

Race against time: Desperate searches continue

Kerala: 206 still missing



Rescue operation continues at the landslide-hit Chooralmala in Wayanad district on Saturday. (PTI)

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, Aug 3 (PTI)

KERALA Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan said on Saturday that search and rescue operations in disaster-hit Wayanad are in their final stages, but 206 people remain missing.

Addressing the media here, Vijayan said, there is difficulty

in identifying the dead bodies and parts recovered from the Chaliyar river.

"Till now, 218 bodies have been recovered, of which 90 are women, 98 are men, and 30 are children. As many as 148 bodies have been handed over so far. There are 206 people missing. Eighty-one people are injured and are under treatment in various hospitals," he said.

The Chief Minister said 67 bodies are yet to
(Contd on page 5)

Read Editorial
CRY OF THE GHATS
on page 8

U'khand: 10,500 rescued

RUDRAPRAYAG, Aug 3 (PTI)

THE operation to rescue pilgrims stranded along a rain-ravaged trek route to the Himalayan Kedarnath shrine in Uttarakhand entered its third day on Sunday. More than 10,500 people have been evacuated, some airlifted by air force helicopters. Officials said around 1,300 pilgrims are stranded in Kedarnath, Bhimbali and Gaurikund, and are safe.

Personnel of the State Disaster Response Force (SDRF), the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) and police are engaged in the rescue operation. The Indian Air Force's Chinook and MI17 helicopters airlifted some pilgrims from the area on Friday. Rudraprayag Superintendent of Police (SP) Vishakha Ashok Bhadane dismissed rumours of a large number of people missing following a cloudburst near the trek-route. "Almost all reported individuals have reached home," the official said and appealed to the public not to believe rumours.



Rescue work underway after landslides triggered by heavy rain damaged the Kedarnath pedestrian route on Saturday. (PTI)

Himachal: 45 still missing



Search and rescue operation continues following cloudburst in Rampur area of Shimla district of Himachal on Saturday. (PTI)

SHIMLA, Aug 3 (PTI)

RESCUE operation to trace about 45 people who went missing after cloudbursts in three districts of Himachal Pradesh resumed on Saturday but there has been no success so far.

With the recovery of a body from Rajban village in Mandi, the death toll has increased to nine. A total of 410 rescuers from teams of Army, NDRF, ITBP, SDRF, CISE, police and home guards are involved in the hunt with the help of drones, officials said on Saturday. So far, eight people have died in the flash floods triggered by cloudburst in Nirmand, Sainj and Malana areas in Kullu, Mandi's Padhar and Shimla's Rampur subdivision on Wednesday.

Flash floods and landslides due to cloudbursts and heavy rains have led to the closure of 114 roads in Himachal Pradesh, while the weather department warned that heavy showers would continue in the state till August 7.

Violence in Manipur within 24 hours of pact to restore normalcy

IMPHAL, Aug 3 (PTI)

SHOTS were fired and an abandoned house was torched in Manipur's Jiribam, triggering fresh tensions within a day of the Meitei and Hmar communities reaching an agreement to make efforts to restore normalcy in the district, officials said on Saturday.

An abandoned house in Lalpani village was torched by armed men on Friday night, they said.

"It is an isolated settlement consisting of few Meitei houses, and most of those were abandoned after violence broke out in the district. Miscreants, who are yet to be identified, took advantage of

Avoid replacing Assam Rifles with CRPF: MLAs to PM

IMPHAL, Aug 3 (PTI)

TEN Kuki-Zo MLAs of Manipur wrote to Prime Minister Narendra Modi seeking his intervention to ensure that Assam Rifles continue to guard sensitive areas of the ethnic strife-torn State and are not replaced by CRPF.

In the letter, the MLAs said that when the Centre was working to end the conflict, removing the Assam Rifles and replacing it with a new force "with no comparable knowledge of the terrain or the peo-

ple" could result in an escalation of violence.

The letter came amid reports that two battalions of Assam Rifles deployed in Kangvai and Kangpokpi would be replaced by CRPF.

The Kuki-Zo MLAs hailed the Assam Rifles as a "neutral force" and the purported move to replace it with the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) as a "sinister design."

"We have come to learn that there is a plan to withdraw 9th Bn and 22nd Battalion of AR from their current sensitive

deployment in Kangvai and Kangpokpi. This wholesome decision to replace the aforementioned AR battalions with CRPF at this critical juncture is nothing but a sinister design," the legislators said in a memorandum.

Their call for the Prime Minister's intervention came after media reports claimed that a large number of Assam Rifles troops would be moved out from the state and deployed in Jammu.

More than 200 people have been killed.

security lapses in the area to commit the arson," an official said. The armed men also fired several rounds of shells and gunshots, targeting the village, he said.

Security forces were rushed to the area following the incident, he added.

Representatives of the Meitei and Hmar communities reached an agreement in a meeting held at a CRPF facility in adjoining Assam's Cachar on Thursday.

