

Foreigners found on Bihar rolls, says EC; INDIA questions data

Poll body says large number of people from Nepal, Bangladesh, and Myanmar found during house-to-house verification by BLOs; names of such people will not be included in the final list, it says; INDIA bloc rejects claim, slams roll revision process

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NEW DELHI/PATNA

The Election Commission on Sunday said that a large number of people from Nepal, Bangladesh, and Myanmar were found during house-to-house verification of electoral rolls as part of the special intensive revision (SIR) process in Bihar. The names of such people will not be included in the final voter list to be published on September 30, it added.

The SIR began on June 25 and the last date for voters to submit enumeration forms given by booth-level officers (BLOs) is July 25, following which a draft list will be brought out on August 1. The EC said a proper enquiry will be conducted



Crucial data: Enumeration activities going on at Nawada for the Bihar poll roll revision on Sunday. ANI

after the draft list is released. The poll body's move is significant in view of the Assembly polls scheduled next year in West Bengal, Assam, Kerala, Puducherry, and Tamil Nadu,

and comes as various States are cracking down on illegal immigrants from countries including Bangladesh and Myanmar.

Earlier, leaders of the Indian National Develop-

mental, Inclusive Alliance (INDIA) had jointly attacked the EC, alleging contradictions and democratic concerns in the data related to the SIR process presented by the poll body

on Saturday. The leaders, including Tejashwi Yadav of the Rashtriya Janata Dal, said that such shortcomings call into question "public trust" in the process. He alleged that fake data were being uploaded on EC sites.

Listing out the alleged shortcomings, Mr. Yadav said the EC had claimed that 80.11% of voters had submitted the enumeration forms, but it had not announced how many of these forms were filled in a verified, voluntary, and valid manner.

Mr. Yadav also rejected the EC's claim that a large number of people from Nepal, Bangladesh and Myanmar were found during SIR process.

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ULFA(I) says missile strike killed two top leaders in Myanmar

The Hindu Bureau

GUWAHATI

The banned United Liberation Front of Asom (Independent), or ULFA(I), on Sunday claimed that a missile strike by what it described as “colonial occupational forces” killed two of its top commanders at a camp located in Myanmar.

The outfit, in a statement, said the attack occurred during the funeral of its senior leader, “Lieutenant General” Nayan Asom, who it claimed had earlier been killed in a drone strike.

According to unverified reports from Myanmar’s Sagaing Division, drone attacks also targeted camps of the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (Khaplang), or NSCN(K). The ULFA(I) and the NSCN(K) are believed to share locations in the region, which lies across the 1,643-km-long India-Myanmar border.

ULFA(I) identified the deceased as “Brigadier” Ganesh Asom and “Colonel” Pradip Asom, stating they were killed in the early hours of July 13. It further claimed that “several members of the outfit and some civilians” sustained injuries in the incident.

“The occupational forces have continued the attack in the areas using fighter jets. We want to tell the indigenous people of Assam that we will avenge this brutal attack carried out by the colonial nation,” the group said.

The outfit, led by Paresh Baruah, continues to refer to the Indian government as a “colonial” power and labels Indian security forces as “occupational forces”. ULFA(I) remains the only armed group in Assam that has not entered into a ceasefire or signed any peace agreement with the Centre. It has maintained that talks can only take place if the issue of Assam’s sovereignty is on the agenda.

The Indian Army and the Assam Rifles – tasked with securing the India-Myanmar frontier– said they were unaware of any operation of this nature inside Myanmar. “There are no inputs with us on the operation,” said Lt. Col. Mahendra Rawat, a Guwahati-based defence spokesperson.

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said he came to know about the the ULFA(I)’s claims but denied any involvement of State forces.

India joins military exercise Talisman Sabre in Australia

India, along with 18 other nations, is participating in Talisman Sabre 2025, a major bilateral military drill led by Australia that commenced on Sunday.

