghar Tiranga' campaign is a tribute to the sacrifices of freedom fighters, and urged people to display the national flag at their homes with pride and respect.

Addressing a 'Tiranga Yatra' organised in Gorakhpur under the campaign, Adityanath said the tricolour represents the "immortal saga" of the sacrifices made by revolutionaries and freedom fighters during India's struggle for independence.

"This tricolour is the name of the immortal saga of the sacrifices of India's revolutionaries and freedom fighters. It is an inspiration from that immortal saga," he said.

The chief minister said the national flag evolved during the freedom movement, recalling that "Swadeshi" became a slogan of the freedom struggle in 1905 and the spinning wheel was later incorporated into the flag used by freedom fighters.

He said independent India adopted the tricolour with the Ashoka Chakra, representing the country's states and its ideals.

Adityanath said it is a matter of pride that citizens can now display the national flag at their homes.

"It is our good fortune that for the national flag for which citizens earlier had to fight in



courts to get the right to hoist it at their homes, today every citizen can proudly display it," he said.

He credited Prime Minister Narendra Modi with ensuring the right to display the flag at homes after amendments to the Flag Code in 2022.

"'Har Ghar Tiranga' is part of Prime Minister Modi's call that every citizen can experience pride by hoisting the tricolour at their home as a symbol of India's honour, dignity and glory," Adityanath said.

The chief minister said the campaign, launched in 2022, has continued in 2023, 2024 and 2025 and is reaching its peak this year as well. He said Uttar Pradesh has set a target of hoisting the tricolour at five crore homes this year.

"Every institution -- government, semi-government and private -- industries and homes will hoist the tricolour," he said.

Referring to India's freedom struggle, Adityanath said the country's independence was not achieved suddenly but came after immense sacrifices by people across regions.

He recalled the contributions of Mangal Pandey, Shaheed Bandhu Singh, Rani Lakshmi Bai, Tatya Tope and Dhan Singh Kotwal, among others.

Recalling the Chauri Chaura incident of 1922 and the Kakori train action of 1925, Adityanath said the sacrifices of revolutionaries must be remembered with respect.

He said revolutionaries, including Ram Prasad Bismil, Roshan Singh, Ashfaqullah Khan, Chandrashekhar Azad, Sachindra Nath Sanyal and Rajendra Nath Lahiri, had sought to use the money recovered from the British government for India's freedom struggle.

"The British called it a dacoity. What greater insult to the revolutionaries could there be than that the incident continued to be described as the Kakori train dacoity even

after Independence," he said.

Adityanath said the Modi government referred to it as the "Kakori Train Action", highlighting its role in the freedom movement.

He also said several revolutionaries did not receive the recognition they deserved after Independence.

"After Independence, remember that statues of these revolutionaries were not allowed to be installed. Memorials in their honour were not allowed to be built, nor were institutions and roads permitted to be named after them.

"Instead, the names of members of one family were used for institutions across the country," he said without naming any party.

"Today, these revolutionaries are being given respect. This 'Tiranga Yatra' is also a symbol of respect for those immortal souls and freedom fighters," he said.

The chief minister urged participants to carry the national flag throughout the procession and take it home after the yatra.

"Do not throw the tricolour away. Take it to your home and hoist it there. Take a 'Selfie with Tiranga' and upload it," he said.

He also appealed to people to respect the national flag, 'Vande Mataram' and the national anthem, saying respect for national symbols should be the responsibility of every citizen. (PTI)

SC asks panel to verify claims of Manipur violence-hit families yet to get rehabilitation benefits

NEW DELHI, Aug 10: The Supreme Court on Monday asked an apex court-appointed committee to verify claims that around 24,000 families affected by the 2023 Manipur ethnic violence are yet to receive benefits under government rehabilitation and welfare schemes.

The top court also asked the Manipur and Assam governments and others to consider setting up two special trial courts to exclusively hear CBI and NIA cases, respectively, arising from the violence.

A bench comprising Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justices Joy-malya Bagchi and V Mohana took note of the submissions of lawyers, including senior advocate Colin Gonsalves, that many affected families are yet to get the benefits of rehabilitation and welfare schemes.

The bench was hearing the issue of rehabilitation of the people who lost their dwelling units, houses and sources of livelihood during the violence.

It took note of the steps taken by the government for rehabilitation of the affected families. It noted



that funds have been disbursed to more than 4,000 beneficiaries out of around 7,000 identified beneficiaries for the reconstruction of their houses.

The government scheme provides Rs 5 lakh for a kutch house and Rs 7 lakh for a semi-pucca or pucca house, the court noted.