The meeting was moderated by Jiribam district administration, Assam Rifles and CRPF. Representatives of the Thadou, Paite and Mizo communities of the district were also present in the meeting.

"The meeting resolved that both sides will make full efforts to bring normalcy and prevent incidents of arson and firing. Both sides shall give full cooperation to all the security forces operating in the Jiribam district. Both sides agreed to facilitate controlled and coordinated movement," a joint statement issued and signed by representatives of all the participating communities said.

The next meeting will be held on August 15.

More than 200 people have been killed and thousands rendered homeless in ethnic violence between Imphal Valley-based Meiteis and adjoining hills-based Kuki-Zo groups since May last year.

Vietnam's President to be new Communist Party chief

PHNOM PENH (Cambodia), Aug 3
(AP)

VIETNAMESE President To Lam was confirmed Saturday as the new chief of the Communist Party after his predecessor died July 19.

Lam will be the General Secretary of the Communist Party of Vietnam, the country's most powerful political role, state media said. It was unclear if Lam will stay in his role as President.

The previous General Secretary, Nguyen Phu Trong, dominated Vietnamese politics since he became party chief in 2011. He was elected to a third term as General Secretary in 2021. He was an ideologue who viewed corruption as the gravest threat facing the party.

In his first speech as the

Communist Party chief, Lam said that his taking the reins was because of "an urgent need to ensure the leadership of the party".

Lam said he would maintain the legacies of his predecessor, notably the anti-corruption

campaign that has rocked the country's political and business elites and a pragmatic approach to foreign policy known as bamboo diplomacy — a phrase coined by Trong referring to the plant's flexibility, bending but not

breaking in the shifting headwinds of global geopolitics.

As Vietnam's top security official, Lam led Trong's sweeping anti-graft campaign until May, when he became President following the resignation of his predecessor, who stepped down after being caught by the campaign.



To Lam

BANGLADESH: Student leaders refuse talks with PM Hasina

DHAKA, Aug 3 (PTI)

TENSION gripped Bangladesh afresh on Saturday after leaders of the student movement refused Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's invitation for talks while protesters laid siege on major streets in the capital, days after more than 200 people died in anti-quota protests.

Bangladesh recently witnessed violent clashes between the police and mostly student protesters demanding an end to a controversial quota system that reserved 30 per cent of Government jobs for relatives of veterans who fought in Bangladesh's War of Independence in 1971.

Witnesses said students

protesting blocked major roads of Dhaka causing traffic snarls while officials said security forces were ordered to keep intensified vigil as protesters started rallying at different city points.

On Friday, Prime Minister Hasina urged the agitating students to meet at her Ganabhaban official residence for talks to end the violence over the quota system in Government jobs.

Her call came a day after new protests erupted on Friday, leaving two people dead and more than 100 injured as over 2,000 protesters gathered in parts of the capital, some shouting "down with the autocrat" and demanding justice

for victims.

"I am saying again, they (student leaders) can come to me for talks if they want they can bring with them their guardians as well anytime," she said during a meeting with leaders of different professional groups.

"The door of Ganabhaban is open (for them)," she said.

"I want to listen to them. I do not want conflict," she said while ruling Awami League sources said three party leaders were tasked to communicate and convince the anti-quota movement coordinators.

Meanwhile, two police officials were suspended by higher authorities for their "unprofessional conduct". The officials fired gunshots that killed

India highlights its successful governance models to visiting Sri Lankan delegation

NEW DELHI, Aug 3 (IANS)

AS MANY as 40 senior civil servant officers from Sri Lanka, representing many key ministries of the Lankan Government, attended the 4th Capacity Building Programme for the Civil Servants of Sri Lanka which concluded in New Delhi on Saturday.

Organised by the National Centre for Good Governance (NCGG), the programme focused on sharing India's successful governance models through highly interactive sessions and mutual exchange of knowledge which will eventually enable both countries to achieve significant milestones in enhancing governance.

The Lankan delegation

included officers, including Assistant Divisional Secretaries, Assistant Secretaries, Deputy Secretaries, Directors, Senior Assistant Secretaries, Assistant Directors, and Deputy Directors. The civil servants represented key ministries of Sri Lanka such as the Commission of Local Government, Public Administration, Home Affairs, Provincial Councils and Local Government, the Ministry of Provincial Council and Local Government, and the Ministry of Justice, Prisons Affairs, and Constitutional Reforms, among others. The session also featured four group presentations by participants on various impactful topics.

It included the Geogoviya

Programme in Sri Lanka, which focuses on using geographical information systems to enhance agricultural productivity and the Agriculture Modernisation Project which aims at transforming Sri Lanka's agriculture through innovative practices and significant impacts.

The Aswasuma Programme, a welfare benefit initiative designed to provide comprehensive social security support to the people of Sri Lanka and a presentation on 'PPP Success in India: Enhancing Infrastructure Projects in Sri Lanka' also highlighted the success of India's Public-Private Partnership (PPP) model and how it can aid in improving infrastructure in Sri Lanka.