

Top Indian medal contenders at upcoming Asian Games

Agency
New Delhi, Aug 16

The condition of former prime minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee remains critical and he continues to be on advanced life-support system, AIIMS said in a statement today. The 93-year-old BJP veteran was admitted to the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) here on June 11 with a kidney tract infection, urinary tract infection, low urine output and chest congestion. A health bulletin issued by the hospital today stated, "Former prime minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee's condition continues to be the same. He is critical and on life-support system." Last night, it had said that Vajpayee's condition has worsened, it was critical and he was on life-support system.

"Both his lungs are not in

good condition because of pneumonia on both sides and kidneys are also weak. He is critical," a source said today.

Vice President M Venkaiah Naidu visited AIIMS this morning to enquire about the condition of the former prime minister. BJP veteran L K Advani was also at the hospital to enquire about the health of Vajpayee.

BJP chief Amit Shah, Union Health Minister J P Nadda, were also at AIIMS, while Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal and Union ministers Prakash Javadekar are expected to visit the premier medical institute.

Delhi BJP President Manoj Tiwari was among those who visited the hospital. Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited the AIIMS yesterday evening to enquire about the condition of Vajpayee. He reached the hospital at around 7.15 pm and spent about 50 minutes

there.

After Modi, Railway Minister Piyush Goyal and BJP MP Meenakshi Lekhi also paid a visit. Later in the night, several leaders and ministers including Suresh Prabh, Jitendra Singh, Harsh Vardhan and Shahnawaz Hussain visited the hospital.

Earlier, Union Textiles Minister Smriti Irani had visited the hospital to check on Vajpayee.

A large crowd of mediapersons and others has gathered outside the hospital to get updates on Vajpayee's health, affecting movement of traffic on the road today. Policemen have been deployed to manage the crowd and traffic outside the hospital. Vajpayee, a diabetic, has only one functional kidney. He had suffered a stroke in 2009 that weakened his cognitive abilities. Subsequently, he developed dementia.

Condition of former PM Vajpayee continues to be critical

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New Delhi, Aug 16

The condition of former prime minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee remains critical and he continues to be on advanced life-support system, sources said.

The 93-year-old BJP veteran was admitted to the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) here on June 11 with a kidney tract infection, urinary tract infection, low urine output and chest congestion.

"Unfortunately, his condition has worsened. His condition is critical and he is on life-support system," the AIIMS

had said in the statement last night.

"Both his lungs are not in good condition because of pneumonia on both sides and kidneys are also weak. He is critical," a source said today. Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited the AIIMS yesterday evening to enquire about the condition of Vajpayee.

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health of Vajpayee.

BJP chief Amit Shah, Union Health Minister J P Nadda, were also at AIIMS, while Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, and Union ministers Prakash Javadekar are expected to visit the premier medical institute soon.

After Modi, Railway Minister Piyush Goyal and BJP MP Meenakshi Lekhi also paid a visit. Delhi BJP President Manoj Tiwari was among those who visited the hospital.

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Can't deny quota benefits to 'creamy layer' SC/ST employees in promotions in govt jobs: Centre to SC

Agency
New Delhi, Aug 16

The Centre on Thursday told the Supreme Court that SC/ST employees from affluent background cannot be denied reservation in promotions in government jobs. The apex court had asked the Centre if those belonging to 'creamy layer' among SC/ST should be given quota benefits in promotion.

While advocating for the reservation in promotions, Attorney General KK Venugopal said that the stigma and imprint of backwardness and caste remains with SC/ST community for centuries even if some of them have come up. "Even today SC/ST people are socially backward

and not allowed to marry higher caste people and ride horses," the AG said.

The AG also said that the concept of creamy layer is not applicable for SC/ST and is not open for judicial review. He said that the question of excluding a certain class of SC/ST has to be decided by the President and Parliament and this exercise.

The five-judge Constitution bench headed by Chief Justice Dipak Misra also comprises justices Kurian Joseph, RF Nariman, Sanjay Kishan Kaul and Indu Malhotra.

Earlier on August 3, the apex court had asked the Centre as to why states have not come forward with any quantifiable data to decide the inadequacy of

representation of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in government services even 12 years after its verdict on the 'creamy layer'.

The five-judge Constitution bench is examining whether its 12-year-old verdict that had dealt with the issue of 'creamy layer' for reservations to SC and ST categories in government job promotions needs to be revisited by a seven-judge bench. The apex court had on July 11 refused to pass any interim order against its 2006 verdict and said that a five-judge bench would first see whether it needs to be examined by a seven-judge bench or not.