More than 12,000 houses have so far been approved under the

Pradhan Mantri Awaas Yojana-Gramin (PMAY-G) for families affected by the violence, the bench said, while noting the submissions of senior advocate Vibha Dutt Makhija, appearing for the Justice Gita Mittal Committee.

The bench also noted that temporary shelters have been constructed and ₹ 51.95 crore released for 885 identified beneficiaries for

permanent houses.

In addition, ₹ one lakh per household has been provided to families whose houses were completely damaged, it said.

However, it was submitted on behalf of some affected families that around 24,000 families were yet to receive the benefits, as could be verified at the ground level, it said.

The bench said it was informed that details of these families had been furnished to the three-member committee.

"If that is so, we request the committee to verify and confirm the particulars of the alleged affected families and forward a note regarding implementation of the Government welfare schemes duly noticed by this Court in its order dated May 27, 2026," the CJ said.

The court also directed that an application concerning properties of affected families be referred to the committee headed by Justice Mittal.

The committee will verify the particulars and status of the properties and submit a report to the court. On the issue of damages to

the places of worship, the bench noted that a list of 276 properties had been furnished and the claims in respect of these properties required verification.

A separate list of 20 churches where encroachment has allegedly taken place was also furnished before the court, Gonsalves said.

The Justice Gita Mittal-led committee will consider the representations and verify the claims on the basis of relevant material and land records, the court said.

The authorities concerned shall ensure that there is no further encroachment upon properties found to be covered by the claims, it added.

The committee will submit a report in this regard before the top court.

Ethnic violence broke out in Manipur on May 3, 2023, following a Tribal Solidarity March organised in the hill districts to protest against the demand for Scheduled Tribe status by the majority Meitei community.

More than 200 people have been killed, several hundred injured and thousands displaced since the violence began. (PTI)

Mizo students stage protest outside MPSC office in Aizawl, demand recruitment reforms



AIZAWL, Aug 10: (PTI) Hundreds of members of Mizo Zirlai Pawl (MZIP), an influential student organisation, on Monday staged a demonstration outside the Mizoram Public Service Commission (MPSC) office here, demanding administrative and recruitment reforms.

The protesters picketed the MPSC office and prevented its officers and staff from entering the premises.

The protest remained largely peaceful, barring a brief scuffle between police and some protesters when officials attempted to enter the office.

The MZIP has demanded structural reforms and additional manpower to strengthen the commission and improve its efficiency and credibility.

It alleged that repeated administrative shortcomings in recent recruitments had undermined the confidence of job seekers and raised concerns over the One Time Registration (OTR) system.

The organisation demanded that the existing OTR system be scrapped and replaced with need-based, post-specific application forms.

It also sought a one-time opportunity for candidates rejected over incomplete OTR document uploads to submit the required documents offline, particularly those who had cleared written examinations but were subsequently disqualified during document verification.

MZIP president Dr C Lalremruata said the organisation would intensify its agitation until its demands were met.

MPSC officials, however, defended the OTR system, saying it was introduced to simplify recruitment applications and ensure fairness and equality in public employment. They claimed that OTR enables candidates to enter their personal details and upload essential documents only once, after which the information can be automatically retrieved for subsequent job applications.

The system reduces repetitive data entry, minimises errors and al-

lows candidates to access their application details and examination-related information through the portal at any time, they said.

Officials also maintained that with OTR systems widely used by State Public Service Commissions across the country, there was currently no justification for scrapping the system or introducing a fresh mechanism for offline document submission.

They said that accepting the demands could have wider implications, particularly for appointments that have already been finalised.

According to the MPSC, it processed around 50,000 applications in 2025-26 and has already handled more than 20,000 applications in 2026-27.

It is estimated that only around 500 candidates may have been affected by incomplete OTR document uploads or attempts to upload documents after the application deadline.

Some candidates whose applications were rejected over incomplete or late document uploads have approached the Aizawl bench of the Gauhati High Court, the officials said, adding that changing the existing procedure while the matter is pending would not be appropriate.

The MZIP said it had been raising concerns with the commission since June last year over difficulties faced by candidates.

While supporting OTR in principle, the organisation said the present system was not sufficiently user-friendly and had created confusion among applicants due to inadequate instructions on document uploads.

The organisation also claimed that candidates had, in some cases, appeared on the valid list, taken written examinations and even been called for interviews before being rejected during manual document verification because documents uploaded through OTR were found to be incomplete.

