

Assam flood situation eases; 1.5 lakh still affected

GUWAHATI, June 26 (PTI)

ASSAM'S flood situation improved on Wednesday with the water level of major rivers and their tributaries receding even as nearly 1.50 lakh people in seven districts were reeling under the deluge, a bulletin said.

The flood-hit districts witnessed light to moderate rainfall, leading to a fall in the water level of all major rivers flowing below the danger mark, except the Kushiara river in Karimganj, according to the Assam State Disaster Management Authority (ASDMA). Nearly 1.50 lakh people were reeling under the deluge in Barpeta, Cachar, Darrang,



Monsoon clouds seen above the city skyline in Mumbai on Wednesday.

(PTI)

Dhemaji, Goalpara, Kamrup and Karimganj.

The number of affected people was 1.53 lakh on Tuesday.

Houses were damaged, trees uprooted, and water levels rose steadily in rivers and dams across Kerala after heavy rains accompanied by strong winds continued to lash several parts of the State on Wednesday.

High tides and sea incursions were reported in districts like Thrissur and Ernakulam, and landslides wrecked havoc in the high ranges of Kozhikode. Several houses have been damaged in Alappuzha, Kannur and Idukki districts following heavy downpour and winds since on Tuesday night, authorities said. A portion of the "annadana

mandapam" (dining hall) at the famed Ochira Parabrahma Temple in Kollam district collapsed in incessant rains.

The India Meteorological Department on Wednesday predicted heavy rains accompanied by lightning in parts of Andhra Pradesh for three days from June 26 to 28.

Heavy downpour is likely in parts of North Coastal Andhra Pradesh (NCAP), Yanam and South Coastal Andhra Pradesh (SCAP). The weather department also forecast thunderstorms over parts of NCAP, Yanam, SCAP and Rayalaseema for five days from June 26 to 30. Gusty winds reaching up to 50 km per hour (kmph) are likely in these places.

Isro arm NSIL to launch largest-ever Australian sat

New Delhi: Australian-Indian in-space servicing arm Space Machines Company has signed a launch service agreement with Isro's commercial arm NewSpace India Ltd (NSIL) for the launch of second Optimus spacecraft weighing 450kg, the largest Australian-designed and-built spacecraft so far, reports **Surendra Singh**.

Slated for a launch on board NSIL's new mini rocket Small Satellite Launch Vehicle in 2026, this mission, named Space MAITRI (Mission for Australia-India's Technology, Research and Innovation), will mark a defining moment for both nations in the area of space collaboration. The mission will address the problem of increasing levels of space debris around Earth.

Space MAITRI is assisted by an \$8.5 million grant from the Australian Space Agency, and is part of the ISI India Projects program. At the India Space Congress 2024 held in Delhi, Rajat Kulshrestha, CEO and co-founder of Space Machines Company, and NSIL CMD Radhakrishnan Durairaj formally announced the signing of the agreement.

Birla 5th LS Speaker to be elected for 2nd term

There Should Be New Vision, Resolve For LS: Birla

► Continued from P 1

An effort involving Congress's K C Venugopal and DMK's TR Baalu from the opposition side and Union ministers Rajnath Singh, Amit Shah and JP Nadda on Tuesday to evolve a consensus had failed with govt again turning down the demand that the deputy speaker be from the opposition.

But Congress did not press for a vote, despite an attempt by Union minister for animal husbandry Rajiv Ranjan Singh 'Lalan' to bait them into seeking one, leading to the 62-year-old Birla being elected by voice vote.

Modi congratulated Birla on his re-election and expressed confidence that he would guide parliamentarians and play a big role in the House to fulfil people's expectations.

After his election, Birla told members that there should be a new vision and resolve for the 18th Lok



Congress chief Mallikarjun Kharge and MP Rahul Gandhi during a meeting with other leading lights of INDIA bloc on Wednesday

Sabha. He called for Lok Sabha to be a centre of creative thinking and new ideas, which would establish high levels of parliamentary traditions and dignity. Modi and parliamentary affairs minister Kiren Rijiju were joined by leader of opposition Rahul Gandhi in escorting Birla to the Speaker's chair after his election, marking a moment of harmony.

Birla got a second consecutive term, the fifth time that a Speaker will serve beyond the tenure of one Lok Sabha.