The M Nagaraj verdict of 2006 had held that the 'creamy layer' concept cannot be

applied to the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes for promotions in government jobs, like two earlier verdicts of 1992 Indra Sawhney and others versus Union of India (popularly called Mandal Commission verdict) and 2005 E V Chinnaiya versus State of Andhra Pradesh which had dealt with creamy layer in Other Backward Classes category.

It had reiterated that the ceiling-limit of 50 per cent, the concept of the creamy layer and the compelling reasons like backwardness, inadequacy of representation and overall administrative efficiency were all constitutional requirements, without which the structure of equality of opportunity in Article 16 would collapse.

45 people stranded at waterfall in MP rescued, 8 missing

Agency
Shivpuri (MP), Aug 16

All 45 people stranded at the Sultangarh waterfall in Madhya Pradesh's Shivpuri district were rescued early this morning, an official said. Five of them, who were stranded on a rock downstream, were rescued by a helicopter, Superintendent of Police (SP) Rajesh Hingankar said.

At least eight people were swept away yesterday while bathing in the waterfall and 45 others stranded following a sudden surge in water due to heavy rain upstream, he said.

The waterfall is connected to the Parvati river. "Police teams, with the help of locals, rescued all the 45 people," Hingankar told Agency.

He said family members of six people filed missing complaints as their kin, who went to the waterfall for a

picnic on the occasion of Independence Day yesterday, were yet to be found.

A search operation was on to trace the missing persons, the SP said.

Eyewitnesses had earlier claimed that more than 10 people, bathing in the waterfall, were swept away. Early today, Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan, in a tweet, said those stranded in the waterfall were rescued with the help of the Border Security Force, State Disaster Response Force, Home Guards, and the local police and residents.

Chouhan thanked Home Minister Rajnath Singh and Defence Minister Nirmala Sitharaman for extending support to deal with the situation. State minister Yashodhara Rajesh Scindia, who is an MLA from Shivpuri, thanked the Indian Air Force and other

rescuers, including three villagers - Ramsevak Prajapati, Nizam and Ballu, for their help.

The waterfall is located near Mohana village, 55 km from the district headquarters, in an area bordering Gwalior district. Tourists had thronged the place yesterday to celebrate Independence Day holiday.

There was a sudden surge in water around 4.30 pm, possibly due to heavy rain upstream, catching those bathing in the waterfall unawares, police said quoting the locals. Union Minister and Gwalior MP Narendra Singh Tomar reached the spot last evening and supervised the rescue operation till late night.

Senior Congress leader and Guna MP Jyotiraditya Scindia spoke to senior officials over phone about the rescue operation.

Indian, Singapore navies to commemorate 25th anniversary of maritime bilateral exercise

Agency
Singapore, Aug 16

The Indian and Singapore navies will conduct joint exercises next month to commemorate the 25th anniversary of the maritime bilateral exercise between the two countries. Our excellent defence relationship is a reflection of deep mutual trust and a shared vision for the region, Indian High Commissioner Jawed Ashraf said here last night.

This year, in just a few weeks from now, we will be celebrating 25 years of our bilateral naval exercise, the longest uninterrupted naval exercises that India has with any country in the world, he said.

Later in the year, the two countries' air forces and armies will also conduct joint exercises, he added. Singapore is a leading

source of investment in India and a key financial market for Indian companies. The country is the gateway to the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) and a broader East.

The economic partnership is of a great value to both the countries, Ashraf said at the India's 72nd Independence Day celebration reception held here.

Elaborating, he said Singapore is a leading destination for outbound Indian investments, which accounts for about 20 per cent. Approximately 8,000 Indian companies are

registered in Singapore, Ashraf said.

He pointed out that the two nations are working together in the fields of technology and innovation solutions that inspire hope and provide solutions for the weak and vulnerable.

The Indian professionals and the startups here provide the spark that is igniting the eco system and creating the cyber bridge between our two countries, he said.

Singapore's education minister Ong Ye Kung was the Guest of Honour at the Independence Day celebration.

Admit Card Lost

I, the undersigned, have lost my Admit Card for my Class XI bearing Roll No. 9010 and Registration No. 10 of 2018 on the way between Wangkhei to Sagolband on August 10, 2018.