The MZIP also urged the MPSC to take responsibility for shortcomings in the portal and provide affected candidates an opportunity to rectify document-related deficiencies. (PTI)

Nagaland minister flags off BJP's 'Har Ghar Tiranga' two-wheeler rally

KOHIMA, Aug 10: The BJP's Nagaland unit on Monday organised a motorcycle rally as part of the 'Har Ghar Tiranga' campaign ahead of Independence Day.

Nagaland Minister for Higher Education and Tourism Temjen Imna Along flagged off the rally and urged people to carry the Tricolour with pride and respect.

He asked people to dispose of the flags respectfully after the programme and not cause littering.

Participants of the rally rode from Eco Park to the Secretariat and back, carrying the Tricolour as part of the campaign to encourage people to hoist the national flag ahead of August 15.

"Carry the Tricolour with pride, and do not cause littering," Along said. (PTI)

Thousands join Samyukta Kisan Morecha's 'Jail Bharo Andolan' in Tripura over 11 demands

AGARTALA, Aug 10: Thousands of farmers, agricultural labourers and workers marched through the streets of Tripura on Monday as part of a 'Jail Bharo Andolan' organised by the Samyukta Kisan Morecha (SKM) over an 11-point charter of demands.

The statewide protests passed off without any major untoward incident, with around 12,000 protesters detained and later released, police said.

CPI(M) state secretary Jitendra Chaudhury, former chief minister Manik Sarkar and CITU state president Manik Dey led the agitation in the state capital.

The SKM claimed that nearly 6,000 farmers and working people were arrested in Agartala and similar civil disobedience programmes were held at 21 other locations across the state.

Addressing the protesters, Chaudhury criticised the BJP-led government, alleging that it had



failed to meet people's aspirations and adopted "anti-people" policies.

"During the past eight and a half years, the people of the state witnessed only rampant corruption at all levels instead of development. A starvation-like situation has been prevailing in the hilly areas of the state due to lack of employment and livelihood. The BJP government

has taken away the democratic rights of the people," he said.

Describing the 'Jail Bharo Andolan' as a movement to "save the country", Chaudhury said the agitation was a warning to the BJP government to change the policies.

"If they don't change policies, massive protests will be organised to topple the government to save the

country from the BJP, which has been destroying democratic values," he said.

Sarkar said the scale of the mobilisation reflected the "depth of public anger" against the government and claimed that the protests would grow in the coming days.

Calling the government "undemocratic, authoritarian, anti-people and isolated from the people", he alleged that it was serving the interests of a handful of power seekers rather than ordinary citizens.

The SKM's 11-point charter of demands includes 200 days of employment under the MGNREGA with a daily wage of ₹ 700, reduction in prices of fuel and essential commodities, and measures to reduce the financial burden on people. "The statewide protest passed off without any major untoward incident. Around 12,000 protesters were detained and later released," state police spokesperson Rajdeep Deb said. (PTI)

APCC demands Arunachal CM Khandu's resignation

ITANAGAR, Aug 10: The Arunachal Pradesh Congress Committee (APCC) on Monday demanded the resignation of Chief Minister Pema Khandu on moral grounds, alleging that the state government was not cooperating with a Supreme Court-directed CBI preliminary inquiry.

In a statement, APCC working president Tanga Byaling alleged that the state administration was reluctant to assist the central agency in probing public works contracts worth around Rs 1,270 crore, reportedly awarded to firms linked to Khandu's relatives.

Byaling said the matter had entered the domain of judicial scrutiny and alleged that the Supreme Court had summoned the state's Chief Secretary and Principal Secretary (Home) after the CBI submitted reports flagging non-cooperation.

The party questioned why the top court had to intervene when the chief minister had publicly

welcomed the probe on April 6, and assured full cooperation.

The opposition party claimed that the ruling BJP's slogan of 'Zero Tolerance Against Corruption' stands exposed, adding that Khandu's resignation is essential to ensure a free, fair, and impartial investigation without any conflict of interest.

The APCC also raised concerns over recent administrative reshuffles and transfers of officials in departments whose records fall under the scope of the CBI inquiry, urging the government to ensure that no tender files, work orders, or digital records are altered, delayed, or destroyed.

Demanding complete transparency, the Congress called on the state government to hand over all requested documents to investigators, publish a status report detailing its cooperation, and ensure protection for officials and whistleblowers facilitating the probe. (PTI)

Meghalaya's tribal district council okays amendments to bar non-tribals from taking part in polls

TURA (MEGHALAYA), Aug 10: The Garo Hills Autonomous District Council in western Meghalaya on Monday approved amendments to its election rules that will bar non-tribals from voting or contesting council elections, while paving the way for a separate electoral roll for the Sixth Schedule body, officials said.