Now in its 11th iteration, the Talisman Sabre is the largest and most sophisticated warfighting exercise ever conducted in the continent, the Department of Defence, Australia, said in a statement. “More than 35,000 military personnel from Australia and partnering nations will deploy across Queensland, Northern Territory, Western Australia, New South Wales and Christmas Island. Activities will also be conducted outside Australia in Papua New Guinea,” it added.

ENVIRONMENT MINISTER ATTRIBUTES IT TO GOVT'S MEASURES

Capital breathes easy: Rain keeps AQI below 100 for most of July so far

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, JULY 13

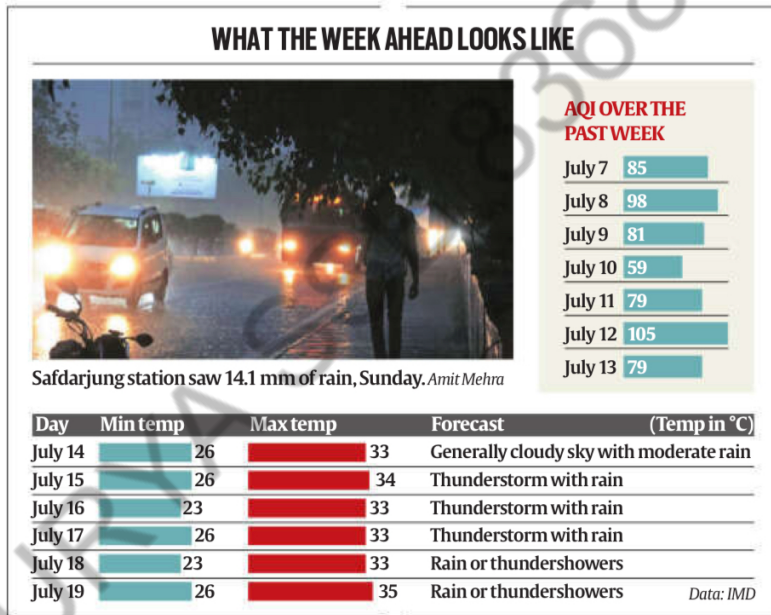
AS RAIN continues to lash Delhi, the Capital has seen cleaner than usual air this year.

Even as July and August are among the months when air quality is typically at its best in the city, because of a change in wind patterns and frequent rain due to monsoon, the Capital's AQI remained under 100 — either good or satisfactory — on 12 of 13 days this month.

After heavy showers on Saturday afternoon, rain lashed the city on Sunday evening too, and the AQI was recorded at 79 (satisfactory).

The predominant wind direction in Delhi is northwesterly and westerly. During monsoon, the direction of the wind is easterly and southeasterly. These moisture-laden winds do not carry as many pollutants, and Delhi's air, as a result, becomes cleaner. Frequent showers also help.

On Sunday, Safdarjung received 14.1 mm of rain. Pragati Maidan received 21.1 mm and 13.5 mm of rain was recorded at



the Pusa weather station.

The city experienced gusty winds, reaching up to 57 kmph at Pragati Maidan, 55 kmph

at Palam, and 37 kmph at Mayur Vihar.

According to the India Meteorological Department

(IMD), moderate rain is expected on Monday, followed by light rain through the week.

Sunday's maximum temper-

ature was 34.8 degrees Celsius, a degree below normal. The minimum temperature settled at 25.1 degrees Celsius, 2 degrees below normal.

On Monday, the maximum and minimum temperatures are expected to be between 33 and 26 degrees Celsius.

Delhi Environment Minister Manjinder Singh Sirsa, meanwhile, attributed the clean air to measures implemented by the government as part of the Environment Action Plan 2025.

"We are seeing a consistent pattern of better air days during months that have typically recorded higher pollution. The focus continues to be on steady implementation — from enforcement to landfill operations — to support sustainable outcomes," he said.

The monsoon plantation drive, meanwhile, kicked off in several parts of the city, with L-G V K Saxena and MP Bansuri Swaraj planting trees at SP Marg. Similar drives were undertaken in Qutubgarh.

The Delhi government has planned to plant 70 lakh trees and shrubs this year.

Astronaut Shubhanshu Shukla prepares to head back home

Hemanth C.S.

