



Dinhata MLA Jagadish Barma Basuniya making a survey of the flood-affected area amid heavy downpour—EOI Photo

**GMCC calls emergency meeting of hill parties to decide next course of action**

Darjeeling, Aug 12 /- With the indefinite strike in the Darjeeling hills entering its 59th day today, the Gorkhaland Movement Coordination Committee (GMCC) called an emergency meeting of all the hill-based parties to discuss the "future course of action". As the shutdown entered its 59th day, we have decided to convene an emergency meeting today to discuss our future course of action," a GMCC member told news agency PTI. The meeting will be held in Kalimpong. The GMCC has 30 members representing all the hill-based parties, including the GJM, GMLF, Jan Andolan Party (JAP) and the Bharatiya Gorkha Parishad. The GMCC is headed by a member of the Gorkha Janmukti Morcha (GJM). Sharp differences have cropped up between the GJM and other hill parties over continuing with the indefinite shutdown. Some parties including the JAP are in favour of withdrawing the indefinite strike. Meanwhile, the situation in Darjeeling remained tense but incident-free. Although no incident of violence has been reported since last night, the police and security personnel have made special security arrangements in the hills and are keeping a tight vigil to avoid any untoward incident. The GJM took out rallies demanding restoration of the Internet services, which remained suspended in the hills since June 18, and an immediate withdrawal of police from Darjeeling. With the food supply severely hit due to the shutdown, GJM activists and NGOs were seen distributing food among local people. Barring medicine shops, all other shops, business establishments, schools and colleges remained closed in the hills.

## State govt working on war-footing to tackle flood in north Bengal: Irrigation minister

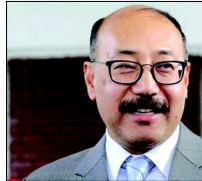
KOLKATA, AUG 12 /- West Bengal government today said it is tackling on war footing the flood in north Bengal, where it has impacted five districts and inundated about 100 tea gardens. "We have already opened control rooms and I am personally involved in monitoring and management. The state is working on a war-footing to tackle the flood situation in the region which is facing heavy rainfall," state irrigation minister Rajib Banerjee told news agency PTI. "Chief minister Mamata Banerjee is monitoring the situation. All steps are being taken, including sending of relief materials," Banerjee said. Coochbehar, North Dinajpur, Alipurdur, Jalpaiguri and Darjeeling are the five districts which have been affected by the flood. State disaster management minister Javed Khan had said yesterday that 58,000 people had been affected in Alipurdur, Jalpaiguri and Cooch Behar. The government has opened 43 shelters in the affected districts and relief materials are being provided to those who have been temporarily displaced from their houses, he added. About 100 tea gardens are reported to be affected across north Bengal in the flood and it is apprehended that tea production in the region will be less. Last year, tea production in north Bengal except Darjeeling was around 315 million kg.



Rajib Banerjee, Irrigation Minister

KOLKATA, AUG 12 /- With most Bangladeshis preferring West Bengal as their destination while visiting India, the state has the most to gain from a better relation between the two countries, Indian High Commissioner to Bangladesh Harsh Vardhan Shringla has said. "The minimum amount required for carrying by a person from Bangladesh before we

really needs to look into." Referring to the requirement of power in Bangladesh, Shringla said that scope to meet part of that demand from the surplus that Bengal has is enormous. You can sell a couple of thousand MW without a problem from West Bengal to Bangladesh. In case of energy connectivity we are planning to connect our energy pipeline integrated gas link from Haldia. We will also connect from Duttapada to Khulna (in Bangladesh) which will go up to north Bengal so that Coochbehar gets gas and they do not have to build a gas pipeline," he said. About connectivity, the diplomat stressed on the inland waterways and coastal shipments. "We have already started shipments in India and we were so in a certain sense we have already started sending goods through Bangladesh. We have also started using smaller vessels along the coast to transport goods from our different ports right into the interior parts of Bangladesh using the riverine system," he said. Later talking to journalists on the sidelines of the session, Shringla stressed on the need for consultation to reach a consensus before taking a decision on the Teesta water issue. "Of course Teesta



Indian High Commissioner to Bangladesh Harsh Vardhan Shringla

## UP CHILDREN DEATHS

# State orders probe, suspends BRD Medical College principal

Oppn attacks Yogi govt, questions CM's silence PM monitoring situation, says his Office

LUCKNOW, AUG 12 /- The principal of BRD Medical College in Lucknow was today suspended for his "irresponsible act" of allegedly delaying payments to the oxygen supplier, which led to the death of 30 infants. Uttar Pradesh health education minister Ashutosh Tandon said. Tandon added that a probe, led by the chief secretary, had also been ordered. The minister told newsmen here that "stringent action" would be taken against those responsible for the tragedy after the probe panel submitted its report. "Till then, we are suspending the principal of Baba Raghav Das Medical College with immediate effect for his irresponsible act," he added. The minister said on August 1, the dealer (oxygen supplier) had written a letter to the principal of the medical college, Dr Rakesh Mishra, demanding payment of an outstanding amount. "The letter was forwarded to the DG's (Director General, Medical Education) office. On August 5, the payment was made to the medical college and the amount was credited to its account on August 7," he added. Stating that the dealer claimed that his dues were cleared only on August 11, Tandon said: "Why was there a delay in payment, why the supply of oxygen was stopped, - these aspects will be probed by the panel." Meanwhile, chief minister Yogi Adityanath informed through his official Twitter handle that Prime Minister Narendra Modi had sought information about the tragedy and on his instructions, Union health minister J. P. Nanda visited the hospital in the state for health Anupriya Patel had also inquired about it. The Opposition tore into the Yogi Adityanath government in Uttar Pradesh today, seeking the scalps of the state health and medical education ministers for the deaths of over 60 children at a Gorakhpur hospital.