The amendments to Rules 128 and 129 were approved by the council to establish a separate electoral roll specifically for GHADC elections, replacing the practice of using the electoral roll prepared for Assembly elections.

The GHADC, established in 1952 under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution, had for decades conducted its elections using the electoral roll prepared for Assembly polls, allowing members of different communities to participate in the council's electoral process.

The amendments followed violent incidents in the Garo Hills region earlier this year after the authorities issued a notification

seeking to bar non-tribals from contesting the GHADC elections, in a departure from the practice that continued for over seven decades.

The Meghalaya High Court later cancelled the notification, while the state government postponed the elections, scheduled for April 10, in view of the violence that claimed two lives.

Under the amended rules, only persons belonging to Scheduled Tribes recognised by the Meghalaya government and fulfilling other prescribed conditions will be eligible to be included in the GHADC electoral roll.

"The amendment marks a significant step in protecting the rights and interests of the tribal people of Garo Hills. With a separate electoral roll, non-tribals will no longer be able to participate in GHADC elections either as voters or candidates," said Chief Executive Member of the council, M Dhormonath Ch Sangma.

The move fulfils a long-standing

demand in Garo Hills for a separate electoral roll for the autonomous council, with supporters arguing that the electoral process of a Sixth Schedule institution should provide greater protection to the interests of tribal communities and enable them to exercise greater control over their own affairs.

The amendment also follows a change approved by the council in March this year, which introduced Scheduled Tribe status as an eligibility criterion for contesting GHADC elections.

The latest amendment, therefore, represents a major departure from the electoral practice followed since the creation of the GHADC and is expected to reshape the composition of its electorate.

The move also comes in line with the commitment made by Meghalaya Chief Minister Conrad K Sangma to address the issue of a separate electoral roll for the GHADC. (PTI)

Nagaland tax revenue rises to ₹ 1,597 crore in FY'26

KOHIMA, Aug 10: Nagaland's tax revenue increased by ₹ 170.47 crore to ₹ 1,597.51 crore in the 2025-26 fiscal, registering an 11.9 per cent year-on-year growth, officials said on Monday.

The Department of State Taxes, during a review meeting with Governor Nand Kishore Yadav here, said tax collection stood at ₹ 1,427.03 crore in 2024-25, up from ₹ 1,358.98 crore in the previous fiscal.

Goods and Services Tax (GST) remained the largest component of the state's tax revenue, contributing ₹ 1,181.88 crore, or 74 per cent, of the total tax collection in 2025-26, according to an official release.

GST collection during the current financial year stood at ₹ 450.35 crore up to July 2026, the department said.

The department, however, flagged manpower shortages, the need for continuous IT infrastructure upgrades and increasing workloads arising from taxpayer registrations and return filings as key challenges.

It also pointed to the growing volume of GST data requiring scrutiny and risk assessment, as well as difficulties in identifying unregistered taxpayers, detecting tax evasion and conducting field verification of high-risk taxpayers. (PTI)

Nagaland cabinet reviews oil exploration, Foothill Road and disaster response

exploration activities are taken forward.

Referring to concerns raised by the Central Nagaland Tribes Council (CNTC), he said stakeholders in border areas affected by oil exploration would have to be taken into consideration.

A tripartite MoU between the government of India, Assam and Nagaland was signed in New Delhi on June 11. It concerns facilitating mineral-oil operations, including exploration and production of crude oil and natural gas, in the Assam-Nagaland border areas.

On the Foothill Road, Along said discussions with the Centre, including the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways, were also taken up.

He referred to the ongoing issue over the proposed 30-metre, 18-metre and 12-metre road widths, describing the project as a potential lifeline for Nagaland's economic

resurgence.

On the flood and landslide situation, Along said the immediate priority was to help affected people return to normal life.

"Politics is one thing," he said, stressing that the government was responsible for helping people get back on their feet.

Several parts of Nagaland, including Mon, Tuli and areas of Tuensang, have been badly affected by landslides and house collapses, with loss of lives reported, he said.

Addressing disruption to education caused by the adverse weather, Along said efforts were on to restore normalcy and minimise the impact on academic sessions.

"We cannot fight against nature," he said, adding that the situation required greater preparedness and measures to mitigate the impact of similar events in future. (PTI)

First round of Manipur govt-UNC talks 'fruitful, cordial': Spokesperson

SENAPATI/ IMPHAL, Aug 10: (PTI) The first round of talks between the Manipur government and the United Naga Council (UNC) was "fruitful and cordial", with both sides agreeing to continue discussions to find solutions to issues raised by the Naga apex body, a government spokesperson said on Monday.

The talks were held at the Senapati district headquarters, where a delegation of ministers and MLAs led by Deputy Chief Minister L Dikho and Home Minister Govindas Konthoujam held discussions with UNC representatives.

Government spokesperson Thokchom Radheshyam described the meeting as an "ice breaker" and said further rounds of talks would be held.

"Today, United Naga Council and Manipur government representatives led by the deputy chief minister and state home minister came here (Senapati) to discuss and find solutions to several issues. We had fruitful and cordial discussions. This is the first round of discussions and a series of talks will follow to find a solution," he told reporters.

"Talks have just started, and results will come after a series of discussions. Still, today's meeting was an ice-breaker. Let's wait for the re-



sult," Radheshyam said.

On the demand for abrogation of the Suspension of Operations (SoO) agreement with Kuki militant groups, he said, "That is the policy of the government of India. Manipur is part of India and we have to go by the policy and decision of the Centre."

UNC president Ng Lorho, however, said the

organisation would not lift its blockade along the national highways until its four-point charter of demands was met.

"We discussed with ministers and MLAs the way forward on how to bring peace. We discussed our four-point charter of demands, and we stick to it. Unless it is fulfilled, we will not end the blockade," Lorho told reporters after the meeting.

He said the government had appealed to the UNC to withdraw the blockade but warned that the organisation could take "more stringent actions" if its demands were not met.

Lorho also said further talks should be held in Senapati and not Imphal.

The UNC has been demanding abrogation of the SoO pact with Kuki militant groups, declaration of the Kuki National Front-President (KNF-P) as a terrorist organisation, removal of the deputy chief minister from office and arrest of KNP-P cadres allegedly involved in the killing of six Naga civilians.

The prolonged blockade along national highways by the UNC since June has severely affected the supply of essential commodities and contributed to a rise in prices of edible items in the state. (PTI)

Lighter by 17kg and after gruelling sessions in Kashmir Sarfaraz ready for Sri Lanka challenge

NEW DELHI, Aug 10: A few days before he was recalled to India's Test squad, Sarfaraz Khan had declared on social media that, "I may not fit in, but I'll fight with everything I've got." It was a message of resolve but one that was acutely aware of the probabilities at that point.

But as luck would have it, his resolve won.

An injury to Sai Sudharsan opened up the window of opportunity which Sarfaraz had been waiting for the past two years. He was included for the two-match away Test series against Sri Lanka beginning on August 15.

The recall could not have come at a more opportune time for the Mumbai-based batsman, having done all that he could to "fit in", including shedding 17kg in the past year and a half.

For someone, who has fought the perception of being a bit more burly for international cricket despite scoring a marathon triple hundred in Ranji Trophy, Sarfaraz now sports a sharper look, something that has certainly elevated his T20 game.

Add to it, hours and hours spent at the Sher-e-Kashmir Stadium in Kashmir to sharpen his skills because seasonal rains made it impossible to have regular training in Mumbai.

The comeback, therefore, is one to savour as being dropped after four failures against New Zealand,



back in 2024, was hard to process. It was a series in which everyone failed but the axe fell only on the 28-year-old.

He then went to England and scored 92 for India A in an unofficial Test against England Lions apart from a century in an intra-squad game (India vs India A) at Beckenham.

But the comeback still remained a distant dream until India's meek surrender to South Africa at home set the alarm bells ringing.

If sources are to be believed, the team management had, back then, enquired about Sarfaraz ahead of the second Test in Guwahati but the selection committee wasn't ready to take him back into the fold.

However, with Sudharsan's right big-toe impact injury still far from healed, the national selection committee had three options -- Ru-

turaj Gaikwad, who has a first-class career average in mid 40s, greenhorn Shaikh Rasheed who is more of a No. 3.

The third and most logical option had to be Sarfaraz, who is probably the best player of spin bowling apart from skipper Shubman Gill and Rishabh Pant in this current set-up.

Also with Dhruv Jurel not really coming good against spinners for some time now (at least when he is playing for the senior national team), one can't be sure that the Uttar Pradesh man will play as a pure batter against the island nation when the first Test starts in Galle on August 15.

Sarfaraz way better than Jurel

Jurel came to Sri Lanka last month as the skipper of the India A team and scored a big hundred and

a fifty in the two 'A' Tests but in the practice game that ended on Sunday, he was out cheaply defending against an off-spinner.