It is also among the few occasions that an election became necessary for a post conventionally decided by consensus.

Birla, who has risen through the ranks in BJP, is also a three-term former Rajasthan MLA.

EAM meets Myanmar dy PM, flags violence along border

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: In a rare meeting with Myanmar deputy PM and foreign minister U Than Shwe, who transited through Delhi on Wednesday, EAM S Jaishankar expressed deep concern about the impact of continuing violence and instability in Myanmar on the Indian border. Jaishankar said he particularly flagged illegal narcotics, arms smuggling and trafficking of persons as priority challenges and sought cooperation for early return of Indian nationals trapped in Myawaddy.

He said India is open to en-

gaging all stakeholders in addressing this situation and pressed for credible security protection for India's projects in Myanmar. "Urged early return to the path of democratic transition in Myanmar. India stands ready to help in any manner," the EAM said.

This was possibly the first time there was an acknowledgement publicly by India about its engagement with a senior leader of the military junta. In a tough diplomatic stance, India has maintained ties with the regime because of the need to cooperate for checking activities of insurgents active in border areas.

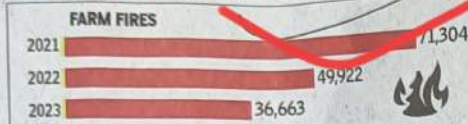
₹500cr action plan to tackle stubble burning in Punjab

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Chandigarh: Punjab agriculture and farmer welfare department has prepared an action plan of Rs 500 crore to put a check on stubble burning by providing machinery and other measures during the paddy harvesting season of 2024.

Agriculture minister Gurmeet Singh Khudian said that the department has received 21,511 applications from farmers, cooperative societies, farmer producer organisations (FPOs), and panchayats interested in availing subsidies on crop residue management (CRM) machinery during the kharif season of 2024. Farmers have applied for 63,697 machines. Individual farmers can avail of a 50% subsidy on the cost of CRM equipment, while cooperative societies, FPOs, and panchayats can receive an 80% subsidy, limited to a maxi-

36K FARM FIRES REPORTED LAST YR



WHAT GREEN TRIBUNAL HAS SUGGESTED

- Take stringent action and impose penalties on violators
- Maintain a database of violations
- Monitor hotspots vulnerable to stubble burning and stipulate a stringent enforcement mechanism
- Undertake periodical analysis of air quality at appropriate intervals at identified areas
- Install an adequate number of ambient air quality monitoring stations at suitable locations, especially at hotspots
- Submit a periodical report indicating the effective implementation of the plan



State govt has received 21,511 applications for availing subsidies

mum according to the guidelines of the scheme, he added. Under the scheme, the minister said, super SMS, su-

per seeder, surface seeder, smart seeder, happy seeder, paddy straw chopper, shredder, mulcher, hydraulic re-

versible mould board plough, and zero till drill for in-situ management, as well as baler and rake for ex-situ machines,

are being made available on subsidy. As many as 1,30,000 CRM machines have been provided to Punjab farmers from

2018-19 to 2023, Khudian said. He added that the agriculture department would also launch an information, education, and communication campaign to educate and train farmers about the available technologies for the management of crop residue, as the state govt is taking every possible step to address the problem of stubble burning.

The minister also asked the department officials to ensure transparency in the entire process and stated that strict action will be taken against the violation of rules and regulations.

Earlier this year, Punjab govt informed NGT it would take steps to effectively manage the entire 19.58 million tonnes (MT) of paddy straw in 2024. The state is also considering a Haryana-type incentive scheme. However, larger area under paddy production could prove to be a deterrent.

Every second Indian adult physically inactive, fails WHO guidelines: Study

52.6% Women, 38.4% Men Have Sedentary Lifestyles; Levels Of Inactivity Projected To Rise

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New Delhi: Nearly 50% of Indian adults are unfit and fail to adhere to World Health Organisation (WHO) recommendations for adequate physical activity, according to a study published in medical journal *The Lancet Global Health* on Tuesday.

The research, conducted across 197 countries and territories from 2000 to 2022, highlighted a significant gender disparity, with 52.6% of women and 38.4% men found physically inactive in 2022. The most concerning aspect of the findings was the dramatic increase in the prevalence of insufficient physical activity among Indian adults, which surged from 22.4% in 2000 to 45.4% in 2022. If the trend of 2010-22 continues, levels of inactivity are projected to rise to 55% by 2030.