A child being administered oxygen at the BRD Medical College at Gorakhpur.

"Gorakhpur where the children have died in such large numbers is the chief minister's constituency and hometown. He has been there several times after assuming the post. And in the past 24 hours he has said nothing on the issue," he said. Yadav also slammed the BJP government in the state for the inaction so far, saying while two days back Adityanath suspended 11 officials in Maharashtra and transferred seven others for dereliction of duty, so far no heads have rolled in the BRD Medical College tragedy. "No official in Gorakhpur listens to anyone, or is accountable to anyone, and it seems that such officials are being patronized by the chief minister himself," the SP leader alleged. Leader of Opposition in the state assembly and senior SP leader Ram Govind Chowdhary is to visit the Gorakhpur hospital. Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) supreme Mayawati also lashed out at the Adityanath government. She said the state government's callousness

led to the tragedy and called for a high-level probe into the incident. Mayawati said a three-member fact-finding team from her party will visit the medical college. "The BJP will never accept its mistake and so I leave it to their discretion to remove those responsible," she said. Meanwhile, the PMO today said that Prime Minister Narendra Modi is constantly monitoring the situation in Gorakhpur and is in touch with central and state authorities, the PMO said today. Minister of state for health Anupriya Patel and the Union health secretary will take stock of the situation in Gorakhpur, the PMO said. District Magistrate of Gorakhpur Rajeev Rautela had said yesterday that at least 30 children died in the state-run Baba Raghav Das Medical College within 48 hours since August 10. Uttar Pradesh health minister Siddharth Nath Singh had said that according to reports from the paediatric department of the college, 60 children died due to various diseases since August 7. Though the

Gorakhpur district magistrate had not given any reason for the deaths, an official here had said that according to the Gorakhpur superintendent of police (SP), 21 children died due to oxygen supply shortage. "According to the Gorakhpur SP, 21 children died due to shortage of supply of liquid oxygen in BRD Medical College. Senior officers are at the spot. Exact cause is being verified by the civil administration," the official, who did not to be identified, had said. The Uttar Pradesh government said today that those found guilty in the "tragic and painful" incident would face "stringent action". "Whosoever is found guilty in the tragic and painful incident at Baba Raghav Das Medical College in Gorakhpur will certainly face stringent action," Uttar Pradesh deputy chief minister Keshav Prasad Maurya told newsmen in Lucknow. Health minister Singh and state medical education minister Ashutosh Tandon today visited Gorakhpur to take stock of the situation at the medical college. (PTI)

## Oxygen was cutoff, claims BJP MP

UNNAO, AUG 12 /- BJP MP Sakshi Maharaj today said 30 infants died in a Gorakhpur hospital because oxygen supply was cut off over non-payment of dues. Sakshi demanded stringent action against those responsible for the tragedy in Baba Raghav Das Medical College Hospital, where 30 children are believed to have died in 48 hours. "The deaths which took place in a Gorakhpur hospital were very saddening. The person, who switched off the oxygen supply on the pretext of non-payment of dues, was responsible for the incident," the MP from Unnao told newsmen. Devising measures to ensure that he had termed the incident as a "massacre" (narsanhar), he said: "I have never said so. I said that the deaths were not natural and steps should be taken to ensure that such incidents are not repeated in the future." (PTI)

# Bengal has the most to gain from better India-B'desh relation: Indian envoy

## Army to deploy robots to fight terrorists in Kashmir?

New Delhi, Aug 12 /- The Indian Army will use hundreds of indigenously built robots to fight terrorists in Jammu and Kashmir, a media report has said. The robots are reportedly capable of delivering ammunition at the intended locations in case of unsafe and emergency situations. According to online portal the eastcoastdaily.in, the defence ministry has already approved an army proposal to induct 544 robots for the purpose. The Army plans to boost the use of such machines for security and surveillance as the "terror theatre" has of late moved from the jungles to urban areas. "The way the situation is evolving, it may just be a matter of time when security forces as a whole, and Rashtriya Rifles in particular, will be facing the threat in built-up and super-built-up areas." The Army was quoted as saying, "These robotic surveillance platforms can be extensively used by the RR forces (Rashtriya Rifles) for gathering real-time input prior to manning up areas." The report quoted an Army note as saying, "These robots are of 'lightweight' and consist of 'surveillance cameras and transmission systems with a range of 200 metres'. Citing the Army, it reported that the requirement of the robots is to 'deliver suitable ammunition e.g. stim grenade'. The ministry has approved the proposal under the Defence Procurement Procedure 2016 which states only Indian vendors are eligible for the projects. The security forces have been currently using a remotely operated vehicle Daksht to handle the improvised explosive devices. The report said Daksht, developed by DRDO, can climb stairs, lift 20 kg loads and has a three-hour battery life. It can be operated with remote within a range of 500 metres.