BENGALURU

Ahead of his journey back to earth, Indian astronaut Group Captain Shubhanshu Shukla on Sunday said today's India looks ambitious, fearless, confident, and full of pride.

"Forty-one years ago, an Indian went to space, and he also described how India looks from above, and you all want to know how India looks from here. Let me tell you, today's India from space looks ambitious, fearless, confident, and full of pride. Because of these reasons, I am telling you again, '*Aaj ka Bharat abhi bi sare jahan se acha dikhta hai*' [today's India still looks the best in the world]. Let's meet on earth soon," Group Captain Shukla, said at a farewell ceremony on the International Space Station (ISS).

After two-and-a-half



Stunning shots: Indian astronaut Shubhanshu Shukla aboard the International Space Station during his Ax-4 mission. PTI

weeks at the ISS, the astronaut will be embarking on his journey back to earth on Monday. Mr. Shukla, pilot of the Axiom Mission 4, along with three other crew members, is scheduled to undock from the ISS's Harmony module at 4.35 p.m. IST.

The crew's journey back to earth would take about 22.5 hours. Following a series of orbital manoeuvres

after undocking, the SpaceX Dragon capsule carrying the astronauts is expected to splash down off the coast of California in the U.S. at 3 p.m. (IST) on Tuesday.

"My journey [to the ISS] is going to get over. But your and my journey is still on; the journey of our human space mission is a long and difficult one. But I can assure you that if we are determined, even stars

are attainable," he said.

Thanking fellow astronauts at the ISS, Mr. Shukla said that they had made his and Ax-4 crew members' stay special.

"For the last two-and-a-half weeks, we have done a lot of science in the station, [and] outreach activities, and looked back at earth when we found time. It almost seems magical to me. These missions have very far-reaching implications beyond science. That is what I believe. Back from here, I carry with me a lot of memories, but one thing that really sticks to me is what humanity is capable of when all of us come together from different parts of the world and work for a common goal," he said.

After splashdown, Group Captain Shukla will undergo a rehabilitation programme for about a week, under the supervision of flight surgeons, to adapt back to gravity.

Tibet-related issues a 'thorn' in ties, says China, ahead of Jaishankar's visit

Press Trust of India

NEW DELHI

Tibet-related issues, including reincarnation of the Dalai Lama, are a "thorn" in India-China bilateral relations and they have become a "burden" for New Delhi, the Chinese embassy said on Sunday. The remarks came ahead of External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar's visit to China to attend a conclave of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) on July 14 and 15.

It would be Jaishankar's first visit to China after the ties between the two countries came under severe

strain following the 2020 military standoff along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in eastern Ladakh.

In the last few months, India and China have initiated a number of measures to repair the bilateral ties after completing the disengagement of troops from the last of the two face-off sites in October last year.

Earlier this month, the Dalai Lama asserted that a trust of Tibetan Buddhists will have the sole authority to recognise his future reincarnation. China reacted angrily to his remarks and said his reincarnation should be approved by the

Chinese government.

In a social media post on Sunday, Chinese embassy spokesperson Yu Jing said that members of the strategic and academic communities, including former officials, had made "improper remarks" regarding the reincarnation of the Dalai Lama "contrary" to Indian government's public stance.

"They should be fully cognizant of the sensitivity of issues related to Xizang, and that the reincarnation and succession of the Dalai Lama is inherently an internal affair of China, brooking no interference of any external forces," the

spokesperson said.

China refers to Tibet as 'Xizang'. "In reality, Xizang-related issue is a thorn in China-India relations and has become a burden for India. Playing the 'Xizang card' will definitely end up shooting oneself in the foot," the Chinese embassy spokesperson said.

In China, Jaishankar is expected to hold bilateral talks with his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi on the sidelines of the SCO conclave.

China is the current chair of the SCO and it is hosting the meetings of the grouping in that capacity.