WHO recommends adults to engage in "150 minutes of moderate-intensity or 75 minutes of vigorous-intensity physical activity, or equivalent, per week". Failing to meet these guidelines can lead to serious health consequences. Physically inactive adults are more susceptible to developing cardiovascular diseases and face an increased risk of type 2 diabetes, dementia and breast and colon cancer.

According to city-based doctors, the lack of physical activity and increased consumption of unhealthy food are among major factors contributing to the rise in lifestyle-related diseases. With every-

thing available on mobile phones, people have stopped going to markets, further reducing physical movement. The availability of snacks and beverages within the office has also limited the need for employees to move around. This sedentary lifestyle affects all age groups. "In our OPD, we see a substantial number of patients with orthopaedic issues related to sedentary lifestyles and poor diets. In a month, the number of such patients ranges between 15 and 25. This indicates that these conditions are prevalent and increasing," said Dr Hitesh Bhandari, consultant, orthopaedics, Indian Spinal Injuries Centre.

He added, "Sedentary lifestyles and consumption of junk food are key contributors to diseases. These include osteoporosis, where a lack of weight-bearing exercise can lead to weaker bones, and osteoarthritis, which is exacerbated by obesity caused by poor diet and inactivity. Chronic lower back pain is another common issue, resulting from poor posture and weak core muscles due to inactivity. Adults aged 40-65 are most affected by a sedentary lifestyle in terms of orthopaedic health. This age group often has desk jobs and establishes sedentary habits, leading to musculoskeletal problems."

Dr Balbir Singh, group chairman, cardiac sciences, Max Super Speciality Hospital, Saket, emphasised the significant health risks associated with a sedentary lifestyle, particularly in relation to car-

GET UP, FOR YOUR OWN SAKE!

Why more people are adopting inactive lifestyles

- > While desk jobs play a significant role, they are not the sole culprit
- > Excessive use of mobile devices and prolonged screen time during leisure hours also contribute to the problem
- > Another factor is lack of access to green spaces, particularly in metropolitan areas
- > Many individuals reside in neighbourhoods devoid of parks and trails, limiting their opportunities for outdoor recreation and exercise
- > This issue is compounded by increasing reliance on labour-saving devices and transportation, which further reduces need for physical exertion in daily life

Why it makes sense to be physically active

- > Reduces risk of developing various health conditions
- > Helps maintain healthy weight, strengthens muscles and bones, and improves cardiovascular function
- > Boosts immune system, enhances mental well-being, and increases overall energy levels
- > Weight loss and increased physical activity can reduce joint pain and improve mobility
- > Incorporating weight-bearing and strengthening exercises supports bone and joint health
- > Maintaining good posture and ergonomic setups at work can prevent musculoskeletal strain



divascular diseases, which affect both the heart and the brain. These ailments are a major concern for people who engage in minimal physical activity. A sedentary lifestyle is also linked to issues like hypertension, diabetes and obesity.

"The consequences of a sedentary lifestyle are more pronounced in older age groups, particularly those aged 40 and above. However, in recent years, there has been a significant change in the lifestyle habits of younger groups. The younger generation is also being impacted, as many work on computers and avoid in-person interactions. Online

TIMES VIEW: Inactivity can lead to both physical and mental issues. Unfortunately, modern office work often doesn't encourage physical activity. The report rightly reasserts the dangers of a sedentary lifestyle. We must prioritise the wellness of our own body, take time out to take care of it. There's no better investment than yourself.

meetings and lack of walking are becoming prevalent among them. At least 80% of the people who visit my OPD lead a sedentary lifestyle," said Dr Singh.

Women tend to lead a more inactive lifestyle compared to

men, he added. Many women believe working in the kitchen and performing household chores constitute significant physical activity, and they often claim to be very active as a result. However, this perception is inaccurate, he said.

Dr Anoop Saraya, a gastroenterologist from ILBS, said annual check-ups and corporate health screenings have been instrumental in identifying health issues through incidental findings.