Finders are requested to hand over the same to the undersigned.

Sd/-

Ayush Irengbam
Palace Compound

Thousands marooned across Kerala, Kochi airport drowns

Agency
Thiruvananthapuram, Aug. 16

As heavy rain continues unabated across Kerala, where flooding, landslides and bridge collapses have killed at least 67 people over the last week, the Kochi International Airport Wednesday announced that it will remain shut till Saturday after water flooded the runway and operational areas.

With the Meteorological department predicting heavy to very heavy rains across the state till August 18 and as flooding was reported at 33 dams and 44 rivers, the state disaster management authority has sounded an alert in all 14 districts. Officials said that 85,399 people have been moved to relief camps.

Flights at Kochi Airport, situated close to the Periyar river, were diverted to various airports even as airlines including IndiGo, Air India and SpiceJet announced the suspension of operations to and from Kochi. The decision was taken after shutters of the Idamalayar and Cheruthoni dams, part of the Idukki reservoir, were opened Tuesday evening to release excess water.

"Kochi Airport operations have been temporarily suspended till Saturday 2 pm as the inflow of water is still on a rising trend. We are working hard to drain out the stormwater," an airport spokesperson said. Every day, the Kochi airport

handles 25,000 passengers and manages 1,650 flights in a week. "We are trying to drain the flooded area by removing a portion of the compound wall. But the situation has not improved," sources said.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi spoke to Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan Wednesday over the situation in the state. "Centre stands firmly with the people of Kerala and is ready to provide any assistance needed," Modi tweeted.

After a review meeting, Vijayan said the situation in Kerala was very alarming. "This is the first time in the history of Kerala that all dams have had to be opened and all rivers are overflowing. Several towns and villages have got isolated in the flood," he said. Vijayan also said that Modi and Home Minister Rajnath Singh have assured all help for the state and that the PM has taken a very positive approach towards the state's demands.

He also said that the water level at the Mullaperiyar dam, which has reached 142 ft, is a matter of concern. "The state has urged the Tamil Nadu Government to ensure that the discharge from the dam should be equal to the inflow. This matter has been brought to the attention of the Prime Minister and the Union Home Minister. As a result of these interventions, the discharge from the dam has now been made equal to the quantity of the inflow. Hence, a major

concern about the water level at the Mullaperiyar dam will be over," he said.

In a letter to his TN counterpart Edappadi K Palaniswami, Vijayan said: "Ideally the storage shouldn't have been allowed to go beyond 140 feet and controlled releases ought to have started at 139 feet so as to avoid unnecessary inundation and destruction likely from uncontrolled and sudden discharges at 142 feet."

A top official in Tamil Nadu said they are working closely with Kerala government. "District collectors of Theni and Idukki districts are working together. We will take all necessary steps to control the water level in Mullaperiyar dam," the official said.

In Ernakulam district, at least 30,580 people have been moved to relief centres, after discharge from the Idukki reservoir was increased overnight to tackle the heavy inflow from catchment areas and the unexpected discharge from the Mullaperiyar dam, which is in Kerala, but controlled by Tamil Nadu.

The water level at the 123-year-old Mullaperiyar dam has reached 142 feet, which was fixed by the Supreme Court in 2014. Also, the Idamalayar dam is likely to release 10 lakh litres of water into the Periyar river, which may affect Ernakulam and parts of Thrissur district. Officials at the State Disaster Management Authority said

that 24 deaths were reported since Tuesday night, taking the death toll to 67 in the last week. In Malappuram district, nine persons were buried alive after a chunk of land collapsed on their house while at Munnar and Chirayankkeezhu in Thiruvananthapuram, two persons died after wall collapses.

Officials said that none of the deaths reported Wednesday were directly related to the flooding caused by dam waters.

Presently, as many as 85,399 people are in relief camps compared to just around 30,000 on Tuesday. Scores of those evacuated have also moved to homes of relatives. Air force helicopters rescued 35 people stranded in a building in Pathanamthitta, where overflowing river Pampa has flooded several areas.

The Southern Naval Command Wednesday deployed 21 rescue and diving teams with Gemini boats across the state and as many as 81 people were rescued, many of whom were also provided food and shelter by setting up a rescue camp. Three columns of relief teams have been kept ready to meet any other requirement.

The Navy has also launched a search operation for three fishermen after their boat sank off the Kochi coast. Of the seven on board the vessel, four were rescued and airlifted while a search on for the others.