North Korean leader Kim reaffirms support for Russia in Ukraine conflict

Reuters
SEOUL

North Korean leader Kim Jong-un told Russia's top diplomat his country was ready to "unconditionally support" Moscow's every effort to resolve the conflict in Ukraine, state media reported on Sunday, as the two countries held high-level strategic talks.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov was on a three-day visit to North Korea, which has provided troops and arms for Russia's war in Ukraine and has pledged more military support.

Mr. Kim met Mr. Lavrov in the eastern coastal city



Mutual beneficiaries: North Korea's Kim Jong-un, left, meets with Russia's Sergei Lavrov in Wonsan in North Korea. AFP

of Wonsan where the two countries' Foreign Ministers held their second strategic dialogue, pledging further cooperation under a partnership treaty signed

last year that includes a mutual defence pact.

Later on Sunday, North Korea's Defence Ministry said it stood ready to take military action to counter

any security threat, in a warning against South Korea, Japan and the U.S. following a recent aerial drill by the allies.

The warning followed a U.S. B-52 strategic bomber flight near South Korea flanked by the three countries' fighter jets in a defence exercise on Friday.

Russian gains

Meanwhile, Russia said on Sunday it took another village in the west of Ukraine's Donetsk region, as its troops advance towards the neighbouring Dnipropetrovsk region. Russia's Defence Ministry said Russian troops had captured the village of Myrne.

Macron announces €6.5 billion in extra military spending

Associated Press

PARIS

French President Emmanuel Macron on Sunday announced €6.5 billion in extra military spending in the next two years because of new and unprecedented threats, from Russia to terrorists to online attacks.

The French leader laid out the spending plans in a sweeping speech calling for intensified efforts to protect Europe. He said France will aim to spend €64 billion in annual defence spending in 2027, the last year of his second term; that would be double

the €32 billion in annual spending when he became President in 2017.

"Since 1945, freedom has never been so threatened, and never so seriously," Mr. Macron said in the French President's traditional speech to the military on the eve of the Bastille Day national holiday.

"To be free in this world we must be feared. To be feared we must be powerful," he said.

He insisted that France can find the money to spend more on the military even as it tries to bring down massive debts.

EU puts off retaliatory tariffs against U.S. in hope of a deal

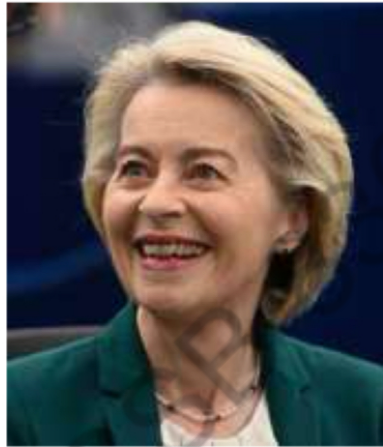
Agence France-Presse

BRUSSELS

EU chief Ursula von der Leyen said on Sunday that Brussels will keep holding off on hitting back at U.S. steel and aluminium tariffs, as it seeks a deal to ward off broader 30% levies.

U.S. President Donald Trump on Saturday threw months of painstaking negotiations into disarray by announcing he would hammer the 27-nation bloc with sweeping 30% tariffs if no agreement is reached by August 1.

"The U.S. has sent us a letter with measures that would come into effect unless there is a negotiated solution, so we will therefore also extend the suspension of our counter-



Ursula von der Leyen

measures until early August," Ms. von der Leyen told journalists. "At the same time, we will continue to prepare for the countermeasures so we are fully prepared," she added.

The EU's current suspension of its retaliation over U.S. steel and aluminium tariffs had been set to expire overnight from

Monday to Tuesday.

Brussels has readied duties on U.S. goods worth around €21 billion in response to the levies Mr. Trump slapped on metal imports earlier this year. But it announced in April that it was holding off on those measures to give space to find a broader trade deal with the U.S.

Deal with Indonesia

Separately, Ms. von der Leyen and Indonesian President Prabowo Subianto on Sunday announced a "political agreement" to conclude a long-awaited free trade deal. The European bloc and Southeast Asia's largest economy have been negotiating since 2016 to agree a deal that is expected to increase trade and investment.