"Individuals with fatty liver are at a higher risk of developing non-alcoholic fatty liver disease, which can progress to liver fibrosis, scarring and cell destruction. In advan-

ced stages, this condition may lead to cirrhosis, and those with cirrhotic liver have a higher likelihood of developing liver cancer compared to the general population. The progression from fatty liver to liver malignancy can span over 20-25 years," he said, adding genetic predisposition plays a crucial role in the development of certain diseases. When coupled with unhealthy eating habits, the risk of these conditions increases.

According to Dr Pragya Shukla, head of clinical oncology department at Delhi State Cancer Institute, "There is an increasing trend of cancer incidence in the younger population. Breast and colon cancers are directly or indirectly affected by a sedentary lifestyle." The sedentary nature of modern lifestyles, characterised by prolonged periods of sitting and minimal exercise, has been identified as a significant risk factor for cancer occurrence across all age groups, particularly among young people, she said.

"Insufficient exercise can contribute to psychological issues, and there is a correlation between eating unhealthy food and experiencing anxiety and depression," said Dr Praveen Gupta, principal director and chief of neurology, Fortis Hospital. A sedentary lifestyle may negatively impact a person's mental well-being. Moreover, the consumption of nutrient-poor, high-calorie foods has been associated with increased levels of stress and low mood.

CBI gets CM's 3-day custody, court says arrest not illegal

False Narrative That I Implicated Sisodia: Kejriwal

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New Delhi: A city court on Wednesday sent CM Arvind Kejriwal to CBI custody for three days, asserting that his arrest in the Delhi excise policy case was "not illegal". The court of vacation judge Amitabh Rawat said in an 18-page order that at this stage of investigation, statements of witnesses and documentary evi-

▶ **EDIT: Jail Mustn't Be Norm**

dence will be considered and the remand of the accused was, therefore, warranted.

"Investigation is the prerogative of the investigating agency. There are certain safeguards provided in the law, and at this stage, on the material on record, it cannot be said that the arrest is illegal. The agency, however, should not be

PLEA AGAINST HC BAIL STAY WITHDRAWN FROM SC

Photo: PTI

▶ CM withdraws from SC his plea challenging HC order staying bail granted to him in an ED case. tells court he will file comprehensive petition against stay and CBI action

▶ Seeking Kejriwal's custody, CBI counsel contends that it was required as CM was placing onus on former Delhi deputy CM Manish Sisodia and needed to be confronted

▶ Kejriwal personally addresses court, denies having given any statement putting 'entire blame' of liquor policy 'scam' on Sisodia, who is also an accused. Says, 'I had said that Sisodia is innocent. AAP is innocent. I am innocent. But CBI's plan is to malign us in the media. Please record that CBI sources have spread fake news'

▶ AAP netas say CBI has been caught lying after court agrees with Kejriwal's statement that he never tried to implicate Sisodia



Arvind Kejriwal at Rouse Avenue Court Wednesday

▶ CBI's counsel accuses Kejriwal of making 'unnecessary allegation of malice'

▶ BJP says it's shocking to see Kejriwal govt indulging in 'melodrama' to divert attention of Delhiites from city's water crisis

▶ AAP urges INDIA bloc to raise issue in Parl

overzealous," said the court.

CBI arrested Kejriwal during the hearing in court after the court allowed the agency to examine him and to produce documents for his arrest. The agency had sought five days of custody.

The application seeking Kejriwal's arrest had been moved by CBI after he was produ-

ced before the court from Tihar Jail, where he was lodged in judicial custody in a money-laundering case related to the excise policy being probed by ED.

The CBI counsel had earlier told the court why the CM's custody was needed. "We need his custodial interrogation. He pushed the entire onus on Manish Sisodia and said he

has no idea about the excise policy. We need to confront him with documents. We are not asking him to admit to something," said the counsel.

Responding to this, Kejriwal addressed the court, saying CBI had released fabricated information to the media.

▶ Continued on P 6

Mark Rutte moves from leading Netherlands to heading Nato

Outgoing Dutch PM A Putin Critic, And A Ukraine Supporter

Mark Rutte, the long-serving Dutch PM, was formally named the new secretary general of Nato on Wednesday, putting an experienced, strongly pro-Ukraine leader with a reputation for conciliation at the head of the alliance. Rutte, 57, will take over from Jens Stoltenberg on Oct 1, at a difficult time for Nato in the face of Russia's war against Ukraine and in the midst of a tight race for the US presidency that could bring Donald Trump, who disparages the alliance, back into power.