It is now well documented that Jurel has problems playing off-spinners. South Africa's Simon Harmer got him thrice in four innings during the series against the Proteas.

In case of Sarfaraz, he has better range of strokes, including the conventional and reverse sweep, which he can play in-front and behind the square.

Red-soil turners at private facilities for training

Post IPL, Sarfaraz played the Mumbai T20 league where he produced some blistering knocks for Akash Tigers Western Mumbai Suburbs.

But once the monsoons hit Mumbai, he left for Kashmir where he stayed for sometime, training against the net bowlers as well as some of the state team boys.

He also did skills training on astro turf wicket at the MCA Indoor facility at BKC and rented private facilities around Kurla where he batted for hours on used and under-prepared red-soil tracks to keep his game top notch against slow bowlers.

Now that he has managed to fit in, India would need him to fight the good fight against Prabath Jayasuriya and company this weekend. (PTI)

Indian-origin prodigies Bodhana Sivanandan, Shreyas Royal make British chess history

LONDON, Aug 10: Indian-origin chess prodigies 11-year-old Bodhana Sivanandan and 17-year-old Shreyas Royal made chess history over the weekend, winning the 2026 British Chess Championships.

Bodhana became Britain's youngest-ever Women's chess champion at the games which concluded in Coventry on Sunday. Cheered on as "Godhana" during the rounds, she clinched her title in a tense rapid-chess playoff with Ireland's 14-year-old Trisha Kanyamarala, a promising talent in her own right.

"Unreal! Bodhana has won. She is unbelievable, a generational talent," said Grandmaster Danny Gormally, as he wrapped his commentary for the English Chess Federation (ECF).

Bodhana famously first picked up chess during the COVID pandemic lockdown when her father's friend was going back to India and gave her a few bags, which included a chess board.

"I was interested in the pieces, so I started playing," she said at the time.

Since then, the north-west London schoolgirl has been topping records as one of the youngest players on the circuit. In the faster formats of the game, Bodhana is already the UK Open Women's Blitz Champion and joint British Women's Rapid Champion. Her latest win at the classical format event makes it an impressive hat-trick for the 11-year-old, her only



loss at the championship this weekend being to Shreyas Royal in round six.

Royal, meanwhile, scooped the overall British title after he topped the table after nine rounds, finishing half a point ahead of England's more seasoned grandmasters. As his first British title, the result establishes his status as an emerging world-class talent in chess.

"Keep persisting, no matter how tough things may get," Royal has previously said, when he was crowned England's youngest grandmaster aged 15.

The teenager from south-east London went on to make a mark as one of the UK's leading young chess players. At this year's championship, he quickly showed that he could compete with the established elite, moving into outright contention for the title as the tour-

namment progressed.

Shreyas, who was born in India, moved to the UK aged three with parents Jitendra and Anju Singh from Bangalore. Around eight years ago, the ECF campaigned with the Home Office to allow the exceptionally talented chess prodigy to continue to reside in the UK and hone his talent.

"In 2018, as Home Secretary, I took a decision to allow Shreyas and his family to remain in the UK. Wonderful to see his extraordinary talent flourish. Britain is proud of you, Shreyas," former minister Sajid Javid said in a social media post after Royal's latest win.

The 2026 British Chess Championships were billed as the biggest in the event's 122-year history, with more than 1,750 entries and a record 34,000 pounds prize fund for the open championship. (PTI)

Shetty trades laid-back style for aggression ahead of World Championship debut

NEW DELHI, Aug 10: Young Indian shuttler Ayush Shetty on Monday said he has been working to shed his "natural laid-back approach" to become a more aggressive player as he gears up for a tough World Championship debut in which his opening match is against current No. 1 Shi Yuqi of China.

Unseeded Shetty said he was mentally prepared for such a possibility and feels better prepared to face the Chinese when the event gets underway here from August 17.

"I was watching the draw live. As soon as I got it with Shi, I was ready. As I was unseeded, I was prepared to play world No. 1. I didn't have much of a reaction, it is just another match, really tough battle," Shetty said during a virtual interview.

The world number 23 Indian has lost to Shi three times, including in the final of the Asian Badminton Championships, but feels those defeats have provided him valuable lessons ahead of their next meeting.

"I think definitely I have lost three times. I had some good learning, also ABC final. The tactical aspect of the game, he was much better, but we have been working hard. I feel stronger," he said.

"I think he is a really tough opponent. I remember ABC final, he was really prepared. I have gotten better, I have been analysing the match, and also the mental aspect. You have to really work hard against him."