The decision, sealed by Nato ambassadors during a meeting at the 32-nation alliance's headquarters in Brussels, removes a potentially contentious issue from the alliance's 75th anniversary meeting next month in Washington. US Prez Biden and his Nato counterparts will formally welcome Rutte to their table at a summit, which begins on July 9.

Long a favourite of Biden for the post, Rutte served as the Dutch PM four times, for nearly 14 years, building complicated coalitions through debate and compromise. Those skills should serve him well in an alliance that works by consensus, where one country can block the intentions of the rest.

Rutte turned down Biden's request that he seek the Nato job at least once before, forcing the alliance to extend Stoltenberg's term for an extra year.

Now serving as a caretaker PM before a new Dutch go-



TOUGH ROAD AHEAD

vernment is sworn in, Rutte is known as a hard worker but an affable boss. A man of habit, the son of a car dealer, he has lived in the same modest house, with the same furniture, for the past 30 years. Every summer, he rents the same house with family members and spends a few days each year in New York with the same friend, staying in the same modest hotel in Chinatown, wrote Caroline de Gruyter, Europe correspondent for the Dutch newspaper NRC Handelsblad, in Foreign Policy.

He is also known for riding his bicycle to work, a habit that will have to change because his new job will require him to endure significantly enhanced security wherever he goes. He will also have to drop the weekly social studies class he has taught for years at a high school in The Hague.

Rutte will take over with Nato struggling to find a way to reassure Ukraine of its long-term commitment to its security at a time when the country is facing increased Russian pressure after more than two

years of war. Allies are also concerned that Trump, who has been openly hostile to Nato and some of its leaders, could win back the presidency, although Rutte got along well with Trump when he was in office.

In Feb, speaking at the Munich Security Conference, Rutte told Europeans to "stop moaning and whining and nagging about Trump," and instead act in their own interests by beefing up their militaries and producing more ammunition for Ukraine. Americans will decide the next president, he said, adding: "I'm not an American, I cannot vote in the US. We have to work with whoever is on the dance floor."

Rutte's view of the Kremlin was deeply affected by the shooting down of Malaysia Airlines flight MH17 over Ukraine in 2014, with 196 Dutch people among the 298 people killed by a Russian anti-aircraft missile that had been provided to separatist forces by the Russian military. In Sept 2022, Rutte told the UN of Prez Putin: "He won't stop at Ukraine if we don't stop him now. This war is bigger than Ukraine itself. It's about upholding the international rule of law." He has described Putin as "coldhearted, brutal, merciless." Under Rutte, the Netherlands has increased military spending to over 2% of GDP demanded of Nato members, and it has provided F-16s, artillery, drones and ammunition to Kyiv while investing more in its own military. NYT

New criminal laws will come into effect from July 1

■ Zero FIR, online police complaints, videography of crime scenes are key highlights of new criminal laws

NEW DELHI, June 26 (PTI)

ZERO FIR, registration of police complaints online, summons through electronic modes and mandatory videography of crime scenes of all heinous crimes are the key highlights of the three new criminal laws that will come into effect from July 1.

The Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita 2023, Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita 2023 and Bharatiya Sakshya Adhinyam 2023 mark a significant step towards empowering Indian



citizens and aim to create a more accessible, supportive and efficient justice system for everyone, official sources said.

The new laws, enacted late last year, are set to replace the British-era Indian Penal

Code, Code of Criminal Procedure and the Indian Evidence Act respectively.

Under the new laws, a per-

son can now report incidents by electronic communication, without the need to physically visit a police station. This allows for easier and quicker reporting, facilitating prompt action by the police, the sources said.

With the introduction of zero FIR, a person can file a First Information Report (FIR) at any police station, regardless of jurisdiction. This eliminates delays in initiating legal proceedings and ensures immediate reporting of the offence.

Under the new laws, victims will receive a free copy of the

FIR, ensuring their participation in the legal process.

An interesting addition of the law is that in the event of an arrest, the individual has the right to inform a person of his choice about his or her situation. This will ensure immediate support and assistance to the arrested individual.

Besides, arrest details will now be prominently displayed within police stations and district headquarters, allowing families and friends of the arrested person easy access to important information.

 MARUTI SUZUKI

NEXA