The 21-year-old, a bronze-medallist at the 2023 World Junior Championships, won his maiden BWF World Tour event at the US Open Super 300 last year and then became the first Indian men's singles player in 61 years to win a silver medal at the Badminton Asia Championships this year.

"When I entered the senior circuits, playing against top 20 players was a great challenge. Matching their pace was tough but now I have adapted to it. Now I can push them, I am more confident," Shetty said.

"Also, playing against Shi, I will be more prepared because he outplayed me."

Shetty has been working with Indonesian coach Irwansyah Adi Pratama, who also trains two-time Olympic medallist PV Sindhu.

"...the training has been tougher. We have been training long, he has been focusing on speed. I have been trying to be agile, faster and aggressive," he said.

"These are what he was focusing upon. Outside the court also he is a really good guy, I can share anything and he will guide me in the right direction."

The youngster has also been sparring with Sindhu, which he feels has helped him develop his own aggressive game.

"We have been training together. He is also tall and attacking player, there is a lot to learn. We



have been playing, similar type of game, we have been trying to play more aggressive," he said.

"I have been trying to be more aggressive. It gives me more energy, consciously I have been focusing. My natural style will be more laid-back, not express much, but I have been trying to be aggressive."

Want to set my own benchmark

The Mangalore shuttler also wants to measure his progress against his own standards rather than comparing himself to the legends of the sport.

"I would want to set my own benchmark. I am not following others, legends of the game. I have been focusing on myself, to get better," he said.

"I wouldn't want to think about setting a benchmark for the next generation. I just want to focus on the game..."

Shetty said his performances at the Asian Badminton Championships and Thomas Cup have given him confidence, but he considers the World Championships an even bigger challenge.

"It gives great confidence that I have done well at ABC and Thomas and Uber Cup, but World Championships I will rate bigger than that. It is a great challenge," he said.

"There is pressure but it is more of excitement. Playing at home is a special feeling. We have been targeting this tournament, focus has been to peak, preparation has been going well. I will be at my best at World Championships," he said.

Shetty also believes the increasing emphasis on recovery is a positive development for the younger generation.

"Right now, people have realised how important the recovery is. Back in the days it was all about working hard, now importance is also on recovery. A lot of young players focusing on recovery."

Shetty said he was excited to play again at the Indira Gandhi Stadium, the venue which drew flak from foreign players for a wide range of issues including pigeon poop on the courts, monkeys in the stands and general lack of upkeep.

"The World Championship is a much bigger event. It will be much better, I think there were some issues (during India Open) but now it will be a better venue and I am really excited to play there again. (PTI)

From NCC shooting to Asian Games, Vidarsa overcomes financial hurdles

NEW DELHI, Aug 10: Asian Games-bound rifle shooter Vidarsa K Vinod has turned setbacks and self-doubt into motivation, transforming an NCC introduction to shooting in 2018 into a place in the Indian squad for the Aichi-Nagoya Asian Games, with her sights set on becoming the world No. 1.

The 27-year-old from Kozhikode, initially picked up a rifle through the NCC simply to experience the sport and perhaps secure a government job, but eight years later she is headed to the Asian Games, where she will compete in the women's 10m air rifle and 50m rifle 3-positions events, targeting her first individual international medal.

"My biggest dream is to become World No. 1. I want to discover my full potential and keep improving every time I step onto the range," said Vidarsa who has made the Asian Games-bound squad on the back of domestic performances.

Born into a family where her father works as a contractor and her mother is a homemaker, Vidarsa often found her dream of competing at the highest level difficult to pursue due to financial constraints.

"I just wanted to experience shooting. I never imagined it would become my profession. When I became the aggregate champion at the Kerala State Championship despite training with borrowed equipment, I realised this was the sport I wanted to pursue," she said. "Shooting is a beautiful sport, but it's also expensive. There were times when my parents couldn't afford to travel with me to competitions, so I started travelling alone."

"Eventually in 2021, I bought my first rifle. Looking back, that was one of the biggest investments they (parents) made," recalled Vidarsa, whose only international medal so far is a 50m rifle prone team silver at last year's Asian Championships. The COVID-19 pandemic brought another setback. Training with a rifle owned by her association, Vidarsa was left without access to a weapon during the lockdown, bringing her shooting career to a near-complete halt.

"I couldn't shoot, but I never stopped training. I focused on fitness, yoga and meditation because I knew I had to be ready whenever the opportunity returned."

After the pandemic, she met fellow rifle shooter



Manu S Ravi, whom she later married. He is now a shooting coach and has been a key presence in her journey.

"He once asked me, 'Why don't you own a rifle?' At first, I laughed because buying one wasn't financially possible. But he made me realise that if I truly believed in my dream, I had to take that step."

In 2022, she won her first national medal and, seeking a more competitive training environment, soon moved to Delhi to train at the Karni Singh Range.

"Living alone in Delhi wasn't easy. I had to cook for myself, manage everything on my own and continue training every day. There were moments when it became physically and mentally exhausting, but I knew these sacrifices were necessary if I wanted to represent India."

The toughest moment came in early 2024 when financial pressures and repeated near misses almost convinced her to leave the sport.

"I had almost decided to quit. But my family, my husband and my coach never stopped believing in me, even when I was losing belief in myself."

A key change came in 2024 when she joined the National Centre of Excellence, where training, accommodation, nutrition and ammunition were provided, allowing her to focus on shooting. (PTI)

Modi meets CWG medalists PM lauds Lovlina for objecting to distorted India map

NEW DELHI, Aug 10: Boxer Lovlina Borgohain got appreciation for objecting to a distorted Indian flag, weightlifter Mirabai Chanu opened up about the "turmoil" of her last four years while some other Commonwealth Games medallists took the opportunity to share jokes with Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who hosted them for an interaction here.

The PM heard from the medallists about their experiences building up to the Commonwealth Games and during their stay in Glasgow during a meeting at his residence on Sunday. It was also attended by Sports Minister Manu Sukh Mandaviya, Minister of State for Sports Raksha Khadse and Indian Olympic Association (IOA) President P T Usha.

"Kya hua wo restaurant waale se jhagda kar rahi thi? (What happened, you were fighting with that restaurant guy?)" Modi asked Lovlina, who won the 75kg category silver, in the little over 10-minute video of the interaction shared by his office on Monday.

The Assam boxer laughed and replied, "We had such a good performance and it was the last day of

the Games. It was a happy occasion sir, we were celebrating and I didn't like it when I saw the distorted flag. I politely told them and they have made the changes also."

The PM, while applauding her, said it was a thoughtful gesture at a time when she was just out to celebrate her triumph. India won 39 medals in the truncated Games to finish fourth. The tally included 13 gold medals, seven of them coming in boxing.

"To be able to recognise the significance of that map at a time when you were celebrating and the Games were over, I can tell you truthfully, that video was not ordinary. It will be remembered by people for a very long time," he told the Tokyo Olympics bronze-winner.

In his one-on-one chat with Mirabai, who won the 48kg category gold in Glasgow with a Games record lift of 190kg, the PM asked about her breakdown on the podium. He also fed her a laddu during the interaction.

Mirabai said it was a moment of letting go emotions that she had been holding on for the past four years.

"Itne aansu tapak rahe the (So



many tears were rolling down)," Modi remarked.

A clearly overwhelmed but smiling Mirabai responded, "I was very happy and emotional in that moment. I was crying because I missed a medal in Paris Olympics by one kilogram. I had faced a lot in these last four years. I was battling injuries and some family problems too."

"There were lot of things. So, these four years were very tough for me. And when I stood on the podium, our flag went up and the anthem played, it was hard to stop myself," the diminutive Manipuri

said without getting into the specifics of her issues apart from injuries.

Boxer Narender Berwal, who won the +90kg gold, took the opportunity to share a funny comment that he received from a Pakistani boxer after beating him in the Military World Games of 2015.

"During the 2015 World Military Games, I had a bout with a Pakistani boxer. I won it but when we were together in the medical room for treatment to our niggles, he said to me 'Bhaijan apka naam Narender hai, apke coach ka

naam Narender hai, apke Pradhan Mantri ka naam Narender hai, mujhe Narender naam se nafrat ho gayi hai.' (Brother, you, your coach and your PM are all named Narender. I hate this name now)," he recalled as Modi laughed.

On a more serious note, PM appreciated the efforts of the athletes and called them an inspiration.

"I have been in this house for 12-13 years now and if there is one group that I have met regularly here, it is the athletes because of your efforts to win medals for India and your tradition of scaling new heights."

"Far more than our push to promote sports in schools, it is your medals that inspire people," he said.

Modi also lauded boxer Jadumani Singh (55kg), who reflected his win over a Pakistani boxer during the Games on July 26, which is also celebrated as Vijay Diwas to commemorate India's victory over Pakistan in the 1999 Kargil War.

"By dedicating your medal to the Indian armed forces, you added glory to an already glorious moment. You defeated the one who should have been defeated," Modi told Jadumani, who is also serving in the Indian Army. (